

Statement on Carla and Rani of Circus Renz Berlin

Joyce Poole, PhD



Asian elephants Carla and Rani, performing in Circus Renz Berlin in the Netherlands

Background and Qualifications

I have studied elephants for almost forty years as demonstrated by my *Curriculum Vitae* (Appendix A) and Bio (Appendix B). I received a Bachelor of Arts with High Honors in the Biological Sciences from Smith College in 1979. I received a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Cambridge in 1982. My Ph.D. thesis was on musth and male-male competition in African elephants. I did my postdoctoral research at Princeton University studying the vocal and olfactory communication of elephants at Amboseli National Park in Kenya. I have also studied the effects of ivory poaching of African elephants on the age structure and social and reproductive patterns of several east African elephant populations, and I have carried out and continue to carry out long-term studies of elephants' social and reproductive behavior with particular emphasis on vocal repertoires, communication, and cognition.

I have collaborated on several other elephant studies including genetic paternity, inbreeding avoidance, seismic communication, the long-term effects of trauma, the effects of age and experience, and cognition. I have also authored several papers on elephant welfare. As a result of my work at Amboseli and in my role as Research Director of the Amboseli Elephant Research Project, and Member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Amboseli Trust for Elephants I am familiar with the work and findings of my colleagues, which covers a broad scope of elephant behavior, social development, growth, longevity, life history, reproductive behavior and leadership. To date, the research that has been accomplished on the elephants at Amboseli represents the most comprehensive compilation of data on wild elephants and is relied on throughout the world for establishing basic to complex facets of wild elephants and their lives. I am author on several chapters on elephant social behavior in the 2011 book entitled, *The Amboseli Elephants: A long-term perspective on a long-lived mammal*. I am the lead author on the *Loxodonta africana* profile in the 2013 volumes on Africa mammals edited by Jonathon Kingdon.

My own research has included logging thousands of hours in the field observing and studying elephants both African and Asian. Of these hours, many of them have been spent studying the elephants in Kenya at Amboseli National Park. I have also studied African elephants in Laikipia, Maasai Mara, and Tsavo, in Kenya, in Queen Elizabeth in Uganda, and in Mikumi and West Kilimanjaro, in Tanzania and in Gorongosa, Mozambique. I have observed wild African elephants in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. I have also observed wild Asian elephants in Mudumalai National Park, India and in Yala, Uda Walawe, Wasgomuwa and Minneriya National Parks, Sri Lanka. I have collected field recordings from Asian elephants in the last three mentioned locations.

I have observed semi-captive orphaned African elephants in Tsavo, Kenya and Asian elephant orphans in Uda Walawe, Sri Lanka; I have made vocal recordings in both locations. I have also made observations of captive elephants in Thailand that were in the process of being released into the wild. Furthermore, I have observed the behavior and a variety of human handling of captive elephants in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Botswana, and Kenya, as well as in zoos and sanctuaries in the United States. Likewise, I have observed the behavior and human handling of captive Asian elephants in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, as well as in zoos in the United States and in the circus in Norway.

In addition to elephant field research, I have key elephant conservation and management experience. Between 1990 and 1994 I headed the Elephant Program for Kenya Wildlife Service under the direction of Dr. Richard Leakey. I was responsible for establishing and then running the conservation and management program for the entire elephant population of Kenya, which then numbered some 25,000 elephants. I was responsible for elephant surveys, the training of Kenyan staff members, setting elephant management policy, making elephant management decisions, and overseeing human-elephant conflict mitigation. I was privy to poaching and ivory trade intelligence, and attended a meeting of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna as a delegate from Kenya. On the basis of this experience and upon spending 35 years of my life in Africa, I have extensive expertise on what practices can be considered as benefiting the conservation of wild elephants as well as what practices can be considered as being in the interests of elephants both Asian and African.

I am Co-Founder and Co-Director of the organization ElephantVoices. The mission of ElephantVoices is twofold: to further the study of elephant communication and to act as a voice for the interests of elephants. ElephantVoices currently runs elephant behavior and conservation projects in Maasai Mara, Kenya and in Gorongosa, Mozambique and is currently working with Global Sanctuary for Elephants and Elephant Sanctuary Brazil to establish a sanctuary in Brazil for abused elephants in South America. Through publications, the media, our website, ElephantVoices.org, and ElephantVoices on Facebook

(with over 90,000 likes) we share our knowledge of elephants with the public. We speak on behalf of the interests of elephants according to our advocacy policy.

Assignment

The Dutch association Wilde Dieren de Tent Uit and Stichting PiepVandaag have asked me to provide my expert opinion on the treatment and condition of the two Asian elephants, Carla and Rani, held by Circus Renz Berlin. I have been provided with the exact same footage that has been enclosed as evidence on the two complaints of Wilde Dieren de Tent Uit (August 2013) and PiepVandaag (May 2014) of Circus Renz Berlin practices including video footage and still photographs. My opinions are based on the evidence I have considered, my 40 years of experience studying and protecting wild elephants, my experience studying semi-captive orphaned elephants, and my observations of elephants in captivity.

I have not been compensated for my time for preparing this report or for any of the opinions that I express in the report.

Conclusions

1. My general observations of Carla and Rani

I have been informed that the ages of these two adult female Asian elephants are somewhat uncertain. Some evidence indicates that both elephants were born around 1973 and imported to Europe when they were half a year old, which would make them approximately 41 years old. The circus has indicated that Carla is 40 and Rani is 42. Other information indicates that Rani was born in 1975 and Carla in 1980, which would make them 39 and 34, respectively. Whatever their exact ages, they are not elderly elephants. By wild standards they would be in their prime, about midway through their reproductive lifetimes.

The appearance of these two individuals, however, contradicts their age – they look and move as if they are infirm. These animals have been trained and confined to such an extent that they are, behaviorally and in posture and movement, hardly recognizable as elephants. In their faces and in their body posture I observe deep sadness. They do not engage with each other and with their environment in a manner one should expect of an elephant. From the wounds on their bodies to their failure to engage in the most fundamental of elephant behaviors, it is clear these animals have been severely impacted by their treatment at Circus Renz Berlin.

The injuries the elephants have received (as evidenced by their scars, lumps or old abscesses) and the drastic modification and even total absence of their most essential behaviors (as seen in the video footage) supports my conclusion that these animals have been and are being wounded, harmed, and harassed by bullhooks and other tools used on them by employees of the circus and by the chaining and confinement to which they have been and continue to be subjected.

Elephants are highly social, complex and intelligent individuals. Ultimately, Circus Renz Berlin does not maintain its elephants in even fair condition because they do not meet even the most basic interests of an elephant (see Poole & Granli, 2009. *Mind and Movement: Meeting the Interests of Elephants*. In: *And Elephant in the Room: The Science and Well-Being of Elephants in Captivity*).

2. Poor skin condition

The elephants are in poor physical condition and both elephants look unwell. One obvious sign of their ill health is their skin. Captive elephants typically have dull-looking skin, but the skin condition of these two elephants is among the worst I have seen. Their skin is dry and lusterless and even peeling in places. It is quite possible that one reason for the poor condition of the elephants' skin is dehydration. I noticed on most of the videos that there is no water available for the two elephants. Circus employees often deny elephants access to adequate water as less water for elephants means less cleaning up to do. Captive elephants should have access to water at all times. Withholding drinking water is unacceptable.

3. Lack of muscle-tone

Rani looks very thin and unwell and she has lost muscle tone. This is particularly noticeable in her forelegs and trunk, which is severely atrophied. One of the videos (where she is eating bread) shows

that she finds it difficult to lift her trunk in a normal manner. In this video I can see that she has developed a particular style of tossing her head in order to bring food up to her mouth. In the wild, only extremely sick, starving or very elderly (70 years) look like this elephant. Carla and Rani are both middle-aged elephants and, therefore, her condition cannot be construed as age related. Rani is either underfed or very unwell. I strongly recommend that her feeding and watering regimes be investigated. A veterinarian who has a long experience with *wild and captive* elephants should check her health. She should be thoroughly checked for TB. At least 12% of Asian elephants in captivity in the United States are infected with TB and it could account for her ill health. Unfortunately, tests for TB in elephants are rather unreliable and most infected elephants don't show clinical signs of the disease. TB is, however, passed from people to elephants and visa-versa, and I notice that the circus permits such close contact with the crowds, including small children.

4. Abnormal gait

I also noticed that both elephants suffer from gait abnormality, showing stiffness in their limbs that does not permit them to walk or move in a normal manner. It is clearly difficult and painful for them to do the tricks they are forced to do in the ring. On one of the videos I noticed that one of the elephants was picking up one foot and then the other (as in the photograph on the cover page of this statement), which is a sign that she is seeking relief for pain. In the video I also noticed that both elephants were very stiff and had difficulty moving and doing tricks. I assume, from experience with circus and zoo cases, that both elephants are suffering from arthritis. Arthritis is, sadly, very common in captive elephants, due to their very inactive lives and their sedentary existence which forces them to stand on hard surfaces. Furthermore, on multiple photographs I can see that a hind leg of one of the elephants is thickened at the location where she would be chained, which indicates long-term damage to the leg caused by chaining.

Chaining exacerbates the sedentary circus situation and causes long-term physical (arthritis and foot problems) and mental (stereotypic and other behavioral abnormalities) problems (see Appendix 1). It is not acceptable for elephants to stand chained on concrete or wooden platforms or held in small paddocks.

Rani and Carla are arthritic because Circus Renz Berlin does not provide them with a suitable environment to live in and because the elephants are not given appropriate care.

5. Stereotypic behavior

In the videos Carla and Rani showed considerable stereotypic behavior, which is typical of captive elephants but is never seen in free-ranging elephants. This behavior is most common in individuals who are or have been chained or given very little space to move.

Rani and Carla are exhibiting stereotypic behavior because Circus Renz Berlin is not and cannot meet their interests as large-bodied, long-lived, highly social, and intelligent mammals.

6. Wounds from bullhooks and other tools

Rani and Carla are abused. In the photos and video handlers can be seen poking, jabbing, hooking elephants on the head, back, ears, trunk and limbs with bullhooks and wounds on the elephants' bodies (old abscesses under their jaws, marks on their trunks, fresh bleeding wounds near one elephant's ear) also attest to the fact that this is a regular practice. This form of treatment is painful and causes distress to Carla and Rani; it wounds and injures them and causes them physical and psychological harm and suffering. The unwarranted striking of elephants with bullhooks, and other objects keeps them in a constant state of fear and stress so that they will obey and perform on command.

Circus Renz Berlin uses bullhooks and other weapons intended to inflict pain to force the Rani and Carla to perform tricks on command. These weapons wound and injure Rani and Carla and cause them physical and psychological harm and suffering.

7. Prolapsed uterus

The elephants are forced to do tricks without the muscle tone that is needed to support them. On one of the pictures I can see that the elephants have to walk in Conga line (polonez). Female elephants never mount one another in the wild. The kinds of movements that Carla and Rani have to perform are difficult and painful and are likely to have caused Carla's prolapse.

Circus Renz Berlin is forcing elephants to perform behaviors that are totally unnatural for an elephant; it is my opinion that the circus should be stopped from forcing elephants to performing tricks with immediate effect.

8. Other observations

On one of the photographs one of the elephants appeared to have wet hind legs as if she was abnormally dribbling urine. This should be assessed.

Carla is blind in her left eye.

On many pictures I see that these elephants are standing in their own feces and urine.

Summary

The photographs and video footage shows that Carla and Rani are confined in small spaces, held in cold and inappropriate places, transported from town to town, kept on chains, poked with bullhooks and kept in a socially deprived condition. These elephants have become physically unhealthy, and psychologically dysfunctional. The chaining, confinement and mistreatment of elephants by Circus Renz Berlin removes any semblance of normal elephant behavior patterns, as I know them. Based on what scientists understand about elephant sociality and emotional and cognitive capacity, it is unacceptable in modern European society to allow such treatment of elephants to continue.

In my opinion circus Renz Berlin has mistreated, abused and neglected Carla and Rani and I think they should be confiscated.

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Appendix 1

Chaining

I wish to make a particular statement about chaining as in my opinion the chaining of elephants is physically and emotionally extremely harmful.

The chaining of elephants is physically harmful because elephants are adapted to continuous movement over long distances. In the wild elephants are on the move 20 out of 24 hours, while in circuses the evidence from chaining suggests the reverse. Elephants in circuses are plagued by a host of physical and psychological ailments that are not observed among wild elephants including obesity, arthritis, foot problems, reproductive and psychological disorders and die at a younger age. The pads of an elephant's foot are designed for walking long distances on uneven and rough surfaces not for standing on concrete. As a result of the predominantly stationary existence on smooth surfaces, the feet of captive elephants wear unevenly causing improper posture of the feet, and consequently of the legs and spine, and leading to painful arthritis and other joint problems. In circus elephants the joints of the extremities and also the joints of the vertebral column are affected by pathologic alterations. The uneven wear shows up regularly in captivity and the adage "use it or lose it" applies aptly to the circus elephants. Elephants need to walk to stay well.

In my opinion the chaining of elephants by circuses is behaviorally, psychologically and emotionally harmful. Some of the features that make elephants so well designed for living in large spaces, become the very reasons for the unsuitability of elephants to the circus. For example, individuals so behaviorally and emotionally well adapted to living in a close-knit society, in circuses are not allowed the space necessary to live in natural family groups, never mind any attempt to present elephants with the option of choosing associates from among other families, clans or populations or providing the opportunity for learning survival skills through experience or from others. By chaining elephants, circuses not only severely restrict an elephant's ability to obtain adequate exercise, but they take away an enormous source of mental stimulation needed for the basic well being of such a highly social intelligent individual. As a result, the elephants are behaviorally and psychologically harmed.

The chaining and confinement of elephants in circuses deprives elephants of the opportunity to establish and foster the complex social relationships and social learning for which elephants are so well known. A life in chains does not permit elephants to search for, select from, learn about and manipulate a wide variety of food items. The normal daily activities experienced by a free-ranging elephant motivate an active mind and keep fit a vigorous body. No matter what the arena, foraging, defending, socializing, or reproducing, an elephant's daily life is distinguished by need, purpose, challenge, choice, will, autonomy and solidarity. Chaining denies an elephant these elements, so fundamental to its psychological and emotional well being. Given elephants' high level of intelligence and inquisitive nature, the confinement of elephants on chains is inhumane.

The chaining of elephants by circuses is the most likely cause of the stereotypical swaying observed in the elephants and demonstrates the harm inflicted on these animals from chaining and confinement. Such behavior is pathological and is indicative of psychological, behavioral and emotional harm.

Elephants in circuses are usually chained in loud environments with considerable low frequency generator and other machine noise. Generators produce sound at the frequencies at which elephant hearing is most sensitive and also at the frequencies at which elephant themselves communicate. The ability of elephants to detect very low frequency sounds over long distances means that in city environments, during transport in trucks and trains, and in the vicinity of circus generators, elephants are continuously exposed to low frequency machine, vehicle and air traffic noise. The elephants extreme sensitivity to these frequencies means that the loud low frequency noise that circus elephants are subjected to at various urban locations and during transport are neither humane nor healthful.