

Ariel

Rapid #: -7377872

IP: 129.82.31.248

**CALL #:** [http://linkresolver.tamu.edu:9003/tamu?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&u ...](http://linkresolver.tamu.edu:9003/tamu?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&u ...)

**LOCATION:** TXA :: Main Library :: Electronic

TYPE: Article CC:CCG

JOURNAL TITLE: Food, culture and society

USER JOURNAL TITLE: Food, Culture and Society

TXA CATALOG TITLE: Food, culture and society

ARTICLE TITLE: A Critique of Single-issue Campaigning and the Importance of Comprehensive Abolitionist Vegan Advocacy

ARTICLE AUTHOR:

VOLUME: 16

ISSUE: 4

MONTH:

YEAR: 2013

PAGES: 651-668

ISSN: 1751-7443

OCLC #:

CROSS REFERENCE ID: [TN:641875]

VERIFIED:

**BORROWER:** COF :: Morgan Library



This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code)  
12/11/2013 11:30:38 AM



# FOOD, CULTURE & SOCIETY

VOLUME 16 | ISSUE 4 | DECEMBER 2013

## A Critique of Single-issue Campaigning and the Importance of Comprehensive Abolitionist Vegan Advocacy

**Corey Lee Wrenn**

*Colorado State University*

**Rob Johnson**

*Vegan:UK*

### Abstract

*A popular tactic in the professional nonhuman animal rights movement is to utilize species-specific or issue-specific campaigns to increase public concern, motivate participation and extend movement support. This article challenges this traditional tactic of moderate nonhuman animal organizations in critiquing the issue-specific approaches to abolition advanced elsewhere and calls for a holistic abolitionist method that requires advocates to relinquish confusing piecemeal campaigns and instead challenge the underlying problem of speciesism in order to influence lasting and meaningful social change. The article applies Francione's radical theory of nonhuman animal rights, which recognizes the importance of vegan education in challenging this oppression. This article makes an argument for the role of radical motivation tactics in social movements as instrumental in reaching desired social change goals in a social movement environment that has largely professionalized.*

**Keywords:** abolition, animal rights, framing, professionalization, radical mobilization, social movements, tactics, veganism

### Introduction

Species and issue-specific campaigning has been an item of particular contention within the nonhuman animal rights movement in recent years in response to the growing divide between abolitionist and welfarist nonhuman animal rights factions.

DOI:  
10.2752/175174413X13758634982092  
Reprints available directly from the  
publishers. Photocopying permitted by  
licence only © Association for the  
Study of Food and Society 2013

Various factions within the movement have attempted to utilize this approach in an effort to improve the status of nonhuman animals. Within the nonhuman animal rights movement, advocates are in disagreement over whether the end goal of the rights campaign should be to modify use or to abolish use. Among those working to end use entirely, advocates are further divided on whether or not abolition could be achieved through welfarist reform or abolitionist-based vegan advocacy (Francione 1996). As a reaction to the mainstream focus on welfare reform, Francione developed an abolitionist approach to nonhuman animal rights that recognizes property status as the primary barrier to achieving equality for nonhumans. In this, he rejects welfarist reforms that he sees as ineffective, and at times counterproductive, to achieving abolition. Instead, he promotes vegan outreach as the moral baseline for achieving nonhuman equality. However, Francione (albeit reluctantly), among others, has conceded that issue-specific advocacy, a traditional tactic heavily utilized by the welfarist faction, might prove useful in achieving abolition if properly contextualized. As such, those utilizing welfarist reform and those relying on abolitionism both use issue-specific advocacy to a large degree.

Taking this into consideration, the focus on one species or issue in a group's tactical repertoire can be categorized into three manifestations: (1) single-issue campaigns that are utilized by welfare groups with no abolitionist context, such as a campaign to enrich cages for battery hens; (2) single-issue campaigns that are utilized by abolitionist groups within an abolitionist context, such as a campaign to abolish vivisection on primates; and (3) species or issue-specific topics utilized to cater to particular audiences in order to draw them into the abolitionist discussion. An example of this would be drawing on the public's love of cats and dogs to lead into a discussion on veganism. Explorations into the effectiveness of species and issue-specific campaigning has direct relevance for the repertoires of nonhuman animal groups, yet it also has implications for mobilization efforts in other social justice movements that draw on emotional appeals and issues popular with the public. For example, is the focus on charismatic megafauna benefiting mobilization for the environmental movement? Does the green energy movement's focus on mountaintop removal motivate overall participation?

We argue that the utilization of issue-specific advocacy diverts attention from the root cause of injustice, thus compromising the integrity of the claims made. We also argue that this type of advocacy diminishes the importance of other injustices excluded from those issue-specific campaigns and may overload the potential constituency to the point of discouraging motivation. As such, we suggest a more holistic, comprehensive, and simplified discussion of rights and justice that will not undermine claims-making and will have maximum impact on mobilization. In the philosophical sense, a holistic approach prioritizes the whole (vegan-based anti-speciesism) over its parts (specific injustices). We suggest that no campaigning can be effective in challenging speciesism if it singles out one issue or species. In a challenge to the work of Dunayer (2004, 2007), Francione (1996) and Regan (2004), we outline incremental abolitionism as achievable only through ethical, anti-speciesist vegan outreach.

## Species-specific Advocacy

Francione defines species and issue-specific campaigns as “single-issue campaigns” that “focus on particular uses of animals, or on particular species” (Francione 2010a) and identifies “some particular use of animals or some form of treatment” (Francione 2010b) as the object of a campaign to end or reform that use. Under this definition, the vast majority of advocacy efforts utilized by the nonhuman animal rights movement could be classified as “single issue.” Popular specialized campaigns include the push to ban veal crates, fur, battery cages, horse-drawn carriages and seal hunting. These campaigns also avoid addressing the root problem of nonhuman animal use: speciesism. As such, they fail to highlight veganism as the most appropriate means of realizing justice for nonhuman animals. Dunayer criticizes this approach:

Explicit advocacy of nonhuman rights and emancipation must become widespread. Otherwise, every battle against speciesist abuse will be fought separately. As of now, one animal rights group works to outlaw bear hunting; another works to end horse slaughter; another works to prevent a university from building an additional vivisection facility ... However, until more groups persistently advocate the rights of all nonhumans, each abuse will be hard to combat, and the list of abuses will remain hopelessly long. (Dunayer 2004: 159)

Focusing on the “symptoms” of speciesism, she further, will not lead to nonhuman liberation. Instead, she advocates an attack on speciesism. However, her plan for such an attack continues to allow for species and issue-specific campaigns in the promotion of bans or boycotts that attack particular uses so long as they are not focused on reforming use.

Species and issue-specific campaigning are popular with mainstream advocacy organizations because they are particularly useful for fundraising (Francione and Garner 2010). To fundraise successfully, these campaigns are favored because they are attention-grabbing and easy to support (Johnson and Wrenn 2012). As such, they are able to target groups of people who sympathize with certain species or issues or with those with little to no vested interest in the issues. These campaigns are designed to elicit emotional reactions that might translate into mobilization. Certainly, the role of emotion in motivating social movement participation has been highlighted as particularly important (Jasper 1998). So, the appeal of single-issue campaigning is understandable. An alternative holistic abolitionist vegan campaign would therefore need to address the potential usefulness of emotion as well as address the potential obstacles to promoting veganism universally to the public.



FOOD,  
CULTURE  
&  
SOCIETY

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2013

## Theoretical Discussions of Issue-specific Advocacy

Species and issue-specific advocacy has long been utilized by the mainstream nonhuman animal rights movement. Campaigns against fur, seal hunting, puppy mills, etc. are intended to draw on popular species and issues in order to elicit emotional reactions from the public that could in turn motivate participation. The welfare movement, as defined by Francione (1996), is a movement concerned with

the reform of nonhuman animal use and may or may not be interested in eliminating that use. Traditional welfarism focuses primarily on the modification of use. New welfarists, on the other hand, hope to realize the cessation of use through the utilization of traditional welfarist tactics (Francione 1996). In contrast, the abolitionist faction rejects welfarist tactics and attempts to utilize advocacy that is consistent with achieving a cessation of use. Tactics utilized must not compromise nonhuman animals or reward their exploiters.

Francione defines species and issue-specific tactics, what he calls “single-issue” campaigns, as “efforts to get legislation to address the issue or efforts to motivate industry to make voluntary changes,” or, “general educational activities designed to get people to change their behavior” (Francione 2010c: 75). For the most part, the utilization of species or issue-specific tactics has been utilized by welfarist and new welfarist organizations. However, the abolitionist faction has also been known to incorporate them into its repertoire. The assumption is that, if properly contextualized, issue-specific campaigns can eliminate some form of nonhuman animal use without singling out that issue as more important than other forms of exploitation. Because traditional welfarists have a substantially different end goal than that of the new welfarists and abolitionists (modification of use rather than the cessation of use), they will be excluded from this discussion. Francione has written extensively on the problematic nature of traditional welfarism. As such, our area of concern is whether or not species and issue-specific tactics can benefit the achievement of movement success. Particularly, we are interested in exploring the utility of applying single-issue campaigning to abolitionism.

It is first important to recognize that both the new welfarist and abolitionist approaches advocate incremental social change towards the eradication of nonhuman animal use. The new welfarist faction assumes that reforms will gradually improve the status of nonhumans and raise public concern to the eventual point of abolition. Abolitionists rely largely on vegan education to create the necessary public paradigm shift needed to reduce nonhuman animal exploitation and increase the political base for nonhuman animal interests (Francione and Garner 2010). Regan (2004) points to legislative action as the primary means of eliminating institutions of nonhuman animal use one by one: “Although we cannot abolish every form of animal exploitation today, we can abolish some tomorrow. Instead of merely changing the conditions in which animals are exploited, sometimes we can end their exploitation” (Regan 2004: 196). Francione (1996) elaborates on the incremental approach to achieving abolition as one that must (1) constitute a prohibition; (2) eliminate an exploitative institution; (3) recognize and respect a noninstitutional nonhuman animal interest; (4) not be tradable; and (5) not substitute one form of exploitation for another. He lists the ban on leg-hold traps and drug addiction tests as potential examples. As previously discussed, Dunayer maintains a stricter definition of incremental abolitionist campaigning. She takes issue with Francione’s conditions and adds that a campaign is only abolitionist if it does not continue to leave nonhumans in a situation of exploitation. Banning leg-hold traps, for example, would mean that certain nonhumans would still be vulnerable to other forms of trapping and would thus not be abolitionist. However,

it could be argued that Francione's fourth criterion, which posits that "animal interests cannot be tradable," encompasses Dunayer's concerns (Francione 1996: 203).

Dunayer (2007), Perz (2006, 2007), and Francione (1996, 2010) debate at length on what might constitute incremental abolitionism. Dunayer, like Francione and Regan, concedes that certain issues or species-specific bans might constitute abolitionist action:

Incremental abolition prevents or ends the exploitation of some (rather than all) nonhuman beings. It doesn't modify their exploitation. Like a requirement for increased cage space, a ban on caging changes the way that hens are exploited. Banning the production or sale of eggs in a particular jurisdiction would be incremental abolition. Increasing the percentage of humans who are vegan also is incremental abolition. (Dunayer 2007: 32)

However, Garner has since taken a more constricted approach to incrementalism. Specifically, he notes that single-issue campaigns can be problematic and confusing as the vilification of one particular nonhuman animal use might lead to other issues being ignored, excused, or seen as preferable (Francione 2010c). Instead, Francione reiterates Dunayer's focus on building vegan numbers and encourages a focus on vegan education to first change the social discourse surrounding nonhuman animal use.

Similarly, Hall (2006) rejects the tendency for the nonhuman animal rights movement to focus on exceptionally horrendous acts of exploitation. Doing so, she argues, means that these groups are not, "attending to the underlying problem of domination; and in some sense they are ensuring that the everyday domination continues unnoticed" (Hall 2006: 39). Instead, Hall calls for "coherent advocacy": collective action and claims-making that takes place within a context of peaceful education. This type of approach, she notes, would necessarily encompass the various species-specific and issue-specific concerns without compromising nonhuman animal interests. Freeman (2012) also discourages advocates from relying on any particular charismatic species to address speciesism as a whole. Likewise, Slocum (2004) challenges the use of charismatic species and other popular single topics as they diminish the importance of the overall social problem at hand.

Garner, too, has criticized the usefulness of issue-specific advocacy for the abolitionist movement, noting that constructing any campaign that meets the criteria that Francione has defined is unrealistic and unlikely:

In a nutshell, the problem with the attempt to devise a form of incremental abolitionism is that it is difficult to identify abolitionist measures, short of abolishing all animal exploitation in a particular sphere of activity, that remain consistent with the animal rights abolitionist principle. (Francione and Garner 2010: 139–40)



FOOD,  
CULTURE  
&  
SOCIETY

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2013

What is more, Garner finds that restricting abolitionist advocacy to vegan outreach severely limits the mobilization potential of the movement.

However, it is our position that Francione is correct in his insistence that vegan education is the most morally consistent approach to advocating abolition. Indeed, it is furthered that Francione's lingering attachment to the potential for issue-specific campaigning remains problematic given the critical importance of creating a vegan consciousness to create significant and lasting change for nonhumans. For example, in his work with Garner, Francione (2010c) continues to posit that singling out specific nonhuman animal uses could be consistent with abolitionism. He presents the focus on nonhuman animals used for food as one instance of incremental abolitionist efforts, suggesting that activists organize, "lawful boycotts of companies not because they sell meat or dairy or eggs that are less 'humanely' produced than the animal parts or products of other companies but because they are selling meat, dairy, or eggs at all" (Francione 2010c: 66). Yet, as such an effort would single out nonhuman food animals and specific companies selling their flesh and excrements, it would still constitute a single-issue campaign that necessarily creates a hierarchy of issues and species with which the public should be concerned. Hall, too, abandons coherent advocacy in favor of single-issue campaigning:

Any time we successfully defend a free-living animal's (or community's) interest in living free of human domination, any time our actions free entire communities to actually experience what would be theirs if animal rights were a reality, this is a good thing and it is a step ahead. (Hall 2011)

Further, Freeman (2012) believes that the utilization of species-specific media could be used to promote holistic nonhuman animal rights. However, even if species or issue-specific campaigning is carefully contextualized within abolitionist advocacy, it risks singling out one form of exploitation or one species as more worthy of attention. It detracts from the notion that *all* animals deserve moral consideration. This problem exists in even the most wide-ranging of issue-specific campaigns, including those which Francione defends. These campaigns also have the potential to overload consumers with information and requests for action or attention. Only abolitionist vegan education that highlights the need to reject all nonhuman animal consumption (which encompasses food, clothing, entertainment, vivisection and companionship) in tandem with anti-speciesism claims-making has the potential to achieve abolition incrementally without singling out one issue or species as more deserving of attention at the expense of other issues and species.

### **Inconsistency between Tactics and Claims-making**

Perhaps the most disconcerting matter with utilizing issue-specific campaigning for achieving abolition is the moral inconsistency in singling out one species or system of exploitation as more urgent, more problematic or otherwise more important than other issues or nonhuman animal use in general. As Francione notes, "there is an implicit message that other forms of animal exploitation are



morally acceptable" (Francione and Garner 2010: 247). Yet, Francione goes on to suggest that if species and issue-specific campaigns made explicit the fact that no exploitation is acceptable and those campaigns were contextualized within the end goal of abolition, then there might be some educational or political value to be gained from engaging them. However, we have noted that any species or issue-specific campaign, regardless of context, necessarily creates a hierarchy of concern that compromises other species and issues. For example, one might argue that a tax on nonhuman animal flesh could be abolitionist, as it would not entail reforming use and it would not require replacing one use with another. However, if nonhuman animal advocates were to campaign to support such a tax, it would imply that nonhuman animal flesh is somehow more worthy of concern than dairy, egg, vivisection and entertainment industries. Neither would it challenge continued consumer preference for those products. Such a campaign would also detract precious resources from vegan outreach that takes a holistic approach to ending speciesism.

This inconsistency is highlighted in similar campaigning done in human rights movements. For example, campaigning to repeal Arizona's immigration law that allows authorities to demand residency authorization from individuals who appear to be of Hispanic decent is, on its surface, an abolitionist campaign. If it were repealed, racial profiling would be eliminated for Hispanic citizens in that state. It is not asking for more respectful racial profiling, neither is it asking to replace that discrimination with another form of discrimination. However, racism would hardly be eradicated in those Arizona communities should the law be repealed. For instance, Hispanic citizens might still encounter housing discrimination, job insecurity or other forms of police harassment. Indeed, racism might actually be exacerbated in that the community should the public at large believe that the successful repeal of racial profiling had fostered egalitarianism or that other forms of discrimination were less morally problematic and could thus remain unchallenged.

In another example, the campaign to improve access to reproductive health services would certainly be of benefit to women. Yet, if allowed to stand on its own, improved access would do little to improve women's status overall. Other important issues like domestic violence, sexist media representations, political underrepresentation and job discrimination are other major challenges to women that would go overlooked. What is more, singling out one issue over another necessarily disregards the interconnectivity of the various manifestations of sexism, patriarchy and their resultant second-class citizenship.

While we might link these issue-specific campaigns into the larger context of ending an injustice, it is unnecessarily confusing and resource-intensive. Another consideration is that, unlike these human rights examples, which decidedly have more practical value in improving equality, the nonhuman animal rights movement is unique in three respects that challenge the usefulness of single-issue campaigning. First, speciesism is more deeply ingrained in human society than is racism and sexism. Human society, for the most part, does ideologically value human equality regardless of race or gender. Therefore, it is far less risky to engage



FOOD,  
CULTURE  
&  
SOCIETY

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2013



in single-issue campaigning for human rights issues. Indeed, Francione notes that issue-specific campaigning is less problematic in a world that largely finds human inequality morally unacceptable: "This is the problem of single-issue campaigns in the context of animal exploitation. The same problem does not exist where human issues are concerned" (Francione 2010d). Secondly, the nonhuman animal rights movement lacks the funding and resources that many human rights movements enjoy (Cooney 2011). Given limited resources, engaging in potentially confusing campaigns that stop short of morally consistent claims is simply inefficient. Third, due to the legal personhood of human individuals, the potential success of a human-focused single-issue campaign is escalated. Given nonhuman animals' status in society as things and commodities, the likelihood of success in any single-issue campaign is significantly reduced. This is especially relevant when that campaign is of an abolitionist nature, as present social and legal apparatuses oppose nonhuman rights and interests. While new welfarist campaigns target individual industry practices and can make claims to increasing efficiency, coherent abolitionism tends to make claims about those industries as a whole. Hence, their success is decidedly rarer as a legal and economic matter.

### **The Potential for Decision Fatigue: Applying Social Psychology and Economic Theory**

Social psychology might provide an important contribution to the discussion in regards to research on decision fatigue. Decision fatigue happens when individuals lose motivation when presented with too many choices (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). Too many options requiring excessive decision making can become counterproductive in eliciting behavior change (Schwartz 2004). Audiences can experience a collapse of compassion when presented with too many issues (Cameron and Payne 2011; Cooney 2011). The Humane Research Council notes that the public is too easily overloaded and overwhelmed with new ideas in regards to nonhuman animal advocacy: "Rather than telling people they should not eat meat for the animals, the environment, the factory farm workers, and their personal health, we might do better to present only one message in depth" (Glasser 2012).

As such, it is not difficult to imagine what negative impact species and issue-specific campaigns are having on mobilization. Most welfarist organizations, for example, have large numbers of such campaigns running simultaneously at any given time. At the time of this writing, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is promoting twelve specific campaigns which address everything from unacceptable slaughtering methods by Kentucky Fried Chicken suppliers to cruelty in airline transportation. Abolitionist organizations, too, engage in this overly complex claims-making. Spanish group, Igualdad Animal, for example, organizes its mobilization around circuses, mink farms and slaughterhouses. Compartmentalizing nonhuman animal use into easily promoted, highly emotional campaigns runs the risk of overloading potential participants with too many objects of concern.

Alternatively, if organizations were to simplify their claims-making and focus simply on anti-speciesism holistically, it might relieve potential audiences of the burden associated with too many competing areas of concern. We can look to

economics for evidence in support of this idea. McCarthy and Zald (1977) have likened social movement organizations to businesses that must sell their goals in competition with one another in the larger social movement environment. Here, adherence represents demand, and organizational advertising can presumably influence that demand. We can extend this analogy to include single-issue campaigns as products. Not only are social movement organizations in competition, but their individual campaigns are in competition among those organizations and also internally within their own organization. Advocacy groups, as mentioned previously, often advertise ten or more campaigns at once. Given that these campaigns are judged successful in their ability to influence attitude and behavior change, we can analogize campaigns as products and the groups promoting them as businesses with an interest in selling these products to potential participants, or, the consumers.

If any particular group maintains a catalogue of ten or more products they want to sell, but with the same fundamental target (the desire to liberate nonhuman animals), then it follows that these products are in competition with one another. Hence, a consumer viewing a website or approaching a stall filled with competing products would be expected to choose only a manageable number of issues that might especially resonate with them and disregard those which seem to be more time-consuming or stressful. Thinking economically, consumers are only expected to invest in items that appear to be doing something significantly more. But, if a consumer can get what they desire for cheaper, they would be expected to take that item that requires less investment. Certainly, individuals tend to make choices that tend to be less costly and pose the least risk (Kahneman and Tversky 1983). In terms of issue-specific campaigns, this suggests that the more effective campaigns (those which demand significant behavioral changes, such as the adoption of veganism) will be de-emphasized in favor of less demanding requests, such as petition signing, small financial donations, or switching patronage from KFC to McDonald's. Veganism might then be largely ignored, as it appears more unattainable or irrelevant, in favor of single issues that fall short of realizing abolition.

Yet, our economic analogy offers several solutions to stunted mobilization. First, multiple single-issue "products" could be condensed into one large purchase option: veganism. Marketing veganism as the umbrella solution to all nonhuman animal concerns would sell all of those products at once. While this tactic might not draw the numbers it would if the products were sold separately, the pressure to attract numbers is lessened because the overall profit gained from selling veganism is increased (here *profit* refers to the actual amount of progression towards nonhuman liberation). This is because veganism is far more profitable in terms of results. For instance, we might expect one recruit to veganism to be more influential to reducing nonhuman animal suffering than tens or even hundreds of petition signatures. The promotion of anti-speciesism and veganism, then, is a far more attractive option if profit is based on progression for nonhuman animals rather than the number of donations or memberships. If a nonhuman animal advocacy group's primary concern is the cessation of nonhuman animal use, then it follows



FOOD,  
CULTURE  
& SOCIETY

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2013

that attitude and behavior change should be more valued than donations. This is particularly relevant as Francione (1996) has long criticized welfarist and new welfarist campaigns as ineffectual in that they distract from or stop short of vegan outreach. It is important to note here that many nonhuman animal organizations have professionalized to the point where self-sustainment has become a priority. This has the potential to interfere with organizational decision-making that might hold the most potential to achieve nonhuman animal liberation. Indeed, if an organization must be excessively concerned with overhead and funding, it will begin to choose campaigns that are most conducive to maintaining donations and membership rather than encouraging social change.

Thus, the response from a business-minded organization is the adoption of a wide variety of campaigns that have the potential to attract a wide constituency. So, if the public is presumed to be unreceptive to veganism, a multitude of campaigns remain that provide opportunity to a receptive public to participate with little risk or cost. Yet, this is a decidedly odd tactic if nonhuman animal liberation is the base concern. If understanding progression for nonhumans in terms of profit, economic theory can further explain this inconsistency. Take, for example, a company selling automobiles—complex products made of many inter-reliant parts. Certainly, that company could insist that individual parts such as tires, engines, car seats and steering wheels be marketed individually with considerable profit. However, this would be illogical and difficult to sell to consumers. Automobile companies understand that selling the products as a whole is more attractive to customers and acknowledge that individual replacement and spare parts are still available for purchase. Marketing campaigns would only make sense if they were to increase desire for the product itself, not individual parts. This creates both more profit whole-scale while simultaneously nurturing a larger market that is now dependent on automobiles within which to foster a need for additional individual parts to customers who have committed to the large purchase. Alternatively, marketing individual parts alongside the main product would be irrational unless the aim of the business was to achieve something other than profit. In other words, a business might advertise parts separately if it has the option of increasing its reputation by creating a new market in which it specializes. However, this is uncommon, and would presumably be a one-time effort or contextualized within an advert for the automobile itself. The business might claim the new range of cars has well-designed tires, for example, but this would rarely be an advert for the tires themselves.

In applying this analogy to the structural weaknesses of single-issue campaigns, it becomes clear that nonhuman animal groups are working towards some other goal beyond achieving abolition. If nonhuman animal advocacy groups indeed value the net profit of realizing nonhuman interests, they should not be focused with selling individual parts (single issues). Yet, most nonhuman animal organizations devote more billing to these campaigns at the expense of the main product. An individual on an organization's mailing list might receive multiple donation requests each week—all asking that person to support any number of single issues while rarely, if ever, asking that individual to pursue veganism. Rationally, if organizations were to ask constituents to go vegan, it would encompass all of the single-issue

products. However, such a tactic would not be financially useful to the organization. Our economic analogy underscores the problem with a business strategy that pushes as much product as possible irrespective of rationality and achieving long-term goals. It is suggested, then, that financial interests rather than nonhuman interests are the primary aims of mainstream nonhuman animal organizations. These financial interests, unfortunately, conflict with achieving abolition.

In favoring certain species and single issues, many organizations offer veganism as only one of many potential choices or ignore it altogether (Francione and Garner 2010). How options are framed and contextualized influences the likelihood of an audience adopting that change (Cooney 2011; Kahneman and Tversky 1979). If veganism is minimized or absent as a choice, it is not likely that constituents will adopt that behavior. What is more, individuals tend to exhibit existence bias whereby, "people treat the mere existence of something as evidence of its goodness" (Eidelman, Pattershall and Crandall 2009: 765). This may help to explain why nonhuman animal consumption remains largely unchallenged, but also why the long history of single-issue campaigning continues to garner support despite its failure to create significant change. Thus, if veganism is downplayed or ignored by organizations focused on soliciting membership and donations through single-issue campaigning, organizations fail to contextualize veganism as the most important behavioral change for their constituency. As such, organizational mechanisms are not only hindering nonhuman liberation by overwhelming potential participants with too many choices and misguided choices, but also in failing to frame veganism as the most critically required change.

### Catering to the Audience

Slocum (2004) argues that political action can be motivated by localizing the problem and choosing specific issues that are of particular relevance to certain constituencies. For example, Greenpeace Canada highlights the problem of climate change through the symbolic representation of the polar bear:

The polar bear is a boundary object that attempts to translate the immensity and distance of climate change into something more meaningful to a number of publics in Canada. It is a temporary bridge that allows communication and understanding among the constituencies of scientists, policymakers, and citizens. (Slocum 2004: 430–1)



FOOD,  
CULTURE  
&  
SOCIETY

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2013

Focusing on one resonant representation of the social problem, in other words, can make a large, complex issue easier to grasp by potential participants. Slocum, too, makes the argument that a discussion that draws in the species and issue-specific topics is necessary for elaborating on the connectivity between single issues and the fundamental social crisis. At the same time, she is also careful to recognize that if species-specific or single-topic issues become the focus of campaigning, they can dilute the main message.

Building on this tactical discourse in the environmental movement, the nonhuman abolitionist movement might be able to appropriate certain topics and

symbols in order to tailor to specific audiences and elicit attention and sympathy. It is important here to differentiate between the use of species or issue-specific *topics* to hook potential participants and species or issue-specific *campaigning*. The use of specific topics is intended to guide an audience quickly into a discussion of abolition, whereas a single-issue campaign maintains a focus on ending or modifying a particular use even if it is contextualized within abolition. An example of utilizing a single-issue topic to direct attention to ending speciesism is seen in Francione's essay, "We're all Michael Vick" (Francione 2009). Here Francione draws on a popular media topic (Vick's dogfighting scandal) to frame a discussion of anti-speciesism. There is no campaign to end dog fighting, but rather a rational discussion of veganism and its role in respecting the moral standing of nonhumans. On the other hand, the Peace Advocacy Network's focus on ending the use of horse-drawn carriages would be seen as a single-issue campaign, and problematically so, in that it focuses on one particular species and form of use. Though the organization is careful to contextualize this campaign in an abolitionist vegan framework, it necessarily singles out one issue as more important at the expense of comprehensive vegan outreach. This is of particular importance because, as stated previously, single-issue campaigns draw a larger audience and appear to be less behaviorally demanding. Thus, the utilization of even one single-issue campaign within a group's repertoire, while seeming theoretically forgivable, is practicably disastrous.

Rather than focusing on abolishing a particular institution or use and drawing in vegan education as an afterthought, a particular issue might be used to introduce audiences to veganism as the core area of concern. It is recognized that advocates might need to cater to an audience that is uninformed or unreceptive to veganism and utilize topics that might especially resonate. For instance, O'Reilly (2012) found a great deal of success in presenting veganism to the employee staff of an environmental consulting agency. As the audience was potentially unreceptive to, and largely unfamiliar with, veganism, O'Reilly began the presentation from a health and environmental standpoint. Importantly, however, O'Reilly did not dwell on the health and environmental benefits of veganism, but rather used these issues to garner interest and quickly tied them into the importance of veganism and anti-speciesism. Had he constructed the entire presentation as a means to improve the environment or personal health, this would not have been abolitionist, as it would single out environmental impact and nonhuman food animals as more important.

Out of the approximate 450 attendees, O'Reilly received 163 e-mails: twenty-six individuals pledged to go vegan, while sixty-one stated they were giving it further consideration. These results are quite remarkable given the limited time and resources expended in the effort. Certainly, O'Reilly could have focused on the promotion of several single issues or species and may have gotten a larger response, but, as noted previously, the focus on one issue or species does little to challenge speciesism and does not provide the more comprehensive results that veganism would. O'Reilly's presentation stands as an excellent example of how species or issue-specific topics can be successfully utilized to reach an audience. O'Reilly was able to utilize this technique because he is unaffiliated with any large

nonhuman animal organization—he was not concerned with accumulating donations or membership, only with reducing speciesism. This is true incremental abolitionism: the gradual increase in vegan numbers. No particular species or use is singled out as more deserving of attention. Instead, O'Reilly discusses the problems with using *all* nonhumans in *any* situation and urges his audience to abandon that exploitation altogether.

O'Reilly's lack of affiliation is a critical point in differentiating single-issue topics from single-issue campaigns. Campaigns are generally used as fundraising tools—they are intended for wide appeal and for quick victories. Large constituencies are needed to supply resources for organizations and quick victories are needed to maintain constituency motivation and support. As such, veganism, presumed to be too difficult or off-putting, is either ignored or made secondary to more supportable species or issues. Abolitionists who are unaffiliated with a large organization, however, are free from the pressures of organization maintenance. This is not to say that a larger organization could not successfully adopt and prioritize a vegan outreach campaign, but it is unlikely. When activists can use single issues to draw public interest, but are not obligated to extend those issues into campaigns, they are able to focus on activism that is accountable to nonhuman liberation rather than organizational promotion and fundraising.

### The Potential in Vegan Outreach

Given the limitations of campaigning for particular species or issues, we have argued that a comprehensive abolitionist vegan outreach campaign would be the only appropriate tactic for realizing nonhuman animal liberation. However, such a campaign has been criticized for its utopian nature and its limited applicability. Garner, for example, criticizes the reach of veganism: “Merely assuming that a vegan education campaign is going to persuade enough, or the right, people to change their ways is naïve in the extreme” (Francione and Garner 2010: 126). Indeed, the inflexibility of ethical vegan outreach has been challenged in its failure to resonate with low-income and minority groups (Harper 2010a). Garner also takes issue with the potential pessimism that might result from relying on utopian goals: “such a vegan campaign might also have the effect of promoting a form of defeatism in the sense that the goals are so far in advance of the current state of public opinion that the mountain to climb will see formidable” (Francione and Garner 2010: 221). This opinion draws on one of the favorable aspects of species and issue-specific campaigning: they facilitate and encourage motivation in providing victories that are comparatively easy to achieve. Certainly, social movements are careful to highlight success and downplay failures to attract and maintain participation (Einwohner 2002; Hunt and Benford 1994). Single-issue campaigns are particularly conducive to this.

However, as previously discussed, vegan campaigning might increase its applicability if it were to draw on specific topics to grab the attention of various groups. Indeed, tailoring to the audience is absolutely essential if the abolitionist movement is to successfully reach diverse populations. Harper (2010b), for instance, suggests that vegan mobilization among African Americans is low because



FOOD,  
CULTURE  
&  
SOCIETY

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2013



veganism is tied to a legacy of white racism and “elitist cultural ideologies.” Reframing veganism as a means of decolonizing oppressed populations in improving health and combating racism, however, might improve its resonance and highlight the problems with speciesism. Furthermore, there is no reason why vegan campaigning might not frame incremental movement successes as victories that might encourage continued participation. New welfarist organization Vegan Outreach, for example, regularly highlights successful leafleting campaigns and participant recruitment.

As Dunayer notes, “Only veganism respects nonhuman rights and rejects nonhuman enslavement. When people adopt a completely vegan lifestyle, more nonhumans are spared, because ideological veganism decreases the demand” (Dunayer 2004: 156). Indeed, veganism not only creates the paradigm shift needed for more concrete legal changes, but it represents direct action in decreasing demand for nonhuman animal life and labor. Furthermore, unlike vegetarianism or other forms of reduced nonhuman consumption, ethical veganism is all-encompassing. Veganism challenges the use of nonhumans for food, but also for clothing, companionship, entertainment and testing. The comprehensive nature of veganism, in addition to its potential to immediately alter economic dependencies on nonhuman animals and foster an anti-speciesist culture, makes it an ideal foundation for promoting nonhuman animal liberation.

### Radical Mobilization

Radical social movements call for a fundamental restructuring of the social system (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000) and intentionally do not resonate with institutionalized discourses (Ferree 2003). Because ethical veganism is largely ignored by mainstream nonhuman animal rights organizations, asks potential constituents to undergo significant attitudinal and behavioral changes, and seeks to create drastic societal reorganization, the abolitionist vegan approach can be considered a radical mobilization effort. Further, because abolitionism is not concerned with incorporation into the social system as it currently exists, it is differentiated from the welfarist approach that seeks only to reform use and potentially achieve liberation without significant restructuring.

The nonhuman animal rights movement is not unique in its experience with radical factionalism. Various subgroups within a movement arise in disputes over meaning, constructions of reality and claims-making (Benford 1993). Radical factions play an important role in their social movement environment. In particular, radical factions enliven their movements (Marullo and Meyer 2004). Indeed, movement-initiated reforms tend to be narrow in scope and fall short of activist goals. Radical factions have the potential to draw public attention and thus draw resources (Haines 1984). Haines adds that radical factions, in this sense, can be hugely beneficial for a social movement and do not necessarily create a public backlash.

Understandably, however, factionalism has been criticized as a drain on movement resources and a cause for movement decline (Benford 1993). Joy (2008), for example, points to factionalism as a primary cause for stagnation in the



nonhuman animal rights movement. However, as this paper has shown, the vegan abolitionist faction stands as an important site for challenging ineffectual or counterproductive moderated nonhuman advocacy. Undeniably, the goals of the nonhuman animal rights movement have been substantially diluted (LaVeck 2006). When movements seek to resonate with the preexisting structure, ideals are sacrificed (Ferree 2003).

Indeed, the nonhuman animal rights movement has largely professionalized. This phenomenon is typical of social movements, as organizations tend to conform and converge in reaction to a competitive social movement environment (Ashworth *et al.* 2009; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This competitive environment necessitates broad audience reach, a large presence and socially legitimized behavior (Edwards and Marullo 1995). While some argue that movement professionalization might be beneficial to the movement overall, particularly in soliciting resources and sustaining movement activity in unfavorable environmental conditions (Jenkins and Eckert 1986; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Staggenborg 1988), other social movement theorists warn that the process can inhibit or erode in that it undermines activism in focusing on organizational inertia (Kleidman 1994). Professionalized organizations are often reluctant to risk resources. As they become increasingly concerned with mobilizing financial resources, their interest in mobilizing action is compromised (Oliver and Marwell 1992). This limits professionalized organizations' ability to work for significant social change as they tend towards moderation (Koopmans 1993). This sometimes results in a rejection of direct action in favor of institutionalized advocacy (Staggenborg 1988). Consequently, vegan abolitionism, which, as a grassroots movement, stands in opposition to professionalized mainstream nonhuman animal rights, has the potential to refocus nonhuman animal rights goals on liberation and challenge movement moderation. Indeed, Ferree recognizes that radical factions might stand as the "only route to cultural transformations that delegitimize existing power relations" (Ferree 2003: 340).

## Conclusion

Francione (1995) argues that so long as nonhumans remain property, their interests can never be seriously considered. In other words, without a prevailing anti-speciesist ideology that regards nonhumans as persons, any modifications to their use will be minimal and attempts to abolish specific practices will fail. This is because the interests of an *object of ownership* can never be realized. This paper builds upon Francione's legal conclusions, and, accepting that the interests of property cannot be considered, emphasizes that vegan outreach is necessary to nurture anti-speciesism and make the abolishment of nonhuman animal use possible. In this, we reject the likelihood that single-issue campaigning of any kind could be significantly beneficial without a receptive, anti-speciesist society.

We have explored three major types of single-issue utilization: campaigning in a non-abolitionist context, campaigning within an abolitionist context, and using single issues to initiate an audience to the fundamental social problem. Both new welfarist and abolitionist single-issue campaigning, we have argued, present a piecemeal approach to nonhuman animal liberation that compromises our moral



FOOD,  
CULTURE  
&  
SOCIETY

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2013

obligation to nonhumans, overloads our audience, and is ineffectual in promoting anti-speciesism. We have noted the connection between organizational maintenance and the preference for single-issue campaigning as one that distracts from nonhuman liberation. While these campaigns increase support and fundraising, they are generally ineffectual in challenging speciesism. As such, species and issue-specific campaigning is representative of moderate social movement activity and is limited in reaching the goal of nonhuman liberation. An abolitionist vegan approach that completely rejects single-issue campaigning, however, holds promise in challenging speciesist ideology and enacting incremental change in increasing vegan numbers that will eventually lead to a powerful political base. Abolitionists would be wise to abandon single-issue campaigning in support of comprehensive, anti-speciesist vegan outreach.

**Corey Lee Wrenn** is a graduate student and instructor of sociology at Colorado State University. She received her BA in political science and MS in sociology from Virginia Tech. Her research interests include nonhuman animals and society and social movements. B258 Clark Building, Fort Collins, CO 80523, USA (corey.wrenn@gmail.com).

**Rob Johnson** holds an MA in mental philosophy from the University of Aberdeen. He is the founder of Vegan:UK: a grassroots vegan education network which advises new and non-vegans alike on ethical, abolitionist veganism. He is the author of *Rational Morality: A Science of Right and Wrong* (Dangerous Little Books, 2013). (rob-johnson@live.co.uk).

### References

- Ashworth, R., Boyne, G. and Delbridge, R. 2009. Escape from the Iron Cage? Organizational Change and Isomorphic Pressures in the Public Sector. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 19(1): 165–87.
- Benford, R. 1993. Frame Disputes within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement. *Social Forces* 71(3): 667–701.
- Cameron, C. D. and Payne, B. K. 2011. Escaping Affect: How Motivated Emotion Regulation Creates Insensitivity to Mass Suffering. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100(1): 1–15.
- Cooney, N. 2011. *Change of Heart: What Psychology Can Teach Us About Social Change*. Brooklyn, NY: Lantern Books.
- DiMaggio, P. J. and Powell, W. W. 1983. The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review* 48(2): 147–60.
- Dunayer, J. 2004. *Speciesism*. Derwood: Ryce Publishing.
- Dunayer, J. 2007. Advancing Animal Rights: A Response to “Anti-Speciesism,” Critique of Gary Francione’s Work, and Discussion of Speciesism. *Journal of Animal Law* 3: 17–44.
- Eidelman, S., J. Pattershall, and C. S. Crandall. 2009. The Existence Bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 97(5): 765–775.
- Einwohner, R. 2002. Motivational Framing and Efficacy Maintenance: Animal Rights Activists’



FOOD,  
&  
CULTURE  
SOCIETY

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2013

- Use of Four Fortifying Strategies. *The Sociological Quarterly* 43(4): 509–26.
- Edwards, B. and Marullo, S. 1995. In a Declining Social Movement: The Demise of Peace Movement Organizations in the End of the Cold War Era. *American Sociological Review* 60(6): 908–27.
- Ferree, M. 2003. Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debates of the United States and Germany. *American Journal of Sociology* 109(2): 304–44.
- Fitzgerald, K. J. and Rodgers, D. M. 2000. Radical Social Movement Organizations: A Theoretical Model. *Sociological Quarterly* 41(4): 573–92.
- Francione, G. L. 1995. *Animals, Property, and the Law*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Francione, G. L. 1996. *Rain without Thunder: The Ideology of the Animal Rights Movement*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Francione, G. L. 2009. We're all Michael Vick. *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 14. Available from: <http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/media/pdf/philadelphia-daily-news-20090814.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2012).
- Francione, G. L. 2010a. A Short Note on Abolitionist Veganism as a Single Issue Campaign. Available from <http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/a-short-note-on-abolitionist-veganism-as-a-single-issue-campaign> (accessed March 6, 2012).
- Francione, G. L. 2010b. Is Every Campaign a Single-Issue Campaign? Available from <http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/is-every-campaign-a-single-issue-campaign> (accessed March 6, 2012).
- Francione, G. L. 2010c. The Abolition of Animal Exploitation. In G. L. Francione and R. Garner, *The Animal Rights Debate: Abolition or Regulation?* New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 1–102.
- Francione, G. L. 2010d. Single-Issue Campaigns in Human & Nonhuman Contexts. Available from <http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/single-issue-campaigns-and-in-human-nonhuman-contexts/> (accessed March 6, 2012).
- Francione, G. L. and Garner, R. 2010. *The Animal Rights Debate: Abolition or Regulation?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Freeman, C. P. 2012. Fishing for Animal Rights in “The Cove”: A Holistic Approach to Animal Advocacy Documentaries. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 10(1): 104–18.
- Glasser, C. 2012. Simplifying Advocacy Materials—Understanding Decision Fatigue. *Humane Thinking*. Humane Research Council. Available from <http://www.humanespot.org/content/simplifying-advocacy-materials-understanding-decision-fatigue> (accessed February 29, 2012).
- Haines, H. 1984. Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights: 1957–1970. *Social Problems* 32(1): 31–43.
- Hall, L. 2006. *Capers in the Churchyard: Animal Rights Advocacy in the Age of Terror*. Darien, CT: Nectar Bat Press.
- Hall, L. 2011. Single-Issue Campaigns: What They Are and How They Work. *Action Line* (Winter 2011–2012). Available from [http://www.friendsofanimals.org/actionline/winter-2011\\_12/movement-watch.php](http://www.friendsofanimals.org/actionline/winter-2011_12/movement-watch.php) (accessed February 29, 2012).
- Harper, B. A. 2010a. Race as a “Feeble Matter” in Veganism: Interrogating Whiteness, Geopolitical Privilege, and Consumption Philosophy of “Cruelty-Free Products.” *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 8(3): 5–27.
- Harper, B. A. 2010b. *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*. Brooklyn, NY: Lantern Books.

- Hunt, S. and Benford, R. 1994. Identity Talk in the Peace and Justice Movement. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(4): 488–517.
- Iyengar, S. and Lepper, M. 2000. When Choice is Demotivating: Can One Desire Too Much of a Good Thing? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79: 996–1006.
- Jasper, J. 1998. The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements. *Sociological Forum* 13(3): 397–424.
- Jenkins, J. C. and Eckert, C. M. 1986. Channeling Black Insurgency: Elite Patronage and Professional Social Movement Organizations. *American Sociological Review* 51(6): 812–29.
- Johnson, R. and Wrenn, C. L. 2012. Popular Myths about Abolitionism Debunked. *The Abolitionist* 3 (Winter): 16–19. Available from: <http://www.theabolitionist.info/article/popular-myths-about-abolitionism-debunked/> (accessed March 6, 2012).
- Joy, M. 2008. *Strategic Action for Animals: A Handbook on Strategic Movement Building, Organizing, and Activism for Animal Liberation*. Brooklyn, NY: Lantern Books.
- Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A. 1979. Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk. *Econometrica* 47(2): 263–91.
- Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A. 1983. Choices, Values, and Frames. *American Psychologist* 39 (4): 341–50.
- Kleidman, R. 1994. Volunteer Activism and Professionalism in Social Movement Organizations. *Social Problems* 41(2): 257–6.
- Koopmans, R. 1993. The Dynamics of Protest Waves: West Germany, 1965–1989. *American Sociological Review* 58(5): 637–658.
- LaVeck, J. 2006. Invasion of the Movement Snatchers: A Social Justice Cause Falls Prey to the Doctrine of “Necessary Evil.” SATYA, October. Available from <http://www.satvamag.com/oct06/laveck.html> (accessed March 23, 2012).
- Marullo, S. and Meyer, D. 2004. Antiwar and Peace Movements. In, D. Snow, S. Soule and H. Kriesi (eds) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 641–65.
- McCarthy, J. D. and Zald, M. N. 1977. Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 82(6): 1212–41.
- Oliver, P. E. and Marwell, G. 1992. Mobilizing Technologies for Collective Action. In Morris, A. and C. Mueller (eds) *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 251–272.
- O'Reilly, A. 2012. A Vegan Presentation. *The Abolitionist* 3 (Winter): 14–15. Available from <http://www.theabolitionist.info/article/a-vegan-presentation/> (accessed March 6, 2012).
- Perz, J. 2006. Anti-Speciesism: The Appropriation and Misrepresentation of Animal Rights in Joan Dunayer's *Speciesism* (Abridged). *Journal of Animal Law* 2: 49–66.
- Perz, J. 2007. Adulterating Animal Rights: Joan Dunayer's “Advancing Animal Rights” Refuted. *Journal of Animal Law & Ethics* 2: 123–71.
- Regan, T. 2004. *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Schwartz, B. 2004. *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Slocum, R. 2004. Polar Bears and Energy-Efficient Lightbulbs: Strategies to Bring Climate Change Home. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22(3): 413–38.
- Staggenborg, S. 1988. The Consequences of Professionalization and Formalization in the Pro-Choice Movement. *American Sociological Review* 53(4): 585–605.