

Bianca Jagger Biography 2011



Bianca Jagger is Founder and Chair of the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation, Council of Europe Goodwill Ambassador, Member of the Executive Director's Leadership Council of Amnesty International, USA, Member of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court and Trustee of the Amazon Charitable Trust. For over three decades she has been a voice for the most vulnerable members of society, campaigning for human rights, civil liberties, peace, social justice and environmental protection throughout the world

Bianca is the recipient of numerous prestigious international awards for her human rights and humanitarian work, including but not limited to: in 2004, The Right Livelihood Award, also known as the "alternative Nobel prize" for "*her long-standing commitment and dedicated campaigning over a wide range of issues of human rights, social justice and environmental protection, including the abolition of the death penalty, the prevention of child abuse, the rights of indigenous peoples and the environment that supports them, and the prevention and healing of armed conflicts*". In 1997, The Amnesty International USA Media Spotlight Award for Leadership, "*in recognition for her work on behalf of human rights around the world, exposing and focusing attention on injustice*". In 1994, The United Nations Earth Day International Award for "*her successful efforts to protect the livelihood of the indigenous peoples of Latin America, stopping the rain forest destruction in Nicaragua and Honduras*". In 2006, The World Citizenship Award from The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. In 2004, she was presented with The World Achievement Award by Mikhail Gorbachev. In 1997, The Green Globe Award from the Rainbow Alliance "*for her environmental campaigning*". In 1998, she was awarded the American Civil Liberties Union Award, for "*her commitment to international human rights, opposition to capital punishment and the promotion of civil rights.*"

Ms Jagger has been awarded three doctorates, *honoris causa*: a Doctorate in Law from the University of East London in 2010, a Doctorate of Human Rights from Simmons College, Boston in 2008; and a Doctorate of Humanities from Stonehill College, Massachusetts in 1983.

She was born Bianca Pérez-Mora Macias in 1950, in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua. She was raised by her mother after her parents' divorce. Witnessing the discrimination of a patriarchal society against a single working woman inspired her to become an instrument of change in the world. She was determined never to be regarded as a second-class citizen because of her gender.

As a teenager, she participated in student demonstrations against the atrocities perpetrated by President Anastasio Somoza's National Guard. This inspired her to pursue her interest in politics. She received a scholarship to study political science in France at the Paris Institute of Political Science. It was there that she discovered the value of freedom and democracy, the rule of law, judicial review, habeas corpus and respect for human rights - concepts she had only dreamt about in Nicaragua.

She married Mick Jagger in 1971. The following year, she returned to Nicaragua to look for her parents after a devastating earthquake destroyed her home town of Managua, fortunately her parents survived. She discovered that aid from the U.S. and elsewhere, was not going to the victims but was being misappropriated by the Somoza regime. It was these ruthless acts of pillage that eventually fuelled the Sandinista Revolution and motivated her to fight repression, corruption and injustice. After her visit to Nicaragua, Ms Jagger urged the Rolling Stones to do a relief concert. In 1993 they performed in L.A. to raise funds for the victims of the earthquake, one of the first ever relief concerts.

In the spring of 1979 she joined forces with the British Red Cross to raise funds for the victims of the conflict in Nicaragua; she then flew to her homeland to join the International Red Cross to help on the ground. 1979, the year of her divorce, coincided with the fall of the Somoza dictator.

In 1981 Ms Jagger travelled to Honduras on a US Congressional fact-finding mission, visiting a UN refugee camp, 20 km from the border of El Salvador. During her visit to the camp an armed death squad crossed the border from El Salvador, with the Honduran army's blessing, entered the camp and rounded up about forty refugees to take them back to El Salvador. Ms Jagger, the delegation and the relief workers feared that the death squads were going to kill the hostages once they arrived in Salvadorian territory. Armed only with cameras, they followed the death squad and hostages for approximately half an hour. Finally, they came within earshot. The death squad turned, brandishing their M-16's. Fearing for their lives, Ms Jagger and the relief workers began to shout, "You will have to kill us all," and, "We will denounce your crime to the world." There was a long pause. The death squad talked among themselves and, without explanation, left, leaving their hostages free - unharmed. This experience was a turning point for Ms Jagger, marking the beginning of her human rights campaigning. She realised the importance of bearing witness when innocent people's lives are at stake, how a small act of courage can make a difference, and sometimes save lives. Upon her return to the US, she testified before The Congressional Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, to bring attention to the atrocities committed by the Salvadorian government and its paramilitary forces, with the complicity of the Honduran Government.

During the 1980's and 90's, Ms Jagger campaigned against US-supported oppressive governments throughout Latin America, including in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, denounced the Contra war in Nicaragua, and worked closely with the Washington Office for Latin America.

Since the 1980s Ms Jagger has worked closely with human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

In 1993 she visited the former Yugoslavia, to document the mass rape of women in Bosnia. In July 1995, when the United Nations "safe area" of Srebrenica was overrun by Bosnian Serb troops, some 8,000 civilians (virtually the entire male population) were systematically massacred. Ms Jagger wrote a decisive essay: 'J'accuse: the Betrayal of Srebrenica,' a detailed account of the massacre, which was published world-wide. Since then she has spoken on behalf of the survivors. For many years Ms Jagger campaigned to stop the genocide taking place in Bosnia and, later, to make the perpetrators accountable before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). She testified on this issue before the Helsinki Commission on Human Rights, the United States Congressional Human Rights Caucus, the International Operations Subcommittee on Human Rights, and the British and European Parliaments.

Between 1993 and 1996, Ms Jagger evacuated 22 children out of Bosnia to receive medical care in the United States. She personally evacuated two gravely ill children, Sabina and Mohamed.

Bianca Jagger has long been a staunch defender of indigenous and tribal peoples' rights throughout the world, including Latin America and India. Since founding the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation in 2006, she has continued to advocate for their rights as Founder and Chair of the BJHRF.

In 1991 her campaign proved instrumental in stopping a logging concession that would have endangered the Miskito Indians' habitat on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. She supported the Guarani in southern Brazil, in their campaign to protect their land from cattle ranchers, and engaged in a similar effort to protect the Yanomami of northern Brazil from invasions of their lands by gold miners. She has also supported the Cofán, Siona, Secoya, Kichwa and Huaorani in their battle against the oil company Texaco, now known as Chevron, in Ecuador.

Ms Jagger is campaigning in support of Chief Almir Narayamoga Surui, of the Surui Paiter in Brazil, to raise awareness of their struggle to defend their ancestral land, in the Amazon, from the encroachments of logging and mining companies. Bianca Jagger is currently campaigning against the Brazilian government's plan to build the world's third largest hydroelectric dam complex in the heart of the Amazon. If allowed to go ahead the Belo Monte Dam would divert 80% of the flow of the Xingu river, causing a permanent drought on the river's "Big Bend," displacing and threatening the survival of the Juruna, Arara and Xikrin indigenous peoples. The project will flood an area of more than 516 square kilometres and generate vast quantities of methane, a greenhouse gas.

Since 2009, the BJHRF has supported the Kondh tribe in Orissa, India, campaigning to protect their sacred Niyamgiri Mountain from the proposed bauxite mine by Vedanta Resources Plc, a British-based mining company. Ms Jagger visited the Kondh in Orissa, with ActionAid, appealed to government officials in India, spearheaded a letter campaign to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chief Minister of Orissa Naveen Patnaik, and in cooperation with Amnesty and ActionAid, appealed to UK shareholders to withdraw their investments in Vedanta, and attended and spoke at two Vedanta AGMs in London. On 24 August 2010, after 6 years of national and international campaigning, divestment by key Vedanta shareholders and protracted legal challenges, then Indian Minister of Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh refused permission for the mining project, criticising the company on several grounds and accusing it of breaking the law. Vedanta is currently appealing through the Indian Supreme Court to overturn the decision.

As Chair of the BJHRF Ms Jagger is advocating critical reforms to our model of development, which needs to encompass principles of justice, respect for human rights, democracy, good governance, accountability, the protection of the environment and sustainability. She is calling for a shift in our fundamental values. Development should take into account the needs and aspirations of all sectors of society: local communities and indigenous and tribal people. The new model of development needs to move away from our obsession with profit and growth and, instead, focus on sustainability.

Ms Jagger denounced the invasion of Iraq, as an 'illegal, immoral and unwinnable war' which undermines the rule of international law. She visited Baghdad in the run-up to the war in early 2003 with a delegation of US academics.

Throughout her life Ms Jagger has been a tireless opponent of the death penalty and has campaigned on behalf of numerous prisoners on death row. In 2003 she was made Council of Europe Goodwill Ambassador for the Abolition of the Death Penalty. In 1996 she was awarded the "Abolitionist of the Year Award" by the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty for "her tireless efforts and heroic dedication in achieving clemency for Guinevere Garcia". Since then, she has campaigned on behalf of numerous prisoners on death row. Ms Jagger received the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyer Champion of Justice Award in 2000. In June 2000, she travelled to Texas to meet with Gary Graham and plead on his behalf with Governor George W Bush. Gary Graham was 17, a minor when he was sentenced to death. At his request, she was one of the official witnesses at his execution, an experience which affected her profoundly.

Ms Jagger continues to denounce the lack of meaningful appellate review in commutation proceedings. In her role as Founder and Chair of the BJHRF, she campaigns on behalf of prisoners on death row in the US Iraq, Iran and elsewhere. she is currently supporting the cases of Linda Carty, a British grandmother on death row in Texas, The appeal failed in April 2012, Linda Carty is currently awaiting an execution date; Reggie Clemons, who is appealing for clemency in the state of Missouri, has a new hearing on September 17th 2012. Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, a 43 year old mother of two, who was sentenced to death in Iran; Tariq Aziz, Iraq's former Deputy Prime Minister, sentenced to death by an Iraqi tribunal, currently languishing in prison,

awaiting execution. It is hoped that Iraq will establish itself as a democracy, and capital punishment has no place in democratic society. It is abhorrent that it was under the US occupation that the death penalty was reinstated in Iraq.

Ms Jagger and the BJHRF led the "Too Much Doubt" Twitter campaign with Amnesty International on behalf of Troy Davis, an innocent man who was executed by the State of Georgia, USA, on September 21st, 2011. On 24 February 2010, Ms Jagger delivered a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 4th Annual Congress against the Death Penalty at the UN in Geneva. She said in her address, 'I have witnessed the State machinery of death at work, selectively killing people because they are poor, a minority and cannot afford adequate legal counsel. The death penalty is unfair, arbitrary and capricious often based on jurisprudence fraught with racial discrimination and judicial bias... These state sanctioned murders have no place in 21st century society.'

Under the auspices of the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation, Ms Jagger has been working to develop a legal framework that will enable us to hold accountable CEOs and management of companies committing human rights abuses and environmental destruction. She advocates the development of a definition of Crimes Against Present and Future Generations, and for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to extend its jurisdiction, to cover Crimes Against Present and Future Generations that are not already proscribed by the ICC's Rome Statute as Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes, or Crimes of Genocide. "Crimes against future generations of life" are acts or conduct committed with the knowledge of their severe consequences on the health, safety, or means of survival of present and future generations of humans, and their threat to the survival of entire species or ecosystems.

Ms Jagger has participated in numerous television and radio debates and lectures throughout the world about Central America, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan, genocide, war crimes, the war on terror and the ensuing erosion of civil liberties and human rights, Crimes against Present and Future Generations, climate change, the rainforest, the protection of indigenous peoples, corporate social responsibility, children and women's rights, human trafficking, and the death penalty. She has participated on the BBC's Question Time, Newsnight, Panorama and CNN. She has written articles for the opinion pages of the Observer (UK), The Guardian (UK), The Independent (UK), The Mail on Sunday (UK), The Sunday Express (UK) The New Statesman (UK), the European (UK) The New York Times (USA), the Washington Post (USA), The Dallas Morning News (USA), the Columbus Dispatcher (USA), The Huffington Post (USA) Liberation (FR), Le Journal du Dimanche (FR), Le Juriste International (FR), Panorama (IT), Der Spiegel (DE), and Suddeutsche (DE) among others.

Bianca Jagger is a regular contributor to the Huffington Post. She is a great believer in the power of social media, and tweets regularly.

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