

Field Organizer Position & NWTRCC Network Review
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Over the past year, I have been the NWTRCC Field Organizer & Outreach Consultant. I have worked with thousands of people throughout the NWTRCC network and in other organizations to help build the power of war tax resistance while also increase our collaboration with people in other social movements.

I have used email, phone, radio, social media, letters, online webinars, conference calls, and in-person meetings and presentations. While this evaluation relies on my experience as the Field Organizer, it is not a specific evaluation of my work persay but moreso an evaluation of the state of our network and the Field Organizer position as a whole.

One part of this job was to get familiar with the existing network and look at ways to strengthen it, in particular the focus on regional and local contacts and counselors. Our network of contacts and counselors is available as a resource for WTRs in their area as well as for new people who are interested in getting involved or learning more about tax resistance. I spent a portion of my time reaching out to contacts and counselors who we haven't heard from recently. I found a few things:

- 1) The network is aging, and has been aging for a while. There are a number of regions where entire resource centers have closed or our area contacts have passed away and nobody has been around to carry on the work.
- 2) Despite this, the network I believe was actually quite well prepared to accommodate the influx of interest with Trump's election, and many counselors said they were excited to finally have renewed interest in war tax resistance after years of never being contacted. If anything, our network structure is still effective but *underutilized*, it was built during a time when there was a much higher level of interest in WTR and that level of interest has dwindled substantially in many regions.
- 3) Because of the lack of interest over the past five years or so before Trump's election, some of our counselors haven't kept up their knowledge and I noticed they were sharing false information (for example, saying that taking allowances on your W4 was based solely on how many children you have, which is not true). I think this could be solved by the use of yearly somewhat-mandatory conference calls for counselors where NWTRCC staff has an opportunity to update them on WTR knowledge and where they can ask questions to stay up to date. The newsletter is ideally the correct avenue for this, but I don't think our counselors are fully retaining the information from the newsletters.

All told, I think the NWTRCC structure is actually set up quite well. In particular, it lends itself quite well to a Field Organizer position, where there can be more explicit contact and outreach with our contacts and counselors with goals in mind (for example, having them help us setup a local presentation, and leaving extra materials for them to get a boost with new organizing while

we are there). I have seen this model with other networks and organizers which I think works quite well for an organization with a small amount of financial resources but a large number of devoted volunteers or committed individuals (which is us!).

What I found to be most effective was when there was an area or regional contact in our network that was interested in having me come to the region and do presentations in a few different communities, *and who also had energy and time to make it happen*. This worked well in the midwest and upstate NY particularly, where I did tours through a few different communities while working with one or two regional organizers in particular. With someone on the ground who was dedicated to make it happen, it was easy enough to find local space and reach out to local organizations. When local contacts didn't have interest/time/energy, then in general the trip ideas fell through and didn't happen.

Overall, I would say that all of my organizing trips that did actually happen were successful and I would recommend that organizing trips remains a portion of NWTRCC's work, whether by the coordinator or a field organizer. This was a portion of the original vision of the position, and my trips included visits to over a dozen states and provinces, with many more still to come before the end of this year. I presented at community gatherings, conferences, organizational staff meetings, colleges, high school student groups, activist groups, and house meetings. All of these seemed useful to varying degrees. If people have specific questions about the type of presentation or gathering, please feel free to ask.

The two avenues I did not find useful were tabling and flyering at events. I understand that other people in our network like these tactics for outreach but I always found the opportunity to actually lead a presentation (even if only for a few moments on a panel discussion) by far outweighed the outreach from tabling at an event or handing out flyers. Perhaps the one exception is handing out flyers in the lead up to a community presentation. What I found to be most effective was being able to give a short talk about war tax resistance with a heavy focus on its connections to other movements (for example focusing on tax resistance as an avenue to challenge white supremacy and state violence through the military, prisons, and police), and then give people lots of time to ask questions, talk with each other, and get materials.

Our focus on redirection this year was also successful. During my presentations, attendees across the board were excited about what they saw as a visionary project challenging state violence and white supremacy in our government as well as in our organizing communities. I received feedback from people who had "fallen out" of WTR communities that this was what they had hoped for, and renewed their interest in being tax resisters and getting involved. For those who don't know, this past year, war tax resisters and other supporters in a dozen cities across the country redirected money to organizations in their communities that are fighting state violence and are led by Black, Brown, and/or Indigenous people. A lot of time and thinking from many people throughout our network went into this redirection effort and making it a success. You can read my blog post about our redirection effort for a more full report.

Despite the general success of my presentations, there were still two main problems I identified with these regional tours. The first was when local contacts were not connected with other movements besides war tax resisters. In these instances, there was not very many people in attendance and not very much interest in war tax resistance. During instances where people were aware of and connected with other movements, we were able to rely on those relationships ahead of time and make links between tax resistance and other social justice work (example: groups working for racial, economic, gender, and climate justice).

This seems to confirm what I have believed for a while, which is that organizing around war tax resistance works best when making the connections to other movements as explicitly clear as possible. Part of the position's focus was on building relationships with other movements, and I think that remains vitally important for NWTRCC to stay pertinent and active with the organizing of today. While my focus for this work was building relationships and collaborating with Black-led organizations that have been involved with the Movement For Black Lives Policy Platform, climate justice organizations, as well as a prison and police abolition organizers, I think any focus on building strong relationships with other organizations benefits this work.

The second problem was with follow-up after I left. My impression is that it is hard for many local war tax resisters who often have many other things going on in their lives to host a series of presentations and then also continue that organizing after a NWTRCC consultant leaves. As such, I think while it is appealing to do a trip to an area that has dwindled substantially in recent years with the goal of "providing a boost," this really only makes sense if there is someone on the ground who can continue that work afterwards. This might mean "letting go" of some areas or regions which I think is okay for right now, and increasing our focus on regions that have more committed people.

It looks like having the NWTRCC affiliate fund might also help with maintaining organizing efforts in a region. For example the Maine WTR & San Diego WTR groups have applied for funding and it seems that having this option available has helped to maintain their work and effort to building tax resistance in their region. Also it seems that the formation of an Outreach Committee has helped to connect and support the people who are more dedicated to building WTR in their regions.

This brings me to my next point, which is a focus on key regions. This was an explicit portion of my job, to develop a focus in the Philadelphia region and evaluate the potential for a "hub" model for organizing around war tax resistance. As I alluded to earlier, I think this is a good avenue for proceeding with our work. It appears that this is developing in Philadelphia, especially as myself and other WTRs are trying to embed war tax resistance as a portion of racial justice work in the city.

Over the course of the past year, I did a number of WTR events and presentations in Philadelphia. I worked with Ari Rosenberg to host a potluck for existing WTRs. We also organized a joint community workshop with Philly REAL Justice and the Black and Brown Workers Collective. These events were a huge success, with a hundred people in attendance

and a few more committing to being WTRs. I continued that work in the spring with house meetings with the help of new resistor Sarah Mueller. The work continues this fall with another house meeting and hopefully an institutional support of tax resistance by the membership and steering committee of Philly REAL Justice. It remains to be seen if a new affiliate will form in the Philadelphia region or if it will be a more loosely organized group. If there is a future field organizer after I leave the position, I would recommend maintaining a commitment to building the hub model, and either hiring a very powerful organizer or having them live in an area where there is already a WTR presence and some support for building a strong hub. If there is money in the future, I would recommend hiring someone that is knowledgeable about WTR but also has extensive experience and knowledge in other movements, and is able to work to embed WTR as a critical and valued portion of that shared work.

I have also found a few areas where field organizing can bring us additional revenue:

- Church groups. Over the past year, I presented at two church groups, one of which it looks like is going to become a regular contributor of between \$500-\$1000 to our work. In particular, it makes sense to reach out to churches where WTRs are members of the congregation.
- Colleges & Universities. While not universal, I have had multiple offers to speak at colleges for a stipend. There's often lots of money at private schools and student groups can bring "radical" speakers and pay them (or NWTRCC depending) well. We are waiting on the actual check from Haverford but should be arriving soon, with another possible presentation at Middlebury College bringing in even more money.
- Regional Activist Organizations & Nonprofits. Through presenting at the Gandhi Institute this year, we built a stronger relationship with them and they became an affiliate as well as made a donation to NWTRCC for my presentation.
- Taken together, these only make up a portion of the money required to have a community organizer, but they are still important and underutilized avenues for us to make money.

While I am surely biased being in this position currently, I believe that the field organizer position greatly benefits NWTRCC as a whole. Even if not existing as a unique position, having a piece of the coordinator's role to include field organizing would increase our efficacy and outreach in the years to come. If you have specific questions or think of pieces I have left out, please ask and I will do my best to answer!

Recommendations:

- NWTRCC contacts, counselors, and structure
 - Generally maintain the existing structure, while understanding that our number of area contacts will likely continue to decrease for the time being as people "age out" and don't have anyone to continue the work in a given region.
 - People should continue to refer newly interested people to local contacts and counselors, while ideally following up with those contacts and counselors to make sure they are educated and supported as well.

- To implement yearly conference calls for counselors and contacts to “brush-up” while also giving them a chance to link up with others and think about potential for WTR organizing in their local areas. This will hopefully help contacts & counselors also plan ahead about a possible transition if they are no longer able to be a resource in their region.
- NWTRCC organizing position
 - To keep field organizing as a portion of NWTRCC’s work either through a dedicated field organizer position or an addition to the coordinator’s position. It is clear to me that having direct in-person contact from a NWTRCC organizer with a focus on action and relationship building helps keep existing WTRs in the network, bring folks back in, and energize new potential membership.
 - To focus on building regional hubs of tax resistance, in particular where WTRs are involved in other movements for justice as well.
 - To ensure funds available for field organizing trips, as well as money available for local contacts to maintain that organizing after the fact.
 - To maintain a focus on collaborating with organizations from other movements, in particular grassroots racial justice organizations.
 - Maintain Outreach Committee but encourage more broad participation of war tax resisters who are interested in doing organizing in their area but need more support to make it happen.
 - To keep focus of organizing on community presentations, not tabling or handing out flyers.
 - To continue virtual presentations, especially joint webinars and conference calls with other activist groups.

In-person Places Presented As Field Organizer So Far (not in any particular order):

- Washington DC
 - Presentation & discussion at Iraq Tribunal
- Ithaca NY
 - Quaker Meetinghouse Community Presentation
 - Catholic Worker House, good discussion with many newly interested people
 - Radio presentation on community show
- Syracuse NY
 - Presentation at Community Art Space hosted by Syracuse Peace Council with presentations from Syracuse Black Lives Matter and Upstate Workers Center.
- Rochester NY
 - Gandhi Institute presented alongside BLACK (Building Leadership and Community Development)
- Burlington VT
 - World Beyond War Conference Lunch discussion
 - Burlington Quaker Meeting Post-Service presentation
- Philadelphia PA
 - Community Presentation with Philly REAL Justice and Black and Brown Workers Collective

- WTR Potluck and Discussion
- House Meeting presentation
- New York City NY
 - Presentation for War Resisters League
- Butler County PA
 - House meeting presentation for local and regional activists
- Chicago IL
 - Lunch WTR presentation and discussion at Christian Peacemaker Team
- South Bend IN
 - Presentation at Showing Up For Racial Justice meeting
 - Community Presentation at Local Church
- Minneapolis MN
 - Panel presentation at Democracy Convention
- St Paul MN
 - WTR potluck and discussion
- Toronto ON
 - Panel presentation at Solidarity and Fightback: Resistance to US led Militarism Conference
- Buffalo NY
 - Radio presentation & discussion on Western NY Peace Center activist station
- Haverford College PA
 - Presentation and discussion for students
- Amherst College MA
 - Panel presentation and discussion with students and local activists
- Bates College ME
 - Presentation and discussion with students and local queer & trans youth

This averages out to an in-person community presentation every two weeks or so. In addition to these in-person visits, I also did virtual presentations with webinars, conference calls, and radio shows for WTRs in our network as well as different activist networks. These were also generally a success (some more than others). I think all of these virtual avenues are good quick and easy ways to reach new groups and organizations without the expense of in-person visits and should be maintained going forward.