

The Eco-Class-Race Struggles in the Peruvian Amazon Basin: An Ecofeminist Perspective

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Introduction

Since the 1992 Earth Summit, there has been a growing recognition of the global ecological crisis that threatens the future of life on the planet. In this debate *sufficiency* has become a defining concept in contemporary environmental and feminist thought. Ecofeminists maintain the view that there is a direct link between the exploitation of women (women's liberation) and the exploitation of nature (ecological justice). In fact, a cornerstone of ecofeminist thought holds that women's and nature's liberation are a joint project. Ecofeminists advocate collective ownership and a restoration of the Commons. At the center of this ecofeminist analysis is the knowledge that capitalist patriarchy creates an intersecting domination against "all unwaged" in its exploitation of women, peasants, indigenous people, and nature. This exploitation takes place not so much through low wages but by their provision of services and material input to capital (land, forest, wood, water, fish, etc.) "free of charge." Ecofeminists maintain that nature is an exhaustible good that we must learn to conserve by living simply and recognizing "sufficiency" as a good life. From this framework, subsistence needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, affection, love, respect, learning, creativity, adventure, company, friendship, enjoyment, pleasure, and work) are the same for people everywhere in the industrial and underdeveloped worlds. This form of subsistence embraces concepts like "moral economy": a new way of life that advocates joy in life, happiness, and solidarity-bound societies.

I call the ongoing struggle in Peru an eco-class-race struggle because it involves the indigenous peoples' ecological consciousness of nature's destruction, labor exploitation, and institutional racism. The actors engaged in this struggle include indigenous people and *bosqueños* (this term includes *riberaños*, or those living on the river banks), international oil corporations (Occidental, Pluspetrol), the national oil corporation (Petro-Peru), forest corporations (Bozovich and Schipper), and government institutions. The geographical scope of this paper is the Peruvian Amazon basin, which covers 78,282,060 hectares, representing some 61 percent of the country.

Until 1973, *bosqueños* used this entire territory for their livelihood. This situation started to change gradually in the 1970s and much more rapidly in 1993 after Alberto Fujimori's government changed the Constitution to expand oil and forestry "concessions," official government agreements that allow domestic and foreign firms to control indigenous territory and extract resources from within the Amazon. This process has been accelerating during Alan Garcia's second term as president (2006 to the present), in which 56,131,862 hectares—72 percent of the rainforest—have become hydrocarbon lots.

In 1993, indigenous people in the Amazon basin received a deed title covering 7,379, 941.72 hectares and an additional 344,887 hectares reserved for the Nahua and Jugapakon groups, who live in voluntary isolation. This forced indigenous people to live on just 10 percent of their original land. Furthermore, the land title on this dramatically shrunken territory only gave them the right to the soil, while control over the subsoil of these lands (minerals and hydrocarbon) was vested in the state and subject to privatization in the form of oil concessions. Areas not demarcated for oil concessions were given away in forest concessions. Currently, approximately 332,975 indigenous people live in the lower and upper rainforest of Peru—all of them in rebellion and actively struggling for their common territories.

Local struggles against concessions have a long history. The lower rainforest portion of Loreto, Peru's northernmost and largest "department" (state), has had labor camps, roads, and pipelines to service oil concessions for more than 40 years. Pollution and noise produced by seismic explosions have modified the land, contaminated rivers, and destroyed ecosystems that indigenous communities depend on for a living. In the southeastern department of Madre de Dios, forestry concessions have decimated wildlife, as forestry concessionaries relentlessly hunt key species such as *huanganas*, *sajinos*, *majás*, *añujes*, and *achuni*, varieties of turtles, iguanas, and other native fauna, in order to feed their workers. They also use machinery for forest extraction which, along with trees for timber, brings down fruit trees, particularly palms that are a crucial part of the wildlife food chain. Besides damaging the soil and watershed, these practices have displaced numerous wildlife species and led others to extinction. As a result, approximately 60 percent of indigenous people residing in the Amazon rainforest have become impoverished and undernourished.

As nature, indigenous people and *riberños* are exploited under the patriarchal capitalist concession system, where, for example, women have been forced into sex work. During the first phase of oil concessions in the 1970s, hundreds of white women prostitutes arrived in Iquitos, Loreto's capital and the largest city in the Peruvian Amazon basin, to "serve" men in oil labor camps. By 2000, young indigenous and *riberña* women had been incorporated into the sex market. According to Rivadeneira, Achuar and Jibara girls, aged ten to fourteen, from the Corrientes River are sold outright to oil workers. These young sex slaves serve the oil workers in the oil camps, and when these men leave, the girls are abandoned. In Madre de Dios, a huge ring of child prostitution involving more than 400 girls and boys operates around 100 bars.

In 2008, the year Peru signed a free trade agreement with the United States and began negotiations for one with the European Union, Canada, and China, the government decided to change the concession system to expedite the privatization of the rainforest commons. In response, indigenous people organized to fight back.

This paper analyzes the recent intensification of these struggles as the concession system has been supplanted by global capitalist free trade agreements. This has provoked a powerful indigenous movement grounded in the defense of what I call here "the good life." These struggles continue to rage right up to the composition of this article in mid-2009 and have gained international attention and sympathy.

The Good Life in the Peruvian Amazon

Ecofeminists Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva argue that "the good life" and freedom are possible when people and nature are not separated, since it is the inhabitants' subsistence know-how that helps to conserve the *conditions* of life (nature) by valuing "sufficiency" and recognizing the need to live in harmony with the natural world. The indigenous people of the Peruvian Amazon have maintained their age-old connection to nature with their ability to steward an unbroken forest system. Endowed with one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet, the Amazonians in Peru inhabit more than 71 distinct indigenous communities and mixed communities living on common land with a diversity of abundant wildlife. Amazonian peoples derive their livelihoods from the forest and its waters and are nourished by its clean and healthy air. This existence has nurtured complex socio-economic and cultural systems that have distinct ways of describing and interacting with the physical and natural world.

Jurg Gasché argues that in the modern capitalist market, these societies exist in a context of two sets of objective conditions: 1) *bosqueños* have free access to natural resources, which are sustained with the knowledge and means of production to use and transform them; and 2)

dependence on the availability of market goods. The combination of the market and free access to natural resources allows forest dwellers to thrive and enjoy a “good life.” Anthropologists maintain that the concept of the good life is at the source of the different objective sociological arrangements we observe today. According to Gasché et al., *bosquecinos* in the Amazon are sophisticated and rational human beings who satisfy their needs with a minimal impact on their environment. *Bosquecinos* organize their livelihood and their labor according to their needs; their “work” of living is practiced with pleasure. Gashé et al. point out that labor for *bosquecinos* (women and men) is a multitask activity that relies upon learning several techniques of fishing, hunting, gathering and transformation according to the seasonal rhythm of the climate (winter and summer), hydrology (e.g., widening waters in the rainy season and narrowing in the dry season), and biology (e.g., seasons of fruition, fattened animals, fish spawning, fish schools). This labor is based not on compulsion, but rather on enjoyment and community cooperation. It is an exercise of solidarity according to social rights and obligations. It is founded in reciprocity with family members, friends, and other members of the community as well as with nature spirits (mothers of the forest—*madre de monte* and *duenos de animales y plantas*). It is grounded in the appreciation of a respected community authority who is believed to be able to influence the forces of nature through “visions,” “conversations,” and “healing.”

Although the labor of women and men are equally important for their survival, there are differences in how the various Amazonian societies view gender roles. The Ashaninkas of the upper rainforest, for example, consider women’s labor complementary to men’s. However, their work is not perceived to be as valuable as men’s, and Ashaninka women are subordinate to men. In contrast, the Shipibos, who live in the lower rainforest, live in a matriarchal society where women are autonomous beings who are entrusted with control of the resources of the community. Shipibo women work alongside men in the commercialization of artisan work. Their communal and household participation are recognized and valued by both their partners and the larger Shipibo society.

From the ecological point of view, *riberenos* do not separate themselves from nature. Rivers are at the center of all their activities. Men gather at the river’s edge before sunrise to fish and hunt, and women congregate there to wash the clothes, collect water for cooking, take baths, and bathe their young children. In each town, the river allows the women and men to grow and hunt food and raise cattle. Every household has a piece of land and is responsible for ploughing, planting, and harvesting its fruit. The slash-and-burn technique is used in agriculture, which is both an ideal practice for common land and a very sustainable system, because it allows the forest to regenerate. In the afternoon after school, girls and boys gather at the river to swim, bathe, catch shrimp and fish, collect drinking water, practice art with small stones, canoe, and participate in jumping competitions from trees. Medicinal plants that grow on the banks of the river are used in food and to cure illnesses. At night, the river provides the quiet needed for a good night’s sleep. The river is always there. It produces food and drink, medicine and entertainment; it gives rainforest inhabitants life, livelihood, and freedom. The river and its products belong to everyone who lives there; and thanks to the river, people grow up physically and mentally healthy. This culture of abundance is subsistence, though the word has none of the negative connotations attached to it in the possessive society or by the Peruvian elites and industrial capitalism in general—everyone has what he or she needs.

The society of the Peruvian rainforest is the product of a particular ecological balance with a diversified, fragile, and acidic soil. According to Flores et al., the context of this ecosystem includes high temperatures (above 24 degrees Celsius), abundant yearly rainfall (between 3,000 and 4,000 mm), and relative humidity (between 82 and 86 percent), all of which speeds the process of decomposition of organic material, erosion, and soil deterioration. In response to these challenges,

bosqueños have developed complex systems of forest management. In the lower lands of the Peruvian rainforest, most communities settled on the river banks of the Amazon, Marañon, Nanay, Itaya, Tamishiyacu, Momón and Maniti rivers, which provide for their livelihoods as artisan fisherman. In the upper lands of the Peruvian Amazon, more than 100,000 residents derive their occupation and income from agriculture. Agriculture in this region is migratory due to the limited natural fertility of the soil. Like fishing, it is subsistence-oriented in its trade on the local market. In this fragile and acidic soil, the forest is the most stable vegetation, and it serves important functions in protecting the viability of flora, fauna, and the ecosystem as a whole. Photosynthesis occurs at the top of the forest, producing tall, closely packed, large-crowned, evergreen trees, which nurture countless vegetable and animal species.

Forest-dwelling farmers and fishers have been coexisting for centuries following simple rules: fishers know which fish species develop under particular types of fruit and trees surrounding the river banks, while agriculturalists obey ancestral agricultural techniques, such as crop association and rotation. The slash-and-burn system of cultivation imitates the natural ecosystem in three different ways: first, through a high degree of food-plant diversification in which an extensive variety of plant and animal species grow. Second, continuous cycles of rain and sun produce a constant and rapid process of decomposition and regeneration of animal and vegetable material. Third, subsistence farming and tropical rainforest ecologies produce closed-cover protection of an already weakened soil against the direct impact of rain and sun.

From the biological point of view, Antonio Brack (who is respected for his biological knowledge but discredited as the current Minister of Environment in Peru) estimated in 1997 that indigenous communities knew 890 medicinal plants, 556 wood species, 1,500 ornamental plants, 102 dyes, 44 types of oil, 96 agro-forestry species, 29 perfumes, 99 dressings, 37 cosmetics, 28 abortive and aphrodisiac leaves, 115 toxic plants, 98 grains, and 261 fodders. In one indigenous community alone, according to Brack, inhabitants know 31 kinds of cassava. José Álvarez, a biologist from the *Instituto Nacional de la Amazonia Peruana* (IIAP), stated that the impact of indigenous people on fauna was low due to their low-density population, cultural and social control on hunting, absence of external demand, limited hunting instruments, wide dispersion of wildlife, and diversified resources.

This “good life” may seem to some to be a deplorable state of underdevelopment. Mainstream development experts see *bosqueños* as irresponsible, ignorant, backward, poor and needy. Following this perception, developers have spread the ideological myth that Amazonian subsistence peoples are poor. But poverty is far more than a crudely materialist term. It is relative to the measure of human needs and in constant relation to nature. From this standpoint, *bosqueños* have lessons to offer the continent and the world: the capitalist crises did not affect them because their habitat provides food, work, and entertainment. Indigenous people’s struggle to retain their lands is also a struggle for recognition and respect.

An intuitively ecofeminist perspective emerges from Peruvian literature in the 1990s as both fiction and nonfiction writers on the rainforest confronted the brutality of the concession system with their stories. Marcella Barcellos reminds us that among natives, life is negotiated with nature according to certain rules that recognize the “owners of things,” or “mothers”: “Everything, from trees to humans, has a mother. Mothers are stronger than men and have special powers,” she says. Barcellos argues that women in the rainforest provide use values and regenerate the conditions of production and reproduction; as such, they are highly respected and live in freedom. In reflecting on the tragedy of the concessions, Teddy Bendayan sees the Amazon Mother as the only hope for life. He writes that “women are the only ones who can save the rainforest by teaching their children, from the time they are in the womb, to shout for freedom.” Roger Rumrill proposes to “remind

women's children that nature is alive, that nature has ears, eyes, heart, sentiments, that if a mountain falls, a tree is cut, a bird dies, a weapon is shot, everything is registered in the jungle's heart."

But by the end of the 1990s, oil concessions in Loreto had significantly reduced the abundance of wildlife. Subsistence living collapsed in the 35 communities living next to Occidental and Petro-Peru (now Pluspetrol) installations along the Corrientes, Tigre, Pastaza, and Macusary rivers, and by streams, lakes, wetlands, and in the flooded forests. Occidental and Petro-Peru pumped oil into those rivers and degraded their pristine land, turning it into an oilfield with more than 150 wells, over 1,000 kilometers of road, and a pipeline through these communities.

This situation sparked several rebellions. The Achuar community formed three local organizations and two international organizations with about 12,500 people. In the Corrientes River area, Pluspetrol Norte S.A. counterattacked. The company founded an organization called FEPIBAC, which divided the rebelling community by providing money to mitigate some of the problems the company had created. It funded micro-enterprises to clean up the pollution and sell locally produced food. It also paid for small infrastructure projects such as a public tap to collect water, which became necessary after Pluspetrol contaminated local water supplies. FEPIBAC works in alliance with the Confederation of Amazon Nations (CONAP), an indigenous association organized by the government. These company-friendly organizations work to get the indigenous groups to accept development projects but sit down and negotiate with the corporations and the government over some of the details.

⇒ Map of Peru should go here ←

Dispossession by Oil and Forestry Concessions and Privatization Decrees

The descendents of the colonizers and *mestizos* (mixed descent, or so-called white), who have taken power since independence (1821-24), have long-held racist and exclusionary attitudes towards Peru's indigenous people from both the Amazon and Andes. As such, they ignored the indigenous peoples' struggles until they finally rose up in arms. Peru's current and two-time president, Alan Garcia, unabashedly summed up the sentiment when he recently said indigenous people are "not first-class citizens." Like many leaders in colonized countries, Garcia's allegiance is to Peru's elite classes in perpetuation of the capitalist system, from which they derive enormous benefit.

But capitalism's underlying philosophy of scarcity—i.e., that there is not enough, so those able to do so better grab what they can while they can—puts it in direct conflict with cultures of subsistence, which are based on the idea that the Earth does provide enough for everyone. Capitalism causes poverty by destroying the culture of subsistence.

The first long wave of dispossession in Peru started with the Spanish invasion in 1593. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the peoples and ecosystems of the Inca Empire (now Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, and parts of Chile and Brazil) fed the growth and evolution of the colonial center, beginning with Spain and Portugal. The industrial revolution also used Peru's Andean gold, silver and potato production as well as the rainforest's mahogany, rubber, and barbasco (*Lonchocarpus urucu*, a plant that is used as a pesticide and insecticide). Yet instead of appreciating these valuable contributions by Peruvian Andean and rainforest subsistence cultures, they have been dismissed and stigmatized as pre-scientific, traditional, primitive, or backward, and their members have been assassinated, raped, kidnapped, poisoned, and massacred.

A second wave of dispossession began in 1950 as Peru was incorporated into the imperium of the United States. Legal provisions were introduced to weaken indigenous people's control over

their lands. In 1970, during the military regime of Velazco Alvarado, petroleum exploration and production began in indigenous lands, in Blocks 1A-B with Occidental (Oxy) and Petro-Peru in Blocks 8-8X, both in Loreto. In 1974, despite these agreements with capitalist outsiders, the military government of Velazco Alvarado recognized the native community as a legal person with collective property rights to their land. It declared that the indigenous peoples' land rights were inalienable and permanent, and that their land could not be used as collateral by the government. This meant that Amazon indigenous people were then considered subjects with rights. But the declaration of rights for indigenous people turned out to be hollow, since Velazco's government also introduced the legal system of concessions that has been used ever since to take indigenous lands. Indigenous people, with Velazco's support, began formally organizing for territorial recognition and after several decades formed AIDSESP, the *Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* [The Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest]. In 1979 during the regime of General Morales Bermudez, who ousted Velazco in a military coup, Amazon forestry land was designated as state property that was "handed over for use" by the indigenous communities. Only land used in agriculture by communities was recognized as communal property. A change to decisions regarding the sale of land was also introduced at that time, framing them as "based on the community decision" and "solicited by two-thirds of the community members." This provision opened the way for massive manipulation and fraudulent "community decisions."

In 1993, Fujimori's dictatorship (1990-2001) made further changes to the Constitution that permitted communal land to be seized by the state if it was judged to be abandoned. This decision was very problematic for the indigenous population, since slash-and-burn cultivation is sequential; some years lands are in use, while other years the land rests. Ignoring this fact, in 1995 the regime expanded oil concessions and signed a contract with Atlantic Richfield Peru, Inc. (ARCO) for production in Block 64, located in Achuar territory along the Morona River and the Huituyacu and Huasaga rivers, two tributaries of the Pastaza River, near the northern border of Peru. In 2000, the Achuar people forced ARCO to pull out of the block, and Occidental took over production there. Between 1996 and 2000, Pluspetrol Norte S.A. operated in Block 8-8X and Block 1A-B respectively. In February 2001, Fujimori—before resigning from the presidency of Peru via fax—granted 23 new oil concessions to Occidental, Repsol, and Burlington Resources. In 2003, the Achuar people's resistance also forced Burlington Resources to withdraw from Block 64. The dictator also granted forestry concessions of up to 10,000 hectares for 60-year contracts to those with deep pockets.

Traditionally, *bosquecinos* would cut a few trees during the rainy season to sell in the city in exchange for basics such as sugar, salt, paraffin, matches, clothing, school materials, medicine, and Christmas gifts. In this way, they extracted resources only to meet their minimal, immediate needs. But as the system of concessions has expanded, the laws have changed. Since 2000, *bosquecinos'* logging activities have essentially been made illegal by requiring them to buy a permit, which they cannot afford. "Illegal" trees cut without a license fetch lower prices, so they must extract a higher volume of trees than they would otherwise need. Thus, *bosquecinos* who do not have access to forest concessions or live far away from them have become criminalized.

Permanent forest production has been superimposed on communal spaces, which has created numerous conflicts, as companies with forest concessions quickly began clear-cutting. Although Article 66 of the Peruvian Constitution grants forest concessions only to individuals, in Madre de Dios and Loreto, mafias of foreign and national traffickers (*habilitadores*) with powerful connections in government moved in to take advantage of the business opportunity. Aside from being given to groups who are not legally entitled to them, the government is not able to monitor or supervise these areas to make sure that concession holders respect the few restrictions that exist. For example, with just one concession of, say, 5,000 hectares, an individual can gain access to hundreds of square kilometers, which happened with the Schipper family, a major player in the timber sector.

In 1992 the family obtained the first forest concession of 5,000 hectares in Iberia, the so-called “Madera Iberia or Chullachaquis Investment.” In 1993, through *habilitation* the family secured another four concessions, which gave it control over 207,000 hectares out of 682,000 hectares authorized in Madre de Dios. The Schipper family also administers three timber companies, Empresa Forestal Rio Piedras, Empresa Forestal Monago, and Forestal Otorongo A and B, which export high-quality wood to the U.S. According to Miluska Soko, Alan Schipper is the “man on the ground”—or in this case, the “man in the forest”—for Drago Bozovich, the timber magnate who heads Peru’s largest wood products exporter, Grupo Bozovich. The company exports cedar (*cedrela odorata*), mahogany (*swietenia macroprylla*), and other woods to an expanding international market, with export offices in the U.S. (Bozovich Timber Products, Inc., [BTP]), Mexico (Bozovich S. de R.L. de C.V. [Bozomex]), a joint-venture in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. The company is also eagerly eyeing China and Europe for future expansion, and it sells to the domestic Peruvian market.

In March 2004, the administration of Alejandro Toledo, who succeeded Fujimori, approved the concession of Block 101 to Occidental Oil’s Peruvian subsidiary. Block 101 is adjacent to Block 64; together they total 1,698,230 hectares (16,982.3 square kilometers, an area slightly less than half the size of Switzerland). By 2006, the government had committed approximately 43 percent of its tropical rainforest to oil concessions—some 27 million hectares in a five-year period. This included contracts with Repsol (Spain) and Conoco Phillips (Canada/U.S.) to explore new concessions in Loreto, Madre de Dios, and Ucayali, which borders Loreto to the north and Madre de Dios to the south. In 2005, Toledo’s administration granted 196 forest concessions in Loreto.

To make matters worse, the state is incapable of monitoring logging in the Peruvian Amazon. One worker with the government agency that grants forestry concessions, INRENA (*Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales* [the National Institute of Natural Resources]), who asked not to be identified, described the situation this way:

There is no budget for conducting field evaluations, even though this is mandatory by law. For instance, to check Islandia’s concessions, the personnel need to walk eight days to go and eight days to come back, because there is no money for gas.”

As a result, concessions are granted with no knowledge of the area. José Álvarez, an IIAP (*Instituto de Investigaciones de la Amazonía Peruana* [Peruvian Amazon Research Institute]) biologist, proposes that organized indigenous and *campesina* communities under their highest authority, the Communal Assemble, take over the monitoring and enforcement of laws and regulations regarding logging in their areas. He points out that indigenous communities are perfectly suited to this task, because they are autonomous, sustainable, have a direct interest in the biological diversity, and have the capability to monitor activities and the legal authority to direct internal affairs and punish offenders. But they need to be empowered by the government.

Globalization Pressures on Dispossession

A third wave in the attack on Peruvian Amazon subsistence societies started with the implementation of free trade agreements to expand commodification. Since 2006, during Alan Garcia’s second administration, privatization of the Amazon rainforest became the main negotiation within the push for free trade agreements with the United States, the European Union, Canada, and China, as the Amazon rainforest became one of the last profitable frontiers for economic development.

A trade agreement negotiated with the U.S., the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) frames its goals in terms of “sustainable development,” a humane and ecologically responsible

sounding code word that allows virtually unchecked capitalist exploitation of the Global South. In keeping with the free trade agenda, the government organized the Environment Ministry with two vice-ministries: Natural Resources Development Strategy, and Environmental Management (EM), which are financed by the International Bank of Development, the regional arm of the World Bank. The EM is in charge of promoting biotechnology/biopiracy, and ethanol, it encourages the use of agro-chemicals in farming, and guarantees private property in agrarian and forestry land. In addition to promoting policies that dispossess the indigenous people of their lands, the creation of these new organizations ignores the competence of regional governments and indigenous and peasant federations. Instead it authorizes the Central Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG) and the Supervision Office of Wood Forest Concessions, or OSINFOR, an agency within INRENA, to privatize land. OSINFOR was set up to supervise the implementation of forestry concessions and protected areas, while MINAG authorizes changes in land use.

In an attempt to justify his racist policies of dispossession, in October 2007, President Garcia wrote an article titled “*El Perro del Hortelano*” [The Syndrome of the Orchard Dog] in which he likened *bosquecinos* to mad dogs who have resources they neither exploit nor allow anyone else to exploit: “There are millions of hectares that the communities have not cultivated as well as hundreds of mineral deposits that cannot be worked... the rivers that run down both sides of the mountain range pour into the ocean without producing electric energy,” he wrote. Garcia then equated modernity and progress with investment and transnational corporations.

Secrecy has surrounded the negotiation of the trade agreements. To avoid public scrutiny, Garcia sought special authority from the Congress to legislate in favor of the PTPA. He then issued 92 decrees, which established the basis for the next indigenous struggle; the decrees violate Covenant 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which the Peruvian government ratified in 1993. They also conflict with the Peruvian Constitution and communities’ legislation that protect native and campesina communities’ rights to agrarian development. Furthermore, the decrees are widely condemned throughout indigenous society, including by the Amazonia Parliamentary Representative. The decrees also contain contradictory judgments produced by two government ministries.

Despite all of these problems and conflicts, Garcia has been negotiating more concessions. Oil concessions under negotiation include Block 109 to the Spanish oil giant, Repsol; Block 67 to the private French/Anglo oil and gas company, Perenco; Block 64 to the independent Canadian oil and gas concern, Talisman; and Block 143 to Texas-based backer of George W. Bush, Hunt Oil. Garcia is also negotiating more areas for ethanol production, gold mining concessions with Dorato Resources, Inc. and areas for hydroelectric plants with the Brazilian oil and gas giant, Petrobras. The hydroelectric plants under discussion are at Nambari (2,000 MW), Sumabeni (1,074 MW), Paquitzapango (2,000 MW), Urubamba (940 MW), Vizcatan (750 MW) and Chuquipampa (800 MW). (See Table 1 below.)

Table 1 presents a summary of specific actions in the process of dispossession of the commons identified in this paper. Following the table is a chronology of the extended rebellion that has erupted in increasingly serious confrontations in the past decades.

Table 1: Dispossession of the Peruvian Amazon Commons, 1970-2009

ADMINISTRATIONS & AFFECTED COMMUNITIES	LEGAL ACTIONS AGAINST THE COMMON LAND	OIL CONCESSIONS	FORESTRY CONCESSIONS
1974: General Juan	Recognized indigenous people land as inalienable,	Block 1 A-B, Occidental	

Velazco Alvarado Achuar	permanent, and not valid as collateral	Block 8-8X, Petro-Peru	
1979 Constitution: General Morales Bermudez	Introduced the Concession System on land expropriation, based on the community decision and solicited by 2/3 of the community members		
1993: Alberto Fujimori Achuar, Cashibo, Shipibo-Conibo, Huambisa, Ashaninka, Yaminahua, Amahuaca, Jibaro, Machiguenga, Nahua, and Piro	Annulled the principles of inalienable, and not valid as collateral.	Block 64, ARCO (forced out in 2000), back as Conoco Phillips Blocks 1 A-B and 8-8X, Pluspetrol Block 64, Occidental (U.S.) Blocks 39, 57, 90, and 109 were granted to Repsol (Spain) Burlington Resources (now Conoco Phillips also operating in block 39)	In Madre de Dios, in 1992, the Schipper family obtained one concession of 5,000 hectares. By 1993, it controlled 207,000 hectares of the 682,000 authorized.
2006 to present: Alan Garcia Aguaruna Aguaruna/Huanbisa Achaur Achuar Achuar Aguaruna Jibaros (Awajun)	Instead of Concessions, its government promotes private property in public auction adjudication with an investment obligation.	Signed 49,000,000 hectares to oil concessions, among them are: Block 109 - Repsol in Pucallpa; block 67 - Perenco (Anglo-French) in La Cordillera del Condor (Bagua); Block 116 - Hocol in alto Marañón; Dorato Perú (France gold mining); Block 64 - Talisman Energy (Canada) Block 143 - Hunt Oil (U.S) Block 147 - Hindu Jindal Steel & Power, Ltd. (India) Block 145 - Olimpic Peru (U.S) 6 hydro-electric areas for Brazil in Nambari (2,000 MW), Sumabeni (1,074 MW), Paquizapango (2,000 MW), Urubamba (940 MW), Vizcatan (750 MW) y Chuquipampa (800 MW) Dorato Resources Inc. (Canadian gold mining) in Cordillera del Condor (Bagua) Secretly negotiated 456,000 ha., with Discover Petroleum (Dutch).	Dionisio Romero got 8,000 hectares, for ethanol.

Source: "Oil Blocks Put on Top of Community Native Territories," *La Republica*, June 14, 2006, and Petro-Peru contracted oil operation blocks. <http://www.formabiap.org>.

Recent Eco-class-race Struggles to Defend the Commons

The struggle in the Peruvian Amazon basin is the first organized Peruvian indigenous peoples' rebellion since the 1780 Tupac Amaru II rebellion against the Spanish colonizers. This quintessentially 21st century rebellion has grown over the course of many years in response to the attack on indigenous people's life by multinational oil, mining, and forest corporations in alliance with the Peruvian government.

Since the first rebellion, indigenous men, women, and children have had a common agenda: the liberation of their territories. In 2003, the first eco-class-race uprising took place after heavy metals such as lead and cadmium were found in Achuar drinking water, rivers, ecosystems, and in the blood of people. One anonymous indigenous informant with whom I spoke in 2008 had this to say about the situation:

Down well water pours directly into the rivers Pastaza, Macusary, Corrientes and Tigre. The contamination is expanded toward the Marañon and Amazon rivers because these four rivers are their tributaries. Pollution produced by oil spills sticks to the trees and bushes. Medicinal plants and "*pan llevar*" are weakened and their fruit instead of ripening becomes rotten. Drinking water is contaminated resulting in people and animal poisonings. The contamination of ecosystems has put our communities close to extinction.

In 2006, the second eco-class struggle began as an international revolt when 800 Achuars from Ecuador and Peru, ignoring national borders, arrived by boat and canoes and formed a peaceful blockade in Pluspetrol-operated Lot 1A-B and Lot 8 to prevent road traffic to the site. For two weeks, they stopped oil production of 40,000 barrels of oil per day. The Peruvian government and Pluspetrol were pressured to agree to the Dorissa Agreement, which contained promises to assess the situation and stop the contamination of their communities from the oil production. Among other provisions, the agreement gave the company twelve months to clean the areas polluted by Occidental's abandoned oil wells; initiate a process of reforestation; and begin re-injecting into the subsoil the contaminated "down well water" that is poisoning the waterways. Every day the oil companies dump about a million barrels of down well water into rivers and streams. To help them cope with the illnesses resulting from exposure to these toxins, local people demanded a hospital be built within two years and that the government conduct an epidemiological study to assess the impacts on indigenous workers.

Despite the Dorissa Agreement, by 2009 nothing changed, and the contamination continues. Pluspetrol has re-injected only small amounts of the contaminated waste water. Further, several oil spills have made life unbearable in affected communities. On July 8, 2007, one spill contaminated 16 kilometers of the Macusari River, and on July 25, 2007 another despoiled 5 kilometers of the stream in Antoquia village. According to Harvey Rivadeneira, a local chemist:

Toxic substances modified the pH of the surrounding watersheds, devastating the hydrobiology of rivers surrounding oil exploitation. Oil covering the river water made mirrors [that reflected the sunlight], making impossible its oxygenation and condemning to death its plankton, animals and its native people.

In March 2008, as conditions continued to deteriorate, the struggle escalated. With the destruction of their means of livelihood by lack of access to their areas of hunting, gathering, and fishing, indigenous people are forced to become wage-laborers at the oil companies, since oil corporations are the only income providers in that particular area. Thus an exploitative relationship forms through a process of structural devaluation of indigenous people's work.

Mies observes that in the Third World, the fate of the subsistence producer is "housewifization"—that is, treatment as feminine or feminized workers who are either unpaid or poorly paid. Victims of racist discrimination, indigenous wage-laborers receive the lowest salary compared with other oil production workers. They are only given one-month contracts and then must wait a year until all members of the 35 communities in the area have earned a month's salary

before they are re-hired. Following the Dorissa Act, Pluspetrol contracted the service of the Peruvian corporation, Graña y Montero, which is involved in energy, mining, and oil production, to remediate the destruction Pluspetrol caused in the forest. Graña y Montero employs between four and five individuals per community. The corporation knows that these workers are capable of remediating the soil contamination because of their experiential knowledge of the soil taxonomy identified in the Amazon. However, because of the classism and racism against indigenous people, they are not respected as thinking or problem-solving human beings, and their knowledge is dismissed.

Tired of the poor conditions, in late March 2008 workers complained of their situation to the 24 *Apus*, community leaders, who according to indigenous tradition, are consulted before any activity is carried out in the community's territory. After listening to the workers, the *Apus* decided to call a meeting with Graña y Montero. The first meeting was set in Titayacu, but the Graña y Montero negotiators did not show up. Instead they sent police who militarized the area. At the second meeting, this time in Nueva Jerusalen, three negotiators did attend. The *Apus* proposed an equal payment of 2,500 *nuevo soles* (US\$800) to indigenous laborers who are given only 28 days of paid employment a year, but the proposal was rejected. At the third meeting, no negotiators arrived.

In support of their members/workers, on March 20, 2008, the *Apus* and their communities initiated a strike for better pay. Workers, community members, and *Apus* congregated at an abandoned airport hoping to discuss their issues with any institutions—the enterprise, the government, and the ombudsperson—interested in helping to resolve the problem. None bothered to come. Instead, armed police arrived and attacked. In this encounter, three indigenous people were injured, one was killed, and three “disappeared.” During the police rampage, one police officer was also killed. The police used a Pluspetrol installation as a detention center. Fifty-three men, including an eleven-year-old boy and a priest, were held in a container and beaten for three days. Afterwards, the “prisoners” were taken to jail in Iquitos where local people and the church intervened to gain their freedom. Of those 53, four indigenous men were accused of police assassination and terrorism and kept in jail.

In August 2008, in Guayabamba jail in Iquitos, I interviewed these four men. They identified themselves as belonging to the Quichua and Achuar communities located on the El Marañon River. They disputed the accusations against them, and three of the four said they had not even participated in the airport demonstration, since the police had taken them from their houses the day before the march. After five months in prison, it was revealed that the officer had not died in the airport as the police had originally claimed, but in the backyard of a 60-year-old woman during a police attack on the small farms and households adjacent to the airport. In an interview with a national media outlet, the woman said she was so afraid of the violence of the police raids that she hid to keep safe and did not see what happened in her backyard. Despite this new information, which should have cleared the four suspects, as I write this essay, two of the four indigenous men are still being held in jail without charge. A month after the revolt, Carlos Curitiva Chuge, a cousin of one of the detainees, was killed by a police bayonet as he was fishing in a communal pond.

Between 2006 and 2008, several other local eco-class-race struggles took place against oil concessions, but the government chose to ignore them. During this same period, the negotiations over the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement with the U.S. increased pressure to take indigenous land. Separate free trade agreements with the European Union, Canada, and China are still under negotiation. Under the PTPA, land privatization was proposed to replace the Concession System.

In 2008, indigenous people became aware of the new scheme to privatize their lands. Before taking action against the new decrees, indigenous people through AIDSESEP called for dialogue,

which again the government ignored. The continued government stonewalling inflamed the struggle against the privatization of the rainforest, turning a local eco-class revolt into a regional battle as knowledge about the privatization of the commons spread and expanded into a larger eco-class consciousness among *bosqueños*.

On July 6, 2008, indigenous people in the upper rainforest area of Madre de Dios initiated a three-day strike against the Garcia government's decrees, by demanding the abolition of all new legislation promoting the privatization of the rainforest. This strike coincided with a national strike organized by the largest union in the country, *Central General de Trabajadores del Peru* (CGTP). On July 8, 2008, the day of the national strike, the regional government headquarters in Puerto Maldonado, the capital city of Madre de Dios, was burned to the ground. Twenty-three indigenous people were detained and accused of starting the fire. During the national strike, Peruvian journalists revealed that the dispute over the privatization of the rainforest was a central issue for the strikers. The press coverage put indigenous people's land claims in a new light, as their pictures were shown on the front page of newspapers all over the country.

On August 9, 2008, International Indigenous Peoples Day, AIDSESP, representing 57 indigenous communities, announced that after several months of calling for dialogue and negotiation, indigenous people were taking to the streets. The uprising began without incident as indigenous people exercised their constitutional right to engage in civil disobedience against the privatization laws and say "No!" to the free trade agreement. They barricaded the road to Camisea and took control of several areas, including the pipeline in the lower rainforest, the hydroelectric installation near Bagua, and the gasline in Urubamba.

In an attempt to find a way forward in this expanding crisis, a roundtable was organized in the town of Datem del Marañón in Loreto state. Participants in the dialogue were, on the one side, the President of the Loreto Region, the Minister of Environment, and two members of the Council of Ministries. On the other side were leaders of seven native confederations represented by AIDSESP, the president of INDEPA (*Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo de Pueblos Andinos, Amazonicos y Afroperuano* [the Institute for Andean, Amazonian and Afro-Peruvian Peoples]), an indigenous organization affiliated with the Peruvian government, and leaders of the *Frente Patriótico de Loreto* (FPL [the Patriotic Front of Loreto]), a civil society organization that includes unions, teachers, university professors, and business people. After eleven days of strike action in which indigenous people paralyzed 60 percent of the country amidst on-and-off negotiations, the Peruvian Parliament in charge of Indigenous Issues voted to eliminate two legislative decrees: 1015 and 1073. According to the law, President Garcia had 40 days to reply to this parliamentary action.

The struggle was highly politicized. In October 2008 a plot organized by the Garcia government and functionaries from the Energy and Mining Ministry and Petro-Peru was uncovered. They secretly negotiated to provide concessions in Reserva Kugapakori, Nahua, and Nantis, located in Cuzco and Ucayali, to Discover Petroleum, a Dutch oil corporation. These reserves were created by the Ministry of Agriculture supposedly to protect voluntarily isolated indigenous people. However in 2009, President Garcia conceded 49 million hectares for oil production, citing "national interest." Revelations of these underhanded deals fueled support for indigenous peoples' claims.

The indigenous struggle got another boost in February 2009 when the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations asked the Peruvian government to comply with Covenant 169. The ILO requested that the government:

- guarantee the participation and consultation of the indigenous people in a coordinated and systematic manner;

- identify urgent situations related to natural resource exploitation that put people, institutions, goods, work, cultures, and environments at risk; and
- adopt special measures in order to protect them.

Despite the indigenous uprising, Parliament's action to rescind two of the legislative decrees, and the ILO resolution, the government ignored the constitutional mandate to reply within 40 days and instead continued selling-out indigenous land to corporations.

On March 12, 2009, IADESEP wrote to the Congress and the President of the Council of the Ministries again requesting a dialogue, which both institutions ignored. On April 9, 2009, with their demands still unmet, the indigenous people declared a permanent uprising in defense and protection of their territories and rose up in arms again. In this most recent uprising, new demands were incorporated, which included:

- to reform the constitution to reinstate the principles of indigenous peoples' inalienable, permanent rights to their territories;
- to prohibit the government from using their land as collateral;
- to recognize collective property among indigenous people;
- to accept and include in the Constitution the UN declaration on Indigenous Peoples' Rights, and ILO edict 169;
- to incorporate into the Constitution the right to previous consultation in every procedure that affects indigenous people;
- to rescind the government resolution that criminalizes protest;
- to eliminate resolutions that privatize water and divert the rivers toward agribusiness projects; and,
- to establish a national dialogue roundtable to implement the indigenous people's demands to rescind the decrees.

The uprising had a significant impact in that it was able to incorporate all *bosquecinos*, including Regional Patriotic Fronts that include unions, municipalities, army reservists, and cities from every corner of the rainforest. These new forces converged to expose the oppression of the Garcia government. Two main cities, Yurimaguas (in Loreto) and Pucallpa (in Ucayali), staged general strikes, while Iquitos, the capital city of the Peruvian Amazon rainforest, organized a march. According to FORMABIAP (*Formación de Maestros Bilingües de la Amazonía Peruana* [the Amazon Bilingual Teacher's Association]), river boats carrying oil on the rivers surrounding the Amazon basin—the Amazonas, Napo, Marañón, and Ucayali—were blockaded. In Loreto, these actions forced Petro-Peru S.A. to shut down the North-eastern pipeline, which cut off the shipment of crude oil for export. It also forced Pluspetrol to shut operations in Block 1A-B and Block 8. In Bagua 300 indigenous people took control of Petro-Peru installations, and thousands blocked highways at the Devil's Curve to stop delivery of supplies to Lima, the Peruvian capital.

In response to this widespread rebellion, the government declared a 60-day state-of-siege on May 9, 2009 in four departments: Loreto, Amazonas, Cuzco, and Ucayali. This declaration suspended the constitutional rights of rainforest citizens living close to oil and gas pipelines. The government violently attacked the Ashaninkas with tear gas grenades, and marine gunboats on the Napo River destroyed the wooden canoes of the Quichuas and Arabelas peoples.

The *bosquecinos* saw the government actions as a declaration of war. The conflict escalated to the national level and brought Andean indigenous people into the struggle, since they are also affected by several of the legislative decrees. The repression continued. On May 12, 2009, while

meeting in preparation for the IV Continental Summit of People and Indigenous Nationalities from Abya Yala (CSPN) scheduled at the end of the month, Amazon and indigenous groups united and announced their planned response. On May 13, 2009 for the first time, AIDSEP, the indigenous peoples' network from the Amazon basin, marched on the streets of Lima accompanied by the most important indigenous Andean associations, such as the peasant federation, CCP (*Confederation Campesina del Peru*), CONACAMI (*Confederacion Nacional de Comunidades en Contra de la Minería* [The National Confederation of Communities Affected by Mining in Peru]), MCP (*Movimiento Cumbre de los Pueblos* [the Peoples Summit Movements]), and ANAMEBI-Peru (*Asociación Nacional de Maestros en Educación Bilingüe* [the National Association of Bilingual Teachers]). Support has also come from the highest levels of the Catholic Church in the Amazon basin, which condemned the land takeovers and declared the right of the indigenous people to defend themselves against this injustice. Other political organizations have expressed solidarity with this uprising and are calling for the creation of a National Political Front.

On May 28, at the IV Indigenous Peoples—Abya Yala Summit in Puno, 7,000 indigenous people from Canada, Europe, and Africa arrived and pledged their support to the struggle. At this Summit, the Amazon indigenous women in association with 2,000 international women presented a document in which they stated:

We, indigenous women gathered in the sacred lands of Lake Titicaca, after two days of discussions and deliberation raise our voices in these times when *Abya Yala's* womb is once more with childbirth pains, to give birth to the new *Pachakutik* for a better life on our planet. We, indigenous women, have had a direct input into the historical process of transformation of our peoples through our proposals and actions in the various struggles taking place and engendered from the indigenous movements.

We are the carriers, conduits of our cultural and genetic make-up; we gestate and brood life; together with men, we are the axis of the family unit and society. We join our wombs to our mother earth's womb to give birth to new times in this Latin American continent where in many countries millions of people, impoverished by the neoliberal system, raise their voices to say ENOUGH! to oppression, exploitation and the looting of our wealth. We therefore join in the liberation struggles taking place throughout our continent.

We gather here at this summit, with our hearts, minds, hands and wombs, for the purpose of seeking alternatives to eliminate injustice, discrimination, machismo and violence against women, and to return to our ways of mutual respect and a life of harmony with the planet. Whereas women are part of nature and the macrocosm, we are called to defend and take care of our mother earth, because from her comes our ancient history and culture, that make us what we are: indigenous peoples under the protection and spiritual guidance of our parents and grandparents who gave life to all the human beings that now inhabit this wonderful planet, even though a few oligarchs and imperialists seek to plague it with death in their quest for their god called greed. Therefore, before the memory of our martyrs, heroes, leaders, we present to our extended families (*Ayllus*), communities, peoples and nations of the world the conclusions of our rebellious hearts.

Indigenous women and men called for a National Uprising to be initiated on July 7, 2009 until victory is reached—i.e., until the decrees are revoked and/or President Garcia resigns. Indigenous people maintain that Garcia is unfit to lead the country, since he has demonstrated an inability to resolve the conflicts between the corporate world of free traders and the commoners and subsistence producers of Peru.

The Garcia government responded to this challenge with violence. On June 4, 2009 the Congress postponed the urgent debate of Decree No. 1090—one of the most objectionable decrees, because it allows the vague and overly broad rationale of “national interest” to open land to oil extraction, mining, biofuel production, and other exploitative projects. At 4:30 a.m. on June 5, 600 police attacked 3,000 Awajun and Wampi indigenous people with tear gas and machine guns from helicopters and on land with artillery while they were occupying part of the highway, the Devil's Curve, in Bagua, killing an unknown number when they ran for cover. The police then forcibly took an unknown number of wounded and dead to the military barracks of El Milagro.

The attack on Awajun and Wampis, appears to be a direct response to a peaceful but effective protest initiated in December 2008 against the Canadian mining company, Dorato Resources, Inc. Marco Huaco, the legal counsel to the Awajun and Wampis, argues that this attack had been directed against these particular ethnic groups because they proved that the government and Dorato Resources, Inc., have been violating ILO Covenant 169.

According to FORMABIAP, during the regional uprising on April 23, 2009, 300 Awajun and Wampis marched to Petro-Peru installations in Imasita near Bagua and requested that the company stop oil pumping until their demands were met. Petro-Peru's management and the indigenous people reached an agreement in which oil pumping stopped while the protesters peacefully protested outside the installations. On the same day, 38 policemen were sent by the government to protect the installations. For 42 days until the attack on June 5th, policemen and indigenous people peacefully sat outside the installations. When indigenous people posted in Imasita learned about the massacre taking place a few kilometers from where they were located, they took eleven of the 38 policemen and assassinated them. Another group of indigenous people opposed to the vengeance decided to liberate the remaining police hostages.

Belgian volunteers working in Bagua circulated photos of dead civilians that contradicted the government's initial claims that only the police suffered casualties. An eye-witness account provides a startling estimate of the casualties. At an AIDSESEP press conference that was televised on *Canal N* on June 7, 2009, Nelida Calvo, an indigenous leader whose brother and uncle were killed in the massacre, described the scene:

Although we indigenous people only had spears, we were attacked by the police, and hundreds of my brothers were killed... The government says that only 25 were killed, but local witnesses saw hundreds of dead bodies spread on the road. In addition, hundreds more have disappeared... I will continue struggling to retrieve their bodies and to stop the execution of the hundred who have been captured by the police.... We are still counting our family members in order to clarify how many of our people are dead, disappeared, or in jail.

The human rights association APRODEH (*Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos*) has so far confirmed 61 missing, 133 detained, and 189 injured, but the numbers continue to rise. On TV screens everywhere, we witnessed the suffering following the massacre in Bagua. A tormented mother, whose son was killed, speaking loudly in her dialect, impeached Garcia with these words:

Please, listen Mr. Alan Garcia: You are guilty of this extermination! You are killing us! You are selling us! You are a terrorist! We defend our territories without arms, our only defenses are spears and sticks, and they are not made to kill as you have done to us. You have exterminated us with arms, bullets, helicopters, and you have killed our brothers, sisters, students, teachers, sons! Alan, we ask you to come to our territories to pay your debts to us! Alan, you are selling our territories, indigenous people's resources: gold, oil, water, and air. You pollute our environment and in this way you make us poor as you now see us. We, the Awajun-Wampis, did not elect you to exterminate us, but to help, to educate our children who now have been killed. We have not taken your private property, nor have we killed your children, your family. Why are you annihilating us? You have extinguished life from us, we have nothing!

This cowardly and bloody attack is a familiar hallmark of Garcia's presidency. In June 1986, during his first term (1985-1990), a massacre of 300 prison inmates took place in Lima. In 1988, Andean farmers were executed by the army.

President Garcia's racist, sexist, and classist governmental style has its roots in the Spanish Inquisition. In the current struggle, the prime minister and other government ministers initially

supported their president's offense against humanity by repeating false versions of the facts that were then countered by eye-witness accounts of dead bodies being dumped in rivers. Orders for the arrest of the leaders of AIDSESEP, including its president, Alberto Pizango, who was charged with sedition and terrorism, were issued on Friday, June 6, 2009. Pizango sought and was granted asylum at Nicaragua's embassy.

The call for a regional uprising beginning on July 7 was moved up to start earlier in response to the massacre in Bagua. AIDSESEP and Amazon Regional Organizations called for a regional general strike starting June 11th. AIDSESEP vice-president, Daysi Zapata, a Yine woman, took over the leadership of the regional uprising. In the Amazon basin, thousands of indigenous people began leaving their traditional lands to gather in the four rainforest cities of Iquitos, Pucallpa, Yurimaguas, and Bagua in preparation. Indigenous people reorganized their forces; new oil compounds were occupied, and more highways were closed in preparation for the regional uprising. In Iquitos, an Army General attempted to intimidate the people with this message: "Stay in your houses, we do not want to kill you, but we have orders from our superiors to kill you if you continue with your rebellion." This message was broadcast by RPP, *Radio Programas del Perú*, a national private news station.

Following the massacre, a Communitarian Front in Defense of Life and Sovereignty was organized. Members called for Garcia and his ministers to resign, the adoption of a new Constitution that includes indigenous people's territorial rights, and trials for guilty parties. Garcia's government responded with televised propaganda in which indigenous people and *bosquecinos* were accused of being "violent," "savages," "terrorists against the democratic system," and "manipulated by international interests." The government provocation prompted the resignation of Carmen Vildoso, Minister of Women and Human Development, which created a ministerial crisis. At the same time, another crisis developed in Parliament with the members affiliated with the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* (PNP), a socialist-oriented nationalist party that opposes the country's ruling elite and the neoliberal project. Most of its members are indigenous and mix-raced children of the Amazon as well as the Andes. In response to the wishes of their constituents, they insisted that the decrees be rescinded. The government then temporarily suspended two decrees, 1064 and 1090, for 90 days. Eighteen members of the PNP then challenged the government by carrying banners inside the Parliament to protest the government decision. On June 11, seven members of the PNP were suspended without pay for 120 days, and eleven were warned that they would be next.

The *bosquecinos* began the uprising on June 11, 2009 with 24 hours of solidarity actions across the country. Thousands of people—old and young, women and men, political organizations and independent individuals, students and community organizations—united on the streets and plazas to reject the decrees and in every language express their indignation against the president. They chanted "We do not have a president. We do have a race murderer." Meanwhile, international marches in solidarity with the Amazon struggle took place in Uruguay, Italy, Spain, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. Common demands were: "Stop abuse and government indifference!" "Stop humiliations and dispossession!" "Stop blood and death!" Eight members of the European Parliament weighed in by presenting a motion to postpone the next round of free trade negotiations. They sent the following communiqué to the Peruvian government:

We condemn these grave acts of violence that are totally contradictory to the maintenance of a stable democracy and the rule of law, as well as the racist overtones made by President Alan Garcia following the events.

On June 16, 2009, desperate to end the conflict and clean up his image as a brutal, racist thug, Garcia forced his party to vote again, this time to get rid of the two laws. The Prime Minister, Yehude Simon, brought government-affiliated indigenous organizations to the negotiating table, but

tried—unsuccessfully—to exclude IADESEP leaders. Days later, Garcia accused six other PNP Parliament members of engaging in a continental Cold War against his government as agents of Hugo Chavez and threatened them with impeachment. The PNP, along with other small opposition parties, formally called for the impeachment of Prime Minister Yehude Simon and Interior Minister Mercedes Cabanillas. They got 56 out of the 61 votes needed to remove Simon and Cabanillas, and would have had enough if not for the seven suspended PNP members. But then, Simon and his Cabinet were removed after more solidarity mass movement actions covering 72 hours over July 7, 8, and 9, 2009, in which citizens throughout the entire country participated.

The persecution of indigenous people continues, and on July 12, 2009, four AIDESEP leaders were charged with sedition and terrorism. As a result, brothers Saúl and Cervando Puertas Peña, requested asylum in the Nicaragua embassy, while two other members are still in hiding.

In contrast to the reaction to the Peruvian government's murderous attempts to lay claim to Amazonian indigenous lands, AIDESEP has convoked unity among social movements and political parties—an unprecedented achievement in Peru. Its direct action campaign marked the emergence of Amazonian indigenous peoples as an influential and autonomous force in Peru's current political landscape. The mobilization also sparked a public realization that the defense of Amazonian resources is an issue of national and international importance, not only a regional or indigenous problem. The indigenous uprising has increased public awareness of the predatory nature of free trade, the need for the prioritization of the commons over private interests, and the meaning and importance of the subsistence perspective.

Conclusion

The neoliberal model—that everything is for sale—was confronted in the Peruvian Amazon basin. Indigenous people have risen in defense of their territories as common land and their society as sufficient. Their subsistence perspective has produced “the good life,” which is based on simple and practical knowledge that for millennia conserved a healthy forest, wildlife, biodiversity, and society in general. This indigenous subsistence perspective holds the secret of abundance, sufficiency, security, a good life, preservation of the economic and ecological base, and cultural and biological diversity. Their ecosystem knowledge has for centuries allowed them to co-exist in and maintain the forests and the photosynthesis needed to produce tall, closed-packed, large-crowned, evergreen trees, preserving thousands of plant and animal species, which in turn provide a rich and abundant physical and spiritual life.

The recent capitalist global financial crisis, the escalating global ecological crisis, and neoliberal globalization—the pillar of free trade politics—are pushing the course of change in the Peruvian Amazon. Large national and international corporations overwhelmingly favor rapid privatization of the Amazon. Corporate projects of oil drilling, logging, mining, biofuel production, carbon credits, ecotourism, and biotechnology (biopiracy) are under negotiation. This model is not only destructive for *bosqueños* but for the entire planet, since it involves the destruction of an ecosystem critical to the stability of the earth's climate.

What happens in the Amazon rainforest over the next decades will depend on the outcome of the struggles between the indigenous, national, continental, and international forces. Stopping the calamity in the rainforest requires a political will that simply does not exist in Garcia's government. Instead of allowing the government and its international associates to destroy the commons of the Amazon, local scientists and *bosqueños* (women and men) are empowering themselves to use their ancestral knowledge (slash-and-burn technique) in combination with new ways to preserve their own means of subsistence and well-being—as well as humanity's future—which depends directly on the

health of these forests. Internationally, indigenous people's struggles for their territorial rights can be seen as a critical element of the fight against global warming. Privatization of the rainforest transforms the Amazon forest which sustains an average of 1,000 metric tons of biomass per hectare, 150 to 200 metric tons of CO₂, and produces 30 percent of our fresh water. Thus, global solidarity with the Peruvian Amazon struggle strengthens the chances of succeeding in mitigating global warming. But international participation cannot include aid and nongovernmental organizations that push international market models. Nor can it include rainforest pirates who promote the "buying of the forest to save the planet," all under the corporations' and corporate environmentalists' rhetoric of the "Global Commons." Instead, this call is for people globally—including activists in the global justice movement—to build democracy by dismantling their national corporations and embracing "sufficiency" as a way to survive.

Ecofeminists have long argued for a new theory of society in which the unseen "feminine" or unwaged—indigenous people, peasants, and nature, along with women household workers—are recognized as necessary to the maintenance of natural and social systems that underpin human life on earth. This unseen and underdeveloped feminine is essential to the process of capital accumulation and therefore availed of tremendous power to interrupt the destructive path of industrialization and replace it with the "art of a good life."