

In War, There Is No End

Diedra Cobb

Diedra Cobb left college to join the U.S. Army, hoping to serve the public good. Once in, however, she began to question the role of the military. Cobb's reserve unit was activated and sent to Iraq. She informed her supervisors that—for ethical and moral reasons—she would not fire her weapon there.

The following is from a statement Cobb wrote at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), while awaiting the outcome of her conscientious objector (CO) application. (APG is one of the world's foremost research, development, and testing facilities for military weapons, and is located in Maryland.) Cobb's CO status was denied on November 13, 2003; she is speaking out against the war even as she appeals that decision.



Photo by Charles Jenks

Many ask, how could I have entered the military and not known the magnitude of what it meant? I joined the Army thinking that I was, quite possibly, upholding some of the mightiest of ideals for the greatest, most powerful country on this earth. Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage: these are the seven Army values, values that I wanted to be able to say that I cherished and possessed. Still they ask, how could I not have seen it? I thought there had to be some good that would come of the carnage, in the end. But this is where I made my mistake, because in war, there is no end. We are still in Germany, we are still in Korea, we are still in Bosnia—hell, we're still in America. The list goes on and on, and the only things determined are who will stay and who will go, who will live and who will die, who will rule and who will serve. I did not know that peace cannot come from war because war never ends.

Almost daily I hear the weapons they test at this post explode, and I feel the foundation of the building that I am standing in rattle its metal innards. And I realize that the wait I must endure through this conscientious objector process is nothing compared to the terror that our weapons will inflict upon the people they are targeting, and this is why I must continue.

As an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Army, I throw down my arms and refuse to plot against the so-called enemy. I declare I will wash my hands of this filthy moral and humanitarian tragedy, once and for all. My eyes are awake now, thank you, Mr. President. The Army never did a better job of instilling those seven values in a qualified and anxious soldier. Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage are the values that have guided me through this process.

I now talk to those who have felt a much larger rattle, from weapons ten times the size of those that are tested here, on this post. To you who were demolished before you could even feel the rattle, to you who survived the injuries, both physical and mental, from those great big, horrid rattles—my objection is in your name, my people of Afghanistan, Vietnam, Vieques, New York, Colombia, Bosnia, and on and on.... The list is too long to begin to touch on all that are to be included. The world is to be included.

And I sit here in limbo, telling the world MY story, which is OUR story, so that those who have even a snippet of curiosity about why so many people are screaming, “Not in our name!” might have some inspiration. I tell my story for those who have a passion for peace that needs to be revived, that they might realize that they do make a difference. Because it is the small parts that make up the whole—and, oh, what a powerful energy that whole exudes when we choose peace and love and compassion!

After thousands of years of war,
And we are still too blind to see,
That all we are accomplishing,
Is the death of you and me.

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” — Gandhi

Peace is the answer.

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