

IF YOU WORK  
FOR PEACE



STOP PAYING  
FOR WAR.

# More than a paycheck

NEWS FROM THE WAR TAX RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

December 2009/January 2010

## Relationships: When One is a WTR

The topic of “mixed relationships”—a war tax resister and a non-resisting partner—comes up often at WTR meetings and in conversations about war tax resistance. Some people say they want to refuse to pay but their partner is against it. Others are resisting but finding it a strain on their relationship. And many WTRs have managed to work things out with their spouse or partner and have stayed together for years, through thick and thin. The stories here represent a range of experiences and may or may not be representative of the WTR network as a whole. Maybe they will inspire you to send in your story or your ideas on making mixed relationships work. We hope to be able to collect the wit and wisdom from these situations to better respond in counseling and to prepare resisters for unexpected situations. As in most things to do with relationships, we know off the top that communication is important, that there are some practical steps, but there’s no magic either. We’d love to hear more on this topic.

In 2003 I quit my good-paying job in the software field so as to get below the income tax line and begin WTR. Soon after, my sweetie and I got together and a few years later moved in together. She’s not a tax resister and has a good-paying job in the software field, kind of like the one I left behind, with a taxed salary.

We split all household expenses 50/50, but I still sometimes feel like I have to be on-guard to make sure that I’m not subsidizing my tax-free lifestyle with her taxed salary—that would feel like cheating. On the other hand, it wouldn’t be fair for my necessarily frugal choices to dictate what sort of life she lives. We each compromise a little, though on the whole we tend toward voluntary simplicity and a low-expense lifestyle—the advantages of which she appreciates for reasons other than the tax resistance angle (for example, she’s able to put loads of her paycheck away for retirement, which makes that wonderful day seem very close).

We have a joint pool from which we pay for common expenses like rent and groceries, and we each pay equally into it. We had a joint checking account at one point that the IRS tapped with a levy, because it was at the same bank as an



Dave Gros and Zannie.

interest-earning account of mine (a rookie mistake on my part). Now I know to keep myself more aloof from any common funds that might be vulnerable to seizure.

Although my WTR sometimes makes our finances more complicated than they would be otherwise, it hasn’t been a source of relationship tension. At best, WTR is part of the package that makes her boyfriend lovable; at worst, WTR is her boyfriend’s crazy hobby (every boyfriend has got to have one). I don’t find it hard to agree to disagree about whether tax paying is a good idea since, after

all, that’s the situation most of us have with most of our friends and family.

—David M. Gross, Northern California War Tax Resistance, Administrative Committee of NWTRCC, and author of the blog “On The Picket Line: How I live up to my values by resisting federal taxes,” [sniggle.net/Experiment](http://sniggle.net/Experiment)

I was a practicing war tax resister for nine years. During that time, 1997 to 2006, I filed no federal tax returns and claimed nine allowances on my W-4 form. I worked low-paying social service jobs but did not live below a taxable level of income. And I made practically no lifestyle adjustments to protect my wages from garnishment or my property from seizure by the IRS. I was hoping to “get lost in the shuffle” and, for a while, I did just that.

About the same time that I became a war tax resister, I entered into a serious relationship that led to marriage in the year 2000. My wife is an activist in her own fashion, and she very much respects my efforts to work for peace and social justice. At the same time, she has consistently expressed concerns about my risk-taking in terms of being arrested for public protest or practicing war tax resistance. Such risk-taking is, for her, both emotionally and practically threatening and could lead to consequences that she is not prepared to accept—such as losing a job or giving up on her dream of buying a house.

From the start, we decided to keep our finances as separate as possible since we both had obligations to teenage children from previous marriages. We split the payment of monthly expenses and maintained no joint accounts. Since Oregon is not a community property state, we hoped to protect my wife’s

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## More than a paycheck

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*More Than a Paycheck* is a bimonthly publication of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, a clearinghouse and resource center for the conscientious war tax resistance movement in the United States. NWTRCC is a coalition of local, regional and national affiliate groups working on war tax related issues.

*NWTRCC sees poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, economic exploitation, environmental destruction and militarization of law enforcement as integrally linked with the militarism which we abhor. Through the redirection of our tax dollars, NWTRCC members contribute directly to the struggle for peace and justice for all.*

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## WTR Counselor Training

Put a bunch of experienced war tax resisters in the room and you can learn a lot from each other. In addition, questions from newer resisters help us all learn to learn how best and most clearly to respond. NWTRCC held a Counselor's Training after our Coordinating Committee meeting in Cleveland on November 8. Four hours turned out to be too short a time (six hours would have been better), but it was fruitful for all nonetheless. We got quite stuck on the many aspects of Federal Tax Liens (see below for one issue) and will try to write something up about that for a future issue or the website.

NWTRCC is creating a counselor's packet, and the prototype was given to each attendee at the training. We'll refine it and make it available to counselors in our network early in 2010. We have also had an objective to produce fact sheets on specific issues for counselors. In addition to #1 on student financial aid, we have added #2 on the frivolous penalty. #3 on issues related to passports, citizenship, and living abroad is in draft form. If you have information on any of these topics and would like to help complete the #3 draft, please contact Ruth Benn in the NWTRCC office. We hope to offer counselor trainings at most of our gatherings or anytime we can pull together about six interested people. Let us know if you would like a training in your area.

## Jail Possible for Resister

Long-time Maine war tax resister Frank Donnelly pled guilty in U.S. District Court on November 23

to under-reporting his income to the IRS. Donnelly, who sold lobsters for a living, is facing sentencing in federal court in Bangor, ME, some time in early 2010. An antiwar and social justice activist in his hometown of Lamoine, Donnelly's lawyer said her client could face up to a year or more in federal prison. The government's investigation of Donnelly dates to August 2005. His case landed in federal court despite a relatively small sum of money being under-reported. Donnelly became an activist following a stint in the Army reserves in 1966. He was court-martialed in 1971 for refusing to wear his uniform after becoming a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. Donnelly told NWTRCC that he didn't relish the thought of going to prison at age 64, but he was prepared for the consequences.

"You've got to stand up for your beliefs," Donnelly said. "I'm standing up for my conscience."

A longer report on Donnelly's case will be presented in the February issue. Contact NWTRCC if you'd like to know about support actions you can take.

—Patrick O'Neill

## HSA Subject to Levy

Health Savings Accounts (HSA) are one of the pre-tax deductions people can take from their paychecks and at the same time set aside money for qualified medical purposes. The account beneficiary owns and controls the funds. Distributions can be made for any purpose, but distributions that are outside the "qualified medical purposes" are subject to a 10% excise tax and included in the individual's taxable income. The IRS has the power

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## Many Thanks

We are grateful for recent contributions and dues payments:

Christian Peacemaker Teams (IL)  
Ithaca War Tax Resisters (NY)  
Michiana War Tax Refusers (IN)  
Oregon Community for WTRs (Portland)  
St. Louis Covenant Community of WTRs  
Sonoma County Taxes for Peace  
War Resisters League National

Thanks so much to everyone who has donated in response to our recent fund appeal—and in advance to those of you who plan to give soon! Our income is down in recent months, and the Coordinating Committee had to tighten the 2010 budget for our fiscal year that begins December 1, 2009.



## Network Updates

Northern California War Tax Resistance and People's Life Fund has had to change their phone number after many years. The new number is 510-842-6124.

NWTRCC's updated list of war tax resistance counselors, area contacts, affiliates, and alternative funds is on the "Contacts and Counselors" page at [nwtrcc.org](http://nwtrcc.org). Print versions of the Network List, which are slightly more extensive, can be requested from the NWTRCC office. Please let the NWTRCC office know if you are interested in being a contact on our network list. Email [nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org](mailto:nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org) or call toll free 1-800-269-7464.

## Relationships

*continued from page 1*

income from garnishment for the payment of my tax debt by assuming the “married, filing separately” filing status. My wife thought this was a good idea until she realized that “married filing separately” status rendered us ineligible for most state and federal tax deductions afforded to married couples. In other words, my war tax resistance was only compounding her financial difficulties.

In March 2004, I received a computer generated letter requesting a tax return and payment, including substantial interest and penalties, for the year 2002 only. I ignored this letter and heard nothing further from the IRS until November 2006. That November, I received letters requesting payment for the years 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. I responded with a letter of my own explaining my war tax resistance. Certified letters and warnings about making “frivolous” arguments followed.

At this point, I decided to suspend my war tax resistance for primarily two reasons. First, I believed that I could not afford to have my wages garnished and continue to meet financial obligations to my family. Also, I felt that my marriage deserved a break from the pressure that the decision to resist had placed upon it. For my wife, war tax resistance had become an imposed, rather than a shared, sacrifice. I continue to work with the local WTR group and to oppose militarism at every opportunity.

—John Grueschow, Coordinator  
of the Military & Draft Counseling Project,  
WRL Portland, Member of the Oregon  
Community for War Tax Resistance

My story about a mixed relationship is a cautionary tale, especially for parents. I always felt fairly comfortable in my marriage with the fact that I resisted paying all federal income taxes, which I started doing six years before I met my ex-wife. My ease with the arrangement was in part because she is a Quaker, has progressive politics, and has opposed every U.S. military engagement since I have known her. But as time went by she became more anxious about financial security, and more anxious generally about our whole life together, in particular issues around parenting. We tried for many sessions to resolve our differences, including those around my war tax resistance, in couples counseling and then in mediation. But the effort was overwhelmed by our differences over our children, which became more and more pronounced as they moved through the school years. Over time significant differ-



Walter Goodman. Photo by Ed Hedemann.

ences developed over education, and my opposition to drugging one of our sons to force him to comply with the demands of school. I helped found an alternative school where I still serve on the board, which is a democratic free school, a type of school known to have success with children labeled ADHD by giving them more freedom and a real say in how they spend their day.

Just one year ago, when as far as I knew we were still in mediation, my wife filed a court case, the main thrust of which was an attempt to remove my custodial rights, especially in the ability to participate in decision-making. To my great regret, and my children's, this tactic succeeded. The judge was an extremely irritable hack who had very traditional values, and right away it became clear that he did not like me. He very precipitously gave sole custody to my wife because of my views on medicating children, schooling, and war tax resistance. My wife's lawyer, to my shock, loudly trumpeted my nonpayment of federal income tax at every opportunity, in an apparent attempt to gain the judge's sympathy and also to gain financial advantage.

Our marriage was in many ways one in which the roles were reversed, with my wife acting as the main breadwinner, while I am a self-employed craftsman, with the flexibility to be very available for our children, particularly when they were young. I thought we had an implicit understanding which enabled among other things my war tax resistance. Unfortunately the forces which spurred my wife forward to force her will on me and my children ended up being much stronger than this implied consent and stronger than her own Quaker sympathies.

When the judge found out I was a non-filer, he forced me to file four years of returns. I did not even get a chance to explain in court that I am not a tax evader, but do not pay for reasons of conscience. I did explain my war tax refusal in my written response, but the judge may not have even read the papers. In any case he treated me

like a tax evader. One result is that I lost several thousand dollars from a bank account due to a levy. But I did not voluntarily pay and am as determined as ever to resist contributing to any form of militarism. I hope one day my sons will see that as a legacy I leave for them, as important in its way as the financial security and comfort that are the predominant values in our culture. Through all the turmoil I have been fortunate to maintain very close and supportive relationships with my two sons.

I wonder if there are others with similar experiences. I think my own experience is reason for any war tax resister who is a parent to try to think ahead and guard against the possibility that following your conscience could make you vulnerable in ways you never expected. There are the judges who sit in tax court, for whom it is possible to prepare and strategize, and then there are their brothers and sisters (though I did not see any female judges in Brooklyn Superior Court) who preside over marital cases, loose cannons who wield immense power over the lives of vulnerable children, and who may have a strong reaction to an act of civil disobedience such as nonpayment of war taxes. It really is a case of no good deed goes unpunished, of an act of love being beaten into a sword.

—Walter Goodman, active in  
NYC War Resisters League

My partner started resisting after watching me do it for years, but gave it up after an Earned Income Credit canceled his total liability (clearly he/we weren't making much money). We were about to buy a house, so having a non-resister was convenient, and he decided to stop. His heart wasn't really in it, though it made sense to him not to pay for war. Not too long ago an aggressive IRS agent seized an account that had only my partner's name on it, but that I had deposited some checks in. They found the account by getting copies of the back of checks written to me and seeing what bank handled the checks. Lawyers indicated it would be hard to fight the seizure because I had used the account, even though the money left in it was not mine. Now we have completely separate finances, with joint expenses split equally, and we generally let each other do what we want. Neither of us spends a lot of time worrying about money (having been brought up in financially secure and/or confident families). In the end the IRS got less than one-third of the total they were seeking, despite putting an aggressive agent on the case.

—Anonymous



# WTR Ideas and Actions

## New Year's in Georgia!

War tax resisters are joining with the Annual Alternative New Years Celebration at Crooked River State Park, St. Mary's, Georgia (near Jacksonville, Florida), December 31 – January 3, 2010.

The weekend includes a Peace Walk and Midnight Vigil at the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, homeport for Trident nuclear submarines, on New Year's eve; speakers, workshops, films networking, storytelling, and entertainment with Southeast activists at work on peace, justice and environmental concerns on New Year's Day (Friday); and the war tax gathering beginning on Saturday, January 2, and wrapping up after breakfast on Sunday, January 3.

War tax resisters will offer practical workshops for those interested in war tax resistance, and there will be time for information exchange, networking, and ideas for future gatherings or organizing efforts.

The site offers cabin or tenting space,

kayaking, river walks, good food, fun, and winter warmth. For program development and registration information contact: Clare Hanrahan or Coleman Smith at [wrlasheville@gmail.com](mailto:wrlasheville@gmail.com) or 828-301-6683.

To follow other WRL/WTR activities in the South visit: <http://warresistersleagueasheville.wordpress.com>.

## Tabling Reports

Clare Hanrahan, Asheville Area War Resisters League, put together a panel for a workshop at the Gandhi-King Conference on Peacemaking called "The Power of the Purse: Women and War Tax Resistance." Panelists included Judy Scheckel, Celo, NC, Pam Beziat, Nashville, and Kathy Kelly, Chicago. Kathy also gave a keynote speech at the conference. Memphis' *The Commercial Appeal* ran an article about the war tax resistance workshop in the October 25, 2009, edition, which is linked on the NWTRCC website "latest news" page.

Erica Weiland tabled with war tax resistance literature at two anarchist book fairs in Tacoma and Seattle, Washington, where she found all kinds of WTRs she didn't know about and is feeling more motivated to get a new group started. "One person doing something like tabling can get things going," she said.

Once again NWTRCC had a strong presence at the November 20–22, Mass Mobilization to Shut Down the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, GA. Thanks to our tablers, leafletters, and scarf sellers for all their work and for joining the thousands who turned out to stand up against oppressive U.S. foreign policy and speak out in defense of real and direct democracy, for life, justice, liberty, dignity and peace.

## No Nukes! Put It On Your 2010 Calendar!

The International Planning Group for Nuclear Abolition, Peace and Justice issued



War tax resisters were among those calling for an end to military action in Afghanistan on October 7, 2009, marking the eighth year since the U.S. attack. Longtime WTR Ed Hedemann (banner left) was reminded that it's easier to be jailed for hanging a banner off a balcony at Grand Central Station than for refusing to pay for war. Ed spent a night in jail and has a December 9 court date. *Photo by Tom Martinez.*



Grand Central Station, October 7, 2009. *Photo by Tom Good, Next Left Notes.*



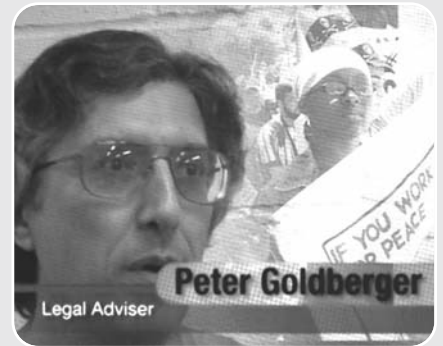
“Disarm Now! Mobilizing Call of the NPT Review 2010” last September in Berlin. In the U.S. the American Friends Service Committee and United for Peace and Justice are two of the key groups working on plans for an **International Peace Conference for Nuclear Abolition** and **Festival for Peace and Justice** in New York City, May 1–2, 2010, at the time of the UN Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference. NWTRCC signed on to the call at our November 8 meeting in Cleveland, and many in attendance plan to come to NYC for the conference and festival on May 2. We hope to have to have a visible presence of war tax resisters/refusers in the crowds. Please let the NWTRCC office know if you are planning to come to New York, and we’ll try to plan a gathering place for war tax resisters during that weekend. Links to the petition that will be presented in May and more information about the organizing for May can be found on the United for Peace and Justice website, [unitedforpeace.org](http://unitedforpeace.org).

▪ **“Resistance for a Nuclear-Free Future,”** July 4th weekend, will celebrate three decades of The Nuclear Resister and Nukewatch with a national gathering and nonviolent direct action at the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, TN. The two groups, in partnership with the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, envision nonviolence trainings, discussions, and action to highlight the need for increasing resistance to nuclear weapons, nuclear power, and the entire radioactive cycle. Let’s coordinate a WTR presence there and keep “refusing to pay for bombs” on the resistance agenda. ▼

## Death and Taxes DVD

Our long-awaited new film, which serves as an introduction to war tax resistance, is headed to the copier/printer at this writing and will be available to send out by mid-December.

*Death and Taxes* features over 25 war tax resister/refusers who talk about why and how they refuse to pay for war, redirecting war taxes, the range of risks and consequences, and thoughts on how WTR fits into the wider peace and justice movement. Introduced with the funk song “Why Don’t We All Stop Paying Taxes” by Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings, the film includes Julia Butterfly Hill talking about



her largest single act of resistance in WTR history, Juanita Nelson speaking on the joy of following your conscience, and Martin Perna of the Afrobeat band Antibalas who talks about WTR as one part of working for a better world.

*Death and Taxes* is 30 minutes long and is designed to be a starter for workshops, presentations, and discussions on war tax resistance, generally for people who are already interested in antiwar activism.

NWTRCC is offering the film at a sliding scale cost of \$10-\$20 each. Send checks payable to NWTRCC to PO Box 150553, Brooklyn, NY 11215, or pay online from the PayPal link at [nwtrcc.org](http://nwtrcc.org) and include a note in the comment that you are paying for *Death and Taxes*. Please let us know how you use it and what the response is.

## Watch Our Website

Shane Williams, a student at Rochester Institute of Technology, is helping to set up a new design for the NWTRCC website. Rick Bickhart in Charlottesville, VA, redesigned the site, and we hope to launch it around the end of the year. Watch [nwtrcc.org](http://nwtrcc.org) for our new look and hopefully easier-to-navigate website.

## War and the Environment

In our last issue Coleman Smith wrote about WTRs making better connections with environmental activists. A letter to WIN magazine floated to our attention recently. Colorado Springs friend and activist Bill Sulzman noted that they use a film called *Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives: The Environmental Footprint of War* in their outreach and organizing work amidst five military bases there. More information about the 56-minute film can be found at [scarredlandsfilm.org](http://scarredlandsfilm.org).

## NWTRCC in Cleveland for Weekend Gathering

War tax resisters in the NWTRCC network gathered in Cleveland over the weekend of November 6-8 for our Coordinating Committee meeting and a mini-conference. These gatherings and business meetings are held in May and November, and each one takes on its own character with input from our local hosts.



Maria Smith and Charlie Hurst. *Photo by Ruth Benn.*

In Cleveland longtime war tax resisters Maria Smith and Charlie Hurst were our inviters, and the weekend was hosted by the groups they work with: Dorothy Day Peace Tax Fund, Cleveland Catholic Worker, and the Cleveland Nonviolence Network. On Saturday evening Maria and Charlie were among those who told their story of becoming war tax resisters and why and how they've kept at it for more than 25 years—despite having a car seized years ago and more recently the garnishment of Maria's salary. Their experiences seeing firsthand the consequences of the U.S. militarism as part of a Witness for Peace team in Nicaragua in the 1980s remind them why they resist when things get tough. U.S. policy in Latin America is still a strong interest of theirs and of many others in the Cleveland activist community.

Poet and creative writing professor Phil Metres presented a poetry exercise on Friday evening to draw out ideas about violence and peace and what motivates us to do what we do. He read two poems, "The Story So Far" by Shara McCallum, and "Jerusalem" by Naomi Shihab Nye and asked each of us to write a short statement about an experience with violence, and then likewise about peace. In each case he started off the group poem and others in the room added their lines. The result, "For



The group prepares to watch a preview of *Death and Taxes*. *Photo by David Gross.*



Mike Ferner, left, and Phil Althouse. *Photo by Ruth Benn.*

We Have Seen/We Build a World, A War Tax Resisters Chorale," is too long to print here but is posted at [nwtrcc.org/chorale.htm](http://nwtrcc.org/chorale.htm).

Mike Ferner, President of Veterans for Peace, and Phil Althouse, attorney and election observer in El Salvador, made presentations on Saturday afternoon under the theme of "Making Connections/Working Together; WTR and the wider peace movement." With so much focus on U.S. policy in the Middle East, it was good to have Phil remind us of the U.S. role in trying to control elections in countries like El Salvador where, despite that influence, opposition parties were elected. Mike spoke about the rut of attending demonstrations and rallies but not feeling like we are really organizing and building a movement that can make true change. He sees us being stuck on being "antiwar," while we might reach more people by talking about what a

better life would look like and how we might get there. He feels developing real democracy where people have more power would give us a chance of building a better life.

NWTRCC also held its business meeting on Sunday morning. The fall meeting includes passing a budget for the new fiscal year, which begins December 1, and setting objectives for the coming year. Given reduced income and general low energy in the peace movement, we focused on maintaining the programs and activities that are central to NWTRCC's work including, strengthening our groups and contact and counseling network; producing and updating materials and the website; keeping the War Tax Boycott as an online campaign; making fundraising a priority; along with the special project of promoting our new film, *Death and Taxes*. The group saw a preview version of the film, and everyone is excited to have it available for organizing during the coming tax season.

## Call for Nominees

NWTRCC is seeking three new members of the Administrative Committee, the small group that organizes our business meetings and stays in touch with the Coordinator between meetings to keep the day-to-day work of NWTRCC going. If you or someone you know might be interested in this important committee work, please contact the NWTRCC office for more information or to make a nomination. Deadline is March 1 and decisions are made at our May meeting. ▼



## Counseling Notes

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to levy an HSA for a federal tax debt, plus, the levy is subject to the 10% tax. The only exceptions to the imposition of the 10% additional tax are in cases of disability, death or payment after the beneficiaries' normal retirement age.

## Liens and Credit Ratings

WTRs who apply for a credit card can find themselves on the reject list if they have a tax debt that has generated a tax lien. In fact, the way many people find out about a lien is through some credit report. A "Notice of Federal Lien" is not a seizure, but a claim to your property or property that you may acquire. It is usually filed in the registrar's office in your county of residence and is designed, at least in part, as a pressure point,

to make public a debt, hurt a credit rating, and embarrass the debtor. While many WTRs have found that a bad credit rating resulting from a lien has not affected their life, some resisters recently noted that prospective employers sometimes use credit ratings to reject job applicants. This was also noted in a November 3, 2009, *New York Times* article about getting your credit score.

When all other aspects of one's financial history are unblemished, is it possible to challenge a bad credit rating based solely on a tax debt due to conscientious objection to paying for war? We'd like to know if anyone has tried it. And by the way, the government requires the three big credit bureaus (Experian, Equifax, TransUnion) each to provide one free report annually to consumers. Be careful to not get caught in any offers that sign you up for a monthly credit report at a substantial cost. ▼

## New England Gathering

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Tom McLean enjoys breakfast at the New England gathering. Photo by Ed Hedemann.

importance of supportive individuals and community. Our stories (Tom Wilson: "I refuse to bow to the tyranny of April 15.") Next year's gathering. Fear, frustrations, sadness, even paranoia. Strategies, dedication, compassion, vision.

For me there was a definite sense of belonging as I listened to the stories of fellow WTRs. And of course I can't be the only one whose theory and practice was ennobled by being part of and engaging with the group of dedicated, like-minded individuals in attendance, many of whom probably agree enthusiastically with Ed Hedemann, who said, "I'd rather have 1,000 people resisting ten dollars than one person resisting \$10,000....The act of resistance is far more important than the amount of resistance."

Although I haven't completely settled on whether I consider myself to be a war tax resister, war tax refuser, or conscientious objector to taxation, I understand the importance of getting these phrases into the conversation. So far I made a post card, wrote a song, and wrote a letter to our local rag last March or so. I'd like to do t-shirts, or maybe a button: "Ask Me About My War Tax Resistance/War Tax Refusal/Conscientious Objection to Taxation (or Whatever)." It seems like there's a lot of enjoyment to be had by people doing this work. Maybe we can also draw inspiration from this one guy I heard of who learned to play the tuba just so he could perform his original Dixieland song "I'm an American, Not an American™" on a 4th of July float pulled by his aunt's prize flock of free-range turkeys, which Benjamin Franklin wanted to name the national bird. ▼ Jason Rawn lives in Maine where he gardens, guitars and eats raw garlic.

## GREAT GIFTS and a great gift to NWTRCC

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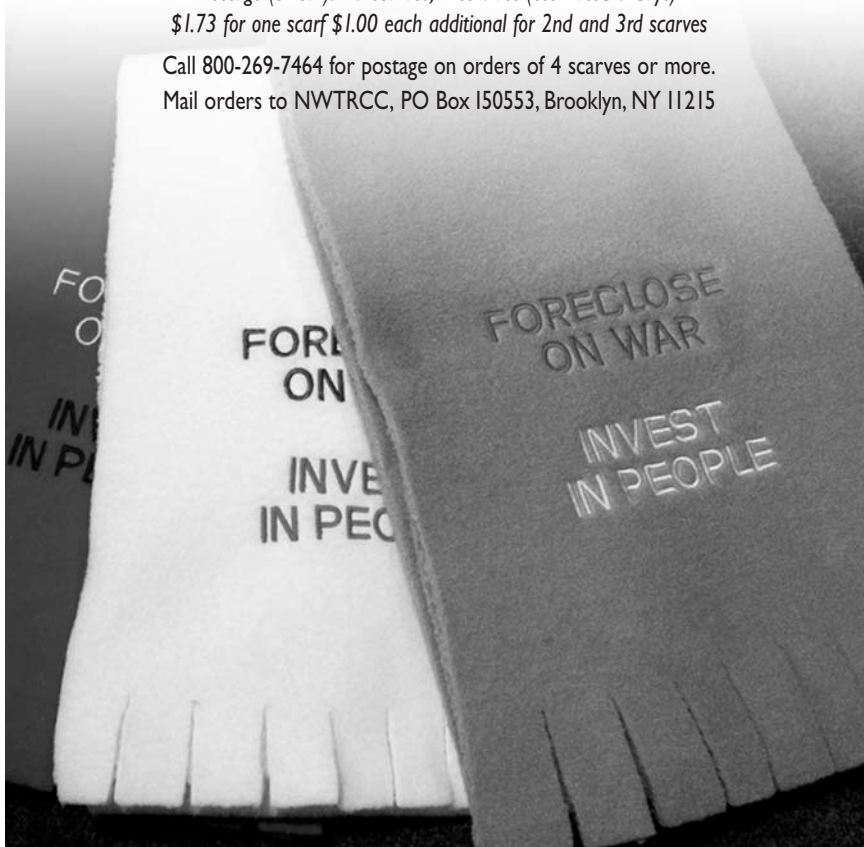
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# New England Gathering '09

By Jason Rawn

It took a year or two after learning that there is such a thing as war tax resistance before I resisted, even though I knew I would become a WTR as soon as I heard the phrase. During that year or two I was increasingly and literally sickened by the reporting I heard daily on *Democracy Now!* Despair had me. This helped reinforce the inertia I was experiencing.

But now something completely different. Since I first began WTR only two years ago, I have become an empowered activist. And a lightness is in my life knowing that I am speaking truth to power and that I'm no longer as complicit as I once was in the foreign policy committed by the U.S. government. But I still buy beer and gasoline and know that I still contribute to taxpayer-funded gangsters attempting to run the world on fear and greed.

When I signed for the first few IRS robo-letters I was most definitely intimidated. I had the idea that the return address on the envelopes was just an alias for "The Death Star, A Galaxy Far, Far Away" and that Darth Vader himself was on my trail. Then I attended the Friday night session of the 2008 New England War Tax Resisters' gathering in Kennebunk, Maine. I was only able to attend the first night, so I knew I'd be back the following year. A few months later the ME WTR Resource Center sponsored a gathering in Belfast, Maine. The sense of support and community was strong at each of these gatherings, and it was inexpressibly valuable to meet and hear others articulating (often articulately, often simply) their stances and experiences of tax resistance, refusal, redirection, etc. And since these two gatherings, I have done a lot of research, reflection, and discussing. These actions have resulted in that amazing sense of empowerment that many of us involved in this practice experience when we take responsibility for "our" individual share of "our" government's red, white and blue criminality.

So there I was sitting with two old ladies. Though unspoken, we agreed that blowing up helpless children (or anything, really) is a

bad thing to do. It seems odd that it's rare to be in such company where everyone explicitly agrees (and behaves as if they explicitly agree) that blowing up helpless children (or anything, really) is bad. But there we were, these two old ladies and I. And 4 or 5 others in a discussion group. But I single them out specifically because two grandmothers of mine had died within the past year or so.

One thing Frances Crowe, one of the living grandmothers/Grandmothers, said as we sat together during the New England War Tax Resisters' Gathering at Amazing Planet! Farm and Justice Center ([amazingplanetfarm.com](http://amazingplanetfarm.com)) in Williamsville, Vermont:

"If I have to have somebody give me the right **not** to kill, I'm in pretty bad shape."

Juanita Nelson, another grandmother/Grandmother at the gathering: "It's the way we live our lives every day." She also said, "Sometimes I think it's time to let the ants take over or something. Try that for a while."

It would have been excellent if my grandmothers/G had had the opportunity to meet



Jason Rawn. Photo by Ed Hedemann.

Juanita and Frances, if only for the shock, which I think would have broken into appreciation, enjoyment, and respect, given ideal conditions.

## Other News from the Gathering

Much was discussed over the course of the weekend in groups all size, including: How to work in tandem with younger activists with related interests. How to attract more young people to war tax resistance. The

*continued on page 7*



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