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**IRAQ WAR PROTESTERS SUPPORT GRIEVING MOM
DEMONSTRATION PART OF NATIONAL EFFORT BACKING WOMAN HOLDING
VIGIL**

FRED KELLY, Staff Writer and Associated Press

More than 150 anti-war activists demonstrated Wednesday at Freedom Park as part of a national show of support for a grieving mother protesting the war in Iraq near President Bush's ranch.

Demonstrators chanted slogans and sang songs during a candlelight vigil, which was one of more than 1,000 staged across the country for Cindy Sheehan.

The California woman started a vigil Aug. 6 outside Bush's ranch in Texas and has threatened to remain there through his monthlong visit until he meets with her and other grieving parents. Sheehan's son was an Army soldier killed in Iraq in 2004.

"This is our Rosa Parks moment," said Erwin Hinson, one of the demonstrators in Charlotte.

"She has given a voice to those that did not have one."

More than a dozen vigils were scheduled across North Carolina by anti-war groups and more than 2,300 people had signed up to attend.

Organizers in Charlotte had expected as few as 50 people to show, but dozens more holding signs came despite a brief rain shower.

They stood in a large circle, holding signs denouncing Bush and the war.

Several came to the middle of the group and gave short speeches.

Some said previous protests had drawn as few as 15 people.

Tom Aggeles held a sign that read "Stop the War" in one hand and a framed picture of his four sons ages 10 to 15 in the other.

Aggeles, an Army veteran from York, S.C., said he came to show his children that war is wrong.

"I'm scared for them," he said. "They are at an impressionable age."

Sheehan's protest has galvanized the anti-war movement and led ordinary Americans to reconsider the war, said Greg Frederick, who helped his wife organize the Charlotte vigil.

"This is like Vietnam," he said.

"We were thrown into this war before we knew all the facts."

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Illustration:Photo

DAVID T. FOSTER III - STAFF PHOTO. Peace supporters gather underneath a tree in Freedom Park on Wednesday evening to support Cindy Sheehan's quest to speak with President Bush in Crawford, Texas.