

Peta: fighting for animal rights



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Propaganda is all around us. “ For good or evil, propaganda pervades our daily lives, helping to shape our attitudes on a thousand subjects” (Cross 123). Propaganda unknowingly reinforces our own opinions, from everyday subjects like the movies we see to world-wide issues such as our next presidential leader. There are millions of issues surrounding our world, most that have organizations fighting for their cause. These organizations use propaganda to attack either your brain or heart in order to gain support.

PETA, which is an acronym that stand for people for the ethical treatment of animals, is a famous non-profit organization working towards ending animal cruelty. This organization specializes in campaigns that attack different associations they claim are ridding animals of their rights. But for most, PETA is recognizable through various campaign posters featuring respectable celebrity figures. One poster in particular was guaranteed to catch the eyes of many, this being Pamela Anderson’s vegetarian ad for PETA. In this sexy ad for PETA, the blonde bombshell shows some serious skin in a string bikini and looks as if she’s been tagged by a butcher, making it clear that humans and animals are composed of identical parts.

Pamela Anderson’s vegetarian campaign poster for PETA successfully utilizes many propaganda theories brought to attention by both Donna Cross and Newman ; Genevieve Birk, such as plain-folks appeal, guilt by association, testimonial, slanting by use of emphasis and charged language to guilt trip viewers into second guessing their choice of consuming meat. Cross’s “ Propaganda: How Not to Be Bamboozled” discusses how society is being falsely played by propaganda because most don’t recognize it when they see it. One device Cross points out that can mislead and deceive is plain-folks

appeal, when the speaker tries to win our confidence and support by appearing to be a person like ourselves. In Pamela's campaign ad, the slogan states " All Animals Have the Same Parts" which entails that when labeled down to parts, animals and humans are one of a kind.

This makes the appeal that animals are just like us, same body parts should mean same rights. Although this device is used in a different way than it would have been in a political campaign, its discreteness is what makes it all the more effective. One could point out ways this poster is using propaganda to change people's opinion on the issue, but the subtlety of the plain-folk appeal being used makes it almost undetectable. The irrelevancy of the plain-folks appeal is that even though it may be true that both animals and ourselves are animals and are made up of the same body parts doesn't necessarily mean that both groups have the same rights. This begs the question, is the equality between animals and ourselves actually as relevant and sizable as PETA makes it out to seem? Another device Cross points out is glory by association, which the propagandist uses to try and transfer the positive feelings of something we love and respect to the group or idea they want us to accept.

In the campaign poster, PETA uses glory by association by taking society's feelings about the animals we love from the outside looking in and associates those heart felt feelings with the idea that they are living creatures and have as much of a right to life as we do. In order to avoid letting glory by association get the best of our minds, suspension of judgement is necessary until you can come up with an opinion eliminating emotion from the equation. The last device Cross points out is testimonial,

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which mean to have some loved or respected person give support for a given product or idea. In this case clearly our testimonial comes from Pamela Anderson herself. Pamela is a much loved celebrity, commonly known for her character on the hit show “ Bay Watch” and also for her status as a sex symbol. PETA had the brilliant idea of asking Ms.

Anderson to promote their cause because they know a bombshell like herself would attract attention, maybe not for the reason wanted initially, but attracting attention never the less. When a celebrity endorses PETA, they may not be making money doing so, but we should still question whether they are in an better position to judge rather than we ourselves (Cross 132). Birk ; Birk’s “ Selection, Slanting, and Charged Language” talks about language and the abundantly clear fact of how it shapes our perceptions of the world. In the excerpt we read, they discuss how we use words and the powers that slanted and charged language effects the way we perceive the language surrounding us.

“ Before it is expressed in words, our knowledge, both inside and out, is influenced by the principle of selection” (Birk ; Birk 351). PETA is a well-known organization, which means that a majority of society has enough knowledge about the cause to develop an opinion concerning their beliefs. That knowledge therefore puts the principle of selection in play when viewing this ad. Therefore if your opinion of the organization is either positive or non-existent, the emotions you should feel when you think about the cause they are fighting for would encourage support. Otherwise, if stored knowledge developed a negative opinion, the purpose of the campaign could

be defective. The principle of selection can unintentionally make or break a campaign like this one.

“ Slanting by use of the devices of emphasis is unavoidable, for emphasis is simply the giving of stress to subject matter, and so indicating what is important and what is less important” (Birk ; Birk 353). Therefore in the campaign ad slanting by use of emphasis is used within the bold, capital letters “ all animals” that emphasizes the importance of the fact that technically humans are animals as well. It was important to use this technique in order to get their point of the campaign across effectively, considering those two words explain the whole idea. “.

.. When slanting of facts, or words, or emphasis, or any combination of the three significantly influences feelings toward, or judgements about, a subject, the language used is charged language...

” (Birk ; Birk 358). Since the campaign ad emphasized the words “ ALL ANIMALS” feelings are influenced concerning the issue at hand, whether in a positive or negative light, those words evoke feelings of either concern or disapproval for the fight. Propaganda leaves it’s hand print all over PETA’s campaign advertisements. From using a testimonial to the use of charge language, propaganda slips under the radar and influences our judgements. The cause PETA fights for everyday is a very controversial one. Some think they go too far in order to justify the rights of animals and others believe a living beings’ rights are worth the havoc.

Even though some campaigns may be judged as overboard, PETA has a unique take when trying to gain attention. Their issues are expressed

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through emotional images and powerful thoughts, which can either turn a person on to offer support or turn a person off to the idea they feel isn't worth the fight. PETA may be an organization that crosses boundaries, saying things no one else would, and puts images out there most wouldn't dare, but when you actually pay close attention to the issues they are fighting for and take the time to become informed about the issues at hand, you can learn to respect their cause. If anything, you can learn to respect their dedication and admiration towards animals. Animals weren't given a voice to protect their rights, so if they can't, who will? The word propaganda comes with negative connotation, but when observing the different techniques used within a campaign like this one, you can begin to view the world and its issues in a different way.

Propaganda could not only reinforce an opinion, but shine a light on opinions one never knew they had.