

themselves outline a transformed and transforming worldview that first and foremost acknowledges the sacredness of Mother Earth and the interconnectedness of all life. The Principles also outline a whole new set of priorities for the environmental movement that emphasizes Human Rights and accountability of the US government to colonized and oppressed communities. Other priorities set out by the Principles include opposition to destructive operations of multi-national corporations and military occupations, the need for responsible, sustainable use of land, appropriate education, health care, preservation of culture, protection from nuclear testing and other environmental toxins, worker safety, and reparations. It also requires individuals to make personal and consumer choices that decrease resource consumption and reduce waste and change lifestyles in order to preserve the earth for future generations.

Oxfam International. **“Another Inconvenient Truth: How biofuel policies are deepening poverty and accelerating climate change.”** 2008. <<http://preview.tinyurl.com/anotherinconvenienttruth>>. This article describes an example of how environmental issues and their solutions are often defined by wealthy countries that created the problems in the first place, like the United States. Not only does the environmental problem negatively impact People of Color and poor people disproportionately, but the proposed solutions tend to exacerbate the harm. People of Color and poor people would define the problem and the solution differently but are often silenced and made invisible through dynamics of environmental racism. People of Color and poor people also do not have control or access to the resources needed to mitigate the problem and transform society. The current biofuel policies of rich countries are neither a solution to the climate crisis nor the oil crisis, and instead are contributing to a third: the food crisis. In poor countries, biofuels may offer some genuine development opportunities, but the potential economic, social, and environmental costs are severe, and decision makers should proceed with caution.

Oxfam America. **“Farmers of Color Shut out from Farm Bill Programs”** 19 July, 2007. <[http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/press\\_releases/farmers-of-color-shut-out-from-farm-bill-programs](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/press_releases/farmers-of-color-shut-out-from-farm-bill-programs)>. Discusses ways to end the discrimination and inequities toward people of color associated with our farm programs.

Shrader-Frechette, Kristin. *Environmental Justice: Creating Equality, Reclaiming Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Dr. Shrader-Frechette teaches at University of Notre Dame and does public policy work in public health ethics and environmental ethics (including environmental justice). Author of 280 articles and 14 books, she has done *pro bono* environmental-justice work with Appalachians, Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans throughout the US. In this book she describes personal experiences of environmental projects and discusses the philosophical and historical issues surrounding the environmental justice movement.

Yulsman, Tom. **“Grass is Greener.”** *Audubon Magazine*, Sept-Oct 2007, pp. 80-86. <<http://audubonmagazine.org/features0709/energy.html>> When corn was found to be a source for biofuel, demand for it exploded. Mexican and Central American cultures and cuisines that depend on corn have suffered as the price for this commodity have escalated. Is it ethical to transpose corn from a fuel to a biofuel if doing so undermines ancient corn cultures? This article argues that switch grass should replace corn as a source for biofuel, as it takes less energy to produce and would not undermine corn as food.

## 3) ANIMAL RIGHTS AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

The simple act of eating expresses one of our most basic and profound relationships with Earth and life. For some of us, our main connection to non-human animals is through our forks and knives. Often, we know very little about them. The freezer pack wrapped in cellophane bears little resemblance to a creature that sees and breathes and sighs. Their bodies become our bodies, yet their lives remain hidden from view. As **Ralph Waldo Emerson** wrote, “You have just dined, and however scrupulously the slaughterhouse is concealed in the graceful distance of miles, there is complicity.”

Zoologists, biologists, and cognitive ethologists all now agree that animals are emotional beings, and that like us, they evolved capacities for satisfaction and frustration, pleasure and suffering as biological necessities. Though animals are often considered part of “the environment,” the complexity of their experiences suggest that they are much more than animated gardenias or slabs of granite. Animals are not so much a *part* of environment as they are subjects moving *through* the environment, with experiences all their own. As anyone who has gotten to know a dog, cat, bird, pig, or cow can tell

you, animals are experiencing, sentient creatures with wants, needs, and frustrations.

At the same time that supply chains distance us further and further from the sources of our food, agricultural methods have become increasingly intensive for the animals entangled in them. Once raised on farms by people who cared for their welfare, animals now are treated as commodities managed in facilities the industry calls “Confined Animal Feeding Operations” (CAFOs), or “factory farms.” The goals of efficiency and profit dictate the textures of their lives and deaths, yet all the while, from birth to slaughter, these beings suffer egregiously. Following the adage that knowledge is power, knowledge about what our consumer dollars support allows us to reclaim the power to be intentional about the world we are creating for the creatures with whom we share our DNA and co-evolved.

**At the heart of the impulse we call religious** is the desire to lessen suffering and to extend justice and compassion. Increasingly, religious faiths and denominations are considering what this means in relation to non-human animals.



### 3) ANIMAL RIGHTS AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES, cont'd

### HIGHLY RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

#### Books and Articles

Pollan, Michael. **“An Animal’s Place.”** *New York Times Magazine*. 10 Nov. 2002 – November 10, 2002, <<http://www.michaelpollan.com/article.php?id=55>>, & B. R. Meyers, **“Hard to Swallow.”** *Atlantic Monthly*. Sept. 2007, <<http://tinyurl.com/2e63gw>>. Michael Pollan’s very readable article makes a moral case for omnivorism, as does Pollan’s book, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*. While Pollan abhors many practices of factory farming, he also challenges the arguments for strict vegetarianism. Myers challenges Pollan’s central thesis supporting animal consumption, examining Pollan’s assertions in the context of what we know today about the individual and social lives of animals, and subsequent human responsibilities to them. Read in conjunction, these two short articles will lead to a far deeper understanding of the issues of ethical eating.

Walker, Alice. **“Am I Blue?”** *Living by the Word*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1988. This short essay is simple and simply profound. Alice Walker describes her meeting with a horse. From this starting point, her reflection exposes an interconnected web of oppression. It expands from the divisions, objectification, and alienation between species to that between races, genders, and generations. Walker’s writing offers a gentle personal and philosophical basis for consideration of our interspecies ethics.

Regan, Tom. **Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights**. Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland. 2004 A long-time advocate for animals and professor emeritus of philosophy at North Carolina State University, Mr. Regan succinctly addresses the complex issues of animal rights. This highly readable book posits the view that animals deserve moral consideration. *Empty Cages* has been called the best available introduction to ethics and animal issues. Though not without controversial passages, it is an excellent reference with which to begin the discussion of animal rights and human responsibility.

#### DVDs

**The Emotional World of Farm Animals** (52 minutes, 2004) <<http://www.animalplace.org/apvideo>>. A beautiful documentary for all ages about the thinking and feeling side of animals all too often just viewed as food. Narrated by Jeffery Masson, author of *The Pig Who Sang to the Moon*, above. Order from site above, or view on Google at <<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8312987796490958256>>

**Mad Cowboy: The Documentary**. DVD 79 minutes. <[http://www.madcowboy.com/02\\_VVFprods.002.html#](http://www.madcowboy.com/02_VVFprods.002.html#)>. This powerful documentary, an extension of his books, tells the compelling story of rancher Howard Lyman’s efforts to inform the public of the impact of factory farming on the environment, the animals, and health, including his concerns about its relationship to “Mad Cow Disease” and Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease. As he interviews activists, scientists, victims, ranchers, farmers, doctors, and consumers through out the world, he presents opinions on every side of the issues. Available at a cost of \$20.00

#### RECOMMENDED SUPPORTING RESOURCES

#### Books and Articles

Balcombe, Jonathan. **Pleasurable Kingdom: Animals and the Nature of Feeling Good**. 2006. New York: Macmillan. Delightful, research-based book by an animal behavior researcher focuses on how animals enjoy themselves.

Kaufman, Stephen R, and Nathan Braun. **Good News for All Creation: Vegetarianism as Christian Stewardship**. 2002. Cleveland: Vegetarian Advocates Press. Biblical-based exploration of ways in



#### Questions for Individual/Group Reflection

1. Do you believe that animals have experiences that matter to them? Does that include the animals we treat as commodities?
2. Do you have a spiritual practice that deepens your gratitude and awareness of your connection with these animals?
3. If your diet includes foods from animals, do you know how they live and die?
4. What *morally relevant* traits distinguish animals we cherish as pets from farmed animals? Is there any *morally relevant* trait that would make it ethical to protect dogs from certain forms of cruelty and neglect, but not pigs? Parrots, but not chickens? Horses, but not cows? If so, what are those morally relevant traits? If not, what are the implications?
5. How do justice and compassion for animals affect your food choices?
6. When does it become a moral imperative to avoid financially supporting systems that perpetuate animal suffering?
7. Are you certain you know the legal meaning of labels like “USDA Organic,” “farm-raised,” and “free range?” (see page 56).
8. Does your family or congregation have a covenant that considers the use, and abuse, of animals in its food rituals?

Like many Unitarian Universalists, they are striving to articulate and practice inter-species ethics. Some Unitarian Universalists are reducing their meat consumption; some are shifting to alternate sources for their animal products; some are shifting to entirely-plant based diets; some are choosing to maintain their existing eating patterns. Wherever you are in your own process of discernment concerning your food choices and your relationship to animals, the tools below will be useful.

Both the Questions and the Resources are designed to increase awareness, knowledge, and the ability to act authentically and intentionally in relationship to other animals, that we may better honor the interdependent web of life of which we are all a part.

“[Humanity] can and does live, in great measure, by preying on other animals; but this is a miserable way,—as anyone who will go to snaring rabbits, or slaughtering lambs, may learn...I have no doubt that it is part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals.” — **Henry David Thoreau, Walden**

### 3) ANIMAL RIGHTS AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES, cont'd

which vegetarianism has deepened the faith of the authors. Emphasis on non-violence and stewardship.

Kowalski, Rev. Gary. *The Souls of Animals*. (1991). Walpole, New Hampshire: Stillpoint Press. A Unitarian Universalist minister examines the deeper connections shared by humans and other beings and offers compelling insights into their spirituality in the context of love, mystery, play, joy and self-consciousness. Rev. Kowalski writes. "Animals are living souls. They are not things. They are not objects. Neither are they human. Yet they mourn. They love. They dance. They suffer. They know the peaks and chasms of being."

Lyman, Howard F. *Mad Cowboy*. (1998). New York: Touchstone. The book version of author's journey from cattle rancher to vegetarian and animal rights activist. Highlights the environmental, health and cruelty issues that drove his search.

Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff. *The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional World of Farm Animals*. 2002. New York: Ballantine Books. Masson interweaves folklore, science and literature with his observations of farm animals' behaviors in this intense, compelling look at the emotions of animals.

Phelps, Norm. *The Great Compassion: Buddhism and Animal Rights*. Lantern, 2004. Buddhism considers kindness and compassion the highest virtues, and explicitly includes animals in its moral universe. Yet many Buddhists eat meat, and monks, priests, and scholars sometimes defend meat-eating as consistent with Buddhist teaching. *The Great Compassion* respectfully analyzes the various strains of Buddhism and the sutras with dedicated scholarship and deep empathy. The author, a longtime student of Buddhism and an acquaintance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, advocates for making Buddhist practice "a blessing to all sentient beings while they remain here in samsara."

Scully, Matthew. *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*. New York. (2003) St. Martin's Griffin. Considered by many the best book ever written about animal welfare. The author, political conservative and former assistant and speechwriter for President George W. Bush, describes our moral imperative to respond to the shameful exploitation and cruelty of current practices. This work offers a strong scientific, religious and philosophical foundation for mercy.

Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. 2002. New York: HarperCollins. This seminal work, originally published in 1975, is widely considered to have launched the modern, worldwide animal rights movement. This updated version reflects current environmental concerns and includes the prefaces to previous editions. It will be of great interest to those wanting to learn more about the history, philosophy and ethics of today's animal right movement.

Peter Singer, Ed. *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*. Blackwell, 2006. An anthology of 18 short essays combining scholarship with accessibility. Particularly useful for discussion groups would be following short essays: "Religion and Animals" (Waldau), "Brave New Farm" (Mason and Finelli), "Utilitarianism and Animals" (Matheny), "The Scientific Basis for Assessing Suffering in Animals" (Dawkins), and "Outlawed in Europe" (Druce and Lymbery).

Winfrey, Oprah. "Conscious Choices: Lisa Ling Investigates the Treatment of Animals on Farms." The Oprah Winfrey Show, October 8, 2008. <<http://tinyurl.com/4m8ulw>>. In fall 2008, Oprah Winfrey facilitated a discussion among Wayne Pacelle, the President of the Humane Society of the United States, the *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, third-generation egg farmer Ryan Armstrong, and egg industry advocate Julie Buckner. Online you will find a summary of the conversation and a slide show with images of Lisa Ling's visit to factory farms.

#### DVDs and Videos

*A Life Connected*. <<http://www.nonviolenceunited.org/veganvideo.html>> 12 minutes. Produced by Nonviolence United, this video seeks to help people live a "connected life" by aligning their everyday

choices with their values of justice, kindness and compassion for all beings.

*Diet for A New America* (60 minutes, 1991) with John Robbins, author of the best-selling book of the same name. One of the most influential films early in the movement for compassionate, sustainable and healthy food, this video remains relevant today.

Vegetarian Association. *Honoring God's Creation*, Christian 26 minutes. <<http://www.all-creatures.org/cva/cvavideo.htm>> Biblically based call for compassion towards animals.

Front Porch Productions. *Seeing Through the Fence*. Durham North Carolina. 2008. <<http://www.porchlifeproductions.com>>. Eleni Vlachos's documentary examines the food industry and our relationship to the animals we eat.

#### Websites

Most of the websites below advocate movement toward a plant-based diet (A plant-based diet might or might not include animal products). Scientists and ethicists support a reduction in the consumption of animal products as a highly effective action we can take to reduce human impact on climate change and our environment, decrease world hunger, and prevent egregious animal suffering. Many of these sites offer very usable tips to help us reduce or replace the meat and other animal products in our diets.

Compassion In World Farming. "Animal Sentience." <[http://www.ciwf.org.uk/farm\\_animals/animal\\_sentience/default](http://www.ciwf.org.uk/farm_animals/animal_sentience/default)>. Highly informative discussion that calls for compassion for all animals in the context of the science that recognizes the sentience of animals.

Compassion Over Killing <<http://www.cok.net/>>. An animal advocacy group working to end animal abuse since 1995, COK focuses on cruelty to animals in agriculture and promotes vegetarian eating as a way to build a kinder world for all of us, both human and nonhuman.

Food Revolution <<http://www.foodrevolution.org>>. Website mission: to provide resources to "help you make food and life choices that enhance your health, express your compassion, and help create a thriving, just and sustainable planet." Not only addresses animal suffering and responses from faith perspectives, but also gets real about issues of class & race as they relate to food. Highlights include: "The Have-Nots and the Have-Everythings", "Racism, Food, and Health", "Is There Slavery in your Chocolate", and "Eating for Peace." Features work of John Robbins and his latest book by the same name

Humane Farming Association <<http://www.hfa.org/about/index.html>>. HFA's comprehensive programs include anti-cruelty investigations and exposes, national media and ad campaigns, direct hands-on emergency care.

People For the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) <<http://www.peta.org/>>. Though perhaps best known for high-profile antics on the boundaries of taste designed to draw attention to the issues they care about, PETA is a serious animal rights organization whose investigations have done much to expose abuses in animal agriculture. PETA provides a wealth of well-researched resources, current updates on worldwide efforts to reduce animal suffering, and tips for compassionate living.

Society of Ethical and Religious Vegetarians <<http://www.serv-online.org/>>. An interfaith effort to make religious communities aware that animal-based diets and agriculture are inconsistent with basic religious teachings, such as compassion, non-violence, environmental stewardship and brotherhood. Phone (718) 761-5876

Vegan Outreach <<http://www.veganoutreach.org/>>. With the goal of decreasing animal suffering, offers useful tips for moving toward a plant based diet including an excellent vegetarian starter kit.

"Position of the American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada: Vegetarian diets." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association, Vol. 103, Issue 6, Pages 748-765* (June 2003). <<http://tinyurl.com/adaposition>>. The American Dietetic Association indicates "that appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases."

Unitarian Universalists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. <<http://www25.uua.org/ufeta/>>. Organization of Unitarian Universalists that advocates nonviolence and compassion, and advocates for animals, especially those who suffer from cruelty, and commercial exploitation.