

DISCUSSION GUIDE



HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES IN THE FILM:

- Land and water protection
- Indigenous rights
- Dignity of the person
- Access to justice
- Threats against environmental human rights defenders
- Sovereignty over natural resources
- Impact of unethical mining
- Corporate violations of environmental law
- Freedom of Assembly

OFFICIAL FILM TRAILER

<https://bit.ly/33aINw5>

MAXIMA

Release Date: 2020

Genre: Documentary

Directed by: Claudia Sparrow

Featured: Máxima Acuña, Mirtha Vásquez, Maryum Jordan, Ricardo Giesecke, Jacqueline Fowks, Marco Simons, Keith Slack, Peter Koenig, Marissa A. Vahlsing, Milton Sánchez, Gómer Vargas, Marisol Pérez, Daniel Chaupe, Ysidora Chaupe, Natalie Bridgeman, Dante Ríos.

Length: 1 hour and 28 minutes

Rating: Not Rated (some graphic scenes and images of violence)

USING THIS GUIDE

The goal of this guide is to help a variety of audiences use this film as a way to start a **substantive dialogue about human rights, the environment and the importance of clean gold sourcing** as well as **corporate accountability**. It was designed for people who want to use MAXIMA to **engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues and communities**. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this guide envisions **conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness** in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by **sharing viewpoints and listening actively**.

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SYNOPSIS

An indigenous woman from the Peruvian Andes who cannot read or write stands up to the largest gold producer in the world, US-based **Newmont Mining Corporation**.

Máxima is fearlessly fighting to stop a multi-billion-dollar mining project launched by Newmont and partially financed by the World Bank. This project would forever destroy and contaminate critical water and land ecosystems. But **without Máxima's land, the project is not possible**.

A **land dispute** quickly turns into a **landmark case of human rights abuse**. Newmont uses **violence, intimidation and criminal prosecution** - all the way to the Supreme Court - in an attempt to evict Máxima and her family. However, **the environment and hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake**, so Máxima fights on.

Throughout **Máxima's fight for justice**, the film provides an illustrative case study in **the tactics used by transnational corporations** to commit **human rights violations and environmental crimes**, the role played by non-profits and The World's Bank, and, ultimately, **the resilience of one woman** who refuses to back down.

THEMES

Timely and relevant, MAXIMA centers around themes like **the power of one, environmental sustainability, international corporate collusion, fighting for your rights, and standing up to bullies**: What is it going to take to stop abuses by transnational companies like Newmont and organizations like The World Bank, and what are we going to do when activists like Máxima Acuña are no longer there to protect the resources that we all need to survive? If Máxima Acuña, a Peruvian farmer from the Andes who cannot read or write can stand in the way of a multi-billion-dollar mining expansion project, why can't we all **stand up for our rights** and to protect what is important to us? Máxima's fight symbolizes the fight that environmental activists all over the world are facing.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1.- How did you feel after watching MAXIMA? Did you feel **helpless, inspired, stirred to action**, or a combination of all three? Do you think the message of the film was ultimately **hopeful**? Why or why not?

2.- This documentary emphasizes the reality of what a **vulnerable indigenous farmer** faces when standing up to a **powerful transnational gold mining company** in defense of her rights, and in defense of water and land that hundreds of thousands of people depend on to survive. As Mirtha Vásquez stated in the film,



*"Máxima was being **forced off land** that rightfully belonged to her by means of **extreme violence**. This made us realize that Máxima's case about **land dispute** was also a case about **human rights**."*

What are the ways you can protect vulnerable citizens such as indigenous people from **human rights abuses by powerful corporations**? In the case of the **Yanacocha mine**, what do you think are some of

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the factors that allowed this system of abuse to take place and continue for over twenty years? How can transnational corporations operating in other countries be held **accountable for their actions**? How can you be more vigilant against **corporate abuse**?

3.- How does Máxima Acuña's journey for justice shape your understanding of **criminal prosecution for environmental activists**? Was there a particular case or series of facts that altered or challenged any of your pre-existing views? Explain.

4.- How much did you know about the **impact of gold mining** before watching the film? Were you surprised to learn about the **environmental and human cost of mining**? What was your reaction after hearing the following quote from Ricardo Giesecke:

*"When you're talking about this type of mining operation, you're talking about **moving mountains!** You take a ton of mineral... and you will recuperate perhaps 1.5 grams. This is what mining people call **invisible metals**. But you're going to have a lot of **dissolved different metals**, and they are going to go into the **running waters**."*



5.- From 1993 to 2017 the Yanacocha mine has reported **sales of nearly \$25 billion USD**. As Peter Koenig states in the film,

*"The **cost of gold** is the lowest in the world of Yanacocha. Why is it so cheap? Because **none of the environmental rules are applied**. Mining is one of the **dirtiest industries** and who pays the cost? The cost is paid by society. That's what's happening not only in Peru, elsewhere too."*

What do you think are some of the factors that has allowed Yanacocha to **operate unethically**? Why do you think they operate that way if they can afford to follow **environmental guidelines**? Taking the environmental impact of mining into account, is **sustainable mining possible**? Do you think gold is **worth its environmental impact**? How can you support **clean gold and/or ethically sourced gold**?

6.- Considering the **billions of dollars** that The World Bank has made off **investments and loans** on projects such as the **Yanacocha Mine**, do you think they can stay true to their **mission and mandate of poverty alleviation**? Why or why not?

Resources For Discernment and Calls to Action

- MAXIMA website: www.standwithmaxima.com
- Stand for Land Rights: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/take-action/campaigns/stand-land-rights>
- Earthworks' No Dirty Gold Campaign: <https://earthworks.org/campaigns/no-dirty-gold/>
- UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/BusinessIndex.aspx>
- Global Witness: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/>
- Corpwatch: <https://corpwatch.org/>
- Gold Rush: How The World Bank is Financing Environmental Destruction: <https://bit.ly/3i9vEHQ>