

BURNED - Directors' Commentary

We are interested in forests because they are an integral part of our lives here in Vermont. Forests surround us. They contribute to our well-being in countless ways: from fresh air, to clean and plentiful water, to a serene and lovely place in which to live, rich in biodiversity. We also heat our house with wood, and we use it to make maple syrup.

In our work with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai while making *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*, we came to understand how critical forests are to communities around the world who rely on them in a much more basic ways than we do—for fuel, food, shade, erosion control, and their livelihoods. We also came to understand how our economic system values forest destruction over forest protection. This is not a sustainable paradigm.

When we first heard about the biomass industry—burning trees for the generation of electricity—we started to look into it. The myths, policy loopholes, greenwashing, and yes, blatant lies astounded us. Rather than basing biomass policy on science, it is often swayed by the bottom line. As a result, it is hugely influenced by the lobbyists and the industry that profits from it. This is nothing new, but as scientists are telling us, forests have the potential to help solve the climate crisis without reliance on unproven high-tech solutions. In fact, forests and soils sequester carbon more effectively than any other method. No better technology exists.

Our film has a point of view. We present the industry's perspective through their PR, as they would not speak with us. We present the voices of those affected by the industry, as well as the ecologists and scientists who understand what is at stake. We stand for the forests that cannot speak for themselves.