



# MAXIMA

**Directed by:**  
Claudia Sparrow

**Produced by:**  
Ryan Schwartz  
&  
Claudia Sparrow

**Executive Produced by:**  
Lesley Chilcott  
&  
Leandro Marini  
&  
Louise Runge  
&  
Steven Berger  
&  
Scott Dixon  
&  
Susan Bay Nimoy

**Sales Representation:**  
Submarine  
Josh Braun, Dan Braun, Ben Braun, Matt Burke & Ben Schwartz

*For additional information please contact:*

Dan Braun – [dan@submarine.com](mailto:dan@submarine.com) - 212-625-1410  
Ryan Schwartz – [ryan@trustfallfilms.com](mailto:ryan@trustfallfilms.com) – 310-989-3190

## **LOGLINE**

MAXIMA, 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, who has claimed ownership of her land in order to expand its multi-billion-dollar mining operation.

## **SYNOPSIS**

MAXIMA tells the story of 2016 Goldman Prize winner, Máxima Acuña, a subsistence farmer from the Peruvian highlands, who is standing up to one of the largest gold mining companies in the world: US-Based Newmont Mining Corporation.

Máxima is fearlessly fighting for her rights to live her life the way her family has for hundreds of years. She comes from a family of farmers and never learned to read or write. To her, water and land are life and must always be protected at all costs because without them it is impossible to survive. As we witness Máxima's way of life, we learn in her own words how it is all in danger of disappearing.

A multi-billion mining project launched by Newmont – and partially financed by the World Bank (IFC) - has put her livelihood and the life of hundreds of thousands like her, along with the beautiful mountains, lakes, and water systems, at risk of being destroyed forever.

For the past seven years, Newmont has claimed ownership of Máxima's land. Without it, the multi-billion-dollar mining expansion project is not possible. Newmont has used violence, intimidation and criminal prosecution in an attempt to evict Máxima and her family. Máxima's life is in imminent danger.

As we follow Máxima's fight for justice both in Peru and the US, we reveal the mechanics of how Newmont manages to get away with human rights and environmental crimes, and the role that The World Bank (IFC) plays in this.

## **THE TEAM**

### **Claudia Sparrow – Director/Producer**

Born and raised in Lima, Peru, Claudia has been recognized as one of the ten prominent filmmakers in Peru. Claudia's first feature film "I Remember You," starring Stefanie Butler (Stranger Things) and Joe Egender (The Night of), won best dramatic feature film at the Downtown Film Festival Los Angeles and had a theatrical and VOD release in 2016. Her American Film Institute thesis film "El Americano," won an Emmy Award in the drama category. Claudia is also the recipient of the Franklin J. Schaffner Fellow Award for directing "El Americano." She is a 2018 Film Independent Fellow.

**Ryan Schwartz - Producer**

Ryan Schwartz's first feature as writer/director, *Summer of 8*, was acquired by FilmBuff in 2016 and released theatrically by MGM/Orion. Starring Matt Shively (*The Real O'Neals*) and Shelley Hennig (*Teen Wolf*), *Summer of 8* was named one of the top ten films of 2016. Under his Los Angeles-based production company, TrustFall Films, Ryan is producing three feature length documentaries, and a biopic based on the largest black orphanage in US history. He recently completed his next original screenplay, *Uphill Both Ways*, which he plans to produce and direct. Ryan received his MFA in film from USC, teaches directing at The New York Film Academy (LA Campus), and is a proud LA Film Independent Fellow.

**Lesley Chilcott - Executive Producer**

Lesley Chilcott is an award winning filmmaker and producer. She was a producer of the Academy Award-winning documentary, AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH and the rock documentary IT MIGHT GET LOUD. Other notable Chilcott-produced films include WAITING FOR SUPERMAN, for which she was awarded a win by the PGA for Outstanding Producer of Theatrical Documentary, among other awards. Chilcott directed the viral short CODESTARS (the number one hit on YouTube for 2 days in 2013), A SMALL SECTION OF THE WORLD about female coffee producers from the mountains of Costa Rica, and the theatrically released CODEGIRL, which is currently on a tour of US Embassies around the world through the State Department.

**Leandro Marini - Executive Producer**

Leandro Marini is the founder and co-owner of Local Hero, a feature film production and post production facility in Santa Monica, CA. Local Hero has overseen post production of over 100 studio and independent films, including "Pitch Perfect," "Dope," "Captain Fantastic," "LBJ," and the award-winning HBO series "Big Little Lies." Leandro serves as imaging supervisor on all films at Local Hero, helping filmmakers map out their camera, color, vfx, and delivery needs at every stage of production.

**Louise Runge - Executive Producer**

Louise Runge has produced several award winning narrative features. She has also been a post production executive for well over ten years. Recent work includes co-producer: Un Certain Regard winner CAPTAIN FANTASTIC, post supervisor: Cannes 2016 Premiere HELL OR HIGH WATER, post producer: I LOVE DICK series for Amazon, and Line Producer: ELVIS double feature documentary with Thom Zimney for HBO and Sony. Runge acts as the on-going post production manager for Participant Media's documentary feature department. She recently partnered with her brother and sister in law's company FAT RAT FILMS to develop feature documentaries.

### **Steven J. Berger – Executive Producer**

Steven Berger, a graduate of the American Film Institute, is a Hawaiian born filmmaker, and is the founder of Provenance Pictures, a Los Angeles based development and production company. He began working in the industry in post-production, and has worked on over two dozen films and television shows over 10 years, including SPIDERMAN 2, THE BOURNE SUPREMACY, and THE INCREDIBLES. Steven was most recently a producer on SLASH and INHERITANCE, both selections of the SXSW Film Festival. Additional Producing credits include THE PRETTY ONE, a Black List script starring Zoe Kazan and Jake Johnson (purchased by Sony Pictures at the Tribeca Film Festival), Dallas Film Festival Grand Jury Award winning ECHOES OF WAR, starring James Badge Dale (IRON MAN 3, WORLD WAR Z, FLIGHT), and Maika Monroe (IT FOLLOWS) and SPOONFUL, an official selection of the Sundance Film Festival. Previously, Steven worked as the House Producer and Director at Tribeca Flashpoint Media Arts in Chicago, part of Robert De Niro's Tribeca Enterprises.

### **Magela Crosignani – Director of Photography**

Originally from Uruguay, Magela's credits include "The Imperialists are Still Alive", an Official Selection of the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, starring Cannes and Cesar award winning actress Elodie Bouchez; "Mosquita y Mari" which premiered at Sundance in 2012, "Mary-Marie" for which she was awarded Best Cinematography at the Brooklyn Film Festival in 2010, "Ruta de la Luna" shot on location in Panamá and winner of Best Cinematography at the Icaro Film Festival, "Feriado" the first Ecuatorian film to premier at the Berlinale, and "Una Noche Sin Luna" a Uruguayan-Argentinian coproduction winner of Best Picture at the Zurich Film Festival. Magela recently shot Vanessa Hope's documentary "All Eyes and Ears," that premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2015.

### **Alejandro Valdes-Rochin - Editor**

Alejandro Valdes-Rochin is an editor and writer of award winning documentaries. Alejandro started his career working in the cutting rooms of narrative films, apprenticing under Jill Bilcock on *Moulin Rouge* and *Road to Perdition* and Academy Award winner Thom Noble on *Vertical Limit*, and then pursued his goal of editing documentary films. His non-fiction work has been released both theatrically and on outlets such as PBS, Al Jazeera, Fusion and Discovery International. Alejandro's recent credits include *Science Fair* (Festival Favorite award -Sundance 2018) and *Death by Fentanyl* (Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award).

## **PRODUCTION NOTES:**

### **INSPIRATION**

In 2016 I came across the article “The Lady of the Blue Lake Against the Black Lake,” by Peruvian journalist Joseph Zárate which told the story of Máxima Acuña, a Peruvian farmer and an environmental activist. Even though I am Peruvian, I had never heard of her, but the fact that she had just won the 2016 Goldman Environmental Prize enticed me to read it. I couldn’t believe how such a vulnerable farmer, who didn’t even know how to read or write, was standing up so fearlessly to such a powerful transnational company. I also couldn’t believe all the alleged violence and suffering that she had been experiencing for so many years in defense of her land and water for the communities. It all seemed unimaginable. As a Peruvian woman, I always assumed that a foreign company from a developed country doing business in Peru was a great thing, that they would operate with the highest standards and be extra respectful of all the local rules and regulations, but most importantly, that their treatment of employees and anybody affected by their operations would be above the one from a local company. Therefore, I was truly shocked to learn that that wasn’t always the case. I was very quickly taken by Máxima Acuña. She seemed like such an honorable, wise and brave woman that I literally couldn’t sleep thinking of her and her cause. I was haunted by it until I finally decided to help by giving her voice a larger platform, and that is how the journey into the film began.

### **GETTING ACCESS TO MAXIMA**

Getting access to Máxima was a huge challenge itself. I started by contacting journalist Joseph Zárate who kindly put me in touch with Máxima’s lawyer, Mirtha Vásquez, in Peru. I started cold calling Mirtha, but she is an incredibly busy human rights lawyer with more cases than she can handle at any given time, so to find her physically at her office and available took months. Then, given how much scrutiny she and Máxima were under, she was understandably hesitant to open up to me. I requested to visit and interview Máxima and her family, to potentially turn it into a short film that would hopefully expose Máxima’s case to a larger international audience. She agreed to inquire with Máxima and let me know. After several weeks of trying to get back in touch with Mirtha, she finally confirmed that Máxima had agreed to it. Over the following weeks we agreed on a date and I started the complex task of planning the logistics to get to Máxima. To start, she lives in a super remote area in the Peruvian Andes where cell coverage is almost non-existent. Also, the temperature can reach freezing levels, especially at night. There’s no running water or electricity where Máxima lives and the Yanacocha mining company has closed all entrances that lead to her house, so we were warned that no visitors were being allowed past the security checkpoints. This was a self-financed shoot, so within our micro budget, we had to find a safe way to bring equipment with enough batteries to last through the shoot as well as enough warm clothes and food for our tiny, unpaid crew, and pray that they would let us through to Máxima’s. This first trip to Máxima’s was a research trip, so our goal was to objectively document everything that we saw and experienced.

## DOCUMENTING MAXIMA

Máxima's land, Tragadero Grande, is a two-hour drive from the city of Cajamarca. Before the land dispute started, Máxima and her family would walk or use public transportation to travel to neighboring communities as needed. However, after the family's court win in 2014, Yanacocha closed the public roads that granted access to Máxima's house and installed security checkpoints. Therefore, we had to rent a van with a driver who was willing to risk taking dirt roads through the Andes for over six hours in order to get us to the checkpoint that was closest to Máxima's house. Once we arrived, we were stopped by Yanacocha security guards who were accompanied by Peruvian police. Even though two of Máxima's children and her 2-year-old grandchild were with us, we weren't allowed to drive through the gate. We were stopped for more than an hour before the Yanacocha security agreed to let us in, but only by foot. So we had to carry all of our belongings, equipment and food/water supplies for half an hour to Máxima's. This was an extra challenging walk given the high altitude (aprox. 14,000 feet) and freezing temperatures. Getting to meet Máxima for the first time at her house was unforgettable; not only is the nature around her land stunning, but she has the warmest smile and demeanor. We were complete strangers and yet she hurried to offer us food (even though they had hardly any) and help us settle. She even offered us to stay in their one room house with her family so that we would be warmer at night, but we declined not wanting to inconvenience them. I was immediately taken by Máxima's candidness and humbleness. She had recently won the Goldman Environmental Prize and yet she treated us as if we were the celebrities, not her. As it started to get dark outside, it was hard not to feel vulnerable and threatened; Yanacocha's fence surrounded Máxima's land and there was ongoing surveillance by Yanacocha security guards including a security booth overseeing Máxima's house from the top of the hill. Once it got pitch-black outside, all I could think of was 'if someone came to attack us, there's nowhere to run to, nowhere to hide.' I genuinely felt scared that night.

## CREDITS

### CAST/SUBJECTS

Activist	MAXIMA ACUÑA
Máxima Acuña's Lawyer	MIRTHA VASQUEZ
Earth Rights International Lawyer	MARYUM JORDAN
Peru's Former Environment Minister	RICARDO GIESECKE
El País Newspaper Journalist	JACQUELINE FOWKS
Earth Rights International General Counsel	MARCO SIMONS
Oxfam America	KEITH SLACK
Former World Bank Employee	PETER KOENIG
Earth Rights International Lawyer	MARISSA A. VAHLSING
Activist	MILTON SANCHEZ CUBAS
Agronomist	GOMER VARGAS CUEVA
Peruvian Minister of Justice	MARISOL PEREZ TELLO
Máxima Acuña's Son	DANIEL CHAUPE
Máxima Acuña's Daughter	YSIDORA CHAUPE
Accountability Counsel Founder	NATALIE BRIDGEMAN
Yanacocha Mine Former Truck Driver	DANTE RIOS

Line Producer	ENID "PINKY" CAMPOS
Unit Production Manager	DIANA CASTRO
Associate Producer	FRED GRACE
Directors of Photography	PHILIP KNOWLTON MAGELA CROSIGNANI LEANDRO MARINI
Additional Photography	CARLOS SANCHEZ MEENA SINGH

Drone Operator    BRENNON EDWARDS

Editor    Alejandro Valdes-Rochin

Additional Editing    MATTEO MARCHISANO-ADAMO

Music Composer    MAURICIO YAZIGI

Field Sound Mixers    DAVID ACEVEDO  
JOSE CARLOS VALENCIA  
NIKOLAS RUIZ ZASIMCZUK  
SCOTT KINZEY  
GUS GOMEZ  
RODRIGO SALVATIERRA

Production Assistant    LUKAS COX

Post Production Sound by  
SMART POST WEST

Mixed at  
SMART POST WEST

Digital Intermediate Provided by  
LOCAL HERO

Cameras and Lenses Provided By  
BRAIN BOX, LLC

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