

SFGate.com

WEB PAGE: http://articles.sfgate.com/2009-04-16/entertainment/17192543_1_julia-butterfly-hill-social-change-hip-dysplasia

Apr 16, 2009

Catching Up with...Julia Butterfly Hill

By Justin Berton, Chronicle Staff Writer

Julia Butterfly Hill climbed down from the tree she named Luna 10 years ago this December. After 738 days, and surviving an El Niño winter on the tip of a redwood, her protest turned Hill into an international symbol for environmental activism.

Since then, she's become an inspirational speaker (some 250 events a year), a best-selling author and the co-founder of the Engage Network, a nonprofit that trains small groups of civic leaders to work toward social change.

Now the 35-year-old, based in the East Bay for seven years, is taking a step out of the public eye and moving to Playa Viva, a beachfront sustainable resort in Zihuatanejo, Mexico. Living in a warm climate will ease a congenital respiratory problem (she uses an inhaler when in the Bay Area), she said, and the ocean will soothe a painful case of hip dysplasia. The downtime will be a welcome comfort. A biopic of Hill's life is in development, and if all goes well, it will yet again cast an intense spotlight in her direction. This year, she's spending Earth Day speaking at Wheaton College in Norton, Mass.

"I'm an introvert by nature, which is part of the reason I climbed a tree," she joked. "But when you climb a tree, you don't expect the world to arrive at your platform."

Interview

Julia Butterfly Hill

Q: If you had one minute to bend President Obama's ear:

A: I'd ask him to seek out and support local everything.

Q: If you had one minute to bend former President George W. Bush's ear:

A: (Long pause) I don't think I would say anything. I would just sit there and hold space. One of the great lessons I learned in the tree-sit is that it's important to know your truth and speak your truth. But it's also important to know when not to speak. There's a time to listen and be silent.

Q: If it's 9 a.m. on a Tuesday morning, we'll find Julia:

A: Either doing yoga or having a cup of tea.

Q: If it's 9 p.m. on a Friday night, we'd find you:

A: By myself, which I love, or with a small group of friends, which I love, or doing a benefit of some sort, like I am tonight.

Q: You haven't owned a car since you were 18. Ever miss it?

A: No. I've got two bikes that get me everywhere I need to go. And public transportation.