

I will be there protesting President Bush's war



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A native Utahn like me, a product of Utah's public schools, is less likely to protest against President Bush than anyone else in the nation.

My teachers - and my parents - taught me to respect our country, the circumstances of its founding and the present-day people who lead us.

I don't enter into protest lightly. This wonderful country is my home and I respect it immensely. But I will be at the rally at Washington Square on Wednesday, protesting President Bush's war. Rather, I respect my country so I will be at the rally.

I'll be there because I'm tired. I'm tired of President Bush and his climate of nastiness. I'm tired of watching perfectly good people end up dead. America has lost 2,613 people to this war so far; thousands more struggle to cope with life-changing injuries. The Iraqis have lost at least 40,000 civilians and combatants.

Maybe there is a war worth fighting, although as a pacifist I

would need a lot of convincing. But this certainly isn't that war. When I close my eyes and picture the War on Terror, I see a line of caskets from here to the moon and a morally and financially bankrupt United States that is no longer admired by other nations.

Ronald Reagan had a lovely dream of America as a shining city on the hill, revered and emulated by the peoples of the world. We've sure blown that.

I'm tired of the argument that protesters are showing a lack of respect for the office of the president. No one is disrespecting the office of the president more than George W. Bush himself.

From the moment he took the oath and essentially went on vacation for two years, through his lies about invading the sovereign country of Iraq, he's been disrespecting the office.

His unprecedented amassing of extraconstitutional presidential authority, his efforts to chill the media into submission, his drastic increases in the size of our government, his unwillingness to interact with regular Americans, his assault on science, the number of documents he has walled off from public scrutiny, wiretapping, torture . . . the president doesn't seem to have a lot of respect for the people he governs.

I'm tired of Americans who will apparently forgive George Bush anything because they see

him as a moral man. During the administration of Bill Clinton, the U.S. enjoyed more peace and economic well-being than at any time in its history.

Don't take it from me, that's a direct quote from the history section of the White House Web site, www.whitehouse.gov, right under the banner "The White House - George W. Bush." The site goes on to say that Clinton "could point to the lowest unemployment rate in modern times, the lowest inflation in 30 years, the highest home ownership in the country's history, dropping crime rates in many places, and reduced welfare rolls. He proposed the first balanced budget in decades and achieved a budget surplus."

President Clinton graduated from Georgetown and Yale. He was a Rhodes Scholar and went to Oxford. He was an exceptionally bright, caring president. He could pronounce words correctly. I didn't agree with everything the man did, but I admired his intellect, his razor-sharp grasp of complex issues and his compassion.

George Bush can do things like preside over the deaths of tens of thousands of people in Iraq, choose the lives of stem cells over the lives of actual people, and get called a moral man. He can contrive a war and endorse torture and get called a moral man.

Meanwhile, Bill Clinton's sexual indiscretion obliterates every good moral decision, every

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compassionate thing he ever did.
Perhaps I digress.

This week in Salt Lake City there will be an anti-war rally and a pro-Bush rally. Some pro-Bush folks might argue that you can't be against the war and for the soldier. Some folks against the war might argue that no one is working harder against the troops than Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice and George W. Bush, who are all scheduled to visit Salt Lake City this week.

But the two rallies will have one important thing in common, and it's a point not made often enough. The people at both rallies will be carrying in our hearts a deep concern for the continued health and safe return of our service people who are fighting this war.

The people at both rallies will have family members serving in Iraq; there will be Iraq war veterans and veterans of other wars at both rallies. The people at both rallies will be there because they are passionate about our country.

Barb Guy writes a biweekly column for the Sunday Opinion section.