

Colorado students occupy high school to protest war, Bush policies

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Some 85 students opposed to the war and disturbed by the general direction of American life occupied Boulder High School in Colorado November 4, before leaving peacefully the next morning.

The students told reporters they were disgusted with the Bush administration's policies, in particular, the war in Iraq, the national debt, the environment, military recruitment in the schools and the possible return of the draft.

The students, who belong to the "Student Worker" group at the school, asked to see representatives of Congressman Mark Udall and Senator-Elect Ken Salazar, both Democrats. They also insisted on seeing Republican Party representatives.

The protesters told the media the action had been planned before the election. They had brought sleeping bags and food to last through the weekend. Clearly, however, the election results deepened their anger and anxiety.

Brian Martens, a high school senior, told reporters, "We want them to reassure us that our fears are misguided and that the government is doing everything in its power to prevent our futures from being destroyed."

Another senior, Travis Moe, commented, "We're protesting our futures, or lack thereof." Stephen Rostovsky said the protest was meant to get adults to listen to the students' opinions. He continued, "This is going to hopefully change that by letting people know that adolescents are there and by saying, 'We're not going to take this. We want a voice, too. We want a place in this democracy ... We should have a say.'"

The students' list of grievances cited the war in Iraq, which they termed "unjust and misguided." The group also opposes federal regulations requiring schools to admit military recruiters or lose funding. The students

hung a message on the wall: "We are the generation that will have to take on and suffer from the burden."

Senior Cameron Ely-Murdock told the Associated Press, "We're worried that in four years we're going to be at war with five countries and we're going to have no trees. I know that's an extreme position, but I'm really worried about the draft."

Teacher James Vacca, the faculty advisor for "Student Worker," remarked, "In an age where narcissistic college students riot in inarticulate drunken stupor, you have students here at Boulder High School, principled, thoughtful and yet scared of four more years of preemptive war, the Patriot Act and an increase in militarism at school through the No Child Left Behind Act."

Protests occurred in a number of US cities and college campuses in response to the Bush election victory. Some 2,000 protesters gathered in San Francisco Thursday to denounce Bush and demand an end to the Iraq war. The initial protest was peaceful, but police arrested 56 people when a group of about 150 broke off and marched through Civic Center and the Tenderloin. They chanted, "We're going to beat back the Bush attack, get the troops out of Iraq."

In Portland, Oregon, several hundred protesters took to the streets, shouting, "Not our president, not our war." One demonstrator held up a placard: "Let's do what Kerry didn't. Revolt."

Eric Blickenstaff came to the Portland protest wearing his dead brother's combat boots and dog tags. His brother was killed in Iraq last December when his combat vehicle drove off a dirt road. Blickenstaff held an upside-down American flag, explaining, "This is the international sign for distress. Our country is in distress. The religious right won the election."

In Bellingham, Washington, some 300 protesters,

starting out on the campus of Western Washington University, blocked traffic at one intersection. A 17-year-old senior at Ferndale High School told the press, “We need to get out of Iraq before we kill more people. Even with Kerry in there, it wouldn’t be much better.”

Some 250 students at Bard College protested in the streets of Red Hook, New York, November 3, claiming Bush was not the legitimate winner. The students staged an impromptu sit-in at the intersection of routes 9 and 199. Twelve students were arrested.

Bard student Gabe Rey-Goodlatt told the media, “George Bush is not our president, and we reject him as our president.” Another student commented, “We’re demonstrating to show our discontent with the electoral system in the US and our discontent with George W. Bush, whether or not he was legitimately elected.”

Several hundred people marched through downtown Denver Wednesday evening to protest Bush’s election and the Iraq war. Alex Talley, 21, explained, “We are out here saying we do not support Bush. He is not our president.”

Protests took place at other colleges and universities around the country, including the University of Vermont in Burlington, the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, and Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York.

At Syracuse, Yusuf Abdul-Qadir told the student-run newspaper, the *Daily Orange*, “We’re just independent people who don’t like Bush and want to live. Love freedom, love something, just don’t love Bush.”

Jason Tschantre, a senior film major, commented, “If there’s a voice that says, ‘We’re the youth and we hate what’s going on,’ someone will have to listen.” He voiced frustration not only about Bush’s election, but about the Kerry campaign. “Forget the Democratic Party,” Tschantre said, “Kerry failed me.” The university’s Democrats had nothing to do with the protest, remarked freshman retail management major Ryan O’Leary. “They’re just standing by and doing nothing.”



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