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What did it mean to you to be appointed as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador tasked with defending and promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, especially with this being the International Year of Indigenous Languages?

"It was an honour. I never thought I'd get this far. My aim was simply to convey to my people how proud they could be of our origins and, at the same time, I tried to make people understand that we are not strangers; we are human beings. And I did all this with love.

When I was appointed Ambassador, I realised that I shouldn't change anything but instead just continue to express my pride at being an indigenous individual and to fight to rescue the languages that we are losing".

When you were invested as a Goodwill Ambassador you said that in many cases parents choose not to teach their children to speak their native languages so as to protect them from discrimination, as was the case with you. What can be done to eradicate this sort of discrimination?

"I think education is important as we always tend to criticise what we are not familiar with. If we were better informed about these issues and knew more about at least the indigenous communities that surround us we would not resort to discriminating against these communities because we would be familiar with them and with the value that they represent. I believe that this is a job for both indigenous and non-indigenous communities since, as I rightly pointed out at the time, parents are choosing not to teach us languages for fear that we will be discriminated against and more importantly that we will not be given the same opportunities to better ourselves that others get; all they want is for us to have opportunities in terms of both our work and our dreams. With this in mind, it's important that we all work together and educate one another so that we don't feel any need to discriminate".

Start with education, you say. As a teacher, you would know all about that.

"I trained as a teacher, but I couldn't practice. The little time I spent in classrooms during placements made me realise that when you go to communities you don't speak their language, you speak Spanish. Sometimes I had to listen to teachers saying "OK, inside the classroom Spanish and outside the classroom their language", and I don't believe it should be like that. On the contrary, we should

embrace these languages in our classrooms so that the children realise that this is also a tool that will enable them to continue to grow.

Not to mention the fact that speaking another language makes them doubly talented, because they are communicating in their mother tongue and, at the same time, in Spanish. Maybe sometimes they think it won't be any use to them in the future because not many people speak it, but it's really useful for communicating with their people and understanding their history".

As the International Year of Indigenous Languages comes to an end, what would you say was achieved during 2019? Are you satisfied with the work that has been done?

"Many things were achieved, not least bringing various issues to light and making people realise that these indigenous communities exist and that we are faced with the issue of losing our languages and in many cases our identities. I hope that saying the year is coming to an end doesn't mean the end of efforts to rescue our languages. The year may have ended, but the efforts and work undertaken in this respect will continue".

Do you fear that once the International Year is over the issue will be pushed aside, that people will forget about it and that native languages will no longer be defended?

"I do have this fear and I hope that it won't all end, that the people who are in charge will continue to fight for the cause, and I'm not just talking about UNESCO or the governments of the respective countries but also about us, the people - what are we doing, on an individual level, to ensure that it doesn't end there?".

You're going to continue your efforts to defend languages...

"I am going to continue my efforts even when my time as an ambassador comes to an end, along with the International Year of Indigenous Languages; I will keep fighting because it's what I like doing, it's something that fills my soul and I don't want to be the only one who feels this way. I've always said, I'm not the only one fighting for this. They used to tell me "you're the only indigenous actress representing her community", but that's not true - I may be the only one with that notoriety, but if you look back at each country's past, you'll see that there are lots of indigenous people fighting for this cause in their respective countries".



When the Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, appointed you as Goodwill Ambassador, she highlighted your commitment to defending indigenous peoples, as well as to gender equality. Where did your interest in fighting for these two causes stem from?

"It started very early, without me even realising it. I'd wanted to be a teacher since I was a child for that very reason, because I knew that children could really change lots of things. Something I always firmly believed when I was studying was that you had to teach the children that we were all equal, that we all had the same rights, that little boys didn't have to just play with cars and little girls didn't necessarily have to wear pink, that boys also had a right to cry... That's where my fight began.

When I reached this major mainstream platform that cinema provided I realised that there were many injustices in various fields of work, not just in the world of cinema but also at many of the companies where I got to talk to people, and I realised that women did not have the same rights as men, speaking only in terms of the workplace, that they weren't being paid a fair wage - and in many places this is still not the case. That was when I started to insist that we could not go on like this, because the fact that we are women doesn't mean that we're inferior and doesn't, therefore, mean that we should be paid a lower wage".

Unfortunately, we still haven't achieved that gender equality you're referring to...

"Yes, exactly - we still have some way to go but I hope more people will continue to join us in fighting for the cause. You can't just say "it will never happen to me" or "I'll never been in that position", and I think that, at least with men, they have a mother or they have sisters or they will have a partner and that is why they should also support us, so that the women in their lives don't have to endure the same conditions. And I always try to make it clear that this is not a gender war and that we are merely seeking equity, and equal rights". ***You are a highly respected public figure and TIME magazine named you one of the 100 most influential people in the world. How does this help you to champion these causes?***

"It helps a lot because it's a way to reach different points where, besides seeing someone different from what they're used to, people realise that their dreams and their ideals really are worth fighting for; it's also a way to inspire them".

In this sense, would you say that being a teacher is similar to being an actress?

"Yes, it's similar in that being an actress gives you the power to convey the messages of your choice through the projects you are involved in - you can transmit these positive messages to society. And as a teacher, too, you have this opportunity to convey these messages, maybe to a smaller group but that's the point - conveying messages - that's what a teacher has in common with an actress, but an actress off set can also lead by example.

We need an inclusive society where indigenous communities are not looked down upon simply because of the colour of their skin or the way in which they express themselves".

What message would you send to the indigenous peoples of today?

"I would tell indigenous peoples that they should be proud of who they are, that we are no different from anyone else - we simply have more knowledge in the form of our language and our culture. So, keep fighting to keep these communities alive and prevent them from dying out and I believe this is a team effort whereby we will be the ones with the ability to keep fighting for the cause".

And what would you say to governments and society in general?

"I would tell them that they can help us in this fight, that they play a key role in eradicating discrimination; it's something that is affecting us too much - we need an inclusive society where indigenous communities are not looked down upon simply because of the colour of their skin, their features or the way they express themselves. We are also people with capabilities, who can achieve many things and make a valid contribution to society".

What do you think governments could be doing?

"I think they could start with working on projects. There are lots of things we can cover in the educational sphere and, at least in the case of Mexico, we realise that this teaching of languages does not exist in the current education system. There are many children who are unfamiliar with at least the indigenous cultures surrounding them or are unaware of the importance of these communities, so I think that would be a good starting point - including these indigenous communities and these languages in the education system".

What are your plans for next year?

"My plans for next year are to continue this fight".