

Activism was not even in my vocabulary when I came to Grinnell. The nearest concept I could relate to was pacifism. I arrived thinking I would be able to study science, music, and other flavors of the finer arts that interested me without those kinds of interference. Soon, though, I was irreversibly immersed in both. After hearing the address to the college by Dr. Martin Luther King, for me activism and pacifism became one. Soon after, I found myself on a bus to Des Moines and was protesting the war on the steps of the state capitol. The protest was non-violent, and no, I did not burn my draft card.

How quickly those new experiences surrounded and changed me from inside out.

I'll let others recount the long list of activism-related events. Most had the same effect on me: to embrace progress, even radical progress, based on not only what I was comfortable with, but what I knew in my heart I as a person we as a society should do, and yes, even what Jesus would do.

All the activism in and around me made regular studying in the fashion I had previously envisioned much more difficult. Because of the closing of the college early in my junior year, a piece I had written for an independent music composition elective would never be performed. The final exam in one of my chemistry classes had to be completed at home while watching more violent events in Chicago on TV.

I left Grinnell putting both activism and pacifism into action. I knew that due to having drawn a "winning" lottery number, grad school would probably be ruled out. So I earned my Conscientious Objector's classification and found work performing Alternative Service in a university hospital for the next two years. Strangely enough, the liberal arts experience continued. It was not the post-college dream I had imagined, but using my chemistry degree to defend life has never left me doubting my decision for a moment. I also found bands to join and continued my pastime as a would-be renaissance man.

After working for a lengthy period of time in the electronics industry, I am now researching standards for environmental sustainability. I realize I have fulfilled a letter I had written while at Grinnell to the editor of a new journal, *Environmental Science and Technology*, about how a college education should include more relevance to social and environmental issues. As one example of the progress we have seen, I had analyzed lead in gasoline in Grinnell's labs and now this toxin is no longer even available at the pump. Since the first Earth Day I attended at Grinnell, it is now a regular event too. Environmentalism is closely related to all the other issues dear to activists, including economic, gender and racial equality.

I am glad my oldest children have not had to experience such social turmoil in their college years. I am not so sure about my youngest, since during our recent visit to the campus of UW Madison we were surrounded by thousands of protestors. One of their signs reading "Open for Business - Closed for Human Rights" reminded me of my own skepticism of the military-industrial complex while protesting on the steps of the Iowa capitol.

I can't help but thinking, here we go again, with a new spin. Figuring it out and acting accordingly is what activism, and education, is all about.

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