

Dear Chapel Hill Friends Meeting,

Being of Quaker upbringing, I have always leaned steeply towards the side of nonviolence.

Since

late middle school I never doubted that each life is beautiful and highly precious. My moral and ethical beliefs do not permit me to involve myself in the killing carried out by any organization. Therefore, I ask the Chapel Hill Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends recognize my position as a conscientious objector.

In my journeys, I have determined that so far nearly every war and act of violence has had two sides, each claiming a sacred or noble goal. One of these goals triumphs and brings happiness to its supporters while the other fails and demoralizes its followers. Regardless of the winner, shattered dreams, ruined families, and angry, violent friends of the fallen lie in the aftermath. The angry and violent friends will start another war which will shatter more dreams and ruin more families and create more angry friends that continue the process indefinitely, each time claiming another sacred or noble goal and insisting that once *this* goal is achieved, no more battles need happen.

I will admit that some wars saved the lives of some innocent people. For example, I respect the soldiers who were willing to give their and other people's lives to end the Holocaust. They were truly brave men and women doing what they thought was best with no regard to their personal safety. However, most of the Germans participating in the Holocaust were not so inherently evil themselves. Incredible propaganda and lethal danger to those who refused coerced many normal, everyday Germans into doing horrible acts that safe, secure Americans and Englishmen could not, and still cannot imagine.

Thus, if I were to participate in the war, I would be killing, among the few real evil Nazis (assuming that anyone can be truly evil), many poor, scared Germans whose only defining difference from me was their place of birth. I respect those who, for a cause as noble as saving the Jews, ventured out onto the battlefield, but I personally would have sought to help my country elsewhere and strove to prevent future wars before they happened.

No mortal cause can be sacred enough and sure enough for me to take even one human life. I am not semi-omniscient, not godlike, not able to see into the future, and not led by anyone who is. The only things I can be absolutely certain of when I take a life is that I am shattering a dream, punching a hole in a family, and snapping a link in a circle of friends. Therefore, I, Samuel Leeman-Munk cannot trust any human's cause, even an end to war and human suffering, enough to take a life or personally participate in war.

Sincerely,  
Samuel Leeman-Munk