

Committee: UNESCO

Issue: Are Natural World Heritage sites a universal common good?

Author: Txai Suruí

The Amazon rainforest has been populated by its indigenous people for over 6000 years. Txai Suruí, despite being only 26 years old, takes on the task inherited from her predecessors: protecting, conserving, and securing the biodiversity which enriches not only indigenous people, but all life on earth. Unlike for most of the global North, we don't see the rich resources simply as commodities to plunder but as life instead. Although Natural World Heritage sites are already secured and protected, local governments often stand in the way of the international community aiding the conservation of our natural heritage. Despite these obstacles, it is essential to our cause that these sites are considered a common good instead of national sites.

When Txai Suruí talks about our natural heritage, she doesn't speak only about the indigenous people directly inhabiting these sites. Rather, she speaks of all people on this world, as all of us benefit from the rich biodiversity and natural beauty these sites provide. Although many governments seem wary towards internationalizing these sites, they often fail to adequately protect them, even when pledging to do so. Instead, it often falls to the indigenous people to nourish our environment and fight for the rights which make conservation possible, despite constantly seeing our own rights taken away.

The Brazilian government has worked directly against us in the past. Many indigenous activists had to pay with their life for trying to secure life for all people on earth. Although the new president has chosen to work closer with us, which proves to be a huge relief, we can't trust the future politics of Brazil to not sway the other way around once more. We need to be able to count on the global community to protect our precious sites. These natural heritages are nothing else if not a common good and thus there has to be an international effort to preserve them. There shouldn't be a question of sovereignty anymore when indigenous people have been denied sovereignty by governments existing for only a fraction of our history.

In conclusion, as representative of Txai Suruí, we fully stand behind the idea of Natural World Heritage sites as common good. We hope to make our voices heard in this committee as indigenous people have always acted as backbone to environmental activism.