

## It's Time for Social Justice Advocates to Stop Bashing the Animal Rights Movement and Start Embracing It

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I know why they do it so much - it's easier to mock the suffering of a marginalized group than acknowledge our own privilege. It's something that the radical left completely understands about other oppressed groups but chooses to ignore when it comes to nonhuman animals because, in this case, leftists are the ones doing the oppressing. But seriously, this shit needs to stop right now.

### Shifting Focus

Shifting focus is probably the most effective tool social justice advocates (SJAs) use to ignore the nonhuman plight. This is done in several ways, some of which I discuss below.

I'm OK with tiny chicks being ground  
alive 🤔🤔🤔

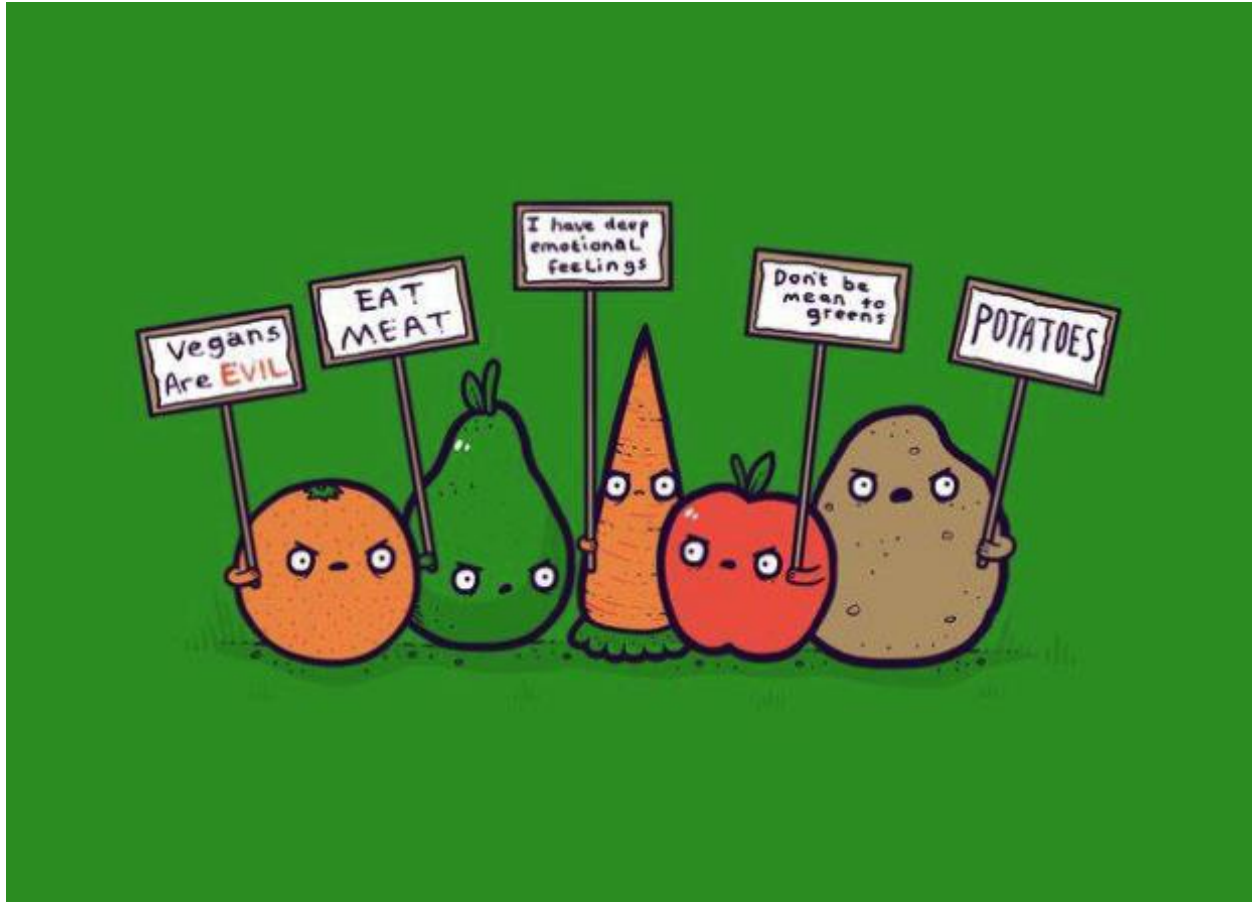
I came across this comment by a radical social justice advocate just yesterday. When confronted with nonhuman abuse, SJAs seem to lose all sense of justice and compassion.

### Shifting Focus to Vegans

Vegans are flawed - sometimes exceptionally flawed - humans. We make mistakes like the rest of our species does. Some of us are incredibly shitty people, like so many SJAs love pointing out. SJAs believe that the general shittiness of vegans somehow exempts them from taking responsibility for the oppression they contribute to.

I simply fail to understand SJAs who claim to not be vegan because of all the shitty vegans. I mean, have you looked at the nonvegans around? The most destructively evil humans to have ever existed - everyone from Trump to Hitler - have been nonvegan. If the behavior of certain vegans turns you off veganism, why doesn't the behavior of nonvegans like Donald Trump turn you off nonveganism? And why doesn't the exceptional activism of vegans and animal rights activists like Coretta Scott King, Cesar Chavez, or Angela Davis attract you towards veganism?

Veganism and the animals rights movement have never been about vegans; they have always been about the victims of speciesism - nonhuman animals. Vegans are at most only allies to nonhumans. The validity of nonhumans' marginalization, oppression, and suffering should not depend on the flaws of their allies.



### Shifting Focus to Capitalism

Christopher Sebastian:

*I know that eating ethically is an epic task because exploitation is built into our food system. I GET that. But regardless of what else you do, vegan will always be the more ethical choice. No, I don't always know who picked my strawberries. No I don't always know how far they had to travel. But YOU know goddamn well, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that beef is \*always\* someone's corpse and dairy is made from stolen breast milk. So I'mma need you to be just ever-so-slightly more woke.*

No, there is no ethical consumption under capitalism\*. However, this does not mean that all consumption is equally unethical. Buying child slaves, for example, is exceptionally unethical. So is consuming the bodies of nonhumans; it is a form of consumption that involves the direct exploitation of others and there is simply no ethical way to do it.

Exempting ourselves from personal responsibility because of a larger system at play is a display of moral laziness more than anything else.

### Shifting Focus to Marginalized Groups


There has been a recent rise in the trend of social justice platforms denouncing veganism using their favorite tactic - memes. Whether it's memes proclaiming that "veganism isn't cruelty-free" or that "expecting everyone to go vegan is classist and ableist," this stuff seems to be everywhere. On the surface, the criticisms certainly seem valid until you examine the mindset behind them.

Now I know that vegans saying silly things like "veganism is cruelty-free" are a thing. However, I also know that it isn't really a systemic problem. So why do social justice seem to want to talk about these few vegans so much? Is vegans saying silly things really one of the biggest issues the left needs to concern itself with? The answer is very simple: guilt. The guilt of oppressing others manifests in different ways for different people. For nonvegan social justice activists, this guilt they feel about consuming other animals seems to take the form of ostensible critiques of vegans in the name of marginalized humans.

One commonality among the leftist groups that indulge in such memetic displays seems to be the fact that they never talk about nonhuman oppression. Even veganism, which is supposed to be about nonhumans, is discussed entirely from an anthropocentric point of view. Ignoring the benefactors of veganism is their way of avoiding confronting the ethics of nonhuman exploitation, which is undoubtedly a much larger thing to worry about than vegans making false statements online. Acknowledging the presence of the nonhuman victims of their lifestyle choices would force SJAs to actually acknowledge their role as the oppressors.

In fact, I did a little experiment to see if vegan-bashing SJAs actually cared about the people they claim to be representing while bashing vegans. I went through all the pages I came across that shared the aforementioned "veganism isn't cruelty-free" meme (supposedly in support of the farm workers exploited in the production of vegan food) to see if they actually spoke out against farm-worker exploitation before this. And guess what-- I couldn't find a single post about the issue. I went through months and months of posts and I COULDN'T FIND A SINGLE DAMN ONE TALKING ABOUT FARM WORKERS. It's almost as if these SJAs didn't even care about farm workers unless it provides an opportunity to bash vegans.

Essentially, *SJAs are using one oppressed group (farm workers) as an excuse to justify their oppression of another oppressed group (nonhuman animals)*; and I hope we can all agree that that's kind of fucked up.



**Laura Portillo** I thought this was talking about ableist language but that was giving y'all way too much credit

This comment was made among a series of troll comments by SJAs on a post about speciesist language on the *Species Revolution* Facebook page. Evidently, when we talk about the importance of non-discriminatory language for one marginalized group, we are being legitimate, but when we do the same for a different marginalized group, we're just being silly.

The worst part is that they contribute to the abuse themselves by eating plants *and* animals. I mean, did you ever see the shit that [happens to slaughterhouse](#) workers? How can SJAs claim to care about farm workers but ignore the rampant abuse perpetrated in slaughterhouses and factory farms? Slaughterhouse work is essentially the [worst job](#) one could have and we have all these folks acting like it doesn't even exist. There's also the other inconvenient fact that exploiting animals for food requires the production of many more plants than direct plant consumption does. So, basically, nonvegans SJAs are contributing to the abuse of a lot more farm workers and take no responsibility for it, but vegans are guilty of not caring about the very same workers?

### Shifting the Focus to Humans

"There is no hierarchy of oppressions," said Audre Lorde. "...except when it's convenient to us," added speciesist social justice advocates.

Okay, this isn't anything new. Oppressors have a long history of trying to make social justice movements about themselves - men do it to feminism and white people do it to Black Lives Matter. But, from what I've seen, nobody does it as blatantly as humans do it to the nonhuman rights movement. Every call to stop oppressing nonhumans is met with an immediate outcry from SJAs. "Let's deal with human oppression first." "You care about animals more than you care about POC." "Lol yt vegans lol."



I have lost count of the number of times I was called a "yt vegan" for speaking out for nonhuman animals. Speciesist SJAs simply refuse to acknowledge the presence of vegans of color. They tend to hold the racist view that only white people are capable of compassion towards other animals. This puts immense pressure on vegans of color to prove our existence. Such blatant racism seems to be acceptable in social justice circles as long as it helps SJAs be comfortable in their speciesism.

In social justice spaces, there is usually an extraordinary amount of pressure on anti-speciesist advocates to prove that they are more dedicated to ending inter-human oppression than they are to nonhuman oppression. Every time we speak of nonhuman liberation, we are demanded to show receipts for all the work we've done for other marginalized groups. We are held accountable for shitty things other vegans say. To even include an animal rights group at a social justice event, the group needs to prove their "intersectionality." Meanwhile, the same spaces demanding such high standards from nonhuman rights advocates don't impose any restrictions on the number of nonhumans murdered and eaten by their own people at their own damn events.

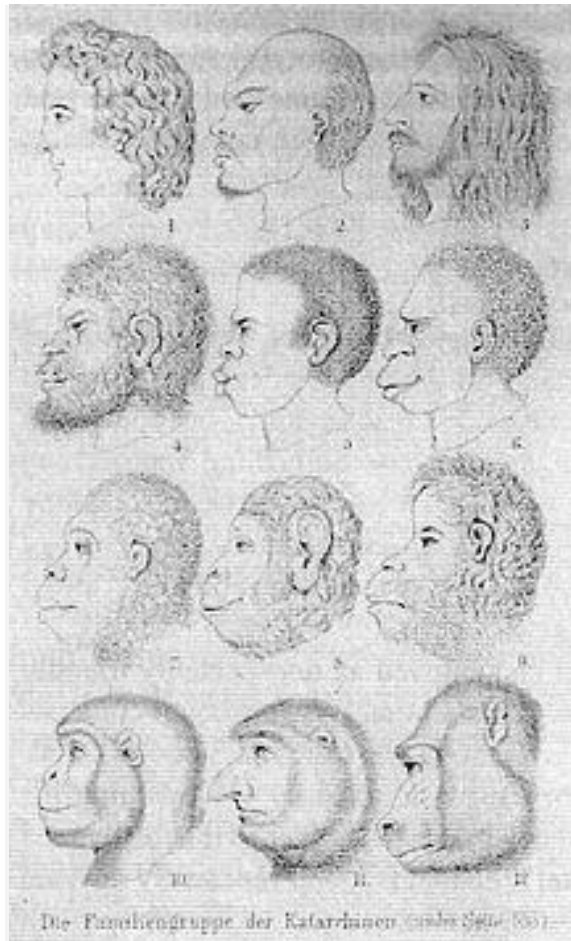
Nonhuman animals are being murdered by the trillions every year. They deserve a movement dedicated to their emancipation. Humans have no more a right to demand to be made the priority of the nonhuman rights movement than men have a right to be made the focus of feminism. A call for nonhuman liberation does not detract from the liberation of others.

### **Dichotomy of Oppression**

One thing speciesist SJAs fail to (or pretend not to) understand is the nature of oppression itself. Oppression demands the otherization of the oppressed. By creating social categories from which they exempt themselves, the oppressors maintain their hierarchy over those they consider inferior. The categories might have biological roots but are transformed into political identities. *Man*, *straight*, *white*, and *cis* are some of the political identities of the oppressors and *woman*, *gay*, *colored*, and *trans* are the political identities of the oppressed.

By excluding ourselves from the category *animal*, we have created the most powerful political identity of them all - the *human*. The false human-animal dichotomy has been used as a free pass to oppress both nonhumans and human marginalized groups over the ages. Putting someone into the *animal* category makes it easy to discriminate against them without any need for an explanation. Consider the following examples which further illustrate my point.

Comparing black people to nonhuman apes has a long, painful [history](#). It is still used to depersonify black people and mock their oppression. [Research](#) shows that an association of 'black' and 'ape' allows a lot of white people to justify police violence against black people.



This image appeared in Ernst Haeckel's *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* in 1868. It depicts "the great chain of being" with a white Apollo Belvedere at the top (the most perfect human), a black person below, and an ape below him.

Men continue to perceive women as emotional animals who do have a control over how they feel. Such perceptions run parallel to the misguided view that nonhuman animals are instinctual creatures with no rationality. In her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, feminist-vegan thinker Carol J. Adams offers countless examples of the animalization of women and the feminization of nonhumans, which play off each other to keep both women and nonhumans in a cycle of oppression. Similar to racist perceptions towards black people, the sexual objectification of women has been shown to correspond with their animalization.





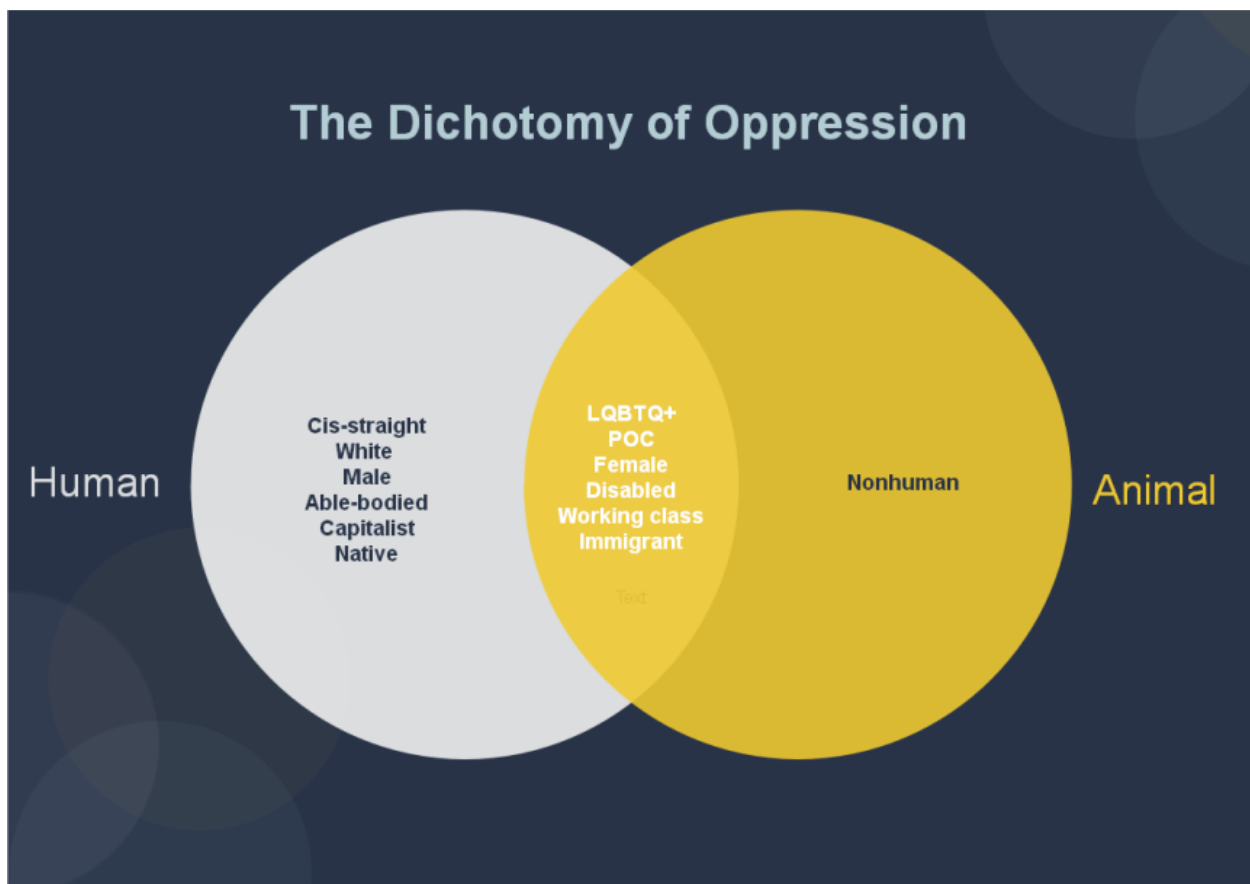
*Although Hillary Clinton has her faults, she is a very powerful woman. What better way is there to mock her than to reduce her to "meat"? That is exactly what Republican Party vendors have done.*



*The sexualization of nonhuman bodies is a very popular advertising tool.*

Need I even go on? How many times haven't we heard members of the LGBTQ+ being **compared** to nonhumans? Or disabled humans **judged** by their "animalistic" characteristics? One can find that every marginalized human group has been animalized.

Oppression necessitates animalization. Our political and social systems always see the oppressor as the *human* and the oppressed as the *animal*. When oppressed human groups themselves engage in the oppression of nonhuman animals, they become the *human*, thus otherizing the animals they are oppressing. By discriminating against other animals, oppressed humans become the oppressors, thus taking on a flexible *human-animal* identity. The animalization of oppressed humans intersects with their humanization as regards to nonhumans, creating a *dichotomy of oppression*, which I illustrate with the diagram below.\*\*



When we fully understand the construction of the human-animal dichotomy, it is easy to see how inter-human oppression is reinforced by our views on other animals. As long as we have the option of justifying the oppression of marginalized humans by comparing them to nonhumans, such oppression will continue to prevail unless we include nonhuman animals in our circle of justice. We need to recognize other animals, who are capable of suffering as we are, as those who deserve basic rights. All oppression is connected, and when we ignore nonhuman suffering, it becomes a means to human suffering.





*We simply cannot achieve human liberation without achieving nonhuman liberation. So, dear speciesist social advocates reading this, it's time to wake the hell up and recognize nonhuman rights as an important social justice issue. Let us break the chains that keep us collectively oppressed, regardless of the arbitrary moral (and political) distinction of species.*

**Additional Note:**

I have noticed that this article has found its way to a considerable number of nonvegan SJAs, who happen to be the target audience. Although the article has received some positive feedback and has affected some positive change, most of the responses from nonvegan SJAs seem to be largely reactionary. Most negative responses I've seen displayed a tendency to completely ignore every important point I make here. I sincerely hope that those reading this would try to comprehend the meaning of the words I have written without dismissing them using reactionary buzzwords. I am attaching screenshots of a few negative responses below. Be warned, though: this exhibition of intellectual bankruptcy and of incomprehension could cause symptoms ranging from a mild headache to a desire to put one's head through a wall.



SPECIESREVOLUTION.ORG

## It's Time for Social Justice Activists to Stop Bashing the Animal Rights Movement and Start Embracing It



Like



Comment



1



Then stop saying Nazi-ass shit all the fucking time

Just now

Like

Reply



Write a comment...



As you probably noticed, I did not say any "Nazi-ass shit" anywhere. Nor has the person who shared this post, as far as I know. This commenter dismisses the article without even reading it because of supposed "Nazi-ass shit" somewhere.



**[REDACTED]**

we shouldn't be treating animals better because then it makes it better to treat humans like animals...

3m Like

I have absolutely no idea what comment this means except that it uses some vague bigoted non-logic to throw nonhuman animals under the bus.



**[REDACTED]**

TW: holocaust, antisemitism, white veganism nonsense

Maybe it's shit like this that makes it hard for this Jew to give them any credibility?

This person clearly hasn't read the article.



**Kristen [redacted]**

I am all for animal rights but people within the "animal rights movement" are hard to support sometimes.

20m

**Like**

**Reply**



**Alex [redacted]**

Uhhh no actually

16m

**Like**

**Reply**



**Alex [redacted]**

This literally dehumanizes marginalized groups lmao

15m

**Like**

**Reply**



Nor have these people.



~~Chris Oylken~~

When animal rights people start showing up at stuff that's not centered around animal rights, and support a movement without tying marginalized groups to animals, I'll listen. Until then, nah.

No. Racism is not the fucking same as the meat industry.

58m

Like

Reply



~~Chris Oylken~~

I'm tired of seeing more people more enraged by dog meat festivals in China then they are about the prison industrial complex here.

54m

Like



Thanks for the amazing insight, random white person. No, racism is not the same as the meat industry. Also, I address the "I will support marginalized groups only if their allies are doing things right" tu quoque in my article itself. Maybe try reading the stuff you're criticizing before criticizing it?





**[REDACTED]**

I agree but I will not get involved until veganism is dead.

1h

Like

Reply



**[REDACTED]**

I am beyond tired of shit, I've seen it in this group time and time again and every time it happens op is told why their views are problematic. There's a huge discussion in the comments. Op and others are eventually banned, but not after a huge amount of ableism, classism and dehumanisation of marginalised people. The comments are closed, until next time someone comes along with these shitty views. I'm so exhausted (edit for typo)

1h

Edited

Like

Reply



You know the drill: claim emotional exhaustion, use lots of buzzwords, and pat yourself on the back for winning the argument. No, not a single one of the comments were ableist or classist. And no, nowhere do I "dehumanize" marginalized humans in my article. I, however, point out the fact that marginalized human groups are depersonified by being compared to nonhuman animals. I mean, how can someone be so obtuse as to completely misrepresent what others are saying because it doesn't fit in with their own close-minded bigoted view? I'm not even going to bother addressing the first comment.

*\*There is no ethical consumption under any economic system, actually. All forms of consumption involve some sort of inherent exploitation. But this is another discussion for another time.*

*\*\*Although I have tried to articulate my views on the dichotomy of oppression, the concept of the human-animal dichotomy itself is nothing new. I recognize and acknowledge that thinkers like [Aph Ko](#) and [Carol J. Adams](#) have done a far better job explaining a similar concept than I have here. Check out their work for a deeper understanding of the subject.*

## Related

[No, Veganism isn't Racist, You Are](#) January 20, 2020 In "animal liberation"

[Make Veganism About Animals Again](#) March 30, 2019 In "animal liberation"

[6 Reasons Non-Black Vegans Need to Show Up for Black Lives](#) June 7, 2020 In "animal liberation"

Tags [animal liberation](#), [animal rights](#), [intersectionality](#), [justice](#), [movement](#), [social justice](#)

## 9 Replies to “It’s Time for Social Justice Advocates to Stop Bashing the Animal Rights Movement and Start Embracing It”



1. [Monica Ball](#) says:

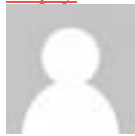
[March 11, 2018 at 8:09 pm](#)

Thanks for this astute article! All violent ideologies depersonify our fellow humans so they can justify the oppressive/exploitative/violent treatment of these “less than humans.” Without the foundation of speciesism, this depersonification of fellow humans loses its power and efficacy in justifying their oppression.

Perhaps some day, we humans will acknowledge that speciesism is a required precursor to all other violent ideologies. Speciesism isn't just similar to sexism, racism, ableism, etc.,—it is the very foundation of these violent ideologies. When we acknowledge this and acknowledge that all oppression is inextricably interwoven, maybe we'll actually have a chance of dismantling oppression and oppressive ideologies.

Loading...

[Reply](#)



2. [Joan Harrison](#) says:

[March 20, 2018 at 3:31 pm](#)

This video of Will Kymlicka speaking about “Animal Rights, Multiculturalism, and the Left” should be seen and heard by everyone concerned about the rest of the Left's indifference to animal suffering ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gslf6xJ0Vuw&feature=youtu.be>.

Loading...

[Reply](#)



3. [Kate](#) says:

[May 22, 2018 at 11:54 am](#)

Thank you

Loading...

[Reply](#)



4. [mplo](#) says:

[September 17, 2018 at 4:49 pm](#)

Oftentimes, the Animal Rights advocates go much too far, and some are even openly against people having pets. That's not fair, because pets are important to people, and provide enjoyment and solace,

as well as companionship. PETA is an extremist group, which deserves no sympathy and support, and won't get mine, that's for sure.

Loading...

[Reply](#)



1. *Evan says:*

[November 23, 2018 at 5:22 pm](#)

Can you say what specifically about PETA is "extremist" in your view and how that purported extremism, even if true, would invalidate all of the good work they do for horribly suffering and abused animals who would be ignored and have no voice without their organization, focus, and support.

How closely do you follow the full range of their work? Their view it seems to me is that all animals deserve respect in their own right. But how does building doghouses for suffering dogs in extreme elements, or placing adoptable animals with qualified people for example fit with being opposed to the idea of pets? Most might use the term "animal companions" but I bet you virtually all PETA staff and volunteers care for and love dogs and cats and other animals just like most families do.

I don't get the driveby disparagement of an organization with little apparent actual idea of the real work its staff and volunteers do.

Loading...

[Reply](#)



2. *Kleven says:*

[December 9, 2018 at 2:49 pm](#)

Exploiting someone because you enjoy it is not ok. Animals kept as pets are often exploited in that they are bred or captured from the wild.

Loading...

[Reply](#)



5. *Kiirstin Marilyn says:*

[November 23, 2018 at 3:52 pm](#)

Thank you for this very insightful article. I only hope that the SJAs that I share it with will take it to heart.

Loading...

[Reply](#)



6. *Philip Powell says:*

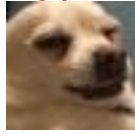
[December 20, 2018 at 10:22 pm](#)

Thank you for this piece, it is thoughtful. We aren't dehumanizing anybody. They don't get speciesism. If they did, they'd understand. Human animals aren't being brought down. It is just a truth. I am sure that learning the earth was not the center of the universe and that evolution was true were difficult to deal with as well. I have seen otherwise normally intelligent people not truly get that

“humans are animals” part of this whole thing. We too are just a limited animal, not so radically different from those we oppress.

Loading...

[Reply](#)



7. *Morgan says:*

[July 13, 2021 at 12:00 am](#)

I'm glad this site exists and you're doing excellent work. I've heard way too many speciesist ideas in leftist spaces and gross misrepresentations of the animal rights movement basically declared as absolute truth in these spaces with absolutely no tolerance for anybody trying to disprove these misrepresentations. Animal rights/veganism is still very much in the stage of being regarded by both the mainstream and social justice spaces as a radical fringe ideology/ group of ideologies. Even in anti racist vegan groups I'm in, while being vegan “for the animals” is not against the rules, it's mocked as being “white veganism” and referring to nonhuman animals as being marginalized is considered dehumanizing to marginalized humans. Even in vegan circles, nonhuman animals are seen as lesser beings than humans.

Veganism is so ardently opposed by people, no matter where they lie politically, because that is what happens when any member of a privileged group is shown the ways in which they contribute to oppression. As a neurodivergent, low income queer trans person, I will speak from my experience. In the early days of women's liberation, advocates for queer and trans rights would have been almost universally regarded as degenerate, fringe and as radical. Even within the movement. Early suffragists were often racist and excluded black women as well. (I will not reference the Black rights movements as a whole as I am not black and do not wish to speak as any authority on a matter that doesn't affect me)

Autistic people have been expressing for decades that abusive therapies such as ABA should not be used on autistic children, and that autistic people should have the rights and autonomy as our neurotypical and allistic peers, but it is so heavily ingrained in common practise to abuse us and deny us our autonomy that we are viewed as bullies for our advocacy. When we speak out, we are dismissed as “high functioning” and therefore unable to speak for autistics who are seen as “low functioning”, even though plenty of nonverbal autistics have spoken out. We are challenging notions that people have held their entire lives and we are informing allistic people, often for the first time, that they are ableist and they lash out.

With the rights of nonhuman animals, we are challenging the belief that humans are superior to nonhuman animals, and exposing people to the fact that they have spent their whole lives oppressing nonhuman animals, and they are lashing out. I used to be one of them until I informed myself.

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