



National Primate Research Exhibition Hall

A Project of the Primate Freedom Project and Alliance for Animals



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HOW LIKE US NEED THEY BE?

July 8, 2005

Mark Juster
Lonnie J. Nasatir
Anti-Defamation League
Greater Chicago/Upper Midwest Regional Office
309 W. Washington St., Suite 750
Chicago, IL 60606-3296

Dear Mr. Juster and Mr. Nasatir:

We are writing in response to your June 28, 2005 letter. You expressed concerns regarding the explicit comparisons the National Primate Research Exhibition Hall is making between the Holocaust and harmful experiments using animals.

The sentiments you express seem to be based on the simple implicit claim that whatever is done to an animal other than a human, cannot rise to the same level of moral concern as it would if it were being done to a human.

This is the common, widely held view of most people today. It is, however, based on assumptions that arose prior to the scientific investigation of animals' minds, including detailed rigorous field observations, comparative neurophysiology, and laboratory experimentation. Consider the following experiment:

Rhesus monkeys were trained to pull on one of two chains, depending on the color of a flashing light, in order to receive food. After training, another monkey, held in restraints, was displayed through a one-way mirror.

By pulling the chains in the correct fashion, the first monkey would receive the food reward, but one of the chains now delivered a powerful and painful electric shock to the restrained monkey. It was discovered that most of the monkeys would not shock another monkey even if it meant not being able to eat. One of the animals went without food for twelve days rather than hurting the other monkey. Monkeys who had been shocked in previous experiments themselves were even less willing to pull the chain and subject others to such torment. [Masserman J, Wechkin S, Terris W. 1964. 'Altruistic' behavior in rhesus monkeys. *American Journal of Psychiatry* vol. 121: 584-5.]

Quite clearly, the monkeys in this study were following the Golden Rule. If we choose to live a moral and ethical life, it would seem profoundly wrong to intentionally hurt others

who seem to adhere to this fundamental notion of fairness and morality. It seems monstrous that we would take such animals from their homes in the wild, destroy their social systems, breed them, experiment on their children, and on them, and justify the entire endeavor with the claim that it might be beneficial to us. This seems to be a profound case of hubris.

You stated that it is disrespectful to compare the "alleged mistreatment of animals with the enormous human suffering that took place during the Holocaust." You state that calling the National Primate Research Exhibition Hall "another" Holocaust museum "evinces a fundamental misunderstanding of the Holocaust."

We are offended that decades of documented cruelty are dismissed in such an offhand manner. There is nothing being "alleged." We state the facts.

You claim that we have a fundamental misunderstanding of the Holocaust. My personal understanding of the Holocaust is based on years of reading and teaching. I brought the National Holocaust Museum's traveling exhibition to my small community in 1995. That same year I had a survivor come to my classroom and speak with my students. I have read most of the works written for adolescents many times over the years with my students. I have read many scholarly works devoted to various aspects of Germany's policies and practices during the Nazi era.

When learning about the Holocaust, slavery, racial strife, the Killing Fields, and other examples of our inhumanity to each other, my students invariably asked why people allowed such things to happen; why didn't they do something to stop them? Although I had no concise answer for them, we always agreed that the people who spoke out, who hid Jews, who helped blacks escape to freedom, who stood with the oppressed, were acting as we hope we would have acted if we had lived through those times.

Once the implication of the discoveries regarding animal mind are understood, the realities of the current situation become impossible to describe in terms other than those used to talk about past atrocities.

The Holocaust, I hope you agree, was not an experience unique to the Jews. The Final Solution was a unique aspect of the Holocaust. We do not claim that a parallel event is occurring today. There is no genocide occurring today in the primate labs. We do not claim there is.

I finished reading Vivian Spitz's *Doctors From Hell* (Sentient Publications, 2005) just recently. As you may know, she was a court reporter during the Medical Case (Case #1) of the Subsequent Proceedings of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. The convicted medical doctors and medical assistants were found guilty of Crimes Against Humanity. Their victims – their experimental subjects – were a very heterogeneous group comprised

