

Creativity can be effective against bullying, even against corporate bullying, circumstances permitting. Creativity helps us recognize options other than confrontation and strife. It guides us as we stand our ground. Though remaining faithful to courtesy, we may respond in unexpected ways.

When Terry Tempest Williams (TTW) began her stint as Eminent Writer in Residence at University of Wyoming, a contingent of legislators and industry heavies demanded that the English department send her packing. The department refused to knuckle under but could not shield its illustrious guest from periodic harassment, Wyoming style. One such incident happened when Senator Kit Jennings and one of his petroleum buddies crashed TTW's creative-writing workshop in Casper. We stayed focused on our writing while our leader, though shaking inside (as she later confessed) remained poised, listening quietly as the two bullies carped about being put upon by environmentalists.

In her most recent book, "When Women Were Birds," TTW recounts another instance of creativity, this time dealing with the Washington Congress, when large stretches of Utah wildlands were threatened by two Utah senators "in the wake of the Gingrich revolution" who sought to open the lands to oil and gas development. Their measure, a 1995 Utah Public Lands Management Act proposal, would have demolished the 1964 Wilderness Act. "We left the nation's capital disheartened and discouraged," TTW writes of her initial testimony.

Soon after, TTW and spouse Brooke (they divide their time between Utah and Wyoming) plus a handful of concerned residents persuaded well-known writers to donate work for an anthology of essays on Utah's wilderness. They managed to print the booklet in time to distribute to every member of congress. "Testimony: Writers of the West Speak on Behalf of Utah Wilderness" touched the hearts and minds of its intended audience. Some legislators read aloud or quoted lengthy segments at the hearing, acknowledging that the chapbook was "the equivalent of a literary bill brought to the halls of Congress." The 1995 Hansen-Hatch scheme didn't survive the hearing.

"Good work is a stay against despair," comments TTW. Good work, I'm convinced, is a creative force.

When British Columbia held hearings recently on TransCanada's proposed Northern Gateway pipeline that would carry diluted tar-sands bitumen from Alberta to a British Columbia seaport, one testimony stood out for its creative approach: Miranda Holmes impersonated "the character at the center of the debate." She introduced herself with "Hi, my name's Dil Bit. That's short for Diluted Bitumen."

With humor and panache, Ms. Holmes enumerated the Northern Gateway hazards, always in first-person monologue. A journalist specializing in problems of toxicity, she marshaled creativity to drive home her points to initially-indifferent listeners.

On Enbridge, she talked tongue-in-cheek about the pipeline company as "a fine, upstanding company with an excellent track record. Why, it took Enbridge 10 years to

spill half as much oil as the Exxon Valdez. And they didn't just spill it in one spot—they spread it around . . . If Enbridge maintains its current success rate it should be able to meet Steve [Harper]'s federal standards, which allow undetected pipeline leaks of less than 2% of capacity per week. For the Northern Gateway project that means Enbridge could legally leave 11 million litres of me a week behind on my way to Kitimat without getting into any serious trouble . . . “

“Eleven million litres of me would be more than three times funnier than [Enbridge's ghastly] Michigan [spill], right? That's good news for me, because I've heard there are some mighty pretty places in northern BC and I think it would be a shame not to get to know them better.”

On the Canadian government's equating exploitation with job growth: “[Y]our premier's promising lots of jobs . . . cleaning up after me will surely keep people employed.”

The Northern Gateway proposal was voted down. (For the full monologue, google Dil Bit.)

Today the residents of Utah, as indeed those of Wyoming, once again need a dose of creativity. An Alberta, Canada, extractive company under the misleading moniker U.S. Oil Sands, Inc. has excavated a two-acre test pit in Utah as a first step toward full-scale exploitation. Plans are for a tar-sands mine to operate by 2014 in an as-yet pristine Utah wilderness.

Two environmental organizations have stepped up their efforts to keep tar-sands mining out of Utah, asserting that ripping open the land for bitumen threatens what little water remains in the state's semi-arid ecosystem. According to a letter written by the Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining, "It is expected that the mine will use **116 gallons of water per minute on a 24-hour basis.**"

In Wyoming, meanwhile, another Canadian company, Encana, has managed to diminish local water supplies—in Pavillion, where contamination of water and air has become so severe, residents resorted to an EPA investigation.

Following four years of EPA studies (and after peer review of the agency's draft report was delayed by Governor Mead on industry behest) did the long-suffering residents attain relief? No. Our governor has joined with the Canadians in dither-and-delay tactics against his constituents.

SOS! Creativity needed! Wyomingites take pride in their rugged-individualism, cowboy mentality. Let's see us bring to the table something creative. We need to convince our governor and legislators that fossil-fuel “business as usual” is suicide—not only ecological suicide but also suicide for humanity, beginning with our children.

Pavillion resident John Fenton has taken to the road. Last July in DC he demonstrated alongside climate warrior Bill McKibben, whose “Do the Math” tour, pattered after his

Rolling Stone essay of July, will stop in Boulder, Colorado, on December 2, 2012. I plan to attend and hope other Wyomingites will join me. A small step toward creativity? You never know until you try.