

# Why I'm Blowing the Whistle on HSUS – By Donny Moss

[Donny Moss](#)

Many animal advocates know that The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) takes credit for victories achieved by other groups and fundraises on the back of those successes. This happened to me and other grass roots activists in NYC after we secured a \$6 million settlement on behalf of 66 abandoned chimpanzees used in research. But what many people don't know is that HSUS has used – and is continuing to use – outside law firms to intimidate, threaten and sue some of its (now former) employees who, after attempting to effect change from within, have publicly exposed systemic abuses of animals in HSUS's care, some of which I have observed firsthand.

For the past two years, I have resisted publicly addressing these abuses for fear of fomenting strife within an already fractured animal protection community, but HSUS's decision to file a lawsuit against two of the 22 whistleblowers at its Project Chimps sanctuary has compelled me to do what many organizations cannot for fear of retaliation – hold HSUS accountable for animal abuse and demand reform so that their sanctuaries are, at the very least, more humane than the laboratories from which the animals were rescued.

I am not a disgruntled HSUS employee. In fact, I have never been employed by HSUS or any other animal protection organization. On the contrary, I am an independent grass roots advocate without bosses, budgets or boards to take into account. I therefore have the freedom – and ethical obligation – to help expose the abuses that HSUS's Project Chimps is attempting to cover up by suing whistleblowers — individuals who have nothing to gain personally by coming forward.

Over the past several years, many employees and contractors, including caregivers, vet techs, veterinarians and construction workers, at HSUS’s two chimpanzee sanctuaries (Project Chimps in Georgia and Second Chance Chimpanzee Refuge in Liberia) have been so alarmed by the neglect, deprivation and other forms of abuse that they were willing to risk their jobs, financial security and future employment prospects by speaking out. Following is a letter that 22 current and former Project Chimp employees sent to the organization’s board.

May 4, 2020

Re: welfare issues at Project Chimps

Dear Project Chimps Board of Directors,

We are writing to you as a collective of concerned former and current Project Chimp employees, volunteers, interns, and donors to bring serious welfare issues in Project Chimps to your attention. Our motive is initially to improve the oversight of the organization and the care and welfare of the chimpanzees whose care is entrusted to the sanctuary, where we are certain that you, as a board member, share. The signature of this letter have worked for Project Chimps during different time periods, from 2014 through the present. We include caregivers, veterinarians, veterinary assistants, and a parasitologist with extensive and wide-ranging chimpanzee experience in extensive professional sanctuaries and care facilities, as well as in the wild. Many of us have seen him or worked together years in collaborating on this letter. Like you, we all have in some way devoted our lives, life or in part, to chimpanzee welfare.

Up until this point, multiple former employees (from 2016-present) have brought forth concerns following the appropriate reporting channels, but resolutions have either not been provided, concerns have been dismissed without investigation and/or actions insufficient to resolve the claims have been taken. Those who have raised issues have also been retaliated against, asked to resign, or have been fired. **At this point, we are requesting the opportunity to have the entire Board hear about our concerns, satisfied, from our chosen ombudsmen directly via a virtual meeting.**

One fundamental concern is that the chimpanzees residents are not receiving the high quality of care that accredited sanctuaries, especially those affiliated with HSUS, should demand; in many cases, the chimpanzees are actually suffering. Alarming, many have observed body condition scores, show signs of deteriorating health, and exhibit increased stereotypic behaviors relative to when they first arrived from the research facilities. Below we briefly outline our repeatedly reported welfare concerns:

- Inadequate and negligent veterinary care, currently consisting of a part-time small animal veterinarian with no previous chimpanzee experience or advanced training in chimpanzee medicine. Project Chimps has a state-of-the-art on-site veterinary clinic, equipped to safely provide comprehensive veterinary care to this particular primate population. Unfortunately, the veterinary care provided fails to meet even minimum standards of care. Veterinary concerns include: lack of a comprehensive health care program for prevention and early detection of health problems; no preventive ideas to monitor or treat chimpanzees experimentally infected with viral hepatitis, despite lifelong increased risk of cancer, amyloidosis, and other potentially fatal diseases; failure to take any measures to prevent transmission of these viruses to uninfected group members; lack of adequate animal care; lack of medical work-up, monitoring, and treatment of known medical conditions; failure to prepare for and investigate clinical emergencies; inadequate pain management; failure to provide safe conditions for inducing anesthesia; failure to provide routine dental care despite available equipment; and failure to collaborate with veterinary operations with expertise in chimpanzee medicine, who have repeatedly offered their *pro bono* assistance.
- Poor diet – inappropriate diet composition, insufficient produce, mostly food, poor quality alone, failure to follow “veterinary nutritional” recommendations for diet planning, etc.
- Global increase in stereotypic and other abnormal behaviors, e.g., coprophagy, dyslexia due to hair plucking, rocking, humming, and pacing. Management disregarded the recommendations of a veterinary behaviorist who was brought in as a consultant, and instructed staff to return from communication with this specialist further. Contrary to widely-accepted best practices, management initiated the use of punishment, including physical reprimands, at times.
- Unsanitary, inhumane, and dangerous living conditions – air infiltration, standing water due to poor drainage and leaky ceilings, poor insulation design resulting in difficult-to-walk, heat-exposed structures, inadequate HVAC systems resulting in low indoor temperatures in winter months, faulty electric shift doors that chimps can move on their own thereby endangering both chimps and humans, and repeated incidents where individual chimpanzees or the entire sanctuary are without water due to pump system problems or broken filters.
- Overcrowding and inescapable social groups due to bringing in chimpanzees too quickly without the proper information or expertise. Most days, chimpanzees lack the natural space recommended by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries and the American Zoological Association. As a result, cases of aggression, vomiting, and stereotypic behavior are increased.
- Inadequate outdoor access – Each group has access to a large outdoor habitat once every three days. On a typical day in which a group has outdoor access, they rarely gain access before 11am and often not until 12 or 1pm and are then brought back inside at 5:30pm. If it rains, chimps are often not given access to the outdoor habitat. While each villa does have an open-air porch, the porches lack natural substrate and some receive minimal sunlight. Cold water, leaky roofs, and heavy limited shading structures. These deficiencies cause many chimps to avoid their porch entirely.
- Inadequate enrichment – insufficient bedding materials and manipulable objects, limited foraging enrichment opportunities, concrete floors with no substrate, inadequate use of three-dimensional space, etc. Management seems to lack knowledge about how to sustain a professional program of environmental enrichment (such as the SPIDER Enrichment) including use of a training enrichment calendar to ensure novelty of enrichment and evaluation of environmental enrichment in terms of whether and to what degree specific enrichment promotes species-typical behavior, decreases stereotypes and self-injurious behavior, etc.
- Failure to track instances of chimpanzee welfare, such as prevalence and severity of stereotypes, abnormal and self-injurious behaviors, overall physical condition, social behavior, and general activity/locomotion/posture, etc. Project Chimps’ five chimpanzee groups were enrolled in a semi-structured welfare monitoring program called WelfareTrack, in which caregivers coded individually and systematically track chimp welfare within and across groups. This allowed for easy analysis and compilation of data and would automatically alert caregivers if there was a decrease in an individual’s welfare. Unfortunately, this program was quickly abandoned, with no reasons provided, after the departure of the first employees who raised welfare management concerns.
- Failure to adequately address concerns about disease transmission between caregivers and chimpanzees, including failure to disclose to employees and volunteers the fact that numerous chimpanzees are infected with potentially fatal viruses (definitely Hepatitis B Virus and Hepatitis C Virus, possibly HIV) that are considered potentially zoonotic, or transmissible to humans, if appropriate personal protective equipment and safety protocols are not used.
- Potential misappropriation of funds – Management appears much more focused on public perception and building facilities for humans (e.g., classrooms, visitors’ center, human recreation, grooming, etc.) than on high-quality care and facility design expenses.

Our goal of bringing these concerns to your attention is to help Project Chimps succeed in its mission of providing exemplary care to chimpanzees formerly used in research. We truly believe that “it’s their time to live.” We have no doubt that Project Chimps’ leadership is very well-intentioned and cares deeply about the chimpanzees, just as we do. However, it is undeniable to all of us that the welfare concerns we are raising are systemic and have persisted and grown in severity since the sanctuary’s inception; therefore we believe that it is time for a hard look at the heart of the organization, specifically its culture and morality.

We would prefer to avoid fighting a war in the media that will only delay solving genuine issues and improving the level of care provided to the chimpanzees in Project Chimps’ care. Please grant us an audience with the entire board where we may have a detailed discussion about these concerns and explore possible solutions. In preparation for this meeting, we are including for your careful review the seven welfare report previously supplied to the board. **We ask that you respond to this letter no later than Friday, May 8, 2020.**

In signing this document, I share the concerns presented in this letter, witnessed many of them first-hand, and implies Project Chimps in demonstrating its commitment to its current and future chimpanzee residents by taking concrete steps to resolve the outlined welfare and management issues. Collectively, the signatories have over 130 years of experience working with and for great apes (mostly chimpanzees). After controlling for time at Project Chimps, the signatories still have amassed over 127 years of experience.

Printed Name	PC Title	PC Tenure	Date Signed
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2014-2014	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2015-2016	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2017-2020	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018-2019	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018-2019	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2019-2020	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2016-2018	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2017-2019	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018-2020	5/1/20

Signatories who are chimpanzee experts, have visited Project Chimps, and previously cared for residents:

Printed Name	Title	Tenure	Date Signed
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	1988-1990	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2006-present	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	1996-2010	5/1/20

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Click image to read letter to Project Chimps signed by 22 whistleblowers who are former and current employees

Following is the response sent by the Chairman of the Board.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bruce Wagman**

Date: Thu, May 7, 2020 at 9:20 PM

Subject: RE:PC welfare concerns (time sensitive)

To: ,

On behalf of every member of the Project Chimps Board of Directors, I write to say that we are in receipt of your email dated May 4, 2020.

As you are well aware, all of these allegations have been reviewed by a number of outside experts, multiple accrediting and government entities, as well as internally and have been verified as unfounded and untrue and we would urge you to share this with the signatories of the attached letter.

We have concluded our investigation and will not engage on this matter with you moving forward.

Bruce

Project Chimps response to letter written by 22 current and former employees

I don’t know why HSUS has ignored the pleas for reform by so many of its

own employees. I can only surmise, based on its reputation for prioritizing its public image over the quality of its work, that HSUS doesn't want to acknowledge the underlying organizational problems that have enabled these abuses to emerge and become normalized. One of these problems is incompetent management — leaders who have inadequate primate sanctuary experience and/or do not prioritize animal welfare, as explained in the following email.

was contacted by my dear friend [REDACTED] and requested to reach out to you and offer my experiences and encounters during the construction of the habitats at project chimps. I was lead welder for BBSI INC. On the project chimps site from June 2016 thru Oct 2019. I was directly involved with coordinating with the caregivers needs and input, as well as upper management, and incorporating ideas and designs into the construction process. For our last year there, i unfortunately have countless examples of foreseeable problems being ignored, or decisions being made to suit the donor's random whims instead of the chimps needs. The facility manager (Christy Jellets), was the worst and most harmful change i witnessed during my experience on site. Her mission was most definitely NOT in accordance with the origin vision of project chimps founders. I witnessed numerous occasions, saving a dollar, or raising a dollar was priority over the chimps mental and emotional well being. The executive director (Ali krumpacker) carries her fair share of blame in making decisions to accommodate donors before chimps, and for allowing christy and her team to go to such ridiculous and thoughtless extremes, that ultimately drained funds that should have otherwise went towards enrichment for the very chimps they were espoused to providing a 'forever home for'. I feel this situation has gone far beyond what should have been allowed, but it really seems there is no governing body to exert authority towards correcting the abomination of a sanctuary project chimps has become. Its heartbreaking to me especially to see the deterioration in the chimps health, being disregarded by management, with emphasis mostly directed catering to donors before chimps. At this point, if they did accumulate the funds to start construction on phase 2, to accommodate 80 more chimps, i would be inclined to decline any invitation to return as it stands now. I could not in good conscience offer my service towards expanding their 'dollar a peak' circus. Their termination of [REDACTED] was the turning point for me, after 3 years of pouring my soul into the sanctuary, when [REDACTED] left the site, its heart and spirit died, and it was no longer a good thing i was building. Without the guidance of his, or any primate specialists expertise, its just a prison for abused and diseased chimps. Their individual names no longer matter, just what number and what housing unit they belong to matter. 'Their time to live' is limited to days potential donors visit, or the public is permitted to by tickets to view the chimps. I dont know exactly what the best solution here would be, but certainly removing the decision makers who cater to potential donors over the well being of the chimps is a good start. Inviting back the experts in the field who sacrifice all else before they would compromise the needs of the chimps would certainly be a smart move. At the least, bringing the problems that exist now to light so they can be properly addressed is the minimum i hope to see accomplished. Thank you for your time and consideration, and if there is anything more i can contribute to see the chimps receive the proper care they are supposed to be receiving, i will do so without hesitation. I hope you are able to get these chimps the attention they are desperately lacking now. You may email or can reach me at [REDACTED] if there is anything else i can do to help.

Testimony of a Project Chimps contractor

I believe the Project Chimps' whistleblowers, including the two who HSUS is now suing, not only because I've reviewed the extensive documentation



they have provided on [HelpTheChimps.org](https://www.helpthechimps.org), but also because I've witnessed similar abuses, which continue in secrecy halfway around the world at HSUS's chimpanzee sanctuary in Liberia.

PROBLEMS AT  
PROJECT CHIMPS

OverviewChimpsDeclineProblemsDocumentationHow to Help

The problems at Project Chimps are summarized on the pages below, and you can find an overview [here](#). It all comes down to misplaced priorities by leadership, lack of proper vet care, unsanitary conditions, lack of outdoor access, and abnormal behaviors being ignored. With [more](#) chimps anticipated to move from the lab to Project Chimps soon, it is imperative these problems be properly addressed. After reading about the areas of concern, please visit the [Goals](#) page to learn how you can help the chimps.

Poor Vet Care

"Sometimes when we see a chimp is not acting their normal self and know something is wrong, nothing is done until it is too late." - Current Project Chimps Caregiver Poor Vet Care at Project Chimps. Medical, behavioral, and psychological issues should be closely monitored, evaluated, and treated by veterinarians who have prior experience [...]

Limited Outdoor Access

At Project Chimps, the chimpanzees spend at least 150 hours per week in concrete buildings. There are 168 hours in a week, 90% of their retirement is spent in concrete rooms. The Reality of the Habitat in the wild, chimps have large home ranges and walk many miles every day between food patches. While sanctuary [...]

Poor Living Conditions

"Look at Chateau and how many issues it has. They asked for our input and I don't think they listened to a single thing." - Current Project Chimps Caregiver Poor Living Conditions. The poor living conditions at Project Chimps start with the chimp buildings. The villas were existing structures leftover from when the property [...]

Abnormal Behaviors

Abnormal behaviors, often called stereotypic behavior, are prevalent at Project Chimps. While some chimpanzees develop stereotypic behaviors at the lab, often as a result of extreme boredom or psychological distress in captivity, many of the chimps start showing an increase in stereotypes (e.g., hair plucking, rocking, coprophagy, etc.) after coming to Project Chimps. In the past, [...]

Leadership

"I think a lot of the staff feels unheard and undervalued" - Current Project Chimps Caregiver Board of Directors Bruce Wagman - Board President Bruce Wagman is the board president of Project Chimps. While he has been a friend to animals in the courtroom through his animal law practice, Wagman actually has no tangible [...]

GFAS Violations

"The priority seems to be on the money and the public rather than on the chimps. I understand we need the money to take care of the chimps, but some of the things we're doing don't seem very sanctuary-like." - Current Project Chimps Caregiver GFAS is the Global Federation of Accredited Sanctuaries with a mission [...]



PROBLEMS AT  
PROJECT CHIMPS

OverviewChimpsDeclineProblemsDocumentationHow to Help

In addition to the documentation below, other materials are also available and could possibly be shared with media, depending on the request. There is also documentation of who wrote each whistleblower letter that can be shared confidentially with media sources. In several instances, recordings are available.

Note: you may have to zoom in on some of the documents to see the text.

- Communications with the Project Chimps Board Dec 2018 - Feb 2019
- Veterinary Behaviorist's Advice to Project Chimps - June 2019
- Internal Complaints to PC Human Resources Manager 2019-2020
- Emails to the Vet and Chimp Care Manager - 2019-2020
- Accounts of Illnesses and their Treatment - Oct 2019-Jan 2020
- PETA Summaries - Jan 2020
- Email from Board President to Silence Whistleblowers - Jan 2020
- Termination of Vet Tech and Caregiver - March 2020
- Letter to Project Chimps Board with 22 Signatures - May 2020
- Hepatitis Document - Staff and Public Health Risk
- Illegally Prescribing CBD Oil
- Concerns About Wound Care
- Project Chimps Whistleblower Policy
- Project Chimps Social Media
- Project Chimps Director's Refusal to Get Blood Pressure Machine
- "Surprise" USDA Inspection Not a Surprise
- Project Chimps Program of Veterinary Care



The Project Chimps whistleblowers meticulously documented the decline in care and their efforts to help the chimps

In 2015, the New York Blood Center (NYBC), which conducted research experiments on chimpanzees at a laboratory in Liberia, abandoned 66 survivors on six small islands on a nearby river. After seeing the starving chimps from a boat, an American scientist working in Liberia contacted HSUS to sound the alarm and ask for help.

To its credit, HSUS responded quickly, launching a GoFundMe campaign to raise money and hiring great ape experts with considerable sanctuary experience to oversee the chimps' care. Jenny Desmond and her husband, Dr. Jim Desmond, who is a great ape veterinarian, put their lives on hold and moved to Liberia to address the emergency.

Under challenging circumstances, the Desmonds quickly improved the quality of life of the abandoned chimps, providing them with daily deliveries of fresh produce, enrichment activities to help occupy their time on the small islands, and birth control. Within weeks of the Desmonds' arrival, the chimps' demeanor changed. Instead of frantically running to the riverbanks in search of food when they heard the sound of a boat nearby, they began

to peacefully saunter over because they knew that the boat was there for them and that it would be filled with food.

Even though they never met me, the Desmonds invited me to stay with them in Liberia so that I could see with my own eyes the stunning transformation of the chimps for whom we were protesting in NYC. During my visit, which took place in February, 2017, I could see that the Desmonds were doing an excellent job taking care of the chimps, especially in light of the difficult conditions in Liberia. Among the many daily challenges they faced were putting systems in place to care for captive chimps on six islands; managing a staff of Liberians who had just lived through a devastating Ebola epidemic; maintaining temperamental food delivery trucks and motor boats; and navigating complicated local politics. They were also living in government housing in a rural area without many of the basic amenities and necessities that we take for granted like a decent shower, air conditioning, a nearby grocery store, and a social infrastructure. I was impressed and humbled not only by their sacrifice, expertise, and work ethic, but also by how much they cared about the welfare of each chimp, as is so clearly demonstrated in this video:

In 2017, relations between the Desmonds and HSUS began to deteriorate because they refused HSUS's demand to turn away chimpanzee orphans who Liberian forestry officials brought to them for sanctuary. These orphans were victims of the bushmeat and exotic pet trades. Providing a refuge was vital not only to welfare of the orphans, who had no place else to go, but also to the conservation of Liberia's wild chimps. Without a sanctuary, the forestry authorities would have continued to turn a blind eye to the poaching of adult chimpanzees and the trafficking of babies.

The Desmonds took a principled stand, and HSUS did not renew their contract, leaving the care of the 66 chimps on the islands to locals who were not capable of providing the same level of care, especially in light of the fact that HSUS was unwilling to invest resources in the sanctuary. As a

consequence, the welfare of the chimps rapidly deteriorated.

To make matters worse, HSUS prohibited the Desmonds from visiting the chimps on the islands, in spite of the fact that the chimps knew and trusted them. HSUS was more worried that the Desmonds would document the decline in care than they were about the care itself.

In May, 2017, our two-year, self-funded grassroots campaign demanding accountability from the New York Blood Center (NYBC) led to a \$6 million settlement. True to form, HSUS's Public Relations department in Washington, D.C. issued a press release taking credit for the historic settlement, making no mention of the activists in NYC who made it possible — activists who occupied corporate lobbies, disrupted meetings, and protested at the homes and offices of powerful billionaires, thereby compromising our safety and putting ourselves at risk of arrest and lawsuits. Our campaign, which ultimately compelled NYBC's largest corporate donors (Citibank, MetLife, IBM) to issue public statements severing ties with NYBC, brought the organization to its knees.



## Breaking news: The HSUS, New York Blood Center announce landmark agreement for care of Liberian chimpanzees

Today, The HSUS announces a major, multi-million-dollar agreement with the New York Blood Center (NYBC) concerning more than 60 chimpanzees formerly used by the NYBC in medical experiments in Liberia. The New York-based medical charity has committed \$6 million to The HSUS to help with the decades-long task of providing long-term care for the animals. This morning's joint announcement signals a critical turnaround in The HSUS's relationship with the NYBC. Most importantly, it provides financial resources for the careful stewardship of these chimpanzees, who deserve every measure of human mercy after the travails they've endured.

I am pleased to express my thanks to the NYBC for making this very generous and important commitment. I'd be remiss, too, if I did not offer our sincerest expression of gratitude to thousands of individuals and dozens of organizations whose generosity and kindness allowed us to help the chimps for the past two years, providing a bridge to an even more secure future with the new facilities we intend to build. This project has required an ensemble cast, and I offer additional earnest appreciation to the government of Liberia, the [Arcus Foundation](#), Dr. Jane Goodall and the [Jane Goodall Institute](#), Duke University scientist Brian Hare, former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, actors and animal advocates Kate and Rooney Mara, the [American Anti-Vivisection Society](#), and the [Liberia Animal Welfare and Conservation Society](#). And the most important thanks are reserved for our incredible chimpanzee care team on the ground.

**Not only did HSUS take full credit for the \$6M victory that it did not win, it didn't even mention the activists in its long list of acknowledgements**

HSUS took credit for a \$6M settlement with the New York Blood Center in spite of the fact that it played virtually no role in securing it.

HSUS's decision to take credit for the victory left the grass roots activists wondering, "What just happened?" However, we accepted the betrayal, in silence, because the chimps were going to be safe – or at least we thought they were.

To add insult to injury, HSUS continued to fundraise off of the abandoned chimps, in spite of the fact that it had more than enough money to pay for their care with the \$6 million settlement and the additional hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars it received in private donations and through fundraising efforts on its website and through a GoFundMe campaign.



In an additional betrayal, HSUS hasn't used the \$6M to improve the care of the chimps. In fact, on my return visit to Liberia in November, 2018 (after HSUS severed ties with the Desmonds), I saw for myself not only the decline in the quality of the food and the lack of enrichment activities, but also that HSUS had not yet begun to build the desperately needed basic infrastructure, including holding areas and shelters on each island; an emergency enclosure and veterinary clinic at HSUS's office; and security posts to protect both the chimps and humans. In fact, in the three years since receiving the \$6 million settlement, HSUS hasn't built even one structure, and the chimpanzees – off of whom they continue to raise money – are paying the price.

Here's just one example. In April, 2020, HSUS employees darted one of the chimps in need of veterinary care due to a snake bite; transported her off of the island; and moved her into one NYBC's old lab cages because HSUS hadn't created a proper holding facility. (HSUS's office is on the same government property as NYBC's old lab.) The Desmonds, who live nearby, said that the chimp, Comfort, was visibly traumatized not only because of her injury, but also by the fear that she was going to be used in experiments again.

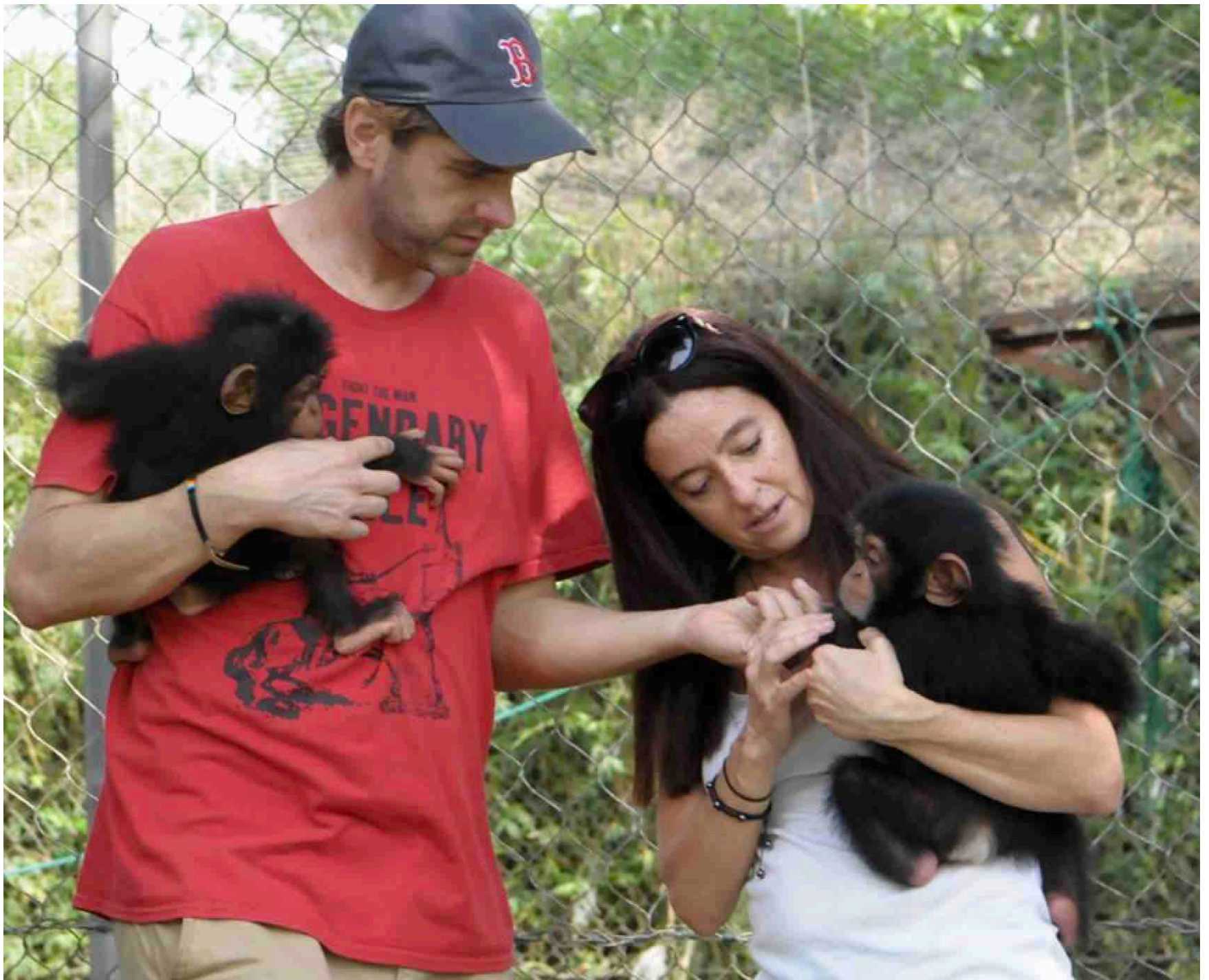


After Comfort was bitten by a snake on one of the islands, HSUS darted her and moved her into one of the old concrete enclosures where she lived when she was used in experiments by the NY Blood Center. HSUS has inexplicably not built a holding area for sick and injured chimpanzees in spite of receiving over \$6M for their care.



Had HSUS built the proper infrastructure on the islands and at their offices, then Comfort's injury could have been easily treated. Instead, she was subjected to surgery and moved back into a terrifying lab cage where she relived her experience as a research subject. After having two amputation surgeries, she died alone in a cage – away from her island family – because HSUS has failed to do its job.

The Desmonds, who remain in Liberia and are running a separate [sanctuary with 59 chimpanzees](#) rescued from the exotic pet trade, have attempted to share information about the inexcusable conditions at HSUS's sanctuary, but lawyers retained by HSUS have sent letters threatening to sue them.



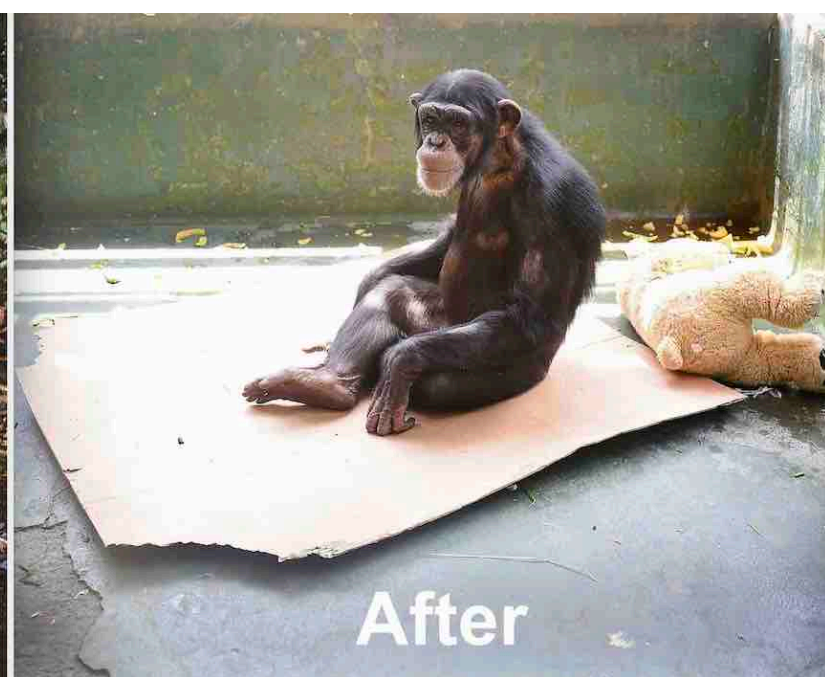
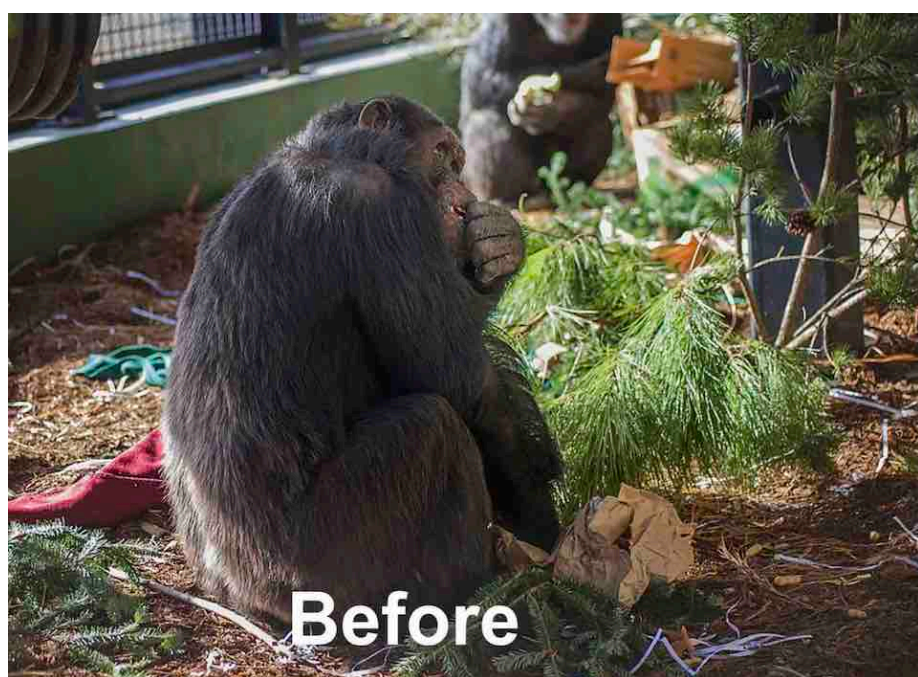
Jenny Desmond and Dr. Jim Desmond of Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection



When conditions at the Liberia sanctuary began to deteriorate, I contacted HSUS and the Chairman of the Board, but my pleas for reform fell on deaf ears. They dismissed my concerns and said that I was misinformed in spite of the fact that I went to Liberia twice and witnessed the decline in care with my own eyes.

Given my firsthand knowledge of how HSUS treats its chimps and employees in Liberia, I was not surprised to learn about the abysmal conditions at Project Chimps in Georgia and the lawsuit filed by Project Chimps against two whistleblowers, Lindsay Vanderhoogt and Crystal Alba.

In 2018, Lindsay, a founding staff member and chimp caretaker, resigned from Project Chimps (see video below), and Crystal, a veterinary assistant, was fired in March, 2020, over her ongoing demands for reform. Knowing that the welfare standards would decline further without Crystal, both she and Lindsay continued to advocate for the chimps by calling for outside investigations and sounding the alarm about the abuses, which, at the time of Crystal's departure, included appalling veterinary care (suspected untreated broken limbs, untreated deep wounds and parasitic infection); barren, concrete enclosures and porches devoid of enrichment where they spend the vast majority of their time; and infrequent access to the outdoor habitat. According to Crystal, one group of 14 chimps had no habitat access for eight months.




The whistleblowers documented the decline in care over time.

Crystal and Lindsay have provided explicit evidence of these and other avoidable abuses on HelpTheChimps.org. The devastating conditions they documented are what we would expect to see in a laboratory that exploits animals, not in a sanctuary that rescues them.

Improper pain management and delayed treatment are among the vet care problems identified by the whistleblowers

According to a statement on HSUS's website, the sanctuary-accrediting organization Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) conducted an inspection at Project Chimps in response to the whistleblower complaints and, in its report, made a list of seven recommendations to improve animal welfare. The GFAS report not only validates some of the whistleblowers' concerns, but it also begs the question of why HSUS's Project Chimps is suing the whistleblowers instead of thanking them for calling attention to the problems.

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OF THE UNITED STATES

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## Statement on Project Chimps

Updated June 9, 2020

[Project Chimps](#) is an independent sanctuary dedicated to providing lifetime care to chimpanzees who have spent most of their lives in research laboratories. The Humane Society of the United States provides funding to Project Chimps to help support its work, which helped enable our own successful quest to end the use of chimpanzees in research by providing a safe and caring environment for retired laboratory chimps. Out of commitment to the sanctuary's mission, several HSUS staff members—including one with extensive primate experience—also serve on the board of Project Chimps.

We demand the best from any sanctuaries that we support financially and Project Chimps is no exception. While this sanctuary has consistently satisfied our requirements to meet high standards of care, we follow up on any serious concern that is brought to our attention.

We are aware of allegations made against the sanctuary. Our understanding is that the staff at Project Chimps—as well as outside experts, including experienced chimpanzee veterinarians—have reviewed the concerns brought to their attention, found them to be largely unsupported and have confirmed that the chimpanzees are getting appropriate care. A USDA inspection in January 2020 also found no areas of non-compliance.

Additionally, the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS), a sanctuary accrediting body, recently carried out a formal site visit at Project Chimps. GFAS has made some recommendations, which Project Chimps has implemented or is in the process of implementing. Those include:

- Contracting with a vet, in addition to the existing veterinarian, who has extensive chimpanzee experience to review specific medical cases and carry out an in-person assessment of all chimpanzees. (Note: The contracting veterinarian concluded that all chimpanzees were in good health.)
- Adding a cover sheet to each chimpanzee's medical file highlighting the information contained within it.
- Prioritizing the development of standard operating procedures that focus on issues such as health assessment, body condition scoring, monthly weight monitoring and fecal collection.
- Implementing a planned schedule for providing physical enrichment items to ensure the rotation of those items.
- Prioritizing the addition of certain features of the already-planned installation of new climbing structures, including low platforms.
- Ensuring a trained spotter is present and observing when another trained staff member enters the zone closest to the chimpanzee enclosure.
- Renewing the search to fill a position that focuses on behavioral needs and/or enrichment for the chimpanzees.

Project Chimps remains accredited and we were pleased to see that Project Chimps will have all the recommended upgrades in place by August 1.



The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) made some of the same recommendations as the whistleblowers to to improve the welfare of the chimps

In addition to implementing GFAS's recommendation and reforming the internal political environment that enabled the rapid decline in care to occur in the first place, HSUS needs to acknowledge that the whistleblowers were acting in the best interests of the chimps and pull the lawsuit, including the demand that Crystal and Lindsay pay Project Chimps's legal bills.

Suing well-intended whistleblowers, some of whose complaints were validated by a GFAS inspection, is an irresponsible, unprofessional and unethical use of the organization's resources. It's also cruel and an insult to all of the people making [contributions](#) to help Crystal and Lindsay defend themselves in court.

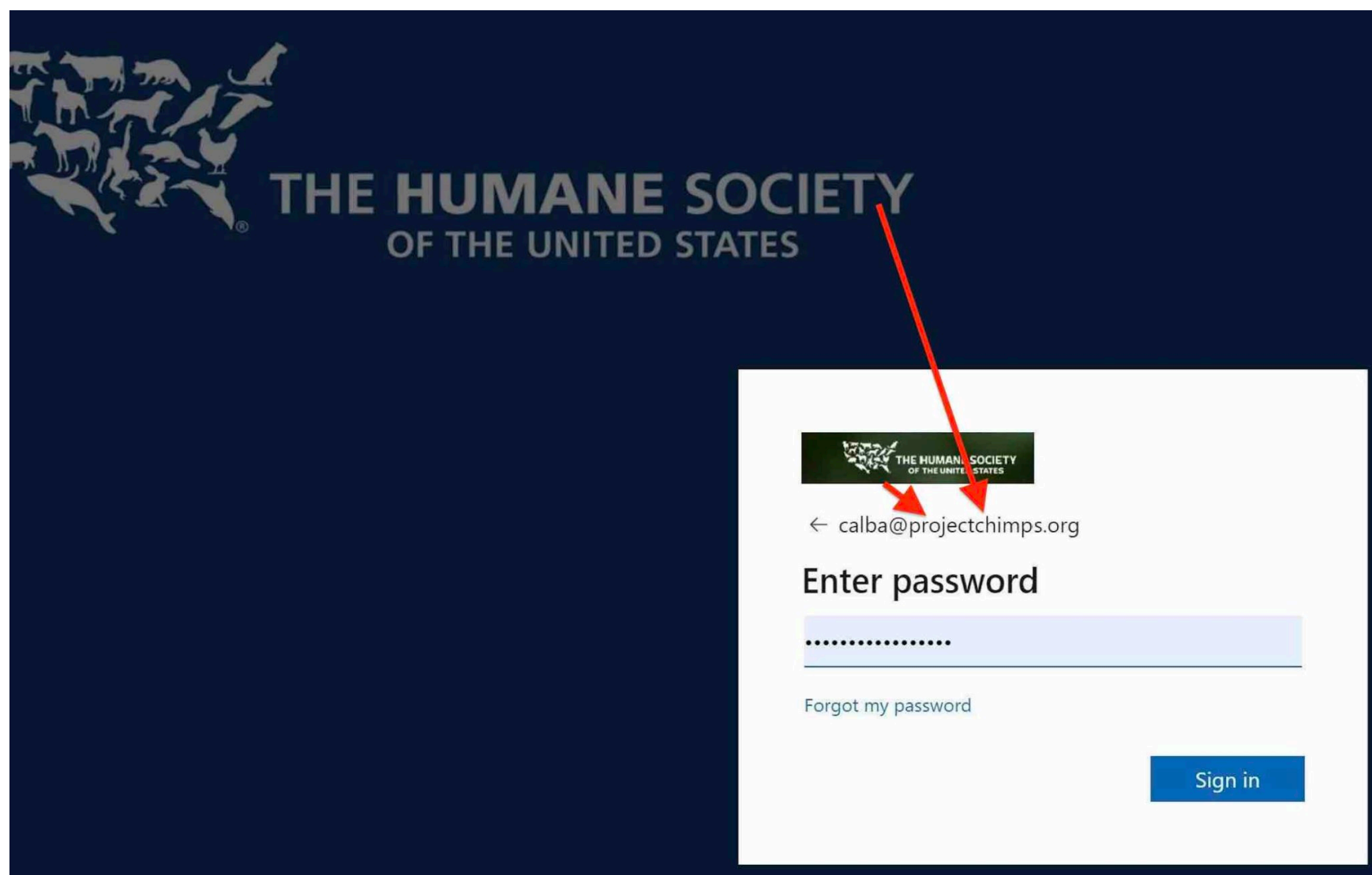
In a statement on its website about its decision to sue Crystal and Lindsay, Project Chimps warns of media coverage about the controversy. Assuming HSUS is unable to kill these stories before they are published, as it is attempting to do, the coverage will likely help to vindicate them.



## Protecting Our Mission

Sadly, these detractors have contacted media who must decide for themselves where the truth lies. We hope you, our supporters, already know the answer. Our 200 volunteers are in every inch of our facility, they see each of the 78 chimpanzees, they work side by side with our small paid staff. We invite you to [volunteer](#), to join our [public events](#) or book a [Chimpcation](#) to see for yourself.

Amid this controversy, HSUS has posted a [statement](#) on its website distancing itself from Project Chimps. This is highly misleading. HSUS hosts Project Chimps's email accounts, and the Project Chimps and HSUS email addresses are interchangeable (see below). HSUS is the organization's primary funder, and four of Project Chimps's board members are either employed by or serve on the board of HSUS. In fact, the Vice President of Animal Research Issues at HSUS is the Vice President of the Board of Project Chimps.



In addition to reforming Project Chimps, HSUS needs to make significant infrastructure and management changes at its sanctuary in Liberia or transition the sanctuary to the Desmonds, who are already running a sanctuary just a few miles away and are well poised to build desperately needed infrastructure for the chimps and oversee their care on the islands.

On a final note, I regret not speaking out sooner. My silence was a betrayal not only of the chimps, who I knew were needlessly suffering, but also of

the employees who HSUS has ignored, threatened, fired and sued for speaking out on behalf of the chimps. If HSUS doesn't drop this lawsuit and prioritize the welfare of the chimps at its two sanctuaries, then I will continue to speak out and to protest, no matter what scare tactics they use in an effort to silence me.