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Interview with Dan Cudahy of Unpopular Vegan Essays



[Corey Wrenn](#), Roanoke Vegan Examiner
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Dan Cudahy of Unpopular Vegan Essays
Credits: Dan Cudahy

In celebration of [World Vegan Month](#), I will be hosting a collection of interviews with vegan abolitionists from across the globe. I'm excited to have this opportunity to showcase vegan activists and give a face to our beautiful movement. Be sure to check back for regular installments throughout the month of November.

Today's featured vegan abolitionist is Dan Cudahy of [Unpopular Vegan Essays](#) who lives in Colorado, USA.

Dan, tell us a little about yourself...

I've been vegan for more than 8 years. I initially went vegan out of disgust with how industry treated nonhuman animals. Within three months of going vegan, however, I had learned a lot more about ethics and the legal and economic situation surrounding exploitation, and it was clear to me that [use, not treatment, was the problem](#). At that time, I was an abolitionist waiting to happen. Three years later, I studied a lot more about the legal and economic structural limitations of welfarism through the work of [Gary Francione](#), and became an abolitionist by the end of 2006.

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Virtually all of my vegan education came from books and the Internet. I was the first vegan I knew. I don't remember even having met a vegan until I became one. Since the Internet was so influential in how I learned about veganism, it is how I do the vast majority of my advocacy. I have done street advocacy as well, but since I'm normally one to avoid street advocates (for any cause), it's not my preferred method. I also find it ironic that so many street advocates see street advocacy as "more important" or "more real" than Web advocacy.

What do you think should be the focus of the non-human animal rights movement?

[Abolitionist vegan education](#), which necessarily includes explaining the [fatal flaws of the welfarist paradigm](#) that has been ingrained in our society for 200 years now.

What are some of the biggest obstacles to reaching our goals?

One of the biggest obstacles, if not the biggest, is that [so many advocates, including vegan advocates, are stuck in a welfarist paradigm](#). The large groups like PETA and HSUS get the vast majority of their donations from non-vegans. Nonprofits are ultimately controlled by their donors. Essentially, this means that animal exploiters control PETA and other large groups. This creates a situation in which the "animal protection" organizations are controlled by the very people who cause animal use and cruelty. If that's not a huge barrier, I don't know what is.

On top of that, we have vegans, who are unaffiliated with these large groups, supporting the welfarist activities of these groups, and who fail to educate themselves about the legal and economic structural limitations of welfarism. This acts as a barrier to a growing, grassroots abolitionist movement.

So, in summary, the two largest obstacles I see to real progress are 1) the counterproductive welfarist activities of large groups like PETA and HSUS, and 2) that so many vegans fall into the trap of not seeing the problems with these groups and welfarism in general.

How is your activism impacted by where you live?

It seems to me that the United States is getting more homogenized with the continued growth of large corporations and Internet use. I live in a rural area of Colorado that is not far from a well-known ski town. From a vegan point of view, the differences between Denver and where I live are still very significant (there are so many more vegans and [vegan options in Denver](#)), but the differences seem to have diminished somewhat over the past eight years due to the increase in availability of vegan items in rural areas.

Suggested by the author:

- › [It's World Vegan Day...so where are the vegans?](#)
- › [Interview with Nicholas Pendergrast of Australia's ARA, Inc. and Vegan Perth](#)
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Corey Wrenn's Preferred Links

- [The Abolitionist Approach](#)
- [Vegan Freak: Being Vegan in a Non-Vegan World](#)
- [On Human-Nonhuman Relations](#)
- [NZ Vegan Podcast](#)
- [Vegan Essentials](#)
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Corey Wrenn is a doctoral candidate in sociology currently researching the vegan movement. She is an abolitionist vegan and is adviser to a...

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