



# *Anti-Speciesism & Dietary Decolonization*



**A Short Introduction to Veganism**

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***“The same ideology that supports speciesism is present in ideologies that encourage and justify sexism and racism...As a black woman who is vegan, I am particularly sensitive to the ways in which forms of exploitation are intertwined... So rather than being concerned with animal liberation or women’s liberation or black and other people of color’s liberation, I think we need to understand how they are all tied together and to know that we can’t free one group if we allow the same kinds of oppressive ideologies to enslave another group. Liberation has to come for all.” - Nekeisha Alexis-Baker***

This pamphlet aims to introduce veganism from an anti-capitalist and anti-colonial point of view. Understanding the underlying economic and hierarchical structures facilitating both human and non-human animal oppression is paramount to advocating both human and non-human animal freedom. It is significant in promoting collective, rather than mere consumerist solutions to non-human animal abuse and discrimination. From an anti-speciesist perspective, this pamphlet will attempt to deconstruct the human/animal dichotomy by outlining global domestication as a shared form of enslavement to the same oppressor/master ideological domination.

## **What is Veganism?**

Veganism is the rejection of the commodification and use of non-human animals. Vegans do not consume non-human animal products (flesh, secretions, bee vomit etc), wear non-human animal fur, or use them in entertainment or research.

## **What is Speciesism?**

Speciesism is the practice of treating members of one species as morally superior to other. Speciesism is analogous to racism, sexism, and other forms of irrational discrimination and prejudice. Speciesism is an ideology that makes discrimination against the members of other species seem normal and natural. From educational and social experiences, the human animal has learned to see human characteristics and abilities as the ideal standard against which all others are measured. Embedded in the culture and thinking of the human animal is the idea that it is natural and inevitable to discriminate against other animals.

Contrary to speciesist belief, the value of non-human animals does not depend on how similar they are to humans any more than the value of women is dependent on how similar they are to men, or how the value of people of color is dependent on how similar they are to white people. Social forces including social status and competition work to suppress the natural empathy people feel and make the oppression of others seem normal, natural, and sometimes even beneficial for the oppressed. Prejudice (an individual attitude) and discrimination (such as mistreatment) are outgrowths of oppressive ideologies psychologically constructed in a socially hierarchical environment. Prejudice and discrimination perpetuate systemic domination by normalizing an inferiority complex placed upon marginalized groups.

Polyculture requires more labor but has many advantages over monoculture. The diversity of crops avoids the susceptibility of monocultures to disease. The larger variety of crops provides habitat for more species, increasing the local biodiversity. This is one example of reconciliation ecology, or accommodating biodiversity. In a vegan polyculture garden that resembles a natural system, plants keep the soil fertile. Not only do plants take carbon from the air, but some plants “fix” nitrogen from the air. Certain plants bring nutrients to the surface with the help of deep taproots. When the leaves, branches and roots of these plants naturally decompose with the help of microorganisms in the soil food web, the nutrients are then available to other plants as a form of nourishment. Non-human animals are not used for food or manure in vegan polyculture gardens. Non-human animals voluntarily enter as free pollinators, biological managers, and consumers.

These are just a few of many revolutionary forms of food production and distribution. Everyday people are developing new and inspiring ways of taking responsibility and providing healthy food for themselves and/or their community. Supporting local non-GMO produce co-ops and organic harvest markets is also a common way to promote a healthy vegan way of eating. Decolonizing one's diet begins with respecting the life and freedom of non-human animals. It requires a revolutionary understanding of how dietary practices affect not only the consumer but all beings in the web of life. Decolonizing one's diet also means liberating their body from processed industrial foods and chemicals found in nonhuman animal foods. Returning to nature means consuming natural healthy foods that the human body naturally needs.

## **Conclusion**

To radically understand the violence against non-human animals it is important to acknowledge the origins of violence of civilization, riddled with inequalities of power and privilege. As the human animal is raised in a class-stratified, hierarchical society which enables the “dominate or be dominated” mindset, respect is hardly extended to the non-human animal who is advertised as food or commodity. Speciesism as a discriminatory force plays a key role is disconnecting the human animal from the natural world. A natural world being colonized by skyscrapers, highways, and concrete walls. These mechanisms of global domination manifest from the conditioned human delusion of anthropocentrism. In the process of decolonizing one's mind and body, equal respect and consideration for the lives and freedom of non-human animals must replace the speciesist mentality which normalizes their oppression.

Embracing a vegan lifestyle not only detoxifies the body but revolutionizes the human animal interaction with non-human animals. It challenges the societal norm of species discrimination while highlighting the dietary colonization of the human body. For biodiversity to thrive, all inhabitants of the natural world must be free to live and evolve. Domination has created an epidemic of hierarchical co-dependency. Civilization normalizes the enslavement of all sentient beings to one-sided exploitation within the economic prison of capitalism. In recognition that all oppression is conceptually interconnected, non-human, human animal, and ecological liberation can only be achieved simultaneously through challenging the logic of this domination. Only when challenged together can sexism, racism, classism, nationalism, speciesism and all other forms of oppression be overcome.

The concentration of power in the hands of a few chemical companies like Monsanto and the industrial producers has resulted in a global food system dominated by speciesism, industrially produced “junk” foods, and regular food shortages with drastic price hikes. This results in millions of people with obesity, diet-related diseases, and a lack of knowing where their food is coming from. The food industry and contemporary dietary habits play an active role in cultivating discriminatory behaviors that erode the interconnected relationship between all animals-human and non-human, and the earth.

Decolonizing one's diet is a lived experience and practice which rejects the colonial dietary intake. It is social resistance in the face of societal norms cultivated by civilization, capitalism, and imperialist domination. There are many different ways decolonization is happening today. As the current economic crisis and brutality by the global police state have sharpened the exposure of systemic oppression, more people have begun taking dietary direct action.

### ~Community gardens~

Community gardens are usually constructed in abandoned or unused parking lots and other neglected spaces. These are built by a community of determined people who are passionate about providing free healthy food for the community. Community gardens provide fresh produce and plants as well as a sense of harmony and connection with the environment. Many community gardens have been created to promote a healthy vegan diet in direct action against local fast food franchises and other markets that attempt to sell non-human animal products. Community gardens are examples of mutual-aid, empowerment, and sustainable health for a community of people. They create a combination of individual and collective power which helps build resistance against the capitalist food industry.

### ~Guerilla gardening~

In addition to community gardens, there is Guerilla gardening which is more an individual act of gardening on controversial, neglected, abandoned, or privately owned plots of land,. Vegan anti-capitalist/anti-colonialist individuals seek to provoke change by using Guerrilla Gardening as a form of direct action against the consumption of non-human animals, and against the idea of private property and land ownership. Many individuals tend the gardens in secrecy at night while some do so by day for publicity as part of their activism.

### ~Polyculture~

Some vegan anti-capitalists/anti-colonialists construct a polyculture way of growing food. Polyculture is growing multiple crops in the same space, in imitation of the diversity of natural ecosystems, and avoiding large stands of single crops or, monoculture. It includes multi-cropping, inter-cropping, companion planting, beneficial weeds, and alley cropping

### ~Sentience~

Speciesism is often cultivated by the belief that non-human animals are incapable of experiencing pain. However non-human animals are not only conscious and capable of experiencing pain but like human animals, experience a wide spectrum of emotions as well. The most basic way of experiencing the world is through feeling or sensation. Sentience is the ability to have perceptions and sensations. The basis of non-human animal liberation is the recognition that they are sentient beings capable of being aware, feeling pain, suffering, and experiencing a state of well being.

Like human animals, non-human animals are aware of their surroundings, communicate with one another through emotions and can maintain complex social relationships in their groups. Some non-human animals can enjoy learning a new skill or react to other non-human animals in ways resembling human empathy. Non-human animals can experience the unpleasant emotions of pain, frustration, and fear. They can be reduced to a state resembling human depression by chronic stress. These emotions are noted when nonhuman animals are taken away from family members, hooked up to machines, and confined in cages.

Speciesism and the notion that non-human animals are products rather than sentient beings leads to the atrocities which have been normalized by human culture, tradition, and domination. Like colonization human domination manifests itself in the destruction of natural habitats belonging to non-human animals who are subjugated into chattel slavery. Speciesism exists as an unspoken routine in the consumerist civilization of capitalism and systematic domination. Factory farming, entertainment, clothing and “pet” ownership are just a few forms of industrialized speciesism. Cultural and traditional speciesism upholds the psychological norm of non-human animal abuse in a human dominated civilization.

Speciesism and the refusal or ignorance in recognizing the sentience of non-human animals has facilitated some of the most horrific suffering any being who perceives pain could endure.

### **Torture, Murder & Commodity status**

Speciesism normalized in society opens up avenues for industrial forms of slavery, torture, and murder. In addition to the social abuse and discrimination non-human animals face in the speciesist society, the factory farm industry mass produces non-human animals who are then subjected to decapitation, being scaled alive, suffocation, rape and many other forms of torture. The capitalist market mass produces global atrocity in the form of death and destruction in pursuit of profit and domination. When non-human animals are reduced to the commodity status, their right to freedom and equal treatment are no longer recognized. By becoming merely food and products in the market their suffering becomes lost in an ocean of public deception and capital gain. Three of the most commonly demanded “flesh” foods are derived from Birds, Pigs, and Cows.

Baby chicks are taken away from their mothers at birth. The male chicks are killed by being ground up alive or suffocated in plastic bags. Their flesh or “meat” has no value in the industry since they are too small and only females are used for breeding. Chickens are deprived of the chance at living life free from human domination. In the industry they will not get a chance to feel the sun on their backs, breathe fresh air, roost in trees, or build nests.

Chickens raised for their flesh, called “broilers” by the chicken industry, spend their entire lives in filthy sheds with tens of thousands of other birds, where intense crowding and confinement lead to outbreaks of disease. Chicken or Turkeys are bred and drugged to grow so large so quickly that their legs and organs can’t keep up, making heart attacks, organ failure, and crippling leg deformities common. Many become crippled under their own weight and eventually die. When they are only 6 or 7 weeks old, they are crammed into cages and trucked to slaughter.

Birds exploited for their eggs, called “laying hens” by the industry, are crammed together in wire cages where stretching and wing expansion is virtually impossible. Because the hens are crammed so closely together, these normally clean non-human animals are forced to urinate and defecate on one another. The birds have part of their sensitive beaks cut off. The unnatural confinement creates frustration which causes the birds to peck each other. After their bodies are exhausted and their production drops, they are shipped to slaughter.

### ~Pigs~

One of the most commonly heard examples of speciesism is the reference to police as “Pigs”. While the exact origins are unknown, this reference gained popularity during the 1968 National Democratic Convention in Chicago. In an effort to show their disrespect for the political process members of the Youth International Party (also called yippies) carried a small pig around as a candidate for president to mock the political atmosphere. As the police began to disperse the crowds and arrest some of the members, someone shouted, "We're running a pig for president. But you guys are the real pigs." Soon everyone started chanting "Pigs! Pigs!". Since then the reference to police as “Pigs” has become normalized in the language of everyone who rejects them. Contrary to the uniformed agents of violent state repression, pigs suffer the violent consequences of being a non-human animal in a system of capitalism and speciesism. Rather than deploying acts of violent repression upon others, pigs are on the receiving end of violent abuse, rape, and murder.

Pigs spend their entire lives in cramped, filthy warehouses under the constant stress of intense confinement and are denied everything that is natural and important to them. Mother pigs (sows) spend most of their miserable lives in tiny gestation crates that are too small for them to turn around in. They are impregnated over and over again until their bodies give out and are then sent to slaughter.

Piglets are torn from their distraught mothers after just a few weeks. Their tails are cut off, the ends of their teeth are snipped off with pliers, and the males are castrated. No painkillers are given to ease their suffering. The pigs then spend their entire lives in tight crowded pens on tiny slabs of filthy concrete.

The globalization of the agrifood system can be generally defined as the integration of the production and processing of agriculture and food items across national borders, through markets, standardizations, regulations, and technologies. Monsanto Company is an American multinational chemical, and agricultural biotechnology corporation which produces genetically engineered (GE) seeds, and herbicide glyphosate, which is marketed under the Roundup brand. The industrialized food system is responsible for more than half of greenhouse gas emissions, making Big Ag one of Big Oil's biggest customers.

### ~Monoculture~

Monoculture describes the commonly used method of crop cultivation. This form of production refers to the single-crop production method in which all other existing or potential crops are excluded to maximize profitability of a selected crop. The destruction of this method of producing food is noted by its lack of diversity which causes atrophy to soil fertility, land, ecosystems, and consumption practices of both humans and non-human animals. This form of energy-intensive industrial farming relies on toxic chemicals which undermines the health of human and non-human animals, and the the environment. Clearing land to grow GMO crops for non-human animal feed is the biggest driver of forest and wetland destruction. In Argentina and Brazil, Monsanto's genetically engineered soy is the main cause of deforestation. When primitive forests which shelter a biodiversity found nowhere else on the planet are destroyed, it is nothing less than ecological tragedy for the non-human animals living there. Industrial agriculture's heavy reliance on pesticides and fertilizers is responsible for the release of many dangerous toxins into the environment. Synthetic nitrogen fertilizer for example is responsible for the nitrate poisoning of the drinking water supply. Synthetic nitrogen fertilizer is the major cause of the 405 oceanic dead zones around the world (including the Gulf of Mexico, the Chesapeake Bay, and the coasts of California and Oregon). Monsanto's genetically engineered corn uses more fertilizer than any other crop.

### ~Poverty Trends during Globalization~

Globalized industrial agriculture and GMO crops poses a problem that affects people of different ages, genders, and ethnic origins, in different regions, and in city slums and rural areas. Poverty takes shape as a global epidemic. An estimated 125,000 farmers have taken their own lives as a result of the ruthless drive to use India as a testing ground for genetically modified crops. For many Indian farmers who now must grow Monsanto's genetically engineered Bt cotton, suicide is their only means of escaping the debt they've accrued to obtain the seeds and pesticides.

Monsanto makes food and farming more expensive, while depleting the nutrition and variety of food available to the average consumer. The result is that people are eating a lot more of these genetically engineered crops, mostly in the form of nonhuman animal products, oils & fats, and sugars. The most commonly known genetically engineered ingredients are high-fructose corn syrup and hydrogenated vegetable oils.

## RESISTANCE

consumed by enslaved people. Given the lack of education for the majority of enslaved people, it comes as no surprise that this term would eventually be called “chittlins”. Low quality food was given to enslaved Africans since the source of sustenance for the oppressed was the after thought of the oppressor.

Due to institutionalized segregation, dietary change amongst newly freed Africans was minimal. With limited access to the resources of southern whites, southern people of African descent made do with the foods they were accustomed to prior to their liberation. As they were aware of this and other persistent inequalities, soul food retained its comforting significance within everyday survival.

The stress of not being able to make ends meet in addition to sedentary work increases the health risk put on by soul food consumption. The availability of healthy food options is severely limited where poverty is concentrated.

Today people of African descent are being devastated by the consumption of non-human animals. Saturated fats, “dairy”, and undigested flesh proteins pave a way for poor health and diseases. Adults of African descent have the highest rates of obesity and a higher prevalence of diabetes than caucasians, and are twice as likely to die of stroke before age 75 than other population groups. Besides tradition and habit, poverty and neighborhoods without good fresh fruit and vegetable inclusive supermarkets also contribute to an unhealthy diet. Low-income communities of color tend to have an abundance of fast food and highly processed foods that are high in calories and fats.

People of color living in low income areas experience the blunt force of poor nutrition, health issues, and diseases. The abundance of non-human animal food in these areas not only paints a picture of nutricide but also a paradox hidden within dietary culture and tradition; those who are experiencing the oppression of the white supremacist post-colonial system are oppressing those who are experiencing the oppression of an anthropocentric society. In a capitalist and hierarchal system, oppression becomes a conditioned, integral element present in the interaction between human animals and their encounters with the natural world. Veganism is one of many steps which aim to re-examine communication and interactions with non-human animals. It calls into question the discriminatory actions against non-human animals and its relationship to the discrimination of marginalized human animals.

Discrimination upholds hierarchies of privilege and power. The human/animal dichotomy merely exists to serve the interests of an anthropocentric civilization. The domestication of the human animal paved the way for discrimination towards non-human animals who remain wild and feral. The concept of being “civilized” carried a sense of privilege which ultimately led to the enslavement of human and non-human animals perceived to be wild, barbaric, or uncivilized. Today “civilized” remains a standard in which the value of life is measured by. This standard plays a key role in disconnecting humans from their animal identity and has created “human and/or animal” rather than “human animal and non-human animal”. From an anti-civilization point of view, animal liberation includes both non-human and human animals.

## **The Globalization of the Agrifood System**

When the time comes for slaughter, pigs are forced onto transport trucks that travel for many miles through all weather extremes. Many die of heat exhaustion in the summer or arrive frozen to the inside of the truck in the winter. According to industry reports, more than 1 million pigs die in transport each year, and an additional 420,000 are crippled by the time they arrive at the slaughterhouse.

### **~Cows~**

When cows are still very young, many are burned with hot irons (branded), their horns are cut or burned off, and male cattle have their testicles ripped out of their scrotums (castrated). Once they have grown big enough, they are sent to massive, filthy feedlots where they are exposed to the elements, to be fattened for slaughter. Many female cows are sent to dairy farms, where they will be repeatedly impregnated and separated from their calves until their bodies give out and they are sent to be killed.

Like all human and non-human animals, cows form strong maternal bonds with their calves, and on dairy farms and cattle ranches, mother cows can be heard frantically crying out for their calves for several days after they have been separated.

Cows are curious, clever animals who have been known to go to extraordinary lengths to escape from slaughterhouses. These very social animals prefer to spend their time together, and they form complex relationships, very much like dogs form packs.

Cows are transported hundreds of miles in all weather extremes, typically without food or water, to the slaughterhouse. Many cows die on the way to slaughter, but those who survive are shot in the head with a captive-bolt gun, hung up by one leg, and taken onto the killing floor where their throats are cut and they are skinned and gutted. Some cows remain fully conscious throughout the entire process.

Pigs, Birds, Cows and all other non-human animals used for profit are rarely ever promoted as intelligent and sentient beings. Instead their seasoned, neatly-packaged flesh or secretions is promoted with illusionary cartoons of smiling faces, witty slogans or “happy cows”. The Entertainment industry and circuses who kidnap non-human animals from their families and their natural environment make a killing with misinformation and distracting the public. The cultivation of speciesism is done by normalizing such discriminatory behaviors towards non-humans. This market deception aims to bury the reality of pain that directly results from consumer demand. Their sentience and ability to feel pain, experience emotions, and suffer the same way human animals suffer is intentionally left out of the equation. With capitalism being the foundation of tactical deception for capital gain, the painful truth of slavery, torture, and mass murder of non-human animals is business as usual to the speciesist oppressor.

## **Patriarchy, Speciesism & Rape Culture**

Everyday billions of vagina-bodied non-human animals are exploited for their reproductive capabilities. They are enslaved, manipulated, tortured, and eventually slaughtered for human profit. They are, in fact, victimized. Not only is this a vegan issue but also an issue of sexual domination which perpetuates patriarchy. Veganism is often dismissed as merely a feminine movement saturated with “feminine over-sensitivity” towards the mistreatment of non-human animals. Globalized patriarchal practices provide evidence in proving a relationship between

the domestication of non-human animals and sexually subjugating vagina-bodied humans. Within the speciesist discrimination towards nonhuman animals can be found the interconnected relationship between the sexual exploitation of non-human vagina-bodied individuals and rape culture in humans. Rape Culture is an environment in which rape is prevalent and where sexual violence is normalized and excused in the media and mainstream culture. It is the manipulation of emotions and abuse of power used to maintain dominance over others.

All forms of dairy farming include the forcible impregnation of cows. Regardless of the size or scale of the dairy operation, the process of impregnation remains the same. This insemination process involves a person inserting their arm deep into the cow's rectum in order to position the uterus, and then forcibly inserting an instrument into their vagina. The restraining apparatus used is commonly called a "rape rack". A vagina-bodied cow has no autonomy over their body in the mind of the speciesist oppressor. A mother cow never gives consent to the insemination process therefore the "rape rack" is used as a restraint. The "rape rack" describes a reality. It is a term that makes no apologies for its graphic, horrifying, and violent nature of existence. The often deceptive phrase "artificially insemination" disguises rape as a harmless process integral to a cruelty free dairy operation. A "rape rack" implies that an object was used, the device was violently inserted into the vagina, and that the non-human animal was violated.

The human animal does not have the monopoly on suffering. From an anti-speciesist perspective, rape has happened. The impregnation of any animal, human or non-human, against their will is an act of violence and in direct violation of their autonomy.

## **One-Sided Exploitation**

In civilization, various human uses of non-human animals have resulted in non-human animal mass-production and oppression. This has led to the conceptualization of non-human animals as property. As commodities for human use and consumption the sentience of non-human animals is ignored or denied all together. These sentient living beings are reduced to objects, bought, sold, and consumed in the capitalist market. Mass-produced or kidnapped from their natural habitats and families, they will live a short miserable life oppressed by a system of speciesism.

An end to speciesism would mean respecting the autonomy of non-human animal beings. This doesn't mean separatism. Anti-oppression coupled with anti-speciesism means extending respect for non-human animal autonomy as well as the environment or habitat they live in. With the abolition of private property ownership, land is free to be shared by all human and non-human animals. Civilized human animals have a history of engaging in one-sided exploitation through the justification of anthropocentric religions and philosophies. As a necessity for survival, dependence on or use of other living beings is not oppressive. The use becomes hierarchical and oppressive when it is one-sided. When a selected group of sentient living beings in an ecosystem are made into resources in order to serve one species, and members of that species do not give back in response to what they have taken, the balanced harmony of equal benefit and freedom ceases to exist. Global civilization exploits many without giving back. This act of selfishness, one-sided exploitation, and domination has plagued the globe with colonization, imperialism, and

speciesism. The struggle against one side-exploitation means a collective anti-authoritarian fight against capitalism and all other forms of oppression. It also means human animal participation in a biosphere in which all animals can benefit from a non-oppressive co-existence. As human animals have evolved, so has the understanding of oppression and authority. In addition to this the human animal acknowledges the destructive force of domestication like in Western civilization as being a catalyst for institutionalized anthropocentrism and industrial speciesism.

## **Civilized: The Domesticated Human Animal**

For many people, consuming the cooked flesh of non-human animals is pleasurable because of the texture, cultural upbringing, and emotional response. Traditionally speaking, "meats" were feast foods. Peasants ate foods that came from the ground; potatoes, greens, and grains etc. The rich raised chickens and cows for meat, eggs and dairy, and hunted their property for venison.

Colonization has not only happened to land but also to the human animal body. The imposition of a heavily flesh, animal secretion, and processed food diet coupled with the patriarchal capitalist food/agricultural production paradigm has created health problems, diseases, and dietary addictions. Contrary to the assumption that veganism is merely a white consumerist activity or way of eating, veganism can be described as dietary decolonization challenging the Standard American Diet as well as speciesism and oppression. Veganism has been embraced by people of color who reject the eurocentric food pyramid and seek to live healthy lives while respecting non-human animal life. Veganism as an anti-authoritarian practice extends equality to non-human animals by respecting their autonomy and freedom.

Along with the invasion of North America by the Spanish came the colonizers ways of eating. This included a "meat"-heavy, dairy diet. This led to the import of cow, pigs, and chickens for mass consumption and the introduction of regular non-human animal eating into the diet of the Indigenous people. Most of the animal flesh products Natives first consumed after initial introduction of Spaniards was food waste – like posole made with pig's feet. Enslaved people ate a high-fat, high-calorie diet that would allow them to burn 3,000 calories a day working. Southern food began to be called soul food during the civil rights and black power movements of the 1960s. An emotional connection and cultural pride can be found in what was seen as the food their population survived on in difficult times.

Soul food is what can be sociologically described as material culture, the physical components of a group that signify values, norms, and social conditions. This material culture reflects the migration and context of reception of new people groups, and how those people groups adapted to their new surroundings. An example of this would be Okra. Okra was a vegetable common to many kidnapped Africans who were brought to the US as chattel slaves. As a source of comfort during the horrible journey across the Atlantic as well as the terrible conditions of slavery in the American south, Africans took what food they could along with them. When looking at soul food, one can see that the meals of most enslaved people consisted of crops and the scraps of "meat" product like chitterlings, a word originating from the European Middle Ages to describe the less desirable parts of pigs