

Berta Caceres: Who She Is & What She Lived For

By Grahame Russell, March 2, 2019, La Esperanza, Honduras

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/berta-caceres-who-she-is-what-she-lived-for-gs5w96qicv>



Banner, Utopia, COPINH center in la Esperanza, March 2, 2019

March 2, 2019 marks the 3rd anniversary of the assassination of Berta Caceres and the attempted killing of Mexican human rights activist Gustavo Castro, shot and left for dead that same night.



Three years later, I am in the home of Mama Berta, Berta's mother, where Berta lived most of her life, where her children grew up. In 2016, Berta had recently moved nearby into her own home, when the team of assassins shot her dead, late on March 2, 2016. Gustavo, a friend and colleague, was staying with her that night, and –shot twice– he “played dead”, and the killers fled into the night ...

Three years later, no justice has been done for the “intellectual authors” of Berta's assassination – the elite economic and political sectors who decided she needed to be killed, and paid for it. In 2018, under huge pressure from Berta's family, her organization COPINH, Honduran civil society, and from international supporters and allies, 7 men were found guilty of being the “material authors” of her carrying out the plan to kill her.

The struggle continues for the full truth about and justice for this great crime.

Since the U.S. and Canadian backed military coup in 2009, hundreds of Hondurans have been killed for political reasons. But for the jailing of seven “material authors” of Berta's assassination, no justice has been done for any political killings. Impunity and corruption are deeply entrenched at the highest levels of the Honduran government, military, police and economic elites ... and their international economic partners and political allies.



Banner at Utopia, COPINH center in La Esperanza, March 2, 2019

Companera

Berta was a mother of four, a grandmother, a daughter, a sister, a grand-daughter, and - to all who knew her, learned from her, got strength, courage and wisdom from her - a *companera*. She was singled out, targeted and killed because of who she is, what she lived for, and what she worked and fought for her whole life.



Mama Berta and Berta's four children (Olivia, Laura, Bertita, Salvador) in front
Brother Roberto and other family members and friends in behind

Who Killed Berta?

Berta was killed not just by the paid team of “material author” assassins –*sicarios*–, working for elite economic and political sectors of Honduras, but by all those people, countries and institutions whose greed and violence she lived, stood and fought against.

Since her early teens, following the path of her mother, of some of her older siblings, Berta lived and worked against all injustices, all inequalities, all discriminations, all Mother Earth destroying activities.

She was killed ...

- by 500 years of racist, violent, dispossessing European imperialism and colonialism
- by 200 years of U.S. military interventions, exploitation, corruption and impunity
- by generations of violent and exploitative, racist and sexist governments of Honduras propped up by the “international community” (U.S., Canada, global corporations, IMF, World Bank, ...)

Berta was killed ...

- by eons of patriarchy
- by centuries of racism against the Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples of the Americas
- by violently imposed “free trade” agreements of the Americas
- by the inherent greed of corporations and investors, particularly from the powerful, rich “democratic” nations that exploit, repress and denigrate the “third world”, that make, prop up and mock “banana republics”
- by the IMF, World Bank, IDB, etc. - institutions created and dominated by these same rich, powerful “democratic” nations

Berta was killed ...

- by corporations and investors who conceive of Honduras – its forests and earth, rivers, water and air, its people and all life forms – as exploitable, discardable objects, and who steal, kill and destroy mightily to make their millions and billions
- by the banana monopolies (United Fruit Company, etc.) and railway barons of the 1800s and 1900s
- by the producers of African palm (World Bank-funded Dinant corporation, etc.) and sugarcane for global consumers of “green energies” (ethanol and bio-diesel fuels)
- by maquiladora garment factory exploiters of cheap labour (Gildan Activewear, Hanesbrand Inc., etc.)

- by hydro-electric dam companies (DESA Agua Zarca, etc.) profiting from privatized rivers and water sources
- by tourism enclaves (operated by the Canadian Randy “porn king” Jorgensen, and his ilk) illegally and violently evicting Garifuna peoples from communal lands
- by mining companies (Goldcorp Inc., Aura Minerals, etc.) ripping the earth for gold, poisoning the waters of the Siria Valley and the blood of local residents, evicting entire communities and even digging up the dead from the 200 year old cemetery in Azacualpa.

Most recently, Berta was killed ...

- by the U.S. and Canadian backed military coup in June 2009 that ousted the democratically elected government of President Zelaya and brought back to power the same elites that for so long have dominated and abused Honduras, who – once back in power - took all the above and made it worse again, using repression as a tool of societal control, opening Honduras’ borders and institutions to increased drug-trafficking, and hiring *sicarios* to target and kill hundreds of people since the coup, people like Berta.

Ten years after the coup, Honduras has one of the highest per capita murder rate in the world, amongst the highest rates of poverty and destitution in the Americas, amongst the highest rates of repression, femicide, journalist killings, corruption and impunity in the Americas.

Every year, tens of thousands of Hondurans are forced to flee their homes and countries and try desperately to get refugee status in the U.S., ...



... and yet, the main stream international media has, for the most part, failed to report on just why so many are forced to flee, year after year.

Berta was killed by all these economic elites and countries, by all these national and international economic institutions because - as anyone who knew her will tell you, as anyone who learned from her, got strength, courage and wisdom from her will tell you - these are the things she lived, marched and struggled against.

What Did She Live, Stand and Struggle For?

For your rights and mine. For the human rights, collective and individual, of all people, in all countries. For Mother Earth herself – the fields and forests, air and water. For all life forms on this most precious and solitary of planets. Berta lived, stood and struggled for another world is necessary and possible.

What To Do?

We remain completely sad for this great crime and loss, for Berta's children, mother, sisters and brothers, for her family and friends in La Esperanza, Honduras, and across the Americas. Yet as a part of many of us died with Berta, a part of Berta lives on.

What to do? Do what Berta would do, as she always did. Live, stand and struggle together. Hold hands. Reach out to and support the so many victims of this global human order. Live, stand and struggle against all injustices and inequalities, all discriminations, all Mother Earth destroying activities, and for another world is necessary and possible.

Thank-you Berta

You are missed, loved, forever respected

Grahame Russell

grahame@rightsaction.org

(I met Berta in 1998. Rights Action supported COPINH and Berta's work and struggle since that time. Berta and her family are friends. This reflection is an updated version of one published after Berta's assassination, March 2, 2016)

COPINH

www.copinh.org / <https://bertavivecopinhsgue.copinh.org/> / copinhonduras.blogspot.com / <http://copinhenglish.blogspot.com/> / FB: Copinh Intibucá / Tw: @COPINHHONDURAS

Tax Deductible Donations in the U.S. & Canada

Since Berta's assassination, Rights Action continues to support Berta's family as they, along with COPINH and Gustavo Castro, demand truth and justice in her and Gustavo's case. Make checks [to "Rights Action"](#) and [mail to:](#)

- [U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887](#)
- [Canada: \(Box 552\) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8](#)

[Credit-Card Donations](#) in Canada and U.S.: <http://rightsaction.org/donate/>

Follow work of other solidarity groups/ NGOs

Honduras Solidarity Network: www.hondurassolidarity.org

Witness for Peace: www.witnessforpeace.org

School of Americas Watch: www.soaw.org

Common Frontiers Canada: www.commonfrontiers.ca

Breaking the Silence: www.breakingthesilenceblog.com

NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with People of Guatemala): www.nisgua.org

Mining Watch: www.miningwatch.ca

CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with People of El Salvador), www.cispes.org

Alliance for Global Justice: www.afgj.org

GHRC (Guatemalan Human Rights Commission): www.ghrc-usa.org

Please re-post and publish this information

More info: info@rightsaction.org

Subscribe to e-Newsletter: www.rightsaction.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RightsAction>, @RightsAction
