

THE DEVIL'S MINER
RESOURCE PAGE¹

'The Devil's Miner' is the story of two young boys, Basilio, 14, and Bernardino, 12, caught in a quandary: without an education they cannot escape the poverty which plagues their family, but they cannot go to school without risking their lives in the silver mines. The silver mine, called Cerro Rico, in Potosi, Bolivia was found in the 16th century by Spanish conquistadors. It is said that devout Catholics sever their ties with God each time they enter the shafts, because of the ancient belief that the devil, as represented in the hundreds of statues constructed in the tunnels, determines the fate of all who work there. Raised without a father, the boys assume many adult responsibilities and must work to afford the clothing and supplies vital to their education. Basilio believes only the mountain devil's generosity will allow them to earn enough money to continue the new school year.

Today, over 120,000 children work in Bolivian mines. At Cerro Rico, hundreds of children continue in the search for silver even though most of this mine's wealth has been depleted. Mining remains one of the few job opportunities in certain regions of Bolivia and mining companies rely more and more on cheap child labor. Because most families live in poverty, they have no choice but to send their children to work. While mining is always a risky endeavor, it is especially treacherous for children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Bolivia in 1990, states in Article 32, that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development." Bolivian law requires that children must be at least fourteen years old to work, but the reality, as we see with Basilio and Bernardino, is much different.

Movie Website: the Devil's Miner

www.thedevilsminer.com

CARE – Donate to Reduce Child Labor in Bolivia's Mining Districts

https://dontate.car.org/05/70240000/?qp_source=170570240000

American Bar Association: Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Bolivia

www.abanet.org/irr/hr/winter05/bolivia.html

International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor

www.ilo.org/ipec/index.htm

Equipo Nizkor

www.derechos.org/nizkor/boliva/

Inter Press Service News Agency: Article on Child Labor

<http://ipsnews.net/news?idnews=30525>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

¹ Special thanks to Tony Cardona and Heron Greensmith for writing this background sheet