

From: Ingrid Newkirk
Sent: Tuesday, January 12, 2021 6:28 AM
To: PETA
Subject: Please absorb this:

A few staffers thought it would be controversial to speak up for animal issues while honoring MLK Day. This is extremely saddening. For starters, MLK didn't just fight a single injustice, he wasn't a single issue person, and injustice isn't a single issue matter. Never being silent was MLK's life's work, and it is our obligation. I know that most people here, hopefully almost everyone here, in my dreams everyone here, understands this already, but let me clarify our position.

We are against ALL exploitation, discrimination, needless violence, abuse, theft, and slaughter. All of it. In times of human strife, as now, our job is to find respectful, creative ways to seize the moment to call for an overarching view, to reinforce the principle of opposition to all oppression, not abandon those who are in the margins at the best of times.

Our mission is to get people to think about the harm caused by any form of discrimination, and how all forms of it are one thing. The "who you are" is not important. You don't have to be Japanese to know internment camps were wrong; you don't have to be a hippopotamus to protest captivity; men must fight sexism and racial injustice must be decried by people of every race. Using race as a reason to be quiet is actually racist, and if we start finding it too awkward to try to advance the cause of understanding for all, we might as well not just shut up but shut up shop. As a Trayvon Martin t-shirt read, "This is not a black or white thing, this is a wrong or right thing" and all issues of power over others is.

Injustice is not just the one little slice you understand or that you can relate to most or exclusively. It is all of it, and our job if we are just people is not to cower and feel awkward, but to wake everyone else up to that fact. MLK didn't say "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" *about* Black people, he said it *to* his Black critics. It was and is a statement that we respect and believe in too.

For example, it is speciesist and supremacist to think that there is something sacred about a *human* woman's experience of rape. So, the cow doesn't count when a man shoves his hand deep into her rectum, finds her uterus, and inserts a long syringe into her vagina? Her bellowing and her fear and her discomfort are not to be compared with a human woman's, because it is somehow less? If a man sticks a broomstick up a pig in fun, that's rape and we must not balk at saying it. If someone is worried that you shouldn't address heinous acts of individual or mass abuse and killing that happened or happens to those who happen not to be human, that is human supremacism. We are not supremacists, and we are not scared of speaking up for all.

MLK, a man, spoke up for women. Was that wrong? He spoke up for white pacifists. Was that wrong? If William Wilberforce, a privileged member of the landed gentry in England, had not fought to free slaves brought to Britain from Jamaica, to provide sanitation and alms for the poor of London, and had not argued to stop the whipping of horses on the public streets, immense

suffering would have continued. He recognized that it was ONE struggle, for ALL the disenfranchised. Should he have shut up?

If Harriet Tubman had not sought the help of white landowners to work with her on the Underground Railroad, she would not have made it to freedom or brought others to freedom after that. She knew we must all work together. What if Jews had refused to be sheltered from the Nazis by German Christians because they weren't Jewish...? It's nonsense and must be recognized as nonsense.

White, black, brown, yellow, striped or polka dots, who cares? Gay, straight, transgender, whatever, who cares? Muslim, Catholic, Hindu, Jewish, who cares? The only divide is between those who want liberty and justice for ALL and those who want it only for the few. We must UNITE for what's right!

We recognize that atrocities are atrocities no matter the victim's age, religion, identify, nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or species. That's why we are unapologetically opposed to ALL exploitation, discrimination, needless violence, abuse, theft, and slaughter. That is the principle PETA was founded upon and our principle today. If anyone here whose job it is to promote animal rights does not agree with what I have written, this is the time to let us know.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 11:11 AM
To: Ingrid Newkirk; PETA
Subject: RE: Please absorb this:

Good morning,

I would like to directly respond to the email you sent concerning Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. As the President of our organization many people look up to you, including myself, and deeply appreciate all that you have done for our cause. As a fellow anti-oppression activist, it is my duty to stand up against any behavior that may hurt our movement and make our workplace unsafe.

Although I do agree with many points made regarding speciesism and human supremacy, I feel I should point out a perspective the email may have missed. I want to emphasize that this issue is one of respect. We can hold the beliefs in your message while simultaneously respecting and uplifting other communities. This is a respect that *all* organizations, not just PETA, must understand and practice.

Considering the recent Black Lives Matter movement and murder of so many Black citizens by our own state, this Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is especially important. Though your email makes clear the fact that all lives matter, on MLK day it is a Black life that is being celebrated. A life of a man who, despite fighting for equality for all, is widely known as a champion for the Black community. For PETA to connect MLK to the animal rights movement projects an image that we use Black people for our cause's gain. This is wrong.

I believe it is important to publicly and respectfully acknowledge Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy and keep our animal rights work that day separate. Deciding not to connect Martin Luther King, Jr. to the animal rights movement will not negatively affect our movement, but our actions on this day *could* harmfully affect the racial rights movement and individuals who follow us. For this reason, we must exercise caution and understand we should not take space from a community that is seldom granted it. To detract from a man who did so much for our country could be interpreted by other anti-oppression movements as an act of disrespect and dismissal by PETA. My concern is that by doing something racially insensitive we would be undoing the progress we have made with other social justice allies, progress that is so important in this increasingly intersectional age of activism.

Additionally and outside of Martin Luther King, Jr. day, it is important to note that diversity, intersectionality, and inclusion matter. This means that as employees of PETA our identities must be celebrated and acknowledged. Identifying as a certain race, sexuality, or gender is something our organization should care about. Listing out identities and following it with "who cares" is insensitive. We *should* care about our identities that make us uniquely ourselves and celebrate them. A color-blind perspective will not get anyone in this organization to unify and if anything only makes divisions more apparent. Employees of PETA may struggle with racism, sexism, homophobia, or transphobia on a daily basis. It is an unfortunate reality that not all of us hold the same privilege as one another or have the same access to rights and freedoms. Our identities impact us and therefore matter. The intersectionality, differences, and nuance to our identities matter. To be truly diverse and inclusive PETA's President should not suggest that they do not.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a chance to demonstrate that PETA cares about diversity and inclusion. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a chance to demonstrate that PETA knows how to give space to other movements that are important partners in our cause. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day should be a day to celebrate his legacy, and nothing more.

For all animals,

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 12:00 PM
To: Ingrid Newkirk; PETA
Subject: RE: Please absorb this:

Thank you so much, [REDACTED] for these words. As a person of color, a Hispanic and Latinx vegan animal rights activist, I really appreciate and admire this email. I have to say that you have very eloquently expressed a very important message and a message that I echo and think is important that we have. As a community of animal rights activists it's very important that we learn how to adapt, evolve and be tactful about the way that we spread our message in the fight for animal liberation. This isn't to say that we can't be edgy, controversial, shocking or over the top, however, it's important that we remain tactful in our delivery.

As [REDACTED] said, I do believe Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Day should be a day to acknowledge his legacy while keeping our animal rights message separate for the day. However, I feel it's also important to recognize that in the last year PETA has done an excellent job at showing support for other communities and being more intersectional in our messaging and I would like to see more of that in our continued fight for animal liberation. Over the summer we encourage activists to join Black activists at Black Lives Matter marches sharing messages against ALL oppressions while elevating the voices of the Black community. We raised funds among our organization to support the Black Lives Matter movement to show solidarity to those who are fighting against racial injustice. We also took to the streets and gave away free vegan food at Black Lives Matter marches in different parts of the country, to not only show support to the movement, while at the same time speaking up for animals.

Personally, I think these are the ways that we continue the fight for animals, while being tactful in our messaging, being intersectional and respectful of other movements while at the same time inviting others who are fighting for injustices to join us in the our fight for animal liberation. Our movement is one that is diverse and inclusive and our actions and demonstrations should reflect that. We should be inviting people to join us to end speciesism!

Respectfully,

From: Ingrid Newkirk
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 12:44 PM
To: PETA
Subject: Re: please absorb this

Hi [REDACTED],

Thanks for standing up for what you believe in, even if we disagree on how you have taken my email. By the way, it is unusual to send this to the whole organization, and not something that is done by staff on any issue without their supervisor's permission, but I'm sure you didn't know that. I apologize to everyone for having to send this out to the whole organization, but that is now what protocol requires. Let me give you some quick feedback, as I think you got the wrong end of the stick on several bits of my memo, so let me try to help there, with some quick answers as I do recognize that this is a sensitive issue for you and some others. I want to thank you.

Re: your comment as well about an "unsafe" workplace, there is probably nowhere "safer" than PETA if by that you mean a place where someone could be physically attacked or harassed for being "different" in someone else's eyes. Staff have been dismissed for harassment in the past and if it ever happened again the same consequences apply. PETA has a history I'm sure would make you pleased as an organization that marched for gay rights before anyone else would, has always supported Black, women's, LGBGTQI rights and much more. Our affiliates fight casteism in India and provide free care for animals in poverty stricken places from North Carolina trailer parks to Romanian and Philippine slums.

I must tell you that we do not hold this to be true: "For PETA to connect MLK to the animal

rights movement projects an image that we use Black people for our cause's gain. This is wrong." No. We believe, I believe, that people are people, and that we are all in this together, that we are all needed to embrace the principle that discrimination in all its ugly forms is wrong. MLK was not a single issue man and he made that clear. We honor him by praising what he did and being inspired by his values, and are proud to link his compassion and his values to the struggle for animal rights. I have NO doubt, as I am of the same generation and was marching in the '60s for racial justice when the issue as hot and heavy as now, if not more so, and civil rights were firmly in the public consciousness: no-one then was so divisive as to lock out white voices in the struggle. In case it helps, I've attached a picture of Dr Spock marching arm-in-arm with MLK. MLK III came to (vegan) Dr. Spock's memorial service to pay his respects, to me that is intersectionality in action, and a recognition of the unity, collaboration and friendship that's needed between movements for justice. It was actually a time when going vegetarian was very much a Black value, and peace marchers, too, who were Black (Blacks being treated like cannon fodder in the Vietnam war) were turning to nonviolent diets.



"To detract from a man who did so much for our country..." is to me a failure to recognize on this important occasion the need for human beings to recognize the appalling suffering inflicted on other living beings who happen not to be human, is honoring him. His family does not find our work a "detraction" nor did Rosa Parks, a vegetarian just as Coretta was, too. We have long worked with Black leaders in Congress, Black stars and athletes, and no-one has thought for a minute that it was demeaning to MLK, our hero in the fight for human understanding, to laud him as a champion of all just causes. He said that himself, as you know. It's written on his monument in Washington.

I feel your pain in writing this: "Identifying as a certain race, sexuality, or gender is something our organization should care about. Listing out identities and following it with "who cares" is insensitive." Oh, my, [REDACTED], we certainly care and always have. We have supported people in their transition, in their privacy, in many different ways and, as I mentioned above, we have never tolerated harassment. I could list so many ways we have been the first to support gay rights, but let me just say this: That "who cares?" was not how you have interpreted it. It was "Who cares?" to how on earth can anyone use someone's identity to discriminate against them, because who cares if you are human or not, Chinese or Lithuanian, a Muslim or a Hindu, queer or straight, there is no justification for a harmful bias! Oh, and I heard that you had mentioned a "White savior" complex when I pointed out that Harriet Tubman depended on whites to help get her and the others she returned to free, to safety. I can't quite understand that definition given

that it is just a plain old fact and harkens back to the other point I made about Christians safeguarding Jews at the risk of their own lives: that was hardly Christian savior complex either. It is just people helping people, and the point I was making (or trying to make) was that those of us of like minds will always work together to save lives and stop harm.

Animal rights is a vital cause of all due to the sheer number of individuals involved and the horrors of their minute-by-minute slaughter and subjugation, and I hope you will not shy away from that fact, as much as you are drawn to other important causes that we also support. But we will never be silent, not for an hour of a day, on the need for animal liberation.

I must ask you to write to your supervisor, going forward, and not the whole organization.

Good luck in your own activism for animals and others.