

The Wild World of P.E.T.A

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Entertainment

Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

(Note: transcript consists of episode outline)

A couple things: first I'm not actually sick even though I sound it. Or maybe I'm *getting* sick, but I think this is just because I got back from Vegas late last night, I was out with friends and talking a lot, plus yelling super loud in clubs trying to be heard over the music, and I'm not used to breathing in a lot of smoke everyone smokes there. Also I kind of have a headache and feel achey in general...I'm probably getting sick.

Second, I want to give a shoutout to our Christian insomniacs, specifically the ones who reached out to me after last episode to offer to save my soul, which I appreciate. Even though I have yet to be converted, I do love you guys, I'm really glad that you've all found something that resonates with you and gives you peace...as for me, I'll just have to continue to live a life filled with existential terrors, just laying in bed every night aimlessly staring into the void that is my soul in a futile search for meaning...things are going great. This is fine. So thanks again everyone... further confirmation that we've built a really amazing community here and I

couldn't be more proud of the insomniacs for being supportive and awesome and nonjudgmental. At least *overtly*, I'm sure you're judging me silently and pitying my inevitable damnation. But you fake it well. And that's the important thing in life. Just pretend to be a good person. If you act like a good person, you're basically being a good person. I had this argument with a friend of mine she's like you're only a good person if you actually care about people and think pure thoughts and I'm like no you're a better person if you have terrible thoughts and don't act on them. if you're just a pure hearted philanthropist by nature, cool, but you have an advantage, it's like a golf handicap...but if you're like me, a terrible person who wants to murder everyone and yet you don't and you try to do good, I think that's more impressive. and I'm not remotely biased.

Anyway, one final order of business before we get into the episode, we received a question that I wanted to quickly address, I know we've talked about it before but it bears repeating, Evan left a comment in Spotify on one of the sample After Midnight episodes, asking why we don't release the full After Midnight episode, and I just wanted to remind you that you can always access the most recent full After Midnight episode in our discord community for free for two weeks, just scroll down in the show notes and click on the discord link or you can get there

through Instagram, lots of ways to get to our discord. Or just message me and I'll send you a link directly. And if you want to access previous after midnight episodes and participate in future live streams, and of course support the show, you can always join the Patreon.

On to today's episode. So I called an audible on this one; there were two polls that ran back to back because we threw your host swap episode in the middle, so I had two topics to choose from, and I decided to go with the second one because I was just feeling it more. And then regretted it immediately, because shit got real. You'll see what I mean pretty soon. I didn't really think this through. But I'm calling today's episode, "the wild world of PETA." Not the bread btw, that's far less wild. Tasty but very predictable. It's just kind of always bread. We are talking about the organization "people for the ethical treatment of animals."

To say PETA is a controversial organization would be an understatement. On the one hand they have done a lot of good, and anyone who argues that they haven't is just uninformed or being intentionally argumentative. If you think about what the world looked like before PETA: first off, everyone wore fur or wanted to wear fur, it was aspirational, it was a luxury. That is no longer the case in most of the developed world. Fur is shameful unless you're a dalmatian-hating Disney villain. Before PETA animal testing was rampant, now it's

heavily regulated in the medical field and you would be hard-pressed to find a consumer product that has been tested on animals, or at least will admit to having been tested on animals. Before PETA there were no restrictions on how you could treat animals in show business, we're taking television and movies and circuses. As Bill Maher pointed out during an interview with PETA's founder, whom he considers a hero—and I consider more of a sociopath—but he points out that back in the pre-PETA days, if you wanted to make Mister Ed talk you could electrocute him or stuff wires in his mouth, no one was going to tell you not to. Whales and other endangered animals were being hunted almost to extinction. PETA waged war against these practices, and made a huge impact on culture and corporations and the entertainment industry and how we think about animal rights in general.

At the same time, PETA's tactics have been nakedly aggressive, often literally, and sometimes bizarre, they have done a lot of damage through the years to the reputation of various corporations and individuals but mostly to their own brand, largely by being unreasonable, inflexible, and basically *extra* in every way. I would say at this point if you want to try to save some animals it is a liability to align yourself with PETA. The PETA organization is synonymous with the concept of "terrorism light," just a *touch* of terrorism; they engage in acts of extreme vandalism, harassment campaigns, they don't mind making

people and companies who are on their naughty list extremely uncomfortable, but their antics often cross the line into massive cringe and can alienate even people who otherwise support their cause. These days PETA has lost much of its influence and credibility and become relentlessly polarizing, the organization is as much a punchline as a powerhouse, and almost seems to exist solely to piss people off; if you work for PETA are you actually a heroic freedom fighter standing up for animals, or are you just trolling for a cause? PETA is basically the 4Chan of advocacy groups. Like if anonymous was even more annoying.

But once again, you can't argue with the track record. As you will see, it is incredibly hard to definitively come down on one side or the other when trying to determine the value of this organization. I think by the end you'll be even more conflicted than you are now, and if you weren't conflicted at all, you probably should be. Despite their track record of wins, arguably saving the lives of millions, PETA has killed thousands and thousands of animals themselves... that's not a metaphor an exaggeration, they have literally killed animals in their own facilities intentionally. We'll get to all that; this story is kind of baffling, and in many ways not at all what I expected.

So the idea of protecting animals from humans is a relatively new concept. We spent a lot of our history trying to

protect ourselves from *them*. To our Ice Age ancestors the idea of saving the animals would be laughable; although it's kind of tough to laugh while you're dodging sabertooth tigers and dire wolves and cave bears. But as humans hunted many predators to the brink of extinction or actually tipped them over the edge, and as more and more of nature was overtaken by cities and towns and Walmarts, the world became a much more insulated place and we became the Apex predator at the tippy top of the Animal Kingdom. At least in America we rarely have to worry about being even injured by an animal, death by wild animal is extremely low on the list of daily stressors for the modern American. To somewhat quote Norm Macdonald, you're more likely to be attacked by your own heart than a puma. Check out our animal attacks episode for examples to the contrary, but those are the exceptions that prove the rule. As we became more and more dominant over nature, and grains and fruits and vegetables became more prevalent, some innovative people began questioning whether we needed to continue killing animals to consume their flesh and muscle. A precursor to PETA was the Vegan Society of 1951, with the stated goal of "ending the exploitation of animals by man." All of these manifestos and mission statements are unnecessarily grandiose. Just say you don't want people to eat animals. Ending the exploitation of animals by man makes it sound like animals are being suckered

in by Ponzi schemes. "Stop bamboozling these chickens"

Now there are lots of great rationales for not eating meat. Vegetarianism is a cornerstone of some religions and cultures and philosophies; if you believe in reincarnation, why would you risk eating a pig? That could be great-grandpa Carl.

I have done stretches of vegetarianism, though it didn't take. And let me get this out of the way, I am a huge animal fan. I generally avoid red meat, I limit my intake of chicken and to a degree fish. I try to buy only organic and free range when I eat meat, and I despise trophy hunters,

but I'm also aware of my own hypocrisy. For instance, I own mixed-material shoes that include leather... and I kind of doubt there are organic, free range Nike cows. I slaughtered chickens myself as a teenager, on my aunt's farm, which was not by choice and was absolutely traumatizing, but I did it. However, in general I do try to live a life that harms as few animals as reasonably possible for a Nike-wearing meat eater. When it comes to my negative impact on the animal kingdom, I'd say I'm slightly below average. But the vegan lifestyle is extreme: as a vegan you can't consume anything that was created by (or includes) animal parts or animal-derived products, So no meat, obviously, but also no eggs, no dairy, no honey—those are deal breakers for me right there. And of course vegans are widely mocked for their fringe

lifestyles; making fun of vegans is at this point a cliché, it's played out; if you're a comedian asking "who in the audience is vegan" and quipping, "they're probably too weak to clap," quit now. Delete your account, everywhere. But I do understand the amusement when it comes to a vegan lifestyle; on the surface the concept seems kind of silly. After all, animals have no qualms about eating *each other*, and many would happily snack on your face, including your cat. And mine. I love Inky and he definitely loves the fact that I feed him, and he likes getting snuggles and love, but he would also love to lap up delicious warm blood and absorb my life-force. He's actually a very picky eater, I think his finickyness would save me. I'm not up to his standards. But anyway you get my point, animals certainly don't treat each other ethically. On the contrary, animals routinely tear each other apart and consume their prey while it is still alive. It seems like the height of hypocrisy to advocate that we not snack on animals when a significant chunk of the animal kingdom would gleefully snack on us if given the opportunity. It's like grizzly man.

Plus there are other problems with the vegan lifestyle which we'll talk about later, but the short version is that it's a luxury. If you can afford an organic animal-free diet, more power to you, but many people live in food deserts where the cheapest most affordable source of calories they can access is a

big Mac, and they have to feed their kids. Judging everyone for eating meat is harsh...as the kids say, check your privilege.

I'm very conflicted about veganism. I do see the benefits. I've had some interesting conversations with my vegan friends and they have pointed out that if we truly believe that we as a species are superior, if we're going to hold ourselves to a higher standard, then we should be morally superior and not willing to exploit other species just because we've achieved dominance over the animal kingdom. That's a compelling argument. See no longer really NEED animal meat and byproducts to survive...so why aren't we collectively trying to eliminate them? It's a complicated issue and I'd be happy to discuss this more in the discord with our vegan listeners and our omnivores alike; please be respectful everyone, but regardless, veganism was the first domino that tipped in a line of dominoes—cruelty-free plastic dominoes...no animal bone, of course—that would eventually lead to PETA. The second domino fell in the 1970s, when Peter Singer published his book "animal liberation ***A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals.***" In the book Singer endorsed a vegetarian diet, and strongly opposed animal vivisection, and so far I'm on board. The book also calls out speciesism, which is a slightly more controversial topic. The idea behind speciesism is that it is unethical to treat any particular species as being inherently

better than another. It's the inter-species version of racism. Singer argues that if an animal is capable of suffering, that animal's discomfort should not be treated as less important than any other animal's pain.

And in fevers, I subscribe to this belief. Humans are just meat and bone
For instance, spiders feel pain, so unlike done people I know, I'll try to save a spider if I can. I'll put a cup over it, and I'll slide a sheet of paper under the cup, I'll release it on its recognizance into the yard so that it can promptly crawl back into the house through whatever hole it initially discovered. It's not a great strategy. You might recall this moment from the old studio.

Spider Interruption

Audio Recording · 33.5 MB

So I am a bleeding heart spider savior, but there's a difference between not wanting to kill a spider, and deciding that a spider's comfort and life in general is as important as your mom's. Here's a quote from Ingrid Newkirk, the problematic founder of PETA who we will meet shortly, "There's no rational basis for saying that a human being has special rights. A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy." it kind of sounds like she glitched there, it's not the most artful statement, but you get it, in other words they're all equivalent. And...just, no. I remember making this argument

once at a family gathering, and someone pushed me on it, they said "if you were on a sinking ship, would you save your mom or a rat." And I said I would save my mom but only because I have an emotional connection to her; but that her life was objectively no more important than the life of a rat." it didn't go over great. My mom did not let me live that down for quite some time, she still brings it occasionally. But I had an excuse, Because I was a stupid kid, rather than, say a grown ass adult woman running a giant multi million dollar charitable organization. Like even from a basic logistical and mathematical perspective, it doesn't make sense to advocate for all animal lives and feelings being equal. Mayflies live approximately 24 hours. Killing a young Mayfly is simply not as tragic as killing a human child. That's right, I said it. Bold stance. But, seriously, that human child had an entire life ahead of it. The Mayfly had like 30 more minutes. And that's assuming it wasn't buzzing around a person with fast reflexes. Then it will be an ex Mayfly.

But Peter Singer's book was extremely influential, and two people it influentialized were Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pachinko, sometimes I get bored with the English language and have to make up words. Alex and Ingrid were in fact so inspired by the book's message of not being shitty to animals that they created an organization that would become notorious for being incredibly shitty to people who they felt were shitty to animals. If you did not pass

their arbitrary animal rights purity test, you were a potential. The extremism develops gradually. Do you remember grizzly man? most animals would be more than happy to consume

Let's talk about the most important and controversial of the two founders, Ingrid. Ingrid Newkirk loves a spotlight, and will admit it, though she claims it's always in service of the animals, and I claim it's often in service of her own ego. She has an interesting backstory. Ingrid Ward was Born in England in 1949, in southwest London an area known as Kingston upon Thames, the most britishest of Britishy places.

When she was seven her family moved briefly to India, where she and her mother volunteered in an honest-to-god leper colony with real ass lepers, and speaking of god she developed a hatred of religion as a result of being abused by nuns in a private convent boarding school. She would later be quoted as saying "I'm an atheist. I don't believe in god. I believe that the horrors of the world could not ever have been created by a loving God."

While living in India she claims to have witnessed rampant animal abuse, which had a profound effect on her and would inform her later trajectory. Ingrid next moved with her family to Florida at 18 and was married to one James Newkirk, the man who would introduce Ingrid to her two other passions in life: formula one racing and sumo wrestling. I don't even have a joke for that, I'm just going to sit with this knowledge and marinate in the fact that the universe is mysterious and

inexplicable. By the early 1970s Ingrid Newkirk was in her early twenties and working as a stockbroker in Maryland, which is where she had her animal epiphany when she found a litter of kittens. It wasn't just finding the kittens that made her want to work for animal rights, but rather occurred when she took the kittens to a shelter, and the shelter informed her that they would have to put the kittens down. Being from England, she misinterpreted the expression. Ingrid claims she thought that the kittens would be put up for adoption...question mark? This is what happens when you accept someone's self published origin story. I'm not sure how she could have misinterpreted "put them down." Put them down for the evening? Like give them a nice nap? Hold them for a while and then put them down? Whatever. Regardless, she claims that she was traumatized when she found out that the kittens had been euthanized. So Ingrid did what any of us would do...she started working for the shelter and killing kittens herself. she actually takes over the responsibility of euthanasia because she believed that she could give the animals a more peaceful demise. What?

We're going to jump briefly into the deep end, and then we'll jump out, and we'll get back into it later. But here's a preview of the deep end. This is an actual freaking quote from the founder of PETA, I'm not making this up. You *can't* make this up. "I would go to work early before anyone got there and I would just kill the animals myself.

Because I couldn't stand to let them go through that. I must've killed 1000 of them. Sometimes dozens every day. Some of those people would take pleasure in making them suffer And I just felt to my bones this cannot be right. Working at that shelter I said to myself, what is wrong with human beings that we can act this way." I'm doing a mental spit take right now. Yeah, that questions. To this day PETA describes euthanasia as "sweet release," and...we're jumping ahead of ourselves. More on that later.

So Ingrid worked her way up in the shelter system to eventually become the head of animals disease control in Washington DC.

Eventually she met a man named Alex Pacheco who would become the cofounder of PETA. Alex was a very good looking young idealist with coiffed long hair, if you want to visualize him just picture Kato Kaelin from the O.J. Simpson trial. You could have swapped him for the front man in Warrant or Poison and no one would've noticed. Alex was American but had spent some of his formative years in Mexico by the ocean in an area filled with wildlife, he enjoyed watching bats and snakes and swimming with dolphins, but he also was horrified to see many animals slaughtered for food by locals. When he moved back to America he briefly entertained the idea of becoming a priest, but his interest in animal welfare was reignited after visiting a friend who worked at a meatpacking plant, and also after reading the aforementioned Peter

Singer book, "animal liberation." Alex became involved in animal activism in his young adulthood, although he wouldn't describe it that way, he doesn't like the term animals, preferring to describe himself as an advocate for other-than-human beings. I understand that language is important and it shapes the way we think, but PETA hasn't done themselves many favors by trying to police the language that people use in their daily lives. PETA sets themselves up for mockery all the time. From Twitter:

"Words can create a more inclusive world, or perpetuate oppression. Calling someone an animal as an insult reinforces the myth that humans are superior to other animals & justified in violating them." PETA has an entire section on their website packed with sayings to which they object on the grounds that children are being indoctrinated to think of animals as objects or, and for parents and teachers PETA offers helpful alternatives.

For instance PETA takes issue with the saying "kill two birds with one stone," and would rather you use "feed two birds with one scone." I get the rationale here but pick your battles, PETA. Just in general, as we'll see, that's a problem.

Here are other idioms that PETA has a problem with:

Instead of "on a wild goose chase," say, "out chasing rainbows." because PETA doesn't want kids harassing geese and chasing them around, and I completely

disagree, I think every child should chase geese because kids need to learn valuable lessons, like fucking around, and finding out. Geese will mess you up. The best way to teach kids not to mess with animals is to allow them to mess with mean-ass animals.

PETA doesn't like the idiom "walk on eggshells." They want all eggs to remain intact, which would make it relatively difficult for chickens to be hatched, but whatever. Like eggshells don't always imply murder and consumption. But PETA would rather you say "walk on broken glass." Those are not comparable experiences. One of them sounds like a threat, and essentially torture.

PETA doesn't want you to say, open a can of worms. Because we shouldn't be putting worms in cans, that's just cruel. Instead you should say, open Pandora's box, which is a completely different saying that already exists and seems much more sinister. The worst that will happen if you open a can of worms is that worms will no longer be in a can, which sounds like exactly what PETA would want. Why don't they want you to release worms from the can? I'm perplexed. Make up your mind, PETA.

Final idiom: instead of "beat a dead horse," you should say "feed a fed horse." That's just redundant, and also seems like cruelty to animals. If the horse has already been fed, feeding it again is unnecessary and potentially dangerous. Feeding a fed goose is basically how foie gras is made, and I

don't think PETA is on board with that horribleness, nor am I. But i'll stop with the idioms now. There are so many more.

Anyway, Alex and Ingrid founded PETA together in 1980. Here's a clip of both of them back to back talking about those early days.

Alex Pacheco.m4a

Audio Recording · 592 KB

So let's examine the official policies and stances of PETA as an organization. They are against animal testing, factory farming, the industrialization of animal slaughter, fur farming, whaling...so far so good. As of this point, PETA, we can be friends. Also notice I didn't mention anything about pets. Contrary to urban legend, PETA does not want to liberate all your pets. They *do* want you to start calling them "animal companion," because they just can't stop themselves with the grammar nazi-ing, but other than that, they've pretty much surrendered when it comes to the whole pets-are-slaves thing. In fact the official stance of PETA is to encourage you to adopt animals.

"At PETA, we love and respect the animal companions who share our homes. Contrary to myth, PETA does *not* want to confiscate beloved, well-cared-for companions and "set them

free." What we *do* want is to reduce the tragic overpopulation of dogs and cats through spaying and neutering. We work hard to *prevent* more dogs and cats from being born, because there are nowhere near enough good homes for all the animals who already exist—which results in almost unimaginable suffering.

We encourage people who have the time, money, patience, commitment, and love needed to care for an animal for life to adopt one from a shelter—or, better yet, to adopt *two* compatible animals so that they can provide each other with companionship. With so many cats and dogs in need of homes, there is no excuse for buying animals from [pet shops](#) or breeders, which exacerbate the overpopulation and homelessness crisis.

The greedy industry that breeds animals and sells them as “pets” causes a tremendous amount of misery. Millions of dogs and cats are confined to filthy wire cages in [puppy and kitten mills](#) and forced to churn out litter after litter until their exhausted bodies give out and they’re abandoned or killed. Many “purebred” dogs endure a lifetime of debilitating [health problems](#) because they have been bred to have distorted physical features, such as unnaturally elongated spines and flattened faces, including through inbreeding.”

And I actually agree with this. I know it’s a complicated issue, I personally have friends who breed animals because they love a certain type of

animal and want to make more of them, but I do think that's a misguided view. I've struggled with it over the last couple years in particular, I was given as a Purebred cat and I will never own a purebred animal again. I loved her, very much, and I now have a stray that I love just as much, and I will stick to adoption of strays for the rest of my life. Adopt a black cat if you can, they're the best, and people often won't adopt them because of superstition. People are dumb as fuck.

Back to PETA's guiding principles. PETA subscribes to the philosophy of direct action. They're not just some lobbying group that is going to work behind the scenes with politicians, they're not limiting themselves to fundraisers and media campaigns. Ingrid Newkirk believes in militant guerrilla tactics, saving animals essentially by any means necessary. And in fact she would like to be even more aggressive...she has gotten in a lot of hot water for refusing to condemn the animal liberation front, a violent, militant animal rights organization that battles against the meat industry via felonies. Breaking and entering, destroying animal testing labs, etc.

So PETA had been founded in 1981 and barely a year later they would have their big break. The organization came to prominence as the result of a pretty amazing win for animal rights, and a pretty painful story to have to tell. I'm going to try to skim through this really

quickly because holy fuck it sucks. The Silver Springs monkey case. In 1981 There was a lab in Maryland called the institute for behavioral research, where a federally funded scientist—and I use that term loosely, some might also say war criminal—named Edward Taub was performing experiments on the central nervous systems of 17 macaque monkeys. What he was doing was severing their sensory ganglia—basically the nerves that travel up and down their limbs—so that they would then lose sensation and also lose the use of those limbs. Then he would bind the opposing good limb to try to determine whether the monkey's brain would be able to adjust and find a way to reroute those electrical signals in order to still use the incapacitated limb. And right away, this is painful for me to talk about...if you see some of the pictures of what the researchers were doing to these monkeys, it's beyond barbaric. perhaps the most famous photograph of animal experimentation of all time comes from this case...if you google "Silver Springs monkeys" you'll find it, and I highly recommend that you not. Unless you're determined to ruin your day. But I'm going to describe it, because I feel obligated, so I hope you didn't plan to sleep peacefully anytime soon. In the photograph a monkey is splayed spread-eagle style, locked in a so-called immobilizing device, or what appears to be a medieval torture device or something from the saw franchise, its arms and legs are taped to metal bars, its neck is clamped so

that it is staring at the ceiling, its abdomen is cinched with a metal belt, there are visible open sores on the monkey's arms and numbers are written on its chest...It's like something out of a dystopian science fiction apocalypse film. If you've ever seen Clockwork Orange where the main character's eyes are pinned open and he's unable to move, that's immediately what came into my head. It's grim.

So Alex Pacheco went undercover in Silver Springs, he secured a job in the lab and would eventually expose not just the abuse, but the absolute filth of the facility. Cockroaches, feces everywhere, it was disgusting.

A quote from Alex...and I'm going to talk for a couple seconds first to give you the chance to fast forward about thirty seconds if you are sensitive, as am I. But I *have* to power through and you don't: "no lacerations or self-amputation injuries were ever cleaned. Whenever a bandage was applied, it was never changed, no matter how filthy or soiled it became. They were left on until they deteriorated to the point where they fell off the injured limb. Old, rotted fragments of bandage were stuck to the cage floors where they collected urine and feces. The monkeys also suffered from a variety of wounds that were self-inflicted or inflicted by monkeys grabbing at them from adjoining cages. I saw discolored, exposed muscle tissue on their arms. Two monkeys had bones protruding through their flesh. Several had bitten off their own fingers and had festering

stubs, which they extended towards me as I discreetly took the fruit from my pockets. With these pitiful limbs they searched through the foul mess of their waste pans for something to eat."

And that's enough of that.

The result of Alex's exposé was the first ever police raid on an animal testing facility, in September of 1981. The man who led the raid, Richard Swain, would later tell *The Washington Post* in 1991: "It was absolutely filthy, just incredibly dirty, like nothing I've ever been in. I've executed lots and lots of search warrants. I've worked in murder, in narcotics, in vice, but this was the first time I went into a room, and I felt legitimately concerned for my health just being there."

Researcher Edward monkey-Mengele... I mean Edward Taub was charged with 17 counts of animal cruelty, he would be convicted of seven, and the trial would result in an absolute avalanche of publicity for PETA. This became a nationally recognized case, by design. Alex not only called the police, he also alerted the local media, to ensure that reporters would be there to witness the raid.

News.m4a

Audio Recording · 183 KB

Edward Taub his steadfastly defended

himself and during the two subsequent trials claimed that he was set up, that many of the photos were staged by Alex when Taub went on vacation for two weeks , and that the animals were not in any pain and their wounds were being treated with ointment. "As for the dirt, Taub said "monkey rooms are dirty places," and that it was normal in laboratories for fecal matter to lie on the floor and food to drop through the cage bottoms into waste trays." Taub would lose his research grant from the national Institute of health, but all of his convictions would be overturned. Six of them during a second trial, and the seventh was upheld briefly but later overturned due to the fact that Maryland's laws outlawing animal cruelty didn't apply to federal research. And as infuriating as that is for me, I sort of understand, because the simple fact is that other than the filthiness of the facility—which was disputed by witnesses for the defense who claimed that Alex had intentionally allowed the lab to become extra filthy during the two weeks of Taub's vacation—what was happening in that lab was not abnormal, this is what animal researchers did at the time and unfortunately often still do, this is where a lot of our medicine comes from and our medical treatments. Taub argued that he wasn't causing the animals any pain, in fact he had severed their pain receptors when he severed the ganglia...although I would argue that mental pain is also pain. Being confined in a torture device for days at a time causes anguish and

misery, whether you can feel your limbs or not. In fact it's kind of worse if you can't, that's terrifying, that's like the metallica song one.

But look, as is often the case on our episodes, those pesky gray areas pop up again and again and muddy the waters of what seems to be a single case of right and wrong....during later testing the monkeys' brains were shown to exhibit evidence of cortical remapping, they basically re-organized themselves to be able to use limbs that had no sensory input, and this contributed to the later development of what's called constrained induced movement therapy, in which good limbs are bound so that the patient's brain is forced to remap, allowing stroke victims to regain use of their limbs. Stroke victims have objectively benefitted from Taub's research. And is it worth it, that's for you to decide. But keep in mind that if you've taken medication or had surgery or used any type of cosmetic product, you've benefited from research that was done on animals. This isn't old news or archaic; elongated muskrat is still killing monkeys left and right for his brain chip company Neuralink. And what makes this so hard is that pesky speciesism again... we're having to agree on a hierarchy of importance. And I get that. I'm grateful for medicine. But at the same time, I don't know how you look at these pictures and I can be OK with what's happening. I just don't know how as a human you can find this behavior acceptable. So there was a subsequent battle over

custody of the monkeys, PETA's request to care for them was denied, and the animals were remanded to the custody of the national Institute of health, the governmental body that had provided the initial grant to Taub, that's like granting custody of chickens to the wolf... eight of the monkeys were determined to be beyond saving and had to be euthanized. A description of one: "Billy had two disabled arms, extensive pressure wounds, diaper rashes, bone infections, and kidney damage from antibiotic use." Grim stuff. I'm not going to go into detail on other cases, but just be aware that some of the other cases PETA tackled were much, much worse. At least there was actual research happening in this lab, with noble purpose, rather than sadism for the sake of fashion or breakfast meats or whatever.

Over the next decade PETA would engineer an absolutely stunning series of successes, such as forcing cosmetic companies like L'Oreal and Maybelline to cease all animal testing. And they quickly developed a template for attacking companies they felt were committing animal abuse. Their tactics can be controversial, but the standard practice in the beginning was to contact the company and basically say hey, just a heads up, we're PETA and we're coming for you, so maybe reconsider being shitty to animals before we start fucking with your company and going to the media. It's essentially extortion; that's a nice company you got there, shame to have

to boycott it. PETA also relies on celebrity endorsements, from well-known animal rights advocates like Pamela Anderson...and speaking of Pamela Anderson, PETA quickly learned that the best way to get attention is to titillate. Sex sells. Growing up, I remember tons of PETA ads that were basically softcore porn. I wasn't sure if I was supposed to feel sad or horny... I blame like 60% of my kinks directly on PETA and the rest on those bookstores in Japan town where they would sell straight up hentai comic books to kids. Naked people writhing around on bloody fur and also tentacle porn.

From a business insider article:

"[PETA] is one of the few organizations that deliberately creates ads that are so outrageous that they will almost inevitably be "banned." It has even put together websites to promote ads that have been banned or rejected.

The technique, known as shockvertising, uses controversial images to burn a message into your brain, by way of taboo subjects, naked people, and bloody corpses. A common PETA advertising theme is to claim that vegetarians have better sex and that eating meat can cause impotence."

We might be familiar with a "I'd rather go naked than wear fur" campaign, in which a ton of celebrities posed mostly naked to illustrate that point. One particularly memorable campaign involved videos mocking the "girls gone wild" franchise, with attractive

young women pulling up their shirts to reveal pendulous swinging cow udders spewing milk everywhere. I'm not even sure what the point of that was but it certainly memorable.

As we learned, another PETA tactic is to infiltrate organizations from within, and surreptitiously shoot photos and video—like at Silver Spring—with the goal of exposing abuses. I watched a documentary about Ingrid and PETA called "I am an animal," and you should not watch this documentary. 90% of you should not. It depicts some of the most gruesome and disturbing images I've ever seen, images that are now engraved in the meat of my brain, and for once I can't even find a way to defuse this for myself with humor, I don't even wanna talk about some of the things I saw. I just want to scrub my eyeballs and my memorybanks with animal-friendly cleansing products and then watch like five hours of Bluey to restore my childish innocence.

Watching this video was terrible but made me much more sympathetic to the cause, and while I'm not going to describe what I saw, what I *will* say is that if you don't think that there are any problems with the way animals are treated in the meat industry, then you SHOULD watch that video and then come explain to me in person how what you witnessed was ok, so that I can learn what it's like to gaze into the eyes of an idiot. Peter has been so successful at exposing animal abuse in the agriculture industry that various states have passed so called ag-gag

laws, basically anti-whistleblower laws that make it illegal to take employment with a company if you intend to their shady practices. Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, North Carolina, the Liz goes on when it comes to states that have bowed to industry lobbyist, although many of these laws have been overturned or placed on hold by courts, and others such as the one in Kentucky are currently being litigated. Imagine your state passing a law that says that if you're employer is doing something shady or an ethical or abusive, it is illegal to tell anyone about it. That'll flat out evil.

So, let's talk about a few more successes: PETA won a widely publicized victory against General Motors... for over a decade GM was using live animals in crash tests, killing over 19,000 of them. From the PETA website: "By early 1993, PETA members and other conscientious consumers across the country had held protests at GM dealerships in at least 45 U.S. cities. [We smashed GM cars](#) outside auto shows while wearing animal mascot outfits, and activists (including PETA's founder and president, Ingrid Newkirk) were arrested after they blocked GM's float during the annual Rose Parade in Pasadena, California, wearing colorful animal outfits—an event that landed on a *Los Angeles Times* list of the [biggest controversies in Rose Parade history.](#)" I'm not sure how many controversies they were competing with...now I'm kind of curious about what other

controversies have swirled around a parade of roses, but that's not the topic today. It was the wildest rose parade fiasco since the infamous mass thumb-pricking incident of 1983.

Because of the thorns? Ok.

PETA has influenced the United States government, they got the pentagon to quit performing wound tests by shooting goats and pigs, which I didn't know was a thing that had been happening. Your tax dollars at work.

PETA also played hardball with McDonald's, extracting some pretty major concessions after a grueling fight. Again from the PETA website, "After a 'Day of Action' in October generated dozens of protests around the country, McDonald's invited PETA into negotiations. Negotiations proved fruitless, so PETA launched a campaign against McDonald's in 1999 that lasted 11 months and included more than 400 demonstrations at McDonald's restaurants in more than 23 countries, as well as advertising and celebrity involvement. In September 2000, McDonald's agreed to make basic but important animal-welfare improvements, which are the only protection for chickens in factory farms because the Animal Welfare and Humane Slaughter acts do not cover birds." McDonald's also added vegetarian options to their menu as a result of PETA's pressure campaigns.

However, a great example of PETA going too far and proving that not all

publicity is good publicity, is the "unhappy meals" campaign. PETA volunteers would hand out happy meals to kids, but instead of images of the hamburger and Grimace on the container, there were images of Ronald McDonald holding a bloody knife, Severed cow heads dripping gore, mutilated birds, and inside I imagine you might find a copy of the infamous comic book PETA released called "your mommy kills animals." PETA, I'll winning hearts and minds.

Traumatizing kids and vilifying moms, always a solid strategy. America has never been rabidly protective of children and mothers.

PETA also went after the TV show Survivor because it depicts contestants eating rats, which in fairness I do not enjoy watching, in fact I can't watch *naked and afraid*, I actually wanted to see that show but I can't watch the contestants awkwardly whacking gophers or whatever with a stick, these people are not experienced outdoorsmen and women and it's just kind of ugly and brutal to watch them chewing on raw lizards or whatever, it's just not my bag. But survivor is a weird target for PETA...you might as well go after everyone on TV who eats a hamburger or chicken leg. Why are we particularly protecting rats, I thought all animals are equal, are we suddenly embracing speciesism? I don't know it's just weird.

Alex left PETA in 1999. He had become increasingly disgusted by the tactics Ingrid was using, and to this day

complains that she is a "media whore," and that she firmly believes no publicity is bad publicity. He has described PETA's objectionable tactics as increasingly consisting of "stupid human tricks."

Stupid human tricks.m4a

Audio Recording · 119 KB

The stupid human tricks are too many to count, but as a for instance: PETA erected a bunch of billboards with pictures of Rudy Giuliani; they show Giuliani with a milk mustache—this was mocking the popular "got milk" ad—but these particular billboards bear the message, "got prostate cancer?" They were referring to a purported link between dairy and the type of cancer from which Giuliani was suffering at the time...and i'm conflicted...that's honestly kind of funny to me because fuck Rudy Giuliani but also objectively kind of terrible because Ouch. fuck cancer even more than Giuliani.

PETA also waited war against what they deemed to be offensive names of locations such as two New York towns: Fishkill and Hamburg. Fishkill is a little aggressive, I'll be honest, but hamburg New York? Really? First, that's dumb as fuck, but also, I think there's a bigger Hamburg that you could target.

Ingrid has rubbed a lot of individuals and organizations the wrong way, even ones who are—or were—aligned with her cause. Priscilla Feral, the president

of the "friends of animals" organization, I believe that's her real name, called Ingrid a "media slut," which somehow sounds worse than media whore. Because media whore is an actual term that people use whereas media slut is ad-libbed and sounds somehow worse. It's like media Cunt, that's just a step too far. Also if you're a whore at least you get paid. Sex work is respectable these days. And slut shaming is just a bad look, even media-slut shaming. Wayne Purcell, the CEO of the Humane Society of the United States, likewise points out that the meat industry and other enemies of animal groups often use PETA as a foil, a convenient punching bag, they can point to PETA and use its crazy antics to discredit all animal rights advocates. And I would say he has a point. Perhaps the most famous example of a PETA messaging-backfire is the "holocaust" campaign in which PETA compared the murder of animals to the mass murder of Jews during world war II. PETA published an advertisement featuring a photo of a naked holocaust victim, next to a skinny, malnourished baby goat, with the tagline "the holocaust on your plate." additional text on the ad explained that "during the seven years between 1938 and 1945, 12 million people perished in the holocaust. The same number of animals is killed every four hours for food in the US alone." None of this is inaccurate, but you could say it was a strategic misstep. And look, prepare to be kneejerk offended. Personally I don't think it's

an unfair *logical* equivalency: looking at this from a historical perspective, Hitler was implementing factory techniques to murder people, it was gruesomely innovative, and we have also implemented factory techniques to mass slaughter animals. The problem is the *moral* equivalency, which I totally understand people will take issue with. I don't think that these two things are morally comparable, so save your emails, but they certainly are logistically comparable...either way we're talking about the industrialization of killing. And if people don't agree with me, that's fine, I'm not minimizing the holocaust; I just think it's unfair to say that using this analogy somehow trivializes the slaughter of humans, rather that what it arguably and ham-fistedly attempts to do, which is elevate the slaughter of animals, to put it in numerical and logistic perspective and emphasize the scale of modern animal slaughter to make it a little bit more impactful for people who might not understand the kind of numbers and techniques that are involved here. A couple hundred years ago we were slaughtering chickens on a farm by hand, and that's a lot different than keeping millions of animals in tiny crates, and basically putting them through a conveyor belt to be slaughtered and chopped up. And you're free to be upset with me for not being super upset about that ad campaign, and I get it, bring on the cancellation, I honestly look forward to it. I could use a break.

So with Alex gone, Ingrid was now the sole dictator—I mean CEO—of PETA, with 300 employees and an operating budget of upwards of \$45 million per year. The organization operates out of a huge corporate building in Norfolk Virginia, planning media stunts and undercover operations that will mostly be ignored, because we're all kind of sick of their shit. but Ingrid is not giving up. And she still participates in these stunts herself, and is regularly arrested for them. I got to see her in action in that documentary, she goes to a department store with some other volunteers and they jump into a window-display that is showcasing furs, then pour ketchup all over themselves and start writhing against the window, it's a very entertaining spectacle, one that is witnessed by reporters that they have asked to be there. It is not in my opinion effective, they look crazy, this is the kind of stuff that people roll their eyes at now...the time when tossing red paint at fur-wearers and writhing around in fake blood was innovative is long past, and now these demonstrations have outlived their usefulness. But I'm certainly not in a position to judge, I personally have made zero progress in the arena of animal rights, and that's kind of what it comes down to, you can hate PETA but they've done some very effective work and most of us haven't. And Ingrid will certainly tell you that the only way to get attention is to be extreme. no one's going to pay attention to your media campaign just because you write some strongly worded blog posts and finger

wag in the comment section of the Louis Vuitton instagram account. In this day and age, you have to go viral to draw attention to yourself and your cause. But at some point you run into diminishing returns, especially if you keep relying on the same techniques to try to generate shock value. PETA is a one-trick pony that does not support the teaching of tricks to ponies, so it's unlikely they'll adapt or change their tactics anytime soon. Plus, having a founder with a toxic personality doesn't help endear the public to your cause. Ingrid is a zealot, but more than that, she's an angry person. By her own admission.

Anger.m4a

Audio Recording · 148 KB

I worry about this woman for a number of reasons. We have to dive back in the deep end of the pool here and talk about PETA's stance toward euthanasia.

From news week::

"PETA's headquarters is in Norfolk, Virginia, where it operates an animal shelter called PETA's Community Animal Project.

There are no restrictions on the animals it takes in, even ones considered unadoptable. Free euthanization is offered.

Data collected by Virginia's state government shows that PETA's

euthanasia rates for cats and dogs at the shelter is exceptionally higher than other shelters in the state."

This is a vast understatement.

In fact, PETA's kill rate for animals that are taken to their facility is as high as 98%. If you bring an animal to their Norfolk facility, it is a one-way trip.

PETA is opposed to animal confinement, they're not anti-pet but they're anti-caging, so they don't bother holding onto the animals you bring them. They just jump right to murder.

From the "why we euthanize" section of the PETA website: "The word "euthanasia" comes from two Greek words—"eu" meaning "good" and "thanatos" meaning "death."

Aaaand we're already in icky territory.

"Euthanasia is defined as a merciful release from life in order to end suffering.

Like any responsible open-admission, socially conscious shelter, PETA provides a peaceful, [painless release](#) from life for animals who cannot be safely or humanely placed in a new home or who are sick, injured, dying, or otherwise suffering (physically or psychologically) and whose guardians often can't afford the service at a private veterinary practice."

I'm not sure who exactly is qualified to determine an animal level of psychological suffering, but apparently PETA has animal therapist on the case,

specifically, Dr. Kevorkian.

"At PETA, we will never turn our backs on animals in need—and sometimes the most humane thing we can offer them is a peaceful release from a world that has betrayed them...

From PETA's response to a newsweek inquiry, "As long as companion animals are still bred on purpose and people aren't spaying and neutering their dogs and cats, open-admission animal shelters and organizations like PETA will have to deal with the results in a caring and humane manner."

Again this kind of sounds like a threat. If y'all don't stop breeding animals, we won't stop killing them.

From the actual description of their animal shelter:

"PETA is proud to provide a safe haven for animals who have no other place to turn—"

I'm not familiar with this definition of the word safe.

"...here, they are welcomed with open arms..."

The cold embrace of death.

"If you have an open-door intake policy and welcome damaged animals who are abused, neglected, unloved, or who no one else will accept, of course your [euthanization] numbers will look different than those of a shelter that accepts a limited number of animals

and turns animals away,"

...true euthanasia—delivered by an intravenous injection of sodium pentobarbital (a barbiturate)—is gentle, painless, quick, and dignified. Because of the high number of homeless dogs and cats—and the lack of suitable homes—sometimes the most humane thing that a shelter worker can do is give an unadopted or unadoptable animal a peaceful exit from a world that has betrayed them."

It's a weird disconnect, because if any other organization were killing 99% of the animals that came to them, I guarantee PETA would be up all up in their windows smearing ketchup. But PETA is the worst offender when it comes to rates of animal euthanizing. I get that this is a thorny issue, they can't rehome every animal. but where I will fault PETA is that they don't even *attempt* to find these animals homes. They don't have adoption hours, they don't have a rehoming policy, they just kill animals. So take only one piece of information from this episode, do not bring an animal to a PETA facility. It's really complicated, and it's easy to have a knee-jerk reaction, and I do fault PETA for how they're handling this, but at the same time there are so many animals being brought into shelters and most shelters do euthanize. Peter is not wrong about the fact that it makes no sense to breed more animals as pets. It doesn't. If you don't like what Peter is doing, Are you also speaking out against animal

breeding?

I honestly feel that Ingrid is kind of like Annie Wilkes in *Misery*, like she thinks it's her duty to purge the world of suffering by murdering everything. There's this whole "evil nurse" trope that has its basis in an actual psychological fallacy in which people believe that they're doing the right thing by committing horrific mass murders, because they're convinced that the alternative is worse. Ingrid has flat-out said she would like to wipe out the human race because we are responsible for so much animal suffering. But it's like, are we going to wipe out the tigers too, because they're responsible for a hell of a lot of animal suffering as well.

Ingrid's organization has done a lot of good, but Ingrid herself doesn't seem to have much driving her except for anger and a desire to punish those who don't subscribe to her worldview. She is, as mentioned, an atheist, which is fine, I myself am agnostic, but Ingrid takes believing in nothing to an almost Big Lebowski degree. I think it's safe to say she is a nihilist. Here is Ingrid reading from her will:

Ingrid's will.m4a

Audio Recording · 592 KB

Even in death, Ingrid wants to continue

guilt-tripping, lecturing, punishing, and generally creeping the fuck out of her enemies.

But once again, there's no black-and-white in any of these stories. The enemies of PETA are often equally unhinged. Here's a clip of Ingrid reading just a small sample of the fan mail she receives on a regular basis.

Ingrid.m4a

Audio Recording · 568 KB

So where does all of this leave us? We talk a lot on this podcast about net negatives and positives, about having to make judgments that fall in gray areas, because very few things are simple and one-sided and conform to a binary of right or wrong. And I would say that overall PETA's impact has been a net positive for animals of the world. I'm going to go out on a limb and say that I don't think that the world is a worse place because of PETA. They have objectively saved more animals than they have eliminated, they've achieved some great successes and have forced reforms on some very disgusting, unscrupulous industries. And sure, they've inconvenienced and humiliated and tricked and argued with and pissed off a bunch of regular ass people who are just trying to enjoy a steak, but does that make them awful? Not in my opinion. Because look, steak is still readily available. The existence of

PETA hasn't made it significantly harder to get a hamburger in America. They've made it harder to get *fur*, they've made it harder to experiment on animals, they've made it harder to hunt whales, and I'm OK with that. Obnoxiousness does not invalidate the positive impact that they've been able to achieve. Are they annoying as fuck? Yes. Do I agree with their philosophies? Not all of them. do I agree with their tactics? Very few of them, these days, probably not the majority, but overall I'm glad PETA exists.

I think the biggest problem with PETA is one they will clearly acknowledge, although they don't see it as a problem: they are uncompromising when it comes to animal rights. And that's just not a very good strategy in life. It's why our government grinds to a halt so often. Compromise is necessary to make progress. It's the only realistic way to get anything done. It's just not realistic to think you're going to convince people to give up their favorite things because you really really want them to and you like to argue.

One podcast I listened to described PETA as a one issue advocacy group and I think that's accurate, they have one goal: improving living conditions for animals worldwide, and they pursue that goal to the exclusion of all others. And often to the detriment of humans. A vegan diet is a great example, It's not realistic for everyone. If you're a human living in a poor neighborhood or a so-

called food desert, and all you can afford is fast food, you're going to eat what you can get, you're going to feed your kids with what you can afford, you don't have the luxury of turning up your nose to a big Mac. hard-core PETA members would be pretty conflicted as to whether or not a child should starve or a cow should be sacrificed—And it's tough because ultimately on a universal scale PETA is right; humans don't matter any more in the grand scheme than any other animal on this planet. Some listeners are going to get mad about that, and that's fine, if you believe that we are special snowflakes and we are God's chosen creatures, cool, but I respectfully disagree; we are made of we blood and fat and meat and organs just like any other animal, we are not special except for our big brains that have allowed us to become the dominant species on earth. Achieving dominance over the rest of the animal kingdom doesn't make us any more important on a universal scale, human empires rise and fall, while solar systems billions of miles away unaffected. On a big enough scale you and I don't matter anymore than a cat or a fish or a microbe. But we are members of the human species and it's natural for us to prioritize our own, well-being, and also, again it comes down to the math. If I save a baby, that baby could live 100 years. If I save a cow, that cow is going to live Maybe 20? And it's not going to experience a full range of emotion and enjoy those years and be productive. It's also not

gonna kill a bunch of other animals or rape people or whatever, so I guess an argument could be made for saving the cow instead of the person, this is the interspecies version of the trolley problem, but ultimately I'm always going to choose to feed a baby a hamburger if the alternative is for it to starve. And PETA and I will just disagree about that.

Now, are they correct that feeding people meat and using farmland to raise animals is the least efficient way to feed your population, and that if we put our resources together America and other nations could easily feed their populations with grains and vegetables rather than killing animals? Yes. And I don't have any problem with PETA advocating for reform. But in the meantime some kids are going to have to eat big Macs, and until we can enact systemic changes in the economy, there's no point in shaming poor people for "impure" diets. And also, some people really like meat. And I get why that's frustrating. Some people really like hunting for sport, some people get in positions of power and decide that we should invade other countries, people are fucking weird, and I'd argue that at this point the best strategy for animal advocates is advocate for your position within the law and do your best not to completely alienate the population, which actually harms your cause. And that's where I think PETA has struggled, although I would say their wins have been significant

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Oscar Watkins just became a €10.00 member!



Oscar Watkins
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Danielle just edited their membership to \$10.00.



Danielle just edited their membership from \$3.00 to \$10.00.



Danielle
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New £4.50 member! 🎉 Meet Eva Grunow



Eva Grunow just became a £4.50 member!



Eva Grunow
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**New \$3.00 member! 🎉 Meet
Josh May**



Josh May just became a
\$3.00 member!



Josh May
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11:23



New listener(s)

Hi there fellas,

I came across your podcast and it is wonderfully informative and funny. I homeschool and our youngest son is 11, 6th grade. I played one of your podcast on mormanism for him when we went on a recent car trip. He actually asked me to turn it up, put his phone down and told his mother and I to 'please stop talking so I can hear them'.

That was two weeks ago and since then he plays various episodes while gaming, going to bed and asks to listen even on short 5 minute errands. He was listening to the podcast 'Stuff you should know' and Midnight Facts has replaced it.

His 12th birthday is July 23rd and I am thinking about getting him a subscription. He talks about hearing his name on a future episode. His name is Elijah but he goes by Tater.

Just wanted to let you know you have an avid fan and your podcast is great.

Also a faithful listener,
Jaime



<https://www.newsweek.com/fact->

[check-peta-responsible-deaths-thousands-animals-1565532](https://www.peta.org/blog/euthanasia/thousands-animals-1565532)

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