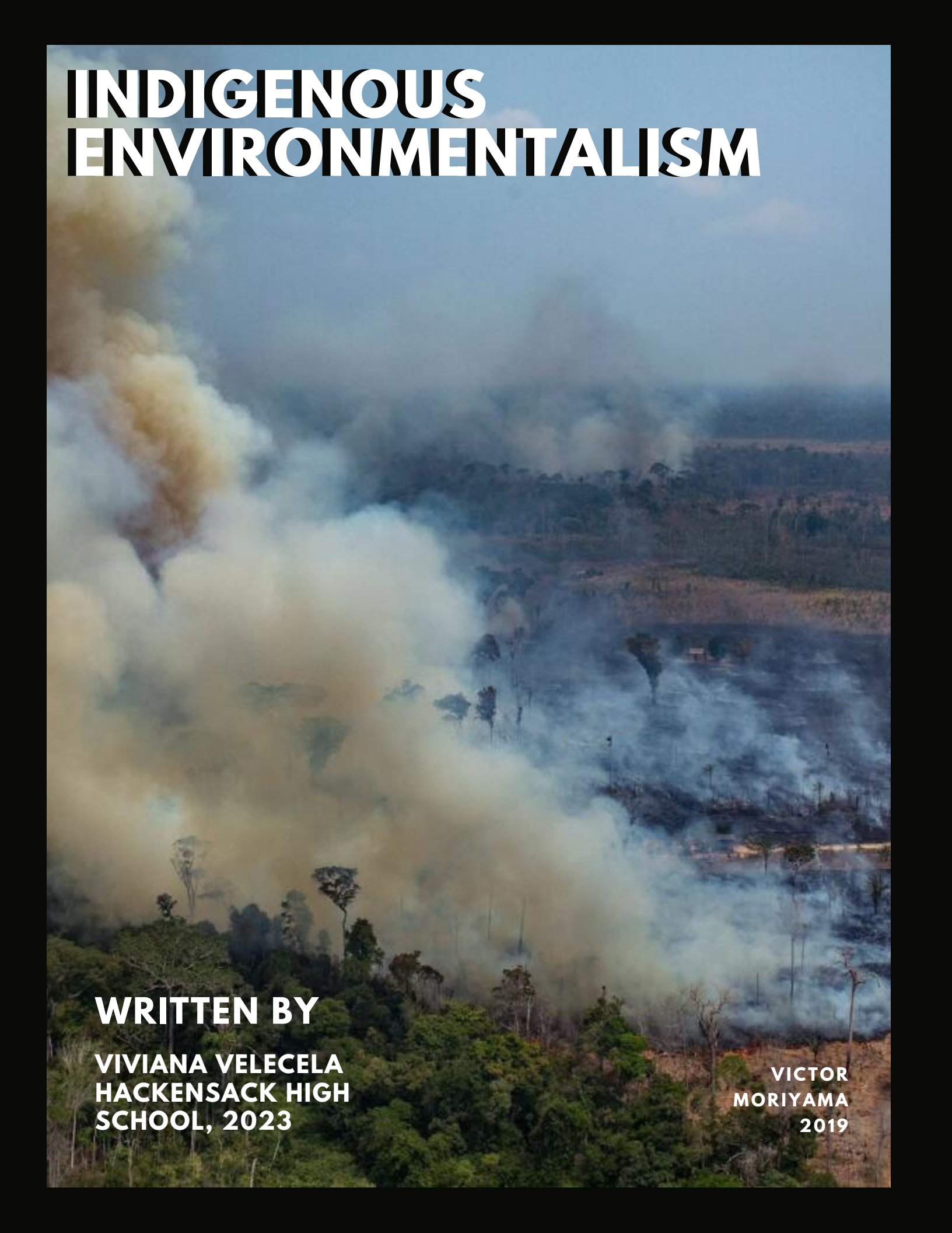


INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTALISM

An aerial photograph showing a massive forest fire. Thick, billowing plumes of white and grey smoke rise from the ground, partially obscuring the dark green forest below. The smoke is dense and spreads across the landscape, with some trees still visible through the haze. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

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**VICTOR
MORIYAMA
2019**

SUMMARY

Indigenous tribes are at risk. Indigenous people view themselves at the same caliber as their land. Their knowledge is essential to understanding the fundamentals of our environment. In many instances, Indigenous people are often disregarded in the climate movement. However, it is important to note that their wisdom is not optional, but mandatory.

The Amazon Rainforest spans across Brazil, Colombia, Peru and various South America countries. It is home to more than 2 million Indigenous people and flourishing with biodiversity. However, deforestation, illegal goldmining and logging negatively effects these tribes as well as their land.



KEY TERMS

Indigenous Environmentalism

Indigenous people view themselves at the same caliber as their land. Their knowledge are essential to understanding the fundamentals of our environment. In many instances, Indigenous people are often disregarded in the climate movement. However, it is important to note that their wisdom is not optional, but mandatory.

Deforestation

Deforestation is the mass destruction of forests often abused by massive corporations. Forests are a natural purifier for water and air and with the massive eradication of them it causes a multitude of negative effects: displacement of Indigenous tribes, animals and increases in carbon dioxide levels.

Amazon Rainforest

The Amazon Rainforest spans across Brazil, Colombia, Peru and various South America countries. It is home to more than 2 million Indigenous people and flourishing with biodiversity.



Yanomami

The Yanomami tribe have a population of around 38,000 and reside in the Amazon rainforest as well as the mountains north of Brazil and southern Venezuela. The Yanomami are now facing threats of diseases following illegal goldmining near their territories.

Awá

The Awá are an Indigenous tribe living in the Amazon Rainforest. Thought to have a population of around 350 they are regarded as at risk of extinction. Deforestation poses a threat to both their environment and living conditions.



YANOMAMI

The indigenous tribe being engulfed by miners

“Our land has to be respected. Our land is our heritage, a heritage which protects us” - Davi Kopenawa

THE YANOMAMI TRIBE

WRITTEN BY VIVIANA VELECELA

The Yanomami tribe have a population of around 38,000. They reside in the Amazon rainforest as well as the mountains north of Brazil. Their first encounter with the Brazilian government in the 1940s, proved fatal. Teams assembled to determine boundaries between Brazil and Venezuela caused diseases like flu and measles to spread rampantly. Having never encountered these diseases the Yanomami people had no immunity and many of them died.

In the 1980s tragedy struck the Yanomami once again. Close to around “40,000 Brazilian gold-miners invaded their land” says survivalInternational.org. Not only did this mean new influxes of diseases it also sparked a series of violence among the invaders and the tribe. Destruction of villages and numerous deaths caused the Yanomami population to suffer. It is estimated that as a result of this invasion, twenty percent of the Yanomami died in under seven years. This invasion did not stop in the 1980s however and continues to this day. Illegal mining of gold and other metals in the tribe's territories continues to burden them. Miners “use mercury to separate gold from mud” (nytimes.com) affecting Yanomami rivers and furthering chances of mercury poisoning (leading to long-term damage to both infants and adults). As a result of invaders profiting off their sacred land, the Yanomami have seen food shortages, continuation of fatal diseases being spread and violence.

Yanomami health is at risk and so is their environment. Despite tragedies in these tribal villages medical care is not being given to them. Their surroundings are a huge part of Yanomami culture. Years of passed down knowledge on native plants makeup fundamentals of their livelihood such as medicine and shelter. Gardens are often used by the tribe as well as hunter-gathering. As miners continue to feed deforestation this damages streams and changes the terrain, putting crops at risk and losing chances of prey. The Yanomami are left unable to grow their crops in the now changed environment emphasizing gold mining as damaging to the environment. Furthermore, “the spirit world is a fundamental part of Yanomami life” (nytimes.com) meaning that every object has its own spirit demonstrating their appreciation for the environment. Something that can be greatly affected if illegal gold-mining persists in the future.



THE AWÁ TRIBE

WRITTEN BY VIVIANA VELECELA

The Awá are an Indigenous tribe living in the Amazon Rainforest. Thought to have a population of around 350 they are regarded as at risk of extinction. European colonizers in the 19th century forced them into seclusion silencing them, creating an environment of fear. The Awá regard their environment, that being the Amazon rainforest, as something just as important as their own lives. "The forest is perfection" says survivalinternational.org. To be considered perfect this regards the forests as something of great importance to the Awá.

Criminal logging gangs prey over Awá inhabited forests. Logging is described as the process of cutting down trees and readying it for use. One of the ways logging contributes to the climate crisis is by releasing more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. With less trees, this makes for lower natural purification. It is estimated that over 34% of Awá reserved land has been cut down as a result of illegal logging leaving the environments, ecosystems and tribes demolished.

Illegal logging has been an issue for quite some time now. In 1964 the Brazilian government passed a law endorsing this before reasoning that it would create 'development' in these regions. Almost as if to say that the Awá were not to be respected, minimizing their knowledge as less. This law made it so that larger corporations could bribe judges and obtain land that was not theirs in search of profit completely going against indigenous views on land. Amazonian tribes especially believe that the forest is on par with humans viewing the environment as a being rather than an object to be used.

KEY FIGURES



DAVI KOPENAWA

Davi Kopenawa of the Yanomami people is a well acclaimed indigenous leader in Brazil. As a descendent of the Yanomami he has made it his mission to protect Yanomami rights as well as their land-given that these are both at risk with illegal gold mining and deforestation.

He is co-founder and President of the Hutukara Yanomami Association created in 2004. The Hutukara Yanomami Association represents Yanomami communities becoming a voice for the voiceless. The Yanomami understanding of their environment is important, something Davi hopes to continue to uplift with his organization.

SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL

Survival International was founded in 1969 by a group of anonymous people seeking to make a difference in opposing the genocide of Indigenous people with an end goal of protecting Indigenous rights. Survival International has published articles spreading awareness and educating people on Indigenous tribes in South America as well as representing them in massive conferences like the United Nations. The website also serves as an accessible way to find campaigns and donation links.





ACTION STEPS

1. Support campaigns and non-profit organizations

Share campaigns and non-profit organizations that are actively trying to aid Indigenous people against climate change. Such organizations include survivalinternational.org, Hutukara Yanomami Association, and <https://apiboficial.org/>.

2. Educate yourself on Indigenous Tribes

Indigenous people are often regarded as “Indians” forcing them to take on a name given to them by colonizers. It is best to educate yourself on Indigenous tribes and unlearn misconceptions brought by miseducation.

3. Donate if possible

Such organizations include survivalinternational.org, Hutukara Yanomami Association, and <https://apiboficial.org/> have websites that are easily accessible, A small donation to these websites can go a long way.

4. Spread awareness

Simply knowing that these Indigenous tribes exist and spreading that knowledge among peers is just as helpful as a donation.

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