

One Man Has Stopped Killing: Hope for More to Do the Same

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By Monica Benderman

For the past two weeks, my husband Kevin and I have answered questions from reporters, journalists, interested citizens from almost every state in the union, and about 8 foreign countries. After all of these interviews, I have a few questions of my own.

What is wrong with a country in which a man and his wife have to jump through hoops, take psychological tests, and wait three months for the results of an application that declares he has made a conscious choice to never go to war again?

What is wrong with the state of affairs of a country when a man and his wife must use every media source available, and during those interviews face the questioning of his and their character, all because that man has decided he cannot in good conscience ever participate in war again?

What is wrong with the direction of the world when a man and his wife receive phone calls and emails from all over their country asking them to explain themselves, calling them coward, wondering if they have ever read the Bible or studied the scripture, all because that man has chosen to speak out against war and violence, and his wife has chosen to stand with him?

What is wrong with a country when an application for Conscientious Objector status is reviewed and questioned, when a man's mental state is evaluated, when his morality is brought into question by a supposed Chaplain (a man of God), all because this soldier has decided he cannot use a weapon to kill another person for any reason?

What is wrong with a country when a man can walk into a military recruiting office, sign on the dotted line and find himself in a war zone 2 months later, without one question directed toward his sanity?

What is wrong with a country when a boy can meet a recruiter in high school, before he has even graduated and chosen his life's path, upon graduation leave for training, and 2 months later find himself in a war zone, without one question directed toward his sanity?

What is wrong with a country where war is glorified and fighting for peace is cowardly?

People ask us how my husband arrived at his decision that he could no longer bear a weapon and go to war against another man. They are amazed that after all of the years he has served in the military that he has come to this conclusion. I am amazed that anyone even thinks Kevin should have to explain himself.

People want to know the process of how my husband came to his decision. They ask if I watched the process, if he agonized, if I felt his anguish. This questioning is beyond my comprehension. I answer the best I am able, in awe that I am even asked.

People want to know if it was stress, PTSD which caused him to change his mind. They want to know what terrible things he saw that made him make such a drastic change. People want to know if there was thunder and lightning, an awakening, an epiphany. I stand in silence, words escape me. Have we gone so far away from Truth that people actually believe war and killing is right, and that a man must be crazy to want to walk away?

There was no "bright light." There were no angels, no mighty bolt of thunder. There was only reality and facing it with eyes wide open. All the sensationalism of preparing for war, the "glory," the "honor," the absence of reality in any training and any preparation, the illusion of the fight, and the altered perceptions of what we would face, not only in combat, but as a family dealing with the effects of war and its consequences were not strong enough to keep us from seeing the reality when it slapped us in the face.

WAR IS WRONG. War brings nothing but death and destruction. War takes away all humanity, not only from the people who die, but also from the people who do the killing. War is insanity, and killing is the pleasure of the truly insane.

What brought my husband, and me supporting him, to the conclusions that he has come to? What great light shown bright and told him that he could kill no more?

Reality; Life is all that matters. Life is the greatest gift we have been given, and we do not have the right to take it away. One person stops, and there is one less person killing.

One more person has stopped, and his reward? To be treated as a coward, to be called insane, to be judged as stressed, to be held up as immoral and as a failure for not following through on his duty to the men he served with.

One man has stopped killing. One man has chosen to find a path other than war. One man has taken the right road, the only road that leads to sanity, and leads to peace. That man and his wife hope that one more man will follow, and another after that; And the duty they adhere to will be saving a life. The honor they receive will be knowing they stood strong in their commitment, they stood for their faith, and they honored the highest order, and respected Life. Anything else is a travesty, anything else is the act of a coward, and anything else is to walk away from God and to fail one of Life's greatest tests.

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