

**Christopher Jones is completing a 6-month prison term for walking onto Fort Benning as part of a silent funeral procession to close the School of the Americas.**

August 13th, 1998

When you're serving half a-year in Federal Prison for your participation in a peaceful political demonstration the question inevitably, arises, "Was it worth it?" When I think about this question there is no doubt in my mind that the answer is, indubitably, yes. The real question for me is how to explain this to others. Whether it be to other inmates or to family members, to other people in the movement or to critics of this cause it is no easy thing to convince others of the fact that far from being a waste of time or a stumbling block in my life this opportunity to face down political repression has been a blessing.

I would say that this is so because the demonstrations, the marches, the public speaking and the imprisonment that has followed are all of a piece and together constitute an act of hope. Coming from a generation dubbed "X" means having grown up malnourished of hope. It means having grown up watching visions of social change being sold out for nice homes in the suburbs arid fast cars with which to escape them. It means having grown up with the world running from the devil of nuclear holocaust towards the deep blue sea of global environmental catastrophe. It also meant seeing that the affluence and prosperity of our America came bolstered by an economic and military violence executed upon the world's poorest in Latin America, Africa and Asia. What I and many of my peers learned from our coming of age in the 80s and 90s was a dark cynicism about the state of the world and a sense of the futility of trying to do anything to change it.

Acting to create a positive change - the closing of the US Army's "School of Assassins" - has this time carried with it the consequence of jail-time. Not to have acted, however, would have been to risk an even longer sentence confined to a prison of apathy and hopelessness. The question then becomes not just, "Was it worth it?" but, "Would it have been worth it not to have done it?" Clearly six months under federal guard is nothing I would embrace but even more fearful is the thought of a lifetime held captive by voices that say, "The problems are too many and too large", "The solutions are too far off", "Aren't we helpless in the face of it all?", "What can one person do anyhow?"

I hope and believe that it will always be worth it to act towards your better impulses rather than to cede your soul and conscience to a state of belief in their own futility even if the consequences mean persecution, imprisonment or even death. This becomes even clearer if we realize that our actions belong not just to ourselves but to the whole human community. Even more than the words that flow so freely in this information age one's actions communicate essential ideas about what is of value, what is meaningful and worthwhile in this life. To be able to share with others, both those now of age and those now coming of age, the hope that there is a place for justice, humane reasoning and compassion at this advent of a new millennium is well worth such inconveniences as my present incarceration.