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Julian Martin

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JULIAN MARTIN
June 28, 1988
D.O.E. Public Hearing on Strip Mining
Lincoln County, West Virginia

Mr. Martin, a teacher at Duvall High School in Lincoln County and a native of WV for 52 years, discusses the impact of strip mining in Lincoln County. He talks about his love of the land, how he was offered \$250,000 for his land for the sake of strip mining but turned it down, and how the topsoil can't be put back in place after strip mining to preserve the beauty of the land that it once was. Mr. Martin thinks there should be other options than strip mining the land.

WEST VIRGINIA STRIP MINING

WVSM - 23

PUBLIC HEARING CONDUCTED BY WV DEPT. OF ENERGY

JUNE 28, 1988

STATEMENT BY: JULIAN MARTIN

Public Hearing held by WV Department of Energy in Lincoln County, West Virginia, regarding an application by Black Gold Coal Company and Mountain Black Diamond Coal Company, to strip mine at Six Mile Creek in Lincoln County, on June 28, 1988.

Statement by Julian Martin:

It seems real important in Lincoln County to establish where you're from and who you are because a lot of people laugh at you if they think you're from New York or something. I've been a citizen of this state for 52 years. I lived in this county for 13 years, and taught at Duvall High School for 12 years. I have to admit I was out of the country for a couple of years in Africa and I...in California for a couple of years, but except for that I've lived here the whole time. Uh, my daddy was a coal miner, lost his eye in the coal mine. He wasn't a communist, he wasn't an outsider and he didn't deal in drugs, though he did drink a lot of coffee. I think...it amazes me at times that we can be so uptight about outsiders, and what we have here is a case that a man from Montana threatening to bulldoze, personally bulldoze another mans _____ down if he finds out the property's on his side of the line. We have a man from Kentucky who threatened to kill the same man and we have a woman from Indianapolis who says we're a bunch of drug dealers and communists. Now, all three of those people qualify to me as outsiders, and what we have here is a case that a man from _____ down if he finds out the property's on his side of the line. We have a man from Kentucky who threatened to kill the same man and we have a woman from Indianapolis who says we're a bunch of drug dealers and communists. Now, all three of those people qualify to me as outsiders. I've lived here 52 years. I've got to act...you know, I can speak the language, okay? I'm not a foreigner. Okay. All my life I've watched the destruction of my native state. I watched Bull Creek disappear. When I was a little boy, 40 years ago, I used to walk up Bull Creek over on Coal River. Bull Creek's not there any more. You guys that are working strip mines, you know it's not there any more. It's gone. My Uncle Ken used to work timber up in the head of that holler with a mule. And he did the least amount of destruction you could possibly do. That place was beautiful. It's not there any more. It's just simply gone. It's been destroyed by strip mining. My home place over on Coal River, coal companies offered us \$250,000 for 32 acres and we turned them down. Okay? We don't need the money, by golly. [applause] I...with me this is a spiritual thing. I've always loved the land; I've always loved to walk these mountains. And the first time I saw strip mining, it absolutely stunned me to silence. I...I was saddened and I was sick. I couldn't believe what people could do with a bulldozer to people's land that used to be beautiful. And if it's wrong to love beauty, if it's wrong to love nature, if it's wrong to say that we only have one earth, and it will never, never be reclaimed, you can't reclaim a destroyed mountain. You can put something back there, but you can't put that topsoil back on; just try it. You never, never can walk through that little glade where the ferns growing, and you can never enjoy these cliffs the way they were, the way they were meant to be. I see...all I see happening here is greed, it's money, and what's...where's it happening here is greed, it's money, and what's...where's it gonna end? When they get to your back door?

They're already at some people's back door, right now. Can you strip mine right up to the edge of city hall? Do the people who own strip mines have strip mines in their back yard? Do they want dynamiting going on where they live? I don't think so. I think they're gonna retreat to their air conditioned apartments. And I think they're gonna send their kids to fine schools out of state. And if you think strip mines gonna bring jobs, look where they got strip mine in WV, and look where they got the most unemployment. Mingo County, McDowell County, you go to the county where they have strip mining, that's where they have the worst of everything. They've got the worse roads, they got the worst schools, they've got the highest unemployment rate. Everything is wrong with those counties. Is that what we want this beautiful place to become? I know this...my daddy was a coal miner and I understand being out of work. Okay? I've been down that road myself. And I know you got to have...you got to provide for your family, but I'm saying, they're only giving us two options. They're saying either starve or destroy West Virginia. And surely to God there must be another option.