

Addressing World Issues- Brazil Deforestation

Among prodigious world issues, the destruction of our precious rainforests is a substantial problem because of their value to our world. Deforestation annihilates the environment, endangers animals, and threatens our health. If I were a journalist, I would travel to Brazil, where 60% of the Amazon Rainforest is located (Maps, 1). The Amazon Basin (or Amazonia) is located in South America and dominates an astounding seven million square kilometers. It is being rapidly destroyed at an exponential rate; in two decades, 40% of the Amazon could be demolished (Maps, 2). In the face of this environmental crisis, I would visit Brazil, the heart of the Amazon, in hopes to bring awareness to the damaging of rainforests.

Primarily, deforestation damages our ecosystem. 50-90% of all species; plant and animal, inhabit the rainforest. These forests are home to more than 50 million specimens that can live nowhere else on the planet. (Rochen, 2). Without these broadleaf forests, the aforementioned 50-90% of all living organisms would die, which would obviously be a catastrophe to the environment. In addition to harming the living environment, deforestation would devastate our climate patterns and oxygen levels. Rainforests act as pollution filters; photosynthesis through the trees drastically lowers CO₂ levels, therefore without rainforests, global temperatures will rise (Tropical, 8). A global temperature increase of 1.4 to 5.8°C from 1999 to 2100 could result from loss of the rainforests (Save, 16). 20% of our oxygen and 60% of our fresh water derives from

the Amazon. (Save, 6-7). Without 20% of our air and 60% of our water, how would our environment, or the human race, survive?

Secondly, animal life is threatened by this issue. Wrecking our forests would wreak havoc over our vibrant world of flora and fauna. More than 33% of all animal species alone thrive in the Amazon (Maps, 2), not to mention the tens of thousands of plant species and 2.5 million insect species. "A 2,500-acre area of a typical tropical rain forest is home to some 1,500 species of flowering plants, 750 species of trees, 400 species of birds and 150 different species of butterflies." (Tropical, 13) A vast biodiversity exists within our rainforests; we could not endanger so many other species without experiencing drastic consequences, such as loss of the majority of plant and animal types. "Experts estimate that we are losing 137 plant, animal and insect species every single day due to rainforest deforestation. That equates to 50,000 species a year." (Raintree, 5) Not only would losing these valuable plant and animal species harm our ecosystem, it would harm our economy. The rainforest provides widely used products such as wood (from logging), rubber, vanilla and cacao beans, coffee, and sugar. Not to mention that of the 12 crops that feed 90% of the planet, half of them originate in the rainforests (Tropical, 30-36). Endangering so many diversities of life would only harm ourselves.

Furthermore, our health is at stake. 25% of our medicine is from the rainforests, and many more cures stand to be discovered in the unexplored depths of the Amazon and other rainforests, if they can be preserved (Rochen, 2). Less than 1% of the

rainforest's plants and trees have been tested by scientists, so who knows what potential cures exist? (Raintree, 18) Next, cancer is known as a significant disease, a global plague. Yet, "The U.S. National Cancer Institute has identified 3000 plants that are active against cancer cells. 70% of these plants are found in the rainforest. Twenty-five percent of the active ingredients in today's cancer-fighting drugs come from organisms found only in the rainforest." (Raintree, 19) Amazing cures could be found to epic diseases like cancer, yet only through preserving rainforests can we accomplish this.

Ultimately, deforestation must be significantly slowed. It is a highly serious issue which much be addressed immediately, which is why I wish to travel to Brazil to cover it. Rainforests once covered 14% of the globe, now only a mere 6% remain (Raintree, 1). 500,000 hectars of forest vanish in a week. (Rochen, 3). If only our rainforests could be saved, our health, the biodiversity of our plant and animal species, and our environment could be sustained as well. However, to do this deforestation must stop or at least slow down or we will lose our planet's precious treasures.