

Montini: Protesters aim to be 'thorn in the side' of dolphin prison near Scottsdale

EJ MONTINI ([//WWW.AZCENTRAL.COM/VIEWPOINTS/EJMONTINI/](http://WWW.AZCENTRAL.COM/VIEWPOINTS/EJMONTINI/))

EJ Montini (<http://www.azcentral.com/staff/2880/ej-montini/>), The Republic | [azcentral.com](http://www.azcentral.com)

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Dolphins in the ocean. Where they belong. (Photo: TheDolphinProject.com)

It's a poetic sounding name for a prison, but Dolphinaris is nothing but a [water-filled concrete-walled gulag](http://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/ej-montini/2016/05/06/montini-dolphinaris-ventura-entertainment-salt-river-reservation/84026648/) for aquatic mammals second only to us in brain power.

And most likely superior to us in compassion.

Among local humans, however, are those who are willing to fight for the imprisoned and enslaved dolphins who will be forced to cavort in their desert puddles with patrons willing to fork over from around \$50 to \$175 each to interact with them.

That grassroots protest group is called [Dolphin Free AZ](http://dolphinfreeaz.com/).

The facility they object to – that we all should object to – is adjacent to the OdySea Aquarium and Butterfly Wonderland in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community at Via de Ventura and Loop 101.

Shame on the tribe for going along with this atrocity.



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[Montini: Yes, you CAN do something about disgusting dolphin prison near Scottsdale](http://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/ej-montini/2016/06/29/montini-dolphinaris-national-aquarium-salt-river-pima-dolphins/86501460/)

[\(http://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/ej-montini/2016/06/29/montini-dolphinaris-national-aquarium-salt-river-pima-dolphins/86501460/\)](http://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/ej-montini/2016/06/29/montini-dolphinaris-national-aquarium-salt-river-pima-dolphins/86501460/)

You can join this protest

The Mexico-based company behind the operation [says on its website \(http://www.dolphinaris-arizona.com/\)](http://www.dolphinaris-arizona.com/): "The mission of Dolphinaris Arizona is to amaze, inspire, and empower guests, encouraging them to become stewards of the oceans and its inhabitants. We hope to deepen respect for dolphins and our natural world, and encourage visitors to take actions, large and small, that can make a difference."

A group of people opposed to that notion hope to make their own kind of difference.

Dolphin Free AZ says it will stage its third protest near the facility on Saturday, July 30, from 7 to 9 p.m. at 92nd Street and Shea Boulevard. The group expects about 100 protesters. They believe the whole idea of Dolphinaris is "cruel and unnecessary."

It's true.



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Controversy: Will tourists soon swim with captive dolphins near Scottsdale?

[\(http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/scottsdale/2016/04/19/controversy-tourists-soon-swim-captive-dolphins-near-scottsdale/83242376/\)](http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/scottsdale/2016/04/19/controversy-tourists-soon-swim-captive-dolphins-near-scottsdale/83242376/)

'Dolphins do not thrive in concrete'

A while back biologist Dr. Maddalena Bearzi, the president of the Ocean Conservation Society in Los Angeles, [told a KJZZ radio reporter, \(http://kjzz.org/content/306695/dolphins-desert-process-bringing-dolphins-arizona-complicated-controversial\)](http://kjzz.org/content/306695/dolphins-desert-process-bringing-dolphins-arizona-complicated-controversial) "Dolphins do not thrive in concrete environments. They suffer from respiratory problems, they suffer from skin conditions that are a byproduct of stress, there are injuries to the dolphins that participate in interactive programs."

The report noted that according to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* a relatively young bottlenose dolphin died of unknown causes last November at the Mirage Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, also a dolphin prison, and that it was the 15th death at the exhibit since it opened in 1990.

Others worry about the danger of valley fever to dolphins kept in an unnatural habitat like the desert.

Protesters vow not to go away

Lisa Arnseth of Dolphin Free AZ told me, "We're all in this fight together and we hope that, with the media's help, we can tarnish the image of this terrible business and perhaps force the owners to realize that it's not too late to change their minds... they could still decide not to bring dolphins to the desert. They could find another entertainment use for the pools and tanks they're building. The bad publicity and protests will only increase once Dolphinaris opens. We're dedicated to fighting this with every resource possible, and we vow to be a very noisy thorn in Dolphinaris' side."

It's a tall task. The owners of the prison have money, which gives them time. I'd guess they figure to simply wait for citizen opposition to die down. To fade. To disappear.

Should the protesters hope to succeed the irritation caused by their thorny activity will have to spread from Dolphinaris' side to its owners' wallet.

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