

Dear Friends,

On May 25th of 2010, it became my legal obligation, as a male and United States citizen, to register with the selective service. During this process, it was brought to my attention that the registration form does not take into account the participant's moral, ethical, or religious position on war. Therefore, this letter should be read as an addendum to my registration form and documentation of my opposition to war and violence.

It is my firm understanding that I could never kill, or be involved in the killing of, another human being. This feeling is rooted in my moral belief that all people should be treated equally and the idea that there is that of god in everyone. William Penn famously once said, "True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it." This quote resonates strongly with me and speaks for the Quaker value of equality. Similarly, Jesus Christ once said, "thou shalt treat thy neighbor as thyself." Both of these quotes advocate nonviolent conflict resolution and compassion for all people.

During my time at The Woolman Semester, a small Quaker school focused on peace, justice, and sustainability, my views on the United States military became much clearer. One project that made a significant impact was a documentary about military recruitment in public high schools. Every day soldiers across seas are subjected to horrible atrocities that will scar them for the rest of their lives. According to a study by the RAND Corporation, twenty percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have reported symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder or serious depression. While I would never claim that this experience made me an expert on the subject, the interviews I filmed, that included seven high school students, a conscientious objector, an army recruiter, a teacher, and the director of Quaker House, certainly broadened my understanding and helped strengthen my opposition to war.

If I am allowed to stay true to my moral, ethical, and/or religious values, then it is obvious to me that I cannot in good conscience serve in the United States army or any instrument of war. While I hope that the Department of Defense never decides to reinstate the draft, I hope that, if they do, my personal values are not overlooked and that I am given conscientious objector status.

Sincerely,

Colin Ulin

May 3, 2011