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Iraq forum promotes interactive discussion

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Hundreds of students, faculty, staff and members of the surrounding community gathered in the Oakland Center Gold Rooms March 10 to share their thoughts on the current conflict with Iraq in an ongoing forum titled "Iraq: A Dialogue."

The event, sponsored by the OU Political Union and departments of **Political Science**, **Philosophy**, and **Rhetoric, Communication and Journalism**, featured speakers who support the pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Several professors brought their classes to the daylong event, including Special Lecturer of Philosophy Patricia Trentacoste. One of her students, junior Angela Raneri, said she appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the issues surrounding the possibility of war.

"The forum was helpful to students, because it gave us more of an opportunity to have interactions with people who have background knowledge about the Iraq situation," said Raneri, who attended the forum with her Philosophy 101 class. "I totally agree with the speakers who were against war. I feel that this can be worked out in other ways. If we go to war, a lot of people will get hurt. I just think war is not necessary."

Rich Chakrin, an adjunct instructor for the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies at Wayne State University, moderated an open discussion among the attendees and set the tone for the forum by defining what constitutes true dialogue.

"A problem presents itself when people try to find an outcome – who won or who lost – through discussion. This, in my view, ultimately leads to war," Chakrin said. "The new millennium will require that each voice be heard in a discussion. We need to be able to express opinions, listen to each other and listen to those who don't agree with us. There is no defense necessary in a true dialogue. Opinions can be stated without any relation to any other opinion. A dialogue does not necessarily strive for an outcome. It's more like collegial thinking through which some understanding may be gained."

Southfield resident Rudy Simons, president of Peaceful Tomorrows, a group representing those who were killed in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, gave his perceptions of the Iraqi regime and the country's citizens based on two visits to the country, the most recent of which was in January.

"(Iraq president) Saddam Hussein has been an advocate of control tactics and has closely studied historical figures such as Joseph Stalin," Simons said. "Hussein is a brutal tyrant. I'm not in favor of his policies, but the sanctions against his country are only hurting its people. And, for them, war would be completely devastating."

One speaker who supports military action against Iraq was Assistant Professor of Political Science Peter Trumbore.

"This is an issue I've spent a great deal of time considering," Trumbore said. "I've concluded that war may be the best of the really bad options. None of the options the U.S. has are good. At the same time, war may be the best solution for the Iraqi people. We need to understand the character of the current regime and the extent to which the U.S. is backed into a corner."

A group representing The Raging Grannies of Detroit and Windsor without Borders, a group against violence toward women and children, sang a number of familiar songs with different anti-war lyrics added, such as "Yankee Doodle Georgie" and "Just Say No to War."

Other OU faculty members who spoke on the Iraq conflict were Trentacoste, Special Lecturer in Political Science Alan Epstein, Professor of Finance Austin Murphy and Assistant Professor of Philosophy Mark Rigstad. Others included poet and activist Hasan Nawash, Wayne State Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies Fran Shor and Tom Stephens of the Detroit chapter of the National Lawyers Guild.

SUMMARY

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