

January 23, 2015

## **Chevron Public Eye Lifetime Award Acceptance Speech**

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Imagine watching your child grow up in the shadow of massive environmental contamination, never knowing if he or she would live another year or contract a deadly cancer. Imagine a simultaneous and seemingly endless battle for justice from the company that admitted causing the disaster in the first place. Would any one of us have the strength to fight on decade after decade?

Emergildo Criollo of the Cofan people of Ecuador has already lost 2 children to Chevron's toxic contamination of his ancestral lands. He has stood face to face with dozens of Texaco and Chevron executives throughout a 22-year fight for justice. 22 years of asking Chevron to make right what it admitted to doing wrong – deliberately dumping 18 billion gallons of toxic waste into Amazon waterways and forests to save \$3 per barrel on the company's production costs.

For Emergildo, it has been 22 years of being ignored. Yet Emergildo is still fighting. We are here today to support that fight, not only for Emergildo and the other affected indigenous and farmer communities, but because Chevron's misconduct in Ecuador and its subsequent cover-up are a threat to anyone anywhere who believes in justice and the right to seek justice.

The first time Chevron won this award -- in 2006 -- the trial against Chevron in Ecuador was still underway. Chevron already had fought for almost a decade to block a trial in US courts. The company wanted the case in Ecuador, where it had huge influence and felt it could "control" the situation by engineering a quick dismissal from friendly judges. But then the trial went on anyway and guess what? The scientific and other evidence was so overwhelming that in 2011, Emergildo and the 30,000 Amazonian indigenous people and farmers in Ecuador did what no others had done before – they beat a multinational corporation on their own soil. And the trial court decision was affirmed unanimously by two separate appellate courts in Chevron's chosen forum of Ecuador.

But in a sense, Chevron's game of hide and seek with the lives of indigenous groups was just getting started.

Vowing it would never pay the judgment, Chevron turned back to the very courts in the United States it had escaped one decade earlier. It used – no, abused – those courts to sue the very people it had poisoned in Ecuador – people like Emergildo who had held it accountable -- alleging that the entire legal case they had litigated for 18 years was nothing more than a racketeering conspiracy against the company. Attempting to win by might what it could never win by merit; Chevron hired 60 law firms and over 2000 legal professionals to help block enforcement of the judgment.

Before a U.S. judge who refused to hear any evidence of the actual contamination in Ecuador, Chevron manufactured an absurd case based on the testimony of known liars and corrupt witnesses. The entire proceeding was a show trial with no legal basis under the law. Chevron attacked not just those who brought the case in Ecuador, but almost anyone who stood in solidarity with them. Alleging a massive global conspiracy, Chevron attacked the environmental and human rights community as well – citing demonstrations, press releases, online actions and even cartoons as a threat to its operations and part of the conspiracy against it.

Chevron has used its vast oil wealth to create a theater of the absurd.

While studies show that well over one thousand people have already died in Ecuador and close to 10,000 are likely to get cancer in the coming years, Chevron spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually not to fix the problem it caused but to keep the people who are suffering in dire and life-threatening straits. This is truly a global battle. The villagers have now turned to the courts of Canada to seek enforcement of their judgment. Chevron needs to be taught that the global community – especially Europe -- will not stand by while the oil giant ignores the rule of law.

This is not just standard boilerplate corporate abuse, as bad as that is. It really involves the premeditated destruction by a corporation of not only the pristine rainforest environment, but also of the right to seek justice to fix it. Chevron seeks nothing less than complete impunity for its corporate crimes – and that is why Chevron deserves a lifetime achievement award from the Public Eye.

Chevron has denounced this award, of course. To do so it cites the very same abuse of justice that earned it condemnation from prominent groups like The Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Amnesty International and scores of others who have called it out for its abuse of the environment and the legal system. Chevron can never defend or explain its actions in Ecuador, nor can it hide the evidence, which remains visible to the naked eye to this day. All it can do is sling mud at Emergildo and those who stand with him. The cowardly and vindictive actions of John Watson, Chevron CEO, symbolize the very worst of corporate greed and arrogance. Having the means to litigate in perpetuity must not be a means to evade justice, for Chevron or any other corporation.

The only conspiracy against Chevron is one that involves thousands of people who are battling for justice. The Public Eye award signifies the gathering strength of this movement. I accept this award on behalf of Emergildo and all of the affected peoples in Ecuador -- as well as on behalf of everyone who raises their voice against corporate crimes against people and planet.

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