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Seminar Reflection

1. (The Interview)

The interview that I conducted turned out to be great, with the exception of a few things. Something that stood out to me about this process was how much my interviewee had to say about the Animas River Spill, which was our main topic. After asking a question, he could go on for more than 5 minutes on just one question, and then bring himself back to the question. This was also a difficulty for me, because I did not want the interview to be too long and full of unnecessary information. Some of the things that Travis Stills, my interviewee stated were very intriguing and useful to my interview, but some other things could have been left without. Next time, I would like to maybe narrow my questions down, and create less questions so that the person I am interviewing can create longer statements, and share everything they need. This would also make less of a worry for me about the length of the interview. In addition, I learned that Travis was very involved in this specific issue, and that the river spill affects people differently then you may have thought. Overall, conducting this interview was a broad step into becoming a more mature student, as well as gaining new insights and opinions on current events.

2. (Habits of Mind)

One of the biggest issues that we now face involving the Animas River spill would be future implications, and the steps we must take in order to clean up the mess that has been made. After a lot of research and listening to others opinions, the best option for Silverton and those who are affected by the spill, would be to list Silverton as a Superfund site. First, Silverton and the surrounding area has been on the EPA’s watch for years, and has been on the National Priorities List for a very long time. Travis Stills, and environmentalist lawyer explained, “The mess that Silverton is in right now is too immense and too expensive for local authorities to handle on their own.” Moreover, this problem has been on the table for too long, and if we keep pushing the solution further and further, the problem could also get worse. Superfund would be the quickest way to clean up the spill, and could also open up the eyes of the people of Silverton on the larger issue at hand, which is the 20,000 abandoned mines that surround the town. Last, a Superfund in Silverton would ease the stress that people had after the spill, knowing that the water and town in safe, healthy, and back to the way it was. Overall, a Superfund would be the best possible answer for this spill, and many others that are waiting to happen in the future.

3. (Habit of Mind)

The history of mining has been a long, extremely key part of the spill, and has most definitely impacted this issue, and could have even prevented the issue. Large amounts of mines in Southwest Colorado have been abandoned since the early 1900’s, when mining was very popular. An author from the New York Times stated, “On Aug. 5, a team contracted by the E.P.A. was investigating the Gold King Mine, an abandoned gold mine near Silverton, Colo., that had been leaking toxic water at varied rates for years. The goal was to figure out how to stop that leak.” (Turkewitz 1). This means that these mines that have been left untouched for decades are leaking toxic water without us knowing, and another spill like this could be waiting to happen anywhere in the Southwest. There has been no treatment for mines like these, and the water behind them will continue to rise and become backed up, until we find a solution to treat this disaster and the others that are to come. Overall, the history of mining has most definitely been involved in this spill, and will continue to be involved because of how previous miners have left the mines that are spilling today.

4. (Habit of Heart)

One of the most important lessons that I have learned as a student through this project would be involving perspective and evidence. Going into this project, when I first heard of the Superfund as a resolution to the spill, I was very against this idea. I did not think Silverton should agree to this at all, and that the Superfund was not a good thought. After reading so many articles on this issue, seeing the mine itself in Silverton, and interviewing and environmentalist lawyer, I had changed my mind. I now believe that a Superfund would be the best possible solution for the river spill because of what I saw as a lack of motivation to clean up the spill in Silverton. In addition, the lawyer that I was interviewing explained how the Superfund would be the least expensive, and least environmentally challenging to undergo. After listening to multiple perspectives and being open to other ideas, I have changed my mind, and seen the other side of the resolutions for the river spill. On the other hand, I also got a deeper understanding of how important it is to have evidence to push your ideas further, and to back up any claim with something to support it. During the seminar, I made sure every statement that I made was backed up with relevant, and meaningful evidence. The evidence that I chose made what I had to say more purposeful, and cleared up any confusion anyone could have. Hearing other students evidence also provided clarity and a strong voice to those who were speaking. To finish, strong evidence, and an being open to other perspectives is something that is very important to have during projects like these, and made me grow and develop in every way as a student and as a person.