



January 8, 2019

Odell Beckham, Jr.  
c/o Tammy Brand  
FYI Brand Group  
*Via email: tammy@fyibrandgroup.com*

Dear Mr. Beckham,

We write to you in response to your January 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Instagram posts that featured you interacting with exotic animals, including playing with a chimpanzee and holding diapered gibbons at Myrtle Beach Safari.

Although you may not realize it, photos and videos like yours serve to condone primate exploitation in the pet trade. Encouraging contact between humans and exotic animals is harmful and dangerous to all involved. Reputable animal sanctuaries would never permit hands-on contact between their animals and a member of the public due risks of disease transfer, injury from attack, and more. As experts in the field of primate care, we implore you to reconsider promoting such irresponsible treatment of animals.

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of nine of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for over 800 primates, many of whom were formerly privately owned as pets or entertainers.

NAPSA members are contacted constantly by people who – perhaps because they saw cute monkeys or apes in the media – purchased a baby monkey and then lived to regret it. Sanctuaries are overwhelmed with requests to house “pet” primates, and so it is a mission of NAPSA that we reach out to celebrities who, often unknowingly, post images that send the wrong message about animal welfare. When Paris Hilton was barraged with negative publicity after posing with an orangutan in 2016, she later [agreed](#) that the concerns were justified. I hope you may make a similar statement, or at the very least not pose with nonhuman primates again.

Attached is NAPSA’s position statement on the private ownership of primates, as well as an educational resource on how to differentiate true sanctuaries from exploitive facilities. You may be an animal lover but you are also an influencer - please promote empathy instead of harm.

Sincerely,  
  
Erika Fleury  
Program Director

NAPSA is a fiscally sponsored project of Community Initiatives, an Oakland-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
1000 Broadway ♦ Suite 480 ♦ Oakland, CA 94607

Visit our website at [www.PrimateSanctuaries.org](http://www.PrimateSanctuaries.org)



## **Advocacy Position Statement Private Ownership of Primates**

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is opposed to the private ownership of primates.

Unlike dogs and cats, apes and monkeys are not domesticated animals. Non-human primates are extremely social animals whose normal development requires the company of others of their own kind. Ideally, primates should live in the wild. Their natural habitats include species-typical social groups that allow them to learn from their families and have a rich emotional life. In reality, however, there is an active industry that breeds primates to sell as pets in human homes.

As infants, primates in the pet trade are removed from their mothers years before they would naturally separate, which causes psychological suffering that manifests throughout their entire life. Teeth are often removed for ease of handling, which can limit the foods they can eat. Qualified veterinary care for pet primates can be difficult, if not impossible, to find.

Primates are inquisitive animals whose proper care requires daily mental stimulation and extensive physical activity, which is often impossible for the average household to provide. Primates kept in human homes are rarely, if ever, monitored by animal welfare officials, which means they are often kept in unsuitable living conditions resulting in neglect, mistreatment, and myriad psychological and physical ailments that can lead to death. There are a range of zoonotic diseases that are transmitted by primates and can be harmful, even fatal, to humans.

Once primates reach adolescence, which can be just a few years into a 40+ year lifespan, they inevitably become too unmanageable to handle. Primates can and will bite. They have strong jaws and sharp teeth, and bites can result in significant and potentially fatal injuries to humans. Realizing that living with an adult primate is not sustainable, owners often seek to surrender their pets or are forced to surrender them due to a threat to public safety.

Many primates that were privately owned end up living in roadside zoos, recycled as breeders to produce the next generation of ill-fated pets, or in other abusive situations. In the best cases, former pets may end up in a NAPSA member sanctuary, where they live their remaining years in an enriched environment more typical to their species. Even in sanctuary, former pets often struggle with learning how to socialize with other primates and many exhibit abnormal behaviors for the rest of their lives.

The private ownership of primates is never in the best interest of the animal or the owner.

For more information:

["Legislative Recommendations to Prohibit the Possession, Sale, Breeding, Import, or Transfer of Dangerous Wild Animals,"](#) American Bar Association

["White Paper: Personal Possession of Non-Human Primates,"](#) Association of Zoos and Aquariums

["The Phenomenon of Monkeys as 'Surrogate Children',"](#) Linda J. Howard

["Private Ownership of Nonhuman Primates,"](#) International Primatological Society

["Atypical Experiences of Captive Chimpanzees \(Pan Troglodytes\) Are Associated with Higher Hair Cortisol Concentrations as Adults,"](#) S.L. Jacobson, H.D. Freeman, R.M. Santymire, S.R. Ross

["My Child is a Monkey,"](#) and ["The Perils of Keeping Monkeys as Pets,"](#) National Geographic

["The Science Behind Why Chimps Are Not Pets,"](#) PBS

["Significant Zoonotic Disease of Non-Human Primates,"](#) Walter Reed Army Institute



## **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 800 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.

For more information:

**"Roadside Zoos and Pseudo-Sanctuaries,"** Eyes on Apes