

Fulton County Board of Commissioners
141 Pryor St. S.W., 10th Fl.
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing in support of a proposal before the board that would ban the use of bullhooks and similar devices on elephants in Fulton County.

As you may know, bullhooks are heavy rods with a sharp metal hook and spike on one end. The device is a standard tool that circuses use to force elephants to perform difficult and confusing tricks. Elephants have very sensitive skin, and bullhooks cause these gentle giants a great deal of pain and suffering. Their use also leads to injuries and health conditions such as puncture wounds and abscesses. This archaic device has no place in a civilized society that values animals, as my family and I do.


My friends at PETA have gathered irrefutable evidence showing the persistent, entrenched abuse of elephants who are violently trained with bullhooks, starting when they are babies. For example, a recent undercover investigation of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus—an investigation that spanned several months and took place in many states—revealed that elephants were struck repeatedly with bullhooks in order to intimidate them and remind them that they need to do as they're told or suffer the immensely painful consequences. And people everywhere were outraged to see photos of baby elephants at Ringling's training compound being torn from their mothers, tied down by all four legs, slammed to the ground, and gouged with bullhooks. A longtime elephant trainer with the Carson & Barnes Circus—one of the elephant suppliers for UniverSoul Circus—was caught on video viciously attacking elephants with a bullhook and instructing others to sink bullhooks into elephants' flesh and twist them until the animals screamed in pain.

Two decades ago, a humane method of training and handling elephants was developed out of concern for the welfare of elephants and the safety of keepers. Nowadays, elephant sanctuaries and most zoos never use bullhooks or other weaponlike tools to punish elephants. Corporal punishment has been replaced with positive reinforcement, such as treats and praise.

Circuses will never give up bullhooks unless laws are passed to ban the devices. As a proud resident of Atlanta, I urge you to ban bullhooks. The elephants deserve our kindness, respect, and protection.

Thank you for your time.

Yours truly,



Tony Gonzalez



PETA

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

501 FRONT ST.
NORFOLK, VA 23510
757-622-PETA
757-622-0457 (FAX)

PETA.org
Info@peta.org

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TO PROTECTING
THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS