

Yachaywasi Films Presents
In Association with the Ford Foundation

WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

A film by Heidi Brandenburg & Mathew Orzel
Produced by Taira Akbar

103 min / Spanish with English subtitles / 2016 / Color / Peru



FIRST RUN FEATURES

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

In this tense and immersive tour de force, audiences are taken directly into the line of fire between powerful, opposing Peruvian factions who will stop at nothing to keep their respective goals intact. On the one side is President Alan Garcia and the Peruvian government who, eager to enter the world stage, begins aggressively extracting oil, minerals, and gas from untouched indigenous Amazonian land. He is quickly met with fierce opposition from indigenous leader Alberto Pizango, whose impassioned speeches against Garcia's destructive actions prove a powerful rallying cry to throngs of his supporters. When Garcia continues to ignore their pleas, a tense war of words erupts into deadly violence.

LONG SYNOPSIS

In this tense and immersive tour de force, **WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE** brings audiences directly into the line of fire between two powerful, opposing Peruvian factions who will stop at nothing to keep their respective goals intact. On the one side is President Alan Garcia and the Peruvian government who, eager to enter the world stage, begins aggressively extracting oil, minerals, and gas from untouched indigenous Amazonian land. He is quickly met with fierce opposition from the indigenous people living in the Amazon jungle, led by Alberto Pizango, whose impassioned speeches against Garcia's destructive actions become a rallying cry. When President Garcia continues to ignore their pleas, a tense war of words erupts into deadly violence, bloody protests and chaotic clashes between both sides.

First-time feature documentary filmmakers Heidi Brandenburg and Mathew Orzel capture all angles of this volatile political and environmental crisis with breathtaking access and bold, unflinching camera work. From the raucous halls of justice to deep in the heart of the Amazon jungle, **WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE** exposes a titanic clash between a government hungry for economic legitimacy and a people, led by an outspoken environmentalist, desperate to protect an ancient land from ruin.

The filmmakers immersed themselves in Peru for several years to flesh out this complex story. Their close relationship with Pizango, an eye for Amazonian beauty, and no-holds-barred interviews with Peru's political cupola come together to create a heart-pumping tale of defiance and courage. The film captures this continuously important story linking indigenous rights and the sustainability of the Amazon rainforest told against the backdrop of globalization.

FILMMAKERS' STATEMENT

We (Mathew Orzel and Heidi Brandenburg) began collaborating on films while we were studying at the University of Newport Wales in the United Kingdom. After graduating, we decided to continue our collaboration and asked Taira Akbar, a talented artist then working for the BBC, to join our team. Together we created a production company called Yachaywasi Films, which translates to “house of learning” in the ancient Inca language. Our vision was to use documentary film as a tool for knowledge building, in which the film company would become that house of learning.

In 2007, we earned a scholarship that allowed us to make films anywhere in the world. Our shared passion for traveling and learning about new cultures, turned our sights to South America. Since Heidi was born and raised in Peru and wanted to return to the country she left behind, the team made Lima their next destination.

It was during our research from Lima that we stumbled upon a news article about the US-Peru Free Trade Agreement. The article stated that the Peruvian Congress used the occasion to legislate a massive bypass of indigenous rights in order to exploit their ancestral lands. Within a year, 72% of the Peruvian Amazon had been parceled out to oil and gas concessions.

The government marketed as being in the best economic interests of the Peruvian people. The opposition claimed that the new legislation would prove disastrous for hundreds of thousands of indigenous peoples and their surrounding environment. Against the backdrop of the global climate crisis, we decided to find the truth.

The mission led us deep inside the Amazon where we experienced the ancient way of life and the unique symbiotic relationship between the Amazonians and their rainforest home. In contrast, we also saw firsthand how contamination was cutting into the fabric of the indigenous culture, which hinges on the well-being of the rainforest and its people. We learned what was at stake and started to understand the possible consequences if the rainforest was to be increasingly exploited.

Through our work with local NGOs, we heard of a massive gathering of indigenous people where leaders from all over the Amazon would elect their next national representative. In the jungle town of Iquitos, we met Alberto Pizango as he was re-elected president of an NGO representing the indigenous peoples. In the midst of the Peruvian rainforest, we became captivated by his honesty, selflessness, and relentlessness to continue the fight for the rights of his people and their ancestral lands. We knew we had to capture this man’s journey for the world to see.

After intense questioning over our intentions and passing spiritual tests to gain his trust, we became immersed in his life without knowing what lay ahead. Within weeks, the story of Bagua emerged and thousands of indigenous protestors pushed him to defend their rights as the de facto leader. Our relationship deepened as we watched him rise to the challenge of leadership. As the largest peaceful indigenous protest in Peruvian history expanded, Pizango led the political campaign against the new legislation destroying his homeland from Lima.

Deep in the Amazon, we saw decades of cultural dissonance explode. We filmed protestors as they shut down major oil pipelines feeding Lima. As we filmed, military helicopters and the police force surrounded us. They took our passports and threatened us with deportation—or worse—after accusing us of supporting terrorists.

As the protests pushed on for nearly two months, we became engrossed in Pizango's battle to counter the legislation in Lima. Suddenly, a snap decision in Congress offended the indigenous movement and stirred protestors into a fury. At daybreak the next morning, gunshots rang out across the Amazon town of Bagua. By day's end, dozens had been killed—national police officers and indigenous alike.

Pizango was made the scapegoat following the tragedy, despite being hundreds of miles away. Suddenly, our main character was hunted down, accused of sedition, conspiracy and rebellion. We were shocked—how can a man be charged for events on the other side of the country when solely lobbying for the rights of his people? The indigenous were labeled as savages, and Pizango as a terrorist through propaganda in an attempt to manipulate the Peruvian public. We wanted to tell the truth.

After the events at Bagua, we lost contact with Alberto for days, and we worried for his safety. Then, in the middle of the night, Alberto called asking us to follow him as he fled for political asylum in Nicaragua. The next morning, Heidi (we need to decide which POV this is being told from) boarded the plane with Alberto whilst Mathew headed back to Bagua to investigate the truth of what had happened. Taira remained in Lima to keep close contact with Alberto's NGO, AIDSESP, and to keep the production wheels turning.

Together we documented the country's most controversial social conflict in decades and found ourselves in exile with the most wanted man in Peru. Back and forth between Nicaragua and Lima during his year in exile, we got to know the real Alberto Pizango. We had unlimited access to the inside story of an indigenous people losing their land, their power and their identity.

Through our tireless research in Lima, we refined the scope of the film. We were touched by the tragedies of the police officers' families. Their stories ultimately brought to light shocking and condemning evidence of the true provocateurs. Though we wanted to make a film about Pizango, we soon realized there was a much larger and more complex force behind Bagua than we initially thought. It was the political power plays within the Peruvian government that set the stage. The government treated the police officers as pawns in a political game just as much as they did the indigenous people. And at the end everyone lost. We knew we had to show both sides and tell this difficult story objectively.

We began gathering a portfolio of intimate interviews with the indigenous, the families of the police and the legal experts with intimate knowledge of the incident. As our film built credibility, we convinced the politicians involved to interview, as well, to bring true objectivity and balance to the story. However, our efforts to meet with President Garcia were repeatedly dismissed.

Our initial motivation to capture the destruction of the rainforest became a story based on the human element. The personal and political complexities that led to the tragedy and the open-

ended destruction of the Amazon rainforest shaped our film. The mystery, personal tragedy, and political intrigue surrounding the battle enabled us to weave a tale of two different peoples disillusioned by the same leaders.

This film reminds us not only that other cultures exist, but also that those cultures create immeasurable value for us all. The story stimulates and engages audiences to experience the tensions and the looming tragedies both in the Peruvian Amazon and across the world, challenging viewers to find the balance between development and nature. We are determined to use this parable to incite audiences to think critically about the world around them and, above all else, to believe in the fight to save it.

----- *Heidi Brandenburg and Mathew Orzel, (Directors)*
with Taira Akbar (Producer)

SUBJECT BIOGRAPHIES

Felipe Virgilio Bazan Caballero



Felipe Virgilio Bazan Caballero is the father of Captain Felipe Bazan, a police officer missing and presumably killed in a politically contentious battle in Bagua, Peru in 2009. He has spent many years trying to find the remains of his missing son. He asked current Peruvian President Ollanta Humala to help his search, though was ignored. The case is now archived. He is a retired police officer and served 24 years in Lima, Chimbote and Cajamarca, Perú. He now owns and manages a small hotel in Cajabamba, and is the father of 6 children and grandfather of 7.

Mercedes Cabanillas



Former Peruvian Minister of the Interior and Former Congresswoman of the Peruvian Aprista Party. In 2009, as Minister of the Interior, she was in charge of the Police forces that were sent to the Amazon region of Bagua to repress the indigenous people who were protesting the government giving away their ancestral lands to foreign corporations for drilling, mining and logging. As a result of the violent interaction between police and military forces, over 50 indigenous people were killed and 200 were injured. She resigned her position on July 11 2009 but served in Congress until 2011.

Alan Garcia



President of Peru 2006-2011. Alan Garcia pushed through the controversial US-Peru Free Trade Agreement which allowed foreign corporations to exploit natural resources from the Amazon. On June 5 2009, Garcia ordered Peruvian Police to stop the Amazonian indigenous protestors from blocking roads in the Bagua region. The military intervention, referred to as the *Baguazo*, resulted in two days of bloody confrontations, resulting in a total of 32 deaths and more than 150 native wounded.

Yehude Simon



Politician, former President of the Peruvian Minister Cabinet (Prime Minister of Peru), and currently a member of Congress. He resigned his office on Prime Minister of Peru on July 10 2009 following the violence over Amazon land rights. He formally apologized to the indigenous people of Peru, acknowledging the government had not properly consulted them prior to passing ten laws that helped foreign companies exploit the natural resources of the Amazon.

Alberto Pizango



The Peruvian Indigenous Amazon leader was born on August 31, 1964, in Timbo Pozo, now pertaining to the native community of Irapay. Pizango is a primary defender of the concept of self-determination by the Amazon people, which asserts native autonomy over ancestral territories. Alberto Pizango Chota is the second child of Alberto Pizango Pizango, and Luz Emerita Chota Pizango, and is a native speaker of the Shawi indigenous language.

He began studying at the parish school of the native community of San Gabriel de Varadero, which required him to travel alone for an hour each way by canoe at the age of 6. His parents also taught him the value of the Amazon as a young child. After he captured butterflies, his mother explained that they were better off free, as young Pizango couldn't offer them food. His father taught him the hard lesson of hunting only what you can eat and use, all of which gave him a deep respect for natural resources from a young age.

After his parents separated in 1971, he moved to the Peruvian city of Yurimaguas for school, where he also became bilingual in Spanish. His dedication to education hardened as he studied sciences and humanities in the bilingual professional school of Education at the National University of the Peruvian Amazon (UNAP) in Iquitos. He briefly studied law, as well, though found his skills better suited for professorship. He worked as a teacher from 1986 to 1998, though felt compelled to leave the profession as he became dedicated to working more closely with the native peoples on land rights and indigenous rights issues.

Since his Amazon upbringing, he has supported self-determination aimed at maintaining a balance between human beings and the region's biodiversity. He asserts that native control of people's land rights—and the continuation of their ancestral livelihoods—is essential to mitigating deforestation and climate change. His work on land rights issues has helped legitimize land ownership for thousands of Amazonian indigenous

He started fighting for indigenous land ownership in 2000 as chairman of FECONACHA. Between 2003 and 2005, he was General Coordinator of the Regional Group of Upper Amazon Native People supporting the creation of the new province now called Datem del Maranon.

He also was chairman of the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSESP) for 3 periods between January 2006 and December 2014. AIDSESP effectively represents the Peruvian Amazonian indigenous groups and is under the umbrella organization of Amazon indigenous people.

In 2008 and 2009, Pizango represented and negotiated on behalf of AIDSESP's affiliate tribes' stance against 102 national legislative decrees affecting the rainforest. AIDSESP asserts that the laws, enacted by former President Alan Garcia's government, endangers the lives of native peoples, their harmony with nature and the future of the rainforest.

He is currently one of the 53 people on trial for defending and speaking out on behalf of Amazon people. The Public Attorney's Office requests a 35-year prison sentence for Pizango and the other leaders 6 years after the tragic events occurred at the Devil's Curve in Bagua. Since the trial began, there have been 45 hearings, and a decision is due in 2016. A separate trial for the deaths at Pumping Station No. 6 that also implicates Pizango is slated to begin this year, as well.

For his work on advancing the civil rights and solidifying land rights and titles for the indigenous, Pizango was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Universidad Privada de Chiclayo. Through 2013, Pizango also continued to teach a Master's class on Interculture Bilingualism at the prestigious "Cantuta," the Universidad Nacional Enrique Guzmán y Valle.

Pizango recently formed the NGO Institute of Peace and Human Rights for the Sustainable Development of the Amazon (IPADEHDSA) aimed at the sustainable management of Amazonian lands by indigenous. He is also working with Hernando de Soto's Institute for Liberty and Democracy, another proponent of broad-based land titling, where he teaches and explains the Indigenous view of development. He also continues to manage his family far outside of Yurimaguas, where he feels most at home.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Heidi Brandenburg (Director)

Heidi Brandenburg is a passionate observer of human nature and our environment. She co-founded Yachaywasi Films to explore social and environmental issues and challenge audiences to rethink preconceptions. Her first feature-length film, *WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE*, expands on the signature character-driven style she developed in *DON SILVA* and *SONNEMANN*. Brandenburg graduated with honors from the University of Wales. Born in Paraguay and raised in Peru and Germany, she now lives in Washington, DC.

Mathew Orzel (Director)

Mathew Orzel is a documentary director and visual artist whose work focuses on the complexities of human relationships. He worked as a sound designer, editor, and director in short film before co-founding Yachaywasi Films with the goal of representing social-justice and environmental issues. Orzel graduated with honors in visual communication from the University of Wales. *WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE* is his first feature-length documentary.

Taira Akbar (Producer)

Taira Akbar is a filmmaker and trained artist, whose work provides a voice for underrepresented cultural groups and environmental issues. She graduated in Fine Art from the Art Institute at Bournemouth, before working as a researcher and production assistant on documentaries at the BBC, including on the award winning feature, *THE TOWER*. Here she developed a passion for long form documentary, going on to co-found Yachaywasi Films, recipient of the Knowledge Exploitation Fund Award in 2007. *WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE* is Taira's first independent feature.

Carla Gutierrez (Editor)

Carla Gutierrez is an editor based in New York City. She edited the Oscar nominated film *LA CORONA* for HBO and the Emmy nominated documentary *REPORTERO*, which broadcast on POV. Her latest work, *KINGDOM OF SHADOWS* premiered at SXSW and opened theatrically in Mexico. Her work has screened at Sundance, IDFA, SXSW, Full Frame, AFI, and *Ambulante*. Carla has been a creative adviser for the Sundance Edit Lab, and a mentor for Firelight Producers' Lab.

H. Scott Salinas (Composer)

H. Scott Salinas has contributed towards an impressive variety of notable projects including Sundance Audience Award Winner and Academy Award nominated documentary film *THE SQUARE*, Sundance Best Director Winner *CARTEL LAND*, HBO smash hit *The Newsroom*, and TNT's hit thriller *Murder in the First*. Along with accolades such as the prestigious Cannes Lion, Clio, and TCM Young Film Composer awards, Scott's accomplishments have earned him esteem and recognition as a highly versatile yet specialized talent.

FILM CREDITS

A film by Yachaywasi Films

In association with FORD FOUNDATION

A film directed by
Heidi Brandenburg Sierralta
Mathew Orzel

Produced by
Taira Akbar

Edited by
Carla Guitierrez

Original Music by
H. Scott Salinas

Cinematography by Heidi
Brandenburg Sierralta
Mathew Orzel

END CREDIT CARDS

In memory of all the fallen in Bagua on June 5th, 2009

Directed by
Heidi Brandenburg Sierralta
Mathew Orzel

Produced by
Taira Akbar

Produced by
Heidi Brandenburg Sierralta
Mathew Orzel

Edited by
Carla Gutierrez

Music by
H. Scott Salinas

Cinematography by Heidi
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Digital Intermediate Colorist
Sandy Patch

Digital Intermediate Producer
Caitlin Tartaro

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Mark Filip

Dialog Editor
Billy Orrico

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Leslie Bloome

Foley mixer
Ryan Collison

Foley assistant
Jonathan Fang

Music Produced by
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Additional Music
Matthew Atticus Berger

Guitars, Charango
H. Scott Salinas

Guitars, Charango, Bass, Bowed Resonator, and Various Instruments
Matthew Atticus Berger

Cello
Artyom Manukyan

Various Percussion
M.B. Gordy

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Ruth Goldstein

Gino Amadori

Ramon Ernest Delucchi Weyrauch - INOTAWA Amazon LODGE

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Oscar Durand

Bernardo Ruiz

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Charlie Phillips

Katia Maguire

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Working Films Reel Power: The late Robert West

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Lora Smith
Emily Verellen Storm
Robbie Gemmel Josh
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Peter Bull
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