

## [After 7 Years of Vigils, A Ballot Measure Might Finally Close Denver's Lamb Slaughterhouse](#)

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### **Denver Baby Animal Save: The Catalyst for Change**

In June 2017, Sarah, a dear friend, and I headed north to bear witness in Denver. The smell of the industrialized neighborhood pierced our nostrils – the stench was unforgettable. As we drove up Emerson Street off Washington Street towards the back of the building, we encountered Superior Farms lamb slaughterhouse. The parking lot was nearly empty, and we slowly approached, uncertain of what to expect.

The Colorado summer heat slapped my body as I got out of the car, and after looking around, we both headed along the pavement toward the main gate, only a few dozen yards away. And there they were behind the chain-linked fence, held together by a lock which was not clasped shut, and which almost fell on numerous occasions. Behind the fence were hundreds of lambs who I expected, but wasn't prepared to meet. The image of those lambs, matted with feces and urine, their eyes full of fear, is seared into my memory. The smell pierced the air and stung my nostrils once again, but, for the first time, I realized to the fullest extent just who exactly I was fighting for. It was at that moment that I fully realized the impact I could have by bearing witness, and eventually, transforming my grief into political action as an organizer for Pro-Animal Future. Bearing witness to the suffering of animals profoundly affects our attitudes and actions and is a life-changing experience. Standing there, facing the lambs behind the fence, I felt an overwhelming sense of helplessness and determination.



*Ceremonies became a regular occurrence at the vigils. Photo Credit: Kimito Sakata*

### **Superior Farms Can't Keep a Secret**

Since the initial day that Sarah and I bore witness, Denver Baby Animal Save, the name of the group that sprung up to organize at the slaughterhouse, has held hundreds of protests, and vigils, and left emotional marks on the activists who would seek out the truth. There were days when waiting for trucks tested our patience and determination. When vigils commenced in the early evening, and a truck did not arrive, oftentimes the crowds would head home.

Slaughterhouses thrive on secrecy. Over the years, Superior Farms closed roads and blocked fences to prevent people from bearing witness. This experience began a never-ending urgency to bring their plight to light and to challenge the slaughterhouse's operations. Activists started to conduct ceremonies at each vigil to honor each baby lamb. Together, [we sang](#), spoke about what lived in our hearts, wrote messages of compassion with chalk, and more.



*Photo Credit: Kimito Sakata*

## **Standing with Baby Lambs**

A whitish-grey lamb with her eyes locked on the gate began using her tongue where the latch was not secured. Sarah and I held our breaths. Moments of self-determination and perseverance became evident for both parties, the observers and the actors. Sarah and I named her Kat. She was slightly larger than the lambs surrounding her, with a passion for freedom that no one could deny. Sarah and I didn't aid Kat, but how we yearned to do so. We offered words of encouragement.

Our hope and desire for that small lock to fall to the concrete was palpable, and we never know if it did, but just a few weeks after Sarah's and my initial visit, security personnel would ensure that another employee's lapse of consideration to secure the gate would likely never happen again.

Educational outreach has been a strategy within the animal rights movement since its origin. A heavy focus on changing hearts and minds has led us to slaughterhouses, aquariums, animal testing facilities, zoos, stores that sell companion animals, and countless other places that profit from the exploitation of animals. The act itself is like going for a walk in the rain and finding yourself in a hurricane - most people are surprised by how difficult it is to be feet away from animals but not be able to save them. Paul McCartney's well-known quote, "If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be a vegetarian," resonates deeply within the animal rights movement. We see them not through glass walls, but in monstrous metal trucks. We stand with them as they are forced into spaces while fear and anxiety flood their being. We stand with them as the smell of their fear hits our faces. We stand with them until we are no longer separated by species.



*Dear Kat. It was an honor to see you. Photo Credit: Alaina Sigler*

## **Action Rooted in Compassion**

Vigils and protests at Superior have been happening since 2017. Despite our efforts, surprisingly few Denver residents know about the existence of Superior Farms, except the surrounding community of Globeville, forced to live amongst its foul stench. That changed last year when I started hearing

talk about trying to ban slaughterhouses right here in Denver. At first, I doubted whether an initiative like this would pass, but it turns out that according to the Sentience Institute's Animal Farming Attitudes Survey of 2017, [47% of Americans would support a ban on slaughterhouses](#).

Some organizers thought that if the animal rights community came together, we might have a chance to close down the lamb slaughterhouse for good. When [Pro-Animal Future](#) officially launched ballot measures to ban fur sales and commercial slaughterhouses in Denver, my intuition told me to get involved. For years, I had dreamed about shutting down Superior Farms. Putting a stop to the operation of the largest lamb slaughterhouse in the country brings me hope every day. I KNEW we could do this.



*Children often joined us at the vigils offering messages of compassion. Photo Credit: Kimito Sakata*

## **Vigils, Protests, and a Ballot Measure**

Building on the momentum from our vigils at Superior Farms, we took to the streets of Denver last year with a bold vision. With the help of over 160 volunteers, we collected a whopping 15 thousand signatures to get [the country's first slaughterhouse ban](#) on the ballot. During the presidential election this Fall, Denver voters will have the power to force the lamb slaughterhouse to close its doors for good. This ban has the potential to save hundreds of thousands of lives and with enough donations and volunteers, Pro-Animal Future aims to launch similar campaigns in cities across the country.

## **The Power of Community**

Not long after we started bearing witness, Superior Farms put up signs saying the road was closed. As Pro-Animal Future's presence has grown, Superior Farms has taken more drastic measures to hide its operations. Recently, they erected a taller fence and a green tarp to prevent anyone on the city's bike path from seeing anything, or anyone, on their property. Since our initial visit, we have held numerous vigils, each a testament to our commitment to animal rights. These peaceful community gatherings at sites of injustice, such as slaughterhouses, auctions, and animal agricultural farms, give the animals love and compassion and document the horrific injustices inflicted upon them. They also raise awareness and break the disconnect between the general public and the reality of animal agriculture.



*One baby lamb suffered from a prolapsed organ—another [harmful occurrence](#) at Superior Farms. Photo Credit: Kimito Sakata*



After the slaughterhouse ban qualified for the ballot, the slaughterhouse installed a fence to prevent us from watching the transport trucks arrive. Photo Credit: Alaina Sigler

## **Moving Forward**

The road ahead is long and fraught with challenges, but the support for a slaughterhouse ban and the growing awareness about the plight of farmed animals give me hope. Together, we can build a future where compassion and empathy guide our actions, and where no sentient being has to suffer for our choices.

The journey from silence to action, from passivity to activity, is a transformative one. Bearing witness is not just about seeing; it's about feeling, understanding, and acting. The movement for animal freedom is growing, and with it, the hope for a more compassionate world. No matter how our concerns manifest, whether for the health of our community, the wildlife who share our environment, or the animals caught up in the food system, we should listen to those feelings. Together we have the power to transform these spaces for the better. In a political campaign this close, a single person signing up as a volunteer or pitching in could mean the difference between winning and losing.

As an Animal Freedom activist, Animal Chaplain, and organizer for Pro-Animal Future, I often give myself gentle reminders *that I'm doing the best I can*. After years of neglecting my emotions and ongoing

hopelessness, Pro-Animal Future offered a new path that restored my faith in our capacity to make real change for animals. Together, we CAN shut down Superior Farms and continue moving toward a future without slaughterhouses. It would mean the world if you joined us.

Here are three ways you can make a difference right now:

1. Join Denver Baby Animal Save at their next vigil. To get involved, you can request to join their [Facebook group](#).
2. Make a small donation to support Pro-Animal Future's work to ban slaughterhouses in Denver and beyond. Every dollar brings us closer to a kinder future for all animals. [Donate here](#).
3. If you live in the Denver, Colorado area, volunteer your time and talents to help win these campaigns and shut down the Superior Farms slaughterhouse. [Sign up here](#).
4. Plan a trip to Denver this September to spread the word about why it's time to ban slaughterhouses in Denver. Pro-Animal Future will be providing housing to dedicated out-of-state activists who are willing to put in time canvassing voters. [Learn more here](#).

### **Meet the Author**

Alaina Sigler is an Ordained Interspecies and Interfaith Animal Chaplain and Animal Reiki Practitioner. She is the founder of the nonprofit organization [The Night Sky Garden](#). Alaina instructs mindfulness techniques, is an organizer with [Pro-Animal Future](#), and helps individuals in the animal freedom movement and beyond to forge a connection with their emotions and empower them to navigate daily life with more confidence.

