

MINING AND VIOLENCE IN GUATEMALA: INDIGENOUS WOMEN RESIST

Victoria Cumes Jochola – BIOGRAPHY



Foto: Delmi Arriaza

Victoria was born in 1975 in the rural community of Xeatzan Bajo, in the municipality of Patzún, Chimaltenango. Throughout her childhood, she and her seven brothers and sisters worked alongside her parents, weaving with her mother and harvesting broccoli, peas, corn and beans with her father.

Victoria noticed the disparity between men and women early on in her life. Men had more opportunities in work and politics, while women seemed relegated to poverty, discrimination, violence and a lack of representation in public spaces.

With the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, Victoria hoped new opportunities would arise for women. She educated youth about the Peace Accords and represented Maya Kaqchikel communities in the Flor de Dalia Women's Group, which focused on the Accord on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In 1997, Nuestra Voz was formed to coordinate numerous grassroots women's groups in creating alternatives for women through leadership training and development projects.

Victoria trained herself in popular education methods and worked as a community educator with Nuestra Voz. In 2005, she accepted a leadership position within the organization while continuing her work as an educator. Although Victoria emphasizes that much remains to be done in order to improve the quality of life for Guatemalan women, years of organizing have also produced positive results. Women are no longer afraid to demand their rights and now propose and manage their own development projects.

In 2007, Nuestra Voz opened spaces for organizations to more effectively coordinate advocacy focused on indigenous women and the Tz'ununija' Indigenous Women's Movement was formed. Seeing the negative impacts and violence experienced by women affected by mining in Guatemala, Tz'ununija' began working with community-based organizations to develop strategies and support women like those with arrest warrants for defending their rights in San Miguel Ixtahuacán.

JOIN US IN SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA

Donate: Donations cover the cost of the tour and any additional money raised is donated directly to the Tz'ununija' Indigenous Women's Movement.

Take Action: Sign NISGUA's international action to support the women organizing to protect their land and families in Guatemala. Connect with one of NISGUA's regional organizers to strengthen North-South ties and collaboration. Sign up for NISGUA's email updates to stay informed and **take action to stop the criminalization** of and violence against community leaders who defend their rights and natural resources.

Accompany: Join NISGUA's Guatemala Accompaniment Project as a human rights observer.