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Interview with Emmy James of Vegan for Life and Peaceful Abolitionist



Corey Wrenn, Roanoke Vegan Examiner
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Emmy James of Vegan for Life and Peaceful Abolitionist
Credits: Emmy James

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 interview is with Emmy James of New Zealand host of *Vegan for Life* and blogger at *Peaceful Abolitionist*.

Emmy, tell us about yourself...why did you become vegan?

I'm an 18 year old [abolitionist](#) vegan from New Zealand. Just over five years ago, I went on a homeschooler's trip to a goat farm at age 13. While milking one of the goats, the farmers went on and on about how they kill them at the end of their production, how they kill the babies who are of no use to them, and "how great the meat tastes!" I was shocked. How could they happily talk about killing and eating one of these beautiful creatures? I was always one of those kind children who cared for and loved non-humans, and this experience awakened something in me. I became vegetarian after that, but I still drank milk and ate products containing eggs. A few months after going vegetarian, I decided to become vegan. I realised that *all* animal use is wrong and I didn't want to be a part of any of it.

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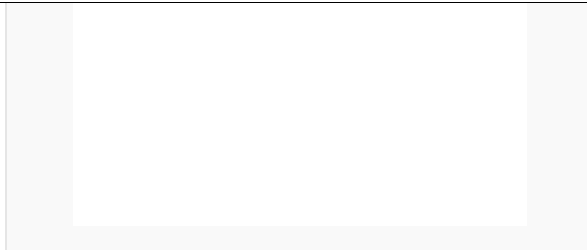
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How did your family respond to your decision to become vegan?

My mother was a bit worried about me being vegan, and made me research first to show her that I could get all my nutrients on a vegan diet. After that I was allowed to go vegan. By that time, my family was mostly vegetarian after gradually cutting meat out of their diet (thanks to me). My sister, the second oldest (I'm the oldest), went vegan at the same time I did in March 2007. Then, my next sister followed a few months after. About two years later, my parents decided to go vegan. The last two to become vegan were my two youngest siblings. They were forced to drink milk because my parents believed they needed it for healthy growing bones. But that changed after my parents read *The China Study: Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss, and Long-term Health*, and they were taken off milk straight away. So I influenced my whole family to go vegan. I never tried to change them - each person made the decision to go vegan themselves. I am truly grateful to have a family like them!

What types of activism are you involved in?

I've done a wide range of things to promote veganism. I've created my own websites, made animations, and have done graphic designs (the logo for <http://nzvegan.com> is an example). I have a blog, *Peaceful Abolitionist*. I hosted *Vegan for Life* as a [podcast](#) and as a [radio show](#) in Hamilton, New Zealand. I've promoted veganism at school whenever I can. I did my public speaking assignment on why I'm vegan (where I also handed out pamphlets and vegan chocolate cake) and I talk a lot to classmates about it. I help out Elizabeth Collins with her wonderful [NZ Vegan](#) stall, and have recently started drawing our logo onto t-shirts! Whatever I do, wherever I go, I look for a chance to promote veganism.

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

Peaceful, nonviolent, unequivocal vegan education! I wish all vegans and "animal rights" activists would just promote veganism! Promoting anything less, ie vegetarianism or free range, isn't animal rights. It doesn't help the non-humans...at all.

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

The animal welfare groups who put out the message that, "[You can still care about animals without having to give up your meat and eggs](#), just buy free range and don't support

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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](#)
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factory farms!" are definitely one. The media seems to be always showing some sort of factory farm cruelty. With SAFE urging people to "Buy free range!" I get many people, after learning I'm vegan, who say to me that they eat meat, but only free range meat, "...from animals who have had a happy life!" Or, they say they're vegetarian, but they only eat free-range eggs, as if that can justify eating them. Speciesism, ignorance, and misrepresentation of the word "vegan" (veganism as a diet, veganism as a fad, vegans are unhealthy, etc) are also huge obstacles.

How is your activism impacted by where you live?

Here in New Zealand our economy relies so much on animal agriculture. Before I moved up to Auckland this year, I lived with my family in the Waikato, a big rural area of the country. We lived close by to a dairy factory and a slaughterhouse. Everywhere you go, you would see slaves in the fields. Everyone you meet would likely know someone who's an animal farmer. So it was quite hard living there as a vegan. I didn't do much face to face activism when I lived there, only online activism and through my podcast and radio show. But living in Auckland, a city rather than a rural area, has been a great change. I've gained much more confidence in talking to people about veganism face to face at school and at Elizabeth's street stall. Here I don't have to worry as much about animal farmers coming up and getting angry at us, since most of the people who come by are either city folk or travellers.

What are your other interests?

I'm a very creative person, I love anything to do with the creative arts: acting, film making, sketching, animation, graphic design, web design, writing, etc. I also enjoy vegan baking which I'm getting better at!

Suggested by the author:

- › [It's World Vegan Day...so where are the vegans?](#)
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Roanoke Vegan Examiner

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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