Indian spiritual leader Mohandas Gandhi once said that a nation's moral progress can be judged by the way it treats its animals. If this is so, then what should be said of a world in which not even the most obviously sensitive, most human-like animals are accorded compassion and the right to survive?

The chimpanzee is humankind's sibling species. Sharing 99 percent of our genetic material and thus most of our attributes, the chimpanzee is the closest one can get to a human being without actually being one. Yet, chimpanzees now totter on the very edge of extinction in their homeland—the result of relentless persecution by humankind. A significant percentage of the chimpanzees who remain have been cruelly captured and imprisoned under inhumane conditions in biomedical laboratories around the world. In U.S. laboratories, chimpanzees can be—and are—subjected to experiments limited only by the human imagination, without a guarantee that painkillers will be used.

During the past twenty or so years, ethologists and other scientists have discovered and documented the breathtaking humanness of chimpanzees. These animals have highly developed cognitive skills; they think, plan, use tools, are inventive and creative, engage in highly complex communications, and can learn—and spontaneously teach other chimpanzees—human sign languages. They live in highly social communities in which infants are carefully raised and, like human children, are dependent on the protection and attention of their mothers for many years. (Chimpanzees reach adulthood at age twelve.)

Chimpanzees express the entire range of emotions: joy, fear, anger, sorrow, jealousy, as well as those once thought to be uniquely human. They have been known to pine away and die following the loss of someone close to them, and they are capable of empathy and altruism (they will adopt orphans, for example). They can even have a sense of humor.

A two-year-old chimpanzee would be nearly indistinguishable from a human baby of the same age if the chimpanzee were not so much more advanced physically—being able, for example, to climb trees.

A chimpanzee raised as a human child in a human household will learn to eat at the dinner table, to help himself to snacks from the refrigerator, to sort and put away tableware, to brush his teeth, and play with dolls. He will also learn to turn on the television, pick a show that interests him, and watch it.

It is these very same beings who are the victims of our vast, unthinking and unspeakably cruel genocide. If we cannot save the nearly human chimpanzees, what creatures will we be able to save? Will we be able to save ourselves?

Last March Dr. Jane Goodall, HSUS board member and world-renowned observer of chimpanzees in the wild, visited SEMA, a National Institutes of Health-funded biomedical research laboratory in Maryland, several months after animal-rights activists covertly videotaped the shock-
Later visited SEMA found bodies of chimpanzees and other primates in experiments performed bizarre, repetitive motions called stereotypies. The creatures were found languishing alone in semi-darkness inside sealed steel and glass isolation chambers measuring only 40 inches high, 22 inches wide and 31 inches deep. Many other chimpanzees were found crammed two together into cold, barren cages 22 x 22 x 24 inches. Not yet involved in any experiment, they had been confined in this way for months.

Many of the SEMA chimps performed bizarre, repetitive motions called stereotypies which, according to Dr. Michael Fox of The HSUS, develop when thwarted attempts to escape become fixations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) investigators who later visited SEMA found several violations of the Animal Welfare Act—including some chambers measuring only 40 inches high, 22 inches wide and 31 inches deep. Most of the shockingly small and barren isolation cages, in use at SEMA are legal and, for the most part, no different than those found at other laboratories using primates. So, too, is the despair, the excruciating boredom, and the inevitable madness of the living creatures locked inside them.

Scientists who use the living bodies of chimpanzees and other primates in research have always defended the practice by saying that these animals are so much like us that they must be used.

But if they are so much like us how can they be used? How can humankind, within the context of its existing framework of ethics and morality, exploit chimpanzees—with their capacities for sentience, cognition, emotion, and suffering—in this way?

The HSUS believes that chimpanzees should be phased out of laboratories as soon as possible and we are working toward this end. Until we achieve this goal, however, The HSUS will continue to work for ways to improve the quality of life for chimpanzees. This is the reasoning behind their current campaign. On one front, The HSUS is working to force the government to write and then enforce strict regulations to ensure that the unusual psychological needs of chimpanzees and other primates are met in the nation’s laboratories. In 1983, amendments to the Animal Welfare Act were adopted requiring the USDA to create regulations that would address the psychological needs of captive primates. Until recently, however, no moves had been made to write the required regulations.

The Animal Welfare Act is a federal law that provides minimal protections for some laboratory animals. It regulates care—such as the housing and feeding of animals—but says virtually nothing about how animals may, or may not, be used in experiments. In addition, the law does not mandate the use of painkillers if their administration would interfere with the goals of an experiment.

Finally, late last year, the USDA announced that the primary regulations were finally in the making. The HSUS went to work. The HSUS, in conjunction with the Jane Goodall Institute, convened a working group of eminent experts who compiled comprehensive recommendations for the care and management of captive chimpanzees and other primates. The recommendations were submitted to the USDA, and The HSUS and Goodall have lobbied extensively on Capitol Hill for their adoption.

Imagine the SEMA chimpanzees having enough space for running, climbing, and swinging; bedding to serve as a substitute for tree nests; frequent social contact with other animals and human caregivers, and intellectual stimulation! Most importantly, if the HSUS/Goodall Institute recommendations are adopted, it would be illegal to take infants from their mothers at too early an age, and no chimpanzee would ever, for any reason, be kept in isolation.

On another front, The HSUS continues to oppose the current National Institutes of Health National Chimp Management Plan, a breeding program begun in 1986. The multi-million-dollar program, which attempts to raise hundreds of chimpanzees for use as experimental subjects, is alarming because it breeds chimpanzees as a commodity and perpetuates their use in experiments that cause pain and suffering. In addition, the plan is in no limits on the kind of experiments that can be done by laboratories that purchase the animals and does not take their humane needs into consideration.

Under the program, chimpanzees are now being raised at five locations throughout the country at an approximate cost to taxpayers of $11 million over the next few years. The program is well underway; yet—increasingly—no provisions have been written into the plan for proper housing and care, keeping infants with their mothers, or whether the animals are to be retired and rehabilitated after they have outlived their usefulness to researchers. So far, there is some doubt that the breeding program can succeed. Many of the hundreds of chimpanzees now at the breeding facilities are incapable of rearing offspring because they are psychologically disturbed as a result of their own impoverished upbringing. Because the chimpanzees are not reproducing fast enough to please the research community, researchers are now attempting such unnatural experiments as implanting chimpanzee embryos into baboons for gestation. The HSUS has testified before Congress against the NIH breeding plan and will do so again this year. The HSUS has also opened a dialogue between the humane community and the NIH. We are working to ensure that the ethical and humane implications of raising chimpanzees for research are not cast aside by the winds of expediency.

The HSUS is working to save the chimpanzees from extinction in the wild. The HSUS recently petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to reclassify the chimpanzees (Pan troglodytes) from its current listing as a threatened species to an endangered one—a classification that reflects its true status.

The FWS has accepted the petition and has agreed to recommend reclassification pending a strong show of public support. It is crucial that the government now hear from concerned Americans on this issue.

Experts estimate that there are only forty thousand to one hundred thousand chimpanzees left in the wild. What's more, the methods of capturing chimpanzees are exceedingly cruel. Chimpanzees frequently suffer their young when at...
tacked, and it is estimated that five to ten adults die for every infant that is captured alive. The animals are usually gunned down or chased to exhaustion by teams of dogs; the terrified infants are then pulled from the bodies of their dead or dying mothers. As such experiences would be for a human child, they are extremely traumatic for the infant chimps who are usually between the ages of one and two years old when they are captured and sold. Since chimpanzees are dependent on their mothers to approximately age eight, many of these babies die in transport from shock or poor handling.

The HSUS strongly feels that listing chimpanzees as an endangered species will result in more stringent conservation measures. Since it is much more difficult to obtain a permit to conduct research on an endangered species, researchers will be more likely to select chimpanzees only for the most important experiments, after ruling out alternatives. The HSUS is working to ensure that more stringent requirements force researchers to provide for the chimpanzees' physical and psychological needs and to retire the animals instead of killing them at the end of research projects.

Reclassifying the chimpanzee would also send a strong message to African nations that Americans treasure the chimpanzee and that we are working to stop the wholesale extermination of humankind's sibling species.

Like a traumatized child, this orphan, confiscated from a brutal trader, will bear lifelong emotional scars.