

Anti Blackness & Racism in Vegan Communities

This document has been made with the understanding that the western meat industrial complex is one that necessitates overproduction, animal cruelty, and food waste. Vegan, vegetarian, and plant based lifestyles that intend to counteract the animal cruelty endemic to this complex often detach their pursuits from the larger destructive framework of capitalism and the meat industry. And in doing so they often sacrifice the wellbeing of people, particularly black and brown folks in this pursuit.

This document is not a comprehensive list of resources, rather it functions as a starting point on many issues that exist at the intersections of western veganism, racism, and colonialism.

Common Anti-Black and Racist Behaviors in Vegan Communities

- 1) Equating the treatment of animals to the history of black enslavement.

This is a [tactic](#) most commonly known for its use by PETA and other large animal rights groups. Some examples include demonstrations of people putting themselves in cages or [equating animal hating phrases to racist language](#). They are meant to shock viewers and question their complacency in a system that is violent towards animals. In doing so they show black people that their lives are equal to that of animals in the eyes of white vegans. Moreover, they historicize racism in a way that places ongoing struggles for black liberation at the same level as the pursuit for animal rights.

- 2) Conflating traditional ways of farming and keeping livestock to mass industrial farming.

The cruelties within the farming industry are largely a result of the overproduction of livestock. Overproduction and cruelty are manifested through [factory farming](#) which largely exists for the profit of large corporations. However, this practice is symptomatic of a capitalist system that regularly engages in overproduction of goods at the expense of the environment. The cruelties of factory farming are not the same as traditional methods of rearing livestock that many different people of colour have historically and continue to engage in all over the world. By equating sustainable and respectful ways of farming to an inherently cruel capitalist industry the vegan community demonises and alienates people of colour who disproportionately suffer under a capitalist system.

- 3) Repackaging traditional BIPOC recipes and food preparation techniques as new discoveries.

Veganism, vegetarianism, and plant based diets are not new - nor are they western in their origins. All over the world people of colour have historically engaged in these practices for centuries. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Rastafarianism are just a few of the innumerable belief systems that center their eating habits around non-violence and engage in differing versions of plant based lifestyles. These cultures have created recipes and methods of food preparation that incorporate

regional ingredients, flavours and techniques. Western veganism is believed to have found its roots in Since then, these traditional methods of food preparation have been “re-discovered” by predominantly white vegans who then [profit from these same methods](#). Often without crediting or paying the people of colour or communities from which foods or methods were taken from.

4) Mass resource extraction

This repackaging is detrimental not only because it allows a largely white vegan community to profit off of the traditions of BIPOCs, it also creates a culture of mass extraction of resources and ingredients from regions and communities. This resource extraction comes from a huge amount of new demand for traditional produce, [driving up the prices of what was once an affordable plant based option](#) for people of colour who consider an ingredient a staple.

5) Ignoring the inaccessibility of a nutritional vegan/ plant based diet in food desserts

A lot of vegan advocacy is focused on showing people how accessible and easy transitioning from an omni diet to a plant based diet can be. This dialogue often ignores that food access is not the same across western countries. Across [Canada](#) and the United States, [indigenous people](#) and [black people are more likely to live in food desserts](#) and face disproportionately higher costs for fresh produce.

Furthermore, plant based diets generally require more food preparation, having a schedule and a job that allows for [this lifestyle is a privilege](#). Advocating for people to switch to plant based diets whilst ignoring the way that systemic racism has made food access more difficult in racialized communities shows a skewed sense of priorities that once again puts the wellbeing of animals ahead of the ongoing persecution of people of colour.

What Can You Do?

- 1) Educate Yourself. You may be getting a lot of information right now and that information may be overwhelming. Instead of detaching and waiting for things to “return to normal” make a list of reading materials, and resources that you've been given and commit to working on dismantling white supremacy in your daily life.
- 2) Don't wait for black death or instances of police brutality to support black businesses, and educators. support these folks all the time. project their voices and their talents across your networks. Even when police brutality isn't front page news, white supremacy and racism is hard at work and creates additional barriers to our success.
- 3) Donate. Give your money to organizations that are mobilizing or providing support to black folks. directly funds organizations and initiatives that are fighting for black liberation, anti-racism, and the protection of marginalised black folks.
- 4) Advocate. Anti black racism is not a black issue. It's a systemic issue that is upheld by the silence and complacency of white and non-black people. opting out of advocacy allows for injustice to continue.
- 5) Don't detach yourself from the issue. A lot of conversations about anti-blackness right now are happening as a response to the repeated instances of police brutality. But police brutality and state violence against black people is the manifestation of a fundamentally anti-black society. Question the ways that your own communities and

professions have normalized anti-blackness and embedded it into its system. How have you upheld anti-blackness in your everyday life?

Further Readings on Racism in Vegan Communities

<https://www.thrillist.com/eat/nation/vegan-race-wars-white-veganism>

Striving With Systems - radical vegan perspectives on total liberation

<https://strivingwithsystems.com/>

White normativity, animal advocacy and PETA's campaigns

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1468796819873101>

<https://foodispower.org/my-scariest-halloween-racism-at-an-animal-rights-protest/>

<http://sistahvegan.com/>

<https://www.directactioneverywhere.com/theliberationist/2015/1/21/racism-and-mixed-messages-whats-wrong-with-australias-animal-rights-movement>

<https://www.directactioneverywhere.com/theliberationist/2014/3/21/the-color-of-a-movement-the-curious-story-of-race-and-animal-rights-and-why-it-matters>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ndJ314WTEU>

Black Vegan Bloggers

Jenne Clairborne

<https://sweetpotatosoul.com/about-jenne>

<https://www.brownvegan.com/>

<https://www.kimberlyelise.com/>

Vegan Hip Hop Movement

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/vegan-hip-hop-movement/383440269257?fref=ts>