

Pioneering animal advocate Caroline Earle White founded the American Anti-Vivisection Society in 1883. She wrote extensively for the organization's publication, *Journal of Zoöphily*, established in 1892, now called *AV Magazine*. Here, in her own words, we share excerpts of her important published work.

Legacy in a Journal

by Crystal Schaeffer

CAROLINE EARLE WHITE was nearly 60 years old when she launched the *Journal of Zoöphily* with her colleague Mary Francis Lovell. She had already helped to establish the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Women's Branch of the SPCA, and AAVS. Her activism is well documented in the century old pages of the *Journal*, and reflects White's legacy: the belief that any cruelty is immoral, regardless of who the victim is.

FIGHTING CRUELTY

White was pragmatic and strategic, focusing her efforts where she felt they could have the most impact and potential for lasting, meaningful change.

It will generally be admitted, I think, that I am one of the prominent anti-vivisectionists of this country, and it is well-known that I, together with a friend, founded the first anti-vivisection society in this country, besides having labored assiduously in the cause ever since. Some years, though, before [AAVS] was ever contemplated, I began to work against the cruelties of cattle transportation, a subject which has occupied much of my time ever since.... [T]he Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals introduced into Congress a bill providing that cattle and other animals should not be confined in cars connecting lines of railroad for more than twenty-eight hours without being taken out for food, water, and rest.... I decided to go to Washington...to see Senators...and make known to them the sufferings and consequent loss in weight of the cattle brought from the far West to our Eastern cities.... Our efforts were crowned with success, and...the act was passed....

I agree with you that the suffering of animals in transportation, and also in slaughtering, is greater than that in a large amount of the vivisectional experiments practiced in physiological laboratories, and for that reason I have almost entirely given up the eating of meat.... A thousand times the money we now spend would not stop [the shipment of cattle]. It will always go on while human beings use beef as an article of food, but it is practicable to diminish it, and that we are trying to do. The charge you make against us that we hate science with a mediaeval hatred is too absurd, as well as false, to be worthy of a moment's consideration. We hate cruelty, not science. —*March 1899, Vol. 8, No. 3, Pg. 27*

SPEAKING TO THE TOP

In White's days, pet dogs were at serious risk of being stolen and lost/stray animals at pounds were in danger of being collected by labs and used in experiments. With few laws or policies protecting animals, White urged top government officials, such as Philadelphia Mayor Edwin Stuart and President William Howard Taft, to take urgent action.

[To Stuart:] Is it not an outrage that the inhabitants of West Philadelphia are subjected constantly



AAVS Founder Caroline Earle White

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to the danger of having their pet dogs stolen from them and taken where they will be tortured for hours and perhaps days until death ends their suffering? Who that appreciates the beauty of a dog's nature, that recognizes his intelligence, his fidelity, his undying devotion to those around him, can help sympathizing with those families in their distress at the thought of what their much loved pets have endured? —*January 1893, Vol. 2, No. 1, Pg. 6*

[To Taft]: I am impelled to address you by the astonishment and, I may say, horror with which I have been inspired by the recent news from Washington that...dogs in the pound shall be given over...to the Bureau of Animal Industry for purposes of what is euphemistically termed "research;" in reality, vivisection... .

[C]ruelty...would be the result of the enforcement of this order and of such disgrace to our Government as this would imply and as such a desecration of our legislative power... The inoculation of the animals with different diseases is almost always accompanied by severe suffering. You will, I trust, excuse my urgency in this matter when I tell you that I was the first person to start the movement against vivisection in this country. Assisted most kindly by my friend Miss Adele Biddle, daughter of Nicholas Biddle, so well-known in connection with the United States Bank, we organized the [AAVS] twenty-seven years ago. May we hope that you will exert your power and influence to prevent the order...from going into effect, and that the Almighty God will reward you if you do this for the sake of the poor, ill-used animals... — *September 1910, Vol. 19, No. 9, Pgs. 100-101*

RESPONDING TO OPPONENTS

Criticisms of White and others who opposed animal experiments were often strident, referring to anti-vivisectionists as "crank[s]" who have "gone daft by nurturing a fad," while the *New York Medical Journal* called them "insane" and "know-nothings."

We pity the writer of this article, almost more than we condemn him, because he knows so little of what he is writing about, and because his grey matter appears to be in such a hopelessly muddled state. [W]hat we protest against is the long-continued torture of millions of innocent, helpless creatures for an extremely doubtful gain... We wish that the editors of various journals in the United States were better informed upon this subject. —*December 1893, Vol. 2, No. 12, Pg. 184*

Are we insane because we wish to stop such experiments as those of Dr. Phelps in the study of ankyloses of the joints, when he took dogs, and, twisting one of their legs over the backs in a cramped position, sealed them up in plaster-of-Paris, preventing their regaining a natural state and causing, as he himself admits, great suffering? Are we insane because we seek to prevent such atrocities as those of Dr. Castex in Paris, when, according to his own account, he beat dogs with a heavy wooden mallet or stone jar and refrained from giving them any anesthetic because, as he says, he could tell better by their moans and the efforts to escape how much they were bruised...? —*June 1897, Vol. 6, No. 6, Pg. 67*

Dr. Grammer says at the beginning of his paper: 'Nor is vivisection cruel. It is the essence of cruelty if pain be inflicted for no worthy purpose, but make the motive great enough and the pain becomes justifiable.' But who, I will ask, is to be the judge of the purpose and the motive? Are a few powerful men united in the pursuit of any object, who claim that motive sanctifies their action, to be allowed to inflict atrocities upon helpless creatures, either human beings or the lower animals?...

We know that the higher animals have nerves, muscles, blood-vessels and bones, and the sensation is conveyed to their brains just as it is in our care. What reason, then, is there to suppose that they suffer less than we do?... Does anyone who has ever had a nerve touched

in the dentist's chair and almost jumped out of the seat believe that in the experiment called 'recurrent sensibility,' where a nerve is laid bare in a dog or cat and then stimulated with electricity without the administration of any anesthetic whatever, the pain is not the most intense one could imagine? No, there is nothing on earth more cruel than vivisection.... – *March 1906, Vol. 15, No. 3, Pg. 27*

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

White recognized the importance of engaging children to nurture compassion, and encouraged animal advocates to work together to create a better world for animals.

From humble beginnings has sprung an immense, encircling atmosphere of mercy, justice, and compassion covering nearly all of the United States and extending even to the territories. To gain this longed-for and glorious end, a great amount of work has been necessary from a number of earnest devoted souls, and one of the greatest aids to the march of humanity has been the education of the children in kindness, not alone to the lower animals who they are taught to love and protect, but to every living creature, to their parents, teachers, schoolmates, friends, and to every unfortunate, afflicted member of the human family. –*October 1910, Vol. 19, No. 10, Pg. 116*

'An Unaccountable Fact!'

We have a complaint to make of the lukewarmness of the old and early formed Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals on the subject of anti-vivisection. A vast amount of work for the anti-vivisection cause has been and is being done, but it is the work of other and more newly formed organizations. These are mostly owing to the work of women; that is, their foundation has been, but of course they have been greatly assisted by men.

May all these organizations, old and new alike, preserve the divine spark which has led them to enroll themselves in the battle against vivisection, and which we pray may lead them to fight on until this monstrous cruelty of torturing God's helpless creatures with agonizing experiments be done away with forever!

–*June 1916, Vol. 25, No. 6, Pg. 83 AV*

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AAVS WAS FOUNDED BY CAROLINE EARLE WHITE in 1883, precipitated in large part by early experiences as President of the Women's Branch of the Pennsylvania SPCA, which she established 14 years earlier. The story is recalled several times in the *Journal of Zoöphily*:

"The first thing necessary to do was to build a new 'pound' and one comfortable for the dogs in every respect.... We had scarcely advanced in our humane attempt any farther than this, when one day the President [Mrs. White]...received a visit from Dr. Horatio C. Wood, saying, 'I have come, Madam, to ask you to let us have some of the dogs you have taken, for our experiments at the University [of Pennsylvania].'"

"'I shall have to decline,' replied the President calmly, although shaking with excitement. 'We could give up our dogs for no such purpose.'"

[Later], "a note came from Dr. S. Weir Mitchell containing the same petition for animals for experimentation at the University." [In reply],

"I HAVE COME, MADAM, TO ASK YOU TO LET US HAVE SOME OF THE DOGS YOU HAVE TAKEN, FOR OUR EXPERIMENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY [OF PENNSYLVANIA]."

"saying that as the Society of which she was the head was opposed to cruelty to animals, she could not consent to give up dogs to the very same treatment they were opposing."

[However], "The doctors did not yield. They at once applied to City Council, asking that body to force the Society to give up the dogs." [But officials agreed that] "it would be the height of inconsistency for an organization that had been formed to prevent cruelty, to aid in the very object it had been formed to prevent."

There was "an idea that we could unite on a compromise Bill with the doctors who were opposed to us... . We decided upon a Bill that we and also a deputation of the doctors were to take up to the [Pennsylvania] Legislature."

"We declined making any speech [before the Legislative Committee], as we had supposed that there was an entire agreement... . What was our amazement when [Dr. Wood] made no mention of it whatever, but at once launched out into a perfect glorification of vivisection, telling of how much benefit it had been to mankind."

"I felt dissatisfied...and I introduced" in 1887, at one of the meetings, "a resolution" that would not allow future compromises, and set the organization as "in favor of the abolition of all experimentation upon animals... ."

"Since then our Society has worked on in the greatest discouragements, and in the face of insufferable obstacles."