

**Testimony presented before the
NYC Council State and Federal Legislation Committee for
The Peace Tax Fund Reso. 367
June 9th, 2005**

Good Afternoon. My name is Theodore Henderson and I'm here as a private citizen in support of the Peace Tax Initiative but principally to highlight it as a potential avenue of greater support for those who are most vulnerable in our society, our children. I became aware of the PTF because I attend Riverside Church and The Riverside church endorses the Peace Tax Bill and Resolution.

A couple of years ago I, like many of us, watched occasional commercials with starving children, whose distended bellies, and horrific living conditions saddened me enough that I would write a check for \$25 and send it in. Afterwards I would go on with my life. When I took an infrequent vacation to an Island resort or South America, otherwise known as the 3rd World, of course you would see the poor and disadvantage on the trip from the airport to the hotel and back again but generally nowhere in between.

This good hearted indifference changed when I took a short mission trip to Uganda sponsored by a company I work with called Usana Health Sciences www.livingwellandhealthy.usana.com and the charity they work very closely with - the Childrens Hunger Fund www.childrenshungerfund.org – whose mission it is: "To serve children in need across America and around the world."

What made this trip different is I didn't pass the impoverished and destitute on the way from the airport but worked with them everyday and most days ate what they ate. For me it was life changing and eye opening as I could no longer ignore the plight of so many who are so helpless.

As a result of the joint efforts of these two organizations the local orphanage/school Africa Renewal Ministry is housing and feeding over 2000 children and have completed a medical center that will service not only the

school but the 30,000 people in the surrounding community.

This morning I read an article on the human devastation and genocide on the border of Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda and was reminded of how little we here in the US are providing there and perhaps under different circumstances a “peace” fund would be a source of appropriate aid.

Internationally whether in Africa or South America help for hungry children is needed. Now with the Tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka and the surrounding areas and many islands in the Caribbean still feeling the effects of hurricanes and flooding with a new season beginning the need to do more has never been clearer

Starving orphaned children are the seeds of an unstable world. Let's feed them, care for them, educate, introduce them to opportunity that many of us now enjoy, and live in a better world alongside them!

No one has ever proved out a more cost effective scenario for a peaceful world than care and opportunity for the disadvantaged.

It isn't just across the ocean that children and hunger collide under tragic circumstances but we here in NYC and the US have local children who are also afflicted with this preventable catastrophe.

I am in no way an expert on homelessness and hunger issues but compassion for the less fortunate and the defenseless tells me we need to do more and we need to do it differently.

May God bless you.

'One in four children in New York City depends on food assistance to avoid going hungry, meaning [that] more than 500,000 children rely on free food from kitchens, pantries and shelters. Every day in New York City one in three people on line for food relief are children.'" So reads a study of childhood hunger in New York City and a plan to end it, recently released by Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-Brooklyn, Queens). -- Reported in the Daily News on 1/6/2005

25% of children in New York City rely on free food from soup kitchens, food pantries and shelters. -- Jobs for Justice

*Each night, over **38,000** homeless individuals sleep in the New York City shelter system. This includes more than **16,000** children.*

*More than **one-in-four** children in NYC live in poverty. A typical homeless child is under 5 years old. -- Youth Services Project*

In 2004, barely 14 percent of the one million eligible children had summer lunch, and less than 7 percent had breakfast, representing a decrease of 20 percent from the previous year. -- Children's Defense Fund

24,000 fewer children in New York City received the nutritional benefits of these daily meals. Our aim is to prevent a repeat disaster in 2005. -- Children's Defense Fund

According to the most comprehensive annual survey of hunger in New York City, people who lost their jobs or much of their income as a result of both the September 11 attacks and the recession are still flooding the city's food pantries and soup kitchens in increasing numbers. These agencies - who have been unable to obtain enough additional resources to meet the growing demand - have been forced to turn away hundreds of thousands of hungry children, senior citizens, and adults. -- NYC Coalition for the Homeless