Angela Davis Delivers the 17\textsuperscript{th} Steve Biko Memorial Lecture

(40:13–43:24)

When Muhammad Ali refused to be inducted into the military in 1967, we could not know at the time that this would become an iconic historical moment, as was the raising of the fist by Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the Mexico Olympics in 1968. Perhaps Colin Kaepernick’s refusal to stand during the singing of our militaristic national anthem that is replete with aural images of bombs bursting in air, perhaps this will become another such moment. Or perhaps the actions by the girls at Pretoria High School, and we’ve seen many images of Zulaikha Patel. This moment may very well be the historical conjuncture we have been waiting for.

We cannot really know.

But we cannot let it pass without asserting our collective agency in order to begin to purge our societies of racisms, including Islamophobia and settler colonialism as well as anti-Semitism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, assaults against immigrants and refugees, and the unremitting capitalist assault on our environment and on our food sources and on the sentient beings who endure pain and torture as they are transformed into food for profit, food that generates disease in humans whose poverty compels them to rely on McDonald’s and KFC for nourishment.

Even though there are never guarantees that we will reach the futures we dream, we cannot stop dreaming. We cannot stop dreaming, and we cannot stop struggling. Not even if—and I say, when—we begin to see the crumbling of capitalism, there will always be vibrant legacies. There will always be unfulfilled promises. There will always be unfinished activisms. Thank you very much.
PETA Reveals: Why Feminists Must Reject All Violence, Not Just Violence Against Humans

I’m about to share a scenario with you that may be disturbing but which I think is important for every one of us to think about.

Picture this: A group of men grabs a terrified young female. They take her into a room, hold her down, and rape her. She struggles and cries out, but she is helpless to escape their assault. Nine months later, she gives birth, but she never even gets the chance to caress her newborn. This same group of men come in and steal her baby. She wails out in anguish as her baby disappears from her sight forever.

Now, if you ordered your coffee with cow’s milk this morning, you paid for this abuse.

I know it sounds harsh, but it’s absolutely true.

Foods many people consume every day—meat, eggs, cheese—are the products of rape, imprisonment, reproductive control, kidnapping, and abuse. Yet many people who consider themselves ethical, conscious people, many people who consider themselves feminists—are unthinkingly supporting this violence towards females every single day by consuming these cruel foods.

I know, because I used to be one of them.

I was a member of the Feminist Student Union at The George Washington University. I performed in The Vagina Monologues. I devoured feminist theory. I remember thinking that I felt so enlightened and socially conscious. I even considered myself something of an animal rights advocate, because I had been vegetarian since I was 7. Yet I still consumed milk, cheese, and eggs.

Then, one day my mind was blown and my world changed forever when a friend gave me a copy of the book The Sexual Politics of Meat by Carol J. Adams. Never before had I thought about the link between eating meat and the patriarchy. Yet I found myself agreeing with the author when she said that both women and animals are objectified, then fragmented into body parts, and then consumed, either literally or metaphorically.

And if you think about it, the entire factory-farming system is built on exploiting female bodies. Consider the pork industry, for example. Here, mother pigs are treated as nothing more than breeding machines. In order to force them to churn out tons of babies—who are then taken away, fattened up, and sent to slaughter—these mother pigs are forcibly impregnated and kept in metal crates so small that they can’t even turn around.
They develop painful ulcers on their shoulders from the constant pressure of lying, nearly immobile, on the cold, hard floor, and their bright minds spiral into depression and madness because their life is spent doing nothing more than looking out from behind bars.

Cows on dairy farms are treated in much the same way. They are violated over and over again. They are forcefully impregnated on what the industry calls a "rape rack"—yes, that is what they actually call it, a rape rack—only to have their beloved calves torn away from them so their milk can be stolen and sold for human consumption. Hens on egg farms are kept in tiny wire cages so small that they can’t even spread their wings—just so their eggs can be stolen and sold.

When their “usefulness” runs out—so when they can no longer breed or produce massive quantities of milk or eggs—these females are then rounded up, sent to slaughter, and their flesh chopped up for humans to dine on. Every single one of these animals is an individual with feelings, desires, and families—just like you and me—yet here they are treated as if their lives count for nothing, except for what their bodies can do for us.

Being confronted with all this shook me to the core. I had had the audacity to call myself a feminist—yet here I was paying for others to systematically exploit and abuse these females in the worst possible ways. How could I condone the same violence and hatred towards animals that the patriarchy inflicts upon women? Was I so superior to a mother cow and her calf that I had the right to take away her breast milk that was meant for her baby?

The answers to these questions were settled for me during an internship in Washington, D.C., where I lobbied for animal rights legislation on Capitol Hill. Here they had the interns watch the documentary Peaceable Kingdom. This film shattered any remaining excuse I had had for not being vegan. I will never forget one scene, in particular, where a calf is torn away from his mother. The baby kicks and screams, but workers drag him away by his legs. I’m very close to my own mother, so imagining this happening to us when I was a baby completely broke my heart.

I knew then I couldn’t deny my complicity in this abuse any longer. Every splash of milk in my coffee, every slice of cheese pizza I ate was subsidizing horrific exploitation and suffering. I knew then I could never support the dairy or egg industries again.

So now, at an incredible time when amazing women are rising up and sharing their stories and saying “time’s up” on abuse and exploitation, it’s time for feminists and every decent person to say “no more” to the ways that our sisters of other species are being systematically exploited in the food industry.

It’s time to acknowledge that imprisoning billions of victims—cows on dairy farms,
sows on pig farms, hens on egg farms—solely because they are female is the opposite of feminism.

We have the opportunity to make a conscious, ethical, feminist decision three times a day. Simply by what we put on our plate, we can choose to exploit and enslave or we can choose to empower and liberate.

I am a feminist and I am vegan, because I reject violence towards all females. I believe that everybody has a right to live life as they choose and to be treated with dignity, respect, and equality. Will you join me?

Thank you.
PETA Reveals: Animal Rights Is Not a ‘White Thing’

I’ve lost count of how many animal rights demonstrations I’ve been to and how many times I’ve been on the news.

But every time I’m at a protest and a reporter takes a photo of me, I’m grateful because I know it’s gonna help animals in two ways. One: It’s gonna make people think about what I’m protesting—for example, the abuse that animals in circuses go through. And two: When people of color see what I’m doing, hopefully it reinforces their own activism.

When you hear the words “animal rights” or “vegan,” many people think it’s a “white thing,” and that couldn’t be further from the truth. But I understand where that idea comes from. When I first started out in the movement, I will say I felt lonely. I would show up to the protest and stand with the other activists, and no one looked like me. No Black girls. But then I started Googling, and I saw amazing Black activists who were writing really insightful blogs about animal rights and being vegan. It was inspiring. I realized there’s different forms of activism. Just because everyone isn’t able to show up and protest in person doesn’t mean they aren’t committed. To think only white people care about health, animals, and the planet is absolutely false. There are so many Black vegans who’ve contributed to the cause that when we call it a “white thing,” we leave out our own people who are making a difference.

Growing up, I didn’t know anything about the animal rights movement. So I was my own one-person movement. Dogs tied outside in the backyard was something I saw all the time. Neighbors and even some family members had dogs chained outside, all alone with no human contact and fed nothing but scraps. I hated seeing that. I was quick to say something. I called animal control, too. People told me to mind my business, but I knew in my core I had to speak out.

In the summers, I would spend time on my aunt’s farm in North Carolina, where I fed pigs, cows, and chickens. My favorites were the piglets—I thought they were so cute. I would say, “I want a pig.” Family members would say, “That’s food, not a pet.” I would yell, “I wouldn’t eat a pig!” Ironically, I ate bacon pretty much every day on almost everything. So now that I’m vegan, I make sure not to pass judgment on someone else who doesn’t know what I know now. I remember what it was like being perfectly happy eating bacon and not making the connection to those piglets.

I understand it can be difficult for communities like mine who live in oppressive environments to see past our own suffering enough to recognize the suffering of other animals. I get it. But it doesn’t have to be one or the other. As a woman of color in this movement, I feel it’s so important that we have a safe space to talk about animal issues and the everyday struggles we face. To me, going vegan is the best of both worlds: It helps the animals, and it also fixes health issues in our communities, like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.
In Black communities, many of the foods we grew up eating were unhealthy. These bad food habits have been passed down through generations, so many of us don’t see there’s a better, healthier way to eat. I want to get my people to see that we’re being exploited by these food companies who do not have our best interest at heart. And our lack of knowledge about going vegan is literally killing us.

I also believe that once a person makes the connection and sees where their food comes from, their mind will begin to change. I’ve seen it happen many times. I knew a guy who played football throughout high school and college. He ate beef, chicken, and pork daily. This was a guy who said, “I’d never stop eating meat.” I started cooking him vegan meals that blew his mind. We watched documentaries like *What the Health* and *Forks Over Knives*, and he started to question all the food choices he had been making. After eating vegan for about a month, he gave in and had a cheeseburger. And that was a big mistake. As soon as he ate it, his stomach started to hurt. He felt tired and nauseous. That’s the moment it totally clicked for him. That’s when he realized that what he eats affects his health. Then I knew he was ready to learn about what happens to the millions of animals every day just for our taste buds. I showed him the movie *Earthlings*, and it was a wrap from there. The whole time watching, all he could say was “That’s wrong.” He visited his first animal sanctuary shortly after, and he made the connection that animals are loving, smart, and want to live. He even got involved with animal activism. I saw his heart, mind, and spirit change, and it’s all because I took the right approach. I never made him feel judged.

So I’m here to tell you two things.

Number one: We can care about more than one struggle. My activism includes everyone and everything. I can’t walk past a hungry dog without helping, and I can’t walk past a hungry person without helping. I care about the planet, and my health is super-important to me. I care about it all.

And number two: Animal activism isn’t a “white thing.” It’s a caring thing—caring for all living beings. And with the right approach, I believe everyone can be inspired to be compassionate, no matter their background or the color of their skin.

Thank you.
PETA Reveals: Civil Rights Icon Inspired This Lawyer to Push the Boundaries of Animal Rights

The person who inspired me to become a lawyer was Thurgood Marshall. I never met him, but as a child, I read about how he won civil rights cases and changed the course of history. Well, forget about politicians or movie stars or professional athletes—I wanted to be like Thurgood Marshall. Even as a 12-year-old, I was already thinking about going to law school.

After practicing law for several years, I attended a lecture that I thought was going to be about nonviolence and social justice issues. And it was—just not in the way I was expecting. The title of the lecture was “Did Your Food Have a Face?” And it changed my life. I went vegan that night, and nine months later, I was working for PETA. That was 25 years ago.

As PETA’s general counsel, I’ve dealt with the entire gamut of legal issues. But what motivates me the most is pushing the boundaries of the law and the court system to establish fundamental rights for animals. It’s a whole new frontier, and each case maps uncharted territory.

One example is our “monkey selfie” case. A few years ago, a crested macaque named Naruto took what became a world-famous selfie photograph. Now, Naruto lives in a jungle in Indonesia, and he took the photo using a camera that had been left unattended by a photographer. The photographer published the photo and claimed that HE owned the copyright.

That’s when PETA stepped in. Naruto didn’t accidentally trigger the camera—he did it intentionally. And the experts who have been observing and studying his troop of macaques for years will tell you that these monkeys are incredibly intelligent and they’re fascinated by their reflections. They even grab motorbike mirrors and look at themselves. So it was clear that when Naruto saw the camera lens, he recognized it was his reflection.

When he clicked the shutter, he saw the reflection change, so he pushed the shutter again and again, each time seeing his reflection change, and he made a series of photographs.

In this situation, the law is clear that the copyright belongs to the one who takes the photo—it doesn’t matter who owns the camera. And nothing in copyright law prohibits an animal from owning a copyright. So we sued on Naruto’s behalf, asking the court to award the copyright to him and to allow PETA to administer the copyright for his benefit and for the benefit of his community of macaques, who are critically endangered from being killed illegally for bush meat and from their habitat being destroyed by human encroachment.
I have to tell you, I had a great experience when I had an opportunity to visit the reserve where Naruto lives and got to see him in person—what was obviously the most unique attorney-client meeting of my entire career. My guide pointed out that everywhere I went as we studied the macaques, they assigned a lookout to watch me. Well, on the third day, a monkey ran by me and swatted me on the leg. The guide said that when the monkeys determine that a newcomer isn't a threat, they “tag” him into the group, which is apparently, what had just happened. So I passed the audition. What a huge honor! They might not have known that I was there to help them, but at least they knew I wasn’t on the wrong team.

The copyright lawsuit was all over the media and became a huge topic of discussion and debate in legal circles. Now, we didn’t win the initial case, so we appealed. But before the appellate court could issue a ruling, something wonderful happened. We entered into a settlement in which the photographer agreed to donate 25% of his gross revenue from the monkey selfie to charities that will benefit Naruto and his community of macaques and protect their habitat.

So we made history after all: This was the first time an animal will be paid for his own creation, his own intellectual property. And that is huge! And this is what’s called “impact litigation.” These kinds of cases, even if they’re not won, serve as paving stones, preparing the road for where we’re trying to go in the fight for animal rights.

Another impact lawsuit was our 13th Amendment case against SeaWorld.

Now, most people know that the 13th Amendment to the Constitution prohibits slavery. But what they don’t realize is that by its plain terms, it’s not limited to only preventing human slavery. So we sued SeaWorld for violating the 13th Amendment by enslaving five orcas: stealing them from their families in the wild, imprisoning them, and forcing them to work and breed, the very definition of slavery.

The case had support from some heavy hitters, including Laurence Tribe, one of the foremost constitutional scholars of our time. And it stirred up major public discussions about the ethics of captivity.

But the court ruled against us, and that was very hard. I felt responsible, like I’d let those orcas down—especially a few years later when Tilikum, the famous orca from the documentary *Blackfish* who was one of our plaintiffs in the lawsuit, died, still imprisoned in a barren concrete tank.

But here’s the thing: When we have these disappointments, I focus on something that my litigation mentor told me about those famous battles for human civil rights during the 1960s and ’70s. He said that in cases that push the boundaries of the law, you lose, you lose, you lose … and then you win.
And so each case brings us one step closer to a society that recognizes fundamental rights for animals *in their own right* and not just in relation to how they can be used by humans. They have—and we are demanding—their basic, inalienable right to live with their families and to be free from abuse.

So what does this all mean? It means that animal rights is the next frontier of civil rights.

And so we keep pushing, we keep fighting, and I promise you, one day, we will win.

Thank you.
‘Grace’: PETA’s Banned Thanksgiving Ad

**Dad:** You want to say grace, honey?

**Girl:** Sure. Dear God, thank you for the turkey we’re about to eat and for the turkey farms where they pack them into dark, tiny little sheds for their whole lives. Thank you for when they burn their feathers off while they’re still alive and for when turkey gets kicked around like a football and killed by people who think it’s fun to stomp on their little turkey heads. And special thanks for all the chemicals and dirt and poop that’s in the turkey we’re about to eat. Oh, and thank you for rainbows. Amen. Let’s eat.

THIS THANKSGIVING, BE THANKFUL YOU’RE NOT A TURKEY.

GO VEGAN.

PETA
RZA: We’re Not Different in Any Important Way

We are all the same in all the ways that matter. It doesn’t matter what we look like, how old we are, what language we speak, or who we love.

It doesn’t matter if we have fur or feathers or fins, the length of our nose, or the number of legs.

We’re not different in any important way.

We all have thoughts and feelings.

We all feel love and pain and loneliness and joy.

We can all understand, but we are not always understanding.

We experience ourselves as separate from the rest, but none of us deserves to be treated with less respect.

Our task must be to break free from prejudice and to see ourselves in everyone else.
Challenging Assumptions Video

Hanh:
I spent most of my childhood away from my native Vietnam. I can tell you many an experience of having to navigate a foreign environment and not always being understood. Now, my experience growing up as a third-culture kid was in no way traumatizing, but it does help me understand how language can be used to justify exclusion and allow certain groups to say, “Those who don’t speak our language and don’t follow our customs are less intelligent, less civilized.” When that happens, language—rather than being a bridge to understanding—becomes a weapon against both human and nonhuman others.

Zachary:
I grew up in rural Illinois, where there was still a Black and a white side of town. And unfortunately, like many places, we had our fair share of racist people. At the root of their prejudice, I feel like they were scared that anyone not exactly like them—perhaps a woman or a Muslim, a Mexican, a person with disabilities, or a member of a different species—would take something away from them or make it seem like their position is less important.

Hanh:
When I first got involved in animal rights activism three years ago, it was at first with little support from my parents. Once, in an argument with my mom, I referred to the trillions of nonhuman animals exploited and killed every year as “victims.” My choice of word really upset my mom. In her mind, victims meant only human victims. And in fact, the Vietnamese word for victim itself, “nan nhân,” is made up of two Sino-Vietnamese characters, one of which means person—and that is always understood to be “human.”

Zachary:
A bigoted or racist person uses arbitrary differences between people—like skin color or gender—to divide them, rather than using our similarities to unite them. Just like a speciesist believes that one species is more deserving of love or life than another, when in reality every living, feeling being has an innate desire to live free from harm. Some humans think that they are so different from other animals they don’t even consider them to be individuals but rather inanimate objects.

But they are individuals, just like you and me. They have likes and dislikes, thoughts and emotions, languages—even cultures. Many form bonds, especially mothers and babies. Take Dolly and her calf, Dolly II. Dolly was an old, clever cow who, unlike most cows in the dairy industry, lived on a small farm that allowed her to raise her babies. Most farms tear the mothers’ calves away from them so they can steal the milk that those calves would need to grow. Dolly had raised many calves by the time Dolly II came along, and she knew when her daughter needed to be independent and had to go and look after herself.
Sometime later, Dolly II had her own calf at the bottom of a faraway hill. Tragically, her calf was stillborn, and she suffered from a displaced womb. Now, a veterinarian was able to stitch up her womb, but in the coming weeks, it was clear that she was weak and depressed.

Then Dolly II disappeared. Workers searched all over for her and eventually found her about three fields away with her mother, Dolly, who was licking her all over. Now at this point, they hadn’t been together in ages, but in a time of crisis, a mother was taking care of her daughter. And about after six days, Dolly II had made a full recovery.

Cows are far from the only animals who forge deep relationships. Orangutans, orcas, wolf spiders, and many other animals are devoted parents. Prairie voles, a type of rodent, are one of the animals who stay together and pick a mate for life. During stressful times, they give the equivalent of hugs and kisses. Pigeons are remarkably faithful. One pigeon named Harold remained by his mate, Maude’s, side, even when she was sick and unable to fly, risking his own well-being to look after her.

Zachary: Speciesists have learned to exploit specific traits of various species. They take advantage of dogs’ protective nature, forcing them to live outside and guard their homes, often denying them basic needs like food, water, shelter, or affection. It’s the ability of rats and mice to learn quickly that makes them so popular in laboratories. Humans exploit animals for what they can do and then discriminate against them for what they can’t.

It’s the same thing that we do to each other—we capitalize on what we want, and then we demonize or disregard things that are useless to us or which is unfamiliar. We objectify women’s bodies and then shame or punish them for their choices.

Zachary: We celebrate Black musicians and athletes, and then allow our justice system to fail Black people in general. We celebrate cuisine and holidays from other cultures while mocking the people that created them. We disregard people with disabilities, forgetting that we, too, could become disabled at any moment.

Hanh: Since the beginning of time, we humans have deliberately distanced ourselves from everything that connects us to the rest of animalkind, while classes of humans thought to be inferior have been likened to animals. In ancient China, the great philosopher Confucius taught that people who weren’t Tang Chinese were closer to animals in their greediness and aggression.

Throughout history, this same type of degrading language has been used by everyone, from the most enlightened moral teachers to the perpetrators of the most gruesome human atrocities. In Nazi Germany, anti-Semitic propaganda frequently
compared Jews to lice or rats who carry disease, and clearly, we haven’t learned. Even now in Vietnamese slang, criminals and so-called “lowlifes” are often called “dogs,” who are supposedly our best friends.

When you think about it, the language that we use to talk about other animals is incredibly dismissive and condescending. We refer to most animals as “it,” the same pronoun we would use to refer to a table. Usually only companion animals are “he’s” and “she’s” and even then only the ones whom we’ve gotten to know well like Mr. Fluffy McFluffsters, the beloved family dog. I could go on and on about the less than dignified names that some animals are given.

Some groups of animals, like fishes, aren’t even seen as individuals but one big, uncountable mass. The same word “fish” is used whether you’re talking about one, two, or 100 individuals. And we call ourselves “owners” of even the dogs and cats whom we pamper and consider family members.

That’s not all. We project a lot of qualities that we dislike about ourselves onto other animals. Growing up, I used to be reprimanded for leaving my room like a pigsty. We use “fat as a pig” and “dumb as a mule” as insults. The equivalents exist in Vietnamese and many other languages. A lot of these stereotypes are the same across cultures. We use a lot of euphemisms, too, to maintain a dividing line between ourselves and other animals. We all have flesh, skin, and hair, but the exact same body parts that we kill other animals for have been renamed meat, leather, and fur instead.

Zachary:
Some humans have even taken exploitation even further, using one form of violence to support or justify another. White supremacists use cow’s milk as a symbol of their alleged superiority. They share photos of themselves chugging milk and using milk emojis to celebrate their “whiteness.” Now, people of color are often lactose-intolerant. So these racists somehow feel that digesting another species’ breast milk makes them a part of the “master race.”

Hanh:
I’ll let you in on a little secret: Humans are animals. Well, so it’s not really a secret, but when we’re talking about animals, we’re not imagining ourselves being in that category. And human intelligence and emotions continue to be the measuring stick for how we understand other animals. Groundbreaking studies would show that pigs are as smart as a human toddler—this is something that I used to repeat a lot. But now I realize that even as I would try to show that other animals are just like us, that phrase “like us” reinforces the idea that they’ll always be inferior.

So the bigger problem with all this is that these everyday words and usages often go unexamined, because from the moment we were born, we learned that we humans can do with other animals whatever we please, just because they belong to a species different from our own. That’s what speciesism is, and it’s every bit as unjust as racism, sexism, or any other “-ism.”
Zachary:
So why draw a line between humans and other animals? Why not take a stand against all needless violence, all discrimination, all injustices? There’s plenty of compassion to go around.

We can’t put animal rights on the back burner just because racism and other forms of harmful discrimination against humans are on the front burner. Not just because the vast majority of hate that animal advocates like myself receive is from self-identified racists or sexists, homophobes, sport hunters, and grinning trophy hunters or because exploitation of others is all one thing. Animal rights proponents embrace the words of civil rights activist and feminist Audre Lorde, who said, *There is no such thing as a single issue struggle, because we don't live single issue lives.*

Zachary:
But there’s still another reason: We know so much about animal intelligence and about the cruelties hidden in slaughterhouses, the puppy mills, the circuses, and all the other places animals are being used—once you know that, it’s hard to brush that aside.

Bullying and violence don’t stop at the human door any more than they stop at the race or gender door.

Hanh:
If we’re to challenge this false sense of entitlement, if we’re to recognize other animals as the unique individuals they are, with unique personalities and interests and rich, complex inner lives, we have to stop treating them as objects and passive caricatures in the very words that we speak.

If we didn’t look down upon and talk down to other animals so much, we wouldn’t feel so insulted or dehumanized when we’re compared to them or when we’re reminded that we’re not separate from them.

So as you remove other animals from the equation when it comes to what you eat, wear, or use in other ways, I hope you’ll also stop to ponder the impact of the words you’re using and the portraits you’re painting of other animals.

Zachary:
Henry Bergh, founder of the ASPCA, won the first court case that saved a child from abuse. And when he was criticized for teaching kindness to animals, it’s said that he responded that if you teach a child not to step on a caterpillar, you do as much for that child as you did the caterpillar. When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was criticized for objecting to the Vietnam War, rather than just restricting his activism to only racial discrimination, he responded that an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
I agree with Dr. King, and as a Black man, I don’t really have a choice on how I feel about social inequality. It’s not that I enjoy fighting it—it’s just that I often recognize that the cards are stacked against me, and I would rather not stay quiet about it. I came across these words by the late great Maya Angelou and turned them into a personal mantra: I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.

And I’ve relied heavily on this quote for my own personal development. It’s helped me choose where to spend my money and how to treat other human beings. And yes, this quote has a lot to do with why I’m vegan. Once I understood that, like humans, chickens, cows, pigs, and all other animals experience pain, experience fear, and value their own lives, I banned products made from exploiting them from my life. I knew better, so—for animals—I did better. Knowing that people can change—even dramatically—I’m determined to open as many eyes as possible.

Living as a Black vegan is a practice in “sankofa”—it’s a traditional West African term that means we can learn from our roots in order to help us move forward. If we really want to honor our ancestral brothers and sisters, we must strive to be our healthiest, greatest, most compassionate selves.

**Hanh:**
Let’s all be a little more careful with what we express and how we express it, because our words, as well as our actions, can have very real victims.

**Zachary:**
Those of us working to break down prejudice against animals are the same ones who are advocating for human rights and challenging hate groups. Because we know that oppression in all of its ugly forms is wrong. The women’s rights advocate Connie Salamone said, It's hard to talk about rights if your mouth is full of the bones of a small, tortured bird.

Let’s be strong in knowledge that it doesn’t matter who the victim is and that, when we witness oppression, we should not let it go unchallenged—both for the victim’s sake and for the sake of our own integrity and consistency. Thank you.

**Hanh:**
Thank you.
#IStoppedYouCanToo

I made the initial decision to work in the field of conservation to help animals through my research.

#IStoppedYouCanToo
Featuring Danielle Solberg

I soon became aware that even research in the field of conservation often entails the use of animals in a laboratory setting. I started researching wild wolves in Idaho in hopes to conserve and protect them. We used noninvasive methods to track their packs.

Our methods quickly turned lethal for many individuals. They killed all the wolves that we identified. I spoke up for the wolves that the state killed and was blacklisted from the department that manages all conservation efforts within the state as well as from my laboratory research.

The only options I thought I had left in conservation work were curiosity-driven experiments on fish and kangaroo rats in my university’s labs. The fish on campus are subjected to filthy, small tanks, where they spend their short lives swimming in circles. After being tormented their entire lives, they’re often killed at a fraction of their natural life spans.

The kangaroo rats also live in small tanks for the entirety of their short lives, only to be taken out of their tanks to run on a treadmill and be tormented by humans so they can observe their behaviors. When the rats are deemed useless to the study, just like the fish, they’re often killed at a fraction of their natural life spans.

I realized that all animals, regardless of their species, are sentient and deserving of a life free of suffering from unnecessary, unreliable, and cruel experiments. I chose to leave the field altogether when I realized that rather than helping animals through my research, I was directly contributing to their suffering. That’s why I stopped, and you can, too.

PETA
#IStoppedYouCanToo
Please share your own story. E-mail RATSinfo@peta.org.