



BRESCIA HOUSE
SCHOOL

The Honourable President, Mr Jacob Zuma
Tuinhuis
Private Bag X1000
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27th September 2013

Dear President Zuma

We are a group of Grade 9 Brescia House Learners whom are working on a project titled "Rhino Apocalypse". This project is highlighting the insane increase in rhino poaching in South Africa and our bid to be part of the solution.

The problem with the increasing amount of poaching is not only the loss of these precious animals, but the impact they have on society. First of all looking at the environment we need to understand that rhinos are an umbrella species and without them the ecosystem will suffer. Secondly, rhinos are herbivores; they help shape the land where they live. Rhinos have a thick skin which means that when they walk through forests and thick grasses they carve routes the smaller animals will use in the future. Rhinos also eat seeds and after these seed have been digested and are excreted they are in a form equivalent to fertilizer and as a result of this the nutrients are returned to the ground. As the dung is rich in organic matter, the rhinos help create a foundation for plant communities to later live in. Thirdly, these animals dig small wallows for themselves and when they then move on to different sites other smaller animals use these wallows for breeding spots, bathing and drinking.

Bearing all of the above stated points in mind, we need to consider the impact of removing this species from the ecosystem. The questions that need to be asked are:

How would the land be shaped without the rhinos? Yes some other animals do fulfil the same purpose to a certain extent, but, that extent is limited .How will the paths be broken in for the little animals to use? Will enough nutrients be returned to the ground for the soil to keep producing the plants that are part of this ecosystem? Where will the small animals go to breed, bathe or drink if the wallows have not been dug by the rhinos?

If by some miracle, all of these questions are solved the next problem would come into mind.

As rhinos are a part of the big five, they help to generate approximately five hundred and fifty million rand per year for the community that they exist in. This amount of money is so large because of all the visitors that come to the parks especially to see the rhino and some of the other big five members. Thinking about this, we can safely say that many jobs are created in order to look after the tourists, to look after the animals and then the jobs that are created to cater to the needs of the employed. We can already see that having the rhino in the reserve has not only changed the community for the better but it has changed the lives of the people who had no jobs but now are earning a living that will put food on the table for their families.

South Africa is currently facing a problem with all the unemployed people so we cannot afford to suffer the losses that the extinction of this species will bring to these people.

Finally, we would like to mention that rhinos are so intertwined in our history that we cannot afford to suffer the loss of them. These majestic animals have roamed the Earth for fifty million years., most of this time humans were not around.

These animals have lived in harmony with the environment and other animals for all this time. Then why are they suddenly becoming extinct? It is because of the greedy poachers who do not understand the impact these gently animals have on their ecosystem and on South Africa as a whole.

The Rhino Apocalypse team are appalled by the rapid number of deaths this species has suffered in the past few years. We understand that as 93, 4% of Africa's rhinos are in our very own country, we have to make a difference to save South Africa from the embarrassment that will come if rhinos become extinct. If we do not stop the poachers now, then when will we? After the extinction of rhinos, elephants may follow then lions and who know what other animals until South Africa has no animal life left.

The Brescia House School Rhino Apocalypse Team working on this project has also joined up with Rhino South Africa and Olivia and Carter. This brother and sister team are founder members of the "One More Generation (OMG) who internationally are making the youth aware of the plight of your Rhino population. These two young people have started an international initiative "The Rhino Letter Writing Campaign", to which we as Brescia House Learners are proud to add our letter, and eventually all these letters from across the world will be sent your office.

In conclusion, according to an article posted by Dr. Will Fowlds on the Investec Rhino Life Line (2013), South Africa is losing an average of five Rhino every two days. The rampant poaching of rhino has become the most significant conservation issue our

country has ever faced. We as a South African community need to embrace the fact that we are the custodians to most of the world's remaining rhino. We are the rhino's last stand (Dr. Will Fowlds).

Regards,

Learners of Brescia House School

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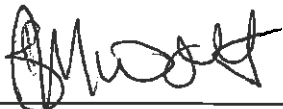
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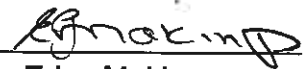
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