

International  
Organization for  
Self-Determination  
and Equality (IOSDE)

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President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500  
United States of America

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Ramon Montano Marquez and I am a young indigenous advocate from the Kickapoo, Kumeyaay and Paipai Tribal Nations, hoping for a better tomorrow for the children of America, and the world. My advocacy and engagements have led me to many great initiatives and to meet many wonderful people from around the world. I work for King-Chavez Neighborhood of Schools here in San Diego, California, as the Restorative Justice Coordinator for our King-Chavez Preparatory Academy.

At my young age of 23 I have accomplished many things, from being appointed to the Youth Panel of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, chaired by the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and current UN Special Envoy for Global Education Mr. Gordon Brown, to being asked to serve in the Global Campaign for Education – United States Board of Directors, to advising staff of the Global Partnership for Education on their Youth Engagement Strategy, and working with many stakeholders in the Global Education Movement and Educational Equity and Justice here at home, which are all great and wonderful experiences... But my most important role on top of my day-to-day job at King-Chavez is being a voice for my tribal indigenous peoples.

Mr. President, you have visited many tribal nations, been honored by many tribal elders, held our children, promised a better future for our tribal youth, and even created an indigenous youth movement- all promising a better tomorrow. However, promises are not always held to accountability and just become words, something that we indigenous peoples have been used to

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for hundreds of years. Yet, we continue to strive for equality and a basic understanding of our indigenous human rights. In 2007 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), a declaration that was adopted and mandated in many UN member states for the protection of indigenous peoples around the world, including us, the indigenous peoples of the United States of America. In 2014, the United Nations hosted the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, and I was honored to have attended through sponsorship of the UN. During the General Assembly of the United Nations during the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, a Resolution was adopted which mandated member states to work with indigenous peoples to find a common ground on the UNDRIP. The UNDRIP and the Outcome Document were adopted by the UN General Assembly for the protection of indigenous peoples around the world. At this time, our own US nation has violated the UNDRIP and our human rights, as the first peoples of this lands. What we are witnessing in North Dakota is in huge violation of the rights of indigenous peoples. This new age civil war attacks our way of life and our constitutional rights as American people. The events in Standing Rock are not only Civil Rights Violations; the events are Human Rights Violations.

There are many articles on the UNDRIP I wished to include in my letter to you, President Obama, but there are two main articles that I feel go along with what I am expressing here today. According to the UNDRIP:

**Article 7** (1) Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person. (2) Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.

**Article 8** (1) Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture. (2) States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for: (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources; (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights; (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration; (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.

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I believe in the American dream, but what is happening to my fellow brothers and sisters has proven to me that the US government does not truly recognize the indigenous peoples of this land or our ways of life and prayer. As an involved education advocate who advocates on local, national and international levels for our children I have seen and heard many things... but the most devastating thing happening today is that our American indigenous children are being denied their human rights and the right to clean, accessible water. The Dakota Access Pipeline is a danger to all Americans who depend on water from the Missouri River, the Mississippi River, and all other affected and potentially affected water, waterways, soils and ecosystems. This pipeline violates a series of human rights and civil rights stated in our US Constitution, UNDRIP and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We the American people mourn for the state that our nation is currently in and most importantly for the future of our children. Every day I walk in to hundreds of children who fear for their future, who see the racism in our nation, who don't understand why our nation is divided. These are the fears of our children. What's more devastating is seeing the pain within the many who have experienced loss, who continue to fight their constant battles within them, those who have been taken to soon, those who have been forgotten and those who continue to strive for the next seven generations.

President Obama, in 2014 you sparked a new movement within the indigenous youth community that made many youth feel loved, heard, understood and cared for; you made promises to the tribal youth to protect them, to care for them, to understand them. Now the youth wonder where these promises have gone, where this movement of understanding has landed. For years our communities have struggled for common understanding between a new western mentality and our traditional cultural values, and we continue to struggle for that very same thing today. President Obama, I believe that it is never too late to do the right thing; all I can do is hope and pray that this wonderful nation of ours will do what's right for the protection of our brothers and sisters, water and tribal communities. I urge you, President Obama, to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline in its entirety and to demand full protection of the water protectors who continue to fight for equal human rights and for clean water for all people. I thank you for your time and pray that you do the right thing for the American people.

With Love and Respect,

Ramon Montano Marquez

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