

## **Agustin Aguayo**

### **Nature of Belief:**

My moral view does not allow me to take the life of another human being. Human life and preserving it is of utmost importance to me. I could not possibly contemplate the notion of causing personal harm to others or assisting others in doing so. This also includes participating in any organized movement in a combat zone. I believe that violence of any kind, or supporting thereof, for example being a combat medic (assisting the injured to later go back to a combat area) is not acceptable. My conscience will not allow me to continue down this path. I believe that everyone has some value and I do not believe it is my place to take anyone's life. I cannot walk into any situation and assume responsibility of judge, juror and executioner. I have come to realize that it is not my place to hurt someone or end their life under any circumstance. I believe that there are higher forces which handle these situations. I consider myself agnostic and not quite sure of whom or what is that higher force. But, I do know it is not my place to do so. I find it extremely difficult to follow orders that require me to be prepared for the possibility of attack. I have a deep admiration for people such as Jesus Christ, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King. I treasure their values and desire to follow their lead. I believe any conflict should be dealt with in a non-threatening way. I also believe that conflicts in general should be dealt with non-violently. I believe that if there is a creator he would not want his creations to hurt or damage each other. As a result I must live my life in the most peaceful way possible. I find it morally wrong to participate in any war and I have come to realize that I am not material for any military position. I can NO LONGER be a part of an entity that goes against what I believe.

### **Change/Development of Beliefs:**

Before I enlisted in the army, I went through a bad financial streak. I decided I would go back to school and earn a degree. As a result, we went through more financial burden as I worked p/t while I was in school f/t. After 2 years and earning my AS Degree that lifestyle became increasingly difficult. After a few years and after living with my in-laws for a few years I decided to look into the Army Reserve to supplement my income as well as help me with my academic options. The recruiter suggested the Army for me and after a few interviews and discussions with my wife I decided to enlist. When I enlisted I was eager to start school and at the time I was interested in the Medical School program. I love school and so going to Medical School was a wonderful idea, to me. Shortly after enlisting I began to think I had made a mistake. But, the Army does a really good job of reassuring you that these feelings are normal. I blamed my feelings on being home-sick. But, it was more than that. The progressive training in arms and other military operations, had from the very beginning, caused me great anguish and guilt. As the trainings progressed I knew I could not stab anyone with a bayonet for instance. And when I felt the earth tremble beneath me after firing an M-16 I felt and I now know there's no way I could point it at someone and shoot. The more I was indoctrinated the more I realized it was not me. My upbringing, my training, and my personal beliefs had all become conflicted. My father is a Jehovah's Witness and, as such, he is an extreme pacifist. His words echoed in my head the more I realized that the army was not about giving you college credits but about serving your country an extreme conditions. I do believe I am patriotic, but, I am not willing to kill for my patriotism. I was deeply moved by others serving when 9/11 happened. But, I didn't realize that at times serving means fighting and killing. As stupid as it sounds I never thought about it until I started to receive training in combat. I believe I can serve my country but, not in the army. For me working in a community based organization helping

children or the elderly is better suited. Now that I know that there is an army regulation that can help people like me, I must take advantage of it. I believe that everyone has the right to follow their conscience to avoid emotional problems and inner turmoil. My convictions are strong and are deeply rooted based on my upbringing, morals, and the experiences I have had in the army.

**When beliefs became incompatible with the military:**

I was very naïve and ignorant as to what my service would require of me. Shortly after being inducted into basic training and especially after being introduced to arms I realized what the Army was truly about. My morals shouted to the very core of my conscience and soul that this was wrong. Progressively it has become overwhelming. I can NO LONGER deny myself. To remain loyal to my convictions, I cannot be a part of the army whether as an active participant or a unwilling bystander. I have always had strong feelings about war. I didn't like the idea of people killing each other. However, it wasn't till I joined the army that those "feelings" changed into full fledged objections. I realized after I joined that I could not hurt, injure, or kill anyone under any circumstances. I realized that I could not participate in any war and that I could not be a part of this entity based on my objections and morals. When I arrived in Germany and found out I would be deployed to Iraq, my best 2 options were hurting myself or going AWOL. I did not know about my GI rights. After some research I become aware of AR 600-43. As a result, I filed for conscientious objector status and I believe that this was made for people like me. I realize that the timing seemed suspicious and I know from my initial conversation with Capt. Grissom he suggested this was a stunt to get out of Iraq. I assure you it was not. I did not know how to deal with the situation and when I tried talking to people I felt that having those conversations would not have been either welcomed or accepted. Throughout my training it all affected me the bayonet training, shooting human shaped objects, and in short all of the combat trainings. However, it wasn't until I received my official orders to go to Iraq that I realized I needed to do something. The shock of that assignment got me thinking. So as soon as I found out I had an option I took it. Unfortunately it was 2 days before my deployment. I knew I was an objector before that but I didn't know there was any army regulation at my disposition for people like me.

**On the use of force:**

I am a completely a non-violent person and I have come to realize during my training that violence may be required of me. I cannot under any circumstance condone violence to any extent. I believe higher forces will be in charge of any retribution against any evils and to take it upon myself would be, for me, immoral.

**Most conspicuous sign of sincerity:**

My day to day behaviors and activities towards others reflect my beliefs and convictions. In my family, we are respectful towards each other. I highly regard to instill this in my children. We do not tolerate violence among our children. I am not violent towards my wife or her towards me. We are respectful of each other and others. I make a conscience effort to avoid confrontations and conflict among my family, peers, and any persons be known or unknown. I practice the Golden Rule: "Practice onto others as you wish upon yourself." I avoid violent movies and violent entertainment. I try to avoid the more warlike aspects of training. I will always try to act in accordance with my beliefs.

**Lifestyle Changes:**

I am more than ever convinced and determined to practice the greatest good within my capabilities. In the future I intend to volunteer my energy to precious causes. The strongest indicator of change in my beliefs is my demeanor. I am extremely uncomfortable to go to work because my conscience is screaming this is wrong, for me. I am sad and stressed and I seek to relieve my spirit of this pain and anguish through proper channels.