

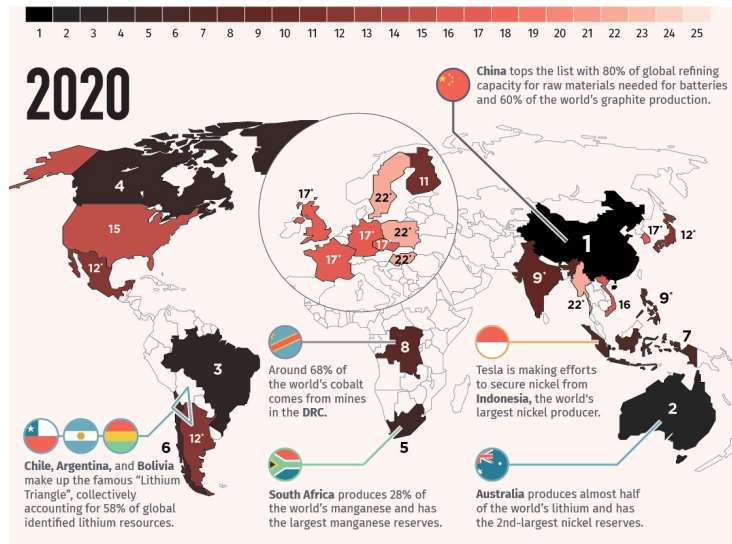


# SAVE OUR FUTURE

*Beloved Earth Community of Riverside Church*

## In This Issue

CRITICAL MINERALS NEEDED FOR CLEAN ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES:  
CAN THEY BE MINED IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE WAY?



## Environmentally and Socially Responsible, or Blood Colonialism: Some Case Studies

### The Democratic Republic of the Congo:

- Highly unstable government, ongoing civil warfare, high level of corruption and horrific record of human rights violations.
- Rich in cobalt and other critical metals crucial to the development clean air technologies.
- Cobalt, called "The Blood Diamond of batteries" because of the high price and the perilous conditions in the Congo.
- Dual mining economies in the Copperbelt. The industrial high tech run by global corporations which—theoretically—supply miners with a hard hat, head lamp, and boots. The artisanal, unregulated, with high rates of death, injury and mutilation, shoeless, shirtless man with a pickaxe, village children out of school crawling through narrow collapsing tunnels, and women doing stone filtering in polluted water, and low earnings; and whole villages torn up as local people desperately search for cobalt, and a bare livelihood.
- Largest owner is China's Molybdenum, producing over 90% of the world's supply.

### Chile:

- World's largest lithium reserves, the world's second largest producer of lithium, after Australia.
- Plans to expand lithium mining in the Atacama by further extracting lithium from salt flats. This process harms people, communities and the environment. It drains the scarce water resources; damages wetlands; and is divisive among area Indigenous people.
- Results in Indigenous communities suffering from impacts of lithium mining, while seeing none of the metal's benefits.

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## The Challenge of Green Energy

Because global greenhouse gas emissions must be drastically reduced to mitigate climate change, there is an urgent need to find sources of sustainable energy to mitigate climate change. The goal is to phase out fossil fuels and other climate changing energy and develop whole systems operating on low carbon sources, such as wind turbines and solar panels, electric vehicles (EVs) and battery storage. Subsequently, governments and corporations worldwide are searching for the minerals and earth metals needed for clean energy technologies.

These critical earth minerals needed for clean energy include: Copper, Cobalt, Nickel, Lithium, Manganese, Graphite and Chromium. However, global clean energy transitions continue to have far-reaching consequences as demand for these minerals increases—even as it is estimated that \$1.7 trillion dollars will be invested in global mining with the production of minerals to meet the growing demand for clean energy technologies increasing by nearly 500% by 2050.

It is crucial to make sure that producing these new technologies and mining for needed earth minerals are fueled by careful regulations. It must be done with respect to environmental preservation, fair involvement of the people who live where the mining is done, and strict adherence to and monitoring of the corporations which mine and produce the "green energy," specifically the sources of their supply chain and the people whose lives these mines devastate.

While the World Bank in partnership with IFC launched the Climate-Smart Mining (CSM) Initiative in 2019 to help resource-rich developing countries benefit from the increasing demand for minerals and metals, as it ensures the mining sector is managed in a way that minimizes the environmental and climate footprint, a sustainable balance is not occurring.

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### The Challenge of Green Energy (cont.)

Instead we see a trail of human misery and wasted earth, as pointed out in recent articles in the Washington Post about the horrific effects of mining for bauxite in Guinea, (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2023/ev-battery-bauxite-guinea/>) for nickel in Indonesia, (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2023/ev-nickel-refinery-dangers/>) and earlier articles (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/batteries/congo-cobalt-mining-for-lithium-ion-battery/>); and in the book, *Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives* by Siddharth Kara, about cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has the world's largest reserve; as well as in the poignant appeals by indigenous people in the US and in source countries worldwide--Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Brazil, Guinea, Indonesia, and Jamaica.

### Case Studies (continued)

- The companies behind the projects violate the community rights by failing to obtain “free, prior and informed consent” to operate on ancestral land (*President, Indigenous Colla Community in Northern Chile; United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples 2007*).
- The brine evaporation lithium extracting process is comparable to the outdated practices of the coal industry, as “Communities are suffering a slow violence that’s creating conditions of ecological exhaustion.” (NRCD *Report on Lithium Mining in South America, 2023*).

#### The United States

- US overreliance on foreign sources and adversarial nations for the supply and processing of critical minerals constitutes a national economic threat (Biden-Harris Administration, June 2021 “Supply Chain Assessment”).
- Bauxite mined in Arkansas supplies only 1% of world production.
- A new US cobalt mine opened in Idaho in 2022. The old mine was shuttered in 1982 after polluting trout streams.
- Lithium belies the Biden Administration’s ambitious greenhouse gas emission targets. Current US production is less than 2% of annual global production, although the US has some of the world’s largest reserves.
- The only active large-scale lithium mine in the US is in Silver Peak, Nevada. Demand has triggered a race to discover and control domestic lithium deposits, “a 21st-century gold rush.”
- Ranchers know mining pollutes, consumes water that keeps the cattle alive, and causes groundwater contamination from antimony, arsenic, and discharge full of radioactive uranium.
- Tribal activists want Biden to stop a planned lithium mine on their sacred land in Northern Idaho. With environmental activists, they accuse the miners and mine proponents of “greenwashing.”

### ACTION TO TAKE: SUPPORT THE CLEAN ENERGY MINERALS REFORM ACT

[https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/clean\\_energy\\_mineracts\\_reform\\_act\\_of\\_2023.pdf](https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/clean_energy_mineracts_reform_act_of_2023.pdf)

### Is This “Green Energy”?

Producing energy for the future is crucial, but it is a process that is far from clean. Essentially, we are seeing “green colonialism,” achieving green energy by exploiting the health, labor, land and environment of another country--the global north exploiting the global south, U.S. industry rights lording over tribal rights, and policies with disproportionate impact on marginalized communities of black, brown and indigenous people.

- “They can’t flush all the water from out of here and rip up all the grass and the sage bush and flip it around and call it green energy.” (Gary McKinney, Shoshone-Paiute tribal member from the Duck Valley Reservation in Nevada).

### Beloved Earth Community

We call Riversiders to protest the climate crisis and care for the Earth through educational programs, greening the church, changing our lifestyles, and taking courageous political actions.

For more information, or to join, contact

David King <[davidking1089@gmail.com](mailto:davidking1089@gmail.com)> or

Claudia Canasto <[canastoclachi@gmail.com](mailto:canastoclachi@gmail.com)>

VEGGIE DISH FOR THE MONTH and a good book, too!

[https://www.mtso.edu/site/assets/files/2952/half\\_sheet\\_recipe\\_cards\\_for\\_christopher\\_carter\\_soul\\_food\\_lecture.pdf](https://www.mtso.edu/site/assets/files/2952/half_sheet_recipe_cards_for_christopher_carter_soul_food_lecture.pdf)

- Next Beloved Earth Meetings: Saturday, September 2 at 1:00 pm. (No August meeting)
- To view this issue online, visit [www.trcnyc.org/belovedearthnewsletter](http://www.trcnyc.org/belovedearthnewsletter)

Contributors to this issue: Milli Akinsulure and Frances Connell. Recipe: Mary Pasquini | Logo, Geofix © Jeremiah Drake