Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Politics. Edited by Meg McLagan and Yates McKee. New York: Zone Books, 2012. Pp. 321-335.

Granito: An Interview with Pamela Yates

Barbara Abrash and Meg McLagan

Pamela Yates is a filmmaker who has been making social-issue documentaries for more than two decades. Her latest project, *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator*, premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. *Granito* follows up on Yates' 1984 film, *When the Mountains Tremble*, which documented the Guatemalan civil war from the perspective of the indigenous insurgents narrated by then political refugee Rigoberta Menchú, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. *Granito* traces Menchú's efforts to bring the former Guatemalan military government leaders responsible for the genocide to justice, drawing on Yates' footage from the 1980s which now serves as evidence of war crimes for the prosecution in Spain's National Court.

MEG MCLAGAN: One of your first films, *When the Mountains Tremble*, documented the Guatemalan civil war in the 1980s. How did you come to make that film?

PAMELA YATES: I had been working in Central America with Tom Sigel. He was camera, I was sound, and we would do work-for-hire jobs together and then dream of making more of our own films with Peter Kinoy, of course. Tom was also my partner for many years and across many films. We would do the jobs, make money, and then come back to the United States and put the money into our own films. We found that it was a lot easier to hire ourselves out as crew than to apply for a two- or three-thousand-dollar grant. It took less time, and you could make more money.

We heard about this rebellion in the indigenous highlands of Guatemala against the military dictatorship. That was when we decided to go. Getting into Guatemala was tough, because the Guatemalan military was hostile to the press. They had killed about seventeen Guatemalan journalists between 1979 and 1981 for trying to report on the movement for democratic reform, and when foreign journalists came to report, they would stop them at the airport, question them, and deport them.

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Pamela Yates filming *When the Mountains Tremble* in Guatemala, 1982 (photo: Newton Thomas Sigel).

The only way we got in was that there were presidential elections called in 1982 to show that Guatemala was "free" and "democratic"—of course, the only candidates were generals—so they had to let in the international press corps. They were worried about attracting and retaining foreign investment, because the military had accrued this terrible human rights record. The elections were a way of showing that the Guatemalan military rulers were democratic.

When I got there, no one would talk to me because they were so afraid. People were being killed and had disappeared, yet everything appeared normal. Death squads were operating in the open, so people were just way too afraid to talk to me. Even if you found someone whose son had disappeared, they would say he was picked up by *desconocidos*, unknown men, but everybody actually knew they were paramilitary death squads. It was really impossible. I tried to talk to the army, and they slammed the door in my face and threatened me. I tried through an intermediary to contact the guerrillas to go on a trip with them and tell their side of the story, but I got no response. I thought, "Oh this is bad. I'm a total failure on my first film."

BARBARA ABRASH: How did you finally earn trust?

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PY: I started with the army. I would go down every day to the air force base and smoke cigarettes with the enlisted soldiers standing around outside. They gradually introduced me to their sergeant, and their sergeant introduced me to his colonel, and then I got to meet the head of the Guatemalan Armed Forces—this macho General Benedicto Lucas García. I did an interview with him, and then I convinced him to take me with him on a helicopter mission to the Guatemalan highlands.

MM: Clearly, you had a lot of feelings about what was going on. How did you conduct a reasonable conversation with somebody like a colonel or the head of a militia? As just a curious journalist?

PY: Yes, and at that time, military sales and aid from the United States had been cut off under Jimmy Carter. The Guatemalan military was very anxious to reopen those sales and military aid under Ronald Reagan. Reagan took office in 1981; we're talking a year later, 1982, because those things move very slowly. The Guatemalan government was petitioning and working very hard to get the United States to reopen sales, and I think they saw me or us as a megaphone to state their story. I basically just ask people about themselves. I am really interested in people. But as I got up through the ranks, I would ask people about military aid from the United States and relationships to the United States. In many ways, it was a matter of being in the right place at the right time and understanding that we could take advantage of this moment to get at the truth of what was happening there.

There were four different guerilla groups, and they formed a united front. One of the leaders of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) made the filming of *When the Mountains Tremble* possible by arranging the trips with the guerrillas. Back in the day, it was all done through intermediaries, so I couldn't know his identity. I knew only his *nombre de guerra*. I recently got to know him and the role he played in making that crucial part of the film possible. This former guerrilla is now the director of the recently discovered secret National Police Archives, which outline the Guatemalan state's system of repression and disappearance. The archives are nearly finished scanning all of the relevant documents from the worst period of violence. It is an important research repository.

When I went on that helicopter mission with the general, we went to a battle, and it was in a bowl-shaped valley, and as we were circling, there were guerrilla sharpshooters on the side of a mountain, and they shot our helicopter down. We were falling out of the sky. The bullets had gone through the windshield—all the windows shattered—out the machine gunner's door, which was open, and hit the rear rotor. And the rotor stopped, so we were falling. The copilot restarted the rear rotor and made an emergency landing on the other side of the mountain. What that meant was that this near-death experience created this bond with General Benedicto Lucas García. When we were rescued to the nearby army base, he let me

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film anything I wanted. I got to film a lot of other stuff. So they never suspected.

Years later, I actually found the shooter, and he's in our latest film, *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* [2011]. His *nombre de guerra* was Rafael. Rafael shot the helicopter out of the sky. The footage I was able to film because of nearly crashing is now being used in the genocide case to indict the general. Rigoberta Menchú is [also] part of this destiny.

The conditions were harsh; you took opportunities to film wherever you could. A lot of stuff we tried to film we couldn't. We shot with civil society, we filmed the army, the guerrillas, we tried to film the whole spectrum of Guatemalan society. Tom did a really good job under tremendously dangerous conditions. Working together gave me a good sense how you imbue beauty and humanity into really difficult situations, into conflict—how to communicate our shared humanity and the value of each individual life.

After six months, we smuggled the footage out of Guatemala and came back to the United States with three hundred rolls of film, fifty hours of footage. Which is not very much. We didn't have anything to hold the film together in terms of telling a coherent story, just a lot of good scenes.

Then we got lucky. Someone brought Rigoberta Menchú to our studio. She had just escaped from Guatemala with her life and was in exile. She was speaking in front of the General Assembly at the United Nations. Our studio is across Manhattan from the UN, on West Forty-Second Street. I did a traditional interview with her, sitting down in front of a desk, and then we realized when we got back the dailies that she was really special, that she could be the storyteller, she was the voice of the voiceless Mayas.

She also brought a huge amount to the story of the film. We sat down and went through all the scenes that we had, and then she wrote the parts of her own story that were illustrated in the different scenes. It was her personal story, but it provided links with the political story unfolding in Guatemala. Then we went into a real studio for two days and filmed her speaking into the camera with a simple black background. I was influenced by the film *Reds* in those days and wanted it just like that film.

BA: How did you fund the film?

PY: The film was supported by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the Rubin Foundation, and a private donor who was interested in Guatemalan weaving and who could see from the war that Mayan culture was being decimated. We made a couple of presales to European television. But we owned our own equipment, and Peter Kinoy was the producer and also the editor of *When the Mountains Tremble*. He is slightly older than we are, and he said, "OK, I'll be the producer, and you be the director." We could really make films for a low cost.

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MM: How was *When the Mountains Tremble* received?

PY: *When the Mountains Tremble* opened in forty U.S. cities and was distributed in twenty-five countries in Europe and Latin America. It went to the Sundance Film Festival, where it won a Special Jury Prize. Sundance was a meeting of the tribe then, principally just us filmmakers.

Even though CPB gave us the lion's share of funding for the film, PBS refused to show the film. We got the money in 1982, but the film was not broadcast until 1986. PBS dubbed the film *When the Stations Tremble* [laughs]. They made us do two different wraparounds and finally decided that they were going to have a five-minute film before the film started that basically told you everything you were about to see in the film—told in the bland *Frontline* style. Then PBS showed the film, with a half-hour panel discussion afterward about why what we said wasn't true [laughs]. They included the ambassador of Guatemala to excuse the genocide! That's what they considered to be "balanced."

Others on the panel were Harry Moses, a producer at *60 Minutes* (CBS) and Doyle McManus, the *Los Angeles Times* Washington correspondent. All white men. All attacking me, whom they reluctantly agreed to let on the panel to defend the film. People said it was like the sharks circling. Remember, it was the second Reagan administration, PBS was afraid for their survival. I have to get a copy of that tape, because we plan to use it in *Granito*.

In 1992, when Rigoberta was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, I called PBS up and I said, "You know, you have the broadcast rights to *When the Mountains Tremble*. Would you like to rebroadcast it?" The PBS executive said, "We're in an election year—we don't have any air time."

It's wonderful to now know that the PBS series *POV* has committed to broadcasting our latest film, *Granito*.

BA: You've always had the usefulness of your films in mind.

PY: We've always been committed to doing outreach with our films. We tried hard with *Resurgence*, but there wasn't really a movement to take the film out and around in the United States. But when we released *When the Mountains Tremble*, there was a movement to stop the war and in solidarity with the people of Central America. That really took off. Peter, Tom, or I would go to every single city and do a parallel campaign. One part was to work with the grass roots, the solidarity groups in the area, and the other was to ensure mainstream press coverage. We wrote an outreach handbook, a model for other filmmakers to follow. That worked really well, and after each screening, we raised money for the solidarity committees. We raised a lot of money—on average, a dollar a person who came to the movie theaters.

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MM: Could you say a few words about your continuing work with Rigoberta Menchú and how her status has changed over the years, from guerrilla activist, to Nobel Peace Prize winner, to her candidacy in the Guatemalan presidential elections?

PY: Rigoberta was a member of the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) in the late seventies and early eighties. It was composed of peasants organizing in cooperatives for small farms and was in the forefront in getting proper lands rights for local Mayas. She was never a guerrilla, though the Guatemalan Army didn't differentiate—all who opposed the military dictatorship, all who worked for reform, were considered "Communist subversives." After Rigoberta fled Guatemala in 1982, fearing for her life, she spent ten years tirelessly crisscrossing the globe, trying to get the international community to understand what was happening in Guatemala and to intervene politically. She and I traveled together for a few years when *When the Mountains Tremble* was showing in festivals and opening in theaters, and she had the amazing ability afterward to get the greatest potential out of each and every single audience member to work for human rights in Guatemala. If you ever want to see a true leader in action, Rigoberta Menchú is the quintessential one. I think *When the Mountains Tremble*, as well as her autobiography, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, and her active speaking tour all contributed to putting her on the world stage. And on the five hundredth anniversary of the Europeans' arrival in the Americas, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Nobel Peace Prize comes with a large amount of money, and with that she created a foundation. She also invested in drugstores that dispense low-cost drugs to poor people. She's constantly fundraising for projects centered on peace and indigenous rights. We have gotten Docurama, the distributor of *When the Mountains Tremble*, to donate hundreds of DVDs to her foundation's efforts.

In 2007, Rigoberta Menchú ran for president of Guatemala. Not only was she the first woman to run for that office, she was the first Mayan to run. Because of the culture of fear that still permeates Guatemala, because the political violence has morphed into drug-trafficking violence, and because the impunity of the past was never addressed, the violence continues. A lot of people who were in the army became part of the drug mafia. Rigoberta ran her presidential campaign in a very difficult situation, security-wise. In the 2007–2008 campaign, eight people who were campaign workers or candidates in her party were killed. Young people in their twenties were gunned down.

Rigoberta ran unsuccessfully for president again in September 2011. Inspired by Obama's successful campaign for president, she's now organizing a civil rights movement in Guatemala called Winaq ("the wholeness of the human being" in Mayan). Once again, thirty years later, the cycle continues as she works to unite

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the Mayas of Guatemala to fight for their rights. She says, "We act like a minority, but we're actually the majority. Let's claim our civil rights."

BA: How does she stay safe?

PY: The government of Guatemala is equally concerned that she is a target, and they've issued her bodyguards. There is a liberal democratic president of Guatemala now, Alvaro Colomut, but the army and other economic interests still hold a lot of power, and change comes slowly in Guatemala. The default is to stop change by reverting to violence.

MM: Your main focus was on supporting the solidarity movement, wasn't it?

PY: Right, and twenty years later, in 2003, when we had the first public showing in Guatemala of *When the Mountains Tremble*, I came to find out that the film had been shown thousands of times clandestinely during the war. The resistance movement would get VHS copies from El Salvador and make copies of copies of copies. You see these copies now and you can barely see the image.

We made another film after *When the Mountains Tremble* called *Nicaragua: Report from the Front* [1983]. We traveled with the Contras, a covert counterrevolutionary group trying to overthrow the Sandinistas and backed by the CIA. We walked with them from Honduras into Nicaragua, maybe a hundred kilometers. We were with them for about two weeks. Then we did the same thing with the Sandinistas in the same area in Nicaragua. We tried to show the war from both sides of the front. We also released the Contra material on a series of five *CBS Evening News* reports, and we broke the story about U.S. covert aid to support the Contras. The fact of the Contras was secret in the United States, but they weren't covert in Central America.

Then we worked with an NGO in Washington called the Caribbean Basin Project on a short film that they could use to lobby Congress to extend the Boland Amendment, cutting off military aid to groups who willfully violated human rights norms such as attacking civilians. The Boland Amendment forced the Reagan administration to cut off aid to the Contras, which is why the government began to fund them covertly, and Iran-Contra was born. They had to find ways to get the funding to the Contras so they could destroy the Sandinistas.

BA: Your work has always been linked to movements, close to activists.

PY: Yes. In the 1990s, we made a trilogy called *Living Broke in Boom Times* about poor people who were left out of the largest economic boom in U.S. history. The trilogy was made with and about poor-people's movements dedicated to trying to get up and out of poverty.

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"Movement" is a funny word. What actually makes a movement? Sometimes you are hopeful that a movement will arise. We were hopeful that a movement of all those hungry Americans would develop, but it didn't, really. We worked closely with the people who were trying to make it happen. What was unique about them was that they weren't advocates for the poor. They were actually the poor, the homeless.

MM: Your film *State of Fear: The Truth About Terrorism* [2005, 94 minutes] represented a shift from a focus on solidarity movements to working with transitional justice and human rights organizations. How did that launch your relationship with the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ)?

PY: *State of Fear* is a documentary based on the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's examination of their country's twenty-year "war on terror" against Shining Path insurgents. During the conflict, both the state and the insurgents carried out campaigns of terror that led to the deaths of nearly seventy thousand civilians, many of them from Quechua-speaking areas of the country. When we first met with staff of the ICTJ, it was a new NGO, born after the South African Truth Commission. They were the ones who said, "The Peruvian Truth Commission is starting up, it will have the first public audiences of any truth commission in Latin America. It would make a really great film. What if we could help you raise $20,000? Do you think you could make a film for that?" We said, "No, we don't think so, but we could start on it." They went with us to meet with the Ford Foundation, which provided seed funding and later support. That was the beginning of a fruitful relationship with the ICTJ.

ICTJ is not a funder of our recent films, but its staff members are valued advisors. ICTJ has been especially helpful with *The Reckoning* [2009, 95 minutes], our film about the International Criminal Court, in that they made it officially part of their consulting work. We could talk to any of their experts, and we could use their offices in any of the countries where we were filming; all of their expertise helped us make much more nuanced films. We were working with people working in conflict zones, day in and day out, people who know the lay of the land. We come to stories and we learn as much as we can as quickly as possible, but we had really good advisors on both *State of Fear* and *The Reckoning*.

MM: Could you talk about working with transitional justice and human rights organizations? Especially in terms of your point of view and how you approached telling the story?

PY: A lot of times when you go to make a film, especially if it is a complex film like *The Reckoning*, there are so many people who know much more about it than you

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do. One of the things we do is get people from the different organizations that have made their focus international justice and ask them to be on our advisory board. And then we get insight into what to read, what to look at, who else to talk to, and that forms the basis of our research. Later, the advisors become our outreach partners. While we're making the film, they come and they look at samples of the film, or they look at the film before we lock it, and they comment on it. But we have final artistic decision over every aspect of the film and educational initiative and narratively how we're going to tell the story. We're always very clear with our outreach partners about that. They also see that we are incredibly good listeners and can recognize good ideas when they are proffered.

BA: You have said that storytelling is the core of your films. Can you talk about how aesthetics play into your stories?

PY: I am an intuitive filmmaker working inside a visual language that I'm not always used to verbalizing. One of my strengths is always having worked with cinematographers who are excellent interpreters of ideas into the visual realm. This began with Tom Sigel and *When the Mountains Tremble*. And since I was a sound recordist for many years, I worked with some excellent cinematographers and learned from them as I learned from Tom. On *The Reckoning*, I worked with Melle van Essen, whom I call "the Dutch Master." He has a steadiness, a calm core. He can bring out the beauty, the humanity, the place we all inhabit that connects us as humans, by how he photographs each scene, no matter how difficult.

I think the geography of the human face is one of the most beautiful panoramas of cinema. I know we connect with faces—it's part of our limbic brain, a remnant from when we were pack animals. We look for meaning in each others' eyes.

BA: Close-ups of faces are a signature stylistic element of your films.

PY: Yes, that's what makes the individual stories universal. These are stories about the human drama, about the human condition, and then there are the faces to bring it home. These faces help create a deep emotional place for the audience. In *State of Fear* and *The Reckoning*, we took a portable green screen with us to all the locations—the sea, the Andes, the jungle, the Congo, Acholiland in northern Uganda. This is a four-by-six-foot piece of green cloth that we set up with two C stands and did portraits in front of it. Then we combined the portraits with many other background images in the editing room to create the signature look of the films.

At the center of everything I do are the victims, those most affected, those whose voice is so rarely heard, but who are crying out to be heard. So thinking about how best to help them tell their own stories has taken many different forms throughout my life as a filmmaker. Those most affected have always been the

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protagonists in my films. I never have experts opine. You can be an expert, but you also have to be a player in the history, not simply an observer, to be in one of my films. This led me to finding and including Rigoberta Menchú and later Luis Moreno-Ocampo, for example.

MM: Have you ever had issues where an organization has wanted you to go one direction, and you really wanted to go in a different direction?

PY: Not on major structural things, but on smaller things, we've had a lot of back and forth. Sometimes we can see their point, and we find a way to finesse putting it into the film, and sometimes we just don't. The differences more often happen when NGOs want to put something into a film because of its content, but if you put something in for content and it doesn't have a reason organically to be there, it's really not heard or felt. It doesn't touch people emotionally. Sometimes our advisors or outreach partners want to do away with certain style elements that they don't think are right, but we feel are really engaging for a general audience. So we have to be pretty clear why we've made this decision.

When we have a screening, we have a questionnaire. The first ten or fifteen minutes after a screening, we ask each person to fill it out, because once the group dynamic kicks in, it's hard to get a contribution from everyone. That's helped a lot in terms of seeing trends in how the films are viewed, but it also confronts us with recognizing what we think, why we think it, and how are we communicating the story. Especially with *The Reckoning*, the contributions of the advisors and the NGO partners were at an extremely high level, intelligent and well thought-out. It really was good for us, but it was challenging too, because everyone had his or her own idea about what the film should be.

MM: When you worked previously with solidarity movements, you didn't have rough-cut screenings or engage in that sort of practice?

PY: We actually did. We're interested in what they think. I also like to show people the films they are in before they are broadcast, because sometimes I am not always a hundred percent sensitive to what they might be sensitive to. I feel that in making nonfiction films, if they're open to it, you should show it to them.

In *When the Mountains Tremble*, the person who became my liaison to the guerrillas told me to meet her in a McDonalds in downtown Guatemala City and to bring a tourist map and *Time* magazine and sit there. We had never met in person, and this was the way she would recognize me. I was really scared. I thought I was being set up. I went, of course [laughs], but I thought this small Mayan woman was going to come in and sit down next to me and everybody was going to know exactly what was going on here. But this woman came in, and she was fair-haired

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and white-skinned and spoke perfect English. She told me not to be afraid and that she was there to set up a clandestine trip to film with the guerrillas. She told me that from then on, my *nombre de guerra* would be Ana María.

Twenty-five years later, she's now a practicing international justice attorney and a professor at a leading U.S. law school. She's in *Granito*. She's the kind of person I have to be sure is okay with what I'm saying and doing with her story in the film, because the way the United States is now, the guerrilla groups fighting for national liberation in the 1980s could potentially now be classified as terrorist organizations, though they never engaged in terrorist acts. I feel like it's her story, her life. She has the right to decide how that is made public for the first time in *Granito*.

BA: It must have been amazing to reconnect with people who were in *When the Mountains Tremble*.

PY: I had stayed in contact with Rigoberta Menchú all these years, though I lost contact with my guerrilla liaison, but more because she wanted to lose contact, not me. I think it is really important to go back to places, even if you are not filming there; that you should continue to have relationships that were formed during the film. It's immoral to go to a place, tell a story, and then say, "Thanks for your story, now I'm going on to the next story." It is so much deeper than that. You are changed fundamentally by the telling of it.

BA: How would you characterize *State of Fear, The Reckoning, Granito*, and the film you are working on now? How do they relate to one another?

PY: They are a transitional justice quartet—transitional justice meaning the act of redressing and preventing the most severe violations of human rights by confronting legacies of mass abuse. This holistic approach includes truth commissions, prosecutions, reparations, and memorialization. *State of Fear* is really about truth, because it's based on the findings of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and *The Reckoning* is about justice, because it's about the first six years of the International Criminal Court. *Granito* is about legacy, or how a documentary film, *When the Mountains Tremble*, made twenty-five-plus years ago, becomes forensic evidence in a genocide case. Our next film, *The Future of Memory*, is about how societies create their collective memory and memorialize their history. How history is an argument. *The Future of Memory* will focus on four to six stories in different parts of the world and on places where people are actively engaged in shaping their historical narrative. Often, the debates take place over building memory museums, as in Uganda; or a monument, as in Peru, or where memory is absent, as in Russia, or where memory is forbidden, as in Spain. And there will be a story that takes place here in the United States.

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MM: With solidarity movements, you are often working with people from the community, and with human rights activists, you are sometimes working with people who are representing others.

PY: Yes. Over the years I've learned how to weave more seamlessly both kinds of stories, since both are integral to finding a way forward. Our multiyear outreach campaigns create tools—because the films themselves are the flagships—for movements and for human rights defenders. The screening kits and supplemental educational materials are designed for people at the community level, and they work with us in creating them and then using them.

BA: You are still on the side of the people who are affected.

PY: It is always individuals who make history. They are often ordinary people who sacrifice enormously to make change. They endure setbacks and challenges to their integrity, and yet they keep going. This effort makes them extraordinary. Like Rigoberta Menchú, a poor Maya woman from a small village in the highlands who became a Nobel Peace laureate. It's these kinds of people who are the protagonists in our films.

MM: In *When the Mountains Tremble*, there was no mechanism for justice—there was only the hope that the United States would stop supporting this calamity.

PY: I thought that by exposing the violence in Guatemala, the international community, including the United States, would come to the aid of the beleaguered Mayan villagers and prevent it from continuing. That was my naive belief, and it was not to be.

The anger I feel knowing that those ex-generals responsible for the Guatemalan genocide have never been brought to account and that they still lead lives of power and luxury is almost too much to bear. Yet I believe that channeling that anger into telling the story of the victims who have never given up on seeing justice done strengthens me. Their many *granitos* have inspired my sole *granito*, the tiny grain of sand we can each contribute.

BA: And now you are also directly contributing to the process of justice. Your outtakes and footage from *When the Mountains Tremble* are contributing to the forensic evidence against the Guatemalan military leaders.

PY: Exactly, that's the *granito*. That concept was part of my testimony in front of the Spanish National Court, where the Guatemalan genocide case is being adjudicated. Using *When the Mountains Tremble* and all the outtakes and complete transcripts from 1982, I entered them into evidence in the case. I ended my testimony

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saying, "I thought I would stop the violence by showing *When the Mountains Tremble* to the world, but now I hope that by adding my *granito*—together with all the other *granitos* that so many others have contributed—that it will bring the perpetrators of the genocide to justice and vindicate the victims."

And what I thought I was doing back then transforms itself into something completely different. It's at the core of our understanding of the importance of human rights documentation, including documentary film.

MM: Can you give us an update on how that case came about and where it is now?

PY: Rigoberta Menchú brought the case to the Spanish National Court in 1999. She was inspired by the court's arrest warrant for Augusto Pinochet and his detention in London as his extradition to Spain was pending. Enough evidence has now been gathered for Judge Santiago Pedraz to issue eight arrest warrants for generals and police officials on charges of genocide. Two of these generals are in *When the Mountains Tremble*, which is why my outtakes were so valuable to them. Because of the two minutes we used in *When the Mountains Tremble* of General Ríos Montt, for example, there are thirty or forty minutes of the interview in real time. In the outtakes, General Ríos Montt talks about how he is at the top of the chain of command. He admits to command responsibility, which is always one of the most difficult elements of the crime to prove in a genocide case.

After the arrest warrants were issued, the Guatemalan Constitutional Court decided that they would not allow anyone to be extradited from Guatemala to Spain to face justice. And the Spanish National Court cannot try the accused in absentia. So none of the alleged perpetrators now dare leave Guatemala. In *Granito*, the scene then shifts to Guatemala, where we see how the Spanish National Court case has had a profound effect on emboldening the domestic judicial system and how evidence uncovered in Spain can now be used in the Guatemalan courts. This is what's come to be known as "the Pinochet Effect." More has happened in the past year in the judicial realm in Guatemala itself than has happened in the last thirty years in terms of arrests and convictions for crimes committed by the army and the state during the years of the genocide and forced disappearances. A former president and army general, Mejia Victores, has been issued an arrest warrant for genocide, and the chief of staff of the army was arrested and charged with genocide. Special Forces officers and a lieutenant were convicted and sentenced to 6,060 years each in the Dos Erres Massacre—30 years for each person they killed in 1982. That, combined with the findings of evidence in the National Police Archives implicating the state for crimes committed during the war, has enabled the attorney general's office to open cold cases from the 1980s.

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Fredy Peccerelli, Executive Director Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation at the La Verbena public cemetery exhumation (photo: Dana Lixenberg).

So whatever happens, this is *Granito*'s moment in time. I hope the film itself will contribute to this tipping point for justice in Guatemala.

Because long-form documentaries such as *Granito* are fixed in time, we have developed a digital media project that will be constantly flowing and changing. At the Bay Area Video Coalition Producers Institute, I developed a flexible media project called Granito: Every Memory Matters. The idea is to create a data bank of memories, a public archive that will contain the memories of the genocide. While filming *Granito* in Guatemala, I realized that not only was the film being used as forensic evidence, but it was awakening a whole new generation, those under thirty, to what actually happened during the war. Because that is not being taught in school. There is a culture of *el olvido*, meaning forgetting. So we want to partner with the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Team to build a memory team and get young people to collect memories and to interview their elders with mobile devices

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to upload to Granito: Every Memory Matters. This memory bank will be a repository of memories that will live on the cloud. Anyone can add to or access this memory bank—either in Guatemala or in the diaspora.

An important feature of the memory bank is a time line that starts in the present, when you can stream *Granito* for free, and then you can travel back through history, all the way back to 1982 and stream *When the Mountains Tremble*. Along the way, you can add or access memories in that time line. It could be videos, photographs, testimonials, evidence, music, or maps.