

IF YOU WORK
FOR PEACE



STOP PAYING
FOR WAR.

More than a paycheck

NEWS FROM THE WAR TAX RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

June/July 2010

Enough Already? Tea and Tax Day

By Ruth Benn

On the one hand one doesn't really want to write anything about the Tea (Taxed Enough Already) Party rallies in our newsletter. They get enough coverage as it is. But at NWTGCC's May meeting, most tax day reports from local groups made mention of how they are dealing, or not, with the Tea Party rallies in their communities. We set aside some time in our agenda to talk about whether to relate them; how we distinguish ourselves from them — especially for the media; or whether to stay as far away as possible.

These comments reflect the range of the discussion:

- In North Carolina, Clare Hanrahan noted that many people coming to rally in Asheville are coming out of the mountains. They have a natural aversion to revenueurs. She has found that they are not all of one cloth and counsels mingling, getting to know them.

- Bill Durland spoke as one who does not have an intrinsic problem with government in some form while the Tea Party pushes for state's rights and decentralizing the federal government. There's some good in that but

problems too, like the rise of militias. Many war tax resisters would be willing to pay taxes to the government for the things that we think government should be doing, which is a distinction between what we do and them.

- Redirection is a defining difference. For a lot of the Tea Party it's about not wanting to pay taxes and keeping the money for themselves. We are more focused on using it for community.

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NO to Tax Dollars for War, YES to Peacemaking Tax Day 2010



Members of the Peace Action Wisconsin's Middle East Committee and Casa Maria Catholic Worker at the pre-tax day Stand for Peace vigil in Milwaukee focusing on war tax resistance and military aid to Israel. Over 30 people protested outside Milwaukee's Federal Plaza for approximately one hour and received mainly positive responses. Photo by Dekeytra Dillard

Eugene, OR

We actually pulled together a nice event on Tax Day. We were out at our historic downtown post office from 11 to 3. Our Taxes for Peace Not War group was not up for organizing it, but individuals in the group continued war tax refusal, redirection and support, and some were able to help out on Tax Day. The event was co-sponsored by CALC (Community Alliance of Lane County) and ESSN (Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network)/Jobs with Justice.

When we arrived, we found three homeless people already there. They pointed out that this was their turf, and one of them vowed to drown out our singers with his singing. We set up our table alongside them and took turns chatting with them, listening to their stories. The singer is a marine vet. We invited him to sing on our mike as part of our program, and he ended up singing a lovely song about Oregon he had composed. We hope that our donations made up for

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More Than a Paycheck is a bimonthly publication of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, a clearinghouse and resource center for the conscientious war tax resistance movement in the United States. NWTRCC is a coalition of local, regional and national affiliate groups working on war tax related issues.

NWTRCC sees poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, economic exploitation, environmental destruction and militarization of law enforcement as integrally linked with the militarism which we abhor. Through the redirection of our tax dollars, NWTRCC members contribute directly to the struggle for peace and justice for all.

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Couples and WTR

In the December issue we highlighted the stories of four war tax resisters in relationships with non-resisters and the successes and struggles they have encountered. This topic came up again during a session at the NWTRCC gathering in Tucson in May and also in the case of a possible house seizure in the Southeast — the first such property issue in some years. As our legal advisor Peter Goldberger said recently, “The best advice for ‘mixed marriages’ remains ‘separate returns.’”

We would like to continue to collect stories from couples, whether they be stories of successful and ongoing partnerships or ones that have encountered serious problems. Many people will also say, “I refused war taxes until I had children, and then it became impossible.” Is this true? Perhaps you have a story that involved parenting and

WTR that you would like to share. This seems to have potential for a new booklet in our Practical War Tax Resistance Series. If you would like to help with such publication, please be in touch with the NWTRCC office.

Other WTR Resources

If you are an internet user and have questions about war tax resistance/refusal, don't forget to look at the www.nwtrcc.org and other websites that have WTR information. On the NWTRCC homepage there is a button for “links,” which will get you started into the wealth of information that is available. There's a link to the **National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund**; many people still have not heard of this effort, so be sure to let people know about their website. **Conscience and Peace Tax International** has, among other things, a very useful “legal” page with court documents from cases around the work,

including many in the U.S. **Mennonite Central Committee** has an excellent section on conscientious objection, including war tax resistance, and **Nonviolent Action Community of Cascadia** has good basic brochures, all available in PDF format. And the best blogger on all issues related to war tax resistance and tax resistance in general is David Gross's **Picket Line**, top of the list of blog links near the bottom of our links page. He finds all kinds of tidbits of interesting history and great quotes from famous and not-so-famous resisters, and he stays on top of any notices related to WTR that appear on the internet. Before you pick up the phone for help, you just might find more information that you thought possible at the tips of your fingers.

Revenue Service Pursues Spanish WTRs

Hugo Alcalde and Jorge Güemes from Valencia, Spain, have been practicing conscientious objection to military spending for several years. As an example, between 2003 and 2008 Hugo subtracted from his tax returns around 1,500 Euro, which he donated to several pacifist, nonviolent resistance associations and socially aware media to protest against war and militarism, as he himself stated in his tax return forms, including an explanatory letter and writing his calculations in the forms. In all of his return forms, he deducted a percentage equal to that of the military and arms spending reflected in the Spanish Government Budget, and clearly stated it in the very form by handwriting a new “Conscientious objection to military spending tax allowance.”

A few months ago the Spanish Revenue Service billed the amounts diverted, adding surcharges and interest. Thanks to the support and advice of

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Many Thanks



Network Updates

We are grateful to these groups for recent contributions and dues payments:

- Taxes for Peace Not War, Eugene, OR
- New England War Tax Resistance, Boston, MA
- Western Washington FOR
- Madison (WI) War Tax Resistance
- War Resisters League, National Office

And a special thanks to all of you who have given in response to our May fund appeal! It's never too late to make a donation, of course. We are grateful for your support.

NWTRCC's updated list of war tax resistance counselors, area contacts, affiliates, and alternative funds is on the “Contacts and Counselors” page at nwtrcc.org. Print versions of the Network List, which are slightly more extensive, can be requested from the NWTRCC office.

Please let the NWTRCC office know if you are interested in being a contact on our network list. Email nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org or call toll free 1-800-269-7464.

Tea and Tax Day

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■ Dave Gross noted that Medea Benjamin and Code Pink surveyed Tea Party supporters at the tax day rally in DC about the cost of war and empire. “We found that this group certainly doesn’t speak with the same tongue when it comes to the U.S. role in the world,” reported Medea in “Reading the Tea Leaves: Will the Empire Break Up the Party?” (HuffingtonPost.com, April 19). The survey indicated that particularly among the Ron Paul type libertarians in the crowd peace activists should be aware of common ground against war and bloated military spending and be open to communication.

■ Try not to think of the Tea Party as “the other.” Stop the left/right tension and change it to top/bottom tension, as in take from the rich/government and talk about working people. We have a lot of grievances in common.

■ Some segment of the Tea Party is really ugly and triggered by having an African American president with talk of “taking our country back.” Distinguish ourselves from the really racist part of it.

■ Be more aggressive in attacking patriotism. In Chicago AFSC’s leaflet seemed to be appealing to patriotism and that’s not the way we should go.

■ Find out the underlying reasons why they feel the way they do about their situation. Welfare to the poor is a common complaint but turning the conversation to corporate welfare can change the thinking process.

■ There is a lot of discontent, much of which is economic and financial. People are unhappy, feel nervous about losing their job or home, and they can be exploited. We have to be cautious and careful and watchful of a



Debbie Russell holds a sign at the Tea Party rally on the steps of the Texas State Capitol in Austin on April 15, 2010.



Scott Yoos leaflets at the Olympia, Washington, post office. Photo by Robert Whitlock

growth of true fascism.

■ We don’t tell the stories of our success well enough. People don’t think they can make a difference, and we need to tell the stories of the way we make a difference.

We did not attempt to reach a conclusion, but our role in this newsletter is to report on your experiences at the local level to help other organizers around the country. Please send in your successes — or cautionary tales as the case may be.

Joffre Stewart reported that through mingling at the Tea Party rally in Chicago, one person committed herself to become a telephone tax resister.

Perhaps another advantage of mingling is that you might end up with a bit of media coverage. The April 16 *Washington Post* “On Faith” column by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite was about her observations at the Chicago Tea Party rally. She concluded her column:

I also happened upon Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Non-Violence, the long-time anti-war tax resister, peace activist and three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee. She and other anti-war

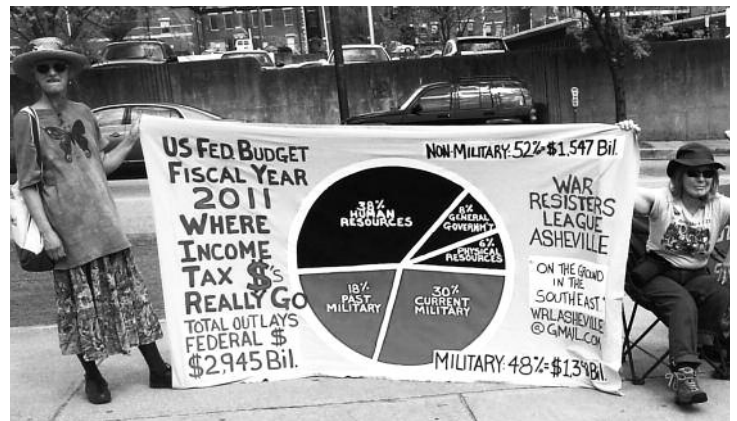
folks were also protesting taxes, only because tax dollars are used to support war. Kathy lives at a subsistence level to avoid paying taxes. “I can’t imagine changing my life so I can contribute to the devastation of war,” she told me. In addition, she observed that because of her commitment to living at a subsistence level, she can’t own a car and she consumes very little fossil fuels, just helping to save the planet. “The IRS is my spiritual director,” she argued. Now that’s not something you hear every April 15.

I wish I could be more like Kathy Kelly, calmly witnessing for peace as the tea party unfolds around her. But I’m frightened too. I’m frightened of the undercurrent of fear that was right below the surface of Daley Plaza in Chicago today.

And then there was war tax resister Thad Crouch, who gave a fairly well received speech at the Tea Party rally in Austin, Texas. We may run a transcript of his talk on conscience in a future issue, but meanwhile you can watch his talk on YouTube by searching on “Warrior for Conscience” and/or his name. The video is in two parts, and it is well worth a listen. ▼



Two war tax resisters and a dozen activists with the U.S. Campaign to End the Occupation protested at IRS headquarters in Washington, DC. To see the video on YouTube, which includes a statement by WTR Carol Moore, search on “Tax day protest against US military aid to Israel.” Photo by Carol Moore



Judy Conrad and Clare Hanrahan hold another great banner designed by Coleman Smith at the Asheville, North Carolina, tax day vigil sponsored by Asheville Area War Tax Resistance and Asheville War Resisters League.

War Tax Resistance Ideas and Actions

Tax Day Reports for 2010

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any losses their group anticipated. That group was very real, and also symbolic of why we were out there.

We had our traditional penny poll, which was covered in our local paper, and passed our some, but not many WRL flyers. About 30 gathered for our program at noon. It featured short speeches and included two labor singers and another who sang, "Brother Can You Spare A Dime." One woman colorfully previewed an upcoming "Resistance to Militarism" style show, wearing a jacket full of zippered pockets. The "military" one was huge and wide open to receive money. "Human services" was zipped up tight.

We announced our tax redirection of \$4,246 to 30 groups, presenting checks to representatives of a few local groups. (By the way, our system is to donate through personal checks. We do not have a local fund for that purpose, and some of us like to take tax deductions for the following year.)

There was a huge Tea Party demonstration over at our federal building. Interestingly, the only TV station to cover us showed the Tea



Bill and Genie Durland make a statement in Colorado Springs, CO. Photo courtesy of Genie Durland

Party ending with, "But there was another gathering," actually quoting and emphasizing our action. That felt good! We were covered briefly by our local public radio, and had an article in our Weekly about the costs of military spending.

—Peg Morton, *Taxes for Peace Not War!*

Boston, MA

We upstaged Sarah Palin and the Tea Party demonstration the day before on the Boston Common. It was quality over quantity. Although we were only six of us standing in

front of the Cambridge Post Office, the postal authorities were so threatened that they said we were blocking the entrance way and to stay off the steps. We braved the cold and wind to get our message across and most importantly gave away \$4,750 of refused taxes to groups much more deserving than the greedy military machine.

Prasannan Partansarathi with the 25% Solution came bundled up from the cold wind to accept our check. He told us that the organization has moved from local to statewide and hopefully national. They were working to support Rep. Barney Frank's resolution calling for a cut in the military budget to support towns and local needs. A representative of the Prison Birth Project, based in Northampton, MA, accepted our check of \$500. The Project was founded in 2008 to support mothers who are incarcerated and have no access to traditional organizing strategies and political education.

We are happy for our little vigil and hope to encourage others to refuse taxes and pass the money on to groups that are actually affecting people's lives in wonderful ways.

—Craig Simpson,
New England War Tax Resistance

Would \$10.40 Get Their Attention?

The Mennonite Central Committee has established a "turning toward peace" fund especially designed for people who want to redirect their tax dollars from the government to more constructive projects. "Since 1996, MCC and its Global Family Program have provided more than \$7 million in humanitarian and educational assistance to the people of Afghanistan. Through Global Family sponsors, five schools and nearly 6,000 Afghan children have directly benefited from peace and environmental education programs. Children also receive school kits, computers and other educational supplies." For more information on the fund see us.mcc.org/wartaxes.

John K. Stoner, in the March 29 *Mennonite Weekly Review*, is trying to get more Mennonites to dip their toes in to tax resistance: "Would \$10.40 get their attention?" he asks in a March 29 article in *Mennonite Weekly Review*. "Christians who are appalled that our

taxes pay for death and destruction in war would like to say so to the government. But how can we say it in a way that would make a difference?

"A group of us in Pennsylvania is calling for a million people to say so in a way that will be heard. We're calling it *1040 For Peace*. We're inviting you to be among the first to do this small act of witness against war and for the rights of conscience."

Film Presentation

Ellyn Stecker and I along with Bill Ruhaak met with 20 folks at the White Rose Catholic Worker house in Chicago on April 9. They were mostly young people from Loyola University, some of them grad students, and one was an older man who was the national director of Witness for Peace delegations.

We showed *Death and Taxes*, and it really held the attention of everyone in the audience. They really liked it. After the video, we went around the room asking what folks wanted to know. It was mostly how to get

started, since most of them had never paid taxes but were preparing to take jobs. The Worker folks wanted to know if there was a way they could avoid putting someone's social security number on bank accounts and how to transfer assets to someone else. A few were from mixed marriages; one had worked for Kathy Kelly and was disturbed by the vitriol heaped on her as a "tax cheat." A few had tax lawyer parents and one was a foreign student who argued that we needed a strong military to protect us from being attacked.

The three of us then shared our stories and tried to speak to the concerns the group brought up. I talked about W-4 resistance, Ellyn spoke about the 1040 club, and Bill mentioned phone tax resistance. The group seemed well satisfied with the evening. I donated a WTR handbook to the CW house for anyone who wanted to go into more detail. I hope we can get a venue at our Catholic Worker community. They were all filled up before tax day.

—Peter Smith, *Michiana War Tax Resistance*

WTR Ideas and Actions

Seattle, WA

Hundreds of people were a little better informed about the militarization of the U.S. federal budget and about nonviolent alternatives to passively paying for wars and weapons after two successful actions at Seattle post offices today. Nearly 500 copies of the "Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes" leaflet were handed out at noontime at the Midtown Post Office by four members of the Veterans for Peace, Greater Seattle, Chapter 92, and friends. Later over a hundred copies of the leaflet were distributed at the Riverton Heights Post Office, where we had to end the action after only half an hour because we ran out of leaflets. As one person noted, "It was like giving candy to babies in Riverton Heights" — many folks were interested and grateful to get the leaflets.

Louisville, KY

The local chapter of Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) hosted a lunch featuring three speakers and a showing of *Death and Taxes*. About 30 people attended. Of the speakers, one had been a telephone tax resister. Another was a local CPA who was able to explain the details of the zero bracket amount (ZBA) or earning less than a taxable income although he had no experience with wtr. The third was a Mennonite who was an ardent WTR and had a case cert denied by the Supreme Court. Various ways WTR might work and what kinds of consequences could

be expected were explored, so it was a very productive discussion.

—From a longer report by Steve Olshewsky

Los Angeles, CA

War tax resisters in Southern California awarded \$4,400 to eight organizations. Money for the grants came from interest on a fund made up of refused taxes. The Southern California War Tax Alternative Fund was created in 1979 and has given away more than \$62,000 over the years. These organizations received SCWTAF grants for 2010: 9to5, Los Angeles, National Association of Working Women; Alternatives to Violence (teaching in California prisons); Coalition for Alternatives to Militarism in Schools; Change-Links (monthly community calendar of events); Nevada Desert Experience (nonviolent action against nuclear and drone weapons); News & Letters (radical political-economic analysis); Northern Spirit Radio (radio and internet programs); and the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee.

Berkeley, CA

Northern California People's Life Fund granted \$20,000 from their redirection fund to more than 20 groups at a granting ceremony on tax day. Representatives from many of the groups came to the event and spoke about their work and what they will use the money for. War tax resisters told their stories of resistance and talked about their motivations.

Boulder, CO

During the days before tax day Gary Erb plays his flute as he tables on the downtown mall. There are other buskers there also, and the music attracts people to come to the table and take literature.

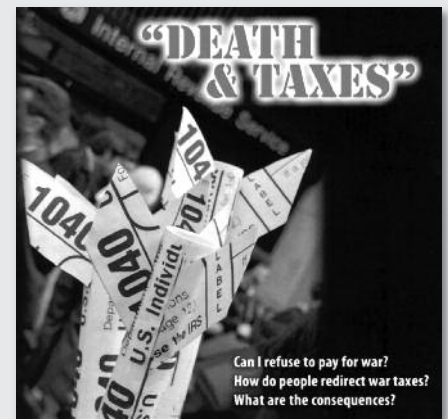
Chicago, IL

War tax resisters and those protesting budget priorities favoring war gathered early at Federal Plaza to leaflet, vigil, and listen to speakers. Kathy Kelly and Brad Lyttle spoke on war tax refusal, and AFSC had a huge budget banner showing the priority to military spending. The rally ended at noon and the AFSC banner was moved to Daly Plaza for the Tea Party rally, joining gay rights and other activists in protesting many of the priorities presented by Tea Party speakers. ▼

RESOURCES

Faith-Based Brochures

NWTRCC publications have included the "praying for peace" brochure representing a Christian perspective. Every now and then someone says that we should have a brochure with a more interfaith perspective, or ones that speak more directly to other faiths. We are open to carrying such brochures, but we need volunteers to draft copy for them. Please let the NWTRCC office know if you are interested in writing.



Get Your Copy Today!

Death and Taxes is 30-minutes long, on DVD, and designed as a starter for workshops, presentations, and discussions on war tax resistance. DVDs cost \$10-\$20 (sliding scale). Make checks payable and send to NWTRCC, PO Box 150553, Brooklyn, NY 11215, or pay online from the Paypal link at nwtrcc.org and include a note in the comment that you are paying for *Death and Taxes*. Please let us know what you think and how you use it.

For showings around the country see: nwtrcc.org/deathandtaxes.htm. Send your listing to nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org.



New York City, April 15, 2010.
Photo by Ed Hedemann



A map marks the places in the desert where people have died trying to cross into the United States.



A session at the Pima Friends Meeting in Tucson. Thanks to Jack and Felice Cohen-Joppa and Steev Hise for hosting the NWTRCC gathering! Photos by David Gross

In Arizona

The timing of NWTRCC's May meetings in Tucson was ironic or unfortunate given the calls for a boycott of Arizona, but as you can imagine we are hardly major contributors to the tourist industry. Many of us did stay at (and thus contribute financially to) Borderlinks, which hosts delegations for educational stays in the region — check them out for a future visit for yourselves or groups you are involved with. See borderlinks.org.

One of our Saturday sessions was on border issues, and we were lucky to have three excellent speakers: Dan Millis, with No More Deaths, who was the first of 15 or so humanitarians who were cited with littering for leaving water for migrants in the desert on Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge; Rev. Gene Lefebvre, co-founder of No More Deaths; and, Rachel Winch, a volunteer delegation leader with Borderlinks. Rachel has an article on the new law at nacla.org/node/6535.

The militarization of the border and the connections for people who don't want to pay for war were made from many angles as we went around the room: The U.S. is funding both sides of militarism against immigrants and the corporate policy that drives people here, especially with the passage of NAFTA under Clinton. The wall on the border is the same as the wall in Palestine. We try to solve everything with violence. By making "the other" we allow policies that dehumanize people, especially people of color. War is in the nature of the state; borders are established by state and changed by wars. We see the willingness people have of allowing nationalism to divide us; a religious person sees that as a sin. Fear is used well by government to pass bad policy and to keep people from acting. For Americans crossing

the border we feel welcome, but one feels apologetic to people coming into the U.S. that they are not treated as well.

An excellent resource on border issues is a short film, *Wild Versus Wall*, made by our very own Steev Hise, who co-hosted us with Jack and Felice Cohen-Joppa. He made the film for the Sierra Club's Borderlands project, and it can be found on their website, sierraclub.org/borderlands.

Coordinating Committee Report

First of all, many thanks to Don Kaufman and Mike Butler whose terms on the Administrative Committee ended at this meeting. And, welcome to our new Administrative Committee members: Charles Carney from Kansas City comes on a full member for two years, and Kima Garrison from Portland, Oregon, and Alexandra Monk from San Francisco will start out in the Alternate positions. Rick Bickhart from Charlottesville, VA, will become co-treasurer with Melissa Jameson of Brooklyn. Thanks to all for offering their time to work with NWTRCC.

The Film Committee is authorized (and encouraged) to work on a marketing plan for *Death and Taxes* and to decide the best way to use the funds we have for promotion. Everyone is pleased with the film sales thus far, already over \$2,000.

Hurray to our Fundraising Committee for all the work they have been doing to help get NWTRCC's budget back in balance and our reserve funds replenished. With phone calls to lapsed donors, grant applications, appeals for individuals and groups to appeal more

widely for support for NWTRCC in their own networks our finances are looking more solid than during the past fall.

The key discussion at the meeting was about the CMTC escrow account that has been based in Seattle. The Nonviolent Action Community of Cascadia has been managing the fund for 20 years and would like to find a new home for it. We agreed at this meeting to establish a small group to work with NACC and find a new home for this national fund.

The Southeast Regional Gathering of War Tax Resisters over New Year's in Georgia was such a success that they hope to hold another gathering next year. NWTRCC encourages other regions to hold such gatherings and has a little seed money to help you get started.

Welcome again to our two new affiliates — Citizens for Peace in Space in Colorado Springs and the San Diego Peace Resource Center.

The next NWTRCC meetings will be in Boston in conjunction with the 24th Annual New England Gathering of War Tax Resisters, November 5–7, 2010, at the Cambridge Friends Meeting. See you there! ▼

Counseling Notes

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Alternativa Antimilitarista-MOC (Antimilitarist Alternative-Conscientious Objection Movement), Hugo and Jorge have filed appeals to the Valencian Community Regional High Court of Justice (TEAR in Spanish) against the Revenue Service requests and hope to get public support.

Read the full article at <http://wri-irg.org/node/10110>. ▼

Julia Butterfly Hill

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the war. We were bombing even the bridges, so they were literally stuck as targets.

I heard about that when I was in the tree, and I prayed and called on my support and said we need to do something in solidarity with this. I asked them to paint a really big bull's eye on a sheet, and they brought that up, and I hung it from the top of the tree and got pictures from a flyover photographer. I sent out a press release and the quote was, "In the war of politics, power, and profit all of life becomes a target." I was trying to make that intersection in people's minds that there's a war on the planet, and there's a war on people, and it's connected.

I see my war tax redirection not only directly related to the actual dropping of bombs, but I look at it as a lot of our taxes dollars also go to many different forms of violence against the planet and all of her beings. Anywhere money is paying for violence I do my very best to beat that back — including in my everyday life. I see the disposability consciousness of our country as a form of very severe violence. Every paper plate, paper napkin, paper towel, paper bag, plastic bag, plastic container, plastic utensils, all those things that are part of our daily unconscious behavior — that is a form of violence and war against the planet. So I practice it even in my daily life.

I don't participate in disposability consciousness to the best of my ability, because if I want to demand change of others I have to be willing to live it in my life. And it doesn't mean that I'm perfect, and it doesn't mean that I'm asking others to be perfect, but I am committed to live my vision that I have for the world. If I want my vision to exist it can only exist through how I show up. I make a lot of mistakes because I'm a human being and that just seems to come with the territory. I do the best that I can with the limitations of being human in an imperfect world.

My commitment is to look inside of myself and to say, "what is my vision of the world," and then head in that direction to the best of my ability with every thought, word, and action. When it came time to make this choice around the money with the lawsuit settlement — there wasn't precedent in the war tax resistance movement for this level of redirection — I was the guinea pig.... As intense as it was to take this on it felt for me the same as when I chose to stay in the tree and not come down. I call it the choiceless


choice. At certain points in our lives all of us come up against choices, and we reach that point where we could choose to be silent or choose to walk away. In the case of paying taxes we can choose to pay for war, but something inside of ourselves calls out louder and says, "No, that's not the choice for me. I have to follow this choice even if it's difficult, even if it's dangerous, even if it's scary, because the calling in my soul is so loud that I have to follow it no matter what.

So that's what called me into taking this action, that's what calls me to do what I do, that's what called me to be with you here tonight. I know that many of you in this room, if not all of you, are already practicing war tax redirection, and I honor you for that and thank you for that.

I tell people all the time, with both my tree

sit and this action, I tend to do things big, but I'm clear that I don't do them alone. I'm a part of a movement — and how blessed I am that I'm part of a movement that has such a long and rich and beautiful tradition as we got just a taste of in the film. I know that many of you are part of that long and rich and beautiful tradition, and I'm profoundly honored to be a part of that movement towards peace, towards beauty, towards love that we collectively move in this work. ▼

Julia Butterfly Hill is the author of The Legacy of Luna, about her tree-sit, and One Makes a Difference. These days she is involved with What's Your Tree. The organization's goal is to create an international network of small groups that heal the world. See whatsyourtree.org for more information.



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Living a Life of Fierce Peace

A Talk by Julia Butterfly Hill

Editor's note: In 2003 Julia Butterfly Hill redirected about \$175,000 in taxes due from a lawsuit settlement away from the IRS and to nonprofits. After an effort at an offer in compromise a few years ago that was rejected by IRS headquarters she didn't hear from the IRS until recently. The amount the government says she owes has grown to over \$400,000. About the offer in compromise Julia says, "I was willing to accept [it] partly because the only reason I had this much of a tax liability was because of a lawsuit settlement. I had given it all away, so what I would pay in a settlement would be pennies on the dollar, and I would still have redirected a huge amount of money. I will have made a public stand but be clear with the state and can still go back to being a war tax resister, but doing it more creatively."

Picking up the story from that point, below is a lightly edited transcript of the rest of a talk Julia gave in New York City on April 26, 2010, following a showing of Death and Taxes. We hope to have the video and audio versions posted on our website soon. An interview with Julia Butterfly Hill was in the February 2002 edition of this newsletter, which is posted on our publications web page.

Currently in the last two weeks [the IRS] started dragging me back through the system again. For many years it's been them sending me a few threatening letters every year. Now they are going after everybody I've worked with in the last few years. I'm getting lots of phone calls from people saying, "The IRS called me, should we be worried?" I try to help them understand what their rights are and for them not to worry — it's just the IRS trying to get to me.

I spoke to an IRS representative a couple weeks ago to try to figure out what was going on, why they all of a sudden reinstated this heavy push. It turns out she was from the Collections Department, and the people I dealt with before were from the Offers in Compromise Department, and apparently they don't even talk to one another. They don't have access to the same files. I said to her "why don't you just pull up my file, why are you asking me the same questions. I've already been drug through the system and asked and forced to answer the same questions...how can you not have that information?"

"There you go wasting our tax dollars again! Just on a purely business level that's a bad business practice to not share files with one another. How much tax dollars are being wasted for you guys to go and redo the same amount of work again? I have to tell you whatever way you look at it, you guys are a bad investment. I majored in business in college. I learned how to invest money and invest money well. If you were going to invest in a portfolio investment fund, a mutual fund, the average person would look at what the companies are, what is the 5-10 year range of the rate of return. You would be diligent as a financial investor. Why wouldn't I approach my taxes the same way I approach my investments?"

She seemed to be on automatic rewind/play. It didn't matter what approach I brought to her, she just kind of repeated the same line. So I said "Here's the thing: I have a bicycle and some really good kitchen supplies. If you'd like to come get those, come find where they are..." That was my last conversation with them, so when I get back to California we'll see what's waiting for me there.



Julia Butterfly Hill speaking in New York, April 26, 2010. Photo by Ed Hedemann

Overall it's been amazing for me. I had this epiphany actually, while in the tree. During the Clinton era when we went into Yugoslavia, and we were bombing there, and I was hearing reports of people running out to the bridges with tee shirts painted with a bull's eyes on them, trying to let people know that innocent people were targets in

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