



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Bianca Jagger (Nicaragua)

(2004)



...for her dedicated commitment and campaigning for human rights, social justice and environmental protection.

Bianca Jagger © Rankin

Bianca Jagger was born in 1950 in Nicaragua, where she experienced the harsh US-backed military rule of the Somoza family, which ruled Nicaragua for almost half a Century until 1979. At the age of 16 she won a scholarship to study at the Paris Institute of Political Studies. She was married to Mick Jagger from 1971-79.

During her childhood and adolescence she witnessed first hand the terror of Somoza's National Guard, and when she returned to the capital Managua as a young woman in 1972 to search for her parents after the disastrous earthquake that left 10,000 dead - she witnessed the Somoza regime profiting from the tragedy of the victims, ruthlessly pocketing millions of dollars Nicaraguans were meant to receive from humanitarian aid. Ms Jagger's early experiences had a profound effect on her life and inspired her to campaign for human rights, social and economic justice throughout the world. Over the years she has received international attention as both a passionate and effective campaigner.

In 1981, she was part of a US congressional fact-finding mission visiting a UN refugee camp in Honduras, when an armed death squad from El Salvador crossed the border, entered the camp and abducted 40 refugees, and proceeded to march them towards El Salvador. Bianca Jagger and fellow members of the delegation gave chase along a dry riverbank, armed only with cameras. The abductors pointed their guns at them, but were told, "You would have to kill us all or we will denounce your crime to the world. There was a long silence and without explanation, the death squads released their captives and disappeared.

In the 1990s Ms Jagger evacuated 22 children from the worst war zones in Bosnia. Mohamed Ribic, a boy 8 years old, lived with her in New York for a year after a successful heart operation, before returning to his parents. In 1993, Ms. Jagger went to the former Yugoslavia to document the mass rape of Bosnian women by Serbian forces as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing. For many years she campaigned to stop the genocide in Bosnia and make the perpetrators accountable before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Her reports on the war crimes against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo contributed to the international community decision, to intervene and stop the genocide. She has been on many fact-finding missions, which have taken her to Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, to remote rainforests in Brazil and Ecuador, to

Bosnia, Kosovo, Zambia, Afghanistan, Iraq, India and Pakistan.

In the 1990s she also spoke out on behalf of indigenous populations rights in Latin America, and to save the tropical rainforests where they live, campaigning on behalf of the Miskito Indians in Nicaragua against the government's granting of a logging concession to a Taiwanese company which would have endangered their habitat on the Atlantic Coast; helping demarcate the ancestral lands of the Yanomami people in Brazil against an invasion of gold miners; and working with other rainforest groups against the threatened clearance of about 40 per cent of the Amazon rainforests for soybean plantations for international export.

In 1996, she was given the Abolitionist of the Year Award by the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty in the USA for her efforts on behalf of Guinevere Garcia, a death row prisoner in Illinois, whose sentence was commuted, after Jagger's campaign. In November of that same year, Ms Jagger received a Champion of Justice Award as a steadfast and eloquent advocate for the elimination of the death penalty in America. Her articles, lectures and press conferences on the subject continue to challenge a penal system that is unfair, arbitrary and capricious, and jurisprudence fraught with racial discrimination and judicial bias. In 2004 she was appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for the Fight Against the Death Penalty by the Council of Europe. Jagger has also been a goodwill ambassador for the Albert Schweitzer Institute and has worked for Amnesty International on their "Stop Violence Against Women", "Torture" and "Death Penalty Campaigns". She spoke at the anti war rallies in London in spring 2003.

In 2004 Jagger added her name to the international campaign seeking compensation from ChevronTexaco for gross environmental damage in the Ecuadorian Amazon. The US-based oil company is accused of creating a Rainforest Chernobyl, turning the Ecuadorian Amazon into an environmental quagmire. During two decades of operations in Ecuador (1971-1992) Texaco (now ChevronTexaco) dumped more than 50 per cent more oil into the rainforest environment than that spilled during the Exxon Valdez disaster. The waste has spread over many years to contaminate groundwater, rivers and streams on which 30,000 people - including five indigenous groups depend for water.

Jagger was part of a fact-finding mission to the area in October 2003 and 2004. She confronted ChevronTexaco's CEO at the company's annual shareholders' meeting in April. "Instead of a single, dramatic spill that captured headlines around the world, what happened in Ecuador was far more... insidious," she said. "Over the course of 20 years, Texaco slowly poisoned the residents of the Oriente Region by dumping toxic waste and crude oil into the water systems. None of my past experiences as a human rights campaigner prepared me for the environmental devastation I witnessed in the provinces of Orellana y Sucumbios. Nor was I prepared for the sad stories of human suffering and the heightened incidents of cancer and spontaneous abortions."

She argued that the oil company neglected to use the technology available at the time to protect the environment. "The reason why they did not do it is they believe life in the third world is worth nothing," she said. "That's why this case is so important. We need to make them accountable." In an earlier speech in Ecuador itself, she said: "These visits lead me to conclude that until ChevronTexaco addresses the environmental damage it has caused in Ecuador, it should be treated as an outlaw company that does not deserve the right to do further business or make further investments in any country anywhere in the world." Jagger also played a prominent role with Greenpeace in the launch of their "Boycott Esso campaign".

On June 9, 2004 Bianca Jagger received the World Achievement Award from President Gorbachev for "Her Worldwide Commitment to Human Rights, Social and Economic Justice and Environmental Causes".

In March 2004 Jagger made a keynote speech at the launch of Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women campaign. She plans to make campaigning against sexual exploitation of children a central plank of her future work.

Bianca Jagger is a member of the Executive Director's Leadership Council for Amnesty International USA, member of the Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch -America. Ms. Jagger also serves on the Advisory Board of the Coalition for International Justice. She is a member

of the Twentieth Century Task Force to Apprehend War Criminals; a Board member of People for the American Way and the Creative Coalition. From 2007-2009, Bianca Jagger chaired The World Future Council.

Ms Jagger has written articles for the op-ed page of the New York Times, the Washington Post, The Miami Herald, the Observer (UK), The Independent on Sunday (UK), The Mail on Sunday (UK), The Guardian (UK), The Sunday Express (UK), The New Statesman (UK), Liberation (FR), Le Journal du Dimanche (FR), Le Juriste International (FR), Panorama (IT) and the European (UK), The Dallas Morning news, the Columbus Dispatcher, to name a few.

Quotation

There is much each one of us can do to make a difference. We are at a dangerous juncture in history... We need to stand up for our principles and values, human rights, civil liberties and the rule of law. If we don't, our world will further descend into chaos.

Bianca Jagger

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