

# The Brooklyn Paper

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August 11, 2011/ Brooklyn news/ Not Just Nets/ Brooklyn Heights/ Brooklyn Bridge Park

## News analysis: Inside the Brooklyn Bridge Park deal

By Kate Briquet

The Brooklyn Paper

J'aime 78

16

It's the billion-dollar boondoggle!

The Jehovah's Witnesses are poised to make out like moneylenders in the temple under the just-signed deal that allows the city to fund Brooklyn Bridge Park's annual upkeep with tax revenues from the group's properties, a Brooklyn Paper analysis reveals.

The deal calls for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's holdings in Brooklyn Heights and DUMBO to be rezoned for residential use " a change that real-estate experts believe will send the value of the Society's properties well north of \$1 billion.

"If they put them on the market now, they'll be sold very quickly," said Downtown real-estate broker Chris Havens.

The deal between Mayor Bloomberg and state officials will reduce the amount of luxury condos inside Brooklyn Bridge Park by using new property taxes created after the Watchtower properties are sold and return to the tax rolls.

That money will go into the normal general fund, which will then cover maintenance of the world-class park.

The deal has green advocates seeing red.

"Tax money is supposed to go into the city's general fund and it's being diverted to one park," said Geoffrey Croft, founder of watchdog group New York City Park Advocates. "These types of deals create enormous disparities. Other neighborhoods can't pay for parks in this way."

Under the deal crafted by state Sen. Daniel Squadron (D-Brooklyn Heights) and Assemblywoman Joan Millman (D-Carroll Gardens), the greater the number of Watchtower buildings that go on the market, the less luxury housing needs to be built inside the park at Pier 6.

Those buildings were projected to bring in roughly \$6 million a year in property taxes earmarked for the park. If the properties don't start yielding sufficient property taxes by 2014, the city, under a new mayor, can move forward with the controversial condos.

Watchtower owns more than 30 properties, but doesn't pay taxes on any of them under federal laws that exempt religious groups from normal levies.



The Brooklyn Paper / Bess Adler

*The Watchtower Society's headquarters on Columbia Heights will be turned into a sweet residential building*

The religious order will either apply to rezone its properties to residential before selling them, or sell them to developers based on the inflated post-rezoning price. Either way, it'll mean big bucks for the group.

Havens estimates that one of Watchtower's most valuable buildings " 25 Columbia Heights, which is part of the group's administrative offices " could go for \$91 million as right now as commercially zoned. It will likely go for at least twice that now that the city is behind the rezoning.

Indeed, One Brooklyn Bridge Park, the former Watchtower property at 360 Furman St., was bought by developer Robert A. Levine for \$205 million in 2004.

The city's deal is the latest funding scheme for Brooklyn Bridge Park " but the only one to gain the support of the wealthy in Brooklyn Heights and DUMBO, who won't have to pay anything to maintain the park.

In 2009, Squadron proposed siphoning off some taxes from nearby landowners to pay for the controversial park project's upkeep. But that went nowhere.

A year later, a committee designated to find alternatives to housing inside the park suggested creating a "park improvement district" that would charge nearby property owners an annual fee. But that went nowhere.

Again, wealthy Brooklyn Heights objected to having to pay.

"Maybe this is all just kind of scheme so Brooklyn's wealthiest residents somehow don't have to pay higher property taxes," said Roy Sloane, president of the Cobble Hill Association and longtime opponent of housing in the park. "Why shouldn't the immediate adjacent property owners pay more for the park?"

That's a question that has come up in various forms ever since the the 2002 agreement requiring that the \$350-million park raise its own maintenance budget so it wouldn't become a drain on city and state coffers.

City and state officials decided that luxury housing " in the form of high-rises at John Street in DUMBO, Pier 1 and Pier 6 " was the easiest way to generate revenues for the park. But that scheme has long been under fire from Heights residents " and, indeed, helped propel Squadron into office.

Opponents of housing inside the park joined the anti-tax crowd and hailed Squadron's call to capture tax revenue from the Watchtower properties as the way to stop future luxury condos within the park.

But former Squadron allies like Sloane say that the deal is fishy and that the senator sold out the park.

"This whole thing feels artificial to me and like it's all driven by real estate," Sloane said. "The Jehovah's Witnesses have been the immense beneficiaries."

### Reader poll

What do you think of the deal? Take our poll below:

- It's bad.
- It's good.

**Updated 03:31 pm, August, 11 2011:** Changes some language to make it clear how the Watchtower property taxes are used.

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J'aime 78

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PODCAST: Is this the best toilet in America?

BAY RIDGE: Terry Rosen, 75, penned anthem for Gov. Carey



## READER FEEDBACK

View discussion (80)

Danny from Bangor Me says:

Ahhhhh,here it is the 21st century the Watchtower corporation is \*cashing in on the kingdom\* .

I was a 3rd generation Jehovah's Witness my entire dan was "liberated" of our financial assets by the Watchtower.-

Danny Haszard

Aug. 11, 1:32 am

Bklyn Heights Lifer from Bklyn USA says:

Comrade Sloane is quick to feed the village when it's not his ox being gored.

Aug. 11, 2:16 am

David from Australia says:

Jehovah's Witnesses as always have done well with their five talents (Math 25:14-16) as would be expected from those entrusted with all the the different aspects associated with advancing the interests of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Aug. 11, 4:18 am

Betty from Brooklyn says:

The Jehovah\$ have done for Brooklyn what \$cientology has done for Clearwater Florida

Aug. 11, 5:16 am

jj from Brooklyn says:

very interesting back story.

this all fits nicely into the "park" story " which was always about money more than "park."

if the port authority was allowed to proceed with its planned development in the 1980s " which included some inoffensive LOW RISE housing " we'd have been enjoying a real park for two decades now. instead, in the end, we will end up with a park site overwhelmed by high-rise, view- and light-blocking housing. despite this deal, the incentive will be to build, baby, build, once the housing market heats up again.

Aug. 11, 7:05 am

ChrisL from ClearwaterFL says:

@Betty--I don't think you've ever lived in Clearwater! The JW's are NOTHING like the Sci-Ties. Clearwater only WISHES that they were. JW's make every effort to obey every law that does not conflict with the Bible. Check the history of the Sci-Ties in Clearwater (or anywhere else) and you will see the difference between night and day...

@DannyH--I've never seen a religious group less concerned about money than JW's. They don't even pass a plate! But they do apply Biblical principles in all things, including their business dealings, so I am not surprised they are coming out ahead. You are either ignorant or dishonest. Either way, you have little credibility.

Aug. 11, 7:06 am

Roberta says:

The JW have a subtle and sleazy way of gold gording a\$\$ets from members,esp when your told you won't need retirement saved up cause armageddon is just around corner.

The Watchtower does have a creed of greed.

Aug. 11, 7:51 am

emeth from the Netherlands says:

Roberta,.. please show me where JW's are or were told that they did not need any retirement.

Please provide me with an official source or quotation.

How can they have a creed of greed if they ... give everything away for free... & dont have collection plates or tithing rules?

You sound Jealous

Aug. 11, 8:07 am

matt from IL says:

What does the writer have against the JW's?

Aug. 11, 8:29 am

Glen says:

The money the Watchtower gets should go to all those who's lives have been ripped appart by child abuse scandals and those families who have lost loved ones to an age old stance on receiving blood!

Aug. 11, 8:30 am

Daniel says:

How fabulously wealthy is the Watchtower?

They were (still are) the largest landowner in Brooklyn.

There are 3 million Jews in NY and Brooklyn more than Israel?

Jews are smart successful and often wealthy YET the Adventist Watchtower owns MORE land than the Jewish populace?

This is astounding ....Watchtower like a mini Vatican,which land holdings can now go commercial and be taxed!-Daniel Hazzard

Aug. 11, 9:59 am

Nick from Brooklyn says:

"JWs make every effort to obey every law that does not conflict with the Bible." Well, I guess my bible contains a few more parts than the JW's version because the day the worker tried to run me over with a snow plow on the front of a truck would constitute murder. Big no-no according to my bible. And, yes the man really did drive straight at me while I was crossing the street.

And, it was brought to my attention that many of the JW buildings were built by their "volunteers" not real contractors and not up to proper building codes. Who would want to live in a building known to be unsafe?

Aug. 11, 10:46 am

Craig from Crown Heights says:

I kinda feel like the Witnesses are a bit of a red herring here. Isn't the issue about how greedy the Brooklyn Heights residents are about funding of public space?

Aug. 11, 11:09 am

Bill from Boerum Hill says:

Got that right, Craig. Squadron and Millman sold out. In giving up the veto over housing, they F& %(!ed Dumbo and soon, Atlantic Ave. Columbia Waterfront will be the next losers when, oh so sorry, the housing will rise in their part of the "park" at Pier 6, too. Brooklyn Paper, thank you for years of telling the truth on this debacle. Soane is to be thanked, too.

Aug. 11, 11:15 am

Bklyn Heights Lifer from Bklyn, USA says:

Craig:

If you believe Comrade Soane's spin on the matter, it is. Tell me, are you prepared to be taxed on parks and other amenities in Crown Heights? Don't we all pay taxes to NYC so that all parks can be funded and maintained?

We don't tax people who happen to live next to a turnpike, only the people who use it. Frankly, I see a lot of people who easily could be from Crown Heights in BBP, of all ethnicities, religions, etc.

Since the City has effectively privatized the maintenance of BBP (a first for any public park in NYC), how about a usage fee?

Aug. 11, 11:15 am

Craig from Crown Heights says:

Dear BK Heights Lifer.....

Uhhh What fr@ckin amenities in Crown Heights are you referring to? Are we really making a comparison here?

Perhaps the privatization of the parks' maintenance is PART of the problem?

Aug. 11, 11:25 am

Blue from NYC says:

@Bklyn Heights Lifer:

Yes, some in Crown Heights may use the park, but the properties immediately adjacent to the park are those who benefit disproportionately in terms of increased property values and accessibility to the waterfront. Not to mention additional business generated by crowds visiting the park from other locales. Increased property tax assessments offset only a small chunk of the former benefit to Heights and DUMBO crowd.

All in all though, just be glad that you get a park. And nobody should blame JW for selling their buildings for a premium. If anything, you should be mad at the City for its zoning policy (and how it sets that policy), or for tax-exemption rules for religious institutions, that force taxpayers to subsidize them, regardless of whether they pray there or not.

Aug. 11, 11:33 am

bluejam from USA says:  
I am happy for Jehovah's Witnesses.

Aug. 11, 11:45 am

tee gee from sunset park says:  
three issues,

1. JW's are no worse than any other religion and in many regards much truer to the bible.
2. JW's do charge for materials - they offer you a cheap pamphlet, you take it and then they ask for a donation. also they print (with volunteer labor) first rate books that are sold...but far below market value
3. the real estate taxes that get earmarked for BB park in effect steals money from every other park in the city.

but in the end i can't complain, we get what we deserve - and obviously from our lack of interest in governance we get the elected officials we deserve.

Aug. 11, 12:49 pm

Frank from Furter says:

if the value of the buildings near the park go up, then the city makes more money as the assessed value is increased.(subject to limitations for some housing). This money goes into the City's coffers. What the heights objected to was paying an additional fee over and above this as business improvement type additional tax. This was tried in Manhattan for the High Line and rejected. That was a non-started. Condos/ coops pay among the highest tax per apartment now anyway. What the Park gets for a building build inside the park on park property is ground lease payments, PILOTS(payment in lieu of taxes) and sometimes an additional payment based on gross sales or other measures. So what is better money from housing in the Park or money from the monied people near the park...including Cobble Hill...

The State actors wanted to take City money to make up for the state's inability to meet its capital call.

This is a new park. Totally new. It shouldn't have to compete and take away money from already existing City parks no matter where they are. That is the basis that this Park was approved. It had to be self funded for maintenance. I am willing to concede that some of the

maintenance money should come from capital...as long as the state ponies up its share. If they are unwilling/ unable to do that then the original agreement should be kept(with housing kept to the minimum necessary to support that). The other ideas have either been dismissed or debunked.

Aug. 11, 1:01 pm

Lifer from Cobble hill says:

There will be housing everywhere in this park. Senator Squadron and Joan Milman are to be blamed. Just remember this, folks. Vote for parks. Housing inside this park was not necessary.

Aug. 11, 2:30 pm

Randall Watters from Brooklyn Heights says:

I worked at the Watchtower headquarters there from 1974 to 1980 for \$14 a month. The Watchtower is a 19th century carry religion but is making sure their skill game will last a long time.

Aug. 11, 3:10 pm

Mike Greene from Candor says:

I have been reading about this for several years now. All the Watchtower Society wanted to do was to unload the property they no longer needed. They would have done so years ago if the city got its act together with the developers. So why is anyone blaming Jehovah's Witnesses for things beyond their control?

Yes, there is much hate out there for Jehovah's people. But spare some of that vinegar for the people who can't make any firm decisions on the matter.

Meanwhile, Jehovah's Witnesses continue to do what apparently no one else seems to be able to do: Maintain their properties in top shape even when they would desire to be rid of them.

Aug. 11, 3:12 pm

Lebroix from Mendez says:

Anyone who feels like they or their families were taken advantage by J.W.s over a period of time were and are just plain stupid and bitter.

Aug. 11, 3:43 pm

Mad Sweeney from Virginia says:

Anyone who uses ad hominem attacks on their critics usually has no other defense.

The Watchtower is well known to those who pay attention (aka, non-members) as a multi-billion dollar international publishing cult (cult members are always discouraged from investigating the inner workings of their leadership). Profiting from their real estate investments is one of their primary money-making endeavors.

Think it isn't about the money just because they use large boxes for their donations instead of a plate? Really? Does that make any sense at all?

Google "Menlo Park Kingdom Hall" to see just how petty the organization can be about real estate.

Aug. 11, 4:05 pm

JK PhD from Ex-Newark says:

What exactly does an organization that tells its members NOT to get an education, NOT to pursue a career, and NOT to seek out money need with a billion dollars? Their members aren't supposed to plan for retirement, but the legal organization can function as a real estate holding company?

I'm assuming they will use their windfall to pay for the healthcare of each and every one of their members who were told that they would NEVER grow old.

Aug. 11, 4:19 pm

Lucy from Washington says:

They need the money to pay off child abuse settlements.

<http://www.watchtowerdocuments.com/docs/jw-secrets.html>

I sure would like to see them use the money for something good. I'm not hopeful though.

Aug. 11, 4:30 pm

JK PhD from ex-Newark says:

@emeth from the Netherlands.

Okay..I'll grant that the sentence "don't plan for retirement" never appears in their literature.

However, millions of people were told not pursue education and not to pursue careers. They were also told that they would NEVER grow old, and people who give to the organization to the point of personal hardship ARE idolized in their publications.

I honestly don't know how motivated the organization is by money. But, they need to be held responsible for the millions of people who planed their lives on a false promise and ARE growing old and sickly.

I was a pioneer. Fortunately, I got out early enough to become self-sufficient. Many are not so lucky. The burden for caring for these individuals will fall on the "wordly" governments they have so often prayed to be destroyed.

The money they make on this deal was earned on the backs of their members. It should be returned to those who sacrificed so much.

Aug. 11, 4:45 pm

estevan from hollywood says:

The JW's hate mankind but I have no issues with owning their property and earning their money.

Aug. 11, 6:17 pm

Suzanne from StevesBrooklyn says:

The WT doesn't tell them not to plan for retirement -- just to make them the beneficiaries of IRAs and pensions instead of their families. (Ex: WT 1993, 12/ 1 "The Giver of "Every Good Gift"

Oh, and correct... They don't pass plates or ask for pledges/ tithes. But they have multiple contribution boxes in the back of their meeting houses and they give constant reminders to



contribute, on top of their indentured servitude as unpaid, tax-free publishing circulation agents.

Aug. 11, 6:33 pm

Pete Ex cult member says:  
@emeth from the Netherlands

Young ones will never grow old or fulfill a career in this system —Awake! May 22, 1969 P15

Aug. 11, 6:35 pm

GROG from Red Hook says:  
1969? Quote mine much?

I went to NYU post grad, studying international business and I'm a JW. I work in lower Manhattan trading securities, and know many Doctors, Lawyers, Playwrights, Teachers, Painters, and Architects who are JWs. I also know many My parent...you guessed it...are JWs!!! and they are retired, living quite well, off their investments. I've also never been molested!

The bitter hate-filled people on here are the sort of people who PASSBLAME. Their lives are failures because they failed. Not their religion. THEM. No amount quote mining, spamming, or trolling will fix that.

Aug. 11, 7:30 pm

GROG-GY from Red Hook says:  
Securities trader in Red Hook? The neighborhood is really damned!

Aug. 11, 9 pm

JK PhD from Ex-Newark says:  
@ GROG

The quote from 1969 is important because the people who were 18/ 19/ 20 at THAT time are now 60 years old. THAT is retirement age. Precisely the point I was making. In all good conscious, the organization should be using their windfall to provide for every baby boomer in their organization who planned their life around their false promise.

Further if you know the people you mention well, you know that either: a) they were those things before they were converted (or were well on their way to becoming them), or b) went against the organizations strongly suggested direction in order to go to school.

BTW: Resorting to name calling is really a great debate technique. I'm sure your alma mater would be proud. Who did you have for your organizational behavior and human resource classes? It's possible I know them quite well...

Aug. 11, 9:02 pm

Pete ex cult member says:  
@ GROG

Young ones will never grow old or fulfill a career in this system —Awake! May 22, 1969 P15

Only months until Armageddon - Watchtower Sept 15, 1941 P28

"...the 'battle of the great day of God Almighty' (Revelation 16:14), which will end in A.D.

1914 with the complete overthrow of earth's present ruler ship, is already commenced," (The Time Is at Hand, 1908 edition, p. 101).

"The date 1925 is even more distinctly indicated by the Scriptures than 1914," (Watchtower, Sept. 1, 1922, p. 262)

. "Our thought is, that 1925 is definitely settled by the Scriptures. As to Noah, the Christian now has much more upon which to base his faith than Noah had upon which to his faith in a coming deluge," (Watchtower, Apr. 1, 1923, p. 106).

Aug. 11, 9:12 pm

Jk Phd from Ex-Newark says:

I'm pulling out the typos and bad grammer today...apologies (my alma matter would also be proud).

Aug. 11, 9:14 pm

Robin Morgan says:

Very shrewd use of worldly assets. What person wouldn't get as much as possible for their property. Jehovah's Witnesses have been very good for the Brooklyn neighborhood and the properties it owns, as many past news articles will attest. What deals the government makes is another matter. We have nothing to do with that and cannot influence it in anyway.

Disaffected ex-Jw's commenting here are mostly bitter about what they think is harsh treatment at the hands of a man made organization. Please look into the facts, then decide. Don't listen only to Internet opposers.

Aug. 11, 9:23 pm

Pete ex cult member says:

@ Robin

Please, please get a clue will you! You think that young children battered and abused by jw's, who were following their teachings and actively encouraged to do so, are bitter really??? These people have ruined many many lives, its not about being bitter its about being hurt by fully grown men when your only 4 or 5. This nothing to do with internet this is to do with my very clear memory of what they did to ME.

Aug. 11, 9:31 pm

Steve says:

Funny how postings by JW's always seem to think that the only true source of information of their societies history can be found from their own society..lol. Everything else is slander or a conspiracy by the forces of evil no less. The latter of course will be destroyed oh so soon as it has always been for the last 125 years. They are incredulous when you provide them quotes from their own literature in the past as they never hear any self criticism (of the governing body) in their magazines, it is always pointing at other religions faults. Pictures in their magazines of Christendom's priests running in sheer terror from Jehovah's retribution. The funniest thing is their arrogance in calling their religion "the truth" and the fact that if you criticize their organization it is as if you criticize god himself. Their god is the governing body, not Jesus or Yahweh as only their interpretation has authority. Watch them run away from a national anthem in sheer terror as the governing body is the REAL Authority. What charlatans.

Aug. 11, 10:20 pm

NO Shill from Watchtower land says:

Whenever the Jehovah's Witnesses start to lose an argument they will SHILL.

GROG (Steve Klemetti) above with his 'education' credentials is a total made up fraud like his Watchtower cult of pure psychopaths.

Jehovah's Witnesses shun higher education it's almost enough to get you kicked out of their cult.

WHY? Because cults don't want you to learn critical thinking skills.

Aug. 11, 10:39 pm

Michael T from Pine Plains says:

People seem to forget the shape of the properties the Jws bought many many years ago. Some where falling down and doomed for teardown. They where bought with donated money, Was it your money ? did it harm you ? NO It was repaired and maintained by volunteer labor? How did this hurt you lazy ass Danny hassard. Because you sleep around and got aids , they kicked you out. The very few people who are saying the most negative here are just scorned because they could not live up to the rules of the JW's. Know how many people get fired from Macdonalds every day and have nothing better to do that sit on their butt and complain about how bad they where treated. If they have 20 zillion dollars and its not your money how does that give you cause to complain. WHat have you found that has something better to offer??? All negatives against these people but you haven,t found anything thats near as good . I would love to be counted among their number but I dont live up to bible standards liek they require. Maybe someday?

Aug. 11, 10:39 pm

Steve says:

Michael it is pretty presumptuous of you to state the negative comments here are from those who could not live up to the organizations standards. How do you know all the people criticizing here were angry people kicked out by God's conduit. It could not possibly be for any objective reasons right, since your beloved organization has a virtual monopoly on the truth. When I want to know the truth about science.i contact the governing body with all of their science degrees and meticulous work in the field. The distressing thing about this organization is how they warp minds and turn their members into closed minded ideologues which of course they have to become to be "saved" according to 12 new york state bible students who have been wrong time and again and yet act as if they are the real gatekeepers to gods kingdom. You can dream to live up to their standards but why would you want to subject yourself to men who really don't know the truth either. Do they reside in the heads of the biblical authors and know the latters intent? Is the bible really a book of all goodness? Try reading it...you really have to be warped to accept the extermination of innocent children that happened again and again (flood, S&G, caananite tribes, egyptian firstborn etc etc)..oh feel the goodness. You can be as polite and kind as you want..but what one believes really decides whether one is good or evil. If you truly think it is just that all the muslims, hindus, atheists, catholics, protestants etc should be exterminated for their beliefs and only your little group is saved...that is the epitome of evil.

Aug. 11, 11:16 pm

Corey from Kensington says:

I found out about the Watchtower corporation the hard way. My grandmother was visited by them regularly, and the ones who my brother, sister and I met seemed very nice and attentive. They seemed to be like any other Christian group, except they had an unusual amount of literature apart from the Bible. After about a year a couple of women moved in with her, and took care of cleaning and errands for gran. She seemed happy with that arrangement and everything seemed okay to me, but my sister smelled a rat. She kept warning me that something was not right. These women were doing something called pioneering, which is like full time recruiting for the church, so they did not make much money from jobs. Sis kept a close eye for them stealing, but things seemed on the up and up and I joked that she was being paranoid. I found out Sis was right about them when it was too late. Gran passed away three years after they moved in with her and we got the shock of our lives when we went to her place to do inventory and figure out what to do with her possessions. We were met by a man we did not know and he informed us that the house belonged to the Watchtower corporation and we had no right to be there. I was stunned. I think about my grandpa working hard all his life, much of it in the depression years, and everything he left behind was taken and gobbled up by this greedy corporation that holds enormous amounts of wealth. I am convinced that the religion part is a false cover for a money making operation.

Aug. 12, 12:51 am

Martin Says says:

As reported from another newspaper, "Brooklyn Daily Eagle" says:

Watchtower is known for its immaculate and well-kept buildings, so there should be no problem in attracting buyers, according to Knakal.

"Each of the properties presented for sale have been maintained according to the incredibly high standards of care and attention that Watchtower is particularly well-known for. The Witnesses' award-winning restoration and maintenance of their properties is well-documented."

Aug. 12, 5:28 am

Alex says:

This Jehovah's Witness religion makes a big deal about it not 'taking collection plates' at assemblies or Kingdom Hall meetings. Yet they encourage brainwashed elderly people to leave their estates to its financial holdings and they guilt everyone who is a member to do everything for the corporation for free. People can't grasp in this group that the Watchtower is a human organization and God is a separate being.

Aug. 12, 6:18 am

Grain of Salt from Cobble Hill says:

Roy Sloane and his wife Judi Francis have been some of the most vocal proponents of using taxes from the Watchtower Properties to fund the park, despite the City's repeated explanations that such a plan would divert money that would otherwise go to the general fund. In light of their multiple public statements in support of the Watchtower arrangement, one can only assume that their current self-contradictory campaign against the deal and against the local officials who struck it is the result of some perceived political slight rather than any actual moral objection to using taxes from the Watchtower Properties.

Aug. 12, 7:53 am

Egbert from Netherlands says:

Did Jesus really care about buildings which were made for free (nearly) and sold for a lot of money? These ABC transactions, really have nothing to do with kingdom-assets...

Aug. 12, 8:53 am

settingthingsstraight from USA says:

Lies lies lies. JW's are NOTHING any of the JW haters/ persecutors are saying. If u want to know what they believe go to watchtower.org or even jw.org.

Fyi this Danny hanszard guy is on EVERY news article with the word Jehovah's name on it ready to post my slander about them. He must be using an app that searches for key words such as jw or Jehovah ...etc. he's a liar.

Aug. 12, 11:11 am

settingthingsstraight from USA says:

\*correction...ANY slander. Not \*my slander. Android lag.

Aug. 12, 11:13 am

Steve says:

Setting...are you saying the only source of truth is from the horses mouth and everything else is a lie? How do you know? Are you aware of all the false end of world predictions according to that organization? 1914, 1915, 1918, 1925, 1975 and in the 80's and 90's the "generation that saw 1914 would see the end?" Oh its another "new light" to replace the old one that didn't work. How do you know the new new new light will be better than the new new light based on past evidence?

How bout their great past medical recommendations of avoiding vaccinations and organ transplants (that undoubtably cost lives) in the past that they reversed later on? Great medical advice eh? Yes trust the brothers unconditionally..or else paradise is in doubt.

Do they give you both sides of the issue such as with their ever stating propaganda about how the few thousand JW Germans in the 30's and 40's resisted Hitler when they conveniently don't mention the 1934 Rutherford letter appeasing Hitler basically saying "hey, we are not the Jews and we sympathize with you in that the Anglo-Americans are the true evil in this world." Pretty heroic eh? Also the fact that the organization was not against Hitler at that time and during the war..the Witnesses position was actually neutrality..and who liberated the JW's from the concentration camps? Hmm..allied soldiers perhaps? But you were against them too.

Even their website is pure propaganda. They list scientists who believe in god and yet when I saw the list I recognized 3 of the 5 and they are all believe in evolution..the site didn't mention that though. Always selective and manipulative quotes to further an ideological agenda at the expense of the truth.

Aug. 12, 12:57 pm

JK PhD from Ex-Newark says:

@ settingthingstraight

Don't forget jwfacts.com to get a more complete picture of the history and less known doctrine. They do a good job of providing time lines and citing primary sources and providing scans of actual literature.

Personally, I find the letter to Hitler (scan of actual documents on the website) and the discussion of their "generation" teaching most interesting.

Aug. 12, 1:04 pm

Danny Haszard says:

\$\$\$ Watchtower money ghouls for God \$\$\$

TRUE STORY

I Danny Haszard gave all my money to the Watchtower building fund during my youth when I was making big bucks in the construction trade union. I did so because they lied to me that I would never need it for my retirement. Well I am 54 years old and I do need all my money back now that it's 2011 and the 'end of the world' is overdue.

The Watchtower religious racket also got all my grandfather's and my father's savings.

The Watchtower one year before the foretold end of the world 1975, was a time that I remember they were ordering the rank and file JW followers to liquidate their assets and go all out for the Kingdom of God.

The late 1960's was also a time period that Brooklyn H.Q. was really crying poor mouth ( JW children were sending in their piggy banks { Jehovah's pennies} I was giving them my paper route and egg money from my 20 hens).

I alone have been extorted tens of thousands of dollars of my life savings by the greedy charlatans as an adult.

Get this! My elderly Grandfather Roger Haszard and MY Grandmother Ruth Haszard are living in Largo Florida usa circa 1987, (now deceased).

We get an emergency conference call from my uncle Wallace on 'what are we going to do with our aging patriarch as they are becoming helpless and are in need of a part-time nurse'.

My grandfather is busted as he gave all his assets to the Watchtower and his estate is all going to the Watchtower when they die.

There is no emergency cash to free up so the family now has pitch in to pay for their care. The Watchtower has occasional hypocritical articles on caring for our elderly, they don't reveal how countless family's get into this bind on account of their wicked advice.

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Staying Alive Until 1975 Danny Haszard

Aug. 12, 2:18 pm

Tonic from Cobble Hill says:

If only I got a cut of the JW's profit - no, I signed a vow of poverty along with thousands of others, making their huge profit possible.

As a former Elder-Bethelite-Pioneer who also served in Ecuador, I can tell you it's FACT that

higher education and full-time work is highly discouraged. Of course, once you get higher education and can think clearly, you'll question all the garbage you were taught all your life. No wonder they discourage it.

The JW's update their beliefs constantly - and used to say 'Millions Now Living Will Never Die!' ...except all of those people are dead now.

Aug. 12, 2:35 pm

AG from Free Will says:

No one was complaining 40 years ago when the JW's were buying property others found not worthy of investment. Geez, is it not EXPECTED that a real estate asset show SOME appreciation after a half a century.

Each and every one of us living today have the free will to do what we want. The last time I checked you're not obligated to give or sign over any assets unless you want to.

I feel for any victims of abuse in any form but, there are unscrupulous individuals in every business, religion, & government... That doesn't make the whole group/ system responsible or corrupt! If a private banker rips off millions of dollars from individuals... Is the CEO or Board to blame? Of course not, there's NO way that he/ they would know or be able to keep track of EVERY transaction with the company. I just don't see the reasoning behind some arguments...

May we find it in our hearts to forgive regardless of the injustice, small or large, committed against us. As this opens up the opportunity for our own errors to be forgiven.

Aug. 12, 5:12 pm

Alex from Canada says:

"settingthingsstraight from USA"

I have checked out alot of what Danny has said an it is true. That in my opinion makes you and the Watchtower the liars.

Keep up the good work Danny Hazard. Keep showing the truth about the self proclaimed 'truth'.

Aug. 12, 9:44 pm

AJ from Brooklyn Heights says:

When Jehovah's Witnesses moved into Brooklyn Heights over 100 years ago, they made every effort to go above and beyond NY's building codes and standards, even reverting to keeping property in it's original vintage condition, to their credit and much expense.

It wasn't necessary and they easily could've bypassed it, but they chose to follow the rules and consequently other residents in this beautiful area of Brooklyn followed their example. This has benefited property owners in the immediate vicinity of the area, yes even increasing everyone's value, after all it's not easy to just go over in this area to purchase a brown stone, you have to be worth 10's or 100's of millions to own one.

People who never lived there wouldn't understand how much work and money went into gutting, restoring and the daily, monthly and yearly keeping up with these properties to antique conditions, even restoring copper and brass railings, doors, trimmings and marble, to name a

few.

Brooklyn Heights owes Jehovah's Witnesses big time for doing this, as many properties that were purchased over the years here were dilapidated pieces of junk unfit for human living, complete with rats galore and wall to wall roaches, drunks, drug addicts, prostitutes and the like.

If it weren't for JW's Brooklyn Heights would be a crummy ghetto like the rest of Brooklyn.

Aug. 12, 11 pm

Florence from El Cajon says:

JWs don't pass the plate huh? I can see why not. A collection plate is nickles and dimes compared to the charitable giving article they publish in the Watchtower suggesting that members donate their estate, jewelry, stocks and investments to the corporation. See the Watchtower of November 2007 and it will show that this is true. I went to a JW convention at the stadium in San Diego and I saw they had contribution boxes at every exit. I personally witnessed this to be so. Why settle for some meager chump change in a plate when you can go after the big bucks of an estate?

Aug. 12, 11:08 pm

Colin from far away says:

I am one of those volunteers who helped build these buildings, we have a lot pf professionals who are volunteering and if you think were unsafe, go to Joplin and see what people have done to those buildings, we are almost fimished because the houses were structurally unstable, alot of other organizations put new siding and roofing on those houses but didnt replace the supports we jehovahs witnesses stayed and made sure it was done right. if you dont believe hire an inspector and find out for yourself, we are also not greedy we have been in New York for a long time, and everything is voluntary, if someone thinks armmagedon will come soon and doesnt prepare encase it takes longer then expected, the consequences are their fault, so make sure you know what you sre talking about before you bad mouth us.

Aug. 13, 1:25 am

Alex from Canada says:

"so make sure you know what you sre talking about before you bad mouth us."~ Colin from far away

Yet the Watchtower organization through its multiple publications and meetings bad mouths every other religion for over 120 years. If anyone else shows the false predictions, flip flops of doctrine or dishonest twisting of historic facts and scholarship then JW members cry foul. Sorry Colin but you can't have your cake and eat it too.

Aug. 13, 6:44 am

jk phd from ex-newark says:

Just so people are clear on my position, I'm happy for the people who live in the area. I used to service a couple of super high end audio/ video accounts in the area and it's beautiful. I also don't have a problem with the dollar value of the sale. I just think they should give a bunch of their windfall to the members who planed their lives on their false promise that they would never grow old. That money should be put in a fund to care for their elderly (who were told they would never grow old and that university education was a waste of time). As consequence of these teaching, the JWs are the least educated and second poorest of all religious groups.



[http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2011/05/15/magazine/15-Leonhardt.html?](http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2011/05/15/magazine/15-Leonhardt.html?ref=magazine)  
ref=magazine

Aug. 13, 10:52 am

Obama? from Brooklyn Heights says:  
Problem—Reaction—Solution

Problem—Brooklyn Heights has hotels that have become rundown SROs & filled by City agencies with "undesirables." Oh my!

Reaction—We must do something about this! But alas, what can be done?

Solution—'Dump' them on the Watchtower at a fraction of what they're worth! Those clean-cut Witnesses will rid us of the unsavory "undesirables" & make those worthless buildings look spiffy-new again! God bless those Witnesses, they're so diligent & wholesome!

So who's to mind years later when those deserving Witnesses make enormous profits on those once "distressed" properties!? God love them!

The anatomy of a scam.

P.S. Why are all the Watchtower's foot soldiers told to gleefully await the end of the world via Armageddon, while the leadership gets richer & richer through real estate profiteering???

Aug. 13, 11:23 am

LaDawn from Hemet says:

I studied with the witnesses for several months. The ones I met were polite. They knew their books really well, but the Bible was a mystery to them. I have read it several times and none of them I knew had read it through even one time all the way. Instead, they have a constant schedule of reading literature that refers to Bible verses. I always looked them up and often the verse did not say what the literature did. Even though they were very friendly while I studied, I noticed they would tell me about BBQs and things they would do together, they would not ever invite me. Yet at the same time they were telling me I should withdraw from my friends because they were being directed by Satan. This would effectively isolate me, and yet they were not willing to be my friends. When they had a big convention in San Diego I attended. I was expecting there would be a lot of praise for God there. Not so much, instead of praise for God, they praised themselves. People got up at the pulpit and boasted about how much ministry they were doing, some boasted about quitting their job and cutting back expenses so they could do ministry full time. Other speakers boasted about the organization, and boasted about how their leaders are the only men able to accurately teach the Bible. Not one word or song of praise to Jesus was spoken at that meeting, it was mostly self congratulations. After that, I quit studying with them. Like I said, they are polite people, but they are really full of themselves, not any humility.

Aug. 13, 12:06 pm

Bob Stone from Brooklyn Heights says:

The actual nexus of this story shouldn't be the Watchtower Society. It's really about the covert, backroom deal made by our local electeds and their enablers. One can speculate about what

was offered to Sen. Squadron, Assemblymember Millman and Councilmember Lander (I'll give Councilmember Levin a pass on this, since he seems at least a little embarrassed about abandoning his, till now, enthusiastic supporters). Or, maybe they were threatened, it doesn't really matter.

When the developers, who form the de facto government of NYC, are ready to build the housing on Pier Six, Millman will be retired, and the others will be on to their next political jobs. When that happens, I'll do what I can to return them to earning a living more or less honestly.

It shouldn't have turned out this way.

Aug. 13, 12:36 pm

Tyler from San Bernardo says:

Often times, people only hear what they want or do not listen completely. This was the case with some of Jesus disciples at John 6:52-69. Some left Jesus because they did not get the full and true sense of what he taught. They were disgusted with Jesus and no doubt bad-mouthed him.

There are generations of successful Witnesses who have attended universities, maintained beautiful homes, have and had retirement accounts. No doubt they were balanced and listened attentively.

Often times, these bitter angry ones, truly had no spirituality in the first place. They were dedicated to men or an organization,....not to Jehovah God. Thus, they paid more attention to what humans said then what Jehovah teaches in the Scriptures. And thus they failed to have sound, balanced thinking.

Aug. 13, 12:41 pm

Danny Hazzard from Maine says:

Tyler above you would make Satan proud posting your devious psychopath skill for them.

The MOST \*spiritual\* of all Jehovah's Witnesses were the pioneer missionaries who lived hand to mouth all their lives I personally have bought numerous cars for them with my high wages that I was earning.I made good money and put 'kingdom interest first with my \*unrighteous Riches\*.

How dare you quote thump a Bible scripture to support your made up skill.The very few educated and wealthy JW were the ones who IGNORED counsel on putting the Watchtower first,and yes many of them are probably better off now.

Aug. 13, 1:06 pm

jk phd from ex-newark says:

My dog in this fight is about my parents. I'm financially well off. They are in their 60s, are still very active witnesses, and are in for a really bad time. They will be dependent on the government for their old age care. There are many others like them. I can't help them out because they are not allowed to talk to me. Yes, I'm emotional.

@ Tyler from San Bernardo, the following are the two questions all JWs must answer before

they are allowed to be baptized.

1. On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will? (This is okay)

2. Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization? (Not so okay).

I'd be careful talking about your point of view among JWs. If you are witness, and you publicly state your opinion, and don't back down, you WILL be thrown out for apostasy. I'm not quibbling with their right to religious freedom and to control membership.

I do have a problem with a billion dollar windfall not being used to take care of their own, especially when their members will be dependent on entitlement programs run by the governments they pray will be destroyed.

Aug. 13, 1:13 pm

Billy from Bethel says:

I, too, had foolishly signed the vow of obedience and poverty. I worked a total of more than 15 years as a Bethelite on Watchtower properties. As instructed at the District Conventions this summer, ex-Jehovah's Witnesses, or "apostates" are labeled prideful, impatient, and ungrateful murmurers against God's true channel, the Governing Body. During the Saturday drama, two families portrayed exemplary JWs by quitting their jobs to spend more time recruiting for Watchtower. The daughter was portrayed negatively for wanted to do "worldly" social work. The older son was vilified for bringing up something scientific like "endosymbiotic theory". The Saturday afternoon program specifically mentioned college and vacation as things that alienated people from God. As noted by the JWs that have posted here, JWs are idiots if they believe the stuff that Watchtower teaches, eh?

Of course, these are things that JWs do not want nonJWs to know about. Personally, I've had no problem living by the moral standards. My problem has been that Watchtower is a cult and I was a victim. After many promises that they would take care of us Bethelites, I was among the ones later asked to leave... because I had health problems. Yep, at 40 I got dumped out without unemployment benefits, health insurance, decent work references, an education, or any savings. That's how they make money. I was an idiot to believe the stuff Watchtower promised.

Sure, Watchtower will make lots of money on this deal. But they will run out of Brooklyn real estate to sell, and they will run out of foreign branches to liquidate. What do you do with a 19th century religion that has survived until the 21st century then? I'm now an honors student in university and Watchtower is no longer my problem. The government has been very generous in supporting my life and education. But I hate to see all the people still being misled by their promises of "paradise soon" that cause people to ruin their own lives like I did.

Aug. 13, 3:05 pm

Tyler from San Bernardo says:

Sad,.....but another one who was dedicated to an organization and not to Jehovah himself. If this person was truly dedicated to Jehovah, he would have had full faith in Hebrews 13:5....where Jehovah says to be content with present things and that he would never forsake

or leave you.

The constant complaining highlights their previous worship of men or an organization instead of God Almighty himself.

They actually appear to be very foolish.

But alas, they may have to eventually be forced into getting a balanced view when their next organization, whatever it may be, or even they themselves fail to give them permanent true peace and security.

Aug. 13, 3:38 pm

Notreally from San Fernando says:

Tyler, are you just ignorant about how people are baptized in that religion? They are now baptized in the name of the Watchtower Society. You tell me why they changed the questions for baptism in 1985 and added that little nugget in there?

And the fact that every JW worships men does not stop there.

Ask yourself, how about a baptized individual who is versed in Archeology and disagrees with the WTS time line regarding 607 BCE? Would they not be disfellowshipped for disagreeing with the "faithful and discreet slave" despite their worship to God not being one bit changed?

You prove to me how JWs don't worship men, because the evidence is clear.

Aug. 13, 7:42 pm

leandro from downtown says:

the Jw's ever do the your buildings on the law. Let be the human's law or God's law.

Aug. 13, 8:55 pm

leandro from bronx says:

the Jw's ever do the your buildings on the law. Let be the human's law or God's law

Aug. 13, 8:56 pm

w.h. conley from brooklyn says:

Every member of JW's are told not to pursue riches or even worry about retirement as that's lacking faith in God. Yet they invest the money received from their members and make billions. They have lawyers to protect pedophiles and their own assets. They close down and sell branches that members built free of charge thinking they were advancing the gospel of christ.

Organized religion is a racket.

Aug. 14, 3:24 am

emeth from the netherlands says:

All this talk about money.. money..

Money is one thing JW's in general are not that worried about. Its a non-issue for JW's. They never had any lack of money... ever.

So what will they do with all their money? The same things as they did the last 150 years or so.

Use it to proclaim the coming of Gods Kingdom

In more languages,.. reaching more people and with more tools to do so. Helping more people to get a better understanding of Gods plan.

That is what is keeping them busy. And they will do so till the moment Jehovah instructs His people that it is finished.

Aug. 14, 6:55 am

cat from windsor terrace says:

I'm actually more interested in how the city and state sold out the park and further privatized. while I would be interested to learn more about Jehovah's Witnesses religion, it's not the big issue in the story as far as I can see.

Were Squadron and Millman pressured by Bloomberg Admin which loves to privatize any park in sight? Wishing for every neighborhood to seemingly look the same, glass buildings, homogenized, luxury businesses with tax breaks to corporations and developers?

This Mayor cannot be out of office soon enough. But it's true, what someone said, it's our fault for putting up with this government and not making more of an effort to be INVOLVED and speak out in any way possible. I work on park issues but couldn't add this one into my mix - tho' it seemed like it had an organized group working on it. I would say that Bklyn Bridge Park anti-housing and anti-privatization Advocates needed to be flyering about this EVERYWHERE. Not just gathering at small meetings. It should (and can) still be publicized.

This deal should not be tied to the Watchtower properties clearly.

The problem is the overly lavish parks they feel the need to spend money on while everything around us is crumbling and there's no money for the maintenance of the parks themselves? Why can't anything be scaled back a bit? I understand with the Bloomberg Admin - this is part of their grand plan so that the area around the parks will also increase in real estate value but it's a very FLAWED way of dealing with these issues.

Parks are public spaces not real estate props

Separately - I heard they chopped down some trees including a glorious willow tree to make room for "Jane's Carousel" and ran out of money to do it. Or is that old news?

Aug. 14, 9:28 am

Frank from Furter says:

I don't know about the trees but the Carousel is being entirely funded by the Valentas who have also given an endowment to it....and is on schedule.

Aug. 14, 6:59 pm

Gary from Dublin says:

Message for apostate & ex-JW: Here we go again... This blog gets overwhelmed by the same bunch of apostates who have nothing less to do than that: discriminating God's name. the fact

is that they are too proud and arrogant to come back in God's favour. So what they do? They attack JW's and the WT and as the Bible depict them so well: "they are like dogs eating up their own vomit"

Yesterday, 2:04 pm

KathyfromCuyahoga Falls says:

I've read many words on this site and much is not worth the time to read. All bibles say the same thing, that words can build up or tear down. Matt. 12:37 " by your word you will be condemned. John 17:17," Your word is truth". The issues here to be discussed were suppose to be the selling of property in Brooklyn Hgts. but it has turned into a smear and hate campaign. If people are truly concerned about what is going on in their community then get educated and involved, and in a positive way. All the hate in the world will never make a situation better or resolved the issues. There are many groups out there that will be held in account for the actions of it's members, so why throw stones. Just make sure that what you are doing is above reproach. My Dad who was a Dr. of psychology told me that people that can't achieve have to make themselves feel better by tearing others down. He definitely was not a JW but very Catholic. I think he would ask, ' why are you bothering to read this page, it's really non-benefical.

Yesterday, 6:42 pm

Alex says:

Thanks for your diatribe Gary from Dublin.

Same word for word, idea for idea crap that every brainwashed victim of your religion spouts off.

Maybe some day one of you will come up with something original and not from the Watchtower Society.

Yesterday, 6:55 pm

Tron from Jacinto says:

I'm glad I have been brainwashed. This world is a filthy place.

Yesterday, 8:54 pm

Alex says:

The gospel according to the Watchtower Organization (Jehovah's Witness American made religion)

"The good news is the world is so bad"

Yesterday, 10:33 pm