

Why I March

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In 1776 our nation recognized and based our constitution on our inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In 1948 the United States drafted and signed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights which further defined our inalienable rights. As a member of March 4 Education, I am here to support our children's right to an education. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Education shall be free and shall promote understanding and peace." On our march to Sacramento, I saw the power of students, parents, teachers, community leaders and advocates united for a common cause. I am honored to support PPEHRC in their efforts to address these issues of human rights to a national audience.

As a classroom teacher I see how poverty impacts education. When children come to school hungry, their attention is focused on the growl of their empty stomachs. Hunger makes the children irritable, eroding classroom management. When both parents have to work full time to reach the poverty line, they have no time to invest in actively supporting their children's education. We know that parental support is a prime component to academic success. When some of my students live in crowded apartments and, in some cases, out of their cars, they are denied adequate learning environments in which to do their homework. Families who have to struggle to pay the utilities and rent, skimp when they buy food and clothing, worry about possible medical expenses, pass these anxieties on to their children. Anxiety does not help focus on academics.

When students are sent to substandard schools, our government is telling them that they don't matter. When a nation as prosperous as ours has 18% of its children living in poverty, our government is telling them that they don't matter. When 45 million citizens in the US are uninsured, our government is telling them that they don't matter. When even the veterans of this nation are denied their benefits, we are being told that we don't matter. We are here to tell you that *we do matter!* We are here to impore anyone who is being treated as if they are of no consequence to join us to address these inequities.

What if we had invested the billions of dollars our government used to destroy Iraq to instead improve our infrastructure, to feed and clothe the poor, to educate our children? What if we began at home, then expanded our efforts to achieve a world in which everyone could enjoy their inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? What if our government truly promoted understanding and peace instead of mistrust and fear? What if we all would come to recognize that we are one world, one people?