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STATE OF THE DISCOURSE

MULTICULTURALISM GOES IMPERIAL

Immigrants, Animals, and the Suppression of Moral Dialogue

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Abstract

As Latino and Asian immigrant populations in the United States continue to grow, controversies are cropping up over immigrant animal practices such as horse tripping in Mexican *charreadas* (rodeos) and the slaughter of animals in the live-animal markets of San Francisco's Chinatown. Immigrant advocates read these controversies through a multiculturalist interpretive framework that constructs animal advocates as agents of an ethnocentric and racist majority. In this article, I argue that this multiculturalist interpretation tends to “go imperial” by mischaracterizing the position(s) of animal advocates and invalidating and suppressing the other, potentially competitive, moral discourse at play: the discourse about cruelty toward animals. I explicate this suppressed discourse and then propose the development of a mutually challenging and potentially edifying moral dialogue in which majority and minority animal practices are simultaneously open to scrutiny and criticism. Clashes over customary practices can aggravate intergroup tensions, but they also have the potential to lead to meaningful moral dialogue between the majority and immigrant minorities.

Key Words: Multiculturalism; Immigrants; Animals; Moral Discourse; *Charreada*; Chinatown

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