The American Kennel Club describes the Greyhound as “a gentle, noble, and sweet-tempered companion with an independent spirit” (“Greyhound,” 1). Unfortunately, they are also the fastest dogs, which has made them the victim of a terrifyingly cruel and unjust industry that banks off of animal suffering: dog racing. According to Grey2K, an organization advocating against the practice, Greyhounds are confined for 20 to 23 hours of the day (“Fact Sheet,” 1). These sweet animals are stacked in kennels where they are barely able to move as they are only acknowledged for their profitability. The status of this industry is disgusting and action must be taken to spread awareness and ban racing in the 5 states that still allow it.

First and foremost, the quality of life for a race dog is shameful to those who participate in the sport. Confinement, cruelty, and under-regulated transportations make up the lives of these innocent dogs. Grey2k estimates that the size of dog cages manufactured by special racetrack cage companies is 32 inches high, 21 inches wide, and 42 inches deep (“Fact Sheet,” 1). Due to massive overbreeding to meet demand, the ASPCA has reported over 80,000 Greyhounds coming into the industry from 2008 to 2015 (“Greyhound Racing,” 2). These poor creatures were raised only to know the crate and the track. Large amounts of kennels are stacked on top of each other and the animals are crowded into intense areas and treated more like objects in storage than animals in suffering. Moreover, the dogs are often transported for long distances to run and some have even died in the process. Dogs are transported through intense weather such as severe heat and storms in order for them to be used as gambling tokens. For example, “in August 2008, three
greyhounds died while being transported from Iowa to the Palm Beach Kennel Club in Florida. The dogs apparently died of heat-related illness” (“Transportation,” 2). Not only are people cruel with the way they manage these dogs, but they are significantly more likely to be directly abused as well. The ASPCA noted over 27 cases of cruelty and neglect, meaning that racing dogs were “starved to death, denied veterinary care, or endured poor track kennel conditions” (“Greyhound Racing,” 2). Thousands and thousands of Greyhounds are euthanized or die each year due to the simple fact that they can’t meet a certain profit margin anymore. It is clear that dog racing is an inhumane and outdated practice that reduces the dog’s quality of life to near nothing, if they even live through all of the hardships.

Next, the list of health issues that arise from the treatment of racing Greyhounds is extensive and needs to be addressed. These health issues stem from a myriad of problems embedded in the industry, such as extensive injuries, harsh weather, poor diet, and exposure to drugs. The list of injustices goes on and on, each equally as horrifying as the last. Injury is the most well known of these issues and its impact on the animals is widespread. The ASPCA cited a whopping 11,722 injuries among the race dogs, including broken legs, crushed skulls, broken backs, paralysis, and electrocutions (“Greyhound Racing,” 2). There is absolutely no reason why the animal that is a man’s best friend should be subject to such terrible injuries for sport and ultimately for profit. In addition, the harsh weather that Greyhounds must race in is a source of pain for them because the nature of their thin coats does not warrant protection against pelting rain or smothering heat. Moving forward, the diet that people feed Greyhounds is inhumane and unethical, exposing them to health risks. The Humane Society explains this diet and its negative effects:
To reduce costs, Greyhounds are fed raw meat from dead, dying, diseased or disabled animals (called “4-D meat”) that has been deemed unfit for human consumption… Greyhounds are particularly at risk of becoming ill from pathogens such as salmonella and E-coli, because they are fed raw 4-D meat. Greyhound trainers refuse to cook the meat because they believe it would cause dogs to be less competitive. ("Greyhound Racing FAQ,” 8)

This further vindicates that racing trainers not only disregard happiness and wellbeing of their dogs, but they would literally let the dogs die from illness before they sacrifice a winning record and cash. Not only are there immediate health risks associated with the raw food, but the diet wreaks havoc on the dental hygiene of the animals and many of them end up having to have their teeth pulled out. Another major health concern is the use of drugs through this industry. From 2010 to 2017, Grey2K found 847 drug positives, 71 of which were for cocaine ("No Confidence,” 1). These dogs are subject to hard drug use in order to try and make more money and many of the legislators in the states where it is legal are turning a blind eye. Even when some drug testing is done, the fines are too low and a percentage of the dogs are still left untested. It is bad enough that there is such rampant drug abuse in our country, but do we have to subject animals to routine drugging as well? With all of the health issues that Greyhounds are exposed to when they race, the industry needs to be shut down completely—with no leniency or exceptions.

The pinnacle of inhumane Greyhound treatment is the drastic over-breeding and subsequent euthanization of thousands upon thousands of dogs. Greyhounds usually have a life expectancy of 10 to 12 years, but thousands are just discarded or killed once they stop making a profit after 2 to 5 years: as a member of the Homestretch Greyhound Rescue and Adoption
Agency explained, “the dogs are essentially a byproduct of the racing industry...when the dogs are no longer useful, they start costing money because they still have to be fed and housed” (Filmore, 1). An activist discussing the horrors of the Greyhound racing industry elaborated on the inhumane way that dogs are treated after racing:

In the long run for these dogs, there is no winning or losing, they all suffer the same fate. It doesn't matter if they are fast or slow or become injured. They will all die due to the lack of profit. The massacre will never end because to the corporate industry. They are nothing more than disposable running machines. (Connell, 3)

One way to combat this particular issue is to stop the gross over-breeding of the animals. This will occur when the sport is shut down, which is inevitable due to the growing awareness of the dishonest business paired with the dwindling popularity and increased laws fighting private clubs. Recently, a law was passed that will phase out Greyhound racing completely by 2021 in Florida, which is major because the state has the largest quantity of racing and the most tracks. This will, in turn, leave thousands of dogs without homes, which will pose an issue if the disposal methods of Greyhounds are left unregulated. Yet, it is a major success considering that thousands of dogs will be retired from the tracks and will gain their freedom. However major the accomplishment, the fight for Greyhound rights is far from over. There are three ways that I propose addressing this issue. The first way is to continue spreading awareness about the issues that make Greyhound racing inhumane. I did this by giving a talk at my school to tell a class of my peers about the issues and other ways they can help. Another way to aid this situation is to donate to the GREY2K organization. Finally, and more importantly, I think the best way to go about these types of issues is to write to legislators who can impose immediate change to the
system in place. This method has worked in the past, as is the case with Florida’s new law, and it will be the only sure way to enact lasting change against this heinous industry. The most powerful tool a common person possesses is the ability to make change in legislation and thus directly enhance democracy. While my state does not have Greyhound racing, I have signed a petition that would prevent racing in Texas. These poor animals are gentle giants, blessed and cursed with their speed. It is imperative that Greyhound racing be stopped—there is no excuse for such inhumane treatment of animals.
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