

from Sister Species

introduction

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This 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

