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Lakota Elders Tour

"Going Extinct Is Genocide": Lakota Elders Tour to Raise Awareness About Struggle

Monday, 22 April 2013 10:18 By [Victoria](#) truthout.com

Lakota elders, activists and non-indigenous supporters march through New York's Times Square to United Nations, April 9, 2013. (Photo: Victoria Law)

On Tuesday, April 9, Lakota elders, activists and nonindigenous supporters marched through the streets of Manhattan to the United Nations, where they attempted to present a petition to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. Entitled the Official Lakota Oyate Complaint of Genocide Based on the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the petition listed the numerous injustices faced by the Lakota people. (Oyate is a Sioux word for "people" or "nation.")

At the UN, security officers informed them that they would not be able to enter the building and present the complaint to the Secretary General. Instead, the security officers offered to take it to Ban's office, but refused to give the Lakota documentation verifying that their complaint had been received.

Outside the UN, Charmaine White Face, a Lakota grandmother and great-grandmother, addressed the 60 people who had marched with her. "We come here as a nation. If they won't let us take our message to them, how disrespectful is that to a nation?"

The action is part of the 13-city Truth Tour by Lakota elders and activists to draw attention to the situation of the Lakota, mobilize solidarity networks to benefit Lakota elders, and renew the Lakotas' traditional matriarchal leadership on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation and across the Lakota nation. Between April 1 and 16, they traveled to Minneapolis, Chicago and other points east and west.

With Colonization Came the End to the Matriarchal Leadership

Canupa Gluha Mani, founder of the Strong Heart Warriors Society, speaks before marching to the United Nations, April 9, 2013. (Photo: Victoria Law)

"The matriarchal system changed when the colonizers arrived in 1492," Canupa Gluha Mani, a Lakota activist and founder of the Strong Heart Warriors Society, told Truthout.

History backs up his assertion: As the United States encroached upon indigenous territory, treaties were negotiated between the United States government and the indigenous nations. After going through hundreds of documents, historians M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey asserted, "In not one of the more than 370 ratified and perhaps 300 unratified treaties negotiated by the United States with indigenous nations was the federal government willing to allow participation by native women. In none of the several thousand non-treaty agreements ... were federal representatives prepared to discuss anything at all with women. In no instance was the United States open to recognizing a female as representing her people's interests when it came to administering the reservations onto which American Indians were ultimately forced; always, men were required to do what was necessary to secure delivery of rations, argue for water rights, and all the rest." (from "American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in Contemporary North America," in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes. Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1992, 322.)

White Face, a Lakota elder and great-grandmother of nine, noted that under the matriarchal system, "The ones who made the decisions for the community were the grandmothers. There were societies of grandmothers. Colonizing has forced people to forget these ways. There are still some of us who were taught the old way. I learned from my grandmother. Other people didn't have that opportunity."

More than 6,753 Lakota children have not had the opportunity to learn from their grandmothers and other elders. Among the list of injustices on the Official Lakota Oyate Complaint is the placement of Lakota children with non-Lakota foster parents. In addition, the [incarceration rate for Native children is 40 percent higher than that of their white counterparts](#).

And there is the matter of language. "In one lifetime, the number of Lakota speakers has dropped 75 percent," states the Complaint. "There have been no new Lakota speakers in three generations. There are 6,000 to 8,000 Lakota language speakers left."

Other [realities faced by the Lakota living on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation](#) include:

- An average life expectancy of 44 years
- An infant mortality rate more than 300 percent the national average
- Alcoholism affecting eight in ten families
- A tuberculosis rate on Lakota reservations approximately 800 percent higher than the national average
- A cervical cancer rate 500 percent higher than the national average
- Corruption in the current leadership
- Retaliation against elders and activists who attempt to speak out against the corruption

White Face notes that she and other Lakota grandmothers seek the enforcement of the [1868 Fort Laramie treaty](#). In the treaty, the United States recognized the Black Hills of Dakota as part of the great Sioux Reservation and set the land aside for exclusive use by the Sioux people. However, six years later, Gen. George Custer led an expedition into the Black Hills, where they found gold. Miners began moving into Sioux territory, demanding protection from the US army. In 1876, Custer led an army detachment to the Little Bighorn River, where they were soundly

defeated by the Sioux. The following year, the [US government confiscated the land from the Sioux](#).

In 1882, the United States began imposing an [assimilation policy](#) on the Lakota and other Native nations, outlawing key spiritual practices and forcibly removing children from their homes to send them to boarding schools, where thousands died or ran away. In 1890, at what would become known as the [massacre at Wounded Knee](#), government forces killed over 300 Lakota men, women and children.

"The [1868] treaty spells out absolute and undisturbed land use and occupation [for the Lakota]," White Face told Truthout. "If we could get that, we can fix everything else our way."

She noted that the Lakota have been sending delegates to the UN since 1984 requesting its assistance in helping enforce the terms of the Fort Laramie treaty. "We've never been able to get them to help."

Corruption Within

Corruption in the local leadership has plagued the people on Pine Ridge. In the 1970s, allegations of corruption of Pine Ridge's tribal council helped instigate [the takeover of Pine Ridge's Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement](#) and a [71-day siege by federal forces](#). Pine Ridge is today, and was then, [one of the poorest areas in the United States](#).

Gluha Mani recounted a meeting two months before the tour began. "They almost beat Charmaine White Face up. Why? Because she was telling the truth! Someone had to come get me to protect her."

When asked about being attacked at a meeting, White Face responded, "Which one?" Then, more soberly, she stated, "When I speak out against corruption, that's when I get attacked."

One week before the Truth Tour left South Dakota, another Lakota woman, Lorraine White Face, was assaulted while buying gas. "She was assaulted because she challenged the tribal council. She told the head of the tribal council to do his job professionally or not at all," recalled Gluha Mani, whom she called from a nearby store.

Barbara Charging Crow does not live on Pine Ridge. Her husband's mother is one of the Lakota elders in Wanblee, South Dakota, east of Pine Ridge. However, corruption is just as much a problem there as on Pine Ridge and other reservations.

Charging Crow told Truthout that in the summer of 2010, the government began laying water pipes through Wanblee, diverting the area's groundwater and replacing it with water from the Missouri River. "My mother-in-law used to be able to turn on her faucet and get water from all over. It smelled a certain way; it tasted a certain way. And then, in summer 2010, she turns on her tap and gets water that smells different and tastes different and is polluted river water. And the whole time, church groups are there, patting kids on the head, cleaning up the garbage, singing songs about Jesus Christ, and the whole time the government's trenching our water.

"The government sent \$6 million, supposedly for 'economic support,'" Charging Crow continued. "The cover page said it was for economic support. But under the first page, it said that this was to pay for our water. Right away, 60 percent of that money is unaccounted for. The behavior of embezzlement has been going on for so long that people think they can get away with more and more. It's getting worse. Then, just before the grandmas leave, people start getting checks for \$1,000 for the change in their water. Is \$1,000 going to cover people's cancer treatment?"

When Charging Crow heard about the Truth Tour and learned that some of the grandmothers were unable to travel, she decided to join. "I'm also a grandma," she said. "I'm a young grandma, not an old one. I'm not an 80-year-old grandma. But I wanted to raise awareness of the abuses and the need for accountability. These grandmas have been living here this whole time, but now they're looking at real-life extinction."

Treaty Territories Surrounded by Open Uranium Mines

Charmaine White Face is the spokesperson for the treaty council created in 1894 to work toward the enforcement of the Fort Laramie treaty. She is also a biologist concerned about the environment of the treaty territory. In the fall of 2003, White Face learned about the uranium mines on the Lakota lands abandoned in the 1970s. Many of the mines have no barriers or signs warning the public not to enter. Many are still emitting radiation. In response, she started [Defenders of the Black Hills](#), an all-volunteer group that pushes for the clean-up of abandoned uranium mines on sacred Lakota Lands. White Face has taken journalists into the mines to see the dangers firsthand. "You'll see front-page exposés of the uranium mines in [news outlets] in Germany, but not here," she added.

Currently, the group is [seeking a sponsor for a federal bill](#) appropriating enough funds for the immediate cleanup of all abandoned uranium mines in the region and assistance to those harmed by radiation. Charmaine White Face cites the example of the Riley Pass Mine, which had been bought by chemical manufacturer Tronox Incorporated. [Tronox filed for bankruptcy](#). Although the [bankruptcy settlement agreement includes a \\$96,000 payment to the Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) for the Riley Pass Mine](#), White Face stated that no cleanup has occurred. Instead, a sign has been posted [warning people not to enter the area](#).

Charmaine White Face and other defenders of the Black Hills remain undeterred. She notes that even the most assimilated (or "colonized," as she calls them) people on Pine Ridge support her efforts to clean up the uranium mines. In 2007, White Face won the [Nuclear-Free Feature Award](#) for her work in exposing the dangers of uranium mining.

The Truth Tour

The Lakota elders did not gain entrance to the UN that Tuesday afternoon. (As of the night of April 10 - the day following their appearance at the UN's Manhattan headquarters - they were still waiting for word from the secretary general's office.)

That night, they screened their documentary [Red Cry](#) and spoke about the issues at New York's Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew. "Our reception in New York has been exceptional and overwhelming," Charmaine? White Face told Truthout the following day.

Charging Crow agrees. "All the people everywhere have been beautiful. Meeting other activists and organizers who have done so many amazing things is an incredibly humbling experience." But she reminds us, "We are trying to get people to see the ugly realities of extinction and genocide. These grandmas have been living here [in Pine Ridge, Wanblee and other territories] this whole time, but now they're looking at real-life extinction. Going extinct is genocide.

[Victoria Law](#)

Victoria Law is a writer, photographer and mother. She is the author of "Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women" (PM Press 2009), the editor of the zine Tenacious: Art and Writings from Women in Prison and a co-founder of Books Through Bars - NYC. She is currently working on transforming "Don't Leave Your Friends Behind," a zine series on how radical movements can support the families in their midst, into a book.

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[Belize archeology institute says ancient Nohmul complex dates back 2,300 years; rock was being extracted for road-building project](#)

Take a Stand on the Sand

Three years after the largest environmental disaster in U.S. history, the BP Deep Horizon blowout and oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, we're still dependent on dirty fossil fuels. If we are serious about fighting climate change, we must keep offshore oil, tar sands oil, gas, and coal in the ground instead of extracting, refining, and burning them, polluting our air, soil, and water. For the past three years, Sierra Club members have helped organized Hands Across the Sand -- the world's biggest grassroots stand against dependence on dirty fuels and for ending climate change.

[Find out where to join hands at your local Hands Across the Sand event at noon this Saturday, May 18.](#)

[TransCanada Reps Kicked Out of Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation » Tar Sands Blockade](#)

www.tarsandsblockade.org

[And with these firm words the TransCanada representatives where kicked out of Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation last week. The seemingly aloof TransCanada officials showed up at the Tribal](#)

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NEVADA INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING RECEIVE \$20 MILLION GRANT TO STUDY SOLAR ENERGY

Nevada higher education officials, along with U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., on Monday announced Nevada will receive a \$20 million National Science Foundation grant to further the study of solar energy on desert lands.

<http://erj.reviewjournal.com/ct/uz3688753Biz16999270>

In Japanese schools, the students don't get ANY exams until they reach grade four (the age of 10)! Why?

Because the goal for the first 3 years of schools is NOT to judge the child's knowledge or learning, but to establish good manners and to develop their character!

Yes, that's what our scholars taught us: Manners BEFORE knowledge!

Should this method be implemented all over the world?

Community Works Journal welcomes Sarah Anderson as our newest educator-essayist. Sarah teaches middle school humanities and interdisciplinary studies at a place-based charter school in Portland, Oregon. She is an alumna of CWI's Summer Institute and her insightful essays on teaching and learning will be regularly featured in upcoming editions of *Community Works Journal*.

FEATURED ESSAY

The Essence of Social Learning: From Classroom to Community [read online](#)

By SARAH ANDERSON

As an outsider looking in, my initial reaction was to wonder: how was this allowed to continue? How was this education meeting the kids' needs, not just as learners but as human beings? If kids were wondering, "What does school have to do with my life?" they were right. What was going on in this school was not helpful. In fact it was hurtful. My biggest question: how common was this? It felt to me like the entire model needed to be scrapped, administrators needed to call an emergency series of meetings with the community and create something entirely different.



Middle school students are social animals. Adolescence is a time when we develop a keen sense of self-awareness and an intense interest in other people. Since most 13 and 14-year olds are more passionate about each other than anything else, and since their brains are really geared towards social development, this is the basis of my classroom. Before all else, we practice how to treat each other well and how to share ourselves honestly and openly.

I have found that engaging with the wider community is a crucial element of building strong middle school classrooms. This does not just mean interacting with adults, it also means creating healthy connections with younger children. Who came up with the idea to isolate adolescent kids day after day in a building with hundreds of other people their same age? Sure, young people this age love to focus on their peer relationships, but should these be the only relationships we foster? This is the age when kids take their first real steps towards adulthood and responsibility. How much can middle school students learn about the adult world by being absorbed daily in the pre-teen/early-teen world?

I believe that the structure of many traditional middle schools doesn't help our kids, and in many cases, it can hurt them. By providing alternative structures, ones that make more sense for the needs for emerging young adults who want to be grown-up but still need tons of training

and guidance- we can help change adolescence from what many consider the worst time of their life, to what it should be: a time of wonder, awakening and community.

[read full article](#)

Locals to weigh in on 'Mount Reagan' proposal

By HENRY BREAN LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

A proposal to name the peak of Las Vegas' Frenchman Mountain after President Ronald Reagan will receive a second hearing by a state naming board in September.

First, though, local officials will get a chance to weigh in on the idea, which conservative activist Chuck Muth presented to the Nevada State Board on Geographic Names on Tuesday.

Board chairwoman Linda Newman said Clark County and any townships or tribal entities near the mountain will be asked in writing for their input.

"They can tell us whatever they want, but compelling reasons are always appreciated," she said. "If we don't hear from them, we'll take that as they're OK with it."

Newman stressed that the proposal only seeks to have the unnamed peak of Frenchman Mountain designated as Mount Reagan. She called Muth's presentation "very impressive" and said the board will likely vote on the idea at its Sept. 10 meeting.

After that, the proposal will go to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for a final ruling.

Contact reporter Henry Brean at hbrean@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0350.

From the Wiley On-line Library

Search term: Shoshone

[Land Rights, Claims, and Western Shoshones: The Ideology of Loss and the Bureaucracy of Enforcement](#)

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Volume 32, Issue 2, November 2009, Pages: 279–311, Richard O. Clemmer

Article first published online : 3 DEC 2009, DOI: 10.1111/j.1555-2934.2009.01044.x

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Volume 41, Issue 3, July-September 1939, Pages: 440–457, E. Adamson Hoebel

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Antipode

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Volume 74, Issue 4, December 2001,

Pages: 501–515, ERICA FLEISHMAN, GEORGE T. AUSTIN and DENNIS D. MURPHY

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Interactional Considerations In Studying American “Indians” The Case Of Adolescent Self-Esteem

Symbolic Interaction

Volume 2, Issue 1, Spring 1979, Pages: 43–58, William C. Cockerham
Article first published online : 22 DEC 2011, DOI: 10.1525/si.1979.2.1.43

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Una de las fotos más famosas de los nativos en



Yosemite

es esta fotografía tomada por JT Boysen en 1901. Susie y su hija Sadie McGowan. *(Click on pic to enlarge for technical excellence in image)*