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ACROSS FROM THE FAIRGROUNDS

## Amy Goodman delights SolFest crowd

By LAURA CLARK/The Daily Journal

Every seat was taken and there was no standing room left surrounding the main stage at the 10th Annual SolFest Saturday, after Amy Goodman took the mic.

In fact, fans packed the place before the petite powerhouse could say a word about anti-war protester Cindy Sheehan, destruction caused by oil companies or the need to build up independent media in this country.

Referred to by John Schaeffer, president and founder of Real Goods, as the "fearless, intrepid commentator," Goodman immediately took command of her crowd as she told of her recent meeting with Sheehan, a mother who lost her son to the war in Iraq, and about two weeks ago "took up residency in a ditch just outside presidential property in Crawford" in an attempt to persuade President Bush to talk to her.

"Beware of mothers who have nothing left to lose," Goodman said, referring to people like Sheehan, whose 24-year-old son Casey was killed in Iraq on April 4, 2004.

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The president has been on vacation "almost a year now," Goodman said, "but Sheehan says she can never enjoy another vacation."

Goodman pointed out that Sheehan is not the only mother camped near the president's ranch these days (there are reportedly more than 100 people there now) and that she and the others were living in a dirt ditch. She said it's also hot in Crawford, but that Sheehan told her the circumstances there "are nothing compared to what the soldiers face in Iraq right now."

Goodman criticized Bush for what she indicated was a lack of concern over what Sheehan and the others had to say, and then she shared similar stories told to her during her visit to Crawford.

Another mother "whose son joined the Army National Guard after 911, had a good life, a family ... but he thought he had to give something back. He never dreamed he'd be deployed to Iraq. ... He wrote to his mother and then he was killed a few months after Casey Sheehan died," Goodman said.

Our leaders, she said, are "these mothers who are speaking out."

Goodman -- who has been described by Wikipedia encyclopedia as "a left-wing American broadcast journalist and author" -- also talked to her rapt audience about the problems she sees with the



2005 Energy Act, noting among other issues, the bill "gives huge tax breaks to energy companies already enjoying huge profits."

"Energy futures ... yes, I think we have to talk about energy futures, and the conversation should start right here at SolFest. After Bush meets with Cindy Sheehan he can come here to begin that global conversation," she said.



Her disapproval of the Bush Administration, large oil companies and the way commercial media "fails to represent the true face of war," was also heard loud and clear Saturday.

"We rarely see injured soldiers. ... President Bush knows the full power of images and he's trying to stop them from getting out. ... It's long overdue that we challenge the original embedding of reporters in this country. It's important that we stop rewarding reporters and publications that beat the drums for the war.



"More powerful than any bomb or missile is the media today and the Pentagon has deployed the media and we have to take it back. ... We have to build up independent media in this country ... shore up Pacifica Radio ... make sure public access TV remains active. ... People are hungry for independent voices. There is no more important time than today to reclaim the media," she said, adding "Our kitchen table that stretches across the globe" should be used to discuss issues such as war and peace."

A follower of Goodman's who listens to the host of "Democracy Now" on a regular basis, summed up Goodman's speech with the same passion in which it was presented.

"I loved what she said about Cindy Sheehan. ... I think it's important that she exposed the oil companies' destruction of our planet and how they hire the military to kill village people where they are raping the resources and the people in Nigeria. And she's exposing the oil spills ... and how the Pentagon tried to hide the truth about atomic bombs (and paid a New York Times reporter) to write stories that covered up the radiation sickness," Phyllis Campanello, of Sacramento, said, referring to a reporter Goodman says denied the lethal effect of those bombings in World War II, and went on to win a Pulitzer Prize for his articles.

Anne Dijoux, of Ukiah, who also regularly tunes into Democracy Now, said she has a lot of respect for Goodman as a journalist.

"She tells it like it is. She seems to not hold a bias, although it's pretty obvious her show leans toward peace, social justice, sustainable local economies, etc.," Dijoux said, then added, "It's great to have an alternative source. Everybody is inundated with CNN."

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