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In This Issue:

- **A Cure for What Jails Ya- An Interview with Jailed "Eco-terrorist" Jeffrey Luers**
by Gregory Dicum
- **Mythic Non-violence**
by Taime Bryant
- **Slovenian President Dr. Janez Drnovsek on Vegetarianism and Animal Rights**
by Takis Fotopoulos
- **An Essay on Direct Action**
by Anonymous
- **Press Officer Lindy Greene on "Violence"**

Are you or someone you know looking for a provocative, educational speaker on the issue of animal liberation? Our Press Officers are available to speak to groups of three to three thousand- just call, write or e-mail and we'll do our level-best to meet your needs.

The latest issue of the North American Animal Liberation Press Office Newsletter is filled with some terrific articles about and by some real heroes in the struggle for animal liberation. A UCLA law professor, the president of Slovenia, and a caged warrior all speak out about direct action and the struggle against the oppression of non-human animals.

On April 29th, shortly after our last issue went to press, hundreds of captive mink were liberated by the Animal Liberation Front in Minnesota. According to the communique issued by the group, "This is the second A.L.F. liberation in the mid-west done in absolute solidarity with Peter Young [currently imprisoned for releasing thousands of captive animals], whose unparalleled bravery and determination serves as an inspiration to us all. What better way to remember our prisoners and cheer them up than to provide freedom for others!

In further support of our imprisoned comrades, the Press Office continues to build our mailing list of jailed warriors and sympathizers. Please feel free to encourage anyone you know to enroll by mail or online at www.animalliberationpressoffice.org for our free newsletter, as well as receiving the support of not only the Press Office, but thousands of supporters worldwide. We dedicate this issue to all those waiting to see the light of day, in order to return to the struggle on behalf of animals and the environment that supports them.

Press Office Directive: The North American Animal Liberation Press Office (NAALPO) was founded to communicate the actions, strategies, and philosophy of the animal liberation movement to the media and the public. Many of these actions are illegal under a current societal structure that fails to recognize the rights of non-human animals to live free of suffering, but validates and promotes the "right" of industries to do whatever they want to animals for profit or research. Within these conditions, those in the underground working for animal liberation often cannot speak out directly. Nevertheless, their actions and message is urgent and deserve to be heard and understood. Since animal liberation actions either go unreported in the media or are uncritically vilified as "violent" and as "terrorist" with no attention paid to the suffering that industries and individuals gratuitously inflict on animals, NAALPO seeks to clarify the motivation and nature of actions taken in defense of animals.

The Press Office also tries to provide a historical, social, and philosophical context for an objective understanding of the nature and motivation of illegal direct actions taken on behalf of captive animals.

A Cure for What Jails Ya- An Interview with Jailed "Eco-terrorist" Jeffrey Luers

by Gregory Dicum

In 2000, 21-year-old Jeff Luers and an accomplice set fire to three pickup trucks at a dealership in Eugene, Ore., to bring attention to gas-guzzlers' contribution to global warming. They were promptly arrested. Luers, who refused to plea bargain, was sentenced to 22 years, eight months in prison. It is the longest term ever handed down for environmentally motivated sabotage in America -- and far longer than sentences given to arsonists in Oregon who have destroyed more property and endangered peoples' lives.

But Luers' sentence may be surpassed if any of the upcoming trials of 11 people arrested in January for eco-motivated arson and vandalism yield convictions. Though Luers' crime was minor by comparison, his case serves as a precedent: the fact that one of those arrested, Daniel McGowan, used to run a website for Luers was raised in an attempt to deny McGowan bail.

Because Luers is already in prison and knows he is under total surveillance, he is willing to speak his mind on eco-sabotage as few others are. He regularly issues communiqués from prison through a website maintained by outside supporters, and co-published Heartcheck in 2005, a prison zine that sounds a call for unflinchingly hands-on eco-revolution.

But Luers' ability to communicate more widely with the outside world has been hampered by the authorities. He has been classified as a member of a "security threat group" -- a measure designed to disrupt gangs, but applied in Luers' case to his anarchist and environmental affiliations. Restrictions on his communications have frustrated many reporters, but Grist was able to interview Luers over the phone from Oregon State Penitentiary -- the first interview he's given in nearly a year.

How do the latest arrests change the landscape for radical action?

This is pretty much the make-or-break point for the radical ecological movement in this country. A lot of people are scared and intimidated right now. They're either going to fall apart, or they're going to come together and show that, no matter how many arrests are made or how hard the government tries to crack down on dissent, the people aren't going to be quiet. That's what people need to do: whether or not they support radical action, they can't be intimidated into silence.

Did your conviction serve as the deterrent it was apparently intended to be?

Unfortunately, yeah, I think it has -- particularly in the local community that I got arrested out of. There's been a noticeable decline in underground activities, and part of that is the harsh sentence I received. But I think part of that is also the fact that we had a lot of people who put their hopes into easy solutions. It looked like it was going to work for a while: there was a huge galvanization of the public after [the WTO protests] in Seattle in '99. But the actions stopped. There was a lot of pressure from the police forces on separating unions and radical activists, and everything just kind of collapsed.

Coming out of that period, "eco-terrorism" was identified by the federal government as one of the biggest threats to the nation, right alongside things like al Qaeda. Did you consider yourself engaged in terrorism when you burned those trucks?

If someone believes I'm a terrorist, I don't think there's anything I'm going to say that's going to change their mind. When you look at the use of the word today, "terrorism" is basically a way to define armed struggles you disagree with.



NORTH AMERICAN ANIMAL LIBERATION PRESS OFFICE

A Cure for What Jails Ya (continued)

What is it that you are struggling for?

The biggest thing I'm trying to achieve is a change in social conscience. Our society operates under an extreme capitalist system that is completely unsustainable. You can't take a limited amount of resources and exploit it infinitely and expect it to continue to yield the same results year after year.

I think we're finally starting to realize that: we've got climate change, our oil's starting to run out, our forests are disappearing. But the thing that bothers me is that technologies exist to create a greener lifestyle and they're not being implemented. In part it's because big companies don't see a profit in them, but it's also because consumers don't demand it.

When I think about the people who are out there sitting in their SUVs and sitting in front of their TVs and just consuming, consuming, consuming, it seems to me that most of them aren't doing it because they are evil and trying to consciously destroy the earth. It's just that they're not thinking about how they're living.

Though they may share some of your goals, a lot of environmentalists are committed to nonviolent change, and would certainly disagree with your tactics. What do you think of their tactics?

We need groups like the Sierra Club; we need people who believe in support and reform. But at the same time, I think that we need people like me who are willing and able to get our hands dirty.

Any individual that cares enough to act knows whether or not they can take that extra step. Everyone has a level of commitment they can make, whether that's taking more mass transit, or riding your bike one day a week, or not using a vehicle at all. You can organize a boycott of the biggest local polluter. If you're already an activist, you can up the scale of what you're doing and get more involved in civil disobedience. Or you can go with other, extralegal activities.

And that, of course, is the route that landed you in prison.

That is the route that landed me in prison. So I advise people to use caution.

Was the truck-burning action you were convicted for the most extreme thing you'd done?

Yeah, I'd say it was. I was trying to move into the realm of more radical actions. This was one that I felt was not only symbolic in nature but allowed me to take that baby step. I was working toward being more of an underground guerilla activist.

Did you consider yourself a member of the Earth Liberation Front?

No. It might just be my political ideology, but I have a hard time identifying with any organization. While I strongly support what the ELF does, and I definitely can identify with their tactics and reasons why they use them, any person in the United States who claims ELF in any action automatically opens themselves up to investigation by the FBI.

As we've seen recently, the bar isn't even that high: people are being investigated based on what they eat or drive, for example. Because a lot of mainstream environmentalists share overarching goals with people like you, isn't there a danger that these acts of eco-sabotage are just giving mainstream environmentalism a bad name?

No. When you've got groups like ELF out there burning things down, it makes aboveground activism look tame. Because of that, the general public knows it's asinine when Greenpeace gets charged with piracy for boarding a ship and hanging a banner.

In Heartcheck, you write things like, "Smash it. Break it. Block it. Lock it down. I don't care why you do it or how you do it but stop it. Get out there and stop it." It sounds like you're not repentant.

I'm not. Social change is never a strictly peaceful thing. I simply don't think that you're going to see any type of true social change in this country without a show of force from the people, whether that comes in the form of millions of people marching in the streets or in the form of a few thousand out there committing acts of sabotage.

Political direct action today is following in the footsteps of the noble acts of social rebellion for human liberation that have always occurred in this country: things like the Boston Tea Party, the Underground Railroad, the Suffragettes, and the civil-rights movement.

You write that many activists are "stuck in a stagnant cycle," and can't get "outside the box of activism." What are you referring to?

In this country, protest is basically a relief valve for public stress. Great examples of that now are the designated protest zones miles away from the actual thing that people are protesting. It's built into the social equation now that if you give people an outlet, they won't take things further and actually threaten the status quo. So when I say, "thinking outside the box," I mean exactly that: if you're doing something that the group you're protesting is actually allowing you to do, then it's probably not very effective.

In the same zine, you also wrote "it's a beautiful thing to see the financial district of a major city smashed to pieces." Of course we saw that in New York -- was that a beautiful thing?

That's a tough one. From a militant standpoint it's sad, but I'm not going to say that it was entirely wrong. I have friends who witnessed 9/11 and I have friends that lost family. I hate to see loss of life, period. And yet, I can understand how the World Trade Center is a legitimate target in this country. The U.S. economy is a trade economy, and when you're striking out and trying to cripple a country, you go after what it is that makes that country operate.

Some eco-tage actions have been pretty major, and could conceivably kill people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. In your view, would that be justifiable collateral damage?

If you're looking at actions like burning cars, then no, injuring someone is not justifiable collateral damage. People are taking a lot of caution. We've seen relatively few injuries in any of these types of actions, and those that have occurred are generally the people committing the actions themselves. I don't think that it's just a matter of time before a bystander is injured through property destruction -- those groups have a track record of nearly four decades of underground illegal direct action that's involved all kinds of sabotage, and we haven't seen a single injury.

But then again, I wouldn't be opposed to physical violence against a human being if it was necessary.

You're advocating violent social change, but your ultimate goal is to have a peaceful, sustainable society. How can a violent path lead to peace?

It's hard. You know, I ain't gonna deny that. But I don't think that an entirely passive resistance in this country could be successful. I don't think the government would allow it, frankly -- it would be quashed through force of arms.

But if people are too dispirited to even keep doing the level of actions that you mentioned in Eugene, how are they going to do something like band together and rise up in armed struggle?

I don't know. That's why I write about it. If I had solutions, believe me, I would have them all over the place whether people wanted to hear them or not. I don't.



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A Cure for What Jails Ya (continued)

All I know is that things are very, very wrong and I'm willing to work in a myriad of ways to try to fix them.

My greatest success is in simply trying to inspire people. Out of all the people that have read anything I've written or heard any interview I've done, maybe .001 percent have actually gotten involved in illegal direct action. But I've gotten a lot of people to start recycling, or to write their representatives. And to me that's huge. If I can get just a handful of people that never cared about anything to suddenly care and want to do something no matter how small, then maybe they'll get a handful of people to do the same thing. It has to start somewhere.

But couldn't you have accomplished just as much above ground instead of going to jail? Do you think you would have had the same impact?

I don't really know, to be honest. I'm a militant, flat out. When I was 16, I aspired to be a militant, as strange as that sounds. I enjoyed being a militant. I enjoyed the civil disobedience that I did, probably in much the same way that people who become soldiers enjoy what they do. I obviously didn't fill that niche very well because I ended up in prison doing it, so perhaps there were better alternatives for me.

When I did this I was a young kid, just turned 21. I went out, did a pretty small little action and got hammered with 22 years. But I have continued to be passionate about why I did what I did, and I think that resonates with people. People want to root for the underdog, and I'm the underdog: the things that I'm struggling for are so utopian they seem almost ridiculous. Yet people want a fraction of that idealism in their lives.

Gregory Dicum is the author of *Window Seat: Reading the Landscape from the Air*. He writes a biweekly column for SFGate, the online edition of the San Francisco Chronicle, and has written for the New York Times Magazine, Harper's, Mother Jones, and others.

Prison Dispatch from Jeff "Free" Luers - June 16, 2006

Today is my six year anniversary. I almost didn't notice to tell you the truth. It isn't just because one day blends into another in here. Right now I just don't really care that much that I'm in prison. I know how that sounds but that's brutally honest. I got careless, I got sloppy. I slipped up. I got caught.

But, over the years something happened. I got stronger. I got louder. I became more powerful than the state ever wanted me to be.

You see, I was supposed to be a message to you all out there that would dare resist. But not enough people listened. Some kept fighting back. They kept liberating animals. They kept burning things down.

Now the state wants to send a more powerful message. They sent in agents and infiltrators. They bought off activists and turned others into traitors with threats. The message is simple: the government sees this movement as a threat. And they are telling you that if you challenge them they will try and lock you away for life.

It's a powerful message. It's down right intimidating, to be honest. But, this last weekend (June 9-11) another message was sent by 43 cities around the world. That message was very clear: we will not disappear.

Yea, some of us are going to end up in prison. That's a fact. Some of the weaker individuals might break under that threat. That's a fact, too. And that is intimidating. Why sugarcoat it?

However, when an international solidarity event, in which 43 cities participate, can be organized from a maximum security prison....That's not just intimidating. That's a threat.

There's no denying the authorities have a lot of power. But so do we and we have to recognize that. We have to harness that energy. Every time we are pushed we must push back twice as hard.

Thank you for not being silent. Thank you for standing up for the "green scare" victims, the earth liberation prisoners and for me. I am so grateful, so very grateful I can't wait to read and hear about all the events.

We have shown that we are united, that we can and will support our prisoners. Now let us show our might. They have heard your words. Make them feel your actions. The earth, the animals, the future, our children, your freedom, the people of Iraq, your very own community needs you to fight back. You are all we have. Your resistance is our only weapon, our only defense. You are the only protection we have left. PLEASE do EVERYTHING you can to help.

-Jeffrey 'Free' Luers
Prison Dispatch - June 16, 2006

write to Jeff at:
Jeffrey Luers
#13797671
Oregon State Prison
2605 State Street
Salem, Oregon 97310

For more information:
<http://www.freefreenow.org>

Mythic Non-violence by Taime Bryant

All societies have myths by which they define and inspire themselves. Perhaps because myths represent aspirations as well as optimistic self-descriptions, there are inevitable gaps between a society's mythic representations and actual, complicated realities. Ironically, depending on the strength of the myth, a myth can actually slow developments in accord with the very values that underlie the myth. One example is the myth of America as a "melting pot," through which Americans have defined themselves as "color-blind" or "tolerant" of race. Of course, in actual fact there is a lot of evidence that we are color-sensitive and intolerant. Certainly American society has not been consistently experienced by people of color as a felicitous "melting pot," and the idea of "melting" (i.e., assimilation) into white society has not been uniformly perceived as the best response to racism, either. However, the strength of mythic representation of a melting pot meant that civil rights advocates had to first contest the factual basis of the mythic representation—whether in fact ours is a melting pot society—and only then build a basis for actual racial acceptance premised on something other than assimilation into white society—diversity.

Analogously, there are many myths about our regard for and protection of animals, and the strength of those myths makes acceptance of contrary evidence more difficult than it might be without such myths. One myth is that Americans reject cruel treatment of animals, as evidenced by the existence of anti-cruelty statutes in every state. While Americans' rejection of animal cruelty may accurately reflect some aspects of our values on an ideological level, reality is much more complicated. Indeed, Gary L. Francione's label of "moral schizophrenia" aptly describes our participation in and acceptance of tremendous amounts of human-caused animal suffering despite our professed rejection of such suffering.¹ Among other possible reasons for the disjuncture is the possibility that strength of the belief that we are "animal-friendly" makes contrary evidence more difficult to accept than if there were no such pre-existing belief.

Another complex myth that impacts animals and their advocates involves representations that we disdain violence and take immediate steps to redress violent harms, even as evidence grows that violence is a



NORTH AMERICAN ANIMAL LIBERATION PRESS OFFICE

Mythic Non-violence (continued)

common, unaddressed feature of our society. In this essay I claim that mythic rejection of violence harms animals and their advocates in the following ways: (1) it lays the foundation for the claims of institutional (ab)users of animals that they do not and would not treat animals cruelly or violently because they are participants in the mainstream values of the society; (2) it results in traumatic silencing of advocates because of public disbelief that so much violence against animals could be occurring in a society that abhors violence; (3) it creates broad-brush oppositional categories such that animals' advocates can be painted as violent actors in a society that rejects violence; and (4) it hinders full consideration among advocates as to what advocates themselves consider "violent" means of protecting animals for fear that such discussion might allow for *any* amount of violence and, thereby, discredit animals' advocates and their cause. However, if advocates do not participate in the definition of violence, as it concerns their own activism, violence will be defined by their opponents in ways that make advocates' tasks of exposing violence against animals much more difficult.

The problem of inappropriate demands for trust. I begin with an example raised by Justice Ginsburg during a recent visit to UCLA Law School. Justice Ginsburg related her disappointment when, shortly after oral argument in which the Government denied the use of torture in interrogating U.S. military detainees, pictures of abuse at Abu Ghraib appeared on the front pages of major newspapers all over the world. Twice on April 28th, 2004, the Solicitor General of the United States had rejected the idea that the U.S. participates in torture. And twice the Solicitor General had argued that the government should be trusted. During oral argument in the case of Hamdi v. Rumsfeld, the Solicitor General was asked, "[D]o you think there is anything in the law that curtails the method of interrogation that may be employed?"² The Solicitor General responded, "It's . . . the judgment of those involved in this process that the last thing you want to do is torture somebody. . . . [I]f you did that, you might get information more quickly, but you would really wonder about the reliability of the information you were getting. So the judgment of the people who do this as their responsibility is that the way you would get the best information from individuals is that you. . . try to develop a relationship of trust."³

The Solicitor General opined that the government is entitled to trust from the public as well as from military detainees. On the same day, during oral argument in Rumsfeld v. Padilla, the Solicitor General was asked, "Suppose the executive says mild torture we think will help get this information?"⁴ The Solicitor General responded that "the executive doesn't [make use of torture],"⁵ and "the fact that executive discretion in a war situation can be abused is not a good and sufficient reason for judicial micromanagement and overseeing of that authority . . . you have to trust the executive to make the kind of quintessential military judgments that are involved. . ."⁶ At the time of oral argument, it was, perhaps, easy to accept such assertions. Certainly it was easier then than during the subsequent days, weeks, and months of public debate about photographs revealing abusive, violent conduct against detainees at Abu Ghraib. In her remarks to us, Justice Ginsburg expressed disappointment in the Solicitor General's assertions of a simple reality when, in fact, reality was far more complex.

For the feminists sitting with me, Justice Ginsburg's example (and disappointment) brought to mind instances in which claims of violence against women have been rejected as the hysterical overstatement of emotional women. After all, it could not be in the best interests of men to abuse their wives or female employees, could it? For me, Justice Ginsburg's example also brought to mind the claims of factory farmers that consumers need not worry about their treatment of factory farmed animals. Indeed, factory farmers have long contended that they are not cruel or violent. Practices like cutting the beaks of chickens and docking the tails of pigs have been defended as actually sparing animals from harms associated with living in close proximity to each other.⁷

The claim is that the practices are not violent; such practices are simply necessary to reduce the harms that animals would experience if not "prepared" for life in intensive confinement. Factory farmers would have us believe that, since it is in their best interest to produce meat from well-cared for animals, they do not subject animals to cruel practices.⁸ Finally, factory farmers could point to lack of prosecutions for cruelty as evidence that they are compliant with anti-cruelty laws and non-violent. Animals' advocates can answer each of these contentions, of course, but, without proof of their claims, it is difficult to convince consumers that factory farmers' claims are inaccurate.

As in the case of little documentation of U.S. military abuses of authority, there is little documentation of institutional exploitation of animals because the public is not given access to see for themselves what is going on. Animal-exploiting industries own both the animals and the buildings in which they are kept, with no obligation to provide access to the public. Such industries can reject calls for greater transparency and accountability, based on claims that their practices take into account the needs of the animals and are designed to protect rather than to harm animals. They would ask, "What need is there for inspection rights of animal facilities?" They would claim, "We are not the ones who should be monitored in this society; it is those who unlawfully disrupt our businesses who should be monitored." And, they would argue, "As participants in the mainstream values of American society, which include protection of animals from suffering and rejection of violent conduct, we should be trusted to apply those values to our own business practices."

In this essay I am not focused on whether violence against animals is "like" violence against women or against U.S. military detainees. Nor am I analyzing a claim that violence against animals should be recognized as equally bad as violence against women and U.S. military detainees or anyone else harmed by violent human action. Undoubtedly, our society imposes a hierarchy of victim-worthiness to be free of violence, but it is not the purpose of this particular essay to participate in or protest that hierarchy. My focus in these few pages is on consideration of some costs associated with a sociocultural myth of disdain for and rejection of violence. Such mythic non-violence facilitates arguments that various actors with power over others would, as mainstream participants in society, not abuse their power by acting in violent ways and that we should trust them. These arguments, taking place against a backdrop of general belief that violence is only a last resort rather than an ever-present possibility in our society, makes it easy to dismiss "radical" claims of violence occurring on a regular and predictable basis.

If violence and the potential for abuse in privately controlled settings were part of our general belief system, we would, as a matter of course, seek greater transparency and accountability without specific proof of violence and wrong-doing in a particular context or setting. While trust may be a desirable basis on which to structure some relationships, the circumstances under which trust is requested or created should take into account the prevalent use of violent conduct to produce desired effects in others. In other words, there should be a basis for trust other than a myth of societal disdain for and rejection of violence. The basis for trust should be *demonstrated* rejection of violence, not unsupported claims of non-violent conduct. In order to create a default rule of required transparency and accountability whenever one has control over another, it is important to break down mythic notions that suggest that such transparency and accountability are not necessary.

The problem of traumatic silencing. That violence is actually a common feature of our experience is illustrated by the American Psychiatric Association's changed definition of "trauma." In 1980, the APA defined a traumatic event as one "outside the range of usual human experience." In 1994, the APA apparently recognized that traumatic events are not outside the range of usual human experience.⁹ It dropped that part of its definition and instead defined a traumatic event as one involving "actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others."¹⁰



NORTH AMERICAN ANIMAL LIBERATION PRESS OFFICE

Mythic Non-violence (continued)

If approximately 60% of men and 50% of women state that they have been *directly* exposed to at least one traumatic event in their lives,¹¹ the extent of *indirect* experiencing of violence is quite great. The experience of violence is not evenly distributed, of course. Relatively powerless individuals are at greater risk of experiencing more violence than relatively powerful individuals.

Some in our society, social justice activists, actually deliberately expose themselves to violent mistreatment of others in order to bring such mistreatment to light and to stop it from continuing. Their experience of violence is necessarily and intentionally great because it is central to their goals to reveal the different manifestations and consequences of violence. As that exposure increases so do the repercussions of experiencing violence: posttraumatic stress.¹² Posttraumatic stress, in turn, adversely affects advocacy by, among other things, burdening the emotional and physical tolerance one has for being disregarded or discredited. Advocates' once calm presentations of reality may turn increasingly strident and take exaggerated form, which then becomes another basis for discrediting activists' statements about the reality of violence.

It is not the fault of advocates' presentation style that they are disbelieved. At the root of disbelief is people's reluctance to believe that there is so much violence in their society and that there is so much violence directly involved in producing their consumer products. Society's clinging to mythic non-violence and rejection of claims of violence ("it couldn't be happening here") compounds both the experience of violence and the potential for posttraumatic stress among social justice activists. Researcher psychiatrist Judith Herman has written about the trauma associated with, for example, rejecting war veterans' claims of the extent of violence they encountered as indicative of the very real nature of "war as hell" and rejecting rape victims' claims about their experiences as indicative of the very real nature of risks of being a woman in this society.¹³ To tell the veteran that "war" is unique and not "violence" because its objectives are justified or to tell the rape victim that rape resulted only because of one aggressor's idiosyncratic evil is to deny the contributions of society to the probabilities that men and women will have experiences characterized by extreme violence. To be told that one's experience is atypical, that one is hypersensitive to situations that others easily tolerate, that one brought violence on oneself, or, in the case of animal activism, that animal suffering is of a different kind or importance, is to be told that one's experience doesn't comport sufficiently with normative values in one's society that society should bear obligations to address those claims of systemic violence.

Making claims of violence seem idiosyncratic—either on the part of the perpetrator or on the part of the victim—is a process by which mythic notions of non-violence are sustained and a means by which we reject the underlying claim of unacceptable probabilities of (and actual occurrences of) violence in our society. Rejection of the underlying claim of violence results in tenacious restating of the claim and relentless seeking of acknowledgement of those claims. Both victims and their advocates are caught at the first important step—having society acknowledge that there is a problem—without being able to move on and actually address the harms one knows are on-going. Exposing a truth that others refuse to acknowledge is a tedious process that provokes self-doubt, frustration, and guilt as the body count of direct victims of violence increases. The stress of contending with seemingly willful disbelief in the prevalence of violence warps the advocacy process and contributes to advocate burnout.¹⁴

This problem of being caught between reality and a disbelieving public is not traumatic in the sense of a severe physical injury, although there are known physiological effects of the stress attendant to speaking truths others refuse to hear. It is traumatic because it is disorienting to be told that the reality one presents isn't "real" or isn't important. As sociologist Jeffrey Alexander has noted, trauma is as much a social construct as it is a phenomenon of individual experience; the community's validation of the truthfulness of the individual's reports either traumatizes or heals.¹⁵

I would go further by asserting that rejection of the reality of violence is not costly only to the individual; it is also costly to the community. The community's acknowledgement or rejection of the underlying truth of a claim of violence can allow or inhibit progress for the individual *and* the community. The cost to the community of rejecting evidence of violence is in failing to process that evidence in ways that move the community closer to its stated ideal of non-violence.

To address public disbelief, advocates for animals seek direct access to evidence of the actual actions that are taken against animals' bodies by industrial (ab)users of animals. At this point in time, institutional (ab)use of animals is difficult to expose because institutions own both the animals and the settings in which those animals are held. Animals' advocates build a picture of animal suffering through investigations that often involve trespass or other illegal conduct. If the data from investigations dispelled disbelief, the fact of lawbreaking to acquire the evidence would be offset by the importance of what is revealed about animal suffering. Unfortunately, it is difficult to dispel disbelief because (a) the public cannot verify for itself the claims made by (lawbreaking) activists; (b) it is inconvenient and troubling to acknowledge the extreme violence wreaked on animals because it would mean that consumers of animal-based products are complicit in the mistreatment of animals; (c) industry is quick to reassure the public that advocates' claims are false; and (d) since advocates must break the law just to find out what is going on, industry can readily characterize as "criminal trespassers" those who expose their practices.

From there it is a relatively easy descent into descriptions of advocates as "terrorists" willing to go to any length, including violence. It is, of course, a gross exaggeration to state that because an activist would trespass, the activist would blow up a building or kill people. Unfortunately that kind of descent into exaggeration is faster as a general matter in post-9/11/01 America. The tendency is exacerbated by the relative lack of public protest about other social justice issues by which animal activism could be compared. It is also exacerbated by institutional (ab)users' preemptively foreclosing advocates' claims through affirmative representations to the public that they treat animals humanely. For example, even without or before negative publicity specifically directed at them and their practices, entities like United Egg Producers and Foster Farms have attempted to shape public views of themselves and their products by labeling and advertising claims of humane care, secure in the knowledge that they control access to the facts that could refute such claims.¹⁶ Having already set in consumers' minds the image of themselves and their products as "humane," consumers will be even less likely to accept claims of animal suffering as justification for breaking into facilities where animals are held.

If the extent to which violence is a part of American society and culture were recognized, claims about its occurring in yet another area would not be met with as much initial skepticism. As it is, people don't want to believe that such mistreatment and abuse of animals, as is described by animals' activists, could really be happening in their society. While some may argue that Americans actually don't care about animals, I believe that Americans do care on an ideological level and that advocates are working against public assumptions that there are laws that prevent the animal industry practices advocates describe, that animal industries actually do attend to the needs of animals, and that the society in which they live would not produce people or institutions capable of the type of cruelty animals' advocates describe. Breaking down mythic notions about violence and non-violence is an important part of unraveling such assumptions and barriers to change.

The problem of oppositional categories. I would like to be clear that my observation that violence is a regular feature of American society does not lead me to advocate a free-for-all among disputants, or violence-based advocacy, or tolerance of violence because so much of it is occurring. Rather I contend that recognizing that violence runs throughout our society is the necessary starting point for serious and nuanced consideration of when and how to *reduce* it. That is why I began with the example of America as a mythic "melting pot."



NORTH AMERICAN ANIMAL LIBERATION PRESS OFFICE

Mythic Non-violence (continued)

Once the myth was challenged, the underlying issue of racial rejection could be approached anew, with a wholly different response: respect for the diversity among us. While that, too, has seriously mythic dimensions, at least a dialectic that moves us forward could begin with initial questioning of the basis and reality of the first myth of the “melting pot.”

Because violence is rejected as part of our description and definition of ourselves, “violent” becomes an oppositional label. Some people/entities are characterized as “violent” (i.e., bad), and that gross categorization eclipses subtleties and differences in the positions of advocates who engage in different types of activism that make majority members of society uncomfortable. Similarly, some people/entities are characterized as “not violent” (i.e., good), and that gross categorization eclipses realities of conduct that refute the label. For example, agribusiness and laboratories that (ab)use animals define themselves, in opposition to trespassing advocates, as “law-abiding” and define their practices as non-violent by reference to the lawfulness of those practices, not by reference to the actual effect of those practices on animals’ bodies. Animals’ activists, on the other hand, are branded as “terrorists,” and their conduct as “violent” by reference to their unlawfulness, rather than by a sophisticated consideration of what is actually violent (or not) about their conduct and claims. In fact, once animals’ advocates are branded as violent or as terrorists, laws can be put in place that presume a need to control them. For example, the Office of the Tulare County (California) District Attorney has entered into a collaborative agency network whose goal is to monitor, investigate, and prosecute what it calls “agricultural crimes.”¹⁷ Once laws and government action are premised on a belief that animals’ activists are “terrorists,” it is difficult to go back to a time when *whether* activists are terrorists was still an open question.

Although animals’ activists are regularly called “violent” or “terrorists” when they break the law, an actual review of so-called “direct action” activism reveals a spectrum of lawbreaking or violence. At one end is picketing and leafleting with images that the observer is likely to consider violent—violent either because of what is shown of animal (ab)use or violent because it speaks in harsh terms about the perpetrators of such violence. The activity of picketing and leafleting may, itself, be completely lawful and peaceful but, technical violations of protest regulations combined with a message that expresses anger and demands stopping violent conduct against animals can easily result in the whole activity being cast as “violent.” Indeed, just being “disruptive” seems to be popularly cast as “violent.”

When violence erupts during activism, the overly simple cultural definitions of violence lead to overly simple characterizations of actors and their conduct. The slide into such designation is, perhaps, exemplified by activists’ attempts to document seal massacres or to question seal killers. Such attempts can result in breaking the law, if the law provides that only authorized seal “hunters” can come within one-half nautical mile of an active seal “hunt.”¹⁸ Is it an act of violence when someone breaks that law to document or to challenge the seal massacre? I contend that it is perceived as an act of violence, or at least an act that welcomes violence, because the law may well have been enacted to prevent violent encounters between seal killers and activists. Having violated a law ostensibly enacted to prevent violence, the lawbreaker will be deemed the violent one when violence does occur, even if the activist did not initiate the actual violent encounter with the seal killer. Tellingly, activists can be called “terrorists” with impunity and without the charge of exaggeration, but activists cannot use the term “massacre” in reference to seal “hunts” without accusation of exaggeration and violent intent.

Is it violent to spray paint “murderer” or “puppy killer” on the home of the general manager of a traditional kill-oriented shelter? Of course, the act could easily be considered violent, but it need not be characterized as the act of a terrorist. It could be seen as illegally expressed anger or frustration, and it could be punished as such without fanning the flames of fear.

By defining the angry or frustrated act as the “violent” act of a “terrorist,” it is, of course, easier to justify suppressing the message, subjecting the activist to more severe penalties, and discrediting the movement of which the activist is a part. Should recognition of that as a consequence lead activists to engage in less property damage? I don’t know. My point is that a significant part of the problem actually lies in the ease with which a label of “violent” attaches and that the ease with which it attaches is directly related to mythic non-violence as a means by which institutional (ab)users can frame such acts to their advantage. Regardless of what activists do or do not do, activists are susceptible of being labeled “violent” and, from there, being labeled “terrorist,” if the term “violence” is allowed to sweep in a wide range of acts and thoughts that are disquieting to majority members of society and activists’ opponents control the definition and labels that flow from it.

If lawbreaking or expressed anger is glossed as “violence,” then certainly the reach of the term “violence” is great. It is also a problem that the public participates in the shaping of the term with only partial knowledge of what “violence” is in the context of animal (ab)use. The discourse about violence that takes place in the public eye is of angry activists and cowering managers of shelters, research labs, and fur farms, for example. What takes place in private is the cowering of animals, if they can, from violent reductions of their bodies to consumer goods and exploiters who disregard clear signals of pain and fear. The discourse on view to the public enables enterprises that (ab)use animals to characterize animals’ activists as “violent” because the private facts that would enable activists to contextualize what “violence” means are not generally available. Accordingly, the sociocultural meaning of “violence” in this context is one-sided.

My point is somewhat different from Tom Regan when he writes that the violence of activists is but a raindrop compared to the ocean of violence perpetrated against animals¹⁹ but that animal (ab)user industries can be cast as “paragons of nonviolence versus beady-eyed flamethrowers”²⁰ at least partially because some activists too often resort to violent advocacy without having pursued alternatives.²¹ I don’t think there is adequate documentation to support the contention that activists have insufficiently pursued alternatives. However, my primary contention is that advocates’ activism, whatever it may entail, is easily characterized as “violent” because their opponents control the definition, that a myth of non-violence allows for oppositional categorization of “beady-eyed flamethrowers” and “paragons of nonviolence,” and that, in addition, the hidden nature of human-caused animal suffering unreasonably and inaccurately further restricts the general meaning of “violence.” Precisely because of their ability to control what the public knows about their practices, institutional animal (ab)users can control the definition of violence just as they have controlled the definition of cruelty.²² It is not animals’ activists who control the definition of violence. Violence is socioculturally defined by those who benefit from definitions of violence that do not include them.

Enterprises that (ab)use animals have been so successful in painting activists (“terrorists”) as the opposite of themselves (“law-abiding providers of consumer goods”) that it was possible to embed that view in law. The Animal Enterprise Protection Act (AEPAA) as enacted in 1992 creates penalties for “physically disrupting” animal enterprises, which are defined as commercial or academic enterprises that use animals for food or fiber production, agriculture, research or testing and enterprises that use or hold animals for entertainment purposes, such as zoos, rodeos, and fairs.²³ Since animals’ advocates often have to trespass or “break into” animal enterprises just to document what is going on, physical disruption of an enterprise could be claimed even if actual damage to property does not occur. Just “physically disrupting” an enterprise is so dangerous—so violent—that it warrants a federal law to supplement state criminal law and its sanctions? It is so violent that it warrants making the FBI available for investigations of “physical disruptions” of animal enterprises? Animal (ab)using enterprises successfully defined “physical disruption” as a form of violence that warrants just such precautions and penalties.



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Mythic Non-violence (continued)

Amendments proposed in 2005 would further expand the definition of “animal enterprises” to include animal shelters and enterprises that sell animals or animal products such as pet stores and furriers. The proposed amendments would sweep “conspirators” to disrupt an animal enterprise explicitly into its reach and would expand the definition of wrongful acts to include “causing the loss of any property used by the animal enterprise (including records), or any property of a person or entity having a connection to, relationship with, or transactions with the animal enterprise.” The proposed amendments also provide for increased penalties, including the death penalty in cases in which someone has died as a result of the wrongful acts.²⁴

Significantly, breaking the law to obtain information about how animals are treated is the only way to get information about many kinds of animal (ab)use. But animal (ab)using enterprises do not describe activists as “breaking the law to obtain information.” Rather they are described as activists who break into animal enterprises in order to destroy those lawful businesses and to harm the law-abiding people who work in those businesses. Allowed to control the characterization of what activists are doing, animal (ab)using industries can control images that are then further embedded by way of legislation. That, in turn, furthers the image of activists as “terrorists,” increases the risks of obtaining needed information that is not available through other means, and emboldens animal abusing enterprises to make greater use of a law that already gives very broad protections to animal enterprises.

Meanwhile, advocates have made little progress in creating legal avenues to obtain information currently obtained only through trespass. I contend that it will become even more difficult to create those legal avenues and that blame for that is properly placed at the feet of animal (ab)using enterprises’ distortion of the meaning of “violence” in a society that swears allegiance to mythic non-violence. Since even low-level law-breaking has been defined as violence, I do not believe that primary blame for the characterization of advocates as violent terrorists lies with advocates who engage in law-breaking activities. Regardless of what activists are doing or not doing, in a fearful and insecure society the easiest way to suppress unpopular messages is by branding the messengers as “violent” and as “terrorists.”

The problem of fearful silence among advocates. Despite the extraordinary reach of the proposed amendments of the AEPA, few animal advocacy groups, if any, are monitoring its progress or attacking its premises. It is being tracked by groups *opposed* to goals of animal advocacy groups, but there is relative silence in the animal advocacy community itself about the law and about proposed amendments which, if enacted, could seriously diminish the already small amount and quality of documentation of violence against animals that occurs minute by minute in animal (ab)using industries in the United States.²⁵ Similarly, there seems to be little discussion about the recent convictions of members of the organization known as “Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (“SHAC”) under the AEPA. This lack of debate about the law, its use in the SHAC prosecution, and proposed amendments is shocking considering none of the six defendants who ultimately were convicted were alleged to have carried out any of the substantive crimes laid out in the indictment, ranging from property damage to intimidation. Rather, the six were convicted of running the SHAC USA website, which allowed others access to information that could be used in such alleged crimes. The act of managing the website was defined as an act of conspiracy in furtherance of violating the AEPA.²⁶

Despite the appearance of a thought-provoking book about direct action tactics in animal advocacy,²⁷ it appears that the subject of direct action (too easily restated as “violence”) is taboo. There are several reasons for that reticence, but for purposes of this essay I propose only two. First, allegiance to mythic non-violence prevents sophisticated, thoughtful discussion of degrees and types of actions that are already and readily characterized as “violent” by the broader society.

Even engaging in discussion about illegal forms of activism seems high risk because illegality is seen—in a fearful, insecure society such as ours—as a precursor to terrorist violence, and allegiance to the myth of non-violence means that one must avoid, at all costs, being seen as violent. Maybe it is less ideological than pragmatic; perhaps the lack of attention to the issue is a function of the fact that most advocacy is conducted by nonprofit organizations, which fear the loss of donor dollars. However, I would like to think that there are other responses to being marginal in an insecure and fearful society than to buy wholeheartedly into the fears of the majority society with the hope that doing so will earn us a little room to exist. It won’t.

Second, through others’ definitions of “violence” and our own distancing from the issue for fear of tainting, the subject of “violence” may well have been reduced to the point that it is perceived as “uninteresting” or “beside the point.” Surely, if we but began a discussion about “violence,” we would see within its current expansive boundaries troubling contradictions and misrepresentations. For example, like Tom Regan, I tend to believe that intentional harm to anything or anyone is an inherently violent act because, for purposes of considering whether an action is violent, I focus on the nature of the act itself rather than on the nature of the target or object of violence.²⁸ But I agree with Regan that when considering the *justice* of a particular act of violence, other considerations become important, such as the availability of non-violent methods to accomplish the particular goal, whether saving innocent victims is the primary objective, and whether the least amount of violence necessary has been used.²⁹ There may or may not be agreement among members of the advocacy community regarding the definition of violence and general criteria for acts of violence to be just. There will most certainly be disagreements as to specifics, such as whether violent acts that are not immediately incident to rescuing living animals are less just than violent acts that are immediately incident to rescuing living animals.³⁰ There may be even more controversy associated with some views, such as ALF Press Officer Robin Webb’s distinctions (1) between harm to sentient beings (violence) and harm to insentient objects (not violence), and (2) between “constructive destruction” of instruments of animal torture and mindless destruction of inanimate objects “just for kicks.”³¹

The point is that these issues are complicated and that debating and discussing them is not just an idle, intellectual exercise. Intra-community debate and discussion signals our intent to challenge opponents’ definitions of “violence” of ourselves as “terrorists.” *Not* to debate the issues and the definitions of “violence” leaves definitional control in the hands of those who would use that control to create a large gap between animals’ activists, painted as “terrorists,” and law-abiding, “humane” mainstream producers of valued consumer goods. As members of a movement currently at risk of definition as “terrorists,” it behooves us to discuss and debate among ourselves issues of violence, justice, and advocacy, and to challenge outsider definitions that are inappropriate and inflammatory. For the sake of clarifying what is and is not violence and terrorism, it is necessary to take on legal representation of activists who have broken laws in the name of advocacy.

Refuting the definition of violence as something animals’ advocates do but that animal (ab)using industries do not do, challenging the definition of violence as something unusual in our society, and replacing the definition of violence as a simple concept with a realistically complex definition are all difficult tasks. That is all the more true when the existing definitions of violence seem already fairly deeply inscribed. However, the situation could grow worse. Without intervention in the definitional process, protest itself could ultimately be deemed a violent affront to society. In other words, this is not just about violence in the animal advocacy movement. This is about painstakingly challenging mythic representations of non-violence so that our society as a whole can, as in the case of moving from “melting pot” to “diversity,” move to the next mythic representation of our interest in living in peace.

¹ Gary L. Francione, Introduction to Animal Rights 1 (2000).

² Hamdi v. Rumsfeld, oral argument transcript at 48. Available at http://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/



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Mythic Non-violence (continued)

argument_transcripts/03-6696.pdf

³ *Id.* at 50.

⁴ Rumsfeld v. Padilla, oral argument transcript, page 22. Available at http://www.supremecourt.us/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/03-1027.pdf

⁵ *Id.* at 23.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* 100-101, 121 (1975, 1990).

⁸ For example, Peter Singer reports that “[F]armers are sometimes advised to avoid practices that would make their animals suffer because the animals will gain less weight under these conditions; and they are urged to handle their animals less roughly when they send them to slaughter because a bruised carcass fetches a lower price . . .” *Id.* at 97. See, also, the Foster Farms website reassurance that Foster Farms treats its birds well: “[I]n the interest of optimal health and development, we keep the birds comfortable, clean, and well treated.” Available at <http://www.fosterfarms.com/faq/raise.asp>

⁹ Am. Psychiatric Assoc., *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* 247 (3rd ed. 1987).

¹⁰ Allen Frances et al., *The Essential Companion to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV Guidebook* 424 (1995).

¹¹ Ronald C. Kessler et al., *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in the National Comorbidity Survey*, 52 *Archives Gen. Psychiatry* 1048, 1052 (1995).

¹² Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* 57 (1992):

The most powerful determinant of psychological harm is the character of the traumatic event itself. Individual personality characteristics count for little in the face of overwhelming events. There is a simple, direct relationship between the severity of the trauma and its psychological impact, whether that impact is measured in terms of the number of people affected or the intensity and duration of harm. Studies of war and natural disasters have documented a ‘dose-response curve,’ whereby the greater the exposure to traumatic events, the greater the percentage of the population with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.”

¹³ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (1992).

¹⁴ Elsewhere I have dealt at length with the subject of trauma and animal advocacy. Taimie L. Bryant, “Trauma, Law, and Advocacy for Animals,” forthcoming in 1 *Journal of Animal Law and Ethics* ____ (2006).

¹⁵ Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* 8(2004).

¹⁶ For example, United Egg Producers established a certification system of eggs as “Animal Care Certified,” and Foster Farms claims on its website that its animals are well-cared for. Regarding UEP’s certification, see United Egg Producers, *Animal Care Certified*, <http://www.animalcarecertified.com> (last visited Feb. 22, 2006) (“[W]e care about the welfare of our hens. This care provides our customers with the safest . . . eggs in the world”). For information on stopping its use, see, *Compassion Over Killing, COK Exposes Maryland Egg Industry*, <http://www.cok.net/camp/inv/mdefi/index.php> (last visited Feb. 22, 2006) (“[T]he Better Business Bureau deemed the ACC logo misleading because it conveys to consumers a false message of humane animal care”); United Poultry Concerns, “Federal Trade Commission Announces End to Misleading Egg Logo”, announced October 3, 2005, http://www.upc-online.org/battery_hens/10305egglogo.html; See also Alexei Barrionuevo, *Egg Producers Relent on Industry Seal*, *N.Y. Times*, October 4, 2005, at C1 (“The Old [Animal Care Certified] label ‘implied that the animals were treated humanely, when they are not’”). For information on Foster Farms, see, <http://www.fosterfarms.com/faq/raise.asp>. For a description of the controversy between East Bay Animal Advocates and Foster Farms, see, Suzanne LaBarre, “Foster Farms Threatens Litigation Against East Bay Animal Activists,” *Berkeley Daily Planet*, April 7, 2006, available at <http://www.berkeleydaily.org/text/article.cfm?issue=04-07-06&storyID=23833>. Although UEP and its members can no longer use the certification and Foster Farms’s claims have been contested as well, it is difficult to attack such claims of humane treatment when there is no access to the very establishments in which the animals are held. Moreover, in response to a small contingent of animal advocate investigators, United Egg Producers and Foster Farms can engage an army of lawyers to threaten civil trespass actions and libel suits.

¹⁷ The collaboration is called the Agricultural Crime Technology Information and Operations Network (“ACTION”), details of which are available at http://www.agcrime.net/request_publication.htm.

¹⁸ Jerry Vlasak and other animal rights advocates were convicted of coming within half a nautical mile of seal killers engaged in legal seal killing in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada, on March 30, 2005. The charges were brought after an altercation broke out between animals’ activists documenting the killing and those killing the seals. See, “Seal hunt protester turns himself in, announces plan for hunger strike,” *The Guardian*, March 28, 2006. Available at <http://72.14.203.104/search?q=cache:d4rhxIP2cJYJ:www.theguardian.pe.ca/index.cfm%3Fsid%3D2048%26sc%3D2+Jerry+Vlasak+seal+hunt&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=5>

¹⁹ Tom Regan, *How to Justify Violence*, in *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters?: Reflections on the Liberation of Animals* 235 (Steven Best & Anthony J. Nocella II, eds., 2004).

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.* at 234.

²² For description and analysis of the extent to which animal agribusinesses have defined “cruelty” so that animal “anti-cruelty” statutes do not apply to them, see, David Wolfson & Mariann Sullivan, *Foxes in the Henhouse: Animals, Agribusiness and the Law: A Modern American Fable*, in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions* 205, 208 (Cass Sunstein & Martha C. Nussbaum, eds., 2004).

²³ 18 U.S.C. § 43(a)-(b) (2000).

²⁴ Senate Bill 1926 provides for extension of the ACPA to include acts of intimidation and harassment (“§43 (a) ‘Offenses’ (2) (B)”), increased imprisonment terms in the event of property damage in excess of \$100,000 (“§43 (b) ‘Penalties’ (3)”) and the possibility of the death penalty if the offense causes the death of another person (“§43 (b) ‘Penalties’ (6)”), and extension of the definition of “animal enterprises” to include animal shelters, pet stores, breeders, and furriers (§43 (d) ‘Definitions’ (1)(B)). S.1926, introduced October 27, 2005 (109th Congress, 1st Session).

²⁵ On March 3, 2006, a Google search using the parameter <inhofe 1926 “animal enterprise” yielded only 72 hits total, of which the 11 below were organizations tracking the legislation. There were no hits related to animal rights organizations in that 72 hit list:

1. Animal Crackers blog (touts itself as an “anti-AR” site);
2. Fur Commission;
3. National Animal Interest Alliance (an organization of animal-using enterprises and private property proponents);
4. Office of Legislative Policy and Analysis (liason between NIH and Congress);
5. Society of Toxicology;
6. Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology;
7. American Association of Meat Processors;
8. American Feed Industry Association;
9. Connecticut Quarter Horse Association;
10. Minnesota Trappers Association;
11. Western United Dairyman.

²⁶ Various news media reported on the trial and convictions. See, e.g., Brad Knickerbocker, “Crackdown on Animal-Rights Activists,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 7, 2006 available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0307/p03s01-usju.html>; Thomas Walkom, “U.S. terror hunt targets animal activists,” *The Toronto Star*, March 13, 2006, available at http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1142203810052&call_pageid=968332188492

²⁷ Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella II, eds., *Terrorists of Freedom Fighters?: Reflections on the Liberation of Animals* (2004).

²⁸ Tom Regan, *supra* note ____ at 233.

²⁹ Tom Regan, for example, delineates specific criteria that include those aspects. Regan, *supra* note ____ at 233.

³⁰ For example, the line of justice that makes it unjust to burn down an “empty building” (that is only *presently* empty of living animals) but just to burn down a building as an incident to rescuing living animals is not as clear to me as it may be to Regan. *Id.* at 234

³¹ “Staying on Target and Going the Distance: An Interview with U.D. A.L.F. Press Officer Robin Webb,” at <http://www.nocompromise.org/issues/22robin.html>.



NORTH AMERICAN ANIMAL LIBERATION PRESS OFFICE

Mythic Non-violence (continued)

Taime Bryant is a Professor of Law, UCLA Law School. She would like to thank New York University's Student Animal Legal Defense Fund chapter for its April 14, 2006, symposium "Confronting Barriers to the Court Room for Animal Activists," which provided the opportunity to develop the ideas in this essay. She also thanks Vicki Steiner for her thoughtful comments on drafts of this essay and Bob Barker for his generous support of UCLA Law School for purposes of research and teaching in the field of animal rights law.

Slovenian President Dr. Janez Drnovsek on Vegetarianism and Animal Rights

by Takis Fotopoulos

In the entire history of mankind there have only been a handful of notable statesmen who were vegetarians and seriously took a stand for animal rights. Even today there are very few. Slovenija is one of the few bright lights in the world of politics today. By giving this interview the president Dr Janez Drnovsek has for the first time expressed the message to people, to start thinking about unimaginable brutality that man is inflicting upon animals.

Why did you become a vegetarian and what changes did you notice as a result?

Because I feel vegetarian food is better, better quality. We eat meat because it's the way we had been brought up. I have been a vegetarian for a few years and just recently I have become a vegan, which means I don't eat milk, dairy products or eggs. There is still plenty of choice, varied vegetable foods, which are sufficient to our needs. I took this step following my inner feeling. Some people believe that vegan food is very limited and boring which is not true. It can be very diverse.

Was the main reason for changing your diet your serious illness a few years back?

That was the time I gradually started to change. First step was omitting red meat, then poultry and eventually fish.

After changing to vegetarian food do you feel better, healthier?

I feel great - they say I have too much energy.

On World protection of Animals Day (October 4th) you invited members of Society for Liberation of Animals and their rights for discussions. What was discussed?

I invited them mainly to try and convey the message to general public to coincide with this day. We don't always realise how we treat animals, how we manage them. They are live creatures. As I said people have this set idea of behaviour towards animals and as result very rarely question what we actually cause. If we think for a moment how man manages animals and what impact he has on animal world we could say he was not human at all. Just think of all slaughter houses and production of beef or poultry where conditions for animals are impossible. Animals are transported in lorries many times without any water which is extremely cruel. It is not that people are bad they just don't think about it. When the final product is in front of them on the plate they don't think what was it before and how it got to this stage.

So you decided to become a vegetarian on ethical grounds as well?

The ethics are part of the reason; the other part is the fact that humans don't need the animal flesh. It is only thinking patterns we follow that are ingrained in us. It is probably really hard to change overnight, but it can be done gradually. This is how I did it.

You spoke against subsidising mass livestock farming in the media. What was your reason for this?

I believe it is foolish, that European Union's main priority is one hundred percent subsidy of farming especially meat products. The fact that EU subsidises mass production of meat and poultry is really the main obstacle from the ethics point of view. Not only that but also from the point of view of nutrition. We are frequently reminded by nature i.e. mad cow disease, recently swine fever, bird flu. It is obvious that something is not as it should be, something is disturbing the nature's balance and that should be a warning to us all.

Vegetarian products in shops are more expensive than meat products, which does not encourage people to buy healthier food. Do you think that more people would stop eating meat if vegetarian option was cheaper?

That is a factor as well although I believe the main reason to be awareness of people. It is a question of making people aware of what is happening and what are they being part of. I think that is the key. That in turn leads to changes in politics i.e. agricultural policy, farming subsidies and future directions. Instead of using huge resources for mass meat production we should use it for organic farming of diverse produce from cereals, pulses, fruit and all the products that originate from these. This would certainly be kinder to nature as organic production means no use of chemical fertilizers or additives. It would mean no pollution to the environment and no chemical additives in our food. We consume these chemicals every day in our food and they are harmful. But behind all this are the interests of big manufacturers, lobbies, huge profits which are the driving force for these food manufacturers' conglomerates. Nonetheless I believe that awareness of people continues to increase in our country and in EU. People are more and more searching for natural alternatives; they are turning to nature and becoming more aware of problems regarding animals and animal products.

Would you on the basis of your own experiences recommend people to try vegetarianism?

If I do it myself I can't see a reason why I wouldn't recommend it to others. I have no complaints as I said; I have more energy than I need. If nothing else I am living proof that you can survive without meat and meat products.

How do you view the fact that we all have to pay the same national insurance contributions? It is well known that vegetarians are a lot healthier and therefore don't use the health service as frequently.

This is a wider problem; the whole concept could be different. I don't think that is a valid point, because there should be some solidarity, where healthy people help those, who are unwell. It is true however that everyone is responsible for their own health. If we consumed less harmful and unhealthy food, we would considerably lessen the financial burden on our health service. Of course it is not in everybody's interest if that were to happen. What would happen to pharmaceutical industries, huge multinational companies which make billions from sick people?

What is your view on hunting?

Hunting as killing animals in the name of sport is unethical. If you are referring to the part of the hunting organization that looks after nature environment and wild animals, for example helping with feeding in the winter - it is very useful. Hunting which is by definition just chasing and killing of animals is of course completely unethical.

What is your opinion on live animal testing?

This is a well known dilemma which has recently been in forefront of politics in Europe, in Great Britain. You have to ask yourself would you like it if you were the subject of such testing. During the second world war my father was an inmate in the concentration camp in Dachau, where he was subjected to such medical experiments together with thousands other



NORTH AMERICAN ANIMAL LIBERATION PRESS OFFICE

Slovenian President Dr. Janez Drnovsek (continued)

people. He didn't like it one bit. Some people would say it is necessary for the progress of science but I am sure that in most cases alternative methods can be used without the need for animal testing.

Where do you think the brutal treatment of animals originates?

It comes from low level of people's awareness.

And looking historically?

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time in history. It is a question of respecting life in general. Animals are live creatures with feelings. Everyone who has a domestic animal or a pet knows that animals have feelings. The world's religions often speak about respecting life but they only mean human life and sometimes not even that. Looking back in the Middle Ages Catholics proclaimed for a long time that native Red Indians which were enslaved by the Spanish and Portuguese do not have a soul. This meant that they weren't treated as living creatures with feelings. Then they changed their mind and proclaimed that black people don't have souls. Centuries of black slavery followed. All this happened with the blessing of the Church. Today nobody accepts this anymore. We can see how historical conscience of people is changing despite the opposing views from some institutions at different points in time.

It's nearly Christmas. For millions of people it is time for happiness, love and peace. For millions of animals it is a time of terrible cruelty at slaughter so that our tables can be laden with carcasses. And all this to celebrate the birth of a man who loved animals, protected them and didn't kill them. What is your view on this?

Jesus would be turning in his grave if he knew that mass slaughter of animals is carried out every year in his name. His deliverance is based on absolute respect of life and it is very difficult to imagine that he would accept millions of living creatures being killed in his honour.

Are you aware that all vegetarians (including you) are cursed by the Church and are condemned to eternal hell?

Fortunately people who say this don't decide who goes to hell and who doesn't.

All the world leaders always emphasise their endeavours for world peace. Do you think peace is connected to our relationship to animals and nourishment of people without the need for killing? Tolstoy said "As long as there are slaughter houses there will be wars."

If a person's conscience is highly developed they will not kill or be cruel to animals. You can not expect from such person to go to war and kill people for a profit. People who do not kill and eat animals have a greater chance of finding a way to live in peace in harmony. Everything is interconnected in one's conscience. On a higher level one comes with the other. Making people more aware is the key.

How do world's politicians view this?

The world's politicians are no more aware of this than most people. I have noticed that in many cases ordinary people are ahead of politicians. We see a lot of non governmental organizations championing causes that are not priorities of governments. Be it our treatment of animals, environment or climate change. This push for change is coming from ordinary members of society. When the critical mass of people accepts an idea, when majority of people expect and demand change only then will the politics respond. Sadly politicians are not the ones to encourage others to be conscious but instead they follow public opinion of the moment. When they see the public support slipping they reassess their priorities.

Tolstoy is just one of many "great minds" of mankind, who publicly spoke

for vegetarianism. Let me name a few: Pythagoras, Leonardo da Vinci, Nikola Tesla, Albert Einstein, and Mahatma Ghandi.... These people are recognized for their great works and achievements, they are often quoted in recognition of their genius. Why do you think that mankind does not want to hear about animals and vegetarianism from these great people for example this daring saying from Albert Einstein "Nothing will increase our chances of survival on Earth as significantly as will switching to vegetarian food." How would you comment on this quote from the genius physicist?

Certainly the chances of long-term survival of mankind would increase. Everything is connected. Better quality food is somehow connected with higher level of consciousness. It is a parallel process if we can do one we can do the other. However it is unreasonable to expect from people with lower levels of consciousness who are cruel to animals, to end wars, to stop manipulating others, to help eradicate world poverty. In short as long as consciousness level is low all the disagreements in the world today will remain and possibly increase to the point of annihilation of humans.

Are the people who say they love animals, but they eat meat, real animal lovers?

I think that people do love animals, their pets, but somehow they automatically eat other animals. If they had to slaughter a cow before they could have a steak, they would think twice. Meat products are so altered in appearance that people don't associate them with real animals.

Some ladies wear animal fur in winter. What is your view on this fashion industry?

Again it's the question of consciousness of people. People often automatically accept the behavioural patterns without questioning them. Only when you question something, you can change your point of view and become more aware of what you are buying.

Where do people get the right to slaughter, incarcerate and torture animals and at the same time demand peace and all the rights for themselves? Is this sanctioned in the constitution?

It is not sanctioned as such, of course the lawyers and legislators will tell you it is not barred; but it is indeed assumed it is legitimate.

From unofficial source I've heard that even your dog Brodi is vegetarian. Is it true?

You've been informed well. You'd better ask him personally. I'm not authorised to answer in his name. (laughing)

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Edited by The Society for the Rights and the Liberation of Animals Slovenia
info@osvoboditev-zivali.org
www.osvoboditev-zivali.org
Damjan Likar
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An Essay on Direct Action [from Free the Animals]

If you support animal rights then recognise direct action is an essential part of way forward for the movement.

"Direct Action" is a term which is often misunderstood. It has the unfortunate reputation of dramatic zealotry, yet in essence, it is often quieter and more powerful than this stereotype. To act directly is to address the actual issue of your concern. If you're working against hunger, it might be simply giving someone a meal. If you're working against homelessness, it might be taking over an abandoned house and making it livable. If you want to end animal cruelty, it might include among other things, removing/liberating animals from laboratories.



NORTH AMERICAN ANIMAL LIBERATION PRESS OFFICE

Essay on Direct Action (continued)

Direct Action is used to describe a wide range of activities designed to bring attention to a particular issue. It is undertaken by people who have strong views which are not being acknowledged or acted upon by their government. Usually it is a last resort when other means of protest have been tried and have not produced the desired result. Direct action sometimes involves acting against the law.

Direct action differs from symbolic protest action, which is lobbying someone in authority to change their policies. An advantage to direct action is that it doesn't require the cooperation of the authority to be effective. If they intervene to stop your action, you have a dramatic story; if they ignore you, you've followed your conscience and can continue following it further. Since the action in itself has a direct effect, it has a power and strength. In practice, the most effective actions are both direct and symbolic, providing a clear witness to your beliefs.

Direct action requires courage, commitment, training and the ability to focus on an urgent issue. Non-violent direct action has an honorable history both as a legitimate means of protest and as a means of raising public awareness of vital issues. On December 16, 1773, Samuel Adams led three groups of fifty men with hatchets onto ships in Boston Harbor. They broke into 342 chests and threw all of the tea overboard. This defiant act resulted in \$1,000,000 in damage. Never is the Boston Tea Party referred to as economic sabotage or direct action, but that is indeed exactly what it was. The French Resistance is another example of people breaking the law in order to answer to a higher morality. Their activities included sabotaging bridges and roads in order to slow down the cattle cars carrying many to their death. Members of this secret organization risked their lives and the lives of their families to save others. In the 1850's, Harriet Tubman and other members of the Underground Railroad freed slaves in the southern United States. There are also numerous accounts of abolitionists sabotaging the property of slave-owners and using various tactics to disrupt the flow of commerce in the slave system. These individuals acted illegally at the time, but they are now regarded as heroes for their role in ending slavery.

Animal Liberation is a worldwide movement that is growing rapidly. Direct action activists working for animal liberation make no excuses for their efforts. The results that they have achieved speak for themselves. The direct action efforts that animal liberation activists carry out at animal research laboratories have given us proof of horrific cruelty that would not have been discovered or believed otherwise. They have resulted in the filing of criminal charges against laboratories, citing of experimenters for violations of the Animal Welfare Act, and, in some cases, shutting down of abusive labs for good. The direct action efforts of these activists have also been followed by widespread scientific condemnation of the practices occurring in the targeted labs. While some direct action may be illegal, can the efforts really be considered immoral? For the tens of thousands of animals who have been rescued, the courageous volunteers who have risked their own freedom, are nothing less than heroes.

Direct action activists believe that the situation we face is so serious, and the changes demanded by it so massive that the only solution is for people to take their future in their hands and physically halt further animal cruelty and suffering. To quote Malcolm X, "If we are extremists, then we are not ashamed of it, for the conditions that our people suffer are extreme, and extreme illness can not be cured with moderate medicine".

Real social change can never be realized from the use of one or a few tactics alone. All possible strategies are necessary to realize any sort of social change. The animal rights movement needs to work together to achieve change. Protests and education are important tools in ending animal abuse - but for the animals suffering in cages right now - the direct action of compassionate activists is even better. We need to continue to write letters, picket fur stores, support mainstream organizations, and we also need underground direct action.

Press Officer Lindy Greene on "Violence"



There has lately been quite a bit of controversy regarding the topic of violence as a potential strategy in the animal rights movement. This is a subject that will be inherently conflictual and contentious - but it needs to be addressed. Even the ALF - whose guidelines require taking measures to prevent harming any life, animal or human - have recently employed arson or explosives in the commission of underground direct actions. Groups like the Revolutionary Cells, the Justice Department, and the Animal Rights Militia do not disallow violence as a legitimate and morally justifiable tactic.

Animal rights activists are innately compassionate people who respect life. Violence of any kind runs counter to their natural dispositions. That is precisely why they are who and what they are. But the continuous and escalating abuse - particularly in the vivisection venues - has become so unbearable and untenable for some that their shattered hearts and irreconcilable moral outrage inescapably compel them to retaliate with increasing levels of vehemence. Still, violence for any animal rights activist would surely be a last resort - never undertaken lightly.

It is to its immense credit that the animal rights movement has been thus far so eminently able to remain non-violent in the face of such pervasive and ignoble abuse of innocent, defenseless sentient beings tortured and murdered - in vivisection and product-testing labs, on fur and factory farms, in circuses and at rodeos, in municipal shelters, and on the Canadian ice floes - for fraudulent science, fashion, the palate, entertainment, and industrial rendition.

The animal rights movement seems to have three segments - welfarist / rescue, above-ground / public, and underground / illegal. Considerable ideological debate reigns regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness of each of these advocacy purviews - and this has invited friction, divisiveness, and infighting. The welfare and rescue arm seeks to help individual animals by bailing them from shelters and securing legislative changes that provide better treatment or kinder methods of death. The above-ground faction employs an abolitionist approach and usually avails itself of the public demonstration in order to raise awareness of animal issues. The underground element strives to directly liberate animals from places of abuse and to inflict economic damage upon those who profit from and are responsible for such abuse.

Individual activists have always had to take into account their own comfort levels, personal resources, and philosophical perspectives in discovering and determining where along the strategic continuum they will elect to fall. Each arena confers its attendant complement of disappointments and rewards. The rescuer rejoices over the ones saved - but sadly contemplates those left behind. The welfarist is glad that the lab animal has a toy or the laying hen some additional cage space - but suffers the despair of knowing they will still live short, painful lives and die brutal, unsung deaths. The above-ground, legal protester enjoys the feelings of empowerment and connection standing shoulder-to-shoulder with fellow activists - but must expect success at the expense of protracted campaigns and law enforcement heat. The underground activist knows the elation of releasing wild, and rehoming domestic, animals - but endures the ever-nigh fear of arrest and incarceration.

If we can glance for a moment back through the lens of history, we will see that all social justice movements have contained their more "radical" or "extreme" elements. In fact, they most likely would not have succeeded without those "fringe" factions - and the same may ultimately prove true of the animal rights movement. From the Sons of Liberty who participated in the Boston Tea Party to protest taxation without representation and British mercantilism; through the Underground Railroad Conductors who



**NORTH AMERICAN
ANIMAL LIBERATION
PRESS OFFICE**

Lindy Greene on "Violence"

liberated black slaves from the Southern plantations; to the Suffragettes who used arson in their quest to obtain the feminine vote, we observe that sociopolitical progress has been achieved exactly because some have been willing to circumvent or break the law. All of these people - whom we today adulate as visionaries and freedom fighters - were labeled "terrorists" in their own time periods.

People typically have no problem with violence used in defense of humans. No one would claim that the Allied Forces were violent when they battled the Germans to dismantle the Nazi concentration camps. But people do have a problem with violence in defense of animals - who are the victims of a holocaust no less malignant and monstrous than that unleashed by the Third Reich. What does this imply? That the suffering of animals is less important than that of humans? That species membership is a valid criterion for placing someone outside the circle of moral compassion and beyond the reach of effective defense? That the lives of torturers and murderers are more intrinsically valuable than those of their victims? It seems, unfortunately, to be an unattractive and ineluctable facet of human nature that the oppressors - luxuriating in the perks of power and privilege - are not motivated by courteous correspondence or emotional entreaty to make concessions to those whom they oppress. Such virtually always must be coerced with the threat - or actuality - of acute physical force. Indeed, it took a Revolutionary War to throw off the yoke of a tyrannical British king; a Civil War to force the plantation masters to free their slaves; and a World War to shut off the flow of Zyklon B at Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen.

Does ineffective action not constitute another form (albeit indirect) of violence? It would seem to suggest tacit cooperation or collusion. It sends the message, "You have nothing to fear from us. We have no intention of launching any kind of serious opposition against you. Keep doing what you're doing - secure in the knowledge that the most you can expect from us is a candlelight vigil, tabling event, banner drop, some street theater, a few polite letters, and a peaceful picket." We congratulate ourselves for "not sinking to their level" and "occupying the moral high ground," while the animals - whom we claim to represent - continue to suffer atrocities undreamed of even by Adolph Hitler.

So, what is the answer for the animals? When we come up with a supremely creative and effective legal tactic - such as secondary or tertiary targeting - the authorities froth at the mouth to quash it and jail its originators. "SHACTivism" was totally above-ground, which ironically enabled the government and its corporate henchmen to identify and cherry pick seven activists for persecution and prosecution. (For obvious reasons, they have a much harder row to hoe with clandestine underground activists.) Okay, then. If animal rights activists begin to engage in violence, the jackboots will have no one to blame but themselves. John F. Kennedy said it quite eloquently: "When you make peaceful protest impossible, you make violent revolution inevitable." When legitimate channels of redress of grievances are blocked or punished - or when working through the system produces negligible results - people get frustrated. And when their frustration reaches intolerable limits, the consequences are predictable. Yet we never seem to learn that lesson. From antiquity to modernity, the tyrants continue to let us know that they will not budge unless forced. And when the force finally comes, they act surprised and victimized.

This author would suspect that most activists have ambivalent feelings toward violence. Who among us hasn't secretly wished the same experiments visited on the vivisectors who wantonly torture innocent animals and retard true medical progress for humans? Who among us hasn't privately fantasized about an anonymous vigilante animal rights cell that would magically rise up to mete out glacial justice to those who bludgeon newborn harp seals just so that some hirsute human pelt princess can be villous in Versace? Fess up! We've all gleefully indulged in such musings and reveries!

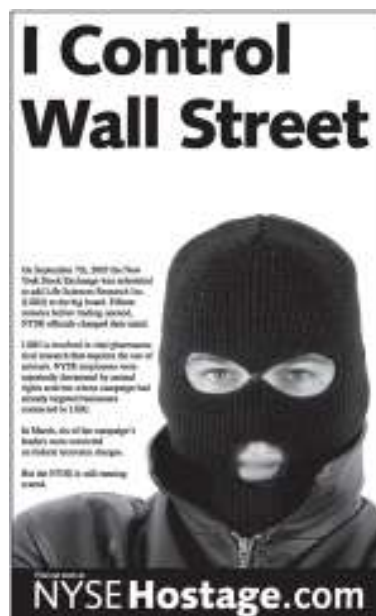
We live in a topsy-turvy milieu where "researchers" can addict animals to crystal meth; "toxicologists" can lethally poison 500 animals a day; fur

"farmers" can skin animals alive; "shelters" can put down tens of thousands of animals every year; and the President (who by his very own definition of the term is a terrorist) can spy on his own citizens, commit genocide against the civilians of another sovereign nation, and - in defiance of Constitutional and international law - torture prisoners of war. But those who become disillusioned with penning polite posts to their Congressional representatives, making a few insignificant changes in the laws, and picketing - and who opt, instead, to engage in illegal direct action - are deemed the "criminals" and "terrorists."

Recognizing that violence may be morally justifiable does not necessarily equate to desiring or advocating it. Animal rights activists don't really want to hurt anyone. They just want the abuse to stop. Analogously, one can acknowledge that a despotic government should be overthrown - while simultaneously dreading, and seeking alternatives to, revolution.

On the other hand, there exists the moral obligation to objectively examine and realistically appraise whether the tactics of a social justice movement are...well...obtaining the social justice it purports to seek. Increasing numbers of animals are being gratuitously tortured in the labs, while millions that could be funneled into valid and progressive research are diverted to the bank accounts of vivisectors to provide them with luxurious homes and fancy cars. We had to confront and accept the fact that no amount of "diplomacy" or "good will" was going to convince His Majesty to grant the colonists their independence; the Confederate landed gentry to relinquish its free labor; or der Reichsfuhrer to stop herding Jews into gas chambers.

If someone were torturing or murdering your spouse, child, sibling, or parent, would you politely ask him to stop? Or would you use whatever force was necessary to disable him? If you were being tortured inside a lab, what would you want others to do? Stand outside and leaflet - or tear down the walls to get you out? Can peaceful approaches accomplish our goals? Or must they be inevitably strongarmed?



Advertisement appearing recently in the New York Times and Washington Post, depicting the effects of the campaign to stop animal cruelty at Huntingdon Life Sciences. HLS shares were delisted from the NY Stock Exchange last October after activists threatened protests.

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