

Animals in Entertainment
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BUS 1040



December 2014
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INTRODUCTION

Unaware of what they are seeing, many people go each year to animal shows at amusement parks, circuses and zoos. Everything about it draws them in-- the snacks, the music, the displays, but most importantly, the amazing animals. They are in awe by how such a huge and dangerous creature can be tamed and taught to do many tricks. As they watch, they are taken to a different world, a world where these great creatures do the unimaginable.

Since they are so overwhelmed with this world, the spectators don't see the concrete walls, the cold cages and the artificial habitats that these animals live in. They are unaware of the lives they were taken from, the miles and miles they would travel every day before being plucked out of their natural environment to be put into a place where the human race controls their lives. As much as we would like to think that these animals are happy and free, they are not, they are prisoners being held captive by our own selfishness.

FINDINGS

BLACKFISH

During the summer of 2013, America was shocked to learn the secrets and insights of one of the most famous amusement parks; SeaWorld. *Blackfish*, a documentary directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite, revealed a disturbing truth to the treatment of the animals within the walls of Seaworld. The documentary follows one animal in particular, a 12,000 pound Orca named Tilikum. At two years old, Tilikum was captured off the Eastern region of Iceland with two other whales named Samoa and Nandu.

Capturing the Whales. To capture these whales, the capturers and divers would use bombs that they threw in the water to herd the whales into coves. Once they got the whales with babies into the coves, they used fishing boats with nets to trap the whales. The young whales were captured, then put into stretchers and when the net was dropped, the adult whales stayed near the boats crying out for their young.

As one of the men on the boats remembers the cries of the whales, he says:

You understand then, what you're doing. I lost it, I just started crying. I didn't stop working, but I just couldn't handle it. It's just like kidnapping a little kid away from it's mother. I can't think of anything worse than that. This is the worst thing I've ever done, is hunt that whale." *Blackfish, 2013*

Before *Blackfish* was released, there was little understanding among the American people of how these whales came to SeaWorld. But upon hearing the stories of how these magnificent animals were captured, many became outraged. Capturing whales, or any animal for that matter, using bombs is highly dangerous and frightening to the animal. Whales live in pods, or families, and do not leave their pod until death. When these whales were captured, they were being taken away from the only life they know. Taking a two year-old whale away from its pod is like taking a child away from its family.

When a child is kidnapped, it makes national news and search parties go out every night looking for the child. But when an animal is taken from its mother and their family, they don't have anyone to help them find their baby; all they can do is cry out and hope that *their* child is brought back to them. *Capturing* is the nice word to call this process, but *hunting* is what was really happening.

Time at SeaLand. By the time Tilikum was four years old, he was taken to SeaLand in Victoria, Canada. SeaLand was nothing but a net in a marina with a floating walkway for customers to walk around to see the whales. Tilikum started training there with a trainer who used punishment as a teaching technique. The former director of SeaLand, Steve Huxter, explained that the trainer would send Tilikum, who was untrained, out with a whale who was trained then give them the same command.

If Tilikum didn't do it properly, then the trainer would deprive both of them of food to keep them hungry; this technique caused a lot of frustration with the trained whale that Tilikum was working with. When the larger, trained whale would get frustrated, it would

turn and rake him. Raking is when a whale is trying to establish dominance and intentionally scratches another whale with its teeth.

The two females at SeaLand would gang up on Tilikum at night, when they were being “stored” in a module that was 30 feet long and 20 feet wide with no lights or stimulation for the whales. Huxter said:

When we first started they were quite small, they were quite young, so they fit in there nicely, but they were immobile for the most part. It didn't feel good, it just didn't. It was just wrong.

During the winter, since the park wasn't open as long, the whales would be in their module from 5pm to 7am, over twelve hours. When the trainers would go to let them out in the mornings, they would find new tooth rakes and sometimes blood on Tilikum.

Blackfish, 2013

The Keltie Byrne Case. Kevin Balcomb, the director at the Center for Whale Research, predicted, “Not only is it inhumane, but it probably led to what I think is a psychosis that he was on hair trigger, he'd kill.” That's exactly what happened. On February 20, 1991, Keltie Byrne, a part time trainer at SeaLand, was finishing up a show with Tilikum when she tripped into the pool where he was being held. As she swam to get out of the water, he swam over to her and pulled her back in by the leg.

After several minutes of him taking her under, then bringing her to the surface, then going back down again, Keltie drowned. There was no memorial left in her name, only the horrifying memories with the spectators there that day. In order to save face before shutting down, SeaLand released to the newspapers that she drowned accidentally, when in reality she was pulled under by the 12,000 pound whale.

After being held captive in a small pool day after day, Tilikum finally snapped. Is it right to say that it was “his fault” for the incident or that he deserved to be punished for what

he did? If anyone is to blame, it's the people who captured Tilikum and the people who paid millions to have him at their institution. Although they hunt other animals, free-ranging killer whales, Orcas, have never been reported killing a human being. They are hunters, but they are also social animals who live naturally in stable family groups. When they are taken from those groups, they become distraught and have no sense of where they belong. Each pod has its own language, all pods sound different from one another. So when whales are put in an environment with different whales, they cannot communicate with them the way they would in their own pod. *Blackfish, 2013*

Time at SeaWorld. In order to make money before they closed their doors for good, SeaLand sold Tilikum to SeaWorld for millions of dollars. SeaWorld was overjoyed to have the animal because they needed a breeder and only a breeder. They made it clear that Tilikum would not be used in shows while he was at SeaWorld because of the Keltie Byrne incident. SeaWorld supervisors and management told their trainers that the female whales were responsible for Keltie's death and that Tilikum had nothing to do with it.

However, when one trainer stopped to admire him in his tank, a supervisor yelled to get the trainer away from him, which raised suspicions of what the supervisors actually knew. There were actually a few instances where Tilikum would lunge at the trainers he was working with. Written in his profile was a statement that said he "...sometimes lunges at trainers..." Yet, SeaWorld would not come out and tell the trainers that he was a high risk.

Along with the lies told to the staff, SeaWorld would lie to spectators concerning facts about whales. "Shamu isn't doing this because he has to, he's doing this because he wants to," was one of the lines crowds would hear during the performance. "Shamu" was getting fish and praise every time he did something, but he only did the tricks and the performance because he wanted that fish, not because he "wants to."

The staff also tells the customers that all the animals get along very well, even though they really do not. Since the whales are in such close quarters with one another and they have no room to swim like they'd like to, they become frustrated and rake each other. There were many times that the park had to separate the animals in order for them to not get hurt. "They're documented in the wild living to be 35, mid-30's. They tend to live longer in this environment because they have the veterinary care," one staff member at SeaWorld says to a touring group. What a lie! *Blackfish, 2013*

Truth About Whales in the Wild. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, killer whales live to be about 50-80 years old. They have no natural predators so they are able to live a full life, which can even be longer than the 50-80 years. The same SeaWorld staff member also lied when he said, "25 percent of whales have a dorsal fin that turns over, as they get older, the dorsal fin collapses."

In reality, less than one percent of whales in the wild have a collapsed dorsal fin, but 100 percent of captive males have a collapsed dorsal fin. In the wild, a male's dorsal fin can grow up to six feet tall and it stays completely straight. The dorsal fin isn't held up by a bone, but by collagen. Since whales in the wild are traveling very far and at high speeds, the water provides the right amount of pressure to keep the fibers in the fin healthy and straight.

Baby Whales. SeaWorld, to ease the concerns about their whales, tells its customers that the whales are with their families. However, SeaWorld's business deals contradict that statement. When a baby calf was born to one of the female whales at SeaWorld Orlando, the trainers thought it was their responsibility to keep their family units together because they knew that's how it would be in the wild. However, when the calf was only four years-old, she started disrupting performances and challenging her mother, so SeaWorld decided to sell the calf. The night they took the baby away, the mother whale stayed in the corner of her tank, shaking and crying out for her baby.

The same thing happened in SeaWorld San Diego when another calf was born to a whale at their park. After some time, the baby was taken away and the mother was distraught and cried out constantly for her young with vocals that no one had heard her make before. When they brought in a senior research scientist to analyze the vocals, they found that it was long-range vocals and that she was trying to call out to her baby. As John Hargrove, a former SeaWorld trainer, remembers:

“That is heartbreaking. How can anyone look at that and think it is morally acceptable? It is not, it is not okay. *Blackfish*, 2013

The Dawn Brancheau Case. Although there were over 100 cases of whale attacks at SeaWorld, the most widely known was the attack in 2010 on head trainer, Dawn Brancheau. As the trainers in *Blackfish* remember, Dawn was a “safety guru” when working with the animals and always made sure she took every safety precaution. One day, while doing a small performance with Tilikum, she had him go around the pool waving at the crowd with his pectoral fin. After he went around the pool once and did the command perfectly, she blew her whistle to let him know to come to her to get fish because he did a good job. Somehow, Tilikum didn’t hear the whistle, so he did the command one more time.

When he got back to Dawn, he expected food, but instead got nothing because of the miscommunication and because she was running out of fish. Tilikum then became frustrated, but finished the show with her. Once the show was over, the two went over to a small cove to have quiet time, just like they would do after every show. During that time, Tilikum grabbed Dawn’s forearm and started pulling her into the pool in front of the crowd of people. He pulled her under the water and started thrashing around. Tilikum kept Dawn for a long period of time, long enough to kill her.

There was no doubt that this was an act of frustration and violence toward the trainer. The autopsy report said she had: “blunt force injuries of the head and neck: avulsion of the scalp and associated galeal and subgaleal hemorrhage, lacerations of the right ear,

abrasions of the left cheek, fracture of the mandible...” along with many more excruciating injuries.

Dave Duffus, an OSHA Expert Witness and Whale Researcher, was called to talk about this case. He remembers:

A lawyer for OSHA asked me what I thought we'd learned and I was sitting in the court and I've got the Keltie Byrne case file in one hand and I've got Dawn Brancheau in the other almost twenty years to the day apart. I'm looking at these two things and my only answer is 'Nothing, not a damn thing. We haven't learned a damn thing for that to happen twenty years apart. *Blackfish, 2013*

Instead of telling the truth, SeaWorld first told the public that Dawn had slipped into the pool and drowned. It wasn't until eye witnesses came forward and told what really happened, that SeaWorld finally came clean about the incident. But they still didn't fully come clean. SeaWorld said that Tilikum had grabbed her ponytail, which she shouldn't have had in the first place. This story allowed them to put the blame on Dawn instead of on the whale and themselves. Upon hearing this, Dawn's coworkers were furious. John Hargrove said, "They blamed her. How dare you, how disrespectful for you to blame here when she's not even alive to defend herself." *Blackfish, 2013*

SeaWorld's Thoughts on Blackfish. SeaWorld would not let the public think that these incidences were acts of aggression or that animals in captivity become crazed animals. However, neurologists have studied many brains of animals who are kept in captivity versus animals in the wild and have proven that the captive animals are all traumatized because they are not in their natural element. They have found that they are ticking time bombs waiting to attack because they are so distraught with their way of life.

SeaWorld's website has a section titled "Blackfish: The Truth About the Movie." The section make six points that try to contradict things said in the documentary. While some of their points seem valid, most of the arguments on the website do not match up with

what the documentary said, which makes it seem like they are just trying to cover up their actions. For example, the website says:

The film falsely suggests that SeaWorld “blamed” Ms. Brancheau for her death. We have never done that. She was our colleague and we mourn her loss to this day.

If SeaWorld wasn’t trying to blame her for the incident, then why not just tell the truth? A spectator’s personal video shows her being dragged in by her forearm, her ponytail was nowhere near Tilikum’s mouth at the time of her being attacked. A former SeaWorld executive, Thad Lacinak, told the news:

Dawn, if she was standing here with me right now, would tell you that it was her mistake, allowing that to happen. He grabbed her ponytail and pulled her into the water, that’s as simple as it gets.

If Dawn were the safest trainer at SeaWorld, she wouldn’t have allowed that kind of mistake to happen. *SeaWorld, 2014*

SeaWorld also claims:

SeaWorld was aware of Keltie Byrne’s death when it acquired Tilikum. We adopted special precautionary protocols regarding work with Tilikum, including prohibition of performance in-water work. These protocols were impressed upon all trainers who worked with Tilikum, yet the film falsely implies that important safety information about Tilikum and his background were withheld. This is untrue. Nothing was ever concealed from Tilikum’s trainers.

If there was no “in-water work” allowed with Tilikum because of his past, then why was he able to attack Dawn? She was *in the water with him*. If SeaWorld would have kept Tilikum just as a breeder and to come out for the big finale at shows, then none of this would have happened and Dawn Brancheau would still be alive. *SeaWorld, 2014*

Tilikum Now. Even after all the incidences with Tilikum, he remains at SeaWorld Orlando, performing every day. Everyone can see that he is unhappy, swimming lifelessly in an isolated, concrete tank. There are times where he won't move from one place for hours on end. Tilikum does not kill because he is a dangerous creature, he kills because he is frustrated with his living conditions and doesn't understand why he is living like this. He has no outlet for his frustration and has nowhere to go to feel free. For Tilikum, his life is spent living in the equivalent of a jail cell, one that he cannot escape from nor ever be set free from. The thought of such a regal, innocent animal to be treated like this is sickening to anyone who knows anything about their way of life.

LIFE AS A CIRCUS PERFORMER

Behind the Scenes. The Ringling Brothers Circus is one of the most widely known circuses because of its dazzling shows and amazing animals. However, what happens behind the red curtains is a different story. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PETA, did an undercover investigation of how the magnificent elephants in this famous circus were treated. In the video PETA created, they set up hidden cameras in the holding areas for the elephants where they go before being sent out on stage. In the video, there are many workers with the elephants who have switches in their hands, hitting the elephants repeatedly in the face. This sickening video reveals that the Ringling Brothers is not for elephant conservation, but for animal cruelty and captivity.

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus is known for its long history of abusing animals. In 1929, John Ringling ordered the execution of a majestic bull elephant named Black Diamond after the elephant killed a woman who had been in the crowd as he was paraded through a Texas city. Twenty men took aim and pumped some 170 bullets into Black Diamond's body, then chopped off his bullet-ridden head and mounted it for display in Houston, Texas.

Ringling Beats Animals, 2014

Although they have an elephant conservation project, Ringling Brothers has been cited numerous times for poor handling of their animals. The citations have included: failure to

provide adequate veterinary care to animals, including an elephant with a large swelling on her leg, a camel with bloody wounds, and a camel injured on train tracks, causing trauma, behavioral stress, physical harm, and unnecessary discomfort to two elephants who sustained injuries when they ran amok during a performance, and failure to test elephants for tuberculosis. Because of these poor living environments, over thirty elephants have died on the circus' watch since 1992.

Baby Elephants. In 2009, a former Ringling Brothers employee, Sam Haddock, came forward with photographs of beaten and abused elephants that he had taken while working for the circus. According to Sam, baby elephants were taken, bound and thrown to the ground in order to get them into uncomfortable cages where they had no room to move. As the babies were being tied up, they would scream and cry as they struggled to break free. In order to get to the next show, the elephants would be chained and crammed into dirty, unkempt boxcars. They would stay in these conditions for at least 26 hours straight, sometimes up to 60-100 hours. There would be unprovoked beatings, like in the video, to the elephants as they got ready for shows.

Breaking the Law. There are numerous accounts of Ringling Brothers failing to comply with the laws regarding the humane treatment of animals. With over 70 cases, they date back to 1993, where Ringling Brothers was cited for not having enough space, required by law, for bears. The cases range from inappropriate living conditions, to not vaccinating their animals to not providing veterinary care for the animals.

The most common citing, however, is not providing proper food storage for the animals' food. They will feed the animals contaminated food, which leads to sickness and death. They try to get around the law by holding back information about their animals and the conditions they are living in. One case, in July 2000, said, "The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide adequate care in transit, failure to provide drinking water, and failure to maintain transport enclosures."

As they transport the animals, they fail to check on them every twelve hours to give the animals food and water as they travel. Instead, they drive the whole way before stopping to check on each animal enclosure. These animals should not be in living situations like this. They are being deprived of sanitary food and water and are trapped in a boxcar for hours on end. Another case states that there was not proper ventilation for the tigers as they traveled because the vent doors had blown shut. The enclosures had become so hot that the tigers tried to escape, leaving one tearing at the cage and breaking a tooth.

Training the Animals. In order for employees of the circus to train the animals, the animals have to become broken, trained and disciplined. Elephants are beaten with switches, electric probes and hooks as they train. After being forcibly separated from their mothers, the circus starts training the elephants when they are just small babies so that it is easier for the trainers to stay in control.

Trainers break the elephants down by tying all their limbs and pressing bullhooks to their skin. The trainers are almost always carrying bullhooks, a tool that has two tips, one hooked and one with a blunt nub, while training. They use the hooks to hit the elephant if they do something wrong. They force the elephants into poses and tricks that are unnatural and uncomfortable for them. The most famous pose is an elephant standing on its hind legs, which is not something females do in the wild. It is not something that elephants are comfortable doing, since males only do it to reach for food in a tree in the wild. After training, the elephants will sometimes have injuries or fall ill, yet they are still expected to perform.

In January 1998, the U.S Department of Agriculture charged Ringling Brothers with several violations against the Animal Welfare Act for forcing a three-year old elephant, Kenny, to perform even though he was extremely ill. Although a veterinarian advised to keep him in the barn, Kenny performed in three shows throughout the day and died only one hour after his last show.

Deaths in the Circus. When an animal dies in captivity, it is the owner's job to announce their death to the public. Ringling Brothers did not report over 15 deaths of animals between 1994 and 2005. They didn't inform the public about the deaths over a decade because the animals had died from the conditions they lived in, making Ringling Brothers look like they were not treating the animals well. Many of these animals were euthanized due to their quality of life.

A majority of these deaths were elephants, and they were euthanized because they had osteoarthritis. This musculoskeletal disease is most common in captive elephants as a result of the imbalance of the joint strength and the weight being put on it. When elephants are being used to carry things around, stand on their hind legs and are standing for long periods of time every day, they are more likely to have complications. The circus fails to realize that these elephants are not dying from natural causes like they do in the wild, but are dying because they are forced into unnatural environments.

Opening the Curtain. In September, 2014, Ringling Brothers brought the circus to Salt Lake City, where they would perform over a course of four days. Although many attended, there was a long line of protestors on the streets in front of the show. The leader of the protest was a 6-year old boy in an elephant costume, bound with chains. This costume was a profound statement to the public, showing them how the elephants are treated behind the curtains. Making the public aware of what's going on will make businesses like Ringling Brothers and other circuses pay for what they have done to the countless animals they have held captive.

RESCUING ANIMALS IN NEED

Mystic Aquarium. In New England, the Mystic Aquarium has been a sanctuary for rescued marine animals for over 40 years. The aquarium opened in 1973, with hopes of highlighting some of the most interesting species in the world. As it grew, so did the number and variety of animals that lived within the walls. Beluga whales, sea lions, penguins and many others have a small home within Mystic Aquarium.

Beluga whales live in a one- acre outdoor habitat that is complete with jagged rocks, evergreens and glacial streams for them to enjoy. Their habitat consists of three interconnected pools that hold over 750,000 gallons of water and three 20- foot- long windows for spectators. They are fed the highest quality diet, have great healthcare and interact with one another as they swim around in their large pool.

28 African Penguins also occupy the facility due to their declining population in the wild. The population of African Penguins has declined 70% within the last 10 years, according to researchers. The penguins came to the facility after they were abandoned as chicks and they were given a chance to live. The penguins live in an enclosed environment that has climates like their natural habitats and love to interact with people.

Although it sounds like these animals are living in almost the same environment as those at SeaWorld, they are not. The animals living in Mystic Aquarium are rescued, endangered animals that live in the highest quality environment separate from the natural ocean. They are researched and monitored in order to learn more about their lives in the wild. The animals are rescued when they become stranded from their families and don't know how to get back. The aquarium monitors their rehabilitation and shares their research with other scientists and institutions.

These animals are kept happy and are not forced to do performances or tricks. Their everyday life is closely monitored for their safety and there are always staff on duty for their needs. Mystic Aquarium prides itself in its safe research of the animals and their close to natural habitats for the animals.

CONCLUSIONS

From my research, I have concluded the following:

- **Many different institutions keep and mistreat animals.** Most of these places are able to hide it well and make it look like animals are dying or are sick from natural causes. That is not the case. These animals are not in their natural environments, but are in artificial enclosures that don't allow them to live how they would in the wild.
- **Using animals for entertainment purposes is selfish and inhumane.** In our world, we are curious about these wild animals and want to know so much more about them, yet making them perform for us is not the answer to our curiosity.
- **Animals kept captive for entertainment are not happy,** which makes it hard to watch them perform day in and day out. They were captured by men who were selfish and greedy for the money and fame.
- **While it is interesting to see these animals up close, there are better ways of researching them.**
- **Animals belong in the wild, not in tanks or cages,** being taken out only to perform for hundreds of people each day. They belong in an environment where they can be free and live with their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating safe environments and habitats for animals to live when they have no chance of living in the wild is how we should research them, not by enclosing them in concrete walls. Animals need a lot of space and places like SeaWorld or the circus are not giving that to them. The following are my recommendations for creating a better living environment for animals:

- **Not capturing animals in the wild** who are living in their natural habitat with their families.

- **Creating laws in animals' favor** to keep them out of toxic and deadly environments in order to keep them free from captivity.
- **Not allowing businesses to sell animals** for millions of dollars in order to make money for their institutions.
- **Building more animal conservations** for injured and rescued animals.
- **Not buying tickets to see these animals perform** unnatural tricks and habits.
- **Bringing animals found injured in the wild to a safe haven** that allows them to live in a habitat that is closely related to their natural environments.
- **Banning animals from performing** in order to shut down circuses and places like SeaWorld.
- **Researching further the effects on animals in captivity** compared to animals in the wild and sharing it with the public to get them involved.
- **Forming more organizations, like PETA, to get more people involved in the humane treatment of animals.**

Animals should have rights and freedoms just like we do; they should not be confined to one small living space their whole life. **Captivity kills—don't buy a ticket.**

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