

# **Behind the Mask: Uncovering the Animal Liberation Front**

**Steven Best, Ph.D., and Anthony J. Nocella II**

*“The world only goes forward because of those who oppose it.” Goethe*

*“But if you have no relationship with the living things on this earth, you may lose whatever relationship you have with humanity.” Krishnamurti*

On September 11, 2001, the political landscape changed forever. Instantaneously, it became unpatriotic to criticize President Bush, the government, or U.S. policy on any front. Groups like the Sierra Club announced that they were indefinitely suspending all criticism against Bush’s pro-corporate agenda as the nation tried to pull together. Without question, there were real enemies outside our continent to be wary of, but the government exaggerated the threat as it began to identify imaginary enemies within. The “war on terrorism” quickly became an attack on civil liberties, free speech, and domestic dissent. While flags waved everywhere, the Bush administration was shredding freedoms and the Constitution, and America moved ever closer to tyranny.

Nowhere was this dynamic more obvious than with the October 26, 2001 passage of the USA Patriot Act, which endowed the government with unprecedented powers of surveillance, search and seizure, and suppression of dissent (see Best and Black and Black in this volume).<sup>1</sup> As liberty was being attacked in the name of “security,” activists in the post-9/11 world confronted a threatening new terrain where political action against the state and corporations decimating animals and despoiling the Earth was suppressed and conflated with “terrorism” in order to legitimate severe political repression.

During this turbulent time when the nation and its patriots called for unity—a “unity” that masks deep divisions, injustices, and conflicts inherent in the U.S.—the war between animal rights and environmental activists on one side, and corporate exploiters and the state on the other, began to heat up as never before (see Best in this volume).<sup>2</sup> Animal rights and environmental activists refuse to ignore the plight of the natural world

as the country focuses on the human costs of global conflicts; rather, they emphasize the bloody war the human species has perennially waged on nonhuman species and the violence and terrorism of the human pogrom against the Earth. Far from backing down in the face of government repression, the militant wings of the animal rights and environmental movements have escalated their struggles and thereby provoked an intense confrontation with their enemies in the state and corporate worlds.

We have entered a neo-McCarthyist period rooted in witch-hunts against activists and critics of the ruling elites. The terms and players have changed, but the situation is much the same as the 1950s: the terrorist threat usurps the communist threat, Attorney General John Ashcroft dons the garb of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, and the Congressional Meetings on Eco-Terrorism stand in for the House Un-American Activities Committee. Now as then, the U.S. demonizes a foreign “Other“ who threatens the American way of life. The government informs the public that the nation is in a permanent state of danger, such that security, not freedom, must become our overriding concern. As before, the state conjures up dangerous enemies everywhere, not only outside our country but, more menacingly, ensconced within our borders, lurking in sleeper cells, waiting to come to life like a plague of locusts. The alleged dangers posed by the foreign Other are used to justify the attack on the Other within, and in a hysterical climate the domestic Other is any and every citizen expressing dissent.

But the state’s tactic can only backfire, for if every dissenting group is branded as “terrorist,” none are terrorist, and the true enemies become harder to identify. As U.S. policy fails miserably in Afghanistan and Iraq, with chaos, anti-American hostilities, soldier casualties, public opposition, and terrorist threats growing, the government nonetheless squanders significant resources to persecute animal rights and environmental activists whom the state, corporations, and mass media smear as “violent” and demonize as “terrorists.” The new ecowarriors, however, insist that their only crime is a principled defense of the Earth and the billions of animals massacred in an ongoing global holocaust. As ecowarriors see it, any human individual, corporation, or state entity that promotes or defends the exploitation of the natural world are the true violent forces and the real terrorists.

Thus, in the post-9/11 climate, intense controversy brews around the discourse of violence and terrorism like never before. And so the questions arise: Who and what are “terrorists“? And, conversely, who and what are “freedom fighters“? What is “violence,” and who are the main perpetrators of it? It is imperative that we resist corporate, state, and mass media definitions, propaganda, and conceptual conflations in order to distinguish between freedom fighters and terrorists, between nonviolent civil disobedience and “domestic terrorism,” and between ethically justified destruction of property and wanton violence toward life.

### I. The ALF: The Newest Liberation Movement

*“Where there is disharmony in the world, death follows.” Ancient Navajo saying*

*“Forty-eight billion farm animals are killed each year around the world - nearly eight times the human population, more than 130 million a day, more than five million every hour, almost 100,000 a minute. These numbers do not include the billions of other animals whose lives are taken, bodies injured, and freedom stolen in the name of entertainment, sport, or fashion.” Tom Regan and Martin Rowe*

*“Animal liberation is the ultimate freedom movement, the ‘final frontier.’ ” Robin Webb, British ALF Press Officer*

This is a book about a new breed of freedom fighters—human activists who risk their own liberty to rescue and aid animals imprisoned in the worst forms of hell warped human minds can devise. Loosely bonded in a decentralized, anonymous, underground, global network, these activists are members of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Their daring deeds have earned them a top spot on the FBI “domestic terrorist” list as they redefine political struggle for the current era. An intense sense of urgency informs their actions. They recognize a profound crisis in the human relation to the natural world, such that the time has long passed for moderation, delay, and compromise. They can no longer

fiddle while the Earth burns and animal bodies pile up by the billions; they are compelled to take immediate and decisive action.

ALF activists operate under cover, at night, wearing balaclavas and ski masks, and in small cells of a few people. After careful reconnaissance, skilled liberation teams break into buildings housing animal prisoners in order to release them (e.g., mink and coyotes) or rescue them (e.g., cats, dogs, mice, and guinea pigs). They seize and/or destroy equipment, property, and materials used to exploit animals, and they use arson as a potent weapon to raze buildings and laboratories to the ground. They have cost the animal exploitation industries hundreds of millions of dollars.<sup>3</sup> They willfully break the law because the law wrongly consigns animals to cages and confinement, to loneliness and pain, to torture and death. They target a wide range of animal exploiters, from vivisectionists and the fur industry to factory farmers, foie gras producers, and fast food restaurants.

Resolved not to harm living beings, motivated by love, empathy, compassion, and justice, animal liberationists are the antithesis of the “terrorists” that government, industries, and mass media ideologues impugn them to be. They are not violent aggressors against life; they are defenders of the peaceable kingdom. They uphold rights not covered by law, knowing that the legal structure is defined by and for human supremacists. The goal of the ALF is not simply to liberate individual animals here and there; it is to free all animals from every form of slavery that binds them to human oppressors. The ALF, and the animal rights movement as a whole, is attacking the entire institutional framework of animal exploitation along with the domineering values, mindset, identities, and worldviews of the human species.

Although human slavery has been outlawed in “liberal democracies” (while industries command new slave trades in domestic and foreign sweatshops) where many dispossessed and disenfranchised groups gain more rights and respect, animal slavery has become worse than ever. This is the case in the sheer number of animals killed, the degree of violation of their natural lives (culminating in the technological manipulations of genetic engineering and cloning), and the intensity of their suffering (as evident in the horrors of vivisection, fur farming, factory farming, mechanized slaughter, puppy mills, and so on). Animal “welfare” laws do little but regulate the details of exploitation.<sup>4</sup>

Just as nineteenth-century white abolitionists in the U.S. worked across racial lines to create new forms of solidarity, so the new freedom fighters reach across *species* lines to help our fellow beings in the animal world. In this endeavor, they unleash a frontal assault on the unquestioned mentality that says animals are objects, resources, or property, and they advance the modern universalization of rights process that is the key marker of moral progress.<sup>5</sup>

By expanding the definition of the moral community, animal liberationists challenge long-entrenched prejudices. These relate not only to class, gender, race, sexual orientation, or specific interest group, but also to the human species itself—to the arrogant conception of its place in the web of life and its ugly, condescending, vicious, and violent attitudes toward other species. *Speciesism* is the belief that nonhuman species exist to serve the needs of the human species, that animals are in various senses “inferior” to human beings, and therefore that one can favor human over nonhuman interests according to species status alone.<sup>6</sup> Just like racism or sexism, speciesism creates a false dualistic division between one group and another in order to arrange the differences hierarchically and justify the domination of the “superior” over the “inferior.” Just as society has discerned that it is prejudiced, illogical, and unacceptable for whites to devalue people of color and for men to diminish women, so it is beginning to learn how utterly arbitrary and irrational it is for human animals to position themselves over nonhuman animals because of species differences. Among animals who are all sentient subjects of a life, these differences – humanity’s claim to be the sole bearer of “reason” and “language” – are no more ethically relevant than differences of gender or skin color, yet in the unevolved psychology of the human primate they have decisive bearing. The theory—speciesism—informs the practice—unspeakably cruel forms of domination, torture, violence, and killing.

The animal liberation struggle is the most difficult battle human beings have ever fought, because it requires universal consent to abandon what most perceive as their absolute privileges and God-given rights to exploit animals by sole virtue of their human status. Moreover, where the stakes of human liberation struggles were largely confined to particular interests, the failure of human beings to win liberation for animals will have

catastrophic and global consequences for all humanity, if for no other reason than systemic environmental collapse.

In a capitalist society, human struggles for freedom—especially those of gender, race, or sexual “identity politics”—can easily be co-opted and absorbed into the feeble channels of affirmative action, “representative democracy,” “liberal pluralism,” and multicultural consumerism.<sup>7</sup> But the fight for animal liberation demands radical transformations in the habits, practices, values, and mindset of all human beings. The philosophy of animal liberation assaults the identities and worldviews that portray humans as conquering Lords and Masters of nature, and it requires entirely new ways of relating to animals and the Earth. Animal liberation is a direct attack on the power human beings in the Western world have claimed over animals since the dawn of agricultural society.

Precisely because of the extreme difficulty of challenging human identity and freeing animals from the brutal grip of human self-interest and domination, however, the new struggle seeking freedom for *all* species has the potential to advance rights, democratic consciousness, psychological growth, and awareness of biological interconnectedness to higher levels than previously achieved in history.

Animal liberation simply is the next logical development in moral evolution. Unless human beings radically alter their relations toward animals and the Earth by creating new worldviews, identities, sensibilities, and an ethic of reverence for life, their own future is gravely threatened. Since the fates of all species on this planet are tightly interrelated, the exploitation of animals cannot but have a major impact on the human world itself. When human beings hunt, capture, and kill animals in acts of extermination, they devastate habitats and ecosystems necessary for their own lives. When they butcher farmed animals by the billions in acts of overproduction, they ravage rainforests, exacerbate global warming, and spew toxic wastes into the environment. When they construct a global system of factory farming that squanders vital resources such as land, water, and crops, they aggravate the problems of desertification and world hunger. When humans are violent toward animals, they are violent toward one another. The cruel forms of domesticating animals at the dawn of agricultural society created the technologies and conceptual model for hierarchy, statism, and the exploitative treatment of other human

beings, while animal husbandry implanted violence into the heart of human culture. Slavery and the sexual subjugation of women are but the extension of animal domestication to humans, as patriarchy and racism work by reducing women and people of color to subhuman, animal status.<sup>8</sup>

In countless ways, the exploitation of animals rebounds to create crises within the human world itself. The vicious circle of violence and destruction can end only if and when the human species learns to form harmonious relations with other species and the natural world. Thus, animal liberation and human liberation are one and the same project.

## II. Direct Action and Democracy

*“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”*

*Frederick Douglass*

*“Even voting for the right thing is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority.”*

*Henry David Thoreau*

*“Direct action is always the clamorer, the initiator, through which the great sum of indifferentists become aware that oppression is getting intolerable.” Voltairine de Cleyre (1866-1912), American anarchist and feminist writer*

*“We always obeyed the law. Even if you don’t agree with a law personally, you still obey it. Otherwise life would be chaos.” Gertrude Scholtz-Klink, chief of the Women’s Bureau under Adolf Hitler*

Anyone quick to condemn the tactics of the ALF needs a history lesson and logical consistency check. Especially amid the current hysteria over war and terrorism, it is easy to forget that the United States won its independence not only by war with England, but

also through acts of nonviolent civil disobedience, including property destruction. As dramatically evident in the Boston Tea Party, when in 1773 fifty members of the underground Sons of Liberty group dumped 342 chests of British tea into the Boston harbor to protest the high tax on tea and British tyranny in general, the colonies employed sabotage tactics to undermine the power of the British and to galvanize the will of the newly emerging nation. Of this form of “eco-terrorism,” John Adams said, “There is a dignity, a majesty, a sublimity, in this ... effort of the patriots that I greatly admire.”<sup>9</sup>

Not merely an act of senseless demolition, property destruction was and still is a legitimate cry for justice and a powerful means of achieving it. Civil disobedience and sabotage have been key catalysts for all modern liberation struggles. As James Goodman succinctly puts it, “The entire edifice of western liberal democracy—from democratic rights, to representative parliament, to freedom of speech—rests on previous acts of civil disobedience. The American anti-colonialists in the 1770s asserting ‘no taxation without representation’; the French revolutionaries in the 1780s demanding ‘liberty, equality, fraternity’; the English Chartists in the 1830s demanding a ‘People’s Charter’; the Suffragettes of the 1900s demanding ‘votes for women’; the Gandhian disobedience movement from the 1920s calling for ‘Swaraj’/self-government; all of these were movements of civil disobedience, and have shaped the political traditions that we live with today.”<sup>10</sup>

Few things are more American and patriotic than dissent, protest, civil disobedience, and property destruction in the name of freedom and liberation. From the Boston Tea Party to the Underground Railroad, from the Suffragettes to the Civil Rights Movement; from Vietnam War resistance to the Battle of Seattle, key struggles in U.S. history employed illegal direct action tactics – and sometimes violence -- to advance the historical movement toward human rights and freedoms. Rather than being a rupture in some bucolic tradition of Natural Law guiding the Reason of modern citizens to the Good and bringing Justice down to Earth in a peaceful and gradual drizzle, the movements for animal and Earth liberation are a continuation of the American culture of rights, democracy, civil disobedience, and direct action, as they expand the struggle to a far broader constituency.

American history has two main political traditions. First, there is the “indirect” system of “representative democracy” whereby citizens express their needs and wants to elected local and state officials whose sole function is to “represent” them in the political and legal system. The system’s “output”—laws—reflects the “input”—the peoples’ will and interests. This cartoon image of liberal democracy, faithfully reproduced in generation after generation of textbooks and in the discourse of state apologists and the media, is falsified by the fact that powerful economic and political forces co-opt elected officials, who represent the interests of the powerful instead of the powerless.<sup>11</sup> From the realization that the state is hardly a neutral arbiter of competing interests but rather exists to advance the interests of economic and political elites—that “pluralist democracy” is the best system that money can buy—a second political tradition of direct action has emerged.

Direct action advocates argue that the indirect system of representative democracy is irredeemably corrupted by money, power, cronyism, and privilege. Appealing to the lessons of history, direct activists insist that one cannot win liberation struggles solely through education, moral persuasion, political campaigns, demonstrations, or any form of aboveground, mainstream, or legal action. Direct action movements therefore bypass pre-approved efforts to influence the state in order to immediately confront the figures of social power they challenge. Whereas indirect action can promote passivity and dependence on others for change, direct action tends to be more involving and empowering. In the words of Voltairine de Cleyre, “the evil of pinning faith to indirect action is far greater than any ... minor results. The main evil is that it destroys initiative, quenches the individual rebellious spirit, [and] teaches people to rely on someone else to do for them what they should do for themselves ... [people] must learn that their power does not lie in their voting strength, that their power lies in their ability to stop production.”<sup>12</sup>

Direct action tactics can vary widely, ranging from sit-ins, strikes, boycotts, and tree sits to hacking Web sites, email and phone harassment, home demonstrations, and arson. Direct action can be legal, as with home demonstrations against a vivisector, or illegal, in the case of the civil disobedience tactics of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin

Luther King Jr. Illegal direct action, moreover, can be nonviolent or violent; it can respect private property or destroy it.

Opponents of direct action, typically those with vested interests in the status quo, believe that illegal actions undermine the rule of law, and they view civil disobedience as a threat to political order. Among other things, this perspective presupposes that the system in question is legitimate or unable to be improved. It misrepresents direct activists as people who lack respect for the principle of law, when arguably they have a higher regard for the spirit of law and its relation to justice than those who fetishize political order for its own sake.<sup>13</sup> Champions of direct action renounce uncritical allegiance to a legal system. To paraphrase Karl Marx, *the law is the opiate of the people*, and blind obedience to laws and social decorum led German Jews to their death with little resistance. All too often, the legal system is simply a Byzantine structure designed to absorb opposition and induce paralysis by deferral and delay.

### III. Origins of the ALF

*“We are a non-violent guerilla organization, dedicated to the liberation of animals from all forms of cruelty and persecution at the hands of mankind.”*

*Ronnie Lee, ALF founder*

*“Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission — to be of service to them whenever they require it.” St. Francis of Assisi*

During the 1970s, environmental and animal welfare and rights organizations became important forces on the U.S. political landscape, taking their place alongside various social movements that emerged in the 1960s. While environmental and animal advocacy groups were increasingly influential and passed a number of laws protecting the natural world and animals, they were compromise- and reform-oriented movements that became institutionalized, co-opted, and limited in the amount of change they could effect. Their main tactics were letter-writing, lobbying, boycotts, and perhaps protests and

demonstrations. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, it had become increasingly apparent that mainstream approaches had failed to bring about the substantive changes necessary to protect animals and the natural world, and that animal advocacy and environmental protection groups often had become part of the hierarchical corporate and legal system they had set out to change. Despite huge amounts of time, money, and energy invested in activism, the situation for animals and the Earth was steadily worsening.<sup>14</sup>

Animal and environmental activists began looking for more radical and effective tactics of struggle. In 1977, for example, Paul Watson was voted out of Greenpeace for increasingly confrontational tactics with the butchers of newborn harp seals.<sup>15</sup> Rejecting Greenpeace's timid condemnation of sabotage tactics against animal exploiters, Watson formed a new organization that became the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. With a 206-foot-long ship purchased with the help of Cleveland Amory and the Fund for Animals, Captain Watson and crew set sail on the high seas in defense of marine mammals everywhere. Watson rammed pirate whaling ships, impeded dolphin massacres, destroyed driftnets used as massive curtains of death, and did whatever it took to defend his constituency, all without ever injuring human life (although his own life was often threatened, jeopardized, and nearly taken by sundry sealing thugs). Similarly, in 1981, Dave Foreman abandoned mainstream environmental politics in order to join with friends to create Earth First! and conduct campaigns of sabotage and monkeywrenching against loggers and other plunderers of nature.<sup>16</sup> Through tactics such as tree spiking, tree sitting, road blockades, chaining bodies to fences, pulling up survey stakes, and destroying equipment used to clear forests and build roads, Earth First! reinvented environmental politics for the new era of ecotage. As Watson, by his own count, has saved millions of animals, Earth First! successfully delayed, weakened, or stopped numerous development and logging projects.<sup>17</sup>

While direct action movements for radical ecology and animal rights were dawning in the U.S., a powerful new group known as the Animal Liberation Front was gaining strength in England and would forever change the struggle to protect animals and the Earth. The roots of the ALF in England can be traced to the Band of Mercy, a nineteenth-century Royal Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals youth organization (see Molland and Webb in this volume). Originating in 1824, the Band of

Mercy focused their efforts on thwarting hunting. A similar English group, the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA), was established in 1963 to contest hunting and continues today.<sup>18</sup> HSA members disrupt hunting activities by blowing horns, blockading roads, setting off smoke bombs, distracting dogs with meat and false scents, and setting themselves in the path between the hunters and the hunted.

Women often played an important role in the HSA and were singled out by pro-hunt thugs as easy targets for violent physical attacks.<sup>19</sup> These courageous women challenged both the speciesism of the hunt and the patriarchal identities and authority of the hunters. The empowering ability of direct action is particularly important for women because it provides a potent vehicle to subvert traditional gender roles. As one author points out, “Women are gendered emotional and empathetic, but also passive and weak. Direct action on behalf of animals takes the desirable aspects of that gendered analysis (compassion, empathy) and destroys the oppressive aspects (passive, weak). In this way, women in the animal liberation movement who use direct action can be seen as creating new conceptions of gender.”<sup>20</sup>

By 1965, HSA members grew tired of being assaulted by hunters and the courts, and sought more effective means to stop hunting. They decided to work underground and shift to property destruction tactics. In 1972, some HSA members formed a new organization in Luton, reviving the name of the Band of Mercy. Led by Ronnie Lee and Cliff Goodman, the group had a more militant philosophy and tactical approach. To stop hunting on land and at sea, they destroyed vans, boats, and equipment, and often succeeded in halting the slaughter. When Lee learned more about the horrors of animal testing, the group targeted vivisectors. On November 10, 1973, Lee’s group set fire to a half-completed building at Milton Keynes—their first attack on the vivisection industry and their first use of arson.<sup>21</sup> Through such actions, the Band of Mercy sought to wreak enough property destruction that insurance companies would end coverage to exploitation industries, and in many cases they succeeded.

The Band of Mercy grew increasingly strong and bold, expanding their activities to include animal rescues. Through arson, destruction, and liberation, the group was halting many hunts, saving many lives, undermining or shutting down animal exploitation businesses, and helping to stop some possible ventures from even starting.

The successes continued until Lee and Goodman were arrested in August 1974 for the raid on Oxford Laboratory Animal Colonies in Bicester. The two soon achieved national political fame as the “Bicester Two.” Both were given three years in prison but served only a third of the time and received parole. Once released, the two took completely different paths. While Goodman became the first-ever police informer on the animal liberation movement, Lee evolved into an even stronger warrior for the animals. Lee organized more than thirty people to begin a potent new liberation campaign, choosing a name that would intimidate exploiters yet demonstrate the ethic of compassion. In 1976, Lee christened his group the Animal Liberation Front. The ALF soon became an international force, and currently has active cells in over twenty countries. The U.S. in particular has become a hotbed of action.

*Migration to the U.S.*

*“We ask nicely for years and get nothing. Someone makes a threat, and it works.”*

*Ingrid Newkirk*

*“We should never feel like we’re going too far in breaking the law, because whatever laws you break to liberate animals or to protect the environment are very insignificant compared to the laws that are broken by that parliament of whores in Washington. They are the biggest lawbreakers, the biggest destroyers, the biggest mass-murderers on this planet right now.” Paul Watson*

The facts of how the ALF started in the U.S. are somewhat sketchy. According to Freeman Wicklund (see this volume), the first ALF action in the U.S. happened in 1977, when activists released two dolphins from a research facility in Hawaii.<sup>22</sup> Others identify the origin of the ALF in the raids that took place on March 14, 1979, at the New York University Medical Center, where activists disguised as lab workers liberated one cat, two dogs, and two guinea pigs.<sup>23</sup> The most complete account of the ALF in the U.S. is chronicled in Ingrid Newkirk’s book, *Free the Animals: The Amazing True Story of the Animal Liberation Front*.<sup>24</sup> Newkirk gives yet another genealogy, arguing that the ALF

first emerged in the U.S. in late 1982, with a Christmas Eve raid on a Howard University laboratory in order to rescue twenty-four cats whose rear legs were being crippled in a cruel experiment.

Newkirk's book eloquently captures the pathos of compassion, the drama of liberation, the courage of ALF activists, and their dedication to finding emergency and long-term medical care for the animals they liberate. To read Newkirk's book is to understand what the ALF does and why. Where references to the ALF might conjure up images of male warriors, it is significant that in this account the founder and key organizer of the ALF in America was a woman. After witnessing the horrors of monkey experiments at the Institute for Behavioral Research in Silver Spring, Maryland, a determined "Valerie" journeyed to a British ALF camp for commando-style training and returned to the states to launch a new branch of the ALF. "Valerie" led numerous break-ins and liberations; funded vehicles, supplies, and transportation costs; served as transporter and facilitator; and overall was the principle force for establishing ALF cells throughout the country.

The first wave of ALF actions included the liberation of cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs, pigs, and primates from experimental laboratories at Howard University, Bethesda Naval Research Institute, various branches of the University of California, the University of Oregon, the University of Pennsylvania, Texas Tech University, the City of Hope, SEMA lab, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and elsewhere. One of the most important raids took place in May 1984, when the ALF broke into the University of Pennsylvania's Head Injury Laboratory, where primates' heads were strapped to machines that fractured their skulls in order to "research" human head injuries. The ALF unleashed \$60,000 in property damage and, more importantly, stole sixty hours of researcher's tapes that documented sadistic acts of cruelty to monkeys. The rescue led to the shocking movie *Unnecessary Fuss*, which helped to shut down the lab and, with public relations assistance from PETA, spread awareness of animal confinement and torture to the public.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, liberations in January 1985 at the City of Hope National Medical Center, Los Angeles, exposed an appalling hellhole behind a façade of progressive science and "humane research." ALF rescues and follow-up media work via PETA news

conferences brought national attention to deplorable conditions where dogs and other animals endured sloppy surgeries, inadequate or no post-operative care, and frequently bled to death in their cages or suffocated in their own fecal matter. Newspapers were inundated with letters from an outraged public, government investigations found serious violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, the National Institutes of Health suspended over \$1 million in federal research grant funds, and the experiments were stopped. Three months later, the ALF raided the University of California-Riverside laboratory to rescue Britches, a three-week-old macaque monkey separated from his mother, isolated and dying in a wire cage, his eyes sadistically sewn shut. PETA filed formal complaints about this extreme abuse to government agencies, urged its members to write their representatives in Congress, and made a moving video of Britches. The before and after liberation pictures were stirring, and the justice of the action was obvious. Once again, the public learned about the kind of horrors that truly transpire behind the closed doors of “science,” and Riverside received a well-deserved black eye. Eight of the seventeen research projects interrupted by the ALF the night of Britches’ liberation were closed forever.

The ALF was able not only to free innocent animals, but also to expose the sadism that masquerades as science, to educate the public about institutionalized animal abuse, to spark public debate about rarely discussed issues such as vivisection, and, in many cases, to bring about welfare reforms or to shut down some operations altogether. After numerous well-publicized raids and rescues, Newkirk writes, “Society’s comfortable belief that all animal research was conducted humanely began to collapse.”<sup>26</sup>

Whereas the early raids involving “Valerie” concentrated on rescues, the emphasis gradually shifted to property destruction and arson. One of the most devastating blows was dealt in 1987, with the torching of the animal diagnostics lab and twenty vehicles at the University of California at Davis, causing \$5.1 million in damage. In February 1992, Rod Coronado and other ALF members set fire to a Michigan State University mink research facility, causing between \$20,000 and \$100,000 in estimated damage and wiping out thirty-two years of research data accumulated to breed mink in fur farms. In an April 1989 raid on the University of Arizona at Tucson, activists liberated over 1,200 animals, costing the university an estimated \$700,000. In May 1997,

10,000 mink were rescued from Arritola Mink Farm in Oregon, the largest liberation in the U.S. to date. The most arson destruction was inflicted on the Alaskan Fur Company in Minnesota in November 1996, creating over \$2 million in damage to fur coats and other merchandise and over \$250,000 to the building. While perhaps not as pleasing to the public as pictures of rescued animals, these actions had their intended economic effects on industry targets.

#### IV. Philosophy and Structure of the ALF

*“It is not the oppressed who determine the means of resistance, but the oppressor.” Nelson Mandela*

*“We’re very dangerous philosophically. Part of the danger is that we don’t buy into the illusion that property is worth more than life ... we bring that insane priority into the light, which is something the system cannot survive.” David Barbarash, former spokesman for the ALF*

If one is looking for groups to which to compare the ALF, the proper choice is not Al Qaeda or Saddam Hussein’s republican guard, but rather the Jewish anti-Nazi resistance movement and the Underground Railroad. The men and women of the ALF pattern themselves after the freedom fighters in Nazi Germany who liberated war prisoners and Holocaust victims and destroyed equipment -- such as weapons, railways, and gas ovens - - that the Nazis used to torture and kill their victims. Similarly, by providing veterinary care and homes for many of the animals that they liberate, the ALF models itself after the U.S. Underground Railroad movement, which helped fugitive slaves reach free states and Canada. Whereas corporate society, the state, and mass media brand the ALF as terrorists, the ALF has important similarities with some of the great freedom fighters of the past two centuries, and is akin to contemporary peace and justice movements in its quest to end bloodshed and violence toward life and to win justice for all species (see below).

On the grounds that animals have basic rights, animal liberationists repudiate the argument that scientists or industries can “own” any animal as their “property.”<sup>27</sup> Simply stated, animals have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, all of which contradict the property status that is often literally branded on them in the capitalist legal system and, indeed, in every existing legal system. Even if animal “research” assists human beings in some way, that is no more guarantee of legitimacy than if the data came from experimenting on non-consenting human beings, for the rights of an animal trump utilitarian appeals to human benefit. The blanket privileging of human over animal interests is simply speciesism, a prejudicial and discriminatory belief system as ethically flawed and philosophically unfounded as sexism or racism, but far more murderous and consequential in its implications. Thus, the ALF hold that animals are freed, not “stolen,” from fur farms or laboratories—and that when one “destroys” the inanimate property of animal exploiters, one is merely leveling what was wrongfully used against living beings.

The ALF is any individual or group in any area of the world who at any time decide to strike against animal exploitation in the name of animal rights while following ALF Guidelines (see this volume). To join the ALF, one does not consult the local Yellow Pages; rather, one goes into stealth action. There is no “leader” to capture in order to decapitate the movement, only a host of individuals and affinity groups that spread rhizomatically and clandestinely. A given ALF cell is unaware of the identities and activities of other cells. This decentered structure defies government infiltration and capture, and thereby thwarts the kind of success the FBI had in its illegal surveillance, penetration, and disruption of the Black Panthers, the American Indian Movement, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, and numerous other groups.<sup>28</sup> Given the decentralized and anonymous nature of ALF actions, the ALF clearly is not about authority, ego, a cult of personality, heroism, machismo, or martyrdom; rather, it is about overcoming hierarchy, patriarchy, passivity, and politics as usual so that creative individuals can dedicate themselves unselfishly to the cause of animal liberation. The structure and philosophy of the ALF thereby has some key affinities with anarchism and radical feminism (see Jones in this volume).

Crucially, the ALF follows a strict code of nonviolence whereby they carefully avoid causing physical injury to animal oppressors when they attack their property. The

ALF claims that in thousands of actions and over three decades of operation, they have never harmed a single human being: “The ALF does not, in any way, condone violence against any animal, human or nonhuman. Any action involving violence is by definition not an ALF action, any person involved is not an ALF member.”<sup>29</sup> Some critics, however, allege that on at least one occasion someone inadvertently was hurt (see Stallwood in this volume). Others state that the decentralized and anonymous nature of the ALF allows it to engage in physical violence and deny that the act was authentically ALF. The same structure, however, permits any rogue individual to wreak havoc in the name of the ALF in violation of its nonviolent principles.

In an “organization” where anyone can claim membership, there may be individuals who join the ALF for the wrong reason—less because they believe in justice for all species than because they have destructive and violent temperaments or enjoy media attention from their actions. Such individuals clearly are ill-suited to the cause they betray, but they do not discredit it. When enough people who identify themselves as ALF champion violence, when position papers and manifestos signed by ALF members proliferate, and when there is no significant opposition to violence by other ALF members, then one can say that the ALF is a violent organization. For now, the ALF holds to a nonviolent stance that its opposition cannot claim, since police and thugs such as sealers and hunters often have violently assailed and killed animal activists.<sup>30</sup> But this point is never made by the apologists of animal exploitation, who arbitrarily define violence and terrorism as attacks on the property of industries and exploiters but not as assaults on animals, the Earth, or defenders of the natural world.

While the ALF renounces physical violence against human beings, it also rejects the claim that destroying property is “violence” (see below). The ALF is grounded in the principle that laws protecting animal exploitation industries are unjust, and they break them in deference to the higher moral principle of animal rights. As former ALF spokesperson David Barbarash sums up the ethical foundations of the ALF, “the basic premise is that if someone’s property is used to inflict pain, suffering, and death on innocent animals’ lives, then the destruction of that property is morally justified. It is not unlike freedom fighters in Nazi Germany destroying the gas chambers. The ALF believe that life is more important than things.”<sup>31</sup>

Following the civil disobedience philosophy of Gandhi and the U.S. civil rights movement, the ALF believes that there is a higher law than that created by and for the corporate-state complex, a moral law that transcends the corrupt and biased statutes of the U.S. political system. When the law is wrong, the right thing to do is to break it. This is often how moral progress is made in history, from defiance of American slavery and Hitler's anti-Semitism to sit-ins at "whites only" lunch counters in Alabama. Thoreau's maxim that one ought to obey one's own conscience rather than an unjust law is a good start toward critical thinking, autonomy, and political responsibility, but it can also provide a formula for violence.<sup>32</sup> To be consistent to its principles, the ALF and other direct action groups must abide by the belief that however righteous their anger, no one must ever be harmed in the struggle for liberation of others; only property is to be damaged as a necessary means to the end of animal liberation. Despite zeal for its cause, the ALF is thus unlike radical anti-abortionists who kill their opponents, and the vast differences should never be conflated.

The ALF can be likened to peace and justice movements with the pronounced differences that it militates for the vast majority of beings on this planet and challenges the arbitrary boundaries of the community of rights-bearers as set by "progressive" humanist philosophies and struggles. The ALF demands justice for animals so that they may not be discriminated against, exploited, injured, and murdered solely because of their species. The ALF struggles for peace in the animal world so that nonhuman species may live among their families, fellow beings, and natural habitats unimpeded by the pain and violence human beings gratuitously inflict on them. The ALF is not a "hate group" motivated by appetites for destruction, wrath, and revenge; rather it is comprised of people who love animals and the Earth, and who are guided by a positive vision of a world where human and nonhuman animals co-exist harmoniously in an expanded biocommunity.

The activist thrust of the ALF shows that there is a clear distinction between animal welfare and animal rights, as well as between animal rights and animal liberation.<sup>33</sup> While those who adopt the animal welfare position seek merely to reduce animal suffering, supporters of animal rights aim to abolish it, demanding not bigger cages and "humane treatment," but rather empty cages and total liberation. Animal

welfare accepts the property status of animals, but animal rights insists that animals are subjects of their own life and no one's to own. Whereas animal welfare philosophy creates a moral gulf between human and nonhuman animals, reinforces speciesism, and allows any use of animals so long as it furthers some alleged human interest, animal rights theory puts human and nonhuman animals on an equal moral plane and rejects all exploitative uses of animals, whether human beings benefit or not.<sup>34</sup>

Clearly, animal rights is the guiding moral philosophy of the ALF, but whereas animal rights often is a legal fight without direct action, animal liberation is an immediate confrontation with exploiters. ALF tactics move beyond protests and demonstrations outside animal prisons in order to illegally break into these compounds, to free their tormented captives, and to destroy the long knives of pain. While appreciating the value of education and philosophizing, working in aboveground and legal channels, and striving for long-term changes for the animals, ALF activists feel compelled to take immediate action, to directly free as many prisoners as possible, and to break any security system or law that stands between them and a suffering animal they can help. For the ALF, animals have fundamental rights to freedom, and these rights entail human duties to secure them.

#### V. The "Principled" Critique of the ALF

*"The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kinds of extremists we will be. The nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists."  
Martin Luther King Jr.*

If the ALF uses "extreme" tactics, it is only because the evil done to animals is extreme and emergency measures are required in conditions where laws rigorously protect the holocaust unleashed by animal abusers. Despite ever-escalating government repression and penalties for animal and Earth liberation actions, today's guerilla warriors are not deterred or intimidated. "The only way to stop the ALF and ELF," asserts the North American Animal Liberation Front Press Office, "is for our society at large to seriously

deal with the issues which have brought these people to take such dramatic actions, and that does not seem to be happening very quickly.”<sup>35</sup>

Whether voiced by advocates within the movement or opponents outside of it, there are two common criticisms of ALF tactics, which we will call the “principled“ or “intrinsic” and the “pragmatic“ or “extrinsic” objections. The *principled critique* examines the intrinsic ethical nature of property destruction (is the action right or wrong?), while the *pragmatic critique* considers the extrinsic consequences of sabotage tactics (do sabotage actions help or hinder the movement?). The distinction between principled and pragmatic objections is an analytic one drawn for clarity’s sake, and it should be clear that detractors can and often do conflate both critiques into one.

Proponents of the principled objection tend to uncritically define property destruction as violence and reject it as inherently wrong on this ground. Their argument assumes the form of a classic syllogism: (i) property destruction is violence, (ii) violence is always wrong, (iii) therefore, property destruction is wrong. These critics rarely define what they mean by “violence,” they dogmatically cling to the pacifist positions of Gandhi and King, and they make unqualified universal judgments that violence is always wrong and never works politically to achieve liberatory goals.

ALF opponents assert that the animal rights movement is grounded in the values of nonviolence and that “violent tactics” contradict these values. Consequently, they argue that groups like the ALF and SHAC disarm the movement’s moral advantage, which is best exerted in ethical persuasion and education efforts intended to create legislative changes. Some may criticize any effort at illegal direct action, while others may only object to property destruction and allow other means of illegal direct action such as open rescues. Those who use violence in the fight for animal rights, ALF opponents say, degenerate into the same mindset they are challenging and reproduce destructive social dynamics. The end does not justify the means; rather the end must be reflected in the means. The argument here could be summarized in Gandhi’s phrase, “Be the change you seek.”

Advocates of the principled critique believe that illegal actions and “violence” are unnecessary for a cause strong enough to prevail on the logical arguments supporting it. Peter Singer, for example, affirms “animal liberation” as a just cause, so long as it

remains “nonviolent.”<sup>36</sup> Violence can only beget more violence, he argues, recommending that animal liberationists emulate Gandhi and King in their goal to divest themselves of hatred, anger, and the will to revenge. Singer thinks that direct action is most effective when it brings results other tactics cannot, and uncovers evidence of extreme animal abuse that awakens public understanding about the plight of animals. As an example of a just and effective raid, he points to the ALF break-in at the University of Pennsylvania head injury lab, which exposed a truth never meant to be seen by the public (see above). Singer argues that to stop or reduce animal suffering “we must change the minds of reasonable people in our society. . . . The strength of the case for Animal Liberation is its ethical commitment; we occupy the high moral ground and to abandon it is to play into the hands of those who oppose us. . . . The wrongs we inflict on other species are . . . [undeniable] once they are seen plainly; and it is in the rightness of our cause, and not the fear of our bombs, that our prospects of victory lie.”<sup>37</sup> The motto here is not Burn Baby Burn, but Learn Baby Learn.

Education and ethical argumentation are indeed potent forces of change. In many cases, argumentation—especially if reinforced by powerful images of animal suffering—can sway reasonable, open-minded, and decent people whose problem is that they do not know, not that they do not care. Passionate and eloquent animal rights educators like Gary Yourofsky have changed many minds and lives across the country. Indeed, many of the leading figures in the animal advocacy movement such as Don Barnes, Steve Hindi, and Howard Lyman are, respectively, former vivisectors, hunters, and cattlemen who had a profound awakening and were transformed through education. Moreover, the movement continues to innovate powerful new means of education, communication, and legislation because more can be done within the mainstream paradigm and advocates proclaim that one must not prematurely close any doors to respectful dialogue with the public and animal oppressors.<sup>38</sup>

While Singer and many others appeal to the “minds of reasonable people,” the ALF believes that far too many are unreasonable and closed-minded, rendering the force of reason and persuasion impotent. Industries and the state have strong institutional and monetary biases against justice for animals that no amount of persuasion or education is likely to change. Paul Watson has convinced an occasional sealer or whaler of the sick

and criminal nature of their actions, but the vast majority has responded to his appeals with a only smirk as they kill without remorse. Meanwhile, nations like Canada, Norway, and Japan adamantly defy international revulsion to marine massacres and pass laws such as the “Seal Protection Act” that protect only the sealers and jail anyone who even witnesses a seal slaughter let alone attempts to stop it. Those who champion education and legislation as the sole tools of struggle project a rationalist fantasy that discounts the irrational forces often ruling the human psyche, the sadistic pleasure all too many derive from torture and killing, the deep psychological mechanisms human beings use to resist change and unpleasant realities, the mechanisms of detachment and compartmentalization that allow them to ignore the enormity of animal suffering, the vested interests they have in exploiting animals, their violent nature, and their species identities as preordained masters of the Earth.

*Semantic Quagmires: Defining “Violence” and “Terrorism”*

*“It’s a strange kind of terrorist organization that hasn’t killed anyone.” The Observer*

*“A man that should call everything by its right name would hardly pass the streets without being knocked down as a common enemy.” George Savile, first Marquess of Halifax*

A key controversy surrounding the ALF concerns whether or not their actions are “violent” and they are “terrorists.” Before one can productively address these questions, it is important to provisionally define the terms; yet rarely do critics undertake this task, and when they do their definitions typically are flawed, biased, inconsistent, and politically motivated.<sup>39</sup> Dictionaries are a problematic place to start, but if we consult them we find that they define violence in broad and vague terms, such that a “violent” act involves “exertion of physical force to injure or abuse” (Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> edition) or that it contains the “purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing” (American Heritage Dictionary). Terms such as “injure” or “abuse” themselves

need precise definitions, and dictionaries tend not to specify whether violence applies only to living beings or also to physical objects.

Some key questions immediately arise: Is property destruction “violence,” or is this an unwarranted extension of the term that distorts its meaning? If property destruction can legitimately be called “violence,” and the ALF might therefore be labeled a “violent” organization, is violence always wrong? Or are there times when “violent” actions in defense of human and nonhuman animals are legitimate and necessary? Since violence is related to terrorism — easily the most abused term of the present era—we must also ask: What is terrorism? (see below, “Defining Terrorism,” and Watson in this volume). Can a movement be violent but not terrorist? Is the ALF a “terrorist” organization – or a counter-terrorist resistance force? Are animal exploitation industries and the state that defends them the true terrorists in this conflict?

A reasonable definition of “violence” would seem to be an intentional act of one individual or group against another individual or group that inflicts physical damage or harm upon their bodies, possibly resulting in death. The word “intentional” is important. If one willfully and purposively intends to physically harm another person, that is violence, but it is not violence if one does it unwittingly or by mistake. If an enraged person intentionally shoots another person with a gun or runs over him or her with a car, that person has committed a violent act, but if the gun fires by mistake or the driver falls asleep at the wheel, that is sheer accident or possibly neglect.

But there are many ways to harm, injure, or abuse another person that are not exhausted with causing physical damage, and so violence might require a broader definition. Violence could involve the intentional causing of psychological as well as physical injury, such as in a situation of domestic verbal abuse. Verbal battering can cause far more harm to a person than a physical attack and might legitimately be construed as a form of violence. One can also intentionally injure a person by maliciously damaging his or her name, reputation, or career, although it is questionable whether “violence” is the best term for this kind of harm (whereas “slander” fits the bill).

If violence entails the intentional causing of physical or psychological harm to a sentient human subject, then this applies equally as well to sentient nonhuman subjects. “In suffering,” Peter Singer notes, “animals are our equals.” Without question, human

beings can and do act violently toward animals in a sickening litany of practices, including branding, tail docking, teeth cutting, debeaking, castration, confinement, beating, clubbing, shocking, scalding, burning, blinding, mutilating, chemical poisoning, anal electrocution, and being boiled, skinned, or dismembered while still alive and conscious. Once society drops its speciesist blinders to define nonhuman animals as sentient beings and complex subjects of a life who can be maliciously victimized, traumatized, and hurt just like nonhuman animals, and who can experience not only physical but also psychological pain, then it is quite logical to conclude that those who intentionally harm animals for whatever dubious purposes are violent malefactors.

Any valid definitions of violence and terrorism must include the obscene suffering humans inflict on animals, yet common usage conveniently ignores this barbarity toward animals while targeting activists who protest the enormity of such evil. If society used non-speciesist definitions of violence and terrorism, ones that acknowledge and respect both human and nonhuman beings as subjects of a life, then the outcry against terrorism would shift from the activists trying to prevent injury, loss of life, and environmental degradation to the industries and individuals profiting from bloodshed, torture, and destruction.<sup>40</sup> Those who cry “eco-terrorist” the loudest typically are those who profit the most from violence and killing, and those who seek to disguise their crimes against life by vilifying others.

But what if we follow Gandhi, King, and ALF critics both inside and outside the animal advocacy movement and expand the concept of violence to include property destruction (see Regan in this volume)? Is the concept still logically coherent, or have we exceeded its definitional boundaries? How can one “hurt,” “abuse,” or “injure” a nonsentient thing that does not feel pain or have awareness of any sort—e.g., a van, a laboratory, or a fur farm? One simply cannot – unless a human being is involved indirectly in the attack.

Proponents of the “sabotage is violence” argument seem to assert at least two things, that there is violence (1) in the action itself and (2) in its effect on human targets. First, in the act of property destruction, objects are defaced, smashed, burned, and demolished. Anger, aggression, hatred, and hostility are exerted rather than calmness, peace, love, and compassion. If this is violence, then one certainly ought to open up the

definition of violence and terrorism to include corporate destruction of oceans, rivers, marshes, mountains, forests, and ecosystems of all kinds, for certainly their peace and integrity are disturbed and it is doubtful love informs such pillage and annihilation.

Second, by destroying property, activists do cause some kind of harm or injury to those who own the property or have a stake in it. People whose homes, cars, or offices are damaged suffer fear, anxiety, and trauma. Their business, livelihood, research, or careers may be ruined, and they are harmed psychologically, emotionally, economically, professionally, and in other ways. From this line of reasoning, one could conclude that property destruction is “violence.” If property destruction is “violence,” it pales in comparison to what industries inflict on animals in the speciesist Gulags, factories, and killing fields/seas of industrial capitalism. Animal liberationists rightly underscore the ironic disparity between the outcry over home demonstrations, liberations, and property damage and the silence over the obscene amount of violence inherent in the torture and killing of billions of animals every year for food, “fashion,” “sport,” “entertainment,” and “science.” Lest sane people choke on this hypocrisy, let moral outrage be put in its proper perspective.

Depending on the motivation and act, one might call intentional damage done to property vandalism, defacement, or theft, but not necessarily “violence.” In the context of animal liberation, however, property destruction is not vandalism, which entails sheer hooliganism and lack of a noble ethical purpose; rather, it is destruction for a just cause—a principled act of *ethical sabotage*. The ALF believes that the ends justify the means, and that if property destruction is an “evil,” then certainly it is the lesser of two evils when compared to the animal suffering it is designed to mitigate or to end. As Paul Watson (who accepts the argument that property destruction is “violence”) puts it, “To remain nonviolent totally is to allow the perpetuation of violence against people, animals, and the environment. The Catch-22 of it – the damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-don’t dilemma – is that, if we eschew violence for ourselves, we often thereby tacitly allow violence for others, who are then free to settle issues violently until they are resisted, necessarily with violence ... sometimes, to dramatize a point so that effective steps may follow, it is necessary to perform a violent act. But such violence must never be directed against a living thing. Against property, yes. But never against a life.”

Typically, those who vilify saboteurs as “violent” leap to the conclusion that they are “terrorists,” failing to realize the differences between the two terms insofar as one can use violence in morally legitimate ways in conditions ranging from self-defense to a “just war” (see Bernstein in this volume).<sup>41</sup> A viable definition of “terrorism” contains at least three specific conditions, namely that there is: (1) an intentional use of physical violence (2) directed against innocent persons (“non-combatants”) (3) for the ideological, political, or economic purposes of an individual, corporation, or state government. Besides ignoring state terrorism, a key omission from prevailing definitions is *species terrorism*, whose innocent victims are the billions of animals tortured and slaughtered by human beings and animal exploitation industries any given year (see “Defining Terrorism” in this volume). Just like human animals, nonhuman animals experience the trauma, pain, torment, and injury of terrorism; they are not people, but they are *persons*. If property destruction is violence, it is not necessarily terrorism, for in a just war to save animals it avoids “non-combatants” (ordinary citizens), targets only “combatants” (executives and managers of industries exploiting animals and the Earth), and does not even physically harm its opponents.

The distinction between physical and psychological violence provides a key to understanding the indiscriminate deployment of the word “terrorism” whose root is “terror.” Using another broad definition, a “terrorist” is someone who causes the feeling of panic or fear in another’s mind. Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) is a vivid example of liberation soldiers using psychological warfare or “psychological terrorism.” To accomplish its goal of bringing down Huntingdon Life Sciences, SHAC deploys tactics of harassment and persecution—ranging from a blitzkrieg of faxes, emails, and phone calls to home demonstrations—to torment executives who work for HLS or their supporting companies (accounting firms, janitorial services, food providers, and so on). If one’s definition of “terrorism” involves only a conscious effort to instill fear and anxiety in the mind of others, then SHAC is a kind of “terrorist” organization—and so too is the Internal Revenue Service.

In fact, since society is inherently conflict-ridden and fraught with tension among actors with competing goals and antagonistic viewpoints, all political struggle involves giving and receiving injury, harm, and fear in some sense. All political action, moreover,

involves some type of “intimidation” and “coercion”—hence the problem with the Patriot Act’s definition of a “terrorist” act. In effect, the Patriot Act banishes political action and criminalizes citizenship. Industries and the state define terrorism as any action directed against policies they favor.

*Dilemmas and the Politics of Language*

*“In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible.” George Orwell*

The act of destroying objects can be construed as violence if the premises of the argument are clear enough from the start, but these premises are shaky and this definition takes one into some very grey semantic territory that has potentially problematic consequences.

First, broadening the term “violence” to include store windows, buildings, laboratory equipment, and assorted physical objects can easily trivialize the violence done to human and nonhuman animals and may blur the critical distinction between living beings and nonliving things. There is a huge difference between breaking the neck of a mink and smashing a fur store window, but the values of society are revealed all too clearly when only the latter action is condemned as a crime worthy of intense opprobrium and legal action.

Second, animal advocates who accept the state’s argument that property destruction is “violent” may unwittingly contribute to the demonization of saboteurs and freedom fighters as “terrorists,” and thereby help legitimate intense FBI suppression of the ALF and ultimately the entire movement. Suppose the ALF agreed that property destruction is violence and publicly announced that indeed they are a pro-violence group. This would solidify the prejudice in the public mind that they are terrorists—a mistaken impression, for, as noted, a political group can be violent yet not fit the definition of terrorists who aim to traumatize, injure, or kill innocent people to bring about their political goals. The ALF might be counter-terrorists, but not terrorists. We suspect, however, that such subtleties would escape the propaganda machines of the state, animal

exploitation industries, the mass media, and much of the public. Consequently, the ALF's status would be sealed as a "terrorist" organization, bringing disastrous and possibly deadly political results such as previously experienced by revolutionary groups such as the Black Panthers and MOVE.

Just as, in the 1980s, Latin American peasants asking for land and fair wages were denounced as communists, so today's activists defending the natural world against corporate attacks are called terrorists. Just as the U.S. corporate-state complex used the term "communism" to export violence under a morally acceptable cover (fighting the "communist threat") through brutal dictatorships, juntas, and death squads, it now deploys the discourse of "terrorism" to discredit activists and promote the terrorist agendas of the ruling powers. Past Red Scares effectively weakened social justice movements by casting suspicion on the patriotic integrity of labor and reform movements; similarly, the corporate-state complex and mass media now manufacture "Green Scares" to legitimate a war against the movements defined as dangers to the fabled American Way of Life.

Detractors insist that it is only a matter of time before the ALF inadvertently kills someone or pursues a course of violence. Some critics argue that the ALF has already injured or killed people, but typically they confuse the ALF with ultra-radical English groups such as the Animal Rights Militia and the Justice Department. While in solidarity with the ALF, the Animal Rights Militia, the Justice Department, and the Revolutionary Cells feel the ALF is too *conservative* in its policy of nonviolence. In contrast, they openly espouse physical violence against animal oppressors, unable to fathom why some believe that a human life has absolute value, especially if it involves a person inflicting violence upon animals. A seal is worth the life of any – in fact, many – sealers. Consequently, these more militant groups employ fake poisoning scares to force companies to pull their products from the shelves. They target exploiters with booby-trapped letters fitted with poisoned razor blades. They set off bombs, and they issue death threats.<sup>42</sup> The Animal Rights Militia, the Justice Department, and the Revolutionary Cells graduated from the "all is justified" school, and they aim to ratchet up the conflict between activists and industry to new levels (see Best in this volume).<sup>43</sup> Razor blade letters, bomb threats or bomb attacks, arson, harassment, death threats, and physical

assaults have proven to be effective means of preventing and ending animal exploitation, and therefore will continue to be used by the most militant elements of the struggle.

But it is important to clearly distinguish between such fringe groups and the ALF, and to keep in mind that when a “radical” animal rights group threatens or commits violence, it is likely not the ALF.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, it could easily be a framing action by the state or an animal exploitation industry, intended to discredit the cause of animal liberation. True, ALF spokespersons and supporters have sometimes expressed violent sentiments against animal abusers, and phrases such as “do whatever it takes” and “animal liberation by any means necessary” can give credence to charges that the ALF has a violent edge. But given the enormity and magnitude of animal suffering, and the righteous anger that animal liberationists feel, one should notice that the ALF has demonstrated remarkable *restraint* in their war of liberation. Here, unlike with property destruction, the ALF believes that the means do *not* justify the end, and therefore they renounce physical violence against their human adversaries.

Death threats and bomb scares, while effective tools of intimidation, may inflict considerable psychological harm, and on this ground one might argue that such tactics are inconsistent with ALF nonviolent principles—while recognizing the absurdity tainting those critics who exonerate animal abusers from moral wrong in causing intense physical and psychological pain to animals. Booby-trapped letters sent by the Justice Department and baseball bat attacks against HLS executives are clear-cut cases of violent actions intended to cause a person physical harm. In April 2002, an avowed ALF cell placed thirty-eight unidentified bottles of Pantene Pro V shampoo contaminated with a diluted solution of ammonia and hydrogen peroxide in thirteen supermarkets throughout New Zealand to coincide with World Week for Laboratory Animals. Although their communiqué stated that the dilution was harmless, it mimicked a bona fide terrorist action by targeting innocent people for a political cause.

Arson is an invaluable weapon for destroying laboratories and research facilities, but it also is a problematic tool for nonviolent direct action because fire is so destructive and unpredictable. More than anything, acts of arson conjure up images of violence and terrorism in the public mind and pose credibility problems for the ALF.<sup>45</sup> For many animal advocates, the question is not whether illegal direct action is defensible, but rather

where to draw the line with such tactics, and some in this camp draw it at the use of arson.<sup>46</sup> If the arsonist does not accidentally injure or kill a human being who was not known to be in the target building after careful reconnaissance, insects and animals in the vicinity might be injured or killed, as could any firefighter called to put out the flames.

It is not unreasonable to conclude that insects and small animals have been injured or killed in arson strikes, thereby calling into question the nonviolent character of the ALF in an absolute sense. As Robin Webb puts the problem, “In my opinion, arson does not fall under the classification of ‘damage to property’ but rather, actions that endanger life. The ALF is proud of its claim never to have harmed human life but arson has, almost undisputedly, taken life, whether it be a mouse, rat or spider. One cannot check every nook and cranny of a department store or broiler shed; the presence of a small creature is not so obvious as that of a human and they do not understand fire alarms and emergency exits. If one does not or cannot take at least as great a care to ensure that spiders are not present as one does to ensure the absence of humans then that is not only endangering life but also practical speciesism.”<sup>47</sup>

Seemingly, if the ALF wishes both to be nonviolent and to continue using arson, the only philosophical resort it has in the face of this dilemma is (1) to claim it never intentionally causes violence to any form of life, or (2) to shift from deontological (absolute) defenses of the rights of all beings to a utilitarian justification of possibly harming animals, insects, or firefighters in order to save maximum animals lives through sabotage.

## VI. The “Pragmatic” Critique of the ALF

*“Until the last fur farm burns to the ground, expect to hear from us.” ALF press release*

*“We played the game, we played the rules. We were moderate, reasonable, and professional. We had data, statistics, and maps. And we got fucked. That’s when I started thinking, ‘Something’s missing here. Something isn’t working.’” Earth First! activist Howie Wolkie on attempts to protect wilderness through compromise with the U.S. Forest Service*

The pragmatic argument brackets the ethical status of sabotage tactics in order to scrutinize their possible or actual consequences for the animal advocacy movement. Like the principled critique, the pragmatic critique advocates legislation and education as the proper tools of progressive change, arguing that sabotage is premature and counterproductive. Following Tom Regan’s line of argument (in this volume), if significant options for non-violent change have not been fully explored, then “violence” (which for Regan includes property destruction) is not a legitimate option. Hence, many animal advocate critics argue that sabotage tactics seek a perilous shortcut to the hard work to be done through education and legislation.

As we have seen, however, the ALF believes that there is no virtue in following the legal path if it is a road to futility, and legalistic dogmas ought to be overturned for a more realistic appraisal of effective tactics. If the legal system were open to justice for animals, the ALF would not have to exist. When laws protecting animals and the environment are passed, they typically are rewritten and watered down over time, rendering them toothless. Frequently, they are not even enforced.<sup>48</sup> The vast majority of “research” animals—ninety-five percent—are rats, mice, and birds who have no legal protection whatsoever in the Animal Welfare Act, and so any form of abuse is permitted.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, in the age of global capitalism dominated by treaties and institutions such as the General Agreement of Trades and Tariff, the North American

Free Trade Agreement, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund, legislative changes for the animals are especially precarious. The WTO has overridden numerous progressive laws such as those protecting sea turtles or banning steel-leg traps, rescinding them as “barriers to free trade.”<sup>50</sup>

The inadequacies of adopting a strictly legal approach are obvious if one studies the history of Paul Watson’s efforts to protect whales and baby harp seals. Despite the laws of the International Whaling Commission that prohibit whaling, Russia, Japan, Iceland, and other nations kill thousands of them every year with impunity while governments such as the United States turn their backs. If not for the interventions, documentation, and publicity efforts of Watson and members of the Sea Shepherd, many more whales would have died and the carnage would have gone uncontested and unnoticed. When Watson innovated new tactics to protect harp seals, such as spraying them with a harmless dye to render their beautiful white coats valueless to their killers, the Canadian government immediately created new laws to proscribe his actions. As noted, the infamous “Seal Protection Act” was made and modified with seal defenders like Watson in mind and no efforts of mainstream organizations like Greenpeace would ever prevent one death.

That said, critics counter with the argument that sabotage is counterproductive insofar as it (1) alienates the public and (2) invites state repression. Short of rigorous sociological polling, it seems true that animal liberationists increasingly are coded by mass media as “terrorists,” and that their message and the context for their actions frequently do not reach the public. But the argument that sabotage always precludes discussion and has no educational value has been disproved, for it is often the case that a provocative hit—such as the August 2003 attacks on Bay Area foie gras chefs and restaurants—brings publicity to the conditions of animal exploitation being challenged and creates debate and change on issues that otherwise would not have been exposed or discussed (see Dawn in this volume). Watson brought unprecedented international attention to the bloodbaths on the high seas only through provocative direct action and sabotage strategies.

More often, of course, the ALF and ELF are negatively coded in mainstream media as “eco-terrorists,” and liberation groups seem to lack a coherent strategy for

jamming the corporate airways, getting out their perspective, educating the public about the plight of animals and their choice of tactics, and exposing the real terrorists who fulminate behind an Oz-like curtain of lies and hypocrisy. The first waves of ALF liberations were often accompanied by press conferences with the assistance of PETA, and successfully exposed cruelties of animal research while portraying the ALF in a positive light. Before and after pictures of animals such as Britches the monkey, liberated from the University of California-Davis, were particularly powerful means of delegitimizing vivisectionists while portraying the ALF as genuine freedom fighters whose actions, though illegal, were just.

At a certain point, however, perhaps with the change in focus from liberation to sabotage, strategic ALF media work in the U.S. became increasingly rare. Some critics observe a parallel shift in media coverage of the ALF from a positive “Robin Hood” coding of bandits breaking the law to realize a higher good to extremists and terrorists enamored with violence and destruction (see Stallwood in this volume). Consequently, one can ask: does the ALF appear just and heroic in media representations, or ludicrous and violent? Are the animal exploitation industries condemned, or is the ALF? Are people encouraged to feel sympathetic to the ALF and the animals they are trying to save, or to “owners” of the animals and the animal exploitation industries? Are the exploiters, rather than the animals themselves, portrayed as victims?

This media framing problem explains why many activists embrace “open rescues” without property damage, and go so far as to replace broken locks or damaged property (see Davis in this volume). As Paul Shapiro of Compassion Over Killing explains, “We found that these rescues generate extremely positive media coverage because we’re not painted as so-called terrorists with ski masks or somebody who’s ashamed to admit what they’ve done. ... And because we’re openly admitting that we did this, the public reaction is much more sympathetic. Another advantage of open rescues is that because there is no property destruction, the issue isn’t muddled by the press. The issue stays on the fact that there is animal cruelty going on and that the animals are suffering. The issue isn’t, ‘Should they have broken property? Are they terrorists? Can we condone these types of tactics?’”<sup>51</sup>

Clearly, animal liberation and illegal direct action is not dependent on property destruction or “violence,” and is fully compatible with Gandhian principles that a public unsympathetic to animal rights might find more palatable than arson and bombing attacks. Yet amidst the current insanity open rescues too are increasingly stigmatized as acts of terrorism. Open rescues work well when activists penetrate hellholes like factory farms that are not popular with the public and whose owners will not prosecute for fear of negative publicity, but if done in sensitive areas such as laboratories, the risk of a long jail term makes them a less plausible approach. Legally, the distinction between open and closed rescues is beginning to blur, as for instance on January 1, 2004 a new California law went into effect making trespassing on animal farms a misdemeanor punishable by six months in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine. Soon enough, open rescuers may get more jail time than they bargained for.

Unavoidably, animal liberationists are caught in a war of publicity and propaganda, and they must defeat the mendacity of the state and animal exploitation industries to fight for the hearts and mind of the people. While public opinion may indeed be secondary to the impact direct action can have on an industry, and potential negative media coverage should not deter activists from sabotage operations, the attitude that public opinion is irrelevant is a tactical mistake.<sup>52</sup> If negative images of ALF actions prevail, industries will win support, liberationists will lose sympathy, and few will protest when the state pounces on the ALF with fierce repression. One might argue that the mass media is incorrigibly corrupt and cannot positively represent ALF viewpoints or actions (see Yourofsky in this volume), but media representations are more ambiguous and complex than this. Sometimes the media does fairly balanced or even positive stories that represent the ALF point of view and discuss the conditions of exploitation they challenge in an educating manner. Activists do not necessarily face a choice between illegal direct action and good press. Liberation activists can apply direct pressure to exploiters as they work media relations after the action—much as the ALF did with great success after the raids on the University of Pennsylvania, the University of California-Riverside, and the so-called City of Hope.<sup>53</sup>

Opponents of sabotage also have good reason to fear that property destruction and arson will invite a severe counter-attack by the government. Clearly, state repression of

the movement as a whole has increased sharply since the early 1990s, when the ALF was very active in the mink releases and arson attacks of the Operation Bite Back campaign (see below). Repression by a state that supposedly protects democracy and free speech is unavoidable whenever a political movement becomes effective and seriously threatens “the rule of law” and corporate hegemony. The blowback mainstream organizations might receive is not necessarily the result of ALF actions alone, but rather also stems from the effectiveness of the animal advocacy movement in general and the will of the corporate-state complex to crush all dissent. The fallacy in this argument against the ALF is the assumption that the state will repress the entire movement only if and when an underground element consistently breaks the law. In fact, from the 1960s onward, FBI COINTELPRO surveiled, invaded, and attacked nonviolent social justice movements working within the constraints of the legal system, and the situation is no different in animal rights or environmental movements. One way or the other, the insidious and entrenched interests of the state must be taken on squarely and the naiveté of substantive change through the legal system must be abandoned.

When mainstream organizations feel heat from the state, they should see the underground movement as their ally rather than blaming or censuring them. Any negative publicity that sabotage brings can be balanced by increased awareness of animal exploitation brought about by direct action. Issues come to light in dramatic form not through signing petitions but rather through direct and dramatic confrontation. Moreover, whatever trouble ALF actions cause the “legitimate” branches of the movement, it also has a positive effective by positioning them as moderate in comparison (see below). Mainstream organizations hurt their own cause when they join in the fray of the corporate and state invective against the ALF as “violent” and “terrorist.”

### *Exploiters on the Run*

*“The pump don’t work ‘cause the vandals took the handles.” Bob Dylan,  
“Subterranean Homesick Blues”*

*“The 60’s are over and the animals don’t have time for their hippy dreams.” Bite Back Magazine*

In response to the pragmatic argument that ALF tactics are counterproductive, set the animal rights movement back, and weaken its credibility in the public eye, it is instructive to underscore the fact that illegal direct action tactics have succeeded in ways no other tactics could. One dramatic example of the power of sabotage and civil disobedience is the ability of Paul Watson and his crew to stop many whalers from their killing. Since 1986, an international ban on whaling has been in place, but whaling nations like Japan violate these laws routinely and without consequence. No letter-writing campaigns, boycotts, or lobbying have stopped the massacre in the oceans, and no entity exists to enforce the laws—save Watson and his crew. By tearing up miles of driftnets, monitoring whaling ships, and sometimes ramming and sinking them, the Sea Shepherd has prevented or stopped a great deal of carnage at sea. The beauty of this example is that the infamous “eco-terrorist” Paul Watson is not even breaking the law, but instead, after exhausting all conventional means of saving whales, is upholding the law against pirate whalers that otherwise kill with impunity in the waters of international indifference.

Similarly, the ALF has rescued thousands of animals that other groups had ignored, were unaware of, or were unable to assist through legal means. Moreover, the ALF has slowed down or shut down many brutal operations other groups were powerless to stop, and prevented other ventures from even starting. Where legal tactics often stall interminably within bureaucratic channels, the ALF has eliminated threats to animals in one night’s work. In November 1986, Rod Coronado and David Howitt demolished a whale “processing” plant in Reykjavik and then sunk two Icelandic whaling ships, half of their fleet. They caused \$1.8 million dollars in damage to the processing plant, \$2.8 million dollars to the ships, and \$4.6 million dollars to the Hvalur of Hvalfjordur company in fines for illegal whaling--and brought about a cancellation in the company’s insurance and increased future security costs.

In the early 1990s, Coronado and others from the Western Wildlife Unit of the ALF attacked fur farms and universities doing research on their behalf. Dubbed “Operation Bite Back,” the raids devastated the fur industry. Six months after a June

1991 ALF break-in, Oregon State University's Experimental Fur Farm shut down, as head researcher Ron Scott admitted to the media that the closure was a direct result of the raid. In December 1991, Malecky Mink Ranch in Yamhill, Oregon was permanently retired after multiple incendiary attacks. In February 1992, the ALF broke into Michigan State University's Experimental Fur Farm; they liberated two minks and set fire to mink researcher Richard Aulerich's office, destroying thirty-two years of research work invaluable to the mink farm industry. In 1993, an arson attack on the USDA's Predator Research Facility ended its bloodletting. Along with dozens of devastating assaults on the fur farming industry, Operation Bite Back also liberated thousands of mink, including a record release of 10,000 mink in 1997 at the Arritola Mink Farm in Mount Angel, Oregon.<sup>54</sup>

To gauge the effectiveness of ALF actions, one need only ask: what tactics do industries such as fur farms and vivisection laboratories fear the most—education and lobbying, protests and demonstrations, or sabotage? Even industry opponents of the ALF admit that it is a potent foe blocking “progress” in their fields. Susan Paris, for example, the president of the pro-vivisection group Americans for Medical Progress, wrote: “Because of terrorist [sic] acts by animal activists, crucial research projects have been delayed or scrapped. More and more of the scarce dollars available to research are spent on heightened security and higher insurance rates. Promising young scientists are rejecting careers in research. Top-notch researchers are getting out of the field.” Similarly, a report to Congress on Animal Enterprise Terrorism states that “Where the direct, collateral, and indirect effects of incidents [of sabotage] are factored together, the ALF's professed tactic of ‘economic sabotage’ can be considered successful, and its objectives, at least toward the victimized facility, fulfilled.”<sup>55</sup>

Critics argue that industries can recover from ecotage in order to build bigger and better, to use more animals, or to cut down more trees. But it is also the case that ecotage tactics have eliminated or economically weakened corporations, forcing them to bear increased insurance and security costs. Even when acknowledging the efficacy of ALF actions, opponents insist that they are of short-term, not long-term, significance. Property destruction, arson attacks, and illegal actions can win some dramatic battles, they say, but contribute little toward winning the war, a process they argue demands patience, public

support, moral integrity, and planting more deeply rooted seeds of change. To this objection, the ALF insists that animals and the Earth are in crisis and resistance can no longer afford to be moderate, compromising, or complacent about time.

Then again, perhaps victory in war requires a multi-faceted attack of numerous tactics and strategies working as one.

## VII. Rifts in the Movement

*“Politics is the art of the possible.” Otto von Bismark*

The question arises: Is this a time for mainstream groups to retreat, to do the state’s bidding, to be put on the defensive by industry front groups like the Center for Consumer Freedom, to renounce illegal direct action, and to become tentative and conservative? Or is it time for courage, for greater militancy, and for critical solidarity with the ALF?<sup>56</sup>

Many in the mainstream are choosing to distance animal advocacy from association with the “extreme fringe” of the ALF, employing such criticisms as are discussed above. Wayne Pacelle, senior Vice President of the Humane Society of the United States, says, “There’s sympathy for the motive but increasing antipathy for the means. It’s clearly counterproductive. We believe you lose your moral authority when you resort to vandalism, threats of violence and other means of illegal conduct.”<sup>57</sup>

Reverend Professor Andrew Linzey frames the point in even stronger terms: “I believe that our movement is facing a Rubicon. If animal rights is not to become synonymous with terror tactics, individuals and organizations must move, and move fast, to dissociate themselves completely from violent militancy. ... I understand something of the despair that leads to violence. None of us are immune from hateful thoughts or coercive desires. But to indulge such pathology, even as a psychological release, invites counterviolence and rightful social derision. Most importantly of all, it constitutes living proof that we really don’t believe in our own vision of a peaceful world. I beg my fellow peaceable animal advocates to take their stand now, as a matter of urgency, before others take their stand against us. ... It has been said that ours is not a cause to win, ours is a cause to lose. I believe it. But we shall not only lose, we shall also deserve to lose, if we fail to break

free of the taint of terror tactics. It is nothing less than tragic that a movement that contains so many honorable and conscientious people should be publicly held to ransom by a small group of violent zealots.”<sup>58</sup>

As dialogue about animal liberation begins within the animal advocacy movement, we hope for pluralism and tolerance for different approaches. There will never be a homogenous unity or consensus over complex philosophical and tactical issues within the animal advocacy movement, nor will people intent on pursuing one strategy yield to the arguments of others. And so the best one can expect is mutual respect and recognition that a tactical tool kit contains many useful devices, ranging from letter writing, legislative measures, and vegan outreach to home demonstrations, open rescues, and smashing vivisection labs. In the words of David Barbarash, “We need to be smart about how we move forward, and not discard any tactics. We shouldn’t overlook the legal avenues to change, nor should we dismiss illegal means just because our society, at this moment in its history, has deemed these actions illegal (while sanctioning the horrendous pain and suffering inflicted on animals). I believe the most successful way forward to animal liberation is a multi-pronged attack on all fronts by different people: while one group is lobbying government representatives for changes to legislation, another group is protesting and blockading the labs, and at another time the ALF will enter those labs to rescue the animals and destroy the implements of torture. If we all work together in solidarity and respect each other’s paths we will move forward much quicker.”<sup>59</sup>

By recognizing the respective strengths and contributions of different approaches, this understanding helps to bridge the gap between the animal welfare and animal rights camps as well as the underground and aboveground communities. Like an ecosystem, the strength of the movement lies in its diversity, so long as there is mutual respect, understanding, and solidarity. Not everyone, however, wants to live under one happy roof. Pacelle, Linzey, and others decry illegal direct action tactics as an invasive species that weakens the ecosystem, while Gary Francione brashly insists that welfarism handicaps the goal of abolition and does more harm than good.<sup>60</sup> Although direct action advocates often charitably acknowledge the great value of aboveground or welfarist approaches, mainstream organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States and Friends of Animals denigrate direct action, animal liberation, and property

destruction. This is not only because they have major philosophical and tactical disagreements with the ALF, or because they cannot afford to alienate potential funders or lose their tax-free status. It is also because in the current neo-McCarthyist climate that promotes guilt by association, mainstream organizations are pressured to criticize the ALF, to distance themselves from it, and even to boycott conferences that include direct activists so that they do not have to fight the kind of rear-guard battles against “terrorist” accusations that pester PETA.

In response to mainstream criticism of the ALF, a Western Wildlife Unit document states, “The ALF leaves the path of moderation to those who sincerely believe that that is the road to victory. But we must also ask that those who approach the legal means of reform with the same conviction in which the ALF approaches its own, not be so quick to condemn avenues of illegal direct action. Without illegal direct action on the path of liberty and justice, many of this century’s greatest social changes never would have been achieved ... all avenues of action must be utilized and recognized because without them our battle appears to be that of a splintered faction unable to share basic common goals ... Not only do we rescue individuals and utilize guerilla warfare to sabotage industries destroying earth and animals, but whether others recognize it or not, the ALF also brings issue to light and creates the catalyst for others in the movement to continue pressuring for change.”<sup>61</sup>

A respectful pluralism would benefit this movement considerably, but the ideal to attain beyond that is synthesis and mediation of the two faces of struggle. The work the ALF did with PETA in earlier actions such as the raids on the University of Pennsylvania, the University of California-Riverside, the City of Hope, or, more recently, with SHAC, show how underground and aboveground facets of the movement can cooperate with great success, throwing bricks while raising bullhorns (see Jonas in this volume). In today’s ultra-repressive social environment, however, cooperation between overt and covert groups is difficult to achieve. Targeted with a RICO lawsuit, In Defense of Animals was forced to promise not to work with or support “violent” organizations such as SHAC, as PETA was compelled to disavow connections with SHAC and the ALF. Both organizations had to pay lawyers and court costs to settle cases and were able to absorb legal fees that might devastate a smaller outfit.

But mainstream organizations don't have to openly cooperate with or support the ALF to benefit from their actions. The ALF enhances their credibility and effectiveness by providing a militant alternative that makes them seem reasonable and temperate in comparison. The "moderate" and acceptable path of change is defined only in relation to a more controversial and "extreme" road. Mainstream wilderness organizations often got additional land designated as wilderness areas only because Earth First! was demanding far more.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience were more easily embraced by the state because they were less threatening than the fiery radicalism of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers. Unlike the aboveground animal rights movement, King was well aware that the "extremists" were in fact his allies, for, as he said, "I am only effective as long as there is a shadow on white America of the black man standing behind me with a Molotov cocktail."<sup>63</sup>

### VIII. Against Hypocrisy

*"Do you think then that revolutions are made with rose water?" Alain Chamfort*

There are two faces of the ALF—the "benign" one that breaks into prisons to release and rescue animals, and the "malign" one that smashes windows, wrecks equipment, and torches buildings. The public seems sympathetic only to the benign side because it believes that property destruction is violence. Many animal rights advocates embrace both sides of the ALF, while others feel that its emphasis has changed from liberation to sabotage, leading it to take a more "violent" turn. In fact, the ALF has always pursued both pathways and views them as inseparably related to the project of animal liberation.<sup>64</sup> As the ALF sees it, animals must be released and rescued whenever possible to bring about good in the short run, but sabotage must also inflict maximal damage to undermine exploitation industries in the long run and to mitigate or prevent the need for future liberations. Yet the argument that the more the ALF destroys property, the more the public will view them as terrorists and not freedom fighters, may warrant paying more attention to rescue, releases, education, and media relations. It must be acknowledged,

however, that rescue operations are likely more difficult to conduct than sabotage, so a preponderance of ALF strikes may continue to be sabotage.

Animal rights or welfare advocates who condemn the liberation and property destruction tactics of the ALF succumb to hypocrisy. We imagine that few people who care passionately about animals would not clandestinely “steal” a dog from a neighbor who neglects and abuses the animal, understanding that calls to the local animal pound or police could take time the dog cannot afford and ultimately may be futile. Similarly, we suspect that few people would not seize or destroy traps set by a sadist in their community who captures and tortures cats. And how many people truly disagree with Paul Watson’s actions when he pulls up miles of driftnets from the ocean used to destroy thousands of marine animals such as turtles and dolphins? Who, like Watson, would not take away a sealer’s spiked club if that act could prevent the sealer from smashing the skulls of baby seals? Who (besides Greenpeace) wishes to uphold the monstrous sealer’s “right to property” over the stunningly innocent seal’s right to life?

Who wants to find fault with the Jewish resistance fighters who killed every Nazi and destroyed every gas oven they could? If one supports that kind of struggle and property destruction, why not support the ALF? Is it because that was the 1940s and this is now? Is it because that was Germany and this is the U.S.? Or is it because those acts defended human beings while the ALF defends animals? Is it because those who criticize the ALF are speciesists who condone sabotage on behalf of humans but not animals? Is it the tactics people disagree with—or the cause and constituency (see Jonas in this volume)? Who would not break down the door of a killer to rescue one of their human or nonhuman family members? The sense of urgency one would naturally feel in such a situation is what the ALF feels for all animals in captivity (see Newkirk in this volume).

One of the central ironies of our time is that within the exploitative and materialist ethos of capitalism, property and inanimate objects are more sacred than life, such that to destroy living beings and the natural world is a legal and (to all too many) ethically acceptable occupation, while to smash the things used to kill animals and to plunder the Earth is illegal, immoral, and even an act of “terrorism.” Individual or corporate property rights over animals and the Earth are protected and privileged over our common inheritance of the planet and the well-being of all future generations. The state unleashes

Draconian rule with the Patriot Act, but champions of animal rights and radical ecology are smeared for using “intimidation tactics.” In the mass media, the courts, the legislature, and corporate discourse, the ALF is denounced as a “criminal” force that operates illegally, while society largely ignores the illegalities of corporations (as evident in recent cases such as the Enron and WorldCom scandals) and the state (ranging from the routine violations of politicians to the murderous acts of the CIA and FBI, to the subversion of the Constitution by Ashcroft and Bush).

Torching a research or vivisection laboratory is considered more heinous than anally electrocuting mink or conducting the LD50 tests that pour industrial chemicals into the bodies of animals until half of them die. The loss of one building is deemed more noteworthy than the devastation of rainforests or the eradication of species. Critics whine about the *possibility* of physical violence by the ALF but fall silent before the *actuality* of state terrorism, animal massacres, and environmental destruction on a global scale. They decry death threats, but never death. They condemn activist pressure against animal exploiters but condone the violence thugs direct against activists. The U.S. is rife with volatile hate groups—ranging from neo-Nazis militiamen to right-wing Christian zealots—that have a long record of violence, including killing hundreds of people in the Oklahoma City bombing, yet the government positions the ALF above all of them as the more dangerous “domestic terrorist” threat. While Al Qaeda and sundry terrorist cells openly threaten more attacks on the nation, the FBI deploys hundreds of agents and squanders millions of dollars to harass activists who rescue cats and dogs. Those who exploit human beings, animals, and the Earth are dignified with labels such as “scientist,” “developer,” or “businessmen” as those who dare attack the property of the powerful are branded as “terrorists.” It’s a game of corrupt semantics where those who monopolize power monopolize meaning.

The hypocrisies, inanities, ironies, distortions, mendacity, deceit, lies, and contradictions that billow from a barbaric society posing as civilized are so massive, staggering, and outrageous that they are numbing to contemplate. In this Orwellian world -- where slavery is freedom and war is peace, where timber companies raze forests under the “Healthy Forest Restoration Act” and governments guard seal massacres under the “Seal Protection Act” -- it is difficult to find truth and logic. It is not the ALF’s tactics

that deserve vehement condemnation, but rather the industries that exploit animals so viciously, the legal systems that institutionalize their interests, the media moguls that denigrate animal rights, and the states that run the whole fucking insane asylum.

### IX. About This Volume

*“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” Nelson Mandela*

This book is unique in many ways. To begin, it is the first volume ever written on the ALF, and as such is long overdue. *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters?* is an anthology of essays by leading supporters and critics of the ALF from *within* the animal rights movement. While unanimous about the goal of total animal liberation, the animal rights community differs considerably over the proper means to achieve this end, and so this book presents both defenses and critiques of the ALF. In addition, this anthology brings together the thoughts of prominent activists and academics, thereby creating a rare encounter of perspectives, although many figures in the book combine both roles and approaches in their orientation toward animal rights.

The tactics of illegal direct action and property destruction are complex and controversial. Rather than seek any definitive, absolute, or final answers to the multitude of important questions that emerge, this anthology wishes to begin serious discussion and debate about a host of crucial ethical, philosophical, political, and tactical issues surrounding the history, philosophy, ethics, and strategies of the ALF; its relation to other resistance movements; and the role it plays in the overall animal advocacy community. The book is subtitled “Reflections on the Liberation of Animals,” rather than “Reflections on the ALF,” because the ALF represents only one tactic of direct action animal liberation, with more violent groups like the Justice Department represented on one side, and aboveground open rescue groups like Mercy For Animals and Compassion Over Killing on the other side.

## *Historical and Theoretical Perspectives*

In Part I, we present three valuable essays on the history of the ALF. Noel Molland and Robin Webb each trace the beginnings of the ALF in England during the 1970s, and Kim Stallwood describes this history from his personal relationships with Ronnie Lee and other members of the ALF. Stallwood narrates what he found to be a disturbing shift in the ALF toward embracing “violent methods.” Against Lee’s and Webb’s philosophy of animal liberation “by any means necessary,” Stallwood suggests four core values that animal liberation actions should meet, including nonviolence to human beings and to property.

Part II provides theoretical analyses on various aspects of the ALF and the current political climate. In “Legitimizing Liberation,” Mark Bernstein nicely dissects the arguments for and against animal liberation. Bernstein grounds the intelligibility and legitimacy of animal liberation in the undeniable fact of animal sentience and subjectivity, well established in the vast literature of cognitive ethology.<sup>65</sup> He underscores the analogies between human and animal liberation movements, and concludes that animal liberationists are soldiers in a “just war.” In his essay, “At the Gates of Hell: The ALF and the Legacy of Holocaust Resistance,” Maxwell Schnurer finds that the key to understanding the ALF lies less in comparing it to human liberation movements in the U.S. than to the German Holocaust resistance movement. Schnurer explores a number of significant analogies between the two struggles and argues from the validity of human opposition to genocide to the justness of animal liberation. For Schnurer, the boldness of direct action has the unique power to challenge human “mindlessness” in the face of systemic violence, and is therefore a critical tool for restoring the lost ethical relationships between humans and animals.

In “Understanding Animal Liberation: From Critical Analysis to Critical Pedagogy,” Anthony Nocella asks critics to steer past the stereotypes of the ALF as “extremist” and “terrorist” in order to grasp its true nature and reason for being. Nocella suggests a method for such rethinking, with the goal of understanding the ALF, or any phenomenon, from within, through empathy and lived experience, rather than from

without, through detachment and “objective” distance. Like Nocella, Judith Barad believes that love is central to ALF philosophy and motivation, but in “Aquinas’ Account of Anger as Applied to the ALF” she also finds an important place for anger in the pursuit of animal liberation. Developing the insights of medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas, Barad argues that anger can be a galvanizing, cathartic, and productive force, but only if coupled with reason, understanding, and love; otherwise it becomes destructive to the activist, the cause, and possibly to other human beings.

Tom Regan brings a provocative argument to the table with his essay “How to Justify Violence.” While influenced by Gandhi, Regan nonetheless rejects the Gandhian dogma that violence is always wrong. Against many figures in the book, Regan insists that property destruction should be considered violence, and to establish his case he appeals to common sense and to the views of Gandhi and King. Regan thinks it hurts the cause of animal liberation when activists deny that property destruction is violence, and believes they should shift their strategy from *denying* that it is violence to *defending* it as violence. Regan specifies three conditions that must hold for such as defense. patrice jones’ “Mothers with Monkeywrenches: Feminist Imperatives and the ALF” sees violence as a male pathology the ALF must avoid, and argues that it can do so through incorporation of feminist values. She draws the organic connections between “eco-feminism” or “anarcha-feminism” and animal liberation, arguing that “animal liberation is a feminist project.” If power over women and domination over animals emerged hand in hand in history, it follows that an important part of the feminist project is animal liberation and a vital component of animal liberation is overturning patriarchy.

In “From the Front Line to the Front Page: An Analysis of ALF Media Coverage,” Karen Dawn offers a much-needed study, perhaps the first, of the relationship between the ALF and the mass media that underground activists so often disdain. Dawn skewers a few trusty dogmas of both the ALF and movement critics in the nonviolence camp. She convincingly argues that the ALF ought to take media coverage more seriously and use the media to its advantage—as it did in its earlier history. Against ALF critics, Dawn uses recent case studies to show that sabotage tactics are not necessarily alienating and counterproductive, as they often generate positive press and social debate.

Jennifer and Jason Black's essay, "The Rhetorical 'Terrorist': Implications of the USA Patriot Act on Animal Liberation," provides an excellent historical and political contextualization of animal liberation struggles in the era of Bush and Ashcroft. The Blacks describe the nature of the Patriot Act, how it wrongly frames liberation activities as "terrorism" under its sweeping purview, and its implications for animal rights activism. Steven Best continues the sharp political analysis of the Patriot Act and extends it to some of the Act's repressive offspring in his timely essay, "It's War! The Escalating Battle Between Activists and the Corporate-State Complex." Best argues that tensions have been steadily mounting between animal and Earth liberationists on one side and various exploitation industries and the state on the other, such that we are approaching a new type of civil war. Warning of the danger of impending fascism, Best shows how human and animal rights are interconnected projects.

### *Activist Perspectives*

The third section of the book features writings from prominent activists. Lawrence Sampson is not an animal rights activist or a vegetarian; he is involved with the American Indian Movement and he supports the Makah nation's tradition of killing whales. He is critical of what he feels is an ethnocentric bias in the animal rights community, yet he supports the ALF because he admires their courage to challenge the "legal criminals" who comprise America's corporate elite. Sampson believes that the ALF and Native Americans are fighting the same foes, and his essay demonstrates the kind of solidarity warriors for human and animal nations must forge before either can mount a credible challenge to the killing machines of modernity. Akin to Sampson, Nicole Atwood's essay "Revolutionary Process and the ALF" commends the ALF for being a "dynamic and inspirational" movement and a catalyst of social change. But she also insists that "the ALF is not revolutionary ... ALF actions can only be part of a revolutionary process" to liberate animals and transform society as a whole. This opens the door to alliances with other social movements of the kind envisioned by Best, Sampson, and Jones, but Atwood argues that the ALF must move from striking random

targets to developing a coherent strategy of attack (a point reinforced by Jonas in this volume).

Freeman Wicklund writes as a former ALF advocate who adopted a more critical tone the more deeply he probed the nonviolent philosophies of Gandhi and King. As Wicklund sees it in “Direct Action: Progress, Peril, or Both?,” there are two roads to animal liberation, the “road of coercion” and the “road of persuasion.”<sup>66</sup> Although social movements blend both paths, Wicklund believes that the best avenue of change is via the road of persuasion, where people abandon speciesism because they are enlightened rather than intimidated. Wicklund believes that the ALF skips important stages of struggle before using direct action, and implements its tactics in a hostile manner that discourages public support. Writing a direct rebuttal to Wicklund in “Defending Agitation and the ALF,” Bruce Friedrich rejects the arguments that clandestine, illegal direct action alienates the public, always gets bad press, reduces activists to the same ethical level of animal oppressors, and impedes the cause. Friedrich analyzes the discontinuities between the struggles of Gandhi and King and animal liberation, and shows why Wicklund’s “strategic nonviolence” tactics are inadequate in the struggle against human supremacy.

In “ALF & ELF: Terrorism is as Terrorism Does,” Captain Paul Watson brilliantly punctures the fallacies that plague hypocrites who abuse the T-word. Whereas most deployments of “terrorism” are subjective, arbitrary, and politically motivated, Watson clarifies what the concept means “objectively defined” and shows why it does not apply to the actions of the ALF and ELF. Like Friedrich, Watson takes on pacifist interpretations of history and debunks standard readings of social movements led by Gandhi and King. The earth is in serious crisis, Watson argues, and the only escape is through militant resistance of the kind represented by the ALF and ELF and widespread adoption of a new ecocentric ethic that overcomes human arrogance and alienation from nature. In a similar vein, Rod Coronado defends the ALF from the pragmatic critique in “Direct Actions Speak Louder Than Words.” Coronado ticks off an impressive list of ALF victories, and he joins Friedrich and Watson in challenging pacifist interpretations of the struggles of Gandhi and King. Like Friedrich and numerous others in the volume, Coronado maintains that no one tactic alone is adequate to win animal liberation, and thus the movement should respect the diversity of its various approaches

Gary Yourofsky addresses the hot topic of mink liberation in his essay, “Abolition, Liberation, Freedom: Coming to a Fur Farm Near You.” Noting that the U.S. failed to make the right choices in the aftermath of 9/11—as the nation embarked on an even more hate-filled, violent, and repressive path domestically and internationally, and the public did not grasp the connections between terrorism toward humans and terrorism toward animals—Yourofsky peels away the veneer of humanitarianism to display its hypocritical core in barbarity toward animals. A convicted mink liberator, Yourofsky debunks the standard lies the mink industry and press spew after an ALF release, and he concludes with a stirring statement of resistance.

Karen Davis’ essay “Open Rescues: Putting a Face on the Rescuers and the Rescued” shifts the debate from the “closed” (underground) rescues of the ALF to the relatively new “open” (aboveground) rescues tactics pioneered by Australian activist Patty Mark. Both types of rescue methods break the law to liberate animals, but open rescue tactics resonate more with the Gandhian approach of Wicklund and Regan than the confrontational style of Watson and Coronado. Davis describes the differences between the two techniques, and offers some interesting thoughts about the importance of narrative and drama for effective video documentation of animal cruelty and rescue. Representing yet another approach to animal liberation, Kevin Jonas’ piece “Bricks and Bullhorns” describes SHAC’s legal and aboveground methods of liberation through intimidation. Jonas provides an important history of the SHAC movement and offers an instructive comparison of its highly focused approach to the scattershot strikes of the ALF. Through the oblique relation between the ALF and SHAC, Jonas also explains how the underground can and must work with the aboveground movement to deliver a powerful “one-two punch” to animal oppressors.

The Western Wildlife Unit sends a stirring call to action in “Take No Prisoners.” This essay beautifully captures the biocentric, spiritual ethic that stirs Sampson, Watson, and Coronado, and infuses the soul of many who take direct action to protect Mother Earth. The Native Americans who lived in harmony with the land were exterminated by the same genocidal and ecocidal armies that now threaten all life. Their resistance was not in vain, their courage lives on through the new warriors who slip into the night and live proudly with the knowledge that each blow they inflict on oppressors is a healing

touch. In her Afterword, “The ALF: Who, Why, and What?”, Ingrid Newkirk beautifully summarizes the arguments in favor of an underground presence within the animal rights struggle. If, she asks, every human liberation movement had a militant and “violent” component, why should it be any different for the animal liberation movement? Moral progress does not work through gentle nudges or ethical persuasion alone, rather, “Society has to be pushed into the future.” Newkirk cuts through the hypocrisy of ALF detractors to show that opposition to sabotage supports the greater over the lesser “violence,” as she illuminates the empathy and urgency that motivates ALF actions for animals trapped in the torture chambers of a violent speciesist world.

The book concludes with appendices and resources for further study. “My Experience with Government Harassment” is Rod Coronado’s chilling testimony about government repression and its impact on the unity of the animal rights movement.<sup>67</sup> “Letters from the Underground” (Parts I and II)” come from an anonymous female ALF member. Part I describes how she joined the underground and gravitated toward her first ALF action—a brave and empowering solo foray. Part II discusses how to find the right people with which to form a cell or affinity group. These letters provide some insight into how ALF actions are conducted and how an ALF activist thinks. In “Defining Terrorism,” Best and Nocella probe the complexities of the term “terrorism.” Citing numerous definitions of the term, they underscore the momentous consequences of politically motivated definitions and call for a more adequate definition that includes both state-sponsored and species terrorism. Finally, the “Contact Resources” list provides the most current information on the various media and organizations that address animal and Earth liberation issues, including prisoner support.

### *Difference in Unity, Unity in Difference*

While certainly there is room for disagreement among the contributors, they all defend the liberation of animals; they believe in the legitimacy of nonviolent civil disobedience as a political tactic to drive progressive political change; and they renounce, repudiate, and revile animal exploitation industries and the bloody stain speciesists leave on this planet and the human soul. The authors in this volume concur on the goal of

animal liberation, while sometimes disagreeing about the best means to achieve that goal. Many like Bernstein, Schnurer, Watson, Coronado, Jonas, Friedrich, Newkirk, and Yourofsky support sabotage or direct pressure tactics and reject the argument that property destruction is “domestic terrorism.” Others like Stallwood, Wicklund, and Regan link property destruction to violence and advocate more Gandhian tactics of liberation. Hence, Coronado embraces the closed rescues of the ALF, while Davis prefers the open rescues of Compassion Over Killing. Coronado, Yourofsky, and Jonas slight the value of media coverage, while Dawn upholds its importance. Some like Watson focus exclusively on animal rights and environmental protection, as others like Best, Jones, and Atwood seek to build bridges among radical movements.

At a time when the animal advocacy movement is divided over the nature and effects of the ALF, contributors such as Coronado, Friedrich, and Jonas call for a *rapprochement* of differences, advocating more solidarity between the underground and aboveground elements of the movement. They reject the debilitating logic of either/or—either closed or open rescue, either legislation or agitation, either covert or overt operations — as both strategies clearly are useful and necessary. Arguably, activists like Coronado and Yourofsky are even more subversive and dangerous in their current aboveground roles as educators than in their former underground incarnations as ALF liberators, but to a significant degree this effectiveness stems from their experience being underground.

Like the ALF Press Office and the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs, an academic think tank for animal liberation issues, the writers in this volume constitute an open network of support for the liberation of animals — a broader concept and approach than “the ALF” — and they reclaim the rights to free thought and speech that as we write are being dismantled by the U.S. government under the rubric of Homeland Security and defense against “terrorism.”<sup>68</sup> The point of this volume is not to advocate property destruction, break-ins, arson, or physical violence against animal abusers. Rather, the book aims to begin a dialogue about what people can and should do in a world where animals are so severely oppressed and tortured, where the law serves to protect the profits of a few abusers rather than to prevent the exploitation and massacre of billions of animals, and where animals need immediate and not just long-range help. The book,

moreover, seeks to dispel a number of misconceptions about the motivations and philosophy of the ALF. It should be clear that the ALF is supported not only by what society views to be “naïve“ or “confused“ young people or wild-eyed and spike-haired anarchists, but rather by a diverse array of thinking people that includes seasoned activists and serious academics. Indeed, the ALF can be your respectable neighbor or fellow Parent Teacher Association member who destroys traps set by those who intend to harm animals or steals and trashes free circus passes left on store counters.

Additionally, we emphasize that members of the ALF are not hateful and “violent” people; they are concerned and compassionate citizens who cannot tolerate violence toward animals, and who will go to extraordinary lengths to stop extraordinary wrongs. It is important that critics of the ALF view them in the proper light, and not confuse ALF actions with those of the Animal Rights Militia, the Justice Department, the Revolutionary Cells, or other groups that espouse physical violence against human beings. Ultimately, we would like to see more informed public debate and dialogue about the ALF, as well as rigorous academic writing on the history, ethics, and politics of animal liberation. We also hope there can be more understanding and harmonious relations between the aboveground and underground components of the animal rights struggle. May this volume be a modest beginning toward these ends.

## X. Into the Future

*“This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

*“Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now. Goethe*

*“The Nuremberg Trials accused those aware of Nazi atrocities with gross apathy and inaction. Will our generation one day be questioned as to why we did not take greater action to stop violence that engulfs the world of animals on Earth?” Rod Coronado*

*“The time will come when men such as I will look upon the murder of animals as they now look upon the murder of men.” Leonardo Da Vinci*

The way forward to total animal liberation is as difficult as it is unclear. No one can predict the future course of struggles, but it is safe to say that different visions, philosophies, and tactics of animal advocacy and liberation will continue to compete. There is strength in diversity, so the best one can hope for is that multiple approaches can coexist, positively reinforce one another, and learn to repel the state repression that unavoidably will grow. Every aspect of the animal advocacy movement should learn to appreciate or at least tolerate different approaches. If they support the ALF, activists should not hesitate to say so, and defend free speech and constitutional rights in the process; if they disagree with the ALF, let them state their criticisms in constructive ways that advance the movement.

The challenge for the ALF is to be as militant and effective as possible without losing the moral high ground, without alienating public support, and without diluting the values of freedom and compassion. Animal exploiters have no such burden; they seek only to oppress and to profit from their violence and terrorism. The state has no such burden; it is an apparatus that monopolizes power and violence and exists primarily to crush dissent and promote corporate agendas. The task of the ALF, clearly, is fraught with great tension and difficulty. The ALF cannot achieve the goal of animal liberation alone or only through sabotage and occasional rescues and releases. By themselves and with their chosen methods, they are not and cannot be a revolutionary force, which by definition requires systemic social change. They can slow the machines of death and destruction but alone cannot destroy them in their entirety. To achieve its abolitionist goals and win freedom for animals, the ALF—as only part of a process of total social transformation—requires a huge army of warriors to join its ranks, an exponential increase of liberation and sabotage actions throughout the globe, and mass support by a diversity of people working in consort against the prevailing systems of hierarchy and domination.

The ALF will win popular support only when enough people understand the motivation and legitimacy of their actions, and begin to view them as freedom fighters

not terrorists. This in turn demands widespread education about the ALF and the unspeakable horrors that billions of animals suffer in the entertainment industries, rodeos, circuses, zoos, fur farms, factory farms, slaughterhouses, and other extensions of the global Gulag for the animal slaves of the human species.

During the nineteenth century, abolitionists in the U.S. broke every law protecting the ownership of slaves and were condemned by the press as violent criminals. Now, we uphold these abolitionists to schoolchildren as heroes far ahead of their time. We hope history will someday view the ALF in the same light, and that the ALF proves worthy of the honor.

## Notes

1. For additional analyses of the impact of the Patriot Act on civil liberties, see Cynthia Brown (ed.), *Lost Liberties: Ashcroft and the Assault on Personal Freedom* (New York: The New Press, 2003).
2. Throughout this essay, we use the phrase “exploitation of animals” to refer to the cultural, institutional, and technological structures whereby human beings expropriate animals from their natural habitats, behaviors, and social relations, disrupt their existence, confine them, cause them pain and suffering, force them to labor in some way, and/or kill them in order to serve human purposes. We therefore call fur, hunting, meat and dairy, vivisection, and other industries that profit from animal suffering and death “animal exploitation industries.”
3. See [www.animalliberation.net](http://www.animalliberation.net).
4. See Gary Francione, *Animals, Property, and the Law* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).
5. For the argument that moral progress can be measured by the degree of the universalization of rights, see Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). Also see Steven Best (forthcoming), *Animal Rights and Moral Progress: The Struggle for Human Evolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).
6. For the classic critique of speciesism, see Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, second edition (New York: Random House, 1990). Richard Ryder first coined the term “speciesism”; see his *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Toward Speciesism* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).
7. On the problems with “identity politics,” see Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991).
8. See Jim Mason, *An Unnatural Order: Uncovering the Roots of Our Domination of Nature and Each Other* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), and Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1996).

9. Cited in James Tracy (ed.), *The Civil Disobedience Handbook: A Brief History and Practical Advice for the Politically Disenchanted* (San Francisco: Manic D. Press, 2002).
10. James Goodman, "Why do we need a Forum on Civil Disobedience?" [www.international.activism.uts.edu.au/civildis/goodman.html](http://www.international.activism.uts.edu.au/civildis/goodman.html).
11. On the corporate domination of the American political system, see William Grieder, *Who Will Tell the People? The Betrayal of American Democracy* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1993); Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2001).
12. See [www.spunk.org/library/writers/decleyre/sp001334.html](http://www.spunk.org/library/writers/decleyre/sp001334.html).
13. Needless to say, anarchists disavow the need for legal systems in favor of localized forms of ethics and community relations.
14. On this theme, see Mark Dowie, *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).
15. Although Greenpeace had developed a militant and media-savvy form of direct action that included actions such as sailing ships into nuclear test areas, they had a strict Gandhian code against "violence toward property." For an excellent account of Greenpeace and Watson's departure from the group, see Rik Scarce, *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement* (Chicago: The Noble Press, 1990). Also see Watson's own account in *Sea Shepherd: My Fight for Whales and Seals* (New York, Norton, 1982), *Ocean Warriors: My Battle to End the Illegal Slaughter on the High Seas* (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 1994), and *Seal Wars: Twenty-five Tears on the Front Lines with the Harp Seals* (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 2002).
16. Applied to the contemporary context of ecology and animal rights, industrial sabotage becomes ecotage and monkeywrenching involves attacks on the machines and property of industries slaughtering animals and raping the natural world for profit. A seminal influence on the direct action environmental movement was Edward Abbey, a radical environmental writer outraged by the devastating impact of industry on the American Southwest. Best known among Abbey's works is *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (New York: Perennial, 2000), a 1975 novel about a ragtag band of characters united in their will to break the law and to destroy the property of industries harming the environment. Abbey's fictional vision inspired non-fictional action. For more on the origins of Earth First! and their militant ecotage tactics, see Foreman's books, *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (Chico, California: Abzug Press, 1993), which gives expert advice about how to employ ecotage tactics to dismantle the industrial machine, and, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1991).
17. After intense FBI harassment, surveillance, and a set-up with an agent provocateur leading to the 1989 arrest of Foreman and other Earth First! members for allegedly plotting to sabotage nuclear power plants in three states, the organization ceased doing ecotage, although today a more socio-political incarnation of the group continues to support direct action and radical resistance movements of all kinds. As Scarce describes, another factor leading to the abandonment of ecotage by Earth First! was the efforts by Judi Barr, Darryl

- Cherney, Mike Roselle, and others to forge alliances with loggers against the timber corporations that exploited workers and forests alike. Since the first use of ecotage in Earth First!, however, there were sharp disagreements within the group about whether or not property destruction is violence and a sound tactic, just as there are similar debates in the animal advocacy movement today. As more social and anarchist ideas influenced Earth First!, Dave Foreman left and started *Wild Earth* magazine in order to maintain his focus on wilderness issues.
18. See the Hunt Saboteurs Association website at [hsa.enviroweb.org/hsa.shtml](http://hsa.enviroweb.org/hsa.shtml).
  19. On the risks that hunt sabs, particularly female activists, face, see [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/5342/hsa5.html](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/5342/hsa5.html).
  20. "Gender and the Animal Rights Movement," [www.utanimalrights.com/gender.htm](http://www.utanimalrights.com/gender.htm).
  21. See Noel Molland, "Thirty Years of Direct Action," in this volume.
  22. Seven years earlier, however, in 1970, former Flipper trainer Ric O'Barry, while obviously not an ALF member, liberated a dolphin from the Lerner Marine Laboratory on Bimini, one of the Bahama islands. O'Barry describes the break-in and jail time and notoriety he received in his book, *Behind the Dolphin Smile* (Los Angeles: Renaissance Books, 1999).
  23. "Monumental Animal Liberation Front Actions—United States," [www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alfusa.htm](http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alfusa.htm).
  24. Ingrid Newkirk, *Free the Animals: The Amazing True Story of the Animal Liberation Front* (New York: Lantern Books, 2000).
  25. On the documentary *Unnecessary Fuss*, see "The ALF and the 'Unnecessary Fuss' Video," Lawrence Finsen and Susan Finsen in Kelly Wand (ed.), *The Animal Rights Movement* (Farmington Hills, Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2003), pp. 203-209. For a recent list of ALF actions, see "North American Animal Liberation Front Press Office 2001 Year-End Direct Action Report," [www.tao.ca/~naalfpo/2001\\_Direct\\_Action\\_Report.pdf](http://www.tao.ca/~naalfpo/2001_Direct_Action_Report.pdf).
  26. Newkirk, *Free the Animals*, p. 267.
  27. See the In Defense of Animals campaign, "They are not our property, we are not their owners," [www.idausa.org/index.shtml](http://www.idausa.org/index.shtml).
  28. On the FBI counter intelligence program (COINTELPRO) and its infiltration of political groups during the 1960s and onwards, see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther and the American Indian Movement* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990). As the authors make clear, the FBI and allied police forces did not hesitate to kill, let alone frame, opponents such as Fred Hampton and members of the American Indian movement. For collected COINTELPRO documents, see Ward Churchill, and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents From the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States*, updated edition (Boston: South End Press, 2002).
  29. "The ALF Primer," [www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/ALFPrime.htm](http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/ALFPrime.htm).
  30. On the brutal repression faced by the hunt saboteurs in England, see [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/5342/hsa5.html](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/5342/hsa5.html). Many animal and Earth warriors and other victims have been killed. Dian Fossey was murdered in 1985 by the gorilla hunters she fought against. Cattle ranchers and perhaps other

- interests assassinated Chico Mendez in 1988. In 1985 agents of the French government sank the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior, in New Zealand, and killed a photographer who was aboard. Loggers have purposely cut down trees occupied by tree sitters, injuring some and killing others. Thugs have injured Dave Foreman and attempted to kill Paul Watson numerous times. Not so curiously, no one cries “violence” or “terrorist” when activists are hurt and killed, rather they save their moral outrage for activist attacks on property.
31. “The ALF Unmasked—Interview with David Barbarash,” [www.animal-lib.org.au/more\\_interviews/barbarash](http://www.animal-lib.org.au/more_interviews/barbarash).
  32. Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1993).
  33. The ALF meaning of “animal liberation” is not the same as Peter Singer’s usage, which is concerned with animal welfare not animal rights—with utilitarianism, not deontology (the philosophical basis for rights theory).
  34. For helpful discussions of the philosophy of animal rights that distinguishes it from animal welfare, see Tom Regan, *The Case For Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), Gary Francione, *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog?* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), and Steven Best, “Chewing on the Rights Vs. Welfare Debate: Do Corporate Reforms Delay Animal Liberation?” in *The Animals’ Agenda*, March/April 2002, pp. 14-16.
  35. North American Animal Liberation Front Press Office 2001 Year-End Direct Action Report.”
  36. See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*.
  37. *Animal Liberation*, pp. xii–xiii. Singer, of course, is a utilitarian, and so his main line of reasoning against ALF tactics logically would be that they could have negative consequences for the movement, and thus he might push the pragmatic objection.
  38. Steve Hindi, for example, is one who has led the way in using mobile education squads similar to his Tiger Truck—a huge van fitted with digital video screens on all sides, electronic message boards, and amplified sound, showing graphic images of animal abuse. Hindi skillfully uses undercover video footage to expose the lies of animal exploitation industries and educate the public about animal cruelty. Humane education programs and powerful films like *The Witness* and *Peaceable Kingdom* (created by Jenny Stein and James LaVeck) are transforming minds throughout the country. Wayne Pacelle and the Humane Society of the United States have pioneered important new legal tactics that bypass corrupt national and state legislatures and bring votes concerning animal welfare to the people through the open referendum ballot.
  39. For an attempt of an ALF supporter to define violence and support property destruction as a justifiable non-violent action, see Ronnie Webb, “Is Violence in the Pursuit of Animal Rights Morally Justifiable?” *Arkangel 4*, archived at [www.arkangelweb.org/index.php](http://www.arkangelweb.org/index.php).
  40. On the concept of persons, see Peter Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1994), pp. 180–183. If certain minimal psychological criteria are required for a being to

- count as a “person,” Singer points out an interesting irony that some humans are not persons, while some animals are. The morally relevant distinction then is not between human and nonhuman but rather person and non-person.
41. For the classic statement of just war theory, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. For a useful online resource, see “Just War Theory” in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [www.utm.edu/research/iep/j/justwar.htm](http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/j/justwar.htm).
  42. See “Animal Rights Militia Fact Sheet” and “Justice Department Fact Sheet,” at [www.animalliberation.net](http://www.animalliberation.net).
  43. In August and September 2003, a new group called the Revolutionary Cells bombed Chiron and Shaklee corporations because of their ties to Huntingdon Life Sciences. Although the group only caused minor damage, this was the first time in recent history that an animal rights group used a bomb. They also sent out a communiqué threatening “the endgame for animal killers” and signed off with “for animal liberation through armed struggle.” See Best in this volume and [www.directaction.info/news\\_aug29\\_03.htm](http://www.directaction.info/news_aug29_03.htm).
  44. In two infamous cases, however, three people attacked HLS British managing director Brian Cass with baseball bats outside his home (he was not seriously injured), and Cass’s marketing director was accosted on his doorstep and temporarily blinded with a searing spray. SHAC disavowed any connection to these actions, criticized them as them as violent tactics incompatible with their legal and nonviolent orientation, and no evidence ever surfaced linking the assault to SHAC.
  45. In a 2003 interview, Rod Coronado described the importance of arson to the ALF: “when we address buildings and institutions that have no other purpose but to destroy life, fire is the only way to stop them.” *LA Weekly*, August 29–September 4, 2003.
  46. See for instance the “ALF response” to a letter challenging the rationale of using arson, where the pro-ALF author concludes that “arson is NOT recommended” for numerous reasons relating to possible injury to life and negative media coverage ([www.animalliberationfront.com/disc2a/0000006c.htm](http://www.animalliberationfront.com/disc2a/0000006c.htm)).
  47. “Is Violence in the Pursuit of Animal Rights Morally Justifiable?” *Arkangel* #4.
  48. On the gross inadequacy of animal welfare laws, see Gary Francione, *Animals, Property, and the Law*. For a specific example of how wildlife smuggling laws are routinely flouted, see “Wildlife smuggling refuses to be caged,” <http://www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/1203/21smuggling.html>
  49. See the American Anti-Vivisection Society bulletin at [www.aavs.org/welfare01.html](http://www.aavs.org/welfare01.html).
  50. See Steven Best, “WTO and Animal Rights,” in Andrew Linzey (ed.), *The Animal World Encyclopedia* (forthcoming).
  51. See [www.satyamag.com/sept01/shapiro.html](http://www.satyamag.com/sept01/shapiro.html).
  52. “Our aim is to destroy property and force laboratories to close—publicity is neither here nor there.” Interview with Jenny, former ALF activist in “Terrorists or Altruists?” *New International*, issue 215 January 1991, [www.newint.org/issue215/terrorists.htm](http://www.newint.org/issue215/terrorists.htm).
  53. This type of work, presumably, is the function of an ALF press office and spokesperson, but since David Barbarash stepped down in January 2003 no one

- has officially assumed the role of ALF spokesperson, and there are debates as to whether or not there should be a single spokesperson instead of a network of activists, philosophers, scientists, and doctors on hand to discuss ALF actions with the media. Official spokesperson(s) or not, media relations is one area where underground and aboveground aspects of the movement can work in unison and harmony, although in the age of the Patriot Act it is becoming increasingly for the aboveground to be associated with or to defend the underground.
54. For an account of Operation Bite Back, see [www.animalliberation.net](http://www.animalliberation.net).
  55. Both quotes cited at [www.angelfire.com/pa/veganresist/alfhistory.html](http://www.angelfire.com/pa/veganresist/alfhistory.html).
  56. By “critical solidarity” we mean that support for the ALF or any other group or cause should never be uncritical or unqualified, and is contingent upon reflection on whether or not the ALF or another group continues to merit support based on its actions and development.
  57. “2 Strategies, same goal in activism for animals,” *The Chicago Tribune*, February 16, 2003.
  58. “Putting Our House in Order,” *The Animals’ Agenda*, September/October 2001.
  59. “The ALF Unmasked—Interview with David Barbarash.”
  60. See Gary Francione, *Rain Without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996).
  61. “Memories of Freedom,”  
[www.djurratt.org/bocker\\_tidningar/memoriesoffreedom.pdf](http://www.djurratt.org/bocker_tidningar/memoriesoffreedom.pdf).
  62. In an interview with *E Magazine*, David Brower said: “The Sierra Club made the Nature Conservancy look reasonable. I founded Friends of the Earth to make the Sierra Club look reasonable. Then I founded Earth Island Institute to make Friends of the Earth look reasonable. Earth First! now makes us look reasonable. We’re still waiting for someone else to come along and make Earth First! look reasonable” (cited in “The Wildlands Project: The Nature Conservancy,” by Judy Keeler, at [www.4x4wire.com/access/education/nm\\_twp/nm\\_twp\\_pt7.htm](http://www.4x4wire.com/access/education/nm_twp/nm_twp_pt7.htm)). That group would be the ELF.
  63. Cited in Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990).
  64. A glance at the 2001 and 2002 ALF reports shows that the preponderance of their actions involved sabotage.
  65. Donald Griffin was the pioneer of cognitive ethology, rocking the prejudices of his peers and blazing new trails with works such as *The Question of Animal Awareness* (1974), *Animal Thinking* (1984), and *Animal Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness* (2001). His legacy is being carried forth innovatively in studies on chimpanzees, birds, whales, dolphins, and other animals, and in the work of writers such as Marc Bekoff. The human understanding of animals clearly is undergoing a major revolution.
  66. See also Wicklund’s defense of nonviolent direct action, “Strategic Nonviolence For Animal Liberation,” at [articles.animalconcerns.org/snv/snv1.html](http://articles.animalconcerns.org/snv/snv1.html).
  67. For a detailed and compelling account of his own experiences of FBI persecution, see Craig Rosebraugh, *Burning Rage of a Dying Planet: Speaking For the Earth Liberation Front* (New York: Lantern Books, 2004).
  68. For information on CALA, see [www.cala-online.org](http://www.cala-online.org).



“Animal liberation is the ultimate freedom movement, the “final frontier.”” — Robin Webb, British ALF Press Officer. This is a book about a new breed of freedom fighters—human activists who risk their own liberty to rescue and aid animals imprisoned in the worst forms of hell warped human minds can devise. Loosely bonded in a decentralized, anonymous, underground, global network, these activists are members of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Their daring deeds have earned them a top spot on the FBI “domestic terrorist” list as they redefine political struggle for the current era. An intense