

Animal Advocacy or Cultural Imperialism? Asian Animal Rights Advocacy and Racialization

From the Taiji Dolphin Drive Hunt, Dog Festivals in Yulin, to The San Francisco China Town live market, Asian communities have been a prime target for animal rights (AR) advocacy, with campaigns often resulting in xenophobic, culturally imperialist and racially charged interventions in these communities. These interventions fail to acknowledge the existence of AR advocacy in these communities as well as the genealogical necessities which animated these animal practices, such as post WWII and nuclear warfare induced poverty, socioeconomic disarray and structural racism. Social science indicates that a movements success is highly dependent on its ability to communicate across cultures and barriers to build coalitions (Beamish and Luebbers 2009; Gamson 1990), thus the importance of, “bridge-builder” activists-those who bring groups together under shared values and, “common discourse” (Keck and Sikkink 1999; Tarrow 2002) is undeniable. I’m proposing to become the bridge-builder of AR between for the Asian and Asian American community with Western AR advocacy. From July to August I will be traveling to Japan to research the budding (but often erased) AR activism in Japan. I will be doing qualitative research, conducting in depth personal interviews with major actors in the Japanese AR community, ethnographic fieldwork, and content/discourse analysis of both primary and secondary sources of both Japanese and Western perspectives. I intend to draw upon my research to: (1) produce a research paper analyzing the racial/cultural dynamics of AR activism in a Japanese as well as racialized Asian context more largely. (2) Highlight the current and historical efforts of Asian AR activism as well as trace the genealogy and political economy of the targeted animal practices beyond Western narratives of “backwards cultures.” (3) Using this knowledge as an organizer of one of NYC’s only AR activist of color groups to support Asian AR and anti-racist activism. (4) Utilize it as preliminary work when I apply to the Fulbright scholarship with the intention of doing a year long continuation of my work that I intend to further explore in my future dissertation. Through my previous research on race and animal rights as a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, my experiences as a research assistant to Professor Yung-Yi Diana Pan, and my classes on qualitative research methods I have built a strong foundation for conducting this research. While my project is being supported by the Rosen fellowship, I would be honored by the opportunity to further explore my research and spread my advocacy through a scholarship like Thomas Tam which is specifically for the benefit of the Asian American community as I situate my project within the larger anti racist struggle of Asian/Americans against cultural imperialism and historical erasure, proving a centrality and focus to our historical advocacy.

Citations

- 1) Beamish, Thomas D. and Luebbers, Amy J. (2009) “Alliance Building across Social Movements: Bridging Difference in a Peace and Justice Coalition,” *Social Problems*.
- 2) Gamson, William A. (1990) *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth
- 3) Keck, Margaret and Sikkink, Kathryn. (1999) “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics” *International Social Science Journal* 51.
- 4) Tarrow, Sidney. (2002) “The New Transnational Contention: Organizations, Coalitions, Mechanisms” ,” paper prepared for presentation at the panel on “Social Movements and Transnational Social Movements,” APSA Annual Meeting, August 31, 2002, Chicago