



# **I REFUSE TO KILL**

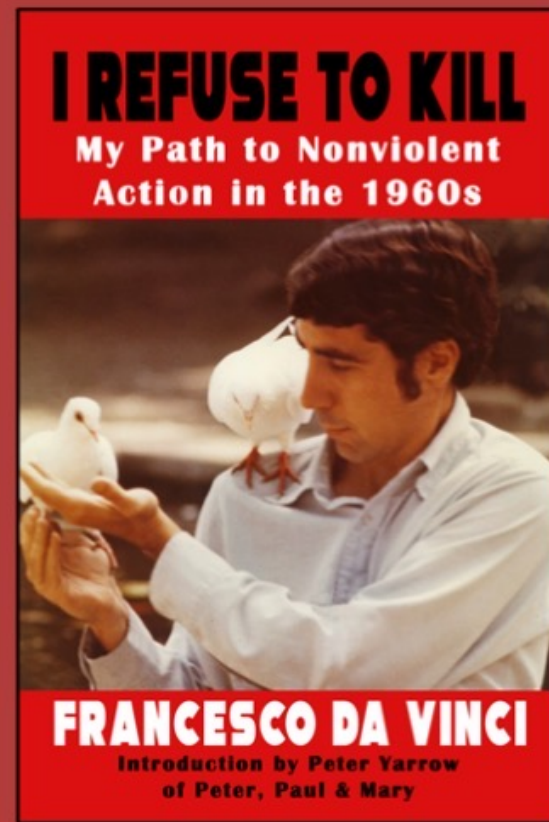
a feature film proposal

# I REFUSE TO KILL: He went to war with war

A feature drama by Francesco Da Vinci & Tom Stohlgren  
based on Francesco Da Vinci's memoir. ©

## Logline:

When a young man applies as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam war, he must battle the country he loves; bear scorn from his family, friends, and fiancée; and face a five-year prison term.



# I Refuse to Kill is based on a true story!



Francesco Da Vinci



At the March on the Pentagon



Kindly talking to soldiers



With fellow CO, Muhammed Ali



Consulting with Cesar Chavez



With a skeptical draft board clerk



With fellow peace activist, Joan Baez



With Senator George McGovern



At the Poor People's Campaign



Motorboat Campaign to stop the USS Constellation from returning to Vietnam



**SYNOPSIS:** FRANCESCO DA VINCI (18) is a young man born into a wealthy, dysfunctional family. His psychiatrist father, DR. DA VINCI (45) and his mother (40), are pacifists and alcoholics. A series of incidents in the early 1960s crystalize Francesco's nonviolent stance: duck and cover drills in high school during the Cuban Missile crisis, Dr. King and the March on Washington, the assassination of JFK, and the mandatory registering for the draft. The aftermath initiates his transformation from bystander to activist. Meanwhile, Francesco's best friend, JERRY (18, African-American) is serving in the Navy in Vietnam.

In college, Francesco faces hatred from professors for his personal philosophy of nonviolence. He participates in the '67 March on the Pentagon and is beaten by national guardsmen. A chance encounter with SENATOR ROBERT F. KENNEDY (43), coupled with the growing student peace movement, give him hope. In 1968, at the risk of prison, Francesco files for conscientious objector status. His legal battle and personal hardships are just beginning. At war with war, there is too little time for his fiancée, JANE (21).

Francesco's CO stand and peace work attract the attention of mysterious federal agents who detain and interrogate him. With support from CESAR CHAVEZ (40s), he forms an anti-war organization, Nonviolent Action, drawing more unwanted attention to his CO case. Finding a supportive draft attorney, CHARLIE KHOURY (mid-30s), is not easy.

In a "David v. Goliath" moment, Francesco rents a small boat to display a banner to sailors, urging that the USS *Constellation* aircraft carrier not return to Vietnam. In response, two navy cutters charge full-speed, almost capsizing Francesco's boat. He ends up on national news and attracts support from Joan Baez's activist husband, DAVID HARRIS (25).

Jane abruptly leaves Francesco. His life is in shambles. The city-wide vote on whether the USS *Constellation* should return to Vietnam, orchestrated by Francesco, is covered by CBS and ABC news. The notoriety may seal Francesco's fate - denial of his CO claim and a five-year prison term. Despite the government's threats, Francesco's CO case comes before ERNEST FEARS, JR. (40s, African American), the Virginia State Director of Selective Service. Against all odds, Francesco wins his appeal, leaves his peace organization, and reunites with Jane in San Francisco.

# I Refuse to Kill - Cast Bios



**FRANCESCO DA VINCI** (20s) is a sensitive, principled college student. He applies as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam war at the risk of a 5-year prison term. While his CO case is on appeal, he forms a peace group, Nonviolent Action, that is covered

by ABC & CBS national news. While the peace group is succeeding, Francesco's personal life is in shambles.



**JANE** (20s), a petite feminist, is Francesco's fiancée. As an aspiring lawyer, she supports his CO stand and counsels him on his rights. But after Francesco walks out on his pre-induction call, she tells him that the stress of his CO case is driving her to the breaking point.



**JERRY** (20s) has an athletic build. He's Francesco's best friend. A midshipman in the Navy, he serves in Vietnam. Though Jerry and Francesco view each other's politics as "misguided," they remain good buddies. Slowly, Jerry develops doubts as to the merits of the war.



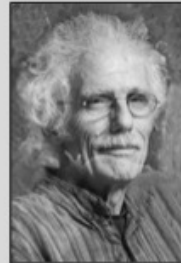
**BEN** (20s), a Vietnam vet in Francesco's peace group, proposes that Nonviolent Action support the anti-war sailors aboard the attack aircraft carrier the USS *Constellation*.



**NORIE** (20s), a spunky peace group volunteer, often leads the meetings of Nonviolent Action. Her passionate anti-war stance stems from grief - she lost her 22-year old husband to the Vietnam war just one week before he was to come home.



**JIM** (20s), a peace group volunteer, is definitely not a risk-taker. He is often the one at meetings that votes against new proposals simply because they might fail. One day, however, he takes a big risk - he joins Francesco and Ben in a small motorboat that approaches the mammoth USS *Constellation* with a peace banner. The motorboat comes under attack from two naval boats.



**CHARLIE KHOURY** (30s), a cantankerous draft attorney with a heart of gold, advises Francesco to fake his way out of the draft. When Francesco refuses, an aggravated Charlie admits he wants to give up nonviolence and "strangle" him. Nevertheless, he stays with Francesco's CO case to the dramatic end.

# I Refuse to Kill - Primary Scene Locations

**Peace House (13 scenes)**



**Francesco & Jane's off-campus apartment (22 scenes)**



**La Jolla (4 scenes)**



**Induction Centers: 9 scenes  
(Ft. Holabird 5; Los Angeles 4)**



**Charlie's law office (6 scenes)**



**University of Maryland (9 scenes)**



# I Refuse to Kill - Comparable Films



**Forrest Gump (1994)**  
Budget: \$55 million  
Box Office: \$678 million  
**Won 6 Oscars.** Another 50 wins & 75 Nominations  
Vietnam era, fictional biopic, but similar style and tone.



**The Green Book (2018)**  
Budget \$23 million  
Box Office \$321 million  
**Won 3 Oscars.** Another 58 wins & 123 nominations.  
Biography, similar time period (1962), social injustice stance, and mood.



**Hidden Figures (2016)**  
Budget \$25 million  
Box Office \$236 million  
**Nominated for 3 Oscars.** Another 36 wins & 94 nominations.  
Biography, 1960s, social injustice, and general feel.



**Hacksaw Ridge (2016)**  
Budget \$40 million  
Box Office \$180 million  
**Won 2 Oscars.** Another 50 wins & 75 nominations.  
Biography, WWII medic who refused to kill gets Purple Heart, same brave CO stand.

# I REFUSE TO KILL Testimonials

"Francesco Da Vinci's *I Refuse to Kill* will inspire and move you deeply. This amazing true story confirms that one person, acting with courage and conviction, can successfully oppose war and help change a part of history. Francesco's story reminds us that acts of conscience are never pursued in vain."

- **Peter Yarrow**, Peter, Paul & Mary

"If there is a saving grace in the sordid record of atrocities in Indochina, it is in the conscientious refusal of young men to serve in a criminal war. Francesco Da Vinci's pioneering role in this courageous course is an inspiration for all of us."

- **Noam Chomsky**, Historian

"Francesco Da Vinci has written a gripping story about the Vietnam war and his stance in refusing to fight in that cruel, senseless conflict. Mr. Da Vinci's story of resistance, in which he risked everything for his moral convictions, could not be more timely as the US continues to be mired in numerous, seemingly endless, and equally senseless wars of choice."

- **Daniel Kovalik**, author of *No More War*

"I strongly support and recommend Francesco Da Vinci's historical memoir. War is not the answer. It is time that the people of this country are more offended by war and more encouraging of peace and conscientious objection. Da Vinci's eye-opening book is an important step toward that end."

- **Ed Asner**, Actor



## Francesco's 1968 statement to his Virginia draft board:

“You can take away my freedom and put me in jail,  
but you can never take away my right to say, ‘I refuse to kill.’”

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