

September, 2010

Volume 10, No. 3

Disposability Consciousness: Where Is 'Away' When We Throw Something Away?

Julia Butterfly Hill

[Editorial note: This talk is so well conceived and written by such an interesting person, that the IJHC obtained permission to transcribe and publish it. If you prefer to view the YouTube, please scroll to the bottom of this article.]

I believe that one of the biggest examples of separation syndrome in our lives is how we have such a profound disposability consciousness in this culture. I use the example of when you say you're "gonna throw something away..."

Where is away? There's no such thing!

Where 'away' actually lies is in a series of social justice issues and environmental justice issues. Every plastic bag, plastic cup, plastic to-go container represents the petroleum complex in Africa, Ecuador, Columbia, Alaska or you name it!

Every paper bag paper, paper plate, paper napkin... That is a forest.

Everything that is called 'waste' or 'disposable' exemplifies the ways in which we are saying that it is acceptable to throw our planet and its people away.

When I started thinking about Disposability Consciousness, I went and asked a lot of native people that I know if in their original language they had any words for waste, disposable, or trash. I have yet to find in any traditional language words for waste, disposable or trash, because ALL traditional wisdom tells us that there is no such thing.

I saw a great sign once that said "It's only called waste if you're not using it properly."

And we have developed a wasteful consciousness in the modern world. We have a Disposability Consciousness. We've lost our connection to the sacred.

To me, disposables are one of the huge magnifiers of how we've lost our connection to the sacred. Because you don't walk up to a tree and say: "Wow! I wonder how many paper plates I could get outta that puppy." We don't think that way, but our actions are doing that.

I invite people to examine everything in their lives and look at where and how does waste mentality and Disposability Consciousness infiltrate into their lives.

I see this as one of the ways in which we all have internalized oppression. Because those forms of oppression are a 'disconnect.' Those forms of disconnect, they work best when they just suddenly weave themselves into the fabric of our lives and we just take it for granted that we're gonna go into a coffee shop and get coffee that came from an exploited community somewhere, where a forest was destroyed for a monoculture... And drink it from a paper cup that used to be a forest... And put a plastic lid on top of that, which comes from what used to be a wonderful, natural, indigenous community somewhere in a beautiful area... And we drink it and then throw it away where it goes back and pollutes a natural landscape or a human community at the end of its journey through our disconnected hands and disconnected minds.

I am so fiercely passionate about this because I know in my heart that as long as we are trashing our planet and trashing each other, then a healthy and holistic and healed world is not possible.

We cannot have peace on the Earth unless we also have peace WITH the Earth. Our Disposability Consciousness is a weapon of mass destruction.

I have walked in the clear-cuts. I have been in the oil pits. I have seen the weapons of mass destruction called 'Disposability Consciousness.'

If we want to heal the world, we have to begin to choose tools of Mass Compassion. Where we are RE-using everything... Where we are RE-connecting to riding our bikes... Getting out and walking... Using LESS energy. Not leaving lights on here and there and not thinking about it.

When I first came to the city after coming down from the tree in which I had lived for 738 days, I was walking around in the neighborhood one day... and I noticed all these lights on in homes where people weren't even there.

I know it's because of that mentality where we're taught that the 'big, scary criminals' will think somebody's home if there's a light on. And I thought to myself, "If I lived in a tree for two years and I know nobody's home, I bet those big scary criminals know nobody's home!"

I say that and I laugh because it's that FEAR mentality that makes us into these wasteful consumers. I sense that in this Disposability Consciousness we are just throwing everything away and that we are afraid of everything and that what is manifesting everywhere in our lives.

I invite people to recognize the joy of simplicity. The power in simplicity. Because when people hear that I'm a joyous vegan... Car-FREE... Walking and riding my bikes as often as I can... Touring in a bus powered by vegetable oil... A lot of times people think, "Well that must be boring... The food must be 'bland'... You must be really sad and upset... And I'm thinking like - "DO I LOOK IT?!"

Truly, it is the most joyful, life-affirming choice to let go of Disposability Consciousness and to reclaim every moment... every day... every choice... as a step towards healing.

Julia Butterfly Hill is an environmental activist who is probably best known for having spent two years in a California redwood tree to prevent it from being cut down.



Julia Butterfly Hill © 2010
www.juliabutterfly.com.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72Z2wmgLiTc&feature=player_embedded#

TERMS OF USE

The International Journal of Healing and Caring On Line is distributed electronically. You may choose to print your downloaded copy for relaxed reading.

We encourage you to share this article with friends and colleagues.

The International Journal of Healing and Caring – On Line

P.O. Box 76, Bellmawr, NJ 08099

Phone (609) 714-1885 Fax (519) 265-0746

Email: center@ijhc.org Website: <http://www.ijhc.org>

Copyright © 2010 IJHC. All rights reserved.

DISCLAIMER: <http://www.wholistichealingresearch.com/disclaimer.html>