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Step onto the Frontlines of Compassionate Activism

You want to step a little closer to the edge? This isn't for everyone. In fact, you're well-advised to take a good, hard look at your motives before stepping into this realm. It can't be confrontation you're looking for. We don't need any more hostility on the front lines. What we need are thoughtful, compassionate activists who have the courage to step outside their comfort zones to raise awareness for animals.

A Summer Break to Write Home About

From May to August 2004, 19-year-old college freshman Jeremy Beckham took to the road with his campaign to save primates. Traveling with stuffed monkey companions, bumper stickers, posters, videos and boxes of flyers, he visited eight American Primate Research Centers where government-funded bio-chemical lab research takes place on a large scale. Jeremy set up information tables wherever he traveled, sharing literature and details with passersby. He talked to hundreds of concerned citizens, many of whom

The journey from cruelty to compassion can take thousands of lifetimes — or it can take a single second.

— John Robbins

were unaware of what was going on in their backyards. He met with reporters and held candlelight vigils. This is compassionate activism on a grand, effective scale.

On the Ice Flows

Rebecca Aldworth was born in Newfoundland and grew up well aware of the Canadian seal hunt and its international reputation as an unnecessary, brutally cruel tradition. After seeing video footage of what was happening on the ice flows of northeastern Canada, she decided she had to do what she could to help the seals. In 2006 she made her eighth trip to the ice flows to document the seal hunt, video camera in hand, sending news from the front lines to media sources all over North America and spreading as much awareness as possible. She is now the Humane Society of the United States' Director of Canadian Wildlife Issues and has become a well-respected leader and compassionate voice in the movement to end the Canadian seal hunt forever.

Set Yourself up for Success

Activists often face considerable risk for their own safety, despite how compassionate and gentle their approach may be. There is a lot of passion on the front lines of any contentious issue, and animal welfare is no exception. Your personal safety, and the safety of those around you, can be greatly supported by good preparation.

Know your cause inside out. Be well informed and ready to communicate.

Be compassionate. No yelling, no judging and no attacking people for the way they choose to support their family.

Seek the guidance of an action group that knows your cause before you try to save the world on your own. They've been there before, and you can learn from their experience.

From Inside the Industry

Pravin Shah wanted to learn more about what goes on inside dairy farms, so he chose farms in the United States and India to visit. In the States, he chose a dairy that sells all its products directly to Ben & Jerry's, which advertises as being an ethical company. What he found, in both countries, was far from ethical. Pravin Shah instantly became a vegan after his dairy visits and began learning all he could about health, nutrition and an animal-free lifestyle. He now dedicates much of his time to sharing his knowledge with others in his role as president of a Jain study center in North Carolina.

Active for Animals

Jeremy, Rebecca and Pravin took a huge amount of courage with them on their journeys to help animals. There is an enormous groundswell happening, but we have a long way to go. As individuals, we can only be successful if we get more people excited about helping animals. We won't do it by pressuring them or scaring them. We can only do it by leading from our hearts and showing them positive solutions to get excited about.

- Center for nonviolent Communication: www.cnvc.org
- Greenpeace: www.greenpeace.org/international/getinvolved
- PETA's Animal Activist: www.animalactivist.com
- Ruckus Society: www.ruckus.org



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

Rebecca Aldworth out on the ice with a pup during the 2005 seal hunt in Eastern Canada.