

Leading Voices within the Animal Advocacy Movement *Speak Out Against Clean Meat*

KAREN DAVIS: "I do not categorically reject clean meat if it has the potential to prevent countless animals from being born for human consumption. Perhaps separating animals from meat could reduce the millions of sentient individuals who are living and dying in hell every day, while providing an opportunity for humans to relate caringly to other species once the conflict between compassion and cuisine no longer exists. However, if Bruce Friedrich's portrayal of the rationale for clean meat is the prevailing ethos of the promoters of this technology, then there's a problem. **The separation of animals from 'meat' is being promotionally linked with the severance of animals from 'meat' in being promotionally, respect, fellowship, and ethical activism on their behalf.** The human desire for meat is being portrayed as the right of an implacable human 'nature,' compared to which animals and ethics and vegan activism are inconsequential, even silly. The promoters of clean meat seem to suggest that until clean meat becomes commercially available, if it ever does, humans have the right, merely as humans, to continue making nonhuman animals suffer unspeakable torture for pleasure and convenience. The assertion that ethical veganism has failed, after a mere 40 or so years of advocacy, is absurd. Centuries of human injustices continue to this day, yet human rights advocates seldom abandon the victims morally and declare justice for humans a failed enterprise."

-- **KAREN DAVIS, Ph.D** is the *President and Founder of United Poultry Concerns, a nonprofit organization that promotes the compassionate and respectful treatment of domestic fowl including a sanctuary for chickens in Virginia. Inducted into the National Animal Rights Hall of Fame for Outstanding Contributions to Animal Liberation, she is the author of* *Prisoned Chickens, Poisoned Eggs: An Inside Look at the Modern Poultry Industry; More Than a Meal: The Turkey in History, Myth, Ritual, and Reality; The Holocaust and the Henmaid's Tale: A Case for Comparing Atrocities and other works including her children's book* *A Home for Henny and Instead of Chicken, Instead of Turkey: A Poultryless "Poultry" Potpourri, a vegan cookbook. A volume of Karen's writings, For the Birds - From Exploitation to Liberation: Essays on Chickens, Turkeys, and Other Domestic Fowl, is being published in 2019 by Lantern Books.*

JUSTIN VAN KLEECK: "While I understand the appeal of any possible strategy to end the suffering of billions of animals on farms, I have serious concerns about so-called 'clean' meat. Foremost among these is the categorical problem of keeping 'meat' as a concept on the human plate. **As long as the culture of meat is not challenged--which cultured meat doesn't do--I don't believe that real, live animals will ever get off the plate either.** The preponderance of meat very likely means that 'real' meat will always have a cultural cachet that alternatives--whether plant based or lab grown--will struggle mightily to overtake. Taste, smell, look, feel--all of these experiential aspects of our eating coexist with the recognition of what those foods are, where they come from, and how they are produced. I have no belief whatsoever that cultured meat will reverse the trend of rising meat consumption globally, and my fear is that it will create a vicious circle that actually drives people to seek out 'real' animal flesh (as well as 'real' dairy and eggs, which both also feed into the culture and industry of flesh.)

"With my partner, I have rescued hundreds of farmed animals from backyards and small 'homesteads,' and we care for these individuals as well at our sanctuary. I have seen firsthand the ways that so-called 'locavores' relate to animals and to their food. Perhaps the most salient aspect of the food(i)e movement and locavorism, for producers and consumers alike, is authenticity. In contrast, the most compelling argument that 'meat' grown in a lab has is sustainability; it will never be authentic. (It's also worth noting that most locavores and small farmers are still to sustainability as well.) There's an entire narrative about the role these living animals play in who humans "truly" are, as evidenced by **so much of the marketing and narrativizing around local animal products.** I am confident there will always be an indelible appeal in the 'real thing' that 'clean' meat will not stop.

"This is surely true because 'clean' meat actually promotes the culture of meat by continuing to promote 'meat' as a desideratum, a desired object--both as a foodstuff and as a concept. **'Meat' remains the flesh of an animal, and as long as that conceptualization of animals as meat remains...animals will die.** As a result, what we find is that there's 'real' meat, there's 'clean' meat, and then there's all that somehow less appealing plant stuff. By propping up meat, 'clean' meat perpetuates the speciesist view that animals are meat and thus perpetuates violence.

"I cannot support lab-grown meat as human food for these reasons. Furthermore, there is so much exciting innovation happening with plants right now, and the staggering investments being made in these problematic animal products could instead help that innovation even more. The future of food is plants."

-- **Justin Van Kleeck, Ph.D., co-founder of the Triangle Chicken Advocates microsanctuary, which he and his wife founded in 2014, and which inspired them to start The Microsanctuary Movement later that year. He also founded and contributes to the radical vegan blog *Striving with Systems, and serves as Sanctuary & Microsanctuary Advisor for A Well-Fed World.***

DINESH WADIWEL: "There is no market based solution to humanity's mass violence towards animals. Capitalism's inherent tendency is to endlessly utilize new product offerings and product differentiation to build consumer markets, finding new ways to expand the production of consumption items. Naturally, we do not have crystal balls at our disposal that allow us to predict the future. But at this stage, there is no compelling reason to believe that so called 'clean meats' are not simply another avenue for animal agriculture and venture capitalists to diversify their product offerings, and expand markets. We should further be highly suspicious of glimmering 'techno-fixes' that promise to resolve the problem of human domination of animals. Human-animal relations are an example of a deep form of structural oppression. It is highly problematic to expect tech industries to come up with solutions to injustice, just as we would not expect technologies to deliver solutions to wealth inequality, racism, patriarchy, ableism or homophobia.

"At the heart of the animal liberation project is the desire for an end to violence against animals. This demands a world that is radically re-imagined, and attacks directly the problem of mass utilization of animals for human pleasures. This radical demand asks for a world without the production of suffering and death attendant to animal agriculture, and with this, cultivates our imagination for meaningful lives that are lived without the consumption of animal products. 'Clean meat' threatens to replace this radical demand with an impoverished desire: instead of focusing on ending animal agriculture's production of death and suffering, we are presented with the goal of finding a 'better meat'. This not only leaves the desire for meat unchecked, but displaces attention away from the radical demand of shutting down industrial animal agriculture.

"The tactical challenge for animal advocates today is not what products we should buy, or which entrepreneurs we should pin our hopes to, but how we can build a democratic movement that can radically transform societies. By definition, such a movement is not going to be driven by venture capitalists and animals agriculture."

-- **Dr. Dinesh Wadiwel, is Senior Lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences, the University of Sydney. He is the author of** *The War Against Animals.*

JOANN FARB: "The same justifications for promoting 'humane' meat are being used to persuade us to endorse clean meat. But 'humane' meat, rather than replacing CAFO meat, is only further legitimizing meat eating and led to CAFO meat being sold beside 'humane' meat in food coops that had previously sold neither. Now, the same animal advocates who promoted 'humane' meat tell us to support clean meat because what they did in the past did not reduce meat consumption."

-- **JoAnn Farb is a former microbiologist with a global pharmaceutical company, a nutrition educator, the mother of two lifelong vegan daughters and the author of** *Compassionate Souls -- Raising the Next Generation to Change the World.*

LORI GIRSHICK: "My position against cell-grown meat is based primarily on my animal rights focus of ending speciesism. I concur with Albert Einstein when he said, **"You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war.'** **We cannot advocate a food made from animals and at the same time claim to want to end the exploitation and use of animals. It is impossible.** In fact, people supportive of 'clean meat' extol the supposed virtues of how it will taste, look, smell, and feel like 'real' meat. This marketing appeal doesn't undermine animal exploitation, it affirms it. "Continually marketing meat products, especially supported by vegans, totally undermines attempts to eliminate speciesism. And while some vegans shy away from the ethical or moral standpoint of veganism (being vegan for other good reasons), I feel that should be front and center to our arguments. A culture that supports meat eating will support the use of animals in other ways. By supporting cell-based meat, you do not stop the slaughter of animals, you support it by continually hawking 'meat' and keeping animals as acceptable products for use. Supporting Clean Meat means supporting the endless use of animals in experimentation, in dog- or cock-fighting, horse racing, circuses, zoos, marine parks, trophy hunting, puppy mills, horse-drawn carriages, and so on. Animal use and abuse is thoroughly integrated in our culture, and cell-based meat is a continuation and strengthening of these embedded practices based on cultural notions that humans have the right to dominate all animals for whatever reason we want."

-- **Lori Girshick, Ph.D., has been a vegan for 37 years and an animal rights activist longer than that. A retired sociology professor, she is the author of five books, including** *Advocates for Animals: An Inside Look at Some of the Extraordinary Efforts to End Animal Suffering.*

VEDA STRAM: "I'm speaking out against this latest project supported by some animal activists that puts animal rights on the back burner (pardon my using that expression, but it fits). The 'clean' meat project is an attempt by some understandably frustrated animal activists to act as if the main driving force behind commitments to animal liberation and an end to speciesism is to satisfy human taste buds, rather than doing all we can, spending all of our resources, to inspire humanity to move toward the end of all the isms of bigotry including racism, sexism and speciesism. In a *Star Trek* episode, Dr. Spock says about a 'brilliant' idea: 'It's extraordinarily sophisticated but I don't know that it reflects intelligence.' I'll grant that 'clean' meat is a sophisticated project; but does it reflect intelligence? It does not demand compassion for animals. It does not advance animal liberation. If we truly care about ending all the bigoted 'isms,' we must support only those strategies that forward the possibility of a world that works ethically for everyone and everything with no one and nothing left out."

-- **Veda Stram has been an animal activist since April 1988 and vegan since January 1989. She has volunteered with** *Last Chance for Animals, The Animals Voice, Orange County People for Animals, Northwest Animal Rights Network and has been on the Board of United Poultry Concerns since 2013. She created and coordinated Newcomer Orientations at the National Animal Rights Conferences. She has been working for All-Creatures.org since July 2008 and volunteered weekly at Vegan Harvest grocery store in Seattle from 2006-2020.*

GARY FRANCIONE: "I do not support 'clean' or 'cultured' meat for at least four reasons. First, cultured meat involves taking cells from living animals; it also involves growing those cells in an animal medium, such as fetal serum from calves or horses. So animals are killed in the process of producing cultured meat. **If you believe that animals have moral value and possess moral rights, you don't support killing animals.** Some of the hucksters of cultured meat are claiming that with further research, they will be able to culture meat without killing animals to get cells or to provide a growth medium. But that research will involve using and killing animals in the process.

"Second, we need to stop thinking of other animals as food. If we were dumpster diving and found a human arm that was made from a culture of human cells, we would not think that it was acceptable to consume the arm. Why? **Because human body parts are not things to eat.** We need to start thinking in the same way about animals: the body parts of animals and products made from animals--however produced--are not food.

"Third, I find astonishing that many of the cultured meat hucksters are claiming that the vegan movement has failed so we need to do something else. The problem is not that the vegan movement failed; the problem is that there has never been a vegan movement. There is not one single large corporate animal charity that promotes veganism as a moral imperative. On the contrary, these charities all promote some form or other of what I call 'happy' exploitation. They promote red�ctarianism. There is a grassroots Abolitionist effort to promote veganism as a moral baseline, and the large charities do everything possible to trash that grassroots movement. Ironically, one of the leading cultured-meat hucksters is someone who explicitly rejected promoting veganism as a moral imperative when he worked for one of the corporate charities.

"Fourth, we don't need cultured meat. Anyone who cares about animals but wants to have the sensation of eating meat can consume one of the many completely vegan substitutes. They mimic meat so well that I actually find them to be repulsive. Cultured meat is just yet another scam to promote animal exploitation."

-- **Gary Francione, J.D.** *Distinguished Professor of Law and Nicholas de B. Katzenbach Scholar of Law & Philosophy at Rutgers University, and Honorary Professor (Philosophy), University of East Anglia. He is the author of numerous articles and books, including* *Animals, Property and the Law, and Animals as Persons.*

BREEZE HARPER: "The whole food-tech startup thing is the problem, framed as it is through a white neoliberal-capitalist masculinist logic that is in itself deeply problematic--at least, here in the USA and especially in Silicon Valley/SF Bay area where I live. The conversation about 'clean meat'...is part of the larger problem of relying on neoliberal 'green' capitalist models + technocracy to 'save' human beings that are contingent upon anti-Blackness, systemic racism, gentrification, etc."

-- **Dr. Breeze Harper is a diversity strategist and analyst with** *Critical Diversity Solutions* and the founder of the *Sistah Vegan Project*. *Dr. Harper has a PhD in Social Science with emphasis on leveraging diversity challenges for social impact. She holds a MA in Educational Technologies from Harvard University. Dr. Harper created and edited the ground-breaking anthology, Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak On Food, Identity, Health, and Society. Her book, Scars: A Black Lesbian Experience in Rural White New England (Sense Publishers 2014) interrogates how systems of oppression and power impact the life of the only Black teenager living in an all white and working class rural New England town. Her new book, Black Mama Scholar: On Black Feminism, Food Ethics, and Toddler Tantrums, will be released later this year.*

ROBERT GRILLO: "The meat industry has clearly indicated it has no intention of using clean meat to replace conventional meat. Quite the contrary, **it is expanding animal production.** It wants to control the market for clean meat so it may reap the benefits should consumer demand grow. But let us never forget that an industry so heavily invested in animal exploitation and killing has no incentive to grow the clean meat market out of the goodness of its heart. This makes it all the more troubling to me that some leading advocates are already getting our expectations up that clean meat could change the fate of billions of animals. To the extent that the technology remains in the hands of the most destructive, violent and immoral industry on the planet, betting on them doing the right thing is a pipe dream."

-- **Robert Grillo, founder and director of** *Free from Harm, a non-profit dedicated to helping end animal exploitation, and is author of the book, Farm to Fable: The Fictions of Our Animal-Consuming Culture.*

ROBERT C. JONES: "The cultural, institutional, systemic oppression of nonhuman animals is a social justice issue. Advocates for so-called 'clean meat' like the Good Food Institute's Bruce Friedrich and Mercy for Animals' Leah Garcés promise that market demand for clean meat will end animal agriculture as we know it. I am skeptical. Is my skepticism warranted? **Show me one social justice movement that was solved by the free market.** Clean meat is just a pie-in-the-sky market solution to an atrocity that requires not merely an alteration in supply-demand curves, but rather a titanic shift in the moral vision of humanity."

-- **Robert C. Jones, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Philosophy at** *California State University, Chico, where he works on questions at the intersection of applied ethics, animal cognition, and social justice. Robert has been a visiting researcher for the Ethics in Society Project at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, and a Summer Fellow at the Animals & Society Institute. He is a member of the Advisory Council of The Animal Museum and a speaker with the Northern California Animal Advocacy Coalition.*

SARYTA RODRIGUEZ: "As demand for both vegan and cellular meat products grows, we must be especially careful that such products meet ethical criteria, not only in terms of ingredients, but also with respect to economics: **where the money you spend on a product is going, and how it will be used.** If, for instance, lab meat is sold by Perdue, then any 'vegan' who buys it will be giving money to Perdue, with which Perdue will continue to kill non-human animals. It is already complicated enough to try to ensure that anything is 'vegan' when one considers environmental costs and how laborers are treated; **the last thing the vegan movement needs right now is to get into bed with animal-killing enterprises.**"

-- **Saryta Rodriguez is an author, editor, social justice advocate, and educator. They are the author of the books, Until Every Animal is Free (Vegan Publishers) and Food Justice: A Primer (Sanctuary Publishers). Saryta also contributed an essay and part of the Introduction to** *Veganism in an Oppressive World, which was published in November 2017 by Sanctuary Publishers.*

STEPHEN F. EISENMAN: "Promoters of lab-grown meat are implicitly telling consumers that their appetite for meat must forever be gratified, regardless of the cost. Today, the cost is the uncounted suffering of un-numbered animals around the world -- both domesticated and wild. (Animal agriculture is a leading cause of habitat loss and ecosystem destruction.) Tomorrow, the cost will be high consumer prices for lab meat, justified -- it will be claimed -- by the enormous research expenditures that brought the product into being. The profits will mostly accrue to the likes of Google and Merck, early investors who are already buying up smaller competitors. **High prices for lab meat will ensure that global demand for conventional meat from slaughtered animals will be little changed, except in niche markets.**

"**The value of ethical veganism is that it challenges the false assertion that humans must eat meat. In addition, it shifts the presumed, moral imperative from gratification to generosity, and from capitalist return-on-investment to caring.** The only way to protect animals, the environment and ultimately humans themselves is to produce a political and moral revolution that values the well-being of all creatures (human and non-human) above the profits of the very few. Abjuring meat -- an astonishingly easy thing to do -- is one among a number of steps (possibly a first step), that everyone who cares about sheer, planetary survival must take. Others include: self-education about animals and the environment, political participation (elections have consequences), public protest, and when necessary, direct action against the neo-liberal state and private corporations that have brought us all to the brink of destruction. Lab-grown meat is a diversion from the necessary path of revolutionary change -- don't fall for it!"

-- **Stephen F. Eisenman is Professor of Art History at Northwestern University and the author of** *The Abu Ghraib Effect (2007), The Cry of Nature -- Art and the Making of Animal Rights (2014), The Ghosts of Our Meat (2015), and (with Sue Coe) Zoicide: Seeing Cruelty, Demanding Abolition (2018). He and Harriet Festing are co-founders of* *Anthropocene Alliance.*

SAILESH RAO: "I have met many Vegans who claim to support clean meat, but say that they would never eat it themselves. This leads me to believe that **the perceived need for clean meat is based on a fundamental lack of faith in humanity.** The extinction crisis, the climate crisis, the plastic pollution crisis and other environmental ills, in addition to racism, sexism, speciesism and other social justice ills, call for a bold cultural transformation to a new system of normalized nonviolence rather than technological quick fixes like clean meat that might, at best, patch up the symptoms of these crises within the current system of normalized violence. To use a medical analogy, why settle for a triple-bypass heart surgery while continuing to eat cholesterol-laden, bad animal foods, when we can eat a whole-foods plant-based diet and heal our heart disease completely?"

-- **Dr. Sailesh Rao, Ph.D., is Founder and Executive Director of** *Climate Healers, a non-profit dedicated towards healing the Earth's climate. He was Executive Producer of the award-winning documentary* *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret (2014), as well as other films, and is author of the books, Carbon Dharma: The Occupation of Butterflies and Carbon Yoga: The Vegan Metamorphosis.*

JOHN SORENSON: "I share the concerns of many animal advocates who have spoken out against the Clean Meat Hoax. I agree that these initiatives to produce laboratory-grown meat serve to normalize consumption of animals, legitimize our use of them as resources and distract attention from more fundamental problems of justice for these beings. Corporations that exploit other animals for profit see laboratory-grown meat as an additional product, not as a replacement. Even if, instead of seeing veganism as a social justice movement, we restrict our attention to what types of consumer products are on the market, we see that plant-based meat substitutes are already widely available. Furthermore, I am not as eager as these laboratory meat proponents are to believe that vegan advocacy has failed. As has been pointed out, none of the large national or international animal welfare organizations have actively promoted veganism. Despite that, every day we see media reports about growing interest in veganism. When I began teaching courses in Critical Animal Studies in the 1990s, I always had to explain what the term 'vegan' meant. Now, there are always students entering my classes who are already vegan and virtually all students are sympathetic to the idea and want to learn more about it. Vegan cooking demonstrations are popular on YouTube, there are new vegan restaurants and cookbooks appearing all the time. It seems that every fast-food chain is competing to introduce new plant-based meat alternatives and many are so indistinguishable from animal flesh that vegans don't want to eat them. The Canadian government's new food guide emphasizes fruit, vegetables, whole grains and advises people to choose plant-based proteins. It is remarkable that these recommendations are being made in the context of massive pressure from the powerful and wealthy meat, dairy and egg industries. Of course, simply adding new consumer products does not solve fundamental problems. These examples are not necessarily manifestations of ethical veganism that address the hierarchy of speciesism, involve a commitment to trans-species social justice or challenge the normalization of violence towards animals. However, they do provide a good indication that attitudes are changing and that there are many opportunities to make further progress. Those who are concerned about the welfare, the rights and the lives of other animals should work to more effectively promote veganism and animal rights rather than calling for more meat to be produced in the laboratory."

-- **John Sorenson, Ph.D., teaches Critical Animal Studies, globalization, and anti-racism. His most recent book is** *Animal Rights (Fernwood Press). Other books include* *Ape: Culture of Prejudice: Arguments in Critical Social Science; Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora; Imagining Ethiopia: Struggles for History and Identity in the Horn of Africa; Disaster and Development in the Horn of Africa; and African Refugees. Prof. Sorenson's recent SSHRC-funded research has been on the representation of nonhuman animals. He has been involved with a number of Third World solidarity groups.*