



PULSE

APRIL 29, 2004



more than a treesitter

Julia Butterfly Hill, famous for her two-year treesit in a redwood, will speak at the McDonald Theatre

By Aaron Shakra
Pulse Editor

Julia Butterfly Hill is probably one of the world's most famous environmental activists, best known for her 738-day tree-sit in Luna, a 1,000-year-old redwood in a California forest. However, she has not become complacent. Her organization, Circle of Life, was founded in 1999 with the stated goal of inspiring, supporting and networking individuals, organizations and communities to create environmental solutions with respect for the interconnectedness of all life. Hill has further championed environmental activist causes through her public appearances, lectures and audio recordings.

Hill is the author of two books: "The Legacy of Luna: The Story of a Tree, a Woman and the Struggle to Save the Redwoods" — a biographical account of her treesitting experience — and "One Makes the Difference: Inspiring Actions that Change Our World." In addition, she has been featured in the documentary "Tree Sit: The Art of Resistance." She was the keynote speaker for April 21's Earth Day festivities on campus, and she returns to Eugene for tonight's performance with The Everyone Orchestra (see further coverage on page 7).

Emerald: What do the words "direct action" mean to you?

Julia Butterfly Hill: Every time we make a choice, it is a direct action on the planet and on people's lives. And we've been conditioned into forgetting that. It's about becoming aware of the fact that every time we make a choice, it has a direct action.

The problem is, in this country we're separated from the consequences of that action that we don't see it as a consequence of that action. So, if I use a disposable cup, it has made a direct action on energy use, on the water use, on water pollution, on raping of land. I see even in the movement that is understood as a direct action — the movement of people locking down and people doing tree sits, and those kind of

things — so many unconscious choices happening within that movement. We need to reawaken to that, we need to reclaim that and we need to start looking at all the ways in which we are having a direct action on this planet and on the people on it.

Emerald: What is the connection between art and activism?

JBH: Art is about creative expression — therefore, it's about life. The connection between art and life in all of its forms is as diverse and amazing and full of possibilities as life is. So, art and activism is about finding creative ways of expressing our connection to life. That's what activism is about. And so often, activism becomes entrenched in anger, and frustration, and how everything's wrong with the world, and it comes across as very negative and very self-righteous. I think the beautiful thing about art and activism is that it tends to take down those walls, it puts us on a level playing field again, and it invites people to hear what we have to say and to think in a new way.

Emerald: Will you ever sit in a tree again?

JBH: (Laughs) I sit in trees all the time. But if you're asking if I'll ever sit in a tree again as a form of protest, I get asked that question a lot, and I absolutely would if I thought it would help. But one of the things I've noticed about this media-driven culture is that it creates false realities, and even though I sat in a tree for two years and eight days, I still have to prove myself to people. If I were in it for myself, I would have come down after a hundred days. That's when I broke the international record, and I could have come down and went to Hollywood and hung out with famous people. If I did another tree sit again, the media would just be, "Oh see, she just stopped getting press and now she wants press for herself again, so she climbed another tree." It would end up hurting the movement instead of helping it. So I continue to remain involved in tree sits. I've done resupplies for tree sits, and my organization, any time we get any information from the front lines on tree sitting, we send it out to our network and let people know what's going on.

In California, I've been working on a bill

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