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The Truth Behind the White Tiger

A blur of snowy white magnificence with piercing crystal blue eyes, the feline huntress commands the awe of persons fortunate enough to have witnessed this beautiful creature in motion. Time and time again, the white tiger's grandeur and power never ceases to amaze humans. Stealthy hunters, these cats are well-built climbers, swimmers, runners, with strong limbs and shoulders, and possess highly keen sight and hearing. ("Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)") Scientists who inbreed white tigers for attraction however, cripple the tiger's strength by deforming them, impairing their sight, and muffling their hearing abilities, which reduces this once powerful hunter to a handicap display of beauty.

While spectators, from children to adults, come from all around to observe these powerful beasts of the wild firsthand in zoos and circus shows, most are not aware of the truth behind the white tiger. In reality these unique cats possess a genetic defect that produce their creamy white coat. In the wild these mutations tend to die out because the color white is "disadvantageous for the survival of the animal... in a tropical jungle environment" ("The White Tiger Fraud"), but zoos, for publicity and self-profit, are inbreeding these rare tigers, "fathers with daughters, brothers with sisters, and mothers with sons" ("The Secret of the White Tiger") in order to produce more tigers with this money-attractive coat. Inbreeding causes baby tigers to acquire harmful recessive genes. Furthermore, mating with close relatives causes the tiger population to undergo inbreeding depression, or to become less fit. ("Inbreeding") This causes white tigers to become cross-eyed, have cataracts that may cause blindness, have short faces, cleft palates, snub noses, jutting jaws, twisted necks, deformed spines, hip problems, clubbed

feet, abnormal kidneys, shortened tendons of the forelegs, mental impairments, and immune deficiency. ("The Secret of the White Tiger", "The White Tiger Fraud", "Inbreeding Depression of White Bengal Tigers "). Humans admire a tiger for its beauty and majestic features, its bodily strength and build, yet paradoxically many zoos attract our very attentions by condoning this deformation of the tiger. Meanwhile, people go to zoos everyday, ignorant of what is really happening behind closed doors.

Perhaps what is most atrocious is the high mortality rate of white tiger cubs. Roughly eighty percent die from birth irregularities. Furthermore, because most of these inbred cubs are deformed, they are too clumsy and unpredictable to be put on zoo display or perform in shows. "According to some tiger trainers, only 1 in 30 of [inbred] white cats will consistently perform." ("The White Tiger Fraud") One "perfect" white cub is the price of the other twenty-nine misfits that will either live their entire lives in cages or be disposed of.

Many white tiger breeding businesses even defend themselves by claiming not to be motivated by money but are working to help the cause of breeding more tigers and stopping tiger extinction. This is easily refutable as "the exotic animal market is a multimillion dollar industry, ranking just below the illegal drug trade". ("The White Tiger Fraud") For businesses that breed and sell white tigers to say that they are not in it for the money would be outright outrageous. Additionally, according to The Tiger SSP (Species Survival Plan), the inbreeding of white tigers serves no tiger subspecies conservation purpose at all. This is because all white tigers in the United States are either inbred and defective or hybrids and crossbreeds between the Siberian and Bengal tigers. Daniel C. Laughlin, DVM, PhD, an expert in the care and management of zoological animals, who "has completed his research into the accurate genealogy of the white

tiger”, confirms that the original litter of white Indian Bengal tigers born in the United States in 1974 eventually died out, forcing the Cincinnati Zoo in 1976 to cross a white male crossbred tiger, half-Siberian and half-Bengal, to a white carrier female Bengal tiger. “Thus, every white tiger ever born at the Cincinnati Zoo is part Siberian tiger and part Bengal tiger... It is [these] offspring [that] have been disseminated throughout the U.S.” Consequentially, the continued inbreeding of white tigers in the United States would not produce pure white Bengal tigers, but rather hybrid tigers, which would not further the cause of preserving the five remaining pure subspecies of tigers left in the world. Moreover, Ronald Tilson, a Minnesota Zoo executive who coordinates the American Zoo and Aquarium Association's species survival plan for tigers, states that white tiger cubs with deformities “have absolutely no conservation value whatsoever.” (“An Unnatural Fate”) They cannot perform in circuses or be displayed on shows, and the majority of big cat sanctuaries are already filled up with other unwanted animals. This leaves many deformed white cubs to be abandoned, put in roadside zoos where living conditions are harsh, or put to “humane deaths” by veterinarians. If breeders really wanted to help preserve the tiger specie, they would outbreed purebred tigers rather than inbreed hybrid white ones.

The inbreeding and selling of white tigers is also in itself a practice of fraudulence against the general public. Zoo-goers are led on to believe that these creatures generally lead healthy and happy lives. Most are ignorant of how these tigers are produced, and this ignorance is unfairly taken advantage of. These people are not aware that their money is going towards sponsoring the heartless scientific venture that reduces most of these cats to contorted and homeless outcasts. As stated by Daniel C. Laughlin, DVM, PhD, “the genealogical misrepresentation, repeated inbreeding, exhibition and sale, for \$60,000 each, of white tigers by

the Cincinnati Zoo initiated the greatest conservation deception of the American public in history.” (“The White Tiger Fraud”)

The greatest dilemma is public unawareness of the issue at hand. Educating the public of the negative consequences of white tiger inbreeding will help to forward the campaign against this malicious practice. There are numerous animal reserves and organizations that are fighting against tiger extinction and human encroaching. Reproductive physiologists are even procuring ways to “produce [tigers] through in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer” (“Battling Extinction with Test-Tube Tigers”) in order to increase the diminishing number of tigers left in the world. Such abundant measures taken against tiger endangerment occur because the general public is well informed that the number of tigers is diminishing and that actions must be taken to prevent this. If the public, especially young people, were educated about the truth behind the white tiger, campaign signs would be walking the streets, voices speaking out against this atrocity. Knowledge is power, and the power of millions of people would be enough to significantly limit or even ban such uncompassionate practices of inbreeding. Personally, I first learned of the practice of white tiger inbreeding through an online video on a video-broadcasting website. Likewise, one can utilize all forms of media to bring attention to the cruelty of white tiger inbreeding and of the deceptions that the general public is led to believe. Students participating in their school newspaper staff can write and publish articles pertaining to this matter in their school newspaper. Computer enthusiasts can create informational videos and post them on video-sharing websites. Who knows, their video may even be featured on the website’s front page for millions of people to view.

Once the public is aware of the truth, they will start to campaign more vigorously against this heartless practice. More programs will be formed to further educate the youth about this atrocity. People can discourage zoos and circuses from buying or breeding white tigers by refusing to go to zoos and circuses that display or use white tigers in their performances. Cutting off these businesses' attendance will cut off their revenues, and thus there will be no incentive to continue inbreeding and displaying these white tigers. One can start petitioning against this form of breeding by collecting the signatures of one's friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, etc. Mailing these signed petitions to one's Congressmen and representatives will assist in pressuring legislature to pass statutory laws prohibiting white tiger inbreeding. Laws may be passed that require businesses that already possess white tigers to maintain full responsibility for their cats, whether they are healthy, deformed, bring in profit, or do not. One can also donate money to sanctuaries that rescue abandoned cats, such as Big Cat Rescue. We humans are the stewards of the earth and must take responsibility to counter the injustice that is white tiger inbreeding in our world today.

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