



If domestic and international news coverage is any measure—with a stream of reports on mass shootings, murder, ethnic conflict, political uprisings, and civil war—we live in a world where acts of violence seem unyielding.

So it was with keen interest that I read *The Better Angels of Our Nature* by Harvard psychology professor Steven Pinker, who argues that violence, throughout the arc of human history, has actually been on a long and steady decline and that we may be living in the most peaceful time ever.

That argument is counterintuitive on so many levels—especially so because of the spasms of killing documented in two calamitous world wars and the Holocaust within the last century. But Pinker compares recent rates of violent death to prior times and says that people are safer today than at any point in the existence of our species.

Every sane person agrees that there's still too much violence, but we've had no major wars between superpowers since the Korean War. The world has largely shed capital punishment for petty offenses, plus dueling, beheading, and other forms of extreme violence. Today, Pinker says, we are in the midst of a “rights revolution”—with declines in domestic violence and increasing protections for people of color, women, children, gays, and animals. There are growing rates of literacy, declining rates of poverty, and the toppling of despotic regimes.

As part of this moral evolution, The HSUS is leading a flourishing global movement for animal protection, marked by a growth in consciousness, lawmaking, and advocacy. We've seen a decline in euthanasia of healthy and treatable dogs and cats, a nosedive in commercial sealing and whaling, bans on some extreme forms of farm animal confinement, and so many other signs of progress.

But we've also seen a rise in human population, and we know that this has, in the past, translated into more development, more killing of animals for food, more killing of wildlife for parts, and more killing of predators.

Without any question, we live in a time of contradictions and conflicting impulses when it comes to animals, and the jury is still out on whether violence is rising or falling.

In the pages of *All Animals*, you'll see us chipping away at the evils associated with puppy mills, with recent rescues in Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. We are mobilizing to reduce the number of animals killed to supply the global horsemeat trade. We persuaded the Los Angeles Unified School District—as part of our participation in the Meatless Monday campaign—to offer only meat-free foods one day a week in more than 1,000 schools.

There's a story about our campaign to end the use of chimpanzees in invasive experiments and to send the animals to sanctuaries to pass their remaining years in peace. As a nation, we are recognizing that our closest living genetic relatives should no longer be treated as test tubes.

On the negative side, we as a nation are waging war on predators—through our federal government, the states, and private ranchers and hunters. Take the case of wolves, who have recently lost federal protections in six states and have been subjected to ruthless hunting seasons. More than 2,000 have been killed just in the last year (including in Alaska, where wolves have never been protected).

Of course, we are working to turn that around. In Michigan, The HSUS and its coalition partners have submitted more than a quarter million signatures to qualify a statewide referendum that would block wolf hunting.

Empathy and reason are on the rise, and violence against people and animals is more socially unacceptable than ever. It's a solemn obligation for us all to fight these forms of violence against animals on so many fronts, and to demonstrate that reason, science, innovation, and other features of a civil society can triumph over ignorance, convenience, and archaic tradition. These creatures want to live free of harm and pain, no different from our own impulse to feel safe and secure.

JULIUS' JOURNEY: 53-year-old Julius and eight other research chimps recently retired to sanctuary. More than 100 chimps may soon follow (story, p. 24).



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