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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Beautifully written, Lindsey. And successfully thought-provoking. —Jeff

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

The cognitive dissonance of consuming animal products

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

Veganism isn't about some attempt to be perfect — that's impossible. Rather, it's about trying to do better each day by living out our values.

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

A LITTLE OVER 10 years ago, it became clear to me there was a major source of cognitive dissonance in my life, but that luckily there was an immediate step I could take to alleviate some of that discordancy.

10 The problem: I wasn't treating farmed animals, the Earth
11 that was used to raise them, or the people in that industry as I
12 would like to be treated.

13 The solution: to stop consuming animal products.

14 I know from talking to people that this dissonance exists
15 for many of us, but it can be scary to acknowledge. For me, a
16 complete change didn't happen instantaneously; however,
17 starting to eat a plant-based diet made so much sense that I
18 couldn't ignore the dissonance, and I started rapidly shifting to
19 that way of living.

20 When I looked more deeply at veganism, I realized how
21 much it lived at the intersection of a wide variety of issues that I
22 cared deeply about: climate change, environmental justice,
23 human rights, how society treats and values (or doesn't) the
24 bodies of females, peace and nonviolence.

25 * * *

26 I WON'T ATTEMPT to cover all the facts or compelling
27 ethical reasons for choosing to eliminate or at least reduce
28 animal products from our diets, but I'll share a few reasons I
29 continue to choose to go this route:

- 30 • Animal agriculture is an inefficient use of land and
31 resources. Estimates vary, but all point to a plant-based diet
32 considerably reducing the amount of land used for agriculture
33 and (by as much as seven-eighths!) a person's greenhouse-gas
34 footprint.
- 35 • Cows, like human mothers, have a natural right to
36 nurture their offspring and they produce milk intended only for
37 the babies they give birth to. So their calves must be taken away
38 (and they might be killed) in order for their milk to be maximally
39 available for human consumption. The cows are caught in a cycle
40 of insemination, gestation, birth, removal, and milking.
- 41 • The meat industry exposes workers to daily violence
42 and unsafe working conditions.
- 43 • Farmed animals consume 5 times more food than the
44 entire human population, and 3.5 billion people could be fed

45 with food grown on land currently used to grow animal feed,
46 [according to the United Nations](#).

47 • Non-human animals are not simply resources for
48 human consumption, as industry would have us believe, but are
49 beings in their own right and, as the sage author Terry Tempest
50 Williams warns us, if we fail to make this connection and
51 recognize the dignity of the Other then we will commit “[d]aily
52 acts of destruction and brutality.”

53 * * *

54 AS SOMEONE who finds the world to be pretty confusing,
55 scary, and illogical most of the time, I search for ways to bring
56 sense and order to my day-to-day life. That veganism connects so
57 many issues means that adopting it was a no-brainer for me. My
58 sincerely held beliefs would now be expressed every day through
59 my food choices.

60 “You may choose to look the other way but you can
61 never again say you did not know,” William Wilberforce said in a
62 speech to the English House of Commons in 1789. Like
63 Wilberforce, once I know something I’m aware that I can no
64 longer pretend to be ignorant.

65 Knowing the truth about animal agriculture and how it
66 conflicted with a host of other beliefs I held meant that
67 continuing as an omnivore wouldn’t be tenable for me. The
68 cognitive dissonance would be too great.

69 I can’t exert much control over the actions of others, but
70 I can at least try to bring consistency to my own actions.

71 * * *

72 THIS DOESN’T MEAN it’s always easy or that I don’t
73 sometimes question my actions. It would be easier if more people
74 were vegan, because then, presumably, family gatherings and
75 going out to eat would be simpler since there’d be more plant-
76 based options.

77 I’d love to go into a shoe store and find an ample
78 selection of shoes not made from the hides and glues of non-
79 human animals. It would be great to not have people judge and

80 belittle a choice that expresses my compassion and belief in
81 nonviolence; that judgment can feel very confusing.

82 These situations can be frustrating, but ultimately they
83 are more tolerable than pretending to be ignorant.

84 I know that over time those frustrations will decrease.
85 More people will choose to eat a primarily-plant-based diet, and
86 some will choose veganism as they make the same connections I
87 did or as they realize that forgoing animal products isn't about
88 some attempt to be perfect — that's impossible. Rather, it's about
89 trying to do better each day by living out our values.

90 Curiosity about a new way of being can take root in each
91 of us. Maybe it starts with replacing one regularly purchased
92 product or choosing the vegan option when dining out. From
93 there curiosity can grow into commitment as a person gains
94 confidence in making new choices. We learn how to incorporate
95 what we've learned into a life that makes more sense for us and
96 the world around us.

97 What starts out as small steps can turn into big strides
98 towards nonviolence, compassion, and respect. We know that
99 while perfect is unattainable, better is within our reach by taking
100 even one small step.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

101 **LINDSEY BRITT** is the founder of Compassionate Dining,
102 a Brattleboro-based volunteer group inspiring people to eat
103 compassionately, healthfully, and sustainably by increasing the
104 availability of plant-based menu options as well as the demand
105 for those options. Learn more at compassionatedining.com, and
106 add your name at tinyurl.com/supportplantbased. Attend their
107 next event, "[Celebrating Community, Addressing Stereotypes: A](#)
108 [Meal and Talk with VINE Sanctuary](#)" at Brooks Memorial Library,
109 224 Main St., Brattleboro, on Monday, Nov. 10 at 5:30 p.m.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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111 `####BEGIN LINKS####`
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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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