

DEBATE: SHOULD THE GOSHUTES BUILD A TEMPORARY NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE SITE ON THE SKULL VALLEY RESERVATION? NO: MARGENE BULLCREEK

SS: What made you first get involved [as an activist against nuclear waste storage]?

MB: For the same reasons—when my brother died, and I somewhat wanted to give up my political thing. There was a lot of unfairness. To build a strong government, having resources to be able to provide for members, to give them, you know, to make things possible so that they could be able to have good homes, and good employment. . . . I'm still doing it today minus my brothers, but I'm always thinking they're there. . . . I feel like I could be able to still stand for the things that we believe in and the things that we believe in is the fairness, is to provide and to want better things for our people. And now, it's the same today. We don't have any homes, we don't have housing for our youths. The children that was, children back then, that are now adults. They still don't have any places to stay. And the employment is still bad; all this is still here. And we have a new council where they can provide all these things, but it's not happening yet. And so it's just continuation after continuation. But the main reason is that, is that I still believe in the same things that I still believe in, like this place. You know, this place still has a lot of meaning to me. This where my broth—my father, my father and mother raised us, and taught us things. And my brothers were here. And I have my brothers buried in a cemetery close to here. There have been times when I felt like I just wanted to go, but I can't because I have my commitments here. And so, um, well there's a lot of things to being a Native American. It's not just all politics; sometimes politics gets in your way, but . . . And then, it knocks on your door . . . When you don't want to be involved in it, it knocks on your day because you're thinking we need this, we need that and

we're going to have to go say something about this issues. Even if we're not being heard, we still have to be, we still have to bring it up. And so, that's how politics, you know, gets me involved in things. But otherwise, you know, I'm very content here, sitting here with the warmth coming from the sun and the wind coming through the trees. I feel very content without having to look down the road and seeing the nuclear waste storage down there. And so, I, I feel very, what can I say? I feel . . . I've been hearing the word blessed a lot lately. I feel content here, now, even now. Because of that we're still holding on to the very things that was taught to us.

SS: What organizations are you involved with? I saw, I did a little bit of background research and a lot of people interviewed you. I saw that you were on the board of HEAL Utah. Are you involved with any other organizations?

MB: Other than HEAL, we have an organization we need to get some money into. So, hopefully, somewhere, we'll be able to get that, but... I'm involved with an organization called Native Community Action [Council]. . . . But what it is, we are doing is, studying the effects from the fallouts, from the test sites in Vegas and how it affected the Native Americans. We have pretty much done most of our studies. It just that we, we have to put the finishing touches on it. The things that they did and the effects that they had in the Native American communities, and how it affected them, and causing cancer today, it'd be overwhelming to think about what's going on. But they were living as how they, their livelihood was being the Native American they are. You know, they lived outside, they hunted during the seasons, they worked more on the outside, and when the test, the test came around, they were all

affected by it, by that. And so, that's one organization. And I've been in close contact with the IEN, the Indigenous Environment Network, in Minnesota, they really helped our organization out by supporting us. And Shundahai [Network] was another one that was um, you know... The chairman for Ohavi. And, ah, that's about all the organizations that I've been really close to.

SS: Great. So, from your perspective, what is the problem with nuclear waste?

MB: What's the problem with nuclear waste?

SS: Um-hm.

MB: The big problem from what I learned over the years is that, that it was something that was created by the DOE [Department of Energy] and they were going to put it at this permanent site. By this time it should have been there [Yucca Mountain], but it's not there. OK and, and, they want to created more, but they don't know where to put this stuff. Our place was, was, was the one place that was going to be possible, and hopefully it won't come about yet. But this was the place where they were going to store it. And this was a temporary stop and from here it was going to go to Yucca Mountain, OK? But I'm saying and I hear this, people say keep it where it's at, keep it in your own backyard. Don't let it come through the states where it's going to affect communities. Keep it where it's at. I believe that they do have spaces because they used to say they have room in their parking lots and they do. Keep it there until it's time to go to its permanent site. The sad part about it is that it's going to go to another Native American territory. And it's their land. And it's just like I'm saying, how come from the start of things that they took over a lot of our Native American country? They took a lot and then this permanent site is a part of that. And it's sad because—that's one of the reasons I was fighting it too. I didn't want this big corporation [Private Fuel Storage] or DOE or nuclear waste is a big thing. It gave, created a lot of corporations and a lot of moneys

for people that are, that wants it. But those of us that are going to sacrifice our land and our livelihood just so that they could create more and create more moneys for themselves by putting this, putting it on our land after we've been stripped of our, the best portion of the lands in the country and put us on the poor, the poor part of the country. And now they want to put it, there's no place else to put it but on our reservation, that's what I'm saying. This reservation that they haven't touched, yet. But to us, there's a lot of there's a lot of values here. Whether it's materialistic or spiritual. And, um, it's just the same thing all over again. That's why, that's how I feel about nuclear waste. And it's not only nuclear waste. Anything that has to do with our Native American land, whether it's nuclear waste or mining or oil drilling or whatever that the country needs. The important thing I'm trying to say is that they've already, they've already dug up the things that they dug up. Why, you know, dig more into our Native American lands? And it's just the same, like the Navajos were telling me about the uranium, you know, you're going to wake up a giant and that's what it did. From that came Hiroshima and all these lot of lives being wasted and lost. And wars. It's just not—it's not right.

SS: You've outlined the problem with nuclear waste, and clearly you're trying to solve that problem. So, how do you see your role in that solution?

MB: The solution I, because the interior, the Secretary of the Interior made a decision, saying that it would affect our homeland security, being who we are as Native Americans and the land that we have, this could affect us, OK. And so, that itself could be a solution because then it could stop the waste from coming not only to this reservation, but to other reservations as well. So, that needs to be, I really feel that needs to be looked into for that, that part of the solution more. You know, I really feel that we need to have support of tribes to work together; we need to have support of your

state legislators, legislatives to work together or the governor because in Utah, they were against it, OK. Not only for, well, for that decision that the interior made. That's, that's what I'm looking at. As far as state-wise, I really feel that they should... if they don't want the waste on our reservation, why create more? And so, why are they talking about having new reactors? What did, what did, what did...why do you think I fought for 13 years? And it's been long years to be able to go up against this opposition. I've lost, I've lost a lot of things; I've sacrificed in other words. And the way I sacrificed is that now I'm not a likely person because I've went against the economic development for the tribe. In a way, we were successful in stopping it because if it wasn't for the very things that we believed in to fight this—to oppose it—then, it wouldn't have happened. Senator [Orrin] Hatch and [Senator Bob] Bennett took that ball and ran with it and made that goal, but they left us behind. They left us behind. They didn't put us up there with them and so we're still sitting here, but then we don't, we realize, we know that if it wasn't for us, they couldn't have stopped this. So, what I would like to see is to be able to have it be like, like a goal for other

reservations as well because this nuclear waste isn't going to stop here on the reservation, the reservation, the Skull Valley Goshute Reservation, the Indian Goshute Reservation. It's going to go somewhere else and it's going to affect those—that community—those Native Americans—those indigenous people, the same way it was affecting us. And we're lucky, we don't have to deal with cancer here. Although there are cancers, but we can't pinpoint it because of the nerve gas and Dugway [Proving Ground] and all that stuff and the government would never recognize it anyway. But we're lucky that we're not affected by the test site, the Nevada test site. Although it might have came this far as, as far as the studies go. But, at least it's not more than half of our members that are stuck with cancer, which is just pretty scary. And so, um, I feel that that would be, um, a solution that's there now. And, ah, but that could be, um, that could be possible for other reservations as well.

Margene Bullcreek, interview with Samantha Senda-Cook, Nov. 3, 2007, Nuclear Technology in the American West Oral History Project, Everett L. Cooley Collection, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, t.s., 9–15.