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Dawgnet
 4600 Sunset Avenue
 Indianapolis, IN 46208

dawgnet@butler.edu
 (317) 940-6207

Visiting professor relates teachings of MLK to war on Iraq

By [Meg Biallas](#)
Dawgnet Staff Writer

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If Martin Luther King Jr. were still alive today, what would he have said about the war in Iraq?

On Halloween, a visiting professor spoke in the Ford Salon of Robertson Hall about how MLK's views on the Vietnam War could be applied to the current U.S. occupation with troops in Iraq.

Dr. Gail M. Presbey is a philosophy professor at the University of Detroit Mercy. The Fulbright Senior Scholar is an expert on African philosophy, and the philosophy of non-violence. She has spent time in India retracing the steps of Gandhi to further understand his views on non-violence.

Presbey wanted to remind students that, although MLK was known for advancing the Civil Rights movement, he also had very strong views on Vietnam and militarism.

"I think that King's message so many years ago about another war gives us concrete advice both to understand the depth of the problem of our current context and with practical solutions to change our foreign policy and to stop this war [in Iraq]," Presbey said.

When a student asked her about how MLK would have addressed Sept. 11, she felt his views would have still been the same.

"MLK would have still said, 'Don't retaliate, stand your ground. Be sure you still love, in some sense, the person who has harmed you and communicate with them to work for a... mutual understanding.'"

Through all her research, Presbey still maintained that MLK would have promoted a message of non-violence in the aftermath of Sept. 11.

"King is considered one of our national heroes, and yet we've really underutilized his message," Presbey said. "It's important to first understand his message. The Iraq war is really impacting our contemporary world."

Much of the work Presbey has researched has included views on how the United States comes across as arrogant -- that the United States has much to teach other countries, and very little to learn from other countries.

Based on MLK's non-violence philosophy, Presbey explained that soldiers in the Vietnam War and in Iraq have endured horrible atrocities, resulting in veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder.

What is Presbey's solution?

"Let's avoid putting them in atrocity-producing situations from the beginning."

Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo have been the source of war torture, yet many Americans are still unaware of these events.

"We go through our day and we don't listen to the news. If our nation is involved in torture, we need to change our laws and practices. I think there's a lot of moral obligation," said Presbey. "But if we don't stay informed about it, we end up shirking our moral responsibilities."

Presbey told students to become active about protesting the war in Iraq.

Write your congress people," Presbey said. "Show up to a protest and get involved."

She explained that lack of action is the reason why Bush has still not pulled out the troops.

"Right now, Bush is going forward because he thinks he can. Even though the polls say the public is against the war, people aren't practicing civil disobedience."

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An impressive faculty-student ratio ranks Butler in the top 17 percent of just over 4,000 schools, according to recent data published on the Web site [CityTownInfo.com](#).

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