

THE DEVIL'S LAPDOG:  
THE HISTORY AND IMPACT OF THE AMERICAN PIT BULL TERRIER

By  
JAYCEE LORRAINE REIDHEAD

---

A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree

With Honors in  
History

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

M A Y 2 0 1 6

Approved by:

---

Professor Juan Garcia  
Department of History

### **Abstract**

The American Pit Bull Terrier, otherwise known as the “pit bull”, has become one of the world’s most notorious dog breeds, due to its perceived aggressive temperament and relation to dogfighting and gangs. This paper looks to examine the history of the breed and how its creation and involvement with dogfighting influenced the general public’s negative perception of the breed throughout the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By understanding how the breed’s violent history influenced its negative reputation, it can be determined how the breed became targeted by breed-specific legislation. Additionally, this paper addresses the history of breed-specific legislation, and how it specifically relates to the American Pit Bull Terrier, and how the stereotypes of the breed influenced the enactment of breed-specific laws. This paper will also address the issues with breed-specific legislation and why such laws are not beneficial for the community, and will also introduce alternatives that are safer and more reasonable for the community and the dogs.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Juan Garcia of the History Department at the University of Arizona, for assisting me throughout this process. His advice helped me tremendously and I would not have been able to complete this thesis without him. I am sincerely grateful for his patience and constant encouragement throughout my writing process. I would also like to thank the University of Arizona Honors College for giving me the opportunity to present this thesis at the first Inaugural Honors Student Engagement Expo. Presenting my work to others was one of the highlights of this process. Thank you.

## Table of Contents

THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PIT BULL TERRIER AND BREED-SPECIFIC LEGISLATION .....	3
JUSTICE FOR THE AMERICAN PIT BULL TERRIER .....	9
THE MYTHS THAT LED TO LEGISLATION .....	12
THE MEDIA AND BREED-SPECIFIC LEGISLATION .....	20
CONCLUSION .....	28

In 1987, *Sports Illustrated* published their July issue with a timely and controversial article titled “The Pit Bull Friend and Killer: Is the pit bull a fine animal, as its admirers claim, or is it a vicious dog, unfit for society?” The author, E.M. Swift, opens the article by stating that “America has a four-legged problem called the American pit bull terrier. And the pit bull, its ‘ridiculously amiable disposition’ notwithstanding, has a two-legged problem called Man.”<sup>1</sup> Over the last thirty years, the American Pit Bull Terrier has been under intense media and legal scrutiny due to the increasing coverage of dog bites from “pit bulls”, and the glorification of this breed and dog fighting in gang culture. The American Pit Bull Terrier exhibits superior drive, tenacity, and courage that have made it the breed of choice for dogfighting since it began in the 19th century. And due to its violent history, strong temperament, and conformation, this gladiator breed has become the target of the media and breed-specific legislation. Breed-specific legislation, or BSL, are laws that regulate or restrict certain dog breeds in order to prevent dog bites. Such laws have been enacted in over 700 cities across the nation,<sup>2</sup> with Denver, Colorado and Miami, Florida, enacting some of the harshest policies and receiving much of the media attention.

The spread of misinformation of the American Pit Bull Terrier and its misrepresentation in the media have resulted in breed-discriminatory laws, or breed-specific legislation. The misconceptions that surround the American Pit Bull Terrier, such as their “locking jaws” and their “inability to feel pain”<sup>3</sup>, have perpetuated the idea that this breed of dog is a monster that does not belong in society. In addition, the American Pit Bull Terrier is largely misrepresented in

---

<sup>1</sup> E.M. Swift, “The Pit Bull Friend and Killer,” *Sports Illustrated*, July 27, 1987, accessed February 9, 2016, <http://www.si.com/vault/1987/07/27/115813/the-pit-bull-friend-and-killer-is-the-pit-bull-a-fine-animal-as-its-admirers-claim-or-is-it-a-vicious-dog-unfit-for-society>.

<sup>2</sup> “Breed-Specific Legislation,” ASPCA, n.d., accessed February 9, 2016, <https://www.aspc.org/animal-cruelty/dog-fighting/breed-specific-legislation>.

<sup>3</sup> “Monster Myths,” BADRAP, n.d., accessed February 9, 2016, <http://www.badrap.org/monster-myths>.

the media, in shelters, by veterinarians, and by law enforcement, regardless of the breed standards established by the American Dog Breeders Association and the United Kennel Club. The general public and legislators alike utilize the blanket term “pit bull” to reference any bully breed or bully breed mix<sup>4</sup>, which has ultimately led to the misrepresentation of the American Pit Bull Terrier breed in the media, statistics and the law. Furthermore, the tough appearance of the breed and the controversy surrounding it has drawn associations with gang culture that has only contributed to the negative perception of this breed.

The American Pit Bull Terrier, a tenacious and lovable dog breed with a violent past, has endeared itself to dog lovers around the world. However, the American Pit Bull Terrier has also become one of the most controversial and blacklisted breeds in the world. While the numerous and sometimes tragic cases of dog bites involving American Pit Bull Terriers are unfortunate, restricting and banning the breed does not adequately solve the problem. Instead it brands bully breeds and bully breed mixes as uncontrollable monsters, and makes them desirable by irresponsible dog owners and criminals<sup>5</sup>. In order to combat BSL, the general public and the media need to be educated on the history of the American Pit Bull Terrier and breed-specific legislation, and need to be aware of the erroneous misconceptions surrounding the breed. The general public, law enforcement, veterinarians, and other officials need to know how to accurately label an American Pit Bull Terrier and other bully breeds according to the breed standards set by the American Dog Breeders Association and the United Kennel Club. And lastly, the general public and legislators need to be aware of the dangers of enacting BSL, and how it is a slippery slope that can and will ultimately affect all dog breeds.

---

<sup>4</sup>“Difficulty of Breed Identification,” Stop BSL, n.d., accessed February 9, 2016, <http://stopbsl.org/bsloverview/impossibleid/>.

<sup>5</sup>“What is BSL?” Stop BSL, n.d., accessed February 9, 2016, <http://stopbsl.org/bsloverview/>.

## **The History of the American Pit Bull Terrier and Breed-Specific Legislation**

The American Pit Bull Terrier originated from both the bulldog and the old English White Terrier. The bulldog was primarily used in the sport of bullbaiting, because it was powerful and had a high pain tolerance, while the English Terrier was a scrappy dog with unmeasured perseverance.<sup>6</sup>When England outlawed bullbaiting in 1835, people turned to dogfighting for entertainment, but the sport needed a new breed that possessed the speed and strength to confront and outmaneuver the other dogs, as well as the courage and tenacity to keep up the fight. Both bulldogs and English Terriers possessed these traits, and so the Bull and Terrier breed was born.<sup>7</sup>When dogfighting became illegal in England, the new Bull and Terrier breed migrated to the United States, where dogfighting was just beginning, and was renamed the American Pit Bull Terrier.<sup>8</sup>

The breed became very popular in the early 1900s, and soon became the breed of choice for dogfighting. “The American (Pit) Bull Terrier is indisputably the most effective fighting dog ever developed by man.”<sup>9</sup>The American Pit Bull Terrier was intended to be the ultimate canine gladiator, with unparalleled athletic ability and propensity for fighting. However, the breed was never meant to function solely as a fighting machine. The American Pit Bull Terrier was also bred with an incredible affinity towards human beings, making the breed a loyal companion.<sup>10</sup>In addition, the traits that made the American Pit Bull Terrier a superior fighting dog proved to

---

<sup>6</sup>Mary Harwelik, “The History of the APBT,” *The REAL Pit Bull*, last updated February 1, 2011, accessed February 9, 2016, <http://www.realpitbull.com/history.html>.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 15.

<sup>9</sup>Dr. Carl Semencic, *The World of Fighting Dogs*, (Neptune City, NJ: T.F.H. Publications, Inc., 1984), 131.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

assist the breed in succeeding in other working arenas.<sup>11</sup> Despite its association with dog fighting, the American Pit Bull Terrier became increasingly popular in the early twentieth century, through its representation of companies such as RCA and the Buster Brown Shoe Company, its representation of the U.S. in propaganda artwork during WWII, its representation in films such as the television series, *Our Gang*, and much more.<sup>12</sup> At the time, the general public was mainly concerned with the German Shepherd, which allowed the American Pit Bull Terrier to flourish peacefully before the decades of “pit bull” mania began.

The first official breed ban was passed in May 1929 in Australia. It banned the German Shepherd Dog because of the widespread belief that it was a “vicious dog with wolf blood in its veins”.<sup>13</sup> While anti-German Shepherd sentiments were widespread in the United States, the heroic stories of Rin Tin Tin in the 1920s aided in dispelling beliefs that the German Shepherd Dog was anything but courageous. However, the anti-German Shepherd movement began again in the late 1960s and 1970s, with many newspapers in the United States campaigning against the breed<sup>14</sup> and calling its temperament into question.<sup>15</sup> While the breed-discriminatory movement against the German Shepherd moved in waves across the twentieth century, the anti-Doberman Pinscher movement steadily increased after its introduction to the American Kennel Club. During World War II, the Doberman Pinscher was pictured alongside S.S. Officers, and although

---

<sup>11</sup>Mary Harwelik, “The History of the APBT.”

<sup>12</sup>Mary Harwelik, “The History of the APBT,” *The REAL Pit Bull*, last updated February 1, 2011, accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.realpitbull.com/history.html>.

<sup>13</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression*, (N.p.: Anubis Publishing, 2007), 75, accessed February 9, 2016, [http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/tinymce/Pit\\_Bull\\_Placebo\\_download.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Pit_Bull_Placebo_download.pdf).

<sup>14</sup>“Dangerous dogs should not be kept as pets,” *The Tuscaloosa News*, August 6, 1987, accessed February 10, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=unwhAAAAIABJ&sjid=hIoFAAAAIAAJ&pg=3805%2C1735749>.

<sup>15</sup>“Stray Dogs Sought After Fatal Mauling of Boys; Experts Discuss German Shepherd Temperament,” *The Blade*, December 19, 1967, accessed February 10, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=wAhPAAAAIABJ&sjid=kQEEAAAAIAAJ&pg=7309%2C1379463>.

the U.S. Armed Forces utilized the Doberman Pinscher as well, the general public associated the breed with Nazi Germany.<sup>16</sup>

Antipathy towards the Doberman Pinscher only grew after World War II, and by the mid-twentieth century the breed was, “almost universally known as a vicious, heartless, demon dog, a beast which took delight in killing, unpredictable and untrustworthy. Homicidal muscle dogs, Nazi hounds, crazed killers: There was literally no end to the emotional epithets. The reaction to the sight or utterance of the word ‘Doberman’ was instant and emotional.”<sup>17</sup> However, according to the Center for Disease Control in a study done regarding dog bite statistics, the Doberman Pinscher accounted for only two fatalities between May 1975 and April 1980, while Saint Bernards, Bull Terriers, and Great Danes accounted for at least two times that amount.<sup>18</sup> This means that during the 1970s and 1980s, the media played an instrumental part in shaping the public’s negative perception of the Doberman Pinscher. Movies such as *The Doberman Gang* (1972) and *Oliver & Company* (1988) featured Doberman Pinschers as villains and contributed to the widespread belief that these dogs were more dangerous than they actually were. And while Rin Tin Tin was able to rebuild the image of the German Shepherd, the Doberman Pinscher had to wait patiently for another dog breed to take its place.

In 1976, the Animal Welfare Act was amended to include the Animal Fighting Venture Prohibition Act, which outlawed dogfighting and cockfighting.<sup>19</sup> As law enforcement conducted an increasing number of raids and arrests, the media became more involved in reporting on these operations. They noted how these dogs had “killer instincts”, which was a glorified term for dog-

---

<sup>16</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 81.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Jeffrey J. Sacks, MD, MPH et al., “Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998,” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 217 (2000): 839, accessed February 10, 2016, <http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/images/dogbreeds-a.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup>Jordan Curnutt, *Animals and the Law: A Sourcebook*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2001), 289

dog aggression, and how decades of being bred for dogfighting had left the breed unpredictable and violent.<sup>20</sup> The reports on these dogs failed to address the fact that the dogs confiscated from these operations were victims of animal abuse, and therefore suffered much more severe trauma than the average pet dog. “The early 1980s find the media continuously churning out emotionally charged articles about Pit Bull anatomy and behaviors that were based on rumors, myths and unproven claims by both experts and laymen. By 1982, Pit Bulls were becoming a hot topic and the media capitalized (sic) on this at every opportunity.”<sup>21</sup> By the late 1980s, hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles were published on the topic of the “pit bull”<sup>22</sup> and created an unprecedented hysteria that would last for decades.

City officials and politicians joined in on the issue of the “pit bull” in the late 1980s, and began enacting breed-specific legislation that banned, or regulated, the breed in their cities,<sup>23</sup> due in large part to the increasing number of reports on “pit bull” attacks.<sup>24</sup> In 1989, Denver, Colorado, and Miami, Florida, among other smaller cities, passed legislation banning “pit bulls”, which included all bully breeds and bully breed mixes.<sup>25</sup> The legislation, however, is subjective, in that it uses the term “pit bull” as a blanket term to encompass a wide variety of breeds and characteristics that are not exclusive to one breed or type of dog. Denver’s “pit bull” ban defines “pit bull” as a dog that is an American Pit Bull Terrier, an American Staffordshire Terrier, or a Staffordshire Bull Terrier; any dog that exhibits a majority of the characteristics of any of the aforementioned breeds; or any dog that exhibits characteristics that comply with the breed

---

<sup>20</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 96.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, 97.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 103.

<sup>24</sup>“Pit bull kills 3-year-old Denver boy,” *Lakeland Ledger*, October 28, 1986, accessed February 10, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=zLxOAAAIBAJ&sjid=vfsDAAAIBAJ&pg=5639%2C5320446>.

<sup>25</sup>Dana M. Campbell, “Pit Bull Bans: The State of Breed-Specific Legislation,” *GPSOLO*, July/August 2009, accessed February 10, 2016, [http://www.americanbar.org/content/newsletter/publications/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_home/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_index/pit\\_bull.html](http://www.americanbar.org/content/newsletter/publications/gp_solo_magazine_home/gp_solo_magazine_index/pit_bull.html).

standards set by the American Kennel Club or the United Kennel Club for any of the aforementioned breeds.<sup>26</sup> Miami's "pit bull" ban is similar to Denver's breed ban, except that it allows for veterinarians, canine behaviorists, animal control officers and zoologists to identify dogs as "pit bulls".<sup>27</sup>

The basis for these breed discriminatory laws was based primarily on the numerous unqualified and heavily exaggerated media reports, and was brought as evidence in conjunction with the tragic and emotional testimonies of dog bite victims. Without any evidence or input from canine behavior experts, dog trainers, breeders, or breed clubs, these laws were enacted.<sup>28</sup> By the beginning of the twenty-first century, hundreds of cities established varying degrees of Breed-Specific Legislation. Denver and Miami had some of the harshest policies, in that anyone found to be in possession of a "pit bull" would have their dog confiscated and destroyed (euthanized), in addition to being fined.<sup>[29][30]</sup> Other cities, such as Little Rock, Arkansas, have passed prima facie legal designations, meaning that the cities recognize "pit bulls" as dangerous and require certain stipulations in order to own the breed. Such stipulations predominantly consist of mandatory spay and neutering, mandatory microchipping and licensing, acquiring dangerous dog permits, mandatory muzzling off-property, mandatory containment in proper enclosures and a maximum limit to the amount of "dangerous dogs" per household.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup>Denver, Colorado, Municipal Code chapter 8, art. II, § 8-55 (1989).

<sup>27</sup>Miami, Florida, Municipal Code art. III, § 5-17.2 (1989).

<sup>28</sup>Bonnie Beaver et al., "A community approach to dog bite prevention", *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 218 (2001): 1736, accessed February 10, 2016, <https://www.avma.org/public/Health/Documents/dogbite.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup>Denver, Colorado, Municipal Code.

<sup>30</sup>Miami, Florida, Municipal Code.

<sup>31</sup>"Legislating Dogs," DogsBite.org, accessed February 10, 2016, <http://www.dogsbite.org/legislating-dangerous-dogs.php>.

In addition to the conditions required by the breed discriminatory laws, many “pit bull” owners are required to carry a minimum of \$100,000 in liability insurance.<sup>32</sup> However, the issue that has persisted since the passing of Breed-Specific Legislation is that many insurance companies have blacklisted American Pit Bull Terriers, as well as many other “dangerous” dog breeds such as Rottweilers, Dobermans, Akitas, etc. This means that insurance companies can deny insurance to homeowners based on the breed of their dog, and whether or not that breed is considered dangerous. If the insurance company does accept them, however, they are at risk for being dropped if they were to ever file a bite claim.<sup>33</sup> Landlords have also blacklisted “dangerous” breeds on rental properties in order to avoid the ridiculously high liability coverage. However, regardless of the BSL enacted in the region, landlords are free to establish their own breed-discrimination policies, since the BSL only applies to local governments.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, this proves that Breed-Specific Legislation, and the ultimate branding of the American Pit Bull Terrier as dangerous, is the root cause for discrimination in insurance and housing.

From the time Breed-Specific Legislation was passed, the public’s negative perception of the breed only increased. The countless media reports published on the American Pit Bull Terrier, some stating that the breed has a “will to kill”<sup>35</sup> and other such erroneous statements, only added to the public’s perception that the breed did not belong in society. The widespread circulation of these exaggerated reports and the passing of Breed-Specific Legislation instilled a fear in the general public of the breed. The ones who have been affected the most by the media and BSL, however, are the responsible owners and breeders of the American Pit Bull Terrier.

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> “Insurance companies refuse clients with aggressive dogs,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, January 25, 2001, accessed February 9, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=8YAfAAAAIABJ&sjid=a38EAAAAIABJ&pg=4492%2C6440904>.

<sup>34</sup> “The U.S. Lawmaking Process and BSL,” *Stop BSL*, accessed February 9, 2016, <http://stopbsl.org/lawmaking/the-u-s-lawmaking-process-and-bsl/>.

<sup>35</sup> E.M. Swift, “The Pit bull Friend and Killer.”

Responsible owners and breeders have watched the media and their own governments vilify their beloved dogs based on information they know to be false. Many have also experienced discrimination in their own neighborhoods by people who believe the false stereotypes perpetuated by the media.<sup>36</sup>

Public statements that Pit bulls are ‘land sharks’ or ‘ticking time bombs’ will not increase the breed’s popularity with responsible owners, but only serve to increase the breed’s popularity with owners who are purposely seeking out a ‘dangerous’ dog. The claims of these politicians have only perpetuated the problem by demonizing breeds of dogs and then making them even more desirable and more sought after by people who will mismanage and abuse these animals in such a way as to put the community at risk.<sup>37</sup>

While the media reports and BSL may have been well intended, they have brought irreversible and unforeseen consequences that continue to be detrimental to not only American Pit Bull Terriers, but to many other blacklisted “dangerous” breeds.

### **Justice for the American Pit Bull Terrier**

The enactment of Breed-Specific Legislation was not well received by most dog owners and fanciers of the American Pit Bull Terrier. After Denver passed its breed ban in 1989, groups of breed clubs and dog fanciers filed civil lawsuits against the city of Denver over the unconstitutionality of the breed ban. In May 1990, *Colorado Dog Fanciers v. Denver* began and concluded after nine days. In June 1990, the Denver District Court upheld the breed ban, and in their decision stated that the Court had no authority to override the decision to enact the breed ban.<sup>38</sup> The group of Colorado Dog Fanciers appealed the case to the Colorado Supreme Court, and in 1991 the breed ban was again upheld. However, in April 2004 the Governor signed a

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 104-105.

<sup>38</sup>Kory A. Nelson, *Denver’s Pit Bull Ordinance: A Review of its History and Judicial Rulings*, (N.p.: 2005), 3, accessed February 9, 2016, <http://www.dogsbite.org/pdf/denver-pitbull-ordinance-history-judicial-rulings.pdf>

House Bill that prohibited regulating dangerous dogs through Breed-Specific Legislation.<sup>39</sup> This victory was short lived, however, because in December 2004 the District Court issued a ruling that upheld the breed ban based on Denver’s home rule powers.<sup>40</sup> After this ruling, Denver residents were in a panic over the reinstatement of the breed ban, and many found themselves having to move or relinquish their beloved pet to authorities to be destroyed. Many constructed a type of underground railroad that allowed owners to send their pets out of Denver or hide them from city officials.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly after Miami passed its breed ban, the American Dog Owner’s Association, Inc., who were also involved in *Colorado Dog Fanciers v. Denver*, took the local Miami government to court on the grounds that the breed ban was “unconstitutionally vague”.<sup>42</sup> Much like the decisions in Denver, Miami also upheld the breed ban. In August 2012, however, Miami-Dade County voted on whether to keep the ban in place or repeal it. The results showed that 63.2% voted to keep the ban in place, while only 36.8% voted to repeal the ban.<sup>43</sup> This is not surprising, however, because the citizens of the Miami-Dade County had spent over two decades with the ban in place, and most likely believed that the “pit bull” should remain banned.<sup>44</sup>

As of today, over seven hundred cities have enacted some form of Breed-Specific Legislation.<sup>45</sup> While the American Pit Bull Terrier was the focus of BSL, many of the regulations and restrictions enacted included several other breeds of dogs that were deemed “dangerous”,

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, 6.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, 8.

<sup>41</sup>“Citizens hiding beloved pets – critics assail Denver’s pit bull ban,” *Lodi News-Sentinel*, July 21, 2005, accessed February 9, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=IcM0AAAAIABJ&sjid=PiEGAAAAIABJ&pg=5201%2C2029610>.

<sup>42</sup>“Dog owners attack pit bull ordinance,” *Gainesville Sun*, July 11, 1989, accessed February 9, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=eUpWAAAAIABJ&sjid=NeoDAAAAIABJ&pg=5957%2C3216479>.

<sup>43</sup> “Miami-Dade ‘Pit Bull’ Ban Remains, Despite Overwhelming Evidence of Failure and County Officials’ View,” *National Canine Research Council*

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> “Breed-Specific Legislation,” *ASPCA*, accessed February 9, 2016, <https://www.aspc.org/animal-cruelty/dog-fighting/breed-specific-legislation>.

such as Rottweilers, Dobermans, Chow Chows, etc. Some of the issues that have persisted during the last two decades of Breed-Specific Legislation are how the term “pit bull” is so loosely defined and whether or not BSL actually makes communities safer from dog bites. As previously stated, Denver and Miami have defined the term “pit bull” as any dog that has the characteristics of the American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, or Staffordshire Bull Terrier as outlined by the American Kennel Club or United Kennel Club. They also allow any veterinarian, zoologist, or animal control officer to determine whether a dog is a “pit bull” or not. In some communities, however, government officials or others who do not have any training in identifying breeds of dogs are allowed to identify and incriminate dogs that are perceived as “pit bulls”.<sup>46</sup> The lack of consistency in identifying the American Pit Bull Terrier, and the broad spectrum for which the term encompasses is nothing more than breed discrimination and “canine profiling”. This allows for a much wider margin of error, and the consequences for these potential errors are irreversible, especially in places such as Denver and Miami where these breed of dogs face death if found to be owned illegally.

In addition, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or ASPCA, has stated that there is no evidence that BSL actually makes communities safer to its citizens and other animals. Studies have found that many breeds of dogs responsible for dog attacks are not covered by BSL, which therefore renders the ban useless in preventing all dog bites.<sup>47</sup> Breed-Specific Legislation often requires communities to spend money on enforcing a ban that is not proven to work. Prince George’s County, Maryland, for example, formed a task force in 2003 to research the effectiveness of their Breed-Specific Legislation. The task force concluded that the county had spent more than \$250,000 per year on confiscating and euthanizing banned dogs,

---

<sup>46</sup>Dana M. Campbell, “Pit Bull Bans.”

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

while the public's safety had not even been improved.<sup>[48][49]</sup> Cities throughout the United States share the same results, but local governments continue to hold on to outdated, biased, and misleading information that only hurts responsible owners, breeders, and fanciers of the American Pit Bull Terrier.

### **The Myths That Led to Legislation**

The widespread circulation of misinformation about the American Pit Bull Terrier has contributed to the increasingly negative perception of the breed. Most of the opinions regarding the breed are not based on scholarly research. Instead they are based on individual experiences, pseudoscientific theories, media-hyped stories, and political agendas, all of which have been taken out of context and embellished by the media.<sup>50</sup> These theories and stereotypes include the ability to lock their jaws, abnormal bite pressure, inability to feel pain, propensity for human aggression, etc.<sup>51</sup> The anti-pit bull groups are not solely to blame for the circulation of misinformation, however. In order to combat the intensifying anti-pit bull sentiments, many "pit bull" advocates have created and maintained their own stereotypes that portray the breed in a more positive light, such as the nanny dog myth and the idea that the breed's aggression is learned, rather than genetic.<sup>52</sup> Both are equally as harmful to the American Pit Bull Terrier because the negative perceptions generate a false sense of fear in the minds of the general public, and the more positive stereotypes create an inaccurate image of the breed that masks its history and its capabilities.

---

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Vicious Animal Legislation Task Force, *Report of the Vicious Animal Legislation Task Force*, (N.p., 2003), 12, accessed February 9, 2016, [http://animalfarmfoundation.org/files/Report\\_of\\_the\\_Vicious\\_Animal\\_Legislation\\_-\\_Prince\\_Georges\\_County\\_-\\_2003.pdf](http://animalfarmfoundation.org/files/Report_of_the_Vicious_Animal_Legislation_-_Prince_Georges_County_-_2003.pdf).

<sup>50</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 107.

<sup>51</sup>"Monster Myths," BADRAP, n.d., accessed February 27, 2016, <http://www.badrap.org/monster-myths>.

<sup>52</sup>J. Thomas Beasley, *Misunderstood Nanny Dogs?* (North Charleston, NC: CreateSpace, 2015), 31.

The idea that American Pit Bull Terriers are capable of locking their jaws was one of the first stereotypes regarding the breed.<sup>[53][54]</sup> Just as the public latched onto the pseudoscientific theories that Bloodhounds were “bloodthirsty” because of their tracking ability and that the Doberman’s brain could outgrow its skull, the public needed a plausible scientific theory that made the American Pit Bull Terrier more dangerous than other dog breeds. The infamous 1987*Sports Illustrated* magazine article, “The Pit Bull Friend and Killer: Is the pit bull a fine animal, as its admirers claim, or is it a vicious dog, unfit for society?” by E.M. Swift, stated that “The injuries these dogs inflict are more serious than other breeds because they go for the deep musculature and don’t release; they hold and shake.”<sup>55</sup> While this merely refers to the breed’s natural tenacity and perseverance, this statement, in addition to the fact that the breed has a naturally wide jaw, created the belief that the American Pit Bull Terrier has the specialized capability to lock its jaw on its targets. However, there are several experts who have discredited this claim.<sup>[56][57]</sup> The reason the general public still believes in the accuracy of this myth is because the power and tenacity of the American Pit Bull Terrier is still largely underestimated. Decades of careful breeding for dog fighting have influenced certain genetic traits to create a dominant fighting style, one that has been incomparable to any other dog breed and that has made it the dog breed of choice for the fighting pits. While the locking jaw myth has been refuted, it does not negate the fact that the American Pit Bull Terrier is still a strong and tenacious dog breed that requires careful and responsible ownership. However, just as the intense

---

<sup>53</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 108.

<sup>54</sup>Stephanie Waite, “Pit bull debate: Nasty or loving,” *Beaver County Times*, June 21, 1987, accessed February 27, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=32AtAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=gNoFAAAAIBAJ&pg=1224%2C3771085>.

<sup>55</sup>E.M. Swift, “The Pit Bull Friend and Killer,” *Sports Illustrated*, July 27, 1987, accessed February 27, 2016, <http://www.si.com/vault/1987/07/27/115813/the-pit-bull-friend-and-killer-is-the-pit-bull-a-fine-animal-as-its-admirers-claim-or-is-it-a-vicious-dog-unfit-for-society>.

<sup>56</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 109.

<sup>57</sup>Jerry M. Bridgers III, “Mechanical Advantage in the Pit Bull Jaw,” (Presbyterian College, 1988), accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.maulkorbzwang.de/Briefe/fakten/preugschat/Bridgers1988-1.pdf>.

focus of the Border Collie and fierce guardianship of the Cane Corso are managed by qualified owners, so should the tenacity of the American Pit Bull Terrier, rather than be banned because of misunderstandings of the natural structure and temperament of the breed.

The breed's extensive history of dog fighting combined with the amount of damage resulting from dog attacks involving the breed have led the general public to believe that the American Pit Bull Terrier is naturally resistant to pain.<sup>58</sup> However, the American Pit Bull Terrier has the same nervous system and feels pain equally as any other dog breed.<sup>59</sup> The general public and the media have essentially mistaken a structural quality for what is actually the standard temperament of the American Pit Bull Terrier. Gameness, the ability to continue the fight regardless of pain or other distractions, has long been one of the fundamental traits of the breed, and ultimately became the trait that set the breed apart from other breeds in the fighting pit. Richard Stratton, one of the founding fathers of the modern American Pit Bull Terrier, explained gameness in his book *The Book of the American Pit Bull Terrier* by stating that:

No matter how strong or indestructible a dog was, however, if he lost interest or gave up in a fight he would naturally lose the contest and not be bred. Thus, gameness became an important quality. Gameness is actually an oversimplification that involves a variety of traits, mainly enthusiasm for fighting contact (winning or losing), endurance, resistance to shock and the ability to tolerate pain.<sup>60</sup>

Stratton argues that the reason many might believe in the breed's inability to feel pain is that American Pit Bull Terriers tend to override feelings of pain under stressful or hostile situations more than other dog breeds, which also makes them the ideal breed for the fighting pit.<sup>61</sup> However, this trait is largely dependent on current breeding practices of the American Pit Bull Terrier, and a true "gamebred" APBT is not your typical "pit bull" on the street or in the

---

<sup>58</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 116.

<sup>59</sup>Mary Harwelik, "Breed Myths," *The REAL Pit Bull*, last updated February 1, 2011, accessed February 29, 2016, <http://www.realpitbull.com/myths.html>.

<sup>60</sup>Richard F. Stratton, *The Book of the American Pit Bull Terrier*, (New Jersey: T.F.H. Publications, 1981), 41.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

shelter, as responsible breeders of this breed maintain close circles and studbooks.<sup>62</sup>In addition, there have not been any scientific studies conducted on a significant population of those legally deemed a “pit bull” to determine whether most “pit bulls” even carry this trait.<sup>63</sup>

The myth that the American Pit Bull Terrier has a bite force higher than any other dog breed stems from a faulty scientific journal article published in 1989 titled, “Mauling by Pit Bull Terriers: Case Report”. The case report examines a nine-year-old girl after a severe “pit bull” attack and claims that the damage is a result of the breed’s superior bite pressure, locking jaws, and inability to forewarn of its attack.<sup>64</sup> However, the only evidence cited to support these claims were newspaper articles and one journal article that addressed treatment of dog bites in children without any mention of the American Pit Bull Terrier. The claims made by the article have since been refuted because bite pressure in breeds of dogs is incredibly difficult to measure. Studies have been done to prove that domesticated dogs, on average, have the same bite pressure as wild dogs, but studying the bite pressure of specific dog breeds relies heavily on the individual dogs studied. Several variables that contribute to a dog’s bite, such as its motivation and inhibitions, cannot be controlled, and therefore make studies impossible to conduct.<sup>65</sup> Regardless of its inaccuracies, professionals have consistently cited the case report in order to promote the idea that “pit bulls” are inherently evil. It is common sense that larger dogs tend to have stronger, more destructive bites, but there is no evidence to suggest that American Pit Bull Terriers have higher bite pressures than other breed of dogs.

---

<sup>62</sup>“Breeders Code of Ethics,” American Dog Breeders Association, accessed February 29, 2016, [http://www.adbadog.com/p\\_pdetails.asp?fpid=794](http://www.adbadog.com/p_pdetails.asp?fpid=794).

<sup>63</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 116.

<sup>64</sup>Brett R. Baack, M.D., et al, “Mauling by Pit Bull Terriers: Case Reports,” *The Journal of Trauma*, 29 (1989), 517, accessed March 3, 2016, <http://www.dogsbite.org/pdf/1989-mauling-by-pit-bull-terrier-case-report.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 112.

Other myths regarding the American Pit Bull Terrier include its propensity for human aggression and its ability to “snap” or “turn” on their owners. These myths can be largely attributed to the lack of knowledge about dog behavior by the general public and the unremitting idea that dog or small animal aggression equals human aggression. Thousands of years of evolution have resulted in a domesticated dog that relies on communication with its human owners to survive. By introducing the idea that American Pit Bull Terriers have bypassed thousands of years of evolution is ludicrous, and certainly has no factual basis. American Pit Bull Terriers, as with all dog breeds, exhibit the same warning signs before initiating a fight. These warning signs include growling, stares, raising of the hackles, body stiffening, flattening of ears, etc.<sup>66</sup>

While we certainly can find cases in which a Pit bull seemingly attacked without displaying any warning signals, again this is not a phenomenon exclusive to Pit bulls, and it certainly is not representative of most Pit bull attacks. Additionally, since so many severe and fatal dog attacks (all breed) are on young, unsupervised children who cannot read or understand canine warning signals, this certainly leads one to question how these types of claims of ‘attacking without warning’ can be taken seriously.<sup>67</sup>

Stratton also addressed this issue by explaining how fighting dogs that displayed tendencies towards human aggression were culled due to the fact that human aggression was a serious liability in the fighting pit. Fighting dogs needed to be able to work well with their handlers, and so human aggression was not a trait that was bred for.<sup>68</sup> American Pit Bull Terriers, on the other hand, were historically bred to be aggressive towards other dogs and small animals. The distinction between animal aggression and human aggression is important to understand because it helps to disprove false explanations of dog attacks and the idea that the breed is capable of turning on their owners.

---

<sup>66</sup>David Ryan, “Canine Aggression Frequently Asked Questions,” *Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors*, last modified 2010, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.apbc.org.uk/articles/dog-aggression-FAQs>.

<sup>67</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 118.

<sup>68</sup>Richard F. Stratton, *The Book of the American Pit Bull Terrier*, 37.

While many of the stereotypes regarding the American Pit Bull Terrier seek to portray the breed negatively, some of the stereotypes that have circulated among the general public originate from advocates of the breed. One such myth is that American Pit Bull Terriers were once *nanny* dogs. Interestingly, there is no literature that explains where this myth originated. The first recorded use of the term “nanny dog” was in the 1970s when Lilian Rant, President of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club of America, referred to Staffordshire Bull Terriers as “nursemaid dogs” because they were so well behaved with children.<sup>69</sup> Since then, the nanny dog term has been taken out of context and attributed to the American Pit Bull Terrier, in addition to other bully breeds and bully breed mixes. While bully breed advocates may be well intended in perpetuating this falsehood, it is important to understand the dangerous repercussions of this idea. The term nanny dog basically implies that the dog is capable of being left unsupervised with children, which is an extremely dangerous way of thinking. Children do not have the developmental maturity to completely understand dog behavior and do not have the physical maturity to adequately defend themselves in the event of an attack. While children should be taught how to properly behave around dogs, and dogs should be socialized enough to behave around children, it is unwise to think that both are capable of doing so consistently without adult supervision.

Another misconception perpetuated by pro-pit bull advocates is the idea that treadmills, chains, and other equipment are exclusive to and representative of dog fighting. In order to combat illegal dog fighting, equipment such as treadmills, flirt poles, and break sticks have been labeled as dog fighting paraphernalia by much of the pro-pit bull community.<sup>70</sup> While these efforts are reasonable in theory, the reality is that these tools have become prohibited in various

---

<sup>69</sup>J. Thomas Beasley, *Misunderstood Nanny Dogs?* (North Charleston, NC: CreateSpace, 2015), 57.

<sup>70</sup>Randall Lockwood, “Dogfighting: A Guide for Community Action,” ASPCA, November 2012, accessed March 12, 2016, [http://www.aspcapro.org/sites/pro/files/aspc\\_a\\_cruelty\\_dogfighting\\_action.pdf](http://www.aspcapro.org/sites/pro/files/aspc_a_cruelty_dogfighting_action.pdf).

cities and states. Responsible owners of American Pit Bull Terriers attest to the importance of these accessories in the lives of their dogs, but run the risk of prosecution if they use them openly. Treadmills and flirt poles are fantastic resources for owners that need more than a walk around the block to exercise their dogs. American Pit Bull Terriers are naturally very high-energy dogs, and therefore need large amounts of exercise and stimulation to keep them happy and well-behaved.<sup>71</sup> Break sticks are one of the most important tools for any bully breed owner, and are often one of the only tools that will separate two dogs in a dog fight with minimal damage. While these tools can certainly be indicative of dog fighting, they are also widely used by responsible owners of American Pit Bull Terriers, as well as owners of other dog breeds for the purpose of properly exercising and managing their dogs.

In addition to these stereotypes, many pro-pit bull and anti-pit bull advocates alike have argued that cropped ears are characteristic of dogs in fighting rings. Joseph L. Colby, another founding father of the modern American Pit Bull Terrier, wrote in his book *The American Pit Bull Terrier* to, “Never crop the ears of the fighting dog, as it leaves too much of the inside exposed and can cause considerable damage, should his opponent get hold of it.”<sup>72</sup> While there may be dog fighters who crop the ears of their dogs, the vast majority of dog fighters prefer to keep the ears intact. In addition, the breed standard for the American Staffordshire Terrier allows for cropped ears, and the majority of show quality American Staffordshire Terriers have cropped ears.<sup>73</sup> This breed has never been involved with dog fighting, and in fact was created to break away from the stigma of the American Pit Bull Terrier, and so the idea that cropped ears signifies a fighting dog is unfounded.

---

<sup>71</sup>“Monster Myths,” BADRAP, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.badrap.org/monster-myths>.

<sup>72</sup>Joseph L. Colby, *The American Pit Bull Terrier*, (Sacramento, CA: The News Publishing, Co., 1936), 27.

<sup>73</sup>“Standard,” Staffordshire Terrier Club of America, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.amstaff.org/standard.html>.

The myths, pseudoscientific theories, and stereotypes regarding the American Pit Bull Terrier have perpetuated the belief that the breed is inherently evil and does not belong in society. On the other hand, many pro-pit bull advocates have created and maintained stereotypes that, while well-intended, are equally as dangerous to the breed as the negative stereotypes. At the outset of the “pit bull” panic, the myths and stereotypes that surrounded the breed included locking jaws, abnormal bite pressure, inability to feel pain, ability to turn on their owners, and tendencies for aggressiveness towards humans. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, the fear experienced by the public due to the rise in reported dog attacks and widespread media reports about the breed led to the introduction of breed-specific legislation.<sup>[74] [75] [76]</sup>

Anti-pit bull organizations such as Dogsbite.org and PETA have utilized these negative stereotypes in order to further their agenda by pushing for stronger breed-specific legislation and other anti-pit bull ordinances, such as making it illegal for felons to own the breed and encouraging insurance companies to blacklist the breed.<sup>[77] [78]</sup> In order to combat negative perceptions of the breed, advocates of the American Pit Bull Terrier need to thoroughly research the breed so that they can help educate the general public on its true history, structure, and temperament. Shelter staff and law enforcement also need to be aware of the true history and nature of the breed, so they can help to spread awareness and educate those who might believe in the myths, theories, and stereotypes about the breed. Breed-specific legislation and anti-pit bull

---

<sup>74</sup>“Dangerous dogs should not be kept as pets,” *The Tuscaloosa News*, August 6, 1987, accessed March 16, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=unwhAAAAIABJ&sjid=hIoFAAAAIAAJ&pg=3805%2C1735749>.

<sup>75</sup>“Insurance companies refuse clients with aggressive dogs,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, January 25, 2001, accessed March 16, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=8YAfAAAAIABJ&sjid=a38EAAAAIAAJ&pg=4492%2C6440904>.

<sup>76</sup>Frank Cook, “Pit bulls becoming weapon for dealers,” *The Bryan Times*, June 30, 1987, accessed March 16, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=VLFPAIAAJ&sjid=U1IDAAAAIAAJ&pg=4003%2C8672071>.

<sup>77</sup>“About Us,” Dogsbite.org, last modified March 8, 2016, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.dogsbite.org/dogsbite-about.php>.

<sup>78</sup>“PETA’s Position on Pit Bulls,” PETA, July 21, 2009, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.peta.org/blog/peta-position-pit-bulls/>.

organizations can only be furthered if the myths and stereotypes of the breed continue to be discussed and regarded as truth. The only way to truly combat these issues is through education and awareness.

### **The Media and Breed-Specific Legislation**

Up until the 1980s, reports on dog bites seemed to have displayed a better understanding of canine aggression, in addition to presenting more reasonable preventative measures for dog bites. While these reports certainly included entertainment elements for their readers, most generally focused on explaining the events that could have triggered the attacks, thereby giving insights into canine behavior and information on how to avoid future attacks.<sup>79</sup> Some newspapers even published articles that specifically addressed the reasons behind dog attacks, most of which placed the blame on the owners and victims rather than on the dogs themselves. In 1972, Felicia Ames, author of *The Dog You Care For* and consultant for Friskies Research Kennels, wrote an article for the *Rome News-Tribune* titled, “What Causes Dog Bite? Human Error, Probably,” that faulted the dog owners for dog bite incidents. She stated, “Outside of a miniscule percentage of sick dogs, dogs vicious by nature, *it is remarkable how few dogs bite*. Those normal ones who do, do so because of poor training, no training at all, or provocation.”<sup>80</sup> Ames went on to discuss how children make up the majority of dog bite victims, and this, she argues, is mostly due to their lack of knowledge of canine behavior. A similar article was published in 1974 that gave specific explanations of aggressive dog behavior, such as a dog protecting its territory or lashing

---

<sup>79</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 139.

<sup>80</sup>Felicia Ames, “What Causes Dog Bite? Human Error, Probably,” *Rome News-Tribune*, June 25, 1972, accessed April 1, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=BmhNAAAAIBAJ&sjid=xTUDAAAAIBAJ&pg=5587%2C3596703>.

out of fear.<sup>81</sup> The author also addressed various ways in which to avoid dog attacks, such as not teasing a leashed dog and avoiding strange dogs that are off-leash. These articles do not place the blame solely on the dog, but instead attribute most aggressive behavior to poor training, socialization, and human ignorance.

It was not until the 1980s that the media reports on dog attacks began to place more blame on the dogs and lessen the amount of responsibility placed on the dog owners and the victims. Articles during this time period began to focus more on the incident itself, and hardly addressed the causes that could explain why the attack occurred in the first place, and ways in which future attacks could be prevented.<sup>[82][83]</sup> In addition, articles began to claim that the dogs attacked without provocation, perpetuating the idea of the dogs being unpredictable and inherently violent, and began to place the blame on the breed of dog rather than on the individual dog. The American Pit Bull Terrier's violent history of dogfighting made it easy for the media to hold the breed responsible for the increasing number of dog attacks. "It was the great misfortune of the Pit bull to be the new 'fad' dog and thus the new dog found in incidents of attacks at the very same time when the media stopped reporting triggers or events which precipitated an attack. This [...] would also play an important role in the general public's lack of knowledge about canine behavior."<sup>84</sup> By failing to report the triggers and events that could have caused an attack, as well as the ways in which one could avoid an attack, the media began to sensationalize "pit

---

<sup>81</sup>Patricia McCormack, "Boys, 5 to 9, frequently victims of serious dog bite," *Boca Raton News*, July 23, 1974, accessed April 1, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=O9sPAAAAIABJ&sjid=TI0DAAAAIABJ&pg=5375%2C2969076>.

<sup>82</sup>Anne Bothwell, "Dog attacks are rare but serious problem," *The Milwaukee Journal*, July 7, 1989, accessed March 29, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=TGkaAAAAIABJ&sjid=6ysEAAAAIABJ&pg=6865%2C4569240>.

<sup>83</sup>Arthur J. Clayman, ed., "Do not own dangerous dogs," *The Daily Gazette*, December 24, 1994, accessed March 29, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=5-8wAAAAIABJ&sjid=jOAFAAAAIABJ&pg=1730%2C5996809>.

<sup>84</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 141.

bull” attacks by over-reporting them and utilizing scare tactics to generate a public fear of the breed.

One of the many examples of the media’s over-reporting of “pit bull” attacks took place in 2003, when a 92-year-old woman named Alice Broom was attacked by a pack of “pit bulls” in Ocala, Florida.<sup>85</sup> Following the initial report of the incident, the attack was addressed in over 200 major U.S. newspapers and television stations, and even circulated in places such as Australia and the United Kingdom.<sup>86</sup> While the attack was certainly tragic, similar incidents involving different breeds of dogs did not generate such extensive coverage. In the same year in Alaska, 4-year-old Sheldon Phillip was mauled to death by his family’s husky mix, and the incident was only reported in two Alaskan newspapers.<sup>[87] [88]</sup> While both dog attacks resulted in the tragic deaths of the victims, it is no coincidence that the death of Alice Broom garnered more media attention because of its involvement with “pit bulls”. Between 1985 and 2006, over 14,000 newspaper articles were published with “pit bull” mentioned in the headlines, with over 2,500 headlines mentioning “pit bulls” in 2006 alone.<sup>89</sup> This example of over-reporting is crucial in understanding the role of the media in the public’s negative perception of the American Pit Bull Terrier, because the constant exposure to these types of stories can ultimately distort the public’s understanding of the dangerousness of the breed.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to the over-reporting and fear mongering of dog attacks, the media has played a significant role in perpetuating the idea that the breed is inherently dangerous due to its close

---

<sup>85</sup>Austin L. Miller, “Pit bulls take life,” *Ocala Star Banner*, December 13, 2003, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.ocala.com/article/20031213/NEWS/212130308>.

<sup>86</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*,

<sup>87</sup>Tataboline Brant, “Family dog fatally mauls 4-year-old Akiachak boy,” *Anchorage Daily News*, September 17, 2003, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.unchainyourdog.org/news/Akiachak.htm>.

<sup>88</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 143.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, 152.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid, 142.

association with gang culture. Since rise of the breed in the late 1970s and early 1980s and due to its popularity in dogfighting, the American Pit Bull Terrier became increasingly known as a tough “status” symbol to be had by those involved in gangs and underground dogfighting rings. “A fighting pet embodies anti-establishment social mores – the antithesis of domesticity and conventional values. A pet that will fight for its master will bring honour and social engagement: a passport to something better.”<sup>91</sup> Those involved in such illegal activities looked to the American Pit Bull Terrier as a way to show off their deviant behavior and their status within the underground rings they were associated with. The media portrayed the breed’s association with gangs and other criminals predominantly through cultural influences, like movies, television shows, and music references. By linking American Pit Bull Terriers with the underground gang culture, the media furthered the public’s perception of the breed as inherently violent and dangerous.

Several rap and hip-hop icons such as DMX, Snoop Dogg, YG, and Eminem have featured dogs perceived as “pit bulls” in many of their music videos that discuss involvement in gangs or gang-related activities. For example, DMX’s “Ruff Ryders’ Anthem” and YG’s “Bicken Back Bein’ Bool” feature brief clips of “pit bulls” in video montages that display gang shootings and delinquent activities such as illegal street racing. Though the clips are brief, the association alone can lead the general public to assume a correlation between American Pit Bull Terriers and those involved in gang-related activities. In addition to being displayed in music videos, “pit bulls” are also referenced within the lyrics themselves. In rapper Machine Gun Kelly’s song “Warning Shot”, he describes himself to fight like a “pit bull” by going in at the

---

<sup>91</sup>Simon Harding, *Unleashed: The phenomena of status dogs and weapon dogs* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

necks of other people.<sup>92</sup> However, the breed's relation with gang culture and other criminal activities is not tied solely to rap and hip-hop artists. Movies such as *No Country for Old Men*, *White Fang*, and *Snatch* feature "pit bulls" engaging in aggressive behavior that only perpetuate the idea that the breed is dangerous and unpredictable.

In addition to the "pit bull" references made by music icons, other cultural icons have also contributed to the breed's negative perception. Former NFL star and quarterback of the Atlanta Falcons Michael Vick was indicted on dogfighting charges in 2007, and has been held responsible by the pit-bull community for furthering the controversies surrounding the breed.<sup>93</sup> "The blood sport has operated underground for years, but many agree the hip-hop use of pit bull images moved it out of the shadows – and the Vick case placed it at center stage."<sup>94</sup> While dogfighting had been around since the breed's inception, parallels between the breed and the sport had never been so sensationalized by the media and had never attracted such attention by the general public. The negative stereotypes of the breed had just been perpetuated by media reports following dog attacks, but the Vick case presented proof to the general public that the breed was indeed as dangerous as the media claimed it to be. During the Michael Vick trial, commentaries began to circulate regarding the continued existence of the breed. Many argued that dogfighters could never be stopped, and the only way to decrease incidents of dogfighting rings and dog attacks would be to eliminate the breed entirely.<sup>95</sup> While pit bull supporters used

---

<sup>92</sup>"Warning Shot," AZlyrics.com, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/machinegunkelly/warningshot.html>.

<sup>93</sup>"Animal Fighting Case Study: Michael Vick," *Animal Legal Defense Fund*, last modified January 2011, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://aldf.org/resources/laws-cases/animal-fighting-case-study-michael-vick/>.

<sup>94</sup>"Pit Bull image snarled in macho depictions," *Reading Eagle* (Reading, PA), July 25, 2007, accessed April 3, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=LzIxAAAAIABJ&sjid=EqIFAAAAIABJ&pg=1137%2C4400196>.

<sup>95</sup>John Smallwood, "It's time for pit bulls to fade away," *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 26, 2007, accessed April 3, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=BowlAAAAIABJ&sjid=ZbUFAAAAIABJ&pg=3074%2C6355696>.

the case to strengthen dogfighting laws, the excessive controversy that the case created led many anti-pit bull advocates to push harder for breed-specific legislation.<sup>96</sup>

Dogfighting was not the only underground ring in which “pit bulls” were associated with. American Pit Bull Terriers became popular dogs for drug dealers, both for their tough look and their temperament. Many drug dealers have been breeding American Pit Bull Terriers to be aggressive towards humans, so as to make them more protective of their property and aggressive towards strangers.<sup>97</sup> This does not reflect the breed standard, however, as American Pit Bull Terriers should not have any aggressive tendencies towards human beings. Instead of utilizing natural guardian breeds such as the Presa Canario or Cane Corso, these drug dealers are creating dogs that do not accurately represent the breed. This leads to an inaccurate representation of American Pit Bull Terriers in the media and a skewed public perception of the purpose of the breed. Newspaper reports of drug busts include the purpose of “pit bulls” in the drug rings by stating that “pit bulls” are better than guns, because you cannot get arrested for having a pit bull, and the dogs are able to alert the owners to the presence of police and other unwanted visitors.<sup>98</sup> The negative association with drug dealers only furthers the general public’s negative perception of the breed, and allows the media to continue sensationalizing the American Pit Bull Terrier as a dangerous dog that does not belong in society.

The American Pit Bull Terrier’s associations with cultural icons that glorify gang culture, as well as its associations with drug dealers and the underground dogfighting rings, have helped

---

<sup>96</sup>Matthew Bershadker, “Why we can’t forget Michael Vick’s dogfighting past,” *New York Post*, March 26, 2014, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://nypost.com/2014/03/26/why-we-cant-forget-michael-vicks-dog-fighting-past/>.

<sup>97</sup>“Drug dealers using pit bulls,” *The Times-News*, August 30, 1992, accessed April 3, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=03NPAAAIAIAJ&sjid=zCQEAAAIAIAJ&pg=5718%2C7638569>.

<sup>98</sup>Frank Cook, “Pit Bulls becoming weapon for dealers,” *The Bryan Times*, June 30, 1987, accessed April 3, 2016, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=VLFPAAAIAIAJ&sjid=U1IDAAAIAIAJ&pg=4003%2C8672071>.

in creating an evil image of the breed perpetuated by the media. Politicians and lawmakers have utilized this image created by the media to support the passing of breed-specific legislation.

In 2005, despite the fact that only one of Canada's 33 documented fatal dog attacks involved any type of dog even remotely resembling a Pit bull, Ontario's Attorney General Michael Bryant began a campaign to rid the province of Pit bulls. Spouting inane and false claims about Pit bulls and aggression and refusing to consider the testimony of Ontario's own professional canine experts, the Attorney General pushed through legislation banning Pit bulls in the entire province of Ontario.<sup>99</sup>

Biased newspaper articles, in addition to the widespread association with gang culture, have only aided anti-pit bull advocates as they push for breed-specific legislation. Rather than educating the general public on reasonable preventative measures against dog attacks and placing the blame of the breed's negative perception on the breed itself, anti-pit bull advocates and policy makers prefer to vilify the entire breed for the behavior of a small percentage of American Pit Bull Terriers.<sup>100</sup>

Over 700 cities in the United States have enacted some form of breed-specific legislation.<sup>101</sup> States such as Alaska, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, and Vermont have municipalities that have successfully passed breed bans and breed restrictions. Some states have even gone to court over the constitutionality of the breed-specific laws, and the appellate courts in states such as Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, and Wisconsin have upheld the constitutionality of the laws.<sup>102</sup> However, enforcement of breed-specific legislation has proven to be largely ineffective because of the difficulties of classifying the banned breeds of dogs.<sup>103</sup> The laws target dogs with "pit bull" type characteristics, and such characteristics could apply to a wide variety of

---

<sup>99</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 172.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid, 173.

<sup>101</sup>"Breed-specific laws by state," Dogsbite.org, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.dogsbite.org/legislating-dangerous-dogs-state-by-state.php>.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>"Failure to Improve Safety," Stopbsl.org, accessed April 3, 2016, <https://stopbsl.org/bsloview/the-failure-to-improve-safety/>.

dog breeds. Dr. Kristopher Irizarry, Assistant Professor in Bioinformatics, Genetics, and Genomics at Western University stated, “I think these attempts to ‘protect society’ from dangerous dogs are flawed because the inherent assumption in these laws is that anatomical and morphological characteristics in dogs correlate with certain behaviors.”<sup>104</sup> Dr. Irizarry continues by addressing that phrenology, or the “science” of assuming that anatomical and morphological characteristics can correlate with certain behaviors, was discredited in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This proves that the very basis on which politicians, legislators, and anti-pit bull advocates make their argument for breed-specific legislation is unfounded.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (“AVMA”) released a statement regarding breed-specific legislation that argued that the cost and difficulties of enforcing breed-specific legislation would ultimately be futile, especially with the uncertainty surrounding the effectiveness of the laws.<sup>105</sup> They state that any dog can bite, and banning certain breeds of dogs fails to address the severe dog attacks that can occur from other dog breeds. “Instead, concentrate on prevention: educate yourself, teach children about proper interactions and behaviors with dogs, and learn how to recognize risky and escalating situations with aggressive dogs. These steps -- not breed-specific legislation -- will lead to fewer dog bites.”<sup>106</sup> Breed-specific legislation mistakenly blames the dogs instead of placing responsibility on the owners. Rather than banning certain groups of dogs, politicians and legislators should look to alternatives that would satisfy both the need for safety from dog attacks and the ability for dog owners to keep the breeds they love. These alternatives include proper containment laws, educating adults and

---

<sup>104</sup>Kristopher Irizarry, “Breed Specific or Looks Specific,” *National Canine Research Council*, n.d., accessed April 3, 2016, [http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/tinymce/Irizarry%20viewpoint.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Irizarry%20viewpoint.pdf).

<sup>105</sup>“Why Breed-specific Legislation is not the Answer,” American Veterinary Medicine Association, accessed April 4, 2016, <https://www.avma.org/public/Pages/Why-Breed-Specific-Legislation-is-not-the-Answer.aspx>.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

children on being safe around dogs, low-cost spay and neuter programs, low-cost training and behavior helplines, breeding regulations, and low-cost licensing.<sup>107</sup>

Containment laws are often overlooked when it comes to addressing dog bites, yet they are powerful prevention tools. Leash laws should be required in all communities, and they drastically decrease the possibility of attacks because the owner has complete control of the dog. Requiring fencing or kenneling is also a useful tool in keeping dogs enclosed at home, and also reduce the possibility of the dogs escaping. Loose dogs present serious hazards to communities, because they may carry diseases, present traffic hazards, and hurt other people and their pets.<sup>108</sup> In addition to containment laws, the next best alternative to breed-specific legislation is safety education, especially for young children. Studies have shown that educating young children on how to properly behave around dogs has been key in preventing serious dog attacks.<sup>109</sup> Since children make up the majority of dog bite victims, it seems only logical that children receive education on how to behave properly around dogs. But, this also means that it is important that parents be educated on dog bite prevention, and how to recognize the signs of dog aggression in order to prevent dog attacks in the home.<sup>110</sup> Education is key in preventing dog attacks, because dogs rarely attack without reason. If people are more informed about the signs of dog aggression and how to behave properly around dogs, then dog attacks could be reduced drastically.

### **Conclusion**

American Pit Bull Terriers have become one of America's most loved and hated dog breeds. Their loyalty, determination, and happy personality have attracted dog lovers from across

---

<sup>107</sup>“Alternatives,” Stopbsl.org, accessed April 4, 2016, <https://stopbsl.org/alternatives-to-bsl/>.

<sup>108</sup>“Containment Laws,” Stopbsl.org, accessed April 4, 2016, <https://stopbsl.org/alternatives-to-bsl/containment-laws/>.

<sup>109</sup>Simon Chapman, “Preventing dog bites in children: randomized controlled trial of an educational intervention,” *British Medical Journal* 320 (2000): 1512-1513, accessed April 6, 2016, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC27395/>.

<sup>110</sup>“Safety Education,” Stopbsl.org, accessed April 6, 2016, <https://stopbsl.org/alternatives-to-bsl/safety-education/>.

the nation, while their power and violent history have led the anti-pit bull community to advocate for their removal from society. Their rise to infamy began as they became the breed of choice for dogfighting rings, drug dealers, and gang members. But as their popularity increased, so did the number of dog attacks due to the lack of education and awareness of this breed. The media played one of the most important roles in the breed's rise to notoriety due to their intense and consistent publishing of dog attacks involving "pit bulls". As "pit bulls" became increasingly visible in headlines throughout the nation with unfounded stereotypes presented as fact within the articles, the public grew increasingly fearful of the American Pit Bull Terrier and began to call for restrictions and regulations. Politicians, legislators, and anti-pit bull advocates have pushed for breed-specific legislation in order to protect the safety of the general public, but little evidence has been presented to prove that the breed-specific legislation is effective. While they are trying to push for strict breed bans, they fail to acknowledge the role of the owner in dog attacks and do not offer alternative prevention measures in order to accommodate the large population of "pit bull" owners.

Pro-pit bull advocates have created several alternatives to breed-specific legislation, all of which have proven to be effective in preventing dog attacks and dogfighting rings. Breed-specific legislation only hurts the innocent dogs and responsible owners, and does little to protect the victims of dog bites. Those who are looking to own the breed for criminal purposes will always find ways around the law, or simply find or create another breed of dog. "Only by acknowledging that a social hysteria has been spawned by the sensational and inaccurate reporting of dog attacks and only by extracting ourselves from the swirl of emotion, myths, rumors, and politics of dog attacks can we rationally and effectively address canine aggression in

a way that may reduce these attacks.”<sup>111</sup> Dog attacks need to be further investigated to understand the real reasons behind each attack, and newspapers need to again address the reasons in which dog attacks happen to educate the general public on canine behavior. Dog owners and their children need to be educated on how to properly behave around dogs, and politicians and lawmakers need to research alternatives instead of turning to breed-specific legislation. Society needs to understand and be aware of the history and temperament of the American Pit Bull Terrier, rather than giving in to the fear mongering of the media. Instead of looking introspectively as to the reasons behind dog attacks and dogfighting, society has unfortunately blamed the dogs. However the dogs are not to blame; we are to blame.

---

<sup>111</sup>Karen Delise, *The Pit Bull Placebo*, 173.

### Works Cited

- Ames, Felicia. "What Causes Dog Bite? Human Error, Probably." *Rome News-Tribune*, June 25, 1972. Accessed September 11, 2015.  
<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=BmhNAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=xTUDAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5587%2C3596703>.
- Animal Legal Defense Fund. "Dealing with Aggressive Dogs: Community Solutions that Consider Each Dog, Not Their Breed." Accessed September 11, 2015.  
<http://aldf.org/resources/advocating-for-animals/dealing-with-aggressive-dogs-community-solutions-that-consider-each-dog-not-their-breed/>.
- Armitage, George C. *Thirty Years with Fighting Dogs*. Washington, D.C.: N.p., 1935.
- ASPCA. "Breed Specific Legislation." Accessed September 11, 2015.  
<https://www.aspca.org/fight-cruelty/dog-fighting/breed-specific-legislation>.
- AVMA. "Why Breed-specific Legislation Is not the Answer." *AVMA.org*, n.d. Accessed September 11, 2015. <https://www.avma.org/public/Pages/Why-Breed-Specific-Legislation-is-not-the-Answer.aspx>.
- Baack, Bret R., et al. "Mauling of Pit Bull Terriers: Case Report." *Journal of Trauma* 29, no. 4 (1989): 517-520. Accessed October 6, 2015. <http://www.dogsbite.org/pdf/1989-mauling-by-pit-bull-terrier-case-report.pdf>.
- BADRAP. Accessed September 11, 2015. [www.badrap.org](http://www.badrap.org).
- "Ban chases pit bulls underground." *Today's News Herald*, August 7, 2003. Accessed October 6, 2015.  
<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=L2JEAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=G7oMAAAAIAIBAJ&pg=1271%2C3846055>.

Beasley, J. Thomas. *Misunderstood Nanny Dogs? A Critical and Objective Analysis of the Facts & Myths Concerning Pit Bulls*. South Carolina: CreateSpace, 2015.

Bershadker, Matthew. "Why we can't forget Michael Vick's dog-fighting past." *New York Post*, March 26, 2014. Accessed October 6, 2015. <http://nypost.com/2014/03/26/why-we-cant-forget-michael-vicks-dog-fighting-past/>.

Bothwell, Anne. "Dog attacks are rare, but serious problem." *Milwaukee Journal*, July 7, 1989. Accessed October 6, 2015. <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=TGkaAAAIBAJ&sjid=6ysEAAAIBAJ&pg=6865%2C4569240>.

Brant, Tataboline. "Family Dog Fatally Mauls 4-year-old Akiachak Boy." *Anchorage Daily News*, September 17, 2003. Accessed October 6, 2015. <http://www.unchainyourdog.org/news/Akiachak.htm>.

Campbell, Dana M. "Pit Bull Bans: The State of Breed-Specific Legislation." *General Practice, Solo & Small Firm Division*, July/August 2009. Accessed September 11, 2015. [http://www.americanbar.org/content/newsletter/publications/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_home/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_index/pitbull.html](http://www.americanbar.org/content/newsletter/publications/gp_solo_magazine_home/gp_solo_magazine_index/pitbull.html).

Chapman, Simon, et al. "Preventing dog bites in children: randomized controlled trial of an educational intervention." *BMJ* 230, no. 3 (2000): 1512-1513. Accessed October 6, 2015. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC27395/pdf/1512.pdf>.

"Citizens hiding beloved pets – critics assail Denver's pit bull ban." *Lodi-News Sentinel*, July 21, 2005. Accessed October 6, 2015. <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=IcM0AAAIBAJ&sjid=PiEGAAAIBAJ&pg=5201%2C2029610>.

Colby, Joseph L. *The American Pit Bull Terrier*. Sacramento, California: The News Publishing Co., 1936.

Cook, Frank. "Pit bulls becoming weapon for dealers." *Bryan Times*, July 30, 1987. Accessed October 6, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=VLFPAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=U1IDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=4003%2C8672071>.

Curnutt, Jordan. *Animals and the Law: A Sourcebook*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2001.

"Dangerous dogs should not be kept as pets." *Tuscaloosa News*, August 6, 1987. Accessed September 11, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=unwhAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=hIoFAAAAAIIBAJ&pg=3805%2C1735749>.

Delise, Karen. "America's Blame Game Goes to the Dogs." National Canine Research Council, n.d. Accessed September 11, 2015.

[http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/tinymce/Blame%20Delise.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Blame%20Delise.pdf).

Delise, Karen. *The Pit Bull Placebo: The Media, Myths and Politics of Canine Aggression*. N.p.: Anubis Publishing, 2007. Accessed September 11, 2015.

[http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/tinymce/Pit\\_Bull\\_Placebo\\_download.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Pit_Bull_Placebo_download.pdf).

"Dog Owners Attack Pit Bull Ordinance." *The Gainesville Sun*, July 11, 1989. Accessed October 6, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=eUpWAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=NeoDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=5957%2C3216479>.

DogsBite. Accessed September 11, 2015. <http://www.dogsbite.org/>.

“Drug dealers using pit bulls.” *The Times-News*, August 30, 1992. Accessed October 6, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=03NPAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=zCQEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=5718%2C7638569>.

Harding, Simon. *Unleashed: The phenomena of status dogs and weapon dogs*. Bristol, United Kingdom: Policy Press, 2012.

“Insurance companies refuse clients with aggressive dogs.” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, January 25, 2001. Accessed October 6, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=8YAfAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=a38EAAAAIIBAJ&pg=4492%2C6440904>.

Irizarry, Kristopher. “Breed Specific or Looks Specific.” *National Canine Research Council*, n.d. Accessed September 11, 2015.

[http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/tinymce/Irizarry%20viewpoint.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Irizarry%20viewpoint.pdf).

Jones, Tim. “Pit bulls are today’s top bad dog.” *Bangor Daily News*, October 7, 2005. Accessed September 11, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=CM88AAAAIIBAJ&sjid=Ji4MAAAAIBAJ&pg=1160%2C1969991>.

Karp, J.D., M.S., Adam P. “Down to a Science: Combating Breed Discriminatory Litigation with Frye, Daubert, and Rule 702.” *National Canine Research Council*, n.d. Accessed September 11, 2015.

[http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/tinymce/Adam%20Karp%20Down%20to%20a%20Science.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Adam%20Karp%20Down%20to%20a%20Science.pdf).

McCormack, Patricia. "Boys, 5 to 9, frequently victims of serious dog bite." *Boca Raton News*, July 23, 1974. Accessed September 11, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=O9sPAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=TI0DAAAAIIBAJ&pg=5375%2C2969076>.

McCormack, Patricia. "Dog bite problem causing concern." *The Dispatch*, July 24, 1974.

Accessed September 11, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=6HkcAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=5IEEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=5000%2C2348997>.

Miller, Austin L. "Pit bulls take life." *Ocala.com*, December 13, 2003. Accessed October 6, 2015. <http://www.ocala.com/article/20031213/NEWS/212130308?tc=ar>.

National Canine Research Council. "Denver's Breed Specific Legislation: Brutal, Costly and Ineffective." Accessed September 11, 2015.

[http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/tinymce/Denver%20BSL%20Brutal,%20Costly,%20and%20Ineffective%20%20Aug%202013.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Denver%20BSL%20Brutal,%20Costly,%20and%20Ineffective%20%20Aug%202013.pdf).

National Canine Research Council. "Miami-Dade 'Pit-bull' Ban Remains, Despite Overwhelming Evidence of Failure and County Officials' View." Accessed September

11, 2015. [http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded\\_files/tinymce/Miami-Dade%202012%20Vote\\_final.pdf](http://nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/uploaded_files/tinymce/Miami-Dade%202012%20Vote_final.pdf).

Nelson, Kory A. "Denver's Pit Bull Ordinance: A Review of Its History and Judicial Rulings." *Dogsbite.org*, April 15, 2005. Accessed October 6, 2015.

<http://www.dogsbite.org/pdf/denver-pitbull-ordinance-history-judicial-rulings.pdf>.

Norton, Justin M. "Vicious attacks fail to stop dog lovers from owning pit bulls." *Today's News-Herald*, July 5, 2005. Accessed October 6, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=3cI1AAAAIIBAJ&sjid=zCYMAAAAIBAJ&pg=684%2C5368533>.

“Pit Bull kills 3-year-old Denver Boy.” *The Ledger*, October 28, 1986. Accessed October 6, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=zLxOAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=vfsDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=5639%2C5320446>.

“Report of the Vicious Animal Legislation Task Force.” *Animalfarmfoundation.org*, July 2003. Accessed September 11, 2015.

[http://animalfarmfoundation.org/files/Report\\_of\\_the\\_Vicious\\_Animal\\_Legislation\\_-\\_Prince\\_Georges\\_County\\_-\\_2003.pdf](http://animalfarmfoundation.org/files/Report_of_the_Vicious_Animal_Legislation_-_Prince_Georges_County_-_2003.pdf).

Ryan, David. “Canine Aggression Frequently Asked Questions.” *Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors*, 2010. Accessed September 11, 2015.

<http://www.apbc.org.uk/articles/dog-aggression-FAQs>.

“San Francisco in uproar after fatal dog mauling.” *Southeast Missourian*, February 3, 2001. Accessed October 6, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=H60fAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=ftYEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=1614%2C4626759>.

Semencic, Carl. *The World of Fighting Dogs*. New Jersey: T.F.H. Publications, 1992.

Stop BSL. Accessed September 11, 2015. <http://stopbsl.org/bsloverview/>.

Stratton, Richard F. *The Book of the American Pit Bull Terrier*. New Jersey: T.F.H. Publications, 1981.

Stratton, Richard F. *The Truth of the American Pit Bull Terrier*. New Jersey: T.F.H. Publications, 1991.

Stratton, Richard F. *The World of the American Pit Bull Terrier*. New Jersey: T.F.H. Publications, 1983.

Stratton, Richard F. *This is the American Pit Bull Terrier*. New Jersey: T.F.H. Publications, 1976.

“Stray Dogs Sought After Fatal Mauling of Boys; Experts Discuss German Shepherd Temperament.” *Toledo Blade*, December 19, 1967. Accessed September 11, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=wAhPAAAAIABAJ&sjid=kQEEAAAAIABAJ&pg=7309%2C1379463>.

Swift, E.M. “The Pit Bull Friend and Killer: Is the pit bull a fine animal, as its admirers claim, or is it a vicious dog, unfit for society?” *Sports Illustrated*, July 27, 1987.

<http://www.si.com/vault/1987/07/27/115813/the-pit-bull-friend-and-killer-is-the-pit-bull-a-fine-animal-as-its-admirers-claim-or-is-it-a-vicious-dog-unfit-for-society>.

The REAL Pit Bull. Accessed September 11, 2015. <http://www.realpitbull.com/index.html>.

United Kennel Club. “American Pit Bull Terrier.” Accessed September 11, 2015.

<http://www.ukcdogs.com/Web.nsf/Breeds/Terrier/AmericanPitBullTerrier>.

Waite, Stephanie. “Pit bull debate: Nasty or loving.” *Beaver County Times*, July 21, 1987.

Accessed September 11, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=32AtAAAAIABAJ&sjid=gNoFAAAAABAJ&pg=1224%2C3771085>.

Warnick, Mark S. “Dog attacks kill about 20 each year across U.S., most of them children.” *The Pittsburgh Press*, September 28, 1990. Accessed September 11, 2015.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=UR0hAAAAIABAJ&sjid=82MEAAAAIABAJ&pg=3741%2C7909241>.

