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For Immediate Release

Event: PPRC Friday Rally, hosted by *Students for Peace & Justice*, turns focus on domestic cost of wars and occupations, Vietnam thirty years later.

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Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: Pioneer Courthouse Square

PPRC Friday Rally, hosted by *Students for Peace & Justice*, turns focus on domestic cost of wars and occupations, Vietnam thirty years later.

The *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition's* Friday rally and march turn to the costs of war and occupation to future generations of school children in the US. "Day after day we hear the news about how many Americans have died and every now and then about the Iraqis who have died in this war and occupation, and for what?", asked Lila Zucker, a volunteer with *Students for Peace & Justice*, the co-host for this week's rally and march. "It's hard to be 'free' and 'liberated' when you're dead, when you've been killed in a senseless and unjust war."

Zucker's opposition to the wars and occupations is focused on the human costs to the people in Iraq, both Iraqi civilians and the occupation forces, but she is also concerned with other kinds of costs to local communities in the US. "While all this fighting and dying is going on in Iraq and Afghanistan, here at home we are experiencing other kinds of losses, some with very long-term consequences for our country," explained Zucker. "Education, especially in Oregon, is going down the drain, with class sizes so large there's not enough chairs sometimes, and teachers with so many students they're too stressed out to give students the feedback we need to learn."

The student taking part in this Friday's rally and march are taking special note that more than 300 teachers are getting cut district-wide. They believe the social costs of such cuts are unacceptable. "To use a cliché, today's students are tomorrow's leaders, it will fall to us to drag this country out of the mess it's in, we could be your doctors, your child's teacher or superintendent or even the future president," explained Zucker. "It's a sad state of affairs when more emphasis is placed on an institution that condones murder than on education."

Zucker said that it's hard to feel optimistic when the country's leaders and the adults around would rather have students become just another anonymous number in Iraq than

to get a decent education. “Money should go to jobs, healthcare and education, not to this war or this occupation,” she said. “*Students for Peace & Justice* is working to bring to light the deep connection between falling public education and this war and the military.” Zucker believes that students need to understand this connection and need to realize that they can no longer depend on adults to take care of their future. “We must take it in to our own hands if we wish to have any future at all.”

The rally and march will also mark the thirtieth anniversary of the US departure from Vietnam and the unification of that war-torn country. “Even today, thirty years later, our country has refused to take responsibility for the crimes committed against the Vietnamese people,” said William Seaman, a volunteer with PPRC. “It took over two decades to barely acknowledge the harm done to US soldiers by Agent Orange and the other chemical warfare agents they used in Vietnam, and the US government has yet to lift a finger to help the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese who were maimed and continue to suffer, even including children with birth defects caused by the residues of those chemical weapons.” Seaman said that the lessons of Vietnam were learned well by many US citizens, but that new generations seem condemned to learn them again in Iraq. “The Bush Administration has dragged this country into another criminal war, killing tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis, horribly injuring thousands more and poisoning the countryside with depleted uranium, ensuring that the world’s image of the United States will be that of a lawless, immoral and corrupt empire.”

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