

J.P.C's Conscientious Objector Statement

Death, and destruction, those are the calling cards of war. It takes and takes and takes, and leaves nothing but carnage in its wake. Cities, hospitals, schools, and everything in between become rubble covered in the smoldering corpses of what used to be people. I believe that war is horribly evil and I can't stomach the thought of taking any part in the slaughter of my fellow human beings.

Although I did not know it at the time, my deep belief in what is right and wrong began when I was growing up in elementary and middle school where I was repeatedly bullied. Children twice my size would gang up to bully me and other students physically beat me during and after school. Everyday I had to endure cruel and malicious remarks directed at me by other students. I hated going to school, I hated those kids, I hated them with every bone in my body and I dreaded every waking moment away from them because I knew that I would have to see them again the next day. As things escalated, my family and I talked to various educational staff, got things sorted out with the school, and eventually the bullying stopped. But the memory of those events have never left me. And since those experiences, I've made a silent vow that I would never cause anyone that sort of pain, that I would never become like the monsters who tormented me so. That same passion rises up in me when I think about joining the military. It's a sick debilitating feeling. If I joined the military, I wouldn't be able to look at myself in the mirror, and if I could, I wouldn't know who was looking back at me. It wouldn't be me. I don't want to cause pain to others. I'm not a killer. I'm not someone who would help others to kill.

Because I was often bullied, I treasured all the more deeply those who were kind to me. One of whom was “Nai Nai” which means grandmother in Chinese. Nai Nai would always be so kind and happy to see me. She would always tell jokes that made the whole family laugh. But as the years went on, she became more and more frail until one day, she got terribly sick. My family spent a lot of time with her during this period. I would take care of her and would laugh with her and tell her it was going to be alright, that she was okay. But I remember that the more time I spent with her, the stronger the tears came later when I left her room, not knowing if that would be the last time I would hear her laugh.

Nai Nai passed when I was 15, and our family soon stopped making trips out to the area where she once lived. I thought that this all must just be a bad dream. Nai Nai wasn't gone; it wasn't possible. I had only been talking to her a few hours ago... This was the first time in my life that I had to deal with death upfront. I had seen death in TV shows, movies, cartoons, and video games. But this was different. This wasn't just something to help the story progress or add intrigue or to add a new difficulty to a game. This was real. I would never get to hear any more of her stories; I would never get to hear her exclaim just how tall I've gotten; I would never see her smiling face again. I felt this emptiness inside myself that I had never known before. And in the ensuing weeks, my mind would wander back to the memory of Nai Nai and the pain would start all over again. This devastation led me to realize just how precious and beautiful life is. And now

knowing how precious a life can be, I cannot stand the thought of ending another person's via a 22 caliber to the chest.

And when someone gets shot, it's not just them, but their family, their brothers, their sisters, and their parents, who also feel the impact. Everyone is connected, and it's absolutely wrong to slash those connections that hold us all together. Because in war, it's humans against humans. There are no winners, only loss.

In order to learn more about war, I read books about past wars. One such book was called "Kill Anything That Moves," by Nick Turse, which recounts many of the war crimes that were committed during the Vietnam war through interviews with veterans and reviewing court martials regarding US war crimes. In his book, I read descriptions of how completely innocent civilians were tied by their fingers to the back of US army vehicles and driven through the Vietnamese villages to terrify the people with the screams of their family members being tortured. By the time the US had finished their "PSA", the innocent captives' fingers were half torn off and their backs had been ground into a fine bloody pulp to the point where you could see their spine. I read another account where US soldiers raped a vietnamese 16-year old girl and her 8-year old sister, and then the men proceeded to torture and beat the girls to death. Reading about these and countless other atrocities committed during the Vietnam war, not even to mention the My Lai Massacre, made me feel so incredibly sick and disturbed inside that I was in a depressed stupor for many days and had to take a break from reading about

war. And eventually I had to stop reading the book all together because of how deeply upsetting and depressing it was.

I continued my reading about war with David Swanson's book titled "War is a Lie" where Swanson exposes the lies we are told about war. In his book, he shows how the government and politicians will try to make the opposition look evil, to look like monsters and not human beings. They will try to make the war look like it is in defence when it is not. They will tell us that our war is just, even when NO WAR is just. Like in the Pentagon Papers, they will tell us that we *need* to continue the war and that we are winning, while secretly knowing that we stand no chance and that the only reason we stay in the war, that we sent our people to slaughter and be slaughtered, was to "save face." It's terrible, but politicians will do whatever they can to gain power and influence, and one of the best ways to do that it by starting a war.

I think that it's truly disgusting just how we are told so many lies about war. But it makes sense, because if the government and politicians told the truth, no one would support war. In "War is a Lie," Swanson writes about the Christmas truce of 1914, where soldiers on opposing sides called a truce for Christmas and were temporarily able to see the *truth* of their situation. During that time, what once was no man's land, an area full of barbed wire and death, was now a safe haven for the two groups of men to mingle and talk and exchange souvenirs. They played soccer together and shared stories; the men realized that the other was no different from himself. And soon after

seeing through the deceptions of their governments, many of those soldiers refused to kill their new friends for the benefit of manipulative politicians. Those soldiers, however, were quickly replaced. When I read this, I was deeply moved. I strongly believe, with all my being that we should love, not kill.

These beliefs greatly influence the way that I think and act in my everyday life. I try to treat others with kindness and stand up for what I believe is right. I try to not continue the cycles of hate that seem to be all too common nowadays. And whenever I see a pro war movie, or hear politicians talking about it on the radio, I can't help but think about all of the pain, suffering and death it has caused. It's grotesque and disturbing. The thought that one day I might be forced to kill makes me feel sick inside. But in those times, I remind myself that I would never do such a thing. It goes against everything that I believe, it goes against my very being. I believe that war is an evil, monstrous, and vile crime and I will not support it in any way. Nor will I help with any service which helps improve the efficiency or the strength of the war machine. I am not a killer. I am not someone who will help others kill.

I am a conscientious objector.

J.P.C

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