**Why Veganism Matters *MORE* After the 2016 Elections**

*From the blog of JoAnnFarb.com*

No matter which candidate you supported, one thing is absolutely clear – this election has been the most intense and divisive of our lives.  While the [KKK celebrates](http://nypost.com/2016/11/11/kkk-celebrating-trumps-election-with-victory-parade/) its outcome with a rally, and reports of [bullying](http://fox13now.com/2016/11/09/granite-school-district-students-being-bullied-after-trump-wins-election/) and [racial harassment](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/11/11/students-many-colleges-reporting-ethnic-or-racial-harassment-election-day) are exploding nationwide, others are taking to the streets across the country in [protest.](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/09/anti-donald-trump-protests-new-york-chicago-san-francisco)   Although most pundits were wrong in their forecasts of who would win, one book, [The Fourth Turning](http://www.fourthturning.com/), by Strauss and Howe got it eerily right, predicting decades ago that based upon historical cycles, America would be ripe about this time, to put into power those embodying nationalism, and advocating reductions in civil liberties. That book also suggests that HOW we manage this turbulent time, could determine whether we will still have a democracy, or even IF the US will even survive.

In 1942 President FDR – husband to social justice hero Eleanor Roosevelt, signed an executive order that caused thousands of law-abiding Japanese American Citizens to be forcefully removed from their homes and [put in prison camps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internment_of_Japanese_Americans). There was little outcry.  Up until the 1970s, our government, in collaboration with credentialed medical doctors deliberately forced African American men to [endure late stage syphilis](http://www.cdc.gov/tuskegee/timeline.htm) for the sole purpose of observing what would happen to them, and few people with knowledge of this objected.  The history of America begins with our founders violently removing the indigenous inhabitants from their ancestral lands.  Shockingly, some of the most ardent abolitionists of the 1800’s [opposed giving women the right to vote](http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/wmhp.html), and today there are caring people who staunchly support civil rights for people of color but [oppose marriage equality](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2008/11/analogy_lesson.html) for LGBTQ identifying individuals.  In the book, The Immortal Lives of Henrietta Lacks, we learn that a large American hospital in the 1950’s injected cancer cells into hundreds of patients [without their knowledge or consent](http://blog.transonic.com/henrietta-lacks-and-the-evolution-of-informed-consent) just to see what would happen – and the only people to object were three Jewish doctors – whose views were marginalized as being, “overly sensitive,” due to the Holocaust having just happened.  History is full of similar examples prompting Albert Einstein to say, “The world is a dangerous place not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”

One of the most egregious examples of the human capacity to look away and disregard injustice against others is the Holocaust, which prompted people to ask.…”how did so many seemingly average people allow such a thing to happen?”  The classic [experiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment) by Stanley Milgram sought to answer this, and suggested that over half of us will go along with things that we know harm others if environmental conditions are right.  However, some cultures (and by implication their cultural practices) appear to be less vulnerable to this phenomenon.  So it’s worth asking ourselves…What can we do, to promote compassion and foster conditions that make individuals less likely to ignore injustice, and more able to put ourselves in the position of others so that we won’t, “look on and do nothing” when injustice is threatening someone else?

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Having raised two [children to adulthood as vegans](http://joannfarb.weebly.com/blog/my-parents-forced-veganism-on-me) while teaching them the ethical basis for this lifestyle, I have been happy to see how this practice has laid a foundation for each of them to think critically about what is going on in our world and how their personal actions may impact injustice happening to others.  From speaking up to a bully who was threatening a peer, to expressing concern about planned classroom activities that would harm animals, I have been heartened over and over to see my children risk disapproval in social situations because they believed that by failing to speak out, they might miss an opportunity to prevent harm.

While increasingly the [main vote we really have](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCMWctmCCqU) is how we spend our dollars, the real power of veganism is not due to its boycott of violently produced consumer goods.  Rather it is the ripple effect that results each time one of us stands firmly in solidarity with justice, nonviolence and compassion.  This inspires those around us to consider their own choice of where to stand.   Every major human caused tragedy that has ever plagued the world, was enabled to occur for one main reason:  *Human beings have the capacity to ignore injustice happening to those we have been taught to, “otherize”.*    Throughout human history, no group has been more victimized and exploited by this phenomenon than the non-human beings that we eat, hunt, experiment on and use for our entertainment.

By embracing a vegan ethic, three times a day, we participate in an activity that not only seeks to prevent our complicity in violence and exploitation against the vulnerable, but actually changes brains in ways likely to create more peace and justice in the world. (According to the latest [neuroscience research,](http://www.thebestbrainpossible.com/i-recommend/) our thoughts and actions alter brain structure in ways that make it more likely we will have more thoughts and engage in more actions along the same lines!)

While we may feel powerless to impact what our leaders are doing, the example of how we live each day –  by modeling a conviction to practice non-violence in our diet, and in what we buy and wear, may be the single most powerful action any of us can take at this time in history.   Furthermore, if those in power are successful in drilling more, and thwarting US actions to reduce worldwide carbon emissions, by becoming vegan, we can still significantly reduce our own [carbon](http://shrinkthatfootprint.com/food-carbon-footprint-diet) and [water](http://waterfootprint.org/media/downloads/Hoekstra-2012-Water-Meat-Dairy_1.pdf) footprint enormously – and again, through the example we set and by educating others, this action could have a huge ripple effect and be powerful!

We don’t know what the next four years will bring, that’s why now, more than ever before, becoming vegan matters. Please join this peaceful revolution!

*(JoAnn Farb is a former microbiologist with Merck and Co. Inc., and a former nutrition educator with The Merc Natural Foods Coop. These two experiences in particular have given her a unique opportunity to recognize, what she has now come to appreciate is THE fundamental challenge facing humanity – from which all other injustices are enabled. She speaks nationally on health, social justice and environmental sustainability. Visit her website and blog at* [*www.JoAnnFarb.com*](http://www.JoAnnFarb.com)*, for recipes, more essays, videos of her presentations and the best collection of hard-to-find inspiring and informative links on the internet.)*

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