

## **Saint Leo Recites Iraq War Essay**

by Sean Lengell

ST. LEO - A day after millions vividly demonstrated against the Iraq war in cities across the globe, a more subtle antiwar message was expressed at Saint Leo University.

Void of banners, fist-waving or shouting, the event's purpose was no less clear: to question the war's legitimacy, morality and effectiveness.

Five students and one staff member spent 70 minutes late Monday afternoon calmly but passionately reading the critically lauded essay "What I Heard About Iraq."

The reading was part of a coordinated effort by theaters worldwide to commemorate the third anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

Eliot Weinberger's essay is a collection of statements by U.S. government and military officials, American soldiers and Iraqi citizens from 1992 through early 2005.

"What I Heard About Iraq" was published in the London Review of Books and is among the most visited pieces ever on the publication's Web site. The essay has been reproduced on or linked to thousands of other online sites and translated in many languages.

Saint Leo's production attracted about 60 people to Selby Auditorium.

Despite the definitely antiwar theme, sophomore David Velazquez, one of the six readers, said he didn't consider the event an antiwar "protest."

"It is an informative speech to enlighten those that may not have heard this [information] before," he said.

Velazquez, who supported the war at its beginning, said reading the essay helped sway his opinion of the conflict.

"I still support the soldiers - I have to support them because they're American and they're getting killed. But I don't support what they do."

Reader Jacqueline Kinsley, 20, said the essay reinforces what she's always believed: The war is morally wrong.

Though "depressing," the essay contains information everyone should know, she said.

Kinsley said it's important for those who don't support her views to realize that being against the war doesn't equate to being anti-American.

"I'm proud to be an American, but I'm embarrassed of my government right now."

By participating in Monday's event, Paul Peterson was exercising a basic American freedom: free speech.

"This is what democracy is all about," he said. "No one is going to come and [arrest] us."

Velazquez agreed: "Democracy needs dissent, and that's what this was."

The reading was organized by Saint Leo English and theater Professor Charles Grimes and co-produced by Cassie Millhouse. Other readers were Carol Moon, Misty Floyd and Lori Perreault.

Find the essay at [www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n01/wein01\\_.html](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n01/wein01_.html)