

Interview with Elizabeth Collins of NZ Vegan Podcast and AAVA



Corey Wrenn, Roanoke Vegan Examiner
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The Auckland Abolitionist Vegan Association outreach stall (Elizabeth not pictured)

Credits: Elizabeth Collins

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 Elizabeth Collins of [NZ Vegan Podcast](#) and the [Auckland Abolitionist Vegans Association](#). I highly recommend subscribing to the podcast. Liz regularly shares very insightful, uplifting, and honest commentary as well as critical interviews with important abolitionists in the movement. Incidentally, I was interviewed on [Episode 41](#) in October 2009.

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Location: Auckland, New Zealand



Elizabeth, tell us a little about yourself...

Hi, I became vegan in late 2007 thanks to the vegan advocacy that was being engaged in by vegan individuals on an internet forum, which was formed on the Earthlings movie website. I did not hear about veganism from any large or small mainstream animal organisations.

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Because of my experiences, and through the guidance of other vegan advocates, I was inspired by those on the forum and by the work of [Gary L. Francione](#) and his theory of the [Abolitionist Approach to Animal Rights](#) to engage in unequivocal, nonviolent community- and internet-based vegan advocacy myself. Therefore I have started a website called [nzvegan.com](#) and I formed the [Auckland Abolitionist Vegans Association](#). We use the [literature](#) from [NZ Vegan](#) to promote veganism in our community. I also do a podcast called [NZ Vegan Podcast](#), which happens to have more international listeners than local NZ listeners, but has still helped me reach some New Zealanders who are now themselves promoting veganism in NZ!

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

Unequivocal, unrelenting, uncompromising promotion of VEGANISM. Nonviolence. Abolition. The abolition of domestication. The eradication of the property status of animals. The recognition of the moral personhood of all animals. These are all basically the same thing to me, and I use the concept of veganism to embrace all those things, and I use [Abolition](#) as the theory upon which I base my advocacy methods.

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


The biggest obstacle in my view is speciesism, which sadly is in a very large part fueled and perpetuated by the dominant mainstream animal movement, whose driving theory is [New Welfarism](#); that is they claim to want abolition by promoting the regulation of animal use, which in itself is actually speciesist and therefore perpetuates the number one obstacle we face which is speciesism.

Other obstacles are general ignorance about veganism and what it means to be vegan – i.e thinking it is a diet, or personal choice, or that it is extremely difficult (which is also not helped by the aforementioned); lack of knowledge about the nutritional benefits of eating a vegan diet—even in the medical community, which is of course perpetuated by anti-vegan animal-using industries who are protecting their interests in that they make money off animal use; corrupt economics; greed; capitalism; out-of-control consumerism—oh there are a lot of obstacles in our way. We just have to push on through and keep going and never stop.

How is your activism impacted by where you live?

New Zealand is one of the few countries in the world, or maybe the only country, whose economy is overwhelmingly based on animal agriculture. It is the primary, number one source of income for our nation, and the base of our entire economy. Check out these figures “According to a 2007 Report by UK Trade and Investment ([pdf here](#)), around 31% of our export earnings come from dairy products and “meat” products alone. New Zealand supplies around 31% of the entire world’s dairy supply and 55% of world trade in sheep meat. According to the same report, New Zealand is the world’s largest producer and exporter of crossbred wool, and

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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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is second only to Australia in the export of all wool". See more [here](#) .

As you can imagine, this makes vegan advocacy in NZ a challenge, as a large percent of NZ communities are rural, farming communities, made up of people *directly involved* in animal farming and all that goes with it, and of course there are all the other jobs that come from animal agriculture. My uncle worked in a slaughterhouse for many years (slaughterhouses here are called the "Freezing Works") and then drove a forklift in one of the refrigeration units for the largest dairy company here, Fonterra. The animal agriculture industry was his main source of income for the majority of his life, and is what he has retired on, and the same can be said of a large portion of our population, so they may be harder to reach than your average consumer who's mortgage payments do not rely on the continuation of animal agriculture. I am lucky in Auckland, as we are an urban community and so the majority of the people we speak with here in our street stall may not have a direct vested interest, i.e. their livelihood, invested in animal agriculture and so are less threatened by talk of veganism. However, we will talk to anyone, including animal agriculturalists, if they came up to us.

What advice do you have for those interested in helping non-human animals?

I urge all advocates for animal rights, all vegans and anyone who cares about nonviolence, justice, morality and respect, and who wants to see an end to oppression, discrimination and slavery, to go vegan, to nonviolently promote veganism unequivocally in everything they say and do as an advocate, and to unequivocally oppose all discrimination, including against our fellow human beings, in everything they say and do and in their actions as a member of their community.

Suggested by the author:

- › [It's World Vegan Day...so where are the vegans?](#)
- › [Interview with Jordan Wyatt of INVSOC and Coexisting with Nonhuman Animals](#)
- › [Interview with Heidi Woodruff, abolitionist activist](#)
- › [Interview with Rob Johnson of VEGAN: UK](#)
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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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