

Star Profile: BIANCA JAGGER

“We must all change”

Bianca Jagger talks to Geoffrey Lean

Bianca Jagger uses public transport, shunning the conventional celebrities' carbon cocooned existence. To prove it, she offers to show *Our Planet* her Oyster card – a rechargeable pass for use on London's buses and underground trains. And, she adds, “I do not own a car”.

It is all part of her fight against global warming, one of the many causes she has taken up over the last quarter of a century – since her divorce from rock star Mick Jagger – which have won her worldwide recognition, and many awards. She has long been a campaigner for human rights, especially those of women and indigenous people, and against AIDS and the death penalty – causes she firmly believes are interlinked with the environment.

Sitting in her London flat, she speaks with characteristic passion about climate change. “If we have children and grandchildren, how can global warming not be important to us?” she asks. “Unless we are prepared to make changes that are almost unbelievable, we are not going to be able to save the planet.”

Many of the changes will have to be made by Governments, she says, and “we need to make them accountable. We need to think about their environmental policies and global warming.” But “unless we are all prepared to change”, she adds, there is reason to be “very pessimistic” about the future of the world.

“There are so many things we can do. Instead of driving everywhere, we should walk short distances or use public transport. Turning the thermostat down just one degree will make a big difference. Recycling waste and turning off electrical appliances are also important.”

In campaigning on global warming, human rights and her other causes, Bianca Jagger is fulfilling a destiny she laid out for herself as a teenager, interrupted by her marriage. Born Bianca Perez-Mora Macias in Nicaragua in 1950, she left her country at 16 – largely because of discrimination against women there – to study political science on a French Government scholarship.

Her beauty drew her into Parisian and then international society, and she ended up marrying Jagger, becoming a worldwide celebrity, entering the rock world, and finding much the same discrimination there. After her divorce, she returned to her original course, but found she had to struggle to get herself accepted.

“This is what I set out to do with my life, and what I care about” she says. “But it was an arduous and difficult task to gain credibility. People were going to be sceptical, they had an image of someone who was glamorous and sophisticated and it was difficult to overcome it.”

Her awards bear testament to her success. In 2004 she received the Right Livelihood Award, ‘the Alternative Nobel Prize’, for her “longstanding commitment and dedicated campaigning over a wide range of issues of human rights, social justice and environmental protection.” Others include the Rainforest Alliance’s Green Globe Award for “her extraordinary conservation efforts and achievements”, the Amnesty International/USA Spotlight Award for leadership, and the National Coalition Against the Death Penalty’s ‘Abolitionist of the Year Award’.

She feels strongly that celebrities should “take the time and have the commitment and the interest to learn about issues, and have the humility to understand them.” She adds: “I have had to learn a lot. I am not a photo-opportunity celebrity, who is pictured holding a child, but then comes home and forgets.”

“I am very grateful to have access to leaders, to be able to talk to them about things I care about. But I do not take it for granted. It has all been a great leaning experience.” GL.



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