

## White Face collects award for Defenders of the Black Hills

By Andrea J. Cook, Journal staff  
Rapid City Journal, Nov. 16, 2007



**Charmaine White receives Nuclear-Free Award** Charmaine White Face returned from an October trip to Austria recharged and determined to continue spreading her message about the damage uranium is doing to people and the environment.

The founder and coordinator of Defenders of the Black Hills spent a week in Austria meeting others dedicated to making the world nuclear free.

White Face was there to accept the Nuclear-Free Future Award for Resistance on behalf of the Defenders of the Black Hills. "I've heard it called the Nobel Prize for environmentalists," said White Face, who admits she was "flabbergasted" upon learning that her organization would receive the \$10,000 cash prize.

The award is a project of the Franz Moll Foundation for the Coming Generations. Cash prizes have been awarded in three categories each year for the past 10 years.

"It's not something you apply for; someone has to nominate you," she said.

White Face and Defenders of the Black Hills were nominated by a Minnesota man, Richard Bancroft. Bancroft and Claus Biegert, the founder of the award, connected with White Face on a trip through South Dakota in 2006.

"It was just an accidental meeting," White Face said. The meeting led to an explanation of the efforts of White Face and Defenders of the Black Hills to protect the environment in the land the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868 awarded the Sioux Nation.

Bancroft's nomination was passed on to a jury that determined the 2007 awardees.



**3 Nuclear free award recipients: left to right: Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima, Japan, accepted for Mayors for Peace for Solutions; Freda Meissner-Blau, Austria, Lifetime Achievement; Charmaine White Face and Defenders of the Black Hills for Resistance** In addition to White Face and Defenders of the Black Hills, awards were presented to Dr. Siegwart Horst Gunther of Germany for his research on health risks associated with depleted uranium in Iraq and Tadatoshi Akiba of Japan and Mayors for Peace for their campaign against nuclear weapons.

Lifetime achievement awards were also presented to Freda Meissner-Blau of Austria for her efforts to make Austria nuclear free and Armin Weiss of Germany for his anti-nuclear activism.

The awards ceremony took place in the Archbishop's residence in Salzburg, Austria.



**Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima, Dr. Horst Siegwart Gunther from Germany who won for Education, Freda Meissner-Blau, Austria, Charmaine White Face and Defenders of the Black Hills for Resistance, Armin Weiss from Germany who won for Lifetime Achievement.** In addition to meeting, this year's recipients and many previous award winners also attended the awards ceremony and participated in a public symposium on renewable energy versus and nuclear energy.

White Face was impressed with Europeans' progress in using renewable energy sources.

"The United States is 50 years behind," White Face said.

Austria and Denmark do not use nuclear energy, and Germany and France are trying to move that way, she said.

White Face returned with "more energy" and a desire to broaden her message about the damage uranium residues are doing to people and the environment, she said.

White Face has bachelor's degrees in physical science, biology, and education. She took additional course work to qualify for minors in chemistry and microbiology.

"I'm a scientist, but I taught," White Face said.

She is also a mother, grandmother, writer and the spokesperson for the Teton Sioux Treaty Council.

All of her experience as a scientist and teacher coalesced when she founded Defenders of the Black Hills five years ago.

The organization of volunteers includes Native Americans and non-Natives who are united in their quest to uphold the treaties; and while they wait for the treaties to be upheld, their focus is to restore and protect the environment of the Black Hills and surrounding treaty area.

"People misunderstand: Our work is not about reservations, it's about the region and the impact the environment in this area has on the rest of the country," White Face said.

She believes her message is being heard. She receives many speaking requests from

non-Native people interested in learning about the hazards of nuclear contamination.

The \$10,000 award will be used to help further the work of Defenders of the Black Hills, White Face said.

In Austria, White Face found a common bond with the people honored and those she met. The trip reaffirmed that although there is more to do, "Yes, we are doing the right work," she said. "I felt really, really good."

Contact Andrea Cook at 394-8423 or [andrea.cook@rapidcityjournal.com](mailto:andrea.cook@rapidcityjournal.com). The original article was taken from the Rapid City Journal - [click here](#) for the original article.