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## Chapter Four

# Human Supremacy, Post-Speciesist Ideology, and the Case for Anti-Colonialist Veganism

Corey Wrenn

## INTRODUCTION

Nonhuman Animal<sup>1</sup> rights theory has long been divided in regard to the degree to which moral concern should be extended to other animals (Rollin, 2006). While many see little conflict with Nonhuman Animal use, others reject it completely in favor of liberationist, vegan, and anti-speciesist goals. Increasingly, many attempt to locate a moral middle ground and support the growth of “humane”<sup>2</sup> Nonhuman Animal agriculture systems or the maintenance of “symbiotic” relationships. This division over moral inclusion is a troubling one for those animals facing extreme violence and violation. For these communities, institutionalized oppression has long since reached crisis levels: more than 65 billion Nonhuman Animals were killed for human consumption in 2013 alone (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States). This number does not include the millions of other animals killed by vivisection, homelessness, and “hunting,” or the billions of animals also pulled from the oceans as food or “bycatch.” Given the staggering level of violence committed against other animals, the belief that use and death are not present harms for other animals represents a problematic ideology that protects systemic discrimination against nonhuman communities.

This paper first argues that use and death do indeed constitute a harm, therefore, no amount of “humaneness” or institutional reform could make the consumption of a Nonhuman Animal ethically permissible. It is further argued that veganism best realizes the human moral obligation to Nonhuman Animals because it recognizes nonhuman personhood and right to life. End-

ing the exploitative use and killing of Nonhuman Animals is the most pressing concern for vegan ethicists, but a post-liberation society will entail further conflicts in regard to human use and Nonhuman Animal autonomy. This paper contributes to the dialogue of human-nonhuman relationships by extending the vegan ethic to include an ongoing commitment to repairing Nonhuman Animal communities devastated by human colonialism and imperialism. The project of human supremacy has subsumed Nonhuman Animals into systems of oppression that would continue to cause suffering and harm even in post-liberation vegan world. Therefore, a policy of noninterference is not recommended. Oppressive relationships with Nonhuman Animals (that is, continued human use) should cease, but a major component of dismantling oppression is the engagement of restorative work. Human aid workers and allies should take care not to reinstitute a pattern of colonialism by interfering with the independence of Nonhuman Animals and the particular cultures of their various species groups and ecosystems.

#### THE PROBLEM WITH CONSUMPTION

At least since the inception of welfare efforts in Western nations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some humans have been working to increase the political recognition of Nonhuman Animals as objects of moral concern. Following many years of advocacy and reform, the public may subsequently be under the impression that violence against other animals has either been eradicated or is in the process of elimination. Certainly, the state, industries, and elites that benefit from speciesism will have an interest in facilitating this societal attitude (Wrenn, 2013). As a consequence, the consumption of Nonhuman Animals may be justified or permitted under the influence of this post-speciesist ideology. Attitude research indicates that humans are opposed to violence against other animals, but most are unaware of the continued suffering involved with institutionalized use (Prunty & Apple, 2013). This false consciousness regarding the status of other animals is likely a result of industry's advertising power, as well as its tremendous influence over the state and media (Nibert, 2013). The welfare approaches favored by large, professionalized non-profits may also be warping public awareness (Wrenn, 2013). Post-speciesist ideology presents a major impediment to social justice efforts because it masks continued human supremacy. Just as many white-identified Americans can point to highly paid athletes of color and Barack Obama's presidency as evidence of "post-racism," so can humans point to the proliferation in "humane" products as evidence of "post-speciesism."

If it is recognized that there are no defensible grounds for excluding Nonhuman Animals from the moral community (Rollin, 2006), it would follow that humans ought to extend equal consideration to other animals

(Francione, 2000). According to Francione, the principle of equal consideration means taking the interests of other animals seriously. That is, instead of offering birds slightly bigger cages as reformist approaches may attempt, humans are obliged not to cage them at all. Humans cannot claim to *seriously* care about the suffering of Nonhuman Animals, nor can humans insist that other animals matter morally, if oppressive behaviors like eating hamburgers, drinking cows' milk, and visiting "zoos" are considered permissible. Francione's (2000) notion of equal consideration recognizes that Nonhuman Animals, like humans, have a morally significant interest in avoiding suffering. This position presupposes that being used as a resource inherently entails unnecessary suffering. Therefore, extending moral concern to Nonhuman Animals will necessitate that their flesh, excretions, and labor no longer be consumed. It is argued that using Nonhuman Animals as resources, fatally or not, constitutes harm to these individuals who have an interest in not experiencing exploitation or suffering.

The notion that *all* use is harmful to Nonhuman Animals is admittedly contentious. Yet, even those uses which do not entail *direct* harm to other animals (like the consumption of corpses that are the result of automobile collisions or natural death) still perpetuate the notion that Nonhuman Animals are nonpersons, objects, and consumable resources. Just as most humans would not eat human "road kill" or recently deceased companion animals (because they continue to be viewed as *persons*, not objects), anti-speciesist humans would not think to eat the bodies of deers<sup>3</sup> (or any other species traditionally viewed as consumable) who have died accidentally or by natural causes.

The preservation of Nonhuman Animal corpses for display "taxidermy" is similarly objectifying. While not all "taxidermy" patrons are "hunters" and many "taxidermists" work with the bodies of Nonhuman Animals who have died naturally or by accident, the practice reduces Nonhuman Animals to resources of human pleasure and amusement. Alternatively, the taxidermy of human bodies is often met with disgust and is generally considered immoral. Indeed, it is regularly the stuff of horror movies. Even displaying the preserved remains of very ancient humans creates moral unease, with some scholars insisting that deceased humans have the "right" to remain undisturbed (Bahn, 1984). Persons with privilege (namely, Western white men of means) have historically exploited the remains of vulnerable groups to their advantage, but legal reforms that reflect moral developments have begun to curb this practice (Hight, 2006). The understanding is not that dead persons have actual rights that can be infringed, but rather that the deceased bodies represent *persons* and a moral society should treat those persons with some amount of reverence (unless the person gave consent to dissection, organ donation, etc. prior to death). The intention of upholding the "rights" of dead persons is also a matter of respecting the cultures and communities they are

connected to. Western science has been responsible for a considerable amount of post-mortem colonization, extracting countless Egyptian mummified corpses and other bodies from nonwhite, developing countries for research and display in Western laboratories, classrooms, and museums. Western imperialism allowed for this looting as well as the systematic objectification of vulnerable cultures, and human imperialism seems to have accomplished the same with vulnerable nonhuman species. The display of Nonhuman Animal bodies for the human gaze is relevant to animal ethics specifically because it reinforces human supremacy. Nibert (2002) notes that viewing countless dead and mounted Nonhuman Animal bodies in human institutions normalizes oppression and hierarchies of power. It is “[ . . . ] yet another powerful socialization device about the role of devalued others in society” (p. 216), and it “[ . . . ] objectifies and demonizes<sup>4</sup> other animals and promotes anthropocentrism [ . . . ]” (p. 217). The use of Nonhuman Animal bodies thus continues to represent and reinforce the systemic oppression of other animals. The consequences of this superficially nonviolent use works to protect the normalcy of explicitly violent use.

Another argument that is frequently raised in discussions over the morality of human-nonhuman relationships is the one made in favor of “pet-keeping.” However, seemingly symbiotic relationships with other animals are also problematic. Many view the inherently paternalistic relationship between humans and companion animals as a mutually beneficial relationship (Scully, 2002; Winograd & Winograd, Forthcoming), but this belief obscures and naturalizes structural discrimination. Hall explains, “Domestication of animals into pets not only takes these animals out of their own world and puts them into our houses and businesses, but physically alters them so that they, like domesticated cattle, are forever exiled from their free-living state” (2010, p. 192). Companion animals are both legally and socially considered consumable items. Dogs, cats, horses, and others are purposefully bred into existence for human enjoyment. While some may seek to treat companion animals well, it remains that they are their property (Francione, 2000). This means that humans can create a considerable amount of suffering for their companions that is well within legal limits, including, but not limited to, tail docking, ear cropping, rape and forced pregnancy (otherwise known as “breeding”), genetic manipulation that leaves animals susceptible to painful physical and mental illnesses and premature death, “breaking” (forcing animals to accept a bridle, saddle, pack, and/or “rider”), surrendering animals to “shelters” (many of which utilize lethal means for managing the facility’s intake), or simply giving them away, abandoning them, isolating them, exposing them to the elements, and separating them from their family members or friends. Companion animals are maintained in a state of constant dependence: they rely on their human “owners” to feed them, water them, shelter them, and provide them with adequate stimulation, protection from harm,

and necessary medical care. Domestication ensures that most companion animals are no longer capable of surviving without human interference. The institution of domestication (or what Nibert (2013) calls “domeseccration”) is itself a form of systematic oppression. It puts Nonhumans within the full control of humans for the benefit of humans. Given the inescapable power dynamics that structure the society in which most animals inhabit, “mutually beneficial” relationships of this kind inevitably work in the service of human supremacy.

### DEATH AS A HARM

In regard to the *direct* consumption of Nonhumans (that which necessitates their death), whether or not death is recognized as a harm to Nonhuman Animals is critical to moral decision-making. Rollin explains that life itself is evidence to the importance of continued interest in living: “If being alive is the basis for being a moral object and if all other interests and needs are predicated upon life, then the most basic, morally relevant aspect of a creature is its life. We may correlatively suggest that any animal, therefore, has a right to life” (2006, p. 110). Yet, this right to life is sometimes questioned based on a Nonhuman Animal’s possession of cognitive abilities. The argument that death is not a harm for Nonhuman Animals is generally based on an animal’s ability to be forward thinking with categorical desires. Cigman (1981) emphasizes that the awareness of death is particularly important: “To be a possible subject of misfortunes which are not merely unpleasant experiences, one must be able to desire and value certain things. [...] the radical and exclusive nature of the transition from life to death must be understood” (p. 150-151). Theoretically, then, a painless death would not be a harm to Nonhuman Animals if it could be scientifically demonstrated that these animals cannot conceptualize death. However, even for those Nonhuman Animals who may not be able to conceptualize their long-term future possibilities, they do indeed, regardless of awareness, possess long-term *possibilities*. In this sense, Cigman’s notion of capacity could be understood as potential. Both Nonhuman Animals *and* human animals, for the most part, possess potential (Regan, 2004). Furthermore, the proposed inability to conceptualize long-term possibilities is not unique to Nonhuman Animals; it also applies to mentally disabled and very young humans. Francione (2000) adds that the theoretical reliance on an animal’s capacity to forwardly think is speciesist. This is because necessitating such a requirement for moral inclusion reflects the epistemological limitations of humans. These barriers will prevent an accurate understanding of what death truly means to other animals. This human limitation should not be equated with a disinterest in continued life for other animals.

Even those theorists who seek to incorporate the diverse experiences of the animal kingdom can be limited by human supremacist values. While Regan recognizes death as a harm to Nonhuman Animals, he does not go so far as to equate a nonhuman life with that of a human (Regan, 2004; Rudavsky, 2009). Regan's notion of comparable harm argues that two harms are comparable when they detract equally from each individual's welfare, or from the welfare of two or more individuals. Harm experienced by Nonhuman Animals, he argues, is not comparable to that experienced by humans because of variations in awareness and potential. However, if it is recognized that there are no defensible grounds for excluding Nonhuman Animals from the moral concern that humans enjoy, it follows that the privilege afforded to human life would be contrary to the principle of equal consideration. Likewise, if death is a harm for Nonhuman Animals and death is also a harm for the human, equal consideration is necessitated; both humans and other animals would have an interest in avoiding death. The process of assigning degrees of harm based on subjective human assumptions which suppose that death is somehow more a harm to humans promotes a post-speciesist ideology. That is, this theoretical process utilizes the presumption that speciesist discrimination has been addressed in order to excuse continued speciesist discrimination. It is a moral negotiation which obscures an unequal relationship that protects human interests above all others. Because human privilege is engaged for the power to define worth, harm, and right to life for vulnerable Nonhuman Animals, this process protects human supremacist social relations.

As a result of human supremacist influences on Nonhuman Animal ethics and post-speciesist ideologies that perpetuate the notion that Nonhuman Animal use does not necessarily entail suffering, there is a widespread societal belief that humans can consume other animals without causing them harm. Singer theorizes that death (and presumably use in general) is not a moral wrong if it is accepted that the Nonhuman Animals who are impacted lack self-consciousness, lead a pleasant life, are not members of an endangered species, are killed painlessly, and do not cause duress to others by dying (1993, p. 133). This is an idealized scenario that does not currently exist, and, for a number of reasons, cannot practically be achieved without the realization of science fiction imaginaries. For the present time, it is not feasible to rear and slaughter a Nonhuman Animal for human purposes without undermining some aspect of their telos. For instance, agricultural practices ensure that family structures will be disrupted, causing significant duress to others. The millions of mother cows who bellow for days at the loss of their calves in the dairy industry exemplify this trauma. At the very least, the eventual death necessitated for consumption is a harm if it is accepted that, as Rollin argues, the state of being alive inherently entails a desire to stay alive, and, as Francione argues, humans are not able to fully comprehend the subjective

experiences of other species and are subsequently unable to make accurate determinations about nonhuman awareness of the self or death.

The desire for pleasurable consumption and freedom from the uncomfortable feelings roused by cognitive dissonance ensures that this idealistic conception of a happy life and happy death is perpetuated at the societal level. Consumers and Nonhuman Animal rights advocates alike can become preoccupied with alleviating the many moral aversions identified by Singer's idealized scenario to the detriment of anti-speciesism efforts (Francione, 1996). Post-speciesist ideology occupies the human imagination and subsequently obscures the fundamental moral inconsistency of Nonhuman Animal use. It is likely that a narrow focus on Singer's unachievable vision may prevent any serious consideration of the oppressive reality faced by Nonhumans used as resources. Rachels (2008) warns that welfare reforms normalize the violence in human relationships with other animals, thus distracting from the systemic oppression imposed on them:

It is true enough that, if you are opposed to cruelty, you should prefer that the meat-production business be made less brutal. But it is also true that, if you are opposed to cruelty, you have reason not to participate in social practices that are brutal as they stand. As it stands, meat producers and consumers cooperate to maintain the unnecessary system of pig farms, feedlots, and slaughterhouses. Anyone who finds the system objectionable has reason not to help keep it going. The point would be quickly conceded if the victims were people. (p. 263)

The position that Nonhuman Animals could theoretically be violated, used, killed, and consumed in a manner that protects the desires of oppressors without posing harm to the oppressed is a position that works in the service of human supremacy. As it is a decidedly more radical and transformative approach, the vegan position is subsequently overshadowed by the powerful and alluring claimmaking of speciesist institutions and their non-profit allies. Because veganism calls for the complete cessation of Nonhuman Animal consumption and thus requires a commitment to significant attitude and behavior changes (changes that are not required by the "humane" use perspective), it is more easily dismissed as utopian or impractical.

While Singer protects the possibility of using vulnerable bodies for the benefit of those in power so long as that use is done "humanely," he also argues that humans should ideally avoid consumption: "In any case, at the level of practical moral principles, it would be better to reject altogether the killing of animals for food, unless one must do so to survive. Killing animals for food makes us think of them as objects that we can use as we please" (1993, p. 134). Much of Singer's work explores the root issue of Nonhuman Animal objectification and subjugation, however, he continues to stand as a major proponent "humane" speciesism, legitimizing it as an ethical alterna-

tive to veganism (Singer & Mason, 2006). Francione counters that use is incongruent with a full recognition of Nonhuman Animal interests:

[ . . . ] we could, of course, treat animals “better” but that, apart from the economic realities that militate against such improved treatment, to improve animal treatment would be no different from enacting a rule that it is better to beat slaves less often. We would still be treating animals as things because we would be denying the application of the principle of equal consideration to animal interests. (Francione, 2000, p. 149)

The rising popularity of “humane” Nonhuman Animal products does not indicate progress towards liberation; rather, *it indicates further entrenchment of oppression*. Indeed, this oppression becomes even more insidious and impermeable, as it is normalized as something that is “natural” and mutually beneficial to humans and nonhumans alike. As Adams (2003) notes, it is this notion of pleasurable consumption—that Nonhuman Animals (and other vulnerable groups like women) are happy to service their oppressors—that makes oppression a formidable force. When oppressed groups are understood to be complacent in their oppression and are also thought to benefit from the system of inequality, challenging the system becomes especially difficult. For example, pornography has become mainstream under the protection of post-feminist ideology. The result being that the human imagination has been shaped to accept exploitative and violent sexual relationships as desirable, while female victims are framed as “porn stars” with lucrative careers who “enjoy what they do.” Likewise, the mainstreaming of violence against animals and post-speciesist ideology shapes the human imagination about willing Nonhuman Animal victims on idyllic farmlands with caring “farmers” and full bellies. Structures of oppression are normalized and romanticized when the victims of oppression are painted as beneficiaries. Modifying and reforming consumption practices generally works to reduce the moral awareness. A more appropriate fulfillment of humanity’s moral obligation to other animals will entail the disruption of these ideologies and a restructuring of the systems they protect.

#### VEGANISM AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE

Veganism is an ethical alternative to the idealized human/nonhuman relationship of oppression which entails an abstinence from Nonhuman Animal products. Wherever possible, vegans do not consume any animal-derived product in any form; this includes food, clothing, toiletries, etc. (“Vegan Society,” n.d.). Veganism is more than a diet or a lifestyle, however. It also exists as a political resistance to human supremacy (Torres, 2007). Veganism is differentiated from vegetarianism, as vegetarianism seeks only to exclude

the flesh of other species from the human diet and is limited in its aim to eliminate non-food Nonhuman Animal products from consumption patterns (i.e. “leather” and mainstream toiletries which contain slaughterhouse renderings). Furthermore, dairy and egg industries enact comparable levels of structural violence on nonhuman species (Singer & Mason, 2006). In effect, vegetarianism as a political position fails to address the human supremacist projects of consumption and use. Vegans also reject “organic” and “humanely-raised” Nonhuman Animal products, as consuming these products necessitates the objectification, use, and harm of other animals.

Because veganism is a form of protest, it generally entails a challenge to the exploitation of Nonhuman Animals in any situation. This protest includes resistance to rodeos, circuses, experimentation, and sometimes domestication for companionship. This protest is often intersectional as well. Most vegan ethicists, advocates, and organizations recognize that there is a connection between the consumption of Nonhuman Animal products (including “humanely-raised” or “organic” products) and the detrimental impacts on the environment, human health, and human justice (speciesism is thought to be entangled with sexism, racism, classism, etc.) (Nibert, 2013). It should be clarified that several variations of vegan protest exist across cultures and movements. Veganism is sometimes promoted as a diet, while at other times it exists as a religious artifact. However, ethical veganism as a means of resisting oppression is perhaps the variation that is most relevant to extending justice to vulnerable groups,<sup>5</sup> both human and nonhuman. In particular, veganism prioritizes the interests of Nonhuman Animals as persons who are worthy of justice, equality, and liberty. According to this anti-oppression vegan ethic, implementing a moral obligation to other animals would necessitate a cessation in their consumption by humans. The consumption of Nonhumans, be it literally in the form of flesh or secretions or indirectly through fashion, experimentation, or amusement in the form of “pets,” zoos, rodeos, etc., is neither necessary nor morally consistent with the principle of equal consideration. If it is understood that death and use is harm to Nonhuman Animals, veganism is necessary for accurately recognizing them as objects of moral concern. Practically all Nonhuman Animal use can be reduced to matters of pleasure or convenience, and neither of these privileges constitutes sufficient reason to deny Nonhuman Animals moral consideration (Francione, 2000). Even instances of Nonhuman Animal use that are justified as necessary (e.g. vivisection for scientific advancement<sup>6</sup> or killing and consumption in survival situations) are nevertheless in violation of equal consideration and reflect human supremacist interests. If a Nonhuman Animal is used because that species wields less social power and is thus vulnerable to exploitation, this is speciesism. In other words, while human oppression of other animals is often justified for a number of reasons (“humane” use, “symbiotic” use, “necessary” use, comparable lack of awareness, etc.), when

humans engage their social power to subjugate other animals and specifically take advantage of their nonhuman status in the process, they engage speciesism and human supremacy.

It is worth considering that Nonhuman Animals also commit acts of violence, use, and consumption against other animals. However, these behaviors do not represent oppression in the sociological sense because they are not enacted as an act of *structural* discrimination. In other words, Nonhuman Animals do not have the political capability of building a social structure that benefits them and systematically disadvantages other species. They are primarily at the whim of human activities, evolution, and circumstance. Consider, for instance, that many communities of color engage violence or prejudice against one other, but no community of color wields the social power necessary to engage institutional oppression as whites can and do. Indeed, much intra-racial violence is a result of social inequality perpetuated by white supremacy. Black-on-Black killing in impoverished urban areas, for example, is not an exercise in Black oppression, but rather a reaction to environmental stressors and disruptions related to a white supremacist society that underserves and exploits Black communities. These include, but are not limited to, segregation, poverty, unemployment, absent social services, and police harassment. This is not a society built by Blacks to serve Black interests; therefore, Black-on-Black violence cannot be understood to be institutionalized. Rather, it is a consequence of white oppression.

Likewise, humanity exists as an oppressing class that enacts institutionalized violence on vulnerable Nonhuman Animal communities, meaning that the human exploitation of nonhuman communities is generally not a true matter of survival or necessity, but a matter of systemic privilege. Humans do not need to use Nonhuman Animals, but do so because human supremacy allows for the practice as a means to grow and protect their privilege. As a result, intra-species violence taking place within nonhuman communities is strategically subsumed within human supremacist ideologies: Nonhuman Animals kill each other, so it is excusable for humans to kill other animals as well. Just as intra-racial violence is frequently referenced as a means to obscure the role of white supremacy, intra-species violence is used to normalize or naturalize violence in the animal kingdom, thus absconding the project of human supremacy from moral investigation. Vegans will recognize this logic in the diversionary tropes that point to lions killing gazelles, predatory food chains, and the "circle of life." That is, instead of addressing the presence of structural discrimination which works in the favor of oppressing classes, the focus is displaced on non-structural violence enacted by individuals of the oppressed classes. Again, these acts are related to survival or as a reaction to environmental stress, but they are nonetheless highlighted to the effect of protecting systems of inequality. While it may be true that lions kill gazelles, humans are not obligate carnivores. Nor is the lion's

survivalist predation comparable to the systemic destruction of billions of cows, chickens, pigs, sheep, and fish to produce unhealthy convenience foods.<sup>7</sup>

## THE ROLE OF VEGANISM AND HUMAN ALLIES POST-LIBERATION

It has thus far been argued that all human use of Nonhuman Animals is, to some extent, problematic in that it supports a system of human supremacy. For instance, consuming "road kill" and naturally expired Nonhuman Animal corpses may not constitute a harm to those individuals who are consumed, but it does constitute a harm to Nonhuman Animals as a group. Even if consumption were to take place completely free of individual suffering, the persistence of consumption as an acceptable practice to impose on vulnerable populations would speak to the maintenance of a speciesist system of oppression. I have introduced veganism as a political resistance to this speciesist oppression. Specifically, I have framed this protest as one that recognizes human violence against other animals as a structural phenomenon. It also rejects the possibility of reforming or humane-washing use, as it continues to serve human interests. "Humane" reforms function primarily to assuage human discomfort (an added value that is routinely capitalized on by industries and non-profits). However, this absolutist position certainly leaves room for many questions in regard to how a societal restructuring would ideally be achieved and what the end results might look like. If all use is problematic, what will be the future of human-nonhuman relationships?

Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) argue that a major failing in Nonhuman Animal liberation efforts is that vegan activists insist that the human relationship to other animals should be one of non-interference. That is, there should be no relationship at all. It is unclear, however, if this mindset is actually indicative of prominent vegan discourse. For instance, Hall's theory of Nonhuman Animal rights prioritizes autonomy and freedom: "It's about simply letting them be," and "[ . . . ] letting them thrive on their own terms in untamed spaces" (2010, p. 14). Yet even Hall's strict "hands off" approach to human-nonhuman relations recognizes the importance of building a "hospitable world" (p. 257), a project that will necessitate some amount of prosocial interference. Most individuals go vegan because they have a deeply felt appreciation and concern for Nonhuman Animals (Cron & Pobocik, 2013; Haverstock & Forgays, 2012; Hussar & Harris, 2010), and it is not the case that many believe that Nonhuman Animals should be freed and then subsequently abandoned. The public support of many "wildlife" rehabilitation centers that offer assistance to non-"game" species like vultures, squirrels, and opossums lends some evidence to this attitude. The popularity of trap-

neuter-release programs and the tendency for caring individuals to feed and supervise feral cat colonies also speaks to this disinterest in abandoning free-living Nonhuman Animals in need.

While it may be inaccurate that vegan abolitionist theory is one of separation without interference, it is true that a meaningful position will need to acknowledge Nonhuman Animals as communities within a human-dominated society and should seek to accommodate this vulnerability. Hall makes clear that the ideologies of domination must be disrupted before any form of meaningful Nonhuman Animal autonomy can be achieved: "Without a whole paradigm shift, animal rights means nothing" (2010, p. 2013). Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) suggest that one way to accomplish this is to conceptualize Nonhuman Animals as *citizens*. Depending on their species and domestication status, they may be categorized as sovereign free-living persons, migrants who inhabit human spaces, or full citizen persons if they are domesticated. As citizens, Nonhuman Animals would be retained within humanity's political sphere of moral obligation. Indeed, a vegan ethic would be ineffective if it should advocate for the liberation of other animals only to ignore their subsequent fate. A similar failing is evidenced in the aftermath of African American emancipation. Without addressing the persistent consequences of generations of colonization and bondage, liberation without continued structural assistance seriously inhibits African American access to equal opportunities. True civil rights require more than physical freedom; continued assistance and political recognition will be necessary. Therefore, vegan ethics are concerned specifically with Nonhuman Animals as victims of human oppression. Liberated and autonomous animals are still victims of this oppression if they are denied the assistance they need to thrive. Active efforts to combat the negative impact of colonization, domestication, and systemic violence will also be necessary to assist future generations who will also experience lingering and cumulative disadvantages. As Hall suggests, humans should "let them be" and work to end speciesist oppression. However, full autonomy should not also entail erasing Nonhuman Animals from humanity's political sphere, as this could leave them vulnerable and short-changed.

As members of a moral community, humans should also be obligated to provide services to Nonhuman Animals who may require assistance even if the need is unrelated to a legacy of human supremacy. I have argued that use entails harm, and this includes interfering with free living animals to suit human needs or domesticating them. Suffering is a harm for Nonhuman Animals, as is their death, even when not directly imposed by human activity. Allowing Nonhuman Animals to suffer and die is still failing humanity's moral obligation to them. With human privilege comes responsibility. Therefore, humans remain obligated to act as allies for other animals where appropriate and with respect for Nonhuman Animal autonomy.

Mitigating situations of conflict will be particularly challenging in a post-liberation landscape. The ability to decide which instances of Nonhuman Animal suffering and death are most important (particularly within a carnivorous ecosystem) will ultimately reflect human privilege. How the influence of human supremacy might be overcome in human relationships with other animals will be difficult even within a vegan framework. I suggest that anti-racist discourse might be useful to this conundrum. Many vulnerable human populations suffering from centuries of colonization are struggling to overcome the legacy of domination and become self-sufficient in their efforts to better their situations. Western whites are largely responsible for the litany of social, economic, and political problems facing communities of color, thus, to some degree, it is Western whites who must work to dismantle their oppressive actions and assist people of color in their fight for justice and freedom. However, social justice workers must also be cognizant of the complicating presence of the "white savior" complex. That is, whites who seek to correct situations of injustice within communities of color *for* communities of color are imposing yet another form of colonization when they seek to impose their own solutions (Cole, 2012).

Perhaps, then, when considering how to manage those ethical conflicts with Nonhuman Animals which are human created, social justice workers might also be careful not to impose a colonialist approach in dictating how these ethical conflicts are resolved. Hall sees humanity's need to control and dominate as a major encumbrance to ending speciesism, but she also sees these traits as problematic for advocacy efforts. Humans should not replicate domination in their efforts to help. First and foremost, humans have a responsibility to stop oppressing. For example, humans should stop "fishing" and curtail pollution because it is harmful to free-living animals in the oceans. However, humans should be wary about dictating how those ocean dwellers manage suffering and death within their own communities. Continuing with the ocean example, humans should be hesitant to prevent dolphins from killing and eating jellyfishes. Jellyfishes have millions of years of evolutionary progress that have equipped them to deal with violence committed by dolphins. It is not within human jurisdiction to manage how jellyfish cope (or how dolphins survive). In these cases, we should not impose our "human savior" complex on them, as this would represent another act of human colonization in Nonhuman Animal communities. This is not to say humans should always err on the side of letting "nature take its course." In situations where human privilege can be enacted to assist Nonhuman Animals in a way that respects their autonomy (and does not interfere with the autonomy of others in the society or ecosystem), humans should be obliged to help.

In situations of conflict that result from human oppression, humans have an obligation to intervene as well. Areas where Nonhuman Animals have become "invasive" as a consequence of human behavior and are causing



difficulties for other Nonhuman Animals, for instance, would likely require intervention. Humans should seek to protect both the vulnerable communities *and* the domesticated or “invasive” species in a manner that respects the interests of both parties as much as is reasonably possible. For example, “feral” cat colonies that are committing acts of violence on birds, mice, and chipmunks as a matter of survival are a human responsibility because this situation is one of moral conflict that is human created. In this case, humans would have an obligation to protect free-living animals hurt by human-created domesticated cats and feline homelessness. Feral cats might be targeted for trap-neuter-release programs, provided alternate food sources, or relocated to sanctuaries. In another example, largely herbivorous black bears may be driven to commit more frequent acts of violence against other free-living animals as their homes are destroyed by human institutions and their normal plant-based food sources are diminished. In this case, humans would be obligated to intervene to protect those animals hurt by this human-produced situation. Providing bears with alternate food sources and improving their habitable spaces might be appropriate human interventions. Even in a post-liberation world, the impacts of human supremacy will continue to disadvantage nonhuman communities. Therefore, humans will remain obligated to repair the autonomy of other animals by dismantling human supremacist structural conditions. Part of this obligation will also necessitate humans becoming allies and active participants in the project of species-inclusive social justice.

### CONCLUSION

The moral consideration of Nonhuman Animals often demonstrates an unfortunate inconsistency between theory and practice. It is an inconsistency that recognizes Nonhuman Animals as possessing moral worth, while stopping short of demanding a cessation of their use. If it is accepted that Nonhumans are worthy of humanity’s moral concern and if it is accepted that use and death constitutes a violation of telos, it cannot also be acceptable to continue the consumption of Nonhuman Animals. This argument is particularly pertinent with the rising interest in the “humane” food products and alternative food systems. Regardless of the degree of “humaneness” attained, the death of the Nonhuman Animals for human benefit still constitutes harm. Indeed, the belief that Nonhuman Animals can be used at all is indicative of human supremacy. Likewise, the belief that Nonhuman Animals can be used in a way that also respects their interests represents the false consciousness of post-speciesist ideology. As an oppressed social group, Nonhuman Animals remain vulnerable to human privilege. All human-nonhuman relationships should be understood in this context.

As a political protest, veganism challenges human privilege by positioning Nonhuman Animals as objects of moral concern who are worthy of equal consideration. Veganism recognizes the personhood of other animals. Importantly, this ethical framework encompasses more than liberation. I have identified the position of non-interference as both misapplied and illogical. A vegan ethic should not abandon liberated Nonhuman Animals, as they would continue to suffer the ill effects of several millennia of violent speciesism. Therefore, ending use is presented only as the first step in the long and complicated process of repairing the damage inflicted by a legacy of human supremacy. These reparations should take care not to replicate colonialist practices and should also respect the independence and self-determination of nonhuman communities. In a post-liberation world, humans must accept that other animals are capable agents. I have suggested that human privilege should instead be put in the service of social justice. This will entail a cessation of use and a new role for humans as allies.

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## NOTES

1. “Nonhuman Animal(s)” is capitalized to denote their status as a distinct social group.
2. Euphemisms, misleading terms, and speciesist terms are placed in quotations to denote their problematic nature and contested meaning.
3. “Deers” has been pluralized to denote that they are individuals. The term “deer,” “fish,” and “sheep,” speaks to individual animals in mass terms, which is objectifying.
4. Preserved Nonhuman Animal corpses are often positioned and portrayed as vicious and aggressive, and therefore deserving of their subjugation and death. Nibert explains that stories and narratives are constructed around the dead bodies of other animals in such a way that human supremacy is normalized.
5. Veganism has been an important component of Nonhuman Animal rights efforts since the early 1800s, but it first appeared as an explicit political position or “movement” in the 1940s with the founding of The Vegan Society in the United Kingdom (Phelps, 2007).
6. Vivisection stands as one of the most contentious forms of Nonhuman Animal use, generally protected under the guise of “necessity.” However, research indicates that most animal-based research is seriously flawed and persists primarily as a profitable mechanism of the pharmaceutical-medical complex. In other words, sentient test subjects are used as a matter of convenience, not necessity (Knight, 2011).
7. Nonhuman Animals are also largely regarded as moral patients, and are generally thought incapable of moral decision-making (Wyckoff, 2014). Biologists have suggested that many nonhuman species do possess morality, however (Bekoff & Pierce, 2009). I chose to omit this argument because it detracts from the all-important lowered social position of all Nonhuman Animals within human society. It is this vulnerable and oppressed position that accounts for the vast majority of unjustifiable death and suffering among sentient communities.