

Julia Award 2015
Silvia Merrigi

**With great pleasure Animals' Angels presents the prestigious Julia Award for
Courage 2015 to Siliva Merrigi for outstanding courage in the field of animal
rights.**

Dear Silvia,

it is my pleasure to present you with Julia Award for Courage 2015. I have been working side by side with you for quite some time now. So I have firsthand knowledge regarding your work and feel competent to talk about it. I have witnessed many times what it means for you "to be there with the animals".

First I would like to mention an attitude we German people name as "Unermüdlichkeit", which means never to give up, may come hell or high water. It makes me think of the Boy Scout Motto: Be prepared or "Allzeit bereit" in German. You never question that it is your task and your duty to stand up for the animals, to help and to support as much as you are able to. You go to the very limits of your physical and emotional possibilities and sometimes beyond. One can call you night or day, in heat or cold, rain or shine – you will be prepared to go and be there with the animals.

Secondly I want to stress your outstanding ability to blend into the culture and environment of the country you work in. I personally witnessed this in Qatar, Morocco and Turkey and I was really impressed by the effortless with which you deal with people, conquer really weird dialects, and respect cultural differences. Sometimes I thought you do not really apprehend the respect and cooperation you get because of your own respectful and pleasant attitude. People find it easy to relate to you, in spite of your sometimes very unpopular demands on them. In our line of work it is absolutely essential not to antagonize people unnecessarily – and you are outstandingly competent in this.

You speak Italian, English, Spanish and some Turkish, which is of extreme value to Animals' Angels and has helped a lot to convince veterinarians, to deal with hostile drivers and to encourage policemen. You told me once, that you moved a lot around the world due to your father's professional life. This may not have been easy for a child, but it taught you some essentials which are now of great benefit to the animals.

Third I want to mention your modesty. You acted outstandingly professional many times on behalf of the animals, but you never ever boast. To give your very best is absolutely obvious for you and nothing to be mentioned at all. You never complain when accommodation is low level (to put it kindly), when food is scarce and sleep even less. And in order to keep your strength up for the animals I would like you to be less modest in the area of your personal comfort: take your holidays, enjoy the comforts your salary provides and considers this as means to keep you fit and healthy for many difficult years ahead in animal rights.

Being prepared, blending into the environment and giving your best at all times, makes you a valuable member of Animals' Angels staff. But this award essentially is

about courage. So I will come to this now and describe two different "species" of courage I have witnessed while working with you.

I clearly remember the horse show in Romania where you stood in between these awful and aggressive men and without hesitating you filmed them while they were maltreating the horses.

This is only one example but it stands for many others.

But there is another requirement in animal rights which demands even more courage from you being the person you are. You quite obviously do not like to give presentations or talks. You never told me why this is so, but it becomes quite clear from the fuss you make, when asked to do so. I am sure that you are doing well during these occasions as a competent representative of Animals' Angels and an honest ambassador for the animals. But I also realize what tremendous courage you need to stand up and speak up in front of an auditorium. Nevertheless - when you are convinced that the animals need this particular action from you, you just go and do it – regardless of the personal cost. Even if it means you have to deliver a speech.... And this exactly is what courage is about.

Finally: I know that your *relation with animals is very deep. You always feel totally responsible when we have somehow to decide for the animals because somebody has to, and you passionately strive to do the right thing in any given situation. You loath suffering and don't accept death and you only accept euthanasia when someone is at the very end and to live means to suffer hugely without any hope. But even then you personally keep struggling with doubts and guilt feelings and with questions that cannot be answered.* This is true courage, to fight and to struggle on, to conquer one's own doubts and emotions for the benefit of others. And true courage is what this award is mentioned to highlight.

Therefore, you were nominated by Christa Blanke and Julia Havenstein for this award.

To look into this world driven by cruelty and greed with the eyes of love takes a lot of courage. Please continue to do so – for the sake of the animals and for the sake of a small NGO called Animals' Angels.