

Tomorrow, March 17th 2014 I will turn 18 years old and will be required to register with the selective service. It feels unnerving and disturbing to me that young men my age can be called by the draft to fight in war, to risk their own life and to take the lives of others.

For much of my life the US has been at war, but as a child war seemed distant and imaginary. Now, I have peers who will join the military. I would be considered eligible for the draft. I can imagine what it would be like to fight in a war. What would it be like to be ordered to shoot at another person? How helpless would it feel to know that I was responsible for someone's death? How could I fight in a war?

I value human life. I'm amazed by the compassion humans can show. I'm fascinated by the curiosity and wonder with which we explore the world. I'm proud of what humans can create, invent and imagine. My moral framework is centered around my value for human life. I believe that by being nurturing towards others I can create a mutually beneficial future. How could I destroy the lives of humans when they give me meaning. How could I fight in a war?

I try to maintain a generosity of spirit. When I meet someone I make a certain set of assumptions; I assume that they are unique, they are interesting, they have value and they have made mistakes. I believe that if I listen to the needs of others then I can resolve conflict. How could I view other people as enemies if I recognize the uniqueness and humanness of individual people? How could I fight in a war?

I could not participate in a war of any kind. I love life too much. Not just my life, but human life in general. My conscience will not allow me to participate in War. I recognize that sometimes people need to use protective force in matters of self defense. I know that there is violence in this world, but I also know that there are empowering peaceful alternatives.

I was fortunate to grow up in a nurturing and peaceful environment, everyone deserves to feel safe, to feel loved. Growing up with friends meeting helped build my moral framework. I give my thanks to friends like Curt and John were there to listen to my thoughts.

My parents and the environment I grew up in played a large role in forming my views. Many of the folk songs we sang when I was a child had messages about peace. I remember the day before my seventh birthday was also the day before the US went to war in Iraq. My mom and I went to a peace vigil and sang, "Every man neath his vine and fig tree, shall live in peace and unafraid."

Music has always been important to me. When I was 13 I discovered a topical singer song-writer named Phil Ochs. His music and convictions influenced mine. Songs like "I ain't a marching any more." and "What are you fighting for?" gave a melody to my beliefs about violence and war.

I gained perspectives by reading about conflict and nonviolence. One book I read, "Beyond War", described from an anthropological perspective how humans are capable of resolving conflicts without war. Books like that expanded and impacted my thinking.

While I learned my beliefs and moral frameworks from my parents and my community, I want to be independently consistent and critical. I want to be able to discern for myself what is a productive way of looking at the world. To some extent I have been freely able to introspect on my own thoughts and values and decide how they fit together with the world. I try to test my moral frameworks and values against other philosophies and systems of thinking.

One perspective I find useful as a test of moral decision making is to ask whether an action is Universalizable. What would the outcome be if everyone took a certain action or if everyone used a certain decision making strategy? Fighting in a war is not universalizable: at the extreme, in a war in which everyone fought, everyone would die. In contrast if everyone refused to fight in a war, there would be no war.

There are many sides to human nature. I focus on the nurturing and caring side of human nature, because I believe it is possible to amplify and encourage those characteristics. It is true that humans are capable of both wonder and of atrocity. By being nurturing towards other people, by providing people with positive ways to fulfill their needs, and by providing the resources and infrastructure for nonviolent conflict resolution it is possible to lessen the likelihood of violence among individuals and among nations.

Central to my being is that I value life and I am optimistic of other humans. I could not fight in a war. Both economically and socially I will avoid contributing to war. I wish to help humans have a better chance. I want to build, create and imagine because there is so much more that is possible.

- Carl W Hintz (3-16-14)

- Thank You.

CARL HINTZ

Don't Forget to be Awesome