

People for the ethical treatment of what?

Last week extremist liberalism reared its ugly head yet again, this time manifesting itself in the form of tasteless billboards. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA) has erected billboards in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The advertisements feature the face of New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani with a milk mustache, juxtaposed with the phrase "Got Prostate Cancer?" Under the phrase appears the caption "Drinking milk contributes to prostate cancer."

To an average human being, this image is simply insensitive, simply cruel, and simply detestable. This form of advertising ought to be decried and deplored by all. Certainly this billboard is evidence that PeTA will stop at no limits in its quest to alarm and to offend. Mayor Giuliani is only the latest figure to be targeted by this extremist group. Countless other citizens are targeted when

they walk out of a fur shop or when they buy hamburgers. Most disturbing, however, is that now all you have to do to be targeted as an animal hater by PeTA is to develop a common form of cancer.

PeTA has satiated the public with their message of compassion towards animals, but their actions tell a different story. Evidently the group likes to emphasize "ethical" in its name, as inferred from the italicized "e" in its acronym. Yet how is plastering the face of an innocent man stricken with an innocent illness at all ethical? PeTA is hypocritical and not at all compassionate or ethical when it comes to humans. This extremist group is driven not by a desire to help animals, rather by its need for self-promotion.

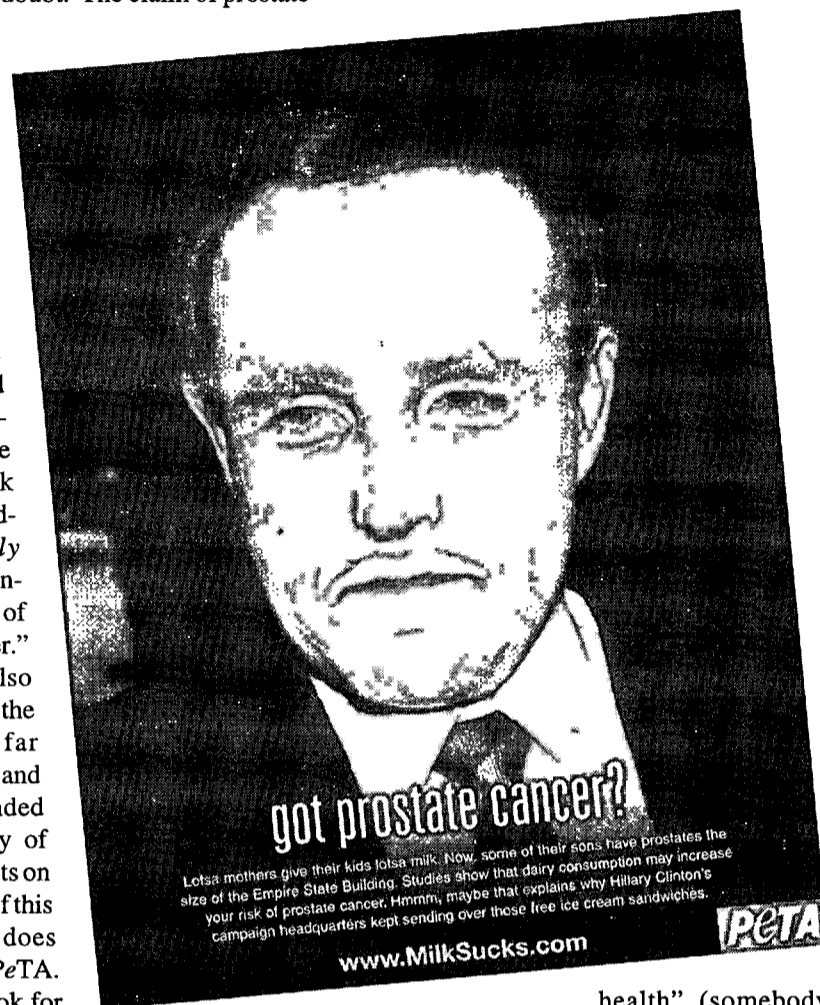
The Mayor's reaction to the billboards was tasteful and direct. "It's tasteless and inappropriate to exploit my illness and also

takes advantage of my position as the mayor for advertising purposes," said the Mayor on August 24th.

Not only is PeTA's campaign exploitation of the most sordid variety, but also its accuracy is in doubt. The claim of prostate cancer caused by milk comes from an April study by the Harvard School of Public Health, in which it was discovered that "consuming a large amount of milk and dairy products possibly increase the risk of prostate cancer." The study also stressed that the case "was far from settled," and it recommended "further study of [milk's] effects on health." All of this uncertainty does not matter to PeTA. They only look for one side of the story.

Mayor Giuliani is considering suing PeTA for using his image in an advertisement without securing his permission. As well he should. No group should be allowed arbitrarily to display persons' faces wherever it likes. And though we cannot legislate morality or ethics, the public ought not to stand quietly while a group sinks as low as PeTA did with this attack against Mayor Giuliani. Milk's effects on health, and specifically on the prostate gland, is unclear. But to PeTA vegetarian campaign coordinator (yes, this is a real position), Bruce Friedrich, milk's health effects are clear: "Dairy products are

horrible for human health, catastrophic for the environment, and a living nightmare for these cows and their veal calf babies." That's right, loyal readers, your mothers are wrong. Milk is "horrible for human



health" (somebody taught this guy alliteration), and the way our legal system is going, if you develop prostate cancer, you'll probably soon be able to sue your mother for advising you to drink milk in your youth. That is, if Mr. Friedrich and PeTA are allowed to proceed with their campaign. Just think, the cows could be co-plaintiffs with you! And any other lactating creature as well!

How unthinkable is this scenario? It's about as unthinkable as any human using another's illness for personal gain. Yet, thanks to PeTA, it turns out that this is not so unthinkable after all.

Khoury Ashooh '03

In support of gay Christians

This past June, while attending an international college chaplains' conference in Vancouver, I spent several hours talking with a United Church of Canada minister named Ken. Ken's story as a middle-aged gay man and minister resonated with questions that have been on my mind. Homosexuality and Christianity: how do they fit together? What is it like to be gay and Christian?

Throughout the summer, at church conventions of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists (among others), the issues of ordaining gays and lesbians and of blessing homosexual unions have been hotly debated. In every case, both ordination and blessing were denied, though often by narrow margins. At each convention, gay and lesbian Christians, and their straight supporters, engaged in peaceful protest and civil disobedience to bring attention to their understanding of the gospel's message on this issue.

I am astounded by the courage and perseverance of such people and of someone like Ken. Growing up as a Catholic, Ken felt called to serve God in the priesthood. During his seminary training, he accepted himself as gay – but only after years of struggle, after submitting himself to electric shock therapy and extensive counseling. When he came out to friends and family, the response was generally negative. One friend mailed Ken some money he owed him and told Ken never to contact him again. Ken's father at first would have nothing to do with him. Ken left seminary, went into acting, and spent the next eight years advocating the full inclusion of self-affirming gays in the Catholic Church – years that ended in frustration. He eventually left the church altogether, though he didn't deny his faith in the loving God he worshiped and sought to serve.

Two years later, a friend invited Ken to attend the United Church of Canada. He found a new church home where he could be an openly gay Christian. Encouraged once again to follow his call to ministry, Ken completed his studies and settled into a full-time pastorate in a church of deaf people. As missionary funds declined, his hours were reduced to half-time, and he added to his

work a part-time campus ministry. Throughout the past twenty-one years, Ken has been in a committed relationship with his partner, John. Every five years they publicly renew before God their vow of commitment to each other. John's mother attended that ceremony for the first time on their fifteenth anniversary, much to Ken's delight.

I hope for the day that more Christian churches fully accept men and women like



Letter to the Editors

Ken. I would like to have openly gay and lesbian clergy colleagues and to represent the church in blessing homosexual unions. I have always respected my brothers and sisters in Christ who, because of their interpretation of scripture, believe that all homosexual

relationships are wrong, and who speak that conviction in a spirit of kindness. I simply disagree with them.

As I read the broad message of the Bible and look at the seven passages that mention same-gender sex, I don't hear a blanket condemnation of homosexuality. I do hear a resounding message of God's great love for all of creation. I do hear a call for us to live lives that are righteous. With regard to sexuality, I'm convinced that righteousness doesn't have to do with the fact of one's sexual orientation, with being straight or gay. Rather, it has to do with how one lives out one's sexuality. Clearly, all Christians are called to do so in relationships characterized by commitment, fidelity, mutuality, and loving kindness.

I also hear a call in scripture for us to work towards communities characterized by justice, especially on behalf of the poor and the marginalized. I think my gay and lesbian brothers and sisters are often marginalized in the Church. I hope for the day that the words "gay" and "Christian" will not sound like an odd pairing. I seek the time when gays and lesbians, as members of the kingdom of God, will be able to focus less on concerns over their sexual orientation and more on the quality of their discipleship to Jesus.

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