



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

Wasting a crisis

While filming the Len Babb Movie Project — we are eight months into this endeavor and making tremendous progress — cinematographer Sam Pyke and I have covered thousands of miles, visited six states, and interviewed some truly incredible Americans.

Perhaps none more so than Victoria Jackson and her family. Victoria is a two-time Ranch Rodeo World Champion, an accomplished photographer, author of two books, and an enrolled member of the Ft. McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone tribe.

Victoria lives in Elko, but wanted to meet us at her uncle’s ranch in McDermitt, Nevada, where we could film the family working together as they roped and doctored calves, and to conduct interviews in the comfort of the

family home.

And so it was that, while we were out in the spitting snow filming Victoria’s uncles and her 80-year-old father, Al Jackson, roping calves in any icy pen — and almost never missing a heel shot — 3,000 miles east of us a wild collection of yahoos were storming the walls and hallways of the U.S. Capitol.

Out in McDermitt, we were blissfully unaware of all that and our collective response upon learning of the mess was in full contrast to the high-pitched squealing, frothing outrage, and eyebrow shaving that has become the national response to virtually every new “crisis” fed to us via the 24-hour-news loop.

I can assure you that all of that behavior in Washington, DC — whatever piqued position you may hold on the subject — looks very different from the middle of an Indian Reservation in the sagebrush reaches of the Great Basin.

That’s probably because the first victims of North American-style cancel culture, an abominable tendency seething just under the surface of both major American political parties — maybe every political party everywhere — were the Native Americans.

People throughout our history have been so upset with the Native point of view and their chosen manners of living that Native people

have been starved; shot for sport; compelled to surrender their means of self-defense; force marched or entrained thousands of miles from their homes; stripped of their languages and religions by brute force; robbed or cheated out of their material possessions; and ultimately herded into government re-education camps where many of their descendants remain today.

The reasons given then were essentially the same as they are given now to justify power grabs — what changes is only which group of people is threatened with cancellation. And that way of thinking almost always begins with breathless references to the “public safety” trope.

It’s alarming — at least it should be — to see some of those same ideas have actually been dusted off and even publicly uttered by various power brokers and elected representatives, who see in the Capitol riots not an ongoing failure in their collective governance, but an opportunity to silence and destroy the opposition.

The response in McDermitt was no response at all. To get worked up over the events in DC requires at least some remaining belief that the American government is an effective and honest representative entity that works exclusively in the best interests of its people.

It isn’t hopeless in McDermitt, though it may



PHOTO BY CRAIG RULLMAN

Victoria Jackson catching her horse.

feel that way sometimes. The suicide rate on reservations all over America is appalling, and folks in McDermitt — considered second only to Pine Ridge in South Dakota in terms of reservation poverty — somehow survive while earning far less than half the average national income.

They don’t have a casino, can’t get one, have no water rights, can’t get them, and are so far away from anywhere, the people living there are essentially an afterthought to an afterthought.

After several hundred years of ceaseless “canceling” by the dominant culture, they have been locked into a cycle of poverty and despair with almost zero way to escape — which of course is the desired end-state of cancel-culture thinking.

Still, when we arrived at Arlo Crutcher’s place the family welcomed us with incredible hospitality, outdoing themselves with huge

meals and a warm embrace of the Movie Project.

Victoria, her father Al Jackson, and the Crutcher brothers: Rick, Arlo, and Brad, have spent the bulk of their lives riding for horseback outfits across the West — from the Big Boquillas in Arizona to the 3-Dot in California, the ZX in Paisley, and of course the Nevada legends: The Spanish, the IL, and the YP.

Cowboying and the Pow-Wow Trail, they will tell you, have enabled their family to earn a living, to remain close

See BUNKHOUSE on page 11



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