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# The Reporter

## *From the Desk of the Executive Director*

I started my day talking with a reporter for the Chicago Tribune. She is doing a story on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Are we seeing more cases? Is it related to conscientious objection? Is it related to fighting an unpopular war? Wasn't it true that the numbers of soldiers with PTSD were disproportionately less during the very widely supported World War II? The change in PTSD does not come from the sacrifice during an unpopular war, I told her, but from the increased training of soldiers to kill on command without thought and the lack of training of soldiers as to how to live with it afterwards.

Next was a call from a soldier in Germany with 7 years in the Army. His wife had left him with two young kids. His command told him they would reprimand him for not having a dependency care plan twice and then he would be "chaptered out." I pointed out that that would result in his not receiving money for college after his years of faithful service. I told him to make a dependency care plan that showed he could not comply with being deployed and then receive the non-punitive discharge he deserved.

Then a mother called. Her 18-year-old son had been picked up from school by two recruiters and driven to sign up for the military. She had ordered the recruiters from her property days earlier. When she found that her son had signed up and that he really didn't want to go into the Army, she called over 40 offices in the military seeking help. All of them told her that her son had no choice. The next thing she knew her son has been taken out of his class BY THE RECRUITERS to discuss his decision not to join the Army. When the mother protested, the assistant principal yelled at the mother for interfering with

what SHE, as vice principal, thought was best for the mother's son. I told her to get all the other parents who were annoyed by the recruiters in the school to go to the principal and tell the principal that the assistant principal had violated the Privacy Act and No Child Left Behind. NCLB provides that military recruiters are to have the SAME access as other recruiters, unless that school allows Wal-Mart to drag kids out of class when they decide not to work there, the assistant principal has violated that law.

So what does this have to do with conscientious objection? It is work based on the concept that we all have to start somewhere. In the early 60's I thought I would join the Marines for money for college. By 1964, I opposed the war in Vietnam. By the mid-70s I opposed all prospective wars, but still thought WW II was a Just War. By the early 1980s I thought all wars were morally wrong but sometimes a necessary evil. In the mid 1990s I concluded all wars were wrong and stupid and cause much more harm than good and always avoidable.

We all have to start somewhere and the Center wants to be there to help each person who calls to take the next step. But we believe our work is essential day-to-day work if we are ever to bring our world to the point where everyone proclaims war is not the answer.

The Center is stopping war one soldier at a time.

Yours for Peace and Justice,

*J. E. McNeil*

J. E. McNeil





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# News Briefs

## Conscientious Taxes

U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., has introduced legislation that would prevent taxes paid by people conscientiously opposed to war to be used for military purposes.

H.R. 1921, titled the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act, instructs the secretary of the Treasury to establish a separate "Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund" for the deposit of income, gift and estate taxes from citizens certified by the Treasury Department as conscientious objectors.

Individuals are urged to contact their Congressional Representative and ask them to support this Bill.

## South Korean Justice Ministry criticized for human rights plan.

The South Korean Ministry of Justice still has not decided its position on several sensitive human rights issues, including the death penalty, and conscientious objection to military service.

A ministry plan on the nation's human rights policies submitted May 22 has faced criticism, from several human rights groups for being passive about such issues as conscientious objection and the death penalty.

In the latest plan, the ministry said it would discuss follow-up measures on conscientious objection to military service as soon as a National Defense Ministry research committee looking at alternative social service programs for such objectors announces the results of its study.

(The Hankyoreh, May 22nd, 2007)

## Protesters urge Canadian soldiers to opt out

A loose coalition of Quebec-based anti-war activists is sending individual letters to 3,000 Canadian military families urging soldiers to refuse their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan.

"Our aim isn't to attack the soldiers or their families, we want to open a dialogue with military families, and we want to open the debate on our presence in Afghanistan and why we should participate in this conflict," said coalition spokesperson Joseph Bergeron. "We want them to know that the reasons they've been given for going aren't the real ones ... they are not going to instill democracy with the barrel of a rifle. The Afghans don't want them there."

Conscientious objection and desertion have become growing phenomena in the U.S., but in Canada it's no simple matter for full-time soldiers to refuse a deployment. (The situation is different for reservists, who must volunteer).

(The Star.com, June 12th, 2007)

## Austrian WWII CO honored as martyr for peace

Catholic peace campaigners have welcomed the news that an Austrian farmer, killed for refusing to fight with the Nazis, is to be beatified by the Catholic church.

Franz Jägerstätter was beheaded in Brandenburg, Germany, on 9 August 1943, for refusing to fight in Hitler's army. He believed that it would be a sin if he acted against his conscience and agreed to fight for the National Socialist state. For him, this was a situation in which he had to obey God more than the commands of secular rulers.

(www.ekklesia.co.uk, June 6th, 2007)

# On DVD



## Breaking Ranks

Screen Siren Pictures Production in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada written and directed by Michelle Mason

### Review by Bill Galvin

This powerful movie, which has just been released on DVD, tells the compelling story of four US soldiers who said no to the

war in Iraq and sought refuge in Canada: Jeremy Hinzman, Brandon Hughey, Joshua Key, and Kyle Snyder.

Two of them are among the first to arrive in Canada and their cases are the test cases in the Canadian immigration and court system. Three of them are combat veterans. This movie covers a wide range of issues related to why these four people (and a couple hundred more) ended up in Canada.

Their experiences are conveyed by interviews with them, footage of heartfelt interactions with their family members and supporters, and film footage of them speaking in public and appearing on TV and radio talk shows. This is interspersed with footage of politicians (Canadian and US), the war, military training, and interviews with US military recruiters.

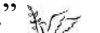
While this excellent movie is about the war and public policy in Canada and the US, first and foremost it puts a human face on the war. It shows these four war resisters as regular people, who are caught up in circumstances far bigger than themselves, and who are trying very hard to make sense of it and do the right thing.

This film was made for a Canadian audience, so in part its purpose is to educate Canadians as to why people in the US join the military so they will better understand the need for Canada to provide refuge. For example, Brandon's father described the harsh economic reality in his home in Texas that forced him to dip into his savings and spend all the money that was to be for Brandon's college education, which forced Brandon into the military. Family members of the others relay similar stories.

Some of the most powerful moments of the film are these soldiers describing their experiences in the war which caused them to take a stand. Joshua Key, who says he was never politically orientated, described the task of his unit in Iraq: "Our job was to go through and grab every male that looks age 15, 16 or over, and put em in the back of a 5 ton and send them off for interrogations. . . I did a hundred raids or more, and out of every one of them I never once found a terrorist, I never once found caches of weapons. I never once found reasons for any of the men to be detained that we took off for interrogations." He described his feelings as he looked into the faces of the people whose homes they were raiding-- and he said, "I still have trouble with it." He gives a vivid description of what he witnessed one day that caused him to turn to his commanding officer and say, "I won't have any part of this," as he went back to his vehicle and refused to participate.

Jeremy Hinzman talks about trying to learn to become a killer. He knew it wasn't something he was inclined to do, but "that's what the training is for. . . As hard as I tried, I couldn't do it. . . I was losing what made me human." They all had similar experiences. Brandon describes feeling like "my back was against the wall," and Kyle, who was in Mosul says, "I couldn't take it no more. They gave me two weeks leave-- I saw it as my opportunity."

The truth is, we all have consciences, and this movie shows the conscientious changes and struggles of four young men and their families as they try to figure it out. I strongly recommend this movie for anyone remotely concerned about conscientious objection in this war. It shows quite well how these people changed as a result of each of them facing war in a real and immediate way.

As Brandon Hughey said, "If I had never gone through this, and, you know, my dad had just paid to send me off to college, I probably would've just ended up another west Texas Republican. . . just self-centered into believing everything the US does is right and good. It's definitely opened my eyes to what goes on in the rest of the world." 

For more information on this film and to see where it is playing, you can access the film's website at, [www.breakingranksthefilm.com](http://www.breakingranksthefilm.com)



human being.

I would not lead soldiers into battle so they could kill a 12-year-old child and then struggle to cope with such a killing by turning a tragedy—the tragedy that a 12-year-old was killed and the tragedy that they were directed to kill for a so-called noble cause—into a good laugh. A few days later I asked to be removed from Ranger School with the admission that I lacked the passion and aggression necessary to serve as an infantry officer due to personal convictions and beliefs. I was asked by a Ranger Instructor if I were a conscientious objector to whom, after wrestling with the idea for a good minute, I replied, “Yes.”

Once released from Ranger School, I returned to my training unit where I was asked to reconsider my decision to seek conscientious objector status and perhaps re-branch. Although, my conscience concerning war, violence, and killing was concrete, I did not immediately apply for conscientious objector status. Out of respect for the individuals in my chain of command, all of whom sat down with me and engaged in civil dialogue once I returned from Ranger School, I agreed to take Thanksgiving break before formally proceeding with my conscientious objector application. It was over this break that I wrote my raw beliefs and convictions onto paper, and my resolve to apply was strengthened. My first obligation was no longer to the men I would be asked to lead as an officer but to Christ. And I came to realize that through following His radical commands I would secondly fulfill my obligation to serve humanity and our great, although at times tragically disappointing, country.


It was from these initial Thanksgiving writings and re-reading the New Testament Gospels that I wrote the following as part of my CO application. These convictions which continue to drive and call me to action as a discharged conscientious objector during a time of war and in a post-9/11 world:

*I lack the capacity to kill and my opposition to our current conflict stems from a personal belief that the means of war will ultimately fail to achieve an end-state of peace. Peace achieved through the destructive and devastating nature of war, not through compassion, love, and tolerance, will ultimately fail mankind and the vicious*

*cycle of war will continue to be responsible for many of the evils that mankind detests.*

*However idealistic it may seem, I have concluded that my failure to strive for perfection as exemplified by Christ, and accept war as a solution to the evils which exist, is a disservice to God, country, and humanity.*

*My personal convictions on killing and war stem from a deeply held belief that in life we are called to serve others as called by the Spirit. In the capacity of an officer in the United States Army I can no longer serve God, country, and humanity. Service must be done to alleviate the suffering of mankind caused by intolerance, ignorance, hate, and violence. The means to alleviate such suffering must be achieved through tolerance, knowledge, wisdom, love, and compassion.*

*However idealistic it may seem, these strikingly positive means have great power for they emphasize and reinforce, not destroy and demolish, the sacredness of life and the goodness and Godly light within all. In taking life through such conflict as war, even if to achieve an end-state where tolerance, knowledge, wisdom, love, and compassion can thrive, we travel down a road of deception for such an end-state is infected by the evils of war. The complications from such an infection will manifest in both the well-intentioned protagonist as well as the adversarial force. Violence, killing, and war will continue to be seen as a means by which to achieve an end. The cycle will continue and we will continuously fail morally, ethically, and religiously and hold the belief that war is a solution to evil. War begets war, war begets evil, evil begets evil, and evil begets war. If every individual would consciously make a decision to refuse to bow towards war as a means to solve conflict and instead look forward to the future which has unlimited potential, while embracing the ideals of love and compassion, then mankind would finally achieve the end-state of peace. No longer do I believe that my participation in war, however well-intentioned, can be defined as service because love, compassion, and tolerance are not the means to achieve the end-state of peace. As a participant in war I would be an accomplice to the horrible realities of war: pain, death, and suffering. I would thus fail to follow in the footsteps of Christ and serve humanity through love of both thy neighbor and love of thy enemy.* 

## The Summer Brings New Volunteers

### Jabari Sampson

My name is Jabari Sampson and I am a junior from Cesar Chavez PCHS. I am 16 years old and a DC native. I was born December 2, 1990. I have 3 brothers and 3 sisters, and I’m the youngest of all. At Chavez the juniors have to attend a program called Fellowship in order to graduate. It places you with the public policy issue you are concerned about and lets you experience it first hand. It also gives you job training and helps some chose their career path. I was placed at Center on Conscience & War because I also am against war of any kind and think that if people don’t want to be in the military they have that right to be honorably discharged.

### Jabari was with us at the Center for three weeks this June.



### Andrew Gorby

#### Former Officer in Training for the Army

Andrew has recently been discharged from the Army as a conscientious objector. He decided to come volunteer some of his time this summer at the Center in order to continue to stay up to date on CO issues and to work as a counselor on the G.I.Rights Hotline. To read Andrew’s story about the crystalization of his beliefs and his discharge process, see page 5.

### CCW says farewell to two Board members and welcomes a new Board member

Jim Feldman and Irving Ruderman have come to the end of their time on CCW’s Board of Directors. CCW thanks them for all their hard work. The Center would also like to extend a welcome to Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou who will be joining the board. More on Rev. Sekou will follow in the next issue.



### CCW Welcomes a new summer Intern

My name is Carrie Brochu, and I am a recent addition to the Washington, DC area. I am a graduate student at American University studying international peace and conflict resolution. I received my bachelor’s degree in anthropology at the University of Connecticut with a minor in religion. I am interning at the Center on Conscience & War because I hope to learn about war at the level of the individual soldier and not just from a theoretical or high-level policy perspective. I think we can learn a lot from the individuals who choose to get involved in war and why they may choose ultimately not to participate. I am also interested in the work being done here because I believe that grassroots efforts toward peace can be very effective. When leaders and policy-makers are unwilling or unable to affect change, it is relatively small groups of dedicated individuals who can ultimately make that change happen.

To read about Carrie’s first day and first time lobbying, see page 4.

### Freedom of Information Act Requests

Thanks to everyone who volunteered to turn in a request on our behalf. We have sent a request for National Guard Regulations to every state except Washington State and have recieved responses from approximately one third of those requests. Thank you again, the Center appreciates everyone’s efforts in helping us with this project.

### IRA Withdrawal

Are you 59 1/2 or older with and IRA account? Remember you can donate your mandatory IRA withdraw to the Center and recieve a charitable deduction without it being income to you.

Please contact the Center at 202-483-2220 to find out more.



to extend the rights and protections for service members seeking a CO discharge. Also speaking at the congressional briefing were Andrew Gorby and Ryan Sigley, both former service members who were able to receive CO discharges.



*Congressman John Lewis Speaks at the congressional briefing*

## Insight from a first time lobbyist

By Carrie Brochu

I started my first day at CCW on the Center's annual Lobby Day. I had never lobbied before and was not sure what to expect. However, I was partnered with someone more experienced who showed me around the various office buildings and gave me lobbying advice. I was pleasantly surprised by the openness in which congressional staff members were willing to sit and listen, ask questions, and generally show interest in what we had to say. Although we did not speak with any senators or representatives directly, we did speak with someone from every office we visited. And although obviously busy, each office was willing to find someone to speak with us.

We opened by explaining our affiliation with the Center and why we were lobbying. Our intention, as you probably know, is to get the Military CO Act introduced in Congress, which would make conscientious objection a statutory right rather than leave it up to Pentagon discretion. The bill would greatly improve the ability of sincere conscientious objectors to have a fair and timely review process. We explained this to the staff members and tried to gauge the possible support of each particular senator or representative. Of course the staff members could not answer directly on behalf of their bosses but were willing to take

our information to pass on. We made sure to exchange contact information, thanked them, and said we would be in touch.

Overall, I feel the process is important and worthwhile in order to lay the groundwork for the bill. It places the issue in their minds and gets our information circulating in Congress. I also feel that it is very important to follow up and continue to lobby on a regular basis. Finding channels of support within Congress is important for the bill's chances of being introduced and subsequently supported. The more congressional staffers we can make aware of the bill, the more possible supporters we will have.

I would say to anyone reading this newsletter that it is both possible and worthwhile to lobby your own representatives on this issue. You may think you do not have enough knowledge or experience to do so. But if you understand the issue and feel passionately about it, you definitely have the necessary qualifications. As someone who just recently became involved with the issue and had never lobbied before, I can tell you from first-hand experience that it is not only within your ability to do so but is worthwhile to the CO cause.

I also participated in the annual CO Day during which we met with others who work on the cause of conscientious objection and heard from two conscientious objectors recently discharged from the military. First, it was interesting to hear from individuals who have been involved in the effort and to hear why they got involved. Secondly, it was great to hear from two recent discharges from the military, Andrew Gorby and Ryan Sigley, and to hear their stories of having a change of heart. In my view both groups are necessary to the CO cause. It is important to have those who have been involved for a long time and have advocacy and lobbying experience, while it is just as important to have recent conscientious objectors straight out of the military who have become inspired to work on the issue. It was also good to hear about some other similar efforts being done, such as the Peace Tax Fund issue and the counter-recruitment drive. It was a lot to take in all at once but was definitely a very rewarding and interesting couple of days. ✍️



## From Officer in Training to Conscientious Objector

By Andrew Gorby

I joined Army ROTC during my junior year of college at the University of Richmond. Many of the reasons I had for joining were similar to those of other ROTC cadets. I was searching for a service-oriented profession that would provide both physical and mental challenges and would reward discipline and athleticism. The Army seemed like the perfect fit, and somewhere in the back of my mind flickered the cliché image of a special operations officer. My one reservation with joining was my opposition to the war in Iraq, yet I held the belief that whether I agreed or disagreed with the war, I had an obligation to provide ethical and creative leadership to those who would eventually serve under my command in a time of war.

I thoroughly enjoyed my two years of participation in ROTC under the guidance of strong leadership. I enjoyed the challenges of leadership, whether as Ranger Challenge captain or planning night and day land navigation courses for Field Training Exercises, having the opportunity to graduate from Airborne School, and competing with my comrades and friends on the PT test. My college experience was typical of any college experience with the exception of ROTC classes, weekend field training exercises once a semester, early morning PT sessions, and wearing the uniform once a week. An added benefit of ROTC was that I had no need to worry about summer internships to fluff a resume, establishing relationships with professors so they could someday write a letter of recommendation, or maintaining a perfect GPA.

I was commissioned 13 May 2006 as an infantry 2LT in the U.S Army. My parents weren't happy with my decision to join the military, although I was able to finally angrily silence them with the question "Whose son or daughter would you send?" Two weeks later I packed my car and headed to Ft. Benning GA where I was to attend Basic Officer Leadership Course II (BOLC II), Infantry Officer Basic Leadership Course (IBOLC), followed by what

was to be the culmination of my ROTC and infantry training: Ranger School.

My transformation to becoming a conscientious objector is difficult to divide into definable phases throughout my time at Fort Benning. During BOLC II I remember calling my Dad after a day on the firing range and telling him that the question "What am I doing here?" suddenly sprang into my mind, seemingly from nowhere, as my fellow soldiers were firing down the line.

He replied, "I am sure you think that often" to which I replied, "Yeah, I guess so." This thought was to stay with me throughout my training, and I always was able to give the same answer of "You are training to lead 40 men into and out of combat and provide ethical and creative leadership in a time of war." I looked forward to that challenge.

As I progressed through IBOLC I found myself thinking deeply about the mission of the Army and the purpose of the M4 which never left my side. I spent more and more time withdrawn from my squad and platoon of other lieutenants, despite having made many friends, and more time reading and questioning my chosen profession. One of the books I brought out into field, which sits dirty on my bookshelf today, was *The Quaker Reader*, which earned me the nickname of Willy P after the only Quaker the other lieutenants knew, William Penn. It was during this time I came to realize that as many times as I fired my weapon I would never be comfortable with a weapon whose sole purpose was to kill. The uneasiness was again easily rationalized through limiting my sphere of thought to the future platoon which I would be asked to lead, not those whom we would be asked to kill. I graduated from the Infantry Basic Officer Leadership Course near the end of October 2006, ready to begin Ranger School which I had been training for since my junior year of college.

Ranger School proved to be not the culmination of my infantry training, as I had expected, but rather the culmination of my realization that my conscience would not allow me to engage in the violence and killing of war. It was at Ranger School where I overheard a proud comment made concerning the killing of a 12-year-old boy, and it was at this moment that I made the decision I would not kill another

*(Continued next page)*