

Drew University

College of Liberal Arts

The Case for Linking Causes:

Why Animal Rights Are an Environmental Issue

A Thesis in Environmental Studies and Sustainability

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Bachelor in Arts

With Specialized Honors in Environmental Studies and Sustainability

May 2021

## ABSTRACT

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While animal rights is rapidly expanding into the mainstream as a prominent social justice movement, there are still facets of the movement which keep animal liberation separate from most other causes, specifically environmentalism. A long history of these two movements recognizes their shared pasts and deliberate stance against all forms of oppression, human, animal, and environment alike. However, tension between the individual virtue of an animal in conjunction with the human condition, or the broad-stroke health of an ecosystem, has created a disparity in activist circles. There are also major divisions in the realm of academia, or environmental philosophy, which has only further severed ties between the movements. Overall, intersectionality between animal rights and environmentalism, along with a willingness to bring animal rights into the conversation of other social justice movements will only further a unified monoculture against all forms of oppression.

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## **Introduction**

Despite a core of similar morals against oppression and for protection of the natural world, as well as a shared separation from an anthropocentric value system, the animal liberation and environmental rights movements have veered into distinctly different corners of activism in the last few decades. Environmentalism has recently begun to reach mainstream audiences in a way that is accessible and commensurable to other now widely acknowledged movements and coalitions, allowing for a more digestible and interactive cause. Meanwhile, animal rights remains somewhat on the outskirts of the social justice and environmental movements, its public perception is simultaneously one of radicalism and insignificance in more conventional circles.

The separation can be best distinguished through specific, modern issues that rely heavily on the input of both animal rights and environmental groups. I will be defining these divisions through three distinct categories: academic divisions, activist divisions, and philosophical divisions. Some of the key areas I will be discussing are compassionate conservation and ethnocentrism surrounding the indigenous fur trade. These issues serve as strong areas of overlap between environmentalism and animal rights, controversial in terms of how we may approach and synthesize. Nevertheless, the cases discussed here illustrate how environmentalism and animal rights are better reinforced through mutualism and cooperation. When kept separate and at odds, not only do both movements suffer through a lack of public support and controversial press, but their immediate and long-term goals may become uncertain, overall resolutions held in limbo, all the while shared adversaries of both groups continue to inflict damage. Understanding the divisions between these two movements is crucial in finding the common ground to both reconnect their cores, as well as pave a new foundation for combining efforts.

Throughout this paper, I will argue for the advantages of tying the animal liberation movement to the efforts of environmentalism and the significance in labeling animal liberation as an environmental cause. By promoting the virtue of life, welfare, and compassion over all else, the environmental movement, as well as the human relationship to the environment and animals, is strengthened all together. Their unification will result in a shared vision against all forms of oppression.

Moreover, these movements rely on one another to promote a shared vision of justice. If environmentalism were to neglect the cause of animal rights, it is further perpetrating the concept in which justice is conditional upon status, and that oppression of animals is of lesser import directly due to a speciesist gap. This rationale is dangerous, as it can lead to lowered defenses in protecting minority or voiceless groups. A unified outlook toward what is ethical and promotes equality is critical in combating oppression in all forms, especially in consideration of environmental and animal concerns. This idea is especially notable considering how animal rights and biocentric approaches are often viewed as antagonizing perspectives to environmental justice and racism. In reality, these ideas must rely on one another for a unified front against all forms of prejudice. Furthermore, from an environmental viewpoint, these issues experience an abundance of overlap (i.e. government subsidies allow factory farms to dump their waste in predominantly low-income areas). It is then important to note that should the gap between animal liberation and environmental rights continue its long-standing separation, environmental degradation will inevitably worsen, as humans fail to understand the interconnectedness between ecosystems and the delicate threads that bind us to them. These causes are intricately linked, and to separate and alienate the two will slow the progress of both.

## **Defining the Problem**

In November of 2017, a truck carrying over 6,000 chickens crashed and rolled over on the Bruxner highway in Lismore, New South Wales. More than half of the chickens died at the scene, while the remaining less than 3,000 or so suffered severe injuries (Duncan 2017). PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), a considerably controversial international animal rights organization, requested permission from the Lismore Roads and Maritime Services to place a memorial in honor of the chickens at this location. The request was not only denied, but met with severe criticism and derision both from community members and online in social media circles. Many of the comments ranged from incredulous to straight mockery of the situation.

One Facebook user wrote, “This is serious, right? How about a memorial for every chicken killed at the abattoir, seriously, gone way too far!” Another: “I like the idea . . . I actually like it that much, I am going to put a memorial sticker on my windscreen in tribute to all of the bugs that have come to grief on my windscreen.” One user went so far as to suggest a candlelit service, posted with an image of a candle with Colonel Sanders' face printed on it (Duncan 2017). The jokes went on, and many lamented the ridiculousness of the situation and of their city officials for considering the memorial site at all. Another Facebook user commented in criticism of PETA as a whole: “Completely minimises the human lives lost on the roads, this is typical PETA BS which values animal life above human life” (Duncan 2017). Even the mayor of Lismore, Isaac Smith, stepped in to speak out against the memorial, further cementing its improbability by calling it “inappropriate” and claiming no need for a conversation about memorials for animals” (J. 2017)

Meanwhile, animal rights activists rushed to the scene, hoping to rescue as many living chickens as possible. Sugarshine Feminist Animal Rescue Mission Sanctuary sent co-owner

Kelly Nelder, who rescued a chicken she named Clarabelle. Another activist, Lisa, said, “I got there and I just saw thousands of chickens laying on the ground. I just hoped that they would show us and the chickens some mercy” (Duncan 2017). A PETA spokesperson commented to a local news source, “We hope our memorial will help prevent future transport accidents, but also will help remind everyone that no animal wants to die a violent, painful death” (Duncan 2017). Though the memorial did not go through, the story itself circulated around the internet and communities far beyond Lismore. No environmental groups commented on the situation.

This may serve as a key example of the modern human relationship to animal rights. The concept of considering the value of chickens’ lives in a similar vein to lost human lives was met with mockery and glaring contempt. Moreover, to even make this consideration is often quickly equated with not valuing human lives, or diminishing the human condition.

In my own experience, animal rights are still not treated seriously by many groups, even those who are young and generally liberal, especially concerning environmental and human causes. Following a political meeting I attended, led by college students and focused on labor rights and unionizing discriminated communities and workforces, one member confessed in casual conversation that animal rights is a very low priority issue for her, to which the rest of the student group agreed. There were no counter-arguments made to her confession, despite the general atmosphere of a hunger for justice. This may be due to the wide gap between animal rights and other social justice movements. While social justice issues are breaching the mainstream as the new normal of ethics, animal rights groups remain somewhat on the fringe, hidden in the shadows of more widely acknowledged issues.

Part of this may be due to the public perception of what exactly the animal rights and liberation movement represents. This perception has been shaped by years of liberation groups

building a repertoire of activism. Much of this activism can be considered rather radical in its nature, unconventional tactics used to grab attention and hold it, creating an emotional response from the community. This, as well as a long history of exploitation and misunderstanding of animals, has led to a movement of persistence and, simultaneously, often nonrecognition. At the same time, the animal rights movement has at times become a group on the fray of other intersectional issues. Tensions between animal rights groups and other issues, including social justice concerns, has created wider divisions between the movements. This has led to a labeling of animal rights as majority white or elitist, despite the inaccuracies of these claims. Despite these modern points of contention, the history between animal rights and other environmental and social justice movements is extraordinarily intertwined. In understanding their shared roots and histories, we are able to better understand their connections and similar cores.

### **Shared Histories: Animal Rights and Environmentalism in the U.S.**

Animal rights and environmentalism have an extraordinarily interconnected history, dating back to some of the earliest links of humankind's relationship to the natural world. Many of the earliest notions of the western human relationship to the environment and animals stem from Christianity, and so it would be flawed to analyze the history of animal rights and environmentalism without this context in mind. In 1967, American historian Lynn White, Jr, described Christianity as "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen," and his essay on the connection between church and environmental degradation became a new sort of gospel for the start of the 1960s environmental revolution (Thomas 1983). Theological foundations are traceable to Tudor and Stuart England, where the overarching view of the natural world was that nature had been created for the purpose of serving mankind, requiring obedience and



subservience of all other species (Thomas 1983). Biblical interpretations gave emphasis to man's authority, philosophers such as Francis Bacon declaring "Man, if we look to final causes, may be regarded as the centre of the world; insomuch that if man were taken away from the world, the rest would seem to be all astray, without aim or purpose" (Thomas 1983). Others agreed, in 1657 Jeremiah Burroughes noting that "[God] made others for Man and Man for himself" (Thomas 1983). And although it was religion which paved the way for anthropocentric ideologies taking hold, new economic incentives of a money economy and the "great civilizing influence of capital" as Karl Marx said, only incited a greater sense of man's charge over nature. That's not to say the entirety of Christianity itself upholds this view. In fact, the Old Testament alludes more toward the concept of human stewardship and responsibility toward the natural world (Thomas 1983). The influence of economic prosperity, however, in turn shifted a renewed focus on the New Testament, which better fit the financial motives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Early American ideas of nature and wilderness were shaped by these archaic European fears of dark, uninhabited deep forests, which played a major role in many early myths and legends of powerful supernatural beings. Roderick Nash discussed these early notions in his 1967 book, *Wilderness and the American Mind*. According to Nash, a sign of early success for these Christians and settlers was the clearing of these dark forests, especially those forests once inhabited by pagans (McDonald 2001). The European settlers of the Americans worked to clear these forests swiftly, equating paved land with productivity, and wilderness still akin to evil (McDonald 2001). Overall, this sentiment toward nature is often labeled "dominion theology." And the idea of wilderness or the natural world in totality as something to be controlled or conquered persisted for centuries as globalization spread.

Animals were similarly swept under this line of thinking, and were viewed both as tools of labor and use, as well as property. In general, they were given little empathy as sentient beings. During the Age of Reason/Enlightenment, anatomists performed public beatings to dogs and made a point to scorn those who felt any pity. These anatomists described the animals as “clocks,” their sounds of pain similar to the sound of a popped spring when touched (Salisbury 2011). These anatomists were attempting to show how animals feel no pain at all because they are quite different from us. While early Christians worked to distinguish themselves from pagan and other polytheistic cultures, this also meant creating a new rhetoric for how we may relate to and understand animals. Previous ancient cultures, such as the Greeks, revered myths tying animals and humans together closely, often noting a shared soul amongst the beings. Christians introduced a slew of new language, including terminology such as “beasts,” “savagery,” “brutality,” “violence” (Salisbury 2011). And, arguably the most influential of labels was the concept of “irrationality,” which promoted a perceived lack of reason among animals, dissimilar to humans, who may also act violently, but with reason. Animals’ perceived lack of cognitive reasoning was the backbone of our medieval understanding of non-humans (Salisbury 2011). This allowed for a functional use of animals at the hands of Christians during the Middle Ages. Animals became tools of labor and use, swept under the broad category of property, similar to early categorizations of race or ethnicity for enslavement. While these views have been both challenged and protected over the centuries, the details are more varied and muddied than originally understood.

One of the earliest acts for legal animal protection can be found in the 1641 “Body of Liberties,” the first legal code enacted by the Massachusetts General Court. The code prohibited any “Tiranny or Crueltie towards any brute Creature which are usuallie kept for man's use” as

well as frequent rest and refreshment for cattle being driven (Davis 2015). In the years following, reformed Puritan ideals shifted toward a kinder dominion over the animals.

The 19th century brought animal rights and social reform together in an entirely new light. During the Second Great Awakening (from 1790-1840), social reformists, as well as ministers, began to shift focus toward animal protection (Davis 2015). Some American ministers, such as Charles Grandison Finney, even included animal protection values in their exegeses on how the modern Christian should behave (Davis 2015). These teachings circulated around the nation, and became a regular addition to Sunday school lectures. The Transcendentalist movement also began to bud during this time, authors such as Henry David Thoreau writing about the sublime of the natural world, and the idea of all parts being dependent on one another. The publication of *Walden* in 1854 was especially influential during the expansionist era. This reveals a response to the colonial perspective of the natural world. Rather than viewing nature as an object of use and under the guise of man's authority, it became a source of wildness and wonder. Animals as a part of this wildness and unfiltered beauty was especially evident.

Social reform in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century also began to tie animal rights and abolitionists together. In fact, anti-slavery literature often expressed animal protection views and stressed their importance. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) notoriously depicted slaveholders as cruel to animals, while it was the abolitionists who showed kindness and mercy (Davis 2015). The Civil War further brought abolitionists and animals rights together in surprising ways. Wartime photography revealed a tragedy of slain soldiers and horses lying together in the fields, which brought forth the idea of connected suffering to a national audience (Davis 2015). Out of the war, this fueled a movement of animal rights, many animal activists believing that animal protection was a key point of an "advanced civilization" (Davis 2015). In 1866, these ideas were funneled

into the creation of the ASPCA, or the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The ASPCA was called into order through the New York Legislature and further initiated groundbreaking laws against cruelty to animals.

Also significant to note at this time is the Industrial Revolution, which connected railroads from the west to cities in the east, such as Chicago, the center of meat processing. Meats from Texas could then be sold from large scale ranches to the factory. This development led to a disconnect between final products and raw materials, which also reinforced the idea of the environment as a source for commodities only, a major change from the Transcendentalist ideas of only a few decades prior. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* infamously recounted the horrors of the slaughterhouse, bringing the sentience of farm animals to the public in gut-wrenching descriptions. In one passage, Sinclair goes into the details of hog slaughter:

Was it permitted to believe that there was nowhere upon the earth, or above the earth, a heaven for hogs, where they were requited for all this suffering? Each one of these hogs was a separate creature . . . each of them had an individuality of his own, a will of his own, a hope and a heart's desire; each was full of self-confidence, of self-importance, and a sense of dignity. And trusting and strong in faith he had gone about his business, the while a black shadow hung over him and a horrid Fate waited in his pathway. Now suddenly it had swooped upon him, and had seized him by the leg. Relentless, remorseless, it was; all his protests, his screams, were nothing to it-- it did its cruel will with him, as if his wishes, his feelings, had simply no existence at all; it cut his throat and watched him gasp out his life (Sinclair 1906).

The relationship between environmental, social justice, and animal rights concerns at this point in history was overwhelming. Heading into the 20th century, animal rights reform led to further protection in the field of equine labor, as well as during WWI. During the war, the American Humane Association founded the Red Star Animal Relief to support and keep safe American warhorses, mules, and donkeys involved (Davis 2015).

Similarly, the animal rights and environmental movement spring from a shared background following World War II. After an intense six years of sacrifice and overall disregard for life in every aspect, along with a dependence on military machines and scientific strategies of war, the concept of humans as replaceable commodities in a larger landscape was met with disgust and regret (Jamieson 1998). This post-war contempt for destruction carried over into environmental and animal concerns, eventually leading to a new foundation for these movements in the years following. In fact, the concept of veganism was first coined by Donald Watson in 1944, and the movement expanded rapidly in the next several decades.

The linkage of these movements has always been apparent. The first ever celebration of Earth Day in 1970 was quickly followed by the publishing of Peter Singer's first animal rights essay (Jamieson 1998). Singer, considered the grandfather of the animal rights movement, later went on to publish *Animal Liberation* in 1975, which still serves as foundational literature for animal activists today. Other works of this era were also liberation focused, including Stephen Clark's *The Moral Status of Animals*, Bernard Rollin's *Animal Rights and Human Morality*, and *Animals, Men, and Morals*, an anthology edited by several now well-known philosophers such as Stan and Roslind Godlovitch. It seems that through the Green Decade, animal liberation was also on the mind.

Overall, these movements have been linked intimately throughout history, revealing how social and environmental reforms have always been trailed or headed by a subset of animal protectionism. Why then, is the animal rights movement still viewed so distinctly from other forms of environmentalism and social reform?

### **Public Perception of the Animal Liberation Movement**

While aspects of our relationship with animals have changed tremendously over time, there is still room for an animal rights movement, and still pushback against this movement. What then does this mean for our perception of animals and animal rights? How far have we come in the last few centuries and where do we have to go with animal rights activism?

It has become somewhat of a cliché for animal rights groups to be associated with the throwing of red paint on fur wearers, or harassing the local butcher. And although these groups may have also performed activism at legislative levels and within the community, these associations are not without merit. A quick internet search of ‘animal rights’ and ‘red paint’ bids hundreds of relevant results, ranging from quite recent news stories, to events from more than three or four decades prior. One of the top results describes a demonstration from the Iowa State Fair in 2013. Animal liberation protesters doused the famous “Butter Cow” in red paint with the words “freedom for all” written across the glass window front (The Gazette 2013). The group which carried out the action later made a statement, saying, “The paint represents the blood of 11 billion animals murdered each year in slaughterhouses, egg farms and dairies” (The Gazette 2013). In another more recent instance, London activists in July of 2020 poured red dye into the fountain in Trafalgar square, turning the water a bloody scarlet. The act was similarly in protest of the meat industry and slaughterhouses, as well as in reference to the ongoing pandemic of

COVID-19, a zoonotic global disaster first spread and later worsened by human relationships to animal agriculture (Walawalkar 2020).

I have found myself involved in several ‘red paint’ confrontations when working with animal rights groups in the tri-state area. The Anti-Fur Season has become an annual occurrence and hosts a string of events in New York City, ranging from mid-Fall to Spring. In October of 2020, I joined a local chapter to participate in the Anti-Fur Season Kickoff. All of the activists, a group close to 30 people with ages ranging from teens to elderly, met on the outskirts of Central Park. From this point, we organized into smaller groups, hiding posters and bullhorns in backpacks and under jackets. We walked discreetly down to Saks on 5th Avenue, and smiled politely at the doorman, who welcomed us inside without question. After pretending to shop for a short while, everyone met at the Fur Salon on the fourth floor. There, we removed our posters and bullhorns, and began chanting. One of the bullhorns played a recorded sound of an animal in pain at a fur processing facility. Guards soon gathered near us, and we were escorted out down the central escalator, all the while we continued our chanting and brandishing of posters. Outside the front of the store, one of the organizers pulled out two fur coats, both of which were donated to the group. She dropped them on the ground in front of the store, and poured a hefty amount of dark red, almost black, fake blood on top of the fur. Passersbys on the street and Saks’ security stopped to watch as the organizers dragged the fur coats around on the ground in circles, leaving the fur and sidewalk drenched and smeared red. An organizer spoke with one of the security guards, assuring them the blood was water-based and easily washable. We walked down the next few blocks, still chanting and the bloody fur trailing, to perform again in front of the Dolce & Gabbana. This experience felt both historic and typical in a way that was almost surreal. The

imagery of red paint served as an immediate point of recognition for the New York audience, the performance easily identifiable as animal rights related without much more explaining necessary.

PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) has become a symbolic figurehead for the face of animal rights ‘extremism.’ From jumping on stage at fashion shows to protest the use of animal skins, to public stunts involving nudity and outlandish costumes, their brand of activism has elevated the movement considerably, creating a basis for what animal rights activism should be among other smaller groups and organizations. PETA was first founded on August 21, 1980 by two young animal advocates, Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco, joined together from backgrounds of rescue kittens and whale hunting protests. The organization took off shortly after the founding, and their first hot case arrived less than a year after. From protecting monkey experiments, to exposing bloody slaughterhouse scenes, PETA’s work throughout the 1980s and 90s was not too far off from their image today.

At the same time, the public response to PETA is less than favorable. In a poll from 2013, relying on data from registered voters of the United States, it was found that only 36 percent of the public has a favorable opinion of PETA, while 39 percent have an unfavorable opinion, with the remaining 25 unsure (Statista).

An opinion piece published in *The Guardian* in 2019 titled “There’s one thing that really puts me off veganism: PETA” further exemplifies this disconnect. Author Arwa Mahdawi describes a recent ad campaign put out by the organization proclaiming, “Traditional masculinity is DEAD. The secret to male sexual stamina is veggies.” Following this was a video of several men with vegetables for genitalia. Mahdawi complained, “PETA’s ads are so distasteful that I sometimes wonder whether the organisation is a genius invention by the meat industry, designed



to make animal rights activists look ridiculous.” She further went on to say the ad and PETA’s work in general is pushing her farther away from veganism as a whole.

PETA has responded to the numerous public outcries against their work in several pieces still listed on their website:

We will do extraordinary things to get the word out about animal cruelty because we have learned from experience that the media, sadly, do not consider the terrible facts about animal suffering alone interesting enough to cover. It is sometimes necessary to shake people up in order to initiate discussion, debate, questioning of the status quo, and, of course, action. (PETA)

By using certain gimmicks and extremist tactics to call in the media, PETA considers their work successful, spreading their information and facts as a byproduct of their coverage. In considering the statistics, their message is spreading rapidly, despite personal opinions. In the past twenty-five years, PETA has amassed over 6.5 million members and supporters internationally. Their victories have also racked up, undercover investigations resulting in shut-downs and the discontinuation of certain products and companies. PETA successfully convinced more than 200 cosmetic companies to permanently stop testing on animals (PETA).

Still, PETA and other animal rights groups’ tactics have led to considerably widespread disdain at times for the liberation community. In fact, this conversation has been circulating since the start of the movement. In a Washington Post piece published in 1989, an almost eerily similar scene played out between fur wearers and protesters. Activists gathered outside of the once-popular fur vault Fred the Furrier, berating and booing customers with bullhorns and large scale posters depicting graphic images of animal victims. One woman dressed in a full-length mink coat commented to reporters, “If these animal rights people are going to strive for a

nonviolent, pacific way to better the world, it doesn't behoove them to use scare tactics. If they took a more Gandhi-esque attitude, they might have a more sympathetic audience” (Yen 1989).

Despite this sentiment, it seems as though public perception to the animal rights agenda is no less warm even when conventional tactics are used. This is especially evident on television talk show platforms, where the topic of veganism is often used for polarizing debates and entertainment. Throughout the month of January, which has been dubbed ‘Veganuary’ by the activists community, and is used to further promote the cause with almost 250,000 sign-ups every year, veganism is used as a mainstream topic on television. But the intention of these talk shows and their hosts are rarely of good nature toward veganism.

In an article printed in *Brightzine Magazine* by Laura Callan, segments on veganism from late 2017 into 2019 are analyzed from shows such as Good Morning Britain, This Morning, BBC’s Newsnight, and The Big Questions. Callan found that the immediate tone of these segments are under the intention to ‘debunk’ veganism, a clearly biased take on the issue. Instead of inviting several vegan spokespeople, activists, or community members or leaders, these shows often invite one vegan along with one or several anti-vegans in order to create heated debates and discussions. Usually, the hosts work to further instigate antagonism between the two sides.

In many instances on these shows, guests are invited not due to any expertise, but solely because of their opinions. This was especially true with feminist writer Julie Bindel, who was invited onto This Morning to debate veganism several times. Bindel is the author of The Guardian’s article, “Why I Hate Vegetarians,” and has described vegans as “humourless, judgmental souls” (Callan 2019). Despite Bindel’s lack of experience in the realm of veganism, during her segments she derailed the conversation on animal ethics and the environmental effects of animal agriculture to discuss her opinions on the matter, even going so far as to spread

misinformation or to make red herring arguments. Bindel made claims that “veganism doesn’t take into account low-income mothers with three children under five, for whom it’s easier and cheaper to feed “fast food meat-based diets,”” arguing that veganism is a lifestyle specifically for those in privileged homes or even of elite status. Of course, this myth has been disproven in several recent studies, one even finding that vegan and vegetarians may save an average of 23 dollars in comparison with meat eaters (Yanek 2020). And a study from 2015 in the *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* found that vegetarians will spend an average of 750 dollars less on groceries per year compared to non-vegetarians, a number that has likely increased (Flynn, Schiff 2015). In another talk show appearance in January of 2018, Bindel took the conversation to rainforests, describing their destruction from the basis of avocado consumption. Matthew Glover, co-founder of Veganuary, corrected her with the fact that over 90 percent of rainforest destruction stems from animal agriculture, but the show’s host did not follow up on this and let the mistruth linger. Bindel even made the same avocado accusation later that year in November of 2018.

The bias in these segments is especially apparent through the hosts. When activist Earthling Ed was invited onto *This Morning*, he was met by the aggressive question, “Are militant vegans going too far?” He calmly attempted to answer by describing the importance of education and why activism for animals is important, but was met again with the same questions from host Phillip Shofield: “Are you militant? How far will you go?” Later on in the discussion, Shoefield proclaimed, “I’ll listen to any argument, but the more militant you are, the more I’ll back away . . . If you make me that angry and frighten me that much, I will eat a sausage!” Earthling Ed then worked to bring the conversation back to environmental issues. Other cases of this have appeared on similar talk shows, such as *Good Morning Britain*. Guest Kayode Damali’s

discussion of veganism along with several other vegan activists was faced with resentment from host and personality Piers Morgan, who directed the conversation to accidental deaths of field mice from wheat harvesting, back to whether Damali was actually wearing leather and is a hypocrite (he was wearing no leather on the show) (Callan 2019).

Farmers are also frequent guests on these segments. In some instances, they have been asked to describe the death threats they receive from vegans, along with how the vegan movement is harmful for their livelihoods. In cases such as these, the farmers are framed as victims, while vegans are painted as a dangerous group which must be stopped. This was especially evident on the February 6th segment of *This Morning* in 2018, “Are Militant Vegans Making Farmers’ Lives Hell?” Two small dairy farmers were invited on the show, along with vegan activist Joey Carbstrong, who is well known within the animal rights community. The farmers spent most of the segment discussing death threats and hateful comments they had received from liberationists after a viral post on social media celebrating the birth of triplet calves. While Carbstrong publicly condemned death threats toward farmers, explaining how those were neither vegan ideals nor a facet of the movement, the segment remained focused on the farmers’ threatened livelihood, with less time and attention spent on Carbstrong’s activism. Even more, the sensationalist headline takes away from Carbstrong’s messaging on the show, which was to explain the harmful practice of the dairy industry on behalf of the animals.

These talk shows often allow the last word to go to the anti-vegan, creating a clear narrative for the entire segment. Even when the vegan guest is making clear, concise arguments to which the anti-vegan struggles to counter, the last line of the segment is given to the anti-vegan and is usually emotional-based.

This further emphasizes the disconnect from animal rights issues to mainstream activism. The ridicule and biased reporting reveals how the animal rights and liberation movement remains on the fringe of social justice movements, with a heavy pushback. Even in the more liberal circles, people “love to hate” veganism further polarizing the issue.

Of course, talk shows serve as venues of entertainment more so than education. Sensationalizing veganism works an opportunity of viewership and drama, easily played up on camera. This then leads to the question, what of more academic circles and agencies? What does a more scientific response to veganism look like? Academic groups are generally responding to veganism in light of its specific subject area. Environmental groups, for instance, focus on the environmental benefits of meat-avoidance, but rarely discuss veganism in its entirety. The Sierra Club has an entire topic section on their blog devoted to veganism, filled with essays ranging from ideas for sustainable gardening to vegan recipes and information on nutrient-rich plant-based foods. At the same time, mixed in are articles such as “It’s Time for Hikers and Hunters to Join Together,” a piece expressing how hunters and “outdoor enthusiasts” share common goals of protecting the land and respecting nature (Boelte 2017). The piece argues for both groups to discard old biases and unify against environmental degradation. While it makes sense that a group such as the Sierra Club will focus on the environmental benefits of a vegan diet, it still seems there is no clear space at the table for animal rights. Because ethics have been disincluded in the mainstream and idealised version of veganism, animal rights has been taken out of the equation entirely. Perceptions of veganism from more serious, academic groups seem to mean focusing on its benefits such as health and the environment. As a result of this, however, ethical veganism becomes taboo and washed out.

Public perceptions and misconceptions of the animal rights movement have also been shaped by a government lens. In 2005, the ACLU released documents revealing the FBI is targeting animal rights groups and their activities as ‘domestic terrorism.’ More than 100 pages of files were discovered about PETA, showing an ongoing surveillance of the organization’s work, even including an outreach event in which activists distributed ‘vegan starter kits’ on campus at the University of Indiana. Ben Wizner, an ACLU staff attorney explained, “The FBI should be investigating real terrorists, not monitoring controversial ideas. Americans shouldn’t have to fear that by protesting the treatment of animals or participating in non-violent civil disobedience, they will be branded as 'eco-terrorists' in FBI records” (ACLU 2005). In Will Potter’s 2011 *Green is the New Red: An Insider's Account of a Social Movement Under Siege*, he takes this a step further. Potter explains throughout his book how the FBI’s pursuit of these groups and even other environmental radicals is meant to threaten and intimidate. Because the animal rights and liberation groups are actively persuading the public to go vegan and stop supporting these large corporations, they are a threat to corporate profits and American consumption in general. The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA), which was passed and signed into law in November of 2006, embodies this notion. The Act makes illegal any action taken for animals that may damage property or interfere with operations at an animal enterprise of any kind. The pharmaceutical companies particularly lauded the Act. The National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR), an organization relying predominantly on animal-tested research, released a statement following the passage:

Today, the AETA provides greater protection for the biomedical research community and their families against intimidation and harassment, and addresses for the first time in

federal law, campaigns of secondary and tertiary targeting that cause economic damage to research enterprises (NABR).

In contrast, animal activists largely opposed the legislation. *Blum v. Holder*, a case filed in 2013, was the first to take a stand against the action. Attorneys for the case argued that the language of AETA is so extreme, it criminalizes speech protected by the First Amendment (CCR 2013). Also noted in the case was the inclusion of “animal enterprises” as a concept, which is kept intentionally vague so that even actions such as peaceful protesting have been limited for fear of prosecution. One of the plaintiffs of the case, Lana Lehr, expressed worry over her professional work as a licensed psychotherapist in Bethesda, Maryland:

A felony conviction would end my ability to earn a living – I’d lose my license to practice. I can’t afford that risk so I have stopped protesting for fear I’d be arrested and convicted. . . I can’t believe that my activism for the humane treatment of animals places me in a terrorist camp (CCR 2013).

The federal judge of the case originally dismissed the lawsuit, although the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) appealed the dismissal shortly thereafter. The case was, however, officially dismissed and closed in 2014.

Ag-gag laws of today similarly attempt to punish activists and silence whistleblowers for filming the inside of factory farms as a form of activism. Lobbyists representing these farms have secured these laws firmly in order to protect their companies from expository news of their animal cruelty, pollution tactics, and unsafe working conditions. While activists are fighting this legislation from several legal levels, the powerful lobbyists of these farms still hold a much higher ground.

This bias of government organizations has influence in numerous corners. A closer look at [AnimalRightsExtremism.info](http://AnimalRightsExtremism.info), a website designed to expose animal rights extremism as a dangerous and high-level threat, reveals the site is produced and managed by the organization Understanding Animal Research (UAR). This group is a proponent of animal research, and, obviously, is at odds with many animal rights activists, making the website as a whole a biased source. This is even apparent in academic journals. In the official Journal of Neuroscience, Chairman for the Committee for Use of Animals in Research, Jeffrey H. Kordower wrote the essay “Animal Rights Terrorists: What Every Neuroscientist Should Know.” Kordower paints liberationists in a highly critical light throughout this piece, using loaded language such as “terrorists” and “violence” to describe their activism. Because Kordower is a proponent for animal research, it is clear his position on the matter holds bias. His leadership position in an anti-animal rights group, as well as the format of his essay makes this journal entry an unreliable piece of literature. This especially considers numerous reports in recent years finding the unreliability of animal research and experiments, making Kordower’s claims all the more untrue and unreasonable.

Through these many lenses and perceptions, it is clear the public’s relationship to animal rights and liberations has been skewed over time. This has led to a powerful disconnect between the actual animal liberation agenda and how people regard the movement overall. Animal protection and liberation have always been the main goals of the movement, not domestic terror or unnecessary and ridiculous radicalism. While the animal rights movement is not necessarily all the more radical or extreme than any other movement, it has been pushed into this narrow view over time, separating its content and voice from other movements of similar nature and ideologies. The animal liberation movement’s disconnect from the environmental movement in



particular is an effect of these perceptions. And while environmental protection has only strengthened its public presence and guidance over the last several decades, the exclusion of animal rights is all the more apparent.

### **Emerging Differences Through Environmental Literature and Philosophy**

The split trajectories of the animal rights and environmental movements is seen through shifting ideologies and changes in public opinion; however, this split may also be noted throughout the realm of academia and philosophy. Much of the dissociation between animal liberation and environmentalism can be traced back to a specific essay by J. Baird Callicott: “Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair,” first published in 1980. This piece argued that animal rights and environmental ethics are two distinct lines of thinking of which are incompatible with one another. Callicott’s language throughout the essay is somewhat harsh and unforgiving. He refers to animals as “living artifacts” explaining that “there is thus something profoundly incoherent (and insensitive as well) in the complaint of some animal liberationists that the “natural behavior” of chickens and bobby calves is cruelly frustrated on factory farms. It would make almost as much sense to speak of the natural behavior of tables and chairs” (1980). This argument is made in relation to his central thesis, which draws on Aldo Leopold’s land ethic. Callicott uses this ethic to promote the whole of the biotic community, emphasizing the value of ecosystems over the lives of individual animals (1980). Leopold’s land ethic completes the triangle.

Callicott also emphasizes the illogical nature of animal liberation in relation to domesticated animals: “[Domesticated animals] have been bred to docility, tractability, stupidity, and dependency. It is literally meaningless to suggest that they be liberated. It is, to speak in

hyperbole, a logical impossibility” (1980). His argument goes even further, suggesting that should all animals be actually ‘liberated’ it might change the ecology of the land and negatively affect ecosystems as a result.

In crafting this piece, Callicott had hoped to create an entirely new ethic for this time period, one which would propose three competing traditions, or three sides to the triangle: ethical or moral humanism, humane moralism, and environmental ethics, or Leopold’s land ethic (Klonoski 1990). Ethical humanists maintain that nonhuman animals are unworthy of a moral standing because they lack rationality, while humane moralism counters this claiming the sentience of animals is what matters most at hand and we are morally obligated to consider suffering as a way to minimize evil (Klonoski 1990). Angled against these opposing ideas is Callicott’s proposal of the land ethic, which promotes an efficient biotic community above all else.

While Callicott played a role in influencing the division between these groups, this split had already somewhat existed in the spheres of sociology, philosophy, and even western culture. In Dale Jamieson’s essay “Animal Liberation is an Environmental Ethic,” he argues that the divide partly stems from an alienation of philosophies adopted by each group. While animal liberationists generally draw from Anglo-American philosophy, environmental ethicists look toward theologians, ‘continental philosophers,’ and ‘process philosophy, meaning the ideologies from these movements, though alike in content, are drawing from entirely different books (Jamieson 1998).

Callicott’s philosophy was expounded on by philosophers and ethicists in the years following his publication. In Mark Sagoff’s 1984 piece, he argued that success for animal liberationists would come in the form of anti-environmental policies, such as decreasing wild

animal populations to lessen suffering or creating non-wilderness areas for animals to be cared for under human watch. Sagoff concluded that animal welfare will never be able to justify an environmental ethic (Jamieson 1998). Animal liberationists were immediately critical of these ideologies and responded quickly. In 1983, Tom Regan labeled this view “environmental fascism,” due to this strict and singular line of thinking (Jamieson 1998). Holmes Rolston III also critiqued Callicott for failing to see nature’s intrinsic value and straying from his environmental ethic roots in value theory (Jamieson 1998).

From this view, it may seem as though the split between environmentalism and animal liberation may exist only in the space of academia with philosophers echoing their sentiments back and forth across a reverberating room. In actuality, there are several key real-world examples pertaining to this phenomenon of thinking, including the use of fur, compassionate conservation, and veganism.

### **Emerging Differences Through Activist Circles**

The relationship between ethnocentrism and the continued use of fur remains a high point of contention and discussion today. While the classic case of red paint on fur exists outside a luxury New York storefront, interactions amongst indigenous populations and animal activists are much more complicated. The idea of culture as a long, withstanding piece of human history, as well as the human condition, is especially noteworthy in terms of how we understand the Native groups of today, and the Inuit peoples of North America are currently caught in this complex web. The complications of this issue reveal an actual separation between animal rights and other social justice movements.

In a recent pushback against animal rights groups, many of which first began protesting the Inuit/Canadian seal hunt in the 1960s and 70s, northern Inuits argue that anti-fur protests directed toward themselves are a form of cultural imperialism, as seal hunts are a necessary facet of both their culture and survival. The recent release of the 2016 documentary *Angry Inuk* may be analyzed in a social and economic context, the film exploring how seal hunting bans threaten Inuit profit, and how the stigma of hunting has ultimately led to an oppression of Inuit voices. In an article by *World Policy*, Lucy Kruesel explains how “seal hunting is not a barbaric act, but rather, a generations-old practice that demonstrates the Inuit’s strong kinship to the Arctic environment” (Kruesel 4). Kruesel further asserts how using a Western lens to understand a distinctly cultural practice is harmful to indigenous peoples all around. Even more, these widespread protests have led to actual economic damage, the prices for each skin falling from close to 100 dollars all the way down to 10 (*Angry Inuk* 2016). Considering the Inuit use resources from the seal hunt to provide for a food-scarce region, the Western judgement feels especially out-of-touch and false in terms of the Inuit lifestyle.

Still, Kruesel’s article is fairly one-sided, failing to mention or attempting to reconcile the native heritage with current, and arguably legitimate, animal and environmental concerns. The voice of animal rights protestors is somewhat demonized through this perspective, which is also an issue when considering the ethical implications of routinely taking animal lives. Through this perspective, the clash of cultures seems to have no compromise in sight, though there are significant areas of loss on both sides should one succeed greater than the other. The loss of a culture or cultural practice in comparison with the loss of a species or simply an animal’s life is difficult to weigh, and this difference of values is what makes these sort of collisions so complicated to resolve. This may be paralleled to Callicott’s controversy, which emphasized

community over the life of an individual, a philosophy or ideology which may be used in many different examples, humans and non-humans alike.

Within the film, *Angry Inuk*, activist Aaju Peter explains how cultural imperialism, the prevailing oppression of white or privileged groups over the natives, takes effect at an economic cost: “They want us to be like little stick Eskimos who are stuck on the land and go out in our little Eskimo clothes with a harpoon. They will not let us hunt with rifles and snow machines. They will not let us sell commercial products. It’s a form of cultural colonization,” Peter said (Kruesel 3). Despite this perspective, there is the ethical cost of the seal hunt, which in the voice of environmental groups such as PETA and IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare), cannot be measured at all.

In response to the recent Inuit defense case, PETA released a statement advocating for a gradual transition to newer industries which promote ethical progressions toward the protection of animals in all facets of society (Randhawa 14). This further asks whether economic fulfillment should come at the price of ethical progression. Of course the Inuit have the right to survive and provide for their families, but in a society where animal ethics are common practice and have been fully realized, how can we find a balance that acknowledges both the culture as well as the individual life at stake? Leaning entirely into the direction of animal advocacy groups may negatively impact the survival of the Inuit; however, entirely ignoring animal groups in favor of profit pulls the Inuit out of a potentially more ethically-sound world. While an animal rights protestor marching north to declare murder is clearly an insensitive strike, the question must be asked of what it would look like to place emphasis on the individual animal’s life? And in turn, what does sustainable environmental living off the land look like? Is abstaining from fur in the northern Inuit territories a feasible task? And are these two lines of thinking reconcilable or able

to exist within the same space? This is just one key example in which animal liberation and environmentalism or environmental sensitivity share an area of overlap with oppositional thinking, drawing a divide between the movements.

Another strong example of a modern and potentially contentious relationship between animal rights and environmental protection is the concept of compassionate conservation. The eradication of certain species in favor of an endangered or native species has sparked an entire movement, questioning why we value some lives over others, and, even more, why we value some species over others. Similar to the complicated case of the Inuit, players are forced to recognize the significance of an individual's life and weigh that life against a larger backdrop of contemporary environmental and/or culture matters. Because compassionate conservation is the idea that animal rights should be largely considered in understanding how we relate to and attempt to protect different areas of the environment, it is also a unique point of connection between environmentalism and animal rights. The idea as to whether an individual animal's life qualifies as worthy in the broader complication of an ecosystem is the core underlying question of this conversation, also directly challenging the "triangular affair" as discussed through Callicott.

There have been various conservation case studies involving ethicists and animal rights groups both in recent years and in history. One of the most infamous examples of this occurred shortly after World War II, its effects still rippling today. In 1948, the American gray squirrel, imported from Washington D.C., was released in two pairs throughout Stupinigi of northwest Italy. The population of gray squirrels in the area skyrocketed, and local groups were immediately concerned that, similar to the British Isles, this new population would displace the native red squirrel, altogether altering the ecosystem already in place in the area. Eventually, in

1989, the National Wildlife Institute (NWI) proposed a plan to begin a slow eradication process. Animal rights protesters showed up in tenfold, denouncing the strategy. Other ideas were proposed, such as a translocation of the species back to North America, or even widespread sterilization, all of which were rejected due to concerns with cost. In the end, the culling of the American gray squirrels commenced, a total of 188 squirrels, considerably low numbers by some standards, but an outcry of cruelty to the protesters nonetheless. A court case followed, with the protesters charging the NWI officers for illegal hunting, damage to property of the state, and cruelty to animals. Though the officers were found guilty of the offences, their efforts were futile anyway, the gray squirrel spreading continuously throughout the region already (Perry 30). More recent examples of this issue can be found in Australia, which is dealing with a case of feral cats.

The cats of Australia went viral quickly, and their story made headlines for quite a while, including a lengthy feature in *The New York Times*. In 2015, the Australian government announced its decision to kill more than two million feral cats by the year 2020. The hunt was established in protection of the threatened rodent and marsupial mammals the cats have hunted to near endangerment. The methods used were both detailed and creative. From poisoned sausages dropped out of a twin-engine propeller aircraft, to bowhunting, guns, knives, and traps, for five years these felines were Australia's number one target. Australia's conservationists claimed necessity to this problem, citing the extinction of 34 species on the mainland found nowhere else in the world. Twenty-two of these extinctions are directly linked to feral cat hunting, such as the desert bandicoot, and the Nullarbor dwarf bettong. Other statistics have revealed the sheer number of birds, reptiles, and mammals free-roaming cats kill every year in Australia (numbers in the low to mid billions).

While Australian narratives have painted cats as the main threat in this case, causing irreparable damage to the ecosystem, some reactions to the government's measures have been less than favorable. Protests and petitions spread around the country and the world, the battle turning ugly at times, with death threats and virtual attacks undertaken from proponents to the cull. Compassionate conservationist groups, such as the Center for Compassionate Conservation in Sydney, have compared the hunt to xenophobia, acknowledging a bias toward native species. The Center made a statement explaining how a determination to return the land to some other point in history, rather than working with its current state, leads to inhumane practices such as cat culling. Still, many have scorned these sentiments and any sympathy toward the cats, describing the cull as a business that must be finalized, and animal rights activists as interfering with critical work. On the opposing side, these cats are committing somewhat of a genocide toward these native species. Which group has greater affirmed rights in this situation? And must it come down to the eradication of one or the other? If so, how would we choose?

Around the world, cases such as these are emerging, human activity plaguing ecosystems to doom, left to determine how and which species should be allowed to remain. There is also a goat infestation on an island just off the coast of the Great Barrier Reefs, and the rapid spread of wild horses in New South Wales, also wreaking havoc on the landscape.

Compassionate conservation is an important area of study for connecting animal rights causes to environmentalism. In the article "Improving Interactions between Animal Rights Groups and Conservation Biologists," Dan Perry argues for the perfect opportunity to not only bring these issues to the public's eye, but to help tie the communities together through a common ground. Perry first looks at their similar elements, such as a shared interest in animal welfare, as well as with populations and ecosystems (Perry 2008). Perry ultimately finds that the key to a



more cooperative and successful relationship is if “managers [are] more open to exploring non-lethal alternatives, and animal rights groups understand the motivation behind eradication attempts and [are] more involved in providing the extra funding necessary to support preventative measures” (Perry 2008). This will allow for a more gentle intermixing of animal and environmental rights, gradually allowing the causes to join and flow into one another. In this case, Perry illustrates an astounding method of connection between animal welfare and environmental conservation. Simply taking into account the sentience of animals in their methodology may allow for easier interactions amongst the groups when dealing with these sensitive issues. Solutions, then, as Perry suggested, may become more ethically focused, appealing both animal activists and environmentalists alike.

While the separation between environmentalism and animal rights is made especially evident through the issue of compassionate conservation, a key area in which the two groups are not only exposed for their differences, but may be forced into opposition entirely, there is also the possibility of solutions offering relief to both sides.

### **Emerging Differences Through Philosophical Divisions**

I will lastly be focusing on the separation of these two movements as seen through philosophical divisions. This includes issues of intersectionality within the animal rights and environmental movements, as well as surrounding the two.

In order to place this conversation in a broader context of environmental philosophy, it is important to understand the distinctions between biocentrism and anthropocentrism, two opposing lines of thought which have dictated specific human actions for millennia and paved the way in terms of how we relate to nature. Historicizing Western environmentalism helps to

understand the philosophical ideologies at play. Anthropocentrism, its Greek root *anthros* meaning “human being,” focuses distinctly on human values and experiences. In the context of environmental philosophy, this concept highlights significant environmental impacts on different communities and populations of people, exploring how the group or individual is at risk for or has already faced severe ecological adversity. This line of thought looks strictly at the human impact and toll, and does not take into account environmental deterioration apart from this. Biocentrism, meanwhile, *bios* meaning “life,” is a philosophy and ethical viewpoint which studies the inherent value of all living things, like flora and fauna species, taking into account the immediate reaction of biotic factions and eco-communities in the face of global and local environmental crises. Examples of this may include examining the impact of climate change on biodiversity, habitat loss, mass extinction, and non-human quality of life.

While these terms help to define the lens through which we understand an environmental issue and our relationship to it, the reality is much more complex. Rarely will the work of a modern environmental group or piece of legislation fall into just one category of anthropocentric or biocentric. Often, these components are linked together as the benefits of both allow for a more thorough act of environmental protection. Even more, understanding the different aspects of environmentalism will instead help to paint a broader picture as to how humans relate to different ecological crises as well as animal rights issues.

Out of the biocentric mindset is the deep ecology movement, an immediate linking point of animal and environmental ethics. The deep ecology movement was coined in 1973 by Norwegian philosopher and activist, Arne Naess, after his thorough reading of Rachel Carson’s acclaimed *Silent Spring*. His basic concept is a type of biocentrism, and the movement soon took off amongst scholars and ethicists around the world. Deep ecology expresses reverence and unity

for all living things, claiming the biotic community is inherently worthy of protection, independent of human needs. In congruence with these philosophies is also the idea of “biophilia,” or a ‘love of life and nature’ that transcends all else, as defined by environmental ethicist Edward O. Wilson. The deep ecology movement further follows several main components: we must focus on restoration of the wilderness and its protection, shift toward a biocentric philosophy previously understood in Western tradition, and to lead the environmental movement away from anthropocentrism. Other aspects include biocentric policies, decreased human influence, protection of diversity of life, and a decreased human population to sustain more widespread ecosystems (Naess, *Principles of Deep Ecology*). This ideology has transcended the era in which it was created, during the green activism of the 1970s, and has been a topic of environmentalism in all of the decades following.

At the same time, opposition to deep ecology principles is not necessarily an anthropocentric attack on the biocentric community. Deep ecology has been challenged due to its somewhat non-inclusive ideologies and teachings in non-western spheres. In developing nations specifically, a counter to this intensely biocentric standpoint has unraveled. Unforeseen contingencies to the deep ecology movement have been noted by Indian activist and writer, Ramachandra Guha, author of “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique.” In a stance against developing modern philosophies regarding the protection of undisturbed wilderness, Guha critiques the concept of deep ecology from a global perspective, arguing that it is an inherently American concept and will consistently lead to green imperialism in a foreign context. In reference to ecological philosophers, Guha examines the issue historically through the means of Pinchot, Leopold, and Thoreau, as well as through fact-based and current ecological efforts happening on a local and broader scale. He

specifically takes up the point of wilderness preservation, which has caused adversity in his native country, India. Guha explains: “Because India is a long settled and densely populated country in which agrarian populations have a finely balanced relationship with nature, the setting aside of wilderness areas has resulted in a direct transfer of resources from the poor to the rich” (Guha 3). Guha refers to the protection of wilderness as a specifically American line of thinking and a serious issue when related worldwide, which makes sense considering he is of Indian nationality and has experienced the environment in a dissimilar way than those of a more thoroughly developed nation. This contrast of the different ways various regions of the world interact with the environment brings into question as to how biocentrism and anthropocentrism could even be considered arbitrary concepts against a completely separate backdrop. In a developing region, the day to day living relationship to the environment will ultimately take on a diverging tone in contrast to a developed nation’s more admiring, yet disconnected relationship to the environment. This makes the counter to deep ecology all the more complex and dynamic, less than black and white originally proposed.

A similar story has played out among Native populations in the United States. In Isaac Kantor’s essay “Ethnic Cleansing and America's Creation of National Parks,” the relationship between Native peoples and public land is examined. In the formation of National Parks, legislation purposefully excluded the fact that Indigenous people once occupied these lands, sometimes further leading to their removal. Earlier lines of thought encouraged the idea of restorative nature with the inclusion of original tribes and peoples. Western artist George Catlin expressed the need for creation of a “nation's Park containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!” (Kantor 2007). Washington Irving took this a step further, proclaiming the importance for preserving these parks as a last refuge for indigenous peoples

(Kantor 2007). This mindset was echoed by various voices of the nineteenth century, including the likes of Henry David Thoreau, whose writings on the wilderness influenced the entire nation. Despite this, a shift toward John Muir's "uninhibited wilderness" perspective created disdain for the Native population. Among some of Muir's writings of majestic spaces and intricate flora and fauna, he also includes commentary on the natives he encounters, describing them as out of place and even "ugly" in the landscape. It was Muir's voice which carried through, likely due to a rise in indigenous racism during this time period. In consequence, native populations were effectively wiped from areas such as Yellowstone and Glacier National Park. This created a binary of national park land and Native reservations; when in reality, the two should not have been separate entities. Green imperialism can exist in many forms, even on a more localized level. Green Imperialism serves as a negative impact for these underserved communities, creating a rift between environmentalism and social justice issues.

In more modern examples, green imperialism takes into consideration what Guha describes as conservationist elites, often First World, wealthy environmentalists who use their own theories and conservation tactics to infiltrate developing communities. The condescension involved often means moving into a rural community where a close relationship to the environment is necessary for survival, and proclaiming ineptitude of environmental awareness from residents of the land. This was specifically illustrated in the instance of the international program Project Tiger, where a network of parks and conserved forests excluded peasants and villages from their resources and land sites in order to protect the local and endangered wildlife, specifically that of the endangered Bengal Tiger.

A study published in the *Journal of Environmental Management* examined this displacement of resources, as well as native villagers' attitudes toward the new implementations

of the conservation program. Of those in opposition of the project, approximately 66% of those interviewed were specifically dissatisfied with the forest conservation aspect because of their inability to collect firewood, and 34% cited an inability to graze their livestock (Arjunan, M. et al. 2006). Poor sections of the community are specifically affected by this because many of these residents are fuel-wood collectors who sell their wood to wealthier landowners. Because this project specifically affects their livelihood, there is greater risk involved in a program such as this. Overall, the study found that those who did support the conservation program, Project Tiger were those with “nothing to lose” (Arjunan, M. et al 2006). Meanwhile, households that were continuously affected by crop loss due to climate change were less likely to support any sort of wildlife conservation, and those relying on forest resources were less likely to support the exclusion of locals from the forests. This example reveals how animal rights issues may veer into dangerous territory with green imperialist implications.

Overall, Guha’s critique of the green imperialism implemented on developing nations holds fast. He notes how most often these conservation programs are for the benefit of wealthy tourists and the more local and complex environmental issues at hand for villagers, “soil erosion, water shortages, and air and water pollution” are overlooked (Guha 4). This case further illustrates the detachment from ideologies such as the deep ecology movement, and actual connections between humans and the land. From these examples, it is clear a relationship between biocentric actions and human-focused sustainability is necessary for a more balanced understanding of environmentalism. Even more, these issues with deep ecology should serve as a warning to animal rights communities and the environmentalist movement as a whole, which must consider intersectionality (i.e. consideration of other communities and oppressed groups) in order to promote inclusiveness and effectiveness of their cause. While the theories of deep

ecology are significant in understanding the intrinsic value of nature and animals, the application of these theories must be utilized from an intersectional lens.

Deep ecology has come under fire for its problematic history and even racist undertones, which are also significant to note. Dave Foreman, a proponent of the deep ecology principles and founder of Earth First!, a radical ecocentrist organization, particularly exemplified these issues in a 1986 interview. Foreman explained that because of humanity's broadscope environmental damage, the United States should not be providing aid to those experiencing famine in Ethiopia, and instead should "let nature seek its own balance" (Feeley 2019). He further argued against immigration because it put "more pressure on the resources" of the county (Feeley 2019). This strain of environmentalism has been co-opted by conservative groups with ties to white supremacy and xenophobia. And while leaders of the mainstream environmental movement in the United States have removed themselves from this narrative, repudiating its claims, the 'greening of hate' has allowed for certain subsets of political groups to attach to these ideas under the guise of environmental conservation. This racist rhetoric will only undermine the conservation movement, anti-immigration sentiment further separating the United States' ability to work diligently with other nations to solve crises of a global scale (Rowland-Shea and Doshi 2021). Foreman's line of thinking also disparages developing nations with higher birth rates, placing a heavy and undue blame on underdeveloped populations, despite studies showing the wealthiest, more developed regions with a much higher ecological footprint and negative environmental impact (University of California Berkeley 2008). It is apparent the deep ecology movement has shifted to the side of radical right environmentalism with an anti-progressive bent, and has taken a turn from the mainstream. Despite this, the deep ecology movement is where animal rights may have found a support system.

Deep ecology would have allowed animal rights a tie-in to the environmental movement, the inclusion of their worthiness to life somewhat obvious as pertaining to these ideas and definitions. The main opposition to the unified causes of deep ecology and animal rights then seems to become the issue of anthropocentrism, providing these movements with a common root and a common enemy, a supposed shared value. However, this also lends the same controversy to the animal rights movement. While deep ecology has been rightfully criticized for its lack of compassion toward human rights affairs, animal rights has taken a similar blow. It may be worthwhile to consider that the tarnished reputation of deep ecology has helped to keep animal rights out of the mainstream. This harkens back to the case of the highway crash, which led to the deaths of hundreds of chickens, and sparked outrage from the community when PETA suggested a memorial. Several critics spoke up not in defense of animal lives, but of humans, suggesting that to care passionately about these animals takes away from and trivializes the human condition. Perhaps this is partly due to events such as Project Tiger, which emphasized animal life in place of humans, a critique which is valuable to weigh in terms of the relationship between animals and human populations. In consideration of deep ecology's ties to extremist groups and racist rhetoric, it is understandable why the movement has left a bad taste behind in the sphere of environmentalism. The grouping of animal liberation along with this sentiment, however, only serves to further separate the movements. A public distrust for Foreman's ideology has most certainly affected perceptions toward animal rights.

So what must animal rights activists do to reaffirm a common goal against oppression? There are several key points of intersectionality between animal rights and other areas of social and environmental justice. Emphasizing these points may allow for a smoother transition of animal rights into the public eye.



## **Positive Models of Connectivity and Overlap**

While there are many areas of separation between animal rights and environmentalism, as noted throughout this paper, I will also be discussing positive models of connectivity between the movements. I will discuss animal agriculture, or more specifically, veganism due to its unique overlap of environmental causes, animal welfare, and environmental justice. For this section, I will specifically examine a comprehensive investigative report which was published in 2019 by Direct Action Everywhere (DxE), an international grassroots animal rights network. I chose this report and this group because DxE is both one of the most mobilized animal rights groups working on undercover investigations inside of factory farms around the world. The report, titled “Inside Smithfield’s Toxic Pig Farms” connects issues of environmental justice and animal agriculture, exploring instances such as Smithfield’s spraying of toxic manure in North Carolina, and public health crises such as the discovery of potential dangerous zoonotic disease transmission present in these facilities. Through reports and work from groups such as DxE, the activism of animal rights groups has carried into human rights concerns, bonding the movements together indefinitely.

DxE’s Smithfield full investigation report was first published in 2018 but is an ongoing legal battle with this powerfully subsidized company. There are several key takeaways from this investigation: Smithfield Foods is a danger to public health due to its irresponsible use of pharmaceuticals and antibiotics, and the environmental hazards and risks that result from their practices tie into issues of environmental racism and injustice. Along with these truths, Smithfield is a major actor in ongoing animal cruelty that can no longer be shielded from the public’s eye.

By investigating Smithfield Foods pig farms in North Carolina, DxE found that hundreds of the animals on these farms suffer from the deadly Greasy Pig Disease (*Staphylococcus hyicus*) which is supplemented by entire rooms of pharmaceuticals and antibiotics, despite recent studies showing severe resistance to these supplements. Even more, these studies have shown that use of antibiotics in large-scale industrial farming has led to the creation of antibiotic-resistant “superbugs,” a major threat to public health. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, about 73 percent of antibiotics in the United States are going to animals being raised on factory farms. This is problematic because new strains of superbugs among humans are now becoming immune to medical aid, putting large populations at risk, especially the elderly, immune compromised, and children. The CDC has estimated that approximately two million people fall ill from antibiotic resistant bacteria and 23,000 die in the United States every year. Through Smithfield, major outbreaks such as a form of *E. coli* and staph infections can be traced back to these animals. In fact, a 2013 investigation by Consumer Reports sampled Smithfield pork chops and discovered 69 percent of the samples tested positive for *Yersinia enterocolitica*, a potentially deadly bacterium. *Salmonella* and *Staphylococcus aureus* were also found among the samples tested. This information is especially harrowing in the age of COVID-19, in which the world has already witnessed with horror how easily a pandemic may spread.

This investigation also brought to the light how these antibiotic-resistant infections are most prevalent in communities neighboring and surrounding these industrial pig farms. The communities around these farms face a greater risk of bacterial infections than most others, and are unfairly exposed to these hazards.

From this information, it is clear the severe health risks surrounding Smithfield Foods also relate to environmental racism tactics. DxE’s investigation further found that, specifically in

the North Carolina location, these hazards are extreme and ongoing. North Carolina has more pigs total than residents, and about 2,300 industrial farms. The pollution from these locations has abrupted in lawsuits and protests, residents noting the unequal distribution in certain neighborhoods and areas. Throughout North Carolina, large lagoons can be seen from airplane-heights, filled with blood, feces, urine, drugs, chemicals, and stilborn piglets. After a few months, the lagoons are emptied into a “spray” system and spread out in nearby fields. The waste creates major issues of water and air pollution in the community. And the situation is only worsening. In David H. Harris Jr.’s article “The Industrialization of Agriculture and Environmental Racism,” he notes how hog inventory on farms in North Carolina is accounting for the extreme increase in hog inventory nationally, increasing from 3.7 hogs on a single farm in 1991, to 9.5 million in 1997, an incredible statistic considering only 6 years. These CFAOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) have gained power through production economics and state and government policies that promote and favor tax policies for industrial farming (Harris 2000).

CFAOs are not only harmful to the environment and humans, they are dangerous. Lagoons have been known to break at times, and during the summer of 1995, there were seven spills total in North Carolina, hog waste “pouring into the waterways, resulting in massive fish-kills” (Harris 2000). This is a repeated event, and in 2016, Hurricane Matthew decimated the state, drowning 10 pig facilities underwater and breaking 15 lagoons into local waterways. The air pollution due to large amounts of evaporated ammonia gas and hydrogen sulfide from these farms and lagoon spraying have also settled onto these towns and waterways, including major water sources such as North Carolina’s Cape Fear River and the Pamlico Sound, where many low-income residents rely on fishing as a source of food and income (Harris 2000). Along with

these issues, many residents face breathing problems, respiratory illnesses, higher levels of stress and anxiety, along with several other health issues. A study conducted by the state's Department of Health and Human Services actually found that students at a certain middle school living within a 3 mile radius of a hog farm have far higher rates of asthma than their peers (UNC Report).

Overall, it is overwhelmingly people of low-income who are faced with these issues. A 2000 UNC study concluded "These facilities are located disproportionately in communities with higher levels of poverty, higher proportions of nonwhite persons and higher dependence on wells for household water supply" (S. Wing, S. Wolf 2000). CFAOs in North Carolina have managed to avoid requiring certain permits, rendering EPA-mandatory check-ins and regulations useless. Harris agrees that this is an environmental racism issue, stating that "[CFAOs] have located themselves in counties that have very high percentages of people who have been traditionally disenfranchised, people of color and the poor who have virtually no say in how these operations are affecting their lives" (Harris 2000). There are over 2 dozen lawsuits against Smithfield by residents of North Carolina, but results of these lawsuits are still in the works.

It is clear from the information presented in this report that animal agriculture holds ties to animal welfare, along with more human-centric and environmentally-focused disasters. In the Janice Cox and Jessica Bridgers piece titled "Why is Animal Welfare Important for Sustainable Consumption and Production?" the authors argue that giving "due concern to animal welfare provides many opportunities: Opportunities in market differentiation and segmentation; quality production; national reputation and trade; as well as livelihoods, sustainability and development" (Cox and Bridgers 2019). This piece argues for reduction, and even complete severance, in the use of animals in agriculture due to issues in sustainability and public health. In tying animal

welfare to agricultural practices, environmentalism will only benefit, creating a more positive space for production and protection of ecological systems, both human-focused and nonhuman. This is a specific sector of these movements where a tying together of the two will serve in the best interest of both. Moreover, this specific example reveals a unified cause for the movements, where both could join against the oppressive forces of CAFOs.

### **Moving Forward and Conclusion**

The separation between animal liberation and environmentalism is still felt today even in the more progressive of circles. This is because these areas of overlap are complex, oftentimes drawing our personal cultures and ideologies into the mix. It is clear, however, from these examples of alignment, that working in congruence with one another will only result in circumstances which unequivocally benefit both groups. Of course, this may be complicated in certain scenarios, such as that of the fur trade within Indigenous circles and animal rights groups. Ultimately, however, it can be concluded that a more open dialogue between the groups, working in unity against oppression, will bear greater results. After all, what is the cost of caring for an individual animal's life if applicable and possible? And what is the cost of holding a broad environmental context in mind when working under animal welfare standards? Weighing these concepts allows for a more informed path for contextualizing modern environmentalism and liberation today. Animals are arguably intricately tied to every aspect of the environment, domesticated or wild, and it is undue to exclude their voice from a constantly progressing world. In fact, it is the voice of the animals which may push us in the direction of a sustainable future. Concern for animal welfare will only ever push society in the direction of equality and justice. This is a divide which must be bridged for long-term success on both sides of the equation.

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