

YOUR KIDS, PETA'S PAWNS....

How the animal rights movement targets children

A seventh-grader organizes a protest outside a Kentucky Fried Chicken in Washington. A **15-year girl** attempts to ban circus elephants in Denver. A rash of adolescent-driven, animal-rights-related vandalism **hits California**. A popular software company promotes a **video game about 'animal liberation' activists** who destroy medical research labs, and in a new game **"Clubby the Seal"** takes revenge by collecting human skin hides. Is there any doubt that the animal rights movement is targeting your kids?

In a newly updated report, "Your Kids, PETA's Pawns," the Center for Consumer Freedom explores how one group, the \$31 million **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)**, utilizes its vast resources to attract children and teenagers—the next generation of potential meat eaters, milk drinkers, circus-goers, and fisherman- to its cult-like crusade. In its 2007 annual report PETA boasts of having "the largest youth membership of any animal rights organization," with over **800,000 Peta members**.

Despite **denunciations from psychologists and school officials**, PETA continues to target children as young as six years old with violent and graphic propaganda. Sidestepping parents and school authorities, PETA lures young and impressionable children into radical activism with a coordinated effort including the use of **graphic comic books**, grotesque toys, **schoolyard demonstrations**, email alerts sent directly to 65,000 children, and even a **classroom lecturer with a felony rap sheet**.

Not convinced? Read the updated **"Your Kids, PETA's Pawns"** and learn how this radical animal rights group is still a multi-million-dollar menace to children of all ages.

Introduction

Everything kids see—in school, in television, in magazines, and on the internet—helps shape their development. But few parents realize how People for The Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and its allies utilize these vehicles to reach kids through clever communications campaigns. PETA begins a graduated process of indoctrination with kindly animal 'welfare' messages on a website geared toward young children. By slipping in radical animal "rights" propaganda into the benign 'help animals' theme, PETA lays out the path to its next, more extreme age-specific website, "Peta2." The blurring line between caring for animals and 'liberating' them begins to disappear as teen celebrity endorsements, schoolyard demonstrations, and other activities help transition middle and high-school students from passive sympathizers to "PETA's army of animal rights rebels." By the time PETA kids reach college, many are encouraged to adopt a lifestyle of vandalism, burglary, and even arson.

Most parents would be shocked if they knew the details of PETA's marketing tactics aimed at children. During 2002 and 2003, for example, PETA sent a 'humane education lecturer' into schools to convert young children to strict vegetarianism. Little did parents know that this paid speaker had been arrested over a dozen times for animal-rights related crimes, many of which were affiliated with his allegiance to the Animal Liberation Front—a group described the FBI as a 'domestic terrorist' organization. And in addition to sending convicted criminals to 'educate' young children, PETA employees distribute graphically violent anti-meat and anti-milk propaganda to kids as they come and go from school. PETA even gives small children blood-and-gore PETA comic books entitled "Your Mommy Kills Animals!" and "Your Daddy Kills Animals!"

Psychologists and school officials have denounced PETA's child-propaganda as "despicable, traumatizing, beyond insensitive, and an absolute atrocity." But PETA shows no sign of slowing down, and the details of its radical messages are unknown to most parents and teachers.

How PETA & the Animal Cult Movement Target Kids

With \$31 million in annual income (2006), PETA is among the richest, most influential animal rights organizations in the world. It sees children as a way to effectively maintain its power by ensuring that its violent and destructive messages will be promoted for generations to come. Although many parents are familiar with PETA's attention-grabbing media stunts, few are aware of PETA's coordinated campaign to bypass parental authority and indoctrinate children with its radical philosophy.

In the words of its founding president Ingrid Newkirk, PETA's goal is 'total animal liberation'. In addition to spelling the end of meat and dairy foods, this extremist organization has vowed to eliminate animals from zoos, aquariums, circuses and rodeos. Its activists campaign aggressively to ban fishing, fur, leather, wool, pet ownership, and biology-class dissection in schools. And PETA opposes all medical research on animals (including lab rats)—even to cure diseases like AIDS and Cancer. PETA's clever advertising campaigns are necessary to achieve its goals because most people are not naturally inclined to adopt this radical philosophy. As one animal cult leader candidly told Great Britain's *Observer* newspaper in 2003, "We are after the kids who are looking and searching for something." Through a sophisticated campaign designed to convert the next generation to its cause, children of all ages are snared by PETA's predatory net and told that their search is over.

PETA's graduated process of indoctrination begins when children enter elementary school and continues through adolescence. At each stage, PETA increases its expectations for 'animal liberation' recruits, going behind the backs of parents at every opportunity. (See chart opposite page).

An Online Minefield for Children

In 2002, PETA president Ingrid Newkirk insisted on CNN's "Crossfire" that "everything {PETA does} is based at adults." But at the time Newkirk made that statement, PETA was already operating several children's websites, each designed to appeal to a different age group.

PETA begins marketing itself online to elementary and middle-school children with the "PETA Kids" website. Another Internet site, "Peta2" targets adolescents with its 'question authority' theme, featuring skateboarders, violent imagery, and street lingo for maximum appeal. Diet-specific sites with names like "Veg Kids" and "Milk Sucks" push false claims and peer-pressure messages, like "eating meat causes cancer," and drinking milk is "not cool." The kid-themed "Fishing Hurts" site uses images from the Disney film "Finding Nemo" to tell kids that "eating fish is dangerous." And international child-oriented PETA websites target young minds in other countries, including specific pitches to kids in India, Germany and England.

These entire websites link to PETA's other online material, potentially exposing web-surfing children to its graphic and often sexually-oriented messages for adults. One such site promotes alternatives to leather clothing, showing adults (and any child who happens to click twice from a 'PETA Kids' page) ways to "Pleather yourself" with custom-designed lingerie. But even if they manage to avoid straying from PETA's child-centered websites, kids see invitation after invitation to join "PETA's army of animal rights rebels." Over and over, animal-rights messages are hammered home, including these:

- PETA tries to overrule parents by telling kids "what to eat" demanding that they adopt a meat-free, dairy-free, and egg-free diet. One PETA Kids page describes graphic pig slaughtering methods, such as 'having their tails cut off and teeth sawed off—all without painkillers! And on Peta2, a PETA columnist tells readers: "EGGS ARE CHICKEN PERIODS! Eating an egg is the equivalent of rummaging through your sister's garbage once a month, gathering all together all the old sanitary napkins, and enjoying your finds sandwiched between a lovely bit of French bread."
- PETA capitalizes on teen celebrity endorsements (including pop superstars and television idols) to glamorize its message. And with its "PETA Kids Superstars" program, it offers what every kid craves—validation—in the form of online 'celebrity' status to everyday children who act out in the name of animal rights.

- PETA gives teens detailed instructions on refusing to participate in biology-class dissection projects, and even advises suing if their grades suffer. “[If] school officials still think they can violate your rights,” PETA warns, kids should “call the Animal Legal Defense Fund,” which will ‘put you in touch with an attorney in your area.’”
- PETA appeals to kids to demand the cancellation of their schools’ field trips to the zoo or circus. “Do your parents have visions of vacation visits to aquariums or zoos dancing in their heads?” asks one PETA Kids page. “Boycott circuses,” PETA urges, advising children to craft “Heck No—We Won’t Go!” petitions and deliver student signatures to their teachers.

Teenage Rebellion, PETA-Style

PETA claims that over 235,000 kids signed up to receive Peta2’s e-newsletter in 2006. But the animal liberation movement needs more than cheering children: It needs foot soldiers. Enter “Peta2,” the group’s website for ‘twens and teens. On the website, MTV-oriented celebrities deliver the overall messages, telling kids ‘what to wear,’ what to eat’, and how to adopt a ‘vegan’ lifestyle. But Peta2’s ‘question authority’ message is tinged with violent, edgy graphics, and sometimes contains suggestions to commit illegal acts.

As kids grow up and basic animal-rights propaganda sinks in, PETA gives young adolescents a road map for getting ‘active’ in the ‘movement.’ It’s called the “Peta2 Street Team,” and it’s one part scavenger hunt, one part Marlboro Catalog. PETA brags that more than 65,000 American children have already signed up.

Through its “PETA Kids” contests and Peta2 Street Team, PETA essentially pays children to adopt its tactics. “PETA Kids” and Street Team members perform specific animal-rights ‘actions’ in exchange for points, which can be redeemed for PETA merchandise and other prizes like music CDs and tickets to popular rock concerts. Sponsored activities include: “participate in a demonstration against KFC,” “veganize your cafeteria,” stop a field trip to the circus”, and “hand out PETA leaflets at a concert, aquarium, circus or fur store.” For more rebellious teens, points are also available for those who “put our Peta2 stencils to good use. Get busy with a stencil and some spray paint!” One of these graffiti stencils is reminiscent of PETA’s early headline-grabbing spraying of fake blood on fur coats in public places: a bulls-eye image that says, “If you wear fur, watch your back.”

Elsewhere on Peta2, an online advice columnist counsels a high-schooler who complains that he was ‘appalled to see a milk poster’ in his school cafeteria. What to do? PETA’s columnist, whom the group dubs “Nugget of Rage”, responds: “Wow, how to get posters removed...hmmm, geez, that IS a toughy. How does one go about removing pieces of paper—perhaps laminated, maybe poster board or cardboard—that are stuck to the wall with, say, tape or thumbtacks? What to do, what to do....um, I know! RIP THEM DOWN. I mean, hellooo? You’re on Peta2.com, you’re supposed to be questioning authority!”

PETA even taunts the ‘wimpier’ kids who refuse to run through school hallways tearing down posters, offering further encouragement ‘that ripping them down is definitely the punk rock thing to do’. PETA even extends its animal rights propaganda to homework. Children sweating over an upcoming class assignment are told: “Let Peta2 do your homework for you!” PETA offers “digital packets full of information” on various topics ‘for use in essays, class presentations, and persuasive speeches.’ Topics PETA encourages kids to explore include, “History of the Animal Rights Movement,” “Animal Rights Philosophy,” “Animals and the Law”, “Factory Farming,” and “Health Benefits of a Vegan Diet.”

Young activists who make it through high school without souring on animal rights have another stage waiting for them. On PETA’s “College Activist” website, no punches are pulled. The site announces that ‘the revolution is here’, reinforces it with blood-and-gore imagery, and tells young adults: “In the coming months, you will recruit and train a group of animal rights activists capable of executing complex campaigns and instituting campus policies that protect animals. Together, you will permanently end animal exploitation on your campus.” Of course, PETA’s definition of ‘exploitation’ includes serving meat and dairy in the cafeteria and using lab rats in vital medical research. Recruits are given ‘missions’,

complete with step-by-step instructions. These one-time ‘PETA Kids’ are now full grown activists, ready and willing to do PETA’s work.

“Humane” Education: Legitimizing Lunacy, Coddling Criminals

Incredibly, PETA also deputizes public school teachers to promote its message. Through the warm-and-fuzzy veneer of its ‘Teachkind’ program, PETA encourages educators at every grade level to incorporate animal cult propaganda into their classrooms. On its flagship website, PETA boasts that its ‘education’ department “reached more than 2,300,000 teachers and students” in 2003 alone.

PETA provides lesson plans, books, videos, literature, stickers and posters—all aimed at incorporating the group’s message into existing class work. One frequent theme involves drawing connections between African-American slaves and livestock animals. Students are asked to ‘compare the progression of the civil rights movement in the U.S. to the current animal rights movement’ and discuss which of today’s activists’ “methods” were ‘most effective’.

The overall curriculum of Teachkind is designed to lead children to accept PETA’s radical animal rights doctrine; in some instances, it subtly encourages kids to break the law. One ‘research and discussion topic’ designed for high school students asks: “Is it ever acceptable to break a law (such as breaking into an animal laboratory and freeing animals)?” The students on the receiving end of this lecture aren’t likely to know that PETA endorses this sort of burglary, arson and worse.

The Teachkind curriculum for first and second graders uses storybook discussions, citing examples of animal ‘exploitation’ in fairy tales like *The Three Little Pigs* and *Cinderella*. Teachers are told to serve vegetarian meals to their classes and ‘discuss the nutritional problems with bacon and other pig-derived foods.’ And in a factually-challenged attempt to equate pet ownership with human slavery, teachers are directed to explain ‘that President Lincoln was an advocate of animal rights.’

PETA’s website for teachers also offers to help ‘find a local speaker’ to give “classroom presentations” on animal rights issues. PETA’s chosen emissaries have included a convicted felon named Gary Yourofsky. The group hired Yourofsky in 2002 as a ‘humane education lecturer’, with explicit goal of putting him in front of college, high-school, and even middle-school audiences. Yourofsky sports an Animal Liberation Front (ALF) tattoo on his forearm. The ALF, a criminal organization responsible for arsons, death threats, and physical assaults, has been called a ‘domestic terror’ group by high ranking directors within the FBI. In January 2005, the ALF officially made the Department of Homeland Security’s list of terrorist threats.

Yourofsky has been arrested over a dozen times for animal-rights crimes, and was sentenced in 1999 to six months in a Canadian maximum security prison for the felony burglary of a farm. In his standard speech, Yourofsky compares himself to Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, and even Jesus Christ. According to Yourofsky; “What we must do is start viewing every cow, pig, chicken, monkey, rabbit, mouse and pigeon as our family members.” In a 2007 lecture at the University of Southern Indiana, Yourofsky declared, “I hope that fathers accidentally shoot their sons on hunting excursions, while carnivores suffer heart attacks that kill them slowly. Every woman ensconced in fur should endure a rape so vicious that it scars them forever.”

And he’s clear on how to enforce these ‘family’ values, telling the *Toledo Blade* in 2001 that activists should ‘not be afraid to condone arsons.’ PETA also endorses the twisted activism of convicted ALF arsonist Rodney Coronado, who spent 57 months in prison for the ’92 arson of a Michigan State Research lab. In 2007, Coronado was sentenced to another year in prison for publicly demonstrating how to make a fire bomb.

In April 2004, PETA youth outreach coordinator Karin Robertson told MSU’s *State News*: “If Rod Coronado can speak and encourage people, that’s really a good thing. His message is supportive of animal liberties and animal rights. We don’t condemn anybody’s activities.” PETA president Ingrid Newkirk went on network television to call Coronado a “fine young man.” Her organization contributed over \$70,000 to his legal defense after his arrest for the MSU arson. When he was sentenced, the U.S. attorney implicated Newkirk in the crime as well.

“Grrr!”

It seems incredible that a self-described ‘mainstream’ charity like PETA would maintain a public relationship with a violent felon. But the group has also featured Rodney Coronado as a guest columnist in *Grrr! Kids Bite Back*, a periodical described as ‘PETA’s magazine for students aged 8 to 14.’ According to its 2005 Annual Review, “PETA distributed 539,162 copies of *Grrr!* Magazine to kids and teens.”

The magazine’s very name prepares preteens to identify with the terrorist Animal Liberation Front, which has long used the phrase ‘bite back’ as a rallying cry for violent crime. In fact, Coronado dubbed his own 1990’s arson spree “Operation Bite Back.” In 2004’s first issue of *Grrr!*, an anti-milk ad includes a photograph of a vomiting teen with the tagline: “If you knew what was in milk, you’d spew.” A comic strip titled “How a Chicken becomes a Nugget” shows a cartoon chicken facing a butcher’s bloody knife. An article titled “Do Grandma’s Woolens Give You the Willies?” encourages children to stand up to grandma: “So, Granny finally gets that you won’t eat her meatloaf or touch leather shoes with a 10-foot pole. But is she still giving you the old (and not so true) “But the sheep won’t die’ line when you tell her to take that itchy wool snowflake sweater back to Sears? Just give her a quick lesson in ‘Wool 101’ warning, it’s pretty gross and Granny will have a hard time forgetting why you feel weirded out by wool.”

Grrr! Kids Bite Back relies heavily on celebrity vegetarians and animal-rights activists in an attempt to lure kids into the PETA lifestyle. Children are asked to vote for the ‘hottest Tofutti cutie’ from a list of vegan movie, television, and music stars. *PETA Kids*, the predecessor to *Grrr!*, has been a staple of PETA kiddie-literature since at least 1990. The Winter 1990 issue taught children to “free” mice and rats from glue traps set by their parents, and encouraged children under 14 to build an activist network through the mail.

Just When You Thought Schools Were Safe....

In January 2004, PETA sent a costumed activist into primary schools in England and Ireland to promote vegetarianism to children. Newspapers reported that PETA’s representative distributed ‘graphic leaflets detailing animal killings’ to young children, along with claims that ‘drinking milk is unnatural.’ PETA has been similarly invading schools in the United States for over 15 years.

Unfortunately, responsible parents who monitor their kids’ reading material, supervise their internet activity, and keep tabs on their school lessons are not necessarily out of the woods. In today’s violent culture, most U.S. school districts forbid unapproved visitors from entering school grounds. Undeterred, PETA activists now congregate just *outside* school property, lying in wait for children as they come and go.

In recent years, PETA has camped outside schools in at least 15 states, passing out anti-fish, anti-milk, and anti-chicken trading cards to children as they walked home. The cards show cartoon images of children suffering various illnesses and embarrassing conditions, supposedly as a result of not being a vegetarian. The characters include “Pimply Patty,” “Diabetic Diane”, and “Ear Infection Enrique.” One registered dietitian told reporters that the PETA campaign was ‘based on sensationalism’ and ‘a real tragedy. It targets teenagers who really are calcium deficient and need to drink their milk.’

Dieticians aren’t the only ones who have spoken out against PETA’s aggressive tactics. After one incident in 2005 where PETA employees confronted children on their way to school, the *Idaho Journal* responded in an editorial: “Thumbs down to PETA members opposed to eating chicken for catching children on their way into Irving Middle School Wednesday morning. While PETA may be commended for obeying applicable laws, it seems underhanded to pass out literature at school when parents aren’t around to evaluate it.”

That same year, parents and educators in South Africa were similarly outraged when anti-chicken PETA activists targeting an elementary school without permission. As a spokesman for that nation’s Education Department told newspapers: “It is unacceptable to terrorize children like this. PETA should be

strongly condemned.” The school’s principal agreed, “I don’t think that all of the children will be able to distinguish that it concerns a campaign. They might take every word for true.”

While some of PETA’s attempts to draw children into vegetarianism are irresponsibly misleading—such as its claims that non-vegetarians are more susceptible to illness—other campaigns inappropriately use graphic images to scare children out of consuming meat, fish, and dairy products. In 2002, PETA activists (including one dressed like a pig) set up outside middle schools in New Hampshire and Massachusetts with a graphic video display of pigs being slaughtered. One protester carried a sign that read “Pigs are friends, not food.” After PETA showed up in Portsmouth, NH, Mayor Evelyn Sirrell told reporters: “It’s an absolute atrocity to use children this way...a lot of kids were traumatized by what they saw.”

No Safe Haven for Kids

PETA doesn’t limit itself to harassing and propagandizing kids in and around schools. Circuses are apparently fair game, as are theaters, restaurants, and even school field trips. In 2004, PETA started handing out “Buckets of Blood” to children outside of KFC restaurants, middle-schools, and high schools. The red-and-white striped buckets are meant to resemble KFC’s signature fried-chicken container. But according to the Associated Press, “instead of fried chicken, each is filled with items including a bag of fake blood and bones, a bloodied plastic chicken and a cardboard caricature of a blood-spattered Colonel Sanders holding a butcher knife toward a terrified-looking chicken.”

PETA launched a similar campaign in 2000, distributing “Unhappy Meals” to children outside of McDonald’s restaurants (focusing on franchises with playgrounds) in states from California to South Carolina. The giveaway included a bloodied toy pig, a stuffed Ronald McDonald doll holding a butcher’s knife, and a game that asked children to lead a fictional cow through a maze. PETA’s written instructions read: “If she takes the wrong path, her throat will be slit with a butcher’s knife.”

PETA’s most controversial child-oriented campaign to date was kicked off in late 2003. In more than 15 states, the group handed out a comic titled “Your Mommy Kills Animals” to children of fur-wearing women, outside holiday performances of *The Nutcracker* and other theatrical shows. The comic’s front page shows a 50’s era cartoon mom with a sadistic look on her face, stabbing a bloody rabbit to death with a giant knife. It urges children: “Ask your mommy how many animals she killed to make her fur coat.” The back cover describes women who wear fur as ‘terrible people’, and tells kids: “One of those terrible people is your mommy. Your mommy kills animals! I bet you didn’t know that.”

Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News* classified PETA’s attempt “to manipulate adults by traumatizing their children” as ‘despicable.’ The *Omaha World Herald* declared that “it’s the vulnerable children who will likely suffer for the anxiety-inducing insensitivity of the attack on what should be a happy, family-oriented outing.” Dr. Jeffrey Dolgan, chief of psychology at Denver’s Children’s Hospital, told *The Denver Post* that PETA’s “Your Mommy Kills Animals” campaign is ‘beyond insensitive.’ He warned: “The implication is that mother is a murderer and a killer...Some vulnerable kids will not do well with this. It is potentially very anxiety-arousing. Someone has made a mistake.”

Sadly, given PETA’s lengthy track record of targeting children for activism, the implication that “mother is a murderer” was clearly not an innocent mistake.