

# Taiji annual dolphin hunt after the cove documentary

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



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## **Introduction**

It has now been eight years since the Oscar-winning film ‘ The Cove’ sent the small, isolated community of Taiji into the midst of an ever-growing controversial debate surrounding the slaughter of 2047 dolphins and the captivity of 58 dolphins for human entertainment over the past year. The cove, surrounded by rocky shoreline was once the perfect hiding spot to keep prying eyes away, but it could only stay hidden for so long as people started to wonder why during the months of September through February, the waters ran a deep crimson red. The newly named dolphin slaughterhouse within the heart of Taiji, Japan grabbed the attention of wildlife conservation groups such as Ric O’Barry’s Dolphin Project, Sea Shepherd, and the general public worldwide. Efforts have been made to end the annual dolphin hunt and hopefully improve the situation for both the townspeople and dolphins. However, according to the fisherman themselves and the town’s mayor: Mr. Kazutaka Sangen, the slaughter of these dolphins is simply part of preserving an age-old tradition. Throughout this essay, I will be exploring the

ways in which faith, ethics, and ideologies have a significant impact on various perspectives at a global, local, and personal level. I will do this by analyzing the political, social and economic aspects of the issue in order to uncover the influences for actions of such stakeholders.

## **Global Level**

Analysing the issue on a global scale includes looking at the perspectives of a single stakeholder: that of a Wildlife Conservation Groups'. Ric O' Barry's Dolphin project is a single example of a conservation group in which holds the view that the slaughter and capture of dolphins themselves are wrong. Ethically, they believe that the fisherman's methods of killing are outdated, senseless, and unnecessarily cruel. It is plainly stated in the film they produced entitled ' The Cove', that " This is not tradition, this is not culture, this is cruelty, this is torture.", and as they spent their last night with the dolphins, they quoted " This is our attempt at an apology for what humankind has done to them." Secondly, Although I am unsure of their specific ideological beliefs, by taking a closer look at their actions we can take note that they lean closer towards those of a liberalist. In the sense that they are open to expressing their ideas and are passionate about advocating change by educating people worldwide about the issue. They have been able to do this by setting up websites, campaigns, holding talks, persuading governments, and documenting a film. Furthermore, amidst all the debacle, Ric O'Barry himself issued a statement to the public: " We hope that mayor Sangen has an open mind during this meeting and will see that we can work together for a better future for the dolphins and the people of Taiji. Based on

this statement alone, it is evident he chooses to express himself in as open a manner as possible and is dedicated to doing what is best to help improve the situation. If the Dolphin Project's campaign proves to be successful, they will be able to implement a ban on the annual slaughter and sale of dolphins within Taiji, Japan. Thereby forcing large aquariums and zoos out of business and enabling the number of dolphins held in captivity to decrease for the better.

## **Local Level**

At a local scale, the views of the fisherman themselves and the Taiji mayor alike need to be considered as a whole due to their similarities in perspectives. In order to fully understand the contradicting perspective against the annual dolphin slaughter, we need to first explore their views regarding faith. Since 1968 in Taiji Japan, it is known as a tradition to slaughter dolphins annually all the way from September through to March. Usually, the fisherman would hunt for pods of dolphins by banging metal poles against their boats to agitate and herd dolphins into the cove. There, the better-looking ones are chosen to be sold to aquariums and zoos, whilst the rest are slaughtered for their meat. According to Mayor Kazutaka Sangen, " Fisherman are simply continuing a tradition that enabled their ancestors to survive before the days of mass transport and the availability of other sources and nutrition." However, it is questionable as to why so many dolphins are being slaughtered for their meat. After all, according to the New York Times, " Dolphin meat is hardly a vital food source and only a minority of Japanese eat whale, let alone dolphin." Leading us on to delve deeply into

views regarding ethics, the majority of local fisherman have been brought up to think that there is nothing wrong with killing these species. In accordance to them, “ It is no different to the slaughter of other animals for meat”, and with the authority and protection from the Mayor to exercise such fishing rights - it has become apparent that dolphin hunting has become a way of life. Lastly, we need to analyze their actions in order to bring light to their possible ideological beliefs. The idea of conservatism stemming from the roots of town council members, such as the mayor’s wishes to keep the tradition alive among the fisherman is an obvious reflection of the commitment they have towards traditional values and ideas. Adding onto that, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga declared that “ Dolphin fishing is one of the traditional fishing forms of our country and is carried out appropriately, in accordance with the law.” As such, the revenue these dolphins have brought in has provided services to elderly residents, education and tourist infrastructure. In the eyes of many Japanese locals, “ Kujira no Megumi - translated, the blessing of the whale.”

## **Personal Level**

Originally, after watching the film ‘ The Cove’, I was brought close to tears at the ruthless and brutal murder of such defenseless, intelligent creatures. Hearing the dolphins desperate cries for help as they splashed relentlessly amongst the crimson red waters of their loved ones was more than enough evidence for me to question why such methods of killing were being used and why the killing of dolphins itself was necessary. Taking a closer look at my views regarding faith, I believe that as part of my religion we are told not

to harm something in which hasn't harmed us. In the holy book, it reads " A good deed done to an animal is like a good deed done to a human being, while an act of animal cruelty to an animal is as bad as cruelty to a human being." Adding to that, my ethical views have mainly stemmed from my parent's strongly held beliefs regarding the idea that animal cruelty is morally wrong and should be disapproved. When I was younger, if I was given the choice to visit aquariums, dolphin shows, or interactions - I was always encouraged to say no and instead, one day see them out in the wild. To this day, I try to avoid visiting aquariums as often as I can and in the event that I am forced to go, I can only help but feel a great amount of pity for the poor dolphins making rounds in their barren, miniature tank. Thirdly, due to the fact that my ideological views mainly reflect those of a liberalist - I, therefore believe that it is my personal responsibility to fight for what I believe in and make a change by taking action or contributing to a cause I feel passionately about. A year ago, I signed the petition to help free the 23 out of 27 remaining dolphins from Resorts World Sentosa Singapore after 4 dolphins faced a tragic death.

## **Conclusion**

As a result of completing my research, I believe that my perspective hasn't shifted in the least based on the varying views of stakeholders I have explored. In actual fact, I have become greatly aware of the severity of this issue and the unfortunately dire situation these dolphins are in. Therefore, it is safe to say that my stance on this issue has only greatened in passion and enthusiasm as to what I can do to contribute to ending the annual pursuit of

dolphins, not only in Taiji but in other parts of the world as well. In conclusion, it is uncertain as to whether Taiji's way of life will disappear due to demographic and economic realities, or will instead continue to fuel the dolphin trade. Put simply, the ever-widening gap between the global animal rights movements and local traditions immersed in ancestor devotion and religion can only make matters worse. Whilst some may argue that the practice of whaling would have been abolished years ago, if not for Japan wanting to prove it is not easily swayed, during 2015 the Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums banned the buying and selling of dolphins from the annual hunt - after receiving protest from the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. However looking to the future, there are things we can do to help. Not only by raising awareness and educating others of the issue can we end the slaughter and captivity of these beautiful creatures in Taiji, but by also saying no to buying tickets for dolphin shows, dolphin interactions, and aquariums, we can end the suffering of dolphins around the world for good.