

Documentary Review

Analytical summary

The documentary, “When Two Worlds Collide,” follows the conflict between the natives and the Peruvian government over land claims in the Amazon. The documentary demonstrates both the natives’ and government’s arguments fairly equally but, there is more air time given the natives. The natives’ believed the government should respect existing treaties and should seek the input of the natives on the use of land. According to Convention 169, the natives had the right to control the usage of the land and its resources. However, the government of Peru passed Forestry Law 1090, allowing for the private resale of land in the Amazon to companies for resource extraction. The government wanted to make trade deals with the United States to boost the economy of Peru. The natives felt the Free Trade Agreement with the United States created opportunities for American companies to damage the Amazon.

The natives protested the move by the government to omit the natives from the land negotiations. The environmental damage done by the resource extractions would be irreversible and have detrimental effects on the natives. The natives promised to end the protests when Forestry Law 1090 was repealed. However, the protests escalated to the point of violence, killing over 30 people in a clash between protesters and police officers in Bagua, Peru. An interesting part of the documentary was the humanization of both sides of the argument. The protesters wanted to protect their way of life. The police did not want to hurt protesters, and said so on the first day of the protests. The protesters agreed to a commitment to nonviolent protest, citing that their grievance was with the government. The main takeaways from the documentary are the two opposing arguments but the overarching theme is that all involved were Peruvian and wanted what was best for Peru and its citizens.

Analysis of the form

The documentary is very effective in showcasing the contentious feelings between the government and the natives. The director does this by constantly switching perspectives through its use of footage of both sides.

The arguments between the natives and the government are very different, but the method in which the two groups debate their argument is very similar. The arguments are juxtaposed in the beginning of the film with images presented that demonstrate stark contrasts between the two sides. The images of the Amazon as beautiful and luscious set up the natives' belief that the Amazon needs to be protected. Then, the documentary shows the images of the extraction equipment and the President's speech which sets up the government's belief that the Amazon should be used to bolster the Peruvian economy. This introduction clearly, and effectively, highlights the stark contrast between the two arguments; the President of the AIDSEP, Alberto Pizango, is seen in nature then, the President of Peru, Alan Garcia, is seen in a press conference, clearly a part of the "developed" world. However, as the documentary progresses, the images become more converged. President Pizango is shown at press conferences and President Garcia is shown walking in nature at extraction sites, blurring the distinctions between the groups. Then the protesters and police are both given air time during the violence. This has two effects. The first is that the viewer begins to see the two groups as similar and the second is that the viewer is swept into the chaos of the protest.

Interestingly, unity is seen throughout the documentary. When the protests began, the native protesters declared to the police that the natives did not have a fight with the police, just the government. When Captain Montenegro, a police officer, was killed by violent protesters, his

wife declared to the country, and protesters, that she did not wish harm on the natives because they were Peruvians like her.

While the documentary does its best to present both sides of the argument, it is clear that the material is slanted towards the natives. There is more air time given to the natives and there are more private interviews given to people that support the protesters. The documentary shows several personal stories from the perspective of the natives with only one private interview from the former Minister of the Interior at the very end of the documentary. The documentary shows footage of natives getting sick because of the damage to the environment, their meetings discussing their grievances, as well as the violence perpetrated against them by the police. This type of footage is given priority over media coverage. However, the media coverage used by the documentary is effective in demonstrating the opinions of Peruvians. The media reported a different narrative than the natives. The media saw the natives as disruptive, violent, and uncivilized. The media and government villainized the protesters for killing police officers. It is important to note that while several police officers were killed, protesters were also killed.

Analysis of the substance

The documentary showcased a contentious debate between people who love their country. The documentary favored the argument of the natives as apparent by the amount of screentime, language, and visuals associated with the natives' argument. While the documentary favored the argument of the natives, it did present the argument of the government, just not as fully. This revealed a biased perception. The issues implicated in the documentary are supportive of indigenous rights and green militarization.

The argument that is made by the documentary is convincing. The most effective tool utilized by the documentary were the visuals. The best example of this was the images of the Amazon at the beginning and end of the documentary. The natives' argument for protection is bulldozed by the government's want to extract resources and bolster the economy. The beginning shows the natural, beautiful Amazon juxtaposed at the end by the damage done to the Amazon and an actual bulldozer. This reinforced the argument.

The other effective tool was the use of media coverage. News agencies and journalists have a lot of power when it comes to shaping the narratives of current events. By including the footage of the media's reactions to the protests, the viewers can understand the "outsider" perspective on the protests, aside from the natives and the government itself.

The legal argument made by the natives implicates the issue of indigenous rights. In the documentary, the government breaks its promises that were outlined in the treaties including the Convention 169. The issue of indigenous rights has been being debated for years, in many parts of North and South America. The documentary highlights this legality issue. That element of the protest, by including interviews with former government officials and indigenous rights lawyers, increases the viewers' awareness of the scope of the issues at hand. The environmental

protection argument made by the natives implicates the concept of “green militarization.” “Green militarization” is the use of the military in the pursuit of conservation. The natives in the documentary used protests and later violence to further argue for conservation of the Amazon. The question of whether or not militarization feeds violence is one that is explored with the documentary. The protesters were peaceful until the police showed up. The police were peaceful until tensions rose. Both groups were committed to peace, however, that intention was made moot when people began being killed.

The documentary highlights the link between development and conflict. The Peruvian president argues for development of the economy through the private sale of land in the Amazon rainforest. The land could be used for construction and resource extraction. The increased revenue going to the government, and the people who are employed by these extractions would improve the economy of Peru. However, it would be detrimental to the natives. The conflict that ensued over the debate of development clearly shows the link between the two.