

NAVAJO STATEMENT BY GRACE SMITH TO UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Thank you Madame Chairperson, for giving my people this opportunity to speak.

My name is Grace Smith and I am here to be the eyes and ears of my people and to speak for the Navajo Elders who do not wish to be relocated and plan to resist such actions by the United States. [We do not wish to accept relocation benefits in exchange for giving up our culture and moving to America. We are red people who prefer to remain red rather than be systematically assimilated into the white race. We prefer to die, as red men fighting for our divine right to be red, rather than to accept a few peices of silver to live as white men.]

[We believe the United States' Trust Policy for Native Americans is a form of racial discrimination against us as aboriginal, primitive, indigenous peoples. This Trusteeship was allegedly established to protect us from exploitation, but has, in practice, become the means by which we are controlled and manipulated, without a voice, with less protection for our natural habitat than endangered plants and animals.. Because the U.S. Trust Policy, established for us without our consent, authorizes the U.S. Congress to extinguish our land titles, without our consent, at any time, and in any manner, we can be relocated any time, with or without a few peices of silver. We can only remain a distinct culture if we can remain where our culture grew and we can remain a primitive society.]

At this very moment, there are several pieces of legislation pending before the U.S. Congress, that will decide our fate, drastically effecting our capacity to continue as a distinct, primitive, native people. We need help in understanding all this legislation. We need help in protecting our human rights as an indigenous population. We need help even in having a voice in the deliberations. Although we have repeatedly requested that Congress hold Hearings on the land, and were promised Hearings, they have never occurred. We are grateful that the Sub-Commission accepted the Hoipi invitation to attend accept\* appoint two observers to attend Hearings on legislation on the issue of relocation,

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To date, the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs has refused to notify us of Hearings on Senate bill, S-1236, introduced by Senator Inouye, calling for the speedy completion of our relocation. We, who would be speedily relocated by this bill have no voice in the matter.

As a primitive people, speaking English as a forced second language, we have great difficulty in understanding the different legislative proposals and in knowing what avenues of recourse are open to us. We ask, therefore, that you whose responsibility it is to protect indigenous populations find a practicle way to help us in this critical instance in our fight to survive. We ask, that at a minimum, you urge the United States to enact Senator Alan Cranston's bill, S-2452, calling for an 18 month moratorium on further relocation and the stablishement of an advisory commission which would give the Traditionals of both the Hopi and Navajo Tribes a voice in the determination of our fate, as distinct, primitive, cultures, traumatically effected ba the law calling for the disruption of the co-habitants of the area, for the purpose of ~~commercial~~ developement.

We ask you to further provide us with technical assistance, as you do to Third World countires, to help us learn how to exercise and protect our human rights. Can you please send us a Special Advisor to help Hopi and Navajo Traditionals to find out when Congress is holding Hearings on legislation that will decide our fate, so that we can express our positions before our fate is sealed and we are pushed out of existence as a Native people, for progress.

Please ask the United States for us if an 18 month moratorium is too much to ask. Please ask the United States for us if giving the Traditionals of both Tribes a a voice for 18 months is too much to ask. Please donât abandon us in our extreme hour of need. Thank you for your kind attention and concern for us and for making it possible for me to come here today. May Great Spirit inspire you in your effeorts on behalf of indigenous people all over the world.