

Staten Island Advance

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Island group gets ready to fight registration for draft

By MARC DAVIS

He's an 18-year-old college student with shoulder-length black hair who lives with his parents in Bulls Head and goes to school in Florida. His name is Michael.

He's a 32-year-old junior high school teacher with an elaborately furnished Bulls Head apartment and plans for dentistry school. His name is Angelo.

He's a 42-year-old pacifist, living in a cluttered Stapleton house and working in a Manhattan office for Middle East peace. His name is Allan.

Right now, Michael, Angelo and Allan don't seem to have much in common. Very soon they will.

Very soon Michael Kolakowski, Angelo D'Angelo and Allan Solomonow will be leading Staten Islanders opposed to military registration and the draft.

It's been a long time since anyone talked about opposing a military draft — five years, in fact. It was in 1975 that President Ford abolished mandatory registration for the country's 18-year-olds.

But now, five years later, there is no question that registration will be back. With Congress' final approval last week, officials are saying registration for 18- and 19-year-olds will begin July 21.

This time around, however, President Carter is saying there won't necessarily be a draft, just a registration.

But Kolakowski, D'Angelo and Solomonow are skeptical. In fact, they are worried.



Recent demonstration against the draft in Washington, D.C.

"There has never been a registration without a draft," D'Angelo says. "And there has never been a draft without a war."

Sporting short, curly hair, a mustache and wire-frame glasses, D'Angelo sorts through files and files of newspaper clippings and pamphlets at his kitchen table. He is coordinator of the Staten Is-

land Council for Peace and Justice, a group that claims 35 members and a mailing list of 85.

D'Angelo was not drafted at the age of 18 only by sheer luck. In the 1966 draft lottery, his birthday came up in the high 300s — safely out of the military's grasp.

But, as leader of the Wagner College

branch of the Students for a Democratic Society back in the '60s, D'Angelo fought bitterly against the draft and the war.

"Those of us who were involved in the anti-war movement at that time were never the same," D'Angelo says. "There are tens of thousands of people in the country who are my age who are still active."

Solomonow is not D'Angelo's age; he is 10 years older. But he, too, was active in the 1960s anti-war movement.

In 1967, Solomonow tore the name off his draft card and mailed the remainder to President Johnson in protest of the Vietnam War. Two years later he served a 10-month jail sentence for that simple act.

"I didn't expect to go to jail, but I was prepared for it if I had to," Solomonow says.

Since leaving prison, Solomonow has worked with the Middle East Peace Project, Manhattan, which he now directs. The project's goal is mainly one of education and consciousness-raising.

"Those of us who worked together (in the 1960s) remember the circumstances well and we welcome the chance to do it again," he says.

"A lot of us are looking for clear and practical ways to convey to others that American policies have gone wrong. The draft fight gives us a clear focus for those kind of issues."

For Kolakowski, the current anti-registration movement is much more immediate. He is 18. If a draft comes, Kolakowski — not the others — will get the call.

"Obviously I am very concerned," Kolakowski says. "On the one hand, I could go along with registration, which I consider morally wrong. Or I could risk it and say no."

But for now, all three registration opponents — Kolakowski, D'Angelo and Solomonow — say the important thing is to work closely with the larger, more vocal anti-draft organizations in Manhattan and Washington, D.C.

Spokesmen for several other anti-draft groups say they will lead demonstrations, sit-ins, teach-ins or simply create a nuisance at post offices at which young people are to register.

On Staten Island, Solomonow and D'Angelo say they will hold seminars and counseling sessions for 18- and 19-year-olds who will be called upon to register.

"We will describe in great detail the provisions of the law and all its options, including non-registration," Solomonow says.

Perhaps the biggest surprise of all in the anti-draft movement today is the age of its leaders. Not many are of draft age themselves; most are in their 20s and 30s.

That is partly because local high

school and college groups who might oppose registration are out of session for the summer, many people say.

But it also is a tribute to the more widely accepted, middle-class nature of the movement today, D'Angelo says.

"The peace movement is no longer radical. It's as American as apple pie," D'Angelo says. "This time, Middle America, respectable people, are coming out for things the radicals in the '60s were talking about then."

Adds Solomonow: "There is greater skepticism of the draft now than I've ever seen. The question is what are we preparing for with registration?"

"I don't think anyone is convinced we're moving for peace."



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RON KOVIC, a Vietnam veteran, who as a result of the atrocity of war is paralyzed from the chest down, spoke at an anti-draft rally on the Capitol steps, Washington, D.C. on April 30, 1979, after having been rolled up the stairs to a microphone in a wheelchair. He said in part:

“When the time comes for you to march against the draft, think of me in this wheel chair. I thought I was fighting for the American dream. I know now I was cheated and tricked and lost three-fourths of my body for nothing (in Vietnam). Now, the audacity, the madness, they want to brutalize another generation. Well, I say if they try to bring back the draft, they’ll reap a rebellion like they’ve never seen.”

**A VIETNAM-ERA NONREGISTRANT,
DRAFT RESISTER,
CONVICTED FELON SPEAKS**

When I turned 18 in August 1969 at the height of the Vietnam war I publicly refused to register for the draft. My statement said, in part, “Vietnam is not an isolated blemish tarnishing an otherwise noble record of American foreign policy. Vietnam is, rather, just another sore of the same disease that led us into

What I am advocating is draft *resistance*, not draft *evasion*. People who oppose the draft because of deeply held moral or religious reasons—because they believe that war is a crime against humanity—should *publicly* refuse to register.

Refusing to register is the most *effective* way to manifest opposition to the current nature and direction of American foreign policy. I advocate this even though I realize that in so doing I may be violating the Selective Service law.

—Jerry Elmer

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