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Dear Chapel Hill Friends Meeting:

I am writing this letter to document my beliefs and feelings about selective service. I hope that this letter adequately explains my reasons for declaring myself a conscientious objector.

My entire life, I have been around nonviolent people, a nonviolent family, and most importantly, a nonviolent community. I have been a familial member of the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends since 1991, and for the last 16 years of my life, the members of the meeting have been my family. Certain people in the meeting I have labeled even as surrogate grandparents. Gerry Gourley was one of these. In fact it was at Gerry Gourley's apartment in Carol Woods where I saw my first violent movie that depicted a human killing others. That movie was Bambi. Starting with Bambi, movies began to leave an indelible mark on me. As I have gotten older, movies such as 'The Longest Day,' 'Saving Private Ryan,' 'Black Hawk Down,' and other 'war' movies have left their mark as well. Coming out of movies like that, with adrenaline surging through my body, I feel almost sick to my stomach. Not because of the movie theatre popcorn, but because I have just seen two hours of people senselessly killing other people in an attempt to solve problems. Ever since Bambi, I have been drawn to war movies for the adrenaline, but repulsed by the wars and killing that they depict.

I also remember when I was a kid arguing with my little brother when we got in a fight. We would say, "I'm allowed to hit you, it's the golden rule, you hit me first." This is, of course, flawed logic and a misuse of what we had learned in First Day School that Jesus had said. 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' We interpreted this as, if he hit me, I would have the right to hit him. I no longer use this childish logic, largely because of my exposure to other religions during First Day School at the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting. Not only did I learn about Quakerism, but I also learned about other cultures and religions. This teaching has helped me develop my moral sense as well as taught me tolerance of other religions. It is not only Christianity who's greatest prophet promoted the golden rule. Moses, Confucius, Muhammad, Hillel, the Hindu Mahabharata, and Buddhist texts, to name a few, all say that one shouldn't inflict on anyone else what you wouldn't want inflicted on yourself.

What my brother and I practiced was a typical version of the cycle of violence that has been happening in our world since the beginning of human history. Feelings are built up until one side or the other strikes, justified in their own minds. The other side feels it is an unjustified act, and so takes it upon themselves to right the wrong. Their retaliation feels justified, but the victims and original aggressors see only revenge. This whole process then repeats itself because it engenders more feelings of hate, and the cycle spirals out of control.

I have never been in a situation where I have had to take part in a war, but because of my upbringing I have become aware of my capacity – and the capacity of others -- for compassion, and I am convinced that the only way to break the cycle of violence is by not participating in it. I believe wars take place because of the cycle of revenge that permeates almost every culture. Because of my desire to break the cycle of violence, I could not, in good conscience, take part in fighting to perpetuate this cycle, and so could not take part in any war for any country or entity at any time in my life. This includes non-combatant roles because I believe they also support the cycle of revenge.

I appreciate this Meeting's support and nurture over the past 17 years, and ask your continued support as I use the selective service registration to declare my position as a conscientious objector.

Sincerely,

Sebastian Michael Green