

WHAT IS THE PENALTY SHARING COMMUNITY?

The Iowa Peace Network maintains a mailing list of persons who have made a commitment to the Penalty Sharing Community to share in the penalties assessed to individuals and families who have chosen to resist war taxes or have participated in civil disobedience or non-violent direct action. When a request for assistance is received, a mailing is sent out which explains the resister's situation and the amount of money needed. For example, if the resister was assessed a \$300.00 penalty, each of the persons in the Community would pay an equal portion of the \$300.00. Thus if there were 200 people in the Community, each would pay \$1.50. The Iowa Peace Network will also add into the amount requested its costs for printing and mailing. Such costs have proven to be minimal.

**PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THIS COMMUNITY!
NOT ALL ARE CALLED TO CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
AND ALL ARE CALLED TO ACTION. THIS IS A
WAY WE LINK ARMS AND ACT AS ONE BODY.**



*Rita Hohenshell being handcuffed
—photo by Gloria Williams*



IOWA PEACE NETWORK

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PENALTY SHARING COMMUNITY

We provide help in paying penalties for:

- **Persons conscientiously opposed to the payment of taxes for war [civil disobedience;]**
- **Costs incurred from acts of nonviolent direct action or civil resistance.**

IOWA PEACE

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Thou shalt not be a victim. Thou shalt not be a perpetrator.
Above all, thou shalt not be a bystander.
—Holocaust Memorial

EXCERPTS— “LETTER FROM THE BIRMINGHAM JAIL”—MLK

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling, for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension, which is necessary for growth.

Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

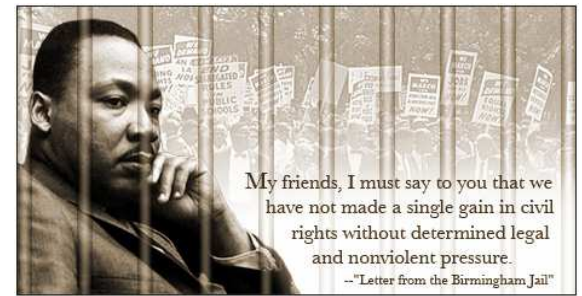
Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more be-

wildering than outright rejection. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of [people] willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.

There was a time when the church was very powerful, in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators!" But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence [or arrest.] But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? ... Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.



My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure.
—"Letter from the Birmingham Jail"

Many penalties for Civil Resistance are hidden, even simple misdemeanor offenses. For instance: the mandatory minimum fine of \$65.00, (max. \$625.00,) there is no longer credit for "time served" in lieu of a fine; the Criminal Penalty Surcharge of 32% of the fine; the Law Enforcement Initiative Surcharge of \$125.00; and a \$50.00 Court Cost fee. Community Service and Probation are usually paired together and the cost for both is \$300.00. Time spent in jail post-sentencing, is \$46.76 per day in Polk County. If unpaid, most of these penalties will make it impossible to renew a vehicle registration or a driver's license. It has not always been this way...

Could Martin Luther King Jr. have inspired such numbers of resisters if the consequence was an inability to drive or register a vehicle?

Given the lack of efficient public transportation, it is almost impossible to earn a living without a valid driver's license. Go a step further and imagine the impact this has on the poor in our midst who incur any variety of fines—even unpaid taxes, cannot pay, are prohibited from renewing their driver's license and are jailed for driving violations...that incur new fines. This is truly a vicious cycle!

I prayed for twenty years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs. Frederick Douglass

Please consider joining with the rest of us as we contribute to the bold strides—the "prayers with their legs" that our brothers and sisters make on our behalf and as a response to a call heralded in the Gospels. The average cost is usually \$5.00 although any contribution—more or less is great!

We pray for you, please pray for this Community.