

The William P. CLEMENTS CENTER

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Established in fall 1996, the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies at Southern Methodist University promotes research by awarding grants and fellowships, supporting the publication of academic research, and providing public programming on fields of inquiry related to Texas the American Southwest and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

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News from Co-Director Andrew Graybill

Because the Clements Center is a small operation and typically begins each year with a full slate of academic and public programming, it is a challenge for us to respond to

current events that intersect with our areas of interest and expertise. But this fall offered a notable exception. Farina King, the 2016-17 David J. Weber Fellow for the Study of Southwestern America, has closely followed the evolving controversy over the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was originally slated to cross the Missouri River above the largely white community of Bismarck, North Dakota, but was rerouted to pass beneath Lake Oahe, immediately upstream of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. Inspired by the protests that erupted in spring 2016 and built momentum throughout the summer and into the fall, Farina organized a public forum held on October 24, "Why Standing Rock Matters: Can Oil and Water Mix?" The event, co-sponsored with SMU's Maguire Energy Institute, drew more than 200 people to Crum Auditorium in SMU's Edwin L. Cox School of Business.

The goal was to feature multiple perspectives on the dispute, and to that end, Farina – with assistance from several key individuals – recruited panelists representing a variety of different constituencies: Kelly Morgan, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Archaeologist; Craig Stevens, a spokesman for the Midwest Alliance for Infrastructure Now (MAIN); Cody Two Bears, a Tribal Councilman representing the Cannonball District of the Standing Rock Sioux; Eric Reed (Choctaw), a Dallas attorney specializing in American Indian law; Ty Benchaita, a managing partner with B&G Products, which focuses on the petrochemical industry; and Michael Lawson, president of MLL Consulting, a historical research firm located in suburban Washington, D.C. Clements Center Co-Director Neil Foley kicked off the conversation, which was moderated by Ben Voth, associate professor of communications and public affairs in SMU's Meadows School of the Arts.



"Why Standing Rock Matters" forum at SMU

The format was simple: each participant was allowed a maximum of seven minutes to share his or her outlook on the contretemps.

Following these prepared remarks,

the floor was then opened to the audience, which was composed of students, faculty, and the broader public. The ensuing conversation was robust, even tense at times, and focused especially on questions of native sovereignty, energy security, riparian rights, and environmental racism. The Dallas Morning News and the Wall Street Journal both provided coverage of the event.

Since this important forum took place, Standing Rock has become a national cause, garnering support from the public, movie stars, and even professional sports teams. In December, federal officials announced that they would not approve permits for easement under the lake. The Army Corps of Engineers recommended an environmental impact statement be prepared with full public input and analysis to explore a possible rerouting of the pipeline. As this newsletter goes to print, protesters are still on the ground at Standing Rock, living in the bitterly cold North Dakota winter and vowing not to leave until the pipeline is gone.

We at the Clements Center feel that it is our duty to support not only research of a historical nature, but also public programming on important contemporary issues, and thus we were pleased to be part of this important discussion. We want to acknowledge and thank those who made it possible: the forum participants (several of whom traveled from considerable distance to attend); Ruth Ann Elmore, the Center's Assistant Director, who coordinated all of the logistics with her typical aplomb; Steve Denson, Director of the MBA Diversity Initiative in the Cox School of Business and member of the Center's internal advisory board; and above all Farina King, who spent countless hours strategizing about how to maximize the reach and impact of the forum.