

# **Civic Engagement Project: Colonialism, Cooking, & Color**

By Vibi Bakshi

### **What is the problem my project will address?**

White supremacy is embedded in the vegan movement.

### **How will I address the problem?**

I'm going to veganizing some traditional recipes, making vegan food more culturally appealing and create YouTube video cooking segments. By subverting the typical aimed demographic of veganism from white women to communities of color, my project will take steps to resisting white supremacy in veganism.

### **What do I hope the impact will be?**

This project will make veganism more accessible to communities of color on the internet through the modification of heritage recipes.

### **white supremacist veganism + inclusive vegan recipes + more vegans**

I will address racism in the vegan community by making modification to traditional heritage recipes, veganizing them and making veganism more accessible to communities of color.

White supremacy is engrained in the vegan movement. The vegan movement is aimed at upper middle class white women who have skinny bodies. People For The Ethical Treatment of Animals is an organization which exemplifies veganism's target audience as middle to upper class skinny white women. PETA's website displays a lack of cultural sensitivity in the harmful comparisons they draw between the holocaust or slavery and non-human animals in factory

farms. Their target demographic is evident in the recipes they advertise of avocado bites, Italian stew, and sauteed kale.

### [Vegan PETA Recipes](#)

If your vegan ideal is a skinny white woman, then you are oppressing communities of color as shown in Harper Breeze's *Sistah Vegan*. Veganism is not as accessible to many communities of color. Aiming veganism at demographics other than upper middle class white women, like communities of color, will allow for a more inclusive atmosphere, leading to more of an ability to save animals. I will create YouTube cooking segments of recipes aimed at making veganism more accessible to communities of color.

The problem that veganism is not as accessible to people of color creates a movement that lacks diversity and allows it to be framed as a 'white issue' when it is more than that. A lack of accessibility for veganism also leads to losing more animal lives. My project is worthwhile because it will create vegan recipes that will aim at communities of color, allowing for them to have cooking information to make appealing vegan food specific to their community. My target audience is people of color who want vegan cooking videos. My target audience is not in Missoula as there is not much diversity in Missoula so I will put my cooking videos on YouTube to reach my audience.

**What are the necessary elements for my project?**

I will make YouTube cooking videos of my recipes to attempt to reach my desired audience and have them interact with my videos. To do this, some resources I will need include filming equipment and a tech person to help me film. The equipment can be obtained for free from the school library. My friend will film for me. Some costs that will need to be covered include the cost of ingredients for recipes which I will cover. The area in which filming will occur will be the Chef’s Kitchen in Cambium Place, the building in which I live. Reserving this space will be free since I live in the building. I have all cooking equipment necessary to use.

**What is my outreach plan?**

To ensure that my YouTube videos do reach my intended audience, I will post on all of my social media platforms, including my website. Missoula Vegans and Montana Vegans administrators have agreed to advertise my videos. Memphis Vegan Social Group will also advertise. I will send the cooking video to philosophers interested in the rights or welfare of non-human animals for potential engagement and viewing from others who are making an impact in the field of animal ethics and decolonization.

**Who are partners?**

Partner/ Org	Contact Person	Role in Project	Status in Partnership
Jocelyn Harris	Jocelyn Harris	Filmer/ Editor of Videos	Confirmed
Cambium Place	Neil	Provide Kitchen to Film in	Confirmed

Lance/June/Missoula Vegans	Missoula Vegans	Advertising videos	Confirmed
----------------------------	-----------------	--------------------	-----------

**What are necessary resources?**

Stuff	Cost	Reason Why You Need It	Status of getting it
Food Ingredients	\$200	To make the dish	I will buy these
Film Tech	Free	To Film Videos	Will get from library

**What do I hope the outcome will be?**

I hope that my project can reach communities of color and allow them to feel like veganism is more accessible to them in terms of cultural appeal and connecting with their heritage. By having a different target audience for veganism, I hope that this creates a more inclusive and diverse vegan movement. Within intersectional veganism, often times people go vegan for health as is the perspective of most contributing authors in *Sistah Vegan*. Ultimately, I hope my project contributes to developing a branch of veganism that is culturally sensitive and still maintains non-human animals at the forefront of the movement.

## **Background Context & Plan**

My project is decolonial, exploring how colonization applies to non-human animals. Engaging animal philosophy, philosophy of culinary authenticity, and philosophy of race, I will create vegan cooking tutorials aimed at communities of color. While there is significant literature exploring ourselves as primarily bodily beings before being individuals with personhood, it is often situated in an ecofeminist lens. My contribution builds on existing efforts to reveal the implicit bias within veganism and work to counteract it by applying how colonization of non-human animals and people can be resisted through cooking. A goal of this community engagement project is reducing environmental injustice to non-human animals and communities of color by making vegan food more accessible through cooking videos.

The biggest goal of my project is to resist the more common lens of intersectional veganism which centers around abstaining from the consumption of meat and dairy products solely for purposes like health or decolonizing human bodies. There are many different reasons to abstain from meat and dairy products. While veganism is abstaining from meat and dairy products for non-human animals, to abstain from meat and dairy products for health is plant-based. Decolonizing human bodies is not a proper lens for intersectional veganism, but it is a reason to be plant-based and abstain from meat and dairy products. Though, one's own experience of being affected by colonialism may influence others to see how colonization affects non-human animals. This includes going vegan for decolonization, understanding how the most anti-racist and anti-speciesist position to take is to be vegan, especially with the extent

anthropocentrism is embedded in settler colonialism. In this respect, intersectional veganism for the decolonization of solely human bodies is a lens to avoid while intersectional veganism for decolonization is an important lens. This project includes putting vegan cooking videos into the world which are concerned with colonization to non-human animals as well as humans in their synonymous roots, diverting the typical vegan ideal from a middle-upper class skinny white woman to communities of color.

Some may be concerned that a vegan diet does not retain what matters most about a recipe to reflect their cultural values, like certain aesthetic values. Identity or meaning is an aesthetic value retained from a traditional diet with modification of heritage recipes. Nick Riggle addresses this value, “Our parents pass down their culture, their histories and practices, to us, passing down their identities to us as they pass us their foodways. Our need to eat feeds into our routines and habits and shapes who we are. It shapes our identities by shaping how we nourish, play, create, and commune around food” (Riggle 39). Traditional diets and cuisine often contribute to people feeling connected to their ancestry and culture.

For example, a lot of people consider soul food as pivotal to their African-American roots. In *Sistah Vegan*, one of the authors describes how part of her goal was making veganism more accessible to people of color who connected to their culture through food. Ain Drew writes a chapter in *Sistah Vegan* called Being a Sistah at PETA. Ain Drew describes working at PETA for the inclusion department and tactics that she implemented for the organization during her time there. Ain Drew writes, “I updated the website with a bevy of health-related information and constantly brainstormed new ways to introduce the concepts of veganism and vegetarianism to people who were engulfed within a culture of Soul Food” (Drew 63). Ain Drew references

how a sense of community can be reinforced in a multitude of ways through a vegan diet. While a lens of human health is a problematic one for being vegan because of its primary focus being humans, it is important to be culturally sensitive to avoid a colonial anthropocentric lens within a movement that is meant to combat anthropocentric colonialism.

A main source of my project is Dr. A. Breeze Harper's *Sistah Vegan* which is from the perspective of black women who abstain from consuming meat and dairy products. *Sistah Vegan* is an edited volume with twenty-five chapters from different authors, who are all vegan black women diving into topics like health, identity, food, and society. They describe making modifications to traditional recipes and how this doesn't make them any less connected to their culture. For example, in the preface, Breeze Harper writes, "Women of color need to reclaim their voice on the cafeteria lines and insist that their children be given foods that not only are nutritious but reflect their cultural space—sweet potatoes, okra, collard greens, brown rice, corn tortillas, and so on. This anthology begins to enlighten us on this process; we must pass the word and follow suit" (Harper XVIII). Breeze Harper describes how the anthology she has edited with various authors guides people on how to veganize traditional soul food. At many different points in the volume, various authors confront how they are still deeply immersed in their culture despite the diet change (Harper 47). They would agree that the aesthetic value of culture is still retained in a vegan diet. Some might argue that if a reflection of cultural space as an aesthetic value involves resisting colonization, reclaiming voices of non-human animals may include a vegan diet intrinsically.

The colonization of animals is pervasive and evident in our culture by how we use, consume, and violate them in our culture. Factory farms involve the systematic breeding, raising,



and slaughter of these animals. Society trains children which animals to prioritize as qualifying for consideration morally using television programs which personify certain animals, stuffed animals which are often mammals rather than common farm animals, and through how we use language in relation to meat consumption, using words like harvest rather than slaughter or beef rather than cow. These are a few indicators of how we are trained to undermine non-human animals as moral subjects.

Peter Singer, who wrote *Animal Liberation*, would claim that non-human animals do qualify as moral subject. In fact, Singer proposes that since the capacity to suffer is the prerequisite to having any interests at all, it is this very capacity that grants moral consideration (Singer 107). For example, consider the case of a person kicking a rock. This is morally permissible because the rock has no interest to not be kicked. In fact, the rock has no interests at all. Now, consider the case of a person kicking a mouse. Kicking a mouse is not morally permissible to Singer because the mouse has an interest to not be harmed because otherwise it will suffer (Singer 107). The mouse has interests and a capacity to sentience whereas a rock does not.

But what kind of moral consideration? According to Singer, the capacity to suffer grants a being equal consideration of interests rather than equal treatment (Singer 104). Consider the case of abortion rights. Women in some states were granted abortion rights. It does not follow that men are also granted abortion rights because men cannot carry babies. In fact, men and women deserve equal consideration rather than equal treatment (Singer 104). Singer's theory is just one of many describing a basis for non-human animals to count morally.

There are five main components to the logistics of engagement work. The first will include creating recipes that are vegan and targeting communities of color rather than middle to upper class white women. This is the most creative component of my engagement project, besides the editing. This will involve calling my mother and spending time experimenting in the kitchen. The second component will involve filming, which my friend Jocelyn Harris will direct. The third component is the editing, which will involve using Premiere Pro software. The fourth component will be posting the videos on YouTube and cultivating a channel so that they are accessible. The last component includes outreach. This involves sending the video to those who may have interest and posting about the YouTube channel on my other social media platforms or groups interested in veganism, food, or culture. The public's possible engagement with the video would indicate whether there is a need or desire for a branch of intersectional veganism that is culturally sensitive and still focused primarily on harm to non-human animals.

## Theoretical Application I: Philosophy of Animals

Our Philosophy of Animals class considered different ideas and theories about animals, most often in relation to animal cognition or captivity. There was a unit on intersectionality which was heavily influential in my project. We spoke about some thinkers to might consider white supremacy as embedded within the vegan movement. This was considered more thoroughly in Dr. Breeze Harper's work. We discovered the intersection between race, gender, and non-human animals. We also referenced Peter Singer and Donaldson and Kymlycka's views.

The target demographic for the modern-day vegan movement is middle to upper class skinny white women. Literature considering non-human animals is written by mostly white people. Through the lens of identity and nutrition, Dr. Breeze Harper's *Sistah Vegan* is the first book written by and about black female vegans in North America. Most of the literature that we read in our Philosophy of Animals course was written by white authors, whereas this reading comes from another cultural context. Rather than critiquing what obligations humans may or may not have towards non-human animals, *Sistah Vegan* varies in its focus on veganism through decolonization and racism rather than through animal ethics.

Communities of color and non-human animals share an experience of relating to themselves as primarily bodily beings. Before relating to themselves individuals with personhood, they taught to relate to themselves as something to be looked at, judged, or consumed. Though many demographics can relate to this experience, my project explores this experience particularly in the context of non-human animals and communities of color. Being subjects of hierarchy and power is a signature and prerequisite in relating to yourself as primarily a bodily being. Consider many individuals in the queer community who experience gender

dysphoria and are hyper-aware of their body from a young age. As ecofeminist literature explores, this is applicable to the experience of women, beginning in girlhood they develop an awareness of whether their body and beauty fits patriarchal gender standards.

Even in the case of women of color, there is an early understanding of the difference in their bodies and the beauty standard, skinny white women, who are the same demographic veganism is aimed at. This is described by Robin Lee in *Sistah Vegan's* "Hospital Sponsored Junk Food at a 'Healthy' Bike Riding Event?" Robin Lee describes an incident involving a group who harmfully brought food advice and how that functioned in conjunction with her being overweight and black, resulting in her not being taken seriously.

This group of white individuals came to another community to bring 'health' since the community is incapable of doing this on their own. The group brought information about health in the form of Oreos and other counter-productive snacks to warn about the dangers of diabetes, cholesterol, heart disease, and other health issues that communities of color, especially the black community are more at risk for.

It is important who is attempting to bring health, for what reasons, and to which communities, because first-hand knowledge of that community is preferable. In the example Robin Lee provides, individuals involved were embodying the white savior complex, when a white person in a position of power attempts to rescue communities of color because they don't think the communities can help themselves. My project might to some degree escape the issue of the white saviorism concerns because I have first-hand knowledge of how to operate in the world as a member of a community of color.

If the vegan movement had cultural sensitivity, it may be the case that a comparison to slavery and the holocaust would not be made, even if these comparisons held some truth. In Sue

Donaldson's & Will Kymlicka's *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* which we discussed in class, Donaldson & Kymlicka describe a citizenship model for domesticated non-human animals, in which they make comparisons to slavery and domesticated dogs in the context of regulating sex and reproduction.

Donaldson and Kymlicka write, "Consider the case of slaves brought from Africa to the Americas. Justice certainly requires abolishing slavery, but that does not mean abolishing the existence of former slaves and their offspring" (Donaldson & Kymlicka 79). Donaldson & Kymlicka ask readers to consider the case of slavery comparatively. They describe how abolishing slavery did not mean abolishing all former slaves as a whole and denying them rights to reproduce, but, rather, integrating them into society. Similarly, domesticated non-human animals deserve integration into society. There is accuracy to the comparisons which Donaldson and Kymlicka employ.

This accuracy is not a question, as described in *Sistah Vegan's* "On Being Black and Vegan" by Delicia Dunham. She considers the experiences of slaves and non-human animals in factory farms, "They are forced to engage in sexual activity with one another while their 'master' watches, to live in separate quarters from loved ones, and to give birth to beings who are promptly taken away and sold to other plantations... When birds are de-beaked and scalded alive so that brothas and sistahs on the south side of Chicago can eat them some fried chicken in KFC, where is the outrage?" Dunham directly relates the plight of slaves and non-human animals, expressing the cycles of harm. Dunham begs the question of why it is unhelpful to bring up an accurate example. She continues, "What makes a chicken's life any less valuable than a Black human life? The word to describe the difference and displacement in value is speciesism. The term speciesism was coined by Richard D. Ryder in 1970 to denote prejudice against animals that

is similar in kind to sexism and racism” (Dunham 44). Offense to these comparisons is rooted in speciesism, though degradation tactics used on black people during slavery were also rooted in speciesism.

Comparing photos of animals in factory farms next to a photo of people who were enslaved ignores the context of Black Americans often being compared to reptiles. Delicia Dunham describes this as, “Part of the fear that Black women have in caring about the plight of animals that causes them to distance themselves from non-human animals is that for so long, Black women have been likened to these beings and subjugated as such by speciesist racists” (Dunham 45). It’s true that there are similarities between how non-human animals are subjugated and slavery, highlighting similarities in experiencing yourself as a bodily being. While this might be an accurate example to parallel denying rights to non-human animals, employing this example is more harmful than useful as it requires ignoring the deep effect and emotions that communities feel towards historical circumstances. The history of these comparisons fosters negative emotions immediately, making many feel isolated from the vegan movement.

My work with veganism doesn’t include striking photos side by side of factory farms and other genocides. Instead, drawing on Delicia Dunham’s work, it is highlighting the similarities in being a subject of hierarchy and power, operating under white patriarchy as a being who relates to themselves as primarily a bodily being. While my project includes veganizing recipes from communities of color in which I do not belong, I hope that my intersectional experience gives me insight in how to be more culturally sensitive.

I have concerns about whether my project should be isolated to only veganizing Indian recipes since I am part of the Indian community and have a first-hand experience allowing for more cultural sensitivity in that regard. However, I want my project to center around inclusion

and diversity. Taking no steps towards inclusivity is not preferable to taking a misstep and later correcting it; this is why I proceed with recipes from other communities as well.

Unlike Robin Lee, my project promotes veganism, with animals at the forefront rather than simply for the purposes of health. With the history of comparing black people to animals, most black vegans are vegan for health reasons (*Sistah Vegan* 45). While this is partially due to the lack of cultural sensitivity, my project is concerned with making veganism more inclusive by being sensitive to all sentient beings while keeping animals at the forefront of the movement because the reasons why we are vegan matters.

Cultivating a branch of intersectional veganism which maintains that animals are the primary reasons for veganism requires a certain level of moral worth to be found in animals. Donaldson and Kymlicka and Peter Singer propose theories on how and why animals should possibly be granted a certain kind of moral consideration, either inviolable rights or equal consideration of interests. `

To maintain non-human animals as a primary reason for veganism as a social justice cause, it requires seeing non-human animals as moral subjects which is often considered in terms of sentience. This is explored by many white authors including in works such as *Zoopolis* and *Animal Liberation*. In Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, which was briefly mentioned in class, Singer describes the qualifying factor for moral consideration as sentience, the ability to suffer and feel pain. We also considered Donaldson & Kymlycka's *Zoopolis*. Donaldson and Kymlicka say sentient beings deserve a different kind of moral consideration, inviolable rights (Donaldson and Kymlicka 20). Inviolable Rights are a protective shield that keep one's basic interests from being sacrificed for the overall good of others. (Donaldson and Kymlicka 23). Donaldson and Kymlicka describe the qualifying factor for inviolable rights as a subjective existence which is

defined as “that is, all animals who are conscious or sentient beings (Donaldson and Kymlicka 19).” This is directly applicable in my project in how I frame concern for non-human animals. In Khao Soi cooking video I post on YouTube, there is concern expressed for the way that coconuts are harvested with monkey labor to create some coconut milk brands. In the video, I directly encourage purchasing coconut milk for the recipe from a brand that does not contribute to suffering from monkey labor, drawing on concerns of suffering from philosophical work on the moral status of non-human animals.

*Sistah Vegan* was directly responsible for my ultimate choice to abstain from veganizing a soul food recipe. Soul food is described as a genocide on the black community, with veganism combatting this. Veganism is decolonization of the body, healing people who are afflicted from health impacts from slavery onto their community. The soul food diet is the quickest way to wipe out a group of people, namely African-Americans, in a kind of genocide, though often times “Blackness” is partially defined by a soul food diet, which the author points to as a mistake (Harper 21). Soul food originated as non-nutritious food scraps which slaves were given, adding grease and other ingredients to make the food scraps taste better for consumption and survival. A whole demographic, that was already pre-disposed to health issues as a result of the legacy of slavery, continues to consume non-nutritious food scraps on such a scale that significant health impacts are continuing from one generation to a subsequent generation.

In “Social Justice Beliefs and Addiction to Uncompassionate Consumption,” authors describe social justice as inseparable to our consumption habits. Harper references Gregory who explains, “I personally would say that the quickest way to wipe out a group of people is to put them on a Soul Food diet. One of the tragedies is that the very folks in the black community who are the most sophisticated in terms of the political realities in this country are nonetheless



advocates of ‘Soul Food.’ He continues, “They will lay down a heavy rap on genocide in America with regard to Black folks, then walk into a soul food restaurant and help the genocide along” (Harper 21). The widespread cultural connection that black people in America have with soul food is described as partially responsible for continuing health concerns in the black community, along with barriers of access to healthy food and lasting impacts of slavery. This critique is mentioned by Harper, and, seemingly, the genocide critique resonates with multiple authors.

Based on the criticisms of soul food, I decided against veganizing a soul food recipe as a cooking video for my project. I am unsure on how to veganize a soul food recipe in a way that is culturally sensitive based on genocide comparisons. Even if I modified the recipe so that it was significantly different than the original and no longer composed of the unhealthy components, the recipe would still be inspired by a soul food concept, and advocating for a genocide-inspired recipe is not inclusive. As I do not have a first-hand experience in a racial community which heavily identifies with soul food, it may be the case that more research and epistemic knowledge from being in a racial community that heavily identifies with soul food would be important in determining whether a soul-food recipe can be veganized in a culturally sensitive way or if the concept of soul food is itself not a concept that can sensitively be remedied.

Colonialism is applied to non-human animals and slaves. Harper writes, “Recent research shows that we’re hurting ourselves and exploiting and enslaving others – non-human animals and humans- in a way that is similar to colonialism; similar to when many of our African ancestors were torn from their communities and shipped to the Caribbean and Americas to chop cane for the production of sucrose and rum for addicted Europeans” (*Sistah Vegan* 21).

Veganism should be related back to the animals with concepts like decolonization of the body

being helpful in understanding this similar experience of colonized groups being treated as simply bodies.

Intersectional vegans tend to be vegan for health reasons. It is important to push the movement of intersectional veganism in a different direction, which keeps animals as a primary reason for veganism while remaining culturally sensitive, allowing our own experiences to help amplify and emphasize why animals should remain at the forefront of the vegan movement.

## **Theoretical Application II: Environmental Aesthetics**

Environmental Aesthetics examined the collision of ethics, aesthetics and environmental activism, considering whether ethical justification for environmental protection could be rooted in aesthetics. The course considered what aesthetic activities are and why aesthetics matters, exploring the relationship between environmental ethics and environmental aesthetics. Some key elements of the class were prominent in the works of Thi Nguyen and Nick Riggle. We also referenced a paper from Matthew Strohl in our class. Though it was not a core element of our class, it succinctly ties our environmental aesthetics class with my community engagement project. The material in this course was directly correlated to my project in how I attempted to modify traditional dishes, creating the Vegan Palak Paneer and Vegan Khao Soi. This course significantly affected how I considered the vegan recipes which I posted on YouTube in terms of culinary authenticity, as well as how important it was to consider the kind of modifications which I made to a traditional recipe and whether it assimilated with the flavors of the rest of the dish.

Nick Riggle considers what makes food worth eating, examining aesthetic values in relation to food in “Individuality, Freedom, Community.” Riggle writes, “From a little glance in the mirror, we can see that eating involves so much more than nutrition—it involves pleasure, community, tradition, creativity, and even identity” (Riggle 35). Riggle describes how understanding food can show that aesthetic values matter. If eating was merely something to stay alive, we might eat the most basic food which allow us nutrients. Riggle considers this simply feeding rather than eating (Riggle 34). Though, it seems that food retains a myriad of qualities which make it important. This is especially true in relation to consuming a vegan diet for the proper reasons.

Activity is a notable factor in a traditional diet and culinary practice. Riggle describes this as, “Some things that are nutritious and edible might be too difficult to grow, collect, or gather and so can’t figure in an eating practice... It might be that growing, cultivating, and collecting these things is honorable work, makes for a good job, or provides for a dignified way of life” (Riggle 38). The activity it takes to retain factory-farmed animal products is extensive, and many have argued that the working conditions are not just unsafe for the animals, but also for employees (Schlosser). Producing meat would involve land for the animals to graze, water for them to drink, grain for them to eat, heavy machinery and employees to help with slaughtering, rape cages to obtain the dairy, and much more. Considering the aesthetic value of activity to retain elements of food, a plant-based diet is optimal, which is applied in my community engagement product through the omission of meat and dairy.

Another aesthetic value present in food worth consuming is use. Riggle explains, “Some edible and nutritious things are worth gathering but are difficult to use. They don’t fit into a culture’s cuisine, are difficult to work with culinarily, don’t mesh with the culture’s technology, or are otherwise boring or hard to integrate because of their scent, flavor, or appearance” (Riggle 38). How simple, integrative, or complicated an ingredient is pertaining to its use. Riggle’s description of ingredients as hard to use is also coupled with excitement for creative cooking endeavors. He explains, “Other edible things integrate well into a culture’s cuisine: they enhance the staples, add something missing, are fun or interesting to work with, lend themselves to creativity, or are versatile and can be used in savory and sweet ways” (Riggle 38).

Experimentation of traditional cultural cuisine with new ingredients is seen in a favorable light by Riggle.

Identity/meaning is an aesthetic value retained from a traditional diet. Riggle addresses this value, “Our parents pass down their culture, their histories and practices, to us, passing down their identities to us as they pass us their foodways. Our need to eat feeds into our routines and habits and shapes who we are. It shapes our identities by shaping how we nourish, play, create, and commune around food” (Riggle 39). Traditional diets and cuisine helps many people feel connected to their ancestry and culture.

A vegan diet and culinary practice retains the value of community. Riggle even addresses food abstaining from meat, “For an obvious example, a group that doesn’t eat meat for religious reasons won’t commune around grilled oysters, even though oysters are nutritious, worth gathering, and useful” (Riggle 39). He continues, “They will commune around foods and dishes that cohere with other, sometimes deeper, values—flavorful vegetable curries, complex salads and stews, embellished rice dishes, quinoa, amaranth, beans, squash, and so on” (Riggle 39). It is often the very fact that people avoid certain foods that helps create this sense of community. Because of this diet change, people can find community in people who have similar values and meaning attached to their vegan diet, concern for non-human animals. It may be that at a given vegan restaurant, many vegans frequent it. Often, vegans meet and find community in each other. In this sense, the value of community is very present in a vegan diet and culinary practice. A vegan diet also emphasizes a sense of community with non-human entities like non-human animals. Creating vegan cooking videos for my project would emphasize community among those who also value that lives of non-human animals to the degree that they do not want to consume them, along with non-human animals too.

An uncertainty which I had with veganizing traditional recipes for my community engagement project was whether the recipe would be considered authentic. If food is seen as

traditional if there are no alterations, then there is no true authentic food anymore. Every recipe varies a bit, though we may try to recreate the exact same thing every time. Additionally, because there is only access to certain ingredients in certain countries, recreating a country's food in another country is going to pose some necessary alterations. The saffron or other ingredients might not be as fresh because while they were native to the former country, the country in which the food is being recreated may have imported those ingredients or produced the ingredients differently than the original country. When I make *rotis*, a traditional Indian flatbread, they are very different from the *rotis* my grandmother used to make in India. Even the snacks my grandmother brings from India affect my body differently. Although it is the same ingredient of wheat in most of these snacks, the wheat in the United States is processed differently than the wheat in India. There are noticeable differences in the recipes and snacks in different countries because of access to certain ingredients. This affects recipes as well in that no traditional Indian dish made in America, for example, is going to be the same as the recipe made in India.

However, that is okay. It doesn't make the dish any less authentic if we view it in its own category, as Matthew Strohl suggests in "On Culinary Authenticity." Although, some people might think that modified ways of cooking compromise culinary authenticity. For example, the Indian food that I cook in America will always be different than Indian food eaten in India because of access to certain ingredients. Modifications are necessary. However, as Strohl argues in "On Culinary Authenticity," the cuisine could be authentic in its own way. Strohl describes Houston-style Viet-Cajun food as authentic Viet-Cajun rather than as inauthentic Vietnamese cuisine (163). Similarly, cooking Indian food in America is authentic Indian cuisine in America. There lies room for culinary modifications and experimentation in culinary authenticity. A modification of these traditional diets or even traditional family recipes would still retain identity

and meaning. Culinary practices that traditionally involve animal agriculture can be approximated with vegan practices that retains what matters most about the culinary practices.

Discourse surrounding art as a game was valuable in application to my community engagement project especially in how to treat the process of finding modifications for traditional recipes. In Environmental Aesthetics, our class considered Thi Nguyen's "The Aesthetics of Rock Climbing." Thi Nguyen compares rock climbing to a dance, explaining how it is an aesthetic activity. He writes, "When I think back to my favourite climbing experiences, what I can remember most precisely is the feel of the movement, the sense of gracefulness, of being able to move with precision and economy and elegance. That movement quality is something I savour, that I daydream about, that calls me back." The movement is something I remember when I make a recipe. I don't have clear measurements. I simply remember the feel of how much ginger separated from the rest of the root and the feel of pressing the amount of ginger with the pestle to make it tender. For my community engagement project, I did measure amount of ingredients I end up using when I cook which is almost always based on movement. I hope that if viewers of my cooking video make a recipe a few times, they can begin to understand the movement of creating the dish rather than the amounts, allowing for more of an aesthetic connection.

Consider the television series *Chopped*, a game in which there is a basket of random ingredients contestants must create a cohesive dish out of. Veganizing traditional recipes felt like I was in the show *Chopped* in that I was working with a specific pool of ingredients. Maybe the ingredients are things that aren't traditionally paired in my modifications but could infuse together nicely. This just makes the experience more enjoyable, like a game, since the fun is in the journey and not necessarily the destination on the final product. This is similar to how rock

climbing is described in *Aesthetic of Rock Climbing*. The beauty of cooking is in the process of preparing the meal, and not necessarily the final product (unless you are simply feeding rather than eating as a social and cultural practice). The main thing I remember about a food dish I cooked is not what it tasted like; it is often how I altered the recipe as opposed to how my mother taught me to make it, how thick I chopped the onions, or how long I sautéed the garlic, ginger, and chili pepper before I added in the tomatoes and onions. The beauty is in how the activity of cooking itself makes me feel connected to my ancestors in the way they cooked Indian dishes. If the goal was the completion of the activity, maybe I would feel inclined to use canned tomatoes or tomato paste instead of fresh tomatoes.

There are a lot of alterations like this that make the process of cooking faster which I don't want to implement. Part of the reason for this relates to the aesthetic values of identity and meaning which Riggle describes (Riggle 39). My ancestors didn't do that way; they had fresh tomatoes and onions and the goal is to feel connected to my heritage and have fun. Another reason why I don't want to implement these easier and time-saving cooking techniques is that I don't want the process of cooking to be faster because the fun of it is in the engaging of the activity of cooking itself. An objector could argue that not wanting to use modifications such as tomato paste and packaged garlic does insinuate that modified ways of cooking do compromise culinary authenticity. However, this is not the case.

In fact, if the modifications assimilate well together and have an aesthetic purpose, then those modifications do not compromise culinary authenticity. Using tomato paste or garlic that's not fresh and from a glass jar to save time does not add to the aesthetic value of the dish. It doesn't assimilate well either, the dish tastes less fresh, and there's less spice and less of a kick, which characteristic part of Indian cuisine. For example, I tried to recreate an Indian dish called



fruit cream, which is like a fruit salad in a lightly sweet cream. Knowing how successful that soaked and blended cashews were in helping recreate the creaminess of dairy, I initially used cashews to recreate this fruit dish drenched in a lightly sweet cinnamon, cardamom, clove, and rose water cream. Though the cashews did recreate the creamy nature to the dish, the cashews did not successfully recreate the lightness to the dish because the cashews were heavy and created a denser and filling cream. The denseness of the cashew cream did not compliment the lightness of the chopped fruits and rosewater. Because the ingredients did not assimilate well together, the modification did compromise the aesthetic value of lightness. However, I tried again and instead used coconut cream from the top of a coconut milk can and the lighter nature complimented the dish as did the coconut flavor with the cardamom, clove, rosewater, cinnamon, and other spices. Because these modifications assimilated well together and had an aesthetic purpose, the modifications did not compromise culinary authenticity, which is how to go about approximating culinary practices that traditionally involve animal agriculture with vegan practices to retain what matters most about the culinary practices. I had to consider whether each step I took to modify the recipes for my project had an aesthetic purpose.

I was able to practically apply the aesthetic value of creativity from theory to the veganizing of recipes I put on YouTube. Each step of modification required creativity. Riggle describes “creativity” as an important aesthetic value pertaining to what makes food worth eating (Riggle 35). By experimenting and approximating vegan culinary practices with traditional practices, I am executing the creative component of my project while significantly embodying one of the aesthetic values which Riggle proposes makes food worth eating.

When it came to heritage recipes and approximating culinary practices that traditionally involve animal agriculture with vegan practices to retain what matters most about the culinary practices, I had to ask myself, “How do I replicate these traditional textures, flavors and recipes to emulate the food people are so comfortable with?” This is just another example of when to consider cooking as a game, like. In the previously mentioned television series, *Chopped*. In fact, the experimentation will make the process of cooking more fun and enjoyable. During the experimentation phase of my community engagement project which involved veganizing recipes, it was challenging to find a substitute for dairy that blends nicely in flavor and is not too heavy to incorporate in a vegan palak paneer recipe.

Indian food leans heavily on ghee, dairy, yogurt, and milk. These animal products are incorporated to create many different dishes, from more complicated Indian dishes like Tikka Masala or Palak Paneer (spinach and cheese gravy) to simple one pot dishes like dahl (lentil stew). Veganizing these dishes took time in the kitchen, a robust Spotify playlist, enjoying myself, and creativity. I was able to use cashews to recreate the thick, creaminess that dairy contributed to these dishes. By soaking them, and then blending them up with the masala, I was able to continue with my dahl recipe per usual with no other alterations.

For my Palak Paneer recipe which is a featured cooking video for my project, it took pressing the tofu for hours, then chopping them to resemble paneer. After that, I would allow the blocks to marinate in a blend of Indian spices and a bit of oil. Then, I would air fry the blocks on each side for seven minutes. These tofu blocks or “paneer” would then be dumped into a blended spinach, onion, tomato, garlic, chili pepper gravy which I had also blended soaked cashews with for creaminess. The flavor and texture of the “paneer” has been retained and so has the creaminess of the blended spinach gravy. This is just one example of modifying a family recipe

and approximating culinary practices that traditionally involve animal agriculture with vegan practices to retain what matters most about the culinary practice.

Strohl's broadening of the term authenticity was important in my experimentation with traditional recipes as he views everything as authentic for what it is. This was practically applied in my experimentation with recipes to veganize them. At first, I considered using a different substance to mimic the paneer in my YouTube recipe, but I realized that the broadening of how Strohl applied the concept of authenticity was important in how the term authenticity was given less meaning by broadening what counts as authentic. Ultimately, through Strohl's piece, I decided that it wasn't so important to consider how close the mock "paneer" is to actual paneer. Rather, the term culinary authenticity may be rooted in a purity mindset and is not actually a reason for concern. This led me to not have significant concern for using tofu as paneer as long as the flavor of the recipe was retained. There is no golden standard for an authentic recipe, especially since no recipe is made the same twice.

While Thi Nguyen's articles helped me consider the process of veganizing traditional recipes as a game, Matthew Strohl's paper allowed me to consider whether my modified traditional recipes can still be considered authentic and Nick Riggle's work contributed to how I perceive community in my project.

### **Theoretical Applications 3: Environmental Philosophy**

There is a lack of recognition of labor of women, animals, and people of color in that women's labor, animal labor, and slave labor has been historically not considered seriously enough as capitalistic contributions. All have been subject to a hierarchical form of domination by white capitalistic colonial patriarchy.

Environmental Philosophy emphasized how our concept of the environment varies depending on our experiences, especially in relation to intersectional approaches to the environment. Johnson & Bowker, Karren Warren, and Amy Irvine highlight intersectional approaches. We read Johnson and Bowker's "African-American Wildland Memories" which details how collective memory has affected the wilderness. African Americans have a collective memory of working land and being harmed significantly on the landscape. Johnson and Bowker write, "The institutions of slavery, forest work camps, and sharecropping exploited black labor, and lynchings were essentially terrorist acts perpetuated against blacks in wildland areas" (Bowker & Johnson 60-61). The wilderness might be where some go to for therapeutic and healing experiences, but, for someone who is coming from the experience of being enslaved, wilderness might not be as uplifting for them than for others. Collective trauma has contributed to a different sense of the environment for certain demographics than the sense of the environment which is derived from a Eurocentric Christian male lens.

Johnson & Bowker describe the case of Emmitt Till, a fourteen-year-old boy who was wrongfully accused of sexual advances towards a white woman whose husband and brother brutally murdered him in Mississippi. They write, "The murders of Emmett Till and Mack Charles Parker, both in Mississippi in the 1950s are two of the more recent collective

recollections of lynchings. Neither of these lynchings took place in large, forested land tracts, still these murders are coupled with ‘the woods’ and are especially salient to African Americans and influence the way some perceive wildlands” (Bowker & Johnson 73). Emmitt Till’s lynching has been passed down from generation to generation by recounting the memories of what happened to him.

Growing up on the cusp of the Mississippi and Tennessee area, I heard the story of Emmitt Till many times, especially by the public school system, friends, and friend’s families. I came to Missoula from a predominantly African-American city which is known for barbeque, blues, and civil rights activity. Outdoor activities were never something that I had come across of many engaging in other than the occasional suburban white family who were going to the Mississippi River for a family boating trip. Moving to Missoula, people enjoyed outdoor recreational activities. In the South, while people went to the mall or cinema for enjoyment, Missoula’s tenants hike, camp, and bike. Johnson & Bowker’s ideas on collective memory affecting how African-Americans perceive the wildlands was directly correlated to my experience in noticing how environmental activities attracted middle to upper class white people seeking recreation. Johnson & Bowker’s article alongside my experience growing up in a predominantly African-American city emphasized environmentalism as often attracting white people rather than other demographics.

Veganism has been described as a white issue. As though, the moral status of animals is only something that those who did not care about racial minorities could care about or entertain. Though, this is prioritizing human interests over others, it strikes me that this is to a degree exactly what Bowker & Johnson give insight on. That collective memory from working the land

and being compared to non-human animals as a degradation tactic could taint relationships with the landscape and animals, but this is not the only option. Another reasonable option is that these collective memories could lead to more appreciation for the wilderness. In terms of looking at non-human animals as moral subjects, by being compared to non-human animals as a way of degradation, it could be that acknowledging non-human animals as moral subjects brings back negative associations and collective memory or trauma. It could also be the case that these experiences contribute to more understanding of what it's like to be treated as a body or as the product of your labor rather than as an individual with personhood, allowing emphasis for considering the moral status of non-human animals.

Animals' bodies being used for consumption, the product of animals' labor being used for other animal products, the product of slave labor for cotton, and the product of a woman's birthing labor for more babies feeding into the capitalistic system all point to labor being undervalued.

In terms of our ecofeminism unit in Environmental Philosophy, we read Val Plumwood's "Being Prey," which might seem as if it is about feminism, but it is about perspective from the ultimate epistemic location, the jaws of a crocodile. The predator is masculinized while the prey is often feminized. Being chased by a predator ignites self-preservation and a desire to survive, allowing an empathy with other beings who have been preyed on. The experience of being made to be prey or being preyed on, may allow for an emphasis and understanding for what others who are preyed on go through. There is a special insight that the subjugated have on the subjugator. To an extent, I acknowledge that in some circumstances it can be argued that animals consume other animals, and this is not an unfair subjugation. Though, this differs depending on whether the subjugator or subjugated has moral agency and can make moral choices. It also differs in our

society in factory farming's industrial aspects. There is no chance for survival instinct or desire for self-preservation to be potentially honored. It is solely a Eurocentric Christian conception of domination, stemming from settler colonialism and biblical beliefs. Understanding that just because Val Plumwood is human, she is not an exception to being preyed on constitutes an understanding that humans are not able to justifiably dominate the environment in a hierarchical dualistic way.

Under white patriarchy, white people used African-Americans as slaves for the product of their labor effectively attempting to prey on them and dominate in a similar hierarchal way to how humans attempt to dominate non-human animals. Being prey is an epistemic experience that allows a special kind of insight with others who have also been prey. This might allow for certain communities of color who are subject to hierarchy and treated as prey to connect with the plight of non-human animals.

Making cooking videos which abstain from treating animals as prey might be worthwhile if the aimed demographic is people of color since a shared experience of being negatively affected by hierarchy and made out to be prey can be something which other demographics can empathize with.

There are correlations between the domination of women and nature which ecofeminists like Karen Warren examine in depth. In "What are ecofeminists saying," Karen Warren writes, "According to Shiva, 'maldevelopment' is a paradigm that sees all work that does not produce profits and capital as non- or unproductive work. The neglect of nature's work 'in renewing herself' and of women's work in producing sustenance in the form of basic, vital needs is an essential part of the paradigm of maldevelopment fostered by industrial capitalism" (Warren 26). Ecofeminist Warren describes the ways in which labor is seen as unproductive under capitalism,

applying it to women and nature. Warren continues, “Mies argues that just as women's bodies and labor are colonized by a combination of capitalism and patriarchy (or capitalist patriarchy), so is nature... Mies argues that under capitalist patriarchy, both women and nature function as exploited resources, without which the wealth of ruling-class men cannot be created” (Warren 26). Nature is subject to colonization by a combination of capitalism and patriarchy, as Mies argues. Though, it seems that these differing levels of hierarchy such as patriarchy and white patriarchy, are missing another important connection in terms of application to nature. Perhaps, white capitalistic anthropocentric patriarchy is a more suitable term to connect the connection to hierarchical subjugation between non-human animals, communities of color, and women. Warren writes, “Included in this ‘ideological superstructure’ are religions and philosophical perspectives that reinforce the domination of women, people of color, animals, and land as reflecting the will of a supreme, deified, patriarchal male God” (Warren 26). Anthropocentrism, racism, and sexism are embedded in settler colonialism which a feminist Marxist perspective can support based on the use of their labor which Meis touches on.

Meis’s feminist Marxist perspective which Warren cites can inform a connection between anthropocentrism, racism, and sexism. Warren writes, “Mies argues that under capitalist patriarchy, both women and nature function as exploited resources, without which the wealth of ruling-class men cannot be created. Other ecofeminists argue that a socioeconomic analysis of women- nature interconnections links patterns of domination.” She goes on to describe the economic and legal domination of women, land, and animals. While this perspective is primarily focused on the connection between women and nature, in conjunction with the Bowker & Johnson article, the alienation of labor is pervasive to such an extent that generations of communities of color remember it.



Amy Irvine's "Desert Cabal" highlights the seeming conflict between when the needs of communities conflict describing how the environment's overpopulation is at odds with women's rights over their bodies. Amy Irvine's *Desert Cabal* reads as, "I don't know what to do about this, because population reduction won't happen without some sort of exertion of control over women's bodies, their sexuality. You can guess by now how that sits with me. Besides, my thirteen-year-old child, Cedar- he loves animals beyond measure. He's given up eating meat, adopted a desert tortoise, and organized a fundraiser that donated hundreds of dollars of supplies for the animal rescue operation in Old La Sal. And as I've mentioned already, he has no problem with wrathful acts of resistance."<sup>1</sup> There is a way in which relating to yourself a primarily a bodily being before being an individual with personhood is often noticed from an early age. Caring about women, communities of color, and non-human animals are directly correlated in that the experiences are significantly similar through the devaluation of labor which Irvine's child picks up on from a young age.

As Amy Irvine has an interest in decolonizing environmentalism, she participates as a conversationalist and chef in two of my videos- a cooking video and a philosophical conversations video. My community engagement project is focused on making environmentalism more inclusive, based on a tenant of environmental justice, which is informed by environmental philosophy's unit on intersectionality highlighting how collective memory and history has created non-inclusive environmental space. By focusing on veganizing recipes that divert the traditional demographic of veganism, it creates a more inclusive and culturally

---

<sup>1</sup> With Amy Irvine's consent, the original quote in *Desert Cabal* has been modified to replace Irvine's child's dead name and gender with their chosen name and gender.

sensitive space. My project is directly building on ecofeminist work from this class and directly applying the connection between women and non-human animals to communities of color.

## **Actions Taken**

I wanted my project to involve food, animals, and concerns about community. Initially, I considered writing small vegan cooking recipe book with about ten recipes. Though, as my project evolved, to meet its goal of influencing communities of color, it seemed that a platform that could reach a wide audience was optimal. YouTube cooking videos seemed the most effective strategy for the goal of reaching communities. I contacted a friend to film the videos who also has an interest in non-human animal concerns. I thought this would be important in how art often reflects how the creators intended. Finding someone with film experience who also lived their life considering non-human animals proved to be simple as I had a few friends who fit these criteria and offered their services. I chose the friend who I was able to feel most comfortable around as this would influence my demeanor in the captured film.

I thought about the philosophical component of my project and realized that I may need to draw that out, showing how philosophy is being applied rather than simply applying philosophy. I thought that conversation with vegans of color would be best. I realized that in Missoula, Montana, the chances of finding people of color who are also vegan seemed slim. When considering whether to approach someone for their epistemological position, I did not want to ask vegan people of color who I did not personally know if they were interested in participating in my project because I wanted to be cognizant of putting someone in a box and did not want to make them feel as if they had an obligation to help make veganism more accessible to communities of color by contributing to my project. I did not know anyone who was vegan and a person of color either so I decided to expand who I had a conversation with

while cooking to individuals who had an interest in decolonizing environmentalism. In Missoula, this broadening of conversationalists allowed for significantly more options.

I chose Mark Sundeen and Amy Irvine. Since Amy Irvine's *Desert Cabal* was on some syllabi of my previous courses, I knew she would have many interesting things to say. Based on the way Mark Sundeen operated his environmental writing class in which I was a student in, I knew he would also have interesting things to say. The first action taken involved scheduling when we film the first video, Monday February 5<sup>th</sup>. This included coordinating schedules with videographer Josie, Mark Sundeen, and Amy Irvine. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, Josie and I planned to meet on Sunday February 4<sup>th</sup> at 10am to discuss filming preferences such as angles, style, and possible solo interview possibilities. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, most needed materials for cooking video are purchased, which were not always simple to find since Missoula only has Samar International and the Good Food Store rather than solely an Indian store. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, an outline of discussion points for first cooking video was created. Dishes to cook were narrowed down. On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, I sent Harper Breeze an Instagram direct message asking for a reading recommendation about soul food, as it is described by some black vegan thinkers as genocide on black people so I was uncertain whether it was beneficial for me to create a cooking video on a soul food recipe.

On February 4<sup>th</sup>, my videographer and I discussed video preferences for the first cooking video. On February 5<sup>th</sup>, Mark Sundeen, Amy Irvine, Josie, and I all met and filmed the Palak Paneer cooking video. This took many hours and was an intense process. I did not prep ingredients ahead of time because Josie and I discussed videoing ingredient prep. By the end of filming on February 5<sup>th</sup>, I knew for the next video condensing would be the most challenging aspect of the video. Capturing the ingredient preparation is not something that

needs to be filmed. When watching other cooking videos, cooks often video themselves looking for ingredients in a vlog style, or a video blog detailing the process of driving to stores to find ingredients and personal challenges which the recipes remind cooks of. This is often makes for a less enjoyable video in which I found myself skipping to the actual recipe anyways. Filming included me juggling having conversation and cooking, which takes away from cooking as an aesthetic practice for me. I was unable to contribute as effectively as I hoped in either aspect because of the multi-tasking. Cooking often involves a rhythm and pacing which is cultivated over time, especially the more you cook a recipe. Adding significant questions and conversation to the cooking affected the rhythm in a way that made the experience of cooking decrease an aesthetically valuable sense of connection to how my ancestors practiced cooking. On the other hand, there was an aesthetic component of community that was emphasized by cooking with other and talking about family at the same time.

I sway back and forth a lot when I talk, and I had to battle feeling too comfortable and not comfortable enough on camera. When I felt too comfortable, I was too casual and extreme with the dialogue I used. When I was not comfortable enough, I seemed tense and stuttered. I made sure to supply coffee and food so my team was satiated, knowing that this would aid in better results for the video. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Breeze Harper replied to my Instagram DM and asked me to email her. I sent her an email at a new email address she sent me. While waiting on a reply, on February 11<sup>th</sup>, I met with Josie for three hours to learn about editing. On February 12- I tried to edit, but the simple act of cutting and pasting into a final sequence proved to be an issue. The computer was slow, even after switching to a library computer. Premier is a really challenging editing software. On February 13<sup>th</sup>, I spoke with Scott at

MCAT, which is a video editing place in Missoula, for guidance. On February 14<sup>th</sup>, I went to the library in the morning to see if they could help me edit my video. They said they could not.

I met with my friend Connor who said he would help with editing, who also practices cooking and consuming in a way that minimizes harm to non-human animals. The footage was copied on his hard drive. He said that it seems realistic to have it done by March 5<sup>th</sup>. I continued attempting to edit video myself which was not fruitful. On March 18<sup>th</sup>, I hired Josie to edit my first cooking video after Connor explained that it would take him a long time to edit the cooking video with his other obligations. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, I created a video outline for Josie to use to edit, and I sent it to her. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, I called Josie to check on the progress of the editing of video 1. She asked to set up a meeting for editing. On April 1, I met with Josie to help with final edits. I saw the first cooking video and we agreed to create a bloopers video with conversations that Mark Sundeen, Amy Irvine, and I had during cooking.

As time was running low and the video process ended up being far more intensive, I decided to only complete two cooking videos. I also converted some filming from the palak paneer video into a separate conversations video. We ended up creating two cooking videos and a conversations video, which meant that I had to cut a recipe video, which I chose as the barbeque jackfruit recipe. This was partially influenced by the fact that I was advised by Dr. Margiana Peterson-Rockney, a Food & Justice professor at our university, to treat *Sistah Vegan* as a more academic text rather than continuing to search for a different source. If it is the case that I treat this source as an academic one, then I should give heavy consideration to the criticism of soul food being a form of genocide. In which case, to reinforce the focus as

creating a culturally sensitive form of veganism that also maintains animals at the forefront, it seems that the most beneficial course of action is to not work with a soul food dish.

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, my videographer, Jocelyn Harris, sent me the palak paneer cooking video she edited. I edited my YouTube account, modifying my handle so that my whole name is not displayed. I posted my video on YouTube, and I began advertising my palak paneer video. I posted my video in the Missoula Vegans Facebook group, Montana vegans Facebook group, my personal Facebook, my personal Instagram, and encouraged my friends to like and share. I wanted the cooking video to reach a lot of people so I sent my video to philosophers concerned with the moral status of non-human animals and vulnerable people like Peter Singer, Nathan Nobis, Gary Francione, and Rebecca Tuvel. I encouraged them to like, comment, and share. Nobis replied when contacted on his philosophy TikTok platform, encouraging me to post on TikTok for more visibility. On April 6<sup>th</sup>, I posted the video to TikTok. Peter Singer emailed me back, liking and commenting on my Palak Paneer video. A vegan non-profit Arukah Animal International reposted my palak paneer cooking video along with Montana Vegans and Missoula Vegans groups on facebook and Instagram. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Josie sent me the conversations video, but the language incorporated was not optimal so I sent Josie communication about how I wanted language to be edited out. When I received the new version, I posted the video on YouTube. I received the Khao Soi video on April 21<sup>st</sup> and posted it online.

## **Accomplishments & Challenges**

The biggest challenge of my project was editing videos, filming, and cultural sensitivity. I spent hours trying to learn Premiere Pro editing software, working with the IT center at the library, and having sessions with video editors for them to teach me. I ended up having Jocelyn Harris edit the videos for me. It was ambitious to attempt multiple cooking videos and editing them all, with a drastic learning curve. The process took time and moderation of goals so we adjusted our aim from making three cooking videos to making two cooking videos and one conversation video.

Filming was a challenge because when engaging in conversations about decolonizing environmentalism, we touched on controversial topics like Christianity's influence on how we perceive our relationship with the earth. There was a significant amount of public relations involved in what was edited out of the video, what jokes were included, and how to cater the video to a multitude of people so that more people would be open to sharing, watching, and commenting. I knew that I was going market it to other vegan groups, Indian food groups, and others so it needed to be sensitive to a variety of different people. When I was too careful, I found that I was less engaging. When I was not careful enough, there was language and dialogue that could be seen as unprofessional or poking fun at religion by engaging in humor that does insinuate the ways in which Christianity affected our ideas of what nature is. Moderating humor with cultural sensitivity and public relations was a challenge in the filming and editing.

When deciding to cut a video based on how lengthy the editing and filming process was, determining whether to include a soul food recipe was a point of contention as it describes a modern-day form of genocide by black vegan thinkers. I was unsure of whether I should dismiss this as overly academized language. Though, I lack an epistemological positioning for me to



have a certain amount of understanding or authority on the subject. Based on this and my aversion to contributing to the promotion of genocide, I decided to be cautious and not post a video on soul food.

It seems that veganizing Indian recipes is something that I had a certain kind of authority on because of my background. To adopt cuisine from other areas of the world seems more challenging without a firsthand knowledge of that cultural cuisine from being within that culture. If I was to repeat this project, I may focus on solely Indian recipes in my ability to be culturally sensitive and adopt certain elements of the project with authority that my background allows. I would also plan on less videos initially and not editing myself.

Through conversations with people about my videos, I was surprised to learn that people from Indian descent were not as interested in my project than others. They questioned the authenticity of the vegan palak paneer, which was anticipated, though this led them to questioning my authenticity in my lack of expertise in Indian food. Growing up on take-out and fast-food was something mentioned in my conversations video. It seemed that authenticity was linked to a concept of purity in how the video product reflected my authority, or lack of it, depending on who was watching.

The most rewarding aspect of my project was that it was able to reach people. The platform, YouTube, was a fantastic choice for my project. There were over four hundred views, eighty-four likes, and two dislikes within the first week of posting. My vegan palak paneer cooking video was also reposted by a few vegan groups on Facebook and Instagram, as well as Arukah Animal International, an animal non-profit. I knew that I would be able to get engagement by my own communities which I am actively involved in, but others seemed interested as well. Another individual reached out to me and described similar interests in

philosophy of race and philosophy of animals. I sent emails to philosophers I was influenced by as an ultimate engagement goal, including Peter Singer who is a leading thinker in animal ethics. I emailed Peter Singer a link to my cooking video, and he watched and commented, emailing me back to let me know. Another challenge was that I didn't want to cede too much territory to white people in this community engagement project, since it is decolonial. Most previous work involving non-human animals has been executed by white people. This is probably due to and resulting in the lack of cultural sensitivity and implicit bias in in veganism, which is a central concern my project is rooted in.

The central goal of a community engagement project is to practically apply philosophy in an impactful way. While I apply philosophy daily in how I engage with the world, this project gave me the opportunity to focus on making a broader impact. The biggest advantage to this project was its accessibility online, allowing for more interaction through YouTube, though this was an unconventional method to apply philosophy. The perceived implications of my authenticity based on the culinary authenticity of the recipe, would be an interesting subject for future reflection in relation to the concept of purity. Soul food's comparisons to genocide could be explored in terms of whether the cuisine can be reclaimed to apply vegan modifications. The commonality of how colonialism is applied to non-human animals and communities of color is important for exploration to further a branch of intersectional veganism that maintains non-human animals at the forefront of the movement.

## Works Cited

C. Thi Nguyen's "Art Is a Game"

C. Thi Nguyen's "The Aesthetics of Rock Climbing"

Donaldson, Sue and Will Kymlicka. 2011. *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Drew, Ain. "Being a Sistah at PETA." *Sistah Vegan*, Breeze Harper, Lantern Publishing, 2009, pp 61-65.

Dunham, Delicia. "On Being Black and Vegan." *Sistah Vegan*, Breeze Harper, Lantern Publishing, 2009, pp 42-46.

Harper, Breeze. "Social Justice Beliefs and Addiction to Uncompassionate Consumption." *Sistah Vegan*, Breeze Harper, Lantern Publishing, 2009, pp 20-41.

Irvine, Amy. *Desert Cabal*. Consortium Book Sales & Dist, 2018.

Johnson and J. M. Bowker. "African-American Wildland Memories." *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2004, pp. 57–75., <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics200426141>.

Lee, Robin. "Hospital Sponsored Junk Food at a 'Healthy' Bike Riding Event?" *Sistah Vegan*, Breeze Harper, Lantern Publishing, 2009, pp 65-68.

Lopes, Dominic, et al. *Aesthetic Life and Why It Matters*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2022.

Plumwood, Val. "Human Vulnerability and the Experience of Being Prey." 1995. *Quadrant*, vol. 39, no. 3, Quadrant Magazine Ltd, 1995, pp. 29–34,

<https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.276838296188087>.

Singer, Peter. "All Animals Are Equal." *Animal Rights*, 2017, pp. 103–116.,

doi:10.4324/9781315262529-2.

Strohl, M. (2019), On Culinary Authenticity. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 77:

157-167. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12631>

Warren, Karen. *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It*

*Matters*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.