

July 4, 2007

From: Robert Bardell

Since I am the author of an article, *The Lost City in the East Bay Hills*, which is available for download on *eastbayhillpeople.com*, I am moved to respond to Leigh Marymor's May 20th letter to James Benney. I have several objections to ideas expressed or implied in that letter.

Nearly all of the sites reported on in either *Native American Indian Sites in the East Bay Hills* or *The Lost City in the East Bay Hills* are on public land. The public does not require permission from "local land managers" to visit public land, nor does it need permission to publicize interesting features of that land.

The "public patrimony in the East Bay" is truly public. It is not the property of any particular group of so-called "stakeholders." Of course, if there are any legitimate stakeholders in the matter of public access to public lands, then we, hikers and explorers, are surely among the foremost, for we are the ones using the land for its intended recreational purpose.

No one owns California history, which begins, not with the Spanish occupation, but with the arrival of the first people in the area now known as "California." In particular, archaeological traces of the first Californians belong to us all if they sit on public land. They are not the property of the "most-likely Native American descendants."

Neither James Benney nor I have published GPS coordinates or explicit directions to truly sensitive sites like the Volvon cave featured in *Native American Indian Sites in the East Bay Hills*. Bedrock mortar sites are not particularly sensitive. They are collections of rocks with holes in them. Rocks—hard, obdurate, and not easily damaged, except, perhaps, by bulldozers or crazed archaeologists intent on fabricating an incident that demonstrates the danger of publicizing the existence of Native American sites.

Publication of directions to "cultural sites" is not a "breach [*sic*] of basic ethics" for someone who is not an archaeologist or otherwise bound by a code of professional ethics. We, who have published such directions and maps, are just regular, everyday people—John and Jane Does—who are hikers, explorers, and history buffs. To us, the cultural sites in question are sources of wonder and amazement. They are windows into the past. We want to communicate a bit of that wonder. We believe the public has a right to know about these sites, and that no group, no matter how well-intentioned, possesses any countervailing right to censor, edit, or in any way block access to that knowledge. We're not talking about national security here.

The notion that publicizing the existence of bedrock mortar sites places those sites in jeopardy is far-fetched. Very few people care about California history and fewer care about the Native American component of it. The specter of "potential harm" to those sites is nothing but a convenient scare tactic employed by people who, for their own reasons, don't want anyone—except those sworn to secrecy—to know about them.

The notion that *Native American Indian Sites in the East Bay Hills* or the *Lost City in the East Bay Hills* encourage irresponsible site visitation, which is implicit in BARARA's condemnation, is preposterous given the tone of and the admonitions in those works. The idea that only visits under the aegis of BARARA or other vetted organizations are "responsible" insults the citizens of a free country who should be presumed responsible until proven otherwise.