



SACRED LANDS: WAL-MART'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

With the recent news about Wal-Mart sourcing unsustainable gold jewelry from Western Shoshone land, it is important to note that this is not the first instance of disrespect towards Native Americans by Wal-Mart. Over the years, Wal-Mart has built stores on sacred land and discriminated against Native American employees. As Wal-Mart continues to grow around the country, it is only a matter of time before they encroach on more Native American land. Wal-Mart latest attempt to build a supercenter on the Cherokee Reservation in western North Carolina makes us wonder, where is the next sacred piece of land Wal-Mart will build a store?

Wal-Mart Buys “Green” Gold Wrongfully Mined From Native Lands

Wal-Mart suppliers mine “green” gold from Western Shoshone lands. The gold for Wal-Mart’s new “Love, Earth” jewelry is mined by Newmont on Western Shoshone land in Nevada. Wal-Mart relies on Newmont to “self-report” its compliance with Wal-Mart’s “sustainability principles.” As such, Wal-Mart has never met with the Western Shoshone and no independent monitoring is required. [Global Action Response, 9/08]

The United Nations criticizes these mining operations. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has ruled in favor of the Western Shoshone and told the United States to “freeze”, “desist”, and “stop” from further mining and other destructive activities. Newmont was immediately notified of this decision and yet has done nothing to address the impact of their operations on the ongoing human rights violations against the Western Shoshone. [Western Shoshone Defense Project via Global Action Response, 9/08]

Wal-Mart Disrespects Ancient Burial Grounds

Wal-Mart construction unearths 64 Native remains in Hawaii. During the construction of a Sam's Club and Wal-Mart supercenter in Hawaii, workers found 64 sets of remains. In 2007, three years after being unearthed, the remains still sat locked up in a trailer under a parking ramp, awaiting reburial. Native Hawaiian activist William Aila had this to say about Wal-Mart’s project. “What if they built a Wal-Mart at Arlington? How would people feel...Those individuals were buried there with the thought that they would be undisturbed for the rest of the eternity.” The superstore opened in 2004, with protesters waving signs accusing the world's largest retailer of destroying graves. [AP via Fox News, 5/23/07]

Wal-Mart supercenter intrudes on ancient Aztec ruins and destroys farmland. When Wal-Mart decided to place a store in an area of San Juan Teotihuacán, a mere one and half miles from Aztec ruins, some Mexican citizens staged a hunger strike in protest of destroying Mexico’s “indigenous heritage.” Not only did the Wal-Mart store destroy the “cultural heritage” of the land, it destroyed “alfalfa and cornfields” which were “razed to make way” for the big box store. [Newsday, 11/7/04]

Stockholders angered by Wal-Mart’s desecration of native gravesites. In the fall of 1999, Wal-Mart came under fire from the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), a coalition of 275 religious organizations who hold 100 billion in their stock portfolios, for destroying Native gravesites with new store development. [News from Indian Country, 1/31/00]

Wal-Mart disrupts a native historical site during the construction of a Wal-Mart supercenter. When building a new supercenter on Charlotte Pike in Nashville, Wal-Mart was not going to let native historical site get in the way of its expansion. The excavation of native graves began in February 1998 and in the end, the remains of 154 individuals had been taken from their graves. [Alliance for Native American Indian Rights]

Construction of Nashville Wal-Mart leads to Native American protests. In 1998, the opening of a Nashville Wal-Mart supercenter was met with protests from the city's Native community and their supporters. The supercenter had been built on an ancient site containing dozens of graves and a pre-Columbian village. Demonstrations started in June 1997 when Wal-Mart first made public its plans to build a superstore on the disputed site and community groups filed lawsuits to halt construction. In both cases, the courts ruled in favor of Wal-Mart. [*News from Indian Country*, 11/30/98]

Wal-Mart and JDN Realty have a long history of building on Native lands. Wal-Mart and JDN Realty have clashed with Native Americans before. In 1996, Wal-Mart sought to build a new store on a sacred Mohican site, but abandoned the project after four years of court battles. In 1995, JDN engineered a deal in Canton, GA to relocate numerous graves and set up a permanent display of Indian artifacts inside the Wal-Mart, right next to the layaway counter. In 1992, Wal-Mart redesigned a store in Paso Robles, CA so a plaque at one end of a parking lot marked a grassy knoll where Native American graves were left undisturbed. [*New York Times*, 8/3/97]

Wal-Mart attempts to cover ancient burial sight in asphalt. In the early 1990s, Wal-Mart Stores, wanted to bulldoze a large Indian burial mound they said was blocking motorists' view of the store from the freeway in Paso Robles, CA. After spiritual leaders of the Chumash and Salinan Indian nations rallied to protect their ancestral burial site, plans to cover the one-acre mound area with asphalt were scrapped. [*National Catholic Reporter*, 12/9/94]

Wal-Mart Discriminates Against Native American Employees

Wal-Mart sued for allowing racial harassment and intimidation. In 2004, a former Native American Wal-Mart employee, Greg Clements, a Marine Corps veteran and a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, sued Wal-Mart for alleged racial harassment while working at a store in the small-town of Chadron, Nebraska. According to Clements, a couple of non-Indian coworkers derided him and taunted him with a pistol at the end of a work shift. According to his lawsuit, Clements appealed to his Wal-Mart supervisors for corrective action, but none was taken. He is now suing the corporate giant for \$25 million in compensation. [*Native America Law Report*, 11/1/04]

Wal-Mart Stores loses business account for discriminating against Native customers. In 1998, the director of an American Indian program closed a business account at Wal-Mart because of discrimination she experienced the day after a newspaper story detailed pending lawsuits against the discount department store for similar practices. "They treat us like criminals and we haven't had that experience at other stores," said Candace Estes, executive director of the Brown Stone Woman, Rapid City's Indian Child Welfare Act agency. [*Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News*, 1/19/98]