

If You Care About Animals, You're Behind Veganism

By Sande Nosonowitz, For Living and Being



Picture yourself on a bright sunny day in the Hudson Valley, walking down the street, admiring the flowers and trees, enjoying the warmth of the sun on your skin. You hear some disturbing noises and as you get closer, you see a young man beating his dog. You cry out, “Stop hurting that dog right now!” “What are you doing?” The young man looks up at you and tells you to back off and “mind your own business. “Who are you to judge me?” “You think you’re better than me?”

Are you judging the young man? Are you better than him? Or do you just want to protect an innocent animal from someone who is harming him?

Vegans, when they speak about veganism, are asking you not to cause harm or pay others to cause harm to animals. Vegans do not feel they are “better than” or “superior to” anyone — in fact, one of the reasons they are vegan is because they feel all beings should be free from harm. We want you to know, and trust that when you do know, you will judge for yourself, that a vegan life is kinder toward the animals, better for your own health and gentler on our fragile ecosystem. Few of us were vegan from birth. and we are all part of a culture of indoctrination — led to believe it is OK, even

normal, to eat the flesh of young animals and to eat and drink the secretions from exploited female cows and chickens.

By knowing what we can all know now (thank you, Google), we can begin to make informed choices. When we choose to continue slaughtering animals for our meals (with no nutritional necessity to do so, dishonoring the health of our bodies and the planet we live on), we partake in willful ignorance and cognitive dissonance. It's like wearing a mask because everyone else has a mask on. Vegans are asking you to remove the mask, and welcome the big reveal — your true nature. **If you believe it is wrong to hurt and kill animals, you already believe in the basic philosophy behind veganism.**

Dr. Will Tuttle, in his extraordinary book, "**The World Peace Diet**," explains something we should know. He tells us, "The main reason animals suffer so horribly in slaughterhouses is that they must be alive when their throats are slit so that their still-beating hearts can pump the blood out of their bodies and partially dry up their flesh. If they were killed by some other means and then their corpses were cut up, the flesh would be so drenched with blood that no one would want to eat it."

I am that person on the street crying out, please stop. Please, stop hurting these animals. I am not judging you. I am you. I had to learn, to grow, to understand so much before I had the wherewithal to change, even amid the enormous social pressure to keep my mask on and my feelings hidden from the truth.

Tuttle describes the social pressures: “Social pressure from friends, family and associates together with market pressure from the food and medical industries, exert a powerful force on all of us to eat animal foods and curb our awareness of the repercussions of our actions. But, it is the height of irony that, amid all this pressure, we may respond angrily to people who question our eating of animal foods with, 'Don't tell me what to eat!' We've already been told, and are being told in no uncertain terms, what to eat.”

Now, more than ever, we see the damage of social pressure and how it can promote racism, intolerance and violence. The social pressure to continue to harm, eat, wear, abuse and exploit animals is enormous — it looms over us three times a day as we sit down to eat. It is there when celebrities try to convince us that wearing fur, leather, feathers, silk and wool is high fashion instead of animal cruelty. It is there at zoos, circuses, rodeos and marine parks, teaching our children that captivity and abuse is acceptable for animals, as long as we're entertained. The social pressure to deny the suffering of animals is absolutely everywhere. This denial perpetuates a world in which unfathomable suffering is unrecognized, ignored or made to seem normal.

“The hope for the animals of tomorrow is to be found in a human culture which learns to feel beyond itself. We must learn empathy, we must learn to see into the eyes of an animal and feel that their life has value because they are alive. Nothing else will do.” —
Kenneth White

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