

Maude Barlow & Others comment on **TESTIMONIO** Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/maude-barlow-comment-on-testimonio>



Maude Barlow:

Ten years ago, I had the privilege of touring the sites of several Canadian mining operations in Guatemala, including the infamous Marlin Mine, owned by Goldcorp Inc., and the now ever more infamous Fenix Mine, then owned by Canadian mining company Hudbay Minerals. I was the guest of Grahame Russell of Rights Action who has tirelessly worked for mining justice in that country and others for many years. Successive Guatemalan governments have given the green light to hundreds of foreign mining companies, many of them Canadian, who destroy the local vegetation, pollute waterways and endanger the lives of local communities and Indigenous People. I met with many courageous people who were victims

of this system. The price paid by those who oppose these mines is horrific, including beatings, killings, imprisonment, gang rape and constant threats and intimidation by Guatemalan police and military, by company security guards and by local thugs supportive of the mines. I was deeply moved both by their stories of courage and of Grahame's unstinting support.

So reading Testimonio was a very personal experience for me and brought back the outrage I felt at the governments of Guatemala and Canada for allowing these atrocities to continue. The book tells the story of what the UN has called 'state planned and carried out genocide' against Guatemala's Indigenous People during the 36-years of government repression against the Guatemalan people and military conflict with a small armed rebel group, and the book tells the story of the continuation of human rights abuses even after the formal "peace accords" were signed in 1996. It is a very powerful indictment of a system of oppression and environmental destruction that continues to this day. Testimonio serves as a challenge to Canadians to call out our governments for not putting a stop to these abuses by our mining industry and calls to us to take action. A must read.

Maude Barlow
Activist, Water defender, Author
@MaudeBarlow

Save The Date

Between The Lines Book launch webinar, Oct.25, 4pm PT, 7pm ET

Media & writers

If you would like to consider writing a news article / book report, contact: David Gray-Donald, Between The Lines media, publicity@btlbooks.com

Between The Lines:

What is land? A resource to be exploited? A commodity to be traded? A home to cherish? In Guatemala, a country still reeling from thirty-six years of US-backed state repression and genocides, dominant Canadian mining interests cash in on the transformation of land into "property," while those responsible act with near-total impunity.

"Testimonio is a stirring and unique piece of work. On the one hand, it brings together a wealth of knowledge and analysis from people who have truly invested the time and energy into getting it right. But what

really brings this book home are the powerful first-hand accounts of Canadian mining operations and the apparatus around them. To read this book is to bear witness to a massive, collective crime being committed by the rich and powerful in Canada against the people of Guatemala. It should be a call to action for people in this country to take responsibility for what is being done in our name.”

– Tyler Shipley, author: *Canada In The World: Settler Capitalism and the Colonial Imagination*

Editors Catherine Nolin and Grahame Russell draw on over thirty years of community-based research and direct community support work in Guatemala to expose the ruthless state machinery that benefits the Canadian mining industry—a staggeringly profitable juggernaut of exploitation, sanctioned and supported every step of the way by the Canadian government.

“Testimonio is a significant contribution to the growing literature about the impacts of predatory Canadian mining policies and companies on communities in Latin America. Russell and Nolin’s edited volume tells the horrific story of Canadian mining in Guatemala through the voices of some of the people most affected, and through a chronological and detailed history that is unrelenting in its courage and force. In the face of our government’s continuous refusal to regulate the behaviour of Canadian mining companies abroad, it is a compelling case study. No wonder there were attempts (by forces unknown) to prevent its publication.”

– Joan Kuyek, author: *Unearthing Justice: How to Protect Your Community from the Mining Industry*

“Testimonio is an important contribution to understanding Canadian foreign policy. Few Canadians are familiar with this country’s historic contribution to genocidal policies in Guatemala or ongoing support for controversial mining companies strenuously resisted by Indigenous communities. Alongside a dark reality, Testimonio details the brave resistance of local communities, which has even contributed to shaping Canadian law.”

– Yves Engler, author: *Left, Right: Marching to the Beat of Imperial Canada*

This edited collection calls on Canadians to hold our government and companies fully to account for their role in enabling and profiting from

violence in Guatemala. The text stands apart in featuring a series of unflinching testimonios (testimonies) authored by Indigenous community leaders in Guatemala, as well as wide-ranging contributions from investigative journalists, scholars, lawyers, activists, and documentarians on the ground.

“Testimonio is another damning case study of the compromising role of Canadian political authorities in the internal affairs of a publicly traded company. It shows how, abroad, the name Canada means something—imperialistic, violent, degrading—contrary to what our domestic propaganda tends to foster.”

– Alain Deneault, author: Imperial Canada Inc.

As resources are ripped from the earth and communities and environments ripped apart, the act of standing in solidarity and bearing witness—rather than extracting knowledge—becomes more radical than ever.

“This is an incredible collection of perspectives on the impact of mining at the community level. These are stories of courage, perseverance, and creativity by those affected by the horrific institutional weight of the World Bank, Canadian pension funds, Canadian embassies, and billionaire investors. It will inspire you to never give up, no matter how big and powerful your foe.”

– Shin Imai, professor emeritus, Osgoode Hall Law School, and co-founder of the Justice and Corporate Accountability Project

“Canada’s mining operations in Guatemala are underpinned by an omertà of government complacency, corporate impunity, and blatant greed. Testimonio blows the lid off this criminal industry, bearing witness to the profound violence and environmental ruination that it engenders. In the face of significant adversity, Nolin and Russell have persevered with bringing to fruition a deeply inspiring collection of resistance and refusal.”

– Simon Springer, professor of human geography and director, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Newcastle, Australia

“This is a book that demands to be read; the collective voices cannot and must not be silenced. Testimonio is provocative, passionate, and heartfelt; it is a thoroughly documented mediation on the horrific violence imposed by a callous industry and those who resist.”

– James Tyner, professor of geography, Kent State University

“Catherine Nolin and Grahame Russell have woven together riveting testimonials from thirty Guatemalan and Canadian journalists, lawyers, academics, filmmakers, human rights defenders, and Indigenous community leaders who have stood up to fight the “projects of destruction” that are called “development” by Canadian mining companies, their defenders in the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala, and the Guatemalan and Canadian governments. Their witness reveals a trail of land grabbing, water contamination, environmental destruction, repression of community organizations, and even assassinations—a trail with which Canadians and our courts must deal.”

– Liisa L. North, professor emeritus, politics, York University, and founding fellow, Center for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean

Contact

- Grahame Russell, Rights Action, grahame@rightsaction.org
- Professor Catherine Nolin, UNBC Geography Department, Catherine.Nolin@unbc.ca

Rights Action (US & Canada)

Since 1995, Rights Action funds land and environment defense struggles and human rights and justice struggle in Guatemala and Honduras, including the community defense v. mining companies struggles documented in *TESTIMONIO*.

Rights Action also provides emergencies and climate disaster relief funds (Covid19, hurricanes, victims of repression, etc.), and works to hold accountable the U.S. and Canadian governments, multi-national companies, investors and banks (World Bank, etc.) that help cause and profit from exploitation and poverty, repression and human rights violations, environmental harms, corruption and impunity in Honduras and Guatemala.

Subscribe to Email Newsblasts: <https://rightsaction.org/subscribe>
<https://www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org>
<https://twitter.com/RightsAction>
<https://www.instagram.com/rightsaction>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/rightsaction>