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MOMMY'S A WHAT?

by Brenda Shoss

In the eyes of the government and conservative watchdogs – Mommy is potential terrorist material. Please don't tell my family. They'll be very upset. Yet even under oath, they'd profess: "Yes, she speaks out. No, she is not a threat to homeland security."

Obsessive. Fanatic. Wacko. The adjectives war on animal rights activists is old news. But a new anti-AR soldier has risen from 9/11 ashes to tackle perceived dissent. Anti-terrorist task forces comb the country for AR "terrorists." According to Bob Kane of Sportsmen's and Animal Owners' Voting Alliance (SAOVA), AR/Eco terrorists will abolish rights to "Enjoy a steak dinner, hunt, fish, and pet your favorite cat or dog."

Conspiracy tales define far-right groups such as SAOVA, Center for Consumer Freedom, Foundation for Biomedical Research, and National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA). Members represent National Cattlemen, Rodeo, Fur Commission USA, Pharmaceuticals and others with a financial stake in animal use. But when the respected Southern Poverty Law Center issues an indepth Intelligence Report listing my colleagues as thugs, I am compelled to ask: *What is going on here?*



Law enforcers now treat animal advocates like gangsters and violent extremists. Activist J. Johnson, 19, discovered his status as "Member of Terrorist Organization" when a friendly Illinois cop provided roadside assistance and ran Johnson's license to demonstrate police tech. To the surprise of both, *Animal Rights Extremist/Domestic Terrorist* headlined Johnson's photo and address.

animals over half a century, I discussed the despair activists feel when they view HLS undercover videos and journals.

The debunkers, who likely saw my bio on SHAC's website, paint a skewed portrait that vilifies the messenger, never the message. Sexy press pits activists against "a company that uses animals to find cures for deadly diseases," as noted in the Waterbury Republican American's *Animal Rights Terrorists*. The report prefers to equate soap and bug spray with life-saving science rather than accept verified facts about HLS animal abuse.

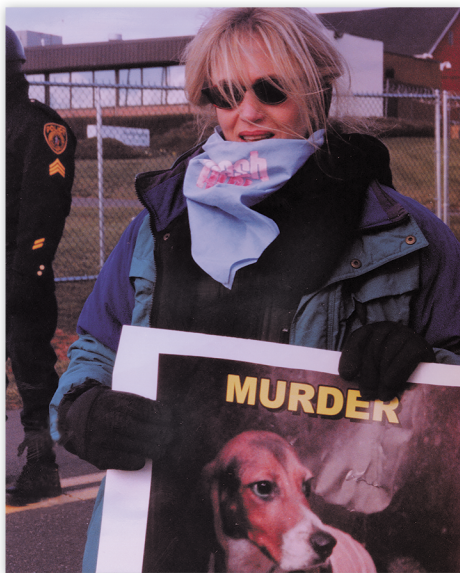
In fact, HLS boasts 32 violations of the Federal Animal Welfare Act, 16 violations of Good Lab Practice in England, a \$50,000 payoff to U.S. Agriculture Department for inept recordkeeping, and scientific fraud in six investigations.

What you won't see on broadcast news is video of an HLS tech who repeatedly face punches a squealing beagle pup. You won't read about noxious materials pumped into animal stomachs for toxicity tests "only reliable 5-25% of the time," as stated in an HLS record. You won't hear about animals who seize, vomit and collapse in cages.



In Dec. 2002, AnimalRights.net (tag: *Debunking the animal rights movement*) posted my name and address with directions to "Please call and demo against these nuts." My fellow nuts included Kevin Jonas of Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) and a third woman with no ties to AR.

Earlier that month, Kevin and I joined 300 activists in East Millstone, NJ to protest Huntingdon Life Sciences, a contract lab that does animal tests for household cleaners, food additives, dyes, pesticides/herbicides, adhesives, and pharma goods. As a speaker invited to solemnize Huntingdon's 50th Anniversary and the death of 9 million



A past HLS worker says animals are improperly anesthetized or euthanized. "[I] saw a beagle on the necropsy table. The vivisector put a knife into the animal, who threw his head back and howled... His last howls were as leg muscles were severed."

Most view people or pets subjected to similar violence as victims of terrorism. But mainstream voices rarely question animal testing. Anti-AR voices villify activists: "They've crossed to the dark side: animal rights terrorism," writes Wesley J. Smith of National Review Online.

"Granted, some radical animal activists have committed serious acts of vandalism and other crimes. But the wrath isn't directed solely at them," argues Steven Zak (*Who Are You Calling A Terrorist?*). "Mr. Smith, for instance, condemns People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and even the moderate Humane Society of the U.S."

PETA, Physician's Committee For Responsible Medicine and Protect Our Earth's Treasures (POET) exposed veterinarian Michael Podell's botched attempt to emulate amphetamine abuse in HIV-positive drug users by pumping speed into cats infected with feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). In response, Dr. Steven L. Teitlebaum, president of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, lumped these law-abiding activists into a "violent segment of the animal rights movement, whose harassment campaigns include personal attacks and death threats against scientists and their families."

AIDS and FIV have dissimilar cellular processes. Some scientists object to FIV as a model for HIV because extrapolation to the human species is baseless. Yet Podell's \$1.68 million study for Ohio State University wasted three years subjecting cats to painful spinal taps, precarious stunts, brain probes, death and dissection.

After Podell's resignation, POET searched for proof of violence against the vivisector. Podell had filed no police reports. When asked to authenticate "almost a dozen" death threats, he came up with one vague email from an activist in England.

POET used legal tactics to reveal fraud in the tax-funded animal research industry. Activists pursue moral justice for nonhuman animals via letter campaigns, education, press and lawful protest.

"The majority are ordinary people with families to care for and bills to pay. We are acutely aware of the unnecessary, inexcusable suffering of other species on a daily basis and we have made a commitment to help alleviate that suffering," asserts The Animal Spirit's Shell Sullivan in *Rights For Animals?* "I talk to people who will listen and I protest against what I believe to be wrong."

Sullivan may soon find her free-speech privileges challenged. The courts increasingly ban demonstrations and judges reject bail for activists. SHAC alleges FBI agents threatened the life of an activist who refused to divulge information. Others have been offered cash to become informants.

Robin Webb, British press officer for the Animal Liberation Front, was arrested at the HLS demo in New Jersey for violating an injunction that ordered

activists to assemble in 50-count groups. Bail was initially set at an unprecedented \$50,000 for the 57-year-old's "crime" of dashing across the grass to become person #51 outside HLS.

Scare tactics stifle free speech and are disproportionate to the crime. At worst, vandalism and property damage do not rank as terrorist offenses. By equating the two, reactionaries "trivialize the real thing and insult its victims," Zak contends.

I'm a mom who wants her son to question the status quo. I want him to know that ethical progress evolves from the unpopular few willing to take a stand. German activist Helmut Kaplan wrote: "Our grandchildren will ask us one day: Where were you during the Holocaust of the animals? What did you do against these horrifying crimes? We won't be able to offer the same excuse for the second time – that we didn't know." Just as my mother gave me wisdom and fortitude to speak for the voiceless, I give my son eyes to see and words to fight back.

And Along Came AETA

The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act Of 2006 (AETA) expands 1992 and 2002 versions of the law with disproportionate penalties for anyone who "damages or causes the loss of any real or personal property (including animals or records) used by an animal enterprise." Indictments and convictions have been made under the 1992 and 2002 Acts. Harsh penalties under AETA 2006 are excessive.

- **AETA boosts penalties for an offense of "nonviolent physical obstruction of an animal enterprise or a business having a connection to ... an animal enterprise, that may result in loss of profits but does not result in bodily injury."** IE: Boycotts, civil disobedience, undercover investigations... tied to an industry's revenue loss of \$10,000 can be punished by steep fines and jail time, plus label activists "terrorists."
- **AETA illegalizes mail and interstate or foreign commerce as elements of "conspiracy" to initiate economic impairment** to manufacturers, distributors and sellers of animals or animal products; research facilities; pet stores; breeders; zoos; rodeos; circuses, etc.

AETA was fast-tracked through Congress, with lobbyist pressure for animal-use industries (pharma, biomedical, agribusiness, furriers, hospitality, tourism, entertainment).

- 9/29/06: Senate passes S. 3880 (AETA) by unanimous consent; no Senator opposes the bill.
- 11/13/06: House of Representatives passes H.R. 4239 (AETA) in a 15-minute up-down vote with just 6 Reps present. Among them, Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) is the only one who contests the bill.
- 11/27/06: Predictably, President Bush signs AETA into law.

AETA is vague and overbroad. Animal Enterprise includes virtually any U.S. retailer. Most *sell animal products for profit*: Grocery stores (meat/dairy), shoes (leather), restaurants (meat/dairy), clothing (wool, fur)... AETA is so overbroad, honest citizens may not know if their activities fall within the law.

- **AETA obstructs prosecution of unlawful activities at animal enterprises.** It's hazy language doesn't exempt whistle-blowing or cruelty investigations.
- **AETA criminalizes free speech.** IE: A boycott intends to cause economic damage – to get companies to comply with animal welfare laws and cease cruel practices. Indeed, most conscientious objectors meet AETA's ambiguous criterion for "terrorist."

AETA is redundant. Disciplinary measures already exist for vandalism, property loss, criminal trespass, harassment, assault and bodily injury.

AETA erodes First Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens. AETA cuts equal protection under the law and limits free speech/assembly. It silences dissent and casts a chilling net on all social justice.

AETA ridicules real terrorism in its effort to equate activists with terrorists. AETA unjustly targets any group that advocates for animals, and silences lawful advocacy seeking to expose animal cruelty violations. AETA may divert valuable taxpayer money and resources away from genuine terrorism.