

**Response to Nathan Snaza's "(Im)possible Witness:
Viewing PETA's 'Holocaust on Your Plate,'"**

I appreciate Mr. Snaza's thoughtful discussion of our exhibit, but wish to differ with him on an important point. Snaza asserts that the "ultimate political aim of PETA" is "the expansion of liberal democratic notions of 'rights' to animals." In fact, our ultimate goal is apolitical and can be best described in terms Snaza himself employs, namely, we seek an evolution in the societal view of animals from *zoe* to *bios*, that is, the elevation of our concept of animals as beings who merely live to beings who share with humans "the form or manner of living peculiar to a single individual or a group."

This aside, Snaza's explanation of PETA's constructivist approach, in which history is viewed as "cumulative and progressive" is enlightening, particularly when one considers the response from some in the Jewish community who bristle at the suggestion that the Holocaust is anything but an "historical singularity." That the "Holocaust on Your Plate" exhibit was conceived of and carried out by members of our staff who are Jewish and whose relatives died in concentration camps is a fact that is largely ignored by those with the exceptionalist point of view, as well as by many in the media, suggests that the constructionist approach is somehow obscene or insulting to Holocaust victims.

To take this point a step further, some have suggested that merely to compare the suffering of Jews victimized by Nazis (and let us not forget that millions of non-Jews were persecuted and murdered) to the suffering of animals is somehow insulting, thus perfectly illustrating the necessity of changing our view toward animals. Disturbingly, some have criticized the exhibit on the grounds that "animals are products, just like soybeans" without acknowledging, or apparently even realizing, that the view of Jews as somehow "less than human" was the mindset that preceded the Holocaust.

Snaza's discussion does much to explain what underlies some of the reactions to the exhibit, and I hope that those who have most vigorously criticized it will consider his points, as well as his "plea for an ethical duty toward 'naked life' in all its forms that is not rooted in universality or systems of thought." While Snaza does not without reservation support the exhibit, I am heartened by much of what concerned him -- that he was troubled by it for various reasons, that he thought about it for many days, and that he worries about the importance of tactics and is often irritated by those of PETA. PETA certainly could confine our public efforts to "acceptable" photographs that are in and of themselves abhorrent. We could have avoided the entire controversy. But we would rather "trouble" people in the hope that they may consider that there is not a hierarchy of suffering.

Sincerely,

Kathy Guillermo
Senior Writer
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
kathyg@peta.org