



Dear Fellow Student,

My name is Jennifer Graham. I'm a high school senior. Two years ago I made a decision not to dissect a frog in my sophomore biology class. It didn't seem like such a big deal at the time, but it certainly caused a stir.

I was an "A" student in biology up until the day of the dissection assignment. I told my teacher that I objected to harming animals for the sake of a school assignment, and refused to participate.

My teacher didn't know what to do, so he sent me to the principal. At first the principal laughed at me; then he threatened to lower my class grade. My mother called to try and persuade the principal I was sincere about not wanting to hurt animals. He replied that if I felt so strongly about not dissecting, I should get a lawyer. So I did.

In a matter of weeks I became the subject of dozens of newspaper articles and television stories. I certainly wasn't looking for so much attention. All I wanted was to find some way to keep my A average without hurting animals.

I went to court to plead my case. The judge who presided over my case was sympathetic to my beliefs and helped come up

with an alternative assignment. Later, I testified before the California legislature, and last year they passed a law giving all California students the right not to dissect.

At the time, my stance was newsworthy. But today there are more and more students standing up for their right not to harm animals in classrooms. Still, it can be a scary and lonely experience. Most of my friends were very supportive, but some kids in school made fun of me. Luckily, my mother backed me up all the way, and hundreds of people from around the country wrote me letters of encouragement.

There's lots of good advice in this booklet about how to protest against dissection and how to find alternatives. I had to figure it all out as I went along, but you don't have to. Here are a few more tips about how to deal with the hassles along the way:

* Don't let teachers intimidate you. They're used to having students obey them, but **you have rights too!**

* There's power in taking an ethical stand. Believe me, it feels great to stand up for your personal beliefs.

* Lean on your friends and family for support. It especially helps to have your parents on your side.

There were times over the past couple of years when I wish I hadn't made such a fuss and attracted so much attention. But now I'm glad I did. You see, I'd never have known how much I cared or how far I was willing to go to stand up for animals — **and for myself.**

So think it over carefully, and whatever you decide, stick to your guns!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Graham