

WRITER'S NOTE

Animals are a fundamental part of my life. I was born into a family with two cats, and as I grew up, they grew older and ill, and I learned how to care for a living being other than myself. They eased from blanket-covered life to beneath the fig tree, and I felt the vacancy that accompanied two deaths I didn't fully understand. A while after Lily and Burnie passed, my family adopted a dog. She was a mutt, colored with light and dark browns, a white chest, four white big paws that would always be crossed in a regal manner, and ears that stuck up like two perfectly erected triangles. The animal shelter gave her the name Cookie, and it was a name that my sister and I would not let go of. Cookie lived our family for thirteen years, and she reinforced my perception of animals as creatures of companionship. I remember times when her head rested upon my chest, her eyes closed in contented sleep, and I would refuse to move in worry of disrupting a seemingly perfect moment. There were also times when I would yell at her, and then feel guilty for hours after, the image of her cowering body and wide eyes etched into memory. She could feel things, and I knew that she would always be unconditionally there. When Cookie began growing old, we adopted a second dog, not only for Cookie's benefit, but also for ours, and the inevitable end we knew would arrive in only a matter of years. We adopted a ten-week old mutt puppy that I named Ellie, and she is the one that is still currently living with us today. She is a dark brindle color with seams of golden brown sewn throughout her fur. Her thin ears change between flopping crookedly, standing straight up, or posing like airplane wings zooming straight into space. Ellie is cuddlesome and goofy. She will curl up next to you and snuggle beneath your body, or can be found jumping up and turning around in circles in a fit of playfulness. I helped raise Ellie from a puppy to an adult, and her loyalty has stood unwavering in our relationship. Then once again, I experienced death, as Cookie reached fourteen years of age, and fell from comfort to sickness to comfort. This time death was more real. I knew where the ache I felt came from, and my grief confirmed the closeness I had held with Cookie.

There have been other instances in my life that have taught me the preciousness of animals. One of my neighbor's cats growing up, Willie, was always shy and seemingly cranky. He was a white and orange cat who never allowed for any sort of friendly relationship with me. But one day I decided to break the barrier that had separated me from this cat. It was a slow effort. Patient. Beginning with leaving food on the front porch then sitting closer to him as he ate. After weeks he would let me pet him fully, and we grew to trust each other. Willie allowed me to see the change an animal can go through, and how cats can be cautious and timid creatures just like humans. Just like myself.

When I reached the age of ten, I began volunteering at the East Bay SPCA in Oakland, CA. It was there that I met Maribel, and I truly learned that life for dogs and cats wasn't always nice. Maribel was a silvery grey pit bull mix that had been forced into dog fighting before the SPCA rescued her. Although mostly healed from the experience, her body still held wounds that suggested mistreatment. And yet Maribel was one of the most high-spirited playful dogs I have ever met. She was the catalyst in my realization that the stereotype surrounding pit bulls is false; these dogs are only viewed as vicious creatures because of the nasty behaviors they are forced into by humans.

Although my first-hand experience has only been with dogs and cats, I have grown to develop a care for all animals. I refuse to kill spiders when they are in my bedroom and am an unwavering vegetarian. One thing that has influenced my interest in animals, besides my

constant contact with them, are online photographs of things that feel impossible to stomach. I have seen pictures of abused dogs, bloody elephants, and animals trapped in plastic. My relationship with dogs and cats and the latter images have shown me that animals are worthy of respect, and that people's care is crucial.

Animals are mysterious creatures. People try to make sense of them by observing their behavior and then making conclusions rooted in the human experience. People exercise anthropomorphism as a means of making sense of the unknowable. Animals are assigned feelings and emotions as people continue to employ the belief that they themselves are capable of comprehending an animal mind. This idea engenders the question of why then, animal abuse is prominent in our society as well as in other parts of the world. Humans are animals, but infuse pain into other animals for the purpose of self-benefit, specifically entertainment and money. I believe these acts of animal cruelty to be based in a notion of human supremacy, for people are anthropocentric creatures. Humans are constantly searching for ways to obtain power and security, each of which can be supposedly obtained through abusive behavior towards another being.

There are creation stories and myths that discuss a more respectful and almost equal coexistence between humans and other animals, as well as cultures, such as the Native Americans, and the Jainists, who view animals to be more treasured creatures and practice minimal animal harm. However, humans in many current societies have lost connection with the worthiness of animals. We no longer hold an understanding that nonhuman animals are creatures that deserve a wealth of respect and honored treatment. It is scary to think about what animal abuse reflects about the nature of humans, for people have been proven capable of not just harm, but also murder. Humans seem to be increasingly lacking qualities that allow them to feel empathy, to nurture other beings, and to realize that an equalized coexistence among animals and humans is crucial for a peaceful environment. As we move towards constructing a desensitized community, where will that lead humankind? As the maltreatment of animals continues to escalate, what will it mean for the way we treat each other?

EVOLUTION

One of the most evident connections between humans and other animals is evolution. Both humans and apes are mammals existing under the denotation of primate. Modern day humans are representatives of the genus of primate called *Homo*. Around 300 million years ago, the earliest mammals evolved out of reptiles. Mammals' legs were directly beneath their bodies rather than on the sides like the reptiles, which allowed for better support when living terrestrially. These mammals were required to develop higher body temperatures because there was greater variation on land than in the water. They were able to hunt both during day and night, and survive colder climates, for which they evolved hairs on the skin as a means of holding onto body heat. Furthermore, they could cover long distances at a fast pace, ensuring a more effective search for food. Around 240 million years ago, dinosaurs evolved from reptiles. They lived on land and had high body temperatures, but were also able to stand on two legs, giving them an advantage over mammals. By around 200 million years ago dinosaurs had chief dominance over the land and only the smaller mammals were able to coexist with the dinosaurs. These mammals withdrew to the colder areas of the land, and evolved to give birth instead of laying eggs. This meant that the young could receive nutrients and oxygen from their mother's blood in addition to keeping warm and safe. Mammals grew a new layer of brain tissue around the instinctual part of their brain, which enforced their dependency on learned behavior. Parents had to devote more time to educating their young, and the practice of learned

behavior engendered intimate relationships between the parent and child, leading to instructive instincts in the parents and imitative instincts in the young. Around 65 million years ago a massive extinction happened, as a rock slammed hard into Earth. There were few survivors: only birds (the last of the dinosaurs) and the mammals who had adapted to cold conditions. Mammals soon conquered the land and grew into many different shapes and sizes.¹

Some mammals lived in the trees and others on land. The tree dwellers lived off of a fruit and insect diet, and developed fingers and thumbs that helped them to grasp branches. The shape of their heads changed from long snouts to flatter faces, and their eyes moved to the front of their face, making it more convenient for them as they swung through the trees. However, the tree dwellers soon grew too big to balance in the trees, and so they adapted to walking on land. Around seven million years ago, mammals relocated from the forests to the grassland, where they grew longer legs and began to walk upright. They developed an understanding of how to gather food and use sticks and stones as weaponry, which allowed them to both hunt bigger animals and carry the meat back to their families. This improvement in infant care led to an increase in brain size that was better for learning. These were human's early ancestors.² This evolutionary tale tells us that scientifically speaking, humans are undeniably, unquestionably animals. So why then, do humans consider themselves to be separate from the animal kingdom?

ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND SPECIESISM

Anthropocentrism is the belief that humans are the most important beings in the universe. It proposes the notion that we have greater intrinsic value than any other species, and are the peak of evolution. Another theory is speciesism, which states that simply being human is a valid excuse to have greater moral rights than non-human animals. When faced with a choice between saving a child or a non-human animal from, say, a fire, most people would react in a speciesist way. They wouldn't question themselves, wouldn't consider the moral status of either creature, and if they did, would be criticized by society for delaying action. A more extreme extension of speciesism is called pure speciesism, which refers to the belief that the essential needs of non-human species are less important than the most unimportant human desire. Those who justify speciesism state that humans have a higher moral ranking because of their supposed ability to be more self-aware and choose a course of action. Others who support speciesism believe it to be a natural occurrence. They argue that the majority of non-human species would treat other species less than they would their own.³ The mindsets of anthropocentrism and speciesism allow people to assert themselves in a superior position to non-human animals, validating a behavior that is ignorant, arrogant, and fully unequal.

¹ "The Story of Human Evolution." *The Story of Human Evolution*. N.p., 2005. Web. Apr. 2013. <http://www.evolutionary-metaphysics.net/evolution_of_humankind.html>.

² Academy of Evolutionary Metaphysics

³ "The Ethics of Speciesism." *BBC News*. BBC, n.d. Web. May 2013. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/animals/rights/speciesism.shtml>>.

SIMILARITIES

Although full comprehension of an animal is unattainable, through careful examination researchers have been able to assess a myriad of believed similarities between humans and non-human animals. One of the most common associations compares humans to apes. Jane Goodall is an expert on chimpanzees, and has spent her life studying their behavior. In 1960 Goodall was in Gambia, Africa and came across a chimpanzee who she had named David Greybeard. Greybeard was using pieces of grass to fish termites from their nest, demonstrating that he was changing an object's function to make it appropriate for a different use. In other words, David Greybeard was making tools, a behavior that scientists at that time believed to be specific to only humans. Throughout her work at Gombe National Park, Goodall has discovered that there are nine ways that chimps work with tool making, and has found chimpanzees in other parts of Africa who make tools as well. These tool-making practices are passed down through the generations, as chimps watch and imitate each other. Goodall calls this a definition of human culture, evidencing that there is no clear divide between humans and the rest of the animal kingdom. Goodall further discusses how the life of a chimpanzee holds numerous other likenesses to a human's life. Chimpanzees have a childhood that lasts around eight or ten years, including suckling and a period of emotional dependency upon the mother. The bonds between chimpanzees can stay deeply intact for many years. Chimpanzees display cooperation, a sense of humor, and have prominent non-verbal communication. They create a multitude of sounds, but also embrace, pat each other on the back, shake hands, and so on. These gestural forms of contact prove similar to many of the conducts of people, and thus inspire a realization that humans are not the only ones who possess so-called "human" characteristics.⁴

Another animal expert, Frans de Wall, studies the moral behavior of animals. He describes how chimpanzees make up after a fight because they recognize that a meaningful relationship they view to be meaningful was damaged, and that it is beneficial for them to attempt to fix it. Wall explains what he believes to be the pillars of morality: reciprocity and empathy. Through studies he found the latter two characteristics to be apparent in chimpanzees and elephants, more specifically, identifying acts of synchronization, cooperation, and consolation.

Wall discusses an experiment that was done many years ago at the Yerkes Primate Center where chimpanzees are trained to cooperate. The study consisted of two young chimpanzees whose task was to pull a box with food on top of it toward their cage. The box was too heavy for just one chimpanzee to pull, and so the two chimpanzees worked together to move the box closer. The next step in the study was to feed one of the chimpanzees, and thus lessen his motivation to help pull the box. The fed chimp however, was still willing to cooperate with the other chimpanzee to move the box, most likely because he understood the idea of reciprocity. If he helped the other chimpanzee move the box, he would get a favor in the future.⁵

Wall also observed that chimpanzees exercise synchronization. He describes a study that was done in which an animated head was set up and programmed to yawn. The chimpanzee would mimic the animated head by also yawning, exemplifying an aspect

⁴ Goodall, Jane. "What Separates Us from Chimpanzees?" Ted Talks. April 2007. Lecture.

⁵ Wall, Frans de. "Moral Behavior in Animals." Ted Talks. Apr. 2012. Lecture.

synchronization that Wall states underlies empathy. Wall says that there is a body channel part to empathy, meaning that someone who is talking to a sad person is going to develop a sad facial expression and posture. So by being able to imitate the yawning head, the chimpanzees were showing empathy.⁶

Lastly, Wall discusses consolation in chimpanzees. He describes a scene in which a juvenile chimp comforts a screaming male chimpanzee that lost a fight. The young chimpanzee put his arm around the sad chimp and was able to calm him down.⁷

Another researched link between humans and other animals is the experience of feeling grief. Elephants are known to linger for several days next to a deceased fellow elephant, carefully inspecting and touching it. Chimp mothers will hold a dead baby for days or weeks, and bonobos become enraged and frustrated at the occurrence of death. Ape brains in particular are viewed to be more sophisticated, which allows them to understand the permanence of death. Some scientists say that instances of animals coming to examine the dead are merely a survival tactic. They say that the living animals are looking for a better understanding of predators. But animals are undeniably social creatures. They develop sincere relationships with each other, so it makes sense that they too, just like humans, experience grief.⁸

Evidence of animal grief is further apparent when examining zoos, specifically regarding elephants. As elephants are transported around from one zoo to another, their emotional ties with each other are disrupted, causing a tremendous amount of emotional pain. In spring 2001, the Denver Zoo moved Asian elephants in and out of the facility regularly. A thirty two year old female by the name of Dolly was sent to Missouri to breed. She was separated from Miami and Candy, two of her close friends. Months after, a female named Hope and a male named Amigo were sent to the Denver Zoo and lived as neighbors to Miami and Candy. Miami began to get irritated and eventually pushed Candy, an act that harmed Candy and resulted in her euthanization. Around the time of Candy's autopsy, Hope escaped and ran through the zoo. She was moved out of the Denver Zoo, and a new animal was brought in. It is most likely that Hope had developed an emotional connection to Candy, and was very distraught over her death. Hope's rampage through the zoo was an expression of her frustration and sadness over losing Candy. Furthermore, it is probable that Miami's irritation stemmed from losing Dolly to another zoo. The story exemplifies how elephants are no exception to being social creatures. They "live in matriarchal groups in which social relationships are enduring and deep. Their memory is legendary. Elephants form life long relationships and grieve when bonds are broken because of separation or death" (Bekoff 156). Zoos have a tendency to focus primarily on the physical demands of the animals-what kind of shelter it needs, what its diet is. What are commonly disregarded are an animal's emotional demands, which are just as crucial to its survival (Bekoff).

In Grand Teton National Park, a mother coyote once left her pack, and never came back. The children would try to follow her scent, sitting up and sniffing the air. They paced anxiously, and it was obvious that they missed her. Three or four months passed before the young coyotes seemed to stop looking for their mother. Animals in the wild have an easier time adjusting to social disturbances that occur, but for animals held in captivity, whose survival

⁶ Wall, Frans de. "Moral Behavior in Animals." Ted Talks. Apr. 2012. Lecture.

⁷ Wall, Frans de. "Moral Behavior in Animals." Ted Talks. Apr. 2012. Lecture.

⁸ Kluger, Jeffrey. "The Mystery of Animal Grief." *TIME Magazine* n.d.: 42-45. Print.

needs are much lower, these emotional breaks can be greatly intensified.⁹ In contrast to the coyotes, the Denver Zoo elephant's physical demands were taken care of by humans. This allowed the elephants to focus more on their emotional needs for a longer period of time.

The evidence presented on both the behavioral and emotional similarities between humans and non-human animals clarify that humans are not separate from and are not better than other animals. We behave in similar ways and although it is impossible to know what an animal feels, we can assume that our feelings are alike. Emotions are such a notable aspect of what makes a human human. We are constantly feeling, and if animals really feel things too, than that information unifies humans with animals on a deeper level than we have ever considered before.

MENTALITY

It has been found that damaging maltreatment of animals is closely linked to other violent actions. In order to explain abusive behavior, other than the selfish motives of money and entertainment, it is necessary to examine the cause and effects of an abusive human mentality.

In May of 2009, a two-year-old pit bull terrier named Phoenix was doused in gasoline and set alight by Tremayne and Traves Johnson. The twin brothers were found to not only be keeping pit bulls in a vacant home, but also to be members of Baltimore's 1600 Boys gang. It was further learned that the Johnson twins were guilty of constant truancy and probation issues. This case hints at the noticeable link between abusive behavior towards animals and the participation in other forms of violent offense. Often dogfights are meeting places for gambling or drug trafficking. There was a study done in the 1980s in which investigators examined the treatment of animals in middle class American families that had been involved in child abuse. The results of the study, contrary to what the researches initially expected, were that these families owned a far greater number of pets than the other non-abuse households that were looked into. The majority of pets living within these abuse-identified households were no older than two years old, suggesting that the family's animals were fatally abused at a young age. It was discovered that instances of animal cruelty were around ninety percent in households where there was also domestic violence. In 1997, in a "survey of 48 of the largest shelters in the United States for victims of domestic violence and child abuse, more than 85 percent of the shelters said that women who came in reported incidents of animal abuse; 63 percent of the shelters said that children who came in reported the same" (Siebert). It can be determined that domestic violence, including child abuse, is often an accurate sign pointing in the direction of animal abuse.¹⁰

Children and animals can develop close companionship. Another study done in the 1980s reported that on average, when seven to ten year old children were asked who were the

⁹ Bekoff, Marc. *The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy-and Why They Matter*. Novato: New World Library, 2007. Print.

¹⁰ Siebert, Charles. "The Animal-Cruelty Syndrome." *The New York Times*. N.p., 11 June 2010. Web. Apr. 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/13/magazine/13dogfighting-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&>.

ten most important individuals in their lives were, two pets were listed. One half of five year olds reported turning to a pet when they felt sad, happy, or other strong emotions. As proven by these studies, animals can be positive and integral aspects of a child's life. When this beneficial friendship is disrupted by a child witnessing animal abuse, it can strongly and negatively impact that child. Children who have witnessed abuse, either as spectators or victims, often exercise abuse reactive behaviors, meaning that they re-enact the behavior they experienced onto an animal. According to Randall Lockwood, a graduate in psychology and the A.S.P.C.A's senior vice president for forensic sciences and anticruelty projects, "such children are also often driven to suppress their own feelings of kindness and tenderness toward a pet because they can't bear the pain caused by their own empathy for the abused animal. In an even further perversion of an individual's healthy empathic development, children who witness the family pet being abused have been known to kill the pet themselves in order to at least have some control over what they see as the animal's inevitable fate" (Siebert NY Times). Children are able to feel some sense of security or authority by inflicting pain on animals. This is just one example of how animal abuse and the desire for power are intimately related.¹¹

A recurring situation that researchers encounter consists of a man abusing a family pet as a means of revenge against other people, usually other family members. Lockwood did a study in which he assessed that cats are regularly abused because they are harder to control, exemplifying how animal abuse gives people a sense of dominance. Furthermore, Lockwood highlighted the connection between poverty and abuse. He describes how poverty leads to feelings of unfairness and attack, which allow the poverty-stricken to rationalize that abusing another being will result in establishing control over their own life.¹²

ABUSE

Breed Specific Legislation

There is a widely held belief that pit bulls are ferocious and savage creatures. When there is a pit bull attack in the news the breed is always specified, whereas an attack by any other dog would simply be labeled "dog attack." The general public has come to unwaveringly associate pit bulls with fear. The term "pit bull" doesn't even describe a specific single breed of dog, but is used to describe a variety of breeds. The specific and actual breeds that fall under the false umbrella term of pit bull include Staffordshire terriers, American Staffordshire terries, American bull dogs, and American pit bull terriers. These "pit bulls" are stereotyped in the same way that humans are. They are judged based off a general view of their appearance, and are hardly ever considered beyond their looks. These dogs are not only discriminated against on the social level, but have also been horribly victimized politically, including via breed specific legislation. Breed Specific Legislation is an ordinance or law that only refers to a certain breed.

¹¹ Siebert, Charles. "The Animal-Cruelty Syndrome." *The New York Times*. N.p., 11 June 2010. Web. Apr. 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/13/magazine/13dogfighting-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&>.

¹² Siebert, Charles. "The Animal-Cruelty Syndrome." *The New York Times*. N.p., 11 June 2010. Web. Apr. 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/13/magazine/13dogfighting-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&>.

In 1989, Denver, Colorado instigated a ban on pit bulls. The ban was created on August 8th and the owners had until December 30th to get their dogs out of Denver. If the owners failed to take care of the dogs, Denver would euthanize them. There were several cases that challenged the constitutionality of the law and the ordinance went through multiple stages and in and out of effect. But on May 8th 2003, a dog named Coco was taken away from her owner, Desiree. Desiree was given seven days to request a hearing for the dog or else Coco would be murdered. Desiree was able to find someone out of state to take Coco while the law was still in effect, however Desiree later grew concerned for Coco's well being, and brought her back to Denver. Coco was then killed. Since 1989, Denver has killed over 4000 pit bulls. Other such similar occurrences have occurred in Cincinnati and Miami. According to the Independent Data Collection Center, 60 percent of people who viewed pit bulls negatively blamed the media for the latter opinion. Only 15 percent said that their opinion of pit bulls was based off of personal experience.

In 2005, The City and County of San Francisco Department of Animal Care and Control established a mandatory spaying and neutering of pit bulls. The requirement applied to all pit bulls unless the pit bull is under eight weeks of age, cannot be spayed or neutered without damage to the health, the pit bull is a show dog, or the owner has not been present in the City and County of San Francisco for more than thirty days. Furthermore, a permit is required for the breeding and transferring of pit bull puppies. In accordance with the latter requirements, the City and County of San Francisco Department of Animal Care and Control made a checklist based off a dog's appearance to gauge if a canine is a pit bull. In order for the dog to qualify as a pit bull, he or she must have five out of eight of the things on the checklist. Each thing on the list is specific to a part of the body. For example, the head must be of medium length and have pronounced cheeks and a broad skull. The eyes must be almond shaped or round, set far apart, and be low in the skull. The neck must be muscular and attached to muscular shoulders. The tail must be medium long, thick at the base, and set low with a taper at the point. The hindquarters must be muscular. The coat must be smooth. All of these things are subjective. Each viewer of a dog could assess the dog differently, allowing a person's bias to play heavily into the equation. Furthermore, it isn't as if pit bulls are the only dogs to have smooth coats or muscular bodies. Multiple traits described on the list are applicable to a wide variety of different dogs.¹³

Dog Fighting

Another source of pit bull's negative reputation is their forced involvement with dog fighting. When a pit bull does actually exhibit fierce behavior, it is most likely rooted in their past relationships with humans. Dog fighting is one of the most brutal and saddening forms of abuse in which animals are objectified to generate entertainment and money. There is much more to dog fighting than what goes on in the fight pit. Dogs used for dog fighting are kept chained. In order to make the dogs aggressive, owners frequently starve and taunt them to prompt survival instincts. Dogs have been forced to run on tread mills with caged animals hanging in front of them, or hang on with their jaws from a chain with bait attached to it. Owners sometimes sharpen their dog's teeth, cut the ears, inject the dog with steroids, or add poison to the dog's food to make their fur taste bad to the other dogs. Dogs who continue to win fights are used to breed puppies for a profit, and dogs that lose are used as bait animals. Female

¹³ Sherrill, Libby, dir. *Beyond the Myth*. 2010. Film.

dogs are fastened to a rape stand to prevent refusal while males impregnate them.¹⁴ One of the best-known instances of dog fighting involved the NFL star Michael Vick, who was convicted for buying and training pit bulls for fights. During the investigation, fifty-four pit bulls were found on Vick's property in Virginia as part of the operation called Bad Newz Kennels. Dogs that were deemed unfit for fighting were shot, drowned, hanged, electrocuted, and one's body was even slammed into the ground.

Through breed specific legislation and forced fighting, pit bull breeds have become the target of unjust and ignorant treatment. Thousands have been ruthlessly harmed and murdered. When I think about all the dogs I have met through my life, the ones with broad skulls and muscular bodies, it makes me sick to think of them being abused. Just like with humans, all individual dogs are different, and are widely shaped by their interactions both with each other and with humans. It is essential to create a judgment that is founded in personal experience, and not a product of media influence and false stereotypes.

EXOTIC ANIMAL TRADE

The exotic animal trade is another example of humans abusing other animals by exploiting them for money and other seemingly beneficial purposes. The practice of importing and exporting wild animals has been occurring for decades. The trade is second to drugs and weapons on the black market, and in the United States, it functions as a fifteen billion dollar industry. Exotic animals as pets are used to promote the owners' status. In the Gulf Nation of Oman, for example, owning an exotic pet, specifically a big cat, is an ultimate status symbol. On the black market, a white lion can be sold for around \$50,000.¹⁵ The exotic animals are often grabbed from their homes, which are commonly Australia, Africa, and Brazil; animals are usually severely injured during transport. There have been cases where parrots have had their beaks and feet taped, and been stuffed into plastic tubes. Baby turtles have been taped inside their shells and placed in tube socks, baby pythons have even been discovered inside CD cases. Live Cuban pigeon eggs were once found inside plastic Easter eggs in somebody's luggage at a Miami airport. Due to the extreme measures taken to conceal their transportation, a majority of these animals don't even make it to their final destination. According to the Environmental Crime Investigation, 90 percent of reptiles exported from their homeland die within one year. Another chief contributor to the rapid death of these animals is the ignorance of the people who handle them. Most people involved in the trading are unaware of an animal's needs, physical and emotional. One particular animal, an arboreal marsupial called the sugar glider will die from a lack of socialization. The exotic animal trade also leads to wide spreading of disease, such as the 2003 monkey pox outbreak that was traced to a rat in Gambia, Africa. Other

¹⁴ "Dog Fighting." *PETA: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.peta.org/issues/animals-in-entertainment/Dogfighting.aspx>>.

¹⁵ Elwazer, Schams. "Lions, Tigers Become Problem Pets in Gulf." *CNN*. N.p., n.d. Web. May 2013. <<http://www.cnn.com/2012/04/04/world/meast/endangered-animal-pets>>.

sicknesses, such as the plague, tularemia, and herpes B have also been associated with the trade.^{16 17}

One related aspect of the exotic animal trade is the poaching of elephants that occurs in various regions of Africa. These elephants are wanted for their tusks, and their tusks only. Between 1979 and 1989 an increase in the demand for ivory led to a rapid decrease in Africa's elephant population. In 1977 there were approximately 1.3 million elephants living in Africa, and in 1997, there were only 600,000 left. This drop in population is monumental, and shows how ready people are to kill animals for their own benefit. Ivory is traded to turn a profit, and is used in sculptures and jewelry. In September of 1996, Michael Fay, a naturalist, found a scene of 300 dead elephant bodies. Each body was missing a tusk. In November of that same year, Fay found another 1,000 dead elephants in close proximity to the first slaughter scene. In Zakouma National Park in Africa, there is some resistance to poachers, however it is a dangerous advocacy to employ. The poachers have been known to carry AK-47's and M14 assault rifles, and when they shoot, they shoot to kill.^{18 19}

SOLUTIONS

Our culture of animal abuse is unsustainable as it fosters disrespect and decreases our capability for empathy. Humans treat animals as if they are disposable objects, and in order to cease this behavior, we must study other cultures that exercise a high respect for all living beings. Although the majority of Native Americans lived many years ago, their lifestyle is one that our culture should idolize. The Native Americans made a conscious effort to waste as little of a killed animal as possible. Each tribe lived life differently according to their unique environment, but in general, employed a lot of similar habits. Not only were animals a source of food, they were also used to support other aspects of life. Houses, such as huts, tents, or lean-tos were often made out of animal skins. Teepees were constructed with buffalo hide. Bones were used as tools, specifically knives. Fish bones were even used to make sewing tools for the women. Clothing was also made out of animal products, such as the hide, feathers, porcupine quills, or fur.^{20 21}

¹⁶ "Exotic Animals as 'Pets'" *PETA: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.peta.org/issues/animals-in-entertainment/exotic-animals-pets.aspx>>.

¹⁷ "Inside the Exotic Pet Trade." *Animal Planet*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Apr. 2013. <<http://animal.discovery.com/tv-shows/fatal-attractions/lists/facts-exotic-pet-trade.htm>>.

¹⁸ "Ivory Wars." *National Geographic*. N.p., Mar. 2007. Web. 17 Apr. 2013. <<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/03/ivory-wars/fay-text>>.

¹⁹ "The Poaching Problem." *PBS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/elephants/poaching.html>>.

²⁰ "Native American Tools." *Native Net*. N.p., n.d. Web. Apr. 2013. <<http://www.native-net.org/na/native-american-tools.html>>.

²¹ "Native American Clothing." *Native Net*. N.p., n.d. Web. Apr. 2013. <<http://www.native-net.org/na/native-american-clothing.html>>.

The Jainists are another group who honor equality for all creatures. Rooted in an ancient religion from India and believe that all beings (plants, nonhuman animals, and humans) contain souls, all of which are equal and deserve equal respect and compassion. The Jainists exercise what current society would call extreme attempts to minimize animal harm. Monks that belong to one sect of the religion, live completely naked. They do not own any possessions except for a water pot and a whiskbroom, which they use to sweep insects out of their path to avoid harming them.²²

PETA is an organization that is currently working to promote the well being of animals. PETA was “founded in 1980 and is dedicated to establishing and defending the rights of all animals. PETA operates under the simple principle that animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment” and believes that “animals have rights and deserve to have their best interests taken into consideration, regardless of whether they are useful to humans” (PETA). Although their methods of promoting their message are often extreme, their passion regarding animal equality must be acknowledged. Perhaps extreme action is what it will take to make people recognize that animal rights are not just something we hear about in the news, but also something that we should all care about. We are all animals, and humans are not in a position to construct the right to hurt innocent beings. By devoting attention to the issue of animal abuse, we can lessen the amount of undeserving harm that gets forced on nonhuman animals. The East Bay SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) is another organization that “is committed to the welfare of cats and dogs in the communities [they] serve. [They] strive to eliminate animal cruelty, neglect, and overpopulation by providing programs and education that support people and companion animals” (East Bay SPCA). These organizations are trying to tackle a huge issue. They will not be able to eradicate animal abuse quickly, but they are devoted to the process. I don’t know how the problem of animal cruelty will ever be fully solved, but I think that working towards healing and eliminating abuse, and the roots of it, is a valid place to start.

CONCLUSION

People’s mentality of anthropocentrism and speciesism has created a sense of human superiority. Humans believe themselves to be more intelligent and more advanced than practically any other being, and it is this superiority mindset that is a primary cause of animal abuse. Humans prioritize entertainment and money over empathy, selfishly believing that their “needs” are worth the murder of a fellow animal. Humans have torn communities of animals apart, ignoring the emotional companionship those animals foster together. We have completely separated ourselves from other animals and no longer consider ourselves to be animals. But that is what it really comes down to, the fact that humans *are* animals. We evolved from earlier mammals, which evolved from reptiles, which evolved from another form of life; human’s ancestry is woven into the ancestry of other animals. We think, we move, we feel, we grieve, we care for one another, we develop attachments, we have hierarchy, we play, and we

²² "Jainism." *BBC*. N.p., n.d. Web. Apr. 2013.
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/jainism/>>.

are connected by the simple, unchanging fact that we are all animals. This is a fact that we no longer think about or associate ourselves with, and it is this anthropogenic disconnect that has led to the mass destruction and mutilation of so many animals.

When I took time to research the subject, to listen to animal experts talk and read their books, I began to realize that there are so many similarities that hold humans close to animals. Of course humans will never be able to know everything about other animals. We can't crawl inside their brains and bodies and feel and think exactly what they feel or think. And so we rely on the human experience to understand other animals. Anthropomorphism is the assigning of human characteristics to an animal. Humans anthropomorphize when they observe or discuss nonhuman animals, as well as interact with them. We jump to assumptions about how the animal feels or what he or she thinks. Anthropomorphism is our way of understanding other animals. Some people view anthropomorphism to be a negative thing; I did when I first began researching, for I believed it to be just another way humans exercised supremacy. I kept thinking how cocky humans were for believing they knew what went on inside an animal. Furthermore, I recognized that anthropomorphism could lead to abuse if people convince themselves that animals feel no pain. But the more I researched, the more I recognized that anthropomorphism could also be a positive thing if people utilize it properly. As long as humans acknowledge that complete understanding of other animals is unachievable, anthropomorphism could bring humans and other animals closer. It can help to illuminate the emotional and behavioral similarities that humans have with other animals. If humans become aware of these shared characteristics, their respect for other animals might increase.

At the beginning of my investigation, I didn't know how real any of the problems I just discussed actually were. They were simply thoughts that caused me momentary sadness, thoughts that I pushed out of my mind to save myself from thinking about the actual brutality. My experience volunteering at the East Bay SPCA had left me hopeful, unaware that the issues of animal abuse extended far beyond the streets of Oakland. I have come to realize that the world of animal abuse is a lot bigger than I initially thought—a world that I believed to be outside of my influence. Throughout the process of writing, I have continuously thought back to my own pets and childhood interactions with animals. Lily and Burnie, Cookie and Ellie, and Willie. The one thought that has repeated itself over and over again is that I can't imagine the magnitude of abuse happening to them. *My animals*. I can't imagine having my dog taken from my hands and killed by the state. I can't imagine her being beaten. I can't imagine her being drowned, set aflame, or forced to fight with another dog. Learning about this topic has caused me the pain that I believe is vital in moving forward. Staying uneducated out of fear doesn't give you any feeling. It doesn't ripple you or churn your insides. It doesn't make you feel raw. Rawness is where true caring begins.

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