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Blogging about research issues at Ohio State University



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The thugs are coming . . .

Posted on July 13th, 2011 by earlelland

People who lurk in the shadows, waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting and vulnerable, have a distinct name. We call them “thugs,” and they are universally scorned and abhorred as bullies and worse by most in modern society. Civilized folk despise these cretins and many will be aghast at the news:

The thugs are coming to campus.

Some months ago in this space, [we told readers](#) of a new campaign brought on by radical animal rights protestors in Florida that threatened to target undergraduate students in the biomedical sciences whose curriculum might include research involving animals.

The campaign, spurred by an activist website called [Negotiation Is Over](#), urged its followers to attack.

Students, the website said, are “infinitely more susceptible to negative and inflammatory publicity,” and that “when education fails, smear campaigns can be highly effective. Abusers [meaning science students involved in animal research] have forfeited all rights to privacy and peace of mind.”

Led by activist [Camille Marino](#) in Florida, this proposed attack on students seeking an education, and possibly a career, in the sciences was broadly seen as stepping over the line. While activists have destroyed property, harassed scientists and businesses and proposed violence for years, targeting students in this way somehow seemed worse.

And many of us in the research community expressed concern but quickly assumed the

“campaign” was just so much more inflammatory rhetoric.

We were wrong.

That website reported the other day that the campaign had begun on university campuses in Florida, New York and Michigan where students and parents showing up for summer orientation sessions and other welcoming events were met with leaflets offering rewards for the identities of incoming students in the sciences. The handouts read:



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"Students, Earn Easy Money!!!

"Negotiation Is Over would like to pay you \$100 cash for information about each biomed student who is learning to experiment on animals in your university.

"Provide us with the following, [and] you can quit your part time job:

- *Name of vivisection student*
- *Picture of student*
- *Address, phone and any other contact info*
- *Pictures and/or summary of animal experiments in which student is involved."*

A phone number and email address was provided to request payment for such information. Photos on the website showed that that the handouts had been plastered throughout university buildings; apparently as "evidence" that the campaign's "soldiers" were on the attack. (On the blog, Marino sent "special thanks to our comrades embedded in enemy camps.")

Now university campuses, especially public ones, are havens for advocates and activists for all sorts of causes, and that's as it should be. Educational institutions should be arenas for dissenting opinions and points of view. Most certainly are.

But as open as these parts of society are, there are limits on *causes celebres* and on what their proponents can do. And some animal rights activists, because of their violent actions and those of their peers, have lost their right to rebel, at least in the eyes of the majority of the public. Moreover, law enforcement has, in recent years, determined that some in the animal rights movement qualify as domestic terrorists and should be treated appropriately.

A recent Zogby poll showed that 53 percent of Americans support the use of animals in research while only 26 percent oppose it. Another 21 percent were "undecided."

Some might see this new campaign is simply an escalation in grade-school bullying, or simply the latest tirade from another wacko group. But that would be wrong, as well as risky.

Americans have, from the very beginning, valued their personal right to choice in their lives above nearly all else. This new campaign specifically targets that right. Efforts aimed at intimidating students simply because of their choices of study, should be vigorously condemned and opposed, and those involved in such intimidation should be made to pay the price. *__EH*

An Update:

The first comment the blog posting above netted was from the chief activist behind this latest animal rights campaign, Camille Marino. She accused me of being "*one of the blood-money soulless animal torture cheerleaders that sit on the board of AMP* (Americans for Medical Progress, an organization supportive of humane use of animals in research)."

That fact, that I serve on the board of this non-profit, pro-research organization, has little to do with Marino's call for the intimidation of students whose choice of majors may involve using animals in research. It in no way justifies her call to harass such students.

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Marino's vehemence and support of violence sets her apart from most other equally passionate animal rights advocates whose protests are respectful, rational and who refuse to incite illegal actions.

For that reason, we've rejected posting her comment, which ended with the poorly disguised threat that, "*My associates will be seeing you very soon!*" Assuming that this was an attempt at intimidation, she should know it didn't work. *EH*



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11 Responses to "The thugs are coming . . ."

[Camille Marino](#) // Jul 14, 2011 at 12:03 am

earle,

you're one of the blood-money soulless animal torture cheerleaders that sit on the board of the amp.

did you not get jackie's directive:

<http://negotiationisover.com/2011/07/13/amp-issues-security-alert-if-you-see-nio-call-the-joint-terrorism-task-force-immediately-2/>

please let me know if you need a copy of the 4-page warning she sent us.

i hate to see you so out of the loop like this.

my associates will be seeing you very soon!

camille

[Alexandra](#) // Jul 14, 2011 at 8:52 pm

My dear,

Well, I want to tell you that animals go to Heaven after their death, so that you wouldn't suffer too much for such memories, but, please, try to stop that, I could see the face of a poor suffering dog, I don't know, if you are the one with this idea, heart attacks on dogs, I don't know, an invention like that...please, try to think about the Mercy of God for his creatures, about the Mercy of God for a dear person for you, for example, a relative, a friend, you own child.

Love,

Alexandra

[Matt Foss](#) // Jul 18, 2011 at 1:33 am

She's clever, never explicitly condoning a crime on the blog. She gets to avoid liability for any attack perpetrated by her followers, even as she gives them all the information they need to carry it out. Does she fancy herself to be the Osama bin Laden of ecoterrorism?

Owen // Jul 22, 2011 at 1:18 pm

The thing to remember about Marino and her gang is that they work by trying to create fear amongst their targets, so the best response is to be aware but stay calm. In the unlikely event that any student is sold out and targeted as a result of this campaign the most appropriate response would be for their fellow students and mentors to rally around them in a very public show of solidarity and support. That would soon send the NIO scum scurrying back under their rocks.

Captain Obvious // Jul 24, 2011 at 3:29 pm

Granted, this group isn't going to win any congeniality contests. But, the way this blog reads (and has read in a previous post about the subject), it really seems like a personal beef between Earle and Camille. I just don't think an official OSU blog should be used for perpetuating personal disputes. It's pretty unprofessional. If Earle wants to get a Facebook profile and talk about it there, fine. This dispute, regardless of who started it or who deserves what, has little to no probative value to what should be the focus of this blog. In fact, I'm starting to think this blog has no focus.

I actually don't agree with the tactics used by this group, but I also don't think the way it is playing out in these blog posts is useful to anyone. If you're really not intimidated by these threats, the appropriate way to deal with them is to pay them no attention, not devote multiple blog posts to the subject. Publicly complaining about them is proving to them that they are winning. Don't forget, links to this blog are being mailed out every week to a big chunk of OSU. It doesn't bolster the reputation of OSU to start a flame war with somebody on an official university blog.

Also, being a public university blog, nobody's comments should be removed. OSU's PR machine has the annoying habit of sterilizing comments on pages subject to public disclosure that criticize the university in any way. Ask E. Gordon Gee.

[earleholland](#) // Jul 24, 2011 at 10:03 pm

It's really hard to take seriously comments from somebody called Captain Obvious but I'll try.

No this is not a personal spitting match between me and Camille. She and her group have threatened harassment and more to many researchers in the past and now has started a campaign to threaten undergraduate science students. It may be true that when we were kids, our mothers advised us to ignore the bullies but in effect, the scientific community has tried that approach for years and failed miserably. Talk to anyone in research leadership at major universities around the country and nobody is advocating ignoring these people. Law enforcement

agencies are aware and certainly are not ignoring this issue. Neither should we.

And as for the advice about what is appropriate for this blog, it seems that the person who created it, and who feeds it, should have a clear idea of its purpose, which was simply to talk about aspects of research beyond just the reporting for new findings, to offer a clearer picture of what research is all about.

Given the number of hits the blog gets with each posting, it's clearly striking a responsive chord with many, many readers. And yes, readers do appreciate the content and say so.

I'm not really clear what you're talking about regarding the removal of comments. Other than spam, all comments see the light of day. Camille's accusative posting is evidence of that. Nor am I clear about what you're suggesting about sterilizing content. We simply don't do that when talking about research.__EH

Benjamin // Jul 26, 2011 at 1:10 pm

Great work. This kind of threat to the undergraduate education is ridiculous and it is the university's responsibility to protect those interested in open-minded learning.

Rob Wakeman // Jul 28, 2011 at 5:31 pm

Thanks for making us all look like psychos, Camille.

Sincerely,
Every other vegan animal rights activist

[Animal rights activists target university researchers, students | Ohio Ag Net | Ohio's Country Journal](#) // Jul 29, 2011 at 10:01 am

[...] Holland, Ohio State University's assistant vice president for Research Communications, said those activists are increasingly targeting students pursuing degrees in fields known for relying on laboratory animals to conduct [...]

[Hundeerziehung](#) // Aug 30, 2011 at 1:36 pm

This is just ridiculous. I can't believe I just read that. Targeting university students in the sciences like that. You have got to be kidding. Targeting them like that and spreading fear, that's just outrageous. If I was a university president, I would put a stop to this very, very fast and decisively. This is just going to far and shouldn't be tolerated. It simply can't be.

[Xavier](#) // Nov 8, 2011 at 7:28 pm

Wow this all seems a bit extreme. There are other things to be concerned about after all human suffering is at an all time high right now. Just a thought. Either way great blog I can't wait to see what someone will say next.

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