

Rights Action  
October 16, 2015

### Why did YWCA Metro Vancouver give Goldcorp an “outstanding workplace” award? (Part 4)

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Dear friends at YWCA,

Greetings. I send you this 4th letter, following up on our previous letters, and one response from the YWCA.



*(Diodora Hernandez, a Mayan Mam woman, was shot in her right eye on July 7, 2010, by local Goldcorp employees, because she refused to sell her land to the company. Miraculously, she survived, losing her eye, and hearing in her right eye, where the bullet exited. (Her daughter walks with her, in this photo). Though Goldcorp acknowledged the shooters had worked at their mine, no justice was ever done; no reparations ever provided to Diodora. Photo: Grahame Russell, 2013)*

Will the YWCA respond to these questions.

- Is the YWCA willing to host public screenings of documentary films – *Gold Fever*, *All That Glitters Isn't Gold* - about Goldcorp's mine operations and workplaces in Honduras and

Guatemala (and beyond), and invite qualified speakers to then engage in internal YWCA and public debate about Goldcorp's operations?

- Will the YWCA send staff, board members and supporters on fact-finding trips to Honduras and Guatemala to visit with Goldcorp harmed communities and families? (Rights Action regularly leads such delegations, and can ensure you visits and meetings directly with mining harmed communities and people.)
- Will the YWCA reconsider the selection criteria it used in the Goldcorp award?
- Will the YWCA publicize how much funds it has received from Goldcorp?
- Will the YWCA return any extra unspent donations from Goldcorp, and refuse future donations?

### **MORE BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Goldcorp's Unjust Mining Operations In Guatemala & Honduras**

As set out in our previous letters, and in letters of others (see 3<sup>rd</sup> letter), there is substantial documentation of the serious environmental and health harms and human rights violations, including killings and shootings, that Goldcorp has caused directly and indirectly in Guatemala and Honduras.

#### **"Practise What Your Preach"**

In addition, here is a link to a comprehensive September 2015 article, summarizing over 10 years of Goldcorp caused harms and violations in Guatemala, documenting how concerned Canadian citizens have moved the United Church of Canada to divest its pension funds from Goldcorp:

- "Practise What You Preach", by Jackie McVicar, <http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/practise-what-you-preach/33875>

And a 2014 Newsweek Magazine article:

- "Dubbed Terrorists, Mayans Fight Back Against Guatemalan Mining Projects", by Peter Guest, August 29, 2014, <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/09/05/dubbed-terrorists-mayans-fight-back-against-mining-projects-266962.html>

### **CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT: Corruption, Repression and Impunity in Guatemala and Honduras**

As the YWCA (hopefully) reflects honestly on what is set out in our letters, and the letters of others, and seriously considers ending its donation recipient /philanthropy relation with Goldcorp, I urge you to investigate the actual political conditions (in the broad sense of the word political) in Honduras and Guatemala, where the Goldcorp-caused harms and violations have occurred, over many years.

Context is important. Goldcorp (encouraged and supported by the Canadian and U.S. governments, with investments from the World Bank) chose to work in these countries in partnership with the corrupted, repressive political, economic and military elites referred to below. I believe that Goldcorp, in effect, contributed to and profited financially from the

corruption, repression and impunity. The spoils of their mining operations in both countries are ill-gotten gains.

For years, Guatemala and Honduras have been known as murder-, repression- and impunity-capitals of the Americas. In 2015, government corruption scandals rocked both countries.

In September 2015, Guatemalan President Otto Perez Molina and Vice-President Baldetti have been forced from office and are in jail pending charges of heading a corruption network – *La Linea* – that stole over \$120,000,000 in public funds. Honduran President Orlando Hernandez is linked to a corruption network that stole over \$300,000,000 in public sector funds. To date, he remains in office, as do most of the officials that profited from the crime network – the same elite sectors that carried out the 2009 military coup.

Despite poverty, repression and impunity, hundreds of thousands of people have been regularly marching in the streets, in both countries, demanding justice for the corruption networks, and fundamental reforms to how their governments and societies operate.

(I believe that if it were people protesting the governments Iran or of Siria, it would be nightly news in Canada and the U.S.. As Honduras and Guatemala are ruled by regimes supported by Canada and the U.S., we learn little to nothing ...)

### **Genocide and Corruption**

Even as anti-corruption struggles continue in both countries, Mayan Ixil genocide survivors forge ahead with the historic genocide trial against former general Rios Montt. (“Rios Montt Case Symbolic of Impunity Guatemalans Must Overcome”, by Grahame Russell, August 25, 2015, <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Rios-Montt-Case-Symbolic-of-Impunity-Guatemalans-Must-Overcome-20150824-0014.html>)

At the time of Rios Montt’s genocide in the Ixil region, Rios Montt’s highest ranking officer in the region was general (now jailed president) Otto Perez Molina.

The same elites that carried out the brutal repression and genocides of the 1970s and 80s, are today running the corrupted, repressive government. These are the economic, political and military leaders that Goldcorp – and other global corporations – are happy to do business with.

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Thus, I ask that the YWCA carefully consider this information, and respond to the questions set out.

Thank-you.

Grahame Russell, director of Rights Action

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**Letter #2 to YWCA from Rights Action**

<http://rightsaction.org/action-content/questioning-why-ywca-metro-vancouver-gave-goldcorp-inc-%E2%80%9Coutstanding-workplace%E2%80%9D-award->

August 3, 2015

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**Questioning why YWCA Metro Vancouver gave Goldcorp Inc. an “outstanding workplace” award?**

Hello Janet, Chantelle, Members of the Board and YWCA friends,

Thank-you, Chantelle, for sending the YWCA response (copied below) to my letter “Questioning why YWCA Metro Vancouver gave Goldcorp Inc. an “outstanding workplace” award?”  
(<http://www.rightsaction.org/action-content/questioning-why-ywca-metro-vancouver-gave-goldcorp-inc-%E2%80%9Coutstanding-workplace%E2%80%9D-award>)

Here, I follow-up with a few points:

**A Disconnect**

I urge the YWCA to reflect on what appears to be a disconnect between awarding Goldcorp for its “outstanding workplace” (for its pro-women and family policies they are apparently implementing in their corporate headquarters in Vancouver) and, on the other hand, the widespread harms and violations occurring in and near their mining operations and workplaces in countries Guatemala and Honduras, let alone elsewhere.

These well-documented harms and violations (I summarized some of them in my original letter) are the results of corporate and investor decisions being taken in Goldcorp’s Vancouver headquarters.

One can imagine a bitterly ironic scenario: As the YWCA lauds Goldcorp in Vancouver (and receiving “Gold” level donations from Goldcorp), were the YWCA to be operating in Guatemala and Honduras, its programmes might be directed at women, girls and families whose lives and community well-being were being devastated by Goldcorp’s mining operations.

## **Enabling Impunity**

I realize these are complicated and polemical issues, but such is our deeply inter-connected, often times profoundly unequal and unjust global human order.

A major, underlying problem is that Goldcorp simply denies all evidence of crimes, harms and violations caused directly or indirectly by its mine operations in Honduras and Guatemala.

They get away with these denials because of the impunity and immunity from legally accountability they operate with, in Canada, Guatemala, Honduras and elsewhere.

Nowhere has Goldcorp been held legally or politically accountable for any crimes, harms or violations related to its mining operations. Neither in the corrupted, exploitative and repressive countries of Honduras or Guatemala, nor before the underfunded and oft-times politically manipulated Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, nor in Canadian courts.

To Canada's double-standard shame, as a country that claims belief in democratic oversight, good governance and transparency, and the rule of law, Canada has chosen not to pass criminal and civil law reforms so as to hold companies criminally and civilly accountable in our courts if and when they commit crimes, violations or harms in other countries.

Thus, Goldcorp spends money and resources on its public outreach strategy ("PR") and denies and deflects all denunciations. Giving "philanthropic" donations, usually in a public way, is part of Goldcorp's PR work. These donations (into the millions of dollars in some cases: University of Ottawa, Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia) are obviously of use to the recipients; at the same time, Goldcorp's image, its social capital, soars.

The donation recipients participate in this image building, and help perpetuate the lack of political and legal accountability.

## **Exceptions to Legal Impunity**

### **Hudbay Minerals lawsuits**

Recently, there are a few (long overdue) exceptions to the rule of legal impunity in Canada. In 2013, the Hudbay Minerals lawsuits (dealing with murder, a shooting-paralyzing and gang-rapes linked to Hudbay's former mining operation in a Mayan region of Guatemala) established a precedent in Canadian law when the Ontario Superior Court of Justice accepted jurisdiction in Canada to hear the civil lawsuits, ruling also that Hudbay can be held accountable for harms and violations that occur at its mining operations overseas.

### **Tahoe Resources (Goldcorp Inc.) lawsuits**

More recently, building on the Hudbay legal precedents, a civil lawsuit was filed in Vancouver courts against Tahoe Resources, for violence and repression at its mining operation in Guatemala. Tahoe is an off-spring of Goldcorp Inc. Former Goldcorp CEO Kevin MacArthur stepped down from Goldcorp in 2008, but not before incorporating Tahoe Resources, taking

over a Goldcorp mining concession elsewhere in Guatemala, with Goldcorp maintaining (until recently) a 40% stake in Tahoe Resources.

### **Don't Take Our Word For It**

Today, with increased reporting on these issues, though mainly from the “alternative” media, and with so many environment/ development/ human rights organizations – tiny ones like Rights Action, on through Vancouver’s Mining Justice Alliance and Toronto’s Mining Injustice Solidarity Network, on through the vital work of Mining Watch, as well as Council of Canadians, Amnesty International, OXFAM, Kairos, Development and Peace, and more -, it is no longer acceptable to pretend one did not know about the allegations of harms and violations occurring at Canadian mining operations around the globe, and not just with Goldcorp.

### **Questions for YWCA**

- Is the YWCA willing to host public screenings of documentary films about Goldcorp’s mine operations and workplaces in Honduras and Guatemala (and beyond), to acknowledge how complicated these issues are, and encourage public debate about Goldcorp’s operations?
- Will the YWCA consider sending staff and supporters on educational fact-finding trips to Honduras and Guatemala to visit with Goldcorp harmed communities and families? Rights Action regularly leads such delegations, and could ensure you direct visits and communication with mining harmed communities and people.
- Will the YWCA reconsider the selection criteria it used in the Goldcorp award?
- Will the YWCA publicize how much funds it has received from Goldcorp?

### **The Story of Goldcorp Is Now YWCA’s Story**

I paraphrase Thomas King at this point, from his book the Truth About Stories: Take the story of how Goldcorp does its business in Guatemala and Honduras. It is now YWCA’s story. Do with it what you will. Tell it to YWCA members and friends. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that the YWCA would have operated differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now.

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### **Letter to Rights Action From YWCA**

From: Chantelle Krish [mailto:ckrish@ywcavan.org]  
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2015 2:31 PM  
To: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)  
Subject: YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Hello Grahame,

Thank you for taking the time to write to us about the Women of Distinction: Innovative Workplace category. I appreciate the thought and consideration you put into your letter. The Innovative Workplace Category recognizes organizations that demonstrate a commitment to supportive workplaces for women and families in Metro Vancouver. A diverse panel of independent judges selected the recipient based on this criteria. The recipient demonstrated these commitments through:

- \* 52% of employees are female, with over 20% in senior executive positions, including the Board of Directors.
- \* Specific programs to support women's professional development in the workplace.
- \* Supportive family friendly practices that includes enhanced benefits for women on maternity/parental leave
- \* Endorsing the Catalyst Accord of Canada initiative to increasing women's representation on boards by 2017.

You can find a full list of YWCA donors here:

[http://issuu.com/ywcametrovan/docs/ywca\\_ar\\_yr\\_2014\\_final\\_for\\_web](http://issuu.com/ywcametrovan/docs/ywca_ar_yr_2014_final_for_web)

Thank you for your concerns and if you have any more questions don't hesitate to be in touch.

All the best,

Chantelle Krish

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## What To Do

### Tax-Deductible Donations

To support mining harmed campesino and indigenous communities, in Honduras and Guatemala, struggling for community-controlled development, human rights and the environment, struggling against the impunity and corruption of global mining companies and their governments, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- United States: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

Credit-Card Donations (Canada & U.S.): <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

To donate stock, contact: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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More information: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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