



As the leading global consortium of university and college-based academics, scholars, researchers, and students, the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) affirms its historic position against conscription and involuntary servitude. Though the conditions facing IPRA members in different countries and regions dictate differences in our approach to questions of voluntary service, our general aims motivate us to build institutions based on cultures of peace and human rights. IPRA founding member Elise Boulding of Dartmouth College wrote extensively of managing peace policies among diverse populations, often called upon by the United Nations and UNESCO for expert policy advice. Citing successful examples throughout history, Boulding often noted that those who refused military service were at the forefront of societies “working for the realization of the ‘peaceable kingdom.’” US scholar Matt Meyer, IPRA’s current Co-Secretary General, began his own academic endeavors as a public draft registration resister during his undergraduate years at New York University. “Registration was and is a key step in the wrong direction,” states Meyer, “towards readiness for conflict and war at a time when we should be working more diligently for points of collaboration and peace.”

In the broader US society, Reverend A.J. Muste, the noted “dean” of the twentieth century peace movement, wrote *“Of Holy Disobedience”* to signify religious, moral, and ethical objections to all involuntary service. Drawing from the pacifist roots of traditional peace church denominations, Muste extended the politics of nonviolence to include fellowships, organizations, inter-faith communities and resistance groups from across the theological and ideological spectrum, including people of all spiritual backgrounds as well as progressives, leftists, libertarians, and others. Muste served as head of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the oldest inter-faith association in US history, from 1940-1953, and was also Chair of the War Resisters League (WRL), the secular organization committed to an end to all war and founded in 1923. As the only individual other than Muste to have been elected to the top positions of both FOR and WRL, Professor Meyer urges a coalition of groups to reach back to the roots of our historic anti-war work while attempting to look forward to brighter times ahead.

We come today from many diverse beliefs and traditions, with sometimes divergent opinions, to say now with one voice: continued registration for the draft, selective service, and mandatory national service are wrong and should be ended immediately.

Peace researchers and practitioners of the twenty-first century raise objections which mirror those developed from the founding of the modern peace movement over 100 years ago. We assert that neither the State nor any human have the authority to force another into acts of involuntary labor or violence. Contemporary political contexts demonstrate daily that warfare and preparation for war has more to do with greed, glory, imperial designs, and oppression than with any notion of justice, reconciliation or repairing the wounds of our complex society. We follow the warnings of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who noted that the “triple evils” of militarism, materialism and racism could be the US’ undoing. We believe that King’s remarks are as prescient now as on the day when he first voiced them. Like Boulding, Muste urged that resisting all forms of military coercion had become “a virtue and indeed a necessary and indispensable measure of spiritual self-preservation.”

Thus, we must reiterate: we will continue to vehemently oppose an expansion of Selective Service registration to women, a shift towards extensive national service, and/or continuation of the punitive federal and state laws codifying an economic form of conscription by imposing administrative, financial, and immigration penalties for non-registration. It would become our moral and political imperative to urge full non-compliance with these draconian policies. We therefore strongly recommend that the government take this time to recognize the unhelpful and unnecessarily expensive nature of past and current registration policies. Now is the time to end them altogether.

Contact: IPRA United Nations Office, 309 Park Place, Brooklyn NY 11238 USA OR University of Massachusetts/Amherst Resistance Studies Initiative, 636 Tobin Hall, 135 Hicks Way, Amherst MA 01003-9277 USA; Tel: ++01/413-545-0394

E-mail: mmmsrnb1@gmail.com OR internationalpeaceresearch.sg@gmail.com **Website :** www.iprapeace.org