

Kaila Rose  
In Support of HB 4007

I write in support of HB 4007, and I write to implore the committee to support it as well.

I know that you will hear and read many testimonies in support, as the communities that continue to recover from the incalculable losses resulting from fire—the Archie Creek Fire, specifically—were only able to rebuild any semblance of life due to the support they gave each other.

It is true, no human lives were lost, for which we are all profoundly thankful. And it is also true that the community pulled together to offer what support we could during such a time of traumatic need, which has helped many families stay on the land that is our home. Also, the extensive work of Jeff Mornarich and his team assisted in supporting us through their lawsuit against PacifiCorp. But it would be untrue to say that anyone in this community will every fully recover. Nevertheless, we keep trying.

Having to start again after losing everything should not be further punished by only being able to retain a minuscule percentage of the monetary aid from the lawsuit that we fought so hard for. My family will only be able to have about 19% of what the settlement gave them. This can barely help them with any of the costs of trying to return to their lives. Lost home, lost property, lost forest, lost wages, lost.

You can work toward helping these families recover by supporting this bill to provide tax exemptions for the wildfire victim's settlements. Please, make HB 4007 an Oregon law.

If you care to read about my personal experience with this event and changes of life, please see below. If not, please just vote in support of HB 4007.

#### About the Archie Creek Fire

I was working in my food truck in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. It had been a very busy summer, despite COVID, and I was too busy to reply to a text from my father on the 7th of September, 2020. It was a video he sent me from his early evening swim in Rock Creek: beautiful, and green, and warm. He said "Sure wish you were here with me."

The next day before I opened, at 3:41pm EST on the 8th of September 2020, I remembered to respond to my dad and say, "Man, I wish I was too!!!!" Boy, would it have been a nice escape from the hot streets of New York City to be back in that beautiful water. He instantly responded with another photo and wrote: "Well that was yesterday and this is today. There are

fires coming at us from at least two directions. We have loaded up some essentials and are forced to evacuate. I am driving up the road now to meet mom at the Gl[i]de post office. Wish us luck. I love you so much."

I am not quite sure how to describe what I felt when I read this text from my father. At first, I was just upset with myself for having been too busy to not respond to his first text sooner. But, then again, and as we would all learn in the next few hours as this fire progressed, there was nothing I could have said or done in any amount of time to change what was happening.

My parents had 30 minutes to evacuate. They, and my god parents Patricia and Keith Lee, went to a friend's ranch safely down river to stay together and wait.

There have been fires before, and there were always discussions of what the plans would be if there was need to leave the property, but never with the thought of losing it fully. After all, this land is everything for my parents who have shared their whole lives together there, and we believed there would be nothing disastrous enough to separate them from it.

And then what became named the "Archie Creek Fire" came. And they all had to leave. And within the next few hours of hearing "there are fires coming at us," everything was lost.  
Everything.

Within the first twelve hours, 72,000 acres of land burnt. With it went: the home my father had built, the sanctuaries my mother had created, the trees under which my sister and I were born and grew up, under which my parents were married, where my sister was married, where I was later married . . . under which my sister and I both processed divorce over the years . . . where I spent the my last moments with my precious canine children and buried my baby with my own hands—and the land with which I remain connected even if my full, daily life exists elsewhere. The rocks and waters remain with the ashes of everything else.

This fire changed everything. For myself, the immediate changes were me leaving my job and home in New York City to return to Oregon and help log, clear the land, and start replanting and rebuilding with my family. Before I knew it, I had been gone from my own life for six months, spending every day on the destroyed land trying to create some new semblance of a life for my parents out of our labors of love. Over all, this was an unfathomable period of regeneration in the hopes of providing something worth having hope in again. I got to work with my father and god father, learning skills and a craft that I never thought I would know. And that was good. I was able to eventually sleep on the property next to the grave of my dog, whom I had buried in December 2019, in the tiny house that became the first completed project on the land. I was able to keep watch over the terrain that once felt so secluded but now is left more exposed than any of us had ever imagined. Yet, with all of the positive growth and time spent with my family, those six months were the hardest times I have ever had in my life and have forever altered me beyond comprehension.

For the lingering effects on my own life and experience of this disaster, I can only list as succinctly as possible the reality it created:

- I will never be able to process or move past the loss that I feel.
- I practice every day to build up the strength to get better at accepting living with this loss and moving beyond it as much as I can in order to complete daily responsibilities.
- I have been inspired by the strength and positivity of my parents to keep fighting through rebuilding their home and planning for their future on the land, which will be where they will spend the remainder of their lives.
- And I will always look forward to returning to celebrate our progress as the years go by no matter how drastically changed everything is.

My mother said to me on the phone on the 12th of September 2020:

"I never thought I would look in the mirror and see what a soul looks like who has lost everything."

The Archie Creek Fire changed all of our lives. And no matter what regrowth happens on the land or in our hearts, remnants will always be there. And nothing can heal or fix that. But, life goes on.

Kaila Rose  
21st February 2024