



**INSTITUTO IGARAPÉ**  
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## **THE DEFENDERS - HOW THEY DEFINE THEMSELVES**

**A pesquisa “Somos vitórias-régias” foi desenvolvida e executada com um grupo de 13 defensoras que representam as lutas das mulheres da bacia amazônica do Brasil, Colômbia e Peru.**

**Saiba mais sobre elas.**

### **Ângela Mendes (Acre, Brazil)**

"It's about believing in a cause and believing that for this cause it's worth moving the world from its place!"

The daughter of Chico Mendes, the rubber tapper leader assassinated in 1988, is an environmental management technologist and coordinator of the Chico Mendes Committee, a movement for the conservation of the forest and the protection of extractive populations and indigenous peoples.

She was one of the leaders in the resurgence of the Forest Peoples Alliance in 2019, which strengthened the struggle of indigenous peoples and extractive populations of the Amazon, renewing the initiative of Chico Mendes in the 80s. She was also one of the planners and coordinators of the international campaign Draw 2020: Forest Peoples in the Fight against Covid19 in the Amazon, launched in July 2020 through a broad partnership with civil society organizations in the state of Acre.

From 2017 to 2020, she coordinated the implementation of the Young Protagonists Program of the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve in a partnership between the Chico Mendes Committee and WWF-Brazil.

### **Atener Wapichana (Roraima, Brazil)**

"It's about feeling the pain of others, putting yourself in the place of those who suffer. Those who often lack information, on how to defend themselves, on how to speak. To be a defender is to be welcoming."

She is from the Tabalascada Indigenous community. Literate at the age of 10, she had to leave the community to complete her studies and become an indigenous teacher. In 2010, she began volunteering against violence towards indigenous people, especially child abuse. Her work gained

greater dimension when she went to work in the gold mines of the Raposa da Serra do Sol Indigenous Land and, later, with the Yanomami people.

**Celleny Servitta (Amapá, Brazil)**

"To recognize oneself as a defender is to recognize and legitimize one's own life story, struggle, and resistance. It is to uphold the desire to achieve, for everyone, justice and the repair of all violence that we suffer and witness every day."

A popular educator and community and intercultural communicator volunteering at the Pan-Amazon Social Forum, Celleny began acting as a defender in the area of the Jari Project, the megalomaniacal pulp empire created by American millionaire Daniel von Ludwig on the border of Amapá with Pará in the 1970s. The project collapsed in a short time leaving a trail of violence and destruction. Celleny participated for 32 years in the Mandara Dance Company, which trained girls and teenagers from the region, and worked as a community teacher in the region. She is studying Pedagogy at the Federal University of Amapá.

**Claudelize dos Santos (Pará, Brazil)**

"When a woman is born in the Amazon, a defender is born."

A human rights and environmental activist, she holds a law degree and is the coordinator of the Zé Claudio and Maria Institute, a human rights and environmental defense organization named after her brother and sister-in-law, who were assassinated on May 24, 2011 for defending the standing forest. She coordinates the network of Amazon Defender Collectives, working with forest and land defenders on issues of climate change, gender, protection and care of traditional peoples and communities. She defends their cultures, lands, territories, and forests. For her work, she was nominated for the Sakharov Prize of the European Union in 2019.

**Dandara Rudsan (Pará, Brazil)**

"We are forged to be defenders. If we don't react, if we don't do something, we are annihilated. And it is only possible to see oneself as a defender when inserted in a network of unique protection mechanisms."

She is a political articulator of RENFA - National Network of Anti-Prohibitionist Feminists. She began acting as a defender at 14 in the fight against the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Plant in Altamira, from where she left to study Law in Tocantins. When she returned, in 2012, already graduated, to help her parents against the expropriation of their house by the power plant, she was already a trans woman. She was rejected by her family and lived on the streets for two years.

Her encounter with the Black movement led her to different paths. She is a postgraduate student in Labor Law and Human Rights at the Federal University of Pará, was a national rapporteur on Human

Rights of the DHESCA Platform, and an articulator of the Black Initiative for a New Drug Policy. She is the founder of the Amazonian LesBiTrans Collective and Nepaz (Strategic Center for Human Rights and Promotion of Peace).

**Dina Carla ( Maranhão, Brazil)**

"It's having the courage to dismantle the corruption ingrained in public agencies, which benefits a few with a lot and thus perpetuates the label of a highly unequal Brazil."

Born in Turiaçu, she is a pharmaceutical-biochemist from the Federal University of Maranhão, specialist in Cancer Cytology (Adolfo Lutz Institute -SP) and Cellular Biology (Federal University of São Paulo). At the State Public Servant Hospital in São Paulo, where she worked for nine years, she began activism in the health area. Today, she works with project management - she has an MBA from FGV/SP in Maranhão. She comes from a Black family. Her mother, Joana Barbosa, started college at the age of 50; her father Crescêncio Almeida was a public servant. Both were enthusiasts for investment in education.

**Elizângela Baré (Amazonas, Brazil)**

"Being an indigenous defender is to be reborn in the face of colonialism, reviving the culture of our people. I will be reborn as many times as necessary."

An indigenous leader from the Upper Rio Negro, Elizângela is from the Cue-cue Marabitanas Indigenous Land, on the border with Colombia and Venezuela, and from the Baré People. She is a sociologist, craftswoman, farmer, and teacher, and is part of the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro.

**Maria de los Angéles Navarro (Mapiripán, Meta, Colombia)**

"Being a defender represents an effort and a struggle to seek a balance between nature and human beings."

An agroecological leader, she works with rural communities in the protection and conservation of natural resources using alternative production techniques.

**Melina Macuxi (Roraima, Brazil)**

"It is to be the voice of my people, to honor our ancestors and the memory of their struggles and achievements. It is to honor our history of existence, resistance, resilience, and (re)existence."

She is from the Macuxi People, an anthropologist and researcher in the themes of indigenous women and original peoples of Venezuela.

**Miluska Elguera (Lima, Peru)**

"A defender is a courageous fighter, who faces social issues with political conviction, guided by love and the common good for everyone."

An anthropologist from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, she holds a master's degree in Human Development from the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales in Argentina. She is specialized in territory, identity, and political processes in the Amazon. She is a feminist activist in political spaces such as fronts and collectives.

**Susy Gaby Díaz Gonzales (Ucayalli, Pucallpa, Peru)**

"We, indigenous peoples without territory, are destined to disappear. Being a defender is to protect, to defend the common cause, our place. It is to continue maintaining the bond with the spirits of the forest."

An activist for the rights of indigenous women, she holds a degree in Law and a master's degree in Social Management from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. As the President of the Intercultural Association Bari Wesna, she has been acting as a defender in programs for indigenous women and defense of territorial rights.

In 2021, she participated in the Human Rights internship program of the University of Deusto-Spain and the UN High Commissioner.

**Vanuza Cardoso (Pará, Brazil)**

"I defend my territory/land as I defend my territory/body, because the interaction we have with nature is different from other people. We defend all lives, human and non-human. We are composed of everything that exists in the natural environment."

A quilombola leader, she is the president of the Council for Racial Equality of the Municipality of Ananindeua. She is Yao of the guidance of the Quilombola Territory of Abacatal. An anthropologist, she is part of the Front in Defense of Traditional Territories.

**Zulma Ulcue (Putumayo, Colombia)**

"It's about taking care of mother earth. When a woman is violated, her wisdom, her culture, and her struggle to defend mother earth, women, their knowledge, and the care for humanity are assaulted."

She belongs to the Nasa People. She has a degree in EthnoEducation, is a psychologist, and a specialist in social development projects. She is active in the political and organizational processes of the Nasa indigenous reserve.

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