

**Testimony before New York City Council Committee on State and Federal Legislation
June 9th, 2005**

**Ibrahim Ramey; presented by Rev. Joan Boatright
Fellowship of Reconciliation, Nyack, New York**

Thank you for your invitation to testify in support of the City Council Resolution and legislation before the United States Congress in support of the proposal to establish a Peace Tax Fund.

My organization, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, was established in the United States in 1915. We are the oldest and largest interfaith peace organization in the USA, and for that matter, the world.

Our credo is a simple one: we believe that warfare of any kind is wrong, and an abomination in the eyes of God. We do not, and will not, participate in campaigns and actions that take the lives of other human beings. We take this position with the full recognition that we will be called cowards, or unpatriotic, or even traitorous.

But we believe that killing is wrong. And like our brothers and sisters in the Mennonite and Brethren traditions, and the Quakers, and members of the Catholic peace movement, we will always seek to preserve our human right to refuse to kill.

This resolution before you seeks to establish, as a right of personal moral conscience, legislation that would allow conscientious objectors to war to pay our taxes for exclusively nonmilitary use. This provision would, of course, not result in the disappearance of the US military, or immediately impede the ability of the United States to wage war. We would certainly welcome any transformation of the war system into a global peace system, to be sure, But the utility of the Peace Tax Fund is simply this: It would allow taxpayers and citizens who oppose war, and killing of any kind, to not be forced to pay for it, or to withhold taxes that currently support military spending, and consequently, the killing of other human beings.

For those of us who are part of the international Fellowship of Reconciliation, the recognition of this right of conscience in the realm of our federal taxes is logically consistent with the recognition of our human right to conscientiously oppose war itself. And this is simply because war cannot happen if our taxes are not deployed to support paying for it.

You have all heard the scriptural injunction that “Thou shalt not kill”. Well, that would also imply, to the peace and pacifist community, that “thou shalt not provide implements for others to engage in killing”.

Who among you would give \$500 to a person whom you know would use the money to buy a gun and kill another person with it? That is
The essential morality and logic of our position: simply put, for us, participating in any form of war, or the financial support for war, is immoral.

And the refusal to participate in, or support, the killing of other human beings, is a belief that we refuse to compromise in any way

Our commitment to be living witnesses to the power of nonviolence compels us to seek redress in the form of accommodation for true nonviolence within our national system of taxation and appropriation.

Our faith in the ultimate rightness and in the success of nonviolence is the grounding of our work, over the last 90 years, for the transformation of injustice into justice, and of the global war system into war into a world built on higher human values of peace, love, and reconciliation.

We are prepared to gladly pay taxes for a better world. But we can not willingly pay taxes that violate our core moral beliefs.

Our call for higher social morality is, in the final analysis, also a call for better citizenship. It would be greatly enhanced by the passage of appropriate legislation, at the Federal level, in support of a Peace Tax Fund.

In conclusion, the Fellowship of Reconciliation urges the City Council of New York City to affirm this resolution, and in doing so, to take a huge step in the affirmation of our human right to not only oppose war, but to dissent from paying for it.

Thank you