

Grant Park Anti-War Rally Stays Peaceful

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Anti-war rallies have changed a lot since the 1968 Democratic National Convention, Hyde Park resident Selena Petersen-Keesecker said as she and others walked to Grant Park on Sunday.

Back when her husband, Joe, now a Presbyterian pastor, took part in the '68 rally, Chicago police gave explicit and threatening directions on where protesters could walk.

This time, protesters were flanked by officers, but only as a protection from downtown traffic.

But the message at both rallies was the same: Stop the war and bring our troops home.

To commemorate the second anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq, Petersen-Keesecker and hundreds of others walked the city streets carrying dandelions and cards bearing the names of people killed in Iraq.

The crowd followed a horse-drawn carriage carrying a flag-covered coffin recognizing the deaths of the more than 1,000 U.S. soldiers killed in the conflict and the 107,000 Iraqi civilians

killed.

At the park, demonstrators heard from family members of soldiers killed in Iraq. Later, they placed the dandelions and the cards on the coffin.

Just before the procession, about 1,000 people from numerous local anti-war groups filled Chicago Temple, 77 W. Washington St., for an interfaith assembly.

"It's important for the community to come together and say in one strong voice that this war is (wrong) and that the troops must come home," said Chuck Hutchcraft, a member of the American Friends and Service Committee, one of the organizers.

Participants of the interfaith event spoke of the danger of American indifference in a war where so many civilians are killed and others reportedly have been tortured.

"Indifference in the guise of a compassionate conservative world view is still indifference," Rabbi Bruce Elder said.

Others talked about the potential loss of credibility the United States would face from other nations.

"This war has robbed the United States of any moral authority it had as a leader around the world," U.S. Rep Jan **Schakowsky** told the packed house.

Another major message of the rally was that people who oppose the war are still patriotic.

"We're as loyal as any of the people who say we're unpatriotic," Petersen-Keesecker said. "Their mother's tears are as wet as ours."

"They say we're unpatriotic because we don't support the war; we say we support the troops," AFSC regional director Michael McConnell said. "We support the troops because we want them home now."