



#FocusOnGlobalExtraction

#GlobalExtractionAction

PROGRAM TWO: URGENT SHORTS

From 16-20 July 2020, Jamaican environmental filmmaker Esther Figueroa (Vagabond Media), in collaboration with Caribbean Creativity, is hosting a free online film festival to reflect on the destructive impacts of hundreds of years of extractive industries on Planet Earth. Program Two: Urgent Shorts presents an educational overview focusing on many of the consequences of global extraction, with links to almost 40 Urgent Shorts that include testimonials from people impacted by extraction and exploitation, media produced by grassroots and international activist organizations, news outlets and documentaries.

Accompanying the *Urgent Shorts* program is a [bonus list by topic of links](#) to 70 extraction related documentaries, testimonials, news programming and shorts, including extensive links to media about environmental justice.

*All media featured in the URGENT SHORTS * GEFF PROGRAM TWO are publicly available online and can be accessed at anytime, not just during GEFF 2020.*

GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION AGAINST EXTRACTION AND EXPLOITATION

**by Esther Figueroa
July, 2020**

On Planet Earth Everything Is Connected...

In 2020 we know this because the corona virus pandemic has spread to millions of humans across the globe with over half a million dead. Pandemic physical and social distancing requirements have changed the way many of us live, die, mourn, work, teach, learn, and interact. One of the outcomes of COVID-19 is a drastic reduction in human mobility and a disruption in the global commodity supply chain. With low demand, the price of fossil fuels plummeted and oil tankers remained anchored unable to unload their cargo.

[Oil prices collapse below zero in coronavirus crisis – what happens now? \(Channel 4 News, 2020, 5 mins\)](#)

With entire countries and cities under quarantine, large polluting industries were temporarily closed, so for a few months, parts of Planet Earth experienced reduced toxic emissions, noise and intrusion, which allowed some species previously pushed out of their habitat and/or killed by humans to rebound. This planetary pause led to clear skies in cities notoriously known for their debilitating air pollution, and at moments, to a world where people were absent from places they usually crowd, whether city centers or popular coastlines.

COVID-19 WILL NOT SAVE THE PLANET

Some note that COVID-19 is achieving what decades of environmental and social justice activism has not been able to – a sharp downturn in human destruction of the planet. But the threats to Planet Earth and all life on it are actually increasing not decreasing. In addition to ever expanding human suffering in the forms of hunger, illness, lack of sustainable livelihoods and displacement, collapsing economies and crumbling societal systems engender the shredding of already weak protections for the non-human world and vulnerable people. The pandemic has allowed governments to declare states of emergency with immense powers that cancel participatory decision-making processes.

[How does the new draft EIA affect the environment and us? \(Mongabay India News, 2020, 9 mins\)](#)

In the rush to get back to the “Old Normal” of a global capitalism fundamentally dependent on extraction and exploitation, to “get the economy going again,” and to make up for lost profits and capital, governments are subsidizing and bailing out industries and financial sectors, and canceling or waiving environmental regulations. The currencies of many countries are devaluing causing the price of necessities to rise while millions are out of work

or have reduced incomes, and governments are taking on even larger debt burdens through new IMF agreements and other forms of borrowing. For example, the World Bank is predicting an economic downturn in the Caribbean and Latin America worse than the Great Depression. This economic reality will have deep environmental and social repercussions.

During the pandemic mining and other extractive industries have been declared essential, including factory farms, meat packing operations, industrial fishing and agriculture, thus putting their poorly paid and often enslaved workers' health at risk, while continuing to degrade the environment – the very reason why we have pandemics in the first place. So while the pandemic has been a momentary relief to parts of the planet, we need to realize that logging, water diversion, prospecting, mining, quarrying, drilling, industrial agriculture and other forms of extraction have not stopped, but on the contrary are expanding.

[*Why coronavirus won't save the environment \(Ecosia, 2020, 9 mins\)*](#)

[*Amazon deforestation soars amid pandemic lockdowns \(Al Jazeera English, 2020, 2.44 mins\)*](#)

[*See how beef is destroying the Amazon \(AJ+, 2019, 10 mins\)*](#)

[*The problem with palm oil – Fight for the forests \(Take Part, 2016, 2.46 mins\)*](#)

[*Big Damage \(David Fedele, 2016, 24 mins\)*](#)

[*Seabound: The journey to modern slavery \(Greenpeace Southeast Asia, 2020, 7 mins\)*](#)

#FocusOnGlobalExtraction

Satellites, smart phones, computers, digital storage, automobiles, transportation, the travel industry, space flight, infrastructure, buildings, medicine, energy, technology, the military industrial complex, domestic appliances, cosmetics, foods and beverages – the global economy and all aspects of our 'modern' lives depend on the large-scale extraction of minerals, fossil fuels, water, trees, plants and animals, that are then manufactured into the goods and services we consume and the endless wars, military skirmishes and "regime changes" taking place around the world. This political economy can only be accomplished through the exploitation of "cheap" nature, people and labor. The extractive industries destroy the natural environment, displace millions of indigenous and rural people, use huge amounts of energy, discharge toxic waste and pollute, create urban wastelands, damage the health of all living beings, disenfranchise generations and impoverish millions of often already marginalized people – all in the name of 'development'. Below are examples of longstanding as well as new concerns.

EXTRATERRESTRIAL & DEEP SEA MINING

On 16 July, the United States of America will celebrate the 51st anniversary of NASA's launch of Apollo 11, and on 20 July, the moon landing. On 30 June, 2020, SpaceX a private company owned by Elon Musk, launched a US military Space Force satellite, one of dozens of military and commercial satellites launched by the company since 2013. SpaceX is also currently developing flights to the Moon and Mars.

In theory outer space, including asteroids, planets and moons, is supposed to not belong to any country and to be a shared commons that no one can own. However, the USA though a signatory to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty planted an American flag on the Moon, and many countries have not signed the treaty. Dennis Hope has claimed ownership of all planets and moons in the solar system and has been selling portions of our moon. Legal and cultural notions of property and profit have therefore expanded beyond Planet Earth. In 2015, the USA passed the Space Act which allows US citizens to own resources in space and bring them back to Earth to sell for profit. As the US, China, Japan and other countries, as well as privately owned businesses, pursue a new era of mineral extractive space exploration, mining the moon and asteroids, along with deep sea mining, are the New Extraction Frontiers.

[*Trump administration drafts pact for mining the moon \(News Time, 2020, 2.54mins\)*](#)
[*The race to mine the Moon is taking off \(Seeker, 2020, 9 mins\)*](#)

The minerals required by “smart” technologies are abundant under the sea and in space. One of the arguments for pursuing deep sea and extraterrestrial prospecting and mining is that terrestrial extraction has been so damaging, in order to protect humanity, it is better to mine in places devoid of people. In addition to this being a crass example of chauvinistic human-centric thinking, it fails to properly account for and make reparations to the people and places already sacrificed by extraction.

[*The next frontier in mining \(Sarah Fahmy, Pulitzer Center, 2016, 7.44 mins\)*](#)

The Pacific Ocean is the largest body on our planet and it is not empty but filled with marine, terrestrial and atmospheric life. The Pacific Ocean is currently the most important region for deep sea mining, and prospecting has already taken place off the shores of places like Papua New Guinea that for decades have already been sites of devastating terrestrial extractive industries such as gold and nickel mining. The Pacific has long been a Sacrifice Zone with nuclear testing, nuclear waste dumping, military “exercises” such as RIMPAC, military control of entire islands such as the Hawaiian Islands, the Marshall Islands, Guam, Kanaki (New Caledonia) and French Polynesia, as well as large scale mineral extraction to the point of depleting entire islands as in Kitibati and Nauru.

[*A nuclear Free Pacific? \(Windward Video Production, 1980, 32 mins\)*](#)
[*A Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific \(Namaka o ka 'Aina, 1983, 5 mins\)*](#)
[*Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific \(Namaka o ka 'Aina, 1983, 3 mins\)*](#)

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TERRESTRIAL EXTRACTION

Throughout the world, extractive industries have been granted legal access to huge swaths of land, have power over the lives of millions of often marginalized people, and the damage caused by extraction is seen as part of the price to pay for progress with no one held accountable. The impacts of extraction on communities is enormous.

[*Brazil Dam Collapse: 12M litres of mining waste slams into town \(TRT World, 2019, 2.26 mins\)*](#)

[*Our Rivers are contaminated with mercury \(Survival International, 2020, 1.24 mins\)*](#)

[*Environmental impact of mining in India's tribal heartland \(Al Jazeera English, 2016, 2 mins\)*](#)

[*Resource Extraction in West Papua \(James Morgan, 2013, 3.34 mins\)*](#)

Those working within extractive industries, whether “legal” or “illegal”, work under horrendous conditions and are often forced labour including forced child labour. For many living in societies with deep inequality, enormous wealth gaps and few opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, extraction is the most lucrative form of work. The damage done by small-scale, community-based prospecting and mining is also significant, and eventually makes the areas in which community members are extracting completely unlivable.

[*Bling – Minor Miners \(Save Child Miners, 2014, 5 mins\)*](#)

[*Peru declares a state of emergency on illegal gold mining \(CGTM America 2019, 8.47 mins\)*](#)

Extraction continues to be deeply embedded in both global capitalist commodity chains and geo-political expansionism and dominance. In this way, military enforced and/or manipulated electoral “regime changes” are often about access to coveted minerals, fossil fuels, land, water, and so forth. The recent controversial election in Guyana was dominated by the high stakes relationship between political power and potential economic benefits from newly signed contracts for oil extraction. Some consider recent electoral “regime changes” in Bolivia and Ecuador as propelled by multi-national desires for unimpeded access to Lithium, oil and other mineral extraction. Jade mining in Myanmar is fueling the “ethnic cleansing” of the Rakhine. The belt and road initiative of China, which has recently expanded its economic power, political influence and settlement into Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean is in part about securing resources.

[*South America's Lithium Boom: A blessing or a curse? \(Now This World, 2017, 3.37 mins\)*](#)

[*The Price of Gold: Chinese mining in Ghana \(The Guardian, 2013, 14.20 mins\)*](#)

[*Diamond Mining – Inside the largest mine in the world \(Doc Bites, 2020, 16.04 mins\)*](#)

EXTRACTION, INDIGENEITY AND THE SACRED

The dominant world view shared by patriarchy, modernity and global capitalism is that humans are separate from, superior to and have dominion over “nature”; that land, forests, sea, water, minerals, air are all property; “resources” to be “exploited.” That the natural world should at all times be made productive. Therefore, people who have other world views or imaginaries, who for example insist that the land, rivers, mountains, seas, skies, and all in, on, above and below, are sacred and should not be treated as disposable and exploitable inanimate objects, are obstacles to development and progress and should be removed.

Indigenous peoples have been the most impacted by extraction which has been central to their experience of genocide and erasure. It is the lands, forests, rivers, seas that they inhabit that are wanted and you cannot have extractive industries without, at some point, the taking of indigenous people's homelands, the destruction of their ways of life and the criminalization of their existence. In May 2020, giant multinational metals and mining company Rio Tinto "legally" destroyed 46 thousand years of aboriginal heritage, claiming that they did not know the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura traditional owners of the land would have a problem with them doing so. This desecration, quite clearly demonstrates the chasm between those that believe the earth is simply material objects waiting to be exploited for profit, and the original inhabitants of Australia, the people considered to have the oldest continuous civilization in the world. The government of Australia continues its history of genocide by choosing extraction over the lives and heritage of the original people of the country the government administers.

[*Rio Tinto destroys 46,000 yr old aboriginal heritage site \(TRT World, 2020, 1.41 mins\)*](#)
[*Australia puts coal mining ahead of Aboriginal rights \(Al Jazeera English, 2017, 2.50 mins\)*](#)

[*Micklo's Story \(Micklo Corpus & Ngikalikarra Media, 2017, 3 mins\)*](#)

[*Bookarrarra Liyan Mardoowarra Booroo \(Martuwarra, River Of Life; Magali McDuffie; Madjulla Inc., 2019, 8 mins\)*](#)

[*Duchess is Paradise \(Pandion Pictures & Madjulla Inc for submission to Environmental Protection Agency, 2014, 21 mins\)*](#)

Canada, the country with the largest extractive industries in the world, like Australia founded on the genocide of first nation people and the capture of their land, is home to decades of indigenous struggle against erasure. In 2012, Nina Wilson, Sheelah Mclean, Sylvia McAdam and Jessica Gordon founded the Idle No More movement to fight extraction and the weakening of environmental protections by the Canadian government. The fight for indigenous environmental justice became even more urgent and expansive with the fight to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline designed to carry Alberta tar sands oil (the worst of all fossil fuels in terms of carbon footprint and pollution) all the way to Texas. Actions and protests were met with state violence, and laws were enacted to ban protests, even by indigenous people on their own lands.

[*Dakota Access pipeline company attacks Native American protesters with dogs & pepper spray \(Democracy Now, 2016, 7.47 mins\)*](#)

[*Victory for Native Americans in Dakota Access Pipeline \(CNN, 2016, 3 mins\)*](#)

EXTRACTION AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The current climate crisis can be traced back to European expansionism starting in the 15th century. With European imperialism came massive extraction from colonies around the world, and the materials and labour necessary for the Industrial Revolution. Both the genocide caused by conquest, enslavement and human trafficking, and the ecocide accompanying the plundering of the Earth, created the conditions for the anthropocene. Now global warming, sea level rise, increased droughts and extreme weather events that

are part of the climate crisis disproportionately impact marginalized people, small-island nations and those living in tropical zones and regions with harsh climate conditions. The climate crisis is creating climate refugees.

[The floods are coming – Climate refugees in Bangladesh \(Deutsche Welle Documentary, 2019, 42 mins\)](#)

WATER EXTRACTION

Large hydroelectric dams are built to provide cheap electricity to power large-scale extractive industries. Dams and water diversion are also necessary for industrial agriculture and transporting water to human settlements, whether water as a bottled commodity, irrigating crops or piped to homes. Major rivers such as the Nile, the Mekong, the Amazon, the Colorado, flow through competing jurisdictions. Fresh water is absolutely necessary for human life, but it is finite and limited, so competition for the control of water sources is fierce, whether at the level of nation states, multi-national corporations, local municipalities or communities.

The Nile is the longest river in the world and flows through ten countries in Africa. On-going geo-political struggles over control of access to the water of the Nile is again at fever pitch, as Ethiopia builds a massive dam that Egypt fears will greatly reduce the water it depends upon, while Sudan (a nation already suffering from drought, hunger and war) is caught in the middle.

China's conquest and occupation of Tibet means that China controls not only extensive mineral deposits found in Tibet, but more importantly China controls the source of water for 46 percent of the world's population, because Tibet is the source of over thirty of the rivers in Asia including the Mekong, the Indus, the Ganges, the Salween, the Yangtze, and other major rivers. In addition to building dams in Tibet, which will limit the flow of water to nations south and west of China, by controlling the source of these rivers, China has immense geo-political power that it can use to coerce its neighbors.

Large dams are some of the most environmental damaging infrastructures in the world, flooding millions of acres of land, diverting the courses of rivers, disrupting the natural flows, destroying wild life habitat, and displacing millions of people (often indigenous and rural peoples) while erasing their heritage. Dams like the enormous Three Gorges dam in China has been linked to a series of earth quakes, and as with similar constructions, major breaches in the dam would lead to disaster.

[Are dams killing the Mekong river? \(Deutsche Welle News, 2020, 7 mins\)](#)
[Expert: Three Gorges Dam could collapse \(NTD, 2020, 3 mins\)](#)

EXTRACTION AND WASTE

Human extraction, industrial manufacturing and consumption have multiplied exponentially since the 20th century, so that maintaining the standard of living and over consumption of the richest countries and people in the world would require much more than one Planet Earth can supply. This unsustainable rate of extraction and consumption also creates enormous amounts of waste that we do not manage, waste that ends up everywhere in the natural environment, and dumped in racially oppressed and economically impoverished communities.

[Dirty Business: what really happens to your recycling \(Sky News, 2018, 46 mins\)](#)
[Malaysia and the broken global recycling system \(Greenpeace International, 2019, 8.28 mins\)](#)

EXTRACTION AND FOOD SECURITY

Food insecurity, hunger and impoverishment are some of the immediate impacts of extractive industries. Large tracts of fertile land are turned into toxic wastelands, dead zones and mono-crop industrial agriculture. Forests with immense biodiversity are destroyed and turned into pasture for cattle rearing, industrial agriculture and dug out for mining. Millions of small-scale and subsistence agriculturalists and forest dwellers are displaced. Their vitally important life skills and knowledge replaced and erased. In this way generations of people have forgotten how to grow food without government subsidized, multinational owned agricultural farming that require GMO seeds and fossil fuel based fertilizers and toxic pesticides. Most countries, especially countries in previously colonial or neocolonial relationships, are dependent on global food supply chains and have large food import bills. This dependency on imports and lack of local food security has led not only to indebtedness, but to the chronic diseases and public health problems that come with bad nutrition.

One such country is Jamaica, whereby plantation agriculture deforested the island and placed most of the arable lands in the hands of a small elite plantocracy. These plantations were powered by enslaved Africans. Post “emancipation”, the enslaved, whose labour had created both immense individual wealth as well as institutional and governmental wealth in Great Britain, were landless and received no compensation, though their owners were compensated for the loss of their “property.” Despite this legacy, many Jamaicans went on to create subsistence and small-farms in the less valued hilly parts of Jamaica. Starting in the 1950s with the arrival of the aluminum industry to Jamaica, these lands became the target for bauxite (the soil from which aluminum is extracted) mining. Almost 70 years of bauxite mining has displaced hundreds of thousands of rural Jamaicans (many moving to urban areas within Jamaica or migrating to the UK and North America), exported billions of tons of Jamaican soil, destroyed and impoverished entire farming communities. The loss of local agriculture, as well as dependency on large-scale tourism, means that Jamaica imports over 80% of its food.

[Our food, our future \(Greenpeace International, 2017, 3 mins\)](#)

[Cockpit Country is our home \(Esther Figueroa, 2013, 28 mins\)](#)

[Cockpit Country: Voices from Jamaica's heart \(Esther Figueroa, 2007, 24 mins\)](#)

CONCLUSION: #GLOBALEXTRACTIONACTION

What should be the relationship between human needs, the needs of the rest of the occupants of Earth and the planet itself? Some advocate for human-centric approaches that continue the development and expansion of human societies through market-driven economic growth, but minimize the human environmental footprint through smart technology and alternative energy. Others advocate for decreased human population, limited economic growth, steady-state economies and the redistribution of wealth through reparations, taxes and the fair sharing of global economic benefits and responsibilities.

[Rutger Bregman and Winnie Byanyima at Davos \(2019\)](#)

In June 2020, the video-taped brutal murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, while two other officers looked on, ignited world wide protests against systematic white supremacy, police brutality, state abuse, the prison and military industrial complexes, colonial occupation and rampant inequality, all within the context of a devastating pandemic and economic depression. The outrage was framed by the #BlackLivesMatter movement which was founded in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman who murdered Trayvon Martin. The Black Lives Matter global network, though unapologetically Black, is intentionally feminist, queer and intersectional. It is a successful model for actions and movements targeting any form of oppression in the world.

[How Black Lives Matter and environmental justice are connected \(Goodful, 2020, 6 mins\)](#)

One of the priorities of the Black Lives Matter movement is the defunding of the police and the military. By “defunding” is meant the shifting of the massive percentage of budgets and resources that go to policing, and to the military and prison industrial complexes, and to instead focus funding on what would nurture, strengthen and transform societies into caring spaces of justice, peace, joy, creativity and sustainable living. To achieve different futures one has to imagine different futures. A future that dismantles our death cult of violence, war, domination, wanton destruction, where all value can be reduced to productivity and profit, is a future worth imagining and creating.

Global extraction and exploitation are essential to maintaining the status quo and indeed making it worse. We therefore need to #FocusOnExtraction and take #GlobalExtraction Action. It is important to understand how the global extractive industries operate, their relationship to extinction, ecological degradation, the climate crisis and anthropocene, to governance and the global political economy, social and environmental injustice, water and food insecurity – every aspect of our life.

It is true that since all aspects of our lives are in some way entangled with some aspect of extraction and exploitation, there are no simple solutions. But some of the obvious solutions are reducing the demand for goods and services dependent on extraction, stopping waste producing unnecessary consumption, making producers of products responsible for the product's entire life cycle, producing technology and other products using existing materials rather than continuing new extraction, continuing to demand reparations, the redistribution of wealth and the fair sharing of planetary benefits and responsibilities. But most of all, we need to fundamentally change our world view from one of human-centric entitlement, power and greed to a human de-centered understanding of the web of life, to planetary empathy, gratitude and caring, because **On Planet Earth Everything Is Connected**.

Accompanying this Urgent Shorts program is a [bonus list by topic of links](#) to 70 extraction related documentaries, testimonials, news programming and shorts, including extensive links to media about environmental justice.



Esther Figueroa filming in Jamaica.