

## **NWTRCC Administrative Committee Nominee Questionnaire For CC meeting May 2020, Online**

### **Lida Shao & Joshua Wrolstad**

#### Current AdComm Members:

Anne Barron, San Diego, CA – term ends May 2020

Sue Barnhart, Eugene, OR – term ends May 2022

DeCourcy Squire, Minneapolis, MN – term ends May 2021

Samantha Leuschner, Carmel, NY – term ends May 2021

#### Alternates:

Justin Becker, New York, NY – term ends May 2020

Jerry Maynard, Houston, TX – full member at May 2020 meeting

At the May 2020 meeting we select two new Alternates (1 year as alternate, 2 years as full member). And the Nominees are:

### **Lida Shao, New York, New York**

#### **1) What interests you about participating on the Ad Comm?**

I am interested in learning more about the nuts and bolts of a network such as NWTRCC which to me seems to be honest community building because the nature of the work requires discretion and privacy, and less entangled with movement stardom or personalities. It's probably the more likely format for me to accept any invitation to sit on anything close to a board of directors because it still gives autonomy and support to the people actually doing the work and part of the network. I am a firm believer of more information and being part of the Ad Comm will give me more to inform my war tax resistance and to do it better. I am interested in participating to see where the network falters too and lend a hand there. I've been NYC based for a bit too long and am curious about people's experiences and creativity elsewhere.

#### **2) What perspectives, skills, or interests would you bring to the Ad Comm?**

I was raised by political parents active in the anti-war/facism movement against Japan and in Maoism broadly defined. This created a specific juxtaposition growing up in the US racialised/gendered/sexualized; I spent many years exploring this in academia and in communities in the US.

Skills wise — I have many skills but perhaps no specialties. Speak Mandarin + Spanish, layout/design programs, film shooting/editing, grassroots fundraising, math/science, mediation/accountability circles, event planning/logistics, home construction, CLT nuts + bolts, democratic/horizontal/cooperative frameworks/structure/governance, POC anarchisms I am particularly interested in ending the prison industrial complex and sexual violence. I'm also interested in how to activate/engage the large immigrant and refugee population that is simultaneously repelled and disgusted by the US and its imperialism, and living within its racist policies & history. I would like to meet more intergenerational radicals.

### **3) What would you like to get from participating on the Ad Comm?**

I would like to be part of a community of war tax resisters however I would also like to understand why WTR doesn't seem to make sense to many other communities I am part of — immigrant, QPOC, cooperative house people.

### **4) Please give a brief history of your conscientious objection to war taxes.**

I think I reached out to Ruth Benn in NYC regarding war tax resistance in 2009 or so. I started resisting in 2011 when I moved into more freelance/contractor work. I've done a variety of things like filing a peace tax form, not filing and/or living with a traceable income below taxable level. The extension of this currently is thinking about how property taxes uphold the US government and how to swing property taxes over as land taxes to the indigenous peoples and how to collectively steward, not own, land and property.

### **5) What other peace and justice work are you or have you been involved in?**

I've been largely quiet in the last 5 years while I've gone back to pursue my medical degree. In medical school, I served as a Communications Chair for the newly established student-run free clinic. During medical school, I've still supported my father's activism in repatriation of the stolen Stone Horses by Penn Museum as well as his lawsuit against the Taiwanese government for canceling his citizenship and healthcare, which highlights archaic two-strait policies between China and Taiwan. I also continue to be a supporter and this year, while on break from school, helped to develop curriculum of the Cooperative Economics Alliance of NYC Giving Circle which helps to move \$50K a year as direct grants to worker cooperatives in NYC. I also am an owner-collective member at Our House in Brooklyn ([ourhousegrows.info](http://ourhousegrows.info)) where we host the local CSA for 135 neighbors, host community events and work to live cooperatively. Previously, I've done a lot of local organizing in my home base — organizing a people's kitchen project and people's transportation projection under a larger anti-gentrification fight in Sunset Park NYC. I also helped organize a city-wide network of Chinese interpreters for social justice work.

I helped to organize some national gatherings — Critical Resistance's 10th anniversary children track and APOC II (<https://apocconvergence.wordpress.com/apocalypse2012/>)

### **6) Please briefly tell us something of your vocation and home life.**

I live at Our House, which is an owned cooperative house which is working on making it a permanently affordable housing and space for community work.

I currently am taking time off from medical school and do some math/science tutoring and have taken a temporary Fellow position with Interboro Community Land Trust helping to establish the CLT with ~450 properties in the pipeline for permanently affordable housing in NYC.

### **7) Is there anything else you would like to share?**

I am looking to return to medical school but am not sure my timeline right now, especially with the uncertainties with COVID. I hope this will not conflict but it does take priority.

## **Joshua Wrolstad, Eugene, Oregon**

### **1) What interests you about participating on the Ad Comm?**

I have been contemplating the decision to participate in War Tax Resistance for some time now and see this as the most direct and substantial way to protest the policies of this country related to perpetual war and state terrorism. The 2019 NWTRCC meeting in Corvallis, Oregon was a positive and inspirational experience for me and those people I met within this community were some of the most courageous, caring, and intelligent individuals I have had the privilege of communing with.

I recognize how strong the pull to “go along” is and I want to stay connected with my intentions to eventually participate in and go through with war tax resistance and becoming an Ad Comm member I feel is a good first step into understanding what this action will mean in my life. It will also be rewarding for me to be given the chance to help assist others as they journey down this path. There is a lot I don’t yet know about the logistics, process, and consequences of war tax resistance and becoming part of the Ad Comm I feel will help bring about the knowledge and with that the courage I need to participate in this action.

### **2) What perspectives, skills, or interests would you bring to the Ad Comm?**

My views over the past decade have become increasingly radical and this has led me to NWTRCC. I do not feel that this state of perpetual war can be altered or even slowed within any of the current structures of government that exist to the public. I have written in the recent past and would like to tap back into this powerful tool and from the perspective of war tax resistance could be a powerful source of inspiration for me and hopefully a guide for more people to follow this powerful form of resistance. I would want to write for NWTRCC on any and all topics relating to the experience, prescient need for war tax resistance, and my own means towards our collective ends. With that I would put my energy, creativity, and conscious into this work.

### **3) What would you like to get from participating on the Ad Comm?**

My goal would be to become informed about war tax resistance through my work with NWTRCC and ultimately incorporate this specific resistance into my life. If by my work or actions I can motivate others to do the same which would add to the significance and justify the sacrifices this choice will require me to make.

### **4) Please give a brief history of your conscientious objection to war taxes.**

As a citizen of the United States of America I am not able to live as a moral person. My attempts to be a good and decent person and live a life in accordance with my conscious are constantly mitigated and corrupted. It is draining to understand without any doubt that my wellbeing and ability to live “free” is at the expense and devastation of those multitudes around the globe who experience the full wrath of this country’s military might. To live in this society under the flag of endless war we must make rationales and compromises that are as shallow and empty as they are short. “I am just one of the little people.” “This president is more hawkish than I would like but...” “If it gets too bad we can just move to Canada.” Living with these soundbites is impossible, they cannot begin to fill the gaps in our collective consciousness in those brief

moments when we contemplate the unthinkable death, destruction, and evil our policies have been from the inception of this nation.

The sheer simplicity of war tax resistance in my opinion is what makes it so appealing. You don't have to vote and hope. You don't have to create a non-profit or hope that the next MLK junior is going to come along in the near future. You don't have to put your faith in either wing of the sole political party in this country. I have for some time now known that removing financial resources in any increments is now the only form of resistance we have available for true peace.

### **5) What other peace and justice work are you or have you been involved in?**

Since completing my degree in 2015 from Portland State University, I have been participating in and committed to student debt strike. I have not paid down my current student debt and am committed to this action. This undertaking will undoubtedly take me off the traditional path and align well with a progression into war tax resistance.

### **6) Please briefly tell us something of your vocation and home life.**

My professional work has been as a social worker in low socioeconomic school systems in east county Portland, Oregon and in Eugene where I currently live. This work has been challenging but rewarding and has positioned me to work with some of the most marginalized communities on the frontlines of state oppression. My ability to make change in this system was severely limited but helped me experience greater understanding with those communities in our society in which capitalism must sacrifice to sustain among other things endless war.

I live with my partner Olivia, who is also a social worker and we live in a Eugene, Oregon. Olivia recently purchased a home, the decision of which was made to prepare for future consequences related to student debt strike and war tax resistance. We struggle every day to live in this sick society and are trying to plan for a future that neither of us glimpsed in our earlier years. We are trying to understand how best to support each other as humans who need to eat, shelter, and live but cannot justify or tolerate the exceptionalism that taints everything in this country.

### **7) Is there anything else you would like to share?**

I feel like I am torn between two completely opposing options. To resist in the only way I feel has any real impact or ride out the coattails of an American Dream taught to me from as far back as I can remember. Right now without any capital or experience to draw from it feels like I will be having to take a vow of poverty if I am going to commit to following my conscious which means at this moment in my life I might have to give up doing one of the things I love the most in life. Going on Adventures with my brother have become the most important experience in my life. These are not extravagant, glamping, vacations but trips out into the wilderness and wild areas of the Pacific NW where we dive, raft, hike, canyoneering, and other pursuits that fill the human spirit. This does take some level of financial resources above that which is required to live, and the prospect of losing that scares and saddens me. I don't believe that I have to give it all up; I just don't know what a future with my activism looks like. I know everyone who embarks on war tax resistance has worries and concerns and I don't have all the answers right now, it just felt good to put his in my response.