

## Questions for Prospective Administrative Committee Members for the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee

### Shirley Whiteside

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

Being in league with people who are concerned about active resistance of the war machine inspires me. While WTR has never been an "easy" sell, it strikes me that in cycles of movements, maybe it could experience a resurgence not seen in a while, due to the increasingly blatant power and presence, funding, impact and visible consequences of the war machine. I wonder about the power of youth movements and social networks that quickly disseminate information and I don't know how well the 'aging' peace movement (which I am definitely part of) accesses that.

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

I always appreciate that NWTRCC disseminates information about all levels of WTR. My spouse and I don't live an extravagant life by U.S. standards, but living in poverty was not our desire--so many people who are tax resisters decide they must live below a "taxable" level, which simply does not always work. I remember meeting Juanita Nelson at a NWTRCC conference I attended in NYC (2005) and she was very intolerant of war resisters who pay at all. While I understood her perspective, I feel that if WTR is an all or nothing option, people are simply unable or unwilling to try it—the popularity of the phone tax resistance when there was 'the' phone company and the taxes were relatively high and consequences were low-risk is a model that could be exemplified by other "symbolic" resistance, like the \$10.40 resistance. I would like to see people of conscience at least take a little personal power in our heavily militarized world.

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

Inspiration from others. A more powerful sense about our ability to stand up as war resisters and put our money where our mouth is. A feeling of connection across geographic lines. WTR is civil disobedience that just makes sense.

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

My first years of WTR were as a non-filer and that worked for over 20 years. For some of that time I had a very low income, then under-the-table income. I never wanted to spend a lot of energy resisting collection—I would write a letter and send it to friends and coworkers naming the organizations I was sending my allotted income tax dollars to and the reason why—I did not communicate with the IRS. I managed this with W-4 resistance. On at least 2 occasions the IRS came to employers to collect after I was no longer employed in those places. At some point I just decided to shake things up and I filed and included a letter saying I was paying under protest. After that my spouse and I decided to start filing a joint return, we would pay with postal money orders and withhold \$100 from our payment. When my spouse went on Social Security they took these amounts from his payments after sending all the requisite collection letters. I feel good about the amount I was able to resist as a non-filer, efforts to collect were mostly thwarted. I stopped working in 2020 but have not yet decided to take Social Security or 'retire', so our income is lower. This year an accountant friend prepared our return and I'm not sure how we're getting a refund—I guess the richer you get the less taxes you pay—we had built a little rental property on our city lot and claimed that income on our taxes, but we had also installed solar panels to power it, and I THINK the expense of the solar panels might be the reason we're getting a refund. It's bizarre.

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

I first got involved in tax resistance thru the anti-nuclear movement, then being involved in resisting the US funding of wars in Latin America (especially El Salvador and Nicaragua). For over 20 years I helped coordinate the Denver Catholic Worker Soup Kitchen feeding the poor a full meal 5 days a week. This was accompanied by various paid employment at a medical clinic for homeless people, and street outreach for the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. I started a street newspaper which was published monthly by people who were homeless themselves, which I did for about 8 years. I'm acutely aware of climate change crisis and support those efforts, but have not been intimately involved in a particular movement but the health of the planet is a big motivator for me. Presently a community of colleagues I've known for years continue to hold anti-racist nonviolent banners weekly since June 2020 when the George Floyd protests erupted in our streets.

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

In July 2020 I 'retired' from my last job which was at a day shelter for homeless people, where I had worked for almost 6 years. There was a pandemic and I did not feel an urge or a need to be employed. My partner and I own about 3/4 acre in an urban area and plant a lot of garden. We have two grown daughters and 3 grandkids in college. We are about to embark on a huge change for us, to relocate to a place where we only know our realtor, a few Catholic Workers, and a woman we just met who teaches at the University of Northern Iowa. We are selling our little stash of land to people known to us who will respect what we have created, at a time when Denver is over-run with incoming population and real estate is governed by opportunists. Both of my parents are living with dementia which is a great challenge for my sister and me.

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

I worked as a local organizer for Fellowship of Reconciliation in N. Manchester, Indiana for a year in 1981—that local FOR group started the War Tax Resisters Penalty Fund and I contributed to that for the years it existed—when WTRPF came back on line I joined the little committee that manages it. It's important to me because it reduces the financial burden for resisters who may be hesitant due to penalties and interest increasing their debt. For many resisters once the penalties add up it can be more than what they initially resisted. It's a way of sharing the risk, especially for people who don't have a strong community to rely on where they live.

# Travis Christian

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

I am interested in the opportunity to be able to serve with NWTRCC as the organization goes into the 40th year of educating and assisting those with moral objections to paying for war.

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

For me my guiding light is devotion to the principles of Nonviolence as advocated by such great figures as Gandhi and Dr. King, and that is the lens through which I tend to view the world. In the past I have lead classes on living a nonviolent life while working as the education director at West Richmond Friends, a Quaker Meetinghouse located in Richmond, Indiana and I hope to continue to grow on my skills and knowledge to continue facilitating others in growing deeper into their commitments to nonviolence. I am also fairly skilled with technology and I'm willing to help out with any sort of data analysis, graphic design, or document layouts which may be helpful in spreading the word tax resistance message.

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

I hope to learn more about the work NWTRCC does, grow in my skills with consensus making, and feel good knowing that I am contributing a little bit toward the vision of a future without wars.

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

I have been living for many years below the taxable income level. The last couple of years I have considered earning more as it has become harder and harder to live on so little, and as such I have been considering what my other options are with regards to war tax resistance, recognizing that each person must choose the strategy that works best for their particular circumstances.

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

I have been a longtime opponent of wars, militarism, and imperialism. I have been involved in various peace and justice causes since I was in high school in the late 90s, including protesting the various wars the US has either been in or have been close to getting involved in since the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In addition to being anti-war, I have also been involved with SURJ while I was living in Richmond, IN (and to a much lesser extent with the Portland chapter since returning), I have served several stints in various roles in organized labor including serving as the shop steward with UFCW Local 555 from 2003-2005, working as a political organizer for SEIU in 2008, organizing as a student on behalf of the faculty at Mt. Hood Community College in 2011 when they nearly went on strike, working as a representative for SEIU Local 503 in 2019 and 2020, and also serving as the Executive Vice President of CWA Local 7901 during that same time. I have also been involved with the protests for racial justice that occurred following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, and at times I am also a bit of an environmental and animal rights activist.

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

I currently rent a small bedroom from a family which helps me keep my expenses down. I work a part-time job as an administrative assistant at Portland State University, where I am also finishing my final term of my B.S. degree in liberal studies with a minor in psychology. Eventually I plan to return to Earlham School of Religion as an online student to finish my M.Div. in peace & justice studies which I began working on while living in Richmond, Indiana in 2018 and 2019.

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

Online I sometimes go by the name Travis Ahimsa in honor of the Dharmic concept of Ahimsa or nonviolence. Nonviolence is for me the foundation upon which I try to build my life and the compass by which I try to navigate through life.

Regards,  
Travis Christian  
Pronouns: They/Them