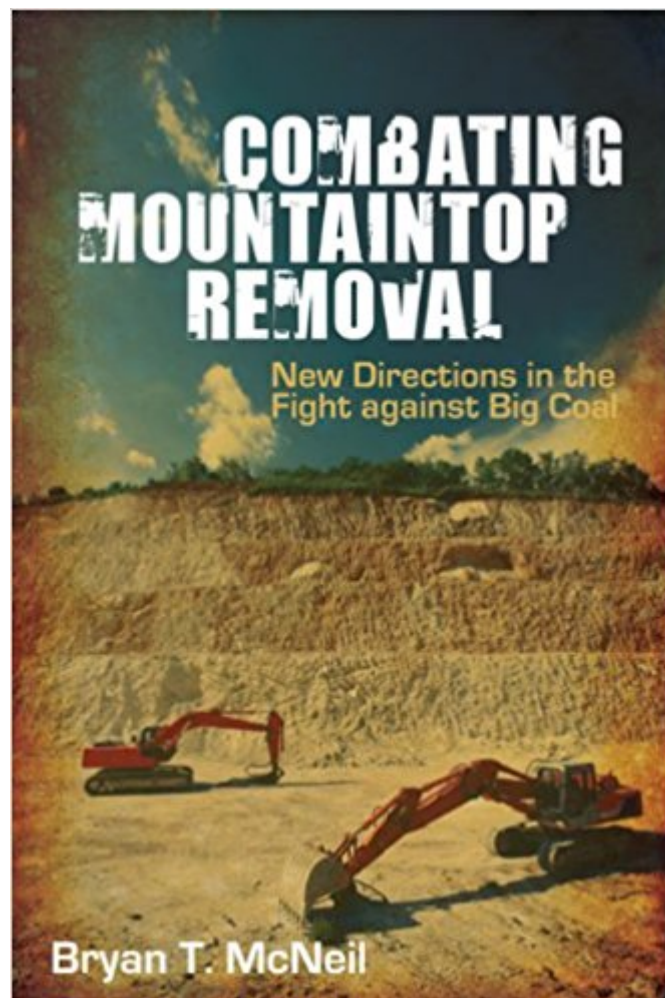




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# Combating Mountaintop Removal: New Directions In The Fight Against Big Coal



## Synopsis

Ã Â Drawing on powerful personal testimonies of the hazards of mountaintop removal in southern West Virginia, *Combating Mountaintop Removal* critically examines the fierce conflicts over this violent and increasingly prevalent form of strip mining. Bryan T. McNeil documents the changing relationships among the coal industry, communities, environment, and economy from the perspective of local grassroots activist organizations and their broader networks.Ã Â Focusing on Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW), an organization composed of individuals who have personal ties to the coal industry in the region, the study reveals a turn away from once-strong traditional labor unions and the emergence of community-based activist organizations. By framing social and moral arguments in terms of the environment, these innovative hybrid movements take advantage of environmentalism's higher profile in contemporary politics. In investigating the local effects of globalization and global economics, McNeil tracks the profound reimagining of social and personal ideas such as identity, history, and landscape and considers their roles in organizing an agenda for progressive community activism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ã Â "Though many writers have dealt with the struggle against this extreme form of mining, McNeil's book fills a gap in the scholarship. . . McNeil demonstrates how the contemporary political and economic climate demands new forms of activism to represent community interests."--Appalachian JournalA book for all concerned readers who want to learn what

[mountaintop removal] means to the people it most impacts.--Library Journal

“This book fills a gap in our understanding of strip mining and its opposition by insightfully connecting mountaintop removal and resistance to neoliberalism. McNeil’s detailed discussion of the complex origins of mountaintop removal and the lack of good alternative economic opportunities in Appalachia is a strong basis for readers new to the subject.”--Chad Montrie, author of *To Save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia*

“A penetrating ethnographic account of one of Appalachia’s most celebrated grassroots environmental organizations.”--*Social Forces*

“A splendid volume, interestingly written, engaging a broad historiography, and formulating convincing arguments concerning the evolution and racial complexity of the rural labor force.”--*The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*

A close ethnographic study of community activist group Coal River Mountain Watch

This book would be valuable just for its explanation of the radical environmental and human effects of savaging entire mountaintops in the beautiful highlands of West Virginia. But beyond that, the book expands our understanding of how this degrading assault by the coal industry exemplifies the power of corporations, fortified by their influence over politicians, to work their will against local opposition. The rapacious demand for fossil fuel energy sources, with its attendant monetary profits, overwhelms almost any attempts at safeguarding the health of anyone in its path, and the health of whatever ecosystems get in the way. The author writes clearly, forcefully, and with a scope that ranges from personal experiences with those in the line of fire from mountaintop removal to the national and global implications of the relentless damage to the Earth facilitated by powers tantalizingly beyond the reach of even the most articulate and indefatigable activists. As a former college professor, I would recommend this book enthusiastically not only for the general reader, but also as valuable reading in courses such as anthropology, environmental sciences, and political science.

While all the anthropological theories are included, McNeil makes an effort to avoid jargon. He lets the individuals profiled speak for themselves and writes about the communities and landscapes that are the book’s subjects with beauty and passion. An excellent ethnography and useful for those involved with community organizing for any issue.

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