

Dear Friends,

As I prepare to claim myself an adult, I must face the question of how I will handle signing up for Selective Service. As a forward to this letter on my beliefs, however, I would like to mention that, when I got my driver's license, soon after my birthday on September the twenty-ninth, my personal information was sent to Selective Service through the DMV. I was told that, in order to obtain my driver's license, I was required to allow the officer at the DMV to send my information and, since the officer was just hearing the phrase "Conscientious Objector" for the first time, she was not able to make any kind of notation on my beliefs regarding the draft.

I hope that this letter can prove witness to my convictions against war. Primarily, I do not feel that any person has the right to take the life of another under any circumstances. All life is precious and in all people there is an inner beauty. I do not feel that I could take the life of another with the knowledge that I would be depriving the world of that person's potential for good.

To "assassinate," according to the American Heritage Dictionary, is "to murder by surprise attack, as for political reasons." This act is one I am sure most Americans would not admit to favoring. However, while one could justify participation in the killing of enemies as being for the benefit of society, I can't help but wonder if others had the same justifications for killing in the past. For instance, one can be certain that President Lincoln, having emancipated the slaves, may not have been popular with southerners of the time. My only question is, "who decides if a cause to kill is just or not?" In my mind and in my heart, I know that there is no time that the sacrifice of another's life has an acceptable justification.

In writing this letter, I am taking the time to look over criteria for Conscientious Objector ship, insuring that I truly believe myself a Conscientious Objector. Though my objections to war are based on morality, they are also based on respect. I trust others to treat me in the manner I want to be treated: with respect and tolerance. In return, I strive to treat others in an equally respectful manner. Included in ways to respectfully treat others, I endeavor not to use violence against other people under any circumstances. Though I may attempt to defend my kin and myself from attack, I refuse to be trained in the tactics of combat.

While I am opposed to the killing of human beings, I am not opposed to killers. This is a true statement in the sense that I continue to see killers as fellow humans. I am willing to help my proverbial brothers and sisters in any way that it is needed of me; I will gladly give their tired bodies nourishment and I would gladly tend to their ailments, if it were asked of me. I wholly disagree with war and I realize that soldiers must endure and witness powerful and grotesque hardships in carrying out their duties. My heart would be broken if I were to discover that not one person would tend to their basic physical and psychological needs. I feel proud in stating that, was I to be asked to aid my brothers in having their basic needs met, I would gladly accept.

Among material I have been encouraged to consider while composing this very statement is a list of procedural items for how I should handle proving that I have some right to profess myself a Conscientious Objector. First on the list includes starting a record of my attendance and participation in meeting for worship, my upbringing as a Quaker, non-violent activities that I have participated in, et cetera. Firstly, no, I do not attend Friends Meeting with the frequency of some of my fellow Friends. However, my beliefs are my own and I do not harbor them in my heart because they were put there by any religious organization. Friends Meeting has been a

place for me to feel at home and to worship in the presence of those I trust. My involvement with Quaker Meeting has helped to shape me as a person, but my views on the world are entirely my own and come from within myself, not my surroundings. The fact that I was brought up in a Quaker household only provides testimony to the truth that I have been taught respect for others and the beliefs of others. Again, I am against war due to a personal truth, not because I was told that war is wrong. As for documenting my participation in non-violent activities: I strive for all my actions to be caring actions, without violence. I have done nothing with the intention of being nonviolent, but I do everything with the intention of being loving.

So, I don't suppose I have any concrete proof that I am against all violence, including war. It is my hope, though, that this letter acts as the closest thing to proof that I can offer: my truth.

Thank you,

James H.C. Malone