



Animals and Society

Spring 2018 Newsletter

Letter from the Chair

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Mission

The purpose of the Section on Animals and Society is to encourage and support the development of theory, research and teaching about the complex relationships that exist between humans and other animals. In the process, it is anticipated that the light we shed on these issues will increase the well-being of both humans and other animals.



It's hard to believe the spring semester is over and summer is upon us. Before we know it, we'll be gathering in Philadelphia for the ASA meetings, where we have some great activities planned.

It's been an honor to serve as section chair this year. I certainly could not have done it alone. Several individuals deserve special thanks for all their help and advice. Michelle Proctor, past-chair, has mentored me through the process and was kind enough to let me intrude on her weekends and weeknights whenever I asked for advice. Erin Kidder stepped up to develop the newsletters for our section and Loredana Loy has served as our social media expert. Liz Cherry has also been a wonderful source of information and help, especially with the Graduate Student Scholarship Award and Section's Teaching Award. Elizabeth Barna has been helping with membership and

Cameron Whitley has been extremely helpful with on-site planning for the 2018 ASA meetings. I'd also like to welcome Richard York as our incoming chair. Richard is Professor of Sociology at the University of Oregon. His area is environmental sociology with an emphasis on human ecology and political economy.

In this issue we highlight some of our members' research. Paola di Paolo describes her field research at "livestock" auctions and discusses how language surrounding animal slaughter serves to numb our awareness and sensitivity to animal suffering. In another piece, di Paolo describes how the material culture of the livestock auction serves to construct dairy cows as exploitable and insentient. Corey Wrenn has also contributed a fascinating piece on Trump Veganism, in which she explores vegans' political attitudes, including those who support Trump. Also, check out some members' publications on page 9.

Don't Forget!!! Section day at ASA is Sunday, August 12th and our reception is Saturday, August 11th at 6:30-8:10 pm at Maggiano's Little Italy, 1201 Filbert Street. I hope to see you all there.

Liz Grauerholz

University of Central Florida



Corey Lee Wrenn, PhD
Monmouth University

Trump Veganism? Research Finds a Highly Intersectional American Vegan Movement

Following the explosion of identity politics that culminated in the shocking 2016 presidential win for Donald Trump, I was curious as to whether these wider cultural trends could be related to the vocal resistance to intersectionality and feminist theory in the Nonhuman Animal rights movement, a phenomenon I have dubbed "Trump veganism." In my article, "Trump Veganism: A Political Survey of American Vegans in the Era of Identity Politics," published with the peer-reviewed, open-access sociological journal *Societies*, I surveyed almost 300 American vegans to ascertain their political attitudes and propensity for intersectional awareness and behavior.

Previous research conducted of vegetarians and animal rights activists from the 1990s and 2000s found this demographic to be particularly left-leaning, and my survey results supported this trend. In fact, this was a *very* liberal group. The majority were atheist or agnostic, most voted for Hillary, quite a few identified as socialist or anarchist, almost half chose not to report their gender, and about 40% were non-heterosexual. Most respondents were white, under 35, and female-identified.

Yet, there was a streak of conservatism that did give pause. For instance, 14% of respondents either supported Trump or were neutral to his campaign. These conservative vegans participated in slightly fewer social justice movements other than veganism. They were also more likely to be vegan for reasons of personal health, not out of concern for other animals. Even liberal voters demonstrated some level of conservatism when it came to vegan ethics. When asked if they supported the concept of "Nonhumans first," about half of all respondents agreed.

The Nonhuman Animal rights movement has a bit of a bum rap given its historical legacy of exploiting racist and colonialist tensions to advance its interests. My research supports that, while activists are eager to prioritize the interests of Nonhuman Animals in their campaigning, they are certainly not ignorant of human oppression. Respondents believed that other social justice movements were relevant to speciesism. They were involved with four other social justice movements on average. Respondents also indicated that they did not believe the vegan movement did enough to prioritize diversity, especially women and people of color.

Presuming this sample to be generalizable, Trump veganism can be said to be a marginal position in the American vegan movement. Instead, this demographic is politically intelligent and heavily involved in a variety of social justice efforts. These respondents are certainly not ignorant to the suffering of marginalized humans and its relationship to speciesism.