

Timeline of Events

Peace

Mid-1600s (Russia):

- The Doukhobors, or "spirit wrestlers," emerge in southern Russia, splitting from the Russian Orthodox Church due to moral and liturgical differences. They believe God resides within each human being.

1859:

- Henry David Thoreau publishes "A Plea for Captain John Brown," quoted later as an influence on draft resistance: "Is it not possible that an individual may be right and a government wrong? Are laws to be enforced simply because they are made? Or declared by any number of men to be good if they are not good?"

World War I Era:

- Jeffrey A. Kisling's father volunteers for service in World War I, despite being eligible for deferment as a Methodist minister. The war ends shortly after his enlistment, preventing overseas service. He becomes disillusioned with war and opposes it afterward.

1942 (July 16):

- John Griffith, while incarcerated, notes in his diary feeling profound happiness and freedom despite being in "bonds," receiving supportive letters.

1942 (July 17):

- John Griffith experiences verbal abuse from a prominent Sumter doctor, who calls him a "son of a bitch" and a "coward" through the bars of his cell. His cellmates defend him.

1942 (July 23 - November 2):

- John Griffith is out on bond before his trial.

1942 (November):

- John Griffith has a second 24-hour stay in Richland County Jail after his trial. He is transferred to Sumter County Jail, which is an improvement.

1942 (November, unspecified date):

- John Griffith's brother, Bob, a troop transport officer, visits him in prison.

1942 (November):

- The Allied invasion of North Africa occurs; Bob visits John shortly after.

1943 (August 6):

- John Griffith writes a letter to his father from federal prison in Petersburg, VA, discussing a hymn he inscribed in his New Testament.

1944 (May 22):

- John Griffith writes to Dot Kirkley about the Methodist Church rescinding its anti-war stance and support for conscientious objection, expressing hope for a continued anti-war movement within the church.

1944 (November 2):

- John Griffith's "conditional release" date arrives, two years after his sentencing. He refuses to apply for parole or conditional release due to terms requiring him not to break laws, which he intends to do by not carrying a draft card.

1945 (May 2):

- John Griffith's 30-month sentence at Ashland is scheduled to end.

1969 (October 6):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling begins a journal to record his thoughts and experiences, feeling himself in a crisis as his 18th birthday and draft registration approach.

1969 (October 29):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling signs the War Resisters League enrollment pledge: "War is a crime against humanity. I therefore am determined not to support any kind of war, international or civil, and to strive for the removal of all causes of war."

1969 (November 1):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling notes "the month of my first fateful decision begins," and that Arlo Tatum of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO) will visit.

1969 (Date unspecified, likely 1969):

- The Scattergood Peace Walk and Peace Marches occur.

- The entire Scattergood Friends School marches 12 miles to Iowa City to protest the Vietnam War.
- An Indianapolis Draft Conference takes place at Scattergood.

1970 (May 26):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling writes in his journal about civil disobedience, viewing it as a necessary and positive action, potentially leading to a "rebirth" in response to the draft.

1971 (July 7):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling reflects on his decision to join the Volunteer Service Mission (VSM), seeing it as an outward manifestation of an inner change and an opportunity for actions to complement beliefs.

1971 (July 10):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling writes to Bear Creek Monthly Meeting, Lewis Mott (clerk), seeking a minute of support for his involvement in the Friends United Meeting (FUM) sponsored Volunteer Service Mission (VSM). He describes VSM's purpose and structure.

1972 (January 30):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling records a profound experience in his journal after a meeting, feeling "loathsome" when confronted with discerning God's will, but then feeling comfort from a voice saying "Nevertheless, I love." He finds immense strength and love in the meeting.

1973 (May 26):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling reflects on his experiences, newfound confidence, and a clearer idea of his life's path.

1973 (April 30):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling's last day at Riley Children's Hospital. A farewell party is held for him, organized by Gibby and John and other boys from Gibby's 8th-grade class (Curtis, Kenny, Randy, Pat).

1978 (Summer, approx.):

- John Griffith is called for jury duty in Kansas City, Missouri. He is questioned about his felony conviction (for draft resistance) and the judge informs him he cannot

legally vote and should not be on voter registration records. Despite this, he serves on a jury the next day.

September 2017:

- A speaker asks a group: "Are you guys feeling proud, are you proud of yourselves? Because the whole world is watching. So whatcha gonna do? Gonna show love? Are you gonna be smart? You gonna think before you act? Take care of each other? Your gonna show 'em what family does." The message emphasizes self-reflection, love, and mindful action.

2017 (November 13):

- A journal entry reflects on Richard Wagamese's quote, "All that we are is story," and how it connects seemingly separate thoughts and writings.

2017 (December 5):

- A journal entry from May 26, 1970, about civil disobedience is revisited.

2017 (December 26):

- The "Volunteer Service Mission Story - Part 1" is noted as being compiled from journal entries, to be posted in a series.

2017 (December 28):

- "Volunteer Service Mission Story - Part 3" is noted, describing the beginning of work in the neighborhood and the objectives of VSM.
- "Volunteer Service Mission Story - Part 5" is noted, describing continued work at the hospital and with neighborhood kids, including film and photo development.

2019 (January):

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) violently raid Wet'suwet'en territories, leading to widespread protests in Canada and globally in support of Indigenous land defenders.

Date unspecified (during Jeff's college years):

- Jeffrey A. Kisling registers for the draft on a Friday. On Sunday at Scattergood, a friend comments, "You registered, didn't you? You don't look like the same old Jeff."

- Later, home for Christmas vacation, Jeff decides to turn in his draft cards. His father supports his decision, but his mother is upset. They agree he will try to get the cards back and wait a year to decide again, to be away from Scattergood's influence.

Date unspecified (during John Griffith's imprisonment):

- John Griffith refuses to cooperate with a guard's order to work, leading to physical abuse with a rifle stock and fist. He is sent to "the hole" (solitary confinement) at Petersburg prison.
- During a second stint in the hole, Mr. Nicholson visits John, trying to resolve the impasse with "draft dodger" prejudiced guards.
- John Griffith is transferred to Ashland and placed in a segregation cell. He continues his non-cooperation with the penal system, refusing to stand for body count, but the Ashland administration decides not to force him to conform.

Date unspecified (after John Griffith's prison release):

- John Griffith is contacted by the FBI for character reference checks related to a pardon application. His former business associates inquire if he's applying for a job with the FBI or government requiring security clearance.

Ongoing:

- The concept of LANDBACK as a reclamation of stolen lands from Indigenous Peoples is explored, particularly in relation to Denzel Sutherland-Wilson and Wet'suwet'en lands.
- The "Poor People's Campaign" is noted as an ongoing effort.
- Rallies are planned at RBC banks in Canada, protesting their financing of extraction projects.
- Ronnie James represents Des Moines Mutual Aid, delivering a land acknowledgment that emphasizes stolen land and stolen bodies as the foundation of the police state.
- Discussions occur regarding fascism as "the power of finance capital" and the hierarchical power structures in society.
- The Doukhobors' philosophy of mutual aid as spiritual tacit knowledge, pacifism, and their belief in God dwelling in each person is highlighted.

- The Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) is described as a unique approach to social work, involving volunteers living in the communities they serve, working jobs, pooling wages, and later being "released" to pursue specific community needs.

Cast of Characters

Jeffrey A. Kisling (Jeff): The central figure and author of many journal entries detailing his moral and spiritual struggle with the draft during the Vietnam War era. He is a Quaker who attends Scattergood Friends School, and his decisions are deeply influenced by his faith, particularly the concept of the "Inner Light" and discerning God's will. He registers for the draft, then decides to turn in his draft cards, facing parental upset. He later joins the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) as a conscientious objector, working as a respiratory therapist and engaging in community work in Indianapolis, including photography projects with neighborhood children. He reflects on civil disobedience as a means of "rebirth."

John Griffith: A conscientious objector during World War II, whose experiences in prison are detailed. He refuses to register for the draft, endures verbal and physical abuse from guards and doctors, and experiences solitary confinement ("the hole"). He maintains his pacifist convictions, drawing strength from his faith and supportive letters. He later refuses parole and conditional release due to conscientious objections to the terms. He serves on a jury despite being a convicted felon and not having received a presidential pardon.

Jeffrey A. Kisling's Father: A Methodist minister who volunteered for service in World War I, later becoming disillusioned with war. He supports his son Jeff's decision to resist the draft, even interrupting a U.S. District Attorney who was verbally abusing Jeff, stating his pride in both his sons' differing forms of patriotism.

Jeffrey A. Kisling's Mother: Initially upset by Jeff's decision to turn in his draft cards, but later agrees to support his decision to wait a year.

Bob (John Griffith's Brother): An officer on a troop transport ship during World War II, commanding beach landing boats. He visits John in prison.

Mr. Sapp: The United States District Attorney who confronts John Griffith and his father regarding John's draft resistance, using aggressive and profane language. He orders John's arrest when bail cannot be met.

Clive: An inmate at Petersburg prison who initially harasses John Griffith for being a "draft dodger" but later asks John to write letters for him after John offers to fight him non-violently.

Mr. Shepherd: A college-educated guard at the Petersburg prison dairy operation who makes derogatory comments about "draft dodgers."

Mr. Nicholson: An individual who visits John Griffith in "the hole" at Petersburg prison, attempting to resolve the impasse between John and the prejudiced guards.

Dot Kirkley: A fellow pacifist and friend with whom John Griffith corresponds while in prison, discussing the Methodist Church's changing stance on war.

David Morgan: A non-registrant inmate at Petersburg prison, son of a Baptist minister from North Carolina.

Denzel Sutherland-Wilson: Mentioned as the first person from whom the concept of "LANDBACK" was heard, and depicted in an "awful video" with Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) pointing sniper rifles at him for protecting his land.

Ronnie James: Represents Des Moines Mutual Aid, delivering a "land acknowledgment" that highlights the foundation of the police state on stolen land and stolen bodies.

Arlo Tatum: National Secretary of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO), mentioned as visiting around the time Jeff Kisling is making his decision about draft registration.

Thomas A' Beckett: Historically quoted by Jeff Kisling (and others) regarding discerning God's will: "I am loathsome," followed by "Nevertheless, I love."

Jesus Christ: Revered by Quakers as an "exceptional person" whose life and teachings demonstrate communion with God and the essence of obeying God's will ("not as I will, but as thou wilt").

Dag Hammarskjöld: Author of the text distributed to visitors of the United Nations Meditation Room, describing it as a place for silence and stillness, dedicated to a God worshipped in many forms.

Don Laughlin: Works with Jeff Kisling at the University of Iowa Hospitals writing computer programs. Also mentioned as a "Friend who had been in prison and was then doing C.O. counseling work" and signed a letter for CO application.

Steve: A friend of Jeff Kisling who is considering going into law and has thought about the legal implications for felons and his own draft status.

William Penn: Quoted for his belief that "True Godliness doesn't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors."

Alan Inglis: Director of Conscientious Objector Services for the Friends United Meeting (FUM), who coordinates the Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) project.

Jan: Mentioned by Jeff Kisling as someone he shook hands with to "break meeting," followed by supportive discussion.

Gibby and John: Friends of Jeff Kisling who organize a farewell party for him on his last day at Riley Children's Hospital. Gibby is in 8th grade.

Curtis, Kenny, Randy, and Pat: Boys from Gibby's 8th-grade class who skip school to clean the VSM house and prepare a farewell party for Jeff.

Emily: John Griffith's girlfriend, whose parents angrily forbid her from dating him after his arrest. She experiences physical abuse from her mother for secretly seeing John. She is not a professed pacifist.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones: A noted Methodist missionary to India, with whom John Griffith's father hopes John will discuss his conscientious objection at Lake Junaluska. Dr. Jones advises John to "view my actions not for success, or failure, but to do only as a Higher Intelligence directs me."

Rachel L. Neubuhr Torres: Author of "Mutual Aid as Spiritual Tacit Knowledge Within Doukhobor Epistemology," exploring the Doukhobors' history and practices.

Noah Baker Merrill: Author of "Prophets, Midwives, and Thieves: Reclaiming the Ministry of the Whole," quoted on the meaning of humility.

Richard Wagamese: Ojibwe author (Oct 14, 1955 - March 10, 2017) quoted for his statement, "All that we are is story," which deeply resonates with Jeff Kisling.

Dimitroff: His writings are featured in a newspaper and referenced in a discussion defining fascism.

Rufus Jones: A well-known Quaker associated with relief work during World War I, defines "conscience" as the "sense of doubtiness."

Eston Rockwell: An associate who helped Don Laughlin and Lyle Tatum, providing advice on non-registration.

Lyle Tatum: An Iowa Friend who had been in prison and later provided conscientious objector counseling work.

Ray Millett: Author of "My Position as a Conscientious Objector during World War II," detailing his experiences.

Seth W. Laughlin: A member of Marlboro Meeting of Friends during the Civil War, who was taken into the army by force but refused to be a soldier, facing physical abuse.

Jesse Hill, William Hill, D. W. Milliken, Clark Milliken, William F. Ball, John R.

Beckerdike: Other members of Marlboro Meeting of Friends who were forced into the army during the Civil War, refusing military service.

Ben Clark: Author of a passage about experiences of conscientious objection, noting the need for "water from another time" (historical lessons).

Judge Hill: A judge who changed Don Laughlin's sentence from consecutive to concurrent.

Dr. Geil: Worked with Don Laughlin, evaluating prisoners, providing him with initial experience for his professional work as a psychometric psychologist.

John Dickey: A Quaker involved in a work program in Mexico during the first rumblings of WWII, who developed a commitment to nonviolent pacifism and refused to contribute to a class scrap metal drive for military armaments.