

only tap the particular area of the animal's body to get an animal to respond. This, the end result of systematic violence, is the "clean" part of animal training--the only part actually witnessed by circus-goers.

Fortunately, activists captured video of the actual viciousness of circus animal training by Tim Frisco, the "animal care director" of Carson and Barnes Circus. Frisco, instructing student trainers in this sadistic art, sinks a bullhook into an elephant and, as the elephant screams in pain, tells the novice trainers to "hurt 'em.... Make 'em scream.... Sink that hook into em... When you hear that screaming, then you know you got their attention." Significantly, Frisco warns the new trainers that they have to beat the animals into submission backstage so that the animal needn't be physically punished "in front of a thousand people." (The Carson Barnes and other video will be displayed by Fresno Voices for Animals during the upcoming Ringling protest.) Frisco learned the trade from his father, a Ringling Bros. circus trainer.

To top off the lifetime of violence and abuse suffered by circus animals, at the end of their lives, when they are no longer of commercial value, some circuses (and some zoos, as well as breeders) sell and ship the animals to what have become known as "canned hunting" establishments. The Humane Society of the United States defines canned hunting as "killing an animal inside an enclosure for the purpose of obtaining a trophy" and estimates that there are over one thousands of these little shops of horror around the US. The HSUS notes that most states allow canned hunting; no federal law bans it; and that the practice is exempted under the federal Animal Welfare Act.

### WHAT CIRCUS WOULD JESUS PAY TO SEE? (CIRQUE DE SOLEIL!)

For some people simple common sense and compassion are not sufficient to spark opposition to the circus and other forms of animal abuse. All religions contain dictates against violence towards and abuse of animals. In the first creation story in Genesis, for example, God creates humans to be "masters" of the animals, yet the creation of animals and humans alike is "good". This general goodness of God's creation is reflected in the vegan diet God prescribes for humankind. God said "See, I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are upon the whole earth, and all the trees and seed-bearing fruit; this shall be your food." As in Christianity, Islam holds that dominion over animals is not unconditional and that those who abuse creation are the lowest of the low. Islamic teachings include the recognition of human-like community among many species of non-human animals, animals as teachers, and human-animal communication. Islam also holds that animals have consciousness, that humans and animals must share resources, limit animal testing and the use of fur to necessity, and strictly forbids all forms of staged animal fights.

In conjunction with compassion and purity of heart, the Buddhist Shurangama Sutra forbids killing or harming animals and contains unequivocal instructions on vegetarian diet, except where the climate and soils cannot sustain fruits and vegetables. Among other masters, Thich Nhat Hanh describes reverence for life as the first precept of Buddhism and explicitly prohibits animal killing and abuse. Similarly, in Hinduism the Bhagavad Gita (verse 5.18) asserts that one who has attained awareness comprehends the unity of all beings. Animal souls like human souls are meant to progress to a higher stage of awareness. As each soul exists for a particular reason, killing an animal interrupts the progression of souls and thus causes great suffering.

Finally, in indigenous traditions, ceremonies precede the killing of animals; participants recognize their kinship with animals and ask forgiveness for taking their life, noting that it was only so that the people could live. No part of an animal is wasted, and ethical teachings consistently remind people that killing or harming animals wantonly is an act of



**TYKE, AN ELEPHANT WHO WENT ON A RAMPAGE IN HONOLULU, WAS KILLED IN A GUNFIRE AFTER KILLING HER TRAINER AND INJURING DOZENS OF SPECTATORS**

supreme ignorance and threatens the harmony that holds human and non-human nature in balance. Along with written law, police, jails, and private property, these cultures also lack fast food, circuses, and zoos.

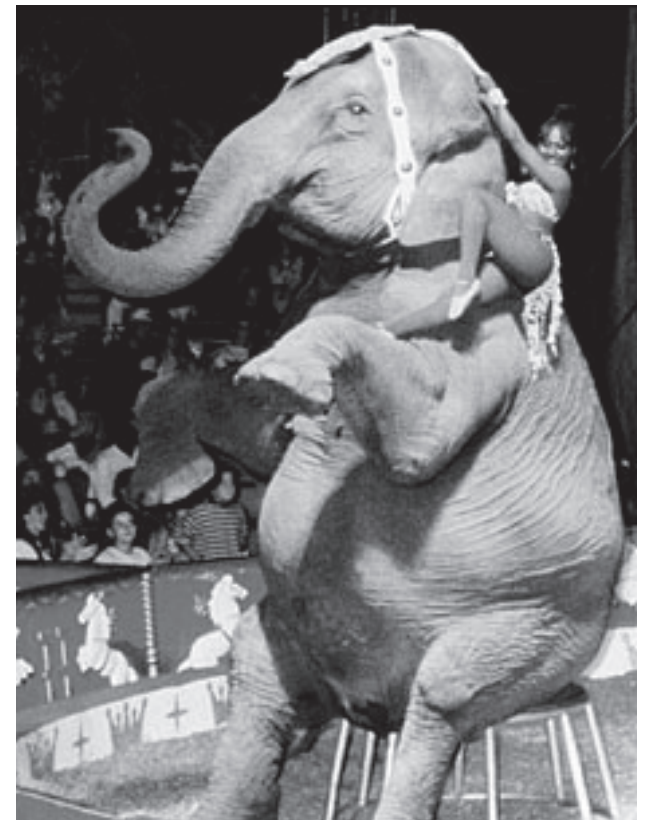
Secular ethics similarly prohibits cruelty to animals. Utilitarianism recognizes the sentience of non-human animals. As any ethical calculus is premised on maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain, any act that results in harm to an animal must be balanced by a greater degree of well being. Conceivably, one could argue that the pain an animal might experience in a medical test (assuming there is no other way to obtain the knowledge) might be outweighed by the medical benefit to human beings. Obviously no such argument can be made in regards to the pleasure a human might take in having a flesh sandwich or, even more so, seeing a beaten and caged animal let out to perform a trick. This is the premise of Peter Singer's ground-breaking work ANIMAL LIBERATION. It is an instance of what Singer calls "speciesism" to discount the animal's interest altogether.

This is precisely what happens most of the time when a human being is actually forced to confront animal cruelty, whether in the circus or elsewhere. They hold that "well, after all, it is only an animal." But while there are obvious and crucial differences, human and non-human animals are not entirely different. Consideration must be given to qualities that are similar between the two groups if ethical action is to follow. Otherwise the fundamental premise of ethical mutuality--that we should treat others as we would like to be treated--will be violated.

This is the crucial point: who do we consider as "others." Historically, especially in the west, humans have completely discounted non-human animals as entirely alien, their voices completely silenced. As with non-white racial groups and women, some differences in degree have been taken to mean a comprehensive difference in kind. Hence, slavery, genocide against native people, and discrimination against women. This is not an argument for voting rights for non-human animals. Obviously, they lack the judgment and foresight to vote. But so do many humans--children, those with severe mental disabilities, senile people, and most republicans. But that obviously doesn't mean that we are ethically in a position to inflict pain, suffering, or take the life of members of these groups. We acknowledge that in other respects they are similar. Though there is a difference in kind, there is not an absolute difference in type. The same holds for animals; insofar as they are alive, are interested in freedom, have a way of life, and can experience pleasure and pain, we ought

not harm them in any way unless we can demonstrate some higher well being that outweighs their suffering.

In fact, it is precisely our unique human character as beings capable of rational choice that obligates us to act ethically, especially toward those who are in a weak or disadvantageous position. Not to do so towards animals deforms our moral character toward both non-human animals and other humans. In the end, it is as simple as Alice Walker once observed "The animals of the world exist for their own reasons. They were not made for humans any more than black people were made for white, or women created for men." Fundamentally, ethics is about recognizing the interests of others. An authentically ethical world cannot exist as long as the interests of any others, including animals, are ignored.



### VIOLENCE: "A DOWNWARD SPIRAL"

Martin Luther King described violence as "a downward spiral." Similarly Cesar Chavez noted that economic deprivation, rodeos, and cock fighting are "all cut from the same defective cloth: violence." The violence inflicted on circus animals is no different. Violence against animals is not disconnected from other acts of violence. It has been determined, for example, that many sadistic criminals engaged in violence against animals as youths. More generally, when humans find excuses for engaging in cruelty to any sentient beings they will more readily find a rationale for acting cruelly toward other human beings. How often, in times of war or in acts of genocide, are human counterparts derided as "animal" or "sub-human" and thus presumably worthy of violent destruction?

In the western tradition, this recognition of the connection between violence to animals and violence among humans goes back at least to the sixth century BCE. The ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras noted "For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed, he who sows the seed of murder and pain cannot reap joy and love." Please be an activist for peace, joy, and love. Join Fresno Voices for Animals in protest against Ringling Bros. Circus. Never attend animal circuses, and warn your friends and neighbors about the abuse of animals in the circus.

(For further detailed, gripping accounts of elephant training please see PETA's "The Plight of Elephants in Circuses.")

