About Oscar Arias

Oscar Arias was born in Costa Rica in 1941. When he was a child, Costa Rica became the first country to disband its standing army. This allowed Costa Rica to invest in education, healthcare and the environment. Oscar studied law and economics in Costa Rica, the United States, and Great Britain, eventually receiving a doctorate in economics. He joined the social democratic party and became a member of the government in the 1970s. Arias was elected President in 1986 amid a civil war in neighboring Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

As president, he took measures to deal with Costa Rica’s heavy foreign debt and other economic problems, but his main interest was in trying to restore peace and political stability to the war-torn countries of Central America. In February 1987, he proposed a regional peace plan for the Central American countries, called the Arias Plan, that set a date for cease-fires between government and rebel forces, ensured amnesty for political prisoners, and called for free and democratic elections in those countries. The Arias Plan laid the foundation for the peace process that eventually succeeded in Central America.

In October 1987, Oscar Arias was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his efforts to achieve the beginnings of peace in the region. With the Nobel Prize money, he formed the Arias Foundation for Peace & Human Progress to promote peace, justice, and equality in Central America. He was re-elected as President of Costa Rica from 2006-2010, after the country amended its constitution to allow him to run again. Oscar Arias continues to work for peace in Central America, keeping the vision of the Arias Plan alive.

“Nuclear wars kill many people all at once, but other weapons kill many people, little by little, every day, everywhere in the world.”

-Oscar Arias
SYNOPSIS

“This is the story of a tiny country that made a decision to do something that no other country had ever done -- it decided to abolish its army and declare peace to the world.

And this is the story of a young boy who grew up in that country, and how he ended up challenging -- and sometimes even convincing -- the greatest powers in the world to follow Costa Rica’s example.

“Oscar Arias: Without a Shot Fired” is a Don Quixote-like saga with great historical touchstones -- Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, Cold War politics and Communism, Central American War and Peace.

It follows a slight, academic, and most unlikely hero over the course of more than fifty years, as he travels the world in a quest to stop the spread of the weapons of war. In the end, it is a story about the triumph of reason, of the sparrow triumphing over the eagle, and how the impossible dream can sometimes come true.

“Mine is an unarmed people, whose children have never seen a fighter or a tank or a warship. Our experience shows that security does not lie in weapons or fences or armies. More combat planes, missiles and soldiers won’t provide additional bread for our families, desks for our schools, or medicine for our clinics.”

-Oscar Arias
ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

DAWN ENGLE - WRITER/DIRECTOR
Dawn Gifford Engle is an activist and filmmaker, and she has been nominated sixteen times for the Nobel Peace Prize. She directed the award-winning documentary films, “PEACEJAM”, “Mayan Renaissance”, “Children of the Light”, “Rivers of Hope”, and “Daughter of the Maya”. She also co-authored the book, “PEACEJAM: A Billion Simple Acts of Peace”, which was published by Penguin in 2008. She has a background in public service, working 12 years for the U.S. Congress, and she was the youngest woman ever appointed to serve as Chief of Staff for a U.S. Senator. In 1994, Dawn Gifford Engle and Ivan Suvanjieff created the PeaceJam Foundation, which has been recognized nationally as an award-winning service learning program, and internationally for excellence in peace education.

IVAN SUVANJIEFF - EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Ivan Suvanjieff is an artist and an activist. He was a Detroit punk rock musician (lead singer of the Ramrods) and an editor at CREEM magazine (his work is featured in two recently published books: ‘The Best of CREEM’ and ‘Iggy Pop and the Stooges: The Authorized Biography’). He is well known for his abstract paintings and his literary magazine, ‘The New Censorship’, with contributing editors Charles Bukowski, Anselm Hollo, Anne Waldman and Andrei Codrescu. He co-created the PeaceJam program, and he has been nominated 16 times for the Nobel Peace Prize. He was the Executive Producer and Director of Photography for the award winning films “PEACEJAM”, “Mayan Renaissance”, “Children of the Light”, “Rivers of Hope”, and “Daughter of the Maya”. He and his wife Dawn were married by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at Saint Georges Cathedral in Cape Town, South Africa in March 2000.

DAVE WRUCK - CINEMATOGRAPHER
Dave Wruck is an Emmy Award winning editor, with nearly two decades of experience working in both television and documentary film. He has received five Emmy Awards for documentary films he has edited. He has also won many awards at leading film festivals, including Best Documentary Film, Audience Favorite, Jury Award, and Directors Choice. He is a constant traveler as he takes on documentary projects all over the world. Dave Wruck has worked closely with the PeaceJam Foundation film department for ten years.

GIACOMO BOUNAFINA - SOUND DESIGN
Giacomo Buonafina is an award-winning actor, sound engineer, and activist from Guatemala. As an actor he is known for his work with respected directors Carlos García Agraz, Rafael Rosal, and the great Guatemalan director Luiz Tuchán. His indie label, “Primera Generación Records”, recorded over 100 albums of local and Central American music and worked with artists to record albums which became fundamental in the post war artistic movement in Central America.

ZABE HOLLOWAY - EDITOR
Elizabeth “Zabe” Holloway has been working professionally in the film production field since 2004. She’s an award winning editor, and first began working with the PeaceJam Foundation in 2010 as an Editor for the documentary film “2012: The True Mayan Prophecy” and continued on as Editor and Production Manager for the films “Mayan Renaissance”, “Children of the Light”, “Rivers of Hope”, and “Daughter of the Maya”. She is a graduate of the Art Institute of Colorado.