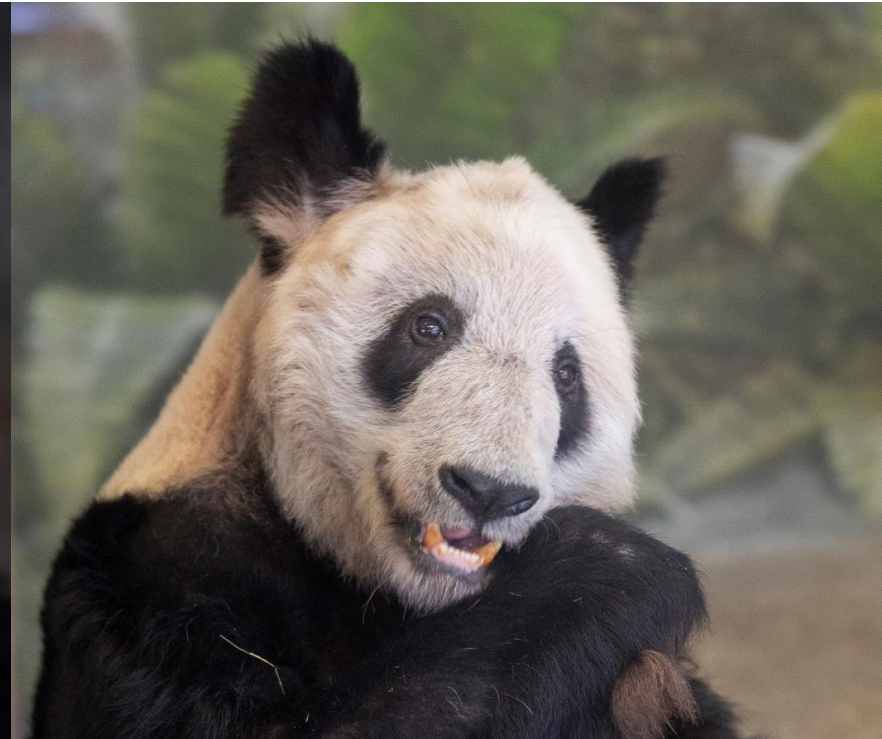


PANDAS IN ZOOS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES



By Panda Voices



WHO WE ARE

- Panda Voices was created in early 2021 by an international group of panda fans from Asia, Europe & The Americas, brought together by concerns over **giant pandas YaYa and LeLe at the Memphis Zoo** in the US.
- We are dedicated to advocating and monitoring **the welfare of captive giant pandas** worldwide.

**Everyone loves pandas, but
does this mean that every
city or country should keep
pandas in their zoos?**

GENERAL INFO ABOUT GIANT PANDAS:

- The giant pandas have survived on Earth for more than **8 million years**.
- They live in the temperate forests high in the mountains of **southwest China**, between elevations of about 1,200-3,400 meters, in the provinces of **Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu**.



PANDAS ARE NATIVE TO CHINA!

Current Habitat



GENERAL INFO ABOUT GIANT PANDAS:

- China's total wild population of giant pandas has grown from about 1,100 in the 1980s to nearly **1,900 in 2024**.
- The **global captive giant panda** population has reached **728**.
- There are still many factors affecting the survival and growth of giant panda population, like habitat fragmentation, lack of genetics exchanges and global climate change affecting the growth of bamboo forests.



WHY PANDAS SHOULD STAY IN CHINA?

- China is the native land for pandas and has the best environment for them.
- Plenty of fresh bamboo and bamboo shoots.
- The best panda experts, experienced keepers and high specialized panda vets are in China.



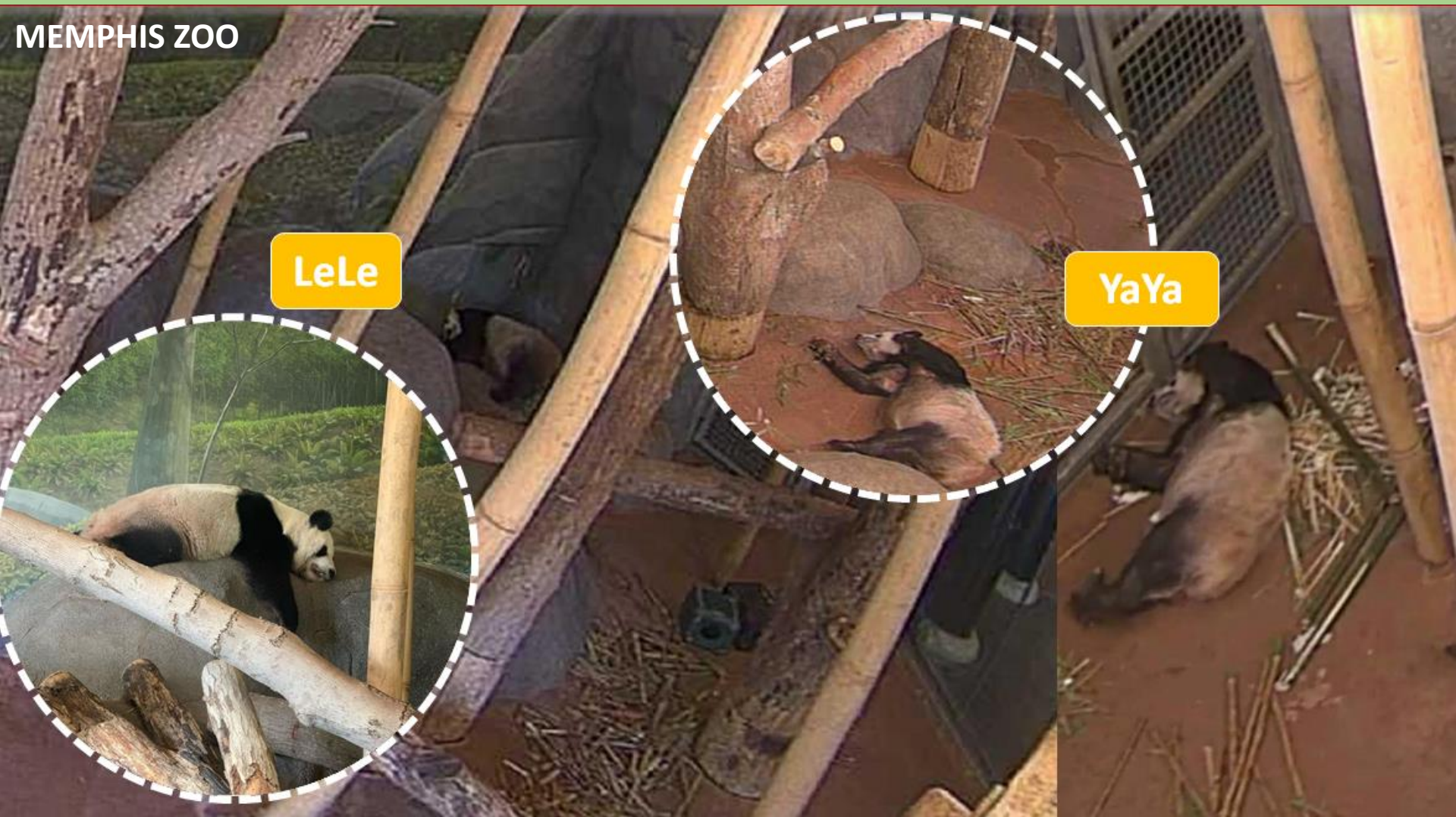
WHY PANDAS SHOULD STAY IN CHINA?

Reason 1

- **Outside China, meeting pandas' dietary needs is extremely costly and difficult.**
- **Bamboo makes up 99 percent of a panda's diet, and its edibility and palatability depend on species, age, growing conditions, and season.**
- **Pandas are highly selective eaters, and bamboo cultivated abroad often lacks the nutritional value and taste they prefer.**

Unless a zoo is willing to regularly import bamboo from China—an expensive and logistically complex undertaking—it will struggle to provide the right types of bamboo consistently.

When pandas are denied their preferred bamboo, it leads to serious consequences: malnutrition, stress, illness, and a decline in mental and physical health.



WHY PANDAS SHOULD STAY IN CHINA?

Reason 2

- And it is important to note—diet is only one part of the bigger picture.
- Another critical factor is the **lack of experienced panda experts and veterinarians outside of China.**

Why Expertise Matters: YaYa's Story

YaYa's parasite infection was reportedly deemed untreatable by her keepers in Memphis. However, after returning to China, she fully recovered under the care of experienced professionals with better nutrition and medical support.



YaYa in Memphis, April 2023



YaYa in Beijing, China, October 2023

WHY PANDAS SHOULD STAY IN CHINA?

Reason 3

-Public awareness and cultural understanding also play a crucial role in safeguarding panda welfare.

-In China, the bond between people and pandas runs deep. **Many citizens possess a basic understanding of panda behavior and health, and they actively observe and report signs of distress**—such as fur loss or repetitive, abnormal movements. **This widespread public vigilance often helps catch problems early and ensures timely care.**

-In contrast, such signs are frequently misunderstood or overlooked in overseas settings, **where public awareness is limited**. Behaviors that signal stress or illness are often mistaken as playful or amusing. **This lack of understanding delays intervention and, in some cases, has resulted in prolonged suffering—and even preventable deaths.**

WHY PANDAS SHOULD STAY IN CHINA?

Reason 4

- **Another major concern is space.** In many overseas zoos, pandas are housed in limited enclosures with minimal outdoor access.

Memphis Zoo

TWO PANDAS



ONE YARD

To truly thrive, giant pandas need far more than any type of bamboo or enclosure. They require:

- 1) **A consistent and abundant supply of fresh bamboo and bamboo shoots** tailored to their dietary preferences.
- 2) **Skilled caretakers** with deep expertise in panda health, nutrition, and behavior.
- 3) **A naturalistic environment** that closely resembles their native habitat, including:
 - **Spacious indoor and outdoor areas** with varied terrain, climbing structures, trees, water features, and shelters.
 - **Adequate distance from public** viewing areas to minimize stress and preserve their well-being.

PANDA DIPLOMACY:

- The practice of the Chinese government to **loan giant pandas to other countries as a symbol of friendship and goodwill** to strengthen diplomatic relations and to promote China's image abroad.
- It dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), but became particularly prominent in the **20th and 21st centuries**.
- The **promotion of wildlife conservation and international** research is also one of the reasons used to support the panda diplomacy.
- There are dozens of pandas acting like ambassadors worldwide in countries like: **the U.S, France, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Denmark Netherlands, Australia, Japan, Indonesia, Russia, South Korea, Singapore and Qatar.**

EXAMPLE OF PANDA SUFFERING: YAYA AND LELE AT THE MEMPHIS ZOO

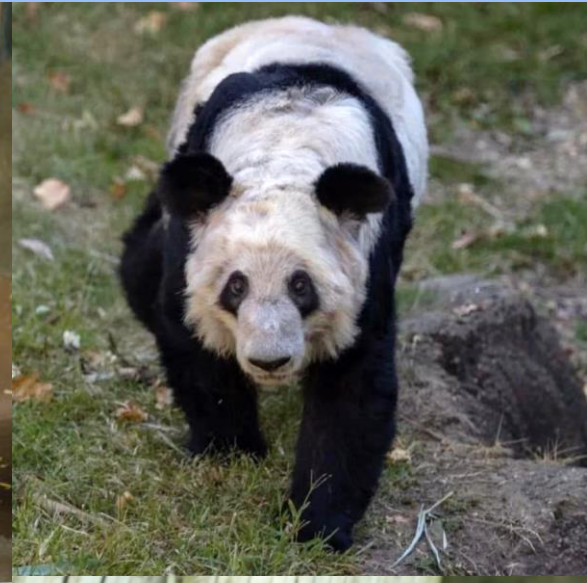
- Both pandas were underweight and skinny.
- Both pandas displayed strong signs of stereotypical behavior.
- Low-quality bamboo and lack of variety of nutritional snacks.
- YaYa had serious skin problems, including parasites.
- LeLe had dental issues including broken molars.
- Small, dirty enclosures and lack of enrichment.

Consequences of Bamboo Shortage and Poor Diet

Lele's Malnutrition, Stereotypical Behavior, and Health Decline at the Memphis Zoo



YAYA AT THE MEMPHIS ZOO



Consequences of Bamboo Shortage and Poor Diet

YaYa's Malnutrition, Stress, and Illness at Memphis Zoo





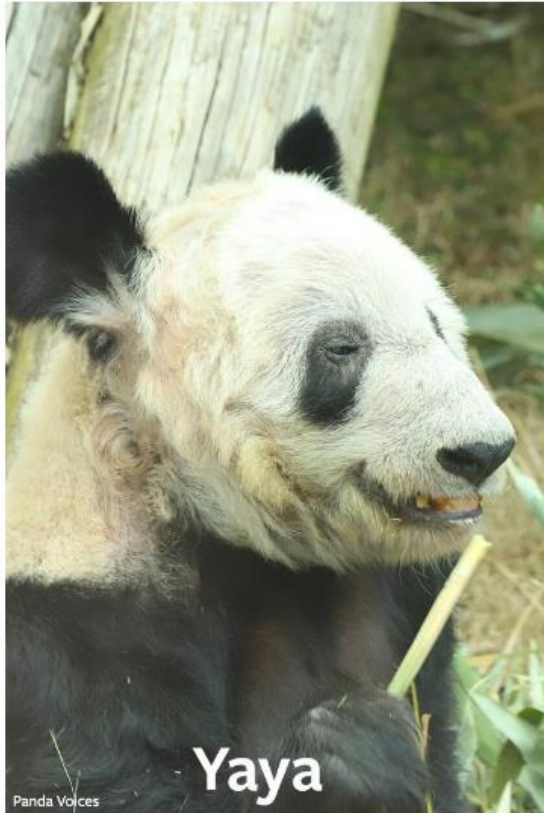
When Love Becomes Harm: The Hidden Cost of Panda Exhibits



MEMPHIS ZOO X CHINA



PARTNERSHIP WITH IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS:



This alert was signed by 88,299 people and has now been delivered to the target. Please take the following actions for animals who still urgently need your help:

TAKE ACTION

Memphis Zoo: Return Suffering Pandas YaYa and LeLe to China Before It's Too Late

PARTNERSHIP WITH IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS:



[DONATE TO PEACE 4 ANIMALS](#)

[BREAKING NEWS](#) [TRENDING](#) [CATEGORIES](#)



BREAKING NEWS

Billie Eilish Joins Campaign To Help Save Suffering Pandas YaYa & LeLe At Memphis Zoo

February 7, 2022

By Karen Lapizco

VIRAL NEWS

Billie Eilish Joins Cause To Save Memphis Zoo Abused Pandas



Published 8 hours ago on February 8, 2022

By Caitlin White



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The Commercial Appeal

Billie Eilish joins animal advocacy organization in calling for the return of Memphis pandas



Micaela A Watts, Memphis Commercial Appeal

Tue, February 8, 2022, 2:20 PM · 1 min read



Le Le the 22-year-old Giant Panda plays the Kansas City Chiefs to win the Super Bowl over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from the Memphis Zoo on Friday, Feb. 5, 2021.

Pop megastar Billie Eilish has joined an international animal welfare organization in calling for the return of [Memphis Zoo](#) giant pandas Le Le and Ya Ya to their native country of China.

In Defense of Animals announced Eilish's panda advocacy in a Tweet on Tuesday. Eilish's official Twitter account retweeted the announcement.

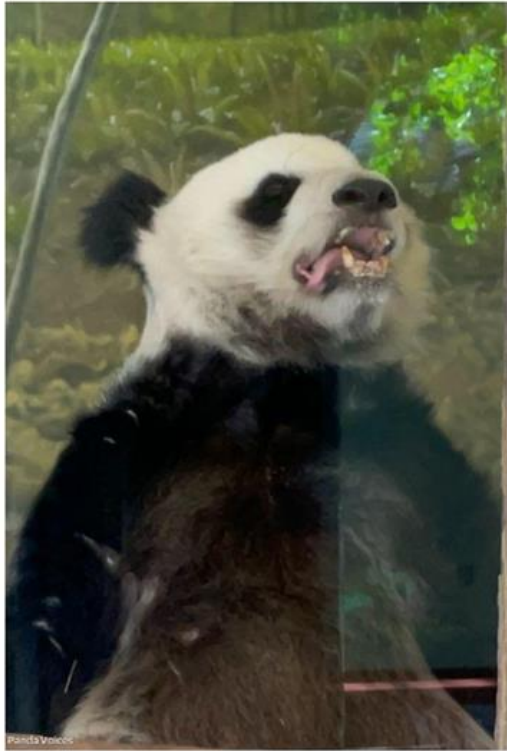


In Defense Of Animals
@IDALSA



#AnimalAbuse! We are working with @PandaVoicesOrg to free 2 pandas suffering devastating mental & physical diseases. Urge @MemphisZoo to return YaYa & LeLe to China for qualified veterinary care, quality bamboo & a more suitable environment!

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RETURN OF YAYA AND LELE TO CHINA



MEDIA RELEASE: Memphis Zoo's Suffering Giant Pandas to Return Home to China

THE ANIMAL READER DAILY ANIMAL NEWS



HOME NEWS ANIMAL NEWS ▾ VIDEO ABOUT ▾

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Giant pandas YaYa and LeLe to return to China in 2023

By The Animal Reader - December 22, 2022

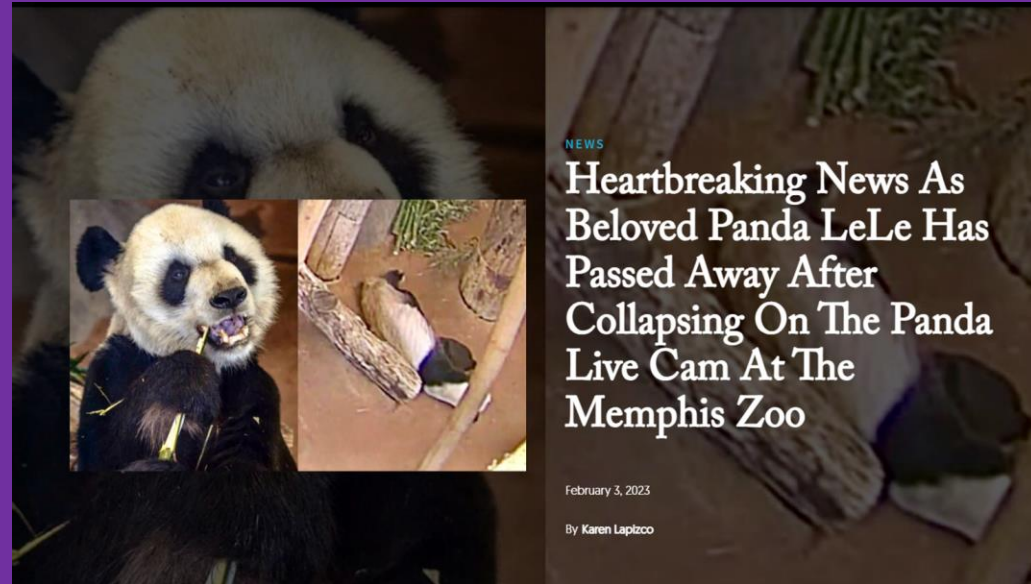


Giant panda YaYa at Memphis Zoo in Memphis, Tennessee, U.S., October 18, 2020, credit: Reuters/Karen Pulfer Focht

Giant pandas YaYa and LeLe will soon return to their homeland of China, according to a statement on Wednesday from the Memphis Zoo in Tennessee.

When Love Becomes Harm: The Hidden Cost of Panda Exhibits

LELE PASSED AWAY TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE RETURN



MEDIA RELEASE: Giant Panda Collapse at Memphis Zoo Prompts Calls for Immediate Action & Permanent End to Panda Exhibit



12:26 PM, January 31, 2023
The last day of LeLe's life

LeLe's dangerous health symptoms were elaborated as "LeLe's silly behavior to make people laugh" by Memphis Zoo CEO and Chief Zoological officer



False

It's a style that LeLe would lay down
It's a style that Lele would lay down. clideo.com

He was simply lying down
He was simply lying down. In that video, and unfortunately, taken out of context, you can, you can twist those types of things, but it was a very small part of what makes Lele who he was. clideo.com

It was really nothing of any concern
He was moving feet. It was really nothing of any concern. clideo.com
@PandaVoices

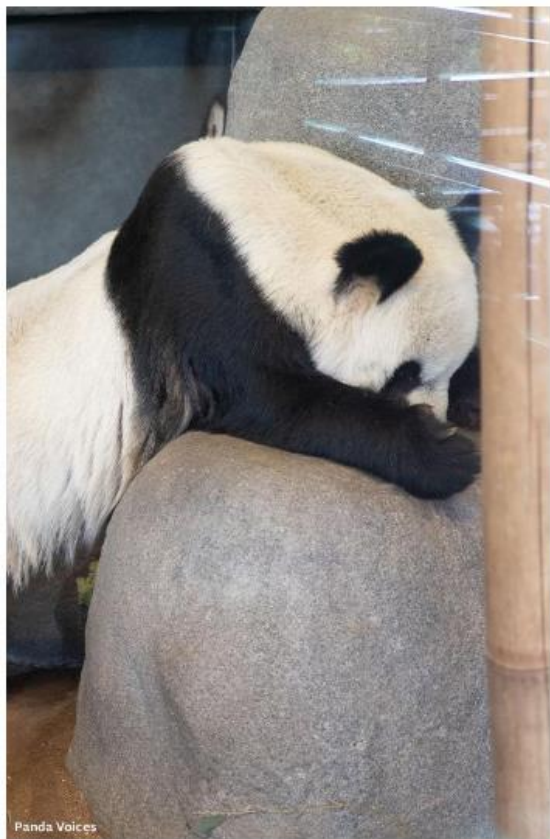
False

I elaborate to that. LeLe was known for his silly antics
I elaborate to that. Lele was known for his silly antics, and he was always, you know, his somersaulting in the yard. clideo.com

He was making people laugh
And just many things that that that he did, he was always making people people laugh. clideo.com

He acts dramatically. But it was his style, and it was what he did
And that was one of the things he would occasionally do was just flop up, flop over on

IN DEFENSE OF ANIMAL'S RECORD-BREAKING ALERT



This alert was signed by 149,168 people and has now been delivered to the target. Please take the following actions for animals who still urgently need your help:

[DONATE](#)

**Justice for LeLe; Save YaYa!
Memphis Zoo Must Acknowledge
Its Crimes Against Giant Pandas**

YAYA RETURNS TO CHINA



Yaya in Memphis



Yaya in Beijing



For pandas, bamboo is not just food—it is everything.

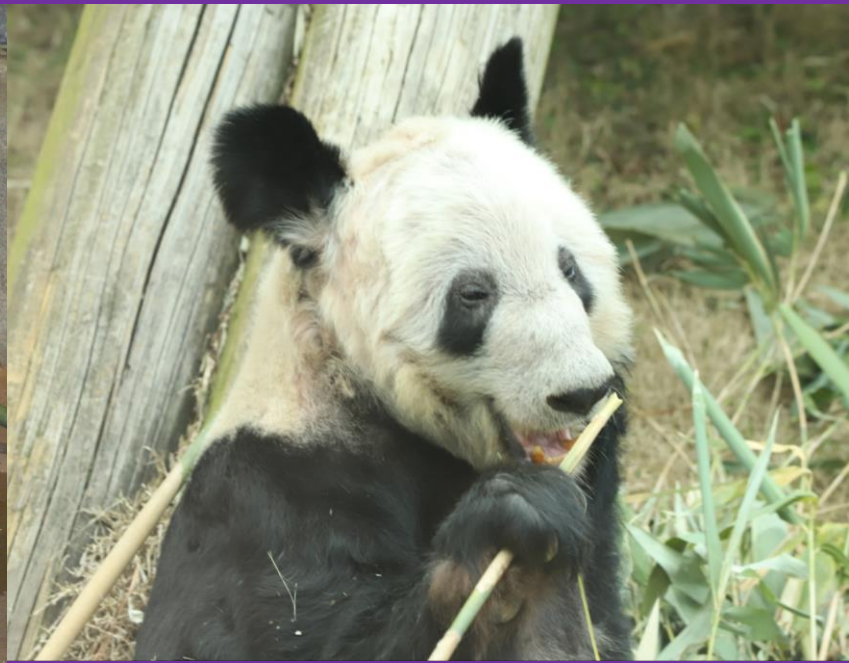


It sustains their physical health, supports their digestion, and contributes significantly to their mental well-being. Without the right bamboo, pandas cannot thrive.



YAYA IN CHINA

**YAYA IN
MEMPHIS**



**YAYA IN
CHINA**



THE ISSUES ABOUT THE PANDA DIPLOMACY

- Pandas need to travel long distances by plane inside a cage suffering unnecessary stress.
- Local staff are frequently unable to treat health issues, and the support of the Chinese panda team is needed.
- Political aspects have an impact on the program.
- Breeding animals in international zoos does not contribute with the conservation of the species and artificial insemination brings harmful consequences to them.
- There is no transparency related to the use of the money paid by zoos worldwide.

COUNTRIES THAT FACED ISSUES

Ethical Choices Make a Difference!

Canada zoo to return pandas to China because bamboo too hard to get during pandemic

The best and safest place for Er Shun and Da Mao during these unprecedented times is where bamboo is abundant and easy to access, Calgary Zoo says.



Zoo Calgary, Edinburgh Zoo, and Ähtäri Zoo in Finland demonstrated responsibility and compassion. When they recognized they could not consistently meet the high standards required for proper panda care, they made the ethical decision to return the pandas to China—before their health and well-being were compromised.

The best way to protect these animals is not to relocate them for display, but to leave them where they belong, within their native habitat and cared for by experts who understand their needs.

SFZ'S PROPOSED PANDA PLAN

- The proposed panda enclosure recently unveiled by the San Francisco Zoo does not meet these essential standards.** The design appears small, outdated, and centered on visitor convenience rather than the welfare of the pandas. It lacks the complexity and natural elements required to support the physical and psychological needs of such a sensitive species.
- Moreover, providing proper care for pandas is both costly and labor-intensive. Without the necessary commitment of resources, cost-cutting becomes inevitable.** This directly compromises animal welfare, leading to malnutrition, fur loss, skin problems, repetitive stress behaviors, and serious health issues.
- We believe this suffering, and the financial burden that comes with it, can and should be avoided.**

Is the San Francisco Zoo really ready to host such sensitive and costly animals like giant pandas, without sacrificing the animals that currently live there?

THANK YOU!



contact@pandavoices.org

