

Suffering of Chickens in the Kaporos Ritual: The Facts

**A Presentation by Karen Davis, PhD,
President of United Poultry Concerns & founding member
of the Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos**

The Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos is an association of people who seek to replace the use of chickens in Kaporos ceremonies with money or other non-animal symbols of atonement. The Alliance does not oppose Kaporos per se, only the cruel and unnecessary use of chickens in the ceremony.

United Poultry Concerns first learned about Chicken Kaporos in 1994 and the Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos was formed in New York City in 2010.



Five Specific Ways in Which Chickens Suffer Pain, Injury, Misery and Abuse as Kaporos Victims

I. Being Held for Days in Transport Crates

II. Being Suspended by Their Wings

III. Being Exposed to the Kaporos Environment

IV. Being Slaughtered

V. Being Abandoned After the Ceremony

I. Being Held for Days in Transport Crates

- Locked in transport crates in their own excrement
- Deprived of food and water for up to a week or more in the crates
- Deprived of shelter from the elements in the crates
- Deprived of bodily comfort:
1) no bedding and 2) no room to move 3) stacked like canned goods instead of being housed like the living, feeling beings they are.



September 12, 2013 New York Daily News photo

“Their misery is so totally compounded that the best thing to happen to them under the circumstances is to die.” UPC President Karen Davis regarding the 2500 chickens who died of heat stroke, starvation, and thirst in the transport crates in Brooklyn during the week of Kaporos in 2013.

Crown Heights Kaporos. Photo by Carol Guzy, *The Washington Post*, October 9, 2010



II. Being Suspended by Their Wings

Young boys hold chickens by their wings in Boro Park, Brooklyn, September 2009.



Photo by Rina Deych

Dr. Amir Kashiv, who reviewed our videos, stated:

“The wings of the ‘modern industrial’ chicken aren't strong enough to support their body and therefore these birds are largely flightless. In broiler chickens, even the legs can hardly carry the intentionally bred-for-increased-bulk body, resulting in very common lameness problems. Lifting the bird by its wings places an unnatural tension on ligaments, tendons and bones. Swinging the bird in the air can cause dislocations, tears, ruptures and broken bones. The manner in which chickens are handled during the ritual of Kaporos is, in my view, painful and harmful and thus inhumane.”

Dr. Amir Kashiv MRCVS
(Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons)



Photo by David Rosenfeld, Brooklyn

Dr. Ian Duncan, Professor Emeritus of Poultry Science at the University of Guelph in Ontario: “Holding a domestic fowl with the wings pinned back as shown will be painful. It will be extremely painful if the bird is held in this position for some minutes.”

Dr. Nedim Buyukmihci, Emeritus Professor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California, Davis: “The manner in which the man is holding the chicken, with the wings pulled back, puts the chicken at risk for ligament and tendon injury, possibly even bone fracture.”

Rabbi Yonassan Gershom: “Imagine somebody holding your arms behind your back and then suspending you by the elbows to get an idea of what this method would feel like. The feet of a chicken are made to support its weight; the wings are not.”

Kaporos practitioners in Chicago in 2004.





Crown Heights
Kaporos. Photos
by Carol Guzy,
*The Washington
Post*, October 9,
2010





Crown Heights Kaporos. Photos by Carol Guzy, *The Washington Post*, October 9, 2010

II. Being Exposed to the Kaporos Environment



Crown Heights Kaporos. Photos by Carol Guzy,
The Washington Post, October 9, 2010

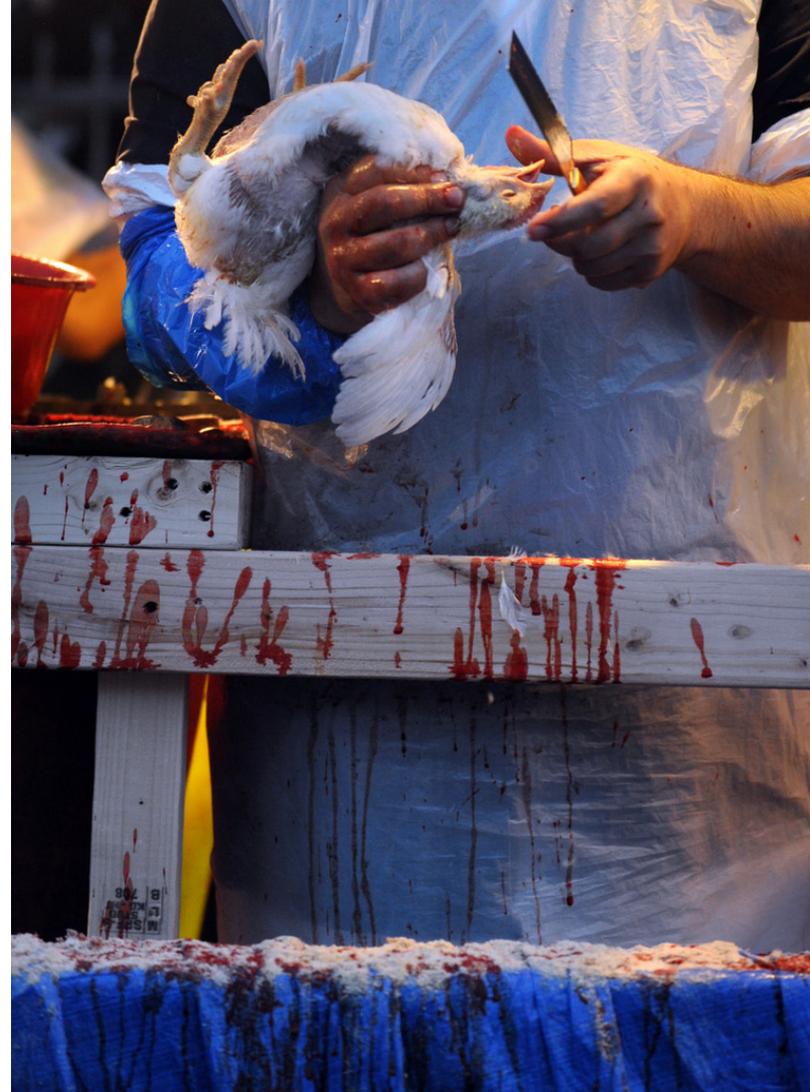
Crown Heights
Kaporos. Photo
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IV. Being Slaughtered

Throat-cutting, even if done “correctly” – by severing with a sharp instrument both carotid arteries, which carry the oxygenated blood to the brain – does not cause a humane death. Throat-cutting is painful. The skin, face, throat and neck areas of the chicken, including the trachea, are filled with nociceptors –pain receptors plus impact and thermo receptors.

Crown Heights Kaporos. Photo by Carol Guzy,
The Washington Post, October 9, 2010



Chickens are conscious of the blade being held next to their face and, being conscious of this blade next to their face, they experience fear and panic. Adding to the pain and suffering of having their throats cut, the birds are thrown roughly into the bleed-out receptacles, and all of this is being done to them – being experienced by them – in the noxious carnivalesque atmosphere of the kaporos environment.

As well as the suffering induced by throat-cutting per se, a chicken can have “conscious perception of nonpainful but highly distressing stimuli” including gagging, breathlessness (dyspnea), smell of blood, fear, and apprehension. Dr. N. G. Gregory, University of Bristol Department of Meat Animal Science. Letter to Karen Davis, January 11, 1993.

“Chicks clearly respond to odors. The responses of chicks to the odor of blood fall into the category of natural behaviors. Blood from a conspecific induced avoidance and fear behavior in the chicks. The olfactory cues of the blood were important for eliciting the avoidance response.” Dr. Lesley J. Rogers, *The Development of Brain and Behaviour in the Chicken*, 1995, p. 109.

V. Being Abandoned After the Ceremony

**Kaporos practitioners
abandoned these chickens
in crates and standing water
in Brooklyn, October 2005.**

Photo by Sam Schloss



Conclusion

While the Alliance to End Chickens as Kaporos focuses on Kaporos, our campaign is part of the broader discussion about the way chickens are mistreated in our society and around the world – just as cruelly and needlessly. When people express horror over images depicting what Kaporos chickens go through, it provides an opportunity to point out that the chicken on their plate suffered no less. The ultimate meaning of our campaign to end chickens in Kaporos rituals was movingly expressed by Cherylynn Kostner in 1997. Of the birds she succeeded in rescuing from Kaporos, she wrote:

The rescued birds became part of my flock family. In time I got to know them individually and I developed a love for them. Their ability to express themselves and to return loving gestures when treated with kindness came through in a Universal language. I have no doubt that each bird has a soul and a connection in spirit to the same creator of my own flesh and blood, as well as yours.

**Chava & Freidl
were saved by
David Rosenfeld
to live in a
sanctuary in
2012.**

Photo by Richard Cundari



These female chickens were abandoned by Kaporos practitioners in Brooklyn. They were rescued and brought to our sanctuary in Virginia.



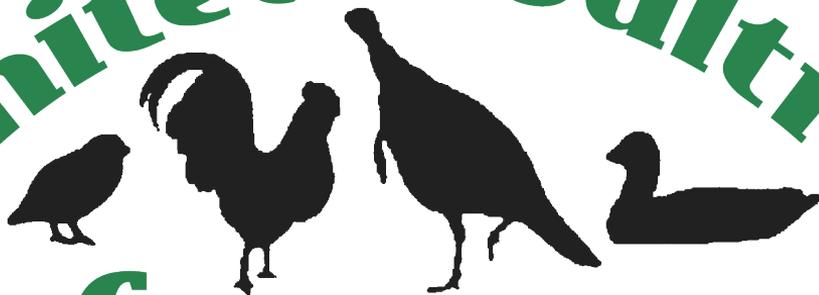
Photo by Karen Davis

Have Mercy



Crown Heights Kaporos. Photo by Carol Guzy,
The Washington Post, October 9, 2010

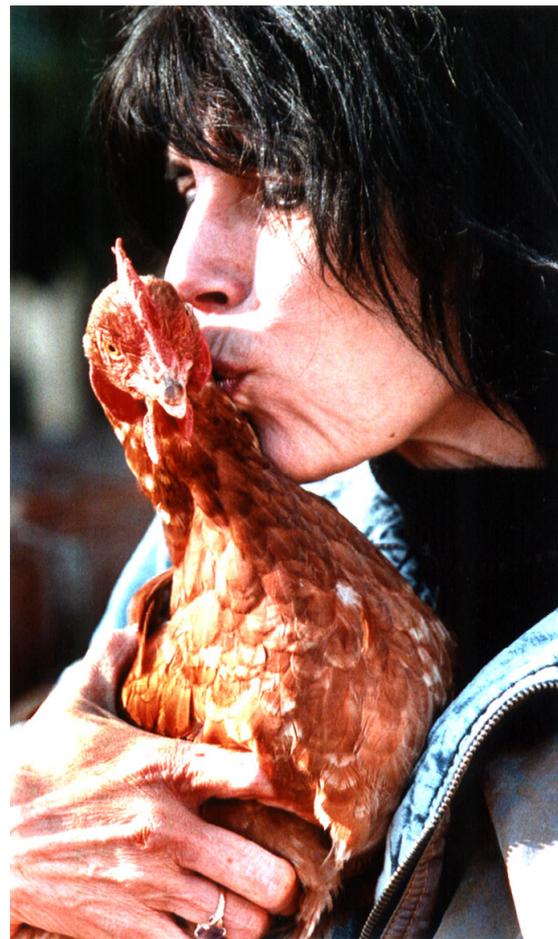
United Poultry



Concerns

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*Photo by Frank Johnston,
The Washington Post*