

*Nothing better illustrates the
heartless and mechanistic
nature of our system
than modern-day Gold mining
environmentally devastating*

Gold mining produces on average 79 tons of waste per ounce of gold.

The only thing more astonishing than the 79 ton per ounce ratio is the fact that this waste is largely toxic. A portion of this waste is drenched with cyanide to extract the microscopic flecks of gold from the ore. The toxic waste, or tailings, then sits in tailing ponds to await its reuse. There have been over 30 recorded spills of this toxic substance (in either its transport or storage) in the last five years, resulting in massive fish kills and drinking water contamination. In some countries, they dump this cyanide-laced waste directly into the rivers and oceans – a practice banned in the U.S. and Canada.

And the untreated ground up ore? Well, this is likely toxic as well. Wherever you find gold, you also typically find sulfides, such as pyrite (a.k.a fool's gold), and heavy metals. These ground up sulfides need only to mix with air and water to create sulfuric acid, which creates acid mine drainage. Not only is this acid water destructive to local plant life and water systems, but this acid also leaches out heavy metals – such as mercury, cadmium, and arsenic, which in turn pollute the air and the water. It has been estimated that metals mining accounts for 96 percent of the world's arsenic emissions.

completely unnecessary

80 percent of gold is used for jewelry.

Additionally, it has been estimated that enough gold has already been dug up and stored in vaults to last current demand for 20 years.

targets politically marginalized populations

50 percent of newly mined gold is taken from Native lands.

For many indigenous people, who often rely on their environment for food and necessities, mining threatens not only their livelihood, but also their traditional way of life. Their lands tend to be vulnerable to encroachment be-

cause of their lack of power within their country's political system; their land and water rights are often ignored while their resources are exploited and their environments destroyed.

promotes corruption and militarization

The "resource curse" is a term coined to describe how resource rich countries have statistically lower economic growth rates than resource deprived ones. This happens largely because countries with great material wealth also have a high propensity for high level government corruption. These large scale operations often negotiate the displacement of peoples and destruction of livelihoods directly with the national governments, despite resistance from local communities and even governments.

Gold's global exploitation is backed by both private security and military might. Many of the same mercenaries who are now finding work in Iraq got their start guarding mines and oil fields. These private militaries operate with impunity in dealing with local conflicts that often end in injuries and even deaths. In some countries, mining corporations will make direct payment to the police or the country's military to guard their gold mine, leading to conflicts of interest when those same police repress protestors at anti-mining demonstrations.