



# Desert Voices

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## Yucca Mountain: Not Saved Yet

*by Judy Treichel*

"Yucca Mountain is not an option," said then-Senator Obama. As President his pick for the new Secretary of Energy, Dr. Steven Chu is a proponent of and advocate for renewable energy (although he also is a strong proponent of nuclear power). Nevada Sen. Harry Reid has vowed to deeply slash the funding for the project. It is important to us that the site be irreversibly abandoned.

The Dept. of Energy (DOE) submitted a license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) last June. The states of Nevada and California as well as several other entities submitted about 300 "contentions" which are issues, stated in a legal format, that explain reasons why a license should not be granted. The contentions were submitted last December and DOE has just finished reviewing them and has declared that, they believe none of them to be valid. Now those who submitted the contentions will reply to DOE's assessment and the NRC will review the contentions and the comments and decide which of them will be brought to a licensing hearing to be challenged and defended by the parties.

The NRC has just selected three hearing panels. Each panel has three judges. If the Yucca Mountain license application goes to a hearing process, these panels would hear the arguments and after a three to four year process would decide whether or not a license should be issued to construct a repository at Yucca Mountain. If they approve a license, construction would begin and when a part of the repository has been built, the DOE would then apply for a license to "receive and possess" waste at Yucca Mountain. Current DOE estimates of when that would happen are about the year 2020.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) held a public hearing in Nevada regarding the proposed rail line that DOE would build from Caliente to Yucca Mountain -- 300+ miles. It would be unusual if a federal board did not approve what another federal agency proposed to do. Any final decision made by NRC, STB, etc. is always subject to litigation in the federal court system. The State of Nevada sued DOE, NRC and EPA over the rules they established for Yucca Mountain. The court decided that the EPA standard was not sufficient and remanded the rule back to them to be rewritten. EPA came out with a new rule at about the time that DOE submitted the license application. The State has again challenged the rule in court but the case has not been heard yet.

As part of Governor Gibbons' 2009-10 budget, he has called for many, severe cuts. One of those would be to drastically cut the budget and structure of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects. If the cuts and changes were made, I think that the battle against Yucca Mountain would be much more difficult

*continued on p.3 - Yucca Mountain*

## Newe Sogobia: Not a Wasteland

*by Dr. Bonnie Eberhardt Bobb*

While you may know that the Western Shoshone National Council (WSNC) is the governing body of Newe Sogobia, Western Shoshone treaty land, you may not know that the Nevada Test Site is a nuclear-free zone. In 1995, WSNC notified the US of their full sovereignty, and that U. S. laws do not apply within treaty boundaries. In December, 1995, WSNC designated Newe Sogobia a nuclear free zone under Western Shoshone law. Shoshone have led activities at the Peace Camp for years and hold annual ceremonies on Yucca Mountain. Look closely, you'll see a flag up there on the head of the Serpent!

In 2000, my husband Johnnie Bobb, Shoshone spiritual person, held the first Newe Sogobi Mavaa' Mia, Walk on the Sacred Land. Starting at Warm Springs at sunrise, Shoshone walkers/runners set out to prayerfully reclaim the land with their footsteps. The participants circle the land desecrated by the Nevada Test Site and Yucca Mountain, passing through Tonopah, Goldfield, Beatty, ending at Mercury.

This year the 10th Annual Walk/Run will begin May 4. Only Shoshone can be runners/walkers, because only Shoshone can reclaim the land, but Johnnie is asking for your help. He needs supporters 1) to assist in setting up and moving camp, 2) to drive support/safety vehicles, and 3) to send prayers and donations of food or cash.

Saturday May 9, 2009 Johnnie will hold a sunrise ceremony at Peace Camp to welcome the runners from their journey. All are welcome! During the celebration that follows, we will discuss sacred Yucca Mountain and on-going nuclear plans. Johnnie emphasizes that the Walk is NOT a protest, but a prayerful event for healing the land. For more information, contact Johnnie at [newebuey2002@yahoo.com](mailto:newebuey2002@yahoo.com).

In related news, in 2008 the United Nations reaffirmed the 2006 UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Urgent Action Decision 1(68), that the US is violating Western Shoshone human rights. The US has ignored the UN recommendations.

WSNC is raising funds to attend and update the next CERD meeting in Geneva. Checks for this or for the Walk/Run should be made payable to "Corporation of Newe Sogobia (CNS)." CNS is the Western Shoshone 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.

Johnnie made the following statement to the Obama Administration. "The Western Shoshone Nation has suffered more devastation from the US government's nuclear policies than any Nation on Earth. Our people were forcibly removed from the area now known as the Nevada Test Site for the nu-

*continued on p.3 - Newe Sogobia*

*Join us to transform fears into compassion  
& apathy into action.*



## *A Communal Pilgrimage to America's Nuclear Sacrifice Zone*

*2009 Annual Sacred Peace Walk  
Las Vegas to the Nevada Test Site  
April 6 - 13*

*We walk in the footsteps of a long legacy of peace walkers  
and spiritual leaders to draw attention to the nuclear  
dangers that continue to threaten our sacred planet and the  
community of life. We come to heal this, the most bombed  
place on Earth.*

Schedule includes:

- Western Shoshone sunrise ceremony
- Full Moon ritual at the Cactus Springs Goddess Temple (Thurs.)
- Civil Resistance at Creech Air Force Base, headquarters of the Air Force's Unmanned Aircraft Systems wing, equipped with more than 100 MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aircraft (aka "drones") – includes Good Friday "No More Victims" Stations of the Cross re-enactment (Friday morning)
- Passover Seder (Friday night)
- Easter Sunday vigil at the gate to the Nevada Test Site
- Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu holy days also will be honored

Check the website for schedule additions. Some walkers may risk arrest at either Creech AFB (Fri. or Mon.) or at the Nevada Test Site (Sun. or Mon.). Considering arrest actions is in no way a requirement for walking with us.

Suggested donation is \$150 (sliding scale)  
Sponsors for low-income walkers needed  
Deadline to apply is March 7

NevadaDesertExperience.org  
702.646.4814 info@NevadaDesertExperience.org

## **The Problem with Drones**

[Editor's Note: NDE is building a campaign of awareness to the issues raised by unmanned aerial systems, commanded at Creech AFB just south of the Nevada Test Site. Many non-combatants have been killed in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq by vehicles controlled in Nevada. P.W. Singer is the author of the new book, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*. The following excerpts are from NPR's Fresh Air interview with Singer by Terry Gross on January 22, 2009.]

"On three separate occasions we thought we got bin Laden with one of these Predator drone strikes, and it turned out not to be the case. We have to figure out what are the legal consequences of what you could call unmanned slaughter, and who do you hold responsible? And this is with systems that don't have a lot of autonomy in them yet. The stuff that's coming soon, or is already in the prototype stage, really does push it into that science fiction realm.

"There's a great quote from a Predator pilot who I interviewed, and he said it this way: You're going to war for 12 hours, shooting weapons at targets, directing kills on enemy combatants. And then you get in the car and you drive home, and within 20 minutes, you are sitting at the dinner table talking to your kids about their homework.

"And that's one of the things coming out of this; we're actually finding that the drone pilots, because of this tough psychological juggling they're having to do, the drone pilots actually have higher levels of PTSD - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - than those who are actually physically serving in the combat zone.



"If you send that machine in first, the belief is that you're avoiding some of the risk. Now, long term, if you pull back and think about this broadly, what does it do, for example, to your foreign policy if you have a shift where you are able to undertake war without human consequence?

"And it is a killing machine. These are systems designed for war. But war is a place also of psychology, and I think that is a huge aspect of this that we're just now starting to understand. How does this effect the enemy's attitudes? How does it affect the public's attitudes around this? There's a belief, for example...The thing that scares people is our technology. But when you go out, for example, and interview people in the Middle East, it is very different. One of the people that appears in the book is an editor from Lebanon who described these technologies as just another example of the cold-hearted Americans, and how it shows that we only have to kill a few of their soldiers to defeat them, that they are cowardly for sending out machines to fight on their behalf. So you have a complete opposite message from what you think you are sending and what people are receiving."



# NDE CALL TO ACTION

**Join Nevada Desert Experience in one of our nonviolent direct actions or invite us to make a presentation or prayer-offering to your community or congregation. We are grateful for your prayers and financial contributions too!**

## Nevada Desert Experience

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**[www.NevadaDesertExperience.org](http://www.NevadaDesertExperience.org)**

NDE does not share our list; nor do we send lots of e-mail. E-mail is very helpful for our organizing saving money, resources, and speeding the distribution of time-sensitive news.

Please add me to your mailing list. I want to receive the NDE newsletter, *Desert Voices*, and to be kept informed of NDE events.

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Contact us for more information about

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### ***Yucca Mountain - continued from p. 1***

and perhaps less effective. However, this is just a proposal and when the Gibbons' budget is reviewed and debated in the upcoming State Legislative session, things could drastically change so there is no final decision or indication of what a final decision would be at this time. The public and official opposition to Yucca Mountain has been huge and strong for more than 20 years and that is not likely to change. No doubt the legislators are well aware of that and it will be considered in their decisions regarding the State's fight against the project. It is also possible that when Sen. Reid addresses the opening Legislative session, he will talk about this issue. It is important for Nevadans to be sure that their members of the Legislature, both Assembly and Senate, know how they feel about the Yucca Mountain project and the State's efforts to fight it.

*Judy Treichel is a founder and executive director of the Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force. Visit <http://nvantinuclear.org> for more information.*

### ***Newe Sogobia - continued from p.1***

clear detonations. We were the people closest to ground zero, and the result has been cancer and agonizing deaths for many of our people. Now our lands are targeted for the deposit of nuclear waste from the US and more than forty other nations. I pray that this genocide of my people and the desecration of our lands be stopped by the new Administration. We hope it will recognize the recommendations of the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and issue an Executive Order halting the worsening harm to our people.

"Martin Luther King, Jr. said '...the most important effect of the civil rights movement was the effect it had on individual people of color, that is their individual sense of increased self importance and self-esteem.' When will the US government begin to treat my people in a way that gives them increased self-esteem, not as members of a Third World Nation within the US, to be poisoned and killed and have their sacred lands desecrated for profit by foreign corporations? I pray that day will come, and that this new Administration will lead us toward that promised land."

*Johnnie and Dr. Bonnie Bobb share a seat on the NDE Council. Johnnie Bobb is a member of the Western Shoshone National Council. Visit <http://newesogobia.com> for more information.*



*On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Alex (in back), Brad and Jon (driving), slowly cruised the Las Vegas Strip playing one of Dr. King's anti-war sermons, "Why I Oppose the War in Vietnam." - Photo by Jim Haber*

### ***Anti-Nuclear Nuclearism - continued from back page***

Ban Treaty), nix the RRW (Reliable Replacement Warhead) and any new weapons designs, cut the nuclear weapons budget in half, stop construction of the plutonium bomb pit factory in New Mexico, close one of the weapons labs, and downsize the entire nuclear weapons complex. Obama could dismantle the profit-driven system of contracts that have made such powerful lobbying interests out of firms with government nuclear contracts. His administration could enjoin talks toward implementing Article VI of the NPT (Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty). He could go against the explicitly pro-nuclear power Energy secretary he appointed and enact a ban on new nuclear power development. Continuity of the status quo, however, is altogether more likely. Hope and change, as this election showed, are possible, but only if those who desire it unconditionally demand it.

*Darwin BondGraham and Will Parrish are coauthoring Atomic Trust: the University of California, Nuclear Weapons, and the Pentagon of Power, a book about nuclearism and academia, and are both Foreign Policy In Focus contributors.*



*An extra thank you to everyone who becomes a NDE "Friend of the Desert" by pledging monthly or quarterly. We know we can count on you!*

*Please consider donating \$5 or more per year to cover postage for these newsletters. We can also reduce waste and cost by sending it to you electronically. Just send us your e-mail address; we'll send you a note about new issues.*

*Nevada Desert Experience is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so your donations are tax-deductable. If you need a receipt for your tax records, please let us know. We are happy to provide receipts upon request.*



**Nevada Desert Experience**  
**1420 West Bartlett Avenue**  
**Las Vegas NV 89106**  
**USA**

*Pacific Life Community Faith & Resistance Retreat and  
 Direct Action, Olympia-Lacey and Bangor Washington  
 Feb. 27 - Mar. 1 <http://pacificlifecommunity.wordpress.com>*

*Peace Train to Stop Star Wars Missile Launch  
 Through Vandenberg AFB, Lompoc, CA  
 May 4 - 5 <http://VandenbergWitness.org>*

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*On Jan. 26 the Federal Court in Reno denied the injunction request to stop the new Barrick Cortez Hills mine pit on Mt. Tenabo reported on in the last issue of D.V. -The Editor*

***Inside this issue of Desert Voices:***

*Yucca Mountain: Not Saved Yet  
 The Problem with Drones  
 Newe Sogobia: Not a Wasteland  
 2009 Sacred Peace Walk, April 6-13*

## **Hope...Celebration...Cautious Optimism for President Obama**

### ***President Obama's Inauguration***

*JoAnn Yoon Fukumoto, NDE Council member*

*It was biting cold waiting on the day of the inauguration. But I would not have missed it for the world. I traveled from Hawaii to Washington, DC to see history in the making. I didn't care how long I had to wait or how cold the weather would be. I was living in the moment. And loving it.*

*I danced, I sang and I cried with strangers who did the same thing. Because it was our day. And we wanted to celebrate. And we did!*

*I came to see Barack Obama take the oath of the President of the United States. Today he is our 44th President and I will pray for his safety and all the difficult decisions he will make in the coming days. I will pray for all Americans to come together and support him.*

*President Obama reminds us to put aside our differences and to work together for the good of our nation. He calls to unity and he calls us to hard work. He reminds us that we are responsible for one another and for our nation.*

*You've got my support, Mr. President.*

### ***Anti-Nuclear Nuclearism***

*by Darwin BondGraham and Will Parrish. Excerpted from an article by the same name in Foreign Policy in Focus, January 12, 2009.*

The Obama administration is likely to continue a policy that we call "anti-nuclear nuclearism." Anti-nuclear nuclearism is a foreign and military policy that relies upon overwhelming US power, including the nuclear arsenal, but makes rhetorical and even some substantive commitments to disarmament, however vaguely defined. Anti-nuclear nuclearism thrives as a school of thought in several think tanks that have long influenced foreign policy choices related to global nuclear forces. Even the national nuclear weapons development labs in New Mexico and California have been avid supporters and crafters of of it.

Then again, this may all be a worst-case scenario. Perhaps the Obama administration will undertake a more visionary and just campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons. The incoming president could reintroduce the CTBT (Comprehensive Test

***continued on p.3 - Anti-Nuclear Nuclearism***

**Editor's Note:** The global sigh of relief was palpable when Barack Obama won the presidential election in November. On inauguration day, the global jubilation was infectious. I'm grateful to friends who's excitement drew me into the celebration. I'm glad that another glass ceiling is broken around race in America, but the power of the president is not absolute. As NDE ally, Tri-Valley CAREs, points out in their January newsletter, "While we are encouraged by Obama's position on nuclear weapons, we note that the retention of Robert Gates, ardent advocate of innovation in the US nuclear arsenal, means that our new President will be under continuous pressure to sign off on new nukes. And, if Obama does not pay careful attention, nuclear bomb projects may move forward on Gates' signature." With your support Nevada Desert Experience will give voice and visibility to the worldwide movement for disarmament, non-proliferation, and no new nukes! - Jim Haber, *Desert Voices* Editor and NDE Coordinator