

U 2's Bono speaking about Aung San Suu Kyi
Time Magazine's 100 Heroes & Icons

Burma's (imprisoned) Nobel Peace Laureate and
Leader of a Nonviolent Revolution for Freedom, Aung San Suu Kyi

UNBEARABLE CHOICES

by Bono/Rock Star & Human Rights Activist

It's hard not to become a monster when you are trying to defeat one. Aung San Suu Kyi is the moral leader of Myanmar, the country more correctly known as Burma. She has been, in effect, under house arrest since 1989.

Why? First, because of the military junta who came to power in a bloody coup in 1962, and have been running the country with a truncheon ever since. Second, because of us. There has been no real roar against these human rights abusers, just the odd bark. Yet even single-party democracies check their mail. They're not just muscle; they're vain. Even juntas measure just how many boos and hisses they can get away with. Suu Kyi's peaceful bloody-mindedness is driven by courage, but her captors' bloody bloody-mindedness is driven by fear—fear of losing the business they are running for themselves.

Suu Kyi is a real hero in an age of phony phone-in celebrity, which hands out that title freely to the most spoiled and under qualified. Her quiet voice of reason makes the world look noisy, mad; it is a low mantra of grace in an age of terror, a reminder of everything we take for granted and just what it can take to get it. Thinking of her, you can't help but use anachronistic language of duty and personal sacrifice.

U2 wrote the song "Walk On" to honor this amazing woman who put family second to country, who for her convictions made an unbearable choice—not to see her sons grow and not to be with her husband as he lost his life to a long and painful cancer. Suu Kyi, with an idea too big for any jail and a spirit too strong for any army, changes our view—as only real heroes can--of what we believe to be possible. The jury is still out on whether we deserve the faith she has put in us.

"Walk On" won record of the year at the Grammys, a very proud moment. But in front of an audience of millions, I did what I've begged others not to do. I forgot to say thank you to the woman in front of the song. Thank you.

--By BONO, rock star and human rights activist.