

What Do I Believe About War?

...Questions for the Conscientious Objector

What is Conscientious Objection?

Generally, conscientious objection is a sincere conviction, motivated by conscience, that forbids someone from taking part in organized killing. This objection may apply to all forms or to particular aspects of war.

Worksheet on War Objection

What follows are the three basic questions a young person must be able to answer in order to be classified as a conscientious objector in the event of a military draft. You may wish to outline your answers here and complete them on separate sheets of paper.

QUESTION 1: Describe the beliefs that are the basis for your claim as a conscientious objector, and whether those beliefs would permit you to serve in a noncombatant position in the armed forces.

The question asks you to describe, in some detail and as honestly as possible, the basic principles by which you guide your life. You should describe those values which are of utmost importance to you, such as God, love, truth, etc., and why these beliefs are in conflict with participation in armed service. This question asks you to formulate your own statement to conscientious opposition to war. You should begin by saying that you are conscientiously opposed to war, and then describe the beliefs that lead you to such opposition. (Feel free to use additional paper for the answer to this and other questions.)

The second part of this question seeks to determine whether you claim non-combatant status in the military or a full exemption from military service. You should specify what it is about non-combatant service that would violate your conscience, if this is the exemption you seek.

Although at this time federal law does not provide exemption for selective objectors or nuclear pacifists, this should not stop you from filing such statements of beliefs or making claims for exemption on the basis of them. In the event your beliefs or the law change, your statement could prove very important. If your convictions lead you to be a non-cooperator, you may wish to record those convictions using this question too.

(Please turn over)

QUESTION 2: Describe how you acquired these beliefs.

In answering this question, you should include any formal religious training you have had, if you feel such training has helped you arrive at your position. If you feel your beliefs were arrived at without help from your formal training, there is no need to mention it. The influences of clergy, teachers, family members, books, television, movies, and membership in organizations, are essential to list. Be specific. You need to show that strong influences in your life have stimulated you to think clearly and seriously about participation in war.

Specific incidents can be mentioned, such as demonstrations, seminars, or assemblies you have attended, to show that your beliefs had substantial formation beyond an academic interest. Take some care not to give the impression that your belief is primarily a matter of political considerations, expediency, or merely an arbitrary, personal moral code unrelated to higher values.

QUESTION 3: Describe how your beliefs affect the way you live, and the type of work you do or plan to do.

This may be a difficult question for you, since young objectors may not have had many experiences that can show deeply held beliefs. You can discuss how your future plans are strongly affected by a commitment to those beliefs. Describe kinds of employment you have had or plan to have that reflect your commitment. Discuss any public expression, written or oral, you have given to your beliefs. This question allows you to demonstrate the sincerity with which you hold your beliefs.

Because of the reasons described above, I am a conscientious objector to war of any form.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please review my conscientious objector statement and send me any recommendations that might help in the presentation of a future claim.

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

When completed, mail this form or a copy of it to the address below. A file will be opened in your name. This will be of benefit to you should you need to substantiate your claim to be a conscientious objector in the event of a military draft. Please contact the address below if you have questions or concerns regarding this process.

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