

## **Bullfighting**

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Bullfighting is it a tradition or a tragedy? This polemical tradition has provoked world wide debates concerning animal welfare. This sport is protected in countries such as Mexico and Spain, where it is excluded from animal welfare laws. Even the European Community has declared bullfighting a protected activity. Many argue bullfighting is a form of art, a cultural tradition. Others see it as an act of violence and cruelty towards animals. As globalization and the awareness of the need for animal welfare increases, bullfighting is becoming more unpopular, especially in Western societies. However, do other societies have the right to impose their values and ethical views on others, and stop bullfighting, or will the societies that support this activity prohibit it themselves?

Human nature has always been drawn to violence. The Romans and Greeks glorified public violence. Nowadays, violent movies and wrestling fulfill society's craving for violence. However, Bullfighting origins are linked to the religious ceremonies of the Iberian tribes which later evolved into "corridas", or bullfighting as we know it today.

The phenomenon of catharsis, along with tradition and now tourism, is what has kept this custom alive. Some even consider it "a symbol of something genuinely Spanish"; or the "triumph of human cunning over brute force"; or the "dramatic ballet dance with death". But do those romantic sentiments towards bullfighting and a long tradition justify an animal's humiliation and suffering?

There are no official figures to show how the tourism industry has directly or indirectly impacted bullfighting, but it is known that major tourist resorts along the

Spanish coasts, have bullrings specially built for this market. According to PETA, approximately 10,000 bulls world wide die in the bull ring. The animal is tormented and literally butchered alive, meanwhile a crowd cheers the graceful Matador.

An increase of animal awareness has influenced bullfighting. There are now other less violent versions such as the bloodless Portuguese- style. In this modified style the bull is not killed in the arena, but it is still tortured and tormented.

As a Mexican and a future veterinarian I am against bullfighting even though it is very popular in my country and it is part of our heritage. Animal cruelty should be condemned and not be tolerated, without exceptions. Many Mexicans obviously do not share the same moral values towards animals. Animals, especially large animals, are seen more as property rather than companions. I think that for bullfighting to be abolished, it is necessary to start educating the societies that supports this blood sport. Education is the key rather than aggressively imposing “foreign” values. Therefore, it is vital to target the young generations to speed up the process. As the banning of bullfighting is not a top priority in my country, it is very unlikely that educational programs against animal cruelty will be initiated in Mexican schools any time soon. Therefore, international organizations which are in favor of animal welfare could fund such education efforts, which hopefully will have an impact on future generations. It might sound idealistic, but I think it is the only solution. This educational process might take generations to eradicate bullfighting. However, it is a long-term solution, and other pro animal welfare projects or movements might come out of this if it is carried out effectively.

**Sources:**

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