

2nd Annual Gold King Mine
AMERICANA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Saturday August 18th 2012
 10AM to 8PM
 All Ages

Gold King Mine
 Jerome, Arizona

\$10.00 includes camping

Live Music, Kids Art Area,
 Community Art Project
 Hula-Hoops, Live Artists
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 Vendors,
 Miss Gold King
 Mine Contest

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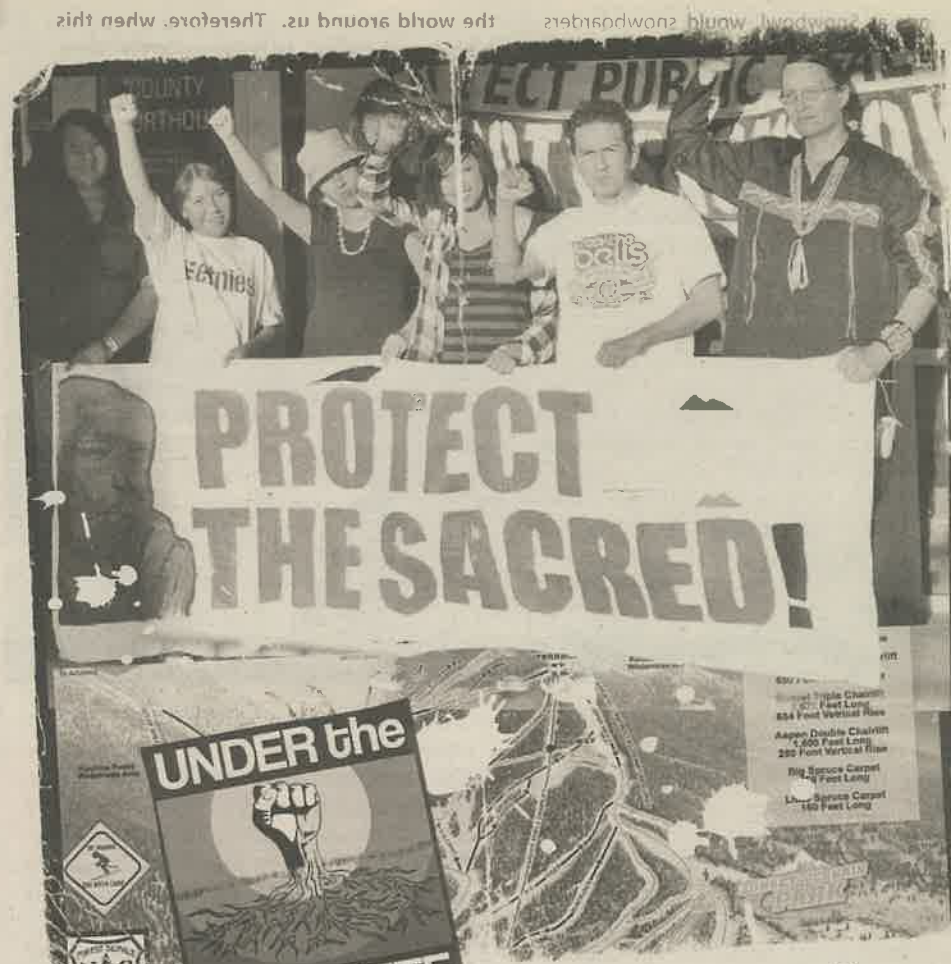
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Saturday Aug 18th, 2012
 Gold King Mine
 1000 Perkinsville Road
 1 Mile N of the
 Fire Station follow signs

Gates open at 10AM
 The Amazing Ripples
 Barefoot & Pregnant
 Back Porch Pickers
 Stephanie Hatfield,
 Cody Wayne & Jill Wood

Moondog,
 Connie Fisher,
 McClellan Family,
 Jimmy Pines
 & Washboard Jere
 Bernie LeZotte,
 Jim Pipkin, Sony Wilson,
 David McClellan,
 Carey Slade
 Blue Rose Band,
 Laina, ralo, Emily
 and more TBA.

Featuring



**THE RHETORIC OF EXCLUSION
 ON THE SAN FRANCISCO PEAKS**

BY KYLE BOGGS

The very idea that there is a multi-generational controversy over development on the San Francisco Peaks should make at least one point clear: the mountain and its surrounding areas are imagined in startlingly different ways. It is a contested space, yet no people reside there. What does reside there are narratives that often clash; yet, in a lot of ways, one of these narratives continues to dominate the way the Peaks are meant to be experienced. That the controversy persists, and continues to receive national media coverage, indicates that there are a growing number of people who resist that narrative.

As a writer, it was this contention that initially drew me into the complexities of this controversy. In the fall of 2006, I was a new writer for the publication you presently hold in your hands. I was eager for story ideas and thus became a regular attendee at Flagstaff City council meetings. I had positioned myself in my usual spot in the back of the room, armed only with a worn pad of paper and a stubby pencil; right away, I realized this wasn't a typical meeting.

While I couldn't say now what was on the agenda that day, I can easily recall the moment when the public was asked to give comments; this was the moment when I first realized that the controversy surrounding development on the San Francisco Peaks would give me more than enough to write about for the rest of my life.

An elderly Native woman, who I later learned was quite famous for her activism in the Big Mountain region of Black Mesa, approached the microphone slowly, clenching the arm of a man who steadied her steps. As she pulled the microphone down to meet the reach of her voice, the reverberation of her silver rings against the metal of the microphone echoed

throughout the Chambers; all eyes were on her. She paused before she spoke. A few sounds came out of her mouth and she paused again. I can still hear the sound of her voice shake as she exhaled into the microphone. Council members glanced back and forth at each other before one told the woman that her words would be translated if she wished. And it wasn't until she spoke about *Dook'o'oshíid*, or The San Francisco Peaks, in her own language that she started to cry.

She went on well past her allotted time limit, speaking about sacredness, about desecration, about how the creator had entrusted the mountain to her people and in return how the mountain has looked after her. She spoke of shrines on the Peaks, ceremonial plants, and medicinal herbs. She told the people present that day about how generations of her clan had buried the umbilical cords of newborn babies beneath the soil of the Peaks in a specified location she did not wish to disclose. **It was striking to me, the way she spoke in different ways of the Peaks, not as a pile of dirt, or a unique eco-system, but as a living entity.**

I remember gazing around the room at the obviously confounded and largely Caucasian audience. To me, the disconnect was fascinating. Though her words were translated, she was not understood. Something clearly and profoundly meaningful was lost on the audience. When the skiers, snowboarders, and Snowbowl personnel spoke up in favor of the expansions, one at a time, their messages were clear: "What is the big deal?" "It's skiing; it's all about having fun." "Why are you trying to ruin people's fun?" they said. They clearly found themselves confronted with a conversation they were not expecting to have.

Looking back at this moment, I often wonder if the reverse would have been true. If the courts had consistently ruled against the ex-

pansions at Snowbowl, would snowboarders and skiers have expressed a similarly intense sadness? Would they likewise long to have been understood, not out of choice but out of necessity?

Likewise, today, we see protestors, native and nonnative, risk safety and freedom by taking to the streets, practicing nonviolent civil disobedience in chaining themselves to heavy machinery in protest against the expansions. **As of today, concerned citizens Joseph Sanders and Jessica Beasley are on day 18 of their hunger strike**, vowing to continue until the following three demands are met: that the City of Flagstaff cancel their contract with Snowbowl; that Snowbowl vows to remove the pipeline and remediate the areas damaged by the expansions, and that an agreement is created with the City of Flagstaff that "there will be no further destruction of the San Francisco Peaks by Arizona Snowbowl, or any others."

Again I cannot help but ponder if the reverse were true, would we see skiers chaining themselves the lifts, demanding to ski on reclaimed wastewater? Would disenchanted snowboarders vow to go without food until a new half pike is constructed? It is curious that the answers to these questions are comically obvious, yet those who rally support for the expansions at Snowbowl from the City Council, the Forest Service, as well as both the State and Federal level Courts, continue to be successful.

On June 12 of this year, the reality of this disconnect was further realized when Diné activist and musician **Klee Benally** went to trial to dispute charges of "trespassing" and "disorderly conduct." Last summer, Klee, who was attending a prayer gathering toward the top of the mountain, chained himself to an excavator in order to, in his words, "stop the desecration of the holy San Francisco Peaks."

Klee left the house that day with no intentions of doing what he did. The noise of the excavator, Klee told the honorable Judge Howard Grodman, had disrupted the gathering at least four times. "The prayers," he said, "we were not able to hear them."

Of his spontaneous action, Klee continued. "I personally felt a call through the prayers to go and address the excavator operator nearest the prayer gathering area. I approached the excavator operator and I told him to stop, that they were desecrating this holy mountain and violating my religious freedoms." At this point Klee affixed himself to the bucket of the excavator, with a bike lock he happened to have in his bag that day.

In response to the accusation that he was trespassing, Klee responded in a way that reveals the structural limitations of western property law. "I did not believe I was trespassing... I think the important thing is that this is a holy mountain to my people since time immemorial, so I feel a spiritual connection that is beyond any sense of trespassing," he said. "I felt like it was my duty to be there because my rights were being violated."

The state prosecutor, obviously frustrated with Klee for refusing to follow the script, pressed him further. "I understand that you don't believe you were trespassing, but under the legal definition..." It was clear that the fragility of the legal language prevented her from having the conversation that was so obvious to Klee.

As Klee refused to accommodate the way the discourse in the courtroom attempted to frame his responses, I was fascinated once again. The stark contrast of turquoise around his neck against the drab backdrop of the courtroom reminded me of the testimony I had witnessed in city council meetings and judicial proceedings over the last several years.

Language, the words we use to express meaning, shapes the way we understand

the world around us. Therefore, when this language is limited, so is our understanding. Western discourse as we know it today, specifically as it relates to land use policies, is the result of a vast archive of historical influences related to ideas of Manifest Destiny, Frontierism, and Christianity to name a few. The way the controversy over development on the San Francisco Peaks has unfolded over the last 40 years has demonstrated again and again as operating through an exclusionary rhetoric, one that legitimizes one way of speaking, of knowing, of experiencing, and thus delegitimizes opposing views.

In other words, the language of the Forest Service, the language of the Department of Agriculture, the language of the City Council, the language of western law all function as a privileged discourse. When we look at the way the controversy has been framed as one where environmental concerns are diametrically opposed to economic concerns, the way native concerns for religious freedom and human health have been legally compartmentalized, we begin to notice the fragility, the exclusivity of the dominant discourse at work. Indeed, it has proven structurally incapable of even having conversations that reflect other ways to understand the world.

In his final statements, Klee told the state prosecutor regarding his action, "It was the only way I felt I could make my point clearly heard." I was quickly reminded of the song "Uprising" from his band, Blackfire. In the song Klee, with his siblings, sings: "Let our actions speak when they ignore our words." It is clear that their words have not been ignored, necessarily; the limited ways meaning can be expressed, more precisely, renders them *unable* to hear their words. **When protestors chant, "What part of sacred don't you understand?" we now know the answer: everything.**

Discourse, however, is not limited simply to the words we use. Profound in its simplicity, sociologist Michael Kimmel once said, "**Privilege is invisible to those who have it.**" When I spoke to majority owner of Snowbowl Eric Borowsky last year, he expressed much frustration that the tribes were so unwilling to compromise on this issue. Looking at the mountain, the way the forest service has divided it up into districts, the way multiple use policy determines what activities can and can't take place on the mountain, the names of each peak, the names of the trails, the names of ski runs, the fact that there is a ski resort on the mountain to begin with all point to the number of ways Western discourse is literally written on the body of the Peaks. But having this privilege, under Kimmel's explanation, renders Borowsky incapable of seeing how much the discourse already works in his favor. After all, when has there ever been a compromise on the Peaks that favored the worldview of native people?

The City of Flagstaff, like many cities around the world, as well as the Forest Service, is increasingly concerned with developing sustainability initiatives. Such directives are articulated in ways that seek a balance between environmental, social, and economic concerns. The controversy surrounding development on the San Francisco Peaks exposes the clear yet often unarticulated connections *between* these concerns, revealing for example, the importance of cultural sustainability. If land use policies are being re-evaluated, it is important they are done so in a way that recognizes the biases embedded in the discourse, and addresses and new more exclusive landscape of expression. **N**

| Kyle Boggs is a cyclist, a dreamer, and a writer who makes his home in Flagstaff.

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