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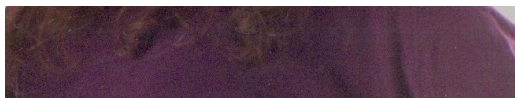
New Jersey Vegan Feminist

August 10, 2016 · Lori Weiss



Rawthenticity

New Jersey-based high fruit raw vegan couple Lori Weiss and Nicole Gregg. We are Certified Raw Food Nutrition Educators and share our regular vegan updates with you here, as well as the stories of other vegans in our Why Vegan section. Thank you for visiting!



Dr. Corey Wrenn, Ph.D.

When Nicole and I were living in Santa Monica and made the decision to move back to New Jersey, I knew that it would be important for me to connect with like-minded people back in our home state. So I searched online for a vegan feminist in New Jersey and that's how I discovered Dr. Corey Wrenn, Ph.D.

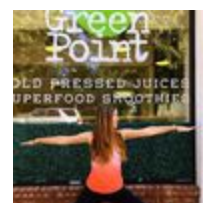
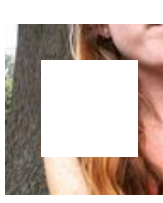
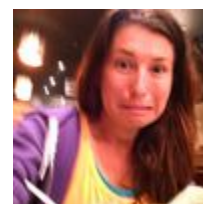
Dr. Wrenn is the founder of the Vegan Feminist Network, as well as Director of Gender Studies and Lecturer of Sociology with Monmouth University. Once I started reading her articles on veganfeministnetwork.com and coreyleewrenn.com, I was hooked and knew that I needed to reach out to her. Dr. Wrenn was kind enough to answer my questions about veganism, feminism, and more:

Why vegan? What inspired you to go vegan?

I went vegan when I was 13 after watching a cooking show on PBS in which the host visited a butcher shop and there were pig's heads hanging from chains. I made the connection and



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kicked meat right then. These were the days before internet, so I sent a letter to [PETA](#), which actually sent me a lot of vegan literature. I knew from about 14 or 15 that I wanted to be vegan, but I came from a low income family in Appalachia, and did not control what food was bought or cooked. Buying and preparing "special" vegetarian food for me was already a strain on my parents. I knew that the first day I moved out would be the first day I went vegan, which was day one of college when I was 17. That was 15 and a half years ago.

What do you typically eat in a day?

I'm a busy academic, but since I went vegan before the days of convenient vegan foods and because I have been low income for most of my life, I had to learn to cook for myself. I cook on a daily basis. I make a lot of stir frys, curries, salads, pastas, etc. I love vegetables. Something I never thought I'd ever do as a teenager; but that's how veganism works! It changes your taste for the better.

What is the [Vegan Feminist Network](#) and what's the story behind the organization?



When you and your girlfriend have matching outfits and matching meals! 🍌🍌🍌🍌

Why Vegan

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VFN is an activist-academic project I started in 2013 in response to the sexist pushback I was receiving. I had long been active in the movement sharing my academic research with the community. I found that after I started teaching gender in 2012, feminism was really beginning to inform my scholarly work *and* activism, and it wasn't being received very well from the patriarchal animal rights movement. I love my feminist elders like Carol Adams and Lisa Kemmerer, but they seem to be relegated to books and university gigs. They aren't really grappling with the messy space of online vegan feminism where so much of the dialogue happens today. I felt like it was a really needed service.

How easy or difficult is it to maintain your vegan lifestyle in New Jersey?

I would say it's easy... only because I am not living in a food desert and I now enjoy a steady income. Coming from rural Appalachia, vegan convenience foods were less available, and no vegan restaurants existed within driving distance. So, moving to New Jersey has been nice as far as options. However, New Jersey has a lot of problems with poverty and structural racism, which means accessing fresh water and healthy produce is much

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more difficult (if not impossible) for many folks. I hesitate strongly to ever describe veganism as "easy" for that reason, especially as a privileged white university professor.

You recently published an article entitled "White Women Wanted? An Analysis of Gender Diversity in Social Justice Magazines." Why did you choose to investigate this topic?

I believe in the power of diversity. The movement needs diversity for three reasons: it is consistent with social justice ethic, diversity increases the availability for role models (which are psychologically important for motivating and inspiring activists from underprivileged or marginalized backgrounds), and diversity in our constituency is mandatory for our movement to be effective. As a sociologist, I recognize that media is an important agent of socialization; it shapes our reality. If the reality the movement is creating is populated by mostly white, able-bodied, thin women, I believe this to be a major impediment to improving diversity.

During your study, you found that there was "unevenly depicted gender, overrepresented whites, and

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underrepresented non-thin body types" and you explain that the media cannot simply include more diverse body types and backgrounds to fix the problem. What solutions do you recommend?

A wise woman once told me that privileged folks need to move over. Stop making diversity an afterthought; bring it center-stage. We can start by making our media more inclusive to the issues that resonate with marginalized folks. Just putting a brown face on the cover isn't going to change anything if the material underneath is relying on the same old script of white people interests (like vegan vacation getaways, or expensive vegan products). When the movement starts to incorporate narratives of food justice, systemic racism, sizeism, rape culture, etc., that helps us to move away from that white-washed, sanitized happy-face veganism that we think puts our best face forward, but really just puts a privileged white face forward. It isn't inviting. If we really want to liberate other animals, we have to nurture an understanding of how speciesism is inherently entangled with the oppression of marginalized humans. This isn't optional; we *must* do this if we want a vegan world.

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In your academic career, how do you promote veganism?

All of my research is in the service of bettering the animal rights movement. Beyond that, I incorporate a strong vegan ethic into all of my classes, be it Introduction to Gender Studies or the Sociology of Deviance. Species matters, and I don't believe any teaching repertoire can fully understand social issues without acknowledging how Nonhuman Animals are integral to them. Occasionally, I get the opportunity to teach an Animals & Society class, and I try to bring in speakers who are strong vegan activists.

What resources do you recommend for someone interested in learning more about veganism in your area?

Whyveganism.com offers a ton of information on the ethical problems with Nonhuman Animal use, but it also provides recipes and coupons. I also recommend my own website veganfeministnetwork.com (and our accompanying [Facebook page](#)). I have a lot of resources there on pro-intersectional veganism, recommended readings, audio interviews, video lectures, etc.

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