

2. Ernest Vigil Opposes Induction to Fight in Vietnam, 1968

On May 7, 1968, I reported to the New Customs House in downtown Denver to take an induction physical for the Armed Forces. I passed the physical examination but refused to go through with the induction ceremony. I was ordered for immediate induction as a “delinquent”; there is no reason for my being classified delinquent, and therefore there is no reason for being called for immediate induction as such. For refusing to cooperate I face a felony charge that can bring a minimum of 5 years, \$10,000, or both.

As found in *El Gallo*, June 1, 1968.

I was fully aware of the consequences; I did not do this for kicks. . . .

The Selective Serve-Us System *is* inadequate and discriminatory and should be opposed until it is changed, so that the Spanish-surnamed, the Black, and the general poor do not have to bear the brunt of this undeclared war. I oppose the war on grounds of personal conscience and I oppose the war as a Mexican-American, a Chicano.

I look at the discrepancy between what our country says and what it does; between what it is and what it should be; and I arrive at the decision that it is beneath my dignity as an intelligent, well-meaning human being to quietly submit or blindly conform to a system that attacks noble meaning (if not meaning altogether) and whose values and practices will not and do not serve the ends of truth, peace, and justice.

Therefore, I hereby submit my draft-card as a gesture of my dissatisfaction and disaffection for the social, governmental, and political system of this nation.

My country is not my God; I will (and must) first serve the dictates of my mind, heart and conscience. There are laws and values that are higher than those of this nation’s government and sometimes these come from the conscience of one lone individual; they cannot be legislated by politicians nor enforced by policemen and soldiers.

In this belief I now state that I will not fight the war of a power and system that I feel is unjust, hypocritical, deceitful, inadequate, and detrimental to peaceful, legal social revolution. . . . This forces people to prepare for what has been called “the fire next time.” . . .

All this, while America says “I’m sorry” for the death of Dr. King and “We sympathize with the poor.” Then during riots they say “Shoot to kill!” During demonstrations they say “Arrest those people.” All of this in a country that has a gross national product of 800 billion dollars and 20% of its people in poverty. All this, while America says “Might does not make right.” Yet look what happens to anyone who gets in the way of the American Establishment. Look at what happens to [Reies Lopez; see Document 3] Tijerina. All this, while Uncle Sam preaches democracy and then supports every dictator in South America with money, equipment and “military advisors.”

All this, in a nation that condemns racism and genocide—but what has happened to the first Americans, the Indians? In South America they comprise anywhere from 1/3 to 95% of the total population. In America it is 1/10 of one percent. . . . And when Mexican-Americans are only 3 to 5% of the total population and 19 to 20% of the Vietnam casualties, it is obvious to me, as it should be to everyone, that something is happening that has to be stopped.

I’m specifically making reference to the Selective Service System and the Vietnam war, but my concerns are far greater than this. Every major institution in this nation is directly or indirectly responsible for the great inequities that exist between the elite, white, middle-class power structure and the disenfranchised minority groups whether Mexican-American, Afro-American, American Indian or Puerto Rican.

What we need as much as the changes to be made, is for the people to make the changes. NOW!