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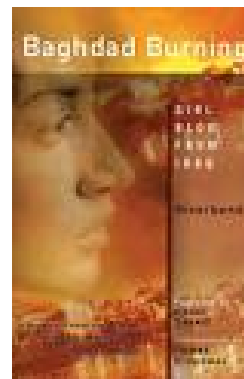
Press Release

For immediate release
November 15, 2007

Contact: Tom Juvan
Phone: 865-8084

Vermont Commons Students Explore the Iraq War

This summer students and faculty at the Vermont Commons School (VCS) read as a “common text” the collection *Baghdad Burning*, drawn from the weblog of a young Iraqi woman who calls herself Riverbend. One of the most powerful aspects of Riverbend’s writing is her ability to take people and events that seem so foreign and distant from us in Vermont and provide them with human faces and voices.



On Friday, November 16th, VCS students, faculty and a host of community members will gather to discuss and reflect on some of issues raised by the book, *Baghdad Burning*. The goal of this full-day event is to remind students that these global events have real local and personal resonance, and that what can seem like huge, distant abstractions – War, Islam, Our Troops – are much more complex and made up of many different perspectives and voices.

One of these abstract monoliths is Islam, and in the morning two students from Middlebury College will share their experiences as Muslims coming from abroad to study in our local community. One is a young woman from Afghanistan, the other a young man from Sierra Leone. In addition, Justin Stearns from Middlebury’s Religion Department will be on hand to help students understand the larger picture of Islam as a global phenomenon.

In the afternoon, the focus will shift to look more directly at the situation in Iraq, specifically exploring the role of the U.S. troops, not simply as cogs in the military force but as individuals



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with experiences to share. Matt Howard, President of the Vermont chapter of Iraq Veterans against the War and a former corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps will share his story of how he joined the Marines and the process by which he decided to use his voice and experiences to speak out against the war.

The day is designed to be a series of dialogues that allow many voices to be heard. Again, one of the most powerful aspects of Riverbend's writing is her voice, a voice that speaks of her experiences and makes them real to us. By hearing the stories of people in our community who have had personal experiences in these global matters, the VCS hopes students will feel comfortable adding their own voices and questions to the conversation.

Parents, press, and community members are welcome to attend this event.

Location: Vermont Commons School, 75 Green Mountain Drive, South Burlington

Time: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

For more information, please contact Tom Juvan at 802.865.8084 x20.

About Vermont Commons School:

Vermont Commons School is an independent day school for college-bound students in grades 7 – 12. The school offers a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum that includes a focus on community service and experiential education. The mission of the Vermont Commons School is to provide a vision of education that crosses traditional boundaries and develops ecological citizenship, with the goal of empowering students with the knowledge, character, skills, and moral vision necessary to become responsible, pro-active members of the world community. For more information, please visit www.vermontcommons.org.

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