

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH ASHLEY JUDD

SUBJECT: THE CONTROVERSIAL PRACTICE OF MOUNTAIN TOP REMOVAL COAL MINING.

MODERATOR: ALAN BJERGA, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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**ALAN BJERGA:** (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon. I'm Alan Bjerga, President of the National Press Club. And welcome to the National Press Club. We're the world's leading professional organization for journalists and are committed to our profession's future through our programming and by fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at [www.press.org](http://www.press.org). To donate to our programs, please visit [www.press.org/library](http://www.press.org/library).

On behalf of our members worldwide, we'd like to welcome our speaker, as well as our attendees, at today's event, which includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists. We'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. After the speech concludes, I will ask as many audience questions as time permits. I would now like to briefly introduce our head table guests.

From your right, Peter Gartrell, an associate editor for Plax(?). Dee Bhambhani, freelance reporter and author of her new energy blog, *Energy Check*. She is also the chair of the National Press Club's events committee. Rob Perks of the Natural Resources Defense Council and a guest of the speaker. Emily Goodin, associate editor for *The Hill*. Sarah Hodgdon, national director of Conservation for the Sierra Club and a guest of the speaker. Andrew Schneider, associate editor for Kiplinger and chairman of the Speakers Committee.

Skipping, for the moment, over our speaker, we have Suzanne Struglinksy of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a member of the Speakers Committee who organized today's event. Rodger Schlickeisen, President of the Defenders of Wildlife.

Evan Sweetman, Chair of the National Press Club's Young Members Committee. Bob Keefe, Washington correspondent for the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and independent writer, Brook Stodder. Thank you.

On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, environmental organization American Rivers ranked West Virginia's Gauley River as number three on its 2010 most endangered rivers list. The threat that put it there was mountaintop removal. As its name implies, this mining practice removes the top of a mountain to reach a coal source inside. And, it doesn't just affect West Virginia. It also affects other Appalachian states, including Kentucky, the home state of today's speaker.

Ashley Judd is an eighth generation Eastern Kentuckian. She first learned about mountaintop removal from the grassroots organization Kentuckians for the Commonwealth in 2007 and gave the keynote address with an I Love Mountains Day on the steps of its State Capitol last year. She is on the Board of Defenders of Wildlife and works with the Sierra Club, NRDC, and Earth Justice on environmental issues.

Additionally, she is known as a feminist activist and advocate, serving on the Board of Directors of Population Services International, a human rights organization with programs in 65 developing countries. She spoke on her work with that group, here at the National Press Club in 2005. And, in 2008, she addressed the U.N. General Assembly on modern day enslavement of women.

Of course, Ashley Judd is best known as an actress from her films and work on Broadway, which includes *Kiss the Girls*, *Double Jeopardy*, *High Crimes* and *Where the Heart Is*. Currently, she's filming *Flypaper*, costarred with Patrick Dempsey. She is married to a two-time Indianapolis 500 winner, and the couple lives in both Tennessee and Scotland.

So, please welcome to the National Press Club Ashley Judd.

[applause]

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Thank you for that kind introduction. I see there's a gavel here. Do I get to use it? [laughter] Or, is there someone in the room with the ultimate authority to use it, so I need to hide it from you? [laughter]

Thank you all so much, especially to the top table and Suzanne for organizing this. I have a lot of friends here. And so, I'd actually like to start by saying good afternoon. And, I'm southern, and so that means you're supposed to respond in kind. So, take two. Good afternoon.

[audience response]

**ASHLEY JUDD:** So, I'd like to start, as I said, by acknowledging my many friends here. And, if by accident I overlook you, please shout out your name. Of course,

Roger Schlickeisen was mentioned. He is the President and Chairman of the great organization Defenders of Wildlife. I'm very proud to serve with him. I have friends here from the Sierra Club. I have friends from the Natural Resources Defense Council. I have friends from Earth Justice. Steve Brody, are you here somewhere? Just an email buddy. Maybe he doesn't exist in real life.

The great Marianne Volers(?) is here. Marianne is a writer of exceptional abilities, who, amongst other important things, wrote what was perhaps the first ever story on mountaintop removal coalmining. It was published in *Mother Jones Magazine*. Who else is here? John Genzler, a classmate of mine from the Harvard Kennedy School. He's actually a dual degree candidate over at that other little school in Cambridge, MIT. He is a child of the mountains, born and raised in West Virginia, whose goal in life is to see not only the end of MTR but to start a clean energy company in West Virginia. And I think, frankly, he'll be Governor of that state, and perhaps serve in many capacities beyond.

Also here is Mary Lynn Evans, who is a longtime anti-mountaintop removal coalmining activist. She uses her considerable talents as an artist. In particular, she has made a powerful documentary called *Coal Country*, which she generously allows to be shown without any cost. And, her producer, Phyllis, is also here. My friend Barb's cousin is here. [laughter] So-- And, I understand there's a University of Kentucky Alumni Association locally that is represented. So, just to all of you, I want to say thank you.

No one does any of this work alone. And, although I stand at this podium, ostensibly by myself, I am flanked and surrounded by, and embedded with, an extraordinary group of people. Also, I know from Appalachian Voices is here, which is a tremendous consortium that represents grassroots organizations throughout Appalachia, who are doing the day-in and day-out work opposing this environmental tragedy.

So, everyone up here was a little bit panicked because I didn't have a hard copy of my speech. Whereas, I, of course, am cool as a cucumber because I know I've got it right here on my computer. I'll just try to make sure that, one, Indie Arie doesn't start playing on my iTunes, or that my dad doesn't IM me and say, "How's your National Press Club talk going? How's it going?" [laughter]

It's great, dad. [laughter]

Okay. So, now for my little talk. I have been conferencing for three days. I've been representing Population Services International at both the Women Deliver Conference and the Global Business Coalition. I'm very glad to be here. By this time, I am a little sleepy. So, I look sleepy, and I'm not brushing my hair, so I just put on extra jewelry. [laughter]

I am very proud to be a Kentuckian. And, of the many things my Creator has seen fit to allow me to accomplish, being an Eastern Kentuckian is the simple fact that brings me the most honor, the greatest sense of self. I love and am proud of being a hillbilly. [applause]

I traced my family in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky back at least eight generations. And, in Kentucky, we talk about counties. So, mine include, and are not limited to, Martin County, Lawrence County, and Boyd County. In eight weeks, I will know even more about my mountain people, their original homes, holdings and habits. My genealogy is being prepared for me as a gift. My life, a very well-traveled one, will see nothing like the wonderful adventure of journeying back through my family history in the Appalachian Mountains. It is, by far, the richest and the sweetest trip.

A few tantalizing details have slipped out. Thanks Aunt Middy. My five-times great-grandfather, Apack(?), in his Will bequeathed, amongst other things, 247 acres, and not one, but two copper stills, and an acre of land, which he insisted be set aside for a meeting house at which all denominations could worship. I can hardly wait to learn more.

There is no better home than Kentucky. [applause] We have a deeply engrained mystical sense of place, a sense of belonging that defines us. Although I currently make my home in rural middle Tennessee and in Scotland, Kentucky calls to me. It is my Avalon.

A few examples: As a teenager, I took a friend to see my beloved great-Aunt Pauline's farm in Lawrence County. She passed away when I was in only the fourth grade, and I had not been to her farm since. Nevertheless, I had never even driven myself there, but I navigated perfectly to her small setting on Little Cat Creek, without making a single wrong turn.

Equally, in college I drove from Lexington, Kentucky to Big Hill in Morrell(?). And, again, although I had not been there since the second grade, I navigated without putting a wheel wrong. If you need more evidence, in 2008, after doing a flyover of legal and illegal mountaintop removal coalmining sites in Pike County, I drove to Black Log Holler, where my paternal grandmommy was raised. I had never been there before.

Pulling on to Black Log, something ineffable, without words, and deeper than memory, from a place so primal it transcends thought and conscious action, I stopped at the foot of a long drive. And, although I had never seen it, I recognized it. I was then surprised when I looked, that the mailbox said "Dalton," my grandmommy's maiden name. Yes, folks, with whom I am kin, live there yet.

I called on the residents. And, like a funny cliché, the old woman accused me of being right here. But, the ache I feel for my mountain home is now more than a bittersweet nostalgia, accrued through inimitable generations of belonging. There is a searing tear, a gaping wound in the fabric of my life and in the lives of all Appalachians. And, it gets bigger. With every Appalachian mountaintop that is blown up, every holler that is filled, every stream that is buried, every wild thing that is wantonly and recklessly killed, every ecosystem that is diminished, every job that is lost to mechanization, every family that is pitted one against the other by the state-sanctioned, federal government-supported coal industry operated rape of Appalachia, mountaintop removal coalmining.

The Appalachian Mountains are the oldest in North America. They are, indeed, so old geologists rather poetically, I think, call them deep time. They may well be the oldest mountains in the entire world. I am here to tell you, mountaintop removal coalmining simply would not happen in any other mountain range in the United States. It is utterly inconceivable that the Smokies would be blasted, the Rockies razed, the Sierra Nevadas flattened, that bombs the equivalent to Hiroshima would be detonated every single week for three decades. The fact that the Appalachians are the Appalachians makes this environmental genocide possible and permissible.

By the end of our time together here today, I hope you will commit your journalistic integrity to stop mountaintop removal immediately. Our Appalachian Mountains reseeded the whole of North America after the last ice age. I smile when I remember that. What an act of biological generosity.

The genetic stock of our mixed mesospheric forests, in part because they were an unglaciated refuge for many species, exceeds any value that can be conceived of or articulated by the human mind. Ancient, life-giving, a perfectly complete and closed loop of life and economy, the preciousness of these mountains is a natural endowment which should be treated as sacred.

Instead, they're being blasted to smithereens. Coal lies in those hills, as we call them. But, y'all know that. And, there are essentially three stories I'm telling today, an ancient one, a tiny bit of the Appalachian genealogy, an old one, about how the current exploitation and abuse was set up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and perpetuated in the 20<sup>th</sup>, and how technology is being used, contemporarily, to permanently and irreversibly obliterate a mountain range, a culture and a people, to say nothing of the original American art forms, the people of Appalachia have given birth to.

The broad form deed, one of the most diabolical abusive legal documents ever created, as stunningly arrogant and entitled as a white man buying from a Native American, vast tracts of land for a nickel. In the following section, I will be quoting from Henry Cottell(?), Chad Montry(?), Ron Eller, Silas House, Jason Howard, and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth Archives. Can you tell I just finished graduate school. [laughter] Really keen on attributing.

In 1887, John CeCe Mayo(?) rode up in the hills with silver dollars sewn into his clothes, taking his wife with him, in order to make a good impression. He thus bought the first mineral rights, using a so-called broad form, which he popularized across the mountains, came to be known as the coal fields.

The methodology of the swindling and manipulation is documented. "With every convincing appearance of complete sincerity, the coal buyer would spend hours admiring the nearest horse, while compliments were dropped on every phase of his host's accomplishments. He marveled at the ample contents of the mountaineer's smokehouse and savored the rich flavor of the good woman's apple butter.

After such a visit, he and the man of the house would get down to business. And, before long, the deed or option was signed, with the uncertain signatures, sometimes just an “X” of the mountaineers and his wife.

And, what exactly did those broad form deeds say? I will read, briefly to you, from three I happen to have on hand. The print is very interesting and small. “All the coal, minerals and mineral products, oils and gases, salt minerals, salt water, fire potters clay, all iron, iron ore, stone and such standing timber as may be held, representative, successors or assignees deemed necessary for mining purposes, including timber necessary for railroads, branch lines, and there of,” etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

“The right to enter upon said land, use, operate same surface thereof, use of, for this purpose, divert water courses.” This is important-- “In any and every manner that may be deemed necessary or convenient for mining. Hereby released from liability, in perpetuity or claim as damaged, free access to, upon and over said land, all the coal, gases, oil and minerals of every description in, upon, and under my farms and tracts of land situation in the County of Lecher, State of Kentucky, on the waters of Old Creek and its tributaries. Extracting, handling, refining, shipping, transporting all said minerals, whether contained on said premises or elsewhere, and for any other purposes.”

Early in the late-- Earlier in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries, agents for land companies following Mayo’s example swept through the region, buying up mineral rights, sometimes for as little as 50 cents an acre, separating the use of surface and tax liability from the natural resources that might be below. In other words, the hillbillies still paid the taxes on the land.

Initially, the deeds separated mineral rights from ownership of surface land. But, in the 1940s, courts began interpreting broad form deeds to mean the surface owner also sold, with the minerals-- important-- the right to extract them through whatever means the mineral rights owner chose. Written in finely printed legalese, the broad form deeds signed over the rights to dump, store, leave upon said land any and all muck, bone, shale, water and other refuse, to use and pollute water courses in any manner, to do anything necessary and convenient to extract minerals.

These clauses eventually caused much regret on the part of the sellers’ progeny when Kentucky courts continually interpreted them in favor of the companies. Broad form deeds transferred the land to the land company all the mineral rights, the right to remove it by any means necessary, leaving the original owners with the taxes.

With the advent of surface mining in the ‘50s, these old deeds took on new meanings as mining companies sought access without regard to any rights of the owners. Roads cut across pastures, forests, devastated fields, ruined water supplies, polluted. State courts upheld the rights of miners. Convenient and necessary.

Families found their meager hopes of subsistence destroyed. They abandoned the farmsteads. They were landless migrants, unemployed workers, roamed the region or left the mountains entirely. It was not until 1987, in a split decision by the Kentucky State Supreme Court, this interpretation of the broad form was finally struck down. In '88, by a margin of four to one, Kentuckians spoke at the ballot box. They voted in favor of the homestead amendment which restricted strip mining by the mineral rights owner, which restricted strip mining by the mineral rights owner, without the consent of the landowner. Five years later, the ruling was appealed.

I used the word “rape” earlier. When I was a student at the University of Kentucky in 1988, I remember clearly sitting in the Kappa House kitchen drinking my morning cup of coffee and discovering that spousal rape was still legal in my state. Oh my gosh, I thought, if I were married, it would be legal for my husband to rape me. I felt horrible shame.

Kentucky’s gender laws have come far since that time. In fact, Governor Beshear just signed a progressive policy requiring men who beat women, and against whom an order of protection has been taken out, must be monitored with GPS. I salute Governor Beshear and the legislators for passing and enacting this law. Kentucky’s environmental laws monitoring evaluation and enforcement need to move apace.

The Surface Mining And Reclamation Act passed in 1977 during the Carter administration was inadequate to begin with. Coalmining techniques outdistanced regulation immediately, not to mention the appalling lack of oversight, reporting and enforcement. As shocking as strip mining was then, mountaintop removal is warp speed overdrive strip mining on steroids.

First, a permit is applied for. Often, at least until recently, with Lisa Jackson at the EPA taking over that administration, they were largely rubber stamped. A friend in West Virginia called it “creeping permititis.” What few restrictions there were on the permit process could easily be waived by merely applying for a permit variation.

Often, however, a coal company didn’t even bother to apply for a permit. They found it more convenient, if you remember that word, to mine without any permit and simply leave. Others were good enough to self-report. And, the state often showed them leniency for having done so.

Access roads are made. The timber on those mountains, one of the most rich and biodiverse habitats in the entire world, which shares species with places like China, are not even harvested. The old growth trees, hardwood forests, in some places 30 species can be found standing together, are simply razed.

Next, explosives are trucked in, explosives so volatile they must be carried on separate vehicles. Small holes are drilled into the rock of the mountains. And, every single day, in Kentucky and West Virginia, around the clock, seven days a week, 2,500

tons of explosives are detonated, blasts 1,000 times greater than the blast that brought down the Oklahoma City Federal Building.

What used to be home for human, flora and fauna, and the potential economic boom for a classically exploited and distressed area, has become, in the coal company's calloused terminology, overburden.

The Smokey Mountains, as the crow flies, not so far away, generated a billion dollars in tourism revenue last year for the State of Kentucky. Using shovels the size of buildings, the essential ingredients of deep time is pushed into the lauded and mythical hollers of Appalachia, indiscriminately burying all that is produced and lives there: watershed, perennial and permanent streams, all plant and wildlife, contaminating the ground water, an example, in the process.

For example, children in Eastern Kentucky draw creeks black. They don't know they're supposed to run clear. Using a drag line 20 stories high, the thing rips out ribbons of coal like little layers of chocolate cake. They're scooped out. In some cases, the site, once the coal company is finished, is simply abandoned. The coal company often sets up a shell company or two to operate a job, and then defaults on the bond.

In other cases, the company decides to make the site a model example of their responsibility. They return "to approximate contour." Of course, the word "approximate" makes it a farce. The word was a government concession to powerful coal interests. Thus, allegedly, the shape of the mountain is somehow reconfigured. They plant non-native, fast-growing, invasive grasses. And then, with their incessant propaganda, celebrate the site as an example of how good for Appalachia mountaintop removal coalmining is.

Why, they even built a prison on one former site. Guess what. The foundation subsided, and the locals call it "Sink Sink." [laughter] On another site, they built a golf course. I'm not too keen on reinforcing stereotypes about my people, but I don't know a lot of hillbillies who golf. [laughter]

And so, in less than one year, Massey, Teko(?), Argus(?), Consold(?), Patriot, International Coal Group, and others who join in this list of shame, bring down ineffable mountains of profound past that should have infinite future. And, Americans take even less than one year to burn up the coal for which it was all done forever. Shame on us.

This practice is a stain on the conscience of America. There are many myths promulgated by the coal companies and those they keep dependent on them through the mono-economy they have created in the mountains and maintained since the first broad form deed.

The Charleston, West Virginia paper this week captured on such enduring myth well in an op-ed, talking about an EPA public hearing at which a permit application for what would become the largest mountaintop removal site in West Virginia was being discussed. A man went all the way to Charleston from Pike County, Kentucky to plead,



“Please approve this permit. It is all we know.” The Charleston paper said, “ What an indictment. What a penetrating condemnation of all the leaders in this young man’s life, from home and school, to county commissions, up to legislators, governors, and Presidents, and anyone else who meets and greets and congratulates themselves for being for jobs.”

No matter what you think the EPA should do regarding Arch Coal’s Spruce Number One Mine in Logan County, projections for coal employment for the future are the same. Coal will never employ 100,000 West Virginians like it once did. I hope to have the chance to address with you some of these other ridiculous, yet persistent myths during the question and answer portion of our time.

There are many individuals on the ground who live with the daily consequences and the nuisance problems, as they are called, caused by mountaintop removal coalmining. Two daughters of coalminers, Judy Bonds and Maria Gunnoe, for example, have been granted the Goldman Environmental Prize for their grassroots organizing and heroic efforts.

There is another wonderful woman whose name I can't think of right now, who decided to get a college degree at a local community college when she was reached by local grassroots group that was teaching her how to go to her state legislators and lobby for her and her community’s own best interests. Her daughter graduated from high school the same time she graduated with her degree from the community college. Upon receiving her transcript, she thought she’d made a 4.0. Her daughter explained, she had made a 4.0. [laughter]

It’s important that those of us fighting the coal companies stick together because they can make me feel absolutely and totally crazy. Their denial, sleight of hand, smoking mirrors, and relentless propaganda is absolutely stunning. But, I know what is happening. I know how outrageous it is. Yet, they try to make us feel like lunatics, out of touch with reality, and like fringe conspiracy theorists. Because no one would really let that happen. Our government would stop it. Four million pounds of explosives every day is a fact.

I wrote a paper about mountaintop removal coalmining for Sophia Greskin(?) at the Harvard School of Public Health. It was hard. It allowed no advocacy. I didn’t know how not to include adjectives. She said it would be a good exercise for me. And, indeed, it was. I got my three minutes of advocacy when I presented my paper to my cohorts, who naturally were a highly intelligent, profoundly energetic, and very engaged group.

Not a single one of them had ever heard about MTR. And, when I finished my paper and was leaving the class, they followed me out onto the streets and said, “Who are the migrant laborers who were being recruited to work in these sites?” At the Harvard Kennedy School, I thought for sure this issue would be the *cri d'coeur* of my class.

The only other person who had heard of MTR, and who joined with me in the fight to stop it, is in this room, John Genzler(?). Together, he and applied to Kennedy School's most prestigious venue, The Forum, hoping to bring Mr. Blankenship, the chairman of Massey, Lisa Jackson from the EPA, Bobby Kennedy, Jr. They turned us down.

My own class presented to one another every Thursday our personal work and interest. I couldn't get MTR on the docket. The opportunity to be here today is very powerful and very special. Thank you so much for your time. And, I look forward to your questions. And, I would like for those of you who are already working with me on this issue to feel free to raise your hand and contribute. We all have done a lot of work. We have got lawyers. We've got environmentalists. We have got regulatory people. We have got folks who are very interested in creating clean energy jobs in the mountains.

There has been some updates, just today, about solar and wind farms being built in West Virginia and Kentucky. Is this Jim Perion(?) gentleman here? We got an email through Kentuckians For the Commonwealth that he was going to be there. If he's not here, I'll read you the email. And also, the actionable thing I want everyone to consider doing, upon leaving here, is to write Lisa Jackson at the EPA and say, "Veto the permit for Arch Spruce Mine Number One." Thank you.

[applause]

American Municipal Power announced an agreement to develop 300 MWs of solar power in Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Also, it's Duke Energy said today it is examining its use of mountaintop removal mined coal. So, there is some movement. [applause]

**ALAN BJERGA:** Thank you very much for your time today. Have a nice amount of time here. I'm looking at the clock behind your laptop, which may be the first ever laptop delivered National Press Club address. [laughter]

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Got to be known for something. [laughter]

**ALAN BJERGA:** And, we certainly appreciate your words today and your willingness to speak with us. And, we have plenty of questions. Please keep bringing them up. First question from the audience: What is the worst consequence of mountaintop removal mining that you have witnessed?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Well, a family called the Uriases come to mind. Of course, I talked a lot about the mountains themselves. Equally as important are the people of Appalachia. The Uriases were kind enough to show me what was happening in Island Creek in Pike County. Their little home is this ever-diminishing oasis of green that's absolutely surrounded by catastrophic moonscape rubble. This is an illegal site. And, everywhere they turn and look, things have been blasted.

They have had health consequences. They are no longer able to use their tap water. They boil water and then let it cool before bathing the baby. They put juice in a sippy cup when they bathe the baby to prevent her from accidentally ingesting contaminated water. And, the loss of jobs is just extraordinary.

When I was researching that paper I told you about, I thought that, when I went onto the coal industry supported websites, that somehow they would omit those facts. But, even their own websites do document and calculate the jobs lost in Kentucky in West Virginia to mountaintop removal because of its high mechanization.

So, the question was, what was the worst? It's a little difficult to compare sufferings, but those are of the worst.

**ALAN BJERGA:** You paint a very black and white picture of the impacts on the communities and of the mining itself. The United States is a representative democracy. All these folks have congressmen. They all have Senators they can write. Why are people from Appalachian states not converging on Capitol Hill? Why are their lawmakers not representing them? [laughter] Do you have an opinion on this? [laughter]

**ASHLEY JUDD:** With all due respect, it's because they have people like Hal Rogers in Congress. And, I do say that with all respect, Congressman Rogers, whom I've met and who, of course, is a lovely man. His policy and stance about coalmining is radically destructive to the people of Appalachia. He, until recently, was the single most tenured member of the House. I believe he still is. And, equally, his county was documented as the single most unhappy and poorest place to live in the entire United States of America. His county is also the highest coal-producing county.

Now, there is good news, because we also have members in Congress such as Ben Chandler, who opposes mountaintop removal coalmining. There are some folks that are coming forward on the right side of the issue, and who understand that we need to develop clean sources of energy and get off unrenewables such as coal. And, we need more of them.

**ALAN BJERGA:** Could you elaborate on some of the efforts you have seen at the State House or federal level, tangibly, to stop this practice?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** I think Kentuckians for the Commonwealth is a really good example. It's a very grassroots initiative that goes door-to-door and has a community presence and asks people to consider empowering themselves as civic and political participants. Folks are empowered with the facts. They go-- They have the opportunity to go through community coaching-- excuse me, communication coaching and community building. And then, they plan trips and go spend time at their state legislatures, making appointments, sitting in offices, and generally doing the deal.

They make a difference. And, every time I have the opportunity, for example, to visit with Bert Lauderdale, who is their executive director, he disappears because it's not about him and it's not about their staff. It's the people who are becoming engaged.

Also, Mary Lynn, what are some other organizations I should mention?

**MARY LYNN EVANS:** I think the most grand change was Senator Robert C. Byrd.

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Yes.

**MARY LYNN EVANS:** And Senator Byrd, who was always a friend of the coal industry, coming to the coal fields himself, has now said to the coal industry no more. Mining is not a right of yours, it is a privilege.

**ASHLEY JUDD:** That's Mary Lynn Evans who is speaking. And, she rightfully pointed out that Senator Byrd, of all people-- and if he can do it, anybody can do it-- is having a change of heart about coal. And, he has said that West Virginians need to take a serious and realistic look at the fact that coal is no longer the future of the state.

**ALAN BJERGA:** Within the use and production and mining of coal, of course there is a profit motive. And, the profit motive is energy use. And, energy use is sort of a broader issue around this all falls. Coal is being used because people want energy. And, there are alternatives to that, as you well know.

There are drawbacks to those alternatives, however. And, this questioner asks, wind turbines in mountain areas, one possible other form of energy, kill birds and bats, and thus conflict with Federal Endangered Species protection. Nuclear power creates radioactive waste that can't be deactivated and poses storage problems. Solar power, not economically viable. Transmission lines in the electrical grid have to increase to transport more energy. What is viable, if coalmining is not encouraged in this way, for meeting our need for energy? And, what is the timeframe in which that could happen?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** I can't tell you how much I love this question because it's difficult. And, the fact is, we have to be willing to look at uncertainties, ambiguities. However, I believe in American creativity, ingenuity. And, I also believe in the power of markets. But, Mark Moody Stewart himself said to me, last night, former chairman of Shell, former chairman of the something-something Anglo-Saxon big ass mineral coal company, whatever [laughter] all over South Africa-- Okay, now I've also said "ass" at the NPC. Great. I'm just-- [laughter]

He was talking about the early 1950s, when the British Parliament banned the burning of coal in open fireplaces. He said they thought their way of life would collapse. Yet, within three years, no one remembered that they used to burn coal in open fireplaces. It was a regulatory decision by a responsible governing body that set the standard.

Also, with regard to this question-- and I do want to pitch some of the question to John. I'd love for him to have the chance to say a bit on this. Because, without a doubt, his area of expertise. The definition of leadership. Taking responsibility to enable others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty. What is certain is that blowing up mountains is not appropriate. That must stop.

Some of the other technologies, I frankly think, are a little less uncertain than this questioner puts forward. Has anyone read Van Jones's amazing book, *The Green Collar Economy*? There are solutions out there. John.

**JOHN:** I would say that [off microphone]

**ASHLEY JUDD:** [humming]

**JOHN:** Thanks for tossing that question to me, Ashley. I think, right now, with regards to the development of renewable energy technologies that the questioner asked-- nuclear, wind, solar, things that we haven't even dreamed of yet, this is our specialty as a nation. The call of future Americans really can't be denied.

We have been ripping down our mountains and burning coal for 150 years. We have been trying to harness the wind for a couple of decades. The sun, about the same time period. These are nascent baby technologies that deserve our support, just as coal deserved our support 150 years ago. Nuclear deserved our support after World War Two.

But, these technologies are going to be driven by American entrepreneurs. They're going to be driven by markets demanding ever more energy. Nine billion people we expect to live on this planet in a couple of decades. It's a 50% increase. We don't have enough coal to provide power for these people. So, we're going to have to come up with ways to harness the energy from the sun, the energy from wind.

I mean, this isn't whether or not they're cost-competitive today. This is, how are we going to make them cost-competitive tomorrow? And, how are we, as Americans, going to create an economy based around that, so we can continue to share the way of American life with the rest of the world. This is our challenge today. This is-- I mean, it's the fundamental challenge we face as a nation.

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Thank you, John.

**JOHN:** Certainly.

**ASHLEY JUDD:** There is a wonderful fact sheet available at [Sierra.org](http://Sierra.org), [The True Costs of Coal](#). Coal is not cheap. That's one of those ridiculous persistent myths that we need to debunk.

**ALAN BJERGA:** On technological approaches, two words: clean coal. React. [laughter]

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Oxymoron. [laughter] One word, multisyllabic, but one word. And, carbon sequestration? That technology already exists. It's called a tree. [applause]

**ALAN BJERGA:** Given your diverse environmental interests, has your interest in mountaintop removal given you a greater appreciation of mountain ecosystems in general? Do you see other threats to mountains in Appalachia or worldwide?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** The number one threat to the Smokies is pollution. They actually have air pollution warnings throughout the peak tourist season in the Smokey Mountains. That is heartbreaking. So yes, by learning about mountaintop removal coalmining, and being sensitized to the various threats to fragile mountain ecosystems, I have learned a lot, broadly.

I also really suggest the book *Lost Mountain* by the great Eric Reese, which is an exquisite, exquisite exploration of the biodiversity of the Appalachian Mountains and is a wonderful treat. The forward is written by Wendell Berry.

**ALAN BJERGA:** Also, in the spirit of the language and technology that has been history-making at the National Press Club today, I have a question that is submitted via Blackberry. [laughter] Have you ever met Don Blankenship? And, what is your interaction with folks who would be considered on the other side of this issue?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** I would love to interact with folks on the other side of the issue. I don't have any difficulty, whatsoever, envisioning coming together in a spirit of dignity, respect and goodwill, and talking with people. I was going to make a joke about not wanting to meet him because he might push me. [laughter] I would love to meet Mr. Blankenship, and that's why he was the first person on my list of hoped invitees at the Kennedy School Forum that never happened. But, I would absolutely love to.

And, I'll tell you who else I would really love to meet on the issue: President Barack Obama. I would love for him to do a flyover of mountaintop removal sites the way he has, recently, of the Gulf. And, one of the things I want to make sure I leave time to read, very briefly before we close, is a remarkable essay by Son of the Mountains Silas House, an exceptional writer who is now, I am proud to say, the director of Appalachian Studies at Berea College. He also wins the informal prize of best blog name on the Internet, "A Country Boy Can Surmise."

And, he challenges the President and all Americans to take a look at what's been going on, not just for the past 44 days, said, of course, with profound respect and empathy for the people of the Gulf, to what has been happening in Appalachia for the past 30 years.

**ALAN BJERGA:** How long would it take you to read that essay?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Not long at all.

**ALAN BJERGA:** Hands off the--

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Hands off the gavel, right. [laughter] So, he summarizes that the President recently toured the Gulf to see, firsthand. "Can't imagine the President doing a flyover of mountaintop removal or holding a press conference about it. I've never seen a mountain blown up on national television, not even once, much less not every single morning on the *Today Show*. Yet, I would venture to say MTR is more devastating than"-- You know what? Let me be clear. He didn't say "more." He said, "as devastating as the oil spill.

"I don't mean to compare suffering." Now, you know where I got that great line. "What I'm saying is actually the opposite of comparison. They're equally as bad. Yet, everyone is outraged about the spill, while few people even know about MTR. The oil spill and MTR are environmental, cultural, and economic health disasters. They're devastating an entire way of life and disrupting generations of knowledge.

"Every time someone says that more than 100 miles of shoreline have been affected by the oil spill, I want to shout that 1,500 miles of waterways have been lost, forever, in Appalachia. Every time I think about the spill, I also think of the pollution pumping into our creeks and rivers by way of MTR." Every single body of water in the Commonwealth of Kentucky is under advisement of contamination. I added that.

"I think all the people in Appalachia who can't find a good paying job, besides the miners, because we live in this mono-economy fostered by the industry, I think of how the spill could affect the Gulf so badly that the region's fishing industry could be wiped out. And, I think of how mountaintop removal is hurting all the industries in Appalachia, particularly timber and tourism."

And I've said this. "We're witnessing the death of the Gulf, and that's a heartbreaking prospect. And, it seems true, unfortunately. We've been witnessing that for 44 days. The President said, 'Every day this leak continues an assault on the people.' If you trace back to when mountaintop removal started, it'd be 10,950 days, a lot more than 44.

"The big difference between the Gulf and Appalachia is the Gulf is not caught up in a mono-economy. We actually have fishermen on the news who can confidently complain about oil companies. In Appalachia, miners lose their jobs if they complain. And, we have been taught that, to oppose coalmining is actually unpatriotic.

"The lack of outrage over MTR may boil down to images and quick definitions. It's easy to turn the spill into a quick sign about oil is pumping into the water. And, it's much more complicated with MTR. The spill was preventable. MTR is intentional and sanctioned."

**ALAN BJERGA:** We have a couple questions, here, dealing as well, questions about your role on this issue, and questions about your life, as well. First of all, with the many causes that you are supporting, how does your *célébrité* help the causes that you are supporting? What are the risks to a cause of having someone like you involved?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Well, I guess you'd have to ask the organizations that don't ask me to work with them, what the risks are. [laughter] No. Can I tell you how much I hate that question? I mean, I just hate that question. You're so serious. Why aren't you people laughing? [laughter]

And, I'm being coy. But honestly, I don't know. I don't even know how to begin to answer that question. I'm an activist, and I'm an advocate, and I'm an artist, and I have portfolios of experience. I don't have to decide. I don't have to choose. I'm not limited to just one. They each give my life meaning, direction and purpose. And, I ain't changing any time soon.

**ALAN BJERGA:** You also recently got a degree from Harvard. Could you tell us a little bit about that, and why you felt you needed that accomplishment in your life?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Well, I've got such poor self-esteem, I thought going to Harvard would make me feel good about myself. [laughter] I always wanted to go to graduate school. And, it was really through the mentorship of some powerful women who make valuable contributions in my life that I ultimately made that decision. And really, the story I would want to tell about Harvard is the one I already have, that I thought that, you know, new energy and clean renewable energy, and the green collar economy would be the *cri d'coeur* of my class. And, I was sorely disappointed about that.

[side remarks]

**ALAN BJERGA:** First question is looking at your own vision for what Appalachia could look like, say, 50 years from now, if mountaintop removal is banned? Is it realistic, without mining jobs, to see Appalachia as a growth area? If not, where does the growth come from?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Well, of course, something does need to be done with the 800 mountaintops that have already been leveled. And, it's not strip malls, which is what the coal companies have suggested hillbillies do with this now-flat land, that they allege we so desperately need.

I believe that the federal dollars and the state dollars that are being set aside to invest in clean energy jobs absolutely should go first to Appalachia. Our coal has been powering this country for a long, long time. Our environment is ravaged and contaminated by the practices. The mitigation, something at which Defenders of Wildlife is an expert, needs to begin, immediately. Industries are kept out by coal companies, collusion and various other practices, to keep employable people exclusively dependent on coal-related jobs.



And, of course, the next big industry is healthcare. Because, as Michael Hendricks at West Virginia University and his research and writing partner are doing the science to show the causal links exist between coal companies, coalmining, and poor health outcomes. So, there is a variety of investments that are needed, both in clean-up and mitigation, in job creating, in education, in skills building, and in bringing in new industries.

**ALAN BJERGA:** What are your thoughts regarding the recent BP oil spill?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Just devastating. Just absolutely devastating. I actually like what my doctor said about it, best. He said, “If you have a six story building in your town, you don’t have a two-story fire department.” And, I just thought that captured it beautifully.

I had the coincidental good fortune of actually flying with the executive director of NOAA from New Orleans to Washington, D.C. last week, and her executive staff. And, it’s a grim prospect, but I am grateful for the opportunity to do a field visit with her. She said planes go out every day, and there’s usually one or two empty seats.

And, while I’m doing this picture in Baton Rouge, you know, the cast might not think this is their idea of a great way to spend a Saturday and Sunday, but I hope to rally the cast and the crew and to make a difference, in some way, to the people of the Gulf.

**ALAN BJERGA:** On mountaintop removal, what would you see, what will it take for there to be a tipping point in this debate, where you feel like you have sufficient profile, and the momentum really truly is on your side, to the point where change is tangible?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Press, press, press, press, press. This issue needs press. In 2000, the Martin County oil sludge spill was “x” number of times bigger than the Exxon Valdez spill. One of my pals fed me that stat. How much bigger was it? It was enormously bigger. We’re talking three digits bigger. Have you ever heard of the Martin County sludge spill? Point taken.

There is a-- And again, I don’t want to get the numbers-- I don’t want to be quoted on the numbers if I don’t have them exactly right. There is a billions and billions and billions of gallons sludge pond held back by an earthen dam 600 feet above an elementary school in Martin County, Kentucky right now. The tipping point is you putting this on the front page of your newspapers, at the top of your news programs, on your online links, in your blogs, and in your hearts.

**ALAN BJERGA:** We are almost out of time. But, before asking the last question, we have a couple of important matters to take care of. First of all, to remind our members and guests of future speakers.

On June 15<sup>th</sup> Paul Steiger, the editor-in-chief of ProPublica and chairman of the Committee to Protect Journalists will be discussing collaborating and competing in journalism's new era as the economic models become a bit clearer or less clear. We're trying to figure out how clear they're going to be.

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, we'll have Rajiv Shah, the administrator of USAID, who will be speaking about the U.S. response to disasters in Haiti and elsewhere, and the outlook for international development.

And, a reminder, on July 17<sup>th</sup>, the National Press Club will once again host the National Press Club's Beat the Deadline 5K, benefiting our professional development and scholarship programs. To register for the race, go to [www.press.org](http://www.press.org).

And with that, we'd like to present our guest with, first, the traditional National Press Club mug. And then, I think you have a message for us. [laughter]

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Thank you. I think my dad got the last one, and he's got himself a great wife, now. So, he might get this one too. [laughter] I do thank you very kindly for your time today. And, I'm just going to close with a brief excerpt from a letter that my great-aunt Pauline wrote my great-aunt Toddy in 1975.

"Talked to daddy day before yesterday. J.R. Miller and Coal Company tried to get road coming over our place. Get it through the country. But, thank God, so far, it hasn't worked. Made me awfully nervous. And, have had headaches so much. Understand they got road over another place down the road, across the creek and over from the Spencer place by Edgel(?) Estop(?). However, they would have to come across our place and strip mine. The Spencers won't let them. How I wish they'd outlaw strip mining and dams. People in Little Blaine don't want the country torn up by strip mining." Thank you.

[applause]

**ALAN BJERGA:** And thank you for coming today. We would also like to thank the National Press Club staff, including its library and broadcast operations center, for organizing today's event. For more information about joining the Press Club, and on how to acquire a copy of today's program, please go to our website, [www.press.org](http://www.press.org). And Ashley, would you really-- would you like to adjourn this meeting?

**ASHLEY JUDD:** I would be delighted. Thank you. [laughter]

**ALAN BJERGA:** Here is your script.

**ASHLEY JUDD:** Okay. Thank you. (Sounds gavel.) We are adjourned. [laughter] Thank you, and we are adjourned. (sounds gavel.)

[applause]

END