

Fully In Tact: Mouse with a mission, by Subject No. 54879

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Hi. My name is Subject No. 54879 and I live in an animal research lab. Although I'm usually a pretty calm mouse - being as I'm nearly always despondent due to various experimental drugs - I feel compelled to write in defense of animal research. It's about time we get some old-fashioned RESPECT.

Researchers have long been criticized by organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals for using furry creatures as test subjects. I can recall more than one occasion when I was rudely awakened, not by severe cramping following bleach-laced pellets, but by loud protesters just below my window. Sometimes these protests last all night; they should be grateful my eyes were swollen with hair spray and I couldn't sleep anyway. Otherwise, you can be sure they would have been hearing from me. This mouse does not put up with that sort of foolishness. No, siree!

What is most aggravating is that protesters just don't seem to understand that animal testing is an honored and effective tradition. Wise up, people! If not for brave subjects such as myself, mankind would not be able to enjoy the vaccinations, pesticides, artificial sweeteners and cosmetics they do now. And forget about moisturized skin, too; that was the result of Granny, No. 37954, and the rest of her proud generation.

When protesters label this as "inhumane" and "brutal," they're spitting on the selfless mammals that have contributed to the luxuries humans enjoy daily. Frankly, I'm disgusted by their brazen ingratitude and it's time I speak out.

Granted, I was not always as generous with my time and flesh as I am now. I, too, have doubted the cause. I, like so many rodents, have also faltered on the Chosen Path. When Skippy the Rabbit's head was immobilized and the lab assistant sprayed his eyes with hair spray every hour on the hour until he went blind and trembling, I nearly lost faith in our purpose. When Guinea Pig Sue's stomach was filled with floor wax to gauge the level of toxins, and she flailed through waves of convulsions in the corner of her cage ... well, I'm not ashamed to admit that I began to question the laboratory's designs for us.

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The little skeptic I was, I sometimes asked if there were perhaps cheaper, more exact technologies available. Sometimes I even questioned the "pound seizure" laws that force animal shelters to hand over thousands of lost cats and dogs to commercial and government-funded labs. When I started losing my hair and my left leg cramped up for a week, I questioned the nature of science. At one point, I even wondered if we are all meant to be free.

But then I was reassigned to a menopause project. It was there, among the other quivering and crying mice, that I saw The Truth. Not only had I been selfish, I'd also almost

begun to doubt the natural order of the universe. "Subject No. 54879," I said to myself with new resolve, "You need to pull yourself together. Your life may be the only hope for human women to overcome their fear of the natural aging process. If you let your little body age before its time, finally becoming sterile, you may significantly delay human cardiovascular disease! Could you ask for a more noble cause?"

And that was the end of my doubts. True, there was once perhaps a cause for fear in this line of work. After all, most researchers still cut out our ovaries to induce menopause. Ouch, right? But no more! Now just a little 4-vinylcyclohexene in a syringe plunged into my thigh is all middle-aged women need to feel better about the short-term and long-term effects of menopause. And hey, that's not so bad at all.

In fact, I look forward to those injections, realizing that if all goes as planned, it might even lead to a new wildlife sterilization method. And if there are fewer wild animals to begin with, there will be fewer killed by habitat destruction, pollution and poaching. See? It's a win-win situation for everyone!

So to all you animal rights activists out there: Simmer down. I appreciate your concern, but there's really no need to worry. We've got it all under control here at the lab. So go home and sleep easy knowing your furry friends are here, twitching and gasping through the predawn hours to keep you healthy. That's why we've been placed on this green earth.

At least, I think it's green. ...

Sabrina Noble is a senior majoring in English and creative writing, and highly recommends the following: StopAnimalTests.com. She can be reached at letters@wildcat.arizona.edu.