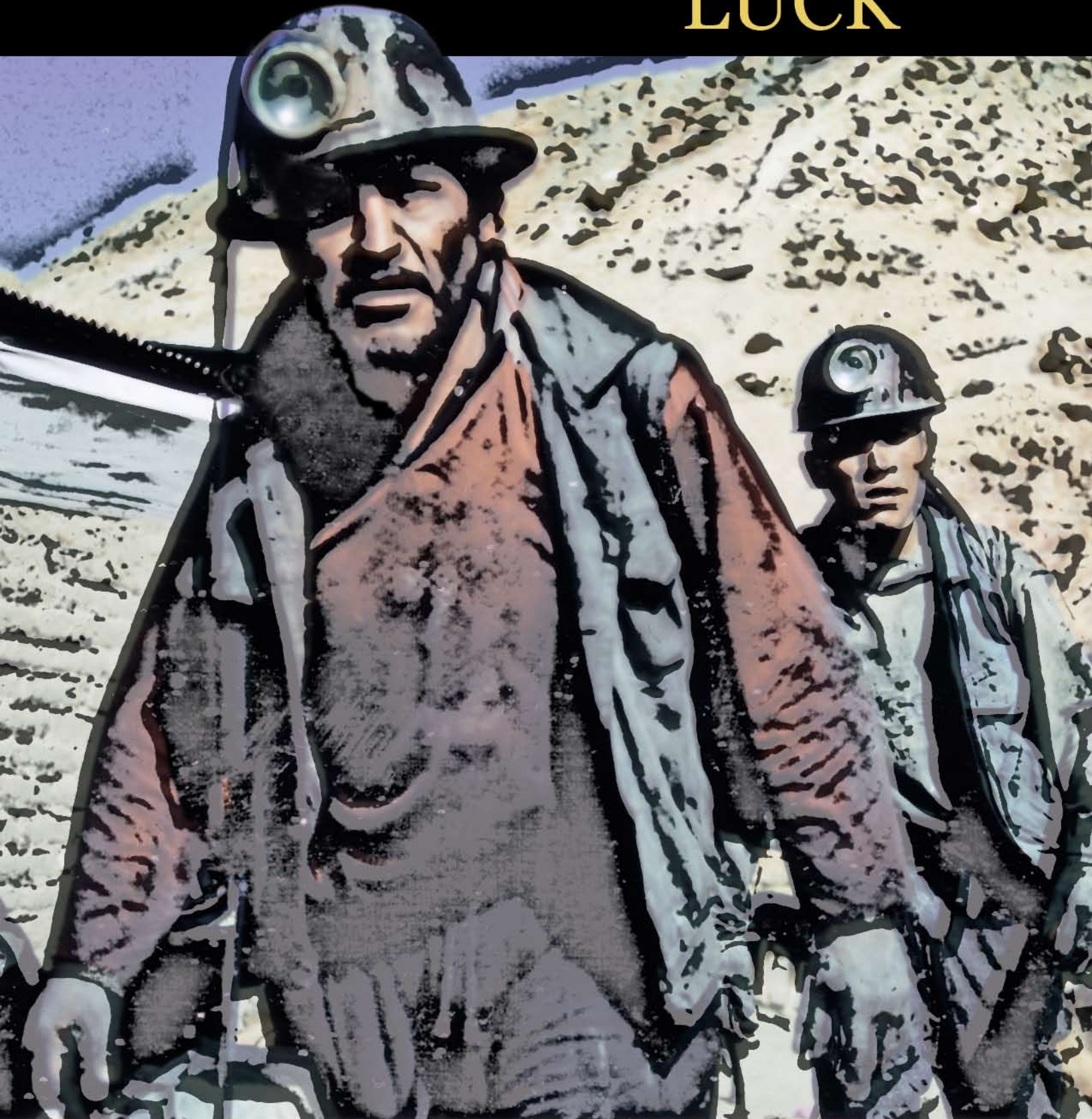


A documentary film by
Chuck Sturtevant

A MINER'S LUCK



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A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY CHUCK STURTEVANT

When an icon of the American West journeys to the heart of Latin America, he finds something a lot closer to the West he remembers than to the socialist threat he fears. *A Miner's Luck* contrasts our mythic view of the history of the American West with our perception of Latin America and asks the audience to treat the workers who produce the goods we consume, whether historically in the American west or currently in developing world, with equal respect.

or...

“Kid, the next time I say, ‘Let's go someplace like Bolivia,’ let's go someplace like Bolivia.”

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Executive Summary:

Once upon a time in America, there were hundreds of small mines and thousands of hardened men who knew how to work them. Americans revere them – and other workers at the base of the production pyramid – in their mythic incarnations as cousin Jacks, 49ers, Paul Bunyan, pioneers, Jim Butler, lumberjacks, prospectors and a thousand local versions of those characters. These heroes are celebrated today to teach us what makes America great. But those mythic heroes would find today's America a hard place to make a go of it.

A Miner's Luck is the story of one of the last of these heroes. Hugh Ingle, a self-proclaimed romantic about old-fashioned mining, longs to open and operate a small, underground mine in the barren deserts of western Nevada. With his driven work ethic, spirit of independence, fierce patriotism, rugged individualism, fundamentalist politics, Christian values and human concern for mankind, Hugh represents the myth of the American west and the rural American values that go along with it. He feels a deep nostalgia for America as he remembers it, when he and his father worked together in a small mine in Northern California without the interference of government control. Longing for this lost epoch, he goes looking for a place where there are still small-scale mines and miners who know how to work them. His search takes him to the remote plains of Bolivia.

Bolivia, with its history of revolutions and its leftist, anti-American president, may seem a strange place to go looking for America's mythic past, but Hugh finds echoes of his childhood in the hundreds of small mines and the thousands of miners who work them. At the heart of "Latin America's turn to the left," Hugh finds the ingenuity, independence, hard work and small-scale production that he feels are missing from the North American landscape. In a moment when America is losing its connection to the base of the production pyramid, *A Miner's Luck* puts this exemplar of an old-fashioned breed of American – the kind of man who produced the goods that made the country run – in direct contact with the people who fill that role in today's globalized world. His reaction to their reality speaks volumes about America's values.

A Miner's Luck is essentially a road movie. It follows the journey of a charismatic lead character to interesting and unexplored terrain. This journey allows the audience to explore a major contradiction within the American consciousness without taking on the aura of an "activist documentary." American values, as expressed in the character of Hugh Ingle, clash with America's treatment of people in the rest of the world. On the one hand we revere ingenuity, hard work and economic production. On the other hand we denigrate the people who live by their ingenuity, hard work and economic production, if they happen to be outside of the United States. This film will put the American version of this kind of producer face to face with the international version of this kind of producer in order to explore the contradiction in how we view them both.

Though *A Miner's Luck* isn't about immigration or international trade, these themes echo in the background throughout the film. This perspective on Bolivian miners contributes a

unique and enriching argument to the debates about both of these issues. A curious audience will wonder where the tin and gold mined in Bolivia is going, what systems are getting it there and why it comes from Bolivia rather than some place like the United States. Without approaching the issue of trade in the global economy directly, *A Miner's Luck* will put a human face on the people on the other end of that system of trade.

Immigration is an especially important topic in the current political dialogue within the United States. Workers in Bolivia are aware of the inequalities that exist between them and workers in the US, even if their understanding of life in the US may not reflect reality as Americans view it. Many poor Bolivians view the solution to their problems – however far-fetched it may be in this land-locked country, three thousand miles from the US border – as the chance to immigrate. Many Americans view the influx of Latinos as a danger to American culture and lifestyle. *A Miner's Luck* will demonstrate that these potential immigrants are not very different from the heroes we revere in our mythic past.

By basing its argument in a myth of the American west and by selecting a main character with an authentic rural voice, *A Miner's Luck* will express this argument within the culture of rural American conservatism. This will allow the film to reach beyond the traditional, urban, liberal audience for social documentaries. By crafting the story as a road movie *A Miner's Luck* addresses the argument indirectly. We watch as Hugh Ingle, champion of rural, conservative, American politics discovers an American spirit of enterprise in remotest parts of Bolivia, and Hugh's conversion is our conversion. Through his experience, we come to understand that the enterprising spirit that he finds missing in America today is a product of poverty and that it still exists in poor and remote corners of the world. In the end we may lament the passing of that enterprising spirit in the United States or we may long for the passing of the poverty that fosters that enterprising spirit in the rest of the world. In either case we will reevaluate both our understanding of American mythology and our understanding of today's global world.

The central question of *A Miner's Luck* is “Why do we view those who produce the basic resources of our economy today as a foreign and dangerous force that threatens our American way life, while we mythologize those same workers in our own past – often immigrants themselves – as heroic exemplars of America's greatness?” In the end, *A Miner's Luck* asks the audience to treat the workers who produce the goods we consume, whether historically in the American west or currently in developing world, with equal respect.

Narrative

The film will start in Tonopah, Nevada, at Jim Butler Days. This celebration of the discovery of minerals in Tonopah and the town's founding includes lots of small-town pageantry and the Nevada State Mining Championships. This opening will anchor the viewers in the American West and give them a point of reference from which they can explore the world beyond their borders. Historically, Tonopah was one of the most important mining centers of the American west, with enormous silver deposits. The

mining championships are a holdover from those boom days and celebrate the skills that were used on a daily basis in the mines:

- Mucking, or loading a one ton ore car by hand with a shovel
- Single jack, or drilling a blast hole in rock with a two pound hammer and a series of star bits
- Double jack, the same, but with two people – one holding the bit and the other hammering with a sledge hammer

As the former director of the event, Shawn Hall, notes, “There aren’t too many miners these days who still do things like single jack or mucking.”

This sequence is designed to create a visual link between what is celebrated as a proud history in the US with what is the everyday work of those at the bottom of the economic pyramid in places like Bolivia. From that introduction, *A Miner’s Luck* follows the story of Hugh Ingle, an American miner, as he travels from Nevada to Bolivia to come to understand the economic and political climate of that country.

Hugh, like many conservative, rural Americans finds himself frustrated with excessive state and federal regulation. As a miner, his work opportunities are limited by regulations that require him to put up environmental bonds, take expensive environmental precautions, enforce strict labor policies and meet hundreds of other bureaucratic restrictions. Furthermore the cost of labor has increased drastically just as the pool of capital available for small-scale mining projects is dwindling.

Hugh is more exposed to the consequences of over-regulation than the large, heavily capitalized mines that operate throughout his home state of Nevada. As a small operator, he doesn’t have the liquid capital or credit necessary to comply with all of these regulations and small mines are inherently riskier investments due to the unpredictability of small, high-grade veins. As a result, he has been left out of the recent bonanza of high prices and record profits that has benefited these large companies. This situation has forced Hugh to work as a metalwork handyman in an economy that is increasingly leaving him and his set of hands-on, intuitive, mechanical skills behind.

“God Himself couldn’t get a job,” he complained to me as we drove in his Ford pick-up to visit his mine property. “You don’t have the degree or the certification...’ ‘I invented it...’ ‘I don’t care, you’re not qualified.’” He continued, a little wistfully, “but you can’t pick when you live so you just got to roll with the punches.” He thinks that maybe he can find something that looks like the mining of his youth in Bolivia, with hundreds of small mines and thousands of miners who know how to work them.

What he finds, when he visits, is something more complicated than a nostalgic reenactment of the mining of his youth. Yes, there are hundreds of small underground mines that operate almost entirely free of regulation. And the miners who work them are skilled and competent. But the lack of authority, the conflict, the poverty and the desperation that these miners confront on a daily basis stands in contrast to Hugh’s

memories of days when hard work and a little luck were usually enough to keep his family's small mines afloat and earn a decent living.

Hugh, accompanied by his guide and interpreter, Pedro Montes, visits various mines of different styles throughout the Bolivian Andes. His first stop is the small town of *Santa Rosa de Lima*, a community of 30 families in the heart of the *Yungas of La Paz*. The steep mountains and lush forests remind Hugh of the Northern Californian mountains where he worked with his father in a mercury mine.

Santa Rosa is primarily an agricultural community whose members have recently begun exploiting a small underground goldmine in the nearby hillside. They have formed a cooperative of 28 miners who cross the river every other week to work the mine, nestled in the curve of an ancient riverbed high above the valley floor across from town.

They show Hugh how they exploit this seam with hand tools, and describe their hope that they will be able to extract enough to make a living month to month and supplement their agricultural income. These farmers-cum-miners have the ingenuity and initiative that Hugh has found lacking in the North America of his adulthood. They may lack the capital to invest in developing the mine for extensive production, and working by hand is grueling labor, but their story is hopeful. This may be the beginning of the economic independence that was promised – but never delivered – when the revolution of 1952 forced out the feudal labor system of the *haciendas*. And it may happen without abandoning the land that they grew up on.

Santa Rosa is furthermore a beautiful small rural town nestled into a valley and surrounded by high ridges in the tropical foothills of the Andes. The ruins of the *hacienda* buildings harbor the whole history of rural Bolivia, from the days of absentee owned coca plantations and the revolution that threw them out, to the flight of young people from rural areas to the cities of *Santa Cruz*, *Cochabamba* and *El Alto* and the resurgence of coca as a cash crop.

Five miles above *Santa Rosa*, *Mina Chojlla*, a tin/tungsten mine, has been in exploitation since 1914. This mine represents an intriguing compromise between a medium sized private mine and the cooperative system that replaced many of the larger, state-owned mines during the 1980s. In 1991, facing extremely low tin prices, the medium sized mine threatened to close. The miners tell Hugh how they refused to leave, and instead entered into an agreement with the company by which they formed an association, responsible for the operation and maintenance of the interior of the mine, and the company agreed to continue buying mineral from the miners.

This region is also famous for its production of several heavily traded tropical stimulants, including coffee and coca. Given that Hugh drinks large quantities of coffee, these additional economic activities will allow the filmmakers to expand the lessons from the case of mineral extraction to agriculture and hint at the larger pattern of economic relationships between the developing world and the developed world.

Hugh's next stop is the historic mine of *Siglo XX*, a totally different type of mining on the other side of the Andes. If *Santa Rosa* holds the history of rural Bolivia and its peasants, the history of *Siglo XX* is the history of Bolivia's wage-earning proletariat. It is a history of exploitation, violence and revolution. These mines were first owned by Simón Patiño, known as the King of Tin, and, after the revolution of 1952, by the state-owned company, COMIBOL. Under both systems of operation, *Siglo XX* nurtured revolutionary resistance, first to the mine owners and later to the dictatorships of the sixties and seventies.

Currently in *Siglo XX*, the miners are divided in their political ideology. Many older and retired miners express a nostalgic longing for the social benefits of the era of the state-owned mining company – especially the “*pulperia*,” which provided essential staples at low prices. Others feel a fierce pride – in spite or because of the brutality of the working conditions – in the highly competitive, largely non-capitalized, cooperative system in which small family groups compete with each other to access the tiny veins that remain. The cooperative miners who speak highly of the advantages of the cooperative system emphasize the independence that they have in establishing their work schedule and the – very American – ideal that under this system, if they work harder, they earn more.

Hugh's hosts in *Siglo XX* are the Aguilar family – uncle and nephew Rino and René – and Sergio Aguda Barzola. They show Hugh the system of cooperative mines that sprang up to fill the void left behind when the state-owned company was “relocalized” in 1986.

Currently in *Siglo XX*, several thousand cooperative miners scrape a living out of the narrow veins that crisscross the workings of this huge underground “anthill.” These cooperative miners began working in the years after the state-owned company was liquidated in the late 1980s. The cooperatives that sprang up in these years allowed unemployed miners and others to access the veins left behind when COMIBOL was shut down, but the end result, at least in *Siglo XX*, has been an uncontrolled sell-off of capital equipment and the gradual devolution of the mining industry into an entirely non-capitalized, non-mechanized venture in which individuals and family groups work with a hammer and a spike to scrape the ore out of its veins. As Sergio puts it, “At moments we reach the extremes of using our hands as tools. It's our fingernails which permit us to scratch a living out of the rock.”

The work is grueling and dangerous. Walking through the mine at *Siglo XX* with Rino and René Aguilar, they point out various sites where miners have died. In one site, called the *pista*, three miners fell to their death when the floor collapsed below them. Around the corner, René Aguilar tells Hugh “Twelve people died here” and points up to an open space that once had been a shaft and a cage. “The cable broke. They all died.”

This experience of life as nasty, brutish and short, combined with the perception that work is plentiful and that life is easy in the United States, has seeded an animosity toward the US. These are men who will work hard seven days a week for the rest of their lives, without the possibility of escape from poverty or improvement in their working conditions. At *Siglo XX*, Hugh is forced to confront the most brutal aspects of life and work in the developing world. His persistent questioning of why the cooperative miners

don't institute systems of control or join the little capital they have echo in reality of a system that cannot provide quite enough to go around.

Yet at the same time, many of these miners are adamant and even revolutionary defenders of a neoliberal system that allows them to at least be their own boss. If they don't work, they don't earn, but if they work hard – and get lucky – they earn enough to live. And they are organized and willing to fight to defend their right to work this way.

This journey gives Hugh a first-hand look not only at the working conditions that compare to those of America in the thirties, but also at the human consequences – positive and negative – of the role that American foreign policy, large transnational companies, foreign political missionaries, non-governmental organizations and the American government play in the politics of Latin America's poorest country.

Throughout his travels, his guide and companion, Pedro Montes, interprets not only the Spanish and Quechua words of his counterparts, but also the cultural, historical and political factors that influence their attitudes. Pedro's background as a miner-turned-tour-guide in the cooperatives of *Potosí* gives him an ideal perspective from which to help Hugh come to understand Bolivia. His gentle, intelligent curiosity serves as a counterpart for Hugh's direct political discourse. His background in mining and his experience as a guide, explaining the workings of Bolivian mines and interpreting the Bolivian world to foreigners, are perfect training for his role as Hugh's counterpart.

The film is principally about Hugh – and his role as an archetype of American character. Hugh's inherent humanism and concern for the people he meets come face to face with the consequences of American capital imperialism. This confrontation of ideas and his reaction to it raise questions about his own nostalgic view of the American past and about the relation between the US and the developing world. These questions relate to immigration, foreign policy, the role of the American military and our basic understanding of human nature in other parts of the world.

Hugh's interactions with the miners – whose work and livelihood he understands intimately – and his growing relationship with Pedro give him a point of reference from which to react to realities of third world life. These encounters are a bridge between cultures that are used to seeing each other only in movies and newspapers. This contact – without the filters of government, newspapers or political aspirations – demonstrates that there is a conflict between how we, as Americans, treat other individuals and how we treat the world at large. Hugh's reactions to what he sees in the mining towns in Bolivia and his interactions with Bolivian people allow him to represent the best qualities of the American character.

Why Now

The exteriors of buses in Bolivia are normally painted with some design that represents the most important views of the owner of the bus – the mascot of his favorite soccer team, a beautiful sunset with palm trees, a woman in a lascivious pose or a plea for

Christ's protection. Many Americans would be shocked to find a number of buses in Bolivia painted with two incongruous and striking portraits – a portrait of the leftist icon and anti-imperialist revolutionary, Che Guevara, facing a portrait of Osama bin Laden. What brings these two icons together in a place like Bolivia?

The only thing that connects these two figures is their anti-American philosophy. In most of Latin America, that is a response to the United States' reputation for heavy-handed manipulation of local politics and what is perceived as an unfair and prejudiced immigration policy. The United States' image in the world continues to deteriorate in spite of significant international aid commitments in developing countries. People who have never had a conversation with an American assume the worst about our country.

The United States has repeatedly found itself in a conflict in which its support for democratic processes contradicts its need for friendly governments in all parts of the world. The election of Evo Morales – by a landslide – as Bolivia's president occurred barely a month before the election of the Hamas party to control of the parliament of the Palestinian authority. Both of these parties base their support in part on their strong anti-American message. As America promotes democratic institutions throughout the world, the feelings of individual citizens towards the United States have an increasing impact on America's foreign policy alternatives.

In addition, the immigration debate continues to heat up in the American body politic. Many Americans fear that the influx of foreign immigrants will undercut wages or that foreign cultures will undermine our American nature. This film will address both of those issues. It will discuss the reasons that people want to immigrate to the United States and place the ideals of incoming immigrants in a context of values celebrated in America's understanding of our history. Furthermore, it will put a human face on those who wish to immigrate and require a human response from an American abroad.

This juxtaposition of American foreign policy with American character will pose questions about whether United States foreign policy represents America and whether the consequences of this foreign policy would be acceptable if Americans were able to have a direct, personal interaction with the people who face them.

Why Bolivia

It is strikingly beautiful.

The deep tropical valleys of the *Yungas*, the high, lonesome plains and the long, snowcapped ranges are beyond parallel. The sparse indications of population in this rugged landscape salt these images with hints of our human capacity for endurance. And for all its strangeness and exoticism, it echoes the American west. High, dry plains with sparse grasses and rolling mountains in the distance blend into the browns and greys of the Nevada desert. Deep, wet valleys with lush forests and impossibly steep sides are reminiscent of the rain forests of Northern California.

Scenes showing traditions and culture in the US and Bolivia will further develop this resonance and dissonance between Bolivia and the US. The image of a half dozen miners seated around a grotesque statue of the “Tio” – a sort of god who determines the fate of miners in Bolivia – seems strange at first, but serves to highlight the role of luck and chance in mining. Other celebrations reinforce the bonds between communities and family members and emphasize the family nature of this enterprise. Through all of these images, the characteristic Andean features and colorful costumes weave a thread of the distinct beauty of the Bolivian people through the film.

Then there is the specter of Hugo Chavez.

Bolivia is often referred to as an important case study in Latin America’s turn to the left, and the election of Evo Morales has certainly drawn a lot of attention from the international press. Those on the left view his rise as a triumph over an unjust system, while those on the right see the insidious influence of Hugo Chavez. And Chavez is hardly the first to view Bolivia as the canvas on which to paint their image of a better world.

Bolivia has always captured the imagination of leftist revolutionaries and neoliberal technocrats alike. Che Guevara died there, and the movement to privatize utilities has fared little better. However, thinkers on both the left and on the right continue to view Bolivia as a place to demonstrate the effectiveness of and need for their particular ideology. Those who get caught in the middle of this political debate are the miners and workers who only want to be able to make a decent living.

This happens because trends in the global economy and political system come into sharp focus in unique but representative ways in Bolivia. Bolivia is an example of larger economic patterns at the same time as its unique cultural makeup and isolation have amplified and warped those patterns. This was true in the era of Spanish colonial rule, and it is true today.

Why Mining

Mining has played an important role in the economy and politics of the region from long before the Spanish conquest. The mines in what is now *Oruro* were central to the Inca Empire and fundamental to Spain’s interest in the region. Control of the mining industry has often gone hand in hand with control over Bolivia’s government. And the miners themselves have played a major role in Bolivian politics, whether as leaders of the revolution in 1952, a principal source of resistance during the dictatorships of the sixties and seventies or key players in more recent social protests, such as those that ousted President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada in 2003.

Furthermore, the system of organization that was prevalent in Bolivian mines was transferred to many other areas of the country after the state redistributed the majority of its mines. The unions of coca growers that nurtured the rise of Evo Morales are directly linked to the miners unions of *Oruro* and *Siglo XX*

Currently the industry is incredibly diverse in its technology and systems of ownership and operation. Bolivia is home to some of the largest and most advanced mining operations in the world, as well as to some of the most backwards and brutal working conditions anywhere. The mines owned by some of the major international companies represent enormous capital investments in state of the art technology and massive infrastructure. On the other end of the spectrum, miners in the cooperative mines such as *Siglo XX* work by hand with homemade equipment.

The clearest look at the goals of Bolivia's current government may be seen in the recent conflict at *Huanuni*. Sixteen men died in a conflict between cooperative miners and the salaried workers of the government owned mine. The government responded by offering salaries to the cooperative miners and shutting the cooperatives out of the mine. This move towards nationalization indicates a cautious trend toward reinvigorating the state-owned company, COMIBOL, and the relationship that this government will have with the large-scale and foreign owned mines will be a major question over the next two years.

Several months later, the government nationalized without compensation the smelter in *Vinto*. This is viewed largely as a politically targeted nationalization because this was an integral part of the mining operations of former president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. Other indications, such as the signing of an agreement with an Indian company for the exploitation of an iron deposit in the eastern lowlands, complicate the perspective on the Bolivian government's direction.

Background

Bolivia

The history of Bolivia and the history of mining in Bolivia are so closely related as to be often indistinguishable. Even before the Spanish conquest, the Inca rulers were extracting silver from around *Oruro* and gold from around the province of *Loayza*. The remnants of these mines around *Loayza* are still paved with Inca era stonework. The Spanish exploitation of the mines, and the forced labor of the Quechua Indians at *Potosí* is, by now, a famous chapter in the exploitation of Latin America's natural resources for foreign benefit.

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, the Bolivian economy has risen and sunk on the international prices of minerals, especially tin and silver. Political life has frequently been dominated by the same parties who dominated the mining industry – capitalists, union leaders or military dictators. This, in fact, has been true up through the presidency of Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, whose fortunes came from the mines he owned.

The tin mines belonging to Mauricio Hochschild, Simón Patiño and Carlos Aramayo fed two world wars and nurtured a revolutionary fervor that finally reached its fruition in 1952. In this year, miners and rural peasants joined forces to restore the democratically elected Victor Paz Estenssoro to the presidency. This same revolutionary spirit met its

greatest tests during the dictatorships of the 1960s and 1970s when labor leaders were arrested or assassinated and civilians were massacred. The memory of the massacres of civilians during this period still remains strong in the collective history of *Siglo XX*.

And in spite of tremendous mineral, natural resource and petroleum wealth, Bolivia remains the poorest country in South America, with the lowest GDP and the worst scores in almost every measurable indicator of quality of life. Hugh Ingle recounts wrestling with this contradiction in a conversation with a group of Mexican immigrants.

“It’s too bad you have to come here at all. Mexico is a resource rich country. There’s no reason you can’t work at home and make a decent living.’ I said, ‘It’s cause your government’s more corrupt than our government that you come north.’ Well they agreed with that. Really that’s what it boils down to. And a lot of those places in South America, I’m sure, are the same way. Those guys ought to be able to make a better living at what they are doing.”

Several of the Bolivian miners offer another reason. René Aguilar complained to me that they sell their ore at \$2.00 a pound, but that it sells for \$6.00 a pound in the London Metal Exchange. “London is cheating us. The United States is cheating us. That’s why we hate the United States.” This anti-Americanism is one of the many factors that contributed to the recent election of Evo Morales as president of the Bolivia.

Evo’s election represents a significant change in the nature of politics in Bolivia. Evo Morales is ethnically Aymara, politically left-of-center and oratorically inflammatory. Evo has gotten great political value out of anti-American remarks. In fact, he earned his political credibility in the election of 2002 in part because the US ambassador openly threatened Bolivians not to vote for Evo. The consequences of this in the international theater are significant.

As the world press covers “Latin America’s turn to the left,” Evo Morales is often cited as a prime example of a socialist, anti-American, radical president. He has pursued policies under the rubric of nationalization of major industries, most notably, the nationalization of the natural gas industry, which was undertaken with much fanfare and political theater and has resulted in contracts signed with several major international petroleum companies and significantly increased tax rates on the production of gas in Bolivia. His recent motions towards nationalizing the mineral industry have raised concerns from inside and outside of Bolivia.

It is, of course, not as simple as it appears at first. While Evo’s rhetoric is second only to that of Venezuela’s president, Hugo Chavez, in terms of its anti-American potency, his actions are not necessarily those of a radical socialist. The “nationalization” of the natural gas industry amounted to little more than a change in the tax structure in order to charge heavy royalties to international companies in order to fund social programs at home. This is akin to Alaska’s use of petroleum revenues to fund its state budget.

It remains to be seen whether the “nationalization” of the mines will take the same tenor.

Evo's staunchest supporters remain among the ethnic Aymara of *La Paz* and poor, rural peasants. When I asked a *La Paz* shoeshiner how the election of Evo to the presidency had changed life for shoeshiners and whether people treat them differently, he told me that they just feel more pride knowing that an Aymara is in the office of president.

That pride has yet to translate into any kind of long-term solution to the chronic political and social instability that plagues Bolivia. Bolivia remains a country where the difference between totalitarian control and anarchy hinges on a colonel's ambitions, a stick of dynamite at an opportune moment, the right bribe to the right official, or some more sinister twist of fate.

Mining in the United States

Jim Butler Days, the celebration of Tonopah's founding as a mining center and the day of the Nevada State Mining Championships, is a nostalgic celebration of the mining industry of the turn of the century in the US. These days Tonopah has little more than a historic connection to the mining industry.

Mining in Nevada is increasingly dominated by a small number of large mines. In 2004, mining added \$3.5 billion to Nevada's economy, almost ten times the figure added in 1980 and nearly double the total tax revenue of the government of Bolivia. But as the revenues in mining grow, the number of people involved in the activity has declined. Mining is increasingly a technologically advanced activity, which requires enormous amounts of capital, specialized heavy machinery and a few highly trained operators. In 2004, under 10,000 workers worked in the mining industry, producing, on average, over \$350,000 per year for their companies.

In the context of American mining, it is no longer economically efficient to pursue small ore bodies. The costs associated with underground mining, the inherent unpredictability of small veins and the overall investing climate have led to the gradual decline of small mines throughout the American west. Towns like Tonopah, which once supported large populations of workers, who labored in underground mines that followed small high-grade ore-bodies are no longer able to compete with the heavily-capitalized corporations that apply enormous machinery to the extraction minerals from massive low-grade ore bodies.

Pre-Production

The research for this film has taken place both in the US and in Bolivia. Principal activities include the identification of characters in both locations, research into historical and economic situation in both contexts and site scouting and relationship building within Bolivia.

In the US, the filmmakers have sought to identify characters who have an intimate experience with small underground mines and a distinctly pro-American outlook,

whether that is based on an isolationist union platform or based on a neo-liberal capitalist political ideology. This intimacy with mining will allow them to approach Bolivian miners with an attitude of camaraderie, and to understand – and explain to the audience – the exact dangers and difficulties that they face in the mining that they are undertaking. Particularly the filmmakers have looked for miners from the western US who have not had significant opportunities to travel or had extensive contact with immigrant populations, but who approach the world with a humanist, open-minded and perceptive perspective.

From this pool of American miners, the filmmakers have chosen to work with Hugh Ingle. Hugh is an old-timer with a perceptive and open mind. He approaches the world from an inherently conservative perspective, but responds with interest and curiosity when approached with less conservative ideas or insights. More than anything, he takes a humanist approach to the world, lamenting the suffering of individuals when faced with stories of brutal working conditions throughout the world.

In Bolivia, the background relationship building is a little bit more extensive. Given that many rural and lower-class Bolivians have a limited exposure to documentary film, a deep – and well earned – mistrust of foreigners and a cultural tendency to avoid statements that might offend whomever they are talking to, the filmmakers have needed to work significantly harder to find characters who understand the goals of the filmmakers and feel comfortable being filmed. The filmmakers are deeply engaged in a process of building the trust of several groups of miners in various locations through what Barbara Kopple refers to as “porch time.”

The filmmakers are aiming to capture a representative sample of mining in Bolivia. They are working with miners in some of the larger cooperative mines, smaller mines deep in rural areas, privately held properties and large scale internationally owned operations. In the town of *Siglo XX*, the filmmakers have identified one family of miners and an individual who represent the dynamism of that community. In the small town of *Santa Rosa*, the miners cooperative has expressed their enthusiasm for being filmed. The Secretary General of the Miners Association of *Mina Chojlla* has also agreed to provide guides for the film-makers in that mine. The filmmakers continue to work with representatives of international mines and have received permission to film in two internationally owned mines.

Further exploration of other potential sites is under way. For this reason, the filmmakers are spending significant time in Bolivia, visiting mining communities and making friends with miners throughout the country.

In addition, the filmmakers have interviewed and will continue to interview – on camera and off camera – individuals who have a deep understanding of the history and or background of mining in the US and in Bolivia. June Nash, who wrote the seminal English-language book on miners in Bolivia (*We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*) and an important biography of a Bolivian miner and union leader (*I Spent my life in the*

Mines), has contributed her understanding of some of the historical and cultural factors that led the Bolivian mining situation to its current predicament.

Figures involved in the mining unions in Bolivia will be able to provide extensive first person accounts of their resistance to the dictatorship and their understanding of the political relationships between the United States and Bolivia. Other interviews will be used sparingly as necessary. Historian, Guy Rocha, will be able to provide background on the changes to working conditions in the western United States. Magdalena Cajias, a mining historian in Bolivia who focuses on social movements, will be able to provide Hugh with the background story of the role of miners in the social and political movements in Bolivia, and explain the perspective of those movements in the context of Latin America.

Production

Production will be undertaken in three stages, a short shoot in Nevada, an 18-day shoot in Bolivia, and another short shoot in Nevada. The most important of these shoots is the 18-day shoot in Bolivia. Hugh will arrive in *La Paz*, the capital city, nestled between the snowcapped peaks of the *Cordillera Real*, 13,000 above sea level. Filming will take place in several sites that are representative of underground mining in Bolivia, according to the following schedule.

- 1 day, arrive in La Paz and rest
- 3 days in *Santa Rosa de Lima*, 3 hours from La Paz
- 1 day of travel, return to La Paz
- 2 days in La Paz, filming at a small international mine near La Paz
- 1 day rest
- 1 day of travel to Siglo XX, 7 hours from La Paz
- 3 days in Siglo XX, filming at a large cooperative mine and a medium-sized cooperative mill.
- 1 day travel, to Tupiza, in the south of Bolivia, 18 hours from Siglo XX
- 1 day rest
- 2 days filming at a small, privately owned mine in the south of Bolivia
- 2 days travel, return to La Paz and rest
- Depart for Miami

The crew for this shoot will include two directors of photography, a sound technician and a producer. In addition, an interpreter and a driver will accompany the crew for the bulk of the shooting. The interpreter, Pedro Montes, will play a crucial role in the film, helping Hugh process and understand what he sees. His gentle and intelligent curiosity allows him to ask important questions in quiet ways. His sensible questions and open mind make him an ideal sounding board for Hugh's insights and observations. This solution to the problem of an interpreter – essentially a logistical problem – will enrich the film by providing a back-story of their developing relationship.

Additional logistical challenges associated with shooting in Bolivia include the remote nature of some of the mining sites. The mine in *Santa Rosa de Lima*, in particular is a two-hour walk from the village. Light-weight and portable DV equipment are essential to the success of this shoot. DV equipment is also crucial for filming in the low-light situations in the interior of mines.

One other key scene is the Nevada State Mining Championships. That has been shot with a director of photography and producer/sound tech over Memorial Day weekend of 2007 (May 27 and 28). This small team captured the celebration and nostalgia of this very American event. A handful of other scenes were filmed over the same weekend, including some preliminary footage of Hugh Ingle in Nevada visiting his mining properties, describing them on maps and explaining his perspective on America, history and American politics.

A few interviews with academics, mine executives and others involved in the industry, will round out the filming, though those interviews will be used sparingly in the final film. It is important that the film maintain the character of a travel and exploration story.

Preliminary filming has been shot on a Panasonic DVX100B and on a Cannon XL2. Both of these cameras are high quality miniDV cameras that have been used in critically acclaimed documentary film production for cinematic release. The filmmakers have been working in 24P with cinematic style settings in order to achieve results that can be transferred to film.

Post Production

Editing

Creative editing will be contracted to an editor who is not previously familiar with the characters involved or any of the footage. This editor will get to know the characters and story directly through the footage, without reference to personal experience. This will ensure that the creative edit of the film paints a portrait of the people and places through the existing footage rather than through the filmmaker's preconceptions.

The structure of the film will be narrative rather than expository. The creative edit team will select footage and build scenes that highlight human connections, moments of learning, surprise, growth, relationships and other important events, and construct a narrative from these scenes. The editors will use simple and basic editing technique that will not distract from its narrative content.

The focus of the edit will always be on character development, the growth of relationships between characters – American and foreign – and emphasizing human interactions. This emphasis on developing a human narrative will help to ensure that the film is accessible to as broad an American audience as possible. Just as the soundtrack is designed to be familiar and welcoming, the overall look of the film is designed to

welcome an audience whose political perspectives have not traditionally been represented in documentary film.

Non-creative aspects of the edit, such as sound mixing, color correction, on-line editing and film transfer will be contracted to competent editing houses.

Soundtrack

The soundtrack will be composed by The WoWz, whose credits include the recently released film *King Corn*. The Wowz specialize in a low-key, classic country style. Rather than focus on Bolivian or Andean music, the soundtrack will emphasize the American nature of this film and set an American audience at ease.

Foreign or foreign sounding music immediately marks a film as about something un-American and therefore gives an audience an idea about the filmmaker's political stance. *A Miner's Luck* is not a movie about a foreign country, and the filmmaker's political stance is based in a patriotic vision of rural, working America. Though the WoWz are sophisticated enough to blend Andean influences into the soundtrack subtly, they will do so sparingly. The music must reflect the American nature of the film.

Distribution

The principal American character in this film is a rural, conservative American, and the principal Bolivian character speaks English clearly and presents a political perspective that is, in a certain sense, very capitalist and very American. This will help ensure that the distribution is not restricted to the urban, liberal audience conventionally associated with documentary film. The distribution of this film will focus on four main outlets that will reach a broad audience.

- Theatrical release: Wicked Delicate Films will pursue a limited theatrical release through film festivals. Success in film festivals will drive DVD sales from the website and generate interest in TV distribution.
- DVD sales: Wicked Delicate Films will pursue sales through its website, at festivals, and through an outreach program with churches, unions, mining history hobby groups, universities and other organizations. Wicked Delicate films expects to sell 5000 DVDs.
- Television Release: Wicked Delicate Films will pursue release on cable television and/or PBS, as well as distribution abroad.
- Educational Sales: *A Miner's Luck* could reach an educational market with this film.

Budget and Timeline

Fundraising has begun on a small scale and funding commitments have been received from a number of individual philanthropic donors. Further funding may come from investors and/or philanthropic sources. This figure does not consider distribution costs.

The bulk of the filming, aside from filming of the Nevada State Mining Championships, may need to be scheduled three months in advance, due to constraints in Hugh's schedule and responsibilities to his family. Once started, however, filming will take less than a month. Post-production is scheduled for six months.

Risks

Political instability

Political instability is always a risk in Bolivia. That's what makes it interesting. The vast majority of instability in Bolivia is in the category of minor nuisance – a road blockade that delays travel for a matter of hours or a day, or a noisy protest in the streets of *La Paz*. Occasionally tensions in a particular location elevate to a point where filming in that location would not be worth the risk to the safety of individuals. (This happened recently in the town of *Huanuni* where cooperative miners attacked the state-owned mine and the salaried miners who work there in order to gain access to the richer areas of the mine). In such a case, the filming would be transferred to another site. Given that the film will include footage from several mining sites, this is not expected to prevent the film from going forward.

Much more rarely, the level of tension in the whole country rises to the point that ground travel is not safely possible and social protests stop all activity in major cities. These events go well beyond local road blockades or localized natural resource conflicts, and could include coups, revolutions, government overthrows or a range of other possibilities. The filmmakers are in constant contact with foreign journalists, NGOs, US State Department officials, Bolivian citizens, local news outlets and *La Paz* taxi drivers, and closely monitor the political situation for signs of unrest that might indicate significant social unrest.

Currently, the political situation is calm. There are no signs that local tensions are at risk of forming themselves into a national movement. The level of satisfaction with Evo Morales's performance remains relatively high within Bolivia. Should the political situation change drastically, obviously the filmmakers would not bring any participants to Bolivia during political turmoil. An evaluation would be made about how and when to continue the film safely.