

Friday, November 14, 2003

## Preposterous PETA

I still remember that cool summer day in July 1988. I was just a few weeks shy of my sixth birthday. My mom carted my younger brother, Tyler, and me to the Humane Society outlet at the south end of Hillsboro. There, I picked out and adopted a kitten I named "Friskie," a tabby American short-hair that still lives at my parents' house.

I like Friskie, and I've grown attached to her over the last 15 years, but I would give her up if it meant finding a cure for malaria or AIDS. I'd let her go, too, if it meant finding a cure for cystinosis (which affects only 600 people nationwide) or fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva (125 people) or even a disease that afflicts only one person. Why? Because a human life, by virtue of human consciousness, is more valuable than the life of a lower animal.

But not everyone sees it that way.

"Even if animal tests produced a cure for AIDS, we'd be against it (sic)," Ingrid Newkirk hystericaly explained in the Sept. 1, 1989, issue of *Vogue*.

Newkirk co-founded and is currently the presi-



**Travis Willse**  
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dent of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. And the absurdity of her comment is lamentably representative of the group's largely fanatical philosophy and reflects the irrational agenda of many extreme animal rights activists. This column will explore less PETA's core values, though, and delve more into its history of grossly irresponsible, offensive rhetoric and opportunistic, radical methods they use that often (somewhat ironically) violate both human decency and intellectual integrity.

(A brief aside is necessary here: I accept a so-called "animal welfare theory," wherein the use of animals for food, clothing or experimentation is acceptable as long as that use has a functional motive and is reasonable. Experimenting on rhesus monkeys to find an AIDS vaccine is wholly acceptable; senseless torture of backyard dogs is not. Furthermore, I condemn PETA's methods and those of many radical animal rights activists, as well as many of their philosophies, but I do not denounce vegetarianism, veganism or any of many other rational practices and ideologies sometimes associated with the animal welfare movement.)

Animal testing of medical procedures that benefit humans is often, simply put, essential.

"Most, if not all of the medical advances over the last 50 years have depended, either directly or indirectly, on research done on animals," psychology Professor Emerita Barbara Gordon-

Lickey explained. "Certainly all new methods, regardless of how they're developed, have to be tested on animals."

But some radical animal rights activists — evidently unsatisfied with merely verbalizing their displeasure with animal testing — voice their ill-reasoned grievances by resorting to indefensible violence. On Oct. 26, 1986, at least one activist broke into, ransacked and defaced Gordon-Lickey's lab ("Vandals ransack science labs, threaten to strike again soon," *ODE*; Oct. 27, 1986), inflicting \$36,000 in damages. (Ironically, the vandal destroyed \$2,000 of audio tutorial materials used for training technicians and scientists to care for and handle lab animals properly.)

In a statement the Animal Liberation Front delivered to the Associated Press about the incident, the group decried the lab's "torture chambers" and asserted: "This is just the beginning of our efforts to liberate those oppressed in research concentration camps in Oregon. We will not allow this slaughter to continue without resistance. You will hear again from us soon." Just to clarify, ALF is a criminal organization that FBI spokesman Ross Rice said is responsible for more than 600 acts of vandalism.

Sharon Nettles, former coordinator of Eugene's PETA chapter, told the *Emerald* for the 1986 story that PETA does not condone illegal actions.

However, about the break-in, Nettles gloated, "I'm glad someone did it."

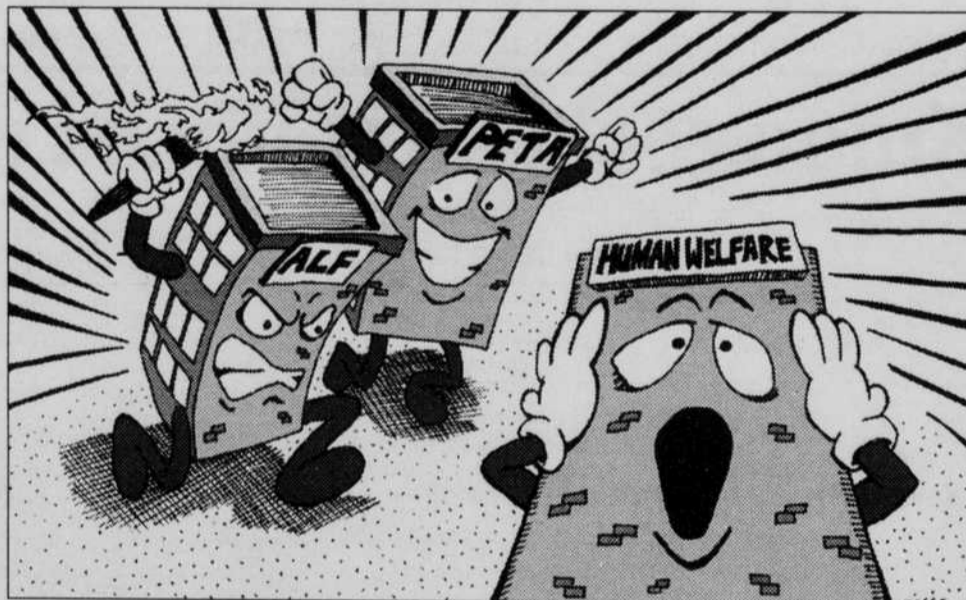
Activist Roger Troen, who was eventually convicted of the break-in, is a member of ALF. PETA came to Troen's undeserved rescue, paying from its tax-exempt war chest his \$27,000 of legal fees and \$34,900 fine. PETA's connections with ALF are numerous — its major grantees include longtime ALF ringleader and former *Earth First!* Journal Editor Rodney Coronado, who was sentenced in 1995 to 57 months in federal prison for the 1992 arson of a Michigan State University laboratory. Since his release, Coronado has openly admitted to at least six other arsons.

PETA's annals are filled not only with granting funds to terrorists but with rhetoric that ranges from offensive to nonsensical.

On July 6, 2001, a shark attacked and chomped off the right arm of then-8-year-old Jessie Arbogast on the Florida coast. In what *Time* Magazine dubbed on its cover "Summer of the Shark," mass media tapped into the collective unconscious, talking sharks for months (lost in this brouhaha was the fact that shark attacks actually declined by 13 incidents that year before). PETA followed suit, unveiling a promotional billboard that asked, "Would you give your right arm to know why sharks attack? Could it be revenge?"

According to PETA, "The recent injuries suffered by shark attack victims offer us a glimpse into the terrifying experience these fish endure when they are hauled out of their environment only to be pitch-forked back into the water after their fins have been sliced off."

Maybe so, by some particularly imaginative and macabre stretch of the mind. But offering a



Steve Baggs Illustration

bizarrely non sequitur "revenge" theory only chillingly and opportunistically abuses a human tragedy and unfairly takes advantage of the gullible, further polluting dialogue about important issues with irrationality.

Regrettably, this blatant opportunism and deviation from reason is more PETA's rule and less its exception.

In summer 2000, a few months after doctors diagnosed New York City then-mayor Rudy Giuliani with prostate cancer, PETA ran a billboard campaign with ads showing Giuliani sporting a milk mustache. The message? The ad read, "Got Prostate Cancer? Drinking milk contributes to prostate cancer." The group dropped the campaign after Giuliani threatened to sue the group.

But even worse than its disregard for a single person's suffering is its apparent disregard for and wholesale devaluation of human life.

In its Nov. 13, 1983, issue, the *Washington Post* quoted Newkirk lamenting, "Six million people died in concentration camps, but six billion broiler chickens will die this year in slaughterhouses" (emphasis added).

Twenty years later, PETA pushed the ideological pedal on the rhetorical metal, launching a "Holocaust on Your Plate" campaign to promote a "nonviolent, vegan diet." In the campaign, PETA paraded a massive graphic display wherein images of chickens, pigs and calves were juxtaposed with pictures of near-dead Holocaust victims and piles of human corpses.

"Just as the Nazis tried to 'dehumanize' Jews by forcing them to live in filthy, crowded conditions," read PETA's press release detailing the campaign, "animals on today's factory farms are stripped of all that is enjoyable and natural to them and treated as nothing more than meat-, egg-, and milk-making 'machines.'"

The Holocaust, one of the worst abominations in human history (numerically and morally), re-

flects humanity's capacity for cruelty. PETA seems to lack the appreciation for human life or decency to see that, out of respect for those who survived the concentration camps — and moreover, for those who did not — comparisons to the tragedy should be restricted to, well, legitimately comparable tragedies. Asserting that the death of a chicken is morally equivalent to the wholesale, grotesque slaughter of sentient, conscious beings is an appalling affront to every Jew, Gypsy, homosexual, person with a disability and other Nazi-labeled "misfit" who resisted de facto murder in the camps for months or years.

On its frequently asked questions page, PETA's Web site quotes the celebrated humanitarian Albert Schweitzer: "Aware of the problems and responsibilities an expanded ethic brings with it, said we each must 'live daily from judgment to judgment, deciding each case as it arises, as wisely and mercifully as we can.'"

But, as its conduct has illustrated time and time again, PETA lacks the wisdom to participate in a fair and rational discussion of its grievances, and eschews mercy by supporting terrorists and taking unfair advantage of human tragedies whenever it suits its bizarre, misguided agenda.

According to nonprofit tax forms filed with the Internal Revenue Service, PETA spent only \$6,100 of its \$10.9 million budget on animal shelters in fiscal year 1996. It seems, then, that The Price Is Right host Bob Barker — who founded the DJ&T Foundation, an organization that funds low-cost animal clinics to fight animal overpopulation — has done more for Friskie and millions of other animals nationwide than PETA ever has.

(Oh, and by the way, don't forget to spay or neuter your pets.)

Contact the editorial editor at [traviswillse@dailyemerald.com](mailto:traviswillse@dailyemerald.com). His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the *Emerald*.

## Oregon law: Police can't demand identification

Editor's note: This commentary is part of the *Emerald's* and ASUO Legal Services' ongoing efforts to assist students through education as well as representation. ASUO Legal Services' attorneys are licensed to practice in the state of Oregon.

### GUEST COMMENTARY

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You've probably seen ads and articles in the *Emerald* saying that you must show ID or give your name whenever asked by a police officer. It's not true.

The *Emerald* quoted Public Safety Inferno Di-

rector Tom Hicks as saying, "The police do have the authority to make you give your ID, and if you refuse, they can take you to jail" ("Foot patrol officers help prevent riots in University area," Sept. 29). Hicks later confirmed that he was misquoted and actually said, "If an officer stops you for a violation, the officer has the authority to detain you until establishing your identity." That's true.

Law enforcement and DPS officers probably don't like the fact that students don't have to give up their names or ID on demand. It makes their jobs more difficult and slows them down. Still, everyone — students and law enforcement — must follow the rules.

Now that so many DPS officers have citation authority, it's even more important that students have accurate information about their legal rights and duties. You might give your name or ID because you don't know your options, or you might instead choose to give your name or ID

because you reason that it's easier or better than suffering the consequences of refusing.

Generally, an officer cannot require your name or ID even during a lawful stop. You're not required to carry ID. Likewise, you're generally not required to show an ID to prove the name you gave is true.

Oregon law doesn't require you to disclose your name or ID upon an officer's demand. Refusing to give your name or ID or failing to carry ID is generally not an offense. The U.S. Supreme Court has previously found other states' laws requiring citizens to carry or show ID unconstitutional.

Sometimes you must carry or present a particular form of ID. For instance, you must carry a driver's license when you drive and show it to officers enforcing traffic laws. Otherwise, police can detain you to investigate your identity and arrest you for the crime of failing to carry or present a driver's license.

If an officer stops you on reasonable suspicion that you committed or are about to commit a crime, he can ask for your name and ID as part of his "reasonable inquiry." However, you're not required to answer, and you commit no offense by refusing to give your name or ID. If you refuse, you should expect to be arrested for the crime the officer thinks you committed, rather than cited and released, but not for refusing to give your name or ID.

An officer who suspects you of a non-criminal violation can stop and detain you and ask for your name and ID. You may legally refuse to give your name and ID, in that case, you should expect to be detained as long as necessary to establish your identity. Again, your refusal to give your name or ID isn't a separate offense and you cannot be legally arrested or jailed for that refusal.

Ilona Koleszar is the director of ASUO Legal Services.