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Goldman Environmental Prize Honors Six Heroes of the Environment

Award recognizes activists from Australia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, India, Slovenia, United States

SAN FRANCISCO, April 24, 2017 — The Goldman Environmental Foundation today announced the six recipients of the 2017 Goldman Environmental Prize, the world’s largest award for grassroots environmental activists. Awarded annually to environmental heroes from each of the world’s six inhabited continental regions, the Goldman Prize recognizes grassroots activists for significant achievement to protect the environment and their communities.

The winners will be awarded the Prize at an invitation-only ceremony today at 5:30 p.m. at the San Francisco Opera House (this event will be live streamed online at www.goldmanprize.org/ceremony). A ceremony at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, D.C. will follow on Wednesday, April 26 at 7:30 p.m.

This year’s winners are:

RODRIGUE MUGARUKA KATEMBO, Democratic Republic of Congo
Putting his life on the line, Rodrigue Katembo went undercover to document and release information about bribery and corruption in the quest to drill for oil in Virunga National Park, resulting in public outrage that forced the company to withdraw from the project.

PRAFULLA SAMANTARA, India
An iconic leader of social justice movements in India, Prafulla Samantara led a historic 12-year legal battle that affirmed the indigenous Dongria Kondh’s land rights and protected the Niyamgiri Hills from a massive, open-pit aluminum ore mine.

UROS MACERL, Slovenia
Uroš Macerl, an organic farmer from Slovenia, successfully stopped a cement kiln from co-incinerating petcoke with hazardous industrial waste by rallying legal support from fellow activists and leveraging his status as the only citizen allowed to challenge the plant’s permits.

WENDY BOWMAN, Australia
In the midst of an onslaught of coal development in Australia, octogenarian Wendy Bowman stopped a powerful multinational mining company from taking her family farm and protected her community in Hunter Valley from further pollution and environmental destruction.

MARK! LOPEZ, United States
Born and raised in a family of community activists, mark! Lopez persuaded the state of California to provide comprehensive lead testing and cleanup of East Los Angeles homes contaminated by a battery smelter that had polluted the community for over three decades.

RODRIGO TOT, Guatemala
An indigenous leader in Guatemala’s Agua Caliente, Rodrigo Tot led his community to a landmark court decision that ordered the government to issue land titles to the Q’eqchi people and kept environmentally destructive nickel mining from expanding into his community.

ATTENTION EDITORS: Detailed biographical information, photographs, and broadcast-quality video of all the winners in their home countries are available by request or online at www.goldmanprize.org/pressroom

About the Goldman Environmental Prize
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2017 Goldman Environmental Prize Recipients

**Africa**
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**Asia**
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**North America**
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**South & Central America**
RODRIGO TOT, Guatemala
An indigenous leader in Guatemala’s Agua Caliente, Rodrigo Tot led his community to a landmark court decision that ordered the government to issue land titles to the Q’eqchi people and kept environmentally destructive nickel mining from expanding into his community.
Rich in resources, mired by conflicts

A former Belgian colony, the Democratic Republic of Congo is no stranger to the resource curse. Rich in natural resources such as fossil fuels, precious metals, and gemstones, the country has long been at the center of military conflicts and exploitation from foreign multinational companies. Among them is SOCO International, a British oil company. In 2010, the Congolese government sold SOCO the right to explore for oil in an area known as Block V, about half of which extends into Virunga National Park.

A World Heritage Site, Virunga is the oldest national park in Africa and the crown jewel of Congo’s ecotourism. It is an area of extraordinary biodiversity and an important habitat for about a quarter of the world’s population of mountain gorillas. The park’s protection also ensures surrounding communities’ access to water and food, as well as important economic opportunities for the 3,500 people employed by the park, ecotourism operators, and a small hydroelectric plant.

Despite its importance, Virunga—on Congo’s eastern border shared with Uganda and Rwanda—has been ground zero for the country’s military conflicts, making patrolling Virunga one of the most dangerous jobs in conservation. More than 160 park rangers have been killed in the line of duty over the past 15 years, often at the hands of armed rebels and poachers.

A career in public service

Rodrigue Katembo, 41, is a Congolese park ranger who grew up during the turbulent years following the country’s independence from Belgium. As the nation was ravaged by military conflicts and political unrest, he was forced into being a child soldier at 14 years old, but left a few years later after his mother helped him escape.

Katembo returned to school, determined to regain the opportunities he lost during his childhood. He studied biology in college, going on to earn a master’s degree. He was drawn to a career in public service, and became a park ranger at Virunga National Park in 2003. He flourished in this role, and with a reputation for high integrity and exceptional leadership, Katembo quickly rose up the ranks to become warden of the park’s central sector—an area of interest to oil companies.

From undercover investigation to Netflix

In 2011, during one of his regular morning patrols, Katembo came across a handful of vehicles that claimed they had legal authorization to drive into Virunga National Park and set up an oil exploration base by the river. They offered Katembo money in exchange for letting them pass, but he refused, holding firm to his principle that the park belongs to the people of Congo and around the world. Coordinating closely with his team via radio, he was able to get the vehicles out of the park.

Putting his life on the line, Rodrigue Katembo went undercover to document and release information about bribery and corruption in the quest to drill for oil in Virunga National Park, resulting in public outrage that forced the company to withdraw from the project.
Katembo reported the incident to the park director, Emmanuel De Merode. They agreed on the need to carefully document evidence of corruption, and met with a film director who helped Katembo with undercover cameras to record footage of SOCO and its contractors offering bribes and discussing illegal activities. Katembo conducted these undercover investigations at a huge risk, knowing that corruption wasn’t limited to SOCO and its contractors. It likely extended into the ranks of Congolese military as well as executives at the national agency overseeing Congo’s protected areas.

Katembo and the footage he gathered during his undercover investigations were heavily featured in the documentary film Virunga. The film premiered in April 2014 at the Tribeca Film Festival and gained a massive international audience through Netflix. Leading investigative media outlets picked up the story, and in July 2015, amid growing public outrage at SOCO’s conduct, the Church of England announced it would divest its $1.8 million holding in the company. A few months later, in November 2015, SOCO announced it was giving up its oil license in Block V.

Since SOCO’s departure from Virunga, wildlife in the park is showing signs of recovery. Populations of hippos and elephants, which had been poached heavily as part of SOCO’s attempts to devalue the park, have stabilized. With enhanced security in the park, civilians are free to access water and fish at Lake Edwards.

Katembo has paid an enormous price for his activism. In September 2013, just days after he had stopped a SOCO team from building a telecommunications antenna inside the park, Katembo was arrested and tortured for 17 days. He returned to duty immediately after his release. Since then, Katembo has been promoted to director of Upemba National Park, where he continues to protect the park and wildlife from poachers, militia, and extractive industries. Thanks to his leadership, dozens of elephants have returned to the park. Zebra numbers are on the rise, while deforestation is decreasing.

In 2016, Katembo helped shut down eight quarries and removed more than 1,400 small-scale miners who were illegally mining for coltan—a metal often used in smartphones. However, extractive industries and armed rebels remain the most serious threat to the understaffed and under-resourced park, its biodiversity, and Katembo’s safety.

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The Niyamgiri Hills, in India’s eastern Odisha state, is an area of incredible biodiversity. The thick forestlands are home to the endangered Bengal tiger and serve as an important migration corridor for elephants. More than 100 streams flow down from the peaks, providing a critical water source for millions of people before emptying out into the Bay of Bengal.

The hills are also of vital importance to the Dongria Kondh, an 8,000-member indigenous tribe with deep ties to the surrounding environment. The Dongria are renowned fruit farmers with an encyclopedic knowledge of the forest’s medicinal plants. The tribe’s relationship with the land goes beyond survival; the Niyamgiri Hills are sacred, and as such, the Dongria consider themselves to be its protectors.

In October 2004, the Odisha State Mining Company (OMC) signed an agreement with UK-based Vedanta Resources to mine bauxite, an aluminum ore, in the Niyamgiri Hills. The massive, open-pit mine would destroy 1,660 acres of untouched forestland in order to extract more than 70 million tons of bauxite, polluting critical water sources in the process. The mine would also require roads to transport the bauxite, which would leave the forest vulnerable to loggers and poachers.

Prafulla Samantara, 65, grew up in a humble family of farmers. When he wasn’t studying or helping his father in the fields, he loved to play outside in the peaceful surroundings that defined rural Odisha when telephones and roads were still rare. As Samantara became older, he noticed industrial development starting to crowd out the areas where he played as a child. He learned to connect the dots between rapid industrialization and the growing consumerism among wealthy urbanites.

Having witnessed the growing inequality between the rich and poor, Samantara pursued studies in economics and law and built a lifelong career as a social justice activist. The early 1990s brought the global economy to India, and reaffirmed his life’s mission to protect nature and the lives of the people who serve as its guardians.

In 2003, Samantara saw an announcement in the newspaper about a public hearing to discuss bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri Hills. Having previously campaigned against a similar mine in another nearby district, he was aware of how environmentally destructive the project would be. He noted that the public hearing would not be accessible to the isolated Dongria Kondh, who do not understand English or have access to computers. Samantara felt a responsibility to help them protect the Niyamgiri Hills.

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**Protectors of the sacred Niyamgiri Hills**

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**A lifelong career in social justice**

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Standing their ground, in court and in the hills
Samantara alerted the Dongria Kondh that their land had been given away. He went from village to village to meet with local communities, sometimes walking or biking through remote routes to avoid mining supporters. Through peaceful rallies and marches, he organized the Dongria Kondh to maintain a strong presence in the hills to keep the mine from moving forward. Meanwhile, Samantara filed a petition with the Supreme Court’s panel governing mining activities, becoming the first citizen to use the legal system in an attempt to halt the Vedanta mine.

As the case worked its way through the court system, investors began to raise concerns about Vedanta’s environmental and human rights record. The Norwegian pension fund and the Church of England divested their shares from Vedanta, citing concerns about its conduct in the Niyamgiri Hills.

Almost a decade after Samantara’s initial filing, the Supreme Court issued a historic decision on April 18, 2013. The court’s ruling empowered local communities to have the final say in mining projects on their land, and gave village councils from the Niyamgiri Hills the right to vote on the Vedanta mine. By August 2013, all 12 tribal village councils had unanimously voted against the mine. In August 2015, after years of partial operation and stoppages, Vedanta announced the closure of an aluminum refinery it had preemptively built in anticipation of the mine’s opening.

However, OMC was relentless. In an effort to revive the project, it sought to overturn the tribal council votes, claiming that some tribal members had died and new ones had come of age. OMC petitioned to mine the bauxite as a sole venture, but following an appeal from Samantara, the Supreme Court denied the petition in May 2016, leaving the Niyamgiri Hills’ future safely in the Dongria Kondh’s hands.

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Trading one bad solution for another
For decades, air pollution from local manufacturing operations had been settling over the narrow valleys in central Slovenia’s historically industrial towns. Dangerous emissions affected local farmers, forests, wildlife, and people. Cancer rates in the region outpaced the rest of the country; children who live here are twice as likely to suffer from chronic respiratory illnesses.

In recent years, the European Union introduced carbon incentives to industries replacing coal with so-called green energy sources such as medical waste, old tires, and other industrial residue. In a perverse scheme that traded one bad solution for another, manufacturers began converting old industrial plants to power them with these alternative fuels.

Lafarge received strong support from the local government. The company promised jobs and denied that its emissions would harm residents. Its assertions were soon met with skepticism by citizens who had suffered enough from rampant pollution. Among them were members of Eko Krog, a local environmental group organized by volunteers.

A refusal to accept injustice
Uroš Macerl, 48, is the president of Eko Krog and an organic farmer whose family farm sits on the outskirts of the Lafarge plant. He grew up on the farm, which belonged to his grandfather, and spent a lot of time playing and working outside. He remembers seeing the snow often turn black from coal dust and pollution within a day or two after falling on the ground. The tap water at home also came out of the faucet black.

Many farmers suffered huge losses as industrial pollution wiped out the three most vital elements of their livelihood: clean air, soil, and water. When he was 23 years old, Macerl took over his family’s farm but gave up the fields and orchards when air pollution made growing crops impossible. He has since been raising sheep instead.

Uroš Macerl, an organic farmer from Slovenia, successfully stopped a cement kiln from co-incinerating petcoke with hazardous industrial waste by rallying legal support from fellow Eko Krog activists and leveraging his status as the only citizen allowed to challenge the plant’s permits.
Unwilling to accept the injustice to his community, Macerl began organizing farmers, residents, and local groups to collect air quality data that showed a dramatic increase in dangerous pollutants since Lafarge had begun burning petcoke. He presented the data to the media as well as local and national authorities. But his arguments fell on deaf ears as job creation was prioritized at the expense of air quality and people’s health—a strange rationale given that Lafarge had actually cut jobs.

**Dramatic improvements in air quality**

After enduring years of pollution from the cement plant, Macerl came to a breakthrough in 2009 when Lafarge applied for an environmental permit to co-incinerate hazardous industrial waste with petcoke. The company claimed that only areas within 500 meters of the main chimney stack would be affected by the emissions. By coincidence, part of Macerl’s property fell within the pollution zone outlined in Lafarge’s plans, granting him legal standing to challenge the permit application.

The Slovenian government rubberstamped the permit, and Lafarge began incinerating over 100 tons of hazardous industrial waste on a daily basis. Macerl filed and won a lawsuit that canceled the permit, but Lafarge continued to burn petcoke and waste. Noting the Slovenian authorities’ failure to enforce the court ruling, Eko Krog and Macerl informed the European Union.

As the case made its way through the European Commission, Macerl rallied community opposition while simultaneously managing his farm. As president of Eko Krog, he kept the community updated on the legal proceedings while organizing protests in Trbovlje and the capital.

The European Commission sided with Macerl. And when Lafarge continued its operations, the commission requested that Slovenia be brought before the European Court of Justice for its failure to enforce EU pollution standards. The national authorities finally ordered Lafarge to halt production, and the company complied in March 2015.

Since the plant’s shutdown, the region has seen visible improvements in air quality. Spruce trees are once again growing on Macerl’s farm, and migrating birds that hadn’t been seen in decades have returned. The number of days with dangerous pollution levels have dropped to about 50 a year, down from 160 at the height of Lafarge’s operations. Lafarge continues its attempts to restart co-incinerating petcoke and waste, but faces formidable opposition in Macerl, Eko Krog members, and a community determined to protect its health and environment.

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Islands of farms surrounded by coal mines

New South Wales (NSW), on Australia’s eastern coast, is a region with a rich agricultural history. Dairy farms, ranches, race horse farms, and vineyards dot the rural landscape in Hunter Valley, where descendants of some of the island’s earliest settlers have been working the land for generations. However, in recent years, the region’s farms have become islands surrounded by oceans of open-pit coal mines.

Under directives to prioritize economic growth above all else, government is issuing coal licenses with little regard to mining’s impact on local residents’ lives. Almost two-thirds of the Hunter Valley floor has been given away in coal concessions, producing 145 million tons of coal every year. Some of it is burned at nearby coal powered plants but the majority is shipped off to foreign markets, cementing Australia’s place as the world’s largest coal exporting country.

Coal mining has displaced many landowners in the valley. Those who remain live surrounded by around-the-clock blasting and heavy equipment operation. Coal dust settles onto houses, farmland, and water sources. When the wind blows, residents shut all doors and windows and stay inside. A survey by a local physician found that one in five children in the valley have lost some 20 percent of their lung capacity; asthma, heart disease, cancer, and mental health problems are on the rise.

Uprooted twice, now determined to stay

Wendy Bowman, 83, is one of the last residents left in Camberwell, a small village in Hunter Valley surrounded on three sides by coal mining. She married a farmer and took over the family business after her husband’s untimely death in 1984. She had to quickly learn how to manage a farm, and abruptly encountered the harsh reality of what coal development was doing to the local community.

Landowners were being forced to move off their property with little say or explanation of their rights. In fact, they often found out their land had been leased to mining companies by reading about it in the local newspaper, where the government posted notices. Coal companies created divisions within the community by offering huge sums of money to select landowners and imposing a gag order on the terms of the deal.
In 1988, just four years after losing her husband, Bowman’s crops suffered a devastating failure. A coal mine had tunneled under a creek that irrigated her farm, and the heavy metals in the water caused the crops to die. Around the same time, another mine broke ground on nearby land, causing constant noise and light pollution. Coal dust from the mine covered her fields, and the cows refused to eat. After a contentious four-year battle, Bowman convinced the mine to buy out her farm that had been destroyed by mining. In 2005, she was forced to relocate again when she was served an eviction notice—and given six weeks to move to make room for a coal mine. She eventually settled down in Rosedale, a small cattle farm in Camberwell. But her battle against coal was far from over.

In 2010, Chinese-owned Yancoal proposed to extend the Ashton South East Open Cut mine, which would bring mining operations onto Bowman’s grazing lands and the banks of one of Hunter River’s most important water tributaries. Bowman was determined to stay and protect the community’s health, land, and water from further destruction.

**Protecting Rosedale and Hunter Valley’s health**

The Ashton mine expansion was initially opposed by the regional government agencies because of concerns about the mine’s air and water pollution. Yancoal appealed in 2012, and the planning committee approved the project. By early 2015, more than 87 percent of homeowners in the proposed mining area had sold their property.

As one of the few landowners left in the area, Bowman became a key plaintiff in a public interest lawsuit to fight back the mine expansion. Given that more than half of the coal for the proposed mine is under Bowman’s property, her refusal to sell was a significant factor in the case.

The Land and Environment Court issued its ruling in December 2014: The Ashton expansion could proceed, but only if Yancoal could get Bowman to sell them her land. It was the first time an Australian court placed this kind of restriction on a mining company. The New South Wales Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court’s decision, effectively stopping the mine expansion in its tracks.

Bowman has refused offers of millions from Yancoal, and is now working on a plan to have Rosedale protected in perpetuity. She continues to be an advocate for the community’s health and environment, and has worked with the local health department to place air monitors near coal mines. She has also recently installed solar panels on her property, and envisions an energy future where Hunter Valley is powered by its abundant sun and wind.

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Criminally high pollution levels
Bordered by the Los Angeles River and crisscrossed by the area’s notoriously congested freeways, LA’s Eastside is home to the densest population of working-class Latino communities in the country. Residents bear the brunt of the region’s pollution, with heavy cargo traffic coming in and out of the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and industrial plants operating well within breathing distance of homes, schools, and parks.

Among these facilities was an aging battery recycling plant, which had been in operation since 1922 with minimal updates and repairs. Georgia-based Exide took over the smelter in 2000 and ramped up the volume of batteries processed at the plant—and with it, emission levels of dangerous pollutants such as lead and arsenic.

A sampling of dust on rooftops of nearby buildings found lead levels of 52,000 parts per million—where 1,000 parts per million is considered hazardous waste. Lead is a powerful neurotoxin that accumulates in the body over time. It can cause learning disabilities even at very low levels, and as such, there is no safe lead level in children.

Community organizing as a family trade
Mark! Lopez, 31, was born and raised in a family of activists where community organizing is a family trade. Lopez attended his earliest protests and marches as a young child, along with his parents and grandparents. Family time often included door-to-door canvassing, community mural paintings, and press conferences.

Lopez temporarily left Los Angeles to pursue a degree in environmental studies at UC Santa Cruz—an arm’s length away from home where he gave himself the space to learn and sharpen the tools of the family trade. He remained active in community organizing on campus, where he advocated for service workers’ rights and pushed for minority student recruitment and retention.

Shortly after his return from college in 2008, during one of his regular visits to his grandparents’ house, his grandmother gave him a flyer that had just arrived in the mail. It was about an upcoming public meeting about the Exide battery smelter. She said, “Hey, you know, Exide is still right here.”

Born and raised in a family of community activists, Mark! Lopez persuaded the state of California to provide comprehensive lead testing and cleanup of East Los Angeles homes contaminated by a battery smelter that had polluted the community for over three decades.
Shutting down the plant, expanding the radius of justice

In March 2015, after coming under investigation by a federal grand jury about its operations, Exide agreed to shut down the plant but left little means to clean up the contamination beyond the smelter site. Lopez understood the reality that if the community wanted justice, they would have to fight for it. The smelter had been allowed to run for decades under temporary permits, racking up multiple violations along the way. The California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) was doing little to encourage residents to have their homes tested.

Lopez and his team at East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice started knocking on doors to inform the community about the dangers of lead contamination. Despite some initial skepticism, residents grew to trust Lopez, who shared their dreams—and fears—about raising their families in the Eastside.

In response to a huge demand from residents, DTSC increased its sampling to 200 homes. Test results showed that all but three of the homes required remediation, a strong indication that the testing area needed to be expanded even further. DTSC eventually agreed to a testing radius of 1.7 miles around the smelter site.

Lopez faced the next hurdle of identifying funds to run tests and cleanup. He turned his attention to Sacramento, calling out the injustice in the state leaders’ sluggish response to the Exide cleanup—a sharp contrast to their swift reaction to a massive gas leak in the affluent community of Porter Ranch.

In April 2016, Governor Brown finally approved $176.6 million for the testing and cleanup of affected homes. Lopez was appointed co-chair of the advisory committee responsible for overseeing the cleanup. While it is one of the largest environmental cleanups in California history, the funds will only cover a fraction of the total homes that need remediation. A newly imposed battery recycling fee is expected to raise additional funds and help other communities in the state affected by defunct battery smelters.

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A long history of incursions

Lake Izabal, the largest lake in Guatemala, and its surrounding land in El Estor, are a place of vital importance to the indigenous Q’eqchi people. Descendants of the ancient Maya, the Q’eqchi maintain their living by farming and fishing. They defended their territory from Spanish colonists in the 16th century and hundreds of years later, they are fighting for their land yet again, this time against their own government and multinational corporations interested in tapping the nickel deposits under their land.

In the 1960s, the Guatemalan government began issuing permits to multinational mining companies in an attempt to cash in on the rising nickel prices. Among the mines established during this rush was the Fénix mine. It stopped its operations in the 1980s as the price of nickel crashed, but not before discharging untreated wastewater into Lake Izabal and rendering it the most polluted lake in the country.

The global price of nickel rebounded, and in 2006, the mining companies returned to El Estor. The government issued a permit to restart the Fénix mine and expand its operations into the Q’eqchi village of Agua Caliente. The company’s security forces began to forcibly remove people from their land, in violation of international treaties that require free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous communities.

Establishing legal grounds to defend their land

An indigenous Q’eqchi leader, Rodrigo Tot, 59, was born in central Guatemala just as the mining boom of the 60s was underway. After losing his parents at a young age, he moved to live with extended family in Agua Caliente when he was 12 years old. The small village became his home where he grew up, learned how to farm, got married, and raised his children.

Tot never received a formal education but taught himself to speak Spanish by listening to others—a valuable skill to an indigenous community that was culturally disenfranchised from the rest of the country. Tot remembers how government and company officials never spoke with the local community about the mines. The Q’eqchi only found out when the miners came on their land to begin work.

Fear began to spread in the community. People were worried that they were losing their land and with it, their livelihood. Tot saw the need to start gathering evidence of Q’eqchi ownership of the land and in 2002, as the elected president of Agua Caliente, he brought these documents to the government and petitioned for land titles. To his dismay, he discovered that several pages from the official land registry had been removed in a deliberate attempt to deny his people their land rights.
An unexpected landmark ruling
The community’s next recourse was to take the government to court. Tot found legal support with the US-based Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC) and Defensoria Q’eqchi, a small human rights organization in Guatemala. The team spent years preparing its case to establish the community’s legal claims to the land, including a geographical study of Agua Caliente and the land’s chain of ownership. As one of the few people of Agua Caliente who spoke Spanish, Tot translated all the details of the proceedings for the community, organized meetings to help gather evidence, and fielded questions from villagers.

On February 8, 2011, two years after the community of Agua Caliente filed its lawsuit, the Constitutional Court issued a landmark decision. Recognizing the Q’eqchi’s collective property rights, the court ordered the government to replace the missing pages from the registry and issue land titles to the people of Agua Caliente. The ruling came as a surprise to environmental and indigenous activists around the world who were well aware of corruption in Guatemala’s legal system and had been skeptical of the court’s ability to see how egregious these violations had been.

The victory has come at an enormous personal cost for Tot. In 2012, two of his sons were on a bus to Guatemala City when they were shot in what appeared to be a staged robbery. One of them died, and the other survived with grave injuries.

Meanwhile, Tot and the community’s quest to secure land titles continues. The government has yet to enforce the court’s ruling, and the mining company continued to pursue the expansion. In response, Tot set up a community watch group to keep trespassers at bay. In 2014, security forces attempted to enter the village but withdrew after a peaceful standoff led by Tot. They have not returned since. The case has been escalated to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and is currently being reviewed under an expedited status.

About the Goldman Environmental Prize
The Goldman Environmental Prize supports individuals struggling to win environmental victories against the odds and inspires ordinary people to take extraordinary actions to protect the world. The Goldman Environmental Prize was created in 1989 by civic leaders and philanthropists Richard N. Goldman and his wife, Rhoda H. Goldman.

The Goldman Environmental Prize winners are selected by an international jury from confidential nominations submitted by a worldwide network of environmental organizations and individuals. Prize winners participate in a 10-day tour of San Francisco and Washington, D.C., for an awards ceremony and presentation, news conferences, media briefings, and meetings with political, public policy, and environmental leaders.