

# Flickering hopes

war  
Gulf war  
Demonstration



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

A group of women silently reflect on the possibility of war during a Watsonville vigil. About 400 people attended the rally.

## Watsonville holds silent protest

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WATSONVILLE — It may well have been Watsonville's first-ever anti-war rally. At least that's what some speculated at Watsonville Plaza late Monday afternoon.

An estimated crowd of 400 lined the perimeter of the Main

Street park holding lighted candles and waving signs in a mostly silent vigil to protest the possibility of U.S. involvement in a war in the Persian Gulf.

In Santa Cruz Monday night, about 300 people jammed into the Pacific Cultural Arts Center on Seabright Avenue to sing, swap feelings about their tensions over the crisis commiserate about the

possibility of war.

The protest was unusual for Watsonville, which is known as a working man's town that is much more conservative than its Santa Cruz counterpart. Most in the crowd could not remember if a similar protest was ever held in Watsonville, even during the Vietnam War.

"The criticalness of this issue

goes beyond all political boundaries," said the Rev. Jim Bradford of the First Christian Church in Watsonville, who helped organize the event. "It doesn't matter whether you're conservative or liberal, this issue touches everyone."

The Watsonville protest was far different than Sunday's pro-

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## Vigils held in Watsonville, Santa Cruz

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test in Santa Cruz, where thousands danced and chanted from UC Santa Cruz to downtown, and then listened to more than four hours of speeches and music.

With the exception of passing motorists honking their horns in support, there was no cheering and also little talking from the large crowd. Among the handmade signs were: "No blood for oil," "Just say no to war," and "A kindler, gentler war?"

"Everyone who is here, is here for their own reasons," said Bradford. "The silent vigil gives people a chance to pray among themselves, release their emo-

tions and rid themselves of some of the guilt of doing nothing."

Many in the crowd had personal reasons for being there. Vince Sanabria has a son in the Army, and Luis Lopez has a nephew in the Army. Others, like Gloria Soto, has a 19-year-old son and several nephews of military age.

Still others in the largely Latino crowd lamented the fact that minorities or "people of color" make up a disproportionate share of the military.

According to Barbara Garcia of Salud para la Gente, a community health-clinic in Watsonville, 15 percent of the people in the U.S. are Latino.

"Yet, in Vietnam, 28 percent of those on the front line were Latinos," she said. "Many minorities join the military for education and job opportunities because they can't afford it otherwise."

Sanabria said his 21-year-old son, Josh, who is stationed near Tacoma, Wash., and is ready to be shipped to the Persian Gulf, joined for "educational benefits. Sanabria called war a "form of genocide.

"It's a systematic cycle to reduce the number of minorities," he said. "People of color are always the first to go."

Maria Coralejo, director of the Watsonville Area Interfaith Di-

saster Relief, — which also helped organize the event — promised that more anti-war protests would be organized should the U.S. go to war.

"No queremos guerra. Queremos paz," Coralejo said. Translated, that means "We do not want war. We want peace."

In Santa Cruz, protesters gathered for a rally billed as "A Call For Peace."

"Sing what I'm singing, or use it to create your own song," said Michael Stillwater, inviting those in attendance to join him as he strummed an acoustic guitar and sang to start off the 2½-hour program.