Conscientious Objection: Is This for You?

Discerning a CO Claim and Documenting It with Selective Service

A PowerPoint Presentation, with Activities and Reference Handouts
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See Read Me First
This is an **Overview**
(See the Teacher’s Guide for Details)

- Information about the Selective Service System (SSS), draft, & conscientious objection (CO) as well as how to discern and document a CO claim & **letter**
- Activities and exercises including a simulation, filing a CO application, & role-playing before a “Mock Draft Board”
- Reactions, explorations, discussion, & action plans

See Agenda #1, 2, or 3
Why Go Through the Effort?

1. Conscientious Objection to War:
   To safeguard young people in case a draft is ever reinstated
   *Preparing for an event that may never happen vs. NOT preparing for that event, and it does happen*

2. Conscientious Commitment to Peace:
   To promote the testimony of peace & nonviolence as teens become adults
   *Discerning and articulating a CO stance that has both immediate and long-range benefits*

See Long-Range Benefits of Writing CO Letters
Context and Disclaimers

✓ Being a CO comes from a deep, inner belief or leading. It is not simply a way to get out of the draft or to avoid life-threatening situations.

✓ Others feel it is their patriotic duty to join the Armed Services. We do not wish to diminish their decision.

✓ This presentation is based on prior experience, case law (when the draft existed), and current Selective Service System (SSS) law. Everything could change.

✓ SSS currently does not grant CO status. Only a draft board would and only if a draft is reinstated. But these steps may help.

✓ Claiming a CO exemption is not easy. These steps are NO GUARANTEE one will be granted. That will depend upon the applicant and the draft board.
Three Criteria for Being a CO
(Conscientious Objector)

1. Conscientiously opposed to participating in **any and all war**, 
2. Based on **moral, ethical, and/or religious** beliefs (and training), and 
3. Must be **sincere or deeply held** (or play a significant role in one’s life).

See *Overview of Selective Service and Conscientious Objection*
Opening Exercises:

• View video tape interviews OR
• Pick one of these exercises:
  ➢ Could You Chant This at Boot Camp then Do It Later? Or Cadences and Jody Calls
  ➢ Meaningful or Inspiring Quotes
• If more time is allotted, also use the Violence vs. Nonviolence Brainstorming Exercise.

See *Exercises* as listed
Part I: Selective Service System

Military Selective Service Act 1940 (1948)

- A Registry of Names, SS#s, Addresses of 18-26-yr.-olds
- Conscientious Objection--Recognition vs. Documentation
- Mandatory Registration--Voluntary vs. Forced
- A Draft Ready TO GO

Voluntary vs. Forced
Conscientious Objection--Recognition vs. Documentation
Mandatory Registration--Voluntary vs. Forced
A Registry of Names, SS#s, Addresses of 18-26-yr.-olds
A Draft Ready TO GO
THE LAW

The Military Selective Service Act

- To deliver manpower to Armed Forces
- A bureaucratic organization complete with personnel, a set of regulations, rules, definitions, and procedures
- A registry of names and contact info
- Administers “Alternative Service”
- “The purpose of registration is, in itself, a form of participation in war” (Rostker v. Goldberg, U.S. Supreme Court, 1981)

Courtesy of Selective Service Teacher’s Guide; https://www.sss.gov
The Selective Service System: A Draft Ready To Go

- **In Non-Draft Times**
  A registry that holds the name, address, birthdate, and social security number of young men (possibly young women in the future) eligible and ready for military induction.

- **In Draft Times**
  A federal system/procedure that drafts young men (and perhaps women) into the military. Includes a lottery selection, induction notices, re-classifications or deferments, local draft boards, and procedures right up to induction.
Selective Service Registration Law & Threats (*Real, but not used now*)

- With few exceptions, all 18-year-old men in the U.S. (and maybe women in the future) must register within 30 days of their 18th birthday.
- Failure to register is a felony, with a fine of up to $250,000 and/or 5 years in jail.
- Selective Service law has no procedure for filing a claim as a CO at registration time.

See *Overview of Selective Service and Conscientious Objection*
What Actually Happens!
Solomon & Thurmond Amendments

- Few prosecutions sought within the past 30 years.
- Rather than fines and jail, those who do not register suffer subtle, hidden penalties, ineligibility, and missed opportunities: a state a driver’s license, federal or state aid for college & medical students, federal or state jobs & training, & citizenship to immigrants.

See the Appendix for More on Selective Service and Registration Linked to State Driver’s License & Other Opportunities
What If I Don’t Register?
Federal Consequences

✓ No Federal grants or loans
✓ No Federal job training programs
✓ No Federal employment
✓ No U.S. citizenship for immigrants

Above slide courtesy of Selective Service Teacher’s Guide
What If I Don’t Register?

State consequences: your driver’s license plus “Solomon & Thurmond” penalties

See Appendix: Registration Linked to State Driver’s License; Other Opportunities; California Legislature passed but Gov. Brown vetoed, saying it was not necessary.
What If I Am 26 or Older and Haven’t Registered?

Once you reach age 26, it's too late to register!

Even though you may not be prosecuted, you may be denied student financial assistance, federal job training, most federal employment, and citizenship for the undocumented FOREVER unless you can “show a preponderance of evidence” convincing the agency providing the benefit you are seeking, not Selective Service, that your failure to register “was not knowing and/or willful.”
Ways SSS Suggests to Register

• U.S. Postal Service form (only way to indicate a CO claim)
• On-line through Agency website
• Reminder postcard from Agency
• Telephone, if card & PIN received in mail
• At a participating High School
• U.S. Embassy
• While filling out Federal student aid or job training form
• Visa application or Immigration/Naturalization form

*Note: SSS does not mention automatic registration in over 46 states/territories when applying for a state driver’s license!
SSS: Same Yet Different from Before

- Still a mandated Federal Law for 18-yr.-old males
- Still the precursor to a draft that is ready to conscript and mobilize an expanded Armed Forces
- Still a civilian agency, separate from DoD or Pentagon, falling under Executive Branch
- BUT, “fairer,” more equitable, less preferential treatment, fewer deferments. Boards will have consistent standards and training
- Shifted from applicant initiated to automated, hidden systems
- Denial of state/federal programs and state driver’s license
- Registration is more efficient, effortless, seamless, invisible
- No way to indicate a CO claim; can only be done with draft
- Agencies electronically cross-reference & data-share registration (State Dept. of Motor Vehicles, Education, Labor, Citizenship and Immigration, I.R.S, U.S. Postal Service, JAMRS, etc.)
No Draft Now, BUT…
Reaching the “Tipping Point:”
An End to the All Volunteer Force

• “Endless wars” that truly never end
• Service members, through stop-loss orders and repeated deployments, suffer from physical and psychological wounds
• A global battlefield encompassing every nook and cranny of our nation
• Heightened security and protection at home as well as abroad
• Future wars i.e., with ISIS, the greater Middle East, Iran, North Korea, China
• Universal Service and Training Acts
• Next draft could include women or specialty skills like doctors, linguists, and tech geeks
The Draft Sequence

1. Congress and President authorize a draft.
2. The lottery is held, matching birthdates randomly with sequence numbers (1-366).
3. Components of SS agency are activated including Local and Appeal Boards.
4. Physical, mental, moral examinations are given.
5. Induction notices are sent to those who passed.*
6. Registrants requesting CO re-classification have within 10 days to file paper work; Boards decide.
7. First draftees are inducted. (<2 weeks or 6 months)

Part II: Who is a Conscientious Objector?

Three main criteria for conscientious objection

History of COs in America and Supreme Court Rulings

Two types of COs:
1-A-O & 1-O
Military Civilian

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Military Civilian
Three Criteria for Being a CO (Conscientious Objector)

1. Conscientiously opposed to participating in any and all war,
2. Based on moral, ethical, and/or religious beliefs (and training), and
3. Must be sincere or deeply held (or play a significant role in one’s life).

See Overview of Selective Service and Conscientious Objection
A History of COs in America

- American Revolution: Some colonial legislatures exempted COs based on religious affiliation.
- Civil War: Still on religious affiliation, a CO could pay $300 to a “Slave Fund” in lieu of conscription.
- WW I: Based on religious affiliation; COs were part of the military and served noncombatant duty; eventually alternative service was an option. COs were not treated well, some imprisoned or abused.
- For 150 years, church membership vs. individual conscience was discussed but never really resolved.
- WW II: Civilian draft board decided deferment, but by religious training or belief (not religious affiliation), and must have a belief in a Supreme Being.

See COs and Selective Service in America (1656 to Present) in the Reference Handouts as an outline & as a long narrative in the Appendix.
Key U.S. Supreme Court Rulings Since World War II

1. Seeger, 1965: The Court struck down the “belief in a Supreme Being” clause saying within religious training and belief would come “all sincere beliefs … based upon a power or being, or upon faith, to which all else is subordinate or upon which all else is ultimately dependent,” OR, “does the claimed belief occupy the same place … as an orthodox belief in God…?”

2. Welsh, 1970: “Spurred by deeply held moral, ethical, or religious beliefs, (that) would give them no rest or peace if they…become a part of an instrument of war.”

3. Gillette, 1971: Not political or selective reasons, or an unjust war. It “must amount to conscientious opposition to participating personally in any war and all war.”

See U.S. Supreme Court Rulings, Congressional Legislation, and Law
## Two Types of COs

### In the Military

- Joins the military but does noncombatant training and service
- Does not carry or use a weapon, even in combat situations.
- Might be assigned as a medic, chaplain, pot scrubber
- Classified as 1-A-O

### Not in the Military

- Has nothing to do with the military system; stays in civilian jurisdiction
- Must do equivalent time of alternative service*
  - (outside of military)
- Might work in a mental hospital, prison, police force
- Classified as 1-O

*Work of national importance under civilian direction.

See *Overview of Selective Service and Conscientious Objection*
Desmond T. Doss

- 7th Day Adventist
- Worshipped on Sabbath, or 7th day
- Refused to carry a weapon
- Classified I-A-0, or noncombatant, as defined by President Roosevelt
- Served as Medic Pfc. in World War II in Philippines, Guam & Okinawa
- In one battle spanning 23 days, he saved 75 wounded G.I.s under intense enemy fire
- 1st CO to receive the Medal of Honor from President Truman
- CD/Video at www.desmonddoss.com
Part III: Are You a CO & Can You Prove It?

Decide

Document

Discern
Discerning and Deciding: Suggestions to Get Started

1. What do you believe about your own personal participation in war?
2. Can you articulate those beliefs?
3. Can you describe what led you to those beliefs?
4. Can you document or produce evidence that demonstrates those beliefs and how you achieved them?
When God says, “Do not kill” and your command says “Kill,” who do you obey?
Exercise: Worksheet Form 22

- Take 10 minutes and put yourself in a CO’s shoes.
- Would you be 1-A-O or 1-O?
- Then answer the three questions listed on the form.
- Come back, report on one question, and discuss.
- Tri-fold the Worksheet.

See Exercise: Worksheet Form 22

HO: Suggestions to Build Documentation & Worksheet Form 22 Tips
How do you register as a CO?

• Selective Service law recognizes conscientious objection as a deferment.
• However, documentation for a CO claim does not exist at registration time.
• Therefore, the registrant needs to devise his or her own documentation as a basis for a claim.
Three Fundamental Ways to Document a CO Claim

1. Write and present a “CO letter” to your faith or support community.

2. Using the Postal Service form, write in a request for a CO claim, and get it witnessed. Then, when your registration card is returned, write on the return portion, “You did not indicate my preference for a CO classification.”


Tri-fold and send copies to yourself.

See Three Fundamental Ways to Document a CO Claim
Letters to Your Faith or Support Community Asking for Recognition and Documentation

• A “generic” sample letter with some main (legal) points to include
• Some specific, real-life examples

See A Template or Generic Letter Documenting a CO Claim AND Two Sample CO Letters
Some CO Letter Starters…

1. The legal requirements or three criteria for a CO:
   - Against personal participation in any and all war.
   - Based upon moral, ethical, and/or religious training and belief.
   - Sincere; deeply held; documented.

2. Personal statements of conviction and/or belief. Rely on Worksheet Form 22 (& Tips) as a start.

3. Measure yourself against the Supreme Court interpretations of conscientious objection.

4. Ask your faith or support community for help and to hold your concerns institutionally (minutes, lockbox).

See Suggestions for Faith and Support Communities
Register on-line (http://www.sss.gov)  Author’s Note: Registering on-line does not allow additions. Do not register on-line.

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM REGISTRATION FORM

DATE OF BIRTH (MM-DD-YYYY)  SEX (Mark with “X”)  SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT NUMBER

1⇒  □□□-□□□-□□□□  2⇒ □ Male  □ Female  3⇒ □□□-□□□-□□□□

***Note: I am a conscientious objector. Martin Luther King, Jr., January 15, 1953. (Signed and Dated)

LAST NAME

4⇒ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

FIRST NAME & MIDDLE NAME

I, Martin Luther King, Sr., Senior Minister at Ebenezer Baptist Church, witness Martin’s conviction. (Signed and dated)

CURRENT MAILING ADDRESS: STREET ADDRESS & APARTMENT NUMBER

5⇒ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

CITY  STATE  ZIP CODE

I, Howard Thurman, long-time mentor of Martin, witness his conviction as a CO. (Signed and dated)

TODAY’S DATE (MM-DD-YYYY)

6⇒ □□□-□□□-□□□□  7⇒ ____________________

SIGNATURE

See Sample Selective Service System Registration Form
Change of Information Form

See Change of Information Form and a Suggested Reply

This does not show my declaration as a conscientious objector noted on (DATE) on my SS Registration Card.

Date Your Signature
Letters of Support
(from others)

- Gather two, three, or maybe more.
- Get from “respected” people; use a cross-section.
- Should attest to CO’s *sincerity and integrity*.
- Person is familiar with the CO’s position, but doesn’t have to agree.
- Start collecting now, especially because contacts tend to fade through early adulthood transitions from high school, college, and jobs.

See *Letters of Support*
• Keep a CO folder. Include copies of registration forms, CO letters, worksheets, dated workshop agendas, correspondence from SS, readings, journals, homework assignments, movies, songs, discussions, activities, volunteer work, etc.

• Refer to your faith or support community’s records and minutes, letters of support, etc.

• Tri-fold important papers: Copy, fold in thirds, send to self and KEEP, unopened.
A Checklist of Procedures...

- For the 18-year-old’s CO folder
  - Worksheet Form #22
  - Workshop handouts, signed and dated
  - SS Registration Form; Correction letter
  - Letter to one’s support or faith community
  - Letters of support from others

- For the Faith or Support Community
  - Clearness or Support Committee
  - Official records and/or minutes
  - Witness SS Registration Form
  - Store records in a safe place (or use a national registry or other outside agency)

See Suggestions to Build...AND Suggestions for Faith and Support...
Can you “defend” your position?

Role-play a Mock Draft Board
A witness of conscience vs. fear
Not a “test” but a “testimony”

See Exercise: Sample Questions a Draft Board Might Ask
Did We Miss Anything?

- All materials, PowerPoint, handouts, and interview tapes can be downloaded or a hard copy purchased from 910-323-3912 www.Quakerhouse.org
- You can purchase a hard copy of *Raising Conscientious Objector Consciousness among Our Youth* from Friends General Conference (www.FGCQuaker.org) or get a free PDF download at: http://criticalconcern.com/swords-plowshares/co-consciousness.pdf.
- See also www.afsc.org/youthmil and www.centeronconscience.org

See *Teacher’s Resource Guide* for additional materials.
Contact Information for Quaker House

- Lynn & Steve Newsom, Co-Directors
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- Email = qpr@quaker.org curtnpatty@aol.com
- Phone = 910-323-3912
- Curt Torell, Board member/Treasurer (and Clerk for NC Choices for Youth)
- Email = curtnpatty@aol.com
Let’s Review: The Final Exam

1. What are the three criteria for being a CO?
2. What’s the difference between Class 1-A-O and Class 1-O?
3. What are some types of documentation that show your convictions, leadings, inclinations?
4. What is “tri-folding”?
5. Where can I get copies of these materials?
6. Feedback questions on the presentation:
   ✓ What was most helpful to you in this workshop?
   ✓ Did this meet your expectations? Why/why not?
   ✓ How could it be improved or help you better?
Wrapping Up

1. Get your agenda signed and dated. Add it to your CO documentation folder.
2. Remember to photocopy your Worksheet Form 22, tri-fold, stamp, self-address, and send to yourself.
3. Read the handouts referenced throughout the PowerPoint or found in the Teacher’s Resource Guide.

“War is not the answer.”
Martin Luther King, Jr. from *A Time to Break Silence* speech, April 4, 1967, Riverside Church, N.Y.C