



New RPA Campaign Urges Truth in Education

Radical paradigm shift needed for progress toward humane treatment, equal rights of all animals; animal-abuse paradigm still unfortunately the norm.

By David Cantor

In my 26 years as a full-time animal advocate, I have countless times heard the refrain, “We’ve got to reach young people.” However, neither children nor any other human beings can affect civilization’s animal-abuse policy through personal kindness, because the policy and its practices, institutions, industries, and systems are the established norm in the human mind.

Among the components of civilization’s animal-abuse ideology establishing false and harmful beliefs in children:

► We should “be kind to” a few kinds of nonhuman animal: “well behaved” dogs and cats, animals captive in cages, aquariums, terrariums, or zoos, animals used for labor, transportation, or entertainment, and some more.

Like all other nonhuman animals, those animals are *less than human*, “not like us.” Though they are bodies like us, they are not deemed *persons* like us for ethical, legal, or political purposes. Their species are not entitled to liberty or equal treatment. They are “well cared for” if they are not starving, diseased, cut or bruised and have clean beds, cages, or tanks.

► Animals we *do not* have to “be kind to” include all “pests,” “vermin,” predators, “ugly,” “gross,” “filthy,” or “slimy” animals, and small and alien-seeming animals like insects, arachnids, worms, or centipedes.

► It is part of the natural and inevitable order that human beings live according to their imagination and inventions – clothing, weapons, tools, fences, walls, buildings, furniture, appliances, roads, transport vehicles, fuels for heating and cooling, genetic manipulation (“breeding”) and exploitation of nonhuman an-

imals – and not according to their biological nature.

Especially in the context of our species’ separation from its original habitat and lifeway, a world teeming with a great variety of animals, such powerful indoctrination wreaks havoc on our innate affinity for other

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What Kind of Animal Are We?

Answering emails and letters Responsible Policies for Animals receives from state education departments in response to RPA’s new Campaign K-12 (see “New RPA Campaign Urges Truth in Education” this page), RPA includes the following to illustrate what all children must learn if they are to understand natural relationships among themselves, other animals, and the living world:

For policy-making participation in a democratic republic, it is crucial for citizens to have a working knowledge of the kind of animal they are, as sound policy is based on the biological facts of human nature, while poor policy and its harmful consequences are rooted in misconceptions about and divergence from our species’ natural lifeway. Science has established that human beings are plant-foraging herbivorous apes originating on the African savanna; are naturally prey to large cats, reptiles, dogs, and raptors, not predators as only through their imagination did they acquire weapons and other media of aggression; are peaceable, empathetic, cooperative, and altruistic by nature, stirred to violence mainly by injustice, deception, or demagoguery; and are innately fascinated with, studious of, and empathetic toward nonhuman animals, whose natural abundance and enormous variety were the most salient facts of original humans’ daily lives.

On March 14, 2015, RPA Executive Director David Cantor taught the first known **What Kind of Animal Are We?** class – at an adult school. Scheduled to last two hours, the class continued for five hours due to student interest. ★

School Tries RPA Way

Animal abuse persists because civilization denies children direct knowledge and experience of non-captive nonhuman animals. Original human experience must be restored. New teaching methods are needed. One teacher is giving them a try.
By David Cantor

Everything human beings are taught about nonhuman animals is misleading and promotes animal abuse. One reason: Rather than *know* nonhuman animals as original human beings did – evolving and living for millions of years in a world teeming with other animals and contemplating their forms, behavior, and interactions – humans only learn *about* other animals today. What we are *told* about them is biased due to civilization's radical humanism and its predominant animal-abuse policy.

Human beings treat other humans they *know* with more empathy, concern, respect, and altruism than distant strangers. Especially considering humans' innate affinity for other animals and the living world – their *biophilia* – humans who *know* other animals rather than only vaguely *know about* them are more likely to promote, or at least accept, the paradigm shift needed to reduce animal abuse and eventually establish the equal rights all animals need to lead fulfilling lives.

Pioneering the Rights Approach

On May 27, 2015, I had the privilege of taking part in science classes with two first-grade and two

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is designed by Rebecca Lotka.

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fifth- and sixth-grade groups of girls and boys at their elementary school in Pennsylvania.* Their science teacher, deeply concerned about nonhuman animals' plight, had planned the sessions with me over several weeks. Together, we started testing educational activities that I call *animal meditation* and *animal literacy*.

Animal meditation consists of contemplating non-captive nonhuman animals in one's immediate surroundings without concern for naming, categorizing, labeling, characterizing, or using them, simply *knowing* them. Anyone of any age who is able to perceive other beings can practice animal meditation. I practice it regularly; it reinforces my perception of all animals' personhood.

Animal literacy begins with animal meditation and adds a component of articulating one's experience with the intention of understanding who the nonhuman animals are, how they live, and their contributions to the web of life. Animal literacy helps correct false and harmful beliefs children are taught about nonhuman animals, helping children reframe beings in their minds as inherently worthy of life, liberty, equal treatment, and their natural lifeways.

So Far, So Good!

The teacher and I led all four groups of children through animal meditation, adding a component of animal literacy with the fifth- and sixth-graders. In the classroom, first-graders drew images of animals on small pieces of paper, affixed

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*Due to likely flak from association with the most radical political proposal in all of human existence – equal rights of all animals – at this time we will not identify the school or the teacher.

their drawings to a wall, and told a little bit about the animals they had drawn. Especially striking was one child's drawing of a firefly – in a jar! – reflecting the power of early indoctrination. (No wonder! I was recently shocked to hear a radio promotion of a firefly-catching event at a wildflower preserve!)

Such mental framing of nonhuman animals perpetuates animal abuse regardless of any cruelty component, any humane messages, or exhortations to “be kind to animals” or “respect the environment.” Children who took part on May 27th revealed an amazing mix of observation, intelligence, and misconception.

It would take far more space to describe what we learned that will prove invaluable for teachers, parents, advocates, anyone concerned about human beings, nonhuman animals, and the living world.

Keeping It Going

We plan to continue developing animal meditation and animal literacy together in the 2015-16 school year. There is great potential for restoring the *biophilia* trampled upon by civilization. Reducing animal abuse is otherwise unlikely.

Looking toward future activities, the teacher wrote to me in an email,

Raising my daughter has made me realize how early and deeply ingrained all of the conventional ideas of animals are from an early age. She is continually given books featuring farm animals, invited to birthday parties at the farm, trips to the zoo, days at the aquarium, and given animals for toys. It's very easy to see how the standard values come to feel as natural as breathing. Personally, I find it difficult to resist these influences on her as well. I feel strong cultural pressure to include her in these “normal childhood activities,” and I wouldn't even know how to start a conversation about some of the reasons for *not* doing these things There is a mentality of, “It's been done forever, so it's fine,” that I find harder and harder to penetrate, even in my own mind.

That should ring true to experienced animal advocates everywhere!

Expect more news on the pioneering of animal meditation and animal literacy! ★

RPA's Unique Website Reflects Unique Work!

RPA's website – www.RPAforAll.org – continues to grow and improve, revealing how far beyond standard advocacy RPA is. Explore it, and see the unique strategy, information, knowledge, and inspiration RPA is providing for the new wave of the animal-rights movement and the Animal-Rights Conversation Corps.

► Few people realize AIDS, Ebola virus, smallpox, influenza, bubonic plague – just about every infectious disease we can name – come from animal abuse. Same with war, poverty, genocide, misogyny, racism, anti-Semitism, and other human miseries.

► Or that there is no way to reduce animal abuse except by promoting the concepts linked to equal rights of all animals. Learn the strategy at the Animal Rights and Campaigns pages. Take part!

► Or that fighting cruelty to animals, helping animals, eating plants only, and other established advocacy methods can't get the job done.

These and other crucial matters are explained at www.RPAforAll.org. Rely on the website that promotes equal rights of all animals, not causes that cannot create the needed change. ★

RPA Presentations

Since the last issue of *Persons*, RPA Executive Director David Cantor gave the following presentations:

► **Beyond Humanism, Toward a New Animalism**, Animal Rights/Vegan Action (ARVA) Meetup, Jupiter, Florida, February 24, 2015.

► **Animal-Rights Strategy**, Princeton Vegan Book & Movie Club, Princeton, New Jersey, March 8, 2015.

► **Animal-Rights Strategy**, Animal Rights Coalition, Minneapolis, Minnesota (via Skype), April 4, 2015.

RPA's presentations, free of charge, teach people in all walks of life the knowledge and concepts linked to equal rights of all animals, why reducing animal abuse is only possible through those concepts, why reducing animal abuse is the only way to improve the plight of human beings, how RPA's method differs from others, and why popular advocacy methods cannot create the needed change.

Host or help organize an RPA event, or propose a location for one. We're available anytime at RPA@rpa1.org or 215-886-RPA1. ★

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animals and the living world – our *biophilia* – making it hard to perceive civilization’s unnatural lifeways as animal abuse. Says veterinarian Rob Teti, a member of Responsible Policies for Animals’ Board of Directors and founder & director of Chenoa Manor Animal Sanctuary in Avondale, Pennsylvania, “Our species’ lifeways in civilization, biologically speaking, are like having African lions swing from trees eating leaves and berries.”

“... civilization’s animal-abuse policy ... establishes false and harmful beliefs”

Particularly since schools are so important in establishing lifelong beliefs, we must ensure that they will stop inculcating false and harmful ones and start teaching children their precise animal nature – their natural relationships to each other, other animals, and the living world.

Campaign K-12: Teach Our Children Right

On May 11, 2015, RPA launched Campaign K-12 with a letter to the top public-school officials of all 50 states. We asked America’s education secretaries, superintendents, and commissioners if their K-12 curricula teach students what kind of animal we are.

Replies have been arriving by mail and email. So far, no state education department has answered plainly and unequivocally that it teaches precisely what kind of animal human beings are, as outlined in the sidebar on page 1, in RPA’s continuing correspondence with the nation’s top school officials, and in literature and RPA’s Campaign K-12 webpage at www.RPAforAll.org.

Invoking Recent School Experience

Ben Lotka, the RPA intern who signed and helped prepare the letter that launched Campaign K-12, told the nation’s top school officials that he realized after earning his college degree, despite being a top student at highly rated Pennsylvania private and public schools and at an acclaimed university, his formal education did not explicitly teach him what kind of animal he is.

“I am doing some of [RPA]’s research into root causes of war,

science standards. Otherwise, they will tell you – as many have told RPA – that their department only sets *standards* while each school district in the state determines how to meet the standards. Like the solar system, energy sources, and other basic knowledge, the kind of animal we are belongs in the standards, not among methods or textbooks chosen locally.

At the Campaign K-12 webpage of www.RPAforAll.org, see ...

► Ben’s letter to all 50 states’ top school officials,

RPA’s Other Truth-in-Education Campaign

Universities, too, perpetuate false and harmful beliefs about human beings, other animals, food, and the environment – especially in “animal science” programs providing billions of dollars’ worth of training, research, sales, collusion, propaganda, and lobbying for the meat, dairy, fish, and egg industries.

Explore RPA’s decade-long **10,000 Years Is Enough** campaign to eliminate “animal science” and bring truth in education to our massive network of agriculture colleges at our land-grant universities. Campaign details, RPA newsletter articles about the campaign, and whom to write to are easy to find at www.RPAforAll.org. ★

genocide, disease, poverty, racism, misogyny, and other human miseries,” Ben wrote, “and how ignorance of the kind of animal we are perpetuates deeply flawed policies in those areas and prevents sound ones.”

What We All Must Do

To take part in Campaign K-12, tell your state’s top school official and those of the other 49 states that all human beings need to learn human nature as established by science so justice can be achieved, ecological harmony can be restored after thousands of years of destructive human rampage, and human beings and Earth’s other animals can lead fulfilling lives. “Cc” your state legislators and governor on your letter to your state’s top school official.

Urge the education officials to *institute accurate and truthful teaching of human nature in their state’s K-12*

- a list of the 50 states’ top school officials with their addresses,
- a very brief description of our species’ animal nature, and
- a two-page series of statements about the kind of animal human beings are followed by published sources documenting each statement.

Those items and advice from RPA, available anytime, will assist you in promoting truth in education, freeing the human mind from false and harmful beliefs that fuel animal abuse. ★

Thank you for supporting Responsible Policies for Animals!