

Savanna Elephant Vocalization Project

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Statement by Joyce H. Poole regarding elephants in circuses 12/4/05,Oslo

I have spent the last 30 years of my life studying the behavior and communication of free-ranging, wild African elephants and promoting their conservation and welfare. It is my considered opinion that elephants should not be used in circuses. Elephants in the wild roam over large areas and move considerable distances each day. They are intelligent, highly social animals with a complex system of communication. No captive situation can provide elephants with the space they need for movement or with the kind of social stimulation and complexity that they would experience in the wild. To watch an elephant family in the wild is a glorious experience. Led by the oldest female--the matriarch--the family is bonded by kinship, affiliation, experience, great loyalty and affection. Elephants in circuses are confined and chained for hours, are bought and sold, separated from companions, and frequently moved about. In short they are treated as objects of entertainment for humans.

I believe that such intelligent, socially complex and long-lived animals should be treated with respect and empathy. An elephant's place is in the wild with its relatives and companions. The totally unnatural existence for captive elephants in a circus is a travesty and to allow this practice to continue is unjustified and unethical. I do not support the use of animals as objects of entertainment in circuses."

Signed:

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