

# **The New Conscientious Objector**

*Friends Volunteer Service Mission as the  
basis for the new Neighborhood Solidarity  
Corps*



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We're living through chaos. It feels like the foundations of society are shaking. Climate collapse, entrenched poverty, and political polarization seem designed to tear our communities apart.<sup>1</sup> When traditional systems fail and institutions prove incapable of providing genuine safety, people naturally look for ways to say *no* to the madness.

For generations, the deepest expression of this moral stance has been the Conscientious Objector (CO)—the person who refused to fight, wear the uniform, or register for the draft.<sup>1</sup> This movement demonstrated profound courage, exemplified by Jeff Kisling's personal struggle in the Vietnam era, where he wrestled with whether to register as a CO or follow the path of non-cooperation and risk prison time.<sup>1</sup> That historical stance was about accepting personal suffering to maintain individual moral innocence.<sup>1</sup>

**But today, refusing to kill on a distant battlefield isn't enough, is it? What if the entire socio-economic system functions as a vast, continuous war machine, built on stolen land, extracted resources, and codified violence?**

That fundamental question is what birthed the **New Conscientious Objector (NewCO)**. The NewCO framework demands an expansion of conscience from a **negative witness** (refusal and non-participation) to a **positive witness** (active repair and liberation).<sup>1</sup>

To understand this necessary radical shift, we must look at a painful historical mirror: the flawed yet pioneering legacy of the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM). This report examines that history, analyzes the profound structural violence of our time, and demonstrates how the **Neighborhood Solidarity Corps (NSC)** embodies the practical blueprint for living the NewCO philosophy through integrated, community-led solidarity.

# The Shadow of Good Intentions: Acknowledging a Fractured Witness

The genesis of the Neighborhood Solidarity Corps is rooted not in simple inspiration but in a complex critical engagement with its own history. The NSC inherited a "fractured inheritance" from the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM), simultaneously embracing its effective methodologies while vehemently repudiating the broader historical legacy of Quaker complicity in state violence.<sup>1</sup> This tension between positive on-the-ground tactics and a deeply compromised strategy is, in fact, the generative philosophical force behind the entire NSC program.

## The Dual Legacy of the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM)

The proposal for the NSC makes it clear that its methods are not theoretical; they are "directly modeled on the successful, field-tested approach of the Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) in inner-city Indianapolis".<sup>1</sup> This program provided a powerful positive groundwork by prioritizing genuine relationships over pre-planned programs, building deep community trust.

This highly effective VSM methodology was distinguished by four core principles that the NSC adopted:

1. **Immersion:** VSM volunteers didn't just commute; they lived full-time within the neighborhood they served, often residing in a house adjacent to the local church.<sup>1</sup> This constant, authentic presence broke down the artificial barriers between "helper" and "helped," fostering a level of trust and familiarity that 9-to-5 outreach programs could never achieve. Immersion guaranteed that actions were grounded in the community's lived reality.<sup>1</sup>
2. **"Wait and See" Philosophy:** This approach was a radical departure from conventional social work, which usually arrives with structured programming already determined.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the VSM practiced "active discernment," trusting the community's inherent wisdom. Volunteer Connie Collett famously modeled this by simply opening the parsonage garage door and waiting to see who showed up and what emergent needs arose from those relationships.<sup>1</sup>

3. **Emergent, Youth-Centered Activities:** Because rigid agendas were rejected, activities grew organically from relationships with local youth.<sup>1</sup> A young person's expressed interest in photography led to the creation of a youth-owned 4-H club focused on photography and cooking. Simple games like whiffle ball filled the churchyard, and the empty parsonage garage became a dynamic, consistently available recreation center.<sup>1</sup> This approach ensured the activities fostered agency rather than mere participation.
4. **Economic Model of Solidarity:** The financial structure itself was an expression of commitment. Volunteers found jobs locally and pooled their wages, covering shared living expenses and program funds.<sup>1</sup> This pooled-income model eventually generated a surplus, freeing one volunteer to commit full-time to community work. This approach avoided the bureaucratic requirements and dependence associated with large external grants, rooting the program's economic life directly within the community it served.<sup>1</sup>

## The Painful Reckoning: The Architecture of Benevolent Harm

While the Indianapolis VSM provided powerful tactics, the broader historical tradition of Quaker service provided the negative ethical precedent that the NSC was created to correct. This troubling historical pattern is called "**benevolent harm**".<sup>1</sup> This concept describes devastating consequences that arise when good intentions are allied with the "violent machinery of the state".<sup>1</sup>

The historical failure stemmed from a "moral blind spot" where "peace" was defined too narrowly as the mere absence of overt warfare.<sup>1</sup> This allowed for participation in insidious systemic violence.

The primary example of this dynamic is the infamous **Quaker administration of Federal Indian Boarding Schools**.<sup>1</sup> This collaboration was justified theologically, framing forced assimilation as a "humane and peaceful alternative" to military extermination.<sup>1</sup> Under President Grant's "Peace Policy" of 1869, Quakers managed agencies with the stated mission "to protect, to Civilize, and to Christianize".<sup>1</sup>

However, this benevolent mission was a mask for a brutal "Architecture of Assimilation" designed to enact the policy of "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man".<sup>1</sup> Children were forcibly cut of their hair, a spiritual violation, and stripped of Indigenous names and languages. Zitkala-Sa, describing her experience at a Quaker-run school, said she felt she had "lost [her] spirit".<sup>1</sup>

The NSC's founders understood that this history revealed a "fractured witness": celebrated anti-war activism coexisted with colonial projects.<sup>1</sup> The NSC recognizes that VSM's relationship-building methods were effective *tactics*, but those tactics become instruments of harm when placed in service of a colonial *strategy*.<sup>1</sup> This understanding—that success requires both ethical goals *and* an autonomous structure—necessitated the NSC's creation as a systematic reversal of the entire historical model of benevolent harm.<sup>1</sup>

# From Witness to Action

The Evolution of the New Conscientious Objector

## A Fractured Inheritance: Evolving the Peace Testimony

The Neighborhood Solidarity Corps (NSC) emerged from a critical analysis of the traditional Quaker peace testimony. While courageous, the old model was a "negative" witness, defined by refusal—refusing to kill, wear a uniform, or pay war taxes. The "New Conscientious Objector" (NewCO) proposes a "positive" witness, defined not by what it refuses, but by what it actively builds: a new world based on justice and repair, created in the present.

### The "Old" Witness (Negative)

- ✗ **Focus:** Refusal of violence.
- ✗ **Action:** Non-participation in war.
- ✗ **Risk:** Complicity in "benevolent harm" and state-sponsored systems of charity.

### The "New" Witness (Positive)

- ✓ **Focus:** Active building of justice.
- ✓ **Action:** Prefigurative politics; creating the desired world now.
- ✓ **Goal:** Decolonization, Mutual Aid, and Abolition as spiritual imperatives.

The following table summarizes the fundamental shift required:

The Ethical Divide: From Benevolent Harm to Solidarity

<b>The Legacy of 'Benevolent Harm' (The Problem)</b>	<b>The NSC Model of Solidarity and Mutual Aid (The Correction)</b>
Allied with violent state systems to administer policy <sup>1</sup>	Operates outside state/market logic to build "people's infrastructure" <sup>1</sup>
Top-down administration reinforcing power imbalances <sup>1</sup>	Horizontal networks of collective care based on solidarity <sup>1</sup>
Imposed external solutions based on a "civilizing" mission <sup>1</sup>	Responds to emergent needs identified by the community itself <sup>1</sup>
Measured success by conformity/transactional metrics <sup>1</sup>	Measures success by the depth of relationships and community well-being (Trust, Agency) <sup>1</sup>

## The Foundational Shift: Solidarity, Not Charity

The most critical shift in praxis is from "charity" to "solidarity" (or Mutual Aid). Charity is a top-down, transactional model that reinforces power imbalances between a "giver" and "receiver." Solidarity is a horizontal, relational act of collective care and liberation, built on the understanding that our well-being is intertwined.

### Charity (Top-Down)

- ✗ Transactional: Giver-Receiver relationship.
- ✗ Hierarchical: Reinforces power dynamics.
- ✗ Symptom-focused: Addresses immediate needs without changing systems.
- ✗ Often allied with state/corporate power.

### Solidarity (Horizontal)

- ✓ Relational: Based on mutual, authentic connection.
- ✓ Horizontal: Builds collective power and autonomy.
- ✓ Root-focused: Aims to build "people's infrastructure" for liberation.
- ✓ A political act of prefigurative justice.

# Defining the New Conscientious Objector (NewCO): The Shift from "No" to "Yes"

The NewCO framework emerges from the conviction that the historical understanding of complicity must continue to deepen. The traditional CO stance evolved through a historical process of "continuing revelation" regarding what constitutes participation in war.<sup>4</sup>

## Beyond the Draft Card: Expanding the Moral Boundary of War

Historically, the moral trajectory of the conscientious objector progressively expanded the target of their objection<sup>4</sup>:

- **Stage 1: Refusal of the Act.** In the Civil War, men like Seth Laughlin endured systematic torture, including being suspended by his thumbs and facing a firing squad, for refusing the singular act of killing.<sup>1</sup>
- **Stage 2: Refusal of the Institution.** By World War I, the witness expanded to rejecting the military institution itself. Merlin Chamness endured brutal violence and solitary confinement for refusing work orders in CPS camps that aided the "military machine".<sup>1</sup>
- **Stage 3: Refusal of the System.** During the Vietnam era, figures like Don Laughlin and others refused to grant legitimacy to the Selective Service System by refusing to register or returning their draft cards.<sup>1</sup> The boundary of "participation in war" expanded from the act, to the institution, to the state system that enabled it.

The NewCO represents the next logical step in this theological trajectory: refusing to cooperate with the *entire socio-economic system* that undergirds and necessitates war, not just the overt military machine.<sup>4</sup>

## The Evolution of Conscience: From Negative to Positive Witness

The traditional CO was defined by a **"negative" witness**: a courageous, sacrificial "No" focused on *non-participation* and maintaining *individual moral innocence* ("I will not kill").<sup>1</sup>

The moral insufficiency of this stance became clear when reformers, aiming for individual moral purity, accepted "humane" alternatives—like the Quaker-run Indian Boarding Schools—that were actually just quieter forms of systemic violence.<sup>4</sup> The NewCO fundamentally rejects this reformism, which aims only to "humanize" state violence.

Instead, the NewCO embodies the emergence of a **"positive" witness**.<sup>1</sup> This is an active, constructive "Yes" to dismantling unjust structures and repairing historical harm.<sup>1</sup> It requires moving beyond a focus on individual innocence to embracing a **corporate responsibility** to repair the harm caused by the systems from which one benefits.<sup>1</sup> The moral focus shifts from, "What must I refuse to do?" to, **"What must we actively build?"**.<sup>1</sup> This shift demands a politicization of faith, translating conviction into radical political praxis, and the NSC's mission is explicitly designed to fulfill this positive witness.<sup>2</sup>

# The Integrated Machine: Diagnosing Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence (CCV)

## The Diagnosis: Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence (CCV)

The NewCO framework identifies the root of systemic harm as an integrated system: Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence (CCV). This isn't three separate issues, but a fused system where colonial expansion, capitalist extraction, and a theology of supremacy work together to justify and enact violence. The NewCO's mission is to be a "symmetrical antidote" to this entire system, not just one part of it.



The NSC's refusal of traditional charity and its adoption of radical solidarity are predicated on a deep theoretical analysis of power. It starts from the diagnosis that modern social crises—from poverty to polarization—are not isolated problems, but rather symptoms of a single, interlocking system of violence.<sup>1</sup>

## The Fused Architecture of Oppression

This systemic analysis identifies modern oppression as operating through a "fused architecture" called **Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence (CCV)**.<sup>1</sup> In this model, religious ideology, political conquest, and economic extraction are "seamlessly integrated" and mutually reinforcing.<sup>1</sup> A crucial understanding is that any attempt to reform one component in isolation is "destined to fail" because the others remain intact to regenerate the oppressive logic.<sup>1</sup>

The CCV operates through three fused pillars:

- **Pillar 1: Christian Ideology.** This is the ideological engine that provides the "moral license for conquest".<sup>1</sup> Its source code, the Doctrine of Discovery (15th-century papal bulls), granted divine authority to seize non-Christian lands. Its endurance is proven by its transmutation into secular U.S. law: the 1823 Supreme Court case *Johnson v. M'Intosh* explicitly cited the doctrine to legally nullify Indigenous land title.<sup>1</sup>
- **Pillar 2: Colonial Violence.** This is the political project of settler-colonialism, aiming for the permanent replacement and elimination of Indigenous sovereignty and culture.<sup>1</sup> The Quaker-run Indian Boarding Schools are a chilling example of Christian justification being put in direct service of the state's political goal.<sup>1</sup>
- **Pillar 3: Capitalist Violence.** This is the economic engine fueled by land theft, resource extraction, and exploitation.<sup>1</sup> The colonial project explicitly dissolved collective land ownership and retrained Indigenous youth for menial labor "at the bottom of the colonial economy," ensuring rigid economic hierarchies.<sup>1</sup>

## The Inward Turn: Understanding Systemic Blowback

A defining element of this diagnosis is the critical understanding that the CCV system, built on perpetual expansion and dispossession, does not remain externally focused. Eventually, it "turns its logic inward," inflicting a version of its foundational violence upon the dominant society it was created to serve.<sup>1</sup> This process is termed **Systemic Blowback**:

- **Capitalist Blowback:** Economic violence manifests as widespread poverty, deindustrialization, and a social crisis of "deaths of despair" (suicide, drug, and alcohol poisoning) surging among populations whose economic prospects have collapsed.<sup>1</sup>
- **Christian Blowback:** This pain is weaponized through the rise of White Christian Nationalism, which acts as a "maladaptive coping mechanism".<sup>1</sup> It misdirects legitimate economic anger away from the failures of capitalism and toward racial and cultural scapegoats.<sup>1</sup>
- **Colonial Blowback:** The tactics of colonial population control—once used on the frontier—are brought home through the militarization of domestic policing, facilitated by programs like the Department of Defense's 1033 Program.<sup>1</sup> This fosters a "warrior" mindset where police view citizens as enemies to be dominated.<sup>1</sup>

This CCV diagnosis is more than an academic concept; it provides the intellectual foundation for building a broad, multiracial, cross-class coalition.<sup>1</sup> The framework establishes a clear causal chain: economic precarity leads to vulnerability to extremist ideology, which is then enforced by a militarized state. NSC organizers can use this systemic view to demonstrate that the militarized police unit in an urban Black neighborhood and the shuttered factory in a rural white town are not unrelated tragedies but are both manifestations of the same extractive, colonial logic, thus countering zero-sum thinking.<sup>1</sup>

# A Blueprint for Repair: The Neighborhood Solidarity Corps (NSC) Mission

The NSC is animated by a systematic reversal of the "benevolent harm" model, moving away from the historical failure of top-down charity toward a horizontal praxis of solidarity.<sup>1</sup>

## Solidarity, Not Charity: The Foundational Rupture

### Borrowed Tactics: The VSM Methodology

The NSC doesn't invent its methods from scratch. It directly borrows the field-tested, successful tactics from a specific Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM) in inner-city Indianapolis. These principles prioritize people over programs.

### The New Praxis: A Symmetrical Antidote

The NSC's "positive" witness is embodied in three interconnected pillars of liberation. These are not separate goals but a single, integrated praxis that forms a "symmetrical antidote" to the violence of the CCV system.

The NSC's foundational principle is distilled into the potent phrase: **"Solidarity, Not Charity"**.<sup>1</sup>

Traditional charity is critiqued as inherently hierarchical and transactional, creating a relationship between a powerful "giver" and a powerless "receiver" that reinforces the very power imbalances that create vulnerability in the first place, thereby stripping individuals of dignity and agency.<sup>1</sup>

Solidarity, conversely, is the radical alternative.<sup>1</sup> It is a horizontal practice of collective care based on a shared understanding of systemic struggle. Its tangible expression is Mutual Aid, defined as the "collective coordination to meet each other's needs".<sup>1</sup> This is a political act of collective liberation, aiming to build "people's infrastructure" outside the logic of the state or the market. It is a practice that makes oppressive systems "less necessary by building

community-based alternatives".<sup>1</sup>

## Vision, Mission, and Relational Objectives

Because the goal is transformation, the NSC rejects transactional outputs favored by traditional non-profits. The program prioritizes relational outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

- **Vision:** A world where every young person recognizes their inherent power to build resilient, self-determining communities.<sup>1</sup>
- **Mission:** To place dedicated volunteers in neighborhoods to build authentic relationships, foster youth-led initiatives, and practice solidarity as tangible community care.<sup>1</sup>

Core objectives focus on qualitative growth <sup>1</sup>:

- *For Youth:* Foster self-worth and agency, develop relational skills, and cultivate creative expression.<sup>1</sup>
- *For Volunteers:* Practice a "changed life" of direct action, learn through presence, and embody simplicity and solidarity.<sup>1</sup> This mirrors the self-sufficiency and communal ethos of the VSM's pooled-income model.<sup>3</sup>
- *For Community:* Establish a consistent "reconciling presence" and create "dual power" infrastructure—small-scale resources that meet needs directly.<sup>1</sup>

## The Radical Metrics: Autonomy through Illegibility

The NSC deliberately rejects conventional metrics like the number of clients served or hours of programming delivered, viewing them as transactional and inadequate for capturing transformative work.<sup>1</sup>

Success is measured qualitatively by key indicators: **Trust** (youth seeking out volunteers), **Confidence** (youth leading activities), **Community** (spontaneous collective actions emerging), and **Transformation** (volunteers achieving deep, lasting personal growth).<sup>1</sup>

This focus on relational outcomes makes the NSC deliberately "**illegible**" to external power structures like funders and government agencies, which seek quantifiable outputs.<sup>1</sup> This illegibility functions as a powerful protective barrier against co-optation and mission drift. By choosing metrics that can only be understood and validated from within the community, the NSC ensures its accountability remains with the people it serves, not with external bureaucratic demands.<sup>1</sup>

# The Symmetrical Antidote: NewCO Praxis in Action

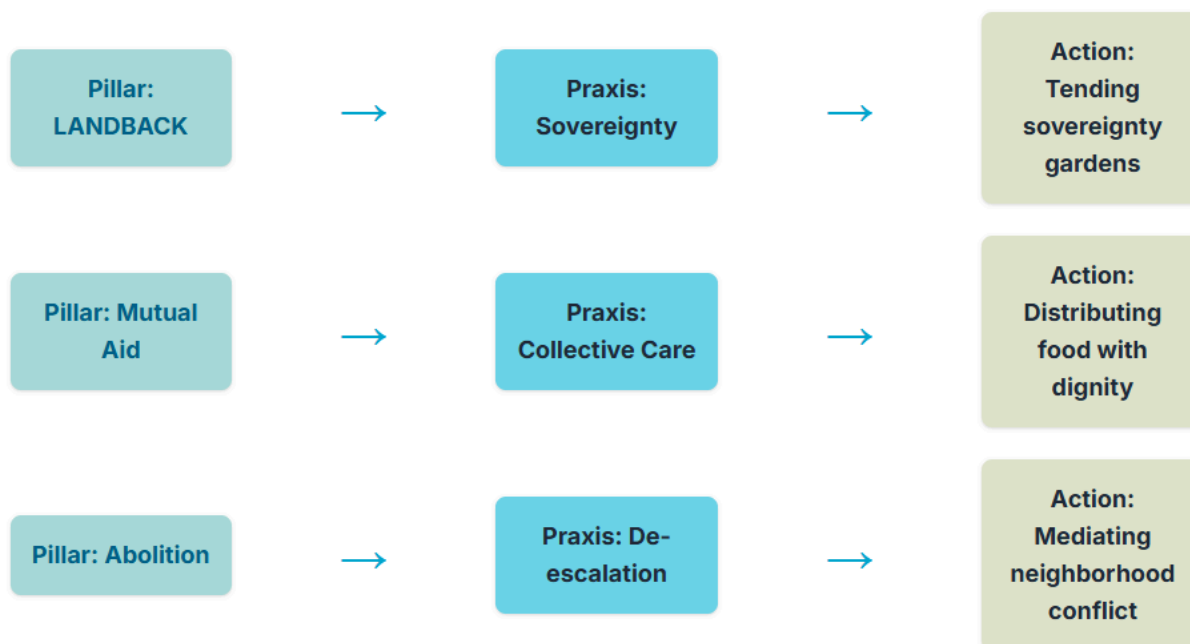
The NSC translates the NewCO philosophy into action through the **Symmetrical Antidote**—three interdependent pillars of liberation praxis designed to directly counter the three fused pillars of CCV.<sup>1</sup> This integrated strategy represents the fulfillment of core spiritual testimonies.

## The Integrated Liberation Praxis

<b>The Fused System of Violence (The Problem)</b>	<b>The Integrated Liberation Praxis (The Solution)</b>	<b>The Living Spiritual Testimony (The Core Value)</b>
Colonial Violence (Land Theft, Elimination of Sovereignty) <sup>1</sup>	LANDBACK (Material Return of Land & Sovereignty) <sup>1</sup>	Integrity <sup>1</sup>
Capitalist Violence (Extraction, Scarcity, Hierarchy) <sup>1</sup>	Mutual Aid (Solidarity, Collective Care) <sup>1</sup>	Equality <sup>1</sup>
Christian/State Violence (Coercive Enforcement, Caging) <sup>1</sup>	Abolition (Divestment from Police/Prisons, Investment in Care) <sup>1</sup>	Peace <sup>1</sup>

## Praxis in Action: From Theology to the Street

This is how high-level theological concepts translate into the daily, material work of the Neighborhood Solidarity Corps. The "why" (Pillar) directly informs the "how" (Praxis), which is lived out in the "what" (Daily Action). Love is redefined as the active, material work of justice and repair.



### Pillar I: LANDBACK as Integrity in Action

LANDBACK is the direct, material antidote to Colonial Violence.<sup>1</sup> It is not a metaphor but a concrete political project demanding the literal return of ancestral lands and the full restoration of Indigenous sovereignty.<sup>1</sup>

Theologically, this praxis is the authentic modern expression of **Integrity**.<sup>1</sup> After centuries of profiting from stolen land, integrity demands tangible acts of restitution over symbolic apologies. For NSC, speaking of peace while occupying stolen land is viewed as a profound spiritual contradiction, and LANDBACK is presented as the only honest response.<sup>1</sup> Corps activities include ecological restoration in partnership with Indigenous leaders (cultivating ancestral foods and utilizing Traditional Ecological Knowledge) and providing essential logistical support for active LANDBACK campaigns.<sup>2</sup>

## Pillar II: Mutual Aid as Equality in Action

Mutual Aid is the antidote to Capitalist Violence.<sup>1</sup> Defined by the principle of "Solidarity, Not Charity," it builds horizontal networks of collective care to de-commodify survival and dismantle the scarcity mindset essential to capitalism.<sup>1</sup>

This horizontal praxis is the living expression of the testimony of **Equality**.<sup>1</sup> If there is "that of God in every person," then denying basic needs for food, shelter, and care while others hold a surplus is deemed a spiritual violation.<sup>1</sup> NSC implementation builds on the VSM's economic independence model.<sup>1</sup> Activities include establishing Community Resource Hubs (free stores operating outside market logic), organizing Skill-Share Networks to build collective resilience, and maintaining Rapid-Response Care Networks for crises like evictions or emergency childcare.<sup>2</sup>

## Pillar III: Abolition as Peace in Action

Abolition is the antidote to Christian (State) Violence and is presented as the necessary 21st-century expression of the **Peace** Testimony.<sup>1</sup> It expands the historical rejection of international warfare to include the state's domestic instruments of violence: police, prisons, and surveillance, recognizing them as the domestic enforcement arm of the colonial state.<sup>1</sup>

Abolition employs a dual strategy: systematically divesting from these systems of harm while simultaneously investing in community-based systems of genuine safety.<sup>1</sup> NSC implementation includes training corps members in conflict de-escalation and mediation for Community Safety/De-escalation Brigades, organizing Court Watch and Jail Support efforts, and providing the necessary labor for local political campaigns demanding municipal budgets "Divest/Invest" away from police and toward social care.<sup>2</sup>

It is essential to understand that these three pillars are a single, cohesive, and interdependent strategy.<sup>1</sup> One cannot achieve Abolition without simultaneously dismantling the colonial property relations that police exist to protect (LANDBACK) and building the robust alternative systems of collective care that make police and prisons obsolete (Mutual Aid).<sup>1</sup> This necessity of integration prevents the single-issue failure predicted by the CCV diagnosis.

# Forging the Future: The Culture of Transformative Accomplice-ship

The work of the NSC requires more than just good intentions; it demands a disciplined internal culture designed to move participants beyond the passive stance of "allyship" and toward **transformative accomplice-ship**.<sup>2</sup>

An ally offers verbal support from a position of safety. By contrast, an accomplice actively uses their position to share risk, takes direction from those most affected by oppression, and focuses energy on dismantling the oppressive structures themselves.<sup>2</sup> The NSC is designed as a training ground to forge these accomplices, linking directly to the objective for volunteers to "Practice a 'Changed Life'".<sup>5</sup>

The NSC's internal culture is built upon four operational principles of accomplice-ship:

1. **Truth & Reckoning:** All corps members engage in mandatory, ongoing political education that includes an "unflinching examination" of the specific local history of colonialism and their own community's complicity in harm.<sup>2</sup> This creates the necessary spiritual integrity for genuine reparative work.
2. **Centering Marginalized Leadership:** The corps operates under formal accountability mechanisms, requiring the guidance, consent, and direction of local Indigenous elders and marginalized community leaders before initiating any projects.<sup>2</sup> This directly counters the top-down, settler-led failures inherent in the history of benevolent harm.
3. **Building Relationships Through Shared Struggle:** The organization prioritizes the slow, patient, and often difficult process of building real personal relationships over quick, transactional project outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Resilient solidarity is forged through the shared labor, hardship, and vulnerability of working together on the ground, echoing the deep relational philosophy proven successful by the Indianapolis VSM.<sup>1</sup>
4. **Moving from Words to Tangible Action:** The NSC maintains a strong institutional bias toward material action and restitution.<sup>2</sup> Symbolic gestures are deemed insufficient; a land acknowledgment must be immediately followed by direct support for LANDBACK campaigns.<sup>2</sup>

The creation of this culture institutionalizes the practice of shared, corporate risk in the service of collective liberation. It moves beyond the individual moral affirmation of the traditional CO (risking prison to affirm one's own belief) to requiring active engagement in dismantling systems, fulfilling the charge to "let your lives speak" through constructive, high-risk action.

The NSC offers a practical, physical way to embody conviction. The program's adherence to simplicity and solidarity, such as modeling the VSM's Economic Model of Solidarity (pooling

wages for shared living expenses and self-sufficiency)<sup>3</sup>, challenges volunteers to move from theoretical anti-capitalism to a lived practice focused on human connection over materialism.<sup>1</sup> By intentionally modeling non-hierarchical, democratic, and community-centric relationships internally, the NSC acts as a microcosm of the liberated world it seeks to create—the ultimate goal of prefigurative politics.<sup>2</sup>

### **Conclusion: Building the New World in the Shell of the Old**

The Neighborhood Solidarity Corps is not just a proposal for a youth program. It is a disciplined exercise in "prefigurative politics"—a philosophy that the most effective way to achieve a just future is to build it in the present. The corps itself becomes a living, breathing testimony to a world where love is made manifest through the material work of justice, mending the social fabric one relationship at a time.

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## **Educational Resources**

**InfoGraphic**      <https://gemini.google.com/share/7b1ac720095e>

**Quiz**                <https://gemini.google.com/share/9781f55ce415>

**YouTube video**    <https://youtu.be/V3KjFLIpVc0>

**Young Quaker Men Facing War and Conscription**  
[young-quaker-men-facing-war-and-conscription\\_68ff7d65.pdf](young-quaker-men-facing-war-and-conscription_68ff7d65.pdf)

## Conclusion: The Call to Build

The New Conscientious Objector is the necessary response to the contemporary spiritual and systemic crisis. By diagnosing the fused violence of the Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence system, the NewCO is compelled to move beyond a partial refusal of violence toward a total commitment to systemic repair.

The Neighborhood Solidarity Corps does not merely reject the past; it redeems the effective relational genius of the VSM methodology by integrating it within a radical, decolonial strategy. It insists that authenticity demands aligning spiritual values with material actions: practicing LANDBACK as Integrity, engaging Mutual Aid as Equality, and committing to Abolition as Peace.

The NSC is, therefore, a challenge to move beyond comfort and protest into the deep, disciplined work of rebuilding society's foundations. What does conscience demand in this moment of fused violence? A refusal to participate, or a revolutionary commitment to build? The choice, as always, is personal, but the required action for liberation is now deeply communal.

### Works cited

1. [How the Neighborhood Solidarity Corps Evolved from the Legacy of the Friends Volunteer Service Mission.pdf](#)
2. The Solidarity Corps: A Practical Blueprint for Decolonial Youth Praxis
3. How the Neighborhood Solidarity Corps Evolved from the Legacy of the Friends Volunteer Service Mission
4. Decolonizing Quaker Peace Praxis watermark.pdf
5. [Proposal for the Neighborhood Solidarity Corps: A Modern Volunteer Service Mission](#)

# Photo Gallery

## Friends Volunteer Service Mission (VSM)

Indianapolis, Indiana circa 1972

These photos were developed and printed with the kids in the darkroom I set up in the bathroom. This is the apartment that we, VSM staff, lived in. We lived in the community for the two years of the program.

