

SUBJECT: Ethical Messages and Legal Ramifications regarding the SeaWorld of Hurt Campaign

For over thirty years the mission of PETA has always been to promote awareness, educate and protest for animal rights. We have gained many supporters throughout our existence who believe in these same principles. The SeaWorld of Hurt Campaign has brought attention to millions of people regarding the misuse of animals in SeaWorld's amusement parks around the world. However, we need to consider our ethical messages and legal ramifications for our campaign. We want to use responsible strategies that continue to address our campaign mission.

As an organization, our main focus is to bring about change to animal cruelty in a way that follows the best practices of advocacy and honesty. When these best practices are not followed there is room for litigation that may affect the future of PETA. According to the Public Relations Society of America Code of Ethics, the values for Advocacy states, we serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent. We provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate. We adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public. After careful review of the SeaWorld of Hurt Campaign there are several ways we can improve our overall message to our audience without provoking any malicious intentions. We want to also carefully include public figures who truly represent PETA and not promote sexuality.

One of the ways we can improve our campaign message can begin with the title SeaWorld of Hurt, Where Happiness Tanks. The message is very bold and direct which can

definitely draw some attention to PETA regarding claims of defamation. The intent behind this title can be damaging to our organization because SeaWorld may feel as if we are making false accusations and trying to criticize their characteristics. SeaWorld has more than ever reason to believe they are more than just an entertainment and amusement park. They feel they are zoologist who care about animal life. These bold accusations can spark a debate resulting in PETA facing defamation. According to William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal defamation consists of the “twin torts” of libel and slander. At common law, the defamation action guarded against damage to a person’s reputation in regards to their business, trade, profession, or office.” Improving the campaign title to state something that could be bold but not hateful would still grab the attention of the audience. In order to avoid a defamation lawsuit, we should immediately take action on revising our campaign message.

Finally, several featured videos that stand out in the campaign include public figures who have decided to speak against SeaWorld. The campaign’s concept is to show how humans and animals are alike. The campaign shows females completely nude covered in black and white body paint then placed in a tank representing orcas in captivity. The message is to help spread the word to boycott SeaWorld amusement parks. However, the visual message looks as if PETA has chosen to photograph women in body paint making it look as if their promoting sexuality instead of animal cruelty. Per the Public Relations Society of America Code of Ethics, the provision of conduct states Free Flow of Information is a core principle protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society. Free Flow of Information intends to maintain the integrity of relationship with media, government officials

and the public. To aid informed decision-making. Our organization's responsibility is to inform our audience of truthful information by giving visual facts behind our message. We want to make sure our message is clear and concise as to what PETA stands for. Unfortunately, we take a big risk when we make the decision to customize our message to fit our public figures opinions.

We know the intentions of PETA have always been good and free of harm to anyone. However, we want to make sure that no one is offended by our message to stand against animal cruelty. As an organization, it is our responsibility to make sure all animals are being treated fair. We should continue to enforce awareness, educate and protest for animal rights through all media and advertisement outlets. Let us keep up the great work here at PETA. Please feel free to notify me with any concerns or questions.

References

Public Relations Society of America Code of Ethics. Retrieved from

<https://www.prsa.org/ethic/code-of-ethics/>

Jackson, D.M. (2000). The Corporate Defamation Plaintiff in the Era of SLAPPs: Revisiting New York Times v. Sullivan. Wm. & Mary Bill Rts. J., 9, 491.