

Statement in front of draft board, February 24, 1971

What are we to do now? The majority of Americans are convinced that we should not have entered the war in Southeast Asia, should remove our air and ground forces this year, and should stop our killing by bombs as well as bullets. Congress has repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and has passed the Cooper-Church Amendment.

Yet President Nixon continues the war on the specious argument that our purpose in fighting is to protect our fighting men. As our American casualties decline, we are bombing ever more Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians. In the face of the latest developments, the response of Congress has been muted.

Many of our young men are now facing a moral dilemma. During this evil war, the draft forces many to become conscientious objectors, exiles, convicts, or participants in the killing. As Congress consider renewal of the draft and providing funds for the war, we feel the urgent need to engage in today's symbolic act. That it is Ash Wednesday, a day which marks for Christians the beginning of a season of penitence and remorse, makes it all the more appropriate.

This morning we are engaged in a non-violent act, blocking access to a draft board. We expect to be arrested, and we will not resist arrest. It is our intent to raise constitutional issues in our trial. If we are successful, an important redefinition of governmental powers will have been achieved. Even if we are found guilty, we will at least have provided vivid testimony to the despair so many people feel about the course of events and the distortion of our political tradition.

We must try. We have an inescapable duty to express our moral anguish.

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Paul F. Garrett, former Aerospace engineer, Palo Alto, Calif.

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