Standing with Standing Rock

A Role Play on the Dakota Access Pipeline

By Ursula Wolfe-Rocca

Like many teachers, I use my summers to read, learn, and fill gaps in my knowledge and curriculum. Last summer, I took a weeklong course with Colin Calloway on Native American history. Calloway writes, "American history without Indians is mythology—it never happened." (Calloway, 2012, p. 11) All week, he demanded two things of us: 1. that we not accept the inevitability of "what happened" and 2. that our historical analysis and curricula include Indian people as full participants in their own histories and in the history of the United States.

When I reflected honestly on my own U.S. history and government curriculum, I decided that on #1, I was doing a passable job. But on #2, I was a failure. I knew too that I was not alone. Sarah Shear of Penn State Altoona carried out an exhaustive analysis of state-mandated U.S. history standards in all 50 states. She and her collaborators found that 87 percent of references to American Indians portray them in a pre-1900 context. (Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015) Moreover, when they do appear in this early U.S. history they often do so as standard tropes. As Shear explained, "What [my students] told me is that they learned about Thanksgiving and Columbus Day. Every once in a while a student would mention something about the Trail of Tears. It was incredibly frustrating."

When we get to modern history, the erasure of Indigenous people is even more complete. Here, standards and curricula "largely depicted Indigenous peoples as existing in the distant past and are thereby marginalized from the American present." Shear's study found that 17 states did not include

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One of the most common signs at the Oceti Sakowin camp of the Standing Rock Sioux. "Water Is Life" is the animating principle of the people working to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline.

any post-1900 standards related to the teaching of Indigenous peoples: "Nothing about treaties, land rights, water rights," according to Shear. "Nothing about the fact that tribes are still fighting to be recognized and determine sovereignty." Curricula that overemphasize American Indians in the past, in ways that often reinforce stereotypes and misinformation, coupled with a total absence of modern Indigenous history, leads students to believe, in Shear's words, "that all Indians are dead." (Landry, 2014)

> *"Our rights are being taken away. You're stealing our rights so you can benefit other people. That's what's happening here."*

In the final weeks of summer, as I looked to the year ahead, my promise to myself was to push hard against the forces of erasure that Shear's research identified and to hold true to Calloway's non-negotiables for approaching Native history. At the same time, my social media feeds began to blow up with references to a protest of Indigenous peoples in North Dakota. The more I read and learned about the Standing Rock resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline, the more obvious it became that this story must make its way into my curriculum. Here was a fascinating and important story—a story that literally *cannot* be told without recognizing Native peoples as full participants in their own, and U.S., history.

I put out a call to other teachers, educators, and activists who might be interested in collaborating on some curriculum. I wanted to roll out the lessons in the days before or after Thanksgiving. This timing, I believed, would be a powerful symbolic rejection of the lies about Indian people promulgated in our national Thanksgiving myths, in favor of a real story, about real Indians, leading a powerful movement in the 21st century. Joined in the work by my fellow Lake Oswego High School teacher, Andrew Duden, and Rethinking Schools curriculum editor Bill Bigelow, we quickly agreed that the story lent itself well to a role play and got to work.

Setting the Stage

Andrew and I both teach a sophomore-level U.S. History and Government class at Lake Oswego High School in Lake Oswego, Oregon, an affluent suburb of Portland. After spending the first quarter of the year on an election project, we began the second quarter with an investigation and critique of our textbook's treatment of Columbus and Native peoples. For us, this was a natural place to insert a mini-unit on Standing Rock, even as our curriculum map indicated we should be in the midst of teaching about Colonial America and the American Revolution. Surely, we thought, students' grasp of the themes of early U.S. history could only be deepened by learning about a modern example involving the rights of Indigenous people.

Before launching the role play, we wanted to give students a visceral and visual sense of the resistance under way along the Missouri River. We thought immediately of Amy Goodman's wonderful coverage on *Democracy Now!*, and specifically, of the horrifying footage of the use of dogs against protestors/Water Protectors by a private security firm (*Democracy Now!*, 2016). We also used "The Standing Rock Protests by the Numbers," a short documentary posted at the *Los Angeles Times* (Etehad and Tchekmedyian, 2016). We asked students to jot down questions that emerged as they watched. Afterward, students shared out their questions and it didn't take long for them to recognize and frame many of the fundamental issues at stake. Gavin asked, "Are the protestors more angry about the possibility of oil spills or that they're building on burial grounds?" Kisa asked, "What guarantee does the pipeline company have against the breaking or leaking of the pipe?" Tatum wrote, "Is this pipeline really needed? What is it for? Can they move it somewhere else?" Vivian asked, "Who owns the land the pipeline is being built through?" Finally, Callie wondered, "Does the government care about what could happen to the water of these tribes?" These questions not only built toward the role play to come, but also generated possible research questions for the entire unit.

The Role Play

We liked the idea of a role play for a couple reasons. Our first and most important goal was to create a context for students to confront the complex social reality of the Dakota Access Pipeline and the resistance movement to which it has given rise. That social reality includes the history and contemporary status of Indigenous rights, the power of the fossil fuel industry, the support for pipeline infrastructure

from segments of organized labor, and the extent to which our government is protecting—or failing to protect—the land, water, and air. The role play asks students to explore these complicated dynamics as active participants. Reading *about* historical figures

"You can sit there and say the pipeline is safe, but it's not your water that's going to be polluted."

is like standing on the sidewalk looking at a house: You can recognize its basic shape, color, and perhaps how many levels it has. Actually *assuming* the identity of these historical figures allows you to step through the front door and explore what's inside: How many rooms does it have? What's the function of each? How are they connected? Which is the most spacious and light? Which the darkest and most cramped? Is it well-built or flimsy? We hoped this role play would enable students to navigate the #noDAPL movement from inside the house, rather than as a bystander peering in from outside. Another of our considerations was that at the moment we were writing, there was little mainstream media attention directed toward Standing Rock, so in some way, the role play was aspirational—a way of insisting that this is a Big Deal, even if that is not reflected in the media. Our aim was for students to know what was happening, but also, perhaps what was *not* happening, and to begin to wonder about why.

The setting of the role play is a meeting, called by the president, to hear input on whether the Dakota Access Pipeline should be completed. Students, representing five different groups, must convince him that the project should be abandoned or allowed to proceed. Two of the groups are in direct conflict:

- Members of the **Standing Rock Sioux Tribe**, protesting the pipeline and encamped along the Missouri River in North Dakota
- **Energy Transfer Partners**, the oil company building the pipeline

The other three groups we selected provide additional context on the question of whether the pipeline should be built:

- **Iowa farmers** who have brought lawsuits and protested another section of the same pipeline
- **Our Children's Trust**, youth activists suing the federal government over its insufficient responses to and action on climate change
- **North America's Building Trades Unions**, which represent the workers who consider themselves direct beneficiaries from the pipeline's construction

After sorting students into five table groups, we distributed the role sheets, which outline each group's beliefs and interests. We asked students to read and underline important information in their roles. Next we had students answer three questions:

1. Do you support the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline? Why or why not?
2. What are the three most compelling arguments or pieces of information that you want the president to consider when making his decision to proceed with or halt the construction of the pipeline?
3. How do you think the president should respond to the Standing Rock Sioux protesters (and other protesters) currently blocking the way of the pipeline's construction?

These questions worked well, but when we recently led this activity in workshops with teachers, we asked participants to instead get into their role by writing an interior monologue. Our aim was to help participants become more invested in their role as they build a character for themselves. Here's the prompt we've offered:

> To get more deeply inside your role, write a first-person narrative or poem from the perspective of your group about the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Draw on information from your role and your own imagination to build a persona where you can explore the feelings and motivations behind your beliefs. Make sure to include: your position on the DAPL and why you see things the way you do. Are you hopeful? Are you fearful? What are your goals and aims

for the future?

At their tables, students shared their writing with each other. This conversation helped students clarify beliefs, develop positions, hone arguments, and build confidence before being asked to speak as a representative of their group.

As a way of building toward the main event, the meeting with the president, we asked students to travel around the room to meet with other groups. In this step, students both learn new information (all the roles have different material) and begin to identify potential allies and sources of opposition. In a class of roughly 30, with groups of five, we asked two students to travel and three to stay at "home base" to meet with visitors from other groups. Students spent about five to seven minutes in each group, and then rotated clockwise around the classroom to a new group. As students met with each other, they filled out a note-taking sheet [included in the accompanying teaching materials] which asked:

- What is this group's position on DAPL? Might you build an alliance? Or is this a group you will need to argue against?
- What new information did you learn from this group about DAPL?

We reminded students to speak in the first-person and stay in character, and as the meetings progressed, so did the energy level in the classroom. The more comfortable students grew with speaking as representatives of their group, the more passionate they became in defending their positions. As one would anticipate, conversations between the Standing Rock Sioux and Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) became particularly heated. Sid grabbed the attention of the whole room when, playing a member of the Standing Rock Sioux, he banged his fist on the desk and loudly proclaimed to a representative of ETP, "But we were here first, and it is *our* water that will be polluted *when*—not if—that pipeline breaks!"

Once students had assumed their characters and gathered information about the other groups in the room, they met back at home base to begin work on their presentations to the president. We asked each group to write a short opening statement that included answers to these questions:

- Who are you?
- What is your connection to the land on which the pipeline is being built?
- What do you think should happen to the DAPL and why?
- What facts and information support your position?
- Why should the president, who is supposed to represent all the people of the nation, take your side?

As students drafted their speeches, we walked around, listening in, reminding students to consider the arguments of other groups, and encourag-

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The Standing Rock Sioux's Oceti Sakowin camp, Thanksgiving weekend, 2016, located in the flood plain along the Cannonball River, North Dakota. About 3,000 lived at the camp at this point.

ing them to anticipate counterarguments and plan rebuttals.

With speeches written—and we encouraged them to practice these once or twice—we now had the whole class circle up for the meeting with the president, played by the teacher. To open the meeting, we said, "I have brought you here today to help me better understand the situation now unfolding on the Missouri River in North Dakota. Ultimately, I am trying to decide whether or not to move forward with this project. I'd love to hear your input."

Before speeches began, we explained that students should carefully listen and take notes on what they were hearing, since they would have time afterward to ask clarifying questions, state points of opposition or support, and provide additional, relevant information and background. We set a rule that if another group was mentioned in a speech they had an automatic right-to-reply. But we did not adhere too strictly to this rule, often allowing other groups to chime in and offer a point they were desperate to make. The result was a lot of heated conversation between and across groups. Occasionally, as president, I interjected a follow-up question or tried to bait a group to make sure all dimensions of each group's position got sufficient airtime.

The ETP group kicked off the discussion, since they were the ones who initiated the pipeline. As expected, they painted a picture of a nation seeking to break free from its dependence on foreign oil, emphasized the safety of their project, and touted the benefits of economic development. Before they were even done with their speech, the hands of the Sioux group were high in the air:

> "So how are *we* supposed to benefit?"
> "This is our land you are taking away."
> "You can sit there and say the pipeline is safe, but it's not *your* water that's going to be polluted."

The members of Our Children's Trust also had grievances against ETP. Riley was a particularly energized representative of this group. She found it outrageous that the company was ignoring the climate implications of the pipeline: "Oh. My. Gosh. Do you not understand that we are not going to survive if we do not take another route (than fossil fuels)?!" Callie, also of Our Children's Trust, undermined the safety arguments offered up by ETP with: "Truck or pipeline, the oil is going to be burned. We're the next generation. We need to think about that. This is the common good."

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The Standing Rock Sioux emphasized that this was not, at its core, only an environmental issue. For example, when the debate moved to how quickly the economy might transition to renewable energy, with Our Children's Trust asserting that it can happen immediately, and with ETP arguing we need "bridge" fuels, Jonah, a member of the Standing Rock group, argued: "Wait a second. This is not just about climate change. This is about our land, which everyone seems to be ignoring." Another student, also with the Sioux, stated, "Our rights are being taken away. You're stealing our rights so you can benefit other people. That's what's happening here."

The Standing Rock Sioux were not the only ones making arguments about rights and land. The Iowa Farmers emphasized how flawed and unfair the use of eminent domain was to seize their land for the pipeline. When they focused on the potential loss of their livelihood, the Building Trades Unions retorted: "But if this pipeline is abandoned, what happens to *our* jobs?"

Again and again, students were forced to consider the way statistics and language can be distorted. For example, ETP asserted they had received permits for the project. A "permit" certainly sounds official, but the Standing Rock folks were quick to explain that not all permits are alike. Sophie emphasized, "They used the wrong permit!" Sid elaborated that ETP had used a Nationwide 12 permit, usually reserved for much smaller projects, "like staircases and decks!" When ETP argued that less than 1 percent of all oil spills from pipelines result in any environmental damage, even Max, who represented the Building Trades Unions, a friend of the project, had to respond: "But isn't that statistic kind of meaningless if we do not know how many oil spills happen overall? I mean if there are like 5,000 oils spills a year, that could be 50 spills that *do* damage the environment."

After almost a full hour of discussion—we have 90-minute classes—there were still hands in the air, and lots of passionate argumentation coursing through the room; but we closed the meeting to save some time for students to reassume their own identities so they could write and reflect on what they had learned from the role play and where they were in their current thinking on the pipeline. We conceived of this writing as a way for students to transition out of their roles. For some students, this transition can be difficult, but it is a necessary step to achieve our ultimate goal: for students to begin to construct a deeper understanding of the issue, not one that has been provided for them.

Students' opinions varied considerably with a majority opposing DAPL. Maximus, reasoned the pipeline just wasn't safe: "Though it seems impressive that 450,000 barrels of oil will be transported daily, this also means that one spill will result in an incredibly large amount of oil leaking into groundwater and rivers." Kavela focused on long-term climate effects: "I think the greenhouse gases in our planet are dangerous and if we do not act on the renewable energy alternatives sooner than later we will eventually reach a point we cannot come back from." Many students homed in on historical injustices as a powerfully persuasive factor. For example, Sophie wrote, "The Sioux have spiritual connections to the land that's being tampered with and it's really unfair after all the sacred land that's already been taken from them."

A number of students who supported the pipeline were compelled by the pipeline's purported economic benefits. Anna wrote, "I think the pipeline building should not stop because our society is dependent on oil and we will become more independent from getting our own oil our own way. . . . oil prices will go down, the amount of oil will go up, getting to consumers more quickly, which benefits our economy." Of course, the notion that all this oil will stay in the United States and contribute to lowering prices is an idea that oil companies would like us to believe. But oil is a global commodity and there is no guarantee that this oil would not be exported to places it might command higher prices.

Some students offered nuanced and conditional support of the pipeline. Joe was emphatic: "If it must be made, leave the Sioux alone. It is rightfully their land, or at least it should be."

Even though students were asked to share their *own* ideas at this point, we realized, that some students simply parroted the information in their roles. Students who had played the Building Trades Unions role, for example, were more likely to write about the good, high-paying jobs associated with pipeline building, whereas students who played Iowa Farmers were more likely to write about the dangerous pollution caused by oil spills and the unfairness of the use of eminent domain to build a privately held oil pipeline. It is important, then, not to conceive of this role play—and the follow-up writing described here—as a stand-alone unit. It is an entry point, not a destination.

Taking a Stand on Standing Rock

After the role play, our students spent a couple of days examining maps, articles, documents, and photographs, all of which sought to deepen their understanding of the issues uncovered by the role play, to further the process of divorcing themselves from their roles, and to foster the construction of

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A demonstration in Bismarck, North Dakota, on Nov. 21, 2016, to protest police violence against Standing Rock Water Protectors the night before when police used water cannons in subfreezing temperatures.

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their own positions and knowledge. Students collected new facts and information, but also developed new questions, which we encouraged them to research.

Eventually, our hope is that students gain enough knowledge and perspective to take a stand on DAPL and share their position publicly. The closing act of our unit calls for students to write a letter to one of the groups or individuals in this struggle, either a letter of solidarity and appreciation or a letter of opposition and persuasion. At a minimum, the letters will be sent to the recipients; but we'll also encourage students to boost their signal by using social media to share, transmit, and promote their message.

Of course, when developing these Standing Rock lessons, we had no idea how things would unfold. But Dec. 4 brought some good news for the Water Protectors and their allies. The Army announced its decision not to grant an easement for ETP to cross under Lake Oahe. The announcement was made in a detailed letter by Jo-Ellen Darcy, assistant secretary of the Army, invoking treaty rights, calling for a full Environmental Impact Statement, admitting that outcomes of earlier environmental studies had been (improperly) withheld from the Tribe, and initiating a robust exploration of alternatives. Given that Darcy cites numerous applicable laws, one hopes the process initiated by the Army will shelter this decision from the power of the incoming president, who just a day before the Darcy letter was released, publicly stated his support of DAPL. (He also has between $500,000 and $1 million invested in ETP.) Even as the Army decision brought much celebration, it will take vigilance on behalf of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the protestors, and their allies to make sure this victory is not just temporary. Perhaps some of our students' letters will make up one small section of this quilt of vigilance.

Final Thoughts

During the negotiations that would result in the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744, a treaty between the colonial governments of Virginia and Maryland and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Onondaga orator Canasatego testified about his people's experiences with the British: "We are now straitened, and sometimes in want of Deer, and liable to many other inconveniencies, since the English came among us, and particularly from the Pen-and-Ink Work that is going on at the table." (Calloway, 2012, p. 189) The wonderful phrase "Pen-and-Ink Work" referred to the treaty that was being written while Canasatego spoke in an old courthouse in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and evokes the duplicity that characterizes so much of the history of treaty-making between Native peoples and European and American invaders. Stories abound of U.S. government officers plying negotiators with alcohol, providing documents in languages they could not read, or getting signatures from representatives who had no such authorization from their tribe. "Pen-and-Ink Work" perfectly captures the way governments used bureaucratic and pseudo-legalistic tools to obscure the very real and usually negative consequences of so many of these treaties on the Indigenous people whose lives and lands were circumscribed by them.

The situation in North Dakota has had its own "Pen-and-Ink Work": the way ETP insists it carried out a "thorough" environmental review; the way the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers allowed the use of the Nationwide 12 permit to approve the pipeline (when such a permit is usually reserved for small projects like boat ramps), which amounted to a fast-tracking of the project; the way much of the media and no one in government seems to take seriously the meaning of the phrase "unceded lands" in the history of U.S.-Sioux treaty-making. One would be historically naive to not consider that even the Army's recent denial of the easement to ETP might prove to be less than what it promises. Our job is to help students develop the skills and access the resources to cut through this "Pen-and-Ink Work" so that they can fully participate in the larger national—and international—discussion of what should be done about DAPL. While these lessons may focus on a single pipeline, during a particular historical moment, the issues raised are large, relevant, and timely: Indigenous rights, environmental racism and justice, organizing and resistance.

The demands and assertions of the Water Protectors and their allies are clear and uncompromis-

ing: water is life, defend the sacred, and #noDAPL. Our teaching must be just as clear and uncompromising in its insistence that the voices of the thousands of Indigenous people, gathered in North Dakota, take center stage—at least for a while—in our curriculum and classrooms. That would be one important step toward undermining the pernicious mythology that "all the Indians are dead" and powerfully illustrating the historical agency of Indian people as they forge a way forward, for themselves and, perhaps, for us all. ■

Ursula Wolfe-Rocca teaches social studies at Lake Oswego High School in Lake Oswego, Oregon. She writes frequently for *Rethinking Schools* magazine.

Andrew Duden teaches social studies at Lake Oswego High School in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

Bill Bigelow is curriculum editor with *Rethinking Schools* magazine and co-director of the Zinn Education Project. He co-edited *A People's Curriculum for the Earth: Teaching Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis*.

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Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Member

You are one of thousands of Indians camped on the banks of the Cannonball River, on the edge of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. The Sioux Tribes have come together to oppose the Dakota Access Pipeline, a 1,200-mile pipeline, owned by a Texas oil company named Energy Transfer Partners, which would snake across your treaty lands and through your ancestral burial grounds. The encampment on the Cannonball grows daily, as you are joined by hundreds of Native and non-Native allies.

You are part of a sovereign nation with legal standing to organize your own affairs and to control the lands allotted to your people by treaty, treaties your ancestors negotiated with the U.S. government. Although federal law requires the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to consult with the Tribe about its sovereign interests, they approved permits for the project and construction began without meaningful consultation with you.

This permitting was accomplished by deceit. Remember, this is an almost 1,200-mile pipeline going through multiple water crossings and sacred sites. But Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) used Nationwide Permit 12. For permitting purposes, they chopped the pipeline into little pieces and did an environmental assessment on these. This is the lowest-level environmental review. Nationwide Permit 12 is used for a small-scale project, like a boat ramp or something like that. It's absolute madness. If ETP had to do a genuine Environmental Impact Statement, they'd never get this pipeline approved.

Your camp on the Missouri is surrounded by signs reading "Water Is Life." You and your allies call yourselves Water Protectors, because when the pipeline leaks or bursts, the impact will be devastating, poisoning your main source of drinking water. Although ETP says that the pipeline is safe, you know it is not. Since 1995, more than 2,000 significant accidents involving oil pipelines have occurred; from 2013 to 2015, there were an average of 121 accidents every year. Your people should not suffer the health and environmental costs due to the greed of the fossil fuel industry—and their government supporters.

This is not the first time that the Sioux Nation's lands and resources have been taken without regard to tribal interests. The Sioux peoples signed treaties in 1851 and 1868, but the government broke them before the ink was dry. The 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie guaranteed the Tribes "undisturbed use and occupation" of land that included the Black Hills, a resource-rich region of western South Dakota. But in 1877, without the consent of "three-fourths of all adult male Indians" stipulated by the treaty, the government seized the Black Hills, along with the gold, timber, and minerals located there. The Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 left more than 250 of your people dead at the hands of the U.S. military. Decades later, when the Army Corps of Engineers dammed the Missouri River in 1958, it took your riverfront forests, fruit orchards, and most of your fertile farmland to create Lake Oahe. Now the Corps wants to take your clean water and sacred places by approving this river crossing.

Your protest has been peaceful, yet you have been met by violence. The National Guard, local police, and private security officers hired by ETP brought their snarling dogs, automatic rifles, sound cannons, armored police trucks, bulldozers, tear gas, pepper spray, concussion grenades, rubber bullets, and water hoses (even in sub-freezing temperatures) to use against your people.

But you are a resilient people who have survived unspeakable hardships in the past, and you will stay on this land until you achieve victory.

Energy Transfer Partners

You represent Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), which has received permission from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to construct an oil pipeline. When built, the pipeline will stretch more than 1,100 miles from oil fields in North Dakota to a river port in Illinois. This pipeline is part of a major national network of pipelines, the largest in the world, with more than 2.4 million miles of pipe to safely and cleanly transfer oil and gas throughout the nation. The construction of a new pipeline would decrease the need for oil to be shipped by either truck or rail, reducing the risk of spill, accident, or waste, and increasing the efficiency by which oil can be accessed by consumers. According to your corporate statement, "Energy Transfer has long-standing commitments to the safety of people, the environment, and our property and assets. We do this because it makes good business sense, but more importantly, it is the right thing to do. These commitments are held as fundamental core values and are an integral part of us as a partnership and a corporate citizen."

Some may be concerned with the environmental impact of building a pipeline of this size and scope. You have worked tirelessly with the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that the environmental impact of this project is minimized and conforms to all federal laws including the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Protection Act. The Army Corps of Engineers already has conducted a comprehensive environmental assessment before providing the permits necessary to build the pipeline, and that assessment and permitting process shows, without question, that the construction of this pipeline is legal and legitimate. By the way, this assessment came at considerable expense to your company.

ETP wants to protect the environment, not harm it. The transfer of fossil fuels through the nation is made significantly safer than when oil is moved by rail. One study showed that transfer of oil by pipe is 4.5 times safer than the transfer of oil by rail over the same distance. Recall some of the horrible train accidents that have occurred recently. In 2013, 47 people died when an oil train derailed in Quebec; and in 2016, 42,000 gallons of oil spilled near the Columbia River, accompanied by a massive fire, when 16 tanker cars derailed. Moreover, according to another study, less than 1 percent of all oil spills from pipelines results in any environmental damage whatsoever.

Of course, we would like to live in a world where we depend more on alternative energy sources. However, the fact remains that our country's consumption of and dependence on fossil fuels is increasing. By addressing this need in the safest way possible and reducing the risk of environmental calamity, ETP is promoting positive interstate commerce, providing new jobs, and reducing costs to consumers by helping to supply quality petroleum products at low prices. This pipeline must continue regardless of what a few law-breaking agitators say.

Iowa Farmer

You are from a farming family in Iowa. Iowa produces massive amounts of corn and soybeans, most of which is sold to feed livestock, making your state one of the largest poultry, hog, dairy cow, and cattle producers in the United States. Iowa is our country's grocery store. Without this food, the U.S. diet would be seriously compromised. A bad or contaminated crop would mean major increases on the price of food throughout the economy. You cannot afford having your farmland disrupted by pipeline construction. Even worse, an oil spill would wreak havoc on you and other Iowan farmers, as well as on the entire food economy.

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) will cut across thousands of acres of Iowa farmland, intersecting many rivers, including the Mississippi, your main source of irrigation and drinking water. When Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) sought to build in Iowa, they filed applications to use eminent domain to secure access to agricultural land owned by farmers. Eminent domain is the power of the government to take private property and convert it to public use in return for fair-market compensation. But it is supposed to be used only for the *public* good. How does this private oil pipeline help the public? Several farmers filed a lawsuit, asking the court to suspend the eviction of farmers. Since when has it been legal for a private corporation to seize farmland in the name of eminent domain? ETP is not a government agency! They are a private corporation!

The judge dismissed the case. That was in May of 2016. The government immediately began valuing your farmland for seizure. As far as you're concerned, this is theft. ETP is getting to build a pipeline that will earn it billions of dollars, while your community loses its livelihood. The whole thing stinks of corporate greed and the federal government corrupted by the deep pockets of lobbyists representing oil billionaires.

ETP promised that construction wouldn't begin in Iowa until it had secured all necessary state and federal permits, pushing work on the project into 2017, which would interfere with spring planting. Not only that, but you worry that the construction of the pipeline on your land will adversely impact the soil, which takes thousands of years to develop. When bulldozers and trenchers cross farmland, the soil compacts, making it impossible for root systems to develop and creating problems for proper water drainage. Restoration after this kind of damage is very difficult, very expensive, and takes generations.

You are also concerned about places where the pipeline crosses rivers, where flooding and water corrosion may cause a dangerous leakage. You need a healthy water table to irrigate your crops. Oil-polluted water will mean irreparable damage to thousands of acres of crops.

So, now you are one of 200 people following the lead of the Standing Rock Sioux. You are in an encampment on the Mississippi outside of Sandusky, Iowa. This small group is growing by the week, and recently a delegation from Standing Rock visited you to show support.

Our Children's Trust

In 2015, you and 20 other young people, from across the United States, sued the U.S. government in a landmark climate change lawsuit, *Juliana, et al. v. United States, et al*. The case accused the government of willfully ignoring the implications of irreversible climate change. You believe that by permitting, encouraging, and enabling the continued extraction, production, transport, and use of fossil fuels, your government has created a dangerous, destabilizing climate system for the country and for young people, in particular. Your generation will be saddled with the climate crises of the future and your leaders should be held accountable for taking action now. In causing climate change, you believe the U.S. government has violated your constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property.

While both the government and fossil fuel industry tried to have your case thrown out, you scored a huge victory on Nov. 10, 2016, when District Court Judge Ann Aiken for the District of Oregon, Eugene Division, issued an order that denied both the fossil fuel industry's and the federal government's motions to dismiss this case, officially giving you standing in court. This case is going to trial! While a long way from over, this case is an important tactic for climate activists. You believe that in order to address the climate crisis, we need all kinds of activism—lawsuits, protests, boycotts—waged by all kinds of people from around the world. The goal of these actions must be to get the world to end its dependence on fossil fuels and to embrace renewable energy. You have been thrilled by the #noDAPL protest movement—the movement led by the Standing Rock Sioux in North Dakota to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline.

The Dakota Access Pipeline project is exactly the kind of project your lawsuit cited as evidence of the U.S. government's dereliction of duty. The people of Standing Rock are absolutely right to say no to this 1,134-mile black snake that would carry toxic fracked oil from North Dakota across four states and under the Missouri River, just upstream from the Standing Rock Sioux Nation. Though Energy Transfer Partners—the company building DAPL—insists the pipeline is safe, you know the statistics: Since 2010, more than 3,300 incidents of crude oil and liquefied natural gas leaks or ruptures have occurred on U.S. pipelines. These incidents have killed 80 people, injured 389 more, and cost $2.8 billion in damages.

But the safety of the pipeline is not your biggest concern. Even if the pipeline were perfectly safe, what will happen when this oil gets to its destination? It will be burned. It will add to the unsustainable rise in greenhouse gases, which will continue to heat the planet.

It is urgent that this pipeline be stopped. We are breaking every record—hottest year on record, highest sea surface temperatures on record, highest greenhouse gases on record. The Arctic continues to lose sea ice, forcing walruses to shore and fish populations to seek cooler waters that cannot be found. Harmful algal blooms spread in the Pacific. Killer cyclones worldwide are well above average. Now is not the time for more fossil fuels. And yet, even with these clear signs of impending climate devastation all around us, the U.S. government is enabling the fossil fuel industry to build more pipelines, to ease the extraction and burning of even more oil.

While the members of the Standing Rock Tribe have historic, cultural, and spiritual ties to the land on which the pipeline is being built, you believe we *all* have a stake in the future of our planet and should be joining in the fight against fossil fuels everywhere. #noDAPL. #nomorepipelines.

North America's Building Trades Unions

Your organization represents 14 building trades unions with more than 3 million members. It's the workers in your unions who are responsible for literally *building* this country. You built the bridges, the highways, the skyscrapers, the schools, the hospitals, people's homes—and, yes, the pipelines that transport the fuel to power this great country.

You know that there is controversy surrounding the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. You respect people's right to peacefully protest. But the country needs this pipeline to provide for our energy needs. And building this pipeline provides good, family-wage jobs. These are not fast-food jobs. These are not minimum wage jobs, where workers are forced sometimes to piece together two or even three jobs to make ends meet. The Dakota Access Pipeline is providing 4,500 excellent jobs—jobs with health care and other benefits. Jobs that pay as much as $37 an hour. Jobs that can allow workers to save money for their kids' college education—jobs that allow workers to put something away for retirement.

Some people say that these are "just temporary jobs," as if there is something wrong with that. But stop and think: All construction jobs are "temporary jobs." That's the point, to complete a project and then move on to another project. And think of all the people besides the pipeline workers who benefit from this work. Recently, you saw an article from a newspaper in Cherokee, Iowa—a town with about 5,000 people. Are people there demonstrating against the pipeline? No. They are cheering it. People in Cherokee are thrilled by all the business that the pipeline construction has brought. As one city official said: "When I drive in in the morning, I see all the construction rigs parked in hotel parking lots. Our hotels are full. I see a lot of people in lines at the grocery store that I've never seen before." Energy Transfer Partners estimates that, in Iowa alone, the pipeline will generate $33.1 million in state tax revenue and $2.1 million in local sales tax revenue.

The Dakota Access Pipeline is a huge and magnificent project that will stretch 1,172 miles, across four states, and carry as much as 570,000 barrels of crude oil every single day. But don't misunderstand. Your organization is not just about building fossil fuel infrastructure. You also support building renewable energy projects like solar and wind. And you support building nuclear, another source of energy that creates no climate-changing greenhouse gases.

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, the largest labor federation in the United States, also supports building this pipeline. He says: "Pipelines are less costly, more reliable and less energy intensive than other forms of transporting fuels, and pipeline construction and maintenance provides quality jobs to tens of thousands of skilled workers." The Army Corps of Engineers has already said that the pipeline is safe, and you know that the skilled workers of North America's Building Trades Unions will make sure to keep it safe.

Dakota Access Pipeline Role Play Questions

As you read your role, please underline important information about your position, beliefs, goals, and motivations. Then, answer the following questions.

1. Do you support the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline? Why or why not?

2. What are the three most compelling arguments or pieces of information that you want the president to consider when making his decision to proceed with or halt the construction of the pipeline?

3. How do you think the president should respond to the Standing Rock Sioux protesters (and other protesters) currently blocking the way of the pipeline's construction?

Meeting with Other Groups

Group name	What is this group's position on DAPL? Might you build an alliance? Or is this a group you will need to argue against?	What new information did you learn from this group about DAPL?