

1st December, 2008

Los Angeles City Council,
Los Angeles City Hall,
200 N. Spring Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90012...U.S.A.

Dear Sirs,

In this, the 21st Century, it has been scientifically proven, and universally accepted, that Elephants not only duplicate their human counterparts in terms of age progression and longevity, but also in terms of emotion as well. They have the same sense of family, the same friendships that span a lifetime, the same sense of death, and many other attributes that we humans don't have, besides. It has recently been scientifically proven through a study of the elephant brain, that these highly intelligent animals have a memory that is far superior to that of a human, and a convoluted "thinking" and "reasoning" section that is equally as sophisticated.

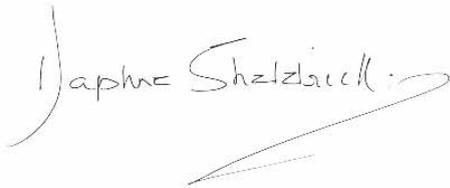
I have worked with elephants for over 50 years of my life, so I know this to be true. During that time I have hand-reared over 90 of their orphaned young, some from the day of birth, and successfully returned them where they rightly belong when grown, to the wild herds of Kenya's largest Protected Area, Tsavo National Park. 36 of our ex orphans are now living normal wild lives, 30 are in the process of rehabilitation and 13 infants remain in our Nairobi Nursery. Because of my long and intimate association with elephants, both wild and orphaned, I am a recognized world authority on the welfare needs of these highly social and highly intelligent animals.

All mammals, man included, aspire to a quality of life. For an Elephant this is something of paramount importance. In order for an elephant to enjoy a quality of life, it needs space - and the sort of space that no captive situation can possibly provide. Most European Zoos have accepted this fact, and have gone out of keeping elephants altogether, quite rightly considering it inhumane to do so now that more is known about the welfare needs of these animals. One hundred miles in a day is but a little stroll for an elephant. Indeed, our 10 year old orphan named Imenti did it in a day, turned round and walked 120 miles the next day searching for a man he loved!

The world looks to America as a World Leader in man sphered, and as such I believe that this should include Animal Welfare and information about what an elephant needs for a quality of life. Consider this – the worst punishment we humans give one another for the worst crime possible is life imprisonment. Is it therefore correct to imprison an innocent elephant for life and worse still, to force captive elephants to breed in captivity? There is nothing educational in seeing a miserable captive kept in cramped conditions that ultimately cost it its life, inflicting pain through arthritic and joint ailments. Keeping an elephant in captivity can be likened to keeping a human in a cupboard for life. In a good Zoo this should not be allowed.

I would therefore strongly urge you to follow the example of leading European Zoos who have abandoned keeping elephants in captivity, and worse still, trying to breed them in captivity, which in no way serves conservation. To make such assertions is simply trying to fool a public that is becoming much better informed about the needs of elephants. I sincerely hope that the advice of people in the know will be heard and acted upon.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daphne Sheldrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Dr. Dame Daphne Sheldrick DBE MBE DVMD
UNEP Global 500 Laureate and Winner of the BBC Life Achievement Award.

c.c. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.