

Background Information

Environmental Representative

Angela Carr, member of the Rain Forest Preservation Club

Hello. My name is Ms. Angela Carr. I represent the Rain Forest Preservation Club. Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today on the topic that is my passion—the Brazilian rain forest and its current state of health. But first let me tell you about the group I represent. We are all volunteers and this is a non-profit organization. For 10 years the Rain Forest Preservation Club has been working to protect the welfare and secure the future of one of Earth's most vital resources—the rain forest.

So what do we do? The Rain Forest Preservation Club works to organize individuals, businesses, learning institutions and other groups to stop the unsustainable use of rain forests around the world. Our group has had a significant impact on protecting rain forests and the culture of its Indigenous peoples. We encourage governments to adopt and enforce sound policies. In addition to getting governments to pass laws to protect the rain forests, we also raise money to buy areas of the rain forest and set them aside for Indigenous peoples. The Rain Forest Preservation Club also works to educate Brazilians on farming methods and how to live in the rain forest by making good use of its resources without destroying the forest.

Our most serious concern is that the rain forests are disappearing quickly. In 10 minutes, a logger with a chain saw can cut down a 3-metres-wide tree that took 1000 years grow. And there are many loggers in the rain forest. Every minute, over 30 hectares of rain forest are destroyed. This means that each day, over 430 000 hectares of rain forest are lost forever. And I do mean forever. The land needs the forest cycle to sustain itself. Land that is completely cleared is productive only for a few years. Then what? It becomes useless to everyone. The quick money from logging the forest and from removing minerals and oil benefits only the large multinational companies. It does not help the Brazilian people in the long run. Only by protecting the rain forest will we secure their future.

So why should we care that the rain forests are being cut down? Especially the Brazilian rain forest, since it is so far from where we live. Let me explain how important the Brazilian rain forest is to each one of us.

Rain forests are unique environments. They are important to a healthy planet and its ability to support life. Did you know that 80% of Earth's vegetation is found in rain forests? Or that 50% of the oxygen you breathe is released by rain forests? Even though tropical rain forests are in another part of the world, they play a major role in our everyday lives. They regulate Earth's climate and help work against the greenhouse effect. As well, the destruction of rain forests affects rainfall around the world, which in turn affects global climate. Rain forests contain food that we eat and many other items that are commonplace in our lives. They bring us herbs and life-saving medicines.

Imagine losing the potential cure for cancer or AIDS that may have been found in an undiscovered plant from the rain forest. In every sense, a standing rain forest supplies more economic wealth than if it were cleared away.

Besides being important to our daily life, the Brazilian rain forest is home to many Indigenous peoples. These tribes have relied on the forest for thousands of years. They have learned to live in the rain forest in ways that do not destroy it. Loss of the rain forest affects not only these people but also the animals, birds and insects that live in the region. Just think, each and every tree may be the home for hundreds of different species.

We want to save the rain forest from permanent destruction. We do not expect the people of Brazil simply to do without the money they could get if they allowed multinational companies to log their trees, mine their minerals, drill their oil and clear land to grow crops. We are working to raise money to buy areas of the rain forest from the Brazilian government. We have already raised a great deal of money and bought thousands of hectares of rain forest that will now be preserved. It will take time to raise all the money we need. But if the government continues to sell the rain forest to corporations, there will be nothing left for us to save.

We ask governments and corporations to stop destroying the rain forest and to work with us to preserve this natural treasure. Protect the rain forest! It protects us!

Adapted from Don Northey, Jan Nicol and Roland Case, eds., *Brazilian Rain Forest* (Vancouver, BC: The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2002). Permission granted by The Critical Thinking Consortium for use by Alberta teachers.