

## Letter from Francine, Ken and Laurie Rubenstein, 2012

(Letter text provided by Janet Chernela)

For the three years of his field work for his PHD. from Columbia, our son & brother Steven Rubenstein lived with the Shuar Indians in the Oriente, the Ecuadorean rainforest. He shared their food, their work, their living quarters, their way of life. The Shuar, the only indigenous people in all of Latin America never conquered by the Spaniards, adopted Steve into the tribe and gave him the name, Nanki (brother). They became his second family and one of his prime concerns was the preservation and protection of Amazonian peoples, their culture and their environment.

Steven's other great love was his Judaism. He was a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary, had been accepted by the Rabbinical School, and for a time he was torn between that career and anthropology. Although he chose the latter, Steve never lost his passion for Jewish thought, Jewish tradition, and especially tikkun olam, "healing the world."

When Steven was in the midst of his field work, he travelled to the Oriente, where major oil corporations were exploring and drilling. We remember the shock he expressed at the disregard they exhibited for the effect of drilling on the environment and on a people whose lives depended on the ecological health of that area. You may, in fact, have read about various lawsuits here and in Ecuador that have resulted from this drilling.

Amazon Watch is an international organization that works to protect the rainforest, to advance the rights of indigenous peoples in the face of large-scale industrial development, including oil and gas pipelines, power lines and roads, to press for corporate accountability and to preserve the Amazon's ecological systems.

American Jewish World Service partners with Amazon Watch in its Northern Peru Project, which specifically works to accomplish these goals. Although the country is Peru, this specific area was once part of Ecuador and is in a region of the Amazon relatively near to the Ecuadorean Oriente, where Steven lived and worked. We, Steven's family, think that support of this effort is an ideal way to combine his two great loves, Judaism and human (including indigenous) rights.

American Jewish World Service will direct all donations in Steven's memory made through this web page to the Northern Peru Project of Amazon Watch.

We'd like to think that Steven is out there, cheering on our collective support of this project, one to which he would gladly lend his name, and a fitting way to carry on his work.

The Rubenstein Family