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Apache Stronghold Journey of Prayer to the Supreme Court to Stop the Shattering of Human Existence & to Protect Mother Earth

On July 11th, 2024, the Apache Stronghold started the journey of prayer to the Supreme Court to stop the shattering of human existence and to protect Mother Earth. We have traveled, held ceremonies, and gathered prayers from Tribes, Communities, Churches, and people in support of saving Oak Flat and religious freedom for the protection of all. We began in the Northwest, West Coast, South, mid-west to the East. The Apache Stronghold has now made it to Washington DC where the people of this country from all backgrounds and religions will gather at the Supreme Court on September 11 for the case filing.

From the prayer gathering in Montgomery, Alabama, the birthplace of the civil rights movement and home of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. first served as a full-time pastor. This church and Dr. King played a central role in uniting the local community in the struggle against what King called the evils of materialism, militarism, and racism. Then from Raleigh, North Carolina where the Apache Stronghold was welcomed by an interfaith gathering hosted by the Raleigh Mennonite church. The Stronghold has moved to the East following the footsteps of the Spirit they have been deeply encouraged by the prayers and blessings they are receiving from those who are bringing the spiritual connection to Mother Earth back into churches. Dr. Wendsler Nosie Sr. reminded everyone that this journey to the Supreme Court is not just an Apache fight, but a fight for all people because “what’s on trial is your spiritual connection to Mother Earth.”

The next stop before Washington D.C. is Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where we met with the Asian community and Germantown Mennonite Church. The Germantown Mennonite Church is on the grounds where Dutch Mennonite families first built their log meetinghouse on Lenape land. In 1687, this Mennonite community authored the first protest by white people against slavery in North America. Today they lament the stolen land and the unjust treaty made with the Lenape people.

As we move from the West in the footsteps of the spirit, we feel hope because we are seeing Christians bringing Mother Earth into the church through prayers and songs.

They sang together “Creation is Song” which was inspired by the writings of the late Cheyenne Chief Lawrence Hart and Psalm 19. Creation is a song, a song that we can see, a sacred gift from God, let’s join the harmony. (English)

Ho’è enemeohe. Nevoohatanone. Ma’heo’o nemetaenone. (Cheyenne)

Afterward, we met with the Asian community. We are grateful for the hospitality and education we received from the Save Chinatown Coalition. We were hosted in Chinatown by Xu Lin, a community organizer and leader in the Philadelphia Asian American community. Xu and his family have been to Mt. Graham several times over a decade ago to run and pray with the Apache.

The Apache Stronghold learned a lot from the solidarity tour about the history of Chinatown - the diverse and rich community created as well as the strong community of resistance over the years to the ongoing threat of gentrification and corporate greed. Debbie Wei, who led the tour, talked about the struggle to stop a new 76ers arena from being built in Chinatown. She showed us around FACTS school, a charter school set up to teach traditional folklore and values. Debbie Wei is an experienced community leader, educator, and administrator and we talked about the importance of education in teaching young people traditional values and respect for elders.

The Stronghold was deeply impressed by the FACTS school where the community is educating the children with values of respect for elders, for all people, and for Mother Earth. We see this as really important work needed around the country to resist the education system of the capitalist predator that wants to assimilate our children into this evil corporate life. *Read more about the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School in the article included in this issue of the Apache Messenger.*

The next day, on September 7th, at the invitation from the Save Chinatown Coalition, Apache Stronghold joined a rally and march at city hall in Philadelphia to stand with the community to save Chinatown from destruction proposed by the billionaire owners of the 76ers want to build a new arena. The Apache Stronghold offered prayers and solidarity as our struggle is no different to save Oak Flat from the billionaires who want to make a profit from the destruction and displacement of people from the land.

“It was an honor to have members of the Apache Stronghold bring their spirit and prayers to our demonstration,” said Debbie Wei, founder of Asian Americans United. “We are both seeking to protect places that hold our histories and memories. Both their blessing to us and the opportunity for us to do a traditional Buddhist blessing for their righteous quest for justice allowed us to have a spiritual connection across our struggles that helps to hold our movements in a common light. We are very grateful for their presence and solidarity.”

“Your spirit is no different from my spirit,” said Dr. Wendsler Nosie, Sr. The Stronghold is grateful for receiving this blessing which helps them with the final push on to DC. This Supreme Court case represents us all

From the beginning, each stop we’ve made to hear and be the people across this country. We know prayers have only gotten stronger as we’ve continued our journey that is why when we got into Washington D.C. and were welcomed at the Festival Center in DC with

prayers and blessings led by the children was just what the Apache Stronghold needed to fill our hearts with the hope and the energy, we need for the final leg of our journey of prayer to deliver our case to the Supreme Court. Dr. Wendsler Nosie, Sr. said that hearing from the children was the best blessing for us to receive. "I never wept at church before, but now I have." Vanessa Nosie added, "Seeing these children share and pray as they did lets us know that there can be a world for us all to exist together with love." Dr. Wendsler spoke later that seeing the children speak and pray about protecting Oak Flat takes him back to his mother who said if you want to change and heal the world you need to tell the whole truth to the children. The children are our hope.

One of the children Juniper shared, "Oak Flat is important to me because I don't want any Land to be destroyed, when trees and animals would die and water would be polluted. I can't imagine somebody destroying a place that was special to me. Oak Flat is where people worship and pray. It's a sacred space. Where will they practice their traditions and pray if it's destroyed? That's why I care about Oak Flat."

To see all the church doors opening to the Apache Stronghold is amazing. To hear preaching about Mother Earth. To hear preaching about the rivers. To hear preaching about the land. We are all one people. It is happening. People across this country are remembering that we all know Mother Earth.

In conclusion, the court filing will happen this Wednesday, September 11th at 2:00 pm EST. We ask the people of this country to keep us in your thoughts and prayers. We are praying the Supreme Court judges make a moral decision to hear our case. 7,000 cases are filed each year and typically 100-150 cases are heard. That is because the Supreme Court is not required to hear every case that is filed. Only if the case fits certain circumstances such as: having a national significance, harmonizing conflicting decisions from circuit courts, the possibility of precedential value, or involves an important legal principle. The Apache Stronghold vs. United States and Resolution Copper case fit each circumstance. However, there is still a possibility our case can be overlooked if the judges fail to see the importance of this case or abstain from confronting the decision on the spiritual connection to the land. This case is crucial for our (all peoples') religion and the environment. For years, mining corporations have been doing everything they can to dilute the environmental laws which shows the importance of this case even more.

Dr. Nosie shares, "It's time to submit our court case. I am so happy we are here. Over 500 years of struggle have affected not only us but every race since the beginning of this country. When they took control of all our rights as free people. Now the time has come for the U.S. government and all governments to reconcile the past for a better future. The spirit of the West is here." Again, we ask everyone to share media posts on IG @protectoakflat and FB Apache Stronghold/Save Oak Flat, bring awareness to the case, and if possible be with us in D.C. on September 11th physically and spiritually. We want to thank everyone for their unconditional support and prayers throughout this prayer journey.