

# UniverSoul Circus

510 Whitehall St., Atlanta, GA 30303

**UniverSoul Circus doesn't possess an exhibitor license from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The animal acts are leased from outside exhibitors, such as Larry Carden,\* Mitchel Kalmanson,\* Carson & Barnes Circus,\* Jennifer Caudill, Jorge Barreda, Tarzan Zerbini Circus,\* Kay Rosaire, Rosaire-Zoppe Chimps, Hugo Liebel,\* and Terranova Enterprises, so UniverSoul is not subject to citations under its own name. Animal exhibitors performing with UniverSoul have repeatedly failed to meet minimum federal standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The USDA has cited UniverSoul exhibitors for failing to maintain transport vehicles properly and failing to provide adequate veterinary care, adequate space, and other violations. Animals used by UniverSoul have caused injuries. Contact PETA for documentation.**

\*Factsheet available

**February 2017:** Fulton County Animal Services conducted a series of inspections during UniverSoul Circus' visit to Turner Field in Atlanta. During one inspection, the following were noted: A camel named Emmett had a 3-inch-long laceration on his right hind leg, a camel named Larry had a swollen ankle and foot that needed to be treated and drained, a zebra had a wound or rub mark on his nose, and several horses had cracked and chipped hooves that were "in bad shape."

Fulton County Animal Services officers also found that the elephants Betty and Bo had been given minimal hay, had no water, and were made to stand on concrete, despite having bruised feet. Bo had "Wonder Dust," a gray powdered blood coagulant, on his chest, and during a performance, an officer noticed a "wet spot" on his left hind ankle. On a subsequent visit, the wound appeared to have "Wonder Dust" on it. PETA independently obtained video footage of the inflamed, pink wound with a small, circular lesion at the center.

**March 28, 2016:** A Los Angeles County animal control officer observed that a tiger named Shakiera had a laceration "just above the forehead between the eyes," which an employee of Mitchel Kalmanson's stated was caused by "continual rubbing of the

forehead on the metal cage." The officer issued Kalmanson, Juan "Johnny" Lam (the tigers' "caretaker"), and UniverSoul Circus an order to comply with county code by having a veterinarian check on the tiger's injury.

**March 18, 2016:** According to the Bay City News Service, two zebras got loose from UniverSoul Circus while in Oakland, California. They were seen running along a major road in east Oakland and eventually were recaptured by circus personnel.

**February 10, 2016:** The USDA cited exhibitor Jennifer Caudill, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care. Two dogs exhibited significant redness and some bleeding on their gums, and many upper teeth contained gritty material and yellow stains. She was also cited for failing to have a complete program of veterinary care.

**January 26, 2016:** The USDA cited exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for failing to provide big cats with a safe transport compartment. The elevated resting surface in one compartment was splintered, and two nail or screw heads were protruding, posing a risk of injury.

**November 24, 2015:** The USDA cited exhibitor Jennifer Caudill, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for failing to maintain control of two zebras after a show in Philadelphia. The handler lost control of the zebras, who fled. One zebra had two small skin abrasions on both front legs after being recaptured.

**September 2015:** Elephants Betty and Bo, traveling with UniverSoul Circus, were denied entry into Michigan following a review of their tuberculosis (TB) test results.

**August 20, 2015:** According to the Courthouse News Service, UniverSoul Circus was barred from having two elephants, Bo and Betty, who had tested reactive to TB, perform during the circus's two-week run in Dallas. Officials in that city were concerned that the elephants could pose a public-health risk.

**February 14, 2015:** During UniverSoul Circus' visit to Atlanta, elephant provider Larry Carden was charged with cruelty to animals after Fulton County Animal Control officers allegedly witnessed him inserting a bullhook into the mouth of one of the elephants, Bo, in an attempt to get him to exit the stage. Carden was eventually acquitted.

**March 31, 2014:** According to New York's *Daily News*, New York City officials required UniverSoul Circus to perform without elephants or big cats after determining that the circus didn't qualify for the

required permits. The city refused to grant UniverSoul a permit on the grounds that the tigers were not kept in cages with adequate space and the elephants hadn't had current tuberculosis tests.

**October 17, 2013:** In a signed affidavit, a former UniverSoul Circus employee alleged multiple concerns regarding animal welfare and employee safety. According to the whistleblower, the elephants, provided by Jorge and Louann Barreda, were kept chained 24/7, except for brief performances, with inadequate protection from the sun and elements when traveling with UniverSoul. During one storm, they were reportedly forced to stand outside in at least 18 inches of waste-filled floodwater, exposing them to the danger of falling trees and power lines and other harmful conditions. The storm was so strong that a canopy allegedly collapsed on top of them. The witness also reported seeing the Barredas strike and jab the elephants with bullhooks, metal poles, and pieces of plywood in order to get them to obey.

The affidavit claims that the big cats provided by Mitchel Kalmanson were relegated to tiny cages and weren't provided with access to exercise pens at any of the performance venues. They frequently growled and exhibited extreme stress by pacing. When they had been exposed to extreme heat, the whistleblower described seeing them trying to soak their paws in their drinking water in a desperate attempt to cool off. During the 2012 season, two separate tiger incidents were noted: The tip of a crewmember's middle finger was bitten off while he was feeding the big cats, and the top of a crewmember's ring finger was bitten off while he was hosing down the big-cat cages.

**July 25, 2013:** The USDA cited exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for a repeat violation: Kalmanson failed to provide three tigers and one cougar with sufficient space to allow each animal to make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement. During the inspection, the tiger trainer stated that the tigers were kept in the small transport enclosures 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the entire four to seven weeks they were on the road. Kalmanson was also cited for failing to have sufficient barriers between the public and four tigers and one cougar. The public barrier gate surrounding these animals was left open and unattended for a few hours, allowing enough room for a person or an animal to enter or exit the area holding the big cats.

**April 18, 2013:** During an inspection in Inglewood, California, the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control cited UniverSoul Circus for failing to provide animals confined 24 hours a day with exercise.

**April 11, 2013:** The USDA cited Pascale Freeman for exhibiting animals with UniverSoul Circus without a valid USDA license.

**April 10, 2013:** The USDA cited exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for failing to provide a tiger, whom the inspectors, including the agency's big-cat expert, observed limping, with veterinary care. Kalmanson was also cited for handling the same tiger improperly by caging her with a chain fastened around her neck, with a section of links dangling, risking serious injury or strangulation if the chain caught on something in the enclosure. The USDA also cited Kalmanson for failing to provide two tigers with adequate space as they were being housed in transport cages that did not give them an opportunity to make normal postural adjustments. They also were never let out for exercise.

**March 15, 2013:** During an inspection in Inglewood, California, the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control cited UniverSoul Circus for failing to prevent an injury to Filoz, a male camel who had sustained a small scrape on his neck during transport.

**February 2013:** Despite being informed that he faced nearly three dozen charges for AWA violations, most of them related to the elephant Nosey and despite massive a public outcry, UniverSoul Circus partnered with exhibitor Hugo Liebel for his elephant act, featuring Nosey. According to USDA records, Liebel, among other violations, has repeatedly denied Nosey adequate veterinary care over a 20-year period and has also chained her so tightly that she could barely move. Liebel paid a fine to settle the charges shortly after exhibiting with UniverSoul.

**November 20, 2012:** After a driver lost control of a truck transporting animals to UniverSoul Circus, the trailer overturned on an interstate in Georgia and trapped several animals. Firefighters used the Jaws of Life to free them. A young camel sustained a soft tissue injury to one of the hind legs, causing massive swelling along the joint. The animal wasn't able to bear weight on the leg and would scream every time the limb was touched. Two llamas were also injured: One had a nose injury and the other a foot injury. The driver was charged with driving too fast for conditions, failing to maintain his lane, and not having the proper class license.

**2012:** In a letter dated January 10, 2014, UniverSoul Circus admitted to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration that during the 2012 tour year, two employees with its big-cat contractor got their fingers "nipped" by a tiger on two separate occasions.

(See October 17, 2013.)

**October 26, 2011:** The USDA issued Jorge and Louann Barreda an official warning for repeatedly violating the federal regulations of the AWA. During previous inspections conducted while traveling with UniverSoul Circus, they were cited for failing to establish and maintain a program of adequate veterinary care for four female African elephants—Makia, Lou, Lovie, and Dolly—with overgrown nails as well as grooves and ridges on the soles of their feet. (See August 24, 2011.)

**August 24, 2011:** The USDA cited exhibitors Jorge and Louann Barreda, performing with UniverSoul Circus at the time, for repeatedly failing to establish and maintain a program of adequate veterinary care for four female African elephants—Makia, Lou, Lovie, and Dolly—with overgrown nails as well as grooves and ridges on the soles of their feet. Foot problems are the leading reason why captive elephants are euthanized. (See April 29, 2011.)

**July 14, 2011:** Following a complaint by PETA that included a video of a tiger with her foot trapped under a sliding door to the cage (see July 5, 2011), the USDA cited exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for failing to handle a tiger in a manner that prevents “behavioral stress and unnecessary discomfort” and for failing to maintain facilities so that there is no risk of injury to animals.

**July 5, 2011:** A member of the public was filming caged tigers with exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson at a UniverSoul Circus show at the University of Buffalo’s South Campus in Buffalo, New York, when he noticed a tiger with her foot trapped under a sliding door to the cage. The video footage that he made public shows the tiger struggling to free her foot, panting, and in obvious distress. (The video can be requested from PETA.)

**April 29, 2011:** The USDA cited exhibitor Jorge and Louann Barreda, performing with UniverSoul Circus at the time, for failing to establish and maintain a program of adequate veterinary care for four female African elephants—Makia, Lou, Lovie, and Dolly. The elephants had foot problems, including narrow sole cracks, some with mild lateral undermining, where foreign materials, including food and manure, could lodge and potentially cause problems.

**February 25, 2011:** In the same week that UniverSoul Circus came under scrutiny by parents for a show that “portrayed strippers, pimps and other adult themes,” the Georgia Department of Natural Resources announced that it was investigating UniverSoul for allegedly allowing Clayton County Commissioner Eldrin Bell to ride an elephant in

violation of state law. In Georgia, elephants are classified as inherently dangerous animals, and one of the conditions of having a permit to exhibit such animals is ensuring that people do not ride them.

**July 8, 2009:** The USDA issued an official warning to UniverSoul Circus for failing to “allow [a USDA] official to perform his official duties by not allowing his video taping or photographing of an animal performance” and using security personnel to intimidate a USDA official by confiscating the video footage that he had recorded.

**February 1, 2008:** A USDA Consent and Decision Order assessed Mitchel Kalmanson a civil penalty of \$6,000 for violations related to two tiger escapes that took place while exhibiting with UniverSoul Circus. (See June 2, 2004, and February 4, 2003.)

**June 5, 2007:** The USDA cited UniverSoul Circus exhibitor Terranova Enterprises for failing to clean animal enclosures properly while with the circus. Animals weren’t removed before cages were cleaned with detergent and subsequent hosing, causing them to become involuntarily wet and resulting in their being exposed to a chemical that could cause irritation or damage their skin. During the cleaning process, a cougar was obviously upset, as demonstrated by her growling and body postures.

**June 16, 2006:** The USDA cited exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for failing to document the condition of a female lion who was missing hair on her tail. The affected area was red, and the caretaker stated that the lion sucks the tip of her tail.

**June 21, 2005:** A U.S. District Court judge who viewed videotape of Tim Frisco (animal-care director of UniverSoul Circus’ elephant exhibitor, Carson & Barnes) beating elephants with bullhooks and shocking them with electric prods described it as “troubling” and noted that it depicts conduct that violates the federal AWA. During this period, Carson & Barnes was supplying the elephants for UniverSoul’s show.

**May 26, 2005:** The USDA cited elephant exhibitor Carson & Barnes for failing to provide elephants with adequate shelter while on tour with UniverSoul Circus.

**June 3, 2004:** The USDA cited exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for failing to establish a handling, capture, and restraint protocol; failing to have a barrier fence around tigers; and not having a sufficient number of adequately trained employees. Only one handler was responsible for the care and handling of the tigers. (See the June

2, 2004, Landover Hills incident.)

**June 2, 2004:** In a letter to PETA, Burger King announced that it was ending its sponsorship of UniverSoul Circus.

**June 2, 2004:** During an inspection of UniverSoul Circus in Landover Hills, Maryland, Prince George's County Animal Management Division observed two tigers fighting. The trainer, Tyrone Taylor, walked into the holding cage, leaving the gate open. One tiger, Igor, escaped and ran loose, attacking an elephant named Suzie and biting her on the hip. During this time, children from several elementary schools attending the performance were walking under the tent in the area where the tiger escaped.

**May 28, 2004:** The USDA cited elephant exhibitor Carson & Barnes for failing to provide an adequate safety barrier between the public and elephants while performing with UniverSoul Circus.

**December 5, 2003:** The USDA opened an investigation of UniverSoul Circus kangaroo exhibitor Javier Martinez following a second kangaroo death within a four-month period. (See July 11, 2003.)

**November 20, 2003:** In an urgent appeal to Las Vegas City Animal Control, Olivia Newton-John wrote, "We respectfully request that you follow the lead of California authorities and prohibit the circus from featuring its kangaroo boxing routine for several reasons, including because Nevada law makes animal fight unlawful." She continued, "I find it appalling that tethered kangaroos are taunted into defending themselves as an oddity for a UniverSoul Circus act."

**October 30, 2003:** The USDA cited exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson, performing with UniverSoul Circus, for failing to have a tiger with an open wound on the forehead examined by a veterinarian and for handling food improperly, risking contamination.

**October 28, 2003:** According to news reports, the Oakland Police Department and the California Department of Fish and Game shut down UniverSoul Circus' boxing kangaroo act after determining that it violated state cruelty-to-animals laws.

**August 21, 2003:** According to *The Montgomery County Sentinel*, a former animal trainer for UniverSoul Circus "found the circus to be mistreating some of its animals and actually called the USDA to report it."

**July 11, 2003:** A kangaroo named Rocky, who was used in a UniverSoul Circus boxing routine in which he was restrained by a harness and taunted into

defending himself, died. The circus had continued to use him even though he had been diagnosed two months earlier with an often deadly bacterial infection known as "lumpy jaw," which can be caused by crowding, poor hygiene, or poor diet.

**July 2, 2003:** According to the *Boston Herald*, a tiger named Angel got loose in the back of the lot where UniverSoul Circus was performing in New Haven, Connecticut.

**June 30, 2003:** Following an accident, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined UniverSoul Circus \$6,225 for two serious violations concerning ladders and training requirements.

**June 16, 2003:** UniverSoul Circus' Platinum Unit was using elephants exhibited by William Woodcock. According to information previously compiled by the USDA on elephant examinations, housing, and transport, Woodcock commented to a USDA official, "If I get any defiance [from the elephants], I'll beat the hell out [of] them. [The elephants] will disobey in public because they know I can't hit them with the stick as much."

**February 4, 2003:** A 450-pound tiger being exhibited by Mitchel Kalmanson, performing with UniverSoul Circus, escaped in Jacksonville, Florida, while a cage was being cleaned. The tiger climbed up on a car, jumped over a fence, and headed down an alley before being recaptured.

**August 7, 2002:** The USDA cited UniverSoul Circus exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson for failing to provide a veterinary-approved large-felid diet.

**December 19, 2001:** A General Mills spokesperson informed PETA that the company had discontinued its sponsorship of UniverSoul.

**March 8, 2001:** The USDA cited UniverSoul Circus exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson for improper food storage, failing to provide an exercise plan, inadequate veterinary-care records, and failing to maintain records of acquisition.

**August 9–13, 2000:** According to Walter Cook, captive-wildlife coordinator for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, UniverSoul Circus was denied a state exhibitor permit for a chimpanzee act while the circus performed in Memphis. Tennessee law requires a protective barrier between the public and potentially dangerous animals such as chimpanzees, which the circus didn't provide. The chimpanzees were kept isolated inside a trailer during the Memphis tour.



**June 5 and 6, 2000:** The USDA cited UniverSoul Circus exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson for failing to provide primates with an adequate environmental enrichment plan and failing to maintain records. The inspector also wrote that the lion was not being fed a veterinarian-approved diet at his home facility.

**April 27, 2000:** *The New York Times* reported that UniverSoul Circus was touring with elephants named Jan, Bunny, and Marie. While traveling with Tarzan Zerbini Circus (aka "Circus Maximus") in April 1997, Jan bit a groom on the head and back. The groom required hospitalization for his injuries.

**April 6, 2000:** The USDA cited UniverSoul Circus exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson for failing to provide chimpanzees with veterinary care, environmental enrichment programs, and adequate space. The chimpanzee cages had barely half the floor space specified in the AWA.

**April 22, 1999:** World-renowned primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall appealed to UniverSoul Circus "to end the senseless exploitation of chimpanzees," saying that animals in circuses "live out their lives in inhumane, lonely, and unnatural settings in the name of entertainment."

**March 26, 1998:** A USDA inspector advised UniverSoul Circus exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson to provide big cats with environmental enrichment after observing one pacing who had previously rubbed all the fur off spots on her nose.

**March 13, 1998:** The USDA cited UniverSoul Circus exhibitor Mitchel Kalmanson for failing to have a program of veterinary care. The USDA also noted that the lion cages failed to meet minimum space requirements.

**October 1, 1997:** Comedian Richard Pryor wrote to UniverSoul Circus' director asking that animals not be used in the circus: "Comparing the lives of elephants who are kept in leg shackles, transported around in cramped vehicles in all weather extremes, forced to labor setting up the 'big top,' and repeatedly struck with sharp metal bullhooks, to the lives of their wild brothers and sisters is perhaps the easiest way to see why they are so broken in spirit."

**May 23, 1997:** According to the *Chattanooga Free Press*, UniverSoul Circus lion trainer Ted McRae was bitten on the shoulder during a training session by a 400-pound tiger, causing a 2-inch gash. McRae was formerly a forklift driver and received only one month of training before working with Kay Rosaire's big cats at the circus.

**April 29, 1997:** *The Village Voice* reported, "The front

row is so close to the ring that people sitting there are advised to remove their belongings from the railing when the elephants enter—if one of these babies goes mad, somebody's getting killed."