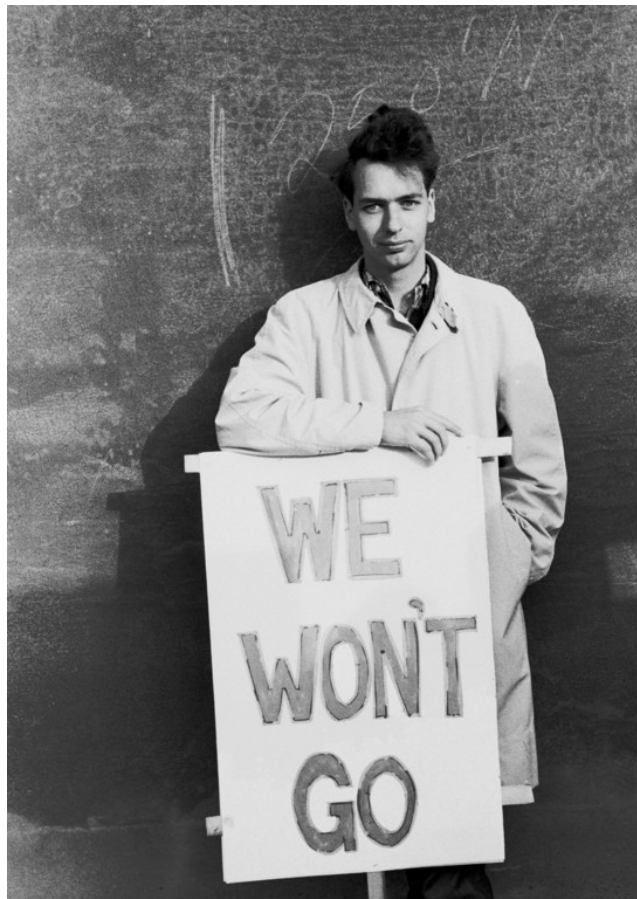


Drawing the Line:
An Examination of the Conflicts of
Beliefs in the Vietnam War Draft



A young man protesting the Vietnam War Draft — (Lonidier)

Isaac Teuscher
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*“I owe allegiance to one thing higher than the government
of the United States, and that is my own conscience”*

— Anonymous Vietnam War draft protester

October 15, 1965. The conversations in colleges and at dinner tables across the United States are full of contention and disagreement: over freedoms, over justice, but mostly over the Vietnam War. Today, on Whitehall Street in lower Manhattan, a crowd has gathered. A peace-group protesting against the military buildup in Vietnam has organized a rally for the afternoon and, as a result, police barricades have been set up to separate the protesters from the jeering crowd which has developed. Halfway down a side street, a sound truck with a platform and microphone atop faces Whitehall Street. Five-hundred supporters gather around the truck-platform waiting for the speakers while an opposing crowd of two-hundred heckle "Get a job!" and "Go back to Russia!". As the rally progresses, the anti-war crowd responds heartily to the impassioned oratory of the speakers. The applause and cheers of the one side seeks to overcome the shouts and hoots of the other.

One of the final speakers, David Miller, stands nervously waiting for his turn. Dressed in a dark pin-stripe suit his mother had bought him as a graduation present several months earlier, a white button down shirt, and a narrow dark tie, he presented a far different picture from what the public imagined as the typical anti-war protester. Indeed, this was not to be a typical anti-war speech. Having been asked to give a five minute speech about non-cooperation, he had agreed to speak, but not knowing exactly what to say, he decided to instead make a much bolder statement.

Soon enough his turn came, and with a sweaty brow, in a state of low-level panic, he climbed the ladder up to the truck platform to face the crowd. After surveying the expectant congregation, which fell hush in anticipation, he said, "I am not going to give my prepared speech. I am going to let this action speak for itself. I know that you people across the street really know what is happening in Vietnam. I am opposed to the draft and the war in Vietnam" (Miller).

With those words, David Miller pulled his draft classification card from his suit coat pocket along with a pack of matches brought especially for the occasion. He lit a match, then another. They both blew out in the late afternoon breeze. As he struggled with the matches, another young man with a May 2nd Movement button on his jacket held up a cigarette lighter. It worked just fine.

The draft card burned as he raised it aloft between his thumb and index finger. A roar of approval from the rally crowd greeted the enkindled card. The clamor awakened the momentarily mesmerized hecklers, and they resumed their shouts.

While both camps yelled, Miller stood, the flame only inches from his hands. Such an action was more than simply in direct defiance to recent laws which declared the destruction of draft-cards to be illegal, it was a symbol of protest and discontent towards the Vietnam War and draft which would be remembered for years to come. He dropped the final piece of the card as the flames reached his fingertips, not having made preparation for the card to be completely consumed.

Though awkward and clumsy, David Miller made the most powerful statement of the day and, with his single burning card, ignited anti-draft flames in the hearts of thousands of other young men across the nation. Realizing he had not prepared a conclusion, he mumbled into the microphone, "Well, I guess that's one dead draft card" (Miller).

In no more than five minutes, it was over. Triumphant and relieved, Miller left the stage. The magnitude of what he had just done hit him halfway down the sound truck ladder so that he hung suspended in his descent. From this moment on, he would forever be known as the first person to publicly destroy a draft card after the passage of the law specifically prohibiting the act. He was now David Miller: the first draft card burner. (Miller).

All around the world — and especially in the United States — the 1960's were a time of massive questioning, discontent, and protest. From the hippie movement, to the free speech movement in Berkeley, to the pacifist movement, to the civil rights movement in the South, the younger generation in cities and colleges all over the nation was rising up, challenging, and protesting both the government and the society around them (Foley). The anti-Vietnam War and Draft movement was most certainly influenced by each of the other social movements in the 60's, yet it maintained a unique identity (Foley).

When understanding the anti-draft movement, a distinction must be made between the anti-war protesters and the anti-draft protesters. In many ways, the movements were the same, as the anti-draft movement was a more specific subset of the greater anti-Vietnam War movement. Some protested any military involvement in Vietnam, while others disagreed with the policy of forced personal involvement, which the draft called for. Draft resisters, those who

usually protested the entire war but always were against having the draft, were sometimes organized into activism groups, but sometimes they were simply disobedient delinquents who were not organized in any specific group. Anti-war protesters also carried out their resistance in various methods: “[Some] filed for conscientious objector status, didn’t report for induction when called, or attempted to claim disability. Soldiers [also] went AWOL and fled to Canada through underground railroad networks of anti-war supporters” (Kindig). The majority of this paper will not concern these delinquents or the larger anti-war movement, but will rather specifically focus on the anti-draft movement.

The campaign to end the draft and war in Vietnam gripped much of the discussion and debate of the late 1960’s through the early 1970’s, both because of its magnitude and because of the enigmatic questions it brought up. In fact, at its height, the movement grew to be so big that, according to historian Jessie Kindig, “In 1972, there were more conscientious objectors than actual draftees [and] all major cities faced backlogs of induction-refusal legal cases. [The] Selective Service later reported that 206,000 persons were reported delinquent during the entire war period” (Kindig). The campaign was not only backed by fiery young activists; as the war in Vietnam got more costly and bloody, more and more U.S. citizens came to support the anti-war position. In 1965, only 25 percent of the public thought that sending troops into Vietnam was a mistake; however, that number would grow to 61 percent by 1971 (Gallup Polls).



*Signs from a demonstration in Seattle against the Vietnam War and draft —
(Kindig)*

Just like the Civil Rights Movement before it, the anti-draft movement was fought on many fronts: in the courts, in college debates, on the Senate floor, and in churches, homes and streets all throughout the United States. What began as disagreement became a movement of mass disobedience, which came front and center in the politics, policies and lifestyle of the time. Indeed the anti-war movement was a movement which, due to its size and influence, significantly impacted the actions of the U.S., and as a result, shaped the world (Foley).

A major reason why this movement brought about such great commotion and upheaval was that, besides directly challenging the laws of the land, the draft-resistance movement brought up one of the most intriguing, multilayered, and enigmatic questions of governance and justice: what course of action should a person take when one's duty to the government and their personal beliefs on religion, morality or conscience contradict each other? Clearly this enigma of what U.S. citizens should do when their personal beliefs contradict the policies of the government is a complex and challenging question. It pulls at duty to the government and consent to be governed on the one hand while being drawn by conflicting ethical and moral beliefs on the other hand (Sandel). Though each case is unique and thus requires specific investigation, in the case of the Vietnam War draft-resistance movement, protest and firm challenges to the policies of the government through legal means were surely justified and indeed ought to have taken place. However, as citizens of the United States of America, until the policy and laws were changed, those drafted should have followed their call to duty and served their country to their full capacity.

To some it may seem unthinkable that the government would ever have the right to institute such a massive draft and conduct an extremely long and costly war, especially considering U.S. soil was never threatened or attacked. Furthermore, many felt that the Vietnam War was a hopeless fight and a sinkhole for the government's resources, the country's attention and the lives of the nation's young men. Throughout the war, however, the government remained firm in its course of action. Congress is vested with the power¹ to raise and support armies as well as to declare war, to make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces, and to make laws necessary and proper for executing their granted powers. This includes the power to compel military service, or in other words, to hold a draft. This power

¹ U.S. Constitution, Art. I, § 8

was exercised by the Selective Draft Law of May 18, 1917 which set up the Selective Service System which in turn was called upon by Congress to institute a draft for the Vietnam War. Though petitions came against its legality, during the war, it was upheld by President Johnson and President Nixon, by lawmakers in the Senate and the House of Representatives, and by the judicial branch with the Supreme Court case of *United States v. O'Brien* in 1968 (*United States v. O'Brien*). The Vietnam War Draft was not unique, nor was the scrutiny of and protest against it; in fact, resistance to conscription has been present in all U.S. wars for which drafts were held (Kindig). While there has always been protest, the system of conscription used by the U.S. has never been ruled as illegal (Foley). Clearly the creation of the draft, involvement in the war and the general process of the government was legally sound and was not in and of itself unjust from a strictly legal perspective.

Still, when looking at the massive death tolls and chaos the Vietnam War caused, one asks: Why were U.S. soldiers fighting and dying in a foreign country halfway around the world? Why would the government enter into a war in Vietnam? This question, like every global politics situation, has a very complicated and multilayered answer. However, I will attempt to offer some context and information on the preceding events that contributed to such an ugly, entangled war.

The United States first got involved in Vietnam in the 1950's by advising the Diem government of South Vietnam after North and South Vietnam split (PBS). Vietnam soon became an important theater of the Cold War, as the communist-backed North broke off from the US-and French-backed South. Fear of Vietnam falling completely to communist rule and then other parts — if not the whole rest — of Asia becoming communist as a result of this first domino in a set of countries drove the U.S. to become more and more involved in the country (History.com). The concern of Communism spreading across Asia became very real when Ho Chi Minh's² communist government was elected and then recognized by the People's Republic of China, in addition to being backed by the USSR (Tomlinson). U.S. involvement continued as the Military Assistance and Advisory Group continued to advise the South Vietnamese military and provide weapons, funding and aid to them (Tomlinson). President Eisenhower articulated the importance of U.S. involvement in Vietnam at a press conference on the 7th of April 1954,

² Ho Chi Minh was a Vietnamese Communist revolutionary leader and the political leader of North Vietnam leading up to the Vietnam War

where he spoke about the ‘domino theory’, saying, “You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is a certainty that it will go over very quickly ... [loss of Vietnam would lead to a] loss of Indochina, of Burma, of Thailand, of the Peninsula, and Indonesia following” (History.com). He went on to say that the impact of these governmental shifts to Communism on the world would be “incalculable” (History.com). Evidently this was a major concern and priority for the U.S. government as it felt obligated to not stand idly by and watch countries become communist (Tomlinson).

Throughout the Cold War, there was little scarier to the U.S. — and especially to the U.S. government leaders — than Communism because of its lack of freedom, both politically and economically. Explaining why the U.S. ought not to let Communism become the system of the world, President Dwight D. Eisenhower said:

Communism and freedom...signify two titanic ideas, two ways of life, two totally irreconcilable beliefs in the nature and destiny of man. The one – freedom – knows man as a creature of God, blessed with a free and individual destiny, governed by eternal moral and natural laws. The second—Communism—claims man to be an animal creature of the state, curses him of his stubborn instinct for independence [and] governs with tyranny. (Time.com)

Essentially the reasoning behind the initial involvement in Vietnam was similar to that of the Cold War in general; the U.S. government believed freedom needed to be protected all around the world, and if protecting and maintaining global freedoms meant the U.S. had to become politically or even militarily involved in another nation, it would do so. From the initial involvement in the 1950’s through the late 1960’s, when thousands of young men were being drafted to fight each year, Cold War ideals remained a driving force behind each and every government action.

The involvement and eventual war also escalated due to a snowball effect; when the United States first became involved to the day the final boots left Vietnamese soil, there was never a good time to withdraw. As a major player on the international scene and with a reputation of loyalty to allies and trustworthiness in following through on protections, even as the Vietnam War became more and more hopeless through the years, it became more and more difficult to end U.S. involvement in the conflict. In 1969, near to the end of what had been decades of involvement in Vietnam, then-President Richard M. Nixon gave a famous speech in which he spoke to why — at that point as with each year previous — ending the draft and withdrawing troops would be awful for the South Vietnamese and the world as a whole:

For the South Vietnamese, our precipitate withdrawal would inevitably allow the Communists to repeat the massacres which followed their takeover in the North 15 years before. They then murdered more than 50,000 people and hundreds of thousands more died in slave labor camps...With the sudden collapse of our support, these atrocities...would become the nightmare of the entire nation. (Nixon)

Awful breaches of human rights had happened under Communist rule and were feared to become even greater should the US withdraw. Nixon continued, further explaining why the government could not simply end the draft and war, “For the future of peace,” Nixon argued, “precipitate withdrawal would [be] a disaster of immense magnitude. A nation cannot remain great if it betrays its allies and lets down its friends” (Nixon). In essence, Nixon contended that because the nation was already so deeply invested in Vietnam, ending the draft or withdrawing the military too quickly would cause not only chaos in Vietnam but would also undercut the character and loyalty of the U.S. to its allies. This in turn would jostle the peace and balance of the entire global political scene.

Additionally, the President spoke about his role as Commander-in-Chief and the obligation he saw to maintain the war and draft if he saw fit. Nixon stated:

If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces in Vietnam, I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation. This is not a threat. This is a statement of policy, which as Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces, I am making in meeting my responsibility for the protection of American fighting men wherever they may be. (Nixon)

Firmly, yet reasonably, President Nixon in this statement brought up one of the strongest and most central views of the pro-war and pro-draft camp: the perspective that our country is at war, and as such, we ought to do everything in our power to win the war and see our motivation for fighting the war be realized. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces at that time, President Nixon felt obligated by duty to his office to maintain the war in Vietnam until he saw opportunity for peace. This belief was echoed by many U.S. citizens at the time, who, even if they were not in the streets marching in support of the war, were silently backing the government and its policies. Nixon addressed his remarks to this so called ‘silent majority’, saying, “to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans—I ask for your support...as President I hold the responsibility for choosing the best path to that goal [of just and lasting peace] and then leading the Nation along it” (Nixon). Many U.S. citizens did indeed support the government, the war and the accompanying draft. Moreover, even if they had some doubts as to

the intentions of the war, the majority of the drafted soldiers nonetheless fulfilled their duty to serve. To this point, Mike Troyer, who fought in Vietnam, said, “I don't think I gave [an expletive] about Communism. Hey, we're fighting Communism, I don't care if you're fighting against flamenco dancers, okay? We're going to do whatever the government says — they own me, I got to do it” (PBS). Even some protesters appreciated and acknowledged the men who were drafted and willingly risked their lives for the nation's cause. Maurice Zeitlin, who protested the draft, said:

I have only respect for the men who fought in that war, because they didn't make the war, they didn't choose to fight in that war, but they accepted a responsibility that they thought was theirs as an American citizen, okay? They carried the burden of being an American citizen. When they were sent to war, they fought...[they were] doing their duty. (PBS)

This concept of duty and responsibility as a U.S. citizen to do what your country asks of you is in essence what make a draft possible. Ultimately, while there was a sizeable anti-draft movement, the majority of draftees saw fighting as a noble act, and even if they did not support the war as a whole, they remained obedient to the government.

Civic duty is the powerful force which drives the draft, and to many, trumps even moral doubts. In the United States of America, the government, as well as the operation of society, is built on the foundational social contract that the citizens of the nation will fulfill their duties (Sandel). Voters ought to vote, one ought to serve to their full capacity when selected for a jury, citizens ought to pay the taxes they owe, and everyone ought to follow the established laws. Duty and obedience to the government's established process is the fundamental base from which our society, government and country are able to operate. When someone neglects their duty, the system breaks down and the society begins to fall apart. Without voting, politicians and the representative government will not be true to the people; without juries, law and its interpretation will become subjective and unjust; without taxes, the government could not operate; and without obedience to the laws, the U.S. would descend into violence, anarchy and disorder. In short, allegiance to and support of the nation and government is required if the United States is to progress as a country. A military draft is a classic example of civic obligation; as such, many in the U.S. were shocked or repelled by the draft protesters, who they saw as shirking their duty. I understand and largely agree with this position. I see conscription as a civic responsibility which not only serves as a safeguard for our military but as a process which

expresses and strengthens democratic citizenship. While I recognize there are certain situations and laws which can and should be resisted because of personal beliefs, in most cases I echo the stance of President Nixon when he said, “It is not the easy way. It is the right way” (Nixon).

While many supported the war, there were many who, for a myriad of reasons, detested the war, protested its draft, and resisted its call of duty through the courts, on the streets and in their personal consciences. For as long as there have been drafts in the United States, there has been discontent and resistance to them; however, the Vietnam War draft-resistance movement was particularly relevant because of its magnitude, its varied approaches and groups, and, most of all, the deep questions of conflicting beliefs which it brought forth. Draft protest, as with any social movement, took time to grow and gain influence, but in the early 1970’s, close to the end of the war, the movement had reached its peak (Kindig). By that point draft resisters, combined with the larger anti-war movement on university campuses and discontent inside the military, were so widespread that there were simply too many men avoiding the draft to track down and charge for violating the law; out of 209,517 accused draft offenders, less than 9,000 were convicted (Kindig). The anti-draft and anti-war protests were so large and prevalent in national politics that they did indeed affect the politicians and policies of the time and helped to push for a faster end to the conflict (Foley).

Many of the 209,517 accused draft offenders however, were not so much protesters who actively resisted the draft as they were simply ‘draft dodgers’, shirking responsibility and fleeing from the call to fight. These dodgers are the group for whom I have the least understanding, empathy or acceptance. Not only did they shy away from and reject their civil duty to serve in the army, but they had neither grounds nor guts on which to call for change. Many simply sought to protect their own lives by fleeing or by making themselves ineligible through some loophole in the system (Foley). I feel that if one is to reject their civic obligations, they ought to have a deep, legitimate basis of conflicting beliefs, and if so, have a responsibility to explain their view and do what is in their power to proclaim their beliefs and work to improve the system as is reasonable. Draft protesters openly defied the law and awaited the system’s punishment with an ethical perspective which compelled them to oppose the draft and at the same time, drove them to fight the government and Selective Service System (Foley). Resisters were those who, because of their beliefs, saw anti-draft efforts as the proper, just course of

action. “For [draft resisters], individual dissent was not inconsistent with good citizenship” (Foley). It is this group of articulate, protesting resisters on whom I will focus the remainder of my study, as I believe they — unlike the draft dodgers — provide the other legitimate and justifiable course of action to take when trying to answer such a great dilemma of belief.



Draft card burning at Union Square, New York, in 1965 — (Riegle)

Draft Resisters took action in a multitude of ways: by raising judicial challenges, by forming groups to call for change, by burning draft supplies, and by opposing the government's policies internally. Firstly, there were many court cases which protesters created to challenge the legality of the draft. These protesters sought to bring about change through the established legal system, and as a result, required a definite ruling one way or the other. One of the largest and most significant cases was that of Dr. Benjamin Spock and his resistance group in the Boston area. In *United States v. Spock*, several activists organized together to challenge the constitutionality of the draft law and decided to turn in a briefcase of draft cards to the government office in 1967, and, in doing so, invited government prosecution for violating the draft laws (Robinson). Those involved included Dr. Benjamin Spock, who was an activist and pediatrician; the Reverend William Sloane Coffin Jr., who was the chaplain of Yale University; Michael Ferber, who was a twenty-three year old Harvard graduate student, and Mitchell Goodman, who was a teacher and author from Maine (Campbell). They used a non-violent but

active process to protest the draft, and, importantly, were fully willing to accept the legal penalties for their actions — in this case being up to five years in prison and fines of \$10,000 (Robinson). In addition to turning in the draft cards, the protesters also wrote and signed a charter which stated their beliefs, goals and justification entitled '*A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority*' ("A Call To Resist Illegitimate Authority"). This charter became the basis for the federal government's prosecution of five of the protesters ("Counseling Draft Resistance: The Case for a Good Faith Belief Defense"). The protesters' legal grounds were the First Amendment, as well as the argument of moral and ethical responsibilities to oppose the war and draft. The document read in part:

We further believe that the war is unconstitutional and illegal...Therefore, we believe on all these grounds that every free man has a legal right and a moral duty to exert every effort to end this war, to avoid collusion with it, and to encourage others to do the same...We firmly believe that our statement is the sort of speech that...must be free. ("A Call To Resist Illegitimate Authority")

By protesting and challenging the law in such a non-contentious, legal manner and going through the proper court system, as opposed to burning draft cards or rioting, they effectively brought to light the central conflict of beliefs. While other protesters were denounced and disregarded because of their unruly and violent means of protest, or were ignored because of legal loopholes, Dr. Spock and his associates could not be dismissed as there was no violence involved, nor were there legal technicalities with which to avoid their case — as the group of protesters included well educated and experienced lawyers — nor could they be seen as unreasonable or anarchists, as they were willing to accept the proper legal penalties should their actions be found as unjust. To this end, they wrote in their charter, "We firmly believe...that the actions we will undertake are as legal as is the war resistance of the young men themselves. But we recognize that the courts may find otherwise, and that if so we might all be liable to prosecution and severe punishment" ("A Call To Resist Illegitimate Authority"). This scenario undeviatingly challenged the draft through the proper means: non-violent, active, reasonable expression of concern and need for change. For this I commend these protesters and am convinced that their personal beliefs were indeed genuine and deeply motivating. Indeed one of the men involved, before signing the statement, said, "I have reluctantly decided that civil disobedience is the only answer to the immorality of our times...This is the first time in my life that I have ever felt obliged to violate the law" (Robinson). This moralistic obligation was the

foundation of their disagreement with the draft, and was eloquently stated in closing of their charter, which read:

In any case, we feel that we cannot shrink from fulfilling our responsibilities to the youth whom many of us teach, to the country whose freedom we cherish, and to the ancient traditions of religion and philosophy which we strive to preserve in this generation. We call upon all men of good will to join us in this confrontation with immoral authority. ("A Call To Resist Illegitimate Authority")

As was anticipated, Dr. Spock and the others authors of the charter were charged with conspiring to counsel violation of the Selective Service law ("Counseling Draft Resistance: The Case for a Good Faith Belief Defense"). After a five week long trial in the spring of 1968 in Boston, a jury found all but one of the participants guilty (Campbell). The Court of Appeals for the First Circuit reversed most of the convictions in July of 1969 but found the charter calling for resistance to the draft to be "a call to unlawful refusal to be drafted," and as such it was found as conspiracy "to unlawfully, knowingly and willfully counsel, aid and abet" violation of the draft laws ("Counseling Draft Resistance: The Case for a Good Faith Belief Defense"). In the end, what was ruled on was not the legality of the draft law, as the protesters had hoped, but was instead the accusation of illegal conspiracy. This reasoning was expressed by Judge Francis J.W. Ford, who, in his charge to the jury, said:

We are not trying the legality, morality or constitutionality of the war in Vietnam, or the rights of a citizen to protest...We are not trying the United States of America...The conspiracy indictment is the crucial issue and it is your duty to determine whether the defendants knowingly and willingly conspired. (Campbell)

And so, although Dr. Spock and his companions sought a judicial test of the constitutionality of the Vietnam War and the demands which the Selective Service System made on draft registrants, they instead found they themselves were the ones deemed illegal. The Justice Department and District Judge concluded that a good faith effort to test a law does not excuse a violation if the law is held to be valid ("Counseling Draft Resistance: The Case for a Good Faith Belief Defense"). In hindsight, however, various law journals have argued that because the violators sincerely believed that their actions were constitutionally protected despite the dictates of the draft law, they ought to have been given a good faith belief defence ("Counseling Draft Resistance: The Case for a Good Faith Belief Defense"). No matter the ultimate verdict, I, for one, laud these individuals for their process of challenging the draft: non-violent, credible and done through the established system of disputing a law. I have respect for these men, who took

a higher road of protest rather than rioting or simply not reporting to the draft. By protesting in such a way, Dr. Spock and his associates were not only more effective and efficient in questioning the political system, but also did not disrupt uninvolved individuals' lives, were seen as more legitimate by the public, as well as the nation's lawmakers, and did not have to resort to violence to have their opinions heard. Due to their moralistic basis of protest and the manner in which they challenged the law, I feel Dr. Spock and his companions' actions were justified.

Another form of protest and challenge to the draft was conducted by the 'Milwaukee 14'. The 'Milwaukee 14' were a group of young men who, on the 24th of September, 1968, broke into draft board offices in Milwaukee, took bags of files of draft registrations, and set fire to the papers. The men then stood around the bonfire of documents and waited to be arrested (Forest).



The 'Milwaukee 14' burning draft records on September 24, 1968 — (Forest)

As was foreseen, they were all arrested, jailed for a month, freed on bail, and then tried the next year, after which each went to prison for over a year (Forest). Though this act of disobedience was clearly illegal and destructive — on the border between civil protest and politically fueled vandalism — what I find most intriguing is the justification, reasoning and perspective of the protesters.

Jim Forest was one of the 14 persons involved in this act, and years later, he wrote about why he did what he did and how he felt about his actions. He cited morality, religious belief, and a sense of greater law as the driving forces which inspired him to participate in this deed. To the question of why he protested the draft law, and why the protest was ruinous, instead of non-violent, he said, "I'm not an anarchist... But when a law is socially destructive, then we are obliged, as St. Peter said, 'to obey God rather than man'" (Forest). This stance of being obligated to disregard socially destructive laws might seem to simply be an excuse for anarchy; however, the rest of Forest's answer helps place his argument in reasonable terms. He went on to say, "Laws may not be perfect but most of them exist to help us live together peacefully. Most of them are like barriers along the edge of a dangerous road [that] help keep us from driving into a ravine" (Forest). Forest and the rest of the 'Milwaukee 14' were not proposing anarchy or challenging the government in its entirety; rather, they saw the draft law specifically to be an immoral and socially destructive law, and, as such, a law in need of reform. He went on to explain that, as he saw it, the Christian gospel provides instruction to protest and act out against immoral or unjust laws just as Jesus did by driving the moneychangers out of the temple³ (Forest).

This religious justification was yet another foundation for many protesters. Besides Forest, many of the 'Milwaukee 14' felt they had religious obligations to protest (Forest), and many of Dr. Spock's associates had similar motivations (Campbell). Even David Miller, the first man to publicly burn his draft card, was a devout Catholic who was deeply moved and inspired by religious teachings (Riegle). One of the major inspirations for many of the protesters such as Miller was the *Mater et Magistra* written by Pope John XXIII in 1961. It read, "It is necessary that public authorities have a correct understanding of the common good. This embraces the sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby people are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection" (Riegle). To many who are religious, obedience to God and His laws trumps any duty towards secular government. Thus many of the draft resisters did not feel the pull of civic duty to accept the draft, as strongly as they felt a religious duty to oppose and protest against what they felt was a grossly immoral law. Similarly to those such as Dr. Spock, who sought to protest through the courts, I acknowledge the religious and moral

³ This story is from the Bible, found in St. Matthew, Chapter 21

grounds from which the 'Milwaukee 14' were motivated; however, I disagree and condemn them for their means of protest — being ruinous of government property.

All in all, the 'Milwaukee 14', Dr. Spock's co-signers, and David Miller, were each inspired by moral, ethical or religious beliefs, and as a result felt obligated to oppose the draft. Since their motivation and reasoning was deeply rooted in their personal beliefs, even to this day these protesters remain fervent in support of their actions. For example, when asked if he would go to prison again under the same circumstances, Jim Forest said, "Oh, definitely!... Things just had to change... We had strong beliefs and community and... there was hope" (Reigle). Just like Forest, David Miller, when asked if he would burn his draft card again, resolutely responded, "Yes, absolutely. I'm not sorry that I did it then; I'm very, very glad... If it has to happen, then it has to happen" (Reigle).

Although obedience to the draft laws and protest against them are opposite actions, in my eyes, as long as they are non-confrontational, non-harming, with acceptance and respect for the laws, and are the actions guided by one's pure conscience, they are both legitimate paths to be taken from the conflict of beliefs which the Vietnam War draft concocted. While destructive protests and dodging the draft did not accomplish anything more than breaking down the system, honest concerns brought up through proper channels, while accepting consequences, is a valuable and necessary course of action if our laws, government, and society are to improve. Furthermore, this principle is not unique to the Vietnam War draft; in all cases where personal beliefs conflict with government policies, proper channels of protest by deeply motivated individuals work effectively. From Korematsu and the constitutionality of Japanese internment, to Brown v. Board and the equality of segregation, to Miranda and personal rights in trial, one thread remains constant: deeply motivated individuals can and do change laws. In the words of one protester, "You need to have people who are willing to stand up and take action when they think something is wrong... that's what a democracy is all about" (PBS).

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