

*Since the reproduction of colonialism takes place on an individual level, individuality can be understood as a battle-ground; one can either choose to surrender to the pre-configured meaning and values of industrial society, or assert a creative nothingness – an ungovernable terra incognita...*

*Possessed by identities, the humanized animal cannibalizes other (human and non-human) animals perceived to belong to inferior identities. From this point of view, consumption takes on a value and meaning of control and domination – a mirror image of the way capitalism consumes emotional space and transforms living beings into territories devoid of compassion...*

*Total Liberation as an intersection of anarchist theory and decolonial praxis, contrasts the statist group-think of the political left with an individual-focused self-determination that values a do-it-yourself ethic over the compulsion to organize, control, or govern others. With this comes an understanding of self-determination as a life force integral not only to the struggles of people native to the land - but to the flora and fauna that resist industrialization as well.*

## Decolonizing Individuality



**Anarchism, Anti-Colonization, & Anti-Speciesism**

Flower Bomb

## Identity: The Colonial Occupation of Wild Space

The socially constructed identities that have been assigned to me at birth play a part in how people view and treat me today. As a bi-racial (“black” and “white”) “man”, I have also been assigned roles to reinforce those identities. The societal expectation to fulfill these roles comes armed with social pressures, emotional coercion, and often times, physical violence. For all of us living on this colonized landscape – including whoever is reading this - this is life as we collectively know it: our individualities carefully calculated, pre-determined, and governed by assigned identities that arrange us according to their socio-economic meaning. We are individual lives collectively organized to fulfill the legacy of a capitalist, industrial society.

Individuality, when defined by *capitalism*, is the agency of one who makes choices while guided by - and participating in the animation of - the capitalist empire. From *this* point of view, individuality is the personification of capitalism: a creature infused with the values of hard work, patriotism, and the pursuit of wealth and success. But what about an individuality that unlearns these values, resists the social coercion that accompanies assigned identity, and even rejects assigned identity itself? How does capitalism chain down and govern an individuality that refuses the participatory reinforcement of capitalist logic? Like a single vine that quietly pierces a concrete foundation, any individual – with enough ambition - can rewild and abscond the internal prison of colonization.

Non-human animals have been regarded as mere objects for dietary consumption for as long as anthropocentrism has maintained possession of the human mind. I feel it is important to point out that anthropocentrism – or *human supremacy* – tends to summarize history the same way that both patriarchy and white supremacy summarize their own: within a narrow framing of self-glorification, entitlement, and the objectification of “othered” bodies. The shared commonality between these forms of hierarchical domination is a worldview based in binary terms: human/animal, male/female, white/black.

Binary presentations of reality – and by extent, individual living beings – are a product of the same mechanistic thinking foundational to the development of industrial society. In order to colonize life and rearrange it according to this way of thinking, one must first possess – or be possessed by - an illusion of detachment from the complex web of the natural world. This detachment overlaps with an illusion of superiority over others – a mindset that a colonizer must surrender primal empathy to. The “othering” or objectification of wild spaces and individuals makes surrendering one’s primal empathy easier, and helps discourage any potential emotional connectivity between the colonizer and the colonized. This process of “othering” indigenous human and non-human

colonial project breaks down and reassembles individuality according to its own version of reality.

While challenging the mechanistic thinking that denies agency to empathy, I have come to the realization that each individual is simultaneously incomplete and indivisibly absolute; instead of an assembly of rigid parts, the body and mind constitute a universe at play, having not left anything “behind” or “in the past”, but evolving moment by moment – incandescent life without a pause. An individual can experience multi-dimensional awareness, envision outcomes inspired by intuition, or traverse a kaleidoscope of emotions that transcend numbers, letters, and language – all while occupying a single physical space. It is no surprise that the uniqueness of personal experience is lost in the reification of assigned identity. Identity politics mirrors the same reductionism evident in the ways that life itself has been reified by the blunted instrument of language; pronouns and identity describe bodies and behaviors the way a dictionary identifies and defines everything else.

Without empathy, there is often less motivation to adventure and mutually explore personal worlds with others. Colonization seeks to prohibit this existential curiosity by essentially outlawing the imagination. To reclaim our individualities from identity and politics is to suspend the illusion of our hierarchal separatism from both nature and from each other. Beyond attempting to coerce or structure a new society, anarchy is an understanding of individuality as an embodiment of wildness determined to exist defiantly against arbitrary formalities or categorical designations.

Dreams and desires don’t speak a language – they conspire with every artery that powers a beating heart. Individuality decolonized is a feral space – a multiverse that harmonizes the energy of ancient worlds and all lifeforms. Individuality is a pulse that creates a wave, a body that is also a mind, a seed that is also a tree, a drop of rain, a thunderstorm on the horizon...

Front cover art by Terra Ivy ([terra\\_ivy@riseup.net](mailto:terra_ivy@riseup.net))

Anthropocentrism acts as a barrier between human and non-human animals; the latter experiences a limited experience of life due to the constant fear of humans, while the human animal is burdened by anthropocentric ignorance, and is often incapable of understanding the complex personal lives of non-human animals beyond viewing their bodies as accessible resources.

The blooming of one's individuality simply can not be experienced in full when burdened by the dead weight of oppression. Freedom and equality exist simultaneously when living beings within a shared space experience life free from control and coercion, interacting freely in symbiotic reciprocity.

### **Individuality as Infinite Potential**

The United States is founded on an illusion of freedom, liberty and individualism. This has always been a central marker of American national ideology. But a delusional mass that continues to serve and submit to various authorities are not voluntary egoists, but rather, in Stirner's words, involuntary egoists. A patriotic soldier may join the military and fight his country's enemy in his self-interest, but in doing so, he is submitting to his commanding officer, to the politicians who decided to go to war, to the duty to obey orders, and to his devotion to Country. He is giving up his freedom as an individual and serving a collective: his idea of a "greater good"...

The idea of individualism that the European explorers and colonizers failed to realize was its rejection to duty, devotion and submission. I recognize no authority figure over me, nor do I aspire to any particular ideology. I am not swayed by duty because I owe nothing to anyone. I am devoted to nothing but myself. I subscribe to no civilized standards or set of morals because I recognize no God or religion. No amount of pressure, judgment, or force should cause me to restrain myself from that which I desire...

As the Western civilized culture's standards and values have been forced down our throats, we need to remember who we are. We need to remember the importance of self and our desires. - Cante Waste (Good Heart), *Towards An Indigenous Egoism*

Self-liberation requires an exhaustive examination of the ways our individual lives have been pre-configured and governed within a civilized imprisonment. Every instrument of colonial power – from the Church to our assigned identities – must be scrutinized and understood as a form of domestication that aims to preserve human supremacy at all costs. Our assigned identities are not an act of biological nature nor accidental; identity politics represent one of many ways a

beings grants industrialization an assumed "right" to transform their bodies and wild environments into "resource" objects. From an anthropocentric and anti-indigenous worldview, settler-colonization constructs "civility" to describe so-called superior beings created in its own image. The "civilized" are then tasked with consuming wild spaces and subjugating those considered animal-like or "savage" in the name of colonial law and order.

Settler-colonization was (and still continues to be) a war against the wild – a war against both human and non-human animals whose complexity as individuals is reduced to commodity status for sexual exploitation, enslavement, and consumption.

The domesticating process necessary for the development of a civilization requires the creation of artificial descriptors or *identities* to apply to a domesticated body. These identities represent roles and behaviors expected of the body which correlate to a specific position on a stratified socio-economic ladder. The assigning of racial and/or gendered identity to one's body breaks down and redefines one's individuality to reflect the image of a mechanized worldview. Sexuality, behavior, and body parts are gendered and reduced to "male" and "female" orientation. Gender is assigned to each individual at birth toward the collective management of relationships and expectations, powered and reinforced by individualized assimilation. While there have been numerous advancements throughout history for gender-based rights and equality within society, gender only allows so much room for individual expression within its confinement – to the extent that liberation is often limited to State-sanctioned permissions or the creation of new labels from *within* gender without critically examining gender itself. An exploration of the power and civilizing role gender has played throughout history can be found throughout baedan's *Against the Gendered Nightmare*:

...domestication is the capture of living things by something non-living. It is also the process where capture is internalized by living beings who are then shaped into pre-determined roles. The non-living thing is immortal and continues long after its captives are dead, and that it is constantly accumulating new lives in order to reproduce itself. Gender is precisely this non-living institution which tears individuals away from themselves and reconstitutes them as a pre-determined role. Gender would be an empty husk if it wasn't for its constant capture of new bodies; bodies which in turn give it life. Isn't the first incursion of Civilization into the life of a wild newborn always to proclaim its gender? It is the first separation which gives rise to all others. Gender is the cipher through which Leviathan categorizes and understands each and every one of the beings trapped in its entrails.

The same can be said of Race. Like gender, Race also “tears individuals away from themselves and reconstitutes them as a pre-determined role.” Race is given life by those who apply meaning and value to skin tone, and like a parasite is incapable of surviving without a willing mind to act as a host. Growing up, I was socially pressured to conform to behavioral expectations stereotypically associated with “blackness”, while also peer pressured to embody the working class ethics of a successful “white man”. The day-to-day anti-blackness interwoven within white supremacist society at first compelled me to embrace my coloredness as a form of cultural resistance. But I wanted to feel something more than just existing as a “person of color” against the force of a racist society. Identity-based organizing and resistance still felt powerlessly compliant with a colonial order that discourages one from envisioning individuality beyond assigned identity. I struggled against the expectations to be somebody that *society* said I *should* be. I wanted to be myself – a *me* that wasn’t a pre-configuration of identities assembled in order to maintain the social infrastructure of civilization. I felt trapped in my own body. But the more I questioned and deconstructed everything society conditioned me to believe, the more I realized that my identity crisis wasn’t a mere personal failure. The fact was racial, gendered, and even “human” identity had failed *me*.

Little by little, I began to understand myself and others as individuals with histories and experiences that emphasize *uniqueness* beyond the shallow homogeneity of socially constructed identity. Similarly, after interacting directly with cows, pigs, and chickens at various farm sanctuaries, I began to understand them as complex individual beings also unique beyond my colonial understanding of their bodies as mere “livestock”, “resources”, or “food” for human consumption.

To “civilize” is to domesticate that which has been identified as “wild” or “savage”. Once an individual has been subjugated through forceful captivity, colonization is the erasure process that transforms the mind and body into a hollowed out image of life, inevitably turning personhood into a spiritual graveyard. Through various institutional processes, colonization manufactures within that space a loyalty to the gospel of industrialization.

### **Anti-colonial Anarchy**

As a rejection of all systems of domination and coercion, it is the utility anarchism has for Indigenous liberation of which we are interested in. And most specifically, it is in its indictment of the state and total rejection of it that we find the greatest use...

We do not seek to “Indigenize” anarchism, or to turn that which is not our thinking into something that works for us. This kind of

For these reasons we believe the hunt is only for the money. They can’t say “Traditional, Spiritual and for Subsistence” in the same breath when no training is going on, just talk.

Whale watching is an alternative we support.

Alberta later said:

“The tribal council isn't telling the world that we Makah are really split on this issue and there is a silent majority that is just afraid to speak out against whaling because the tribal council tells them it will threaten our treaty rights. This is not true at all. Our treaty rights will stand whether we go whaling or not.”

In *Dissent From Within: The Hidden Story of the Anti-Whaling Members of the Makah Tribe*, Brenda Peterson expresses her own feelings in support of Alberta Thompson’s perspective:

This is really a dialogue much deeper than treaty rights; it is about the connections we make between ourselves, other species and our living world. Let our connection with the whales - from Baja to the Bering Sea - be the human hand and heart, not the harpoon. As we begin a new century, why not listen again to the Makah elders, because these grandmothers are speaking bravely and eloquently for other elders of a species more ancient than our own.

In *Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects: (Re)Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought* Billy-Ray Belcourt contributes an anti-speciesist perspective to Indigenous Studies:

I suggest that the recognition of animals as colonial subjects has been absent from Indigenous Studies. That is, contemporary decolonial thought has yet to engage with a politics of animality that not only recalls “traditional” and/or “ceremonial” human-animal relations, but is also accountable to animal subjectivities and futurities outside settler colonialism and within a project of decolonization. That is, decolonial thought cannot, for example, demand the repatriation of land as an ecofeminist praxis while simultaneously advocating for hunting as a recreational activity precisely because hunting has been weaponized as speciesism to normalize the killability of animals for human ends. Here, I propose a re-centering of animality through Indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies (specifically Mi’kmaq and Cree) to propose a decolonial animal ethic.

Even within decolonial discourse that re-centers the stories and narratives of people native to the land, critiques of human supremacy still apply; to critically examine oppressive relationships between humans and animals isn't to de-spiritualize the connectivity of all living beings but to dismantle anthropocentrism within said spirituality, evoking a biocentrism that diminishes hierarchal divisions and eliminates authoritarianism.

In a written memorial for Makah elder Alberta Nora "Binki" Thompson, the authors briefly recall her as not only being one of the few Makah elders fluent in the Makah language but also as being an outspoken defender of whales:

It was by sheer willpower that Mrs. Thompson got into the small boat to finally see her beloved whales. And it wasn't long before a friendly gray whale and her calf swam up to her in the small boat. It was then that the whale rose up to touch her hand. She wept in joy, love, and awe; and at the thought that they might suffer from whalers—including her own people of the Makah tribe of Northwest Washington—who might approach these whales with harpoons instead of loving hands.

In January of 1993, the Makah tribe along with 14 commercial fishing groups and 19 other tribes were successful in getting the gray whale taken off the Endangered Species list with the specific goal of whaling. In response to this, Alberta invited other Makah elders to her home. It was here that the elders discussed their tribe's intent to resume whaling for the first time in 70 years—whaling that these elders did not support. The elders decided to write a letter in English hoping to express to the world their opposition to their own tribe's desire to resume whaling:

We are elders of the Makah Indian Nation (Ko-Ditch-ee-ot) which means People of the Cape. We oppose this Whale hunt our tribe is going to do.

The opposition is directly against our leaders, the Makah Tribal Council, Tribal Staff, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is an arm of the United States Government...

...The Whale hunt issue has never been brought to the people to inform them and there is no spiritual training going on. We believe they, the Council, will just shoot the Whale, and we think the word "subsistence" is the wrong thing to say when our people haven't used or had Whale meat/blubber since the early 1900's.

appropriation is relative to assimilation, and we see no use in it. We do not seek to "decolonize" anarchism simply because we do not share its ancestry. What we would like to offer is that we have already pronounced and located an Indigenous Anarchism, and it doesn't and should not exist.

Our project isn't to translate anarchism into Indigenous languages, as so many other ways of thinking have been missionized, but to build ways with which we can end coercive relations in our every day lives. Leftist political ideologies are an unnecessary step towards Indigenous Liberation. We offer no allegiance to colonial politics.

...We assert that every formation and theorized political matrix is at its core comprised of manipulation, coercion, and exploitation. Our existence is unmediated by any dominating force or authority. We're not interested in engineering social arrangements, we're interested in inspired formations, agitations, interventions, and acts towards total liberation. - Klee Benally, *Unknowable: Against an Indigenous Anarchist Theory*

Decolonization has as many definitions as there are stories of people with ancestral colonial trauma. For me, in addition to being a process of building up personal confidence and self-care, decolonization is a process of acknowledging and reconnecting with narratives erased from history. It is a process of rewilding and reconnecting one's self with a primal empathy that's been suppressed beneath the many layers of civilizing domestication. To empathize is to connect and communicate through language barriers and across lines of racial, gendered, and species experience. Decolonization is an unlearning of the mechanistic worldview that reduces all living beings to objects of labor and profit.

Decolonization is anarchy in the sense that it rejects the authority of civilization and embodies a complete dismantling of the internalized capitalist view of the wild world. Anarchy beyond leftism not only includes a critique of industrial civilization but also the deconstruction of a colonizer mindset; self-liberation isn't limited to mere freedom from capitalism and the State but from the mindset of the policeman, politician, and representative. *Total Liberation* as an intersection of anarchist theory and decolonial praxis, contrasts the statist group-think of the political left with an individual-focused self-determination that values a do-it-yourself ethic over the compulsion to organize, control, or govern others. With this comes an understanding of self-determination as a life force integral not only to the struggles of people native to the land - but to the flora and fauna that resist industrialization as well. Understanding self-determination as inclusive of non-human anti-colonial struggle brings to light an intersection

of indigeneity and wildlife consistent with an anarchist critique of speciesism and human supremacy – a critique that also acknowledges ecofeminist and vegan indigenous cosmologies and narratives that have been suppressed by racist, patriarchal, and human supremacist historical revisionisms.

Questioning the authority of civilization means questioning the authority of assigned identity – social constructs that assume their own power through possessing the minds of those they were designed to govern. Identity is not only instrumental to upholding divisions of labor toward the reproduction of civilization, but also functions to alienate one from their own wildness. To challenge the identity-based human/animal binary brings into question the hierarchical relationship it maintains. From this perspective, *veganism* for example isn't merely a boycott activity but the result of seeing one's self through the eyes of the oppressed animal. This empathizing challenges the disconnection responsible for upholding (human) assumptions of moral entitlement to wild bodies and spaces. Attempting to make ethical consumer choices under capitalism is a result of having developed this awareness and instinctually wanting to cause the least amount of harm to others as one would expect for oneself. Decolonial veganism moves anti-speciesism as a theory toward a praxis of rewilding that actualizes animal liberation not only from within the human and from foodway commodification as well.

Critically examining the most basic identifiers society has assigned me: I reject “human” identity because I have come to understand it as a deliberate distinction from *animal* that, with my assimilation, seeks to maintain and advance an anthropocentric paradigm. I refuse the colonial subjecthood of racialized “whiteness” as well as “blackness” - especially defined as subservient to “whiteness” because I am subservient to no one and no thing. I have no preferred gendered orientation or pronoun. I recognize all notions of “man”, “manhood”, or “manliness” to be social inventions that serve no other purpose than to codify my body parts and domesticate my sexual reproduction within a framework of patriarchal order. I reject political ideologies that uphold cultural essentialism – a form of nationalism that places the meaning of liberation within a graveyard of identitarianism.

Decolonization, as I relate to it, is an individualist path of self-creation – a personal disruption of the civilized behavioral norms demanded by the social collectivity of colonization. Since the capitalist-industrial machine works best by reproducing itself within the bodies and spaces it occupies, I find it important to remember that there is no neutrality in the choices I make. Since the reproduction of colonialism takes place on an individual level, *individuality* can be understood as a battle-ground; one can either choose to surrender to the pre-configured meaning and values of industrial society, or assert a creative nothingness – an ungovernable terra incognita.

as a defining principle and advocates against consuming non-human animals – originated in north India sometime between the 5th-7th century BCE.

To acknowledge vegan indigeneity is to fundamentally understand that the refusal to suppress empathy, and in turn act in defense of another animal's life can not be accurately accredited to colonialism, nor be accurately understood as a mere invention of whiteness, classism, or even green capitalism. Such misunderstandings inadvertently uphold white supremacy by associating compassion with whiteness, erasing any and all existence of people of color throughout history who chose not to consume animals.

In *The Fascinating Plant-based History of the Diné People*, afro-indigenous vegan Mansour Hassan Yarow Jr offers some insight:

Many Indigenous tribes have creation stories that point to vegetarianism. In the Choctaw creation story, corn was given to them by Hashtali (the Great Spirit) which is considered divine. In Cherokee legends, animals, plants and humans lived in harmony with one another until the humans became aggressive and ate the animals. The animals created diseases in response, to keep human population in check. Even among the Mi'Kmaq people, legends are told with multiple references to veganism, including regret at animal death and a kinship relationship between humans and animals.

Vegans and vegetarians have existed throughout history all around the world, long before the words themselves could be found in a dictionary. Disrupting human supremacist cycles of oppression existed then and continues today across every identity marker.

Indigenous plant-based foodways have been diminished and carnist diet was imposed on cultures that had previously consumed no or very little meat. Today, Indigenous vegans, Black vegans, and other vegans of color are “challenging the paradoxical stereotype of veganism as elite and white.” For example, in their book *Decolonize Your Diet: Mexican-American Plant-Based Recipes for Health and Healing*, Luz Calvo and Catrióna Rueda Esquibel provide an extensive collection of traditional plant-based recipes with the intention to rediscover their roots. The overarching argument of their work is that Mexicans and Indigenous people in general must rediscover and reappropriate their traditional plant-based diets in order to reclaim both their physical and spiritual health. – Denisa Krásná, *Animal Colonialism in North America: Milk Colonialism, Environmental Racism and Indigenous Veganism*

great distances. For many, *veganism* is as an example of how exposure to slaughterhouse footage can reanimate empathy with so-called farm animals and generate action in the name of their liberation. While slaughterhouses conveniently keep animal death well-hidden from public, they are only the most recent method of suppressing the empathetic bonds between human and non-human animals.

As long as humans have dominated wild spaces (especially with the use of controlled fire) there has always been a necessity for ritualizing the suppression of empathy with those wild spaces. Prior to industrialization (and continuing on today) prayers and ceremonies have been useful for managing the uncomfortable emotions that arise after hunting and killing an animal. But these prayers and ceremonies only serve to comfort the human – not the dying or already dead animal who never materially had a say or choice in the matter. There is no level playing field when merely existing as a *non-human* animal is a prerequisite for being hunted. When it comes to ritualized coping mechanisms used in response to feelings of guilt or sadness, an internal contradiction arises: apologies, giving thanks, or respect merely represent a one-sided conversation when the other side loses everything - including the right to opt-out.

In his story titled *There is No Respectful Way to Kill an Animal*, ex-hunter and Muscogee Creek-Cherokee author Craig Womack outlines the inequality inherent to the relationship between a hunter and a deer:

The prayers and ceremonies do something for us, not the deer, at the very least not the same thing for the deer, and there is no way to escape the fundamental inequity of the relationship. I would go as far as to say the lack of relationship: she's dead, we're not. If, as some would suggest, a relationship between hunter and prey is realized through respectful rituals, it is hard to get around the fact that one of the most significant aspects of that relationship—its symmetry and equity and power balance— is ended when one party is dead.

When the spell of speciesism is broken and no longer alienates one from their “food”, repulsion in response to seeing the death of another animal reconnects empathy with action. In this sense veganism – or the individual choice to both eliminate non-human animals from dietary consumption and minimize harm toward them whenever and wherever possible – is hardly a *new* phenomenon but rather ancient as a global lifeway - new in name only.

While the roots of word “vegan” can be traced to the Vegetarian Society in 1944, many other examples of plant-based cultures existed throughout history. For example, Jainism - a spiritual practice that centers non-violence (or ahimsa)

## Anti-colonial Amoralism

I am also a nihilist. The massive manufacturing of mind and matter – the education system, for a capitalist industrial society - assembles a currency-dependent servant-slave to the lie called progress. I believe that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known, communicated, or translated. My anarcho-nihilism is associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns the existence of capitalist-industry and all civilized men. - Kerry Redwood Ajecoutay, *Of Indigenous Hunters & Colonial Stereotypes*

Decolonization challenges *morality* - a pre-configuration of judeo-christian conformity – allowing for an unmediated life defined by subjective experience rather than religious doctrine. Decolonization encourages an examination of how industrial civilization produces social meaning and values that reflect its own mechanistic interpretation of the world. Colonial values and meaning act as phantoms in the mind, creating personal urges and impulses guided by the virtues of power and greed. The internalization of these values underlines the corruption of a primal spirit imprisoned within a colonized space. Despite being mere ideas, greed, money, and political power hold the imagination captive. These phantoms go hand in hand with control and domination, manufacturing narratives and visions of their own.

Moral notions of “good” and “bad” are pre-defined and built into the framework of a colonized landscape. Capitalism socially rewards greed with power and respect, motivating a mass population of individuals to compete or kill each other for money. As we grow up learning that displaying acts of kindness, sensitivity, and vulnerability often make one a target for bullying, mockery, or exploitation, we become more rigid and guarded. Speaking out against injustice invites violence by the State whether a protest is peaceful or not. On an individual level, moral codes of conduct are programmed into the subconscious. As a binary presentation of its own, ideas of good and bad are shaped by the colonial terrain and designed to govern rather than encourage critical thinking. By using starvation and poverty as real-time motivators, obtaining capital and wealth become associated with positivity and feelings of success and relief. Despite being understood as “the root of all evil”, the divine worship of capitalism morally codifies money to mean “good” within a world where one’s survival has become dependent on it.

Since colonial values and behavior must first take root within the individual before inspiring its reproduction in others, asserting individuality as a reclaimed space of pure negation creates an intersection where anarchy and decolonization meet.

## Anti-colonial Veganism

When individuality is surrendered to the captivity of supremacist thinking (or the capitalist virtue of profit), it is no surprise seeing empathy suppressed in order to justify the utility of rendering living beings as expendable resources.

The suppression of empathy is evident in the day to day life of capitalism where the mutilated (and sometimes still bloody) bodies of pigs, chickens, cows, turkeys, and fish in grocery stores garner little to no reaction at all from those who casually pass by. In the name of scientific progress (and profit from prescription drugs) Western medicine attempts to ethically justify torturing non-human animals with experimentation by claiming that non-human animals are different from humans. But similarities shared between human and non-human animals – the ability to experience pain, relief, sadness, loneliness, fear, etc- are studied and yet neglected as valid emotional experiences. The normalization of speciesism between human and non-human animals designates the latter to carry the burden of unimaginable pain and torture toward the advancement of the human species.

Human supremacy denies the personal realities of non-human animals to the extent that their individualities are absent from their depictions in advertising. Rather than there being any publicized acknowledgement of their suffering or physical resistance to captivity and torture, the meat and dairy industry invents falsehoods in order to maintain the human/animal disconnection. Laughing cows, smiling chicken nuggets, images of pigs with sectioned bodies and absent faces - all serve as the industry's attempt to psychologically conceal oppression beneath a layer of humor that keeps consumers in perpetual denial. Emotional disconnection between two living beings is easier to sustain as long as one's personhood is altogether denied from existence. Mutilated body parts on display in grocery stores are as marketable as capitalism's ability to effectively sedate the consumer's empathy.

In 1831, a self-determined Nat Turner led a four-day rebellion of both enslaved and free black people in Southampton County, Virginia. After Nat Turner was eventually caught and executed, his body was mutilated; he was decapitated and his body temporarily given to medical doctors for dissection and experimentation. His skin was then said to have been cut into pieces and used to make purses, wallets, and a razor strap. This horrific treatment wasn't exclusive to Nat Turner but in fact was fairly common, and sometimes even included the cannibalization of enslaved africans and captured natives by wealthy colonizers who considered their flesh to be a delicacy.

The conceptual development of civilization directly correlates to an internalized colonial worldview that suppresses empathy with a patriarchal, anthropocentric, and white supremacist moralism. Possessed by identities, the humanized animal cannibalizes other (human and non-human) animals perceived to belong to inferior identities. From this point of view, consumption takes on a value and meaning of control and domination – a mirror image of the way capitalism consumes emotional space and transforms living beings into territories devoid of compassion.

The intersection of patriarchal, speciesist, and racialized oppression isn't a mere coincidence; humans who, either based on identity alone or through active refusal, fail to comply with a civilized society's behavioral expectations are often compared to animals. Within a civilized society, the Animal ranks as the lowest common denominator on a system of moral value. Since moralism is a construct of human supremacy, animals are perceived to be devoid of moral value – which is why the fight for animal rights within civilized societies continues to be a controversial topic even to this day. In order to affirm the rights of animals, the State must first recognize them as persons – just as non-white and non-masculine humans had to be recognized as *non-animal* in order to obtain their basic rights throughout history. But overlapping with the struggles of people native to the land, an animal's rights granted by the State don't include *land back* or remedies to displacement. Rights may imply sanctuary from commodity status as enslaved or consumable objects, but ultimately fail to translate into material liberation as industrial society still requires the consumption of land and wild space in order to exist. To this day, wild spaces continue to be dominated and territorialized, contributing to the colonial legacy of displacement and ecological genocide.

An anti-oppression theory that critically examines gendered and racial violence without applying that same critical lens to the speciesist violence committed by human supremacy allows compromise to undermine the consistency of an anarchist, anti-colonial praxis.

Similar to the way that time itself quantifies experience by reducing it to a linear direction (past/future or forward/backwards), identity politics limit the way we perceive others by denying the validity of experiences that overlap or intersect with others. For example, despite being suppressed by a socialized supremacist or bigoted worldview, empathy can defy the mapped out lines of identity and compel an individual to indirectly experience a small yet powerful glimpse of what someone of a different identity experiences directly. Since we are raised to believe that our assigned identities are universal representations of ourselves, our perception of one another is often limited. But throughout history, empathy has been responsible for the cross-fertilization of ideas, leading to acts of solidarity between individuals experiencing different forms of oppression across