



August 21, 2009

## **Comments about Michael Vick by Last Chance for Animals' (LCA) President Chris DeRose**

Michael Vick may have paid his legal debt to society--but he has not paid his moral debt. He says he is sorry, but I do not feel his remorse is genuine (i.e. 60 Minutes interview). It is disheartening to see him putting so much time and energy into getting his football career back on track, and watching his insincere attempts to convince the public that he understands what he did was wrong. Let us remember exactly what Vick is apologizing for: the systematic, sadistic torture and killing of countless innocent dogs, via electrocution, hanging, and drowning, by his own hands for years. It is important not to forget the gruesome deaths these animals suffered, by Vick's choice. If he was truly remorseful, he would do major soul-searching in order to understand why he chose to inflict such horrific pain and suffering on innocent animals and work with disadvantaged kids, who look up to football "heroes," to turn their lives around. This is an opportunity for him to be a real hero, and a real man--not just a guy that throws a football around. A real man is not afraid to be a role model for peace and compassion.

Before Vick was sentenced in August 2007, I wrote a letter to federal prosecutor Michael R. Gill, proposing that instead of doing time in prison, Vick pay his debt to society in the following ways while being suspended from playing football:

- \*Educate himself on the issue of animal cruelty and get professional counseling
- \*Travel nationwide to reach and educate other dog fighters, the public and especially young people, about animal cruelty
- \*Pay a hefty "fine" by donating to pit bull and other animal rescue organizations
- \*Pledge to donate a percentage of his future income from all sources, including playing football, and endorsements, to fund advocacy programs on animal abuse

I made the above proposals for the following reasons: having been a "big brother" to 26 tough street kids over the years, I know this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Vick to make a tremendous impact nationwide, even worldwide, as all eyes are upon him. By being a positive mentor, he will become the new role model for young kids living in impoverished, disadvantaged neighborhoods, and help put an end to animal abuse. It is never too late to make a real difference for good in this world.

As one of the leaders in the Animal Rights movement for over 30 years, I knew my letter to the prosecution in August 2007 would not be popular. I welcomed the criticism because as the late, great Dr. Martin Luther King said: "...there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but one must take it because one's conscience tells them that it is right."

It is now August 2009--Vick was released on May 20<sup>th</sup> after serving 19 months at the Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary to serve his remaining two months in "home confinement" at his luxurious five-bedroom sprawling estate in Hampton, Virginia. He was reinstated by the NFL on July 27<sup>th</sup> and signed by the Philadelphia Eagles on August 13<sup>th</sup>.

What has he done to redeem himself in the three months since he has been released from prison? He is engaging in football practices and workouts, preparing for his first game in October 2009 and has apparently agreed to work with the HSUS on programs aimed at preventing kids from getting involved in dogfighting. The nation will be watching to see his dedication, if any, to the cause of animal advocacy and helping teach young people how to treat animals.

Some say that "Vick has served his time and deserves a second chance." I agree with that, but he has been reinstated by the NFL, and signed a multi million dollar contract with the Philadelphia Eagles, just by serving his legal debt to society regardless of whether he has proven himself to be a changed man

Vick got his second chance in football, with very little effort on his part. It's too bad the dogs he brutally tortured and murdered do not get one; we need to honor them by "remembering" what they went through. When Vick pays his moral debt to society and shows true remorse, then he can be forgiven, but we should never forget the systematic, sadistic torture Vick's dogs went through.