



Nonhuman Rights Project

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NIH PROPOSAL RE: HUMAN-ANIMAL CHIMERA RESEARCH

As a US-based civil rights organization that mobilizes scientific understanding of nonhuman animals to advocate for recognition of certain animals' legal personhood and fundamental rights, the Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) **opposes the National Institutes of Health (NIH) proposal to lift the funding moratorium on human-animal chimera research and is prepared to litigate on certain chimeras' behalf.**

We have litigated, and will continue to litigate, our claim that chimpanzees and other nonhuman animals such as gorillas, bonobos, orangutans, elephants, and cetaceans are entitled to legal personhood and certain fundamental legal rights based on their autonomy, which we argue is a sufficient condition for personhood. We do not argue, nor do we believe, that autonomy is a necessary condition for legal personhood. We are prepared to argue in court that certain chimeras are similarly entitled to recognition of their legal rights to bodily liberty and bodily integrity.

As we have done in our campaign on behalf of chimpanzees, we will embark on a campaign on behalf of certain chimeras with the support of members of the scientific community who are as troubled as we are by the prospect of this research. We will also mobilize members of the public who—with the help of our lawsuits—know that legal personhood has never been, is not now, nor will it ever be synonymous with the term “human being.” Instead, it is who “counts” under the law. Whether chimeras are considered human beings, nonhuman animals, or a new class of being altogether remains to be legally explored.

Were the NIH to fund this research, it will undermine the commendable progress it has made in recent years in supporting the development of models for studying human disease that do not entail the unnecessary exploitation and inevitable suffering of sentient beings. It would also ignore the ethical imperatives of an ever-evolving global scientific understanding of nonhuman animals' cognitive and emotional complexity that is already accepted in American culture.

We strongly urge NIH to keep this funding moratorium in place.

Dated: September 4, 2016

Steven M. Wise
Founder and President
Nonhuman Rights Project