

GVRD: Find a solution

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On Mother's Day, my husband and I visited the grave site of my mother-in-law at All Soul's Catholic Cemetery in Vallejo. This was a connection with our past and a deep and moving experience for us both.

Having heard about the nearby Native American Glen Cove sacred site along the Carquinez Strait, we decided to stop by there as well. When we arrived, we found many members of the local Native community and their supporters encamped there in order to stop the Greater Vallejo Recreation District from destroying this sacred ancestral burial ground and turning it into a parking lot, bathrooms and paved trail. Spiritual leaders from Ohlone, Miwok, Pomo and other local tribes consider the proposed development plans to be an offensive desecration of this holy area that has already seen many years of abuse in the hands of settlers.

My husband and I found this beautiful, somewhat hidden area, to be quite a magical place. We were taken on a "walk about" of the site. We learned where the shellmounds were and saw the creek and the beach, which is the Ohlone's last land connection along the Bay. We learned how their ancestors' burial site was manipulated (without prior consent), this being a violation of their human and religious rights.

This sacred site in Vallejo offers so much for the City of Vallejo. It offers an opportunity for the city to embrace a very unique place and show that it respects and preserves the history that took place at this site.

Richmond, like Vallejo,

is made up of a very diverse population. In the City of Richmond, we are fortunate to have the Native American Health Center and, as mayor, I am profoundly impressed with the kindness, strength and inspiration that this part of our community brings to Richmond.

Richmond has an opportunity to protect sacred sites on our shoreline as well, and I am an advocate for

the protection of those areas. Respecting indigenous people's rights, as part of our diverse community in the Bay Area, elevates our multi-cultural experience. We are all enriched with such an experience and are able to better address the critical challenges that we face collectively in the 21st century, like global warming and continuing wars.

I call upon the GVRD to find an amiable solution. As someone who works closely with the Native American community in Richmond, I would be happy to be a part of a meeting to include the Sacred Site committee, the GVRD, and the Native American Heritage Commission Board (in Sacramento). It would be in the interest of all to sit down together, discuss the situation and hopefully come to a mutually beneficial resolution.

Gayle McLaughlin

Mayor

City of Richmond

