

*Since Nathan mentions my name at the top of his article, I need to clarify a few things.*

*First, the ASPCA devotes millions of dollars every year to promoting no-kill spay/neuter and adoption programs in New York City and across the country. That said, I do think they were wrong not to make a greater effort to find a home for Oreo. (I'm guessing they've been kicking themselves, too, ever since!) Certainly, it's not yet possible to place every homeless pit bull in a loving home, and clearly Oreo had deep psychological, as well as physical, wounds from the abuse he'd suffered. But there are several sanctuaries, including Best Friends, that the ASPCA could have approached to take him. To the best of my knowledge, they didn't do this.*

*In a high-profile case like Oreo's (just like with the dogs rescued from Michael Vick – in which, incidentally, the ASPCA played a key role in saving their lives), it's really important that the general public not get the false impression that a) pit bulls are simply dangerous killers, and b) those who have been abused cannot be rehabilitated. Neither of these is true. But this still does not discount the work that the ASPCA is doing for homeless pets on a far wider level.*

*Second, I'm a great admirer of the work of Jane Hoffman and Laura Allen. The Mayor's Alliance for NYC Animals was Jane's vision, and it's a landmark coalition of animal shelters, rescue groups, spay/neuter programs and more – and a model for other cities across the country.*

*I also work closely with Laura Allen on a new project for pit bulls, The StubbyDog Project, for which she is our chief legal adviser. Any idea that Laura is, or ever has been, on the wrong side of the no-kill movement is simply not true.*

*I've also worked closely with Nathan Winograd, will be speaking at his No-Kill Conference later this year, and consider him a passionate advocate for the animals. But I don't agree with his analysis of New York City, and I don't think most others of us in the no-kill movement do, either.*

*After I wrote a personal letter of support for Oreo's Law, I talked with both Jane and Laura. Both of them are attorneys, and both of them spoke to me about what they saw as potentially serious flaws and loopholes in the bill. Nathan, who is also an attorney, sees the bill differently. People of like mind and heart can take different points of view on things like this, discuss them and potentially learn from each other. The end result may well be a better bill.*

*As to the general tone of Nathan's comments: Fifteen years ago, the humane movement was polarized between the traditional "no option but to kill" view at one end and the new, pioneering, grassroots "no-kill" movement on the other. But that is no longer the case. The whole country is headed toward no-kill. Yes, there are still many holdouts, but New York City is not among them. Just for starters, Jane Hoffman reports that the groups who make up the Mayor's Alliance take in between 1,500 and 1,700 homeless dogs and cats from city shelters each month and place them in good new homes. That's impressive. (And, believe me, coordinating a diverse coalition of grassroots animal rescue groups, large national organizations with their own agendas, funding agencies like Maddie's Fund with their own rules and requirements, and the New York City government is no mean feat!)*

*The way most of us look at it, Nathan, Laura, Jane, the ASPCA and others are all working for the same cause. Does everyone always agree with everyone else? No. Is there more work to be done? Of course. Pit bulls like Oreo make up roughly a million of the 4-million-plus dogs and cats still being killed in shelters every year. (That 4-million figure, by the way, is down from 15 million in the early 1990s.) There's also much work to be done to close those dreadful puppy mills that sell often-sick puppies to the pet stores, and to persuade people always to adopt their pets from a shelter and never-ever buy from a store.*

*But there's nothing to be gained in creating new rifts in a movement that is closer than ever to achieving its mission of bringing an end, once and for all, to the killing of animals in shelters.*

*Nathan is passionate about the animals. So, too, are Jane and Laura and the ASPCA and all of us who care about the animals. Individuals among us are better off directing our anger to the people who truly deserve it: those who abuse pit bulls, profit from puppy mills, and commit other atrocities toward innocent sentient beings.*

*Michael Mountain*