

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum
Oregon Department of Justice
1162 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4096

August 13, 2013

Dear Attorney General Rosenblum,

In 2012, SHowing Animals Respect and Kindness (SHARK) video-documented cruel acts of "horse tripping" (where rodeo riders rope horses around their legs, which brings them crashing to the ground) at the Big Loop Rodeo in Jordan Valley, Oregon. The video of this animal abuse went viral, with more than 200,000 views, and it sparked a movement in the Oregon legislature to ban horse tripping.

When SHARK went to the 2013 Big Loop Rodeo, the rodeo and the Malheur County Sheriff's Department, which has financial and personal ties to the rodeo (see Exhibit #1), took extreme action. On May 18th, Sheriff's deputies violently arrested Adam Fahnstock, who was filming for SHARK, and forced another to leave the premises.

There was an eyewitness to the arrest, Kaye Killgore, who wrote a letter about what she saw and the bias exhibited by the Sheriff's Department (see Exhibit #2).

Seeing this vast abuse of power committed by the Sheriff's Department, I immediately flew from Illinois to Oregon to attend the rodeo the next day. Though I was legally at the rodeo and was not violating any of the rodeo rules, I was asked to leave by the Sheriff's deputies simply because I had a camera with me (it must be noted that numerous people had cameras, but only I was singled out – due to my political beliefs - and asked to leave).

As I drove away from the rodeo, I realized that I was being followed by two Malheur County Sheriff's vehicles. Ten miles away from the rodeo location, Sheriff's deputies Brian Belnap and Brian Beck pulled me over and demanded my identification. Soon after, a second Sheriff's vehicle pulled up.

When I pulled over to the side of the road, Deputy Brian Belnap, who had no legitimate reason to interrogate me, took personal information from me that was then shared with at least one private citizen, who then posted on her Facebook page both my name and rental information about the vehicle I was driving (see Exhibit #2).

That information could have only come from Deputy Belnap or one of his fellow officers who were at that incident. I can only wonder what other personal information of mine (including the VIN number for my personal vehicle, which the deputies had no legal reason to take) was distributed to friends of the rodeo who might use this personal information to harm.

Under Oregon's open public disclosure law, I requested and received the camera recordings from the Sheriff's vehicle dash board camera and a body camera worn by Deputy Beck. These two videos are online, unedited and available at the following links:

Malheur Bodycam <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoPeq0fKYmo>

Malheur County Dash Cam <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmVac7X0SS4>

Please note that the audio for the first 30 seconds of the Dash Cam video appear to have been erased. I can only assume that, as that directly preceded the Sheriff deputies stopping me, that it contained damaging evidence. This potential erasure of evidence is extremely disturbing and needs to be investigated.

Using the Sheriff Department's own video, this is what happened:

At the start of the "Bodycam" video, Deputy Brian Belnap approached me and claimed I was stopped because I failed to provide ID when I "trespassed" at the rodeo. This entire premise was false, as I had neither trespassed nor was under any legal obligation to provide ID when at the rodeo. After taking my ID at the traffic stop, Belnap went back to the Sheriff's vehicle.

Even though I was using a rental car, Belnap told Beck to write down my VIN number for my personal vehicle (2:21 on the video)

At 3:10, Deputy Brian Beck said that he was going to contact the "Rodeo Board" and ask if they wanted me "trespassed permanently" from the rodeo.

This was critical, as the Sheriff's deputies were literally trying to create a reason to justify why they had stopped me.

At 4:02, Deputy Beck asked, over the radio, for someone to contact the Rodeo Board and see if they wanted me trespassed permanently.

While waiting for a response, the deputies discussed what they should do (5:12). Asked if they were going to cite me for trespass by a third officer, Belnap said he didn't think so, because I left "semi-willingly."

At 7:17, having at that point heard nothing back from the Rodeo Board, the deputies decided on their own to tell me that if I returned to the rodeo I would be trespassing. They then waited another minute and an unknown voice over the radio said "Yeah, trespass him."

I had been stopped and held for no legal reason. My ID had been taken and I was

kept waiting while the deputies tried to figure out how to threaten me with trespassing. At 8:41, they joked about this.

Belnap: "Should we see how long he'll stand out there?"

Beck: "Yeah, I guess we could."

They then realized that wouldn't be a good idea, and at 9:00 Belnap returned to me and told me I had been "trespassed permanently" from the Jordan Valley rodeo club. I was then told that I would be arrested if they caught me there again.

At 10:00, I asked Belnap why I was stopped. Belnap then made the false claim that I had violated the rodeo rules (I had not). Finally, Belnap told me that I was "free to go," meaning that I was not free to go while the deputies plotted out a reason to keep me there in the first place.

At this point, we switch over to the Malheur County Dash Cam, which takes place after the deputies returned to their vehicle and the body cam was turned off.

I had earlier asked to speak to a Supervisor. Over the radio, you hear someone tell the deputies to give me their card and tell me to call the office on Monday. Even though I had not left (I was still outside of my car) and the deputies are told to give me that information, they refused. Instead they waited for me to leave.

It appears the reason why they didn't want to give me their card was because they feared I would sue them for the improper way they had stopped me.

The conversation picks up right after they were told to give me the information (12:40).

Beck: "He's already going to get lawyers."

Beck: "This...this guy [Hindi] is the real deal."

Beck: "This guy is the one that posted everything last year on his site..."

In his next comment, Beck acknowledged the entire fraud of the stop, and the problem the deputies have created (12:56).

Beck: "Here's the problem; they didn't trespass him when we were there. They asked him to leave."

Belnap responded: "Well, even so, we're going off what we were told."

Beck then made a startling statement (13:20):

Beck: "I didn't want to stop the man."

Beck: "God, we are going to get sued."

Belnap: "Perhaps you're right."

Beck: "We are going to be in a world of hurt here. It's all because of that rodeo board. You know that, right?"

Then Beck yelled: "Dammit! I was still recording!"

Based upon the repeated violations of my and other SHARK investigators civil rights, and the abuse of power committed by a rogue sheriff's department, we are asking for an immediate and full criminal investigation into the Malheur County Sheriff's Department.

Due to the outrageous behavior by the Sheriff's department personnel, which include Lieutenant Rob Hunsucker and Sergeant Brad Williams, who were in the second vehicle at the traffic stop, I am calling for all the officers involved with these incidents be immediately suspended, and ultimately fired for their actions. Officers of the law so willing to break their oaths must never be allowed to have such power over innocent people again.

Sincerely,

Steve Hindi
President,
Showing Animals Respect and Kindness

EXHIBITS

Exhibit #1

The ties between the Malheur County Sheriff's Department and the Jordan Valley Big Loop Rodeo.

In a letter dated April 7, 2013, which was presented as testimony on April 8, 2013 before the Oregon State Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, which was holding a hearing on a bill to ban "horse tripping," Malheur County Sheriff Brian E. Wolfe defended the Jordan Valley Big Loop Rodeo and horse tripping (or roping as it is also called). He ended his letter with the following.

"I personally oppose any and all legislation, laws, or rules prohibiting Rodeo events including Horse Roping."

Sheriff Wolfe's letter was submitted on official county stationary, and from Wolfe's official position as Sheriff, yet, in his own words, Wolfe was making a political statement. The full letter can be seen on this link:

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2013R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/22951>

Sheriff Wolfe was also a past President of Vale Rodeo, so his objectivity when it comes to rodeo related issues should be questioned.

<http://oregonvotes.org/pages/history/archive/may152012/guide/eng/brianewolfe.html>

The Malheur County Sheriff's Department has direct ties to the Big Loop rodeo through their deputies. In testimony provided to the same Senate committee mentioned above, Jerry Raburn, who is with the Jordan Valley Rodeo Association, the organization that runs the Big Loop Rodeo, stated that:

"Not only is the rodeo a boost for the businesses here, but also for volunteer groups, service organizations, schools and churches. "

In his list of organizations that benefited from the rodeo, he included the *"Malheur County Sheriff's Deputies."*

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2013R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/14453>

Jake Roe, the Mayor of Jordan Valley, went further in his testimony on the horse tripping ban bill.

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2013R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/15992>

"The Sheriff's posse sells food at the park to raise money..."

The Malheur County Sheriff uses the rodeo to raise money for itself. But the ties go deeper still.

One of the activists who was ordered to leave the rodeo was confronted by Malheur County Sheriff Sergeant Richard Harriman. With Sergeant Harriman was another Malheur County deputy named Bob Wroten. Sergeant Harriman introduced Deputy Wroten by name to the activist, and also told him that Deputy Wroten was *"with the rodeo board."*

SHARK's video of horse tripping and animal abuse at the Big Loop Rodeo was so shocking that it led the Oregon Legislature to craft legislation to ban horse tripping. In the minds of many Big Loop supporters, as evidenced in their testimony to the Senate committee hearing the bill, a horse tripping ban would seriously harm the Big Loop rodeo.

The Malheur County Sheriff officers, one of whom we were told holds a position on the rodeo board itself, actually sell product and collect money at the rodeo, meaning that they have a personal stake in the continued profitability of the rodeo.

Exhibit #2

Statement by Kaye Kilgore on the arrest of SHARK volunteer Adam Fahnstock.

<http://www.eugeneweekly.com/blog/horse-tripping-video-2013big-loop-rodeo>

Hello, I wanted to let you know that I went to the Jordan Valley Big Loop Rodeo this last weekend, and I would like to tell you what I saw there. As I testified previously I grew up in Eastern Oregon and have gone to rodeos since I was a small child. I am embarrassed to admit I'm from Eastern Oregon after going to Jordan Valley.

1. There were signs prohibiting taking videos, however the announcer said that just applied to "people from Western Oregon, animal rights activists, and the media." The announcer stated that didn't apply to the "good folks who want to film their relatives or friends." There were lots of cameras visible. He also stated that if the people from Western Oregon, animal rights activists, or the media were observed taking video they would be arrested and escorted off the property. They violently arrested a man about 10' from where I was sitting, took him down in the seats, and took him to the Malheur County Jail where he was booked for Disorderly Conduct and Resisting Arrest. They ejected three other people that I saw, one man who stated he was just taking pictures,

not video. I understand that it is private property, and that they have the right to make the rules, but I feel the rules should apply to everyone.

2. They mentioned the bill and that they had made trips to testify. The announcer stated that the bill "looks like it's going to pass, but that it would not affect their rodeo" at all.

3. The announcer stated that people from Western Oregon should just stay in their cities and leave them alone.

4. The horses used in the "Big Loop" event are thin enough that you can count their ribs, and seem young.

5. Because I was so uncomfortable being there, I did not stay for the entire rodeo. During the first round of the "Big Loop" event, they managed to rope two horses by the neck, one fairly close to the throatlatch, did not rope any horses by the feet, so in the first section all the competitors got "no time". However, one horse crashed violently into the wall, and they continued trying to rope it after it got up. I did not see them check the horse out by a veterinarian.

6. The horses that were in the "Big Loop" event were completely terrified.

I wanted to share my experience with you. I have never left a rodeo before it was over before. I was uncomfortable there and felt threatened by their general attitude. The crowd cheered when people were arrested and ejected.

Thank you for considering this statement. I urge you to pass this bill and protect those that have no voice in this event, the horses.

Thank you,

Kaye Killgore

Exhibit #3

Post made by Mary Williams Hyde, May 21, 2013

<https://www.facebook.com/mary.w.hyde>

https://www.facebook.com/mary.w.hyde/posts/10200437580681031?comment_id=5048611&offset=0&total_comments=26¬if t=feed_comment_reply



Mary Williams Hyde · 1,255 followers

May 21 at 7:39am via mobile · 🌐

 Follow

Please send me photos of any AR people who are caught at events! I want to keep posting their photos. The google research i did beforehand helped ME recognize Steve Hindi the SHARK guy when he showed up at Jordan Valley. He is the one who made that horribly deceptive video exploiting the bronc who broke his leg last year. They had trouble getting the horse out of the arena because he was so wild and not halter broke. steve turned that into what he labeled as major animal cruelty and made a ton of money from it. that video is also one of the main ones being shown to the Oregon legislature. dont know if he was there Saturday which doesn't actually matter because nothing of interest to him happened, and Sunday, when i saw him it was Grand Entry time. He was sure mad when he got thrown out. Wasn't actually sure it was him though, because he refused to give his name. But they got the id l when highway patrol stopped him later. rental car was insured by SHARK. I will post some new photos of him later for everyone to memorize plus i think i can get some mug shots of the other two.

Please note this line that she wrote:

"But they got the id l when highway patrol stopped him later. rental car was insured by SHARK."

How would she have known about the "ID" and that this was me, or about who had rented and insured the vehicle? That was information that had to have been shared by one of the deputies. And if the Deputy did share my personal information with this woman, and/or others, then how do I know that my driver's license, home address or other personal information were not distributed as well?