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# Bullfighting: At What Cost should Culture be Preserved?

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**Bullfighting:  
At What Cost Should Culture Be Preserved?**

By

Olivia Larene Read

An Honors Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Graduation from the  
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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## INTRODUCTION

When one hears the word “bullfight” it is nearly impossible not to instantly connect the idea with Spain. Bullfighting has been a large part of the Spanish culture for hundreds of years and continues to play a role in the culture today. However, in more recent years, the bullfight has become a very controversial subject. While many people see it as an integral part of the Spanish culture and wish to see bullfighting continue on into the future, there are many people who oppose bullfighting because of the violent nature of the sport. Each side presents different, often contradictory, evidence for why it should or should not be allowed in hopes of persuading others to join their cause. In my thesis I will be explaining the history of bullfighting, what takes place during a bullfight, and the arguments for each side of the debate.

Though I am not from, nor have I ever been to, Spain, I took an interest in this subject as I was exposed to the topic during the seven years that I took Spanish classes, both in high school and in college. While the sport of bullfighting may not directly affect me or anyone who reads this, the bigger picture behind the argument is something that affects nearly everyone in the world. As we enter a time of globalization, cultural lines have begun to blur as people from different places are able to interact in ways that they never have been before. Languages are dying out and customs are disappearing as people leave the old ways behind for new traditions and norms that span the whole world. Some people worry that if they do not cling tightly to their past that in time it will disappear and be lost forever. But the question arises, are all customs and traditions of a culture worth preserving? The fact is that there are many customs and traditions that have lingered in our society that many people find to be controversial, but they have been allowed to

remain legal because of the argument that the culture must be preserved. An example of this here in the US is the freedom for people to still fly the Confederate flag, even though many people find it offensive. By using bullfighting as an example I hope to help others to be able to really evaluate both sides of an argument and come to a conclusion for themselves as to whether or not using that argument is appropriate.

This information will also be important to anyone who plans on traveling to a country that allows bullfighting; it is important to know exactly what happens to the bull before, during, and after a bullfight and the effects of bullfighting on the people and their environment in order to help them decide whether or not it is an event that they wish to attend. While bullfighting may not affect very many people as it only exists in a few countries, the argument for preserving culture is something that affects nearly every single person in some way.

Bullfighting was banned in Catalonia a little more than a year ago not only because people were concerned about animal rights, but also because the attendance of the bullfights was at an all-time low (*Bullfighting in Barcelona Ends with Catalonia Ban*, 2011). The truth is that over time all cultures change. The current culture here in the United States is nothing like it was when America was first discovered. Perhaps, over time, traditions will be less widely observed and will eventually fade into history, but as they go new ones will take their place.

While I certainly have my own opinion about whether or not I think that bullfighting should be preserved, I did my best to remain impartial and remove my bias from this paper until the end so that I could allow each individual reader to form their own opinion. I did my best to present solid arguments from both sides whenever possible

and not to favor one side's arguments more than the other. This way, I hope to allow you to get all of the facts and come to your own conclusion about whether or not bullfighting is a tradition that ought to be conserved or if it is time for it to come to an end.

## **HISTORY**

In order to understand the arguments behind why bullfighting ought to be preserved or banned, it is important to first look at the origin of bullfighting and also how it continues to exist in the world today to better comprehend the rationales behind the two sides.

As legend goes, during the Crusades, both the Muslims and the Christians would practice by fighting bulls from horseback. Their reasoning for picking bulls to fight was because they were the only animal that would not run away when the men would try to fight them; it was a challenge. However, bullfighting may actually be much older than this. There have been drawings discovered on the walls of caves in Crete from around 2000 BC of men who were acrobats, jumping and somersaulting over the backs of bulls and these bulls were not killed. It is unclear just how old this tradition may be and how it first started but it has certainly been around for a very long time. The first actual documented instance of bullfighting in history is from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and includes documentation of both fighting a bull in the ring and the "running" of the bull through the streets. The first recorded bullfight took place in 1080 at the wedding of infante Sancho de Estrada and doña Uraca Flores. It was not uncommon for bullfighting to be part of the festivities during a wedding at that time.

Bullfighting (or *la corrida de toros* as it is known in Spain) as it is most widely known today, in a ring with a *matador* (bullfighter), became popularized in Andalusia, in southern Spain, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At this point, aristocrats had been involved for centuries in bullfighting from horseback as they were the only ones allowed to participate in the sport. But, its popularity among the aristocrats had begun to decline as the common man became more and more interested in joining in on the sport.

## THE FIGHT

Though many people are aware of the existence of the sport of bullfighting, they may not be aware of what really transpires during the actual bullfight. While there are actually many different types of bullfighting (which can be seen in the chart below), I will only be explaining the two most popular types: the running of the bulls and *la corrida de toros*.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Corrida de toros</i>	Bullfight on foot
<i>Novillada picada</i>	A 3-4 year old calf is fought by a matador and a picador (a bullfighter on horseback that jabs the bull with a lance before the matador actually fights it).
<i>Corrida de toros de rejones</i>	Bullfight on horseback.
<i>Corrida de novillos de rejones</i>	A calf fought on horseback.
<i>Novillada sin picador</i>	A 2-3 year old calf is fought by a matador but there is no picador.
<i>Toreo cómico</i>	Comic calf fight.
<i>Festival</i>	Bull fought for charity benefit.
<i>Recortadores</i>	Dodge female calves.
<i>Tientas</i>	Tests on ranches.
<i>Encierros</i>	The running of the bull through the streets to the ring.
<i>Capeas</i>	Cape work involving male bulls and calves.
<i>Vaquillas</i>	Female calves are let loose into the ring.

<i>Suelta de reses</i>	Bulls are let loose into the streets.
<i>Toro de fuego</i>	Fireworks are attached to bull's horns and set alight.
<i>Misc.</i>	Other not included above.

The running of the bulls consists of letting a bull loose to run through the streets, often on its way to the ring to be fought in *la corrida de toros*. The young men in the town then chase or are chased by the bull. This form of bull fighting is very popular in Pamplona where every year, during the nine-day festival of San Fermín, there is a running of the bulls and it is seen as a great tradition.

*La corrida de toros*, where bulls are fought in the ring, are more complicated. The rules for the bullfight are governed by national rules from the Ministry of the Interior. The *matadors* fight the bulls either on foot or on horseback, depending on the type of bullfight. Though it became legal for women to participate in bullfights in 1976, men are still most commonly the matadors. During the fight each matador will end up killing two bulls. The fight itself is comprised of three parts and takes about 20 minutes total. The matador is in charge of a group of men who will help him kill the bull.

Before the fight starts, a ceremonial parade takes place where ring officials, the three matadors, and their assistants walk about the ring. During the first part of *la corrida de toros*, the bull enters the ring and men on horseback, called *picadors*, pierce the bull in the neck with lances in order to weaken the bull and cause it to lower its head in order to make it easier for the matador to kill. In the second part of the fight, two men on foot will enter the ring and stab the bull in the neck with one short barbed spear each in order to further weaken the bull.



In the third and final portion of *la corrida de toros*, the matador will tire the bull by “passing” the bull. This is the probably the part of the bullfight that most people are familiar with. After “passing” the bull, the matador will use a sword to stab the bull in the “*cruce*” (which can be translated to “cross, crossroads, or junction”) where it is meant to hit the aorta and instantly kill the bull.

### **THE MATADOR**

In order to become a professional bullfighter a person must go through many, many years of practicing and training, working hard to move up in the ranks of the *novillero* (bullfighting of bulls less than four years old). Women are now also allowed to be matadors as well but only one has attained the rank of “*toreira*” and it took her 20 years in order to do so.

During the fight the matador wears a *traje de luces*, a “suit of light” which is a silk suit that is embroidered with either silver or gold thread. He is the leader of a group of men who are either on foot or on horseback and who will help him to kill the bull.



A *matador* is expected to be graceful, skillful, intelligent, and courageous. The *matador* must never show fear and is expected to stand his ground, no matter what the bull is doing. He ought to never run away from the bull or fall over. He must always be the dominate one in the ring and should never be dominated by the bull. If the matador is killed during the fight he is guaranteed to instantly become a hero.

## **THE BULL**

In order to make it into the ring, the bull must fit certain qualifications that have been dictated by the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry of Interior is the in charge of policing, national security, immigration, prisons, and road traffic safety and is the executive branch of the Spanish government. The bull must either be between four and five years old or weigh about 1,000 lbs (470 kg).



It is required that the bull is both physically a virgin and also that it has never before entered into a bullring and been fought during its lifetime. Before the fight begins the bull's horns are inspected to make sure that they are intact and have not been cut, filed, or shaved. If either the people in charge of the fight or the public deems that the bull's horns are not dangerous enough, they will reject the bull and a new bull will be brought in to the ring. A bull can also be rejected if they do not meet the crowd's expectations in appearance. A bull that is rejected this way is deemed "*defectuoso*". This can be because of any sort of thing dealing with appearance including horns that do not appear to be dangerous enough. It is all up to the crowd whether or not they deem the bull worthy of the fight.

## **TO BAN OR NOT TO BAN, THAT IS THE QUESTION**

### *Concerning the Economy*

When the economy crashed in 2007, Spain was hit especially hard. The middle class shrank dramatically and unemployment rates skyrocketed. In a time like this, when jobs are already scarce and morale is low, it is important to consider the different economic aspects of bullfighting and take into account how its removal may or may not

affect the economy as a whole. In his article titled "World News: Bullfighting in Spain is Stumbling", David Roman explains why bullfighting is a very important factor to the economy of Spain (Roman 2013). "Bullfighting is a 2.5 billion euros (\$3.3 billion US dollar) industry, employing more than 10,000 people across Spain, including matadors and assistants, managers, breeders, bullring workers and promoters." It would appear, by looking at the statistics that David Roman presents, that if bullfighting were banned it would only add to the difficult times that Spain is already facing. Those who believe that bullfighting should not be banned could argue that getting rid of such a large piece of the economy when it is already facing hard times would be unwise, even if you don't agree with other pieces of bullfighting, this would be something you would have to consider.

However, on the other side of the argument, a very different opinion on how bullfighting affects the economy of Spain can be seen. A website titled "Bullfighting-Free Europe" that is dedicated to completely banning bullfighting in all of Europe claims that bullfighting does not actually employ as many people as one might expect and that the number of full time jobs it provides per year does not even reach 400 ("Bullfighting-Free Europe"). It also goes on to say that bullfighting actually hurts the economy by pointing out that the government in Spain heavily subsidizes the sport of bullfighting. "It has been estimated that over 530 million euros (\$685,608,000 US dollars) of taxpayers' money is destined to the pro-bullfighting industry per year in Spain." The people and organizations that receive this funding include "bullfighting schools, bullfighting fan clubs, breeding and slaughtering of bullfighting bulls, purchase of bulls for popular fiestas, promotion and marketing schemes for bullfighting, payments by public television for the broadcasting rights of bullfights, pro-bullfighting museums and many more"

(“Bullfighting-Free Europe”). In the eyes of those who oppose bullfighting, this tax money could be better used for healthcare, education, and other social programs that can help to improve the wellbeing of the Spanish people, especially during their current hard times. Also according to the website, the money that is gained from the bullfights is not evenly distributed among the people who participated and instead ends up in the hands of a select few rich people. The two sides in this argument present completely different facts as to how the economy is being affected by bullfighting. Those who support it claiming it is a very large and important positive contribution to the economy, while those who oppose it claim that the economy would actually be better if bullfighting were banned.

#### *Concerning Attendance*

Those who oppose bullfighting also point out that bullfighting has recently seen a decline in the number of people attending the fights, saying that this shows a lack of support for the sport. What used to be an extremely popular sport is now hurting for attendance because people are no longer interested in watching bullfights. 50% of the Spanish people supported bullfighting in 1980 but by 2006 the number in support had dropped to a mere 10% (Beilin 2012: 65). Also, bullfighting can only be televised during certain hours and no one under the age of 14 is allowed into the bullring to watch the fights. When one takes a look at independent polls on a person’s opinion about bullfighting from the general population, these polls show that the vast majority of Spanish people and also people from other European countries have no interest at all in bullfighting. This shows that with each passing year, there are less and less people who support bullfighting and the people who do are becoming a minority.

During the time that Francisco Franco was dictator of Spain from 1939 until his death in 1975, bullfighting was incredibly popular because of his intense passion for the sport. Once Franco died and Spain became a democracy, people felt freedom to express their opinions about their dislike of bullfighting and their wish for it to be banned. When Franco was in charge they were not able to do this. Since his death, the support of bullfighting has declined all over Spain.

Those who support the conservation of bullfighting state that there are other reasons for the decline in attendance that have nothing to do with a lack of support. John McCormick, in his work titled “In Defense Of Poesie And Bullfighting,” points out that the sport of bullfighting has experienced inflation. The amount of money that has to be paid for each bull and the amount of money paid to the *matadors* has increased dramatically and he claims, “The ordinary spectator of the past, the working class and the poor, who were among the most faithful and knowledgeable of *aficionados*, cannot afford the new ticket price” (McCormick 1992: 112). So, from his point of view, it is not simply a lack of support, but a lack of funds that has caused there to be a decrease in the number of people attending the bullfights. This is further explained by the recent hard economic times that Spain has been experiencing. In her article titled “A Bloody Business”, Jacqueline Nelson explains that, “Across Spain, the number of regional bullfights and runs has dropped as local governments tighten their purses to help counter the decreased tax revenue caused by a staggering 20% unemployment rate” (Nelson 2010). So while perhaps there is less support for the sport than there was in the past, those who support bullfighting argue that this is not the only factor that is contributing to the lower attendance rates. Perhaps if prices were lowered, those who enjoy bullfighting would be

able to attend and help to contribute to the economy by increasing the circulation of money with their spending.

### *Concerning Tourism*

Tourism, which is a section of the economy that pertains to bullfighting, is also a subject that is brought up during debates. On the one hand, those who support bullfighting claim that, “Attending a bullfight out of curiosity and never wanting to return is a common phenomenon amongst tourists” (“Bullfighting-Free Europe”). It is postulated that tourists don’t go to Spain just to see a bullfight and in fact many tourists don’t attend them at all. However, those that do may attend because they feel that if they do not that they are missing out on an important part of the Spanish experience:

“[B]ullrings are largely sustained by tourists who visit out of curiosity and a misguided belief that if they fail to visit this unique part of Spanish culture, their visit to Spain will not be complete. The vast majority of tourists are appalled by what happens at a bullfight and leave after they see what happens to the first bull” (“Bullfight: The Facts”).

Banning bullfighting then, if this is truly the case, would not have a negative impact on the tourism industry or on the economy of Spain in general since no tourists go to Spain just to spectate a bullfight.

However, on the other side of the debate it is argued that a lack of tourists coming to see the bullfights is having a negative impact on the economy in Spain and that it will only be worse if bullfighting is banned. “Thanks to Spain's economic troubles and the resultant cutbacks, tourism has suffered too. Hotels that used to take reservations months in advance now not only have vacancies, but are offering discounts. Bars and restaurants have seen thinner crowds, and many Pamplona residents say a lack of tourists has been noticeable” (McCormick 1992: 111). To people who support the continuation of

bullfighting another argument in favor of keeping it is that tourists do not understand bullfighting for what it is: an art form. Those who count it as an art form do so because of the way that the matadors seem to be dancing with death. The smooth and agile moves they use to avoid the deadly horns of the bull tells a story about animal and man, life and death. "... [T]oreo is not the savage mess that many tourists pronounce it to be, but an art form requiring study, taste, observation, and a measure of dedication and patience, like any other art, before its essence and aesthetic quality emerge" (McCormick 1992: 112). So, supporters would state that just because these tourists do not understand the real meaning behind why the bulls are fought, it does not mean that Spain should lose this important piece of their culture. This argument brings me to the next point that is extremely controversial in the bullfighting debate: is bullfighting an art form or isn't it?

### *Concerning Artistic Merit*

According to Bullfighting-Free Europe, those who support the continuation of bullfighting say that, 'Bullfighting is an art of universal character, represented by painters, musicians, sculptors and writers: Goya, Sorolla, Picasso, Orson Welles, Góngora, Quevedo, Benavente, Lorca, Machado, Alberti, Vargas Llosa, Hemingway and Ortega and Gasset. It is "The World's most cultural *'fiesta'*.'" To the supporters, bullfighting is not simply a man going out in a ring and killing a bull, but instead it symbolizes the relationship between man and beast, and also the relationship between life and death. Many artists have thought this to be true about bullfighting and therefore have created great works that try to capture this idea in words or pictures. But perhaps

McCormick does the best job in explaining exactly how it is that bullfighting can be considered an art form when he says,

“To the confirmed *aficionado*, at its rare best *torero* combines the *torero*’s training, experience, intuition, control, craft, imagination, and spontaneity. It does not depend upon mere agility or athletic ability, but it demands immediate recognition of the possibility of each *toro* and almost instant devising of a plan for dispatching the animal with grace and authority, according to the canons of the art and craft. For these and many other reasons, *torero* as an art form is unique in that the *torero* cannot make errors without grievous risk; he cannot paint over a bad stroke or rewrite a paragraph. *Torero* is not a pure art but a mixed one; it is an art of performance, like ballet, and, like opera and theater, it demands the complicity of many and varied people for success” (McCormick 1992: 111).



To understand this better, it would make more sense to look at bullfighting not as a sport, but more of a ballet where the *matador* follows a set of choreographed steps over and over. He is then judged by the public through their applause as to the quality and precision of his “dance”. To *aficionados*, bullfighting is not a sport, but an art: there are

no points to be won or goals to be scored. When bullfights are reported upon in Spain, you will not find them written up in the sports page. Instead, they can be found in the cultural pages of the newspapers which further supports this idea of bullfighting being an art form.

It is the job of the *matador* to emotionally move the audience with his performance. Some feel this at a deep level known as *duende* which translates into English roughly as having soul or a heightened state of emotion. *Duende* is often used to describe *flamenco* dancing as well. It may also move the audience at a purely superficial level because of the “thrill” element of bullfighting. Because bullfighting is meant to move the audience who watches it, some may say that it could be compared to the opera or a ballet, both of which put on a show to emotionally touch the people who are viewing the performance (Fiske-Harrison 2011).

Bullfighting is not just a crowd of people showing up to watch the death of a bull because of their thirst for bloody entertainment. In fact, if you go to Seville, the ring is completely silent until a moment of beauty appears which most often occurs in the last part of the fight where the *matador* stabs the bull with his sword. Those who support it see bullfighting as a metaphor of life and death and man’s struggle with the two. “[B]ullfighting is the only art form that both represents something and *is* that thing at the same time: the matador’s elegant immobility in the face of the bull not only represents man’s defiance of death, it *is* a man defying death” (Fiske-Harrison 2011).

Part of the issue with bullfighting is that the English word for this performance “bullfight” is misleading. *La corrida de toros* translates as “the running of the bulls” and

not as a fight at all. While the bull is fought and killed, there is never any question whether or not the bull will die: that is the ultimate outcome of each fight.

The argument that those who wish to ban bullfighting bring up is that the cruel and violent killing of an animal cannot be considered an art form. To them, the brutal death of an innocent animal is just that and nothing more. Just because great works of art and literature have been produced about bullfighting does not make it an art itself. There are a great many paintings and stories about war, which has been around for thousands of years, but that does not make it art.

### *Concerning the Cultural Implications*

Esperanza Aguirre, head of the conservative regional government in Madrid has said, “[Bullfighting] is an art-form that deserves to be protected and that has been part of Mediterranean and Spanish culture since time immemorial” (Tremlett 2010). Because bullfighting has been such a large part of the Spanish culture for hundreds of years, some people see it not just as an art form, but a part of the Spanish identity and because of this they wish to protect it.

Recently, in 2010, the bullfight became a protected art form in Madrid. By doing this the bullfight has become as important to protect as the historic buildings and monuments in Madrid. Organizers of the fights receive special tax breaks from the government. It is also possible that anyone who tries to interfere with bullfighting could end up getting into legal trouble and having to go to court “for ‘damaging’ the region's cultural patrimony” (Tremlett 2010). The retired bullfighting legend José Miguel Arroyo, "Joselito", stated that, “It was about time. People need to wake up and defend those

things that mark our identity" (Tremlett 2010). Carrie B. Douglass, author of "'Toro muerto, vaca es': An Interpretation of the Spanish Bullfight" explains that bullfighting is not just part of the overall culture of Spain, but it also represents the personality of the individual Spaniard. "The bullfighter embodies the Spaniard: '*Senquismo*, or Spanish stoicism; passion; the emphasis on the affirmation of the person; and the intelligence inherent in the artistic performance of the *torero*'" (Douglass 1984: 242). If this is true, taking away bullfighting would, in essence, be like taking away a part of Spain and a piece of the Spanish people themselves. To people who support bullfighting and fight to keep it from being banned, this is an important part of their identity that they wish to keep intact. Bullfighting has been around for hundreds of years and it brings together like minded people who may not have much else in common other than their heritage and their love of *la corrida de toros*.

McCormick eloquently sums up exactly why bullfighting is such an impactful portion of the culture of the Spanish people "... *toreo* is more than a casual diversion of a benighted people. It has figured significantly in the history of the Catholic Church in Spain, in civil and criminal law, in the divisions of society by class, in the language, in all the arts, and for better or worse, in the politics, manners, and mores of generations" (McCormick 1992: 110).

Another point in support of bullfighting is that with the economy so low, it brings down the spirits of the inhabitants of the country. Bullfighting, in a way, symbolizes man's struggle with the world and his misfortune. The *matador* then, becomes a symbol of the Spaniard who can overcome adversity and rises to the status of a hero that is strictly Spanish. Attending bullfights is a way for the downtrodden to lift their spirits as

they immerse themselves in an activity that is completely Spain and marvel at the skill and fortune of a hero who can represent themselves and their country.

However, there are those that disagree that the bullfight needs to be protected as a part of the culture and think that as we are entering into this new era of modern society that it is something that needs to be left behind. Many who support bullfighting use the argument that it is necessary to preserve bullfighting in order to preserve the Spanish culture itself, "... but this argument is also used to defend female circumcision (genital mutilation). It could also have been used to defend witch-burning, bear-baiting and a multitude of other evils, 'Culture' is not a magic word, and simply labeling something as such doesn't make it right and above criticism" ("Bullfight: The Facts"). In the eyes of those who oppose bullfighting, it isn't that they think that culture is not something that needs to be preserved, but that not *all* culture needs to be preserved. There are many things that have happened in the past that were considered a part of our culture that are better left in the past. Slavery here in the United States would be a good example of this. It was once completely normal and acceptable for one human being to own another human being and treat them as property, just because of the color of their skin. This was a cultural norm in the past, but we can see now that this was inhumane and it is something that most people are glad we have abolished. As time moves forward, cultures change, and this is how it has always been. It is up to us to look at these customs and traditions and decide whether or not they have a place in our modern society. Those who oppose it think that it has no place, but those who support it believe that it is still an important part of what Spain is.

### *Concerning Treatment of the Bulls*

Perhaps one of the most hotly debated pieces of bullfighting is the treatment of the bulls themselves. Bullfighting is the act of a man killing a bull for sport while people watch in the stands. If you ask someone who supports bullfighting, there are likely to tell you that there is nothing wrong with how the bulls are treated in the ring for two reasons. The first reason is that the bulls which are used in the fights are bred with the specific purpose of eventually fighting in the ring. “To the charge of cruelty, many Spaniards answer that the *toro* is bred to die a glorious death in the plaza” (McCormick 1992: 111). According to supporters these bulls are bred to be much more aggressive than the average bull and they state that these bulls want to fight. If bullfighting were banned these “special” bulls would die out and eventually cease to exist. Secondly, and both sides agree with this argument, bulls that are bred specifically for bullfights actually live a much better life than those that are bred specifically for their meat. They live very happy lives up until the point that they enter the ring. It could also be argued that these bulls are actually treated much better than animals that are bred specifically for consumption. They are given a large area to roam around in instead of being kept in small cages like many of the animals here in the US that are bred just for food. In some places, these animals that are bred specifically for consumption are treated horribly, such as baby chicks having their beaks clipped, and are not given quick, painless deaths. These bulls are given healthy meals and the animals we breed for consumption are fed all sorts of awful chemicals and hormones. Is it really fair to point fingers at a culture that condones bullfighting if we ourselves legally allow companies to mistreat animals simply because they are bred for the purpose of eating?

Alexander Fiske-Harrison points out that *matador* Cayetano Rivera Ordóñez said to him “that if the bull were not killed in the bullfight, it would only be killed afterwards by someone else, ‘who has risked nothing, knows nothing, and feels nothing for him’” (Fiske-Harrison 2011). Since the bull is killed as a part of a ceremony and the bullfighter makes a connection with the bull, it is better than it being slaughtered by someone with complete indifference toward the animal. And once the bull is killed, it is not wasted. All bulls that are killed enter the food chain.

However, if you were to ask someone who opposes bullfighting about how these bulls are treated, you would hear a completely different story. If we think back to what it is that transpires during a bullfight, this is where the arguments for the ill-treatment of the bull during a bullfight come in. First of all, those who oppose bullfighting do so because of how long it takes for the bull to die. It is not a quick or painless process and can take upwards of fifteen minutes for the bull to finally die. The death of the bull is not instant and it suffers for a while before it finally dies. “The anti-bullfight veterinarian José Zaldívar told the committee that claims that the bulls felt little pain when a *matador* sank a sword into its neck to kill it were wrong. In the great majority of cases, he said, the *matador* missed the vital spot that would cause the bull to die quickly. ‘These provoke internal bleeding,’ he said. ‘It is a slow, agonizing death – as the high acidity of their blood proves’” (Tremlett 2010). Even if the bull survives the fifteen minutes of the fight, they are not allowed to live. The bull, by law, is required to be taken out of the ring and killed. The reason they do not allow the bull to live is because if it were allowed to enter the ring again it would most likely kill the *matador*. Once the bull has fought the *matador* it learns the tricks that the *matador* has used and is very likely to be able to beat the

*matador*. In some places, if the bull is not killed after the fight, young amateur bullfighters will fight these bulls that have already been in the ring and it is incredibly dangerous and sometimes fatal. Another argument is that there are many people who strongly believe in animal rights and think that animals deserve the same rights to life that humans do. These people oppose bullfighting because of the slow and painful death that the bulls endure. If the animal is to be killed, it's death should be quick and painless instead of the suffering the bull in a bullfight must endure.



Also, it is said that the bull is placed at a disadvantage before the fight to ensure that the *matador* will emerge the victor. The bulls have newspaper stuffed in their ears to stifle their ability to hear, cotton balls in their nostrils, Vaseline in their eyes to greatly weaken their ability to see the *matador*, and they are kept in very tiny cages. Some people say that if the bull is to fight, it should at least have a fighting chance. But this is obviously done to reduce the risk to the *matador* in hopes that the bull, and not he, is the one who is killed in the ring.

### *Concerning the Environment*

Supporters of bullfight argue that because many of the bulls that are bred specifically for fighting are raised in semi-preserved areas of land called *dehesas*, that their existence contributes to the preservation of Spain's endangered animals and their natural habitats. Several protected species including the lynx and the imperial eagle call these *dehesas* their home. The bullfighting industry claims that these areas and protected species will disappear if bullfighting is abolished. They state that their industry and its businesses makes a valuable and irreplaceable contribution by preventing the *dehesas* from being developed, thereby destroying the homes of these endangered animals.

Arguments from the other side disagree that the *dehesas* are actually that important. They claim that if bullfighting were to be banned, these lands would still be preserved and the animals that live there would not lose their homes. They do not have to be the homes to bulls that are being raised to be fought for these animals to be protected in these areas.

### *Concerning the Ban in Catalonia*

In 2012 bullfighting was officially banned in Catalonia in Spain. Many animal rights activists were excited because this ban meant that there would be no more bullfighting in this area and therefore no more bulls being tortured. "Local government officials banned the bloody sport after increasing pressure from animal rights activists, who say bullfighting is cruel and inhumane" ("Banning the Bull" 2011: 2). But there are others that think that the only reason that Catalonia banned bullfighting was to distinguish themselves from the rest of Spain. It is no secret that the people of Catalonia

in Spain wish to have their own independence. With their own government, own language, and own culture, the people of Catalonia would prefer to have the power to make their own decisions, and by banning bullfighting they are trying to distance themselves from Spain as much as they possibly can. "I hold nothing against the Spanish and their bullfights but may they do in Spain what pertains to their country. In Catalonia we want to be civilized Europeans" (Brandes 2009: 789). It should also be noted that although the type of bullfighting in a ring, the form that everyone thinks of when they hear bullfighting, was banned, that was the only type that is now illegal. There are still other forms of bullfighting that are legal. For example, bull dodging, where the bulls are not actually killed and *bou embolat*, (also called *toro de fuego*) where lit flares are attached to the horns of the bulls, are not banned. This raises the question as to why *la corrida de toros* was banned in Catalonia, if other forms of bullfighting are still allowed. If animal cruelty was the main focus for the ban, shouldn't all forms of bullfighting have been banned?

But of course, not all of the people agreed that bullfighting should be banned in Barcelona. "For a city like Barcelona to close this arena is like throwing a Picasso painting into the garbage," a man named Cristobal, one of the fans at the Monumental, was quoted as saying by the AFP news agency when asked about his opinion on Barcelona's banning of bullfighting. But more and more places seem to be coming to the conclusion that bullfighting does not belong in this modern era.

## THE SO WHAT?

So now, the question becomes, what does bullfighting have to do with me? I don't live in Spain or any other country that allows bullfighting. If you ever plan to visit Spain or watch a bullfight, I believe it is important to have knowledge about bullfighting in order to make a more informed decision about whether or not you want to participate. As stated above, many people who visit Spain go to the bullfights because they feel like it is an essential part of their visit to Spain but they don't actually know what happens at a bullfight before they attend.

But, you say, I probably won't ever go to Spain, and I will certainly never watch a bullfight. The bigger picture here is not just that there is a controversy over whether or not bullfighting should be preserved, but rather, what parts of culture in general should be preserved. This becomes a very sensitive subject. First of all, many cultures are dying out, or at least changing drastically, because of globalization and it is important to many people to try to keep their cultural traditions around as long as possible in order to preserve the rich diversity of human life here on Earth. Languages die every day and people worry that the vast variety of cultural traditions will disappear and we will lose a part of humanity that makes it so wonderful: our differences. Secondly, it can be very difficult to decide what is worth keeping because cultural norms differ all around the world. What is deemed as appropriate behavior here may be something that is frowned upon in other cultures or vice versa. Just because something is described as being an important part of a person's culture does not mean that it should blindly be allowed to continue if this tradition goes against basic human rights or is damaging in other ways. Each tradition must be looked at on a case by case basis in order to determine the validity

of keeping it and the best way to determine this is to gather evidence from both sides in order to make an informed decision.

### MY OPINION

After looking at all of the arguments from both sides, I have come to the conclusion that I do not think that bullfighting should be allowed to continue. While I now have a better idea of why bullfighting is so important to the Spanish culture and the people of Spain and I can see how they might consider it an art form to be preserved, I just do not see the brutal killing of an animal as a spectator sport to be something that belongs in this modern world. While it is important to preserve traditions in order to conserve cultures, I do not believe that all traditions need to be protected.

### CONCLUSION

The following chart presents a summary of the arguments from both sides of this controversial issue. Hopefully this will allow one to make their own, informed decision on whether or not they believe that bullfighting is a tradition that needs to be preserved, or if it is time for this part of the Spanish culture to be put to rest.

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>
The Economy	The industry of bullfighting is worth \$3.3 million and employs more than 10,000 people.	Bullfighting is heavily subsidized by the government and this money should be used for other, more beneficial programs.

Attendance	Less people attend because bullfighting has experienced inflation and the people who love bullfighting can no longer attend the fights. There have been less fights because the government cannot contribute as much to bullfighting with a 20% unemployment rate being a bigger concern.	Only 10% of Spaniards support bullfighting. Polls have shown that the majority of people have no interest in bullfighting. Attendance has dropped drastically.
Tourism	With bullfighting being banned in certain cities, it has affected the economy. Hotels have more vacancies and restaurants are seeing less customers.	Many people attend bullfights because they think if they do not, they are missing out on a piece of the experience. These people never come back and are often horrified by what happens during the fights.
Artistic Merit	Bullfighting is not a sport, but an art. It can be looked at as a sort of a dance where the <i>matador</i> goes through a set of choreographed moves. This dance represents life and death and man versus beast. There are also numerous works of art with bullfighting as the subject.	Something that involves the brutal and inhuman killing of an animal cannot possibly be considered an art.
Cultural Implications	In 2010 bullfighting became a protected art form in Madrid. Bullfighting has been around for a very long time and is almost synonymous with the Spanish culture.	While it is important to preserve culture, there are certain traditions that need to be left behind in this modern era. Just because something is a part of culture doesn't mean it needs to be preserved i.e. slavery.
Treatment of the Bulls	The bulls are raised specifically to be fought in bullfights. These bulls live a much better life than animals that are raised for food.	The bulls are put at a disadvantage before the fight begins and they do not stand a chance. The bulls hardly ever die instantly and go through a lot of pain and suffering during the fight.

Environmental Impact	The <i>dehesas</i> , which is where the bulls are raised for fighting, are protected areas of land that are home to other endangered animals that live in the area. Getting rid of bullfighting means these lands would end up being developed and these animals would lose their homes.	Even if these <i>dehesas</i> disappear, the land will still be protected and these endangered animals will not lose their habitats.
Ban in Catalonia	Catalonia only banned bullfighting because they want to be their own independent country and are trying to separate themselves from Spain. This is shown by the fact that other types of bullfighting, such as <i>bou embolat</i> where lit flares are fastened to the horns of bulls.	Catalonia banned bullfighting because they did not believe that it was something that belonged in this modern era and they do not believe in allowing animal abuse to continue.

“Whether or not the artistic quality of the bullfight outweighs the moral question of the animals’ suffering is something that each person must decide for themselves – as they must decide whether the taste of a steak justifies the death of a cow. But if we ignore the possibility that one does outweigh the other, we fall foul of the charge of self-deceit and incoherence in our dealings with animals.” – Alexander Fiske-Harrison

There is no middle ground in the argument on whether or not to keep bullfighting as a part of the Spanish culture in this modern day; either a person is passionately for it or against it. Each side presents compelling, often contradictory, arguments in order to try to persuade others of the importance of their cause. Some see it as something that is indistinguishable from the Spanish culture itself, while others see it as nothing more than a bloody sport that has no place in our world today. It is a very controversial subject and will continue to remain one as more parts of Spain deliberate on whether or not to ban this sport. Perhaps in the future bullfighting will only be a distant memory and the mere mention of the word will no longer bring up the strong connection to Spain as it does

now, or perhaps it will be as big a part of the culture as it ever has been. Only time will tell.

**GLOSSARY**

*aficionado* – a person who is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about a particular subject

*la corrida de toros* – bullfight

*bou embolat* – also called *toro de fuego*, a type of bullfighting where lit flares are attached to the horns of the bull

*cruce* - cross, crossroads, or junction

*defectuoso* – defective

*dehesas* - semi-preserved areas of land where bulls are raised for fighting

*duende* - having soul or a heightened state of emotion

*fiesta* – party; event

*flamenco* – a form of Spanish folk music and dance from the region of Andalusia in southern Spain

*matador* – bullfighter

*novillero* - bullfighting of bulls less than four years old

*picadors* – bullfighters on horseback

*Senequismo* - Spanish stoicism

*torera* – professional female bullfighter

*traje de luces* – the suit that a bullfighter wears; “translates to suit of light”

*toreo* – bullfight

*toro* - bull

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