

Bill Crain appeared in Green Joint Municipal Court in New Jersey on December 15, 2010, as a result of his arrest during the New Jersey Black Bear Hunt. Prior to the judge's ruling, Bill read this statement.

Your Honor, I would like to provide some context for my actions.

I am a professor of psychology at The City College of New York, where I have taught for 40 years. My family and I lived in Teaneck, New Jersey, for 23 years, where I served 9 years on the Teaneck Board of Education. In the 1990s, I became concerned about the possibility of a State-authorized bear hunt in New Jersey. I testified against a hunt on several occasions, and when the State held bear hunts in 2003 and 2005, I joined the protestors. This year's hunt was the first since 2005.

I was arrested on the first day of this year's hunt. I walked into a weigh-in area where hunters brought the bears they had killed. Police officers told me to leave the area, and when I refused, I was placed under arrest. I was the only person arrested during the hunt.

I considered my refusal to leave the weigh-in area to be an act of civil disobedience. I believe citizens should almost always obey laws and comply with government operations. At the same time, government laws and operations should ultimately serve higher moral principles, such as the pursuit of justice and a respect for the inherent worth of all whom the government represents. When a government's laws or operations flagrantly violate moral principles, we may feel a moral obligation to refuse to comply—to engage in civil disobedience. In my case, I refused to comply with a State Wildlife operation that blatantly and cruelly violated a respect for other living beings. I believe that civil disobedience should always be peaceful.

True, our own country's guiding moral principles do not yet include a respect for other living beings. On this account, there is much work to be done. Just as people have historically struggled to gain full respect for people of color and for women, many of us are now working hard to achieve full respect for our animal relatives.

The bear hunts have basically been massacres of highly intelligent, sensitive animals. The bears intend us no harm; no bear has ever killed a human in New Jersey. The State reports that 589 bears, including many mothers and cubs, were killed during this year's 6-day hunt. Other bears, not included in the count, were wounded and will die slow, painful deaths in the woods. Many cubs will die because their mothers have been killed and cannot care for them. The bears did nothing deserve this.

I am technically guilty of violating a state law. But I did so to call attention to the State's violation of a much more fundamental moral principle: Our obligation to respect all living beings who share the planet with us.

Thank you for listening.

Note: Bill was found guilty of a lower charge than initially issued and he was fined \$389.