



OSCAR ARIAS: WITHOUT A SHOT FIRED

A FILM BY DAWN ENGLE AND IVAN SUVANJIEFF

STUDY GUIDE

**NOBEL
LEGACY
FILM
SERIES**



ABOUT THE FILM

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. Dreams can sometimes come true.



ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS



DAWN ENGLE, WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Engle is an activist and filmmaker who has been nominated fifteen times for the Nobel Peace Prize. She has directed many award-winning documentary films including “Mayan Renaissance”, “Children of the Light” and “Rivers of Hope”. She also co-authored the book “PeaceJam: A Billion Simple Acts of Peace.” She previously worked for 12 years for the U.S. Congress, and was the youngest woman ever appointed to serve as Chief of Staff for a U.S. senator.



IVAN SUVANJIEFF, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Suvanjieff is an artist and activist. He was a Detroit punk rock musician (lead singer of the Ramrods) and an editor at CREEM magazine. His work was featured in the books “The Best of CREEM” and “Iggy Pop and the Stooges.” He and Dawn Engle were married by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 2001. Suvanjieff has also been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize fifteen times.

ABOUT THE NOBEL LEGACY FILM SERIES

The PeaceJam Foundation is developing a series of films highlighting the cutting-edge work being done by its board of 14 Nobel Peace Laureates to create a better future for all of humanity. The films premiere each June in Monaco at the Festival de Télévision de Monte-Carlo, which is hosted by H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco.

OSCAR ARIAS'S LIFE & WORK



“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.”

When Arias Sanchez was just seven years old, Costa Rica made the historic decision to be the first country in the world to abolish its standing army. Thus, Oscar grew up in Central America's only country that did not rely on military might to ensure its security. The importance of disarmament has always been a major part of his political viewpoint.

From the day he took office as president, Oscar felt his mission was to create peace not just for Costa Rica, but throughout the region.

On his election day, the presidents of nine Latin American countries came together to hear Oscar's plea for democracy and liberty. It was a plan to remove Central America from the middle of the Cold War that was being waged between the world's two superpowers - the United States and USSR. In their struggle against each other, these two superpowers supported various governments and armies creating civil wars like the one that killed more than one hundred thousand people in Guatemala. The superpowers had also supported different sides in conflicts in El Salvador and Nicaragua. They had also increased border tensions between Nicaragua and its neighboring states, Honduras and Costa Rica.

What soon became known as “The Arias Plan” called on the leaders of Central America to limit the size of their armies, assure freedom of the press, and to hold free and open elections. Because of his tireless work for this plan,

Oscar became known for defending personal freedoms and limiting the build-up of military power. He also made great efforts to battle poverty and improve education for the people of the region. His work as an international diplomat reached a high point in 1987 when all the Central American presidents signed the Procedure to Establish a Firm and Lasting Peace in Central America.



OSCAR ARIAS'S LIFE & WORK CON'T

Oscar was a very accessible president, often mingling in the streets without bodyguards. Unlike most world leaders, President Arias often dined in public restaurants and drove his own car. Oscar felt safe in Costa Rica, a country whose stability was measured not by military power but by success in the areas of education, health care, and elections.

Oscar's charisma and loyalty to his people elevated him to the status of a national hero. He worked on their behalf, to improve their lives in every way. And the world recognized him for his courageous efforts in the Central American peace process in 1987, when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

With the monetary award that comes with the Nobel Peace Prize, President Arias formed the Arias Foundation for Peace & Human Progress. The aim of the foundation is to promote peace, justice and equality in Central America and serve as a model in these areas for the rest of the world. It has become one of the leading organizations in Central America.

The foundation has focused largely on disarmament and the end of the international arms trade, but it has also taken on many of the tougher social problems. It has taken up the cause of those most often victimized by the trafficking of drugs, arms and people - namely women and youth. While working with the foundation, President Arias has become actively involved with peace-promoting organizations around the world. Oscar Arias Sanchez strives to get the people of the world to understand that true security is not based on having a huge army but on providing people with education, jobs and health.

Currently the Arias Foundation is in the middle of revising and improving the Arias disarmament plan for Central America. It is collecting data on what has been accomplished, and looking to fill in any gaps that may have been overlooked in the original agreement. This is part of a larger effort by the foundation as it continues to work for peace and stability in Central America.

A few Years ago, the Costa Rican people "reinterpreted" their constitution in order to allow Oscar Arias Sanchez to run for president again. He won the election in January 2006 and in 2010 finished his second term as the President of Costa Rica.

“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



UNDERSTANDING THE FACTS

Costa Rica is a rugged, rainforested Central American country with coastlines on the Caribbean and Pacific. Though its capital, San Jose, is home to cultural institutions like the Pre-Columbian Gold Museum, Costa Rica is known for its beaches, volcanoes, and biodiversity. Roughly a quarter of its area is made up of protected jungle, teeming with wildlife including spider monkeys and quetzal birds.

[Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html>]

LOCATION:	Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama	POPULATION:	4,814,144 (July 2015 est.)
AREA:	Total: 51,100 sq km; land: 51,060 sq km; water: 40 sq km	AGE STRUCTURE:	0-14 years: 23.12%; 15-64 years: 69.6%; 65 years and over: 7.27% (2015 est.)
CLIMATE:	Tropical and subtropical; dry season (December to April); rainy season (May to November); cooler in highlands	LIFE EXPECTANCY:	Total population: 78.4 years; Male: 75.75 years; Female: 81.19 years (2015 est.)
TERRAIN:	Coastal plains separated by rugged mountains including over 100 volcanic cones, of which several are major volcanoes	ETHNIC GROUPS:	White or mestizo 83.6%, mulato 6.7%, indigenous 2.4%, black of African descent 1.1%, other 1.1%, none 2.9%, unspecified 2.2% (2011 est.)
NATURAL RESOURCES:	Hydropower	RELIGIONS:	Roman Catholic 76.3%, Evangelical 13.7%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1.3%, other Protestant 0.7%, other 4.8%, none 3.2%
LAND USE:	Arable land: 4.9%; permanent crops: 6.7%; permanent pasture: 25.5%; forest 51.5%, other 11.4% (2011 est.)	LANGUAGES:	Spanish (official), English
ENVIRONMENT CURRENT ISSUES:	Deforestation and land use change, largely a result of the clearing of land for cattle ranching and agriculture; soil erosion; coastal marine pollution; fisheries protection; solid waste management; air pollution	LITERACY:	Definition: age 15 and older can read and write Total population: 97.8% -male: 97.7%; female: 97.8% (2015 est.)
		GOVERNMENT:	Presidential Republic

DEBRIEF

1. Which facts were most surprising to you and why?
2. How do some of these facts about Costa Rica compare to facts about your country?
3. Based on these facts, what do you think are some of Costa Rica's strengths?
4. Based on these facts, what do you think are some of Costa Rica's problems?

IN THE CLASSROOM

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FROM THE FILM

1. What is the primary message of the film?
2. What aspect of Costa Rica or Oscar Arias's story surprised you the most?
3. What are three new things/facts that you learned from this film?



4. Oscar Arias Sanchez states that “to govern is to educate”. Do you think most governmental leaders and diplomats today would agree or disagree with this statement?
5. Despite repeated requests by Central American governments for a reduction in military assistance, the United States and the USSR continued to fund a proxy war in the region. What do you think these superpowers had to gain by doing so?
6. When finally a cease fire was agreed upon by Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, the US government called the cease fire a “façade of freedom”. Why might this statement, made to the international community, have halted peace talks moving forward?
7. Oscar Arias Sanchez advocated for trading “bullets for ballots”. Why was this message so important to share with his Central American community? Are there places in the world today that should heed his advice? Where and why?



“Peace is not a matter of prizes or trophies. It is not the product of a victory or command. It has no finishing line, no final deadline, no fixed definition of achievement.”

ACTIVITY 1: OSCAR ARIAS'S NOBEL PEACE PRIZE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Read this excerpt from Oscar Arias's Nobel Acceptance Speech.

Visit http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1987/arias-acceptance.html to view the entire speech.



“... Peace is not only a matter of noble words and Nobel lectures. We have ample words, glorious words, inscribed in the charters of the United Nations, the World Court, the Organization of American States and a network of international treaties and laws. We need deeds that will respect those words, honour those commitments, abide by those laws. We need to strengthen our institutions of peace like the United Nations, making certain they are fully used by the weak as well as the strong.

I pay no attention to those doubters and detractors unwilling to believe that a lasting peace can be genuinely embraced by those who march under a different ideological banner or those who are more accustomed to cannons of war than to councils of peace.

We seek in Central America not peace alone, not peace to be followed some day by political progress, but peace and democracy, together, indivisible, an end to the shedding of human blood, which is inseparable from an end to the suppression of human rights. We do not judge, much less condemn, any other nation's political or ideological system, freely chosen and never exported. We cannot require sovereign states to conform to patterns of government not of their own choosing. But we can and do insist that every government respect those universal rights of man that have meaning beyond national boundaries and ideological labels. We believe that justice and peace can only thrive together, never apart. A nation that mistreats its own citizens is more likely to mistreat its neighbours...

... I know well you share what we say to all members of the international community, and particularly to those in the East and the West, with far greater power and resources than my small nation could ever hope to possess, I say to them, with the utmost urgency: let Central Americans decide the future of Central America. Leave the interpretation and implementation of our peace plan to us. Support the efforts for peace instead of the forces of war in our region. Send our people ploughshares instead of swords, pruning hooks instead of spears. If they, for their own purposes, cannot refrain from amassing the weapons of war, then, in the name of God, at least they should leave us in peace.”

Discussion Questions:

1. In the first paragraph, he refers to “deeds that will respect noble words and Nobel lectures.” What do you think he means by this? Can you think of a few examples of deeds, past or present, that respect noble words and/or Nobel lectures?
2. Arias Sanchez believes that the ‘shedding of human blood is inseparable from the suppression of human rights’. What do you think he means by this? Can you think of an instance in the world today where the suppression of human rights is directly tied to bloodshed?
3. In the last paragraph, he refers to countries in the East and West with far greater resources than smaller nations like Costa Rica. Which highly resourceful countries do you think he is referring to and why? In what ways did these powerful nations interfere with Central America's peace plan?

ACTIVITY 2: OSCAR ARIAS REACHES OUT TO OTHER COUNTRIES FOR PEACE

In small groups, research one country from Central America that experienced violence during the 1970-80s. Determine what was taking place in that country prior to them signing Oscar Arias' Peace Accord in 1987.

Each small group can prepare a presentation for the whole group (could include with maps, charts, and photographs).

Below are countries that signed the Arias Plan:

- Costa Rica
- Honduras
- El Salvador
- Nicaragua
- Guatemala

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think motivated each country to sign the Peace Accord?
2. In the country you studied, what was happening prior to signing the Peace Accords (was there political violence)? Did anything change in the country after they signed the Peace Accord?
3. What kind of relationship do these countries have with each other today? In what ways did the Peace Accord influence international relations in the region?



ACTIVITY 3: EXPLORING HUMAN SECURITY

Throughout this lifetime Oscar Arias Sanchez has advocated for “values and principles above profits” He has prioritized human security above all, arguing that “Security of the state does not mean military power. The security of the state depends upon the quality of the life of its people.”

In the 1980’s as well as today, people in communities around the world face poverty, inequality, illiteracy, disease and in many places, the ability to work and build infrastructure. From the very start of his political career Arias Sanchez has reasoned that “If nations continue to focus on weapons and soldiers at the expense of basic human needs, no real security will ever be possible.”

In this lesson students will explore the meaning of security. Students will explore the similarities and differences between human security, military security, political security, national security, and cyber security.

In groups, students will investigate their own society to determine which kind of security are most valued by its members. In groups, students will be looking through local and national newspapers and searching news articles online to determine which kinds of ‘security’ are featured most frequently.



Step One: Defining Security

Share the following definitions of security with students.

- 1. MILITARY SECURITY** is the capability of a nation-state to defend itself, and/or deter military aggression. Alternatively, military security implies the capability of a nation-state to enforce its policy choices by use of military force.
- 2. POLITICAL SECURITY** is defense against any form of political oppression. It is concerned with whether people live in a society that honors their basic human rights.
- 3. NATIONAL SECURITY** is a concept that a government should protect the state and its citizens against all kind of “national” crises through political power, diplomacy, economic power, military might, and so on.
- 4. CYBER SECURITY** is the protection of computer systems from the theft or damage to their hardware, software or information, as well as from disruption or misdirection of the services they provide.
- 5. HUMAN SECURITY** is the combination of threats associated with war, genocide, and the displacement of populations. At a minimum, human security means freedom from violence and from the fear of violence, and protection of basic infrastructures such as healthcare systems, education, and natural resources.

ACTIVITY 3: EXPLORING HUMAN SECURITY CONT'

Step Two: Prioritizing Security

Have students in their groups write the five types of security on a piece of paper. Give them 5 minutes to prioritize them, putting a 1 next to the most important and so forth. Then have each group share their list.

Discussion Questions

1. Was it difficult or easy to prioritize the different types of security, and why?
2. In the film, Oscar Arias Sanchez describes the relationship between Costa Rica and Panama as the “best of neighbors” because neither country has any weapons to fight with. Do you agree with him that demilitarization makes a nation stronger and more trustworthy? Are there any circumstances where you would disagree with him on this point?

Step Three: In the News

Hand out newspapers to each group (or have students use their phones or tablets). Have students spend 20 minutes looking through the newspapers and recent articles on news various news websites. Have them look for examples of the 5 types of security in the headlines and keep track of the number and kinds of stories they find for each of the 5 types of security. Then have the groups to share their findings.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which kinds of security are most frequently highlighted in the media? Which ones do you find the least often? Why do you think that is the case?
2. Are there any headlines that overlap, or pertain to more than one kind of security? Which ones and why?
3. Are there any groups that placed one headline in one category, while a different group placed the same headline in another? What was each group’s rationale, and what does this tell you about security issues?
4. Based on the media coverage, which types of security seem to be most valued by our society/country. Does this match your personal views? If not, what could you do to help others in your community see the value in other types of security?

Extension Activity:

In the film Oscar Arias Sanchez states: “It will not help us to count our nuclear submarines when the ocean is a burning pile, our helicopter gunships when the sky is a black cloud, or missiles that will not be able to target anything but cockroaches in the desert...The real enemy today is climate change, poverty, inequality, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and illiteracy. “

Writing Prompt: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement above? What do you think is the biggest danger to our world today?