



## Conscientious objector Iraq vet speaks at Porter Center

by Joseph Chilton  
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A standing room only crowd gathered Monday evening in the annex of the Porter Center for a speech by Aidan Delgado, a conscientious objector who served as a prison guard during the war in Iraq.

Delgado was the keynote speaker for a LINC event, and students as well as community members filled the room to listen to Delgado's story and to ask him questions about his experiences in the military.

The event began with Delgado asking the crowd whether or not they would be willing to kill ten people if they were given the knowledge that



Photo by Marc Newton

"It got to where you can witness something horrible and have it not even effect you," said Delgado, referring to the dehumanizing behavior aimed at the prisoners at Abu Grahیب by the United States soldiers.

"I began to think about peace, love, mercy, and justice. I wanted to become an embodiment of these ideals as a Buddhist."

The process is becoming a

Conscientious Objector took 18 months, and so Delgado was forced to serve almost a year in Iraq after he put down his weapons. It was not until six months after he returned from Iraq that Delgado's application was finally approved.

After telling his story, Delgado began to reflect on what he had seen as a soldier in Iraq. Delgado relayed the information that while he served at Abu Grahیب, 70-90 percent of the prisoners were arrested by mistake, yet were still treated as violent criminals.

Delgado also painted several gruesome scenes for the crowd derived from his experiences as a soldier.

While Delgado was undoubtedly against the war, he still took great strides to

make sure that people understand that the soldiers serving in the war are good people put into a problematic situation.

"Very few of us, no matter how patriotic, would be willing to put a bullet into the heads of women and children in order to fight an abstract terrorist, but that is exactly what we are asking our soldiers to do," said Delgado.

The session concluded with a lengthy question and answer segment, in which Delgado fielded queries about his experiences from Brevard College faculty and students, as well as members of the community.

Delgado told of the disillusionment that accompanied joining the army, as well as the tender relationships that he had with the members of his company after he became a conscientious objector.

Many of the Delgado's answers were attempts to give insight into the mind of a soldier, and several addressed the dilemma presented by the thin line between fighting terrorism and creating terrorism as a soldier.

"The line between fighting terrorism and being a terrorist is razor thin," said Delgado.

"As soon as you believe that the other side is 100 percent corrupt and evil, then you no longer have to hold yourself to any moral standards, and that is when terrorism is created."

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