

# DELEGATE BIOGRAPHIES

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## **PATRICIA GUALINGA, SARAYAKU**

Patricia Gualinga is an inspiring indigenous leader from the Kichwa community of Sarayaku in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Her leadership was instrumental in Sarayaku's 2012 victory for respect for indigenous consultation at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the 2013 Women's Mobilization for Life calling for "Selva Viviente" or "Living Forest" as an alternative to oil drilling on indigenous ancestral territories. She is currently International Relations Director for Sarayaku.

Paty is International Relations Director for the globally celebrated indigenous community of Sarayaku in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Her wisdom & expertise are based in years of activism and a strong, democratic community process which has directly resulted in ground-breaking victories in defense of their ancestral territories. She can present eloquently and extensively about grassroots, indigenous-led solutions to climate change, including keeping oil in the ground, the "Living Forest" (Selva Viviente) conservation concept, and "Plentiful Living" (Buen Vivir). She has been a tremendous and effective force for indigenous rights, advocating tirelessly before multinational oil company CEOs, judges at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Ecuadorian congress, and many other high-level decision making spaces. Paty is authentic, articulate, and fearless in the face of formal power. What she has to say is what world leaders need to hear.

*"We, as women, are disproportionately affected by oil exploration. We don't want oil expansion. We want our country to develop alternative energy plans. We want a post-petroleum economy. We want the Amazon to be valued for what it is, not just economic resources... We have an alternative proposal called "Kawsak Sacha, Selva Viviente or Living Forest." The Amazon is not an area of national interest, but a zone of life that should exclude oil activity. We want to work together so that this is known around the world. If we are willing, this proposal can come from the communities and the National Assembly... We are for life, not only resources. We are here for our lives, yours, the entire world's lives and for those of our future generations." – Patricia Gualinga, Sarayaku*

## **ELENA GÁLVEZ, YASUNIDOS**

Elena Gálvez is a Mexican historian who has been living in Ecuador for five years. There, she has gained an understanding of the reality in the Ecuadorian Amazonian through studying indigenous Amazonian communities and their incorporation into capitalism through extractivism—first, through examining rubber production and then through petroleum exploitation.

This work led to Gálvez's involvement in the creation a socio-environmental reparation process as well as the drafting of historical documents to demonstrate ancestral ownership of indigenous territories and opposition to expansion of the petroleum industry in these territories.

As part of YASunidos, she has been involved in forming groups of signature collectors and individuals fighting to defend Yasuní National Park. She also organizes workshops and presents speeches about Yasuní at Ecuadorian Universities. She is currently working to create coalitions between YASunidos and other anti-extractivist organizations.

*"Extractivism has proven to be deeply violent and has devastated nature and human geography of the Amazon in only a few decades. This reality has affected me directly because the expansion of the petroleum industry is reaching places that are human patrimony in the sense that they are homes to the biodiversity and cultural diversity of peoples that show us that a form of relating to nature not based on destruction and domination does exist."* -Elena Gálvez, Yasunidos

### **Elena Gálvez, Personal statement:**

The process of bringing indigenous peoples into the capitalist system through extractivist activities has proven to be deeply violent and has devastated both nature and human geography of the Amazon region in only a few decades. Seeing this reality deeply impacted me because the expansion of the petroleum industry is reaching places that are essential to human life. These places, which are home to rich cultural and biodiversity, show us that there is an alternative way of relating to nature based not on destruction and domination, but on respect and harmony.

This conviction led me to form part of the collective YASunidos, a group comprised of various movements all calling for a respectful relationship with nature and for stronger community relationships. Members of the collective include feminists, vegans, marxists and ecologists.

Since the creation of this collective, we have been driven by the principle of leaving the oil in the ground, which is necessary if we are to move towards a post-extractivist society. Moreover, we have propelled a process of citizen participation through the collection of signatures for a national referendum on oil exploitation in Yasuní-ITT. This process permitted us to engage in dialogue with many people and began a debate about extractivism. It had the additional benefit of encouraging participation in public spaces in Ecuador and with Ecuadorians around the world.

My particular role in YASunidos included creating groups of signature-collectors and defenders of Yasuní in Ecuador's provinces. In addition, I supported a process of speeches and workshops at universities.

I currently facilitate building relationships between YASunidos and other movements against extractivism. Extractivism has proven to be deeply violent and has devastated the the nature space and human geography of the Amazon in only a few decades. This reality affected me directly because the expansion of the petroleum industry is reaching places that are human patrimony in the sense that they are homes to the biodiversity and cultural diversity of peoples that show us that a form of relating to nature not based on destruction and domination does exist.

## **ANTONELLA CALLE, YASUNIDOS**

Antonella Calle is an animal rights and environmental activist. She became involved in activism by joining the fight to end bullfighting in Ecuador in 2010 and by later collaborating in a successful campaign to ban bullfighting through a national referendum. She is a founding member of the Ecuadorian delegation of the Animalist Association LIBERA!, a group committed to promoting animal rights and veganism. In 2012, she was the voice of the Quito public radio cultural program Antena de Olla. She continued her involvement in Quito public radio in 2013 as the voice of Navaja Suiza, a program about veganism, animal rights and the environment.

Antonella has been involved in YASunidos since the collective's formation in August 2013, when Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa ended his initiative not to exploit Yasuní. During the signature collection process, she was in charge of receiving and processing the signatures and identification cards of people supporting the referendum. She also collected signatures and served as a spokeswoman for the collective. Antonella is currently involved in strengthening internal communications and organizing the group at a national level.

*"There is no justification for the exploitation of Yasuní. It is one of the most biodiverse regions in the world and is home to indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. I also believe that the fight for Yasuní goes beyond protecting this physical territory—it proposes a new way of life, post-extractivism, that respects the rights of nature and human rights and prioritizes life over money. For me, the defense of Yasuní calls for another world—a better world—for today and for future generations."* – Antonella Calle, Yasunidos

### **Antonella Calle Personal Statement**

I became involved in YASunidos because I believe that there is no justification for the exploitation of Yasuní. It is one of the most biodiverse regions in the world and is home to indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. I also believe that the fight for Yasuní goes beyond protecting this physical territory—it proposes a new way of life, post-extractivism, that respects the rights of nature and human rights and prioritizes life over money. For me, the defense of Yasuní calls for another world—a better world—for today and for future generations.

My experience in the process of defending Yasuní has been rewarding but also very challenging, especially during the signature collection process for the referendum because the Ecuadorian government chose to "boycott" the initiative. Collecting signatures was very satisfying as it provided an opportunity to connect with citizens and inform them about Yasuní and why it should be preserved. It was also important in forming a diverse group of people to defend Yasuní.

I am currently helping to strengthen the collective in terms of communication and the coordination of issues at a national level. I was in charge of receiving the signatures and identification cards of people who supported the referendum. Additionally, I serve as a spokeswoman for the collective and collect signatures.

## **LEO CERDA, YASUNIDOS**

Leo is Kichwa and a native of the city of Tena in the Ecuadorian Amazon. He is a climate, energy and sustainability activist working to build a more just and sustainable society in Ecuador. Leo has worked for many years with local grassroots organizations creating awareness of the environmental and cultural impacts caused by the oil industry. Leo holds a degree in international relations and political science from the University San Francisco de Quito.

Leo is currently collaborating with YASunidos, a youth collective that formed in 2013 working to stop planned oil extraction in Ecuador's Yasuni National Park. Leo is committed to the realization of a post-extractivist Ecuadorian Society. As part of his participation in the Climate March and other events in New York Leo will share the story and strategies of Yasunidos' groundbreaking efforts in Ecuador to keep Yasuni oil in the ground and build support for Yasunidos among the global climate movement.

## **ESPERANZA MARTINEZ, ACCIÓN ECOLÓGICA**

Esperanza is the co-founder of Acción Ecológica, a non-profit environmental organization based in Quito, Ecuador. She is also the co-founder and international secretariat for OILWATCH, a global network of oil affected peoples and their allies. She has been instrumental in the campaign to hold Texaco, now Chevron, accountable for the destruction of the Ecuadorian Amazon, influencing the change in the Ecuadorian constitution that recognized the "rights of nature", and has been a major supporter/proponent of the Yasuni Initiative...the Ecuadorian government's plan to keep oil in the ground in Yasuni National Park with compensation from world governments.

As a founder and current president of Accion Ecológica, the country's leading grassroots ecological organization, and Oilwatch, an international south-to-south network connecting communities affected by oil extraction, she is perhaps the most recognizable and influential environmental leader in the country. Some twenty years ago she began a campaign known as Amazonia Por La Vida, or "Amazon for Life", focused on the protection and defense of Yasuni National Park, a place experts call one of, if not the, place of greatest biodiversity on the planet. Over the years, her campaign has forced several companies to abandon drilling plans in the park, and/or limit the scope of drilling plans. In 2006, together with economist Alberto Acosta, they developed a pioneering plan designed as a first step in moving Ecuador towards a post-petroleum economy. The plan sought to leave Ecuador's largest oil field--known as the ITT--in the ground, which by geologic fortune, lies directly beneath Yasuni National Park. The plan, which required international contributions, was adopted as policy by the government. During that time, she served as Chief Advisor to Mr. Acosta in writing Ecuador's new constitution. She advocated for, and won, the inclusion of Rights for Nature, the first magna-carta to include such rights in the world. Ultimately, the government abandoned the Yasuni-ITT initiative for lack of international contributions and approved drilling plans. With extraction imminent, Esperanza rallied a civil society response. Now, leading the collective known as Yasunidos (United for Yasuni), they have achieved a historical first in Ecuador. In a major, national grassroots initiative, Yasunidos gathered far more than the requisite number of signatures for a national referendum, but the Ecuadorian government's electoral institution rejected more than half of these signatures on procedural grounds. Faced with the dismissal of their call for a referendum, Yasunidos is

taking the effort to the United Nations, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and to young people around the world.

*“We are so proud of what Yasunidos has achieved so far. Not only did we mobilize to get the needed signatures for a popular referendum, but we mobilized civil society for a greater call for a new development model that keeps oil in the ground and addresses the needs of its people. We proved that defending Yasuní is not just about monetary contributions, or political statements, but a mobilized civil society. While the government rejected our calls for a referendum, we are committed to defending Yasuni and our democracy.”* – Esperanza Martinez, Co-founder and President of Acción Ecológica

### **GLORIA HILDA USHIGUA, SÁPARA**

As President of the Sápara Women’s Association, Gloria was instrumental in coordinating the indigenous Amazonian women’s mobilization for life, a march of women from the Ecuadorian Amazon to the capital city of Quito to present the government with a call for Sumak Kawsay, or “Living Well.” Gloria is also a practitioner of traditional indigenous medicine.