

Our Environment, Our Vote

Laiza Gois Cruz

BEFORE YOU READ: What are some activities in your life that are compulsory? Do you agree that these activities should be compulsory? Why or why not? (*If you're not sure what compulsory means, read the first two sentences of this essay for context clues.*)

Voting in Brazil is compulsory. Every citizen over 18 years old is required by law to vote. However, according to the Supreme Electoral Court, in the presidential election of 2018, 42 million voters voted null, voted blank, or just did not vote.¹ This turned out to be negative for my country and may even be the world.

Jair Bolsonaro won the presidential election in Brazil with 57.7 million votes. His opponent Fernando Haddad received 47 million votes. If all the non-voters had voted, the results of the election could have been different.

In the election of 2018, I didn't vote because I was in the U.S., and I forgot to request an absentee ballot. As a result, my voice wasn't heard in this

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election. I do not agree with Bolsonaro's ideas, particularly about the environment. I believe the Amazon rainforest is a Brazilian treasure, and we should preserve it. It is important not just for Brazil. The Amazon provides oxygen for the whole world. But Bolsonaro took no action when the wildfires caused a lot of destruction in the Amazon in August 2019. I felt frustrated, and so did a lot of other people around the world. The fact that I did not vote against this candidate made me feel even more frustrated.

In the U.S. presidential election in 2016, 100 million eligible people did not vote. That means 43% of the country was not represented in that

election, according to *The Washington Post*.² When a large percentage of people don't vote, the government does not represent the community. When we don't vote, we let other people write our own history.

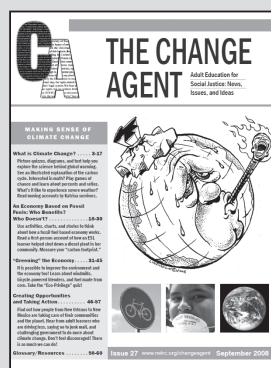
AFTER YOU READ: Why didn't the author vote? How does she feel about it? In her opinion, what was at stake in the last election in Brazil?



Laiza Gois Cruz, a 26 year-old Brazilian, works as an au pair in the U.S. She is a writing student at ERACE in Branford, CT. She has earned a Bachelor's Degree from the University of São Paulo. She enjoys reading, traveling, and learning about different cultures.

Sources: 1. Grandin, Felipe, et al. "Percentual De Voto Nulo é o Maior Desde 1989; Soma De Abstenções, Nulos e Brancos Passa De 30%" G1, 28 Oct. 2018, <g1.globo.com>. 2. Ingraham, Christopher. "About 100 Million People Couldn't Be Bothered to Vote This Year," *The Washington Post*, 29 Apr. 2019, <www.washingtonpost.com>.

Oxygen for the World



The author says that what happens in the Amazon affects all of us. Read more about the earth's ecosystems and climate change in Issue #27 of *The Change Agent* (Sept. 2008).