



**Hong Kong Ivory Ban**

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Lawrence D. Bell High School--Students Against Animal Violence

Hurst, Texas, USA

June 1, 2017

Honorable Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs

While I am the secretary on the board of directors of Global March for Elephants and Rhinos (GMFER), I am also an English teacher of high school students in Hurst, Texas, in the United States, and as such, I am the sponsor for a student organization, Students Against Animal Violence (SAAV). We applaud your proposed ban on ivory imports, re-exports, and possession of pre-Convention ivory for commercial purposes. We also hope to see an increase in stiff penalties for wildlife crime.

This past year my students spoke out against the endangered status of the elephants, the rhinos, the lions, and other wildlife by creating a visual display of all the animal species lost since the beginning of time with a warning about those whose very existence hangs in the balance due to man's greed, arrogance, and ignorance.

Knowing that a sentient elephant loses its life at the rate of one every fifteen minutes, we as a global society must not sit complacently and idly by as ninety-six elephants are brutally slaughtered each day due to man's egotism, insatiability, and stupidity. Their decreasing population and the lengthy gestation period means that the elephants will not have the sustainability to keep from facing full extinction. I shudder to think of future generations seeing these creatures only in picture books. Ivory trinkets on shelves and jewelry items are pitiful, despicable symbols of lives snatched and robbed by evil souls. I have to believe that you, wise men and women, will see the brutality for what it is, and you will ban the importation of ivory so that future generations will live to see the elephants in their native habitat.

Thank you for hearing my voice for them. Also, please heed the following quotes from my senior students as they, too, want to be a voice for the voiceless. May you hear their trumpets loud and clear!

Sincerely,

Stephanie McCollum  
GMFER secretary  
AP/IB English teacher at L. D. Bell High School; Hurst, Texas 76054

Vivian Martin: "Ivory is rare enough as it is. Just as a life is rare, once it is destroyed, it is

gone forever.”

Lynsey Baguchinsky: “Banning ivory is needed. The suffering of an animal as gentle and beautiful as an elephant is truly a tragedy. Watching the humans that suffer along with these animals is also a sad thing. The animals are and should be held sacred and should not be killed for something as small as a piano key or a decoration.”

Danielle Coble: “Speak for those who cannot!”

Emily Jumper: “Politics, the economy, social norms. This conglomeration formulates a complex distraction from what truly matters in the grand scheme of things. Saving our world and the beautiful elephants that inhabit it should be forefront in our minds. Nothing is invincible, but our binding together is world changing.”

Elizabeth Holley: “I would like to share a quote from the play, Doubt, by John Patrick Shanley: ‘Innocence can only be wisdom in a world without evil. Situations arise where we are confronted with wrongdoing and the need to act.’ Please act now for the elephants.”

Shelby King: “Save the elephants!!”

Decalvis Butler: “Save the elephants!”

Kaylee Castaneda: “Don’t lessen biodiversity!”

Susannah Beckham: “With the elephant population in decline, others species will decline as well as a result of the food web/ecosystem, which will not only lessen biodiversity, but it will affect the way the entire planet functions. Save our elephants!!!”

Melanie Rodriguez: “SAVE THE ELEPHANTS”

Brandan Thacker: “Innocent elephants do not deserve to perish due to the selfishness of humans. It would be unfortunate if elephants killed humans in a painful manner only to take and use our bones while discarding and wasting the rest of our bodies. Save the elephants!”

Audrey Shepherd: “Why don’t elephants deserve a full life, too? Dying for man’s unnecessary wants is pathetic, and elephants are majestic creatures that deserve a full life of honor and admiration from afar in their own world.”

Ryan Dunbar: “To take an innocent life is to take a piece of one’s soul.”

Colton Sizemore: “The elephants are living beings and have thoughts and emotions also. It is not our right to take their lives for pointless reasons.”

Paiton Woodard: “Who are we to determine what lives and dies? We mourn over the injustice of premature death, but we so easily go and take the unalienable right to their life. I believe

that the elephants are just like any human. Just because we cannot understand them or we do not look like them does not mean they deserve any less rights than we do. Stop uselessly killing helpless animals for the luxury of human goods.”

Dani Peterson: “Depriving the elephants of the opportunity to live a full life is not a question of economics. It is a question of ethics and the value of life on this earth. The environment is hurting already from the deaths of the elephants. Will you truly ignore this damage because it is not your own country? Do you not honor the Earth and the beautiful creatures thereof? The elephants will not stand a chance of surviving this slaughter—what then of your business? Is it not better to choose to end the killing than to let the Earth fall apart? Spend the money of the ivory industry elsewhere. Economically speaking, this is the best option than to allow the money to be wasted. There are more important ways to spend money than to waste it killing elephants.”

Hannah Anderson: “God blessed us with an abundance of beauty. It is our choice to let it flourish or to watch it fade as a consequence of man’s destruction. Save the elephants, save the beauty, let the world thrive.”

Walter Osorio-Cole: “Poaching is a crime not only against the environment but against the Earth and humanity. It reduces biodiversity and will end up killing the entire elephant species unless it is stopped. Killing the animals leaves their offspring unprotected and leaves them to starve to death. Killing elephants for ivory is insane. There must be a ban followed by prosecution of those who break it in order to end the useless assassination of innocent animals due to useless human greed.”

Jayson Mitchell: “ I am moved to write this because I cannot condone the onslaught against elephants in the pursuance of money. Like all of God’s creatures, elephants were created and put on this Earth; they were not placed here to die cruel, senseless deaths for nothing more than profit. These creatures, once gone, cannot be brought back, and their impact on the natural world cannot be duplicated. Please make a concerted effort to curtail poaching.”

Addie Fusaro: “It is discouraging that anyone would value the lives of an endangered species less than the monetary value of ivory. Every elephant is at a risk of dying until every poacher is imprisoned. At this moment, only where anti-poaching efforts are strong is where elephants have a chance of survival. You have the power to protect the elephants even more by placing an entire ban on their ivory. Elephants are a natural wonder of the world, and they should be protected as such.”

Zarah Jamaluddin: “Elephants are such majestic creatures that they must be protected. Without the help of mankind, the world may see the loss of yet another precious species.”

Mikaela Firasek: “Please help the world to not lose another precious creature. You have so much power to make a difference and put an end to the horrific tragedy that has crept into reality.”

Taylor Curtis: “People often do not realize the negative impact they have on the world until it is too late. They either haven’t realized the catastrophe they have created, or they do not care. I am choosing to believe that you do not realize the damage man is creating in hopes that you will change the course of action before it is too late. Do not be the reason that a beautiful

species is extinct. Do not let greed blind you from doing what is right.”