New Developments

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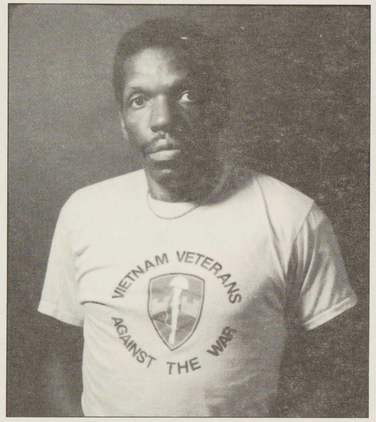
Another Brother is the name of a video documentary by Tami Gold about the life of Vietnam war veteran Clarence Fitch. The documentary—which the Muste Institute helped fund with a $1,000 grant in 1994—uses archival footage and interviews to tell Fitch's story, starting from his experience as an 18-year old Marine in Vietnam and his return home to Jersey City where he spent many years dealing with a heroin habit. In his own words, Fitch shares his difficult recovery from drugs, his mentoring role with high school students, his work as an anti-war activist and a union activist at the post office, and his courage as a person living with AIDS. (Five years after kicking his heroin addiction, Fitch died of AIDS in 1990.)



Clarence Fitch—an anti-war veteran and union activist who battled a drug habit and AIDS—is the subject of the documentary Another Brother.

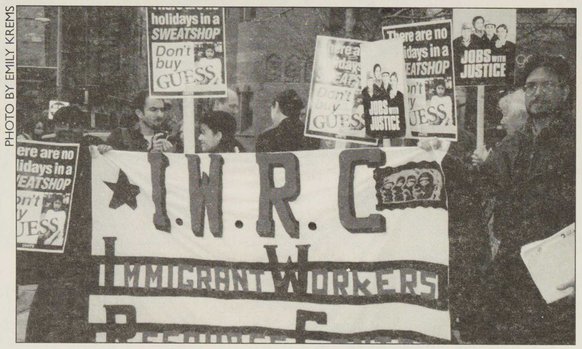


PHOTO BY EMILY KREMS

Left: Executive Director Juana Hernández (left, holding banner) and board member John Allocca (right, holding banner) of the Immigrant Workers Resource Center in Boston take part in a December 1997 protest against sweatshop conditions and labor abuses by the Guess company.

The documentary is available now; a discussion guide for high school teachers is in the works. A preview screening will take place in New York on May 20 at 6:30pm at the Lang Recital Hall at Hunter College, 68th St. & Lexington Ave., on the 4th Floor of the North Building. For information, contact ANDERSONGOLD Films, 151 First Ave., Suite 210, New York, NY 10003; phone/fax 212-982-7222; email <kelly@bway.net>.

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The **National Organizers Alliance (NOA)**, a Muste Institute grantee in 1995, works to advance progressive organizing and support the people who do it. NOA holds regular gatherings where organizers meet to discuss strategies and ideas for movement-building. As part of its efforts to support organizers, NOA has unveiled its Retirement Pension Plan, a 401(k) plan uniquely structured to meet the special needs of progressive social justice, service and arts organizations and their staff members. For information about the pension plan contact NOA Pension Administrator Steven White at 202-543-9530 or 1-888-NOA-PENS. NOA can be reached at 715 G St SE, Washington, DC 20003; phone 202-543-6603; fax 202-543-2462; email <noa@igc.org>.

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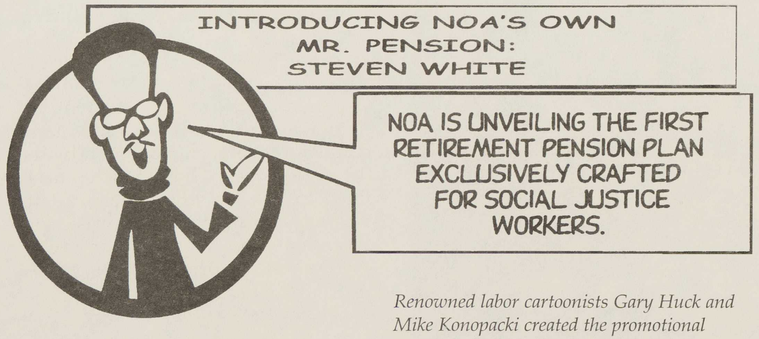
The **Immigrant Workers Resource Center** (IWRC), a Muste Institute grantee in 1995 and 1997, celebrated its tenth anniversary this past December. Since its founding in 1987, the Boston-based center has conducted some 400 workshops on worker rights; assisted workers in more than three dozen union organizing drives; organized four annual May Day celebrations; conducted 20 classes that combine English as a Second Language teaching with a workers' rights curriculum; and helped more than 3,000 immigrant workers resolve conflicts over back pay, health and safety conditions and other workplace issues.



Renowned labor cartoonists Gary Huck and Mike Konopacki created the promotional materials for NOA's new pension plan.

Grantee Profile:
Filmmaker Documents "Act of Conscience"

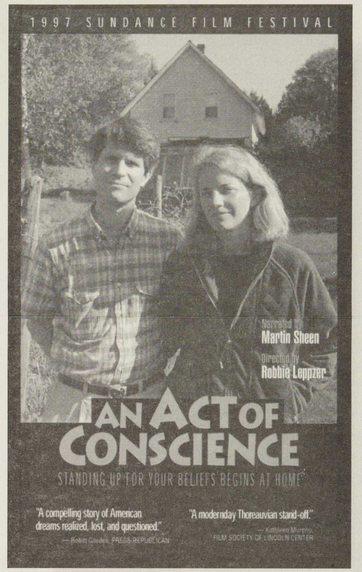
In June 1996, the Muste Institute made a $1,000 grant to Turning Tide Productions for a national grassroots video distribution campaign for Robbie Leppzer's documentary on war tax resistance, An Act of Conscience. *We asked longtime activist and tax resister Ruth Benn, director of the War Resisters League's national office, to review the movie for* Muste Notes. *If you're interested in arranging a screening of* An Act of Conscience *in your community, contact Turning Tide Productions at PO Box 864, Wendell, MA 01379; phone 508-544-8313 or 1-800-557-6414; fax 508-544-7989; email <info@turningtide.com>. Copies of the video are also available from WRL.*

An Act of Conscience tells the story of the IRS's seizure of the home of Randy Kehler and Betsy Corner, a result of their 12 years of war tax resistance. Randy is known to many in peace circles because of his two years spent in federal prison as a Vietnam era draft resister and his leadership of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign in the 1980s. He and Betsy Corner and their daughter Lillian lived in a home on a land trust in Colrain, Massachusetts.

In 1989 the IRS seized the house for nonpayment of federal taxes and four months later held a public auction of the house in Greenfield, MA. At that auction area war tax resisters and peace activists joined together and entered over $35,000 worth of sealed bids for food for the hungry and other community services in trade for the IRS not seizing the home. No bids were accepted, and the government purchased the home for $5,100.

In the spring of 1990 a formal notice of eviction was served on the family for "illegally occupying federal property." The support group that had gathered for the first auction geared up for the struggle ahead, as Randy and Betsy publicly refused to surrender their home to the government to be used to help pay for killing and war. On December 3, 1991, federal marshals and IRS agents arrested Randy for refusing to leave, evicted Betsy and Lillian, and padlocked the home. The next day an affinity group of supporters liberated the home and reoccupied it, risking arrest in defiance of government orders.

Filmmaker Robbie Leppzer captures all of the above and the ensuing two years of the pull and tug between activists, the government, and a young couple, Danny Franklin and Terry Charnesky, who purchased the home at another auction in February 1992. For viewers who have never heard of war tax resistance, the video offers a good historical overview along with eloquent



statements from Randy, Betsy and other activists explaining why they took on this risky form of protest.

An Act of Conscience is not just a video about war tax resistance though. After Randy's arrest it covers two years of 24-hour vigils at the home, legal struggles—especially with the complications of the home being on a land trust, celebrations of joy and hope, and tough meetings as support committee members disagree over strategy and tactics. Through it all music plays an important role, from Randy's arrest as he plays the piano to various renditions of the support committee's theme song, "We Shall Not Be Moved."

An Act of Conscience is enthralling on many levels. It can be watched by organizers as a case-study of planning and strategizing against a situation that gets more and more complicated. On another level it challenges individuals to consider, "how much am I willing to risk for what I believe." It also presents an admirable case for developing community in our social change work. But probably most of all, *An Act of Conscience* should be watched just because it's an interesting and moving story.

—Ruth Benn

Muste Institute Welcomes New Freeman Intern

Derrick Francis is a 17-year old high school student who works as an intern at the War Resisters League national office. Derrick is paid a weekly stipend for the hours he puts in at the WRL office, thanks to the Ruth and Harrop Freeman internship program, established by a generous bequest from the Freemans' estate and administered by the Muste Institute.

Derrick found out about the Freeman Internship through Global Kids, a non-governmental organization that tries to get New York City youth involved in international affairs and global activities. "I considered myself to be pretty well informed, but at Global Kids I started hearing about things I didn't really know much about, like the situation in Israel and Palestine. There were so many facts, I was bombarded... and I felt compelled to get active.

What attracted him to the Freeman Internship? "I was in dire need of money, but I didn't want some go-nowhere job like deep-frying french fries," Derrick explains. "And I knew myself as a pacifist, I had always pushed for nonviolence. So I thought I could make money doing something I believed in, something I could really dedicate myself to."

Right: Freeman intern Derrick Francis (right, with guitar) stands in front of the Muste Institute's "Peace Pentagon" in Manhattan with his friend Andre Zucker, another high school intern at WRL.