Just days before this year’s Linkages students were due to return to their home countries, Professor Owen Fiss asked me to gather a group of Yale Law School students involved in the current anti-war movement for a last-minute conversation with the departing group. I was alarmed by this request: some of the visiting students had been given the impression that students here overwhelmingly support a war in Iraq. I didn’t believe this to be true, but Professor Fiss’s request opened my eyes to the fact that there is indeed no organized anti-war movement at our law school. I hastily contacted a group of students whom I knew were questioning U.S. policy on Iraq from a variety of perspectives, and we met with the visiting students from Argentina, Chile and Brazil on February 12, 2003.

At our meeting, it immediately became clear that the problem wasn’t simply that the Linkages students hadn’t been exposed to anti-war sentiments at the law school; rather, many of them had heard no discussion whatsoever about a war that our country has been aggressively promoting for months. Was there truly no discussion of impending conflict at the law school? And what could explain the lack of such discussion in an environment famed for its contributions to the analysis of legal, political and moral issues of global import?

At first, I and the other Yale students explained that we often discuss the possibility of war and its implications in private conversation with our friends, and we noted that a student group had organized a series of lectures on war in Iraq from the perspectives of international law and politics. The prospect of war has not been invisible in our lives. Perhaps the Linkages students had simply not had the opportunity to speak privately with enough Yale students. Fine, replied the Linkages students, but where were the protests, the passionate outcries of dissent? Our guests explained that in their own universities, the Iraq situation was a topic of constant public debate, and that shouting matches between students of differing viewpoints were commonplace.

The South American students were especially perplexed after having seen during their brief visit a number of events and interactions that visibly...
indicated Yale students’ deeply felt commitment to activism in other areas, including workers’ rights, gay rights, fighting racism and increasing diversity in our faculty and student body. These issues, among others, have all occasioned heated, school-wide discussions in my time at Yale. The prospect of war has not. The Linkages students had precisely diagnosed a troubling public silence. The conversation then shifted from what we as students were doing to why we have not been doing more, and what might explain the different levels of visible debate at Yale and the South American universities. One strand of conversation was a comparative anthropology of sorts. Certainly, cultural norms work to define what is appropriate in debate in New Haven versus Sao Paolo. Yelling at others in public, or even telling others bluntly that they are wrong, is extremely rare at our law school and, in culture generally. One student from Chile noted that at her university, Marxists might scream at one another, then go out for drinks to U.S. students shook their imagine going out for we have just accused of

This is not to say we do disagree, even angrily, entirely explain the lack of Perhaps an ethic of professionalism that prevails at Yale prevents the topic of war from interrupting the everyday business of classes and scholarship. Perhaps Yale students only devote themselves to causes that they feel capable of influencing. Perhaps our academic culture focuses too strongly on policymaking and cost-benefit analysis, producing bureaucrats rather than visionary moral leaders. None of these possibilities is a satisfying answer to the challenge issued by one of the Linkages students during our meeting: if you do not speak out - whatever your views, and even if your speech is symbolic and can’t effect immediate change - your democracy is in danger.

As I write this, we do not yet know whether there will be a war. No matter what happens in the next weeks and months, our South American colleagues taught us a lesson. The Yale Law School is too silent about war, and it is our responsibility as students to remedy this silence. This lesson, of course, reflects the true purpose of programs such as Linkages: to have others hold a mirror before us, revealing what we too often cannot see from within the bounds of our own cultures. **By Kevin Kish**
We had the privilege to visit Yale at a crucial moment for the U.S. and the entire world. The mere possibility of a war against Iraq has already affected established principles of international law. Hence we were expecting to observe strong debates on the subject in all areas of the Law School. To our surprise, that discussion was difficult to find. We started to wonder if students and professors were immune to what is going on at the international and national stage.

We exposed our queries in a meeting with a member of the faculty. He was very interested and suggested we meet with the Antiwar Student Group. The meeting was extremely interesting.

The students gave us three answers to the question as to why there is so little open discussion on the war against Iraq. First of all, they referred to the fear of being impolite. Because there are American people risking their lives in Iraq, they stressed, it is not polite to express ideas against the war.

Secondly, they said that some students may be afraid to openly express their ideas about the war because of the consequences it may have in their future careers. Some students think that to be associated as pro-war or anti-war may have an undesirable effect over their professional future. Finally, they expressed a more theoretical argument related to the idea of the separateness between law and politics. They told us that in such an academic environment as Yale is, there are people that prefer to have academic discussions devoid of political connotation. The debate over the war in Iraq is highly political, they said, therefore is better to have it outside the Law School. This argument was also given by two professors in other meetings we had with them.

This last argument was specially interesting to us because the reality of our law schools is entirely different. Our countries are founded upon the “science”
of law, which is isolated from politics that can be learned by memory without critical discussion. Still, it is an everyday fact that politics have an impact on our law schools. Moreover, huge mobilizations and debates took place in the law school in cases such as the trial to the Military Junta in Argentina, the Pinochet case in Chile, and the latest elections in Brazil, in which Lula won.

Whatever the reason for the lack of public discussion, we all agreed upon the richness of an open and unconstrained deliberation about the war against Iraq.

At the end of the meeting, the Yale students thanked us for the opportunity we gave them to think and discuss about the subject. What they did not realized is that we are very grateful for their sincerity and openness in sharing their ideas about such a delicate matter. by Laura Saldivia and Ramiro Salvochea

An American Experience Recounted

It has been a month since I left USA. I left behind an amazing experience... But it is just memories in my mind. And sitting in front my computer and looking the album, I think better realize its value.

On Thursday, January 26, we arrived to New York, United States of America. Four law students from Chile "Excuse, lady... Chile what is that?? A plate, some country in Africa or the capital of Peru?? Ohhh, yes, yes.. Now I remember a country next Argentina veryyyyy poor."

Well, as you might see, not every American knows where Chile is, but we wouldn’t let it be an obstacle for our trip. We were four Chileans from University Diego Portales and la Chile: Antonia, Luisa, María José and myself, Paulina. Even though we didn't know each other, we had to unite for our country, to represent Chile in Yale University.

We had a warm welcome even though it was very cold. But Patrick and Sara let us feel like home in their pot luck. My first impression was the cultural mixture with people interacting from Argentina, Brazil, and USA. It is amazing how much you can learn from a country just talking to the people and seeing the differences and similitude between the countries. During the Super Bowl, I observed that it is the same thing in Chile when we see the soccer match.

For us, everything was new and unique. To put our feet in the Yale Law School and be able to discover the legal American system was an opportunity to open our minds and compare it to the Latin-American system. The most important thing in the educational area is that American students have everything to study, the atmosphere, a great library, transport, com-
puters, access to the information, full time professors, and a modern infrastruc-
ture from the law school to the gym. They have all the necessary things to study
and have a complete education and become a great lawyer. On the other hand,
in Latin America, for every student it is very hard to become a professional. You
have to work and fight to get what you want, especially in our profession. It is not
easy to get such an education.

As the first week went by, we grew accustomed to the cold and to the
University. The different meetings with Yale professors were interesting, and
they gave us a global vision, not just of the juristic American order but also of in-
ternational society. Professor Koh and Professor Calabresi, for example, gave
us a vision of the legal system in the area of human rights in the world. As for
public defenders and prosecutors, we are now able to describe the penal proce-
dure.

The weekend in New York, well we all know about that trip, so we better
skip the details. But above all those little things, the city was unforgettable. To be
able to go to the federal appeals court, have meeting with ACLU people and
Women’s Rights United, and spend time in one of the most exciting cities of the
world was unbelievable. It is like the whole world is inside Manhattan.

We have been very lucky to have the possibility to see an historic epi-
sode of the American history. The war against Iraq is one of the important events
of this century. Seeing the State of Union Address, being witnesses to the pro-
test against it and being able to talk with the students about that subject let us
see an entirely different point of view.

Washington was amazing, and I would like to take the opportunity to
thank Mrs. Vida who made us feel at home. It was a long to trip to Washington D.
C. but the songs save us to get bored. We can closer the presidential system in
the White House and the Pentagon but also realized that all these centuries,
USA developed so fast in order to put the Constitution in the first place.

It is difficult now to forget all the relationships we made and will continue
throughout our life, because now we are more prepared than before to represent
our country in the international community. Everything makes us a little bit differ-
ent at the moment of return to our country. And that difference is the most impor-
tant thing to create a lawyer to be: An Open Mind. By Paulina Zenteno Diaz