



America Needs to Move Forward Instead of Dwelling on our Past

by David F. Briggs



With the passage of the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act in December 2014, Resolution Copper acquired 2,422 acres of federal land above and adjacent to its copper deposit near Superior, Arizona in exchange for 5,344 acres of conservation lands across the state of Arizona.

Congressman Raúl Grijalva introduced H. R. 2811, better known as the "Save Oak Flat Act," in the U. S. House of Representatives on Wednesday, June 17, 2015. Containing highly emotional language this legislation attempts to rectify injustices committed more than a century ago by repealing Section 3003 of the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act, which authorized the land exchange package.

Legislative packages of this type are very divisive because neither those who personally experienced the injustices nor those who committed the unjust acts are alive today. Consequently, these bills benefit individuals based solely on their membership in a minority group, as opposed to whether or not their ancestors were actually victimized. Likewise, the remainder of society is collectively penalized, whether or not their ancestors actually played any role in committing the injustices.

Finally, this type of legislation sets a dangerous precedent. If approved, the "Save Oak Flat Act" would open a Pandora's box; inundating Congress with similar petitions seeking redress on all sorts of real and imagined grievances.

Throughout our nation's short history, many racial and ethnic groups from the four corners of the globe have come together to make America one of the most prosperous and highly diverse societies on Earth. Despite the many challenges faced by Americans, we have preserved the rich traditions and religious beliefs of our ancestral homelands. We have sacrificed much and have worked hard so future generations could experience a better life than we have had. Over the years, when called upon, we have volunteered to defend our way of life; we have fought together; and we have died together on battlefields to preserve all we hold dear. No matter what our racial or ethnic heritage may be, for better or for worse, these experiences have made us who we are today. Having more in common than differences that divide us, we are all Americans, who desire to be self-sufficient, provide for our families and protect of the environment in which we reside.

Much water has flowed under the bridge since the Apache wars during the latter half of the nineteenth century. We must not allow ourselves to dwell on the past. We must move forward focusing on today's challenges that face all Americans, including access to good educational opportunities, successfully competing in the global marketplace, eliminating poverty, reducing unemployment and fighting drug addiction, crime and other ills that plague our society.

For more than a decade, Americans have debated the benefits and costs of the Resolution Copper project. Responsible development of this copper resource offers all Americans a rare opportunity to help provide the means required to meet the challenges we face. However, this will not come without a price. There will be impacts to the environment and sacrifices will have to be made by all. But these can be minimized through the responsible application of technological advances and innovative mining practices.

The time has come to make a choice. Do we remain divided, forever mired in trying to rectify injustices of our past?

Or do we move forward, working together to find common ground to build a better life of all Americans?

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