Opinion
Guest Voices



Mike Martin, blacksmith and founder of RAWtools (Courtesy of Mike Martin)



by John Dear

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This week on "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," John Dear speaks with Mike Martin, a blacksmith and founder of RAWtools. This creative Christian peacemaking project is reminiscent of what Advent is all about — beating swords into plowshares, preparing the way of the nonviolent Jesus, getting ready for the coming of peace on earth.

Dear met Martin about 15 years ago at the Wild Goose Festival, a Christian summer festival in North Carolina. Dear was there to give a talk on peacemaking in a tent, while Martin was outside banging away on handguns and putting them into a fire, and eventually turning them into plowshares, garden tools, and little crosses to wear around your neck. While Dear spoke about beating swords into plowshares, Martin was actually doing it, and you could take part by hammering on a gun or buying one of Martin's creations. Since then, his project has taken off.

"We have a national network of people who know how to destroy firearms," Martin said. "We can help you destroy your firearm, and connect you to a blacksmith. We travel across the country and turn a donated firearm into a garden tool, and we invite people into the process of transformation."

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Martin is a former Mennonite youth pastor and licensed for this specialized ministry by the Mountain States Mennonite Conference. He learned how to blacksmith in order to turn guns into garden tools. He is the co-author of a book with Shane Claiborne, *Beating Guns: Hope for People Who are Weary of Violence*.

"I've probably hammered on a gun barrel thousands of times and it feels meaningful every time," Martin said. "We're using raw tools — not war tools — to transform the world. We offer a safe space for gun violence survivors to heal."

Listen to the full episode here.

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.