



July 27, 2017

Dale Coleman, Vice President
Stone Theatres Management, LLC
Via email: dcoleman@stonetheatres.com

Dear Mr. Coleman,

I write to you regarding recent [news stories](#) and [videos](#) of two chimpanzees visiting Stone Theatres Grand 14. This may seem little more than a cute publicity stunt, but I hope that after learning of the public safety and animal welfare concerns involved, you will prohibit Stone Theatres locations from hosting such dangerous events.

The release of the hit film “War for the Planet of the Apes” has once again inspired animal exploiter “Doc” Antle of Myrtle Beach wildlife facility T.I.G.E.R.S. to parade two young chimpanzees named Vali and Sugriva in a public movie theatre so they could supposedly “watch” the movie. He has done this before. These desperate bids for attention are carried out with complete disregard for the welfare of the chimpanzees or the public, both of whose safety is severely endangered at such spectacles.

Exhibiting, humanizing and forcing chimpanzees to interact with humans gives the world a very inaccurate message about these complex and intelligent animals – and it has harmful repercussions. T.I.G.E.R.S. claims to promote global conservation, yet scientific data show that imagery portraying chimpanzees in this way actually has a negative effect on their conservation in the wild. NAPSA’s enclosed advocacy statement gives more information on this distressing subject.

Vali and Sugriva were torn from their mothers *years* before they would naturally separate, and their life of training and handling denies them opportunities to lead a healthy species-typical life. This affects primates throughout their entire lifetime, leading to social disorders, self-injurious behavior, depression, and aggression. One need only recall the tragedy of Travis, a similarly humanized chimpanzee who mauled a woman almost to death before he was killed in 2009, as proof that these are wild animals who not only can never be domesticated, but who are unpredictable and impressively strong.

Chimpanzees belong in the wild, and if that’s not possible, in the care of trained experts at a nonprofit primate sanctuary – not in a suburban strip mall. Reputable sanctuaries are licensed, accredited, and always place the animals’ well-being as the first priority. T.I.G.E.R.S. will exploit their animals as long as the public’s dollars permit. Sadly, Vali and Sugriva are forced into this life, but we urge the Stone Theatres Grand 14 to commit to never again playing a part in such publicity stunts in the future – before any further tragedies occur.

Sincerely,

Erika Fleury
Program Director



Advocacy Position Statement Performing Primates

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is opposed to the use of trained primates for entertainment. As experts in the field of primate care, we respectfully ask the public not to support public events featuring trained monkeys and apes.

While such performances may seem amusing on the surface, the primates used in these spectacles are poorly treated. Although the records of many animal rental operators are generally less than stellar, and training and housing conditions can be incredibly stressful (and often abusive), the simple fact that primates are forced to dress up and perform on cue in a terribly unnatural situation is reason enough to avoid such events.

The entire lifetime of a primate is negatively affected when they are exploited for entertainment. As infants, they are removed from their mothers at a very early age – years before they would naturally separate. They are trained using methods that intimidate and inhibit their innate behaviors. Even then, the intelligence and unpredictable nature of these wild animals means that they often can only be used for a short time as actors before they become too independent, unmanageable, and dangerous. Primates are then deemed useless to the entertainment industry, and sold into situations that range from uncomfortable to downright harmful. The lucky ones are able to spend the remaining years of their life in a primate sanctuary.

NAPSA is a coalition of ten of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our member sanctuaries, we care for over 700 primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment. We see how primates are forever damaged by the work forced upon them, and we look forward to the day when such archaic practices are no longer permitted.

For more information:

["Apes in Media and Commercial Performances," Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#)

["Bengals Shocking Half-Time 'Cowboy Monkey' Has a Cruel History," The Dodo](#)

["Chimpanzees in Entertainment," ChimpCARE](#)

["Great Apes in Entertainment," Jane Goodall Institute Australia](#)

["Impact of Visual Context on Public Perceptions of Non-Human Primate Performers," K. A. Leighty et al.](#)



Position Statement

True Sanctuaries vs. Pseudo-Sanctuaries

The mission of the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is to advance and advocate for the welfare of captive primates. NAPSA member sanctuaries care for over 700 nonhuman primates retired from the entertainment, biomedical research, and exotic pet industries, and are experts in providing enriched lifetime care to captive animals. As there are no regulations in the United States that manage who may refer to themselves as a sanctuary, it is important for NAPSA members to distinguish themselves from other facilities who house captive animals but who do not operate with the same high standards, and may even exploit and harm the animals in their care.

It can be difficult to distinguish pseudo-sanctuaries from reputable sanctuaries. There are a number of key characteristics the public may look for when trying to make this determination.

True sanctuaries:

- Operate with the best interests of the animals in their care as their first priority.
- Are non-profit organizations.
- Do not breed, sell or trade the animals in their care.
- Do not allow public contact with captive wildlife.
- Do not remove animals from their enclosures or sanctuary property for exhibition, education, research, or commercial purposes.
- Have limited public visitation.
- Do not exploit the animals in their care. Examples include: photo opportunities with animals, hands-on interactions, or training animals to perform.
- Are fiscally responsible and able to provide lifetime care for all animals at the sanctuary.
- Advocate on behalf of the species in their care.
- Are licensed, accredited and/or overseen by outside organizations. This may include the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, the United States Department of Agriculture, and/or NAPSA.