

Dear Friends,

In early 2011, I registered to vote. At the same time, I registered with the Selective Services. Because it is not possible to make a statement of beliefs when registering for the draft, I feel the need to express mine now, for the record.

I am opposed to war in all forms, and I do not believe that it is ever acceptable or justifiable to take the life of another human being. This ethical and religious belief is deeply seated in my upbringing in the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers. I attended a Quaker school from pre-school until middle school, and have been attending the meeting for more than a decade; because of this, the Quaker community has heavily influenced my personal beliefs. Quakerism is founded upon the firm belief there is that of God in every person. This sentiment is in direct opposition to the practice of war. Also finding its roots in Quakerism is my belief that war is never the answer, and that there is a nonviolent solution to any conflict.

War, as a phenomenon, is never innocuous and is inherently an ineffective means of problem solving. To quote Martin Luther King Jr., "Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers." Defeat doesn't end in a sudden epiphany on the part of the subdued.

In addition, there is a great deal of hypocrisy in our legal system. Killing, when the victim is another American, is punishable by death. Killing when ordered by the Pentagon, is cause for a medal. This superficial distinction is only caused by completely subjective point of view, and does not constitute an adequate reason for taking another's life.

In conclusion, I am firmly opposed to the participation in war. I could never reconcile the taking of another life with my own religious beliefs or morals or participate in war in any capacity, noncombatant included. Because of this, I consider myself a Conscientious Objector.

Sincerely,
Michael Grathwohl
June 2011