

Berta Caceres: Who She Is & What She Lived For

A reflection by Grahame Russell, March 3, 2016



Berta Caceres, a great Lenca woman from western Honduras, was assassinated early this morning. She was killed because of who she is, because of what she lived, stood and fought for, her whole life. And for her life, *sicarios* (paid assassins) broke into her home in La Esperanza, Intibuca, Honduras, and shot her dead, in the dark of early morning, March 3, 2016.

A mother of four children, a grandmother, a sister and daughter. And, to all who knew her, learned from her, got strength, courage and wisdom from her, followed her, a *companera*.

Who Killed Her?

She was killed by all those people and economic and political institutions whose greed and interests she lived, stood and fought against. Berta lived against all injustices, all inequalities, all discriminations, all Mother Earth destroying activities.

She was killed ...

by 500 years of European racist, violent, dispossessing imperialism; by 200 years of U.S. military interventions, exploitation, corruption and impunity; by generations of violent and exploitative, racist and sexist “governments” of Honduras, ... all propped up, all the time, by the “international community”: the United States, Canada, global corporations, the IMF, World Bank, IDB.

Berta was killed ...

by eons of patriarchy, by centuries of racism against the Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples of Honduras and the Americas; by the greed-conceived and violence-imposed “free trade” agreements of the Americas; by the inherent, endless avarice of global corporations and investors, supported all the time by the wealth and power of rich “democratic” nations (many being members of the exclusive and despicable G8 club) that exploit, repress and denigrate the “third world”, that make, prop up and mock “banana republics”; by the IMF, World Bank, IDB, etc. - institutions created and dominated by those same rich, powerful “democratic” nations.

Berta was killed ...

by corporations and investors who conceive of Honduras and the world – its forests and earth, its natural resources, its rivers, waters and air, its people and all life forms – as exploitable and discardable objects, and then steal, kill and destroy mightily to make their millions and billions; by the infamous banana monopolies (United Fruit Company, etc.) and railway barons of the 1800s and 1900s; by the producers of African palm (World Bank funded Dinant corporation, etc.) and sugarcane for global consumers of “green energies” (ethanol and bio-diesel fuels); by *maquiladora* sweatshop exploiters of cheap labour (Gildan Inc., etc.); by hydro-electric dam companies (DESA Agua Zarca, etc.) profiting from privatized rivers and water sources; by exclusive tourism enclaves (operated by the Canadian Randy “porn king” Jorgensen, etc.) violently evicting indigenous Garifuna peoples from their communal lands on Honduras’ north shore; by mining companies (Goldcorp Inc., etc.) ripping apart Mother Earth for gold profiteers, poisoning the waters of the Siria Valley and the blood of local residents.

Most recently, Berta was killed ...

by the U.S. created, funded and armed “war on drugs” that took undemocratic and unjust, corrupt and violent situations in Honduras (Guatemala, Mexico, etc.) and made them worse, all while drug consumption in the U.S. increases, while profits to the weapons producers increase, while tax-payers’ money increases to militaries and various ‘specialized’ forces increase in a number of countries; by the U.S. and Canadian backed military coup in June 2009, that ousted a democratically elected government and brought back to power the same elites that for so long have dominated and abused Honduras, who – once back in power - took all the above and made it worse again, who use repression as a tool of societal terrorism and control, hiring *sicarios* to target and kill so many hundreds of people since the coup, people like Berta.

The U.S. and Canada helped kill Berta. Seven years after the coup, Honduras has the highest per capita murder rate in the world, and amongst the highest rates of repression, femicide, journalist killings, corruption and impunity in the Americas. Ignoring and even denying all this, the U.S. and Canadian governments sign “free trade” agreements and promote the expansion our mining, tourism, sweatshop, banana, etc. companies and investments.

Berta was killed by all these people, institutions and powerful interest groups because - as anyone will tell you who knew her, learned from her, got strength, courage and wisdom from her, followed her - these are the things she lived against, stood and struggled against, all her life.

What Did She Live, Stand and Struggle For?

For you and me and everyone. For your rights and mine. For all human rights, collective and individual, of all people, in all countries. For all life forms, and for Mother Earth herself – the earth, fields and forests, the air and water, and all life forms on this most precious and solitary of planets.

Berta lived, stood and struggled for another world is necessary and possible.

What To Do?

We are desperately sorry for Berta’s children, her mother, her sisters and brothers, her family and friends in La Esperanza, and Honduras, and across the Americas. Our hearts are again broken by

this global human order we live in. As a part of so many of us dies with Berta, a huge part of Berta lives on.

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

Thank-you Berta. You are so utterly missed. You are so completely loved and respected.

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(I met Berta in 1998. Rights Action has supported COPINH and Berta's work and struggle since that time. Berta and her family became very dear friends over this time.)

What To Do

In the coming days, we will send out more information about how to respond in the U.S. and Canada. In many ways, our countries have Berta's blood, and the blood of so many Hondurans, on our hands. We must try, and try again, to hold our governments, the U.S. military, and our companies and investors accountable for supporting the June 2009 military coup, and then pretending to ignore, while profiting the on-going, violent aftermath.

Funds for Berta's family and COPINH

In the coming days, we will find out from Berta's family and close friends what the family's immediate needs are. To support Berta's family and COPINH's on-going work for justice and fundamental transformation and change in Honduras, make tax-deductible donations (write "Berta & Copinh" in the memo line) to "Rights Action" and mail to:

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

Credit-Card Donations

- Canada: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/rights-action/>
- U.S.: <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations> (click on NetworkForGood)

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