

My name is Jacqueline Mason-Francis. I am a community organizer. I have been serving the Central Harlem community for the past 10 years.

First, I would like to thank Councilman Perkins and other members of the Council for having the courage to Reso 367. And thank you Councilman Joel Rivera for holding the hearing.

As the present administration continues its aggressive policies of warfare and military build up, it's very appropriate that New York City, the home of 911, should begin this dialogue regarding the conscience of our nation with respect to war spending versus spending to support life is a

In my work and everything I do, I'm motivated by my faith which informs my sense for my fellow citizenry, our communities, our society and the people of the world. Yet everything I do and people like me do to build up society is undermined by the fact half of all treasure of taxes that god has blessed us with, is going to killing, and preparing for war.

In our work with youth for the past years, we see that most of the parents we

serve cannot afford to send their children to college even though most of them work or did work until their employment was ravaged by downsizing and job elimination. The young people are not nurtured as they should be. In our communities, society has nothing to offer our children other than armed service or the military, or the jail. Central Harlem has the highest youth incarceration rate in NYC. In the Summer of 2000, the federal workforce investment act completely cut the budget for the Summer Youth Employment Program. Meanwhile, the pentagon has spent 100 billion on star wars program without producing one weapon that works. With all the tax money that the federal government collects from New York City, can't we get some of that back to help build our communities.

The toll of war exacts a high cost on all our lives and the greatest cost is paid by our children and marginalized people. We are an obscenely wealthy nation. If we are serious about values we claim to hold dear, we would declare a red alert to solve the social problems of the world, or New York City. Why not a state of emergency after 911 to build up our city instead of making war on people who

had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks.

We are blessed to be in a system where we can elect our representatives, but it's not enough to express the will of the people. It doesn't express the will of the millions of chronically poor American, or the millions without healthcare or steady jobs. I think American people want educational, health, employment and other social systems that build society. Somehow the conscience of the nation is not reflected by our representatives along.

This level of war spending does not reflect what our nations, and my brothers and sisters who are Christians, in fact will for our nation. As it stands, we have little say in how our tax dollars are spent. At a time when our military spending exceeds that of all other nations combined, supporting the right of conscience for taxpayers is an act of justice.

Dr. King prophesized that "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching

spiritual death." The Peace Tax Fund does not challenge congressional authority but this is a voice for those who would avert this spiritual death. And I applaud the City Council for being the first in the nation to hear out the voice of conscientious objectors.