

Title: Animal Rights, Human Wrongs: Granting Primates Protection through Non-human Personhood

Presenter: Jordyn Villanueva, Riverside City College

Mentor: Laura Greathouse

Primates are often utilized in medical experiments due to their 98% biological relation to human mammals. However, recent studies indicate that the emotional and cognitive capacities of primates are exceedingly complex and even suggest cultural development within several primate species. Although primate testing is common within medical research, the discovery of their multifaceted intelligence warrants the urgency of granting primates non-human personhood in the United States.

Countries such as Germany, Austria, and New Zealand have already banned great ape research largely due to the intelligence and sentience primates possess. Chimpanzees for instance, have been observed utilizing language and communication amongst their species. According to scientist Amie Kalan, these communicative behaviors “show evidence for cultural variation” (Kalan). Many primate species are also highly social beings, whose mental health greatly depends upon extensive social stimuli on a daily basis. Along with their capacity for social intelligence, primates exhibit levels of emotional intelligence as well. Therefore, “non-human hominids’ should enjoy the right to life, freedom and not to be tortured” (Glendinning). The idea of granting primates non-human personhood is often misunderstood and can be daunting for some. However, it is important to recognize that, “the idea of granting personhood rights to nonhumans would not make them equal to humans” but rather, “would obligate governments to protect [animals]” from abuse (Johnson). Although this law would not grant primates complete protection against experimentation or varying forms of abuse, it is certainly a small step towards eliminating animal injustice from our nation’s social norm.

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