

Anti-War Protesters Hold Orderly Rally

By Maureen O'Donnell

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Lila Lipscomb, the grieving mother who was the emotional heart of Michael Moore's film "Fahrenheit 9/11," rallied anti-war protesters in Chicago on Sunday by invoking the memory of her son, who died in Iraq.

By speaking out at the second anniversary of the Iraq war, "I give honor to my child," she said before a speech at the Chicago Temple, 77 W. Washington. "It keeps me alive, and it also keeps him alive, along with 1,520 [estimated U.S. military casualties]."

Lipscomb broke down when asked how she felt after President Bush's re-election.

"It was like I had lost my child all over again," she said. "And I found myself at his grave, and I was still clawing at the dirt, and I was still screaming."

Her son, Sgt. Michael Pederson, was killed in a Black Hawk helicopter crash.

In a country with little to offer the working poor, the young often turn to the military, Lipscomb

said in a speech to about 600 anti-war activists gathered at the temple.

"My son was killed because we were poor," she said.

The group filed out of the temple and walked east to Grant Park in an orderly procession headed by a horse-drawn casket draped with a U.S. flag.

The interfaith rally included Muslim, Jewish and Christian speakers. Abdul Malik Mujahid praised the soldiers who spoke out against torture at Abu Ghraib prison, as well as journalists who told the story.

'Not paying very well'

"They represent the best of America," said Mujahid, chairman of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago.

Also criticizing the war was Debbie Lucey, sister of Massachusetts Marine Jeffrey Lucey, who killed himself after returning from Iraq.

U.S. Rep. Jan **Schakowsky** (D-Ill.) called the war "unnecessary and immoral."

As for criticism that Lipscomb is milking the lecture circuit, "It's not paying very well," she said. Organizers of the protest said she was paid for little more than transportation, lodging and food.

Critics "obviously don't know my paycheck," she said, "and they don't know that I still work . . . sometimes 50, 60 hours a week to pay bills. They don't understand that my husband, after his second plant closing, has lost yet another job."