

## Remarks at the “Say No to Rumsfeld” Rally – White Plaza, Stanford, November 8, 2007

*Todd Davies*

It's great to see you all here!

I've been at Stanford in some capacity for more than 27 years now, since I arrived here as a freshman in Branner. For the last few years, I've been the associate director of Symbolic Systems. But I think of this university as more than just the place where I work and went to school. I live on campus as a resident fellow in Arroyo, but even when I wasn't living on campus, I thought of Stanford as my community – a place and people that I am a part of and care deeply about. And when I heard that Donald Rumsfeld had been appointed to a Distinguished Visiting Fellow position at the Hoover Institution, and therefore at Stanford University, I felt defiled by the association, and I wanted to join with others and let the world know that this appointment does not represent the Stanford community as a whole, that we had no role in it, and that many of us are embarrassed by it. To say that is simply to exercise our right to free speech, and those who are proud to have Rumsfeld affiliated with Stanford are free to say that as well.

I joined with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other concerned community members in signing the No to Rumsfeld petition online. That petition has over 3900 signatures, but could use many more, so if you feel as I do, type “Rumsfeld Stanford petition” into your favorite search engine and you'll find it easily. I also signed the faculty letter that was sent to the San Francisco Chronicle and the Stanford Daily.

I've been really happy to see many faculty become engaged and willing to speak out on this issue. The Faculty Senate voted to call Hoover's director, John Raisian, to attend a meeting which is happening this afternoon at 3:15 at the Law School, to answer questions about the criteria that were applied in appointing Rumsfeld. Beyond the Rumsfeld appointment itself, I hope this leads to a rethinking of Hoover's relationship with Stanford. Several faculty have indicated a willingness to participate in hearings where evidence about Rumsfeld's actions as Defense Secretary can be aired and debated. As many of you know, criminal complaints for violations of international law have been filed against Rumsfeld in several countries, most recently in France. You can read more about these cases at the website of the Center for Constitutional Rights – [ccrjustice.org](http://ccrjustice.org).

The campus movement against Rumsfeld has been inaccurately characterized in many press stories as a threat to free speech and academic freedom. It is certainly not that. No one has a right to be appointed to a distinguished position at Stanford, and everyone has a right to say they oppose it. That's an exercise of free speech, not a threat to it. No one I have talked to who signed the petition or faculty letter opposes having Rumsfeld speak on campus. And if he comes here to speak, we want him to answer for his actions as Secretary of Defense, as an architect of the War in Iraq, and as responsible for interrogations that I and many others

believe constitute torture, and therefore war crimes, under both U.S. and International Law.

The campus movement against Rumsfeld has a lot going for it.

First, it has the interests of the university and many facts on its side. I'll have to refer you to the CCR website and other sources for the facts about Rumsfeld. The Wikipedia article on him is a good place to start. But if you doubt that Rumsfeld's appointment is an embarrassment to Stanford, I'd ask you to imagine it as one of a string of appointments of international and domestic figures who have been driven from office. Let's imagine this as the "Hoover Still Loves You" distinguished fellow position. Past holders might have been Richard Nixon after he resigned as President under threat of impeachment, Spiro Agnew after he resigned as Vice President having been charged with tax evasion and money laundering, Michael "Brownie you're doin' a heckofa job" Brown, after he resigned as head of FEMA, Mark Foley after he resigned from the U.S. Congress, Augusto Pinochet after he was driven from the Presidency of Chile. And the list could go on, of course. All of these people had experience at high levels in government. Would appointing them to distinguished positions at Hoover be a good thing for Stanford?

The second thing this movement has going for it is large numbers. I hope someone has a way to get in touch with those 3915 people who have signed the online petition, because they are your base. Many of them will do much more if asked.

And the third thing is lots of international attention. The Rumsfeld appointment and the response to it made headlines all over the world. This is a real opportunity to have an impact not just on our campus and on the Hoover Institution but on the war and on U.S. policy.

Remember what small but committed groups of students were able to accomplish on this campus last year on the living wage and sweatshop issues, without a large student base or international attention. And imagine what we can accomplish with those elements on our side.

Faculty are looking to students to take the lead. But I've attended a few of the student meetings and I can tell that many more of you are going to have to get involved for this to work. Talk to your friends who oppose Rumsfeld and ask if they will get involved. There is a lot to do – educating people, organizing rallies, logistics, press and media, outreach. And if they say they won't, ask them why not. Talk to professors in the Law School who think Rumsfeld's actions were illegal, and ask if they are willing to go public. And if they say they won't, ask them why not. Talk to professors in the social science departments like Political Science who think that Hoover should be brought under normal academic governance. Ask if they are willing to speak out, and if they say no, ask them why not. Students are the conscience of the campus. And faculty will not take bold action without strong support from you. You should demand our support for you in return.

I wish you all the best. Peace and Justice!