

Dear Friends,

Currently, I am not required to register for the draft because I am female. However, if society continues to progress in the direction of true gender equality, as I hope it will, I will be required at some point to register as well. Therefore, I am writing this letter to reflect upon my beliefs and express my objection to serving in the military if I was ever called upon to do so.

Growing up in a Quaker school and in the Quaker meeting, I experienced daily the power of consensus and peaceful decision making to resolve conflict and was taught that violence and retaliation are never appropriate responses to hostility. Over the years, these lessons have continued to shape my conscience and interactions. I believe war is a cornerstone in the endless cycle of brutality and conflict which has plagued the world since the invention of weapons. I cannot morally participate in and facilitate this cycle by being part of the military.

During meeting I often reflect on the welcoming nature of the Society of Friends and the importance of the prison outreach program to our community. From the meeting and the visitors from Orange County Correctional I have learned that there is no black and white, there is no good and evil. There are only groups of people brought together by different circumstances and from different backgrounds. This central belief is what would not allow me to see our nation's declared enemies as legitimate targets of deadly force. There is nothing within me that would allow me to believe that the people I would be asked to kill, directly or indirectly, are not deserving to live.

For some people, the ability to determine whether another person lives or dies would be empowering; to me, it is repulsive. I would not be able to separate myself from my belief that there is inherent goodness within each human. I would not be able to live with myself, no matter how heroic my actions would be deemed or what victory I would help to achieve. My thoughts would immediately go toward the families who have lost a loved one and the light that I extinguished; this would pain me forever.

In this world in which we are further and further removed from the consequences of our military actions, it is growing harder to protest against serving. We are no longer asked to look the person we are attacking in the eye. This separation from our targets makes no difference to me; whether fighting on a battlefield or ordering a drone attack, I would not be able to participate in the taking of lives.

Nor do I feel I could work to support an organization that endorses killing in warfare or otherwise, even in a non-combat position. Everything I have learned as a Quaker leads me to reject the notion that killing in the name of my country is justified and as a part of the military establishment I would be endorsing that notion.

In short, my own humanity is bound with that of others and taking the life of another would take a part of me.

Sincerely,

Milena Wuerth