

WEB PAGE: <http://www.damanhur.org/index.php/news-area/special-guests/1632-interview-with-julia-butterfly-hill>

Sept 6, 2009

## Interview With Julia Butterfly Hill



***Why did you choose Damanhur as the place to launch What's Your Tree in Italy?***

I believe that many Damanhurians have 'found their tree.' They know what their dreams are and are actively realizing them.

I've been to many, many communities all over the world. Often I find that those who want to create communities are spiritual and creative, although not grounded, and those who are grounded are not always open to spiritual and creative processes. The first time I came here, I was struck by the equilibrium of the spiritual and material, that both sides of this dichotomy are strongly present here. Damanhur has created a system for the individual to flourish and discover his or her gifts, and also to use these gifts as a contribution to the larger community as service to others.

# Interview

Julia Butterfly Hill

## ***What is the 'Tree' in What's Your Tree?***

What's Your Tree is designed for people to discover their core purpose, the divine essence of what they were born to be – not to *do* but to *be*. This core purpose does not shift, though the way we express that essence in the physical world can change. The Tree is the 'doing' part of purpose. We can always create a symbolic new tree, just as the tree occupation was only one of many things I've done in my life.

## ***What is this process like in the What's Your Tree program?***

The process is to first discover your core purpose. Then, this generates the action - instead of first experimenting with lots of external activities to try and find the right thing, without knowing the core motivation. There is a distillation process with What's Your Tree to uncover oneself. Like with wine, the distillation makes it very potent. This is a process that nature has taught me.

## ***Have you discovered your core purpose?***

Yes. My core purpose is to live a life of integrity and loving, joyous service.

## ***How did you get the name Butterfly?***

When I was seven or eight years old, I was hiking and a butterfly landed on me and stayed with me as I hiked. I've had the name every since. The butterfly is a powerful symbol of very intense transformation. True transformation can only happen by completely liquefying who I am and what I feel, what my idea of the world is. The difficulties I have lived through have served as a gateway to transformation, like a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly.

I believe in the importance of continuous change, evolution and transformation.

## ***What message do you have for the children of today?***

Believe in your dreams and your power to change the world. Dreams were not accepted by the culture and religion that I grew up in. I felt very powerless as child, very shut down. The world says that my dream should be to make lots of money, to fit in and live up to whatever form of beauty is the latest trend. Instead of this kind of dream, there are so many dreams

# Interview

Julia Butterfly Hill

that are worthy of nurturing. I see that questioning is fostered and encouraged here with the children of Damanhur.

Every child is divine gift and expression, deserving of respect, kindness and compassion. I work with at-risk children, and I tell politicians, "The children are not at risk, *society* is at risk. The children are an external manifestation of the society at risk."

***You mentioned that fear would have stopped you from climbing the tree if you knew what you were to come up against. How do you move beyond fear?***

People often thank me for my courage. In the word courage, heart is the root. The only way to truly move through obstacles it is to act from the heart. 'I am afraid, sad, or overwhelmed, yet I am acting from love anyway.' My courage emerges in the face of grief, my biggest challenge. I feel the suffering of the world and it makes me want to shut down. I find the courage to act despite the cynicism I sometimes feel.

What's Your Tree doesn't say you need to be fixed or changed. What's Your Tree supports people in finding their divine essence. We don't need to get rid of duality, as it is a constant presence – like in the Temples of Humankind, where duality is represented as a part of life. We want to become empowered to make the most potent and healthy choices in the face of duality.

***What kind of research did you do in designing the What's Your Tree program?***

We researched many different projects for two years before developing What's Your Tree. We researched projects that were successful and ones that weren't, to understand what can be learned from things not working out. In Damanhur, I see that people are not afraid to make mistakes. They are only mistakes if we don't learn from them. Learning about what doesn't work prevents us from making same mistakes again.

# Interview

Julia Butterfly Hill

The What's Your Tree system is a living system, based on nature. The program itself is ongoing research. We have inserted feedback loops, so our learning continues to guide the program.

***Some people have observed that Damanhur is very structured. What is your sense of this?***

I find that structure requires accountability, and Damanhur has a high level of accountability. Damanhurians are accountable to themselves, their nucleo communities, the larger community, the world, the cosmos. I see the people in the highest decision-making positions in Damanhur have six-months terms. There is structure, and there is change. There is a structure that supports aliveness. I am very impressed with how the structure of Damanhur supports individual expression, creativity, and self-exploration.

I find that accountability is often mixed up with self worth. We are raised in a society of pass or fail, right or wrong, black or white. Accountability is taught to us as a very mean thing. I used to see accountability as something to rebel against. Now, I recognize that accountability is access to power. Real accountability is about the ability to manifest things. If I hold myself accountable, I can powerfully manifest my visions and dream.