



Albert Thomas

Position: Liberia

Topic 1 Indigenous Peoples, Healthcare, Mental Health, and Wellness

The issue at hand will affect the treatment of indigenous ethnic groups within Liberia, who make up about 95% of the country's population. The other 5% make up the Americo-Liberians, who are descendants of free-born and formerly enslaved African Americans who arrived in Liberia from 1822 onward and Congo People<sup>1</sup>. These policies to help the indigenous people will greatly improve the health of the Liberian people. Currently, majority of Liberians have no access to Western medicine because health care facilities generally are located near or in major cities. As a result, diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and cholera are affecting the country's population<sup>2</sup>. Liberia will be hugely impacted by the outcome of this meeting and it will affect almost all the Liberian people.

Most Liberians are open to integrating Western and Indigenous health care system since they want access to Western medicine to relieve symptoms of disease<sup>3</sup>. I would like to move the committee in favor of helping the indigenous people as much as they can in order to improve their health. I would propose that Western doctors work with multilingual members of each country needing assistance for their Indigenous population in order to help integrate Western medicine into indigenous societies. This will work by first explaining and giving local healers throughout these groups a deeper understanding on how Western medicine works so that they can in turn explain to the Indigenous people how helpful these medicines can be. This will help reduce scepticism and resistance to new medical processes because indigenous people will be more inclined to listen to healers that they trust and have already placed their faith in. I would also like to pass an agreement so that larger, economically stable countries would help countries that are having trouble building new health facilities, like Liberia, to build infrastructure and improve the availability of western medicine to help indigenous people.

Countries that would contradict my views consist of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. I will work to convince these countries to change their views and support an updated version of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by making following the procedures set by the an international law that would be enforced and have repercussions for breaking from the path of

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<sup>1</sup> "Demographics of Liberia." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> "Liberia." *Culture of*. Advameg Inc., 2016. Web. 09 Nov. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> "Liberia." *Culture of*. Advameg Inc., 2016. Web. 09 Nov. 2016.



helping indigenous peoples. I feel this will make the concept more concrete than the UNDRIP by making it an international law as opposed to a policy and giving it set repercussions. These additions will give the idea “teeth” as New Zealand’s Minister of Maori Affairs would describe it, and allow the US to have a better understanding of what the law is actually suggesting.

Ever since the Liberian Civil War from 1983-2003, the new government has had low adaptive capabilities in regards to climate change. Liberia itself is in fact vulnerable to climate change, as temperatures rise, rainfall increases, and heavy rainfall increases<sup>4</sup>. The government has been incapable of giving a resolution to this issue do to lack of research and information. I would like to propose an initiative for researchers to conduct studies on how climate has changed and in what capacity in order to release this information to both the public and the governments of developing nations. With this, the governments of the world will then be able to gain a better understanding of how the climate is changing and what it can do to prevent it.

Indigenous peoples within Liberia aren’t all represented within the country. The figurehead of the country, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is the president of the nation and a member of the Kru ethnic group. The Kru are an ethnic group that makes up only 7% of the population though it is one of the main languages spoken in Liberia<sup>5</sup>. This small percentage shows how little representation is seen within the Liberian government. This lack of representation can allow other indigenous ethnic groups to be exploited by foreign companies not taking into account the environmental impact they are having on Liberia.

I will work to promote Indigenous people’s representation in government and create directives that will allow nations with large indigenous populations representation in order to protect their land. I will also promote an integration for infrastructure in order to help indigenous people by giving them more electricity through solar power. This will in turn reduce the need for petroleum refining and hydroelectric power plants that currently exist within Liberia, and help prevent companies from destroying natural lands in order to get natural resources. This will not only allow Indigenous Liberian people a higher standard of living, but will also allow the people more protection for their land through environmental protection. If this is implemented worldwide, it can reduce the maltreatment of lands at the hands of foreign companies across the globe and help protect lands of indigenous peoples. Along with this, I will push for new environmental protection requirements that restrict companies from allowing pollution and other

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<sup>4</sup> "Climate Change Adaptation in Africa." *Climate Change Adaptation in Liberia* (2014): n. pag. *Climatelinks*. Web.

<sup>5</sup> "Kru People." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2016.



harmful materials into the atmosphere in order to protect the Liberian people from climate changes, the destruction of indigenous lands, and increase representation of indigenous people worldwide.

Liberia, being filled with indigenous people, has a large number of peoples without proper education. I will move to educate the indigenous populations of the world by having teachers in science, math, and language come to these impoverished areas and work with multi linguists to teach these groups about different fields of study. This will allow indigenous peoples to be more trusting towards new technologies and medical healthcare changes within their nations.