

# Mountain Justice Spring Break Virginia

## Campus Coordinator Toolkit

March 1-10, 2013

**“Mountaintop removal is one of the greatest environmental and human rights crises plaguing this country. Appalachia cannot continue to be ignored.”** -Bonnie Swinford, United Mountain Defense Board Member, 2009

**“We are here because now is the time to take greater action as individuals, as communities, and as a country to create a sustainable future and stop the destruction of our homes.”** -Wise County Virginia resident Hannah Morgan, while locked to a steel barrel blocking the entrance to a coal plant construction site, 2008

This March 1-10, Mountain Justice Spring Break Virginia 2013 (MJSBVA) will bring you face to face with the devastating effects of mountaintop removal and coal industry abuse – and give you the skills and knowledge you need to *fight back!* Through education, community service, speakers, hiking, music, poetry, direct action and more, you will learn from and stand with Appalachian communities in the struggle to maintain our land and culture.

This will be an amazing opportunity to meet and join the good people who make up Mountain Justice, and support the growing statewide anti-MTR movement in Virginia. Stand up, take action and stand in solidarity with the communities in Virginia facing the ongoing destruction of strip mining and threat of a proposed new mine and learn what you can do to bring sustainable change both in Appalachia and in your hometown.

The only way to create a just society is to bring people together for that common cause. This toolkit will give you the background information and techniques to organize your campus and peers, and will help you to help us build the movement. We need people like YOU to help bring people to MJSBVA, to be part of the revolution. Are you ready to be a campus coordinator?

# Table of Contents

• Table of Contents	1
• The Details of Mountaintop Removal in Appalachia	2
• MJSB's...	4
• History (4)	
• Goals (5)	
• Plans (6)	
• Significance of YOU	7
• How to use this toolkit	7
• Getting the word out	8
• Student Organizations (8)	
• Faculty and Staff (8)	
• Facebook & Other Social Networking Websites (9)	
• Fundraising and Fun-raising	10
• Travel Help	12
• Final Words	12

# Background on Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining in Appalachia

Coal has been mined in present-day United States since the early 1700s, and has since become the economic mainstay in parts of the Appalachian mountains, specifically West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Virginia and Tennessee. Entire communities were built around coal mining and a unique Appalachian culture was born. Generations of mining men and women have extracted the coal which has allowed our modern cities and technology to grow. However, this progress has come with a price.

The Appalachian region has become essentially an energy colony, with coal extracted and little given back to communities in return. Mining jobs have been lost since the mechanization of coal mining, from deep mining to mountaintop removal. In addition, the water has become poisoned to the point where folks have to buy water in order to cook and bathe. The coal companies are after coal and profits, with no regard to the health or sustainability of the communities they work within. While coal mining provides some jobs, it also creates ecological devastation and dramatic health problems for numerous communities in Appalachia. Black lung, asthma, cancers, flood risks, unstable foundations and loss of wildlife habitat are some of the hazards Appalachians face. Appalachia, one of the most biodiverse ecosystems in the world, has become a sacrifice zone for our wasteful and gluttonous energy demands in the US.



The burning of coal is responsible for 40% (2 billion tons/year) of US greenhouse gas emissions (RAN, 2008) while only providing 37% of America's energy (IEA, 2012). With overwhelming evidence from scientists around the globe that climate change is a crisis we need to address immediately, continuing to burn coal at current rates is irresponsible and short-sighted. The United States is one of the richest and most privileged countries in the world's largest (per-capita) emitter of carbon dioxide on the planet. We are killing ourselves and the Earth by flirting with tipping points that are too close to call. Once surpassed these planetary feedback loops may be irreversible and the results tremendous. Rising sea levels, more frequent and powerful storms, desertification, coral bleaching, loss of biodiversity and droughts will alter life as we know it forever.

The current energy rhetoric in the United States has coal pinned as a necessity for continued power and electricity generation. The externalities of mountaintop removal mining, buried headwater streams, poisoned groundwater, rising cancer rates and other negative health effects are ignored by the oppressive coal companies. With over 100 new coal plants on the drawing board, in various stages of development, national action must be taken to stop these energy monsters in their tracks. Lawsuits, civil disobedience, petitions, letter writing campaigns, phone banking, banner drops, film showings and numerous other tactics have been employed over the last several years to ramp up the pressure on the coal companies to stop the destruction of Appalachia and our climate.

With deep seeded roots in Appalachia, the coal companies hold a lot of power. However, the Appalachian peoples' roots run much deeper than the coal companies'. There is a history of resistance in these mountains and hollers. Currently, there is a large and growing resistance to end mountaintop removal, stop the construction of new power plants, and keep out coal waste impoundments. The entire death cycle of coal creates problems for Appalachia communities. The transition away from coal will take work, but, it is necessary to sustain life in the Appalachian bioregion and the rest of the world. Climate change must be addressed now and coal is a major contributing factor.

The future we envision for Appalachia is one of health, community and sustainability. Before the grip of the coal companies, many Appalachians made their living in small businesses making and selling crafts, practicing herbalism, gardening, conducting sustainable forestry, and raising livestock. While many still practice these trades, the majority of Appalachia has been taken over by the cloud of coal mining. One offshoot of Mountain Justice has been the formation of the Appalachian Community Economics (ACE), a place where alternative economic models can be shared and implemented. Better, healthier jobs are possible and are necessary to retain life in Appalachia. A just transition to clean energies, like solar, wind and geothermal power, are already on the rise in the mountains. Local, community based solutions to the climate crisis will be what ultimately pulls Appalachia out from the oppressive thumb of King Coal. *Join us as we create the world we all wish to see!*

**“You are the one you’ve been waiting for”**

Julia “Judy” Bonds – Aug 27, 1952 to Jan 3, 2011

# MJSB's...

**History** - Mountain Justice (MJ) is a pan-Appalachian movement and campaign to stop



**mountaintop removal coal mining.** MJ was framed after Mississippi Freedom Summer in the Civil Rights Era (which was a movement to bring equal voting rights to African-Americans in the South). For eight years, Mountain Justice has worked in the coalfields of TN, KY, WV, VA and OH to stop mountain top removal (MTR) mining and restore the health of the people and ecosystems therein.

Mountain Justice Spring break began after the success of Mountain Justice Summer. MJSB primarily focuses outreach to those in college and brings them to the coal mining region to learn about the culture of Appalachia, build relationships

with the communities, and learn the skills they need to further the campaign to stop MTR.

MJSB's have been held throughout the Southeast since 2007. All of the past breaks hosted unique, empowering workshops and grassroots direct actions that targeted major oppressive players in the coal death cycle.

The first MJSB was held in the Coal River Valley of West Virginia. Just up the holler (valley), Marsh Fork Elementary sits 150 feet away from a coal processing plant and just downhill from a pond filled with 2.8 billion gallons of toxic coal sludge. Many community members have cried out to Gov. Joe Manchin for a new school, to no avail. At the end of the week, MJSB'ers participated in a sit-in at the Governor's office to demand a new elementary school. In addition to direct action, attendees learned basic organizing skills, the role of anti-oppression in working for justice and change, and how to write effective letters to the editor and press releases to tell their stories. *Today, after many subsequent actions to the 2007 MJSB, there is a new Marsh Fork Elementary safely built out of coal's harm.*

Subsequent spring breaks have targeted: the proposed Dominion Resources power plant in Virginia; permits for four American Municipal Power coal plants, several new mines and toxic waste ponds; Bank of America and Citibank (the two largest financiers of MTR coal mining); the Tennessee Valley Authorities' (TVA) headquarters in downtown Knoxville through a rally and disaster relief cleanup for the 2008 TVA coal ash spill; the transport of coal by blockading the haul road of the active Republic Energy Mine on Kayford Mountain and a coal barge on the Kanawha River in West Virginia.

Past workshops highlight anti-oppression skills, campaign organizing, media, non-violent civil disobedience, Appalachian ecology and culture, labor history, and alternative economic opportunities. Panels often include the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), The Beehive Collective, Appalachian women, and local frontline communities. Site visits to coal camps, viewing points for active and reclaimed strip mine sites, and polluted waterways are provided to bring you face to face with the external costs of coal.

At MJSB, young people learn and act to speak up for climate justice and stand in solidarity with Appalachian communities to stop the destruction of their homeplaces.



**Goals** - The goals of Mountain Justice Spring Break are the same goals held by the Mountain Justice movement. They are to:

1. Raise world-wide awareness of mountain top removal mining and its effects
2. Escalate resistance to MTR from a regional to a national level.
3. Build our support base for the campaign
4. Unify and strengthen regional groups fighting MTR.
5. Mobilize coordinated days of action using tactics ranging from public outreach to civil disobedience.
6. Maintain safety as a high priority
7. Debunk the myth of “clean” coal and “jobs versus the environment”.
8. Encourage conservation, efficiency, solar and wind power as alternatives to MTR and all forms of surface mining.

**Our goal for MJSB is to educate, empower and activate students and youth to take action year-round to stop mountain top removal mining and create the space to build sustainable and vibrant economies in its place.**



## **Plans - Mountain Justice Spring Break is an alternative spring break with elements of education, service, action and fun!**

Workshops enable us to learn about the history of coal and MTR, power dynamics, creating sustainable systems, and techniques in non-violent direct action. You can wake up and stretch each morning with yoga and feast on three solid meals a day, with vegetarian and vegan options. The days consist of workshops, hiking, and service field trips and the evenings wind down with entertainment and campfires. Students will have a chance to strengthen relationships and build networks with others in the Appalachian bioregion and beyond.

There's also an opportunity to train in non-violent direct action skills and put them into practice at the end of the week! The hope is that once MJSB week is over, the momentum will continue and more and more people will become aware of the destruction happening to our precious land in Appalachia. The aim is empowerment, both for the coalfield communities affected and for the students who join them. This is a chance to become inspired to organize and create something better for future generations.

This year, one week of MJSB will be in Appalachia, Virginia at the Appalachia Civic Center from March 1-10, 2013. We will have a multitude of workshops available to educate on multiple topics ranging from campus organizing, to environmental justice, to sustainable living methods to take home. Service work will be done with local grassroots organizations and we'll have the opportunity to learn directly from local activists and coalfield residents about the role King Coal plays in the region. We'll also be performing direct actions to bring this issue of coal back to the big businesses that are creating this destruction as well as to bring this issue to the greater population in the region and the nation. Our desire, once again, is to educate, serve, and activate this spring break.

*We are happy to be working with the fine folks at Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards ([www.samsva.org](http://www.samsva.org)) and the RReNEW Collective ([www.rrenewcollective.com](http://www.rrenewcollective.com)) to make this year's MJSBVA a success!*

# Significance of YOU

Many of those working in the Mountain Justice movement live in the coalfields, with family roots reaching back decades, even centuries in Appalachia. Others come from outside the region and outside of Appalachia. All have a passion and relentless spirit to stop the destruction and to build vibrant and sustainable economies in its place. Many remember the first time they witnessed the effects of MTR, and the profound personal effect it had on them. The strength of Mountain Justice lies with each and every person who chooses to participate. Mountain Justice attempts to organize without hierarchy and our progress comes from each individual person and the synergy they create with each other. Monthly meetings occur regularly and an annual strategy meeting keeps the focus on our goals; working groups meet both online and offline to plan seasonal camps, educational opportunities, and actions. If you would like join the movement, there are email lists to receive more information and monthly meetings to attend. We hope as a first step you will attend Mountain Justice Spring Break!



## How to use this Toolkit

This toolkit will help you recruit a group of good folks, raise money, raise some awareness, and raise some eyebrows. Even if folks can't come to MJSB, you can use this as a chance to talk to your community about the destruction of mountaintop removal and the work of Mountain Justice and its role in the impending Just Energy Revolution



# Getting the Word Out

## Talk to Student Organizations

Recruiting from among student organizations allows you to target students based on their interests, recruit from a pool of already active students, and harness the groups' resources to further advertise and fund your trip (see funding section for more details).

### Here are some things student groups can do to build interest in attending MJSB:

- Host an MTR and Lifecycle of Coal Awareness week or day or event, including showing films, raising money, and hosting speakers and discussion about coal industry abuse.
- Invite their members to MJSB and/or provide funds to their members who attend MJSB
- Get the word out to their listserv, Facebook site, and at their group meetings

### Here's how to do it:

1. Build a list of all student groups on campus. Make sure to identify environmental & social justice groups, but be creative and broaden your search to include other groups that have large networks (e.g. the ski club, greek system, religious groups, cultural groups, etc). Include contact info for group presidents (email, phone, office address). Feel free to use the outreach letter or create your own.
2. Follow up with a phone call, or just stop by the next meeting. This is essential. Most people don't respond just to an email.

## Talk to Faculty, Staff and Administration

Reaching out to the faculty and staff at your school is crucial due to their access to students and funding mechanisms. They have a real stake in students' development and may see MJSB as an exciting opportunity for students. They also help you gain credibility and insight talking about energy injustice on your campus and in your community.

### Professors and staff can:

- Help you find speakers for discussions/presentations/informational days
- Help you find funding for your trip and raise funds for grassroots issues
- Identify students who want to attend
- Use of class / department listserves (preferably an email written by the faculty member encouraging students to attend)
- Make announcement in their class (aka "class rap")

### **Here's how to do it:**

1. Make a big list of professors and staff. Make sure to include professors you know and those from related majors such biology, environmental studies, history or directors of community service programs and any sustainability programs. You can also include the Dean, the Vice President for student affairs, and even the campus President.
2. Send each person an email.
3. Follow up by phone or in person. Schedule a meeting to make a pitch for help.
4. Be persistent and watch the magic happen!

## **Facebook & Other Social Networking Websites**

### Here's how to do it:

1. Create a MJSBVA 2013 Facebook group for your network. Use information and graphics from [www.mjsbvirginia.wordpress.com](http://www.mjsbvirginia.wordpress.com) to stock your group page.
2. Search 'Mountain Justice' and 'Mountain Justice Spring Break VIRGINIA' to find announcements.
3. Provide on-going updates about the conference to keep the group page fresh and dynamic.
4. Use the MJSB website badge (available on [mjsb.org](http://mjsb.org)) to provide a flashy link to the MJSB website from your website/Facebook/Myspace page.
5. Post information about MJSB and links to the website on other groups' pages.

## **Fliers, Posters, and Handbills**

On the MJSBVA website ([www.mjsbvirginia.wordpress.com](http://www.mjsbvirginia.wordpress.com)) you will find some pre-made fliers, posters and handbills. Quick tips:

- Be sure to add the name of your club, when you meet, and a local contact for someone in your community if people want to go.
- Print them using old paper – collect old fliers (bright colors are better) and print MJSB fliers and handbills on the back side of them.
- Post fliers/posters early in the semester so people find out as soon as possible.
- Have MJSB handbills at all your events. These save paper and give people something to hold onto.

# Fundraising and fun-raising

## Grants

A great way to get the \$\$\$ to come to MJSB is to use the funds your school already has. A lot of times they have a sum of money that is specifically meant for students with great ideas and plans like attending educational events (just like this one!). You just need to find out where these funds are and convince them you are a worthy cause. No problem. However, when there is a limited pool of money for great opportunities like these you need to be sure to get working on it fast. **So the sooner you get started getting grants *the better*. Start this part of the organizing early and BE PERSISTENT.**

### Here's how to do it:

1. Determine your funding need so that you can ask for a specific number of students to be funded. You'll need to plan on acquiring enough funding to transport the maximum number of students you think you can recruit.
2. Build a list of all possible sources of funding with contact info. This should be very similar to the list you used for your recruitment drive. Potential contacts on your campus include:
  - Advisors and chairs in the academic departments
  - Any alumni or faculty members active in mentoring or other student development programs
  - Student Groups & Student Government Association
  - Office of Student Affairs & Office of Student Activities
  - Office of Community Service
  - Office of Student Life & Residence Life Office
  - Office of Career Services
  - Office of Religious Life
  - Office of Sustainability or Environmental Services
3. Email the appropriate officer in each organization you contact.
4. Call to follow up and schedule a meeting time if necessary.
5. Prepare your pitch and appropriate materials. Make sure to package the ask appropriately depending on who you are asking for money. You can focus on different aspects of the program such as service-learning, cultural studies, organizational and leadership skills, and campus club development.
6. Follow up until you get an answer!

## Host an event/fundraiser

Hosting educational events & parties can be a great way to recruit for your group, raise funds for grassroots organizing, and get people excited about being part of a clean, just energy revolution.

At all these events, be sure to:

- Pick a high traffic area, or place where people congregate.
- Have big signs and information about Mountain Justice Spring Break, Mountaintop Removal, Global Warming, etc. to hand out.
- Have laptops connected to the internet at the table so students can register right there.
- Have signup sheets and follow up with people the next day.

## Rad Event Ideas

- Make/sell rad buttons and stickers
- Make a stencil and spray paint or silk screen tote bags and t-shirts
- Show a movie like Kilowatt Ours, Black Diamonds, or Low Coal (contact us for a copy)
- Street skits – act out King Coal meeting his match! Have a tug of war between clean energy and dirty energy!
- Have a sled riding contest
- Get a pile of coal to represent how much your school burns
- Sell crafts
- Silent auction
- Shovel driveways
- Bake sales
- Yard Sales
- Sell jell-o shots
- Kissing booth
- Invite professors to a panel discussion on energy issues
- Sell hot chocolate during morning classes or after a religious service
- Benefit w/ all types of music for all types of people
- Ask folks in a letter pitch for funds
- Have a book club and read *Coal River* by Michael Shnayerson, *Lost Mountain* by Erik Reece, or *Big Coal* by Jeff Goodell
- Wine Tasting
- Organize bike races w/ sponsors or fee
- Sell stuff on E-Bay
- Throw a party with a tiered donation price
- Raffles w/ educational materials
- Ask small business owners to place a donation jar by the register
- Poetry slam
- Masquerade Ball
- Dinner party
- Co-Host an event off-campus

## Travel Help

Getting to MJSB can be easy or difficult depending on where you are coming from and how many you are bringing. There are many ways to work out how to get here. You can utilize the fundraising money that you hopefully have plenty of to get yourselves rent-a-cars, a bus or van, tickets on greyhound, or be able to split gas. Here are ways on how to get to MJSB:

- Check out our ridepool board on the MJSBVA facebook and website or contact the MJSBVA Planning Collective
- Set up a carpool system with help from registered students that have cars
- Your school has tons of vehicles! Ask to borrow one or some. Get in contact with your transportation or facilities office.
- Can't go wrong with public transportation: Greyhound, other buses, or train.

## Final Words

A big thanks to organizers of Power Shift and the SSC Power Shift Media tool kit as this kit borrows from their ideas a lot! If you have questions, concerns, thoughts, or ideas feel free to hop on MJSBVA planning calls by contacting [kara.m.dodson@gmail.com](mailto:kara.m.dodson@gmail.com). To join one of these calls dial 712-775-7100. When asked for a code, enter 634027#.

**For more info on how to use this kit, contact Kara, the outreach coordinator, at [kara.m.dodson@gmail.com](mailto:kara.m.dodson@gmail.com) or cell # 434 509 7573.**