

Meet The New Animal-Rights Sugar Momma

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Would the most influential woman in the oddball history of the radical animal-rights movement take one step forward? Not so fast, Ingrid Newkirk. That role now belongs to Florida's Nanci Alexander, the long-time activist and Animal Rights Foundation of Florida co-founder. Her divorce from billionaire Houston Rockets owner Leslie Alexander left her with \$115 million to play with (plus a Boca Raton mansion and some pricey NBA tickets). And play she has. Shortly after her 2003 divorce was finalized, she set up Nanci's Animal Rights Foundation, endowing it with \$104 million in cash over three years (click here to see the payments).

So who gets all this money? Click here to see the payments. So far, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has received \$15 million. And a whopping \$20 million from Nanci has tripled the budget of PETA's quasi-medical front group, the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM). PCRM rewarded the windfall with a "compassion" award in 2005.

These millions are in addition to the relatively modest six-figure payouts PETA and PCRM got from The Alexander Foundation, a family affair which stopped paying out money when the divorce court judge's gavel hit the bench. This foundation also has the distinction of being the only "charity" to ever admit giving money to Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) USA, a violent group whose leaders -- along with the organization itself -- were convicted in federal court last year on terrorism charges.

On April 19, Nanci Alexander was a guest on a New Jersey talk radio program about restaurants. (She owns a vegetarian eatery which has never turned a profit.) Host Francis Schott quizzed her for an hour about her philosophy, and we got an unusual insight into the woman whose checkbook affords her unusual influence in the animal-rights movement. (Click here to listen to the interview.) Asked if "meat is always inherently a bad thing," Alexander replied matter-of-factly, "Oh, absolutely."

There's more:

Schott: "I have no problem with people who choose a vegan lifestyle. My problem is with organizations that promote not making a distinction between humans and animals. And with organizations that would work to remove my choices to raise and slaughter animals for food, and to sell those animals, and to eat those animals. That's a problem, when you begin to try and take away others' choices. When the organizations you support and work with try to take away others' choices."

Alexander: "It's wrong. Killing is wrong. Killing is wrong for whatever reason."

After parrying for 45 minutes, the host cut to the heart of the matter, asking Nanci Alexander to weigh in on a famous animal-rights conundrum. Faced with the choice of saving a dog or an infant from a burning building, which would she rescue?

Alexander: "I don't know until it would happen, to tell you the truth."

Schott: "So you're telling me that if it's your dog, and -- and my baby, that you might --"

Alexander: "I couldn't tell you right now what I would do."

[...]

Schott: "Sometimes we need to make a choice between a dog and a human -- in Hurricane Katrina, a lot of people said 'listen, if I take my dog I've got to leave my baby behind. I'm taking my baby.' Or 'there's a baby across the street that I can save,' and we had to make a choice between people and animals. And most people choose the people. Do you think that's wrong? Or do you think that someone who chose his dog over someone else's baby -

- don't you think that's always an immoral choice?"

Alexander: "I wouldn't say always, no."

Schott: "Yeah. Well -- and there we have the crux of the problem. I think we've gotten to it."

The interview is a fascinating listen if you're interested in whose money is talking when the animal-rights movement moves its lips. At the end of its last fiscal year (June 30, 2006), Nanci's Animal Rights Foundation had \$73 million in the bank. That's a lot of money, and it will be spread far and wide among activists who share Alexander's bizarre views.

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