

# from Sister Species

## introduction

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**t**his anthology began when I sent out a call for papers, asking women to write about their work in animal advocacy. I had long been aware that women were the heart and soul of the animal advocacy movement, and I was determined to create an anthology that honored at least a few of these courageous women.

I asked contributors to write about animal advocacy. I sought authors working in different types of activism, for different species, in a variety of capacities, in a handful of nations. I chose women from different ages, religions, socioeconomic groups, and continents. Each of these women sent an essay about animal activism and also discussed some other form of oppression that they were addressing alongside speciesism, whether sexism, racism, homophobia, or class stratification. Unexpectedly, I discovered that I had gathered a collection of essays demonstrating the many ways in which animal liberation is inextricably linked with other social justice causes.

With essays in hand, I found myself outside my field of expertise, which focuses on animal ethics. My doctoral dissertation centers on major thinkers in several key areas of animal ethics. During the years in which I worked on this dissertation, no faculty member suggested that I explore the feminist ethic of care, or ecofeminism—though these constitute key areas of animal ethics. No one suggested that I explore how Martin Luther King or Gandhi might have informed the animal rights movement. Maybe this is because all of my teachers were white men, and they all worked within the narrow confines of patriarchal, Western philosophy. Nonetheless, as I worked, I caught glimpses of ecofeminism and the feminist ethic of care through the eyes of male authors; their comments turned me away from exploring these alternative perspectives.



Ultimately, my dissertation was published in a fat book on animal ethics that considered only white male thinkers, only white male perspectives, only white male ideas. My work was expansive, and yet it was painfully narrow. And no one working with me seemed to notice.

Only later, through activism, did I meet feminists working in the area of animal liberation, at which time I slowly began to explore this deep vein of comparatively new ideas. During this exploratory time period I picked up Karen Warren's book on ecofeminism, which caused me to drop the subject with disgust. Warren went out of her way to be inclusive of humanity, while being equally conscientious about excluding nonhuman animals. I turned to the writings of Carol Adams, thinking that her combination of feminism and animal liberation might be more palatable. My journey into interlocking oppressions began in earnest with her 2003 book, *The Pornography of Meat*, which stands at the juncture of feminism and animal advocacy, but which also explores racism and homophobia.

So there I was, manuscript in hand. How was I to write an introduction for a book on interlocking issues of social justice? I headed for the library, and this anthology has become part of my ongoing growth outward from that initial white, hetero, patriarchal perspective—a journey that has led me into richer understandings of animal advocacy specifically, and social justice more broadly.

Here is one of the key ideas that I am assimilating into my social justice advocacy: It is necessary for each of us to try to understand how privilege affects the ways we think about and engage in social justice. The way that we view the world is influenced by our lived experience—by sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, race, sex, and species, for instance (Mills and Salamon in Harper, "Phenomenology"). And this affects how we engage in advocacy. If I explore just one of these dimensions, race, I discover that "social contracts, economic systems, and citizenship, a person's consciousness and how one creates philosophies" are all "significantly shaped by one's lived experience of race" within a particular society (Mills, Yancy, and Sullivan in Harper, "Phenomenology"). For example, Barbara Flagg points to "the ability of Whites to control the cultural discourse of racial equality," including the rhetoric of colorblindness, and "Whites often employ strategies that reinstate Whiteness at the center. Here the metaprivilege of Whiteness resides in the 'absence of awareness of White privilege' . . . Whiteness does not acknowledge either its own privilege or the material and sociocultural mechanisms by which that privilege is protected. White privilege itself becomes invisible" (Flagg 5–6). In an upcoming essay on this topic, A. Breeze Harper writes that to be white



is to “know and move throughout” one’s racist homeland as if it were not a racist nation (Harper, “Phenomenology”). She notes that Dwyer and Jones III describe whiteness as carrying a “socio-spatial epistemology” that assumes the position of authority, through which Caucasians come to believe that their epistemologies are not specific, but are general—applicable to all people (Harper, “Phenomenology”). All of this is equally true in a sexist society and a speciesist society. Those who are of comparatively powerless races, when put in a position of power-over, tend to be no less blind to *their* privilege.

Despite my belated efforts, I have no doubt that my white privilege continues to be largely opaque from my own point of view, just as most white men are oblivious to sexism and most racialized minorities are oblivious to speciesism. I would prefer that my privileged status as a white, middle-class, abled-but-aging female not slip under the radar. This requires education—mostly not from those in our privileged category—followed up with a will to change, complete with commitment and diligence.

I am one of those many white, middle-class, female vegans whose voices dominate Western animal activism. My whiteness—my blindness and ignorance—limits my effectiveness as an activist. Race matters. (Sex matters. Sexual orientation matters. Species matters.) Ignorance of what others face, where they are coming from and where they have been, limits my ability to dialogue with others in any meaningful way. Tara Sophia Bahna-James—who self-identifies as standing among the many racialized minorities in the United States—notes that, as she adopted the vegan lifestyle, her “female, Black-identified friends” provided “the most vocal skepticism” (162):

One friend made the connection that often veganism meant having the luxury of enough time and money to go out of one’s way and engage in specific, harder-to-find consumer choices; a prerequisite that makes assumptions about class and privilege that are largely at odds with the more mainstream Black American experience. Another, more financially successful Black friend had been put off by hearing vegans make ethical arguments that analogized animal agriculture to slavery. Still another friend, whom I watched go from childhood in the projects to a law school degree by the sweat of her own brow, couldn’t help but interpret what I said as though someone was asking her to sacrifice after all she’d been through. And though I’m committed to veganism, I don’t necessarily disagree with their arguments. I still feel I can see where these friends are coming from, simply because I know where they’ve been. (Bahna-James 162)

I don’t know where they’ve been, or even what life is like for racialized minorities in our racist communities. What are *my* chances of touching these



individuals with my hopes for change when I have little understanding of *their* particular frustrations and hopes for change?

I must engage with the normative parts of my life because they are a major impediment to social justice activism. Privilege creates a consciousness that is reflected in social justice advocacy, about which we are generally unaware—as is evident if one explores the history of the feminist, environmental, and animal liberation movements. Those who hold power and set norms simply because they are male, or white, or heterosexual must be aware of their unjust power and accept different ways of being and thinking—introduced by others. People must find commonality with those of different religions, affectional orientations, races, and classes if hoped-for social changes are to be considered by those who do not share our religion, affectional orientation, race, or class.

Fortunately, there is a growing awareness that oppressions are linked. In *Sistah Vegan*, Michelle Loyd-Paige writes:

All social inequalities are linked. Comprehensive systemic change will happen only if we are aware of these connections and work to bring an end to all inequalities—not just our favorites or the ones that most directly affect our part of the universe. No one is on the sidelines; by our actions or inactions, by our caring or our indifference, we are either part of the problem or part of the solution. (Loyd-Paige 2)

Many social activists are now discovering that certain oppressions have been imprudently ignored and that many concerned and dedicated social activists are fighting just one form of oppression while unwittingly fueling the fires of other injustices. In a single-minded quest to reduce poverty, racism, or sexism, for example, many activists lose connection with the bigger picture—the links between poverty, racism, and sexism. This harms our ability to work with a diversity of other activists, and also harms the effectiveness of outreach. For example, in A. Breeze Harper's new anthology, *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health and Society*, Harper writes of her experience as a black college student, encountering social justice activists who tried to "reach out" to Harper, but their seeming indifference to race and class (likely stemming from ignorance of race and class issues) blocked effective communication:

When I met those "crazy, tree-hugging" environmentalists and vegetarians (and the occasional vegan) for the first time, while attending Dartmouth College from 1994 to 1998, I couldn't believe they thought they had the right to tell me I shouldn't be eating Kentucky Fried chicken or taking thirty-minute showers or buying GAP clothing. *Who the hell were they to tell me this?* I naively thought



While all things are relative, if you are able to access and read this book, you are almost surely among those to whom much has been given.

This anthology is about expanding understandings of social justice, about connecting dots—recognizing links of oppression. “Ultimately, we must deeply consider, do our addictions and other forms of consumption contradict our antiracist and antipoverty social justice beliefs?” (Harper “Social”). Does our diet contradict our antiracist, feminist agenda? This collection of essays stems from an understanding that social justice activism in the twenty-first century must address intersectional oppressions, and that these interlocking oppressions include—to name just a few—speciesism, sexism, racism, and homophobia. More specifically, this book

- Exposes critical connections between social justice movements, focusing on sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, and speciesism, remaining mindful that there are other forms of oppression that fit within this framework;
- Establishes speciesism as an important concern for all social justice activists, with a special focus on connecting speciesism with racism and sexism;
- Elucidates why all social justice advocates ought to adopt a vegan lifestyle;
- Encourages animal advocates to network with other social justice advocates to expose and dismantle all forms of oppression, and (at a minimum) avoid contributing to other forms of oppression because of ignorance, exhaustion, or indifference.

Toward this end, I have included four separate sections in this introduction. In the first section I provide a brief overview of the evolution of intersectional analysis in the field of social justice, beginning with feminism and pluralism in the sixties and seventies, moving through an explanation of patriarchy and linked oppressions in industrialized Western nations, exploring ecofeminism, and concluding with speciesism. In this section I endeavor to explain how aspects of feminism have been challenged and stretched across time in the hands of a diversity of human thinkers and writers, and how this process has prepared the way for understanding and incorporating interlocking oppressions through an increasingly diverse feminist movement. If you are familiar with the history of feminism, basic elements of patriarchy, and ecofeminism, you may prefer to skim the beginning of this section, focusing on the latter portion, which introduces speciesism.

Section II focuses on a handful of key ideas that run through this collection of essays: empathy, silence, trauma, and voice. After exploring these (and closely related) concepts, I employ two of these ideas, empathy and voice, in Section III (Making Change). In this section, true to the purpose of this anthology, I encourage readers to be informed, and to make choices that are consistent with a heightened understanding of linked oppressions. Social



justice advocacy is not simply a career—it is a lifestyle. Martin Luther King noted that “injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent, and determined action” (M. King 407). Living up to our own beliefs is essential. This type of advocacy requires a great deal of vigilance, introspection, and a willingness to change. Reading *Sister Species* is of little use if the information therein is not applied in day-to-day life. To demonstrate the sort of integration of daily choices and ethics, the type of conflicts that can arise in this quagmire of interlocking oppressions, and the sort of introspection and flex that is required, we close Section III with an ongoing debate over food choices at feminist and ecofeminist conferences.

Section IV introduces authors and essays. The introduction closes with a short comment on word choice and the ongoing process of expanding understandings of interlocking oppressions.

#### i. feminism, patriarchy, ecofeminism, and speciesism

##### EXPANDING FEMINISM

For thousands of years the patriarchy has waged a war against women; a war in which it controls and violates our bodies with rape, battering, forced motherhood, and conditioned self-hatred. As well as assigning women the exclusive sexual functions of reproduction and providing men pleasure, the patriarchy reduces women to instruments of labour. (Heller 351)

In the early sixties, Betty Friedan became a household name when she published *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she writes: “We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: ‘I want something more than my husband and my children and my house’” (hooks, “Black” 25). While Friedan called women to take up careers, rather than languish at home, other authors noted that the problems about which Friedan wrote were not the problems of all women, or even most women. She did not speak for “women without men, without children, without homes. She ignored the existence of all nonwhite women and poor white women. She did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute, than to be a leisure class housewife” (hooks, “Black” 25).

Friedan made the error of writing as if “a select group of college-educated, middle- and upper-class, married white women—housewives bored with leisure, with the home, with children, with buying products, who wanted more out of life” represented women generally (hooks, “Black” 25). She seemed to assume that all women shared her luxurious boredom when, in truth, most women would likely revel in the life that Friedan rejected. Consequently, Af-



rican American bell hooks—along with many others who did not share heterosexual, abled, white privilege—recognized the value of Friedan's contribution, but also felt that her book was "a case study of narcissism, insensitivity, sentimentality, and self-indulgence" (hooks, "Black" 26).

The starting point of feminist theory is envisioned as universal: Women are systematically oppressed in relation to men in patriarchal societies, societies in which "men have more power than women, and have more access to whatever society esteems" (Flax 10). Additionally, at least since the writings of Aphra Behn (1640–1689—one of the first professional English female writers), some white women "have thought about race and class as well as gender" (Kirk, "Introduction" 7). Nonetheless, there has been a well-publicized form of feminism, championed largely by comparatively privileged women (epitomized by Friedan), who have offered a somewhat "one-dimensional perspective" (hooks, "Black" 26):

[M]any prominent U.S. feminist activists and writers were White, middle-class, heterosexual women who generalized from their own experiences. They focused on their subordination as women without paying attention to their privilege on other dimensions, notably race, class, and sexual orientation. (Kirk 16)

Some notable feminist authors demonstrated little or no understanding of interlocking oppressions experienced by poor, Latino, lesbian, or Muslim women, for example, and disenfranchised women came to see this narrowness of understanding as "a marked feature of the contemporary feminist movement" (hooks, "Black" 26).

Those who felt marginalized challenged feminism's one-dimensional perspective. In the late 1970s, for example, a group of black feminists known as the Combahee River Collective (CRC) pointed out that, in their experience, it was "difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression," because they most often experienced oppressions simultaneously (Combahee 39). The CRC built their agenda around personal experiences: We are "actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression," and we hope to exemplify an "integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (Combahee 38).

Some white feminist authors willingly climbed aboard. Others gave a nod, but failed to engage with or weave these interlocking issues into their writing in any meaningful way (hooks, "Black" 32). Still other mainstream feminists overtly refused to include race or class in their feminist analysis, while others attempted to shut down those who brought interlocking oppressions to the table (hooks, "Black" 31), perhaps fearful of diverting attention from their pri-



mary focus. Embarrassingly, history has shown time and again how humans complain about the pinch in their own shoes, while failing to see that their tight-fitting shoes are trampling on someone else.

Over time, more and more feminists accepted the reality of linked oppressions. Generally speaking, it is no longer acceptable “to talk simply and naively about ‘women’ as women” (Birke 33). With an increased awareness that “women” represents a host of individuals distributed across lines of considerable difference, contemporary authors and thinkers often put their work in context, outlining the limitations of their viewpoint (Collins 187). One such author notes: “My own experience is not only as a woman, but is also situated in my experiences of being white, of being middle-class, of growing up in postwar London, of being a lesbian” (Birke 33). Contemporary texts for gender studies now tend to be created with an eye to diversity, including essays from women and men of varied cultural backgrounds from around the world; more often than not, these texts carry subtitles with the word “multicultural” or “global.” This shift toward diversity—this reaction to a new understanding of the complexity of “women”—is not completely integrated into feminism, nor has this shift been completely satisfying. Sometimes attempts at diversity create an uneasy balance “between the imperatives of outreach and inclusion on the one hand, and the risk of tokenism and further marginalization on the other” (Lee 46).

Strong scholars continue to push for greater reform, noting that “diversity” too often holds whiteness as the norm, and that diversity is generally envisioned as assimilation into the larger, dominant culture. Transnational feminist Dr. M. Jacqui Alexander notes that “diversity” is inadequate, particularly for addressing racism and colonialism. “Diversity” too often diverts attention from the root problem: Normative whiteness. Alexander notes that neither “diversity” nor multiculturalism will achieve equality if whiteness continues to occupy the center. She notes that U.S. academic institutions increasingly have faces of color on their faculty and in their student body, but all are expected to assimilate into Eurocentric whiteness as the cultural norm. As long as the politics of diversity and multiculturalism are prevalent among the white middle class, “diversity” will continue to mimic or reflect this demographic and maintain privileges affiliated with whiteness (Alexander 118–19). While on the faculty of The New School for Social Research in New York City, Alexander fought the school’s white supremacist sense of “diversity,” through which they merely added faces that did not look “white,” with the expectation that these racialized minorities would teach in a way that would support and perpetuate white privilege.



Overall, the School's definitions of "diversity" do not emanate from a historical reading of racialization—the historical collective aspects of debt to which black people and people of color are entitled. . . . Rather, they attenuate history into notions of individual rehabilitation and individual remuneration. The institution would want to attempt such a revision of history in the absence of any discourse about the mythologies of race and the creation of racism, hence the substitution of "diversity," racially preferring race-neutrality, meaning presumably that white people can never acknowledge the privilege they derive from the hierarchies of race; people of color and black people can never talk about racism; and progressive coalitions of white people and people of color could never undertake fruitful discussions about the ways in which privilege and disinheritance mutually imbricate each other. These discourses establish, in effect, a system of segregation that absents white men in power, even while they rule. (Alexander 140)

This is equally true of heterosexism, sexism, and speciesism.

Despite these deep, institutional tendencies, feminists and those in women's studies are now more apt to recognize that it is ineffective to seek justice for women without addressing racism, homelessness, and heterosexism: One of feminism's strengths is that it is not generally just about women (Birke 33). I think it is fair to say—certainly among scholars—that most contemporary feminists link equality between the sexes with "welfare and social-work groups, peace groups, pro-abortion groups, [and] black women's groups"; they critique "militarism, racism, and capitalism" alongside sexism (Adams, *Pornography* 163). Those working for sexual equality have generally come to understand that social justice advocates "must liberate women from the multiple oppressions that constitute their gendered identities—oppressions based on race/ethnicity, class, affectional orientation, age, ability, geographic location, anti-Semitism, and colonialism" (Warren 62).

Despite an impressive array of oppressions that activists must work against, hooks notes that black women tend to live at the bottom of the demographic barrel, with a social status that is "lower than that of any other group" (hooks, "Black" 32). Consequently, she argues that black women are not "socialized to assume the role of exploiter/oppressor in that [black women] are allowed no institutionalized 'other' [to] exploit or oppress" (hooks, "Black" 32). Here, hooks' words reveal her own privilege and a consequent blindness and lack of understanding.

#### PATRIARCHY, DUALISM, AND HIERARCHY

Oppression—Prejudice and discrimination directed toward whole socially recognized groups of people and promoted by the ideologies and practices of all social institutions. The critical elements differentiating oppression from simple preju-



dice and discrimination are that it is a group phenomenon and that institutional power and authority are used to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways. Everyone is socialized to participate in oppressive practices, either as direct and indirect perpetrators or passive beneficiaries, or—as with some oppressed peoples—by directing discriminatory behaviors at members of one's own group or another group deemed inferior. ("Glossary" G-4)

By definition, oppression is propagated by ideologies and institutions, and individuals are socialized to oppress certain "others." An "ideology" consists of ideas, values, and attitudes "that represent the interests of a group of people" ("Glossary" G-3). Oppressions, then, are by definition linked—linked by common ideologies, by institutional forces, and by socialization that makes oppressions normative and invisible.

Contemporary societies tend to be distinctly patriarchal, and contemporary oppressions therefore tend to be rooted in patriarchal ideologies and patriarchal institutions. Patriarchy is "the systematic organization of male supremacy" (Stacey 53) so that "men hold power and are dominant figures" ("Glossary" G-4). Patriarchy provides a "male-dominated, male-identified, male-centered, and control-obsessed" social structure (Johnson 34). Certain attributes are common in patriarchal societies, such as false dualisms, which provide a framework for domination and subordination, oppressor and oppressed, and support a social structure in which certain groups have power while others are comparatively powerless.

Patriarchal dualism feeds into contrived hierarchies of power, which provide those on top with "access to whatever society esteems" (Flax 10). Dualism also undermines human relations (Lahar 96): Through dualism, those living in patriarchies tend to categorize in terms of opposites, beginning with male and female, and extending to a plethora of other contrived divisions, such as white/other races, human/animal, culture/nature, and reason/emotion. Most people in Western patriarchal cultures are conditioned to "see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior" (Lorde, "Age" 526). But why would Africans and Caucasians be viewed as separate and distinct when all human beings have emerged from common ancestors in Africa? It would make more sense to view all Americans as African Americans, since evidence suggests that humans originated in Africa. Similarly, patriarchy's ideology of false dualisms encourages us to view Barack Obama as "black," though with one white parent and one black parent he is just as genetically white as he is black.

Despite the obvious shortcomings of dualistic thinking, cultures around the world tend to dichotomize sex into male and female (Lorber 27). At the root of this false dualism lies the erroneous assumption that there are only two



sexes. While XX and XY genes predominate in the animal world, this karyotype does not even begin to express the variety of karyotypes possible, even if we focus only on the human animal. In humans, we find 45 X, 47 XXX, 48 XXXX, 49 XXXXX, 47 XYY, 47 XXY, 48 XXXY, 49 XXXXY, and 49 XXXYY (Callahan 62). Roughly 60,000 boys are born annually with one or more extra X chromosome (Callahan 63). About half as many babies are born with a 45 X karyotype (Callahan 64), while still other babies are born with a variety of karyotypes among different cells within their bodies (Callahan 65). All of these people tend to suffer because of dualistic thinking—because others have created a false dichotomy of male and female biology into which they cannot fit.

Western patriarchy adds to this biological dualism the idea that there are certain characteristics that go with each of these exclusive and exhaustive sex options. If you are assessed to be biologically female, then you will be expected to be feminine. Conversely, if those born before you decide that you are male, you will be expected to be masculine. Society pressures children, from birth, to conform with one or the other—masculine or feminine. But human ways of being are rarely bifurcated cleanly along sex lines: Most of us are a mix of masculine and feminine ways and inclinations. Most of us suffer from being pushed, one way or another, through social molds into which we do not easily fit.

Dualistic separations of human/animal and nature/culture are as untenable as racial and sexual dualisms. Humans are animals—mammals, primates—and humans are part of nature. Furthermore, each “species ramifies into many differences, including human beings,” who are born into a variety of breeds/races and cultures (Radford Ruether 469). Simplistic dualisms, because they are untenable, impede our ability to relate to the world around us—including one another—and it is therefore critical that people “address and redress” dualistic thinking (Lahar 96).

Dualism is central to interlocking oppressions: Patriarchal societies don’t merely divide, they conquer. In a “dualistic worldview, men and women are not simply defined as polarities, but all that is associated with women is devalued and subordinated” (Kheel, *Nature* 38). This means that “emotion, animals, nature, and the body” are all devalued in relation to “those things associated with men,” including “reason, humans, culture, and the mind” (Gaard, “Living” 5).

In *The Pornography of Meat*, Carol Adams uses the terms “A” and “Not A” to describe this common feature of patriarchy. On the “A” side, patriarchal cultures hold men, whites, culture, human beings, minds, civilization, production, and capital as the norm. Audre Lorde adds young, thin, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure to the “A” category (Lorde, “Age” 527). Those who do not qualify as an “A” fall into the subordinate “Not A” category: Women, nonwhite



racialized minorities (a term which I borrow from A. Breeze Harper), nature, nonhuman animals, bodies, primitive peoples, reproduction, and labor (Adams, *Pornography* 50), as well as plump, older, nonheterosexual, and non-Christian individuals. Patriarchal societies thereby empower certain individuals at the expense of others: Devalued individuals are viewed as a means to the ends of the dominant group. In order to maintain this power structure, and further selfish interests, those in power strive to “maintain a strong distinction and maximize distance” between dominant and subordinate individuals (Plumwood 23).

Oppression is propagated by ideologies and institutions, whereby individuals are socialized to oppress and be oppressed. This creates a system of linked oppressions. Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated an understanding of linked oppressions forty years ago when he said,

I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. (M. King 399)

Neither can activists afford to struggle against one group of “Not A” individuals while remaining ignorant of other oppressed groups. While no one can speak for all who are oppressed, neither can social justice advocates work from isolated corners, divided and fragmented, yet hoping to bring deep and lasting change: The “liberation of all oppressed groups must be addressed simultaneously” (Gaard, “Living” 5).

Increasingly, groups of feminists are coming to see that the “struggle for women’s liberation is inextricably linked to abolition of all oppression” (Gruen 82). Indeed, many people have come to understand that feminism cannot move forward without addressing other isms—especially isms that are manifest within the ranks of feminist circles: “Racism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance. Sexism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over the other and thereby the right to dominance. Ageism. Heterosexism. Elitism. Classism” (Lorde, “Age” 527). Many social justice activists—many feminists—continue to work against one form of oppression while feeding the flames of another, without noticing that the blowtorch behind the flames must be turned off before we can have any hope of putting out the resultant fires.

#### ECOFEMINISM

Ecofeminists see the oppression of women, people of color, children, lesbians and gays and the destruction of nature as linked and mutually reinforcing in a system



of domination which is legitimized and perpetuated by various institutions such as the state, the military, religion, the patriarchal family, and industrial capitalism. We fight for the freedom and self-determination of all oppressed peoples as well as for a harmonious relationship with nature: We realize that until we are all free from social and ecological exploitation, no one is free. (Heller 351)

In 1972, in a book with a title that translates as “Feminism or Death,” French author Françoise d’Eaubonne called women to “lead an ecological revolution to save the planet,” coining the term “ecofeminism” (Merchant, *Earthcare* 5). She looked to a change in relationships between women and men to bring about a change in relations between humans and the natural world, which she believed would reverse ecological destruction and preserve life on the planet (Merchant, *Earthcare* 5).

Ecofeminists focus on interconnections between the domination/oppression of women and the domination/oppression of nature, noting that the “hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing” (Y. King 458). Ecofeminists are aware that “the perpetrators of violence throughout the world are, by and large, men, and the victims of this violence are primarily women and the natural world” (Kheel, “License” 110). Ecofeminist analysis is generally much more expansive than environmentalism and feminism: “Conceptual interconnections are at the heart of ecofeminist philosophy” (Warren 24). While the science of ecology “aims to harmonize nature, human and nonhuman,” ecofeminism draws on ecological, socialist, and feminist thought, incorporating a handful of social justice movements, such as feminism, peace activism, labor, women’s health care, antinuclear, environmental, and animal liberation (Y. King 458; Gaard, “Living” 1).

For example, many ecofeminists now argue that environmentalists could more effectively protect the natural world from large corporations dumping externalities—carbon monoxide, chemicals, and animal waste—on poorer, nonwhite neighborhoods, if they were willing to stand up against racism. Their insights into the workings of patriarchy have been supported by recent findings. For example, in 1987 the United Church of Christ’s Commission for Racial Justice (CRJ) discovered that two-thirds of U.S. Blacks and Latinos “reside in areas with one or more unregulated toxic-waste sites” (Riley 472).

The nation’s largest hazardous-waste dump, which has received toxic material from 45 states, is located in predominantly black Sumter County, Alabama (de la Pena and Davis 1990, 34). The mostly African American residents in the 85-mile area between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, better known as Cancer Alley, live in a region which contains 136 chemical companies and refineries. (Riley 472)



In the United States, "poor people of color are disproportionately likely to be the victims of pollution," including toxic waste (Riley 472); race is "the most significant variable" in distinguishing communities with toxic waste from those without (Riley 475, 472). The CRJ coined the term "environmental racism" to describe waste management policies that favor moneyed Caucasians at the expense of "others."

Race is a key factor in determining the level of environmental pollution that individuals are likely to experience in their neighborhood; another is economic status:

The evidence is strong. If you are a person of color, you are much more likely to live in an area where toxic dumps, landfills, incinerators, and polluting industries are or will be located. It is also less likely that the pollution will be cleaned up, and polluters probably will face lighter punishments than if they were located in white neighborhoods.

Similar results are found at the international level. Poor countries are more likely to suffer environmental degradation—deforestation, desertification and air and water pollution—than wealthy countries, and the poorest residents of those countries, the poorest of the poor, are likely to suffer the most. (Des Jardins 240–41)

Sex is also an important factor because the natural environment is "inextricably connected to rural and household economies," which tend to be governed by women (Warren 3). Development and destruction of the natural environment therefore create "particular burdens for women," especially in underdeveloped countries (Des Jardins 245). Women constitute 80 percent of Africa's farmers, and are therefore directly affected by deforestation and soil erosion (Riley 478). Women are also primarily responsible for gathering fuel and water, and women in Africa, Asia, and South America are increasingly faced with water and wood scarcities, forcing them to "spend up to forty-three hours per week collecting and carrying water," and traveling many miles to find fuel (Warren 7). Additionally, toxic substances that are dumped into water and backyards "impair women's reproductive systems, poisoning their breast-milk, their food and their children" (Heller 351). In short, women suffer disproportionately in relation to men because of "both social domination and the domination of nature" (Y. King 462).

In Western patriarchal culture, both women and nonhuman nature have been devalued alongside their assumed opposites—men and civilization/culture. Nature tends to be objectified, "controlled and dissected"; nature is an object to be exploited for "natural resources" (Merchant, "Dominion" 47). Women



and nature are placed together in the “Not A” category, and are often seen as objects for exploitation, “things” to be used for the benefit of the “A” category—white, property-owning males. Ecofeminists—at least in theory—oppose all forms of domination, and reject “the notion that any part of the world, human or nonhuman, exists solely for the use and pleasure of any other part”—they reject power-over (Vance 133–34). Dichotomies and hierarchies, contemporary ecofeminists note, are alien to the natural world—nature is interconnections (Y. King 461). No individual or species is privileged in the world of nature: All eat and are eaten; all become sick and die in their turn. Humans are part of an interconnected continuum of life (Merchant, *Earthcare* 204).

In light of environmental racism and sexism, many ecofeminists call attention to the fact that environmentalists, feminists, and those fighting racism and poverty are plucking at different straws in the same broom: “The global environmental crisis is related to the sociopolitical systems of fear and hatred of all that is natural, nonwhite, and female” (Riley 473).

#### SPECIESISM

As often as Herman had witnessed the slaughter of animals and fish, he always had the same thought: in their behavior toward creatures, all men were Nazis. The smugness with which man could do with other species as he pleased exemplified the most extreme racist theories, the principle that might is right. (Singer 257)

Failing to notice a lack of Latino and African American representation in Congress is a result of systemic oppression—racism. Indifference to the fact that white men dominate large corporations is both racist and sexist. A lack of concern about the plight of a “breeding” sow on a factory farm is also a result of normative systematic oppression—speciesism.

Historically, women, animals, and children have legally been defined as the property of males. Patriarchy (where men control women) and pastoralism (where men control nonhuman animals) “are justified and perpetuated by the same ideologies and practices” (“Sexism”). For example, both women and animals have historically been considered less intelligent, less rational, and therefore more primitive and closer to nature than men. Reducing women and nonhumans to something less than civilized men of intellect has allowed men to exploit women, nonhuman animals, and nature. Objectification, ridicule, and control of reproduction are all linked to patriarchal denigration and exploitation of females—including human females—and nature. Nonhuman animals are systematically marginalized, objectified, and exploited by human beings of both sexes, of every color, age, and ability, and from every socioeconomic background.



In Western patriarchal cultures, nonhuman individuals tend to be associated with human females and nonwhite racialized minorities, but they are even lower on the contrived human hierarchy of being (Adams, *Pornography* 45–46). “The oppression that black people suffer in South Africa—and people of color, and children face all over the world—is the same oppression that animals endure every day to a greater degree” (Alice Walker quoted by Adams, “Feminist” 207). Humans are all in the “A” group in relation to nonhuman animals.

Speciesism is systematic, institutionalized oppression. Exploitation and slaughter of nonhuman animals in Western nations is a “group phenomenon,” forced onto the vast majority of cows, turkeys, pigs, and chickens simply because of their species. Cattle and pigs are collectively viewed as expendable—eatable. Rabbits and rats are treated like Petri dishes rather than living beings. Fox, chinchilla, mink, and beaver are called “furbearers”—resources, clothing. Tigers, elephants, dolphins, and chimpanzees are bought and sold for zoos, circuses, television programs and advertisements, and marine parks as entertainment, as props, as means to human ends. “Humankind’s root cultural relationship with animals is that of aggressor to victim,” and this victimization is systemic—“deeply ingrained in human institutions” (Scholtmeijer 235, 256).

In the definition of oppression offered above, at the start of the section titled “Patriarchy, Dualism, and Hierarchy,” “institutional power and authority are used to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways” (“Glossary” G-4). In the case of speciesism, institutional power and authority are used to support and perpetuate the oppression of nonhuman individuals. For example, the U.S. government created a food pyramid, which erroneously claimed that animal products are central to a healthy diet. Similarly, both animal agriculture and science industries propagate the myth that animal exploitation is “necessary for human health and wellbeing” (Luke 311). Many people still believe both of these blatant untruths—the vast majority of students in the classes that I teach believe this expedient capitalist’s untruth. The U.S. system of justice has created and maintains laws whereby nonhuman animals have no legal standing, but are defined as “property,” as wives and slaves once were. Other animals (including mice, rats, and birds) are not included in the current, legal definition of “animal” in the United States, thereby denying these individuals the slight protection provided by U.S. animal welfare laws in order to allow scientists to use these sentient beings in any way they see fit, without pausing for fear of legal sanction (Luke 303). Institutional power and authority also lie behind discriminatory laws that prevent animal advocates from using free speech to protect hunted animals (Comninou 134). Institutionalized support for the systematic oppression of nonhuman animals



is also evident in the recent Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, as well as in the mainstream media, both of which mislabel animal advocates—social justice advocates—as “terrorists.”

Because the oppression of nonhuman individuals is normative, it is largely invisible, and most of us are complicit in one way or another. While social justice activists now widely recognize that the poor, elderly, and nonwhite racialized minorities are harmed (along with women) by patriarchy, these same activists are too often unable to similarly recognize the harm of patriarchy on nonhuman animals—even ecofeminist theorists (Gaard, “Living” 6). Very few social justice activists understand speciesism or the harmful exploitation that stems from such marginalization and cruel domination of nonhuman animals.

This remains the case despite obvious links across forms of oppression. For example, men equate sex with women and hunting in both language and tactile experience. Bullets are called “balls,” firing is referred to as “discharge,” and hitting a body with a bullet is called “penetration”; firing prematurely is called “premature discharge” (Kheel, “License” 91–92). This makes yet more sense given that hunting ethics are often “predicated on the need to harness an aggressive, sexual energy and to channel it in appropriate ways,” allowing for “the continuation of man’s aggressive drive” (Kheel, “License” 92, 95). As a teacher, I impatiently listened to a young man boldly defend the importance of hunting because he found the experience to be orgasmic. In Western patriarchal culture: “Without the pursuit of orgasm, sex typically is thought to have no meaning or narrative structure; without the intent to kill, the hunt, we are told, has none as well” (Kheel, “License” 91).

Patriarchal metaphors “simultaneously feminize nature and naturalize women” (Adams, “Introduction” 1). Marriage grants a man “legal license to his wife’s sexual and reproductive services, [while] the model of animal husbandry grants agribusiness and wildlife managers access to the bodies and reproductive services of other-than-human animals” (Kheel, *Nature* 231). Women and nonhuman animals are exploited for their reproductive abilities, and both are devalued as they age and wear out—when they are no longer able to reproduce. Susan Griffin provides a noteworthy example of how both women and nonhuman animals—largely female nonhuman animals—have been molded and exploited across centuries by men for the sake of men (Griffin 67–70). Factory-farmed animals are the objects of egregious oppression, exploitation, and violence—and the vast majority of factory-farmed animals are females. Sows and cows are repeatedly forced into pregnancy through artificial insemination. After they carry their offspring and give birth, they desperately try to protect their newborns. Nursing milk is stolen from cows, who must be reimpregnated each year (because cows lactate—like women—only after



giving birth). In contrast, sows are simply reimpregnated immediately after birthing, while hens are manipulated into cycles of ovulation so that people can steal and consume their reproductive eggs.

Because of their biology, female farmed animals are more rigidly confined for a longer period of time than male farmed animals (who are simply sent to slaughter as adolescents). Given the horrors of factory farming, those slaughtered young are lucky. Farmed animals are genetically and physically manipulated from birth to premature death, and they are looked down on in Western, patriarchal cultures as dumb and unnatural. "Not only men but women and animal protectionists exhibit culturally conditioned indifference toward, and prejudice against, creatures whose lives appear too slavishly, too boringly, too stupidly female, too 'cowlike'" (Davis 197). Similarly, environmentalists generally find nothing to concern them in the sufferings and premature deaths of domestic animals "bred to docility, tractability, stupidity, and dependency" (Davis 201). Females—sows and cows and hens and women—suffer because of their sex in Western patriarchal culture, where female bodies are exploited as sex symbols, for reproduction, for breast milk, and/or for reproductive eggs. As such, farmed animals are at the very bottom of the contemporary, Western hierarchy of beings—and this is speciesism. (For more on factory farms and females, please see the Appendix.)

Factory farming is not the only Western business that cruelly exploits females *because* they are females. Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories, Inc. produces an estrogen replacement product called Premarin (also sold under the name Prempro). Premarin is made from the urine of pregnant mares who are tethered in stalls for four or five months out of each year specifically for this purpose. Their foals—some 40,000 strong—are shipped off to be fattened and slaughtered at just four months old, a time when they would normally be close at the sides of their mothers. Premarin is marketed based on the archaic assumption that a woman's biology is problematic, that there is something inherently not quite right about female processes, and that women therefore require the care of medical professionals—traditionally males (Ehrenreich 6). Premarin is on the market because people have been led to believe that a woman's natural ways of aging are a sickness in need of cure. This attitude toward aging is indubitably linked with the exploitative view of females as childbearers, which makes aging and menopause problematic and undesirable. "Marketed as a cure for menopause, Premarin hurts both female horses and female humans in order to provide profits for a pharmaceutical corporation" ("Sexism").

Overtly associating women with nonhuman animals, as I have just done, is unsettling to many. Such association is viewed as offering a "more substantial threat to women than identification with nature" (Scholtmeijer 233), perhaps



because nature is recognized as noble and magnificent, while nonhuman animals—especially farmed animals—are viewed as expendable property—dumb and despicable. “The suggestion that the otherness of nonhuman animals can inform the otherness of women, therefore, appears to be counterproductive, to pull women down into a condition of defeat along with the animals” (Scholtmeijer 234). Consequently, feminists have too often bolstered the “otherness” of nonhumans in the hopes of extricating women from this ignoble association, liberating “white women and people of color from the onerous equation with animals and otherness,” while leaving nonhuman animals to remain as exploitable “other” (Scholtmeijer 257; Adams, “Feminist” 204). (I experienced this type of reaction from feminists at a conference in Stony Brook University. At the time, I did not understand their aggressive objections to identifying the links between the oppression of women and the oppression of female farmed animals.)

By distancing themselves from other exploited females, such feminists endeavor to pass exploitation on to other exploited individuals, those whom they perceive as being yet lower on the hierarchical ladder (Kappeler 335). Such indifference to the exploitation of those whom they perceive as lesser mirrors the larger culture of hierarchy and oppression. In so behaving, these feminists “mirror patriarchal oppressors” (Dunayer, “Sexist” 19). Women, including feminists or ecofeminists, who prefer to ignore that nonhuman animals who are exploited for their reproductive abilities are oppressed females “closely resemble men who prefer to ignore that women are human” (Dunayer 19). Women who prefer not to recognize a cow as an objectified female also resemble early feminists who focus exclusively on white, middle-class women. Feminists who “engage in this kind of denial, [who] support and participate in the oppression of the less powerful” in hopes of elevating themselves, are “not only hypocritical” but also engage in a “profound betrayal of [feminism’s] deepest commitments” (Adams and Donovan, “Introduction” 8). To avoid such pitfalls, in light of linked oppressions, feminists and ecofeminists “must specifically address the oppression of the nonhuman animals with whom we share the planet. In failing to do so,” activists and theorists adopt “the sort of exclusionary theorizing” that they ostensibly reject (Gruen 61). For those who seek freedom “from violation by the powerful—power and privilege must not be more widely shared, they must be radically dismantled” (Kappeler 335). Instead of feeding nonhuman individuals to the patriarchal monster in the hopes of saving themselves, women must turn the monster away.

Those who fail to recognize speciesism as one of many linked oppressions are likely blind to shared attributes between feminists, animal activists,



and other social justice advocates. Like those fighting sexism and racism, animal liberationists call attention to a lack of any morally relevant distinction between “A” and “Not A” individuals by which humans might legitimately exclude certain nonhuman individuals from basic legal protections and privileges enjoyed by human individuals. Farmed animals have a central nervous system and show recognizable signs of physical distress and psychological trauma—similar to those of humanity—when they are physically harmed and/or tightly confined on factory farms, and when their young are snatched from their protective care. Animal species (such as kangaroos, crocodiles, cattle, and chickens) appear different on the surface—like human races and sexes—but share core similarities such as a need for “food, shelter, space, and freedom to move about” (Merchant, *Earthcare* 204). Animals (human and nonhuman) feel pain, can suffer, and ought to be treated accordingly—pain and suffering are always morally relevant. Social justice activists who are not on board with animal activists ought to belatedly “acknowledge the pain and suffering currently experienced by many other-than-human animals, including those who are raised to be eaten” as morally unacceptable (Kheel, *Nature* 233).

Protecting nonhuman animals places limits on human power, and will put an end to ill-gotten gains (a term used by animal rights philosopher Tom Regan)—just as emancipation of African slaves curtailed white power and put an end to the ill-gotten gains of Caucasian Americans. This is the reason for such strong resistance to animal liberation even among other social justice activists. Animal activists are often met with derision from those who wish to continue their accustomed diet, those who do not want to rethink their leather shoes, toiletries, or treasured forms of entertainment. Feminists and civil rights activists who ask others to change for the sake of justice—to give up ill-gotten gains—are often met with similar insults and raucous rejection.

Though other social justice activists rebel against a movement that requires all of us to make significant changes in daily choices—particularly dietary choices—it is increasingly difficult to advocate for women, the poor, or immigrants, for example, with a clear conscience while eating cattle and their offspring and consuming their nursing milk. Animal activists are exposing the links that connect the oppression of nonhuman animals with human oppression. For example, in *Slaughterhouse*, which focuses on factory-farmed animals in industrial slaughter facilities, animal activist Gail Eisnitz found it impossible to ignore human rights violations and labor injustices. Racking up “nearly thirty-six injuries or illnesses for every one hundred workers,” Eisnitz notes that “meat packing is the most dangerous industry in the United States” (271). Eisnitz spoke to many slaughterhouse employees who reported



acid-spattering (261), arms torn off (272), lost hands (272) and death—which was “compensated” with a mere \$1,000 (272). “Knowing that they can—and will—be fired for complaints about injuries, illness, and working conditions, employees are scared silent” (274). One employee commented that slaughterhouses “exploit Hispanic workers because they can’t really speak out. They hire a lot of illegals, too. Some are just children—twelve and thirteen, maybe fourteen years old” (262). She found these horrific conditions again and again in U.S. slaughterhouses, in a nation where most citizens expect the government to oversee labor, a nation where few citizens are aware of the affects of the financial ties between agribusiness and the U.S. government.

Those who buy animal products support the abuse of these laborers. Those who buy animal products ought to ask whether or not they would like to work in one of these slaughterhouses, or in a battery hen operation. If we would not like such a job, we ought to choose other food options, shifting job opportunities to places of employment whose policies and methods do not grate against our conscience.

Animal activists have also begun to link animal-based diets with environmental devastation. It is now clear that those who care about the natural world are better off committing to a vegan lifestyle than moving to an economy car (Eshel 1). Choosing to consume animal products—when one can remain healthy with an entirely plant-based diet—“has dire environmental consequences such as deforestation, soil erosion, heavy water consumption, unrecyclable animal excrement, and immense demands on energy and raw materials” (Adams, “Feminist” 214). Those who would suggest that individual animals do not matter in light of larger ecological problems do not know (perhaps do not want to know) that speciesism has caused—and continues to cause—ecological devastation.

That said, those who enjoy socioeconomic class privilege are often unaware (as I tend to be) that many, many people do not have ready access to healthy, vegan food choices. I have the option of growing a little garden outside my home. We have three health-food stores in town that provide vegan alternatives, and I have a car to use to pick up groceries from these stores. Poorer neighborhoods, where people likely live without transportation, often do not have health-food stores with vegan options—or even supermarkets with fresh vegetables—let alone organic produce:

Access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables, proper nutritional information, and community gardens is currently challenging for many whose food choices are limited to Jack in the Box, White Castle, convenience stores, or grocers that do not sell fresh produce. In addition, TV food advertisements



aimed toward people of color convey unhealthier items than those aimed toward whites, which potentially makes unlearning current concepts of food and nutrition difficult. (Harper, "Social" 39)

Scholars such as Kwate and Eisenhauer note that poorer neighborhoods more often provide a liquor store and a greasy but cheap fast-food restaurant. If farmer's markets are located near working-class neighborhoods, critical food scholars like Dr. Alkon note that most socioeconomically poorer people simply cannot afford these alternatives.

While remaining aware of the white class privilege that can lie behind a healthy vegan diet, readers who have not yet noticed what bell hooks missed in the quotation above, assessing the position of African American women, may now be in a position to do so. Though women of color tend to live near the bottom of the demographic barrel, they do not have a social status "lower than that of any other group" (hooks, "Black" 32). Furthermore, nonwhite racialized minorities *are* "socialized to assume the role of exploiter/oppressor" and they *are* provided with an "institutionalized 'other'" to exploit and oppress (hooks, "Black" 32). While poor women of color are likely to have few if any human "others" to oppress, *all* human beings are systematically socialized to oppress cattle, chickens, snakes, mice, dogs, and other nonhuman individuals. After the fashion of Sojourner Truth, wouldn't cows and chickens likely ask feminists: "Ain't I a female, too?" And would not dogs and snakes ask: "Ain't I a living being, too?"

#### SUMMARY

The various strands of feminism have faced many challenges as they have emerged to address a host of different social justice issues. Many of these strands have evolved to accommodate an ever-growing understanding of linked oppressions. Feminism is stronger because feminists were willing to rise to meet challenges posed by people like bell hooks. As a result, feminism has become more diverse, more inclusive—more relevant to more people. Listening to the criticisms of others—and being self-critical—has been and remains central to the survival, growth, expansion, relevance, and applicability of feminism.

Some feminists have effectively challenged other social justice movements, including animal advocates, for sexist campaigns such as PETA's famous naked march. And animal advocates are now challenging feminists, as well, not only for excluding billions of females from their protective canopy, but for turning their heads away, for continuing to make choices that lead to the oppression and premature death of these many beleaguered mothers and their offspring. The challenges for feminism's many strands in the twenty-first century are



not the same challenges that faced feminists in the last century. Now that scholars and activists have firmly linked speciesism with sexism, the many feminisms have arrived at yet another critical juncture: How will feminists meet the challenges posed by animal advocates?

Advocacy is better served when fellow activists are able to respond in ways that do not build walls or burn bridges. Change takes time and tends to come hard to human beings. Those who understand this human tendency are more effective activists.

Challenges between activists are most appropriately met with sincere inquiry. If we wish others to hear our message when we bring social justice issues to the table, we must listen to other activists when they do the same.

## ii. empathy, silence, trauma, voice

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference—those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older—know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. (Lorde, "From" 587)

I have often wondered how empathetic women have the courage to repeatedly expose themselves to trauma—entering animal labs, factory farms, and slaughterhouses to witness and record insidious treatment of nonhuman animals—while maintaining a semblance of emotional and psychological equilibrium. Authors in this anthology provide an answer: Empathic people face misery head-on, not only to bring about much-needed change but as a means of coping. In a world where unconscionable violence and pervasive injustices are the norm, they have come to see activism as the lesser of two miseries. *These women have found that their only hope for peace of mind is to walk straight into that pervasive misery and work for change.*

To understand this brave response, it is important to understand violence in patriarchal cultures. Violence runs across lines of oppression. (How else can large populations be kept subservient to smaller populations who are alienated by a dualistic, hierarchical social structure?) Violence, generally enacted by males, disproportionately affects children, nonhuman animals, nonwhite



racialized minorities, and women—especially women who are members of nonwhite racialized minorities. Violent men sometimes purposefully create terror in women by threatening a beloved child, cat, or parakeet (Adams, “Woman-Battering” 72). Men sometimes harm or kill nonhuman animals, using them as pawns to establish or maintain power and control over women.

In the racist, sexist United States, nonwhite racialized minorities—and women in particular—are subjected to more than their share of horrific violence, but no human being would wish to trade places with nonhuman animals in factory farms or laboratories. “Whereas women may feel like pieces of meat, and be treated like pieces of meat—emotionally butchered and physically battered—animals actually are made into pieces of meat” (Adams, *Sexual* 46). While women may be called “pet” (as if they exist only to entertain men), nonhumans legally are “pets.” The legal status of women and nonwhite racialized minorities has improved markedly in the past fifty years; matters have grown considerably worse for nonhuman animals.

Violence against those in the “Not A” category “cannot be understood without a feminist analysis” (Adams, “Woman-Battering” 80). Violence is central to patriarchy, and Western society’s various forms of systemic violence are interconnected. Recognizing similarities across forms of oppression such as racism, child abuse, speciesism, and sexism, for example, is essential to “recognizing the interrelatedness of all violence” (Adams, “Woman-Battering” 80). We can curb this tendency only if all forms of violence are exposed and challenged—rape and slaughter, rodeos and brothels. We cannot expect to put out the fire by removing only one coal.

Violence tends to force silence on those who would otherwise speak. Audre Lorde writes about fear that rules lives and requires silence (Lorde, “From” 583); Adrienne Rich writes of “lies, secrecy, and silence” that have been used to “perpetuate the exploitation of women” (Kheel, “From” 259). Indeed, women are systematically silenced to prevent them from speaking out against oppression: “Beginning in preschool, girls are told to be quiet much more often than boys,” even though, as one might expect in such a system, boys tend to be “much noisier than girls” (Kilbourne 139). From a young age, girls are trained to be “quiet, small, and physically constrained,” leaving girls “afraid to speak up for themselves or to use their voices to protect themselves from a variety of dangers” (Kilbourne 139).

Authors in this anthology recall a past tendency toward silence and describe their struggles to find voice. They explain the importance of honesty, of speaking up, of using voice to keep us all “uncomfortably conscious” of oppression, asking tough questions—even when we don’t have all the answers. In “Talking Back,” bell hooks explains her need to create a “writer-identity” to



pull herself from institutionalized, systemic silence ("Talking" 81), and calls attention to the healing, empowering affect of finding voice—how voice leads women from exploited and manipulated object to liberated subject: "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle . . . a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is . . . the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice" (hooks, "Talking" 81).

All of those in the "Not A" category tend to be objects that can be exploited by those in the "A" category. Objectification is a defining aspect of linked oppression: "Objectification permits an oppressor to view another being as an object" (Adams, *Sexual* 47). Sexist men view women as objects (for sexual gratification, household labor, or as status symbols); racists view other races as objects (slaves, cheap labor, athletes); speciesists view nonhuman individuals as objects (meat, livestock, pets). Objects "do not speak, objects do not feel, and objects have no needs. Objects exist only to serve the needs of others" (Kheel, "From" 260). In Western medicine, women have been objectified as something to be "investigated, analyzed, solved" (Ehrenreich 6). African Americans and the poor have been used as test subjects, as in the infamous Tuskegee experiments. And billions of nonhuman animals have been objectified as Petri dishes.

Amid this pervasive violence, in spite of their own painful objectification, women in this anthology convey a deep and abiding empathy. Alison Lance describes herself as a voodoo doll, taking each blow for doomed nonhuman animals. Empathy leaves these authors wide open to trauma, especially in a patriarchal world of pervasive violence. Many contributors discuss how they have dealt with destabilizing experiences of trauma. Perhaps, most notably, Karen Davis explains her prolonged struggle to maintain balance in a world of irrational violence.

These authors provide insights into the links that connect empathy and silence on the one hand, with trauma and voice on the other. Their essays indicate that social justice activists in general, and animal advocates in particular, must work to expose the injustices they have learned to see—even though this injustice brings yet more trauma—so that this tension can be noticed, and eased. To correct social problems, we must expose them to the light of day.

Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion, before it can be cured. (M. King 404)

Authors in this anthology who are working on behalf of social justice



*immerse* themselves in the horrors of oppression—they know what is going on, help those who are suffering, and inform the larger community. For the women whose essays are included in this anthology, immersion in the ugliness of injustice, in the hope of change, seems preferable to turning away. Bahna-James expresses this choice well in her essay when she refers to “accessing vulnerability” as a “source of power.”

Essays in this volume indicate that there is a reward for courage and determination in the face of helplessness and suffering: Walking into pain in the hope of bringing change moves a person from helplessness and despair to empowered activism.

### iii. making change

I have found that the happiest people are those who do the most for others.  
(Washington 281)

Most of us know at least one beleaguered activist who endlessly faces injustice in the hope of bringing change, battling every day against the indifference of the masses, sometimes disillusioned with humanity, but never willing to give up hope. In fact, at least a few readers are likely to fit this description. Those who are such activists know that the overwhelming array of desperate problems that face social justice activists can “numb and immobilize us,” can foster a bitter and disillusioned view of humanity, or cause individuals to concentrate energies “too narrowly” (Lee 48).

Activists quickly learn that it is impossible to be thoroughly educated on all relevant matters; we cannot “address everything fully at the same time” (Lee 48). By definition, we cannot simultaneously offer an all-out battle against sexism and racism, or prostitution and marital rape, or the veal industry and the egg industry. By definition, an all-out battle requires exclusive attention, and most activists tend to specialize, to launch an all-out attack on just one aspect of the many linked oppressions. Specialization enhances effectiveness, so activists tend to specialize.

*But activists must not work against one another in their single-minded dedication to one specific cause.* Those fighting to protect horses must not eat cattle. We do well to specialize, we do not do so well if we specialize without knowledge of interlocking oppressions—or without the application of that knowledge.

Audre Lorde notes that “the quality of Light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives” (“From” 583). I



have found this to be very true: "Deep personal and social change requires self-criticism" (Birkeland 49). Social justice advocates must "revision"—look again—"in order to correct or improve" advocacy and our lives more generally (Adams, "Introduction" 5). We must all "reach down into that deep place of knowledge" so that we can "touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears," and thereby expand the circle of justice (Lorde, "From" 588). All of us have more to learn about interlocking oppressions. I have just begun this somewhat startling journey, and I am unhappy to remember where I stood just a few years ago. I have been part of the problem—I still am, but I am working for change within, and I know that this inner change will enhance my ability to invite change to the larger world. Martin Luther King found that a "[s]hallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will" (M. King 404). Those who seek greater justice in our world need to work toward a deeper understanding of oppressions. Activists need to develop the kind of understanding that will lead to a lifestyle—a way of being—that works against *all* oppressions.

It is also important that each of us "be fully aware of the limitations of our specific agendas" (Lee 48). This requires us to be open to change as a response to what other social justice activists say—especially those advocating against parallel interlocking oppressions. We cannot end just one form of oppression, so we need to be on board with other activists. If we are not, we doom social justice activists to perpetually pulling up the innumerable shoots that spring from the very deep roots of oppression. Furthermore, blindness to one's own privilege and ignorance of the struggles that others face (in a homophobic, racist, ageist, ableist, sexist society) are major impediments to social justice activism. Those who are privileged must give way so that others can take the lead, bringing new social justice concerns and methods to the activist's table.

#### APPLICATION: CONTROVERSY OVER DIET

If we acknowledge the connection between these systems of exploitation, we will have to make a change in the way we live—in what we eat, in what we wear. And it is simply not convenient to make such a change. . . . Yet if we can see the intertwining oppressions of women of different colors and different nations, if we can understand how racism and classism function like sexism, if we can understand in essence, that it is the claim of difference that authorizes these oppressions—what prevents us from understanding the oppression of other animal species? (Gaard, "Ecofeminism" 301)

While it seems likely that most social justice activists will agree that oppressions are linked, few such activists incorporate this understanding into



their reading lists, discussions, economic choices, or daily lives. Those who fight sexism know little about homelessness, and those who fight racism know little about factory farming. Similarly, those who work on issues of poverty often fuel the flames of sexism and speciesism, and animal advocates too often express racism. In fact, most social justice advocates know almost nothing of speciesism and therefore reject animal advocacy outright (rather than nod agreement while continuing as before). An ongoing debate between feminists, ecofeminists, and animal advocates exemplifies this speciesist tendency, and reveals a lack of understanding about speciesism on the part of many feminists and some ecofeminists.

Many feminists and some ecofeminists employ inclusiveness to exclude nonhuman animals. For example, some feminists and ecofeminists defend animal-based food offerings at events by arguing that not all who attend are vegan, and that those putting on a conference should not force a particular diet on participants, alienating those who choose a different diet. To do so, they argue, would infringe "on women's rights to choose," and fail to show "deference to the cultural traditions of women of color" (Gruen 82).

Ecofeminist Karen Warren falls into this category. She focuses her argument on minority groups, such as those living in the Arctic, whom she claims are unable to choose a vegan diet. She therefore argues that requiring a vegan or vegetarian diet is, in the words of Andrew Brennan, "ethical colonialism" (Warren 129).

Warren misses the point. Although there are people who have no choice but to eat what is readily available, this is irrelevant to food offerings at feminist and ecofeminist conferences, which are seldom if ever held in the Arctic. In fact, I do not believe that these conferences are held in locations where finding food is a common problem. Nor do these conferences offer whale blubber or caribou flesh so as to be inclusive of those who live in the Arctic. Yet Warren's arguments (and those of others who oppose offering a vegan diet at feminist and ecofeminist conferences and meetings) indicate that conference organizers ought to serve foods that participants are accustomed to eating. Foods offered at feminist and ecofeminist conferences generally represent nothing beyond that which the dominant culture is accustomed to, ignoring all other "ethnic and racial traditions around food" (Adams, "Feminist" 211).

Warren sidesteps the critical question: Can those putting on ecofeminist or feminist conferences serve nonvegan foods and remain true to their mission and ideals? Perhaps even more critically, can Warren continue to eat and serve yogurt and salmon and maintain personal integrity?

Warren's argument conveniently forgets that "cultural traditions are exactly those institutions at which legitimate feminist critiques are aimed"



(Gruen 82). Why would it be necessary to challenge cultural traditions that maintain male dominance over women, but not cultural traditions of human dominance over nonhumans?

Of course the absence of vegan foods at feminist and ecofeminist conferences is just the tip of the cow's exploited teat. Feminist and ecofeminist conferences, to be consistent with much contemporary theorizing, will need to offer only fair-trade coffee and chocolate, hire well-paid labor, avoid foods that are individually wrapped (which require extra processing and result in excessive waste) and avoid Styrofoam altogether. To be consistent with much of what feminists and ecofeminists are saying at their conferences, they will not only need to provide foods that minimize suffering, but also offer only products that minimize waste and human exploitation, that require less processing and more community involvement. If Warren is going to hold her ground, she will have to decide whether feminist and ecofeminist politics are exclusive: By providing eco-friendly, vegan foods at conferences, are feminists and ecofeminists engaging in cultural insensitivity and exclusivity? And if so, does this mean that Warren and her supporters must provide, at their conferences, environmentally damaging, exploitative products unless or until eco-friendly alternatives are readily available for everyone?

From the standpoint of linked oppressions, it is of critical importance that Warren's arguments, designed to justify serving animal products at feminist conferences, ignore egregious suffering and innumerable premature deaths caused by those who choose to eat animal products in industrialized nations. Warren's speciesism is perhaps most evident in her conclusion where she sums up and reiterates her viewpoint: "For animal welfarists, moral vegetarianism is like an event everyone can and should practice always. To fail to do so is always to commit a moral wrong. This is not a view I share" (Warren 143). Is feminism "like an event"? Veganism is no more of an event than is feminism. Much like feminism, veganism is a way of being based on a certain understanding, but unlike feminism, this understanding leads people to boycott animal products when alternatives are available because choosing nonhuman animal products exponentially increases suffering.

Despite her misunderstanding of the nature of veganism, common sense would likely lead Warren to agree that anyone in the industrialized, technological world who attends a feminist conference has the ability to choose a vegan diet—at least while he or she is at the conference—and thus holds a political responsibility to make dietary choices that are consistent with his or her overall commitment to social justice. Inasmuch as animal products in Westernized nations are brought to the table only by exploiting those who are less powerful—usually in an extremely gruesome manner—those who stand



against exploitation of the less powerful by the more powerful will need to select vegan food options whenever possible.

If we apply Warren's above statement to feminism, by simply replacing "animal welfarists" with "feminists," and "moral vegetarianism" with "equality between the sexes," we can see her speciesism yet more clearly: "For feminists, equality between the sexes is like an event everyone can and should practice always. To fail to do so is always to commit a moral wrong." True. Well said. Like many feminists, Warren recognizes the importance of protecting women—even at the expense of culture—but she is not similarly committed to the protection of chickens or pigs. In short, Warren is speciesist, and Warren's seeming ignorance of speciesism allows her to view flesh eating as a merely personal choice, rather than a political choice. She fails to recognize the consumption of animal products as yet another form of systematic oppression—one that she fuels every time she consumes animal products (Adams, "Feminist" 200). Carol Adams highlights this point: Serving "animal flesh at feminist conferences requires that feminists traffic in animals—that is, buy and consume animal parts," and this indicates that participants "endorse the literal traffic in animals: production, transportation, slaughter, and packaging of animals' bodies" (Adams, "Feminist" 197). I assume that feminists would not consume human flesh to appease the world's dwindling number of marginalized cannibals.

Sadly, collectively, feminists "seldom see the practical connection between the liberation of women and that of animals," and pitifully few "feminist gatherings are vegetarian, let alone vegan" (Gruen 82). Luckily, other ecofeminists (and feminists) include animals in their moral circle. Carol Adams notes that hierarchy—power over—"is clearly a part of our relationships with the other animals, otherwise we could not experiment upon them, display, hunt, kill, and eat them" (Adams, *Pornography* 18). She notes that feminist and ecofeminist pluralism ought to prevent all of us, including Warren, from siding with "human-skin privilege in order to avoid white-skin privilege" (Adams, *Pornography* 18). Consistency requires a vegan diet:

The differing ethical stances regarding the flesh of human animals versus the flesh of nonhuman animals illustrates that the issue is not whether a community can forbid an action but who is to be protected from being consumed. Since a communitywide vegetarianism is seen as problematic but a community ban on cannibalism is a given, it is obvious that theorizing about species is at this point in time receiving different discursive space from theorizing about race, class, gender, and heterosexism. (Adams, "Feminist" 210)

Similarly, ecofeminist Greta Gaard writes that "the most ethical course is clearly the path of least subordination [and] a vegetarian diet is ethically prefer-



able to a carnivorous diet because a vegetarian diet involves the least amount of subordination, domination, and oppression" ("Ecofeminism" 298). Therefore, for those who are not dependent on killing animals in order to survive, "vegetarianism is an integral part of ecofeminist praxis" (Gaard, "Ecofeminism" 301). Marti Kheel also encourages those working against oppression to commit to a vegan lifestyle as an important method of "reducing . . . suffering and for contributing to the overall well-being of the natural world" (*Nature* 233). A voice of inclusiveness also comes from Josephine Donovan, offering a common-sense reasoning: "We should not kill, eat, torture, and exploit animals because they do not want to be so treated, and we know that" (185).

Obviously, people with limited options must eat what is most readily available, but feminists and ecofeminists cannot hide behind "ethical colonialism" to justify speciesist food choices at conferences and maintain intellectual integrity. It is hard for those who hold power to relinquish power—it is hard for most humans to change basic daily habits—but as A. Breeze Harper notes in her essay in this anthology, feminists and ecofeminists cannot ask of others what we are not willing to do ourselves. In light of interlocking oppressions, feminists and ecofeminists must take a stand on behalf of all who are oppressed, rather than seek loopholes in the hope of defending their habitual diet while continuing to ask others to make fundamental changes in their understandings and lifestyle on behalf of women and other oppressed human minorities.

#### iv. authors and essays

Some of the authors in this volume have been social activists since they were young, and have seldom turned their hand to writing. Other contributors were called away from writing their essays to rescue a flock of hens, investigate a new tip from an informant, or travel abroad for an extended tour of education and outreach. In such cases, I felt privileged to work with rough material to create polished essays.

In the process of unexpectedly collecting this unusual assortment of essays, I have learned firsthand how one can come to see and understand intersections between animal advocacy and other social justice causes by hearing others. For example, through the essays they submitted, Harper, Park, and Iyer helped me see more clearly how racism is linked with speciesism. By reading the experiences, feelings, and understandings of others, I have learned a great deal about the many ways in which sexism, heterosexism, racism, and class privilege form interlocking oppressions. These essays are, first and foremost, about learning by listening to the understanding of others.



In a boldly personal and deeply philosophical essay, pattrice jones, a young “lesbian/feminist/anti-racist/pro-peace/anti-poverty activist,” remembers how she “insisted that everything—racism, sexism, homophobia, capitalism, militarism, etc., etc.—was connected . . . but somehow managed to leave animals out of the equation.” She ponders her reluctance to recognize milk products as sexist exploitation, touching on a hot button between feminists, ecofeminists, and animal liberationists—is diet personal or political? Further, jones connects trauma with action, noting the “shifty slippage” behind the “ease with which we forget” the traumas that “others” have suffered and calls us to speak in ways that keep truths about the suffering of others “uncomfortably conscious.”

An early obstetrics text noted that a woman “has a head almost too small for intellect but just big enough for love” (Ehrenreich 72). Males are prototypical in patriarchal Western science; in 1980 it was still the case that “not a single chapter in the Handbook on Adolescent Psychology was devoted to girls. . . . [R]esearch was done on boys and assumed to apply to girls as well” (Kilbourne 130). So it was that Twyla François’ mother was “ignored in a medical system that was not designed for women,” and while her grandmother, aunt, and mother perished from cancer, their male doctors never explained that the consumption of animal products is linked with cancer. Facing cancer herself, François realized that her voice and her authentic self had been crushed by a patriarchal society that “coerces young women into being what they are expected to be—submissive and unquestioning, maintainers of the status-quo.” She reclaimed her life, delving into the trenches on behalf of farmed animals and finding commonality between female humans and female farmed animals.

Ingrid Newkirk’s essay shows the spunk and pluck that lies behind People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). She rejects categorization at the outset (even male and female), and ponders a world without compartmentalization—a community of beings—but categories inevitably resurface. Newkirk observes that she works largely with females (and for females), raising the question of essentialism: Is there some innate difference that lends females to animal advocacy? She also notes that women tend to control kitchens, which she refers to as “fonts of power”—vegan power. Newkirk even urges readers to move toward the compassionate side of human nature—“the side that women are not ashamed to show.” (At some point, one suspects that demolishing categories is perhaps not Newkirk’s primary concern.) Newkirk’s essay asks the proverbial question: What does it take to bring change?

“People of color” is a category created by false dualities—a legacy of European racialized colonialism, whereby the many nuances of humanity are divided into “color” and “white”—neither of which describes either category in any meaningful way. How does it make sense to lump every African



American and every Korean American together, while keeping every Swiss American and French American separate . . . unless that Swiss or French American has noticeable Chinese or South American ancestry? Although racism unifies those who are oppressed by racists, each individual's experiences are unique. Although women suffer from sexism and nonwhite minorities suffer from racism, there are a plethora of huge differences between the experiences of individual women and individual racialized minorities that shape an individual's life. Why does skin color (biology) trump culture, class, education, age, nationality, and all other determinants of who we are—all other categories?

Harper's American roots reach back farther than my own: On her mother's side, her blood reaches back to a lineage of black slaves owned by Thomas Jefferson. In contrast, I am a second-generation American and Miyun Park is the daughter of immigrants. While I have learned about slavery only as a matter of grade school curriculum, Amie Breeze Harper takes America's shameful history of slavery personally and identifies this ongoing legacy in what she terms "racialized neocolonialism and environmental and nutritional racism" (Harper, Personal). Park is perhaps more cognizant of America's involvement in the Korean War than she is of U.S. slavery. But it would also be possible that neither Harper nor Park—as an African American and a Korean immigrant, respectively—are concerned about either of these topics. We cannot know people's interests or inclinations based on their race. We *can* know that race and its byproducts (i.e., racialization, racial formation, racism, normative whiteness) will have shaped the lives of both Harper and Park in the United States.

Amie Breeze Harper turns attention to "animal whites"—the tendency of the animal rights movement to be powered by middle-class Caucasians who remain collectively oblivious to linked oppressions, particularly the issues of racism and poverty. Harper reflects on her childhood, and calls attention to the power of finding voice, of speaking honestly, and notes a lack of engagement on the subject of racism among most white animal advocates. She asks: "How can any of us be exempt from the same critical reflexivity and emotionally difficult self-analysis that we demand from speciesists?"

Miyun Park is a Korean American, and as such, she is stereotyped among the model immigrants who "work hard, send their children to college, [and] rise rapidly in American society" (Daseler 46). This "dubious distinction" (model minority) denies individuality, imposes expectations, and "biases relations with other minorities" (Daseler 46), but this stereotype has likely been part of Park's life—along with racism. Labeled "nothing" in kindergarten, "Gook" in public, and "yellow" on her birth certificate, Miyun Park's essay offers an



insider's view of "other" in which she focuses on "it"—cruelty and indifference, prejudice and inequality—the wrongness of exploitative, damaging relations.

Indian American Sangamithra Iyer highlights the inadequacies of dualisms. She seems "white" to the locals of Cameroon, but is a "person of color" in the United States and Europe, where the slightest visible indication of any nonwhite racial mix disqualifies an individual from white privilege. Iyer's essay focuses on capitalism and poverty, speciesism and racism (especially environmental racism); she links the profits of the powerful with the suffering of the masses. Additionally, Iyer, who becomes a foster mother for three chimpanzees orphaned by the bushmeat trade, offers musings on motherhood and trauma. She notices the plight of poverty-ridden mothers in Cameroon and recalls the many unfortunate mother cows exploited by the dairy industry.

While women may or may not be more empathic than men, Iyer makes clear that empathy is not unique to the human animal. Iyer brings us back to the topic of trauma: Trauma caused by animal research and by big industry (dairy, logging, and oil), trauma caused to orphans (both chimpanzees and humans) and to mothers (both chimpanzees and humans), trauma linked with poverty—sickness and premature death—and the trauma caused to earth and wildlife by capitalistic industries. Her essay shows us how personal experience and understanding bring change and reminds readers how easy it is to overlook the affects of our actions.

Hope Ferdowsian remembers her father quietly weeping as he recognized the dreadful affects of oppression and trauma on a stray dog—the same dreadful affects he had seen in his own mother. Ferdowsian is the daughter of an Iranian who relocated to the United States in order to avoid religious persecution, carrying with him an understanding that exploitation and suffering are always undesirable. In her work, she compares the affects of trauma in human beings and chimpanzees (a new and fascinating area of noninvasive research). She recognizes the potential of these new studies to help even the most calloused people understand just how wrong it is to treat other animals as if they have no feelings.

Martin Luther King Jr. warned that if the church did not move away from smug complacency, the church might "lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century" (M. King 409). He wrote: "I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists" (M. King 408). Elizabeth Jane Farians pulls Christianity into the spotlight in an essay that explicitly and implicitly demonstrates critical links between sexism and speciesism. Farians



chose to work within the church to institute long-term changes and reverse some of Christianity's "spiritualization of violence" (Kheel, "License" 88). In the process, she reminds herself "to keep cool," that she is "making progress," and that she is "doing this for nonhuman animals." Like many women who work for nonhuman animals, Farians perfects the art of self-effacing in her dedication to the cause. Lurking under the cloak of the model female in order to bring change to a patriarchal institution, Farians informs us that who she is and how she is treated is irrelevant—she is "here to bring change for nonhuman animals."

Tradition is somewhat sacred in the West. In fact, tradition trumps life itself—so long as that life is not human. While respect for tradition does not prevent feminists (or other social activists) from taking a stand against female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, or the seclusion of women (none of which are inherently deadly), this respect for tradition too often prevents any meaningful response to hunting, trapping, fishing, rodeos, and ranching, for example (all but one of which are inherently deadly). Speaking from inside the Ojibway community, artist Linda Fisher expresses dismay at the innumerable "leather goods, feathers, and trinkets made of animal parts—bear claws, cougar teeth, turtle shells, and whale bones" that she sees at traditional ceremonies. She questions whether the Native American tendency to focus on hunting is essential to her community's heritage, and explores the recent attempt of the Makah (Western Washington) to renew their "ancient tradition" of whaling.

Latino playwright, performer, and educator Tara Sophia Bahna-James describes the important role of theater in social activism. Her paradoxical acceptance of unity through diversity parallels feminist thinking and drives Bahna-James' art-based activism: "True compassion is not something we can feel merely for a few select individuals, groups, ethnicities, or species. True compassion acknowledges a connection to All; true compassion is inherently inclusive." Bahna-James refocuses our understanding of "other" to include those who do not share our personal point of view, and also to include those "parts of ourselves that we don't wish to see." She describes how theater carries us across contrived boundaries, noting the helpless feeling that sometimes overwhelms activists, and introduces vulnerability as power.

"I believe that nonhuman animals suffer in ways that no human has ever dreamed of or experienced, and that there are elements in human nature that exult in creating strange new worlds of misery." Karen Davis, who wrote these lines, grew up in a community where animal abuse and racial prejudice were as invisible—and rampant—as child abuse and sexism. In college, Davis became fascinated with Nazi concentration camps, and her empathy—her ability to identify with the oppressed—moved her into a psychological state that pushed



her out of school. She later returned to school, refocusing on the civil rights movement, noting the incongruity of her college's separate-but-equal policy and coming to an "intellectual awakening" that placed her in "opposition to much of conventional society's way of thinking." In her empathic examination of linked oppressions, Davis describes her journey from a powerless and sensitive youth, through dangerous levels of despair and collapse, into an empowered faithfulness to animal advocacy.

For Lauren Ornelas, animal liberation is not about compassion, it's about justice, and she notes that "animal advocates will draw more people, and become part of a more viable movement, when we explicitly connect animal, human, and environmental injustices. We are all comrades." Consistent with her words, Ornelas launched the Food Empowerment Project (FEP), a vegan project focusing on "animals, workers, and the environment." The FEP is designed not only to chip away at corporate animal exploitation, but also to encourage community gardens, change how fieldworkers are treated, and shine a stark light on environmental racism. Through food, Ornelas notes that she has "found a movement in which almost anyone could participate."

In "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King, Jr. commented that "law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress" (M. King 404). Our Western speciesist legal system protects humans (mostly property-owning humans) over and against all other creatures. Billions of dollars back institutions that exploit animals, and officers of the law support corporations at the expense of activists. Christine Garcia, a lawyer working in the field of animal law, exposes injustice in the U.S. legal system, and in the process, introduces animal liberationist as "other." She recognizes nonhumans as the "most abused individuals on the planet," and the U.S. government forms most of her opposition in her efforts to protect these many sentient beings. King once wrote that laws are unjust when they "deny citizens the First-Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest" (403). Garcia notes: "Police protect the university's legal right to test on animals, not the citizen's right to protest animal experimentation. Officers (the government) never arrest scientists or administrators at the request of picketers, even when picketers are harassed while protesting." She quips: "Judges need to be reminded that even animal activists are protected by the constitution."

Allison Lance tries not to let speciesist legal systems get in her way: She is determined to rescue and aid nonhuman animals using whatever methods are readily available and likely to be effective. Some of Lance's actions seem modeled on M. L. King's description of "nonviolent direct action," which he asserts "seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a commu-



nity which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue" (M. King 401). Even peace-loving King recognized the importance of breaking unjust laws in a world where "everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal'" (M. King 404). Activists, King declared, should "dramatize the issue [so] that it can no longer be ignored" (M. King 401). Lance does just that.

Lance's essay pushes the limits of "conscientious citizen," "dedicated activist," and flies in the face of essentialist stereotypes of female animal activists motivated by empathy and compassion. A bold scrapper with a sense of humor, a woman who considers human childbearing to be both selfish and thoughtless, Lance is willing to go beyond nonviolent action, heeding the words of Malcolm X: "We're not for violence. We're for peace. But the people that we're up against are for violence. You can't be peaceful when you're dealing with them" (Malcolm X 417). Lance confronts killers with two strong arms and raises critical questions about the place of violence and illegal action when working in a violent world, a world where animals are killed by the billions, daily. Lance's essay will resonate with women who are deeply tired of patriarchy and its insidious, pervasive male violence and control and with animal activists who are sick of the pervasive and ongoing exploitation and killing.

#### v. note on word choice

Linguistic practice, like other human practices, is even more deeply speciesist than sexist. Humans, after all, have a verbal monopoly. (Dunayer, "Sexist" 17)

In pulling this anthology together, I tried to remove sexist, racist, homophobic, classist, and (most notably) speciesist language. It is important not only to change how we write (in order to purge prejudices and oppression from our language), but also to explain why we have made such changes. In this section I explain a few of the changes that I have made in the course of compiling this anthology and why I have made them.

For many centuries we talked only about "breeding" when talking about procreation in *other* species. Now the term is sometimes applied to humans, but there is a marked tendency to accuse women of breeding without mention of men, who are equally breeders. In this text, any reference to breeding *includes* humans and *equally* refers to men.

There is no such creature as a "farm animal," except human beings, who have spent considerable time farming down through history. Other species, such as turkeys and pigs, are exploited on farms, by humans. As such, they



are “farmed” animals. Similarly, there is no such thing as a “veal calf” or a “lab animal,” though there are millions of calves and mice who are systematically exploited by ranchers, experimenters, and consumers. There is also no such thing as seafood, only sea creatures who are exploited by others for food or profit. In this anthology, I have tried to locate and correct these common misrepresentations.

People also tend to refer to nonhuman animals as “it” or sometimes “he,” regardless of the individual’s sex. This one-sex-fits-all approach objectifies and denies individuality. In fact, nonhuman animals who are exploited for food industries are usually females. Such unfortunate nonhumans are not only exploited for their flesh, but also for their nursing milk, reproductive eggs, and ability to produce young. When guessing the gender of a nonhuman animal forced through slaughterhouse gates, we would greatly increase odds of being correct if we referred to such unfortunate individuals as “she.”

In Western culture, we most often refer to nonhumans as things, rather than as individuals. For example, we might say, “The dog that chased the ball was black.” I have tried to note these conventions, and change “that” to “who”: “The dog who chased the ball was black.” Nonhuman animals are individual beings, they are a “who,” not an “it” or a “that.” I hope that I have caught and changed most of these common but demeaning habitual references to nonhuman animals. (For a more comprehensive look at speciesism through language, see Joan Dunayer’s *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation*.)

Finally, the word “animal” also refers to humans: We are animals, mammals, primates. Therefore, I have tried to replace “animal” with “nonhuman animal,” or “other animals,” for example, when referencing animals who are not human beings. In my own works I tend to use the word “anymal” to refer to all animals excluding the species of the speaker, whether chimpanzee, whale, or *Homo sapiens*. This avoids the human tendency to exclude themselves from the animal world. (For more on this, please see “Verbal Activism: ‘Anymal’” at [http://www.animalsandsociety.org/assets/library/593\\_sai413.pdf](http://www.animalsandsociety.org/assets/library/593_sai413.pdf).)

In watching carefully how this anthology might either help or harm other species through the use of language, I hope that readers will remember that humans are also animals, lest we falsely distance ourselves from others. Such false distancing facilitates exploitation of other species: cows and hens, bears and chimpanzees, mice and rabbits. Largely to avoid cumbersome sentences, I have not made this change for “animal” when used in conjunction with a second word, such as “animal liberation,” “animal welfare,” “wild animal,” “animal advocate,” “animal testing,” “animal research,” “animal shelter,” “animal protection,” “animal law,” “animal products,” “companion animal,” “animal cruelty,” “animal control,” and “animal suffering.”



The language of this anthology attempts to be inclusive, understanding that language is equally a tool for oppression and a resource for liberation. The complex interweaving of oppressions that are highlighted in this anthology call us to reconsider common, unexamined uses of language. It is important to note that these linguistic habits are as true for me as for many authors and readers of this anthology. I offer this text in the spirit of doing the best we can, of evolving consciousness, of a shared journey toward a richer understanding of systematic, interlocking oppressions.

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