

from Speaking Up for Animals:
An Anthology of Women's Voices

Introduction

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Women should be protected from anyone's exercise of unrighteous power ... but then, so should every other living creature.

—*Mary Ann (Marian) Evans (George Eliot), 1819–1880,*
from a letter ("George")

Abundantly pierced punk teens and older women with simple silver hair filled the large greeting room—females outnumbered males by about ninety-eight to one. Still, the single person in charge, the one who welcomed us from the front pedestal, was a man. I thumbed through the conference program, focusing on keynote speakers: Paul, John, Ken—suspiciously masculine-sounding names. As the weekend wore on, I mingled overwhelmingly with women while listening to a battery of male speakers, most of whom took the time to thank a handful of women for their unwavering dedication—their unpaid, behind-the-scenes work both for animals and to support the men behind the podium.

I had just arrived at my first animal rights conference, but it was clear that I had not arrived at a socially progressive gathering. Here, as elsewhere, men held leading roles while women filled supporting roles. Men spoke while women listened. Men founded organizations, and women joined those organizations. What I did not understand at that time were the many powerful links between patriarchy and factory farming—between the exploitation of women (their lack of voice and power, and their tendency to be exploited by men), and the exploitation of nonhuman animals (their lack of voice and power, and their tendency

