

Meat, Media & Morals

Furrowing in on Effective Food Activism in the Animal Protection Movement

ADVISOR: PROFESSOR LIZ SAFRAN

BY BEAU BROUGHTON

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OVERVIEW

I argue that food activism—specifically in the realm of the animal protection movement—can and has benefitted from the use of three things: Integration of media, targeting desirable demographics, and employing an ethical narrative to inspire lasting behavioral change.

I explore how the distance between consumer and producer in the US is in many cases troublesome, and attempts to shine light on production processes should be executed in the most effective, insightful way possible.

POPULAR FOOD TEXTS

Books and documentaries such as those listed here have disseminated food-related areas of concern to the public, laying the way for more applied grassroots advocacy work. Their often prescriptive approaches provide viewers with relatively clear courses of action.

- *Fast Food Nation* (2001)
- *Super Size Me* (2004)
- *Food, Inc.* (2006)
- *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006)
- *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007)
- *The Harvest/La Cosecha* (2011)

METHODOLOGY

The 10 Billion Lives Tour



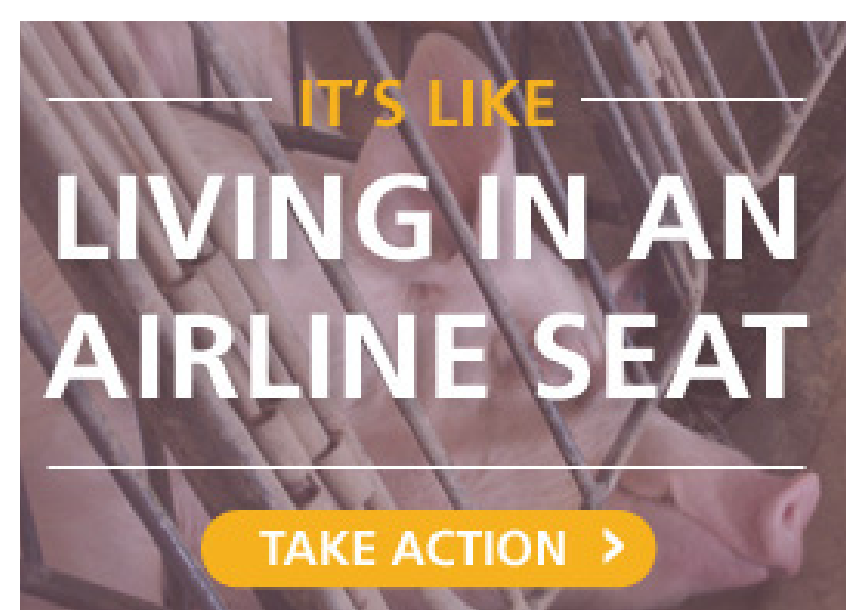
SCHOLARLY FOOD STUDIES

Authors such as Julie Guthman—whose work focuses on organic agriculture in California—seem to have adopted a practice of critically examining and responding to the first wave of 21st-century critical food media.

Popular authors certainly play an integral part in spreading concern far and wide, with the help of Netflix, book clubs, and social media. Scholars, though, serve a vital role by adding a vertical dimension to the conversation, providing an element of depth to complement popular media texts.

BRANCHING OUT BEYOND NON-HUMANS

The animal rights community has specifically been repeatedly called out for its reputation as a white, middle-class movement who continually exploits the plight of disadvantaged populations as well as other social justice issues in their advocacy efforts. Animal advocates need to consider not *if*, but *how* their actions are actively producing othered communities in the process of obtaining liberation for one marginalized group.



INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Legislative victories and institutional changes advance the social and legal status of farmed animals. Facilitated by shifting public perception, these victories lend themselves to the success of grassroots campaigns that simultaneously encourage consumers to reflect and renege on their support for these industries.

- Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Scandal (2008)
- California's Prop 2 (2008) —PICTURED—
- Pink Slime Scandal (2011) —PICTURED—
- California's Foie Gras Ban (2012)
- Smithfield initiates phase-out of gestation crates (2014) —PICTURED—

—WORKS CITED AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST—

The campaign targets young, open-minded segments of the population, aiming to provide viewers with the moral motivation and practical resources to alter their diet and thus decrease their support for the meat, dairy, and egg industries. I worked and lived on the tour for a total of four months in 2012 & 2013 and collected follow-up surveys from previous viewers to gauge the longevity of the effect of watching the 10 Billion Lives video, a 4-minute documentary depicting industry-standard practices inherent in animal agriculture.

SURVEY RESULTS:

58% of viewers continued to eat fewer animal products in 2013, one year after viewing the video.



Timothy Pachirat's *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*

The politics of sight involves the power of vision, experience, interaction, and the importance of altering or restricting these factors to gain or ease control. Through the lens of an ethnographic killer, Pachirat utilizes his experiences at a Nebraska slaughterhouses to masterfully situate sight and secrecy at the intersection of violence and food justice, allowing readers to empathize with those who make a living from killing, as well as with the killed themselves.