



# **BRINGING DOWN THE MOUNTAINS: THE IMPACT OF MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL SURFACE COAL MINING ON SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITIES (WEST VIRGINIA & APPALACHIA)**

*SHIRLEY S. BURNS*

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Coal is West Virginia's bread and butter. For more than a century, West Virginia has answered the energy call of the nation—and the world—by mining and exporting its coal. In 2004, West Virginia's coal industry provided almost forty thousand jobs directly related to coal, and it contributed \$3.5 billion to the state's gross annual product. And in the same year, West Virginia led the nation in coal exports, shipping over 50 million tons of coal to twenty-three countries. Coal has made millionaires of some and paupers of many. For generations of honest, hard-working West Virginians, coal has put food on tables, built homes, and sent students to college. But coal has also maimed, debilitated, and killed.

*Bringing Down the Mountains* provides insight into how mountaintop removal has affected the people and the land of southern West Virginia. It examines the mechanization of the mining industry and the power relationships between coal interests, politicians, and the average citizen. Shirley Stewart Burns holds a BS in news-editorial journalism, a master's degree in social work, and a PhD in history with an Appalachian focus, from West Virginia University. A native of Wyoming County in the southern West Virginia coalfields and the daughter of an underground coal miner, she has a passionate interest in the communities, environment, and histories of the southern West Virginia coalfields. She lives in Charleston, West Virginia.

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