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Reason Is What Separates Us From the Animals.

[belmontmedina](#) on January 11th, 2011

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James McWilliams is spouting nonsense again.

In an [earlier piece](#), McWilliams makes the argument that no matter how meat is raised, eating it is bad – essentially, we should all be vegan. Only, McWilliams dances around his veganism and never unequivocally cops to it. Apparently, being vegan in no way makes you biased and perhaps not the best possible (or even a marginally useful) evaluator of animal production systems. If I hate chocolate, I've got no business judging a goddamn truffle contest.

From the piece:

"The predictable response to the conundrum is to note that there's a difference between raising an animal in hellish conditions and killing it and raising an animal in idyllic conditions and killing it. Sure there is. But such a difference is less than it might seem, and hardly enough to justify the radical distinction we draw between free-range (good) and factory farming (bad)."

[*somewhat graphic videos ahead*] Watch a video of [downer cows](#) at a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO), and tell me there's not a radical distinction between that and [this](#). Take a look at [Joel Salatin's chicken processing killing operation](#), and tell me if it even remotely compares to [this](#). (I suppose there are chickens involved in both). CAFOs and industrialized animal production are far worse for animals (and in turn the people that eat them), full stop. Equating a giant CAFO like Tyson with a small, sustainable producer like Salatin is completely inaccurate. McWilliams goes even further:

"Here's another (admittedly experimental) way to consider the comparison between free-range and confined. The confined animal lives a mercifully short life of brutality and is dispatched; the free-range animal lives a much longer life full of relative freedom and is dispatched. From the perspective of happiness lost, the latter scenario is more tragic."



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Yes, you read that right. Those downer cows? At least they were never going to be “happy”!

In his [latest piece](#) for the Atlantic Food Channel, he attempts to refine his earlier argument by saying that animals are sentient beings, and therefore it is wrong to kill and eat them. Not an argument I personally agree with, but so far, so good. The trouble comes with his definition of “sentient.” If sentient means, according to McWilliams, “capable of suffering,” where do we draw the line? And if animals are so sentient, doesn’t that make a farm system where they suffer less, if at all, dramatically better than one that causes nothing but suffering for all of the animals and many of the people involved?

A fish does not register “pain” or “fear”. It might exhibit a rush of stress hormones when confronted with a lethal situation, but plants also release stress hormones, especially as a result of any sort of damage. Like when you snap a tree branch to pick an apple. Or shear off leaves from a spinach plant for salad. I’m not making the argument that plants are sentient beings, but as long as we’re “lifting veils” and performing “mental exercises,” to use McWilliams’ parlance, we might as well go whole hog, don’t you think?

Bottom line: whether you should eat animals and how they should be treated if you do eat them are two completely separate conversations.



Category: Food

22 comments to Reason Is What Separates Us From the Animals.



Marie
January 11, 2011 at 2:52 pm · Reply

As much flack as vegans get for anthropomorphizing, you sure are jumping through a lot of hoops to justify use of animals, from assuming the “rush of stress hormones when confronted with a lethal situation” somehow does not constitute pain, to dragging in the same tired argument that plants feel pain, though any biology book will show (hopefully, before the creationists infiltrate the curriculum) that plants don’t have nervous systems. Animals, including fish, do. What’s next? Are you going to talk about the mice and field creatures that get killed in harvesting? Thanks Barbara Kingsolver, way to derail a conversation.

Two things seem to not be addressed in this debate. First, if we think eating meat is okay and grass-fed and free-range is the answer how do we supply demand without resorting to factory farm like conditions? Additionally, what about the people doing the slaughtering? It’s easy to vilify nasty horrible factory farms that largely employ undocumented workers, but Polyface Farms is one small example of mostly white privileged folks. What about the rest of us?

I recognize that there are many perspectives and shades of gray on this topic, and the fact that you took this post down within hours of initially posting could indicate that you’re being challenged on these issues, as well. Some of us wrestle with this and make the decision to eliminate the one thing we do ultimately have control over: to not support animal agricultural industries.



Nicole
January 14, 2011 at 9:23 pm · Reply

I think you’re missing the point. As a vegan, McWilliams is, by definition, against any sort of meat production, making him a poor judge of which sort of meat production is best. And as far as that production goes, until the 60’s and 70’s, large-scale CAFOs were all but unheard of- most meat production occurred on smaller farms closer to Polyface (although not as technologically adept), and the processing happened in a network of smaller, regional slaughterhouses. I followed McWilliams in his sentience argument because I think he does it in an intellectually dishonest way. When it comes down to it, the studies don’t definitively prove either point of view, and then it becomes less a matter of science and more a matter of personal belief.

As for my personal feelings about veganism and vegetarianism, it makes little difference to me what you choose to eat in that sense,

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although I'd like to think if I can respect your decision not to eat meat (or use any animal products), you can respect my decision to eat meat. To be honest, if your options are not eating meat and eating industrially produced meat, I think it's better to do without, or consume as little as possible. My concern lies more with the way food is produced, no matter what it is, or who is eating it.

And as for taking down the post, you're giving us too much credit-user error, that's all.



Bea Elliott

January 12, 2011 at 9:38 am · Reply

Sure, there may be places and incidents where nonhumans suffer in to a lesser degree than in other situations... BUT does compassion expect the least from us? Or the most? When there is a doubt of what is or is not "humane" treatment of animals... Seems like we ought to, (whenever we can) - choose the options which are obvious: To not kill. It is not difficult and does not compromise human life at all. So I really don't see the need of splitting hairs as to what "stress" or pain a fish or any Other feels. Extending kindness where/when we can will only improve our world.



Joseph Shahadi

January 12, 2011 at 5:40 pm · Reply

@nicole

Hm. I can't help but think that arguing for/against the consumption of animal protein based solely on a metaphysical discussion about the feelings of animals is a blind alley. There are a range of good reasons to become vegan or vegetarian and empathetic concern for the position of animals—the emblematic argument of this position— is only one of them.

I became a vegetarian and then a vegan as an investment in my health after watching my father die painfully from cancer. Years later I began eating fish again (or for the first time really since I never ate it as a kid) when it became known that Omega 3's are an essential component in an anti-cancer diet... and because by then my mother was also dying from cancer. My food decisions were/are motivated first by a concern with my own health rather than a vicarious investment in the lives of animals (although I am not unmoved by animal suffering—I'm not a robot). Truth is, there are a lot of people like me with a history of disease in our families who choose to limit animal protein in our diets. So from my point of view, the back and forth between largely white pro- animal activists and largely PoC thinkers who critique their often racially tone-deaf arguments is an unproductive tangent in an essential conversation about the impact of nutrition on long-term health.

Sure, I have heard obnoxious vegans on TV and online and I've heard a lot of complaining about them in response, as if they speak for all vegans everywhere. But I was never like that when I was a proper vegan and I frankly never knew any vegans who were.

It may not be possible to truly know whether or not animals suffer as a result of their production as food (or whether their suffering, if it exists, is comparable in any way to human suffering). But that's not really the point for PoC who suffer from lifestyle diseases in disproportionate numbers. If we don't have a metric for animal suffering we certainly have one for PoC suffering from heart disease, hypertension, high cholesterol and many cancers—all of which are positively impacted by limiting or eliminating animal protein. And another measurable impact of a beef-and chicken based food economy is the negative environmental impact. Rather than engaging in a philosophical debate about the unknowable effects on animals of farming them for food I'd rather stay focused on the stuff we know for sure: Eating animal protein is not great for you no matter how you cut it, the large scale farming of animals for food fucks up the earth and creates a world economy that thrives on institutionalized social injustice.



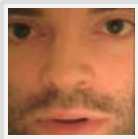
April

January 13, 2011 at 3:14 pm · Reply

Sorry, but no one is dying from eating meat. Your comment borders upon fear-mongering. "Everything in moderation" remains the best dietary advice. And, indeed, that means eating more vegetables than meat (which people have done for most of history, anyway), but you don't need to adopt a contrived pescetarian diet to achieve that goal. The main culprits for just

about all the diseases you name are excess fat and sugar, plenty of which are to be found in meals that exclude meat. This is exactly why vegetarians' arguments, as applied to people of color, are tone-deaf, as you point out.

All that said, I agree that the argument over whether/how much animals feel distress is absolutely pointless, on both sides.



Joseph Shahadi

January 14, 2011 at 1:06 pm · Reply

@April

Did you read *any* of what I wrote at all?

There are vegetarians and yes, even vegans of color whose reasons for eating that way have nothing at all to do with the internet sniping around food choices like...well, like what you just wrote.

I think it's pretty clear that I was describing my own experience and that of my (poor, immigrant, PoC) family—not providing a model for anyone else. We are not at all the kind of people who are ever represented in contemporary food debates (which, if the blogosphere is to be believed, is waged entirely by maniacal, upper-middle class white people who compare birdhouses to American slavery). While these racialized debates provide tasty drama and offer fascinating opportunities to analyze institutional racism—which I appreciate— they do not tell the entire story. And, as I said, provide an unproductive tangent in any frank discussion about PoC, nutrition and health.

Declaring silly aphorisms like "Everything in moderation" (a sentiment that comes to us from the cutting edge of nutritional science... of the 1950s) or outright falsehoods like "no one is dying from eating meat" aren't helpful either. When you argue that the consumption of animal protein plays no role in heart disease, hypertension and some cancers you are *entirely* wrong. And you have arrogantly dismissed decades of nutritional science in the name of —what, exactly?— snark? Boring.

My point has been, let's stick with the facts instead. And they are:

- 1) The US rates badly in tons of markers having to do with health (long and short term) and longevity compared to the rest of the world.
- 2) The US American diet is completely focused on consumption of animal protein—and that way of eating is actively marketed to poor PoC families (like mine).
- 3) When a US-led western diet is exported around the world those populations begin to suffer the same ill-effects that we do.
- 4) The US food economy is based on farming beef and chicken—a focus that shapes the global economy in a way that supports social injustice for PoC world-wide.
- 5) The US food economy requires environmentally destructive farming practices that negatively impact the planet for everybody, not just April.

So you see ALL diets are "contrived", dear. Some are contrived for us and some we choose for ourselves.

On a personal level I have no investment whatsoever in your food choices. Eat what you want, knock yourself out. Enjoy your forties. But don't set yourself up as the food-Ombudsman for all PoC because you certainly are not.



April

January 14, 2011 at 2:29 pm · Reply

"Dear"? Way to be dismissive and sexist. Good job. And, no, I'm not setting myself up as the "food ombudsman," whatever that means.

Please give me a specific example of someone whose omnivorous diet alone—not an unbalanced diet, but just the action of eating a non-vegetarian diet—was

determined to be the primary factor in his/her death, and we'll talk. I have seen no such report, and I doubt you have.

Whatever you choose to do with your diet is fine. But I do think it's a tad nonsensical to suggest that eating meat is somehow putting down poor people of color. I'd say most nutritionists would agree.

You'll notice that I did not argue the economic parts of your argument, because I agree that mass farming has many ill effects (although not sure how/whether those can completely be avoided). But it's very possible to find meat from other sources. Poor people of color have done it for centuries and still do it today.



Joseph Shahadi

January 14, 2011 at 6:04 pm · Reply

@April

I have no idea whether you are a man or a woman, cis or trans, etc. or etc. (there is no link attached to your name and your icon is a lovely, but genderless Moroccan brick pattern) so "sexist" is a bit of a stretch, but I will absolutely cop to "dismissive."

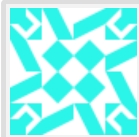
I found your response irritating, judgmental and reactionary and I suppose my temper got the best of me. (Of course if you were being honest you would admit that you set the tone for our interaction, not me— but then you couldn't be "offended" by my comment and claim the high ground.) Look, you didn't read/read into what I originally wrote and took several cheap shots and frankly I did not have the patience today to just let them slide.

You have misrepresented my argument now twice (perhaps you do not understand it?) so I do not hold out much hope for this conversation. Especially since you aren't even coming close to addressing what I am actually saying... I'm about the furthest thing away from a preachy earth shoe-wearing vegan as it is possible to be. But you seem to want me to be so you can rehearse your "argument". No thanks.

As I said, I have *never* met a person who fits that awful vegan stereotype in real life... but I have met A LOT of people like you who argue about food by generalizing their own experience—and always from a privileged, western POV. ie. "I'd say most nutritionists would agree"

Would you now? Okay then!... But why on earth would I ask a nutritionist for an economic analysis of the global impact of a meat-based food economy? Yes, PoC might have access to meat from other means than global agribusiness—but they *don't* have access to the tons of grains and vegetables that are being used to feed cows and chickens instead of people... or the land that is used to grow the tons of grains and vegetables that feed the cows and chickens instead of people... The only way to "avoid" these effects is to shift away from a meat-based food economy. Do you understand now? So the global impact of a Western meat-based food economy is much larger than "I ate a hamburger and I did not immediately die therefore I get to eat hamburgers if I want." For PoC, the link between personal health and the health of local and global communities is explicit.

Whether you like it or "agree" is beside the point: I was/am only arguing that there are other reasons why people limit or eliminate consumption of animal protein that avoid entirely the twee, sentimental and/or racist arguments that get kicked back on forth online. By representing "The vegetarians" only as pushy, racially insensitive white people you make the rest of us disappear and that is not okay. Vegetarians/vegans of color exist. And in fact, some us chose to modify the way we eat for reasons that have to do not only with health but economic and social justice for PoC globally—In other words, for the exact opposite reason of the White-people-care-about-animals-more-than-PoC meme that is whizzing 'round the internets.



Suitlandman

January 14, 2011 at 6:47 pm · Reply

hmm, this is an interesting debate...Joseph, I think one of the issues here is that you are in fact responding to two distinct, but sometimes overlapping, criticisms of vegetarianism. The post was about ethical stances on the treatment of animals in food production, beginning from the assumption that we are going to eat meat anyway and arguing that the discussion should distinguish

between humane and inhumane production practices. This discussion is difficult to reconcile with the problem of PoC health, its all about the welfare of animals. If the response of many black critics on this topic is that white people have shown much more attention to animals than they have to the issues of minorities, then to make a point regarding the ethical treatment of animals it would be good idea to talk about how we might discuss in an anti-racist way, a topic so bound up with liberal white racism. I think that would be an interesting discussion, but there is no way to talk about it in vacuum away from the racial politics that animate it.

When you begin to talk about nutritional inequality, I think you are moving into another ethical territory, one based on what foods should be available to and promoted among PoC. This is people-centered. The fact of the matter is that most poor black Americans cannot make the nutritional decisions you made because healthy food is more expensive and often physically unavailable in the areas they live in. Furthermore, they have often developed a love for the nutritionally inferior food to which they have historically had access; culturally this is not such a bad thing (to hate the food we eat would be tantamount to self-hatred), although health-wise it has had many negative consequences. You would need to better clarify that the answer to this problem is not that black people need to commit themselves to vegetarianism in promotion of social justice, but that healthy food needs to be made more available to these people and that some genuine effort needs to be made at positively changing a culture of eating that has developed through difficult historical circumstances (this is not necessarily related to the ethics of animal treatment in food production). Whenever you criticize the eating habits of low-income populations without acknowledging that these people often couldn't eat healthy even if they wanted to, you risk being lumped together with racially insensitive white tree-huggers. I think you did make this point in some way, but you muddied the whole thing up by suggesting that the decision to eat healthy was a matter of principle among PoC.



April

January 14, 2011 at 7:22 pm · Reply

OK. If you had based your argument on the problematic business of meat raising, I would have been in agreement. Now that you have clarified, I am more sympathetic to your argument. However, the vast majority of your initial comment was about how you are a pescetarian and how animal protein is bad for you. You only tacked on a sentence or two at the end about agribusiness.

(Note: I never once called you a preachy vegan—especially since you aren't one—or a tree-hugger. It seems you're trying to put words in my mouth. I only pointed out that your health statements were hyperbolic, which I stand by.)

I still will argue that meat consumption, across the board, is far from the crux of nutritional inequality in poor communities in color. That's why I thought your argument was off base. If you're talking about Popeye's and KFC, that's one thing. But that's not an argument for being a vegetarian. That's an argument for increasing access to food that isn't fried or processed junk. And there are plenty of nominally vegetarian foods that are as much processed junk as fried chicken. As for whether vegetarianism is better for you: those are far from definitive, as conflicting studies on this topic are released regularly, so I was a tad annoyed that you were citing them as if they were some gospel truth.

As for being sexist: "I have no idea whether you are a man or a woman, cis or trans, etc. or etc." Please! How many men have you met named April? Your tone was clear. An apology would be nice, but I don't expect one.



Nicole

January 14, 2011 at 10:51 pm · Reply

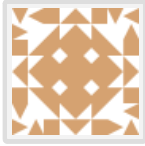
@April. For what it's worth, I've encountered more than one female "Kyle" in my life, and started going by my middle name in 7th grade because anyone who sees my first name without meeting me thinks I'm male. So that last point is more than a little unfair.



April

January 14, 2011 at 11:46 pm · Reply

I still think this is unlikely—Kyle is more of a unisex name than April will ever be (still haven't met a male April, and I, too, know a female Kyle)—but regardless of whether it was sexist (which I think it is), it was ridiculously condescending, as were his repeated straw men.



April

January 14, 2011 at 11:50 pm · Reply

Also—apologies for belaboring the point—I doubt seriously he refers to men as “dear.”



Joseph Shahadi

January 14, 2011 at 8:54 pm · Reply

@Suitlandman

I really admire Nicole's food posts, as I've said before. I understood her response to McWilliams and I do not disagree with her. I was just offering another—largely unspoken— narrative in this increasingly racialized debate: that there are vegetarians and vegans of color who exist. I offered my own health-based reasons for eating the way I do and further described the larger economic and social justice context for many vegetarians and vegans.

I am not trying to defend or recommend vegetarianism. Nor am I suggesting that Black people in particular or PoC generally *should* become vegetarian/vegan as a matter of principle. I am merely pointing out the fact that there are Black and other PoC vegan/vegetarians *already* whose reasons for eating that way are at best tangential to questions about the ethical treatment of animals. That's all.

When you write, “The fact of the matter is that most poor black Americans cannot make the nutritional decisions you made because healthy food is more expensive and often physically unavailable in the areas they live in” you are making A LOT of assumptions. First, you are assuming that I am not poor myself. Unfortunately that is not the case. As I have said several times now I grew up working class and despite a couple of fancy degrees I am quite literally just barely scraping by. So I am not “critiquing the eating habits of low income populations” I am a member of one and I am talking about MYSELF. So I don't really need a lecture about the difficulties of accessing wholesome food with no money—I pretty much struggle with that every single day. In any event I did not mention social class at all— I simply said PoC, which is not synonymous with lower income status. Your point about access is well taken, but that isn't really what I am talking about.

Your notion that one must learn to hate the way his people traditionally eats in order to make a change is extreme and strange. That wasn't my experience at all. Let me put it this way: when I was growing up I used to eat a Lebanese dish called Kibbeh Nayehh, which is basically a plate of raw ground beef. I LOVED it and ate it whenever I could. I didn't learn to hate it— I simply made a different choice as an adult. That's all. It wasn't frightening or disruptive. I was/am still me. In fact, I remember being surprised by how easy it was to change once I realized that most of the things I ate, I ate out of habit.

I didn't think it would be so controversial to simply describe my own experience as a working class PoC who moved away from eating meat. And further to add that while I have known plenty of people like me I have never actually met one of those “racially insensitive tree huggers” in real life. Not saying they don't exist but think the inordinate amount of focus on what amounts to a couple of assholes online disturbs me. It's sort of like assuming that Jerry Falwell speaks for all Christians and that his reasons are theirs.

Critiques of the racism in some of the discourses about vegetarianism/the ethical treatment of animals are welcome—as I said waaay up in my original comment. But allowing those discourses to stand in for vegetarianism generally in the public mind is wrong-headed. Especially given the relationship between nutrition and quality-of-life diseases for PoC (not only black folks).

Suitlandman

January 14, 2011 at 9:29 pm · Reply



Joseph, I feel where you are coming from on the whole point of letting us know that vegetarians of color exist. I think people do forget that, so its a good point to make. However, I would push back against a couple of the other assertions you make. For instance, I would argue that in the grand scheme of things PoC is equatable with low-income. Poor people in the US are disproportionately of color; no need to obscure that point. Which brings me to my next point: I was not assuming you werent poor. You could be miles below the poverty line and still overestimate how accessible are healthy foods to low-income populations (in fact, thats *exactly* what you have been doing). However, being something of a poor grad student myself, it bothers me when people with degrees act as if the "genteel poverty" of being a graduate student or of some other early career status is comparable to "actual" poverty. Having gone through "2 degrees" you already have had more access to middle class lifestyles than many other people in the US, no matter your income (because class is not only a matter of income). True, you dont mention social class; thats actually a huge reason why your earlier comment was *problematic*. You talked about eating habits as if they had nothing to do with class, which is rather shortsighted. The tendency to do this is what irks me about many white vegetarians (and this alone makes them "racially insensitive", although I agree that they dont always fit the litany of characteristics that you name.

About this phrase: "Your notion that one must learn to hate the way his people traditionally eats in order to make a change is extreme and strange."...you've totally misunderstood me. I was just saying that you have to take into account the fact that not only are foods imposed on people by large-scale economic systems but the people themselves actually often grow to *prefer* the foods they eat. We can't just think that a "shift away from a meat-based food economy" will change eating practices among PoC because things simply dont work that way.



Joseph Shahadi
January 14, 2011 at 10:42 pm · Reply

@suitlandman

Seriously? "Genteel poverty"? Who the entire fuck do you think you are? You don't know me son. Go fuck yourself.



Suitlandman
January 14, 2011 at 11:44 pm · Reply

Joseph—I really apologize for what I said, Im realizing that I may have overstepped the line. I guess that was my reaction to constantly being around a lot of lowly-paid academic people who call themselves poor and, coming from a black working class background myself, I feel that is not comparable to the type of poverty that I was discussing, where people lack such basic things like access to healthy food (grocery stores, habits, etc). Maybe I'm being a hard-ass and no such distinction should be made.

Anyway, all of this doesnt change the fact that I was presumptuous and insensitive. I honestly didnt mean to offend you, so again I apologize. Your points have been well-taken



April
January 15, 2011 at 12:08 pm · Reply

"Go fuck yourself."

Yes, and *I'm* the one who has dragged down the level of discourse here? That's laughable. Try learning how to debate without attacking people personally, and your points will be better received. I think you actually fit the "awful vegan" stereotype more than you realize.

Nicole
January 14, 2011 at 10:44 pm · Reply



@Joseph I'm glad you enjoy the posts. Sometimes I wonder if there's much of an audience for them. I agree (see above) that the metaphysical argument for animals is a dead end- I wanted to illustrate what I see to be the ridiculousness of McWilliams' line of reasoning. I would also make the argument that eating animal protein isn't necessarily bad for you- but eating the kind of industrially produced and processed animal protein most Americans eat is bad for you. Take beef- grassfed beef has lower levels of saturated fat (and fat in general), and actually has omega-3s (all but unheard of in conventional corn fed beef). Even conventional beef finished on grass is better, from a nutritional and food safety standpoint, than corn fed. So my problem is not with meat in general as it is with conventionally raised meat in particular, and McWilliams, to be frank, has no idea what he's talking about in trying to conflate the two.

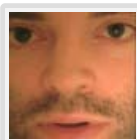
As for food access, I stayed away from it in this post, because it's such a huge, complicated issue. If people choose to eat meat, it is better for them to eat hormone and antibiotic free, free ranging (and fed an animal appropriate diet, meaning no corn for cows) meat? Yes. Does that mean organic? Maybe. Does that mean local? Maybe. But trust me when I say that I am very much aware that this is a moot point for millions of Americans, many of whom are people of color. That being said, when it comes to food, I think you have a responsibility to purchase and consume as healthfully as you can afford- and yes, sustainable meat is more expensive, so you're probably going to have to eat less of it. I realize that this is not at all possible for many, many people. But for some of us it is, and it's our duty to support those producers so that those sustainable meat can be accessible for more people.

Meat is a specific point of contention for me, because it's so resource intensive. When it comes to vegetables and fruits and whole grains, I fully support buying local and organic, but it's less absolute for me. But, in terms of food access, it's a totally different set of concerns. I don't want to talk about organic and local until we as a country can make sure that everyone has access to fresh, healthy food. If you have access and don't use it? That's a separate issue-these (whether people take advantage of access to whole, healthy foods, whether they buy local or organic, or whatever) are all secondary issues. If all you see at your corner store is boxes of mac and cheese, I don't give a shit how organic or free range it is.

It's also worth pointing out that we shouldn't get to urban-centric (and I mean suburbs too). These issues are as bad, sometimes worse in rural areas. In urban areas, you can often walk or take public transit to a poorly stocked store. In rural areas, without a car, and with little or no public transportation, you might not be able to get anywhere period.

@suttlandman I struggle with many of my peers who care about food issues, because there is an indisputable racial element. Problems with access and diet-based health diseases do disproportionately affect people of color. And many of the (what I would call) secondary and tertiary concerns come from people who take it as a given that they will have access to not only healthy food, but a wide enough variety of healthy food that it is possible to argue over whether the USDA's organic certifications are strict enough (side note, they're not).

Unless you and Joseph are acquainted, I'd say you don't know what his circumstances are, so I'd be careful before accusing anyone of "genteel poverty." By those standards many of the people recently pushed into "food insecure" category don't really count. And while yes, people of color are more likely to be poor, there are enough poor white people and middle class or wealthy people of color that I don't agree with your assertion that "PoC is equatable with low-income".



Joseph Shahadi
January 20, 2011 at 3:16 pm · Reply

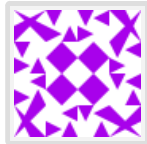
@Suttlandman I waited to reply until I was more calm. The personal tone of your comment stung me. I knew that it had more to do with you than me when you said it but in the moment I wasn't able to make that separation real and I responded emotionally instead. I appreciate your apology.

@April In a medium where I could easily post comments as "Susan" (wait for it... My Name is Not Susan) it is presumptuous to assume gender based only on an internet handle. However, I freely admit I was being condescending. I was irritated that you seemed determined to take my fairly innocuous comment about my own experience and make it into a battle cry.

Nevertheless I should not have called you "dear."

@Nicole

I admire your food posts and I was/am genuinely surprised by the conflict on this thread. I hope you know that I was trying to add to the conversation, not derail or dominate it. It's fascinating how personally people take conversations about food. I suppose because it is bound up with culture in big and small ways (see: little Joe tucking into giant plates of raw ground beef flavored with olive oil and onions. Yes, he has an Arabfro) even without the larger political contexts you do such a great job teasing out. I hope you keep posting on these issues.



bob

February 2, 2011 at 7:30 pm · Reply

It is very hard for me to see how a cow living a nice life (if raised in the right kind of farm) that ends with one second of suffering (if slaughter is done right) is a net negative. Compare this to the cow never existing and I think the cow is getting a very good deal. I will certainly grant that the cow is sentient, and I think this actually works in favor of the argument of the cow existing because it can lead a happy and productive life — there is no fear or dread of the impending death so it doesn't have to worry about death for people.

[on James McWilliams and eating meat \(part one\) | The Thing with Tomatoes](#)

January 16, 2011 at 1:06 am · Reply

[...] New post up at PostBourgie on James McWilliams and eating meat.
[...]

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