

Dear Friends,

I am here today to read you a letter that expresses my values and convictions on war in any form. Of course, as a female, I am not yet required to register with the Selective Service System on my 18th birthday. But, because I believe in gender equality, I believe it's important for me to write this letter both because men have no choice but to register, and also because if our country continues on its current course, women might well soon be required to register.

My values are Quaker values: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality. SPICE. I have adopted these ideals as my own. Attending Quaker meeting every Sunday and having discussions about these testimonies, I was consistently drawn first and foremost to the testimony of Peace.

In middle school, my friends started watching movies with violent scenes; good guy kills bad guy, evil blood is spilled, epic battles, and so forth. I could never watch; I would get up on the pretext of visiting the bathroom and sit in the kitchen alone. I did not refuse to watch these scenes out of squeamishness; that wasn't the reason they bothered me. I simply could not understand my peers' enjoyment of the depiction of violence. I now understand that my aversion to this violence stems from my refusal to condone violence, or even quietly stand by--regardless of whether it is the "evil" or the "good" suffering. Violence, I believe, is never the answer.

Last year, a few of my classmates and a teacher of mine went to a field to shoot guns. Not even at animals, simply at targets. I had an immediate and intense negative reaction to this, and declined to join. I did not even experience the slightest glimmer of excitement at the prospect of shooting a gun. Playing with something that has ruined so many lives is repulsive to me, especially when done for sheer entertainment. I could never hold a gun, because of its great potential for destruction. I cannot agree with, or take part in, any activity that is violent or is associated with violence, such as war and military conflict.

Therefore I am a pacifist. I believe there is no such thing as a "just" war. There is no grievance so great that a war is justified. Most wars are, beneath the surface, about money and power. Our leaders who start wars are not the ones on the battlefield; they instead are safe in their glass towers, separated from the gruesome consequences of their decisions.

I have been a vegetarian my entire life. I have never so much as tasted meat. Although meat and human life are not directly comparable, I believe it's important to mention that even though my health has been compromised, and I was told by a medical Doctor that I had to eat meat for my health, I firmly declined. Eating a dead creature simply to enhance my well-being was not something I was, or am now, willing to live with. I refuse to directly or indirectly cause or condone the pain or death of another.

To reiterate, I cannot support or take part in any act of violence, be it war or otherwise, because I believe nothing good or just has ever come of war. As a Quaker, and more importantly as a human, I believe there is light, or goodness, in every person; Therefore I could never, will never, take part in, or support in any way, any action that might snuff another's light into darkness. I dream of a world where everyone's light can shine, together, in peace.

Sincerely,  
Emma Hulbert