

Dear Chapel Hill Friends Meeting,

I wish to be noted as a conscientious objector to war.

War kills innocent people without regard for justice. I could not personally participate in such an act for doing so would go against my deepest held moral inclinations.

That, in short, is why I write this letter.

Growing up in a Quaker meeting I've been taught from an early age that war is wrong. As far as Quakerism has "core pillars," the testimony to peace is the closest you'll get.

As I've grown older though, I've spent a lot of time reflecting on the things that have been taught to me as a kid. Not everything churches teach kids today is correct, and while I've been pretty sure for a while now that the meeting I grew up in wasn't anything like the Westboro Baptist Church, I felt, and still feel, it is my duty to critically analyze those values that I have been taught.

And when it comes to antimilitarism, what I've found is that I do genuinely object to warfare and participation in it.

Proving that this objection is strong enough grounds for conscientious objection is difficult for me, especially since I am an atheist. I do not have the luxury of appealing to eternal divine law. Instead, by US law, I must make a case that my opposition is "morally" founded or that my Quaker upbringing is significant enough for my opposition to be of "religious" nature.

From a religious perspective, I find again, as stated above, that my objection to participation in war took root through my Quaker meeting and that it cemented through guidance from the many role models I found within my meeting growing up.

Morals, to me, are nothing more than the biological programming kept within us, as social creatures, to do justice to the larger community of humans. Yet from that perspective, I do think that I can make a confident case against warfare, as killing indiscriminately is no 'justice to mankind'.

War historically has only been used as an economic and political tool to enrich and empower the privileged few involved in statecraft (and occasionally to pay off their goons). War, fundamentally, is an act of statecraft, never done for humanitarian ends. World War II wasn't started because of the camps or the slavery, it was started because of geopolitical alliances. Those making war are blind to injustice.

Ultimately, the people that suffer from war the most are innocent civilians, reduced to poverty and despair. To those that make the decision to go to war, destitution is a goal, as cruel institutions are often justified and upheld through the scarcity and desperation of the people living under them.

War is often justified as some life-saving operation, but in my historical understanding that is categorically false, merely a propaganda narrative that appeals to those same sacred values that state-sponsored killing desecrates.

As per *Gillette v. U.S.*, I hold no obligation to defend my beliefs against hypothetical wars. A 'just war' may be a scientific possibility, but it isn't an anthropological one.

Therefore with both my full understanding of wars and their context, as well as my deep moral instincts to do the best for my fellow human being, I could not willingly participate in war.

That, in length, is why I write this letter.

With love and some degree of careful consideration,

Henry Schneider