

A Humane Education Frequently Asked Questions Document

An Independent Learning Project

Presented by

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To

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## Abstract

This Independent Learning Project includes a frequently asked questions (FAQ) guide to better prepare humane educators to respond to questions and comments raised by students and teachers in the classroom, as well as from school administrators, parents, and the general public outside the classroom. The FAQ guide was written realizing the dearth of written material available to humane educators preparing them for these situations.

The FAQ guide covers human rights, cultural issues, environmental issues, animal issues, and issues related to the teaching of humane education. The guide intends to respond to a wide variety of questions and comments, but certainly does not intend to be all encompassing.

The FAQ should be viewed as a document that offers possible responses to questions and comments raised as opposed to a document that attempts to give the reader the “right” answers. The ultimate goal of the FAQ responses is to stimulate critical thinking and allow the questioner to determine what is right based on their own values.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **Rationale**

This Independent Learning Project has been designed to address the particular needs of humane education students and practitioners. There is a gap in the training of humane educators for certain “real life” situations that come up in the classrooms, in particular preparing humane educators for questions frequently asked and challenging comments made by students. Obviously, humane educators want to be well prepared when they enter the classroom and present their programs to students. Anticipating potentially difficult questions and comments is an essential part of this preparation.

I became aware of this problem as I began preparing for my first humane education program. Never having presented a humane education program before, I was uncertain of what questions the students might pose. My preparation began by locating sources that provided frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to the topic I was presenting. I was able to find a few web sites, periodicals, and books that gave me a handful of FAQs. The limited FAQs I was able to find were helpful, but their answers tended to be lacking in a few important ways.

Many of the answers seemed to fall short when addressing the complex nature present in many of the questions. In some cases answers seemed to pass judgment on the questioners themselves, sometimes in snide fashion. At times questions were answered

as if there was only one possible answer: the “right” answer. Humane education, on the other hand, presents a different approach. In the *Sowing Seeds Workbook*, The International Institute for Humane Education (IIHE) pointed out, “It [humane education] does not seek to teach the right answers, but rather to encourage people to explore answers for themselves...It does not promote a single correct path, but rather introduces options so that each person can make informed, wise and compassionate choices” (p. 1). Humane education programs often bring to light paradoxical situations. Examination of these paradoxes reveals there are no “easy” answers. In *The Courage to Teach*, author and teacher Parker Palmer (1998) stated:

Paradoxical thinking requires that we embrace a view of the world in which opposites are joined, so that we can see the world clearly and see it whole...The result is a world more complex and confusing than the one made simple by either-or thought. (p. 66)

Answers to the FAQs I read tended not to deal with the interconnectedness of the problems being addressed. Often times the answers simply dealt with the issues that were of prime importance to the organization supplying the answers. In many cases though, the questions being raised touched on multiple social concerns. Despite this, the answers often failed to bring to light any concerns not directly related to the mission of that particular organization.

Answers often times included statistics, which bolstered the arguments the organization was making. The problem, however, was that sources for the statistics were

rarely given. Providing accurate information to students is essential to any humane education program. Relying on information that does not originate from verifiable sources may jeopardize the overall integrity of a humane education program, especially if the information turns out to be inaccurate.

Answers to the FAQs often failed to direct the reader to sources where they could obtain both corroborating and contradictory information related to the question. Since humane education attempts to explore many sides of an issue, these sources, if available, can be very valuable. Providing additional sources of information to the readers of the FAQs could significantly reduce the amount of time needed to research a given topic.

Humane education deals with a wide variety of issues, including environmental, human rights, animal rights, and cultural. Within each of these categories there are dozens and dozens of sub-categories and several FAQs can be generated from each one of them. A humane educator attempting to locate and compile a list of these questions, and prepare thoughtful responses to those questions could spend a great deal of time immersed in such work. This ILP will attempt to tackle at least some of this much-needed work. I anticipate humane educators using this document as a way to better understand many of the issues and as a resource to steer them to additional information related to the topic where further research can be undertaken.

**Problem Statement**

The problem considered in this ILP is the present lack of a comprehensive FAQ document that addresses the wide variety of issues covered in humane education along with the complexities inherent in many of these issues. In addition, the preponderance of existing FAQ documents fail to cite sources for information given, while at the same time fail to direct the reader to alternative sources for additional information on the subject either supporting or countering the argument being made.

The lack of such a document makes it difficult for humane education students to properly prepare themselves for potentially difficult and tricky questions and comments posed by students. Though no document could address all the possible questions that could arise in a humane education program, a comprehensive FAQ document would make it possible for humane educators to anticipate the types of questions they could face.

**Goal**

The goal of this ILP is to develop a comprehensive FAQ document to better prepare humane educators for questions they may encounter in the classroom. This document, as it may touch on a variety of issues ranging from population growth to frugality to sexism to media influence to factory farms, can serve as a jumping off point for further study by humane educators. The document will not necessarily seek to give the “correct” response, but instead will attempt to explore the complexity of the issues in a non-judgmental way and to give the humane educator guidance for further study on the

topics. The purpose is to provide humane educators with a practical document they can use in preparation for almost any type of humane education presentation.

### **Population**

This ILP intends to have a direct impact on humane education students who are preparing themselves to become humane educators and on practicing humane educators. In addition, this ILP will have an indirect impact on the students attending humane education programs.

There are currently very few practicing humane educators, but there are ever-increasing numbers of humane education students preparing themselves to be humane educators someday. This ILP is designed primarily to serve them.

This ILP may also serve activists working on social justice causes, as it will attempt to highlight the various connecting points where several of the issues affect one another. The document will also assist the activist by giving examples of how to respond to challenging questions and comments in a compassionate, nonjudgmental way.

In addition, this ILP may aid teachers interested in learning more about humane education and discovering how humane education principles could be incorporated into their teaching.

### **Methodology**

The humane education FAQ document proposed in this ILP includes frequently asked questions elicited from several practicing humane educators. To gather this information, a request will go out to eight practicing humane educators asking each to provide a list of questions and challenging comments posed to them by students. The responses will be analyzed to determine those questions and comments that are experienced by multiple educators. From this analysis, a final list will be developed. Once finalized, the FAQ list will be further analyzed to determine logical relationships for purposes of sequencing within the document. Answers to the questions and responses to the comments will be generated based on research of carefully selected books, periodicals, web sites, and other relevant and reliable sources. Answers will attempt to highlight the multifaceted nature of the questions where warranted.

The ILP, when complete, will be used as a training aid for humane education students and current humane education practitioners. It is my desire to keep this FAQ document open as a work-in-progress throughout my career as a humane educator as I gather, analyze, and synthesize new information obtained through teaching and life experiences.

This chapter has highlighted the shortcomings of some currently available humane education FAQ documents. It has outlined how the FAQ intends to take a more comprehensive approach by accounting for the complex nature of the humane education issues. The next chapter intends to highlight, through the research of relevant literature, ways in which the FAQ document will assist the humane educator in preparing for

classroom interactions with students. It intends to underscore how the all-important element of critical thinking can be employed to address the controversial and paradoxical nature of humane education.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

#### **Preparing to be a Humane Educator**

Why is it important to compile a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and comments likely to be brought up in humane education programs? How might a humane educator respond to these questions and comments differently than a typical schoolteacher? Humane education is a new and emerging field of study. "...humane education is still on the periphery of the educational system..." (IIHE, 1999, p. 2). Because the field is so new, there is still a dearth of published material designed specifically to address the needs of humane educators. Today, as more students train to become humane educators, the need for tools designed to help them succeed becomes even greater. The comprehensive humane education FAQ guide looks to improve their chances of success by preparing humane educators for challenging situations they likely will encounter in the classroom. The FAQ document will also attempt to explore some of complexities the questions may ultimately raise. In some cases, this will mean looking at many sides of an issue and exploring conflicting perspectives. In her book *Above All, Be Kind* (2003), author and teacher Zoe Weil raised the point, "Learning about different perspectives and struggling to sort through conflicting opinions will help you become ever wiser" (p. 72).

For the most part, schools do not teach children to question the premises of our culture. Instead, the schools tend to reinforce deeply held cultural values and traditions

often times with little or no regard to potential harmful consequences to other individuals, to themselves, or the planet.

But where do these cultural values and traditions come from and what are the effects? Is this also taught in the schools? Weil (2003) stated she didn't think so. "Teachers seldom teach about origins of their cultural values, the effects of media and advertising on their desires and behaviors, or the ways in which societal values influence individuals" (p. 35). Humane educators take a different approach to teaching. IIHE (1999) stated:

Humane education is a corrective. Humane education *does* look behind the scenes and challenges prevailing cultural assumptions. Humane education creates awareness of choices and exposes influences which are usually too subtle or too hidden for people (especially young people) to notice. (p. 4)

By exposing students to this information, significant change is possible for them with benefits to both themselves and the world. In the pamphlet titled, Humane Education for a Humane World, IIHE (2003) stated:

By giving students the insight they need to make truly informed choices, humane education paves the way for them to live according to their values that can lend meaning to their own lives while improving the world at the same time. (¶ 2)

Humane educators must thoroughly prepare themselves if they expect success in the classroom. The FAQ document is designed to assist humane educators with that preparation. Having a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and

anticipating the type of questions and comments students will ask is vital. Advising potential humane educators, IIHE (1999) stressed, “Be well prepared: This sounds simple and almost too obvious to be considered a strategy, yet it is one of the most important things you can do to make your program worthwhile and effective. Study your material and get organized” (p. 17). Humane education covers a wide array of subject matter and although humane educators are not expected to be experts on all matters, they are at least expected to be knowledgeable.

In reviewing the questions and comments to be included in the FAQ document, I notice that students are attempting to find inconsistencies between the message delivered by the humane educator and the humane educator’s own lifestyle choices. Students want to see if the humane educator is actually practicing what she is preaching. Author Sharif Abdullah (1999) in the book *Creating a World that Works for All* emphasized, “We must work on ourselves first, and then be prepared to do the work on our culture and institutions” (p. 16). Mahatma Gandhi, who once said, “My life is my message” understood completely that actions speak louder than words.

Sincerely attempting to reflect the values we are teaching give us the moral authority to encourage students to examine their lives and consciously make decisions that affect others. This does not mean that humane educators should insist students change their lives, rather we should insist the students open their eyes to the consequences of their decisions. The more our own lives incorporate conscious and compassionate decisions, the more likely students will listen to our message and act in

accordance with their own compassionate nature. In her writings on how to raise a humane child, Weil (2003) stated, "...I could *try* to live with kindness and respect for all. In so doing I would be modeling exactly what I wanted for my own child – that he try, too" (p. 61).

### **Subjects Covered in the FAQ Document**

From a broad perspective, "Humane education examines the challenges facing our planet, from human oppression and animal exploitation to materialism and ecological degradation" (IIHE, 2003, ¶ 1). The humane education FAQ document will address questions and comments covering many broad topics such as animal issues, environmental issues, human rights issues, cultural issues, and the field of humane education itself. Within these broad areas there are many sub-categories and the document intends to cover many of them. The document will attempt to highlight the interconnectedness and complexities inherent in many of the issues.

### **Human Oppression & Exploitation**

Human oppression and exploitation comes in many forms: from slavery to homophobia; from racism to sexism; from discrimination against people with disabilities to political imprisonment; from sweatshop labor to age discrimination. Humane education deals with all these human rights issues and others. Students will be aware of some of the issues, but not others. Also, many will have no idea that they themselves may be contributing to these problems.

Those of us living in the industrialized nations consume a disproportionate amount of the world's resources. In his book *World War III*, Michael Tobias (1994) speaking of projections made for the end of the last century stated, "the industrial nations together will account for roughly 20 percent of the world's population—about 1.5 billion people, who will be responsible for some 80 percent of all global consumption" (p. 318). Indeed, there are humans that have more than enough, while even more do not have nearly enough. World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn in 1997 (as cited in *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* authored by Thom Hartmann, 1999) pointed out that "...over three billion people—more than half of all humans on the planet, and fully three times the entire human population of the planet in 1800—struggle today to live on less than two dollars a day" (p. 29).

Privilege plays a large role in perpetuating human oppression and exploitation. In his book, *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, teacher and author Allan Johnson suggested being white, male, and heterosexual gave a person privileges not enjoyed by others. And he suggested someone ultimately pays a price for that privilege. "Privilege is always at someone else's expense and always exacts a cost. Everything that's done to receive or maintain it—however passive and unconscious—results in suffering and deprivation for someone" (p.10, 1997). Author Derrick Jensen (2002) agreed in *The Culture of Make Believe*, "Our culture allows, even encourages (demands would probably be the best word) someone to profit—to gain power, material possessions, or prestige—at the expense of another's misery" (p. 410). But why don't we do something about it? Johnson (1997) went to the heart of why so many of us are reluctant to face these issues.

“When it comes to the problem of privilege and oppression, privileged groups don’t want to hear about it all because it disturbs the luxury of obliviousness that comes with privilege” (p. 132).

Many Americans remain oblivious to much of the human exploitation and oppression our own country supports around the world. The righteous and noble motives many of us attribute to our own country apparently deserve more careful scrutiny. Jensen (2002) pointed out:

Today, night riders do not often wear white robes as they visit the homes of uppity blacks in the American South, nor do they pull these blacks out of their homes and hang them. Instead, an equivalent force can be found wearing U.S.-made camo fatigues, shooting union leaders and uppity Indians with U.S.-made guns in Columbia. They can be found beating union organizers at factories owned by U.S.-based corporations in Mexico. They shoot indigenous peoples in Nigeria who resist despoliation of their land by oil companies. With U.S. assistance and U.S. weapons (or, sometimes, corporate assistance and corporate weapons), they form death squads and kill uppity non-Whites in Central and South America, in Africa, in Southeast Asia, in the Pacific, in Oceania. (p. 527)

### **Animal Oppression & Exploitation**

Non-human animals have always made a convenient target for human exploitation and oppression. Animals cannot verbalize in human languages their desires; they do not—any one of them—demand that we respect their right to be. There are many who

offer a voice to the animals and demand the rights of animals be respected. But not everyone believes animals are deserving of our protection. In *Animals in Society*, Weil (1991) wrote, “Some people still believe that animals have no feelings. These people may think that kicking a dog is no worse than kicking a desk or a television set” (p. 1).

Arguably, animal issues are some of the more contentious issues covered in humane education. *Animal Rights: Opposing Viewpoints* published by Greenhaven Press, Inc. looked at several of these animal issues and offered the reader a “pro” and “con” perspective. For instance, when considering the statement “All Animals are Equal”, Peter Singer wrote:

It should be obvious that the fundamental objections to racism and sexism...apply equally to speciesism. If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his or her own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit humans to exploit nonhumans for the same purpose. (*Animal Rights: Opposing Viewpoints*, 1996, p. 22)

Arguing that all animals are not equal, R.G. Frey stated:

[W]hat justifies the infliction of pain, if anything does, is the appeal to benefit; but what justifies use of the appeal in those cases where humans are the beneficiaries of animal suffering is, arguably, that human life is more valuable than animal life.

(*Animal Rights: Opposing Viewpoints*, 1996, p. 29)

It is by learning the various perspectives of an issue and turning those perspectives over in our minds that we are better able to build the foundation that shape our beliefs.

One motive common amongst exploitation and oppression of animals, humans, or the environment seems to be greed. It is pervasive amongst the exploitation of animals. Consider animal agriculture, purebred domestic pet breeding mills, exotic pet trade, canned-hunting, animals in entertainment, animal skins for fashion, and animal experimentation. When speaking of greed in the vivisection industry, Dr. Sharpe (1988) stated in his book *The Cruel Deception*, “The secrecy, the inflated claims for animal based research and the frequent denial that tests cause anything more than mild discomfort, all point to powerful vested interests whose profit and livelihood depend on the survival of vivisection” (p. 251).

Many of the FAQs presented to me by the humane educators I surveyed are on the subject of vegetarianism. This subject appears to be of special interest to students. Vegetarianism is, after all, a way of eating quite different from what our present culture promotes. A serious conflict arises within the students when they are confronted with the consequences of animal agriculture—the immense suffering inflicted on the animals, the devastating impacts to the environment, and the mounting medical evidence suggesting that a meat-based diet may not be healthy—and when they also take into account their personal desire for these animal products. Arguably, very few subjects covered in humane education can have a bigger impact on a student's life than the subject of a vegetarian diet, considering it will affect them at least three times every single day. In addition, it may also be said that no other subject has greater potential to create a humane world. In his book, *The Food Revolution*, author John Robbins (2001) said:

When you choose to affirm the dignity inherent in life and to uphold the beauty, the magic, and the mystery of the living Earth, something happens... Your life becomes a statement of human possibility. Your life becomes an instrument through which a healthier, more compassionate, and more sustainable future will come to be. (p. 385)

### **Environmental Degradation**

Environmental degradation has been taking place for centuries, but never at the pace and magnitude seen in the past century. Though confronted with ample visual evidence and volumes of scientific evidence, most of us tend to minimize or try to ignore altogether the devastation all around us. Tobias (1994) wrote, “By and large, individuals are programmed by nature against grasping the large devastation caused by themselves, against internally processing too much shock and bad news” (p. 319). But many scientists believe we have pushed the earth past its limits. In the book, *Beyond the Limits*, the authors stated, “Human use of many essential resources and generation of many kinds of pollutants have already surpassed rates that are physically sustainable” (Meadows, et al, 1992, p. xv). The earth feels the collective human impact in many ways as Hartmann (1999) explained:

There is now more human flesh on this planet than there is of any single species. We now consume more than 40% of the world’s total ‘net primary productivity’ (NPP), which is the is the measure of the some total of food and energy available to all species on earth. We consume more than 50% of the planet’s available fresh

water. This means that every other species of plant and animal on the planet must now compete against each other for what little we've left. (p. 18)

As we humans continue to increase our footprint across the planet, we put tremendous strain on all other species as they struggle to cope with our behaviors. Inevitably, some species cannot cope and they disappear, forever. We harm not only the species we drive to extinction, but also the biodiversity on which all other species rely. Tobias (1994) stressed the importance of biodiversity, "Because the planet has spent billions of years adding, not subtracting species, we can safely assume without debating its teleological whys or wherefores that biodiversity has a crucial purpose in both the short- and long-term scheme of things here on earth" (p. 28).

So as we continue destroying the planet day after day, what can we humane educators do to inspire students to care and to act? In the book, *Earth Education*, Professor Steve Van Matre (1990) expressed the necessity of educating them on how life on this planet functions, "...we need to help our learners build (and internalize) the big picture of how life works ecologically first, then ask them to work on their own environmental habits" (p. 20). Weil (2003) also emphasized the reverence for nature as a key element of inspiration when she stated, "What we revere we protect and honor" (p. 46). If we can inspire children to revere nature—the trees, the birds, the insects, the rivers and streams, the plants, the mountains, the oceans, the rainforests, everything that is nature—then perhaps we will have instilled in them the desire to protect it.

## **Cultural Values & Institutions**

The various forms of exploitation, oppression, and degradation exist and flourish in our society because our culture allows and in some cases encourages it. From when we are very young we receive messages that buttress the values of our culture in our psyche. According to IIHE (1999), two particular institutions are responsible for instilling these values, “Young people are educated in an unspoken American perspective on life primarily through television and school” (p.2). IIHE (1999) thought that not everything learned from these sources was beneficial:

For example, we learn that consuming things is a great virtue, and that the more one has the more successful and happy one will be, regardless of the consequences to the planet. We also learn that individualism is often more important than community, and that the Earth is here for us to do as we wish. (p. 2)

As our culture “develops”, it has had a tendency to separate people from nature. And as technology progresses, the disconnection seems to grow deeper. Author of the book, *Culture Jam*, Kalle Lasn (1999) stated:

Most of us are now fully detached from the natural world. We can barely remember the last time we drank from a stream, smelled wild skunk cabbage or saw the stars from a dark remove, well away from the city. We can’t remember when we last spent an evening telling stories, instead of having Jerry or Oprah or Rosie tell stories to us. (p.4)

As mentioned briefly earlier, rampant consumerism is having devastating effects on humans, animals, and the environment. But instead of seeking to curb this excess, our culture is poised to increase the rate of destruction to the point where the numbers no longer make sense. As David Orr (1994) pointed out in his book *Earth In Mind*:

The annual world gross economy now exceeds \$21 trillion, and we are told we must increase fivefold by the middle of next century. That same global economy now uses, directly or indirectly, 25% of the earth's net primary productivity. Can that increase fivefold as well? (p.159)

And so what are the effects of consumerism on people in our present culture? Jacobson and Mazur (1995) implied in the book, *Marketing Madness*, that consumerism was not all it was cracked up to be when they quoted Paul Wachtel, "The consumer way of life is deeply flawed, both psychologically and ecologically. It fails to bring the satisfactions promised and its side effects are lethal" (p. 212).

But what is fueling the demand for all these material goods? Do we in the U.S.—who do a disproportionate amount of the world's consuming—really have an inherent need for all that we consume? The answer to the first question is, at least partially, advertising. The answer to the second question is no. Advertising attempts to create problems where problems don't otherwise exist; it attempts to create inadequacies in people where none before existed; it attempts to create a need where there was once none. Advertising claims to have the solution to all of life's problems. As Jacobson and Mazur (1995) stated, "Each ad is a parable that illuminates the same theme: All of life's problems can be solved and happiness attained by *buying things*" (p. 25).

It is corporations, by and large, responsible for the advertising. Today's corporations carry tremendous financial resources and political influence. Author David Korten (2001) implies that corporations may not exist to serve the common good, but instead to primarily serve the elite few. In his book, *When Corporations Rule the World*, he wrote,

The dream of the corporate empire builders is rapidly being realized. The global system is harmonizing standards across country after country—ever downward toward the lowest common denominator. Driven by the imperatives of global financial markets, the global system values only money. People, with their incessant special-interest demands for living wages, prosperous communities, and healthy environments, are an unwelcome economic burden—a meddlesome source of inefficiency to be eliminated. (p. 229)

### **Some Complexities That Arise**

There seem to be common links among the forms of exploitation, degradation, and oppression we have just explored. What is it that drives an individual to act in ways that exploit, oppress, and degrade? What drives one person to disregard the suffering of others and another to empathize and act to heal? As mentioned earlier, our culture plays a role in advocating certain destructive behaviors. Part of that culture is the way we raise our children. Psychoanalyst and author Alice Miller believes this behavior is learned in childhood and easily perpetuates generation after generation. In her book, *For Your Own Good*, Miller (1990) stated:

Children who are lectured to, learn how to lecture; if they are admonished, they learn how to admonish; if scolded, they learn how to scold; if ridiculed, they learn how to ridicule; if humiliated, they learn how to humiliate; if their psyche is killed, they will learn how to kill – the only question is who will be killed: oneself, others, or both. (p. 98)

But Miller (1990) didn't believe it was necessarily the actual victims of oppression who were the intended targets of abuse; instead, she believed these actions were a result of the perpetrator's misdirected efforts to exterminate their own former weakness as a child and to avoid sorrow (p. 188).

Abdullah (1999) expressed his belief that exclusivity was behind much of the world's ills.

It [exclusivity] allows us not only to separate from others but also to oppress them. Racism, sexism, homophobia, slavery, all forms of hatred and bigotry, stem from the notion 'I am separate from you—by virtue of skin color, ethnicity, behavior, belief...' (p. 15)

But it is when we empathize with the perpetrators, as well as the victims, of violence that we demonstrate the compassion that is truly needed to break the cycle of violence that is so prevalent in our current culture. Without taking into account the suffering of the perpetrator we cannot expect to diminish the source of oppression. As IIHE (1999) stated, "By vilifying others we create a world of 'us and thems [sic].' This is the same thinking that leads to wars, race hatred, bigotry of all kinds" (p. 6).

In his book, *Earthkind: A Teachers' Handbook on Humane Education*, Professor David Selby (1995) stated that the commonalities inherent in many of the ills plaguing the world today have common roots:

The insight that different manifestations of exploitation, injustice, and oppression have the same source, have similar dynamics and are interlinked, speaks for an alliance of the anti-racist, anti-sexist and humane educator. Each field is concerned with counteracting negative and repressive attitudes that fuel discrimination and injustice (attitudinal racism, sexism, speciesism); each addresses political, economic and social systems that have grown out of, and in turn reinforce, those attitudes (structural/systemic racism, sexism, and speciesism). (p. 21)

Selby (1995) went on to say, "Motivations for cruelty include a desire to control, retaliation, a need to let out pent-up aggression, a wish to shock, and sadism" (p. 26). These same underlying factors are present in the perpetrator regardless of the victim's species.

### **Controversy and Paradox**

Many of the issues taught in humane education can be considered controversial for a variety of reasons. It is important that we as humane educators not shy away from the controversies and paradoxes that surface in discussion of the issues, but instead carefully explore the many sides the issues present. It is through this careful examination that our thoughts are clarified and knowledgeable opinions then formed. As Bender and Leone (1996), editors of *Animal Rights: Opposing Viewpoints* stated, "Careful examination of

others' views can lead to readers' understanding of logical inconsistencies in their own opinions, perspective on why they hold an opinion, and consideration of the possibility that their own opinion requires further evaluation" (p. 10).

One of the key elements of any humane education program is to encourage students to think critically. To get students to examine the cultural values and traditions they may have been taught from the earliest years of their lives, we ask them to think critically on their long-held beliefs and be open to different perspectives. But while we do that, we must also encourage them to think just as critically on the information and messages we are delivering to them. Weil (2003) offered this:

...I want students to question me in order to discover the truth for themselves. In this way they'll learn how to question everything, whether it be from government sources, corporations, the non-profit sector, the media, public relations firms, the left, the right, or in between. (p. 37)

Paradoxes encountered in humane education classrooms also present an excellent opportunity for deep and critical thought. In fact, several questions in the FAQ document present paradoxes. Someone may not believe in killing animals, but what about Eskimos that cannot grow plants in their climate? We may abhor racist actions of an individual, yet we must somehow find compassion in our hearts for them. We tell students about the misery on factory farms, yet even if we are vegan, some animals most certainly die in the harvesting and transportation of our food. Author Parker Palmer (1998) encouraged us to hold the paradoxes together and by doing so we make it possible for our hearts to grow.

We will not be able to teach in the power of paradox until we are willing to suffer the tension of opposites, until we understand that each suffering is neither to be avoided nor merely to be survived but must be actively embraced for the way it expands our own hearts. (p. 85)

### **Summary**

We face many serious problems that need to be addressed quickly if we expect to sustain life on this planet. Humane education seeks to inform students so they better understand these problems. It also seeks to inspire the students to take positive actions to help solve them. Educating students by giving them accurate, often very sobering information is an important first step. But it is not enough to simply spew forth the ills of the world. We must give students positive choices - choices that allow the students to act on their compassionate instincts to change the world for the better. Author and filmmaker Michael Tobias (1994) wrote, “Our children need to be informed and inspired, not daunted” (p. 469).

Our job as humane educators is to bring out the best in the students we teach. Adequately preparing ourselves to the best of our abilities is crucial if we truly expect to inform and inspire them. It is my hope that this FAQ document helps, in some way, to achieve that goal.

## Chapter 3

### The Project

This FAQ is designed to assist humane educators in dealing with challenging questions and comments from students. This document is not intended to provide the “right” answer to the questions or the “best” way to respond to the comments; instead, it is intended to give you, the humane educator, a general sense of the questions and comments made by the students and teachers attending humane education programs, as well as questions and comments made by parents, school administrators, and the general public outside the classroom. My responses are intended for you to see how *I* would respond to them. The way I have responded may or may not be how you would respond. This does not make you wrong and me right, or vice versa. At the very least, I hope this document gets you to consider the complexities involved in many of the issues and gets you to consider how you might respond to some of these very challenging questions and comments.

### Format of the FAQ Document

For each FAQ I will state the question or comment to be addressed. Immediately following the question or comment you will see the title “Response.” In this section I will respond to the question or comment as I would if I were addressing the students directly. In some cases, I will respond with a question back to the students. I will always, though, come back and give some response. During my response, I may put notes to you, the reader of this FAQ, in parentheses. After my response, I will include a

section titled “Things to Consider”. In this section, I will give you things to consider as you formulate your response to this particular question or comment. I will highlight opposing viewpoints when applicable. I will try to warn you about potential missteps that could easily be made when responding to a particular question or comment. I will also include references for further research on the topic.

### **Considerations When Responding to Students**

There are several points I try to keep in mind when responding to questions or comments from students:

Be honest – Always tell the truth. Never stretch the truth or knowingly omit pertinent facts in order to make a point. Never make something up if you don’t know an answer or can’t remember.

Legitimize the question or comment – Let the student know that the question or comment was worthwhile.

Give factual information – Carefully verify facts to ensure you are providing accurate data. If you are unsure, say so. It’s okay to say you’re not sure. You can always get back to them with information after you’ve had time to do research.

Promote critical thinking – Get students to grapple with and appreciate the complexities of the issues.

Inspire reverence, respect, and responsibility – Inspire students to revere the natural world and goodness in general, to respect everyone and the earth, and to take responsibility for doing the most good and the least harm.

Offer positive choices – Empower students to take positive action on the information you present.

Present differing points of view if they exist – Do not only present the point of view that you think is right. Present multiple sides and let the students decide what they believe is right. And if you have a bias, as everyone does, make that known to the class.

Don't judge the students – Never make a student feel as if they are wrong for making a certain comment or for having a particular viewpoint.

Don't attempt to prove you are right – You are not trying to win an argument. You are trying to educate – avoid becoming defensive.

Ask questions to answer questions when possible – Sometimes the best way to respond to a question, especially non-factual questions, is to ask questions of the students thereby letting them answer their own questions or letting other students attempt to answer them. This allows the students to think for themselves instead of you thinking for them.

Tell personal stories – In responding to students, relate personal stories whenever appropriate.

Avoid being the guru – Providing all the “right” answers and always telling students the best way to deal with issues puts you in danger of becoming their guru. Encourage students to come up with their own answers and solutions to the problems they are grappling with.

## FAQ

### Questions and comments from teachers, administrators, and parents

Question – What exactly is humane education? Isn't it just about animals?

Response – Humane education, as it first came to be known a century ago, did focus primarily on animal issues – especially companion animal issues. The definition over the past two decades has greatly expanded to include issues relating to the environment, human rights, cultural issues, and a broader perspective on animal issues. What's more, humane education attempts to show linkages among these issues in an attempt to discover some of the root causes of the problems we face in the world today.

Humane education seeks to present information to students that they might not otherwise study in school. With the understanding that much of the information we receive today comes from corporate sources with a vested interest in making a profit, humane education attempts to present perspectives that might otherwise be left out of the discussion.

Humane education attempts to teach students to become critical thinkers, allowing them to look at issues and use critical thinking to sift out the facts. Humane educators ask that students think critically on all information they receive, even information the humane educator is presenting. In our society today, we are often asked to blindly accept

information without question. Humane education asks students to look critically at many of the assumptions that make up our society's beliefs and attitudes. Students are asked to evaluate whether or not these cultural assumptions square with their own personal values. The humane educator's purpose is not to indoctrinate students with their own personal beliefs, but rather to let the students decide for themselves what is right.

Humane education also attempts to instill in students reverence, respect, and responsibility. Humane educators give students the opportunity to build reverence for nature and for good, and at the same time encourage students to develop respect for the earth and all living beings. This is done by exposing students to the wonders of nature and through various classroom activities. Humane educators also encourage students to take responsibility for their own actions. Humane educators teach students to consider the choices they make everyday. Humane educators encourage students to examine these choices and determine what actions cause the least harm to others and to the earth.

Humane educators don't just talk about the problems in the world; they also discuss what students can do to help solve these problems. Once the students become aware of problems and their consequences, they're encouraged to take positive steps to address these problems. The humane educator offers some possible solutions and encourages students to come up with their own so that they feel empowered to make a positive difference in the world.

Things to Consider – A great web site to learn more about humane education is [www.iihed.org](http://www.iihed.org).

Question – Teachers are already so overburdened. How can you expect them to add another subject to their schedules?

Response – Teachers, in general, do a remarkable job educating our children, at times with inadequate resources and often under difficult conditions. When we consider including humane education as part of the curriculum, we need to determine the relevance and importance of the subject matter.

“In a world in which people are quickly destroying natural resources, abolishing species, and perpetuating warfare; in a world filled with poverty, hunger, racism, bigotry of all kinds, cruelty, and injustice, what could be more important than humane education?” (IIHE, 1999, p. 2)

But before we can ever expect humane education to become part of the general education curriculum, those of us involved with humane education must ensure that teachers get the needed training, which will enable them to teach humane education to their students. The number of teachers trained in humane education is constantly growing, but there is much work to be done in reaching the majority of teachers. Once the teachers are trained and the public understands the benefits of human education, I believe humane education will become part of the standard education curriculum.

Humane education with its teachings on environmental awareness, consumerism, animal exploitation, human oppression, media literacy, sustainability, and many other issues of tremendous importance to our lives and the lives of future generations is needed every bit as much as the current core subjects taught in schools today, such as math, science, and English.

Although I believe that incorporating humane education into the existing subjects is preferable to leaving it out altogether, in doing so we run the risk of failing to provide students with “focused, sequential, and cumulative” (Van Matre, 1990, p. 5) lessons that provide for more effective learning than presenting humane education activities that just happen to fit in with whatever the teacher happens to be teaching at the time.

Of course, teachers may also bring in professionals who are knowledgeable on the topic being covered and invite a humane educator to offer presentations to the class.

Humane education is a very new field of study and educating the public on its importance is in its infancy. The few comprehensive humane educators who are out there now and the ones being trained must take on this responsibility. I believe that once the public understands the benefits of humane education, it will become a welcomed addition to the core subjects taught in our schools.

Question – Humane education has an ulterior motive – to make people vegetarians and animal rights advocates.

Response – One of the subjects covered in humane education is animal issues, but we also cover many other important subjects such as human rights issues, environmental issues, and many cultural issues. What we often find when we explore a problem in one area, say the effects of factory farming on animals, is that the effects are seen in other areas as well, such as damage to the environment from air and water pollution, worker exploitation in slaughterhouses, and human health consequences affecting consumers of meat. I believe it's important we explore these problems and try to decide what the best solutions are. To come up with solutions to problems created by factory farms, you may or may not decide that becoming a vegetarian is an effective solution.

One principle I try to live by is “do the most good and least harm”. For me, that does mean being vegetarian. There are others who share this philosophy. But there are also others who don't. My recommendation is that you look at the issues and decide what you think is best for yourself, what you think is best for other beings, and what you think is best for the earth. What are some things we can do so that we do the least harm and the most good in any given situation (Weil, 2003, 14)? That is what humane education asks us to consider.

Question – I don't think school is a place where teachers should impose their values. Humane education is a form of indoctrination about animals and the environment.

Response – Humane education does not attempt to impose values on students; instead, it “invite(s) students to wrestle with complex issues, question and evaluate information, explore rights and wrongs, and make their own decisions” (IIHE, 2003, ¶ 3). When I go in to present a program, I'll tell students not to accept the information I'm going to present to them; rather, I ask them to take the information and research the issues for themselves to see if what I presented was accurate. I, as a humane educator, never tell the students what they should think, what choices they should make, what they should believe, or how they should behave. I believe that armed with factual information, good critical thinking skills, and a commitment to live humanely, the students are capable of making these decisions for themselves.

I will not deny, however, that humane education does have a bias. The bias is toward having respect for others, taking responsibility for our own actions and choices, acting with compassion, and encouraging critical thinking at all times.

In humane education, we ask the students to consider what it is they truly care about. We examine how our actions and our choices affect others, the environment, and ourselves. We explore alternative actions and choices that take into account the effects

on those things that we care about. And finally, we learn that we all have the power to make a positive difference in the world.

Question – How is humane education different from values education, like Character Education or Sustainability Education, or Environmental Education?

Response – Actually, humane education contains certain elements of each of the educational practices that you mentioned, and it has some elements the others do not.

First, let's look at character education. According to the Character Education Partnership, an advocate for the character education movement, "It [Character education] is the intentional, proactive effort by schools, districts, and states to instill in their students important core, ethical values that we all share such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others" (The Character Education Partnership, n.d., ¶ 2). Humane education shares these goals but views these character traits expansively so that we treat *everyone* with respect and with caring and behave responsibly toward *all*.

Sustainability education tends to focus primarily on teaching students ways that we can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. "To use an economic metaphor, humankind must learn to live off of the income or the interest generated by the planet's remaining natural capital stocks" (Wackernagel & Rees, 1996, p.36). There are those who claim that we

are using up our planet's resources at unsustainable rates. Sustainability education teaches about this phenomenon and attempts to find answers that address the problems. Humane education shares these same goals. Humane education, however, will focus on these general concepts and also on the consequences of our actions on individual people and animals, something sustainability education does not.

Environmental education seeks to teach students ways to better understand, appreciate, and protect the natural environment. Environmental will often incorporate elements of sustainability education, and vice versa. Humane education shares these same goals, but again focuses on individual beings - something environmental education does not do.

So as we can see humane education encompasses the teachings found in character education, sustainability education, and environmental education, but goes further by taking into account the treatment of individual beings. In addition, humane education includes issues related to our treatment humans distant from us but connected to us through the global marketplace. It also covers a variety of social issues such as media literacy, corporate power, advertising, and consumerism. Humane education also explores linkages among the issues. When we see human oppression, animal exploitation, and environmental degradation, we often see similar forces with common roots. Humane education helps students to understand and recognize these forces and helps them learn ways to counteract them in positive ways.

Comment – We’re inviting someone else to our school to present the other side.

Response – I think that’s great that you’re getting someone to offer an alternative perspective to the topic that I’m presenting. I hope that you’ll listen to my presentation and the other speaker’s both with a fair amount of skepticism. After you’ve heard what we both have to present, do the research for yourself. After you’ve gathered and processed the information, put this information up against your values and decide for yourself what the best choices are based on what you know. This is a great opportunity to practice your critical thinking skills.

If afterward you have any questions, you can contact me and I’ll be glad to come back to visit with your class.

Also, please be aware that there aren’t just “two sides” to an issue. There are often many perspectives. I urge you to discover your own.

Comment – We have pets in the classroom, and the children love them.

Response – Many teachers have had success with keeping pets in the classroom. Classroom pets provide a way to help teach some life sciences lessons, and they can also help teach compassion and respect for other living beings. But sometimes the good intentions of teachers and students can have an undesired outcome if adequate thought isn’t given to the animals needs.

Of course, it's important to choose an animal who is appropriate for the classroom environment. Understanding the habits and behaviors of the animal is essential. For instance, choosing a nocturnal animal, such as a hamster, would probably not be appropriate for a classroom where a majority of noise and activity takes place during the day.

It's important that a proper habitat for the animal is constructed and maintained – an environment where the temperature is not too hot or too cold; where it's free from harsh sunlight, chilly drafts, and high foot traffic; and of course the habitat must always be kept clean.

When school is not in session – on weekends, holidays, breaks, and summer vacations - someone must be available to provide proper care for the animal. Whoever is responsible must be thoroughly knowledgeable about caring for the animal.

And in order to keep from increasing the number of unwanted pets, animals should be kept in same sex pairs or otherwise spayed or neutered.

You must ensure there are adequate funds available for any veterinary expenses that may arise.

If you do ultimately decide to get a classroom pet, consider adopting an animal from a shelter rather purchasing one from a pet store. This will reduce the demand for pets, which are purposely bred by pet stores and which contribute to pet overpopulation.

When considering keeping a classroom pet, it's important that teacher and students understand all that's involved and be willing to accept that responsibility completely.

When a fish dies from overfeeding, or a hamster bites due to stress or fear, or a rabbit is abandoned at an animal shelter during the summer months, a powerful message is sent to the students: the animals' lives are not important, their care is not paramount, they exist for human benefit and enjoyment. (Weil, 1991, p. 49)

### **Questions and comments from students**

Comment – There are too many problems, and too many things that are awful in the world. There's really nothing I can do about it all, and it doesn't seem even worth trying.

Response – There have been moments in my life where I've felt exactly the same way. The problems in the world and the magnitude of some of them have at times made me feel helpless to do anything about it. I believe these feelings are pretty common.

I realize that I by myself can never fix all the problems in the world. There is no human on this planet who has that kind of power. For me, coming to that conclusion was very liberating. Once I realized this, I began to focus on what I could realistically accomplish and resisted putting any pressure on myself to do more.

I knew the kind of world I wanted to see. I wanted the world to be based on respect and kindness; I wanted a world where all people would be given an opportunity to share in the earth's abundance and to live with dignity; I wanted a world where animals would be shown mercy and compassion; I wanted a world where nature would be treasured and protected. Bringing about this kind of world was what I cared most deeply about.

Then I began to look at the choices I was making in my life and started trying to make decisions that were based on my core values. Living my life according to my values was sometimes difficult, but when I was successful, it felt really good. Once I began to live according to my values, I wasn't asking others to do something I myself wasn't willing to do.

I began to notice that as I made more choices that were based on respect and kindness, I was starting to influence others to do the same just by my example. I thought about what Mahatma Gandhi once said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

I also thought about a story I heard about a little boy who was walking along the seashore after a big storm. There were thousands of starfish washed up on shore. He picked up one of the starfish and threw it back in the ocean. A man who was walking past saw him doing this and said, "There are too many starfish on this beach, you'll never make a difference." The boy looked at him and replied, "To that starfish I made a difference."

Comment – I can't possibly analyze everything I do, wear, eat, and buy! It's crazy to live that way.

Response – I can definitely relate to what your saying. When I first decided to look at the choices I make everyday - most without ever before seriously thinking about

them - it wasn't long before I became overwhelmed and even discouraged. There were so many choices I made every day and in many cases the choices I made weren't the least harmful choice I could be making. I found that it took a lot of time to research all the different options I had for each action I was analyzing.

But I soon came to realize that I didn't have to remake my life all at once. I could settle on moving toward the philosophy of doing the least harm – of “trying to live with kindness and respect for all” (Weil, 2003, p. 61). I no longer put myself under the pressure of trying to be “perfect”. I would simply focus on one aspect of my life at a time and see how I could come closer to living my life according to my values.

I started by looking at how I got around town, knowing that cars do a tremendous amount of environmental damage. I looked at my options and gradually over time I decided I could get by without a car – I could bike, walk, or take public transportation. This would not only benefit the environment, but it would also save me a whole lot of money and fill my life with a lot less hassle.

I looked at my food choices and decided to buy as much organic food as I could. I knew that my decision would benefit the environment; it would likely benefit my health; and my food would probably taste better. But I was concerned about the cost. I then decided that I would simply eat out a little less and do more cooking at home. I still go out to eat, just not as often as I used to. So overall I ended up not spending any more

money on food than I did before. I then went on to look at other aspects of my life and gradually made changes over time.

What helped me most to continue examining my choices was that I didn't pressure myself to change too quickly. When I was ready to make a change, I did. If I wasn't quite ready, I didn't. But every time I did make a change to live my life in a way that was more in line with my values, I felt a tremendous sense of satisfaction and self-respect.

I also found out that once I discovered a choice that was causing the least harm, I didn't have to keep examining that aspect of my life. I found a less harmful choice and that became the way I lived that part of my life. Of course, I could reexamine that choice at any time, but my more harmful choice was no longer the choice I automatically made, my less harmful choice was.

There are times to this day that I don't choose the least harmful choice, and I do this both consciously and unconsciously. I *try* to do the best I can and know there will always be room for improvement. I know I will never be perfect, but I hope I will continue every day to do more good and less harm. These are my values and this is how I want to live. Truly it feels better to live more kindly.

Things to Consider – I recommend reading *Above All, Be Kind* (Weil, 2003, pp. 60-62) under the heading *Trying to Live With Kindness* for how she dealt with analyzing daily choices.

Comment – If I did what you suggest, I'd be laughed at. Name brands are important; you can't just wear thrift store clothes.

Response – {I would likely respond to this comment with several questions to the entire class. You could choose from some of the ones below:}

Who would you say defines what society calls “cool?”

Does anyone profit from society's acceptance of what's “cool?” If so, who?

Why do you think what's considered “cool” changes so often?

What or who encourages us to want to go out and shop for more things, things that are considered “cool?”

Does advertising have any effect on you?

The U.S. marketing budget went from \$50 billion in 1979 to over \$200 billion today. And 20% of the world consumes approximately 86% of resources. If everyone consumed as much as the top 20%, we would need at least 3 planet Earths. (*Third World Kids – The Cost of Cool*)

How many of you think you'd be happier if you had more stuff?

When you purchase new clothes, typically how long does the feeling of satisfaction last?

How much of the clothing you buy do you think is an actual need, as opposed to a want? How many pairs of shoes, jeans, t-shirts, etc. do you need?

Do you feel you have everything you need? If not, what do you need that you don't have?

Do you feel you have everything you want? If not, what do you want that you don't have?

What are some of the things you consider when purchasing something to wear, for instance – price, quality, fashion, impact on the environment, impact on worker making the item?

How many of you see a connection to the items you buy and the possible harm done to the environment and to workers who produced the item?

What damage do we do to the environment when we continue to buy things we don't need? {deforestation, extinction of plant and animal species, overflowing landfills, air and water pollution}

Who do you think should take responsibility for improving the world's environment and addressing the impacts of over-consumption (i.e., resource depletion, air and water pollution, habitat loss, species extinction, etc.)?

What are the benefits of breaking away from society's definition of "cool?" {environment, charities selling used clothes, you saving money, freedom to define your own identity}

Should "cool" be about doing what others expect you to do or should it be about being yourself, unique and individual, and living according to your own values?

What are a few things that you want in life?

In my opinion, it's not what a person buys or what she owns that makes her "cool", it is who she is and how she decides to conduct her life.

Things to Consider – I highly recommend watching the 26-minute video entitled, *Cost of Cool*, produced by Population Communications International (PCI).

Question – Our economy is based on people buying things. If we all suddenly stopped buying so much stuff, the economy would collapse. How can you suggest that we buy less stuff knowing how that will affect people?

Response –The U.S. economy in its current form does seem to rely on perpetual growth. When our economy doesn't grow, economists tell us we're in recession, or when the economy really slows down, depression. When this happens, most people become very worried. They start asking questions such as, will I lose my job? Will my standard of living go down? Will I have enough money to live on? These are all very legitimate concerns. When we think about an economy that is continually expanding, however, we might want to ask ourselves some other very important questions:

- What effects will continual growth have on rapidly depleting resources like oil, forests, fresh water, productive land, and certain scarce minerals? What effect does continued growth have on major pollution problems like global warming, contaminated water and land?
- What are the limits to our growth and how close are we to the limits?

- What if every country in the world consumed as much as the U.S.?
- Are there other options to our current economic model?

Perpetual economic expansion carries certain costs, such as accelerated resource consumption and pollution. In order for life to exist on this planet, we need clean air, clean water, and productive topsoil. Right now these are all in decline, largely due to an economic system that seems to encourage its degradation. There are ecological limits to how much and how quickly we can extract resources and introduce wastes. The earth is, after all, finite. Because of this, many feel we must look for ways to live sustainably; that is, discover new ways for humans to live on the planet; to live and prosper now *and* in the future.

But there are others who say these problems will never materialize in our lifetime so there should be no need to worry. But what about the mass extinctions taking place right now? True, humans alive today *may* not have to worry about the consequences of our actions in our lifetime on themselves, but inevitably some future generation will. We need to ask ourselves if it is morally acceptable to leave future generations a depleted and polluted planet thereby making life more difficult for them; and is it morally acceptable to perpetuate mass species extinctions.

In order to act on the problem, we need to look to an alternative economic system, one that encourages conservation of resources, reduction of waste, alternative clean and renewable energy sources, and ways to diminish the decline in biodiversity. Some ways

to live sustainably might be to tax industries that cause harm to the environment, such as aluminum manufacturers, logging companies, factory farms, oil & gas industry, and automakers. At the same time, we might want to subsidize industries that benefit the environment, such as organic farmers, renewable energy suppliers, recycling companies, and reuse companies.

There is a difference between “growth” and “development”. Meadows, et al (1992),

TO GROW means to increase in size by the assimilation or accretion of materials. TO DEVELOP means to expand or realize the potentialities of; to bring to a fuller, greater, or better state. When something grows it gets quantitatively bigger; when it develops it gets qualitatively better, or at least different. Quantitative growth and qualitative improvement follow different laws. Our planet develops over time without growing. Our economy, a subsystem of the finite and non-growing earth, must eventually adapt to a similar pattern of development. (p. xix)

Futurist and writer Paul Hawken suggests an alternative to the perpetual growth economy is a restorative economy. This would involve reusing products, switching to renewable energy sources, and increasing biodiversity instead of decreasing it. In essence it would be redesigning the economic world so that it mirrors the natural world (Hawken, n.d.).

What do you think? Can you think of ways in which we can protect our earth, the ecosystem, and the economy at the same time?

Things to consider – An interesting and informative web site regarding Paul Hawken’s theory of a restorative economy based on the principles of natural capitalism can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/AmStudies/lewis/ecology/natcap.htm> .

Comment – Advertising may have its problems, but banning advertising would take away our basic freedom of speech.

Response – This is a very contentious issue – some people feel very strongly that any ban on advertising is a violation on the First Amendment’s guarantee of freedom of speech, while others argue that “commercial speech” should not be protected because the First Amendment was originally designed to protect individual citizens’, not corporations’, rights to political, religious, and artistic expression. And there are still others that say although advertising should not be banned entirely, certain forms of advertising should be regulated. Let’s explore some of the issues starting with television, arguably our society’s most powerful media influence.

Commercial television networks get 100% of their revenue from advertising (*Advertising and the End of the World*, 1997). Networks encourage corporations to advertise on television, but when the Media Foundation, a non-profit group, has attempted to buy advertising time on network television to challenge the media through

parody ads, they've been consistently turned down (IIHE, 1999, p. 4). Do you think restricting Media Foundation's ads is justified?

What about advertising to children on television? Some feel that young children should be protected from advertising because several research studies have shown they cannot distinguish between the advertising and the program they're watching. In addition, most young children don't understand the concept of money and therefore shouldn't be treated like adult consumers. Some countries in Europe have banned television advertising directed to children and have also banned advertising of alcohol and tobacco, specifically to protect their children. Do you think bans or restrictions on ads directed toward children are justified?

What about advertising in schools? Children who are not home schooled are required by law to attend school, making them a captive audience for advertisers; if advertising and commercials are included in their classes, students have no choice but to be exposed to, watch, and listen (Jacobson & Mazur, 1995, p.35). Proponents of advertising in school argue that advertising dollars bring in much needed revenue for the schools. Do you think advertisers should be allowed into schools to bring in money or should we ensure funding comes from the public so that schools can remain advertisement-free?

And what about ads in public spaces? It's one thing when we have control of the advertisements that we see. For instance, we can turn off the television; we can turn off

the radio; and we can choose to read written media that's ad-free. But when we go into public space, especially in urban areas, we're bombarded with ads – from billboards to buses to sides of buildings to subway trains to trucks to cabs – advertising is practically everywhere we look. Should we have the right to be in public without being bombarded with ads? On the other hand, some states do not permit billboard advertising. Should these states have the right to limit advertising?

Things to Consider – You may want to explore with the students the relationship between advertising, consumption, and the degradation of the environment.

You can also explore the relationship between advertising and the impact it has on our cultural values. A wonderful video on this subject is *Advertising and the End of the World (1997)*.

Here are some interesting quotes and the web sites you can go to for more information on advertising and how it relates to freedom of speech.

This is regarding Sweden's ban on advertising to children.

Several research studies indicated that young children do not understand the purpose of advertising and cannot distinguish between advertising and the program they are watching. Thus, children would be exposed to the powerful influence of TV advertising to such an extent that they would want to own the products being shown to them.

Then, as now, one of the reasons for the ban on TV advertising directed at children was that young children should have zones where they are protected from commercial influences. As they are incapable of understanding the value of money, they should not be treated like adult consumers. Advertising can awaken strong needs in children to own things, needs that they cannot manage in any other way than by pestering their parents. This “pester power” can give rise to problems within families. (Jacobsson, 2002)

This is from an editorial declaring any ban on advertising as an infringement of the First Amendment. Richard T. Kaplar said, “Giving up freedom of speech in a democracy, even for some perceived benefit to children, is the most irresponsible of actions” (Kaplar, 1997). Later in the editorial he stated, “Of late, however, free speech seems to be regarded as just one more worthy goal to be balanced against all the others, like child welfare” (Kaplar, 1997).

International Chamber of Commerce claimed,

Freedom of commercial speech is a fundamental principle of free markets and should be applied to the marketing of all legal products...Legal constraints on commercial communications beyond the basic framework necessary to guarantee consumer protection often constitute barriers to free trade and inhibit consumers' freedom of choice...Freedom of commercial speech also helps to ensure freedom of expression through funding independent media. Newspapers, magazines, cable,

satellite, broadcast services and internet are all supported by advertising. Media advertising revenues also significantly finance educational programming and entertainment, such as sporting and cultural events. Advertising and sponsorship helps provide quality information and entertainment for consumers and enhances participation and attendance at events...A natural result of competition is increased commercial communications, which ensure that consumers have the information they need to make freedom of choice a reality. Any action that restricts commercial communication therefore reduces choice and by definition restricts free trade and ultimately increases selling prices...Restrictions on the freedom to advertise legitimate products may have the effect of protecting domestic markets from external competitors: often the only way for a foreign competitor to enter a new market is through an advertising campaign. If such campaigns are banned or heavily restricted, it may become virtually impossible for new entrants to penetrate the market...Excessive regulation in the field of advertising and commercial communications will hinder free trade and affect economic growth and development.

[http://www.iccwbo.org/home/statements\\_rules/statements/2003/Freedom%20of%20Commercial%20Communication.asp](http://www.iccwbo.org/home/statements_rules/statements/2003/Freedom%20of%20Commercial%20Communication.asp)

This is from what I consider an unbiased article regarding Massachusetts's proposed ban of tobacco and alcohol billboard ads within 1000 feet of a public playground or school. "Free-speech advocates say there is rarely, if ever, a justification

for the government to substitute its judgment for that of individual citizens in determining what information should or should not be disclosed to the public” (Richey, 2001).

Comment – Shopping is my favorite activity.

Response – How many of you feel the same way? I believe that most people enjoy getting new things – there’s an excitement that seems to come with it.

I enjoy getting new things, too. There are a lot of places I go to find new stuff. Thrift stores are one of my favorite places to shop. A good thrift store can provide you with practical clothing and most of the household items that you might need for pennies on the dollar. I can also find great bargains at garage and yard sales. And when I want to check out a good book, music, or video, I just go to my local library. And the best part about libraries is that it’s all free – assuming I return it on time.

There are times, though, when I choose to purchase brand new items instead of looking for used ones, but I try to limit these purchases as much as possible for a few reasons. First, protecting the environment is very important to me. Consumerism has an adverse effect on the environment by using up more natural resources and creating a lot of waste. Second, I save more money when I purchase used items instead of new. And third, many of the products we buy today are produced in countries known for using unfair labor practices. When I buy secondhand items, I am not supporting these practices. But for those times when I do buy brand new items, I look for those made with

organic materials – such as organic cotton - or those made with recycled materials. And if the item is imported, I look for items that have been fairly traded.

Overall, I don't spend a lot of time shopping. Because I don't shop for recreation, I have time for a lot of other activities which I'd much rather be doing. I have more time to hang out with my friends playing music, sports, or anything we like. I've got time to work on projects around the house. And I have time to get out and explore nature at one of the nearby state parks or down by the lake. All these things I can do instead of shopping for things I probably don't need anyway.

Things to Consider – Consider asking some of the following questions to stimulate more discussion:

- Does our culture encourage us to shop? If so, how?
- What role does advertising play in consumerism?
- What do you think makes people want to shop for things they don't need?
- Who profits from consumerism?
- Who suffers as a result of consumerism?
- What other useful activities could we take part in instead of shopping?
- What product characteristics do you look for when you purchase a product?  
(i.e., durability, functionality, style, environmental impact from manufacture, distribution, & disposal of product, human impact on sweatshop laborers for instance, animal impact if product is made from animal, local or distant manufacturer local, local or corporate store)

- How often have you thrown away or given up items before they actually wore out? Why do you think this happens? Do you think the manufacturers had its obsolescence in mind when they designed the product?
- With a growing population and dwindling resources what do you think would be the ultimate outcome if we don't significantly reduce our consumption?
- When we acquire more things, does this make us happy? If so, for how long?
- If we decide to acquire less, what choices do we have? (i.e., purchase styles that tend not to go out of style, purchase products that are more durable even if they are more expensive, only purchase when you need something, repair products if possible, buy used products, get by with less)
- What would change in our lives if we didn't shop as much? (more time to do other things we might not otherwise have time for, have more money, not be a slave to fashion, ability to work less hours)
- How many of you have heard that the economy will improve if we buy more things? Where else might that financial capital be spent if we chose to limit our shopping? (i.e., education, housing for the poor, nutrition)

A great web site on consumerism with plenty of links is [www.ecofuture.org](http://www.ecofuture.org).

Another one is [www.verdant.net](http://www.verdant.net).

Comment – Wal\*Mart is cheap, and we can't afford to go to fancy stores.

Response – There are people who object to some of Wal\*Mart’s policies. These people claim that Wal\*Mart contributes to urban sprawl, small town decay, unfair labor practices, and sweatshop labor. These, they claim, are the hidden social costs behind Wal\*Mart’s low prices. If you’re opposed to some of Wal\*Mart’s policies, and are looking for comparable low price options, what choices do you have?

One option might be to shop at thrift stores. You can often find items – furnishings and apparel, for instance – that are much less expensive than items found at Wal\*Mart.

Another option may be to contact Wal\*Mart management and let them know if you’re displeased with some of their actions and/or policies. Explain what actions you’re willing to take if they don’t change their actions and/or policies (e.g., boycott their stores, shop elsewhere, let friends and family know why you’re displeased with Wal\*Mart).

Another option might be to make a list of all the items you regularly buy at Wal\*Mart. Can you do without some of these items? Can you think of substitutes for some items on the list (e.g., vinegar for some cleaning products, library books for purchased books)? Can you find other stores that you don’t have objections to – locally based stores, for instance - that can sell you the items you need at a reasonable price? Remember, buying from a locally owned store generally keeps the money in the community as opposed to going to corporate headquarters in another state.

Comment – My using plastic or paper cups aren't going to make any difference. It's the big companies that need to change.

Response – I hear this a lot from people I talk to, and actually I used to say the same thing myself. There was a time when I looked at the world's problems such as environmental destruction, animal exploitation, and human oppression and decided these problems were too big for me to deal with; I was, after all, just one person. I was telling this to a friend and he said to me, "You know, if you think you can't make a difference, you never will".

It was through my studies and through my discussions with others involved in social justice issues that I came to the conclusion that just by me not using plastic or paper cups indeed wasn't going to fix the world. But I also came to realize that I wasn't the only one making choices. Others were also taking action to make the world a better place. And my actions didn't just affect me, they affected those around me, too. By consciously making decisions to lessen my negative impacts on the planet, I became an example of how it was possible to live in a way that did the most good and the least harm. And it wasn't painful for me to do either. When some people saw what I was doing, they actually made kinder choices, too.

There's a quote, which has been an inspiration to me ever since I first read it. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world". Creating a better world was something I wanted very badly, and I knew that if I wasn't willing to

make the changes in my own life to bring about that better world, then I had no right to ask anyone else to help bring it about either.

I totally agree with you when you say that big companies need to change. What do you think primarily motivates these big companies? Profits. So what better way to speak to them than in terms of their bottom line? I believe that every dollar I spend is a vote for the product or service that I'm purchasing. If I spend my money on a product that damages the environment, I'm essentially telling that company to make more of that product and never mind the damage you're doing to the environment because it's not really that important to me. If, on the other hand, I don't buy their products and instead purchase products from a company that either helps or at least does not damage the environment significantly, then I'm saying make more of this product because I like it and I like that I'm not harming the environment. So instead of buying plastic or paper cups that I throw away, I buy a reusable cup and never throw it away.

I can also let the companies that do harm the environment know by writing, calling, or e-mailing them and letting them know that the environment is very important to me and that I won't buy their products as long as they continue to neglect their impact on the environment. I will also let the companies know that I am encouraging others to do the same. What other ways do you think we can pressure companies into being more environmentally responsible?

For me it comes down to trying to live my life according to my values as best as I'm able. I know I'll never be perfect, but I try my best to live my life so as to do the least harm possible. As I find new ways to do this, which I do practically every day, I consider this a blessing not a burden. Because one day forty or fifty years from now when my grandkids ask me what I did to help try to save the planet, I don't want to tell them I did nothing because I didn't think I could make a difference. I want to tell them that I cared enough about them and the planet that I did everything I could. I believe I can and will make a difference in bringing about a better world, and I believe you can and will, too.

Question – How did you get to our school? I bet you drove. Isn't that hypocritical?

Response – {If you don't drive, this could be a short answer; however, the student is likely trying to find inconsistencies in what you're advocating and what you actually practice. The type of response that follows could be used if a student highlights an aspect of your lifestyle that may be in contradiction with your message. Let's assume in this case I did drive to the school.}

Yes, I did drive to get here today. And as we've talked about earlier, the burning of fossil fuel is one of the leading causes of global warming and also air pollution. Let's look at my choice to drive and explore things I might want to consider and other options I might have instead of driving.

First let's look at my car. It's a 1996 Honda Accord. It gets about 30 m.p.g. I live on the south side of Chicago and of course your school, Downers Grove South is in the western suburb of Downers Grove – approximately twenty miles from where I live. It took me fifty minutes to get here this morning. What other options do you think I might have? {wait for responses and discuss them}

Instead of driving my car to get here, I could have taken public transportation, which would have picked me up a block from my apartment and delivered me to a few blocks from the train station. I would have taken the train that would have taken me to Downers Grove. From the train station I would have had to have someone pick me up or called a taxicab to take me the four miles to get here to your school. Or, assuming good weather, I could have walked from the Downers Grove train station to your school.

The people operating the train don't allow bicycles on the train; otherwise, I might have been able to ride my bike from my apartment to the Chicago train station, then from the Downers Grove train station to the school.

I could have ridden my bike all the way from my apartment to your school – a long haul, but not impossible. Because of the traffic lights and congestion it probably would have taken nearly two hours to get here, though. With all of the materials I wanted to bring for you, I probably wouldn't have been able to manage.

Another option would be for me to purchase a car that gets better gas mileage – perhaps a hybrid car like the Honda Insight or Toyota Prius. These vehicles typically get fifty to sixty miles per gallon. And they cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000. A little expensive for me right now, but perhaps the dollar savings in gas might eventually help pay for it. I may also look into all the places I currently spend my money and find ways to cut back so that I might be able to afford one of these vehicles.

I could also choose to only accept speaking engagements in the city of Chicago, which would allow me to commute by bus or subway. I've hesitated doing this, at least up until now, because there are no humane educators serving the schools out here. To me, offering these programs out here has meant accepting certain tradeoffs, like having to drive my car to get here.

This was a terrific question and I believe it's an excellent example that asks us to explore all the options we have to live more lightly on the planet. As in many of the choices we face every day, the answer may not always be clear-cut. I'll certainly continue to give this more thought and hopefully have the wisdom and courage to make the choice that ultimately does the most good and the least harm. Thank you for helping me.

Question – Aren't leather and wool better for the environment than petroleum-based shoes and clothes?

Response – This is an excellent question and the type of question we should continuously ask ourselves when faced with the many choices in our lives. What can I do that causes the least and does the most good? Let's look at our choices when it comes to our shoes and clothing.

Leather and wool production and petroleum-based clothing production all, unfortunately, result in some environmental damage. Converting hides into leather is a heavily chemical intensive process, which actually utilizes over 100 chemicals (Khan, n.d.). Also the process of tanning makes the leather products non-biodegradable. In addition, we need to consider the pollution caused by raising the animals on factory farms, not to mention the misery suffered by the animals in these conditions – this is true for both the cows and the sheep that produce the leather and wool products, respectively. And of course the petroleum industry, which produces the materials needed for petroleum-based shoes and clothes, has a history of causing major environmental damage such as spills and refining related pollution.

Realizing that both types of clothing have certain flaws, what other choices do you think we have to cause less harm? One thing we can do is to purchase products made from organic cotton, hemp, or other natural products. Also, many products are now made with recycled human made products such as rubber or plastic. Another thing we can do is to buy our clothing products from second-hand stores. We can choose to repair shoes and clothing when it becomes necessary instead of getting rid of them. And finally,

maybe the most important thing we can do is to take good care of the shoes and clothing we own so it will last a long time.

Things to Consider – Listed below are some useful web sites on this topic.

<http://www.cowsarecool.com/enviro.html>

[http://www.jivdaya.org/a\\_shoppers\\_guide\\_to\\_leather\\_alternative.htm](http://www.jivdaya.org/a_shoppers_guide_to_leather_alternative.htm)

<http://www.woolisbaad.com/environment.asp> - PeTA site.

<http://www.vegsource.com/joanne/qa/qawool.htm> - why wool is bad.

<http://www.vegsource.com/joanne/qa/qalthr.htm> - why leather is bad.

[http://www.woolgroup.co.nz/innovation/anim\\_welfare.html](http://www.woolgroup.co.nz/innovation/anim_welfare.html) wool industry touting its environmental record.

<http://www.tannerscouncilct.org/perspective.htm> leather industry touting its usefulness.

Question – Are you a hippy? Are you a tree hugger?

Response – That's a very interesting question. Why don't you give me your definition of a hippy and a tree hugger?

Instead of placing a label on myself to define who I am, I prefer to define who I am by identifying what it is I truly care about and by looking at my actions.

What are some of the things I truly care about? My family, young people, people who are exploited, animals who are oppressed, the wilderness, future generations, the air, the water, the soil, the natural beauty of the world, freedom, my community, equality, honesty, compassion. What are some of the things you really care about?

What about some of the things I do to help what it is that I care most deeply about? I try to lessen my impact on the planet by living as simply as I can. I do this by eating lower on the food chain; in other words, eating mostly fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and not eating animal products. This helps the animals, the environment, and exploited animal agriculture workers. I buy mostly organic foods. This keeps dangerous pesticides off of the land, my food, and from the workers who grow and handle it. I don't own an automobile; instead, I walk, ride my bike, or take public transportation. This limits the amount of emissions put into the air, as well as eliminates the demand on resources to produce an automobile. I compost my table scraps instead of adding them to a landfill. I volunteer in my community to keep it strong and vital. I try to pick up trash when I'm outside to help keep the land and water cleaner. I participate in protests that attempt to bring certain injustices to the public's attention. How about all of you - what are some of the things you do to help the people and things you care most deeply about?

So am I a hippy or a tree hugger? I'll leave that for you to decide.

Question – Slavery made some of the things we do today possible.

Response – I think it's safe to say that slaves were very productive people and in many cases made large sums of money for their “masters.” They were involved in constructing roads, houses, public buildings, and other projects that endure to this day. And at least some of the money that might otherwise have gone to paying wages to these slaves was probably invested in other ventures that increased the standard of living for the society of whites.

But let's reflect on the lives of the individual slaves, those exploited to achieve this productivity we enjoy. What must it been like to be taken by force from their native Africa? To make the 4,000 mile transatlantic journey while traveling in abysmal conditions? To live their entire lives in captivity? To have no choice in where they lived or worked? To be beaten and humiliated? To be compensated for long hours of hard work with nothing more than food, clothing, and shelter?

And now we must look on our actions that either knowingly or not support today's slavery. Because there are individuals today that, believe it or not, live as slaves. To do this we must look more closely at the origins of the products we buy and the conditions under which they were made. We must closely scrutinize our financial investments to ensure we are not funding companies that utilize slave labor.

It's not possible to go back in time and erase slavery from our past, but it is possible to act to erase slavery from our future.

Things to Consider – An excellent book on slavery as it exists today, I recommend, *Disposable People*, by Kevin Bales (1999).

Comment – You know, I just have problems with those people. It's just wrong to be gay.

Response – How do you think it would feel for a gay person in this room to hear you say that? Imagine if someone were to say that about a quality that you had that you kept secret? How would you feel?

Tell me the reason(s) you think it's wrong to be gay. {Possible responses would include, the bible says it's a sin, they act different or weird, it's unnatural}

It's important to remember that each of us in some ways is different from everyone else. And believe it or not some of the ways that you may be different may actually cause resentment in other people. But that doesn't give those people a right to harm you or show you disrespect.

Let me ask you a few hypothetical questions: What if you were the only person in this class or even in this school that felt it was wrong to be gay and everyone was offended by your opinion? What if they had a problem with your opinion and thought you were just wrong? What if they decided to act out in a violent way against you because of your beliefs even though you were never disrespectful or intolerant toward anyone?

You don't have to think it's good to be gay, but it's important to remember that that people who are gay are people with feelings just like you and they deserve at minimum to be shown tolerance and respect.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Once one assumes an attitude of intolerance, there is no knowing where it will take one. Intolerance, someone has said, is violence to the intellect and hatred is violence to the heart" (M.K. Gandhi: Excerpts and Quotations).

Question – If you could make everyone in the world vegetarian, would you? Would you outlaw meat?

Response – I will admit the idea of compelling everyone to obey my authority and become vegetarian is mildly intoxicating. But seriously, the reason I decided to pursue a career in humane education was because I wanted to help bring about a world free of injustice, exploitation, and domination. But if I compelled people to act according to my wishes, and perhaps against their own, I would by my own actions do more to create a

world that is unjust, exploitative, and oppressive; instead, I would rather inform, inspire, and empower people to look at their lives and make changes to live more humanely. Once people see and understand the benefits a humane lifestyle brings to themselves, to others, and to the natural world, I strongly believe they would support most legitimate humane laws that were proposed.

As a society comes to agree on core values and principles, it passes laws to uphold them. That's why slavery was outlawed in this country, why women were given the right to vote, and people with different skin colors finally allowed to marry. I support the democratic process, and so I do my part to promote humane choices through education. Perhaps that will lead toward legislation to protect animals who are still mostly unprotected in this country.

Things to Consider – You may want to bring into the discussion the concept of acting on the basis of what is lawful and acting on the basis of what is moral. Ask students what the difference is?

Question – Are you saying it's better to be vegetarian?

Response – Growing up as a child, I ate a standard American diet, which included animal products like meat, dairy, and eggs; processed foods like potato chips, white bread, and french fries; foods with a high-sugar content like candy, soda, and snack cakes; and non-organic fruits and vegetables. I stopped eating meat because I didn't want

to support an industry that treated animals in a way I considered inhumane. I later learned of the environmental impacts of factory farming, the adverse health consequences of an animal-based diet, and the ill treatment of many animal agriculture workers. These things that I learned reinforced my decision to be vegan. A vegan diet, by the way, typically does not contain any animal products such as meat, dairy, and eggs.

In addition to cutting out animal products, I now mostly eat organic fruits, vegetables, and grains because I believe pesticides do harm to the environment, to the workers who have to handle the pesticides, and to my own health. I've also drastically cut down on processed foods and foods that contain a lot of refined sugars and grains. These processed food products often contain a lot of calories, but very little nutritional value.

I do my best to eat a variety of foods and use supplements in some cases to ensure I get the nutrients I need. I also make sure to get plenty of exercise. I believe that the combination of my diet and my exercise routine are the primary reasons I feel as healthy as I do today.

It's important for me to live my life according to my values. One of my primary values is to do the least harm and most good. For me personally, my decision to be vegetarian is in line with that philosophy. It's up to each of us individually to decide how our values relate to our food choices and lifestyles.

Things to Consider – For a list of health and diet facts and statistics refer John Robbins's book *Food Revolution*.

Question – What do you eat?

Response – {In my response here, I will assume that a discussion has already taken place on factory farming.}

Since a big part of my philosophy on eating is to do the least harm possible to myself, to others, and to the environment, I've decided the best way to do this is to eat a completely vegetarian diet. This means I choose to eat no animal products.

Eating no animal products means avoiding foods such as meat –yes, this includes fish, - dairy products, and eggs. One reason I've chosen to do this is because many nutritional studies have concluded that a complete vegetarian diet can reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and other common deadly diseases. Also, many cases of food poisonings are attributable to food derived from animals. We've already discussed the mistreatment of animals and the environmental damage caused by factory farms – this is another big reason why I've chosen a vegetarian diet.

In addition to avoiding animal products, I also try to avoid processed foods such as candy bars, cookies, potato chips, soft drinks, and french fries. These foods are typically high in calories but low in nutritional value. It's probably not a coincidence that

here in the U.S., where a third of all teens eat fast food on any given day, the incidence of obesity in teens is higher than in any other country.

And finally, I try to avoid produce that has been sprayed with chemical such as pesticides – organic foods. Why might I decide to do this? I do this many of the chemicals used to kill pests, funguses, and insects can also be dangerous to human health. And these chemicals can have an adverse affect on the biodiversity of the region where it's used.

Now you might be thinking to yourselves, “if I cut all that kind of food out, there'd be nothing left for me to eat.” Well, believe me, this is what I used to think, too. When I was younger, I ate a lot of all of these foods. When I first thought about switching my diet to a more healthful one, I was afraid I wouldn't find enough foods to keep me alive. And I certainly thought I'd be sacrificing taste. I'm happy to say I couldn't have been more wrong. I've discovered so many delicious and nutritious foods that I'm never at a loss for something good to eat.

I eat a lot of the same types of foods you do, but I use meat substitutes that are flavored and textured like meat. For example, I eat veggie chili, burritos, tacos, spaghetti, and pizza. This is a very small sampling of the foods that make up my diet. I've discovered that there are literally tens of thousands of vegetarian recipes. The standard American diet, sadly, ignores so many of the wonderful natural foods available to us. Why might this be?

In addition, there are other delicious meat substitutes like faux meats made from soy and wheat that mimic beef, chicken, lunchmeats, tuna, hamburgers, hot dogs, ribs, and sausages. There are delicious dairy substitutes such as soy milk, soy ice cream, and rice cheeses. I've found that nearly all animal products can be mimicked and the best part is the companies producing them are making them tastier all of the time. These products typically contain less fat, they're high in protein, and they contain no cholesterol. How many of you have tried meat substitutes?

And because I look to buy foods that haven't been sprayed with pesticides, I try to buy organic foods whenever I can. And to get the freshest produce possible, to support small-scale local farmers, and to conserve energy, I buy produce from the local farmer's market during the summer and fall months.

So when I'm not shopping the farmers market, where do I find all of these foods? I find a really good selection in stores like Whole Foods and Trader Joes. And even the mainstream stores in Chicago like Jewel and Dominick's are carrying more of these foods as the demand for them increases. Also, since more food companies are beginning to make these foods available, the prices are starting to come down, too.

And when I go out to eat, I can usually find a vegetarian dish in almost every restaurant. There are at least a dozen completely vegetarian restaurants in Chicago to

choose from. Again, as the demand increases for this kind of food, more restaurants will offer a greater variety and an even tastier selection.

The best part about my current diet is that it's very much in line with my values; to do more good and less harm.

Question – What can we do about these factory farms?

Response – That's a very good question. Let's take a look at why factory farms exist in the first place, and then we'll look at steps we can take to address the issue.

Large corporations are the ones that typically own factory farms. All for-profit corporations exist to make money. The way factory farms make money is to produce as much of their product (animal flesh, milk, or eggs) as cheaply as they can. To enable this, animals on factory farms are treated as units of production, raised as inexpensively as possible regardless of the physiological or psychological effect it has on the animal, as long as the animals stay alive long enough to survive until they are slaughtered.

Today in the U.S. nearly ten billion animals are killed for food each year.

Factory farms have developed in part to satisfy the high demand for meat and dairy products. While the meat and dairy industries certainly create demand for their products, it is the consumers' excessive reliance on animal products which

perpetuates factory farming. If chickens were not raised in intense confinement, but rather were allowed the run of a barnyard, people could not expect the quantity of chicken available today. (Weil, 1991, p.67)

There are some people who choose only to eat animal products from farms which humanely raise their animals. However, when you purchase animal products from a grocery store or a restaurant, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether the animal came from a humane farm or not.

There are others who choose to abstain from all animal products altogether. They do this to diminish the demand for these products. People who take this action believe that they are casting their vote with every dollar they spend, or don't spend.

Some people write letters to the editors of newspapers and other publications, educating readers on the plight of factory farm animals. They may also educate their family and friends.

Some write letters to their elected officials urging them to pass meaningful legislation to protect the welfare of farm animals.

What other actions can we take?

What actions are you personally willing to take?

Question – Don't you just want a big, fat hamburger sometimes? You're missing out!

Response – I became vegetarian about fourteen years ago, and I'll be honest, it wasn't all that easy for me to make the transition. I grew up eating meat and definitely had acquired a taste for it. To give up anything that's become a habit in your life is usually not easy.

I remember distinctly the last night I ate meat though. I was out to dinner with my father. We went to a steakhouse. At that point in my life, I was seriously considering becoming vegetarian, but still couldn't quite make the transition completely. So at this dinner I ordered a steak. It came out and as I looked at it and all I could picture was the cow that it once was. I thought about how she might have lived and died. And now here she was on my plate. I'm not sure why, but I ate the steak. Maybe I didn't want to see it go to waste or maybe I once again just did my best to not think about what it was that I was eating. But one thing was different; I didn't enjoy the meal at all. I went home and as I lay in bed, the visions of the cow were vivid in my mind. Before long, I dashed to the bathroom; I could no longer keep it in my stomach. That was the last time I ate meat.

Back then when I first became vegetarian, there were some meat substitutes – not very tasty at the time – but for the most part I relied on tofu, beans and rice, peanut butter and jelly. Today, I'm happy to say, that with new meat substitutes, I can easily satisfy

any taste I have for meat. I can get vegetarian hot dogs, burgers, ribs, chicken strips, barbeque beef, chili, pepperoni, sausage, ice cream, soy milk, the list goes on and on.

And honestly, the best part is that while I'm enjoying all of these delicious foods, I'm not contributing to the suffering and death of animals I care very much about. So I personally don't feel like I'm missing out at all.

Comment – Animals were put here for humans.

Response – That's an interesting statement. Why do you think that?

I have heard others make this statement and I've wondered if animals were put here for humans if that therefore justifies abusive treatment of animals. I believe that as long as we humans utilize animals for our own purposes we should at a minimum ensure that those animals are treated well and not be forced to experience cruelty and abuse.

For instance, a vast majority of the animals we raise for food are raised on factory farms - housed in tight confinement where most of their natural instincts are stifled for their entire lives. Many of these animals die of disease and injury before they ever make it to the slaughterhouse. Also, many factory-farmed animals endure painful mutilations, such as de-beaking, de-horning, tail-docking, teeth-clipping, ear-notching, branding, and castration, all without anesthesia. In fact, the federal laws that protect animals like dogs and cats do not apply to animals we raise for food.

Animals raised for food are no less capable of pain and suffering than the animals we raise as pets. If we acknowledge the fact that animals are capable of feeling pain, we have to ask ourselves if it is ethical to force them to suffer.

When I consider the choices I am confronted with every day and decide what I believe is ethical, I think of what the renowned humanitarian, Albert Schweitzer once said, " We must live daily from judgment to judgment, deciding each case as it arises, as wisely and mercifully as we can."

Things to Consider – To further this discussion, you may want to ask some of the following questions:

If we were to accept that animals were put here for humans, do you think that we humans have a responsibility to these animals to see that they don't needlessly suffer at our expense?

Where do you think we should draw the line as to what we humans can do to animals? How do you think we should apply our personal values when it comes to the way we treat animals?

When you look at the abuses inflicted upon some animals, you can ask yourself if those abuses are something you can morally support. In other words, do your own

personal values allow you to be a participant in the abuses, do they allow you to witness the abuses and remain silent, or do they allow you to be a consumer of products that involve abuses in their production?

Should we apply our personal values only to the way we treat humans?

Do you think abuses against animals in any way affect how we treat other humans and the rest of the world?

In the past, some humans attempted to justify mistreatment and abuses against certain groups of people, such as against blacks, women, and children claiming that these people were inferior or that the bible justified such actions. What do think of this and how might this relate to our views of animals?

When alternatives exist – in entertainment, food, fashion, cosmetics - that don't involve cruelty, do we have any moral obligation to choose them over choices that do in some way involve cruelty?

Consider how it might feel if there was an “other” species or form of life that was physically and intellectually superior to us, who claimed that we ourselves were put here for their benefit. How might we feel about that?

Comment – If hunters eat the animals they kill, then it's all right.

Response – What do the rest of you think, is it okay to kill an animal as long as we eat them? Should it matter what kind of animal we hunt?

There are those who argue that animals that live in the wild and are killed for food live a much better life than animals on a factory farm. I would agree with this statement. And though this statement may generally be true, there are those who claim even though the lives of wild animals may be better, those who are shot may face an excruciating death, perhaps even more so than domesticated animals killed in slaughterhouses.

For many animals shot in the wild, their deaths are anything but painless and speedy. Many animals are crippled by weapons such as shotguns and rifles, but even more suffer and are crippled from the use of primitive weapons, handguns, and bows and arrows.

Archers, for instance, hit and fail to retrieve more deer than they hit and successfully retrieve. Animals that are hunted also suffer from the stress of constantly being chased and shot at. This disrupts their eating and severely restricts their ability to store the fat and energy they need to survive the winter. Hunting can also disrupt certain animals' migration and hibernation.

Things to Consider –

A few Native cultures may still hunt to survive, but in the continental U.S. hunting is practiced primarily for sport. Several studies indicate that the average price of venison from deer shot in the woods -- after calculating the costs of firearms, ammunition, license fees, travel expenses, etc. -- is about \$20.00 per pound. Clearly, there are more economic ways to eat than by spending \$20.00 per pound for food. (The Fund For Animals, 2001)

Following is a list of studies referred to in the previous paragraph: J.G. Mitchell, *The Hunt*, Knopf, New York, 1980. J.G. Mitchell, "Our Wily White-Tailed Deer: Elegant but Perplexing Neighbors," *Smithsonian*, November 1982. E. Bauer, *Deer in their World*, Outdoor Life, New York, 1983. M. Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1993.

Question – We really have a big problem with too many deer. What choice do we have but to hunt them?

Response – That's a really good question and one that I've been asked a lot. We really do have a lot of deer, so let's look at some reasons why there are so many and explore some alternatives to reducing their populations other than hunting.

One reason there are so many deer is because state wildlife agencies enact policies that encourage deer populations to proliferate, with the primary purpose of

increasing targets for hunters. For instance, state wildlife agencies will clear forests and in its place plant vegetation enabling the deer population to thrive. These agencies often allow more bucks to be killed than does. This skews the sex ratio allowing more births as one buck can impregnate several does. And finally, state wildlife agencies promote the hunting of the natural predators of deer. These predators would otherwise naturally reduce deer populations, especially the weaker and sicker deer.

In the absence hunting, nature would keep the population of deer in check by accidents, disease, extreme weather, predation, and starvation. Hunters, however, typically don't search for weak and starving animals that would more easily succumb to nature's checks and balances. The hunters either shoot animals at random, or they seek out the strongest and healthiest animals in order to bring home the biggest trophies or largest antlers. This allows the weaker animals to propagate, instead of ensuring survival of the fittest.

So what are some alternative solutions are there to hunting? We could build fencing, designate land for wildlife, and utilize chemical birth control methods (Weil, 1991, p. 33). We could also reintroduce natural predators to deer habitat to help keep the deer population in check. We might also consider eliminating the methods, which I just mentioned, that perpetuate large deer populations.

What other things do you think we could do to ensure the deer population doesn't get out of control?

Comment – Vivisectors are evil. They should all be put in jail.

Response – I can remember when I first heard about vivisection, I felt sick to my stomach. Thinking about innocent animals suffering can be very, very painful. I also remember having similar feelings to yours. I wished the most awful things on the people I saw hurting these animals. I wanted no mercy for them. I really thought this way for a long time. I would think that if only there was some way to make these people suffer like the animals suffered then things might be all right.

After some time, I started to realize that having all this hatred for these people didn't make me feel any better and it certainly wasn't doing any good for the animals. And it was only after I did a lot of reading, after I had actually spoken with some people involved in vivisection, and after I had given it a great deal of thought, that I began to realize the people that experiment on animals are not themselves bad people.

It's important to remember that most people involved in vivisection feel they are providing a valuable service to humans. They believe they are helping to alleviate human suffering or with their findings adding to society's collective knowledge. Those involved in vivisection today were most likely taught in school that vivisection was acceptable and actually required to conduct sound medical research.

When I think about someone experimenting on animals, I try to remind myself of times when my own actions have directly or indirectly hurt animals. I think we can

probably all think of instances in our lives where we didn't always make the kindest or most compassionate choice, right? I realize that I'm not perfect and that I'm also not evil. I believe the same is true of those who experiment on animals.

Are there constructive things that you and I can do to help the animals, to make things better for them? I believe there are.

What are some things you think we can do help alleviate the pain and death of animals that may be used in medical experiments? (Let them come up with a list and add to it if necessary. The list might include: contacting companies that conduct or support animal experiments and asking that they consider adopting alternative testing methods; contacting their government representatives and asking them to introduce laws to phase out animal experimentation; contacting animal welfare organizations to learn other ways to help the animals; talking to friends and family about vivisection - the effects on animals and possible alternatives; supporting charities that don't experiment on animals; buying products not tested on animals).

So we can see that there are a lot of positive steps we can take to make things better for the animals. We can look at our own actions and change what we can to do more good and less harm. And we can do many different things to try to bring about change in our society so that we no longer accept the suffering of animals as a fair tradeoff for medical advancement.

For me, it's been a whole lot easier to take these positive steps if I remove the heavy burden that hatred places on my heart.

Comment – They should test products and medicines on prisoners instead of animals.

Response – What do the rest of you think about that – should they test products and medicines on prisoners instead of animals?

If we did allow testing on prisoners, what types of tests should we allow?

Should all prisoners be subjected to these tests?

What if some of the prisoners used in testing are actually innocent?

How would you feel if a loved one of yours was in prison – rightly or wrongly – and was subjected to these tests?

When I saw animals suffering in animal experiments it made me very angry. I was angry with the experimenters for inflicting this pain and suffering. Why were they doing this? How would they like it if those same experiments were done to them? Maybe that's what these experimenters needed was a taste of their own medicine. After much thought, I came to the conclusion that inflicting more pain and suffering wasn't going to solve anything. I knew there had to be an answer that didn't involve pain and suffering – an answer that helped to alleviate pain, not perpetuate it. Mahatma Gandhi once said, “An eye for an eye only makes the whole world blind.”

Are there other methods to test products and medicines other than testing on people or animals? {possibilities might be to focus on preventing diseases and illnesses instead of treating symptoms and potential cures; only test on volunteer subjects, which may include prisoners; put more resources into developing alternative tests such as computer simulation and in vitro techniques; develop only essential drugs}.

## Chapter 4

### Summary and Conclusions

This ILP project has allowed me to use much of what I learned over the past two years in the IMED program. The FAQ guide was comprehensive in subject. While answering the questions in the guide, I was able to conceptualize responses to challenging classroom questions and comments. This will undoubtedly prove very valuable as I begin to offer more classroom programs.

Through this project I was not only able to think through how I would respond to individual questions, but I also developed a process by which I plan to respond to all questions posed to me. I did this by developing a checklist of things to remember whenever I respond to student questions.

I intend to add questions and responses to this guide over time. And as I discover new information, I will also update the responses to some of the questions already appearing in the guide. I can picture this guide to be a work-in-progress for the rest of my career in humane education.

I hope this guide is as valuable to the reader as it was to me, the writer.

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**OBJECTIVE**

*A Humane Educator position in a highly respected social justice organization that will utilize my education, experience, strong interpersonal skills, and effective communication abilities.*

**KEY QUALIFICATIONS**

- } Currently developing yearlong humane education curriculum for high school students, as well as numerous other humane education programs and activities.
- } Highly articulate and effective communicator; able to convey ideas and information in succinct, easy-to-understand manner.
- } Strong relationship skills with ability to interact effectively with young children, teens, and adults.
- } Participated in public demonstrations on various social issues including animal testing, factory farming, circus animals, puppy mills, fur industry, Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and genetic engineering.
- } Written hundreds of letters to politicians, business leaders, and publications on a variety of social justice issues.
- } Responsible for introducing a vegetarian lifestyle to several friends and family members.
- } Vegan for more three years; vegetarian for fourteen.

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