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Veterans, grannies protest war

Matt Rocheleau, Collegian Staff

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Event moderator and formerly an active duty member in the Air Force, Michael VanValkenburg, said he remembers being told by a superior during a training exercise to target women and children because they could be terrorists.

"The dehumanization of the enemy really stood out," said VanValkenburg. "I became opposed to what we were doing by how I was being trained and the impact of it had on my brothers and sisters in the military."

In 2005, when Daniel Blain's child was born, he was training as a military policeman.

"The first thing that came to mind was not 'Wow, I'm a dad,' but 'how can I train to kill someone else's baby?'" said Blain, "I as a Christian and a father could not continue to serve."

Blain said he then applied for discharge as a conscientious objector, which allows soldiers to avoid participation in combatant warfare based on religious, moral or ethical grounds.

He said his application has not been accepted and has seen soldiers wait up to 18 months before having theirs considered. During the process, Blain said he has not been supported by many military members.

"I have even faced scorn and derision from family members, including my parents," he said.

Natalia Tylim a member of the Campus Antiwar Network and a senior at Smith College also spoke and said the government has given many people a false sense of hope on the success of the insurgency of troops in Iraq.

The crowd applauded each speaker, including members from the Raging Granny's of Western Mass. who introduced the event with a song.

The women are part of an international group who sing for peace and justice where people request them.

Raging Granny member Donna McKay told how she appreciated the stories each speaker shared.

"They were here giving us their experiences at their own expense," she said.

"I was really moved by their comments and stories," said Packi Wieland, another member. "I appreciate their honesty and how important it is for us to hear those stories."

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POLL

This month, UMass Chaplain Kent Higgins was reprimanded by the University for offering credits to students for their participation in the Obama campaign. Should a state university offer credits to students for partisan campaigning?

Yes -- it encourages educated citizenship.

No -- it compromises the University's ethic.

It's all the same to me.

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24 Hour News

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Ed Cutting

posted 10/02/08 @ 7:19 AM EST

I look at this quite simply – it is a violation of the UCMJ to commit war crimes, and it is a violation of the UCMJ to fail to report others committing war crimes. ([Continued...](#))

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