Paw

Small Footprints That Can Change The World
November 19, 2010

When we acknowledge that all of life is sacred, and that each act is an act of choice, and therefore sacred, then life is a sacred dance lived consciously each moment. When we live at this level, we participate in a better world. – Scott Cloud Lee

You know that instantaneous feeling when an elevator drops, and your heart seems to skip a beat? That is the exact feeling I get when I look into the eyes of each and every animal at the Connecticut Humane society. Today was my first day on the job, my first day in an animal shelter, and embarrassingly, my first day I bawled my eyes out in public. It was a phenomenon I could not control, for I could not stop the stream of tears from falling down the steep curves of my face. There is such a large part of my heart that wants to do anything, and everything to help these animals, and give them the love they deserve.

It was day one, which meant I had to be trained on how to deal with some of the animals, and because I was not a professional or anything of the sort, I spent most of the day observing. Today, I really got a sense of the environment of the shelter. I was able to step outside of my comfort zone, and meet people that I would have never gotten the chance to meet—and that is a blessing within itself. I cannot fully explain the love of the people working for the shelter. One can feel the passion that radiates through the walls of the Connecticut Humane society the minute they walk into this loving safe haven for neglected animals. Everyone is so kind to each stranger that crosses through the threshold.

I wanted to put a quote written by Scott Cloud Lee at the top of this journal entry. This is because when I sat down to write about today, I referred
back to our class for inspiration. After today, I really could relate to this quote for it embodies my outlook on life. It is when we cherish each life, whether it is a puppy, kitten, or human, and recognize that those lives are sacred, we will live our lives to the fullest. I wholeheartedly believe that every life is
important, and has value. Therefore, to me, this quote means that by acknowledging the value of each life, and therefore helping to maintain the value, in turn, you are supporting a better world.

After much reflection of my day I have come to a new revelation, which came to me in quite a casual manner. The small footprints that I can make in this world can make a difference, and perhaps even change the world. Many people have said this to me, yet I never really believed it to be true. It is one of those revelations one needs to ponder on for oneself. The dogs with whom I kept company today actually taught me something for a change—for their paw-prints (so to speak), can change the world, too. They are changing the world by inspiring others like me to make a difference. This within itself can have a huge ripple effect on society.

After my revelation on the drive home from the Humane Society, I drew a connection with class. In “The Cave,” there was one prisoner who saw the light, among all the others; however, who, notably, was first blinded by such a light. I feel like that prisoner of society, and have finally seen the light. Seeing such hardship in the eyes of helpless animals showed me the light, and blinded me at first too. For the blindness represents perplexity—of what to do with this new discovery. After my eyes adjusted to the light, I could see more clearly than I ever could. I knew what I was to do with this discovery, and why I was the chosen “prisoner.” I want to
He who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.

–Immanuel Kant

do as well as I can, and help

that their small footprints to help others can make a difference. This is my goal,
my revelation, and my light bestowed upon me when I was a prisoner of my own consciousness.

November 20, 2010

I had such a feeling of confidence on day two of driving to the shelter. I felt as though I was in the exact right place, at the exact right time, doing exactly what I was meant to do. In *The Apology*, Socrates says to improve one’s soul, and that is exactly what I was doing.

My second day, I was immediately confronted with a challenge. Today, I was helping evaluate a dog that had come in last night. This dog had a very challenging life thus far. The sixteen-week-old black lab puppy was tortured and left to die alone in a diaper box at a gas station on the Berlin Turnpike. A man that heard the whimpering rescued the puppy out of the trash can. The puppy had glue in his eyes, nose, and ears. His back legs had multiple fractures. The puppy was brought into our shelter just in time, for only a few minutes more, the vets at shelter said, “he wouldn’t have made it.”

I spent the rest of the day keeping this dog company by feeding him treats (maybe a few too many), and petting the top of his head, for the rest of his body was bandaged up. It was still very questionable that the puppy was going to make it until tomorrow. This is because he was so young, and had a lot of pain to
overcome. However, I did not leave the puppy all day. I didn’t want to. I was
assigned other tasks such as stuffing envelopes and putting together donation
packets to mail out. I still did not leave this small puppy. We called him Charlie,
and I called him Charming Charlie. He had put a charm on me, and touched my
heart. I had this feeling that he was going to be okay if I stayed right by his side. I
knew that all he needed was a little love, and I was more than willing to provide
that for him.

Other volunteers warned me not to get too close to animals like Charming
Charlie. They said, while we are all here to help, sometimes there are things that
are “out of our hands.” I kept that in mind, but I also kept in mind what Socrates
once said. He said that a life that is not full of questions and thinking is not worth
living. Therefore, although I was advised not to spend so much time with this one
puppy, I had to disagree with these other volunteers. Although they are older than
I am, and have more experience at the shelter, I don’t think that I am doing harm
by giving Charlie such attention. I had this burning feeling deep in my soul that I
needed to be there for Charlie; maybe the other volunteers didn’t have this
feeling. But I did. I felt like I needed to do what I felt was right in my heart, even
if that meant disagreeing with the opinions of others (which is something I think
Socrates would approve of).

Through my experience today with Charming Charlie, I felt closer to
someone that I admire dearly. Her name is Inderjit Khurana, and she is a
phenomenal woman who has lived such an inspiring life. I have a high regard for
her work with children, for she is transforming their lives. In the same respect, I
hope to similarly change the lives of animals. There was one woman I remember that Inderjit Khurana spoke of, and her name is Yashuta. Yashuta was Inderjit’s student who broke the taboo of girls not going to school. She went on to high school to play the flute, and now is in a Music College pursuing her passion of music. Furthermore, in addition to inspiring young girls and me, Inderjit does all her work purely for the love of children. She has very little money, but in my eyes “divine intervention,” which is so inspirational.

November 21, 2010

Day three and Charming Charlie is still alive and on his way to getting better. I spent the day with him again, as well as multitasking other chores that the shelter needed help with. However, today I was also educated a little bit on euthanasia.

Euthanasia is defined as the act or practice of ending the life of an individual suffering from a terminal illness or an incurable condition, as by lethal injection or the suspension of extraordinary medical treatment. It can also be defined as a quiet, painless death¹.

A quiet painless death sounds like the act of euthanasia could be peaceful and happy—a nice way to pass away. However, to me the ruthless act sounds so cold and stark. That is why those who have a good home, love, and respect to offer, the Connecticut Humane Society begs them to go to a shelter and take one

¹ “Euthanasia.”
or two animals home. The problem is that few people do that, choosing instead to go to a breeder or a pet shop and not "fixing" their dogs and cats, which contributes to the high euthanasia rate that animal shelters face. Most of the animals that are taken in and euthanized could hardly be called "pets," as they had spent their lives chained up in the back yard, for instance.\textsuperscript{2} They were unsocialized, never having been inside a building of any kind, or known a pat on the head. This is so incredibly heart-breaking. Yet, knowing this has changed my life. I will never go to a breeder to buy a dog again, for there are so many amazing dogs in shelters that need a loving home. Without such a sanctuary, many of these animals face the euthanasia treatment, and this is the brutal reality of this harsh world.

The abuse and neglect of animals has a similar connection to Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement. The mistreatment of African Americans is much like the mistreatment of animals, although on a smaller scale. When King talks about his most basic reason for being in Birmingham, he states “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” This quote can be used to explain why I chose to help in the animal shelter. For, injustice to animals anywhere is indeed a threat to justice everywhere. It is important for people who have a passion against injustice to reach out and help stop it, or provide efforts to aid the aftermath. King also brings about another very important point. He believes that it is just as detrimental to be actively evil hearted, as to be good hearted but not do anything to stop the injustice you see. I hope one day to inspire

\textsuperscript{2} Newkirk.
others that are good hearted to take action against the injustice of animal abuse.
November 22, 2010

Today was my last day at the shelter (but not for good!). Charming Charlie was still charming, and the vet told me that he holds promise for the future. She also told me that she swears it is because of all the love I showed him that he was able to survive through the first night. Hearing her tell me that really empowered me. I felt so strongly that if I could touch one animal’s life in the short time I was there I can only imagine what I could do with a longer period of time—such as a lifetime of dedication.

I have a passion for these animals, but in the larger picture, I have a passion to help those who cannot help themselves. Whether it is neglected or abused animals, enslaved women in Not For Sale, or acts of racist segregation, I want, and need to help. I have been so fortunate in life, as I was blessed with a loving family who provided many opportunities for me. Through this citizen praxis project, I have learned just how thankful I am to have a privileged life, and that there are many out there that do not. I now have a burning fire inside me to help others, and inspire more people like myself to help others.

There is a Haitian proverb in the book Mountains Beyond Mountains that states: “God gives but doesn’t share.” This refers to the notion that God gives humans everything that we need in life. However, it is up to the people to share. When I first read this quote I immediately thought that it is important for people to share resources, money, and food. Then again, after I did my praxis project I
began to really reflect on this proverb. I now think that it is up to the people to share knowledge, empowerment, and love. For by sharing all of this, “we acknowledge that all life is sacred and we participate in a better world” which brings me back to the original quote I wrote in my first journal entry.

Consequently, every time I look into an animal’s eyes my heart still skips a beat. I think it is the feeling one needs to obtain when they find something that they are truly passionate about. However, I never would have guessed that I would become so connected with this project, but I have. I am so emotionally invested with helping animals, and all forms of life that cannot help themselves. I honestly believe that I can make a difference in the world. And hopefully one day, I will be able to stand on a mountaintop beside Inderjit Khurana, Paul Farmer, and Martin Luther King knowing that just like them, I did everything I could to make this world a better place.
Work Cited


**Link showed in class: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hkRqF8-tmM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hkRqF8-tmM)**