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Protect Greyhounds – End Dog Racing! Interview with Christine from GREY2K USA

## Protect Greyhounds - End Dog Racing! Interview with Christine from GREY2K USA

by [YURDA](#) on MAY 31, 2012 · [NO COMMENTS](#) · in [ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM](#), [ANIMAL WELFARE GROUPS AND RESCUES](#), [CAUSES AND PETITIONS](#), [GET INFORMED AND EDUCATED](#), [INTERVIEWS ON PACKPEOPLE.COM](#), [INTERVIEWS ON PACKPEOPLE.COM](#), [NON - PROFITS](#)



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We have 2 beautiful brindle Greyhounds in our building and every time I meet them I catch myself staring at these majestic-looking gentle dogs. I know that one of them is a veteran female race dog and I just love her; the other one is our neighbor's dog on the same floor. Tall and slim, with deep chests and the walk of a proud aristocrat, greyhounds are known to be calm and relaxed. They make very well-mannered and loving family dogs. Modern Greyhounds are descendants of an

ancient identifiable breed that goes back to the Egyptians and Celts. While they love physical activity and love running, they are unfortunately exploited in an industry for human profit and abused for dog racing.

How did I meet Christine from GREY2K USA? We started a petition a while ago on change.org and one of Christine's petitions popped up on my news feed. She is collecting signatures for different petitions including an end to dog racing. At that time it was her goal to encourage people to sign her petition to boycott Skechers for promoting dog racing during the Super Bowl. Skechers filmed a commercial at Tucson Greyhound Park showing greyhounds racing (and losing) against a smaller dog wearing the company's shoes. I signed her petition, along with 125,000 other caring animal advocates.

I connected with Christine, the co-founder, president and general counsel of GREY2K USA and wanted to learn more about her work and organization. GREY2K USA is the largest greyhound



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protection organization in the United States. As a non-profit organization, they work hard to pass stronger greyhound protection laws and to end the cruelty of dog racing on both national and international levels. They also promote the rescue, rehoming and adoption of wonderful greyhounds across the globe, but they do not have a shelter facility or adoption center. (If you are interested in adopting a greyhound please see the links at the bottom of this article.)

Christine A. Dorchak's dedicated work has made a tremendous change and we are honored to share her interview with our audience. As a passionate animal advocate we all have to know more about this cruelty to greyhounds – and we have to raise awareness. Please take 10 minutes and read Christine's highly informative and eye-opening interview; also please share, network and support the work of GREY2K USA to make a positive change. ~ Thank you.

How and when did your personal adventure in animal advocacy begin?

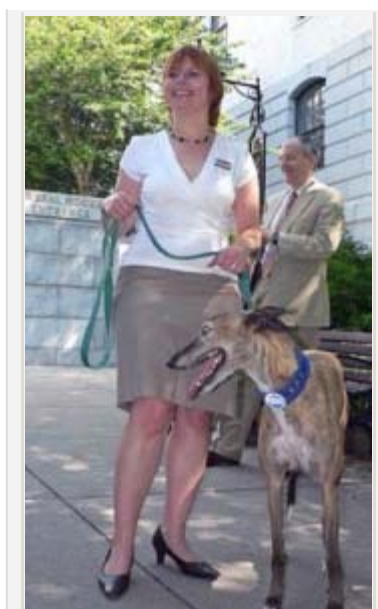
I have always cared about animals and grew up loving the natural world. This love was fostered by my mother, who always taught me to respect nature. As a child, I loved the squirrels, the chipmunks, the birds, the snails and all the animals around me! Then, when my parents allowed us to adopt two beagles – a boy and a girl – whom my brother and I found running lost around our neighborhood, I got my first experience with “rescue.”

After college, I began reading about the animal protection movement in earnest. I collected aluminum cans and donated the proceeds to my local shelter. I gave direct donations as I could. It was clear that my love for animals was still very important. But then in 1992, my world changed forever. While on a walk with my dog Kelsey early one morning, we were struck by a speeding trolley. I suffered severe injuries to my head, neck and back, crushed my spleen and could not walk. My poor dog had broken her hip trying to pull me to safety.

When I finally came out of my coma, and realized what had happened to us, my first words were “How's Kelsey?” All I could think about was the dog who had saved my life ... I vowed that if I ever got up again, I would devote my life to helping dogs. I would make a difference. But how?

I finally got my answer when I learned of a campaign to end dog racing in Massachusetts. I became an animal attorney to better understand the process, and for the next ten years, I would find myself living and breathing the local and then the worldwide effort to save greyhounds.

You can see a video about our experience on the GREY2K USA bio page [here](#).



Christine Dorchak and her dog ZOE lobbying at state house

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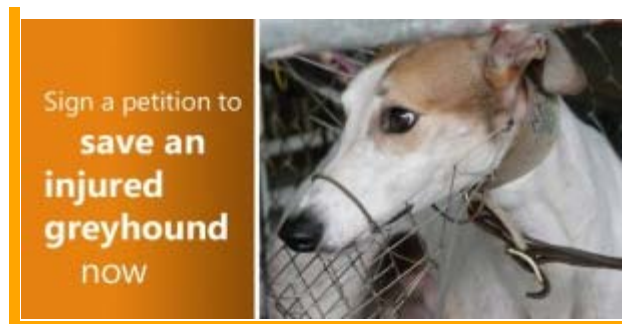
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Why greyhounds?



After my accident and following several years of difficult recovery, I began volunteering for organizations like the Doris Day Animal League, In Defense of Animals and others. I worked at shelters, attended rallies, distributed pamphlets on vivisection, hunting, rodeos, circuses and more. I

even did some radio interviews and started my own cable access show called Animal Agenda. Then, the greyhounds became my focus when I realized that their fight was one that could be won legislatively. I could see that there was a clear pathway for them, and that they were just one successful ballot question away from getting the second chance they needed. The idea that everyday people could actually make laws – that we had the power to effect change just by voting – really appealed to me.

Unfortunately, the first Massachusetts campaign for the greyhounds failed at the ballot box 49 to 51, and was one of closest voter questions in state history. The greyhounds set another record that year, but not a good one! That was in 2000. With an eye to writing a new ballot question and figure out how to create a stronger campaign, I decided to become a lawyer. This would never have been possible unless good fortune had smiled on me. I was awarded a full scholarship to attend the New England School of Law in 2001. Since I had no money, this was the only way I could ever have succeeded. Ironically, my tuition was paid for by a local track owner who happened to be on the board of the school. (How grateful I was that he did not learn of this until the night before graduation!)

That summer, I sat right down and drafted the Greyhound Protection Act. This became the ballot language which prohibited dog racing in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2008. The question passed and the greyhounds had won!



Injured greyhound in cage

You are working hard to pass stronger greyhound protection laws and to end the cruelty of dog racing. Can you explain to us why dog racing is cruel and how greyhounds became racing dogs?

Greyhound racing is simply cruel and inhumane and causes thousands of dogs to suffer each year. Racing greyhounds endure lives of nearly constant confinement, kept in stacked cages barely large enough for them to stand up or turn around. While racing, many dogs suffer and die from injuries including broken legs, paralysis, cardiac arrest and

heat stroke. Additionally, many greyhounds are destroyed every year, because the number of dogs retiring from racing always exceeds the number of adoptive homes.

Beyond the industry standards of confinement, injuries and fatalities, and the killing of young, healthy dogs, the industry has a fundamental problem of perspective: In the eyes of racetrack promoters, dogs are merely short-term investments. Even the fastest dogs only race for a few years, and are expected to generate enough profit during that time to make up for the cost of their food and housing. The pressure to generate profits can lead to negligent care and outright cruelty such as the use of drugs to alter a dog's performance.

Another essential problem with dog racing is that thousands of dogs are overbred every year in an effort to find younger, faster dogs. The older ones are then displaced, and their very lives put in immediate jeopardy. Will they be rescued or will they be destroyed? The lucky ones who do reach adoption will then displace other needy animals (cats, dogs, rabbits, etc) also seeking homes. In this significant way, the racing industry aggravates a homeless animal population which is already overwhelming and immensely sad. I believe that best answer is to get to the root of the problem and end dog racing as quickly as possible.

The pastime of dog racing began in the early part of the Twentieth Century with the invention of the mechanical lure. Illegal "flapper" tracks began springing up all across the country. At one time, there were at least sixty-five facilities from West Coast to East. Ironically, California was the birthplace of the industry, but it also became the first state to shut its dog tracks down. At the same time, other states like Florida, then Oregon and Massachusetts, worked to legalize the activity. The first state approved, pari-mutuel dog track opened in Hialeah, Florida in 1931. No one foresaw the direct cruelty that would result nor could anyone envision the problems of companion animal overpopulation that were soon to develop.

Pari-mutuel wagering is a system in which people bet among each other, and the winners of a given race each share a percentage of the total pot. The host state and the dog track owners also take a share, as do the owners of the dogs. There is something in this system for everyone – except the dogs, of course.

GREY2K USA was the first organization to successfully outlaw dog racing. Since your formation, twenty-six tracks all across the country have closed for live racing. What needs to be done to protect greyhounds and why is it still legal in some states?



international levels. Primarily through our 501(c)3 sister organization, the GREY2K USA Education Fund, we promote the rescue, rehoming and adoption of greyhounds across the globe. Giving the greyhounds their second chance is job #1 for both organizations!

At the present time, there remain twenty-two operational dog tracks in seven states. When we first

formed in 2001, there were nearly fifty tracks in fifteen states, so we have truly cut the industry in half. Additionally, the number of greyhounds bred into the industry has also been halved over these last ten years. The outlook is very good that greyhounds will soon be dogs again – just dogs, and not commodities as they are in the racing world.

Meanwhile, we are actively working to block the expansion of dog racing into other countries. In 2010, I helped draft the language that made betting on dog races illegal in Guam. That same year, South African officials listened to our testimony and that of other advocates around the globe and refused to legalize the activity as well. Currently, we are working with ANIMA in Macau to shut down the track there, which is called the Canidrome.

A lot of people are passionate about animal welfare, yet not in a political way. Can you share why you think that it is important to have a political stance to make a change?

In a word, greyhounds ARE political animals. Dog racing, unlike most other cruelties that non-human animals suffer, is a state-regulated activity. No one “regulates” dog fighting or horse tripping for example, but the state plays an active role in dog racing. This is because, at least initially, government profited by it. In the early days of dog racing, betting and wagering on live racing generated tax revenues because each host state shared in the winnings. Nowadays, revenues are so diminished that in some cases, states are actually paying for dog racing. In other words, the costs of regulation actually exceed the taxes paid. This is the case in Florida, where state records show nearly a 100% decline in the “handle” or amount of money bet on live races.

Could you give examples of laws you’ve helped establish – and tell us how long it takes to enact a law?

The first bill I helped draft was the statute requiring dog tracks in Massachusetts to begin reporting on the number of injuries suffered by greyhounds, and also to document their fate after racing. The bill also mandated the creation of the first state-sponsored adoption fund, which was truly ground-breaking. Since we had lost our first attempt to prohibit dog racing on the ballot, we wanted to make sure that the dogs would at least be better protected.

The reporting law was truly the beginning of the end of dog racing because it established a solid record of cruelty. It was this record that became the basis for our successful legal case to end dog racing via the ballot initiative process. During the campaign, I’d walk around with a stack of injury and death reports and ask voters, “Would you treat your dog like this?”

I went on to draft successful legislation to restore greyhounds to the anti-cruelty statute of New Hampshire, to strip the three tracks there of millions of dollars in subsidies, to “decouple” or remove the state mandate requiring tracks to host live racing, and then finally, we passed legislation to end dog racing in the Granite State altogether. This is one example of the many steps it takes to help the greyhounds!

Similarly, I have drafted legislation to end dog racing in other states, including Rhode Island, Florida and

also (as previously stated) the US Territory of Guam. It took six years to end dog racing in Rhode Island, and while we were able to pass into law better legal protections for Florida dogs, the bill to ban has yet to be passed. In Arizona, we also continue to work on a prohibition. This year we worked with the track to pass a decoupling measure, and hopefully, next session we will see a complete end to dog racing. Every legislative session brings new hope!

From your perspective, which laws are the most needed at the moment?

The end to dog racing cannot come soon enough!

What are your biggest obstacles?

According to state records, thousands of dogs are seriously injured each year at commercial racetracks, including dogs that suffer broken legs, cardiac arrest, spinal cord paralysis and broken necks. As long as dog racing continues, greyhounds will suffer. The thought that a dog may go down and break his neck at any makes me very sad and frustrated. But it also motivates me to keep working until this cruelty ends everywhere.

What are your next steps? On what project are you currently working?

Our next steps involve writing and passing legislation to end dog racing in the seven remaining states where it yet exists: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Texas and West Virginia. We will also continue to network with groups in other countries to aid in their fight against dog racing. At the present time, we coordinate with Animals Asia, Animals Australia, GreytExploitations (UK), and the NSPCA(South Africa).

Meanwhile, we are also actively working with ANIMA in Macau to shut down the track there. The Canidrome is the only Chinese dog track, and all the dogs are eventually put to death. There is no adoption program and hundreds of greyhounds die each year. One of these dogs is named Brooklyn. Read Brooklyn's story [here](#).

Of course, our legislative campaigns in the US revolve around the formal state house sessions, and at this point, lawmakers are in recess. So are emphasis right now is on public outreach and community education. Believe it or not, at one time, greyhound racing was considered a fun pastime. Only in the past several decades, thanks to increased education, have most people come to realize that dog racing is a losing proposition for the greyhounds involved. Even dogs that are released by their owners may be burdened for life with injuries and socialization issues resulting from their time at the track.

Our Greyhounds in the Classroom project (through the GREY2K USA Education Fund) is helping to make sure that kids know that greyhounds are family friends, and not racing machines. They belong in homes not cages. When kids meet our rescued greyhounds, they know this to be true. Greyhounds are



CHRISTINE AND ZOE IN OFFICE (SEPTEMBER 2011)

their own best advocates! Learn more at [www.grey2kusaedu.org/education/classroom.html](http://www.grey2kusaedu.org/education/classroom.html)

Similarly, the Education Fund is now running a greyhound adoption campaign on all trolleys in the city of Naples. With thirteen operating facilities, Florida is home to more dog tracks than all of the other six states combined — so there is a great need for promoting the adoption of ex-racers. We also hope to place digital bulletin boards in ten key cities across the state by this Fall, but full funding is still needed.

How can someone adopt a greyhound?

No matter where you are, a needy greyhound is waiting close by! We offer a referral list on both of our web sites along with a Q & A about adoption. What may surprise many to learn is that greyhounds are some of the quietest dogs of all – they rarely bark – and what they like to do best is sleep. Greyhounds are commonly called 45-mile-per-hour couch potatoes, and for good reason. When you adopt a rescued greyhound, you not only save a life but you will also bring home a wonderful family friend. Learn more [here](#).

Do you need volunteers? How can people help GREY2K USA and the greyhounds?

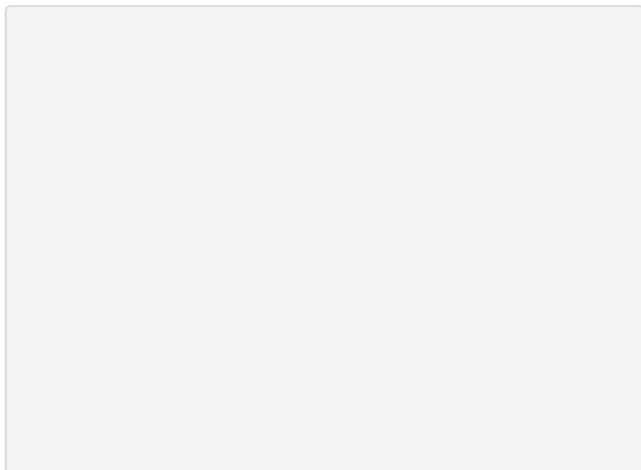
The easiest thing to do is to sign up for action alerts from the GREY2K USA homepage. You will then start receiving petitions to sign online, information on campaigns, and requests to help pass legislation by calling lawmakers at key times. You will also receive information on how to participate in our “Governors Initiative” and other letterwriting programs. Of course, donations are also needed but we also like to inject a little fun by hosting auctions and fundraising contests throughout the year. Helping greyhounds is really a “grey” thing to do! Sign up [here](#) and start today!

What would you say is your personal goal?

I would like all greyhounds to get a second chance, like my own dog, Zoe. She is a ten-year-old brindle girl with a bit of a limp but I love her dearly!

GREY2K USA is committed to ending dog racing and we will keep lobbying and educating until greyhounds become just dogs again, to be loved and treated like the family friends we know them to be. Someone once said ‘Race cars, not dogs.’ I heartily agree!

\*\*\*\*\*



As you know, adoption is the key! If you want to adopt a greyhound please visit [Adopt-a-Greyhound.org](http://Adopt-a-Greyhound.org) or click [here](#) and see a list of rescue groups. Many beautiful purebred dogs are waiting for a home.



Kahlua is an adult greyhound for adoption at Southern California Greyhound Adoption; <http://www.socalgal.org>



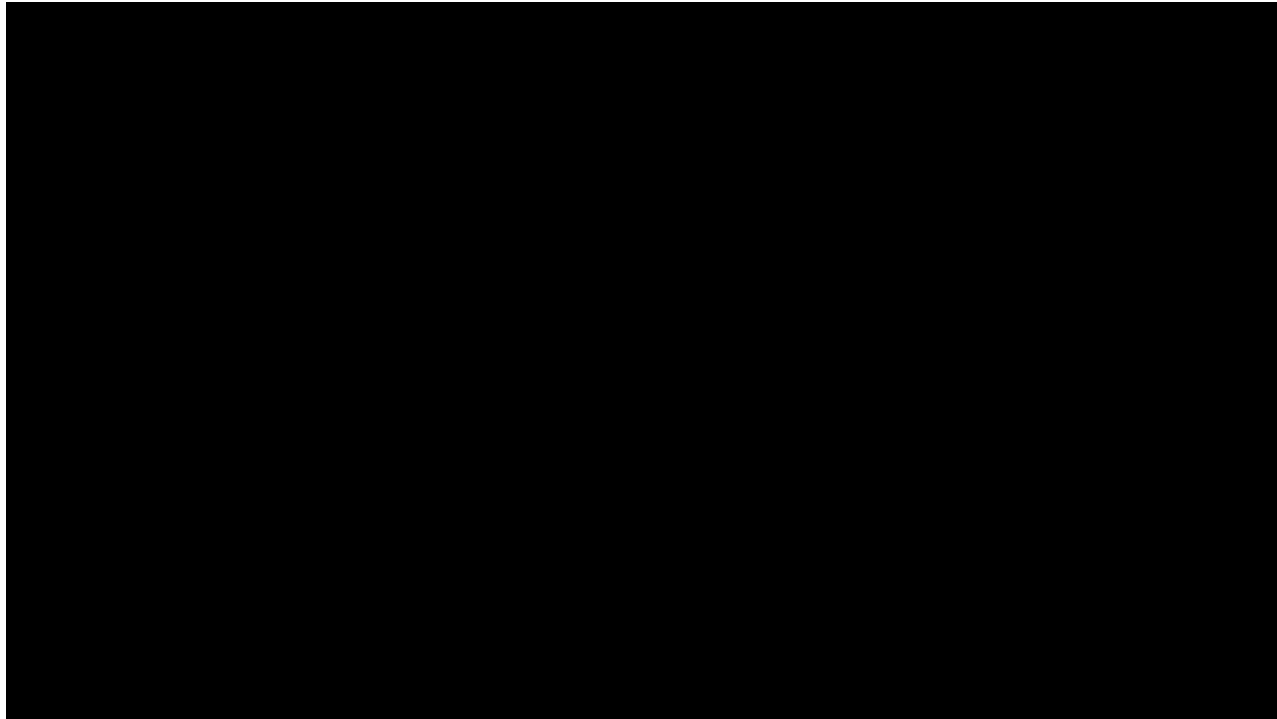
GREY2K USA's website: [www.grey2kusa.org](http://www.grey2kusa.org)

GREY2K USA educational platform: [www.grey2kusaedu.org](http://www.grey2kusaedu.org) to join our team and check out the links to groups all over the world who have joined together to end the cruelty of dog racing.

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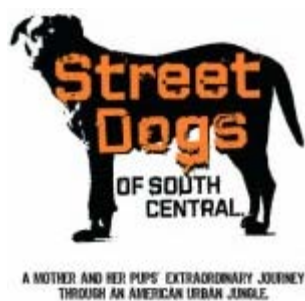
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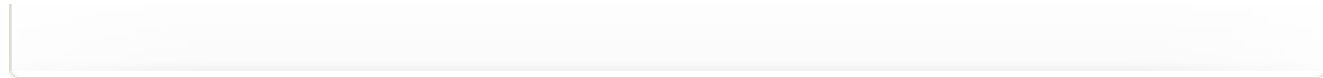
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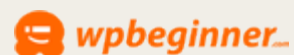


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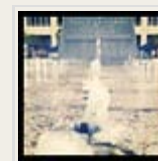
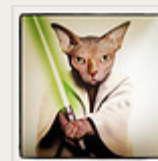
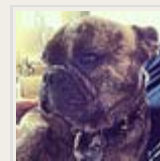


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