THE ART OF SKATEBOARDING AND ITS APPLIED ETHICS - PROPOSAL

In seeking funds to expand upon a study of skateboarding as it relates to social justice, I am proposing to examine skateboard culture through the lens of applied ethics. All around the world, from Kabul, Afghanistan to Durban, South Africa skateboarding is being used as a vehicle for community enrichment. I travelled to Durban in 2010 where I volunteered at the Indigo Skate Camp, an after school program for Zulu youth where they are provided a healthy snack, supplementary education opportunities, and a positive atmosphere for exercising their minds and bodies in the creative act of skateboarding. I led printmaking lessons for youth there and exhibited their work at the Art & Social Justice Conference which was held in Durban that year. Research was conducted through a body of documentary photographs to be exhibited this April at the UP Gallery on campus.

Modeling my experience after the work of humanitarians such as artist/activist Sue Coe and those artists exhibited at the UW Art Museum for The Disappeared in 2009, I view creativity as an instrument for social change, as an opportunity to act ethically. Applied ethics examines particular issues in private and/or public life that are matters of moral judgment, so as to identify the most morally correct course(s) of action in various fields of community. Having observed issues around public health, supplementary education, recreational management, and social stratification in Durban, I can see places where comparison can be made to a community right here in Wyoming on the Wind River Reservation. The Indigo Skate Camp seeks to address and remedy issues in their community, making positive gains while sustaining a meeting ground for reflection on and modification of its social and ethical effectiveness; a practice in applied ethics that my project will replicate.
I presented my work from South Africa at Wind River’s February Youth Council meeting where I also proposed to collaborate with the youth in adapting such a program and its facilities to their environment. Having gained the Youth Council’s favor in a unanimous vote that day, we are now moving forward through our initial planning stages for summer events, workshops, and a long term goal of bringing a new skatepark to the reservation. These summer activities will promote creativity (community artworks), healthy recreation (skateboarding demos), opportunities for supplementary education (printmaking lessons), and future space that will act to sustain such movement (the skate park). Working with the youth will allow me to investigate certain ethical issues around the community, engage in dialogue on those issues at the Youth Council’s monthly meetings, and collaborate with them in finding solutions as well as preparing a space that can perpetuate our progress towards a more ethical society.

In writing this grant application I am seeking funds for those said summer activities along with other integral legwork aimed at our long term goal of designing, funding, and eventually building a skatepark on the Wind River Reservation. Though the end of the summer will not be the end of my work with the Youth Council, it will culminate a series of events directed at addressing and practicing applied ethics around their community. Research for the ethics based aspects of the project will be achieved through a body of documentary photographs, video, testimonials, responsive artwork, and writings, all encompassed by a short film to then be presented on campus. I thank you for your time and consideration.