

# Contemporary Examples of Civil Disobedience

Julia Butterfly Hill lived in "Luna," 180-foot-tall, 600-year-old California Redwood tree for 738 days between December 10, 1997 to December 18, 1999, to prevent loggers of the Pacific Lumber Company from cutting it down.

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Kathy Kelly co-founded Voices in the Wilderness, a campaign of civil disobedience to challenge U.S.-U.N. economic sanctions imposed against Iraq. In the summer of 2005, VITW was fined \$20,000 for bringing medicine to Iraq without permission of the U.S. government (a fine which VITW refused to pay).

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WBAI radio in New York broadcast the track "Filthy Words" from a George Carlin comedy album, which eventually led to a Supreme Court case, FCC v. Pacifica Foundation (1978), that helped define acceptable free speech limits on broadcast television and radio in the United States.

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The City of San Francisco issued marriage licenses to same-sex couples in defiance of California law.

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*From the Washington Post, March 28, 2005; Page A-1:* "Some pharmacists across the country are refusing to fill prescriptions for birth control and morning-after pills, saying that dispensing the medications violates their personal moral or religious beliefs. "There are pharmacists who will only give birth control pills to a woman if she's married. There are pharmacists who mistakenly believe contraception is a form of abortion and refuse to prescribe it to anyone," said Adam Sonfield of the Alan Guttmacher Institute in New York, which tracks reproductive issues. "There are even cases of pharmacists holding prescriptions hostage, where they won't even transfer it to another pharmacy when time is of the essence." "Our group was founded with the idea of returning pharmacy to a healing-only profession. What's been going

on is the use of medication to stop human life. That violates the ideal of the Hippocratic oath that medical practitioners should do no harm," said Karen L. Brauer, president of Pharmacists for Life, who was fired from a Kmart pharmacy in Delhi, Ohio, for refusing to fill birth control prescriptions.

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Following the 1997 Acteal Massacre that took place in Chiapas, a group calling themselves the Anonymous Digital Coalition began to post messages onto the Internet calling for cyber attacks against five Mexico City-based financial institution's Web sites. The intent of their plan was for thousands of people around the world to simultaneously load load these web sites on to their Internet browsers to block those web sites from normal use and "clog up the pipelines of power." Also, a group of Mexican digital activist hacked into a government homepage on the internet and placed pro-Zapatista slogans on the front pages of the site.

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"The morning, 30 April 2008, we entered the Waihopai Spy Base near Blenheim, NZ. Our (Plowshares) group, including a Dominican Priest, temporarily closed the base by padlocking the gates and proceeded to deflate one of the large domes covering two satellite dishes. At 6am we cut through three security fences surrounding the domes - these are armed with razor wire, infrared motion sensors and a high voltage electrified fence. Once inside we used sickles to cut one of the two 30-metre white domes, built a shrine and knelt in prayer to remember the people killed by United States military activity."

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Hunt sabotage began in 1960's Britain. The hunt saboteurs (or 'sabs') engaged hunters with hounds (or 'hunts'). The job of the sabs was to make hunting impractical by delaying or confusing the hounds to give the quarry (usually foxes and sometimes deer) a chance to escape. Two sab techniques are blowing hunting horns and covering a quarry's sent

with pungent sprays to mislead the hounds. in 2004 a sympathetic Labour government passed an Act of Parliament banning hunting with dogs.

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Ethan & Vima Vesely-Flad send 51% of their annual federal income tax assessment, the amount the War Resister's League estimates is spent on the military, to a Quaker group that has a peace tax escrow account which is used as a place to send monies that one doesn't want used for military purposes. They told the IRS that they support paying taxes, but don't intend to pay this percentage until the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan has ended. Ethan's wages have been garnished by the IRS.

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In 2008 Tim DeChristopher placed fake bids to win oil drilling rights on public lands to prevent oil companies from moving in. He is still waiting to find out if federal charges against him will be filed. "I knew that ethically I had to act," he said.

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Two mining companies had plans to begin test-drilling on land that the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation claims as their traditional territory. The court issued an injunction prohibiting the members from interfering with the companies' actions. When some of the members refused to obey the injunction they were charged with contempt, sentenced to six months in jail and substantial fines were also imposed.

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Seattle middle school science teacher Carl Chew refused to administer the Washington Assessment of Student Learning . He was suspended for two weeks without pay. Chew told the Associated Press that "he has seen kids struggle through the test with few positive results to show for the time and effort expended over two weeks each spring."

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In 1990 the lesbian and gay direct action group, OutRage!, organised a "Kiss-In" in Piccadilly Circus to challenge the way the indecency laws are often interpreted by the

police and the judges to prohibit lesbians and gay men from kissing, cuddling and holding hands in public places.

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On February 23, 2009 police in Baltimore made what is believed to be the first arrest in a civil disobedience program aimed at supporting homeowners who refuse to vacate their foreclosed homes. An activist with ACORN — the Association of Community Organization for Reform Now — faces criminal charges after breaking into a home in southeast Baltimore on Thursday to protest the foreclosure crisis sweeping the country. At least 500 volunteers have reportedly agreed to work as "home defenders" to employ non-violent tactics to block authorities from evicting homeowners. Other cities targeted by the campaign include Denver, Boston, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Dallas, Cleveland, Minneapolis and Orlando, Fla.

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On the day of the 2008 Beijing Olympic opening ceremonies, 10 local Tibetans chained themselves to each other and to police barricades outside of the Chinese Consulate in New York City. Others sat down on the West Side Highway across the street from the building. The activists were arrested

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In more than 20 incidents in 2008, Tibetan nomads, protesting a "settlement of nomads" policy that has disrupted their traditional way of life, have temporarily taken over Chinese government buildings, taken down Chinese flags and raised Tibetan flags.

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Three demonstrators scaled the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and unfurled a giant banner reading "One World, One Dream" and "Free Tibet 08;" one of the protesters carried a Tibetan flag. They were arrested. In Paris, thousands protested the torch run – hanging giant banners from the Eiffel Tower, forcing authorities to cut the torch run short and extinguishing the torch three times. In the UK , dozens were arrested in acts of civil disobedience, including a banner hang off the Westminster Bridge in front of Parliament.