

“Winning with the Wind: Hope for Coal River Mountain”

Personal Statement Written by Lorelei Scarbro

My name is Lorelei Scarbro. I was born and raised in West Virginia. My father, grandfather and husband were coal miners. My husband spent 35 years as an underground union coal miner. I say that to let you know that I am no stranger to the coal industry. I am the mother of four children who attended Marsh Fork Elementary. I live in Rock Creek and my property borders Coal River Mountain where Massey Energy has proposed the destruction of 6,600 acres of mountaintop removal.

The house I live in and raised my children in my husband built with his own two hands and he is buried in the family cemetery next door. I can sit in my living room and watch the deer cross the field below my house. I often stop my car to allow the wildlife to cross the road. My four-year-old granddaughter especially likes the deer and the turkey. A fresh mountain stream runs by my driveway. The air is free of coal and rock dust. When I married my husband and moved onto the property which was handed down to him by his parents, I thought this is where I would spend the rest of my life and maybe hand it down to my children. If mountaintop removal is allowed to continue, odds are none of us will be allowed to live here in peace.

I have sat quietly by for years and watched the destruction of this land that I love and did little more than the occasional letter to the editor. I have watched our communities depopulated, our schools closed, peoples' homes flooded and people die all for power, money and greed. Everyday as I drive Coal River Road I see more and more of the mountains destroyed. It is so strange to see the trees disappear along the ridge top and then the peaks disappear and then the top of the mountain is blown apart and pushed into the valley covering and killing everything in its path. From vegetation to wildlife. Animals are covered and killed by the waste the company can't use. Even mama bears with their cubs are covered up in their caves with no escape. Left to starve to death.

I know people whose only source of water is the well near their house and when they turn on their faucets the water is black or brown. It didn't used to be that way until the mining operation moved in close to their house. These people can't afford to buy all of the water they need to drink, cook and bathe in. Nor should they. Therefore, these people are sick and dying. When a lot of people in the same community have the same life threatening illnesses after blasting, toxic sludge ponds and underground injections, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out why. When I think of what my future holds if mountaintop removal continues, I know this is what is in store for me.

We in the coal fields of WV are not to be sacrificed so the rest of the world can turn their lights on. We can get power from clean renewable sources of energy. I can live without electricity from coal fired power plants, but I cannot live without clean drinking water and neither can you. The destructive practices used in mountaintop removal and the chemicals used to clean the coal poisons our water. Not just the drinking water of my friends, but all of our water. We all live downstream.

(Personal Statement Written by Lorelei Scarbro cont...)

When I talk to people who don't live here and tell them what our government allows to happen they say "Why don't you just move". When people say that I always think, "What is home to you?" Appalachians have a strong sense of place. A sense of belonging to what surrounds you. It is not the value of the property or the things you are surrounded by. It is the memories you shared with the people you love and the things you experienced there. It is being connected to the land that, if need be, you can survive there just on the land. We don't want to loose that and we certainly don't want it stolen from us. WE DON'T LIVE WHERE THEY MINE COAL. THEY MINE COAL WHERE WE LIVE.

Coal River Mountain Watch, along with a lot of other very special people, is proposing that the destruction of Coal River Mountain be stopped. We are proposing the water no longer being poisoned and the wildlife and vegetation be left intact. We are proposing that the Appalachian culture be maintained with access to the mountains for gathering herbs and roots for medicines and food. We are proposing the Coal River Wind Farm. We hope you will support us in this effort.

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