



ABOUT [TOM NEILSON](#)

Born on a dairy farm, Tom was raised with long days in the barns and hay fields of upstate NY. He began performing at the age of three. He was a concert soloist in his youth performing mostly classical and liturgical music.

He left the country in 1970 to avoid the draft and lived in Colombia until 1974. He was in Nicaragua working with the Sandinistas in 1985-86, and with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front in Eritrea in '88 during their liberation wars. Tom has also lived and worked several years in Africa and Europe.

Tom's doctoral dissertation from UMass Amherst examines US political/economic hegemony in the Horn of Africa, and the rest of the world. It is rooted in his work with the United Nations in Somalia in 1983-84.

Known locally as the Bard Insurgent, he is a veteran of stage and street theater with his writing, acting, and directing. His songs draw the listener into his musical response to globalization. He provides a voice for those who believe in the power of folk music to effect change.

Tom's award-winning songs of humor and compassion have been performed in 22 countries on five continents. His lyrics are celebrated for their sophistication, political astuteness, and wit. He has been at the forefront in helping communities organize against water privatization, mountain top removal, nuclear energy, incinerators, GMOs, fracking, and toxic waste. He is currently very active with the Western MA Latin America Solidarity Coalition.

In 2017, Tom received the Arab American Women Association Award for Human Rights work for Palestine through performance art. In 2015 he was nominated for the United Nations Nelson Mandela Award for Lifetime Achievement in Peace and Justice. Most recently, Tom has won two awards from Just Plain Folks International for best Traditional Folk Album and best Social Commentary album.

A member of [AFM Local 1000](#), his music has been used in documentaries, TV shows, stage, and street theater as he tells the stories of people's struggles against greed & violence, interjecting a good deal of levity along the way. If you ask him, he'll tell you he's just a farm boy with a guitar who loves a good ball game and human rights.

Tom's wife, Lynn Waldron, joins him today. Her activist work includes most currently working with the Wendell State Forest Alliance to prevent logging in public forests in Massachusetts. She has joined Tom as actress and singer in the Jobs With Justice annual "Voices of Labor History" production to celebrate and honor May Day. She also performs in a hospice choir singing at bedside for the critically ill and dying.

Tom and Lynn live in Greenfield, MA.