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Thousands protest in Hollywood

By Rong-Gong Lin II, Times Staff Writer
March 18, 2007



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Actors and musicians joined thousands of demonstrators marching through Hollywood on Saturday afternoon, chanting slogans and hoisting signs to call for an immediate U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

College students joined with gray-haired activists to chant "Stop the War" as the march started at Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street. Police said 5,000 to 6,000 people took part; organizers estimated many more.

Organized by the L.A. branch of Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, the march marked the fourth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

"The war has been on people's minds, especially after the midterm elections, when antiwar sentiment swept the Republicans out of Congress," said Ian Thompson, a march coordinator.

But "the Democrats have done little, if anything at all, to respond to public sentiment," he said. "I think people are fed up with that."

Some marchers were optimistic. "We were in the minority, and now we are in the majority," said Christopher Armen, 51, a Los Angeles native.

For others, the march was a reminder that U.S. involvement in Iraq remains strong. "It's more and more frustrating," said Chris Giaco, 39, of Long Beach.

And marcher Michael Sanchez, 50, of Montebello was upset that the turnout for the march wasn't larger.

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The protest had a Hollywood feel. Marchers snapped photos of a Glendale couple wearing grim reaper costumes—"I'm Bush, she's Cheney," said husband Norm Wheeler. Actress Athena Demos rose above the crowd on orange stilts, with 8-foot cloth wings. "I'm dressed like the dove of peace," she said.

Dan Conkey, 58, a tourist from Columbus, Ohio, who called himself a supporter of President Bush, marveled.

"It's kind of a freak show," said Conkey, wearing an orange shirt and shorts. "But it's kind of neat to see this on Hollywood and Vine. It's entertaining."

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Times staff writers Charles Proctor and Ashley Surdin contributed to this report.

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