Vegan Consciousness and the Commodity Chain: On the Neoliberal, Afrocentric, and Decolonial Politics of “Cruelty-Free”

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I analyze how neoliberal whiteness, race consciousness, decolonization, and anti-racism operate within three different vegan food guides: PETA’s Vegan Shopping Guide, Queen Afua’s Sacred Woman, and Food Empowerment Project’s Ethical Food Choices. PETA, Queen Afua, and Food Empowerment Project are all located within the landscape of vegan politics to produce “ethical” spaces across multiple scales (i.e. consciousness, the body and the home). However, these three sites represent different engagements with food commodities for achieving ethical consumption. Such differences are not so much about food, as much as they are about the social, political, and economic relationships underlying the food commodity chain. This manuscript will reveal that these ‘differing’ vegan guides, actually effect and are affected by whiteness; both in its historical (i.e. colonial whiteness and Jim Crow segregation) and contemporary forms (i.e. neoliberal whiteness). These connections will be revealed and articulated through the primary framework of critical race materialism and the lens of critical food studies.

Chapter two is titled “‘Never Be Silent’: On Trayvon Martin, PETA and the Packaging of Neoliberal Whiteness”. Vegan tomato products and So Delicious® are advocated as “cruelty-free” in PETA’s online Vegan Shopping Guide. I will engage critical race materialist and decolonial analysis of the meanings PETA has applied to these two commodities. Such analysis will reveal how PETA’s marketing of vegan products, as “cruelty-free,” conceals
human exploitation that makes these foods possible. I also show how PETA’s ‘anti-racist’ use of Trayvon Martin’s 2012 murder for their new campaign, signify how both post-humanism and post-racialism work to conceal the violence of neoliberalism and racism.

Chapter three is titled, “Feed a Wom[b]man, Feed the Black Nation: Afrocentric Vegan Politics and Queen Afua’s Kitchen.” Queen Afua is one of the most popular and widely read health activists amongst Black women in the USA. In this chapter, I analyze the food that Sacred Woman recommends or abhors to ‘purify’, ‘decolonize,’ and ‘liberate’ Black Americans from legacies of colonialism and racism. First, through an Afrocentric framework, I show how Afua’s vegan philosophy resists anti-black conceptualizations of Black women as “unfeminine” and “breeders.” After this analysis, I use Black feminist theorizing to explore how the meanings Afua places on particular vegan commodities simultaneously reproduces heterosexist, ableist, and black middle-class ‘reformist’ conceptualizations of a ‘healthy’ Black nation.

Lastly chapter four is named “Food Empowerment Project and the Underside of Veganized Modernity.” Food Empowerment Project (FEP) is a pro-vegan food justice organization in South Bay California. They place great emphasis on farmworker rights and alleviating environmental racism. I show that their Ethical Food Choices guide exposes how neoliberalism, corporate-capitalist profits, and hyper-consumerism dictate “ethical” vegan marketing schemes and labels such as “sustainable,” “ethically sourced,” and “Fair Trade.” They achieve this by re-signifying the neoliberal meaning of ‘sustainable’ palm oil products and cocoa, to reflect the cruel and unethical conditions they create. Analysis of FEP’s boycott of popular ‘eco-conscious’ and ‘sustainable’ labeled vegan brands Earth Balance® and CLIF Bar® will be undertaken.
Ultimately, this dissertation articulates how something as ‘mundane' as vegan food guides can be used to create new critical literacies around ethical consumption and racial dynamics, as well as reveal how neoliberal whiteness operates within the food commodity chain.
VEGAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COMMODITY CHAIN: ON THE NEOLIBERAL, AFROCENTRIC, AND DECOLONIAL POLITICS OF “CRUELTY-FREE”

CHAPTER ONE: VEGAN GUIDES: A CRITICAL RACE MATERIALIST APPROACH IN A NEOLIBERAL ERA

WHY FOOD STUDIES? .............................................................................................................................. 1
BRIEF OVERVIEW OF VEGANISM IN THE USA .................................................................................. 4
  Brief Genealogy of Racial and Feminist Analysis in Veganism ............................................................ 10
METHODOLOGIES ....................................................................................................................................... 15
  Racial Formation and Critical Studies of Race ....................................................................................... 15
  Patricia Hill Collins and Black Feminist Theorizing .......................................................................... 17
  Critical Studies of Whiteness: Neoliberal and World-Systems Perspectives ........................................ 19
CHAPTER SUMMARIES .............................................................................................................................. 20

CHAPTER TWO: “NEVER BE SILENT”: PETA AND THE PACKAGING OF NEOLIBERAL WHITENESS

PETA’S VEGAN SHOPPING GUIDE AS PEDAGOGY OF CONSUMPTION .................................................. 26
NAFTA MAKES IT POSSIBLE: ON THE VEGAN TOMATO TRAIL OF STRUCTURAL RACISM, POVERTY, AND SEXISM ........................................................................................................... 29
PETA APPROVED: GETTING YOUR VEGAN CHOCOLATE “FIX” THROUGH CHILD SLAVERY ..................... 37
“WE’RE ALL [POST-RACIAL] ANIMALS, SO GET OVER IT”: ON TRAYVON MARTIN AND THE POST-HUMANIST LIMITS OF “CRUELTY-FREE” .................................................................................................................. 43

CHAPTER THREE: FEED A WOM[B]MAN, FEED THE BLACK NATION: AFROCENTRIC VEGAN FOOD POLITICS AND QUEEN AFUA’S KITCHEN

INTRODUCTION: SACRED WOMAN, RE-SIGNIFYING VEGANISM, AND BLACK FEMINIST THEORIZING ................................................................. 52
WHO IS QUEEN AFUA? .......................................................................................................................... 53
FROM CAPITALIST COMMODITY TO THE SACRED DIVINE: RECLAIMING THE SPACE OF THE BLACK FEMALE WOMB .............................................................................................................................. 57
SWEET ‘DAMAGED GOODS’: CURING THE ‘TOXIC’ WOMB THROUGH SUGAR ABSTINENCE ....................... 60
QUEEN AFUA’S CHICKEN-FREE KITCHEN: RACE-CONSCIOUS BLACK FEMALE EMPOWERMENT, MIDDLE CLASS CIVILITY .................................................................................................................. 65
  THE [BLACK] SEXUAL POLITICS OF MEAT [ABSTINENCE]: THE “FEMININE” KITCHEN AND RACIAL-SEXUAL ABSTINENCE ..................................................................................................................... 72
DECOLONIZATION AND THE LIMITS OF “RETURNING HOME” .............................................................. 77

CHAPTER FOUR: FOOD EMPOWERMENT PROJECT AND THE UNDERSIDE OF VEGANIZED MODERNITY

FOOD JUSTICE BEYOND A SINGLE [VEGAN] ISSUE .............................................................................. 85
EARTH [IN]BALANCE AND DOING WHAT IS RIGHT: A TALE OF TWO BUTTERS ..................................... 88
FEP AND THE CONTESTED SEMIOTICS OF VEGAN CHOCOLATE: UNPACKING THE ‘INVISIBLE KNAPSACK’ OF VEGAN CONSUMER PRIVILEGE ...................................................................................... 103
THE FEP VEGAN REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED ..................................................................... 115

CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................................... 119

APPENDIX ............................................................................................................................................... 129
  APPENDIX 1 ...................................................................................................................................... 130
  APPENDIX 2 ...................................................................................................................................... 133
  APPENDIX 3 ...................................................................................................................................... 137
  APPENDIX 4 ...................................................................................................................................... 140
  APPENDIX 5 ...................................................................................................................................... 141
  APPENDIX 6 ...................................................................................................................................... 142
  APPENDIX 7 ...................................................................................................................................... 143
  APPENDIX 8 ...................................................................................................................................... 145

NOTES ....................................................................................................................................................... 146
WORKS CITED ............................................................................................................................................ 151
Chapter One: Vegan Guides: A Critical Race Materialist Approach in a Neoliberal Era

Veganism is the belief that one should not consume animals or animal by-products. Despite representing less than one percent of the population, the popularity in veganism is on the rise (Iacobbo 2004 and 2006). Vegan practices matter and vegan food politics encompass many issues that extend and reflect larger political/cultural ideologies, such as the normalization of globalized capitalism, hetero-normative gender roles, and racial power dynamics (Johnston and Baumann 2009; Potts and Perry 20110; Alkon and Agyeman 2011). This dissertation will attempt to address these issues by exploring the following questions: How are everyday vegan food objects experienced through racial hierarchies of power (geopolitically and psychically)? How do vegan objects represent spaces of modernity and coloniality within a current era of neoliberalism? These central questions will be explored through a critical race materialist analysis of the vegan food guides People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Vegan Shopping Guide, Queen Afua’s Sacred Woman (2000), and Food Empowerment Project’s (FEP) Ethical Food Choices.

PETA, Sacred Woman, and Food Empowerment Project are located within the landscape of vegan food politics that attempt to create “cruelty-free” and “ethical” spaces across multiple scales (i.e. consciousness, the body, the home, the community, and the globe). Despite being vegan-oriented, these particular guides represent differing views of vegan commodities. Such differences are not so much about food, as much as they are about the social, political, and economic relationships underlying the food commodity chain. An emphasis on commodity chains is an appropriate point of engagement to explore how racial, gender, class, and sexual hierarchies operate, and are represented within vegan food guides. Commodities, as represented
in a capitalist culture, falsely represent the spaces they come from and the unequal human and non-human social relations they produce (Robinson 1983; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994).

A single commodity chain usually exploits several forms of waged and nonwaged labor. At the world-market level, ‘the uneven exchange of these commodities between nations...constitutes the very essences of global inequality.’ Thus, commodity chains are the key structural mechanisms of unequal exchange. (Dunaway 2002:132)

Such unequal exchanges in the commodity chain will be revealed through the semiotic analysis of the food objects portrayed by PETA, Queen Afua, and Food Empowerment Project.

I will be taking a material culture approach to the three vegan guides mentioned above. Cookbooks and food guides are excellent materials to analyze because they function as “artifacts” that communicate the value system of society. Analyzing these guides can also tell us what social, political, and economic meanings are imbued in the ingredients and preparation these guides promote (Williams-Forson 2006; Driver 2009; Miller and Deutsch 2009). Cookbooks and dietary guides are also symbolic of the ‘moral authority’ of what people should eat (Smith 2008a). Seemingly “mundane” foodstuffs and culinary equipment suggested in food guides, such as pre-packaged vegan ice cream and Vitamix blenders are human created objects that communicate an entire socio-historical situation. Though ice cream and a vegan cook book may seem like “regular” day-to-day items, materialist reading of these items reveal a lot about the cultures in which these items were created, such as ideologies and societal values surrounding race, whiteness, and gender (Appadurai 1988; Williams-Forson 2006; Bernstein 2009; Tompkins 2012).

This work explores how the ‘cruelty-free’ meanings that PETA applies to vegan ‘convenience’ foods, marks it as a pedagogy of neoliberal whiteness; how Sacred Woman constructs the identity of a “liberated Black” woman as one who eats ‘live’ vegan foods and
abstains from the objects of colonial whiteness (sugar and chicken); and how FEP disrupts the ‘taken for granted’ narrative of neoliberal whiteness by re-signifying vegan palm oil and cocoa products as ‘unethical.’ PETA as my initial site of inquiry is appropriate, as they are the most popular and influential vegan organization in the USA (Julius 2012). It is also PETA that shapes the debate about veganism and ethical consumption within American society (Kim 2011). *Sacred Woman* offers an intervention into PETA’s framing of veganism, elevating the debate to include the significance of how racism and whiteness influence vegan consciousness. FEP indirectly and directly responds to *Sacred Woman* and PETA’s claims by identifying how and why vegan consumerism fails if it is limited to an economy of neoliberal whiteness.

I have concluded that the themes that connect these vegan guides above, are how they effect and are affected by whiteness; both in its historical (i.e. colonial whiteness and Jim Crow segregation) and contemporary forms (i.e. neoliberal whiteness) as represented in the food commodity chain. These connections will be revealed and articulated through an analysis of the sites of the three vegan food guides mentioned above within primary framework of critical race materialism and the lens of critical food studies. I have chosen black feminist, decolonial, and critical whiteness theories as the appropriate analytical tools to show how racial dynamics and ‘ethical’ consumption are inseparable.

I will be using the term whiteness to articulate “the conscious or unconscious promotion and advancement of the beliefs, practices, values and ideals of Euro American White culture, especially when those cultural values are represented as normal” (Pierce 2000: 6). This definition of whiteness is rooted in a genealogy of recent but strong canon of critical theory. Works within the canon collectively articulate how contemporary whiteness is formed by hetero-normativity, neo-liberalism, Christianity, consumer-capitalism, patriarchy, and middle-class sensibilities
(hooks 1991; Frankenberg 1993; Collins 2004; Wane 2006; Lipsitz 2006; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008; Goldberg 2009; MacMullan 2009; Martinot 2010; Cheah 2011). My engagement with these facets of whiteness will be primarily focused on neoliberalism, consumer-capitalism, hetero-normativity, and middle-class sensibilities.

Influenced by Critical Race Theory\(^1\), critical race materialism asserts that formal imperialism and legalized racism were replaced with [racial] neoliberalism at the end of the twentieth century. Neoliberalism promised global justice for the victims of racialized colonialism by insisting that an open and free market, capitalist competition, and individual responsibility would create economic balance and prosperity for all, therefore eradicating racism. However, critical race materialism argues that racism was not eradicated but in fact re-configured in a way that fits the investments of the global North, mostly white, population; this re-configuration is called ‘coloniality’ (Goldberg 2008; Martinot 2010; Valdes and Cho 2010).

In the next section, I will briefly explain why I have chosen the field of critical food studies to investigate the phenomenon of racial dynamics within vegan food guides.

**Why Food Studies?**

In the Western academy, the first food studies scholars were anthropologists who looked at “exotic” foods of non-white cultures in order to explain the cultural patterns of “primitive” peoples (Avakian and Haber 2005). Cultural food studies as a formal field of study, was not established until the 1960s. Much of the analysis within cultural food studies is undergirded by the notion that “tastes” are not objective but rather, are social constructions which are culturally formed (Bourdieu 1984; Kaufman 2011). Food reflects power structures and social formations (Avakian and Haber 2005). Influential theorists in this canon were Mary Douglas (1966), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969), Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Roland Barthes (1968; 1972). In her highly
acclaimed *Purity and Danger* (1966), Douglas analyzes the taboos around food that can be found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. She concluded that proper food protocols were a method for tribal societies to maintain their separate identity. This pattern still exists today.

Lévi-Strauss explained that when one prepares food, they are in fact communicating a cultural identity, which is repeated and solidified through repetition of culinary traditions. In the 1960s, “he argued that food preparation was a form of socialization for society” and that the preparer of foods works as a “cultural translator of cultural standards” (Kaufmann 2011:6). Such cultural standards are significantly influenced by middle to upper-middle class value systems and the meanings they give to culinary items (Bourdieu 1984). The underlying theme that appears to connect this food studies scholarship is the significant role that “proper” food philosophies play in the creation of not just “purity”, but how one expresses their sense of ethics. Whether it is “raw”, “cooked”, food prepared under the law of Islam, or cuisine that adheres to rules from Biblical scripture, these all represent how people desire to literally consume to create “ethical bodies” which in turn create ethical minds and actions. Such “ethical” inscriptions applied to food can be analyzed through food semiology.

Semiology is the study of signs and seeks to understand how signs communicate the value system of a culture (Barthes 1968). For example, how are vegan food objects symbolized to create myths about innate “purity”, “cruelty-free”, and “ethical”? How are the signs of food ethics perceived and how can such interrogations reveal how phenomenon such as racism, neoliberalism, and globalized capitalism, are normalized or rejected? Barthes’s scholarship on semiology has been used extensively in food studies (LeBesco and Naccarato 2008; Manning 2012) as well as critical whiteness studies (Sandoval 1997; Tan 2012) to analyze how modern objects convey a situation, how they reflect a system of communication, and most importantly,
how the meanings inscribed on these objects literally shape the collective consciousness of modern Western society (Barthes 1997). The social places that certain foods have in society are also a display of a particular type of ‘attitude’\(^3\). For example, I explore differing attitudes that PETA, Sacred Woman, and Food Empowerment Project have towards “sweet” vegan food commodities. PETA signifies the same commodity as ‘cruelty-free’ and ‘pleasurable’ while Sacred Woman associates packaged sweets with ‘addiction’ and ‘toxicity.’ Alternatively, Food Empowerment Project signifies chocolate sweets with ‘slavery’ and ‘exploitation.’ However, none of these socially prescribed attributes onto “sweets” are embedded with any concrete truths, just a mythology that communicates false perceptions and values (Barthes 1972)\(^4\).

Though Barthes is known for his work on semiotics of objects, this scholarship not only focuses on the object of food, but also on the objects of post-empire whiteness (Barthes 1968; 1972). In the mid twentieth century, Barthes analyzed the effects of post-empire whiteness on the collective consciousness of white people living in the global North. His observations lead him to believe that despite colonialism having been formally abolished, most white people will continue to function in the world through the logic/grammar of post-empire whiteness, which could be revealed through an analysis of their relationship with/to “every day” objects (Sandoval 2000). I renew and extend this research, by showing how PETA inscribes “cruelty-free” meanings onto vegan food objects, while obscuring the role that neoliberal whiteness plays to make these commodities possible. Neoliberal whiteness is a form of post-empire whiteness.

Barthes work has also inspired me to not only look at post-empire objects of neoliberal whiteness (i.e. vegan food commodities advocated by PETA as ‘cruelty-free’), but also analyze how the same vegan food objects take on contrasting and similar meanings that they do. Although the purpose of Barthesian racial analysis was to solely reveal how white collusion with
whiteness can be revealed through their relationship to everyday objects, I will complicate Barthes’s conclusions. By applying his framework not only to PETA’s Vegan Shopping Guide but to Sacred Woman as well, I open up new possibilities to think about how collusion with neoliberal whiteness is not necessarily limited to predominantly white vegan organizations like PETA. Though Sacred Woman attempts to decolonize Black females from the violence of white supremacy, Afua’s relationship with, and meanings applied to vegan objects, tells a different story: that even the descendants of the colonized can unconsciously uphold particular values of whiteness when advocating for liberation from it.

Overall, there has been very minimal scholarship to date that takes a critical race approach to vegan guides and commodities culture in a neoliberal era (see Harper 2010; Tompkins 2012). Such scholarship can offer a critical literacy of racial neoliberalism for those who desire to make fundamental changes to the food system, from the local to the global level. More specifically, such scholarship for a global North and West audience provides an intervention into the taken-for-granted notion that racial neoliberalism is “progress.” This intervention is my contribution to both critical studies of race and critical food studies. In the next section, I will provide a brief overview of veganism in the USA.

**Brief Overview of Veganism in the USA**

American veganism as a social movement makes visible the "unethical" production of American meat-eating culture; a culture linked to an ideology that constructs nature and its raw materials (including animals) as mere commodities of which no moral obligation is necessary (Adams 1990; Lefebvre 1991). H. Jay Dinshah formally established veganism as a movement in the USA in 1960. Dinshah's wife's parents were active in the Vegan Society of England. This relationship greatly contributed to the evolution of the American Vegan Society. Dinshah was a
lifelong vegetarian, and then transitioned into veganism in 1957 (Iacobbo 2004; 2006). The American Vegan Society embraced the principles of its British predecessor, advocating a strictly plant-based diet and lifestyle free of animal products. In addition, the American Vegan Society championed the philosophy of ahimsa, a Sanskrit word interpreted as "dynamic harmlessness," along with encouraging service to humanity, nature, and creation. In other words, in order to practice veganism, it is not sufficient to simply avoid specific foods and products; it is necessary to actively participate in beneficial selfless action as well. (Stepaniak 2:2000)

For those who decided to transition into veganism, they collectively felt that vegetarians still benefited from the exploitation and suffering of non-human animals (Zamir 2004). The departure from vegetarianism into veganism and the establishment of the American Vegan Society occurred during a time in the USA in which corporations began to dominate animal farming. Activists and philosophers felt these agribusinesses treated animals cruelly to gain maximum profit for minimum costs. Philosophers such as Heidegger and Derrida compared the treatment of animals in agribusiness to the Nazi death camps (Calarco 2008). Most notably, the era of the American Vegan Society took place at a time in the world in which hundreds of thousands of people were fighting against all manifestations of Western empire and colonialism. Marginalized groups who had suffered under colonialism were uprising and resisting, creating new paradigms and legislation to think about human rights, treatment of nature and non-human animals, women's rights, anti-racism, decolonization, and gay and lesbian people (Malesh 2005).

The cheeseburger and milkshake are symbolic of the stereotypical USA citizen's identity, exemplified by the thousands of meat and dairy centered fast-food chains across the USA (Schlosser 2002). These chains are normative spaces of consumption that tell a story: eating animals or animal byproducts is normal; it has always been this way. Hence, most people eat animals and byproducts in spaces that make invisible the ways in which these items arrive to
their plate. The advertisements (symbolic images) in spaces such as McDonald's represent this culture, only showing the end product (i.e. “hamburgers”) to the consumer; erased from the menu are the uneven relationships of power and privilege that occupy the food commodity chain (Morgan et. al 2006; Barndt 2008; Gottlieb and Josh 2010; Liu and Apollon 2011). Such concealment can be found in all food sectors. For example, consumers do not see how chickens bred for Kentucky Fried Chicken products are treated in a way that is considered inhumane (Griffiths and Steinbrecher 2010). Nor do they see images of the filthy and inhumane ways in which battery cage chickens and downer cows are treated in factory farms (Eisnitz 2007).

There are many reasons why people practice veganism, ranging from religious beliefs to social justice activism. For example, ethical vegans believe that it is immoral and unethical to cause harm to animals and/or eat animals. They choose to abstain from animal consumption but also think it is unethical to be involved in any type of 'animal exploitation', such as visiting a zoo. There are those vegans who place an emphasis on going vegan for 'health' reasons, connecting veganism to “ethical” treatment of the body (Soifer 2002). There are vegan environmentalists who believe that raising animals for consumption wastes more resources than simply growing plants for human consumption (Jacobson 2006; Kheel 2008). There are those who practice ethical veganism because they believe it is an extension of feminist activism; for them, breeding animals to produce milk, eggs, and baby animals for human consumption exploits and abuses the reproductive rights of these animals (Adams 1990; Adams and Donovan 1995; Kemmerer 2011). There are those who believe that animals used for human consumption come from the same mentality that has justified human cruelty such as Jewish Holocaust and slavery of blacks in the USA; hence, they believe that ethical veganism is the path to least likely produce people who
advocate colonial racism and genocide (Spiegel 1996; Patterson 2002). In the next section, I will provide a brief genealogy of race and feminist analysis in vegan scholarship.

**Brief Genealogy of Racial and Feminist Analysis in Veganism**

Alvenia Fulton claimed to be the first Black American to start and own a health foods store and vegetarian restaurant in the mid 1960s (Semmes 2012). Fulton believed that the Black American community was suffering from nutritional related diseases that were rooted in soul food practices (Smith 1974). For Fulton and her followers, holistic vegetarianism could be an antidote to post-industrial food philosophies (Watkins 1976). Implicit also in Fulton’s philosophies was that “natural” dairy-free vegetarian practices could simply erase the culinary and nutritional consequences of colonialism experienced collectively by Black people in the USA.

In the 1960s, infamous Black American vegetarian Dick Gregory⁶ would apply what he learned from Fulton. He declared that the collectivity of Black Americans cannot fully liberate themselves from racism and colonialism until they critically examine and change their "unhealthy" soul food habits (Gregory 1974). Other than appearing in *Ebony, Essence,* and *Jet* magazines for African American audience, and a few other popular magazines like *Vegetarian Times,* there is minimal scholarship written about how Fulton’s vegetarian philosophies were influenced by her religious, political, and nutrition beliefs. Though Witt (2004) and Semmes (2012) do write about her, she is outshined by the tremendous attention given to Dick Gregory by both authors. Though it has been difficult to find much about Fulton, it is likely that she, as well as Dick Gregory, have significantly influenced a lineage of Black vegans and vegetarians in the later part of the twentieth century. Although brief, *Sacred Woman* acknowledges Fulton as one of the ‘elders’ whose work she carries on (Afua 2000).
During the 1970s, there would be a significant shift in pro-vegetarian and pro-vegan philosophies. The rationale of animal defense and later "feminist ethics of care" would be the driving force behind a new era of pro-vegan and vegetarian movements. Peter Singer, a philosopher during the 1970s, followed in the footsteps of Heidegger and Derrida (Calarco 2008). By writing about the place of non-human animals (NHAs) in his acclaimed Animal Liberation (1975), Singer suggested that cruel treatment of animals is symptomatic of a system that had justified racism and sexism. Singer calls this treatment of animals ‘speciesism.’ Speciesism is the phenomenon in which human beings privilege the human species over other living beings, justifying the use of non-human animals for food, clothing, entertainment, etc. Singer proposed that NHAs should be afforded "rights" such as humans are. Though a controversial subject, in terms of comparing speciesism to other ‘-isms' (Singer 1975; Freeman 2008:31), this framework has been quite dominant in the post 1970s critical animal studies and pro-vegetarian and vegan scholarship; particularly amongst those who feel that one cannot understand racism and sexism, as well as capitalism and Western colonialism without taking into account speciesism. Though Singer has persuaded thousands of people to consume in a way that alleviates pain and suffering, it is noteworthy that this father of the contemporary animal liberation movement engages in ethical arguments from a lineage of Eurocentric masculinist and liberalist philosophy (Adams 1994; Adams and Donovan 1995; Donovan and Adams 2007; Luke 2007).

Shortly after Singer published Animal Liberation (1975), Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco would create the now widely known pro-vegan/vegetarian organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in 1980 (Iacobbo 2004; 2006). Most of their small membership had been students from George Washington University and members of the
Vegetarian Society of D.C. Though there are many other well-known animal liberation organizations throughout the United States, it is PETA that is a household name in connection to "animal rights" and "veganism/vegetarianism" (Julius 2012). Since its inception, and explored in chapter two, PETA has been accused of employing racially insensitive tactics to sell the message of animal rights to the mainstream population (Deckha 2008; Harris 2009). There are feminist and critical animal studies scholars who do not consider Newkirk's approach to animal liberation as the feminist ideal (Danis 2007; Deckha 2008; Glasser and Bron 2008). It wouldn't be until 1990, that the canon of critical vegan feminism would emerge (Adams 1990).

Up until the 1990s, critical feminist engagement with animal rights and veganism/vegetarianism in the West had been silent in the mainstream vegan discourse. Sexual Politics of Meat (Adams 1990) was one of the first books to employ "feminist ethics of care" logic for abstaining from animal and animal by-products consumption. "Just as feminist theory needs to be informed by vegetarian insights, animal rights theory requires an incorporation of feminist principle. Meat is a symbol for what is not seen but is always there- patriarchal control of animals" (Adams 1990:16). Most of post-1980s scholarship about feminist-vegan/vegetarian critical theory focused on the faults of 'patriarchy' and/or 'male-stream' thought within animal ethics. However, rarely, if ever did these authors consider how racial formation affected their own scholarship and world-view about food and animal ethics. This is indicative of a dominant white and middle-class feminist standpoint. Such a dominant standpoint has historically engaged in feminism with the assumption that everyone is white, middle-class, and from the global North (Frankenberg 1993; Collins 2000). However, there are omnivorous ecofeminists that argue vegan feminism creates the myth that women are "naturally" suited for supporting veganism because they are not "natural" predators (hunters) like males are (Plumwood 2000). Such a theory stems
from a perceived world history of food access being connected to women as 'gatherers' and men as 'hunters.' However, some scholars argue that it can be rather essentialist to imply that women are non-predatory and were never 'natural' hunters while men were the opposite (George 1994; Plumwood 2000). Sacred Woman serves to show that what is absent from the canon of vegan feminist ethics-of-care is a better understanding of how "gender" and "patriarchy" are not universal notions; furthermore they are complicated by the racial dynamics that whiteness produces.

Missing from the scholarly literature on pro-vegan philosophies of the 1960s-1990s are epistemologies that challenge how whiteness configures vegan methodology and rationale. One doesn't really see such contributions until nearly 20 years after The Sexual Politics of Meat was published. In 2009, Harris examines PETA's "Animal Liberation" 2005 campaign, which compared the animal farming industry to Black slavery in the USA. She tries to explain why, even though she is pro-vegan animal rights proponent, it is inappropriate for PETA to use institutionalized racism as a comparison to the treatment of livestock animals in the USA (Harris 2009). Such a position for a vegetarian and animal rights philosopher clashes against slightly earlier works by pro-vegan animal rights defense scholars who claim that Black slavery and the Jewish Holocaust are comparable to speciesism (Spiegel 1996; Patterson 2002).

In 2010, Journal of Critical Animal Studies published one of the first issues that would focus on veganism from a critical race perspective (Harper 2010b; Serrato 2010). Such recent contributions have expanded the scholarship on food and ethical consumption by creating academic and literary spaces to discuss race in a way that critical food and critical animal studies scholarship basically have ignored. Indeed, though such contributions are slowly being published in the academy, non-white vegans have, and are, producing epistemologies that barely hit the

In 2010, I published the edited volume *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health and Society* (Harper 2010). It was the first book of its kind to capture the experience of Black female vegans in the USA. In my introduction, I explain that in a country in which racialized-sexualized hierarchies of power are the norm, Black women will collectively approach vegan philosophy in a way that is significantly different from the standard white middle-class vegan (Harper 2010). That same year, Tracey McQuirter’s *By Any Greens Necessary* vegan guidebook was published, specifically acknowledging the politics of what it means to be a Black female in the USA (2010).

In 2010, Black American vegan activist DJ Cavem Moetavation, released hip-hop vegan album *Teacher's Lounge*. The album fuses critical issues of structural racism and poverty, with hip-hop philosophy and pedagogies, to produce an alternative vegan epistemology in response to the mainstream. Similarly, Supa Nova Slom released his book *The Remedy* (2010) to specifically address the "ill" health and food status of brown and Black hip-hop generation. Even though they are not books, online sites such as *Decolonial Food for Thought, Vegans of Color* (2012), and *Food Empowerment Project* (2011) are deeply critical pro-vegan websites that guide people
through veganism while engaging with the fact that racism, Eurocentrism, white supremacy, neoliberalism, and colonialism have all deeply affected the lived experiences of most people living in the global North.

The above-mentioned literature, websites, and musical media all arise from lived experiences and document a particular cultural expression just like the work of Singer, Adams, and Donovan. However, what is noteworthy is that they mostly exist outside of the mainstream academic canon. This is because they disrupt the fundamental tenets of the traditional canon in pro-vegan and animal liberation studies which assumes that everyone has a white, middle class, and global North relationship with food and animals (Deckha 2012; Nocella 2012). This new ‘race-conscious’ canon of veganism acknowledges that veganism cannot be ‘post-racial.’ For this canon, decolonial politics and resistance against the value system of Eurocentric whiteness are fundamentally rooted in, if not central to, their food and nutritional activism. In addition, these alternative vegan scholars and activists reflect a more democratized access to food and health knowledge. That means this knowledge is more easily accessible via the medium of music, non-academic writing, and online social media tools.

The next section will provide my chosen methodologies to engage in critical race material analysis of the three vegan food guides.

**Methodologies**

**Racial Formation and Critical Studies of Race**

This dissertation will be drawing from the canon of racial studies that understand race to be a social construction with political, geographical, and economic consequences. I will not be drawing from the canon that traditionally thought race to be biological (Tucker 2002). Nor will I be drawing from the modern theories that came out of the Chicago School of sociology. These
theories promoted the idea that ‘racial assimilation’ would achieve equality for non-whites (Omi and Winant 1994).

Critical Race Studies of the 1970s emerged from many, but I will focus on the dominant influence of two critical thinkers: DuBois and Frantz Fanon. The sociology of race during DuBois's era was still very much produced through a white male supremacist lens, but DuBois began to question the fundamentals of racial study itself. During the early part of the twentieth century, DuBois began studying the studier (white male sociologists) and the “objectivity” they espoused as “authority” to speak about the racial problems.

At the heart of Du Bois’s critical race theory, then, was a critical theory—a critique of theory itself. In The Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois formulated the problem succinctly as a failure on the part of the theorists to study the problems of racialized people instead of reducing such peoples to the problems themselves. (Gordon 1999: 24)

In the mid twentieth century, Frantz Fanon (2004 and 2008) helped to lay the foundation for critical race discourse within an era of global decolonization. Taking a Freudian psychoanalytical approach to anti-colonialism and decolonization, Fanon addressed the collective emotional and mental processes of colonized peoples of African descent living in white colonies. Fanon’s constant reference to trauma and psychological scarring is one of the most provocative and innovative aspects of his scholarship (2004 and 2008). This Fanonian strain of thought significantly influenced the direction of creating a post-structural approach to the phenomenon of race for the later half of the twentieth century. Post-structuralists understand that one cannot study phenomenon in a vacuum. Instead, one must interrogate how discursive structures and processes construct and constitute particular phenomenon. Such an analytical approach to phenomenon of race would lead to the establishment of Critical Race Theory (referred to as CRT).
In the 1980s, CRT scholarship contested the American myth that the American legal system, state, and national policies treat all of its citizens fairly and without racial discrimination (Williams 1991; Bell 1992; Crenshaw 1995; Delgado 1995; Bell 1996). CRT asserts that race still does matter, despite a post-Civil Rights era. Racism is so deeply embedded in the fabric of American society that it is made invisible in a society that professes meritocracy and colorblindness (Chapman 2010). Most notably, CRT argues that the law is not neutral and that it serves to maintain the interests of neoliberal whiteness (Bell 1996; Lipsitz 2006).

In 1986, introduced to the canon of CRT was the theory of racial formation, which is a

Sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed...[R]acial formation is a process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized. Next we link racial formation to the evolution of hegemony, the way in which society is organized and ruled. (Omi and Winant 1994:56)

Racial formation theory creates a better understanding of racism as well as other inequalities such as classism, sexism, and nationalism that are linked. Social structure and cultural representation are both implicit in racial formation and inextricably connected. “Racial projects do the ideological ‘work’ of making these links. A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (Omi and Winant 1994:56) Integral to this dissertation is how resources are extracted and unevenly distributed along particular racial line, and within the food commodity chain. How are they commoditized, and how do racial projects, such as neoliberal whiteness, configure who has the privilege to consume vegan commodities and who must be exploited to harvest and produce them?

Patricia Hill Collins and Black Feminist Theorizing
Black feminism is rooted in how antebellum Black slavery in the Americas created an uniquely oppressive situation. Black females had to endure both institutionalized racism and sexual violence. Authors within this canon argue that contemporary Black females experience these legacies as sexism, racism, class struggle and sexualized-racialized violence within a world of globalized capitalism (Davis 1983; Combahee River Collective 1986; hooks 1992; Collins 2000; Collins 2004; Collins 2006).

I will be employing a Collinsian Black feminist discursive analysis of Afua’s vegan ‘methodology of the oppressed’ to reveal how Afua’s Afrocentric veganism both contest and maintain racist-colonial ideologies about race, gender, class, sexual orientation and consumerism. Collins scholarship is particularly useful because she focuses on how ‘new racism’ is being framed by global capitalism and a global commodity chain:

The African slave trade has a global reach and its legacy created the contemporary African Diaspora...People of African descent are routinely disadvantaged in this global economy in which corporations make the decisions and in which "the company is free to move; but the consequences of the move are bound to stay." Within a global context...they are the ones who lack control over oil, mineral wealth, or other natural resources on their land; who lose their land to global agribusiness; and who are denied basic services of electricity and clean water, let alone the luxury goods of the new information age. (Collins 2004:33)

Loss of natural resources and land to produce ‘healthy’ foods, due to slavery, is a significant theme throughout Sacred Woman. Afua proposes that Black women regaining control over nutritional resources must be achieved to ensure true Black liberation. My engagement with a Collinsian framework will add new ways of thinking about the effects of new racism and new forms of consumer-capitalism on Black health texts such as Sacred Woman. The grammar applied to food in Sacred Woman (Afua 2000) communicates a unique standpoint: despite the structural and institutional racisms enacted upon the collective Black USA population, ‘race-conscious’ health texts like Sacred Woman reflect the privileged standpoints of hetero-
normativity, middle-class status, and especially a global North consumer. While Collins is sympathetic to the plight of Black women’s loss of resources from the African Slave Trade, my analysis of Sacred Woman pushes her work further. I question what it means for Sacred Woman to “liberate” Black females, but with a type of tunnel vision: one that neglects any critical engagement with the impact neoliberalism has on upholding new forms of slavery within the vegan commodity chain.

**Critical Studies of Whiteness: Neoliberal and World-Systems Perspectives**

The canon of critical whiteness studies analyzes how whiteness functions at the structural, systemic, and institutional levels. I will be mostly using the term neoliberal whiteness to describe the contemporary era of racial-power structures and capitalism that the three vegan guides under analysis were created and situated within. Neoliberalism operates as a major component in forming the racialized consciousness of the global North and West (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez 2002; Maldonado Torres 2008). Hence, I will be using the term racialized consciousness which will help examine the ways in which consciousness is shaped in terms of white racist social structures” (Farr 2004: 144-145). I extend this to examine the ways in which meanings applied to food objects are shaped in terms of white racist social structures. Decolonial world-systems analysis will be utilized to explore meanings applied to the food objects advocated or denounced within the three vegan guides.

Decolonial world-systems theory allows me to build on the traditional models of world-systems analysis by Wallerstein (1974). Wallerstein’s model seeks to understand phenomenon through a classical Marxist analysis of the global commodity chain. It reveals that ‘modernization’ and ‘development’ will not yield socio-economic equality for all who participate. Contemporary modernization theory assumes that the world has been fully
decolonized and that developmentalism (i.e. neoliberalism) will resolve the negative consequences of colonialism (i.e. poverty, imperialism, racial inequality, and white supremacy) (Madldonado-Torres 2004; Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2007). However, such traditional models neglect to consider how most “modern” day global North consumers are ignorant about the exploitative nature of commodity chains. Such ignorance is a direct affect of their geopolitical and epistemic locations within spaces of “modernity” (Sandlin and McLaren 2010). The canon of decolonial world-systems analysis reveals that the coloniality of power situates our epistemologies of ethics within a specific region of the world-system (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodrígues 2002). ‘Coloniality’ articulates

‘colonial situations’ in the present period in which colonial administrations have almost been eradicated from the capitalist world-system. By ‘colonial situations’ [this means] the cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression/exploitation of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racialized/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations. Five hundred years of European colonial expansion and domination formed an international division of labor between Europeans and non-Europeans that is reproduced in the present so-called ‘post-colonial’ phase of the capitalist world-system (Grosfoguel xxi: 2007).

It is no surprise that these spaces of coloniality (periphery zones) in which food sources are extracted, overlap with regions of the world that have already been colonized by the global West. Neoliberal whiteness has replaced the existence of colonial administrations to ensure that these periphery zones of food sources remain in service to the global North and West.

Chapter Summaries

Chapters two through four all have a central underlining theme: “ethical” bodies can be “achieved” through “proper” vegan consumption, which will therefore create “ethical” kitchens,
communities, nations, and planet. Such constructions of “ethical” are in conflict amongst the three guides analyzed. Though seemingly unrelated to each other at first glance, such conflict over food ethics represents how these guides are primarily affected by whiteness and neoliberalism. Such effects are articulated through critical race materialist analysis of the relationships these guides have to foods and equipment they either condone or admonish.

Chapter two is titled “’Never Be Silent’: On Trayvon Martin, PETA and the Packaging of Neoliberal Whiteness”. Vegan tomato products and So Delicious vegan ice cream are advocated as “ethical” and “cruelty-free” in PETA’s online Vegan Shopping Guide (referred to as VSG). Chapter two will engage critical race materialist and decolonial analysis of the meanings PETA has applied to these two commodities. Such analysis will reveal how PETA’s marketing of vegan products, as “cruelty-free,” conceals human exploitation that makes these foods possible. In conclusion, I show how the meanings PETA applies to vegan commodities, and their ‘anti-racist’ use of Trayvon Martin’s 2012 murder, signify how both post-humanism and post-racialism work to dysconsciously conceal the violence of neoliberalism and racism.

Chapter three is titled, “Feed a Wom[b]man, Feed the Black Nation: Afrocentric Vegan Politics and Queen Afua’s Kitchen.” In this chapter, I analyze the foods that Sacred Woman recommends or denounces as the way to ‘purify’, ‘decolonize,’ and ‘liberate’ Black women from legacies of colonialism. First, through an Afrocentric framework, I will show how Afua’s vegan philosophy combats racist conceptualizations of Black women as “unfeminine” and “breeders.” After this analysis, I use Black feminist theory to explore how the meaning Afua places on particular “liberating” foods, simultaneously reproduce heterosexist, ableist, and middle-class ‘reformist’ conceptualizations of a ‘healthy’ Black nation.
Lastly chapter four is named “Food Empowerment Project and the Underside of Veganized Modernity.” Food Empowerment Project (FEP) is a pro-vegan food justice organization in South Bay California. They place great emphasis on farmworker rights and alleviating environmental racism. I show that FEP’s Ethical Food Choices guide exposes how neoliberalism, corporate-capitalist profits, and hyper-consumerism dictate “ethical” vegan marketing schemes and labels such as “sustainable,” “ethically sourced,” and “Fair Trade.” Through the semiotics of coloniality, FEP achieves this by re-signifying the neoliberal meaning of ‘sustainable’ palm oil products and cocoa, to reflect the cruel and unethical conditions they create. In this chapter, analysis of FEP’s boycott of popular ‘eco-conscious’ and ‘sustainable’ labeled vegan brands Earth Balance® and Clif Bar® will be undertaken.
Chapter Two: “Never Be Silent”: PETA and the Packaging of Neoliberal Whiteness

Vegan tomato products and So Delicious vegan ice cream are advocated as “ethical” and “cruelty-free” in PETA’s online Vegan Shopping Guide (Appendix 6, page 148). This chapter will engage critical race materialist and decolonial analysis of the “ethical” meanings PETA has applied to these two products. Such analysis will reveal how PETA’s marketing of vegan products, as “cruelty-free,” conceals human exploitation that makes these foods possible. I examine the meanings PETA applies to vegan commodities and the ‘anti-racist’ use of Trayvon Martin’s 2012 murder, signify how both post-humanism and post-racialism work to dysconsciously conceal the violence of neoliberalism and racism.

Though there are many other well-known animal liberation organizations throughout the United States, it is PETA that is the number one household name in connection to "animal rights" and "veganism/vegetarianism" (Julius 2012). PETA has over two million members and is the most recognized pro-vegan animal rights organization in the world (Griffiths and Steinbrecher 2010). For PETA, choosing to go vegan is about moral obligations to non-human animals as well as no longer remaining silent about the tremendous amount of suffering that animal commodities have created for animals (Kim 2011; Kemmerer 2011). They also encourage activism through protest.

PETA and their volunteers protest spaces of animal-consumption, often by occupying restaurants like McDonald’s® and Kentucky Fried Chicken® (KFC). It is common to protest KFC® with posters that show how chickens are crammed into cages, are constantly sick, and how water and land are being polluted by conventional farming practices (Griffiths and Steinbrecher 2010). PETA’s images tell a counter-narrative to the KFC® ads: animals used for food is unethical; the American consumer should know and feel ethically obligated to boycott the
cultural practice of consuming animals (Malesh 2005; Griffiths and Steinbrecher 2010). PETA’s activists have transformed spaces of exploitation into more just and liberated spaces for farm animals such as cows and chickens.

PETA has persuaded a significant number of people to pass legislation that make agribusiness accountable for animal welfare. For example, many companies that once used battery cages for hens, have been pressured to remove hens from cages and allow them to roam freely (Braunschweig-Norris 2005). Over the past 15 years, PETA has successfully convinced *Wendy’s®*, *Safeway®*, *Burger King®* and *McDonald’s®* to implement policies that treat their chickens, cows, and pigs more humanely (Girffiths and Steinbrecher 2010). Such a cultural shift in the way in which chickens are perceived as sentient beings that deserve freer space, could not have been possible if it weren't for organizations like PETA (Braunschweig-Norris 2005; Matheny and Leahy 2007).

PETA should be understood as being a pro-vegan animal-rights organization first and foremost. PETA’s founder and spokes-person, Ingrid Newkirk, believes that social justice activism, based on identity politics cannot achieve liberation for animals (Kemmerer 2011). For her, human beings should be in solidarity with all beings, and not focus on identity politics (i.e. identifying as “African American” vs. “we are all human”) (Kemmerer 2011). Furthermore, Newkirk prefers that PETA does not confine the label of ‘women’ to human beings. Instead, ‘women’ should encompass all females of all species, such as the hens whose reproductive systems have been commoditized to produce babies that are then taken away from them for consumption or profit (Kemmerer 2011).

This post-humanist framing of veganism acknowledges that cruelty and suffering should not be permissible to all animals (human and non-human) (Francione 2000; Francione 2008;
Wolfe 2009). Such post-humanist framework seeks to understand what an ethical world can look like if human beings think about justice beyond humanism. Most importantly, organizations such as PETA believe that one cannot avoid replicating the world of human atrocities (i.e. antebellum Black chattel slavery and Nazi Holocaust) without acknowledging its roots in speciesism (Kim 2011). This is a central and a critical point to PETA’s animal rights rationale; it represents a type of “post-empire” consciousness that attempts to understand how pre-empire human injustices were so easily successful and accepted by the status quo.

For many, veganism is also in response to how nature (i.e. non-human animals) has been commoditized. Such commodification tortures, maims, and kills millions of non-human animals per year for human food, clothing, medicine, and entertainment (Kheel 2007; Torres 2008; Wolf 2009; Twine 2010; Wrenn 2011). Pro-vegan organizations such as PETA position themselves as a response to the commodification of non-human animals. The exposure to animal suffering, by organizations like PETA, has created a significant vegan consumer activist movement. Many people, upon learning of how commodification of animals creates so much suffering, have chosen to become a member of the vegan movement through PETA. Central to this movement is choosing to buy vegan products as their weapon against globalized speciesism (Wrenn 2011).

Are there limits to vegan consumerism as a way to combat the globalization of speciesism? Some scholars argue that it is unclear that pro-vegan consumer activism truly alleviates the exploitation and suffering that neoliberalism and globalized capitalism causes (Torres 2008; Wrenn 2011); particularly since a consumer-capitalist moral economy by default, exploits all (Chomsky 1999; Smith 2008; Wrenn 2011). In the next section, I will show how the VSG operates as “pedagogy of consumption” for people who want to no longer support the commoditization of animals.
**PETA’s Vegan Shopping Guide as Pedagogy of Consumption**

PETA has many pro-vegan animal liberation pedagogies, ranging from teaching people how to leaflet and protest, to how to discuss animal welfare in schools (PETA 2011b). The VSG is a “pedagogy of consumption,” teaching people how to consume a certain way that will have positive outcomes for the lives of non-human animals. However, within a critical pedagogy framework, consumption refers to more than the acquisition, use, and divestment of goods and services. Consumption represents a site where power, ideology, gender, and social class circulate and shape one another. Consumption involves the study of particular moments, negotiations, representational formats, and rituals in the social life of a commodity. The consumption of cultural objects by consumers can empower, demean, disenfranchise, liberate, essentialize, and stereotype. (Denzin 2010: xiv)

PETA’s VSG teaches people that they can change animal cruelty practices through the sites of their kitchens and grocery stores. On the introduction to the VSG, only accessible online, PETA writes:

> It's never been easier—or tastier!—to give your kitchen a cruelty-free makeover. Major health-food chains chock-full of animal-friendly fare are popping up everywhere, and mainstream supermarkets have become meccas for followers of meat- and dairy-free diets. The best part? With PETA's shopping guide, you don't have to strain your eyes! (PETA 2011a)

PETA’s focus on the kitchen as a site to stock “ethical” food products becomes a space to create an “ethical” vegan body. It symbolizes the potential buying power of creating spaces of animal liberation.

The VSG is geared towards people who want to transition into veganism, but are unable to figure out how to navigate the animal-product centric space of most grocery stores. This beginner guide has no doubt helped many omnivores map out their grocery store into a vegan-
friendly walk. It has also helped to dispel the stereotype that being vegan means one has too few food options. Through PETA’s guide, the new vegan consumer is “educated” to believe that to create a “cruelty-free” kitchen is a one-stop consumer act that simply involves buying PETA pre-approved vegan products. As soon as the money is handed over to the cashier for an exchange of vegan products, one need not think any further about the concept of "cruelty-free;" their consumer choice to "go vegan" is enough. Now they are on their way to making their kitchen "cruelty-free." In a sense, “being vegan” is enacted through one’s role as a modern citizen consumer. Consumerism became a common avenue of identity formation since a post-World War II era in the global West (Sandlin and McLaren 2010). Consumption must be understood as not just a singular act, but also a process that is imbued with social, cultural, and economic practices.

The promise that the ideology of consumerism makes is that ‘consumption is the answer to all our problems; consumption will make us whole again; consumption will make us full again; consumption will make us complete again; consumption will return us to the blissful state of the ‘imaginary’ (Sandlin and McLaren 2010:4).

This ‘imaginary’ is the space of a PETA approved ‘cruelty-free’ kitchen. However, who has such ‘easy access’ to so many vegan choices?

On their Produce shopping guide section, PETA has written: "It’s as easy as (apple) pie to get your “Five a Day” (the number of servings of fruits and vegetables recommended by the American Cancer Society) when you eat a vegetarian diet. Fruits and vegetables are great sources of essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants” (PETA 2011f). Yes, it appears to be "obvious" that produce is, by default, "cruelty-free" of animal products. However, what is not being made transparent is that the people who are able to follow this guide must have access to produce that will satisfy daily nutritional requirements. Such access typically includes well-
stocked grocery stores and/or farmer’s markets. Access doesn’t just mean geographically ‘close’, but also includes monetary access as well. Implicit in this guide is that everyone has the privilege of consumer choice and the money to enact it.

There is a significant discrepancy between those who can afford and get transportation access to a diverse variety of produce versus those who cannot. The former are predominantly white middle to upper middle class demographic; the latter tend to be non-white and/or low-income populations (Freeman 2007; Liu and Apollon 2011; Liu 2012). Not only are the latter collectively unable to gain ‘easier’ access to a diverse variety of produce, they are quite often the very people who work within the most underpaid, unequal, and dangerous spaces of food production that make the items in the VSG, ‘easy as pie’ (Liu 2012). In a recent analysis on good food and good jobs it was concluded that an effective response to the inequities of the food system requires analysis and action that both acknowledge and address the economics and racial composition of the power elite and those most impacted. Generally, such strategy was lacking in both the good food and good jobs movements. Both worlds focus on their self-interests, without a broader vision of how race, class and gender are interconnected in the food chain for both producers and consumers (Liu 2012: 9)

A significant number of low-income and communities of color simply do not have access to healthier food options, as these communities are over run by liquor stores, fast food restaurants, and convenience stores (Food Empowerment Project 2011a). For example, companies selling nutritionally vapid foods, strategically target Black communities or Native American reservations. Nowhere in the VSG are people encouraged to think about what it means to have the power to enact veganism through the ‘ease’ of consumer choice. Despite the contemporary scholarship that shows how such structural racism impedes food choice (Eisenhauer 2001; Kumanyika 2008; Bedore 2010), this reality goes unmentioned in the VSG, as
well at the entire Peta.Org website. Hence, PETA’s Shopping Guide acts as a “map” to navigate consumers to/through what they assume they already have access to: a well stocked grocery store. Paying close attention to the tomato, the next section will examine how structural racism and human exploitation make a well-stocked grocery store ‘easy as pie’ for some.

NAFTA Makes It Possible: On the Vegan Tomato Trail of Structural Racism, Poverty, and Sexism

On their “Refrigerated and Frozen Foods” section of the VSG, PETA.org writes this introductory paragraph:

Convenience foods can be lifesavers for busy families on the go. Veggie lunch “meats” are the perfect filler for a low-fat, high-protein sandwich, while veggie hotdogs and burgers with “tater tots” on the side will quickly become the kids’ most-requested 10-minute meal. Frozen burger crumbles make veganizing grandma’s spaghetti sauce or secret meat loaf recipe a snap. Vegan versions of your favorite comfort foods—from pizza to pot pie to butter pecan ice cream—can be found in the frozen section of most supermarkets and health food stores. Go up to the attic and dust off your TV tray—new selections of vegan “TV dinners” are sprouting up in your grocer’s freezer case all the time. (PETA 2012c:1)

The above paragraph is laden with language that symbolizes the authentic [White] American family culinary experience. As a marketing ploy, it does make sense that PETA would select the aforementioned products as examples of what ‘everyone’ yearns for when they think of American “convenience foods.” When not addressing a specific racial or ethnic group in the USA, the default marketing language is a ‘universal’ or ‘post-racial’ approach that is actually embedded with codes of neoliberal whiteness; hence an authentic American experience is a ‘white’ experience (Nicholson 1998; Burton 2009).

Pre-packaged and already-made-to-buy hotdogs, burgers, ‘tater tots,’ pot pie, and pizza vividly ensure that ‘going vegan’ means one will not lose access to these cozy comfort foods
from a by-gone era. Such objects of convenience have come to define the post-World War II [white] American identity (Anderson 1971; Inness 2005). Such convenience foods were introduced to women as necessary items to please the bellies of their husbands and children (Neuhaus 1999, 2003). To become the new ‘modern’ citizen, one was expected to adhere to the ideology that material accumulation is a sign of [white] progress and being ‘civilized.’ Also, when PETA writes, “veganizing grandma’s spaghetti sauce or secret meat loaf recipe a snap,” it is a marketing scheme to signify nostalgia that grandmothers cook ‘home-made’ food for their grandchildren. Such nostalgia can be ‘easily’ purchased via the promise of food technologies (see Outka 2003; Titterton and Fioroni 2009). However, whose nostalgia?

There are many people in which the mention of ‘grandma’s spaghetti sauce and secret meatloaf’ does not illicit memories of their grandmother’s cooking. For example, my grandmother and many other people of African descent experienced elders making traditional soul food, which did not include spaghetti and meatloaf. Such elders prepared meals that did not reflect PETA’s taken for granted whiteness, which is assumed in PETA’s marketing of vegan convenience foods (Rumbaut 1997; Heneghan 2007; Burton 2009b;). The aforementioned convenience foods also signify a collective American relationship with food objects that did not exist before World War II: access to ‘already made food’ on the shelves of a grocery store that completely obscure its genealogy in a liberal market economy. The ingredients that comprise the perfectly packaged food objects start off as ‘natural resources’ (i.e. plants and/or animals). They then must be raised, farmed, cultivated, harvested, transported, processed, packaged, and ultimately sold to the new ‘modern’ convenience shopper. Mythologizing via branding (Kniazeva and Belk 2007) obscures the injustice disproportionately enacted upon racialized
minorities that harvest these resources. Who picks the tomatoes that end up as ingredients in the foods that PETA’s frozen foods guide section promotes?

Although this is only a small sample, here are some of the brands approved by PETA’s VSG: *Amy's Spinach Pizza®, Amy's Roasted Vegetable Pizza®, Moosewood Mediterranean Tomato & Rice Soup®, Tofutti Pizza Pizzaz®* and *Yves Veggie Pizza Pepperoni®* (PETA 2011a). What these products all have in common is the ingredient of the tomato. Tomatoes are obviously not from an animal. However, missing from the guide is a critical genealogy of the tomato commodity chain’s role in sustaining the gender and racial exploitation of females under NAFTA.

North America's access to tomatoes rely mostly on the labor of racialized minority females; many who work in the most environmentally toxic and inhumane conditions, to bring tomatoes to North America. However, to understand the implications of North Americans having access to tomatoes all year round, it is important to understand the intensive multi-layered genealogy of the tomato's roots. In what is now the nation of Mexico, colonialism destroyed the culture and biodiversity of the indigenous people's land-base and livelihood. Since European colonialism, indigenous people of Mexico were forcibly removed from their land, leaving most of them with only one option for survival: working for unlivable wages and relying on foods that are imported to them from the USA for their own sustenance. In 1994, the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) would also come to exacerbate problems of inequality and exploitation of indigenous populations, making it possible for North Americans to have even cheaper access to tomatoes all year long.

NAFTA was conceived in order to create the world’s largest free market, integrating the economic sectors of U.S.A., Canada, and Mexico. Unfortunately, what NAFTA did was also
allow market interests to trump basic human rights of already vulnerable populations, such as indigenous Mexican laborers. NAFTA represents how global industry employs racist and sexist stereotypes about females to maximize profit. There is an institutionalized belief that females make better tomato harvesters and maquiladora laborers (for tomato packing plants). This is not only sexual division of labor; it is racialized-sexual division of labor. Indigenous females are hired to work outside in the fields, harvesting the tomatoes. However, none of the sorters or packers is Indigenous but rather are lighter-skinned mestizas (Barndt 2002). Already using Mexico’s racist, colorist, and sexist beliefs about Indigenous people (Morris 2001), tomato corporations use the trope that Indigenous women are ‘closer to the land’ and nature. Hence, these women “should” be able to endure tremendous amounts of sun exposure, as well as pesticides sprayed onto the fields. They are also paid ten times less than the mestizas in the packing plants.

Housed in deplorable huts, without water, electricity, stores, or transport, they come as families to work in the fields and move from harvest to harvest. The women bear the brunt of this lack of infrastructure-cooking and washing, taking care of kids (even while working in the field), and dealing with their own exhaustion and the poor health engendered by the conditions of extreme poverty. Because their own regions offer even less opportunity, they are forced to suffer these jobs and the racist treatment built into them. (Barndt 2002: 87)

NAFTA and the WTO are newer and ever-expanding mechanisms to help achieve global economic power for the USA, which

began to cast transnational political economic issues in a newly racialized mold. This process reached new heights at the 2001 UN World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa, where the US did its best to undermine and marginalize demand for global racial justice. (Winant 2009: 37)

Within the socio-historical context of European and American colonialism/imperialism, to undermine global racial justice means that it is still ‘ethical’ to enslave and exploit a highly
disproportionate number of non-white people of the global South for the economic and social interests of a largely modern white middle to upper class global North and their corporate interests (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodriguez 2002). NAFTA is an example of sustaining an underlying narrative that there are permissible spaces of racialized-gendered suffering.

Simultaneously, the vegan cheese pizzas that the VSG advocates, suggests that it is not acceptable that cows suffer in "farming spaces" to produce milk for cheese (hence, the creation of vegan cheese for the pizza). Advocating vegan cheese pizza as "cruelty-free" allows PETA and its followers to be consciously anti-speciesist. Simultaneously, they are unconsciously uncritical, or unaware, of the racist spaces and economic policies (i.e. NAFTA) that make so many vegan commodities like tomatoes possible. It is noteworthy that the VSG or PETA.org do not provide one or two lines that ask readers to ask food companies about the quality of life of the people who harvest their ingredients: they are only encouraged to think about the quality of life of animals.

Though originally started as a dairy-free company to adhere to Jewish Kosher laws, Tofutti has become an incredibly popular brand amongst vegans in the USA. They are also a brand that PETA recommends as a provider of “cruelty-free” and convenient vegan comfort foods. If one goes to www.tofutti.com, they are greeted with a homepage that shows alternating images of all their products, including their enormously popular Tofutti Cutie® ice cream treats, Better than Ricotta Cheese®, and Pan Crust Pizza Pizzaz® (Tofutti 2012). The slogan of Tofutti is “Living Healthy Dairy Free.” Below is a picture of one of their products.
I will be focusing on their pizza product because of their use of tomatoes to make it.

When one clicks the hyperlink to go to the Tofutti Pizza Pizzaz® webpage, they are greeted with information about the product:

Now that’s an outstanding pan pizza! Pan Crust Pizza Pizzas has that great pizza parlor taste. Combines a delicious pant crust, zesty sauce and our dairy free Mozzarella cheese into a completely authentic, yet healthy pizza. (Tofutti 2012a)

The reader is assured that the pizza is authentic and that eating the pizza will be the same as eating a pizza at the pizza parlor; the taste will be indistinguishable because it is ‘authentic, yet healthy.’ The ingredients listed, which include crushed tomatoes, ensure the potential consumer that this authentic pizza product is ‘dairy free.’ Overall, the description of the product is focused on the potential “health” concerns of the buyer, who is assumed to be vegan, a Kosher Jew, and/or lactose intolerant. This food is marketed in a way that creates pleasure by incorporating the pleasant imagery of eating in a pizza parlor. For example, the semiotics of nostalgia is created by the use of the word ‘parlor’ versus ‘restaurant’. However, the ingredients in Pizza Pizzaz® lack a concrete genealogy that describe how and who has harvested the tomatoes and
other ingredients. I make this observation within the context of a post-2000 era of ethical labeling schemes that have become enormously popular in the USA.

What is notable about Tofutti’s webpage, is that nowhere on their products website do they talk about from where they source any of their ingredients, let alone tomatoes. There are no ‘ethical labels’ on their products. The twentieth first century marks a significant era of ‘ethical food’ products and marketing in which it is becoming more common to see the symbols of “fair trade,” “organic”, and “non-GMO,” plastered on the packaging of foods purchased in American stores (Lewis and Potter 2010; Sandlin and McLaren 2010). These symbols communicate to the buyer, how and where their foods (and other non-food items) have come to them. For example, buying a package of sugar with an “Equal Exchange®” (a form of ‘fair trade’) label on it symbolizes that the harvesters and producers of cane sugar are not enslaved on a plantation. These laborers are receiving livable wages while being given the right to unionize without fear of retaliation. Sugar, bananas, coffee, and cocoa have been commodities that have garnered the most attention over the past 15 years.

Within the context of ethical labeling schemes, tomatoes have not been given the same focus or concern, as the aforementioned products above. Premiere fair trade organizations such as Equal Exchange have focused mostly on consumer pedagogical strategies for sugar, coffee, bananas, and cocoa. However on October 03, 2012, Organic Alliance had a press release that stated they would be producing the first-ever Fair Trade organic tomatoes in Mexico, which will be marketed and distributed in the USA (Alliance 2012). Organic Alliance is a global company that grows and markets organic, fresh, and fair trade produce. Being the first company to offer organic fair trade tomatoes, this indicates that overall concern about ‘ethical’ tomato products is only just beginning to enter the collective consciousness of American consumers.
Returning back to Tofutti website, I perused the site to get an indication of what direction the company was heading towards. In terms of a code of ethics: Would they take into consideration the ‘health’ and ‘quality’ of life of those who harvest and packs their ingredients? I selected the “About Us” hyperlink and was greeted with a pictures of the founder, David Mintz, and his thoughts:

“I wake up every morning grateful, happy and ready to face new challenges. Many more mornings than I wish for, I awaken at 3:00 or 4:00am to head to a plant to oversee production. Quality control is huge and for me it is almost everything. Each product is like my baby and you don’t simply hand over your infant! I can’t no matter how hard I try or how skilled the people are on my team (and they are), I just can’t seem to let go. I simply just have to see it for myself. The product’s consistency, texture and taste are so very important to me.

We are not fake dairy we ARE LIKE dairy for millions and millions of people! Tofutti is their only option, a chance to eat like everyone else. I take that very, very seriously. My passion is nutrition and food. What can I say? I have no excuse, so I don’t try to make one, I am what I am. 60 – 90 million Americans are allergic to dairy or are intolerant. Then there are those who choose to be dairy-free for religious reasons and still those who choose for health to be gluten free, vegan, vegetarian or cholesterol free. I am committed to them first and foremost.”

After nearly 30 years David still creates, invents and feeds the world one soy bean at a time. (Tofutti 2012c:1)

David Mintz becomes the reason how and why vegans have access to Tofutti foods. We are narrated an image of Mintz waking up very early in the morning to oversee production and to ensure the ‘quality’ of the product. He is committed to the 60-90 million Americans with dairy restrictions. The above is an example of myth-making through food symbolism and epistemic power (Barthes 1972 and 1997). What is actually occurring is that Mintz is committed to an American who supports liberal market economy by buying commodities that will solve whatever ails them (i.e. lactose intolerance) or troubles their consciousness (i.e. speciesism or Kosher law requirements). Tofutti, through the representative voice of Mintz, reveals itself not to be
committed to the “health” of people who harvest the ingredients that make Pizza Pizzaz® (and other products) a reality. His quote is focused on Americans, and by default, not focused on the indigenous Mexican tomato laborers (in Mexico) or the tens of thousands of undocumented abused Mexican tomato laborers residing in the USA.

In December of 2012, I called Tofutti to inquire about the sourcing of their tomato ingredients. I asked if they were organic and if they knew how the harvesters and the packers of the tomatoes are treated. After several minutes on hold, the customer service representative returned to share with me that the tomato sauce does not come from organic tomatoes and that he does not know about the tomato source because they buy from a third party. When I asked if I could have the information of the third party source, I was put on hold. Several minutes later, I was told that they were not allowed to reveal this information because it is ‘proprietary information.’ The tomato commodity chain is only one aspect of how racism and NAFTA make the foods in the VSG possible. In the next section, So Delicious® Internet website, advocated by PETA, will be analyzed.

**PETA Approved: Getting your vegan chocolate “fix” through child slavery**

On the VSG Snacks, written is the following:

> Whether salty snacks or sweet treats are your passion, you’ll find lots to love in the snack aisle. Most pretzels, popcorn, and corn and potato chips are animal-free (except for some flavored varieties). Check the labels—you’ll find that a surprising number of cookies, crackers, pastries, energy bars, and other snack foods are free of hidden animal ingredients like eggs, butter, gelatin, whey, and casein. Chocoholics, rejoice! It’s all too easy to get your “fix” with chocolate cookies and dairy-free dark chocolate chips and bars. (PETA 2011d)

PETA then proceeds to advocate over 150 snacks, including So Delicious® chocolate desserts and Nestlé Double Chocolate Thin Mints ®. So Delicious®, by Turtle Mountain, is one of the
top selling vegan ice cream brand in the USA. They have won “best vegan ice cream awards by
the number one selling vegan magazine, VegNews, 2005-2010 (Turtle Mountain 2012). As a
matter of fact, on the “Our Favorite Products” (see Appendix 5 page 147 for partial list) section
of the VSG, So Delicious® brand makes it to the top of PETA’s list (PETA 2012c). However,
this favorite PETA product holds a secret: There are thousands of people on cocoa farms who
work as slaves to harvest chocolate for the global Western market.

The Ivory Coast exports fifty percent of the cocoa beans that are used in global chocolate
production (Hawksley 2001).

There is a surprising association between chocolate and child labor in the Cote
d'Ivoire...from which chocolate is made, under inhumane conditions and extreme
abuse. This West African country is the leading exporter of cocoa beans to the
world market. Thus, the existence of slave labor is relevant to the entire
international economic community. Through trade relations, many actors are
inevitably implicated in this problem, whether it is the Ivorian government, the
farmers, the American or European chocolate manufacturers, or consumers who
unknowingly buy chocolate [emphasis added] (Chanthavong 2002).

Furthermore, as of 2001, thousands of children from the country of Mali have been declared
"missing". Authorities believe that "at least 15,000 children are thought to be over in the
neighbouring Ivory Coast, producing cocoa...Many are imprisoned on farms and beaten if they
try to escape. Some are under 11 years old" (Hawksley 2001:1). Despite the human rights
violations that cocoa harvesting produces, PETA advocates Nestle® chocolate snacks and So
Delicious frozen vegan desserts. These are promoted as forms of consumer activism against the
globalization of speciesism. As of 2004, Nestlé® had been sourcing from West African child
slavery. Thus far, they will not disclose where they currently source their cocoa (Orr 2011).
However, I will focus on So Delicious because unlike Nestlé®, all of So Delicious® products are
vegan.
In 2007, So Delicious® frozen vegan desserts are described as the following:

While they’re not a company big enough to purchase fair trade chocolate, Turtle Mountain doesn’t use bone char-refined sugar, and they are certified organic. The company is also a supporter of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project, an organization helping [to] prevent sea turtles’ extinction. What better reason do I need to buy soy ice cream but to help sea turtles? (Veggies 123.com in Harper 2010b)

If Turtle Mountain could not afford to buy from sources that guarantee no slave labor, why didn’t they stop purchasing cocoa all together? Saving sea turtles and using sugar, free from bone char refinement, is what makes this vegan treat "ethical" and "cruelty-free." It cannot be overlooked that the "ethics" surrounding cocoa and sugar for Turtle Mountain and their customers, is not equally as important as ensuring that the sugar is "bone char free" and sea turtles are given the right to self-determination and survival. If it were, perhaps Turtle Mountain would have received enough complaints from consumers (or boycotts) to start buying cocoa that is certified slavery-free.

When I recently inquired about their cocoa source in August of 2012, Turtle Mountain replied

We currently purchase two types of cocoa that go into So Delicious products, depending on whether the product application is Organic or Conventional. Our Organic cocoa is already certified Fair Trade by FairTrade USA, and can be found in our certified organic products (Organic So Delicious) like our organic fudge bars, sandwiches, and ice cream quarts. Our non-organic lines currently use conventional (non-Fair Trade) cocoa powder, but we are committed to total supply chain integrity and will be working more closely with our ingredient manufactures on their social/labor practices going forward (Turtle Mountain 2012a).

On the So Delicious® “product-certifications” page, listed are definitions of nine “quality” specific labels for the consumer, including “Certified Vegan.” None of the certification labels indicate the “quality” of treatment that the laborers receive. Even though the company claims to
now use some FairTrade cocoa, it is noteworthy that there is no label and definition for that “quality” attribute (Turtle Mountain 2012b). Furthermore, everything about their products “assures” the customer that their purchases are “guilt-free,” as all the images on their site convey joy. Missing are depictions of those harvesting the ingredients for Turtle Mountain. On the “community” section, there are five images: all pictures show white people and one donkey.

(So Delicious 2012a)

The latest supporter of Turtle Mountain products is the Brees family. Pictured on the website is NFL quarterback Drew Brees. Brees is holding nine different types of So Delicious® products as his wife feeds him a chocolate covered frozen treat.
Turtle Mountain writes, “The donation amount is completely uncapped. So indulge away! The more delicious, creamy ‘ice cream’ you bite, lick & scoop, the more good we do together!” (So Delicious 2012). Hence, one is receiving double satisfaction from the taste of the dessert and by “knowing” that their dollars are supporting a “good cause.” To encourage one to buy even more Turtle Mountain products, 0.75% of net sales will go to the Brees family’s BreesDream foundation charity.

Below is how Turtle Mountain describes their products:

At Turtle Mountain, LLC we are keenly aware of how foods affect a person’s well-being and quality of life. As we listen to the needs and desires of our customers, we have learned that the success of our products is as much about what they do not contain as it is about what they do contain. To this end, we use only the highest quality ingredients, and employ the most stringent testing, production, and packaging methods. (So Delicious 2012b)

If they are keenly away of how food affects a person’s well-being, what “person” are they referring to? Why isn’t the consumer educated about the “needs and desire of our commodity chain laborers” or the health of the communities from which these ingredients are extracted,
harvested, and commoditized? The answer lies in geopolitical consumer privilege: USA, Korea, and Canada are where their products are sold. The ‘person’ that truly matters is a consumer who dictates what the neoliberal market should provide for them. The “well-being” and “quality of life” of the harvesters of ingredients that have long been associated with racialized slavery (sugar, vanilla, coffee and cocoa beans) are completely invisible on this PETA promoted website (as well as in the VSG itself). Now, this must not be interpreted as Turtle Mountain not knowing or caring about the true roots of these ingredients. The email I received from customer service implies that they are aware of issues of slavery in cocoa harvesting. However, the absence of these images and information on Turtle Mountain’s site maintains the mythology of ethical purity that buying their product creates.

Even though PETA does promote itself to be dedicated to and making transparent how animals suffer for human gratification, they don’t educate their supporters to think what “cruelty-free” means within a neo-liberalist consumer-capitalist economy. As a matter of fact, PETA’s Vegan Shopping Guide, pedagogy of “cruelty-free” consumption, simultaneously succeeds and fails at what PETA set out to do: to no longer stay silent about cruelty. Because the guide focuses on the vantage point of the consumer as a potential animal rights activist, the “winner” ends up being the consumer. He or she is “educated” that buying vegan products equals saving the cow, pig, chicken, or fish. This is true, as drinking coconut milk over cow milk means the cow has been spared. However, the guide fails the humans who harvests the vegan ingredients found in the products promoted by VSG. By not providing any information to the “winner” about the commodity chain, VSG signifies how their post-humanist approach to veganism actually masks a post-racial consumer culture invested in not really “knowing” where products originate. A by-product of neoliberalism, post-racialism not only epitomizes PETA and its VSG, it also
maintains structured ignorance about the significance of race and whiteness as organizing principles of the commodity chain.

In the next section I will explain how PETA strategically uses the Trayvon Martin murder to construct itself as ‘anti-racist’ and ‘cruelty-free.’ Lastly, I will explore the limits of post-humanist veganism within a moral economy of neoliberal whiteness.


In 2012, PETA released their new campaign Never Be Silent, which featured a three-minute video, premiering on their main web site Prime.PETA.org. Even though there are many things occurring on the home page of this campaign, I focus on PETA’s introductory message for the Never Be Silent campaign video. Titled “Trayvon Martin Case Reminds Us: Never Be Silent” the reader is greeted with the following letter:

We all have prejudices to dispel: the need to get away from thinking that “I” am important and special and “you” are not, and the frightened mindset that tells us that certain “others” are of no consequence. And homophobia, racism, sexism, speciesism, ageism, anti-Semitism, and other “[isms]” not only separate us from one another but also can lead from words to weapons (Newkirk 2012:1).

The above preface to the video explains how Martin’s racially motivated murder (racism) is in fact connected to animal exploitation and suffering (speciesism); hence, both are part of the same interlocking system that makes all oppressions (i.e. sexism, racism, speciesism) possible; this is a fundamental tenet of post-humanist veganism.

Further into the message, Newkirk also explains PETA’s understanding of how racism and slavery used to be the accepted norm:

Much of our bias is born of misunderstanding, of ignorance. In the days of institutionalized slavery in America, many educated people honestly believed that Africans could not feel pain nor experience parental love as white
people do, so it was acceptable to brand slaves and to auction off their children. Not too long ago, well-respected physicians rejected the idea that any woman could ever "be allowed" to go to medical school and earnestly believed that women would faint at the sight of blood. People also genuinely thought that it was acceptable to allow children to work in mills and factories. Although we have, in theory, abolished human slavery, recognized women's rights, and stopped child labor, we continue to enslave other species who, if we simply pay attention, show quite clearly that they experience parental love, pain, and the desire for freedom, just as we do. (Newkirk 2012:1)

After reading the letter, one is encouraged to click on the Internet video (PETA 2012h) to view the campaign. Viewers see many images of non-human animals being abused, tortured, and killed. Such graphic portrayal of animal suffering has been a strategy that PETA has used for years (Kim 2011).

PETA’s definition of “anti-racism” is epitomized by condemnation of both Trayvon Martin’s murder and antebellum black slavery: real racism are overt acts of violence, such as racial profiling, lynching, or enslaving Black people. It is not structural or covert. Furthermore, Newkirk’s epistemology of human slavery and child labor, as having been “eradicated”, is a profound signifier of how neoliberal whiteness shapes consciousness and one’s relationship/role to the commodity chain. Analysis of both tomato and cocoa ingredients, in brands advocated by PETA, concretely showed that forced child labor and slavery have not been, “in theory”, eradicated. Though nuanced, Newkirk presents the definitions of racism and slavery within the context of colonial whiteness. Coming from the standpoint of the global North, concealed is how neoliberalism has transformed racism and white supremacy into unrecognizable and ‘invisible’ processes to its beneficiaries (Goldberg 2008; 2012). From PETA’s definition of racism, the structural racism that makes NAFTA possible, resulting in ‘cheap’ commodities, are not even named or recognized as racism. In this sense,
neo-liberalism seeks to disconnect itself from its white supremacist history by rearticulating an anti-racist counter whiteness. The latter aims to differentiate itself from white supremacy by particularizing itself; it thereby insists upon the definitive discontinuity of its own enterprise and that of white supremacy. (Brewster 2005:2)

Newkirk recognizes that she is not the type of white person from the era of antebellum slavery, who honestly believed that Africans were inferior and deserving of racist based exploitation. Condemning Trayvon Martin’s murder and antebellum slavery creates a counter whiteness to the one exemplified by Martin’s murderer and institutional slavery of Africans. Newkirk’s counter-whiteness represents a post-empire (Sandoval 1997) white ‘consciousness’ that condemns overt forms of American racism and white supremacy.

PETA has a long history of using references to overt racist atrocities for its own animal rights agenda (Harris 2009; Kim 2011). Rarely, if ever, has the organization actually questioned how they frame “the problem of racism”, or how they collectively benefit from structural racism and perpetuate neoliberal whiteness as the given norm (Harris 2009; Kim 2011). To explore their absence of critical engagement with neoliberal whiteness, I typed the words “racism” and “racist” into the search engine of Prime.PETA.org. Search results showed three articles (“Trayvon Martin Reminds Us to Never Be Silent” was one of them12). Typing in the words “NAFTA,” “neoliberal,” and “whiteness” in the search engine yielded no results. Even though Peta.org has hundreds of articles and blog posts, there are no other articles or blog posts that focus on how racism manifests beyond individually violent racist acts, Jewish Holocaust, or antebellum slavery. The purpose of this exercise was to see how these concepts affect PETA’s framing of racism, anti-racism, as well as “never be silent.” This framing of racism also reveals the potential limitations of vegan activism as a “post-humanist” endeavor and in an era of neoliberal whiteness. In the next few pages, I will show such post-humanist limitations through a
brief analysis of PETA’s response to the NAACP’s accusations of racism, during their year 2005 Animal Liberation campaign.

In 2005, PETA launched an extremely controversial campaign. Title “Animal Liberation” the campaign paralleled the root causes of human suffering to the same causes as non-human animal suffering: "othering," domination, power, and discrimination (Bailey 2007:39). Their campaign did not only rely on text to convey their message, it employed images of Jewish Holocaust, Native American genocide, and anti-Black racism. Some of these images used were that of Black people in slavery and Black men having been lynched (Bailey 2007). In response to the NAACP who found the use of the images to be racist (Harris 2009), Newkirk responded, "We’re all animals, so get over it" (Kim 2011).

Though a post-humanist oriented response, the desire to have all humans embrace “we are all animals”, versus ‘human’, is a type of ‘white logic.’ Newkirk’s response assumed that every human being has had the same access to, and history of, “humanity” as the collectivity of white and middle class human beings in the USA (Deckha 2012). Since European colonialism, to undergo the process of white racial formation has meant that whites will be treated as ‘human’; that they are not an ‘animal’ (Collins 2004 and 2006; Harris 2009; Deckha 2012). However, Black people in the USA collectively equate being referred to or compared to an animal as ‘dehumanizing.’ During colonialism, ‘animal’ and ‘subhuman’ were used to describe and justify the exploitation of Africans for slavery (Bailey 2007; Harris 2009). Decades of such colonial abuse have influenced a collective Black consciousness to be "on edge," "enraged," and always fighting to prove to whites that Blacks are human (Fanon 2004; Harris 2009).

Animals - and for African Americans, especially primates - activate, I think, this urge to disassociate on the part of people of color, based on the intuition that our dignity is always provisional. PETA's animal liberation campaigns, from this vantage point, are "white." They assume a comfort in associating oneself with
animals and animal issues that people of color can only assume with difficulty. (Harris 2009: 27)

PETA’s 2005 response wasn’t just a white racialized vantage point; it was a discourse of rhetorical whiteness or ‘white talk’ (Frankenberg 1993; Warren 2003). As such, PETA "functions as a discourse, a fluid sea of values, beliefs, and practices that individuals draw upon, consciously and unconsciously, to exert cultural power and maintain a racial system that keeps whiteness safe as the cultural center" (Warren 2003:22). Post-humanism masks such a racial system that keeps neoliberal whiteness safe as the [invisible] global cultural center. Those, such as the NAACP, who seek to expose the white standpoint of PETA, are socially placed as 'impure' thinkers because they chose to expose this rhetorical body of whiteness that underlies PETA’s activism.

PETA’s response to the NAACP also reflects popular and contemporary views about racism in the USA: now that we live in a post-Civil Rights era, race and racism are no longer significant impediments for non-white people (Goldberg 2008; 2012). A manifestation of neoliberalism, such popular conceptions of race are referred to as ‘post-racial’ or ‘post-racialism.’ The problem that arises from such dominant conceptions of 21st century racial dynamics, is that if anyone contests that USA is a ‘post-racial’ state, they are accused of using race as an excuse; they are ‘playing the race card’ (see Bonilla-Silva 2006; Gallagher 2008; Goldberg 2009). In a sense, Newkirk’s response was not just post-humanist; it was a ‘post-racial’ one. ‘Animals’ could have easily been replaced with: "We are all 'post-racial', so get over it.” This is no surprise, as the canon of post-humanism ignores the significance of race, colonialism, and whiteness on how one comes to their animal liberation consciousness (Deckha 2012).

Engagement with the potential problems of post-humanist/post-racial veganism and neoliberalism are non-existent amongst the Internet users who have commented on the VSG
website. None of the comments show concern for, or asks questions about, human beings producing the ingredients for PETA advocated foods. On the “Baking” section of the VSG, the mention of Nestlé only comes up because a participant is upset that it is being advocated despite the fact that the company is conducting ‘tea experiments’ on non-humans. On the “Beverages” section, one commentator shows concern that Red Bull is being advocated even though they “test on animals”, while MissQ is concerned that, “Crystal Light use artificial sweetner [which] is derived from animals”. On the second page of comments, there is a debate on whether the ingredient taurine, in Red Bull, is derived from animals or not. Several others note that they need substitutes for soy because of their soy allergies. On the “Breakfast” guide, a comment points out that Nature Valley use GMO ingredients and that one should be cautious of this. Any dialogues about sweeteners or cocoa focus more on the nutritional health aspects, or if sugar products advocated used ‘bone-char’. Their “Produce” section yields no comments about the difficulty people may be having of getting fresh produce. There are also helpful hints from commenters who suggest that many vegan items can ‘easily’ be found at Trader Joes or Whole Foods.

The comments reflect a collective concern to transition into veganism for animal rights while making sure the brands and ingredients listed on the VSG are ‘healthy’ and have not been tested on non-human animals. Virtually no comments reflect on how factors such as environmental racism, racialized gentrification, and poverty in the USA, determine the ‘ease’ of food access. Instead, some commenter’s challenges are that they still crave certain dairy products, or that one is a teenager who can’t convince their family to support them, or they don’t understand why it is ethically ‘wrong’ to eat eggs or milk.
The very definition of veganism by the American Vegan Society is rooted in the concept of ahimsa, which means 'anti-violence' and 'harmlessness.' Of course, how one engages in an ahimsa-based life is subjective and up to individual interpretation (fostered by one's racial, gender, class, national, etc., embodied experiences and investments). However, I seek a definition of ahimsa that goes beyond physical acts of violence and …

[… ] toward an understanding of violence that also includes the harm of failing to interrogate the lenses through which we see — lenses that simultaneously make visible and obscure. This latter understanding of harm is what we refer to as violent consciousness, which we assert is a central component of the phenomena of dysconsciousness, arrogant perception, and normalization. (Sihra and Anderson 2009: 379)

PETA’s VSG, letter prefacing the Never Be Silent Campaign, and “get over it” response, reveals a type of “impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness” (King 1991:134). Engagement with the theory of "violent consciousness" lays the groundwork for one to see how PETA’s rhetoric of vegan consumerism (modernity) as "peaceful," "non-violent," and "cruelty-free" operates; that it is contingent upon racialized human exploitation (coloniality). Even though PETA’s VSG does not promote the violence of eating and/or killing non-human animals, constructing vegan commodities as “cruelty-free” is it an act of discursive violence because it encourages the concealment of an exploitative commodity chain? Is this an example of how colonial forms of racism and whiteness, has shifted more towards discursive, structural, and covert processes of coloniality (i.e. NAFTA)?

My analysis of PETA’s relationship to food objects, such as tomatoes and cocoa, is not really about animal rights or even veganism. What my analysis does suggest is that PETA’s framing of “cruelty-free” is linked to a larger American cultural phenomenon: beneficiaries of a
neoliberal capitalist economy do not really want to know from where and how commodities get to them. A process of estrangement, erased is the genealogy of how these objects arrived there and how they took on the 'harmless' meaning that they have (i.e. “cruelty-free”). Hence, estrangement teaches the holder of such objects that what they have in their hands is pure and innocent; that they have no responsibility to investigate any further, how it got there in the first place. Such ideologies fool the subscriber of neoliberal whiteness into thinking they have an active consciousness when in fact this estrangement encourages passivity-in-consciousness (Barthes 1972; Sandoval 1997). This is exacerbated by the neoliberal politics of a “post-racial” USA. PETA’s two campaign strategies signify how manipulation of concepts such as ‘post-humanism’ and ‘anti-racism’ become tools of racial neoliberalism. Such manipulation only serves to conceal the violence of neoliberal whiteness within the commodity chain. It also dismisses the fact that many non-white people, do not have the racial privilege to engage in activism, let alone vegan food politics, from “post-racial” and “post-humanist” perspectives. After all, Trayvon Martin was killed while trying to get food (Skittles® and iced tea) in a predominately white neighborhood.

Most of mainstream Americans lack critical literacy skills around how their consciousness is shaped by white racist structures within a capitalist moral economy. Research has shown how a significant number Americans, mostly white, do not even know that structural racism continues to exist, or if they do know, they lack the critical race literacy skills to recognize it as racism (Allen 2001; Farr 2004; Lee and Lutz 2005; Banaji et. al 2006; Mills 2007).

If VSG represents a ‘post-racial’ framing of veganism within an era of neoliberal whiteness, then what can a ‘race-conscious’ vegan guide look like? How does it engage with the concepts of whiteness, racism, and neoliberalism within its vegan methodology? In the next
chapter, I will explore Queen Afua’s *Sacred Woman* (2000) vegan guide. *Sacred Woman* serves as an intervention into the post-humanist and post-racial framework of mainstream vegan guides like PETA’s VSG. *Sacred Woman* is grounded in an alternative epistemology of Afrocentric politics and Black racial uplift. At first glance, *Sacred Woman*’s ‘race-conscious’ approach to veganism seems revolutionary. However, within its Afrocentric framework, *Sacred Woman* both empowers and limits its Black female readership. Imbued in Afua’s ‘race-conscious’ veganism are mainstream notions of women’s place in the kitchen, the superiority of middle-class sensibilities, and heterosexism.
Introduction: Sacred Woman, Re-Signifying Veganism, and Black Feminist Theorizing

Racial ideologies are powerful in shaping one’s worldview. Examining food is useful for analyzing these ideologies and the way racial and gender politics pervade even the most benign situations, like Sunday dinners.

-Psyche A. Williams-Forson (2006:79)

American studies scholar Psyche Williams-Forson has analyzed how factors of race, class, whiteness, capitalism and colonialism have influenced Black women's place and agency within North America, from antebellum period to the present. Williams-Forson achieves this through the discipline of food studies and the theoretical framework of Black feminism. Williams-Forson examines the use of chicken (as a food and symbol) amongst American Black females to answer the question, "How have these foods informed and helped to shape modes of Black feminist social consciousness and personal identity?" (2006)

From a different perspective, Black feminist geographer McKittrick writes, "Black matters are spatial matters. And while we all produce, know, and negotiate space- albeit on different terms- geographies in the diaspora are accentuated by racist paradigms of the past and their ongoing hierarchal patterns" (McKittrick 2006:xii). These ongoing hierarchical patterns produce ways of knowing that are uniquely racialized and sexualized. Hence, Black girls and women in these particular spaces have collectively produced and will collectively produce knowledge that contradict the "common sense" geographies and knowledge systems of the white racial status quo (McKittrick 2006). Taking these two frameworks together, this chapter considers veganism using black feminist theory and Afrocentrism to examine Queen Afua’s
*Sacred Woman.* A race-conscious raw vegan foods guide, *Sacred Woman* stands as contradiction to a “common sense” carnistic culinary system that has long symbolized the civilized Eurocentric, white, male, and capitalist ruling elite in the USA (Adams 1990; Mason 1997; Potts and Parry 2010). In particular, my analysis will focus mostly on the “Sacred Foods” section of the book. This analysis extends Williams-Forson and McKittrick’s fundamental inquiries into the realm of Afrocentric veganism, by examining how *Sacred Woman* shapes modes of resistance and empowerment for Black females.

My central questions for this chapter are: How is Afua’s signification of veganism, as a purifying tool against white supremacy, simultaneously embedded in middle class food reformist politics and the reproduction of hetero-patriarchal gender roles? How does *Sacred Woman*’s vegan methodology make visible the consequences of antebellum slavery on current Black American health? Simultaneously, how does *Sacred Woman* advocate veganism in a way that conceals new forms of human slavery that make Black American dietary “liberation” possible? Ultimately, this chapter will reveal that *Sacred Woman*’s Afrocentric epistemological standpoint, both uplifts and entraps her Black female audience with particular fundaments of whiteness that get unconsciously re-inscribed onto decolonial food politics.

**Who is Queen Afua?**

Queen Afua was born in New York City as Helen O. Robinson in the 1950s. She had suffered numerous health problems as a child and teenager, including arthritis, hay fever, chronic asthma and painful menstrual cycles (Afua 2000). When she was eighteen years old, she went on a healing retreat where she fasted on citrus fruits. She returned back home healed from her ailments. This inspired her to learn more about the connections that diet has to one’s bodily and emotional health. She visited Egypt several years later and saw how much significance had been
placed on the womb. From this experience, she concluded that the African woman’s womb is the center of health and Black people’s liberation (Mar 2000).

Afua published her first book, *Heal Thyself for Life and Longevity*, in 1992. The book is a vegan guide to health and wellness and has sold over 100,000 copies (Mar 2000). It also helped to establish Afua as one of the most influential African American holistic health leaders of the time. In 2000, Queen Afua published the book *Sacred Woman: A Guide to Healing the Feminine Body, Mind and Spirit*. Indicated by its Blackboard23 bestseller status, *Sacred Woman* appears to be one of the most influential holistic health books ever written for Black women. During her interview on Blacknet.co.uk, she tells the audience

Women usually suffer from fibroids around the age of 35 years and it is the same for prostate cancer in African men. A man is a reflection of the woman's state. They are our mirror image. We are sharing the same emotional baggage and toxic foods. We are still suffering from 'seasoning' of 400 years of slavery. We are still eating Soul Food that's Slave Food!" (Mar 2000: 1)

Afua’s perception of Soul Food also parallels that of Alvenia Fulton and Dick Gregory. *Sacred Woman* is situated within the lineage of Fulton and within the framework of Afrocentrism (Afua 2000).

*Sacred Woman* (2000) is a comprehensive guide that teaches Black women how to become "queen" of their womb health, through a “live” foods vegan diet. Queen Afua’s readership and her impact on Black people’s lives are quite significant. She has authored six books and has traveled throughout the African Diaspora to speak about holistic veganism. As of November 11, 2012, an Internet Google search of her name yields nearly 120,000 results. She has had a considerable impact on Black celebrities who give thanks to her for teaching them how to eat a healthier and vegan diet24.
Afua’s online presence can also be seen on the *Queen Afua Wellness Institute* (QAWI). QAWI is an interactive website in which people can learn how to “Drop your toxic bags & pick up your wellness!” (Afua 2012). Afua and her staff offer trainings to “heal thyself” from their ailments and then take the knowledge they learned back to their families and communities to build “cities of wellness.” She writes, “People make up the city. If you heal the people, you heal the city” (Afua 2012). The QAWI offers events such as online consultations, trainings, retreats, and workshops such as “Soul Sweat” and “Holistic Medicine Woman.” Most of QAWI’s services are accessible via Internet (webinar), teleconference, or face-to-face. One of the most significant themes on the website is the focus on “purification” and “detoxification.” QAWI regularly offers programs such as “21 Days to Rejuvenate and Detoxify the Entire Anatomy” (Afua 2012c).

The central theme that cannot be ignored on QAWI is that Afua and her staff expect Black people to take individual responsibility for their own health. To do so means they will be aiding in the building of Black ‘cities of wellness’. On QAWI there are many URL links that one can click on, including the “Book Store” link. The Book Store includes 6 books that Afua has published, including *Sacred Woman*. The QWAI online site was created over ten years after the first publication of *Health Thyself for Life and Longevity* (Afua 1992), and appears to be a larger extension of the health and food philosophies found in Afua’s publications. An interactive online community connected to QWAI is the Queen Afua Heals Facebook page. As of February 14, 2013, the page has been “liked” over 20,000 times and over 4,500 people are “talking about this” (Afua Heals 2013).

A YouTube video search of “Queen Afua” plus “Sacred Woman” yields 3,500 results. Many of these videos are not only by Queen Afua, but also by scores of Black women who want
to share Afua’s knowledge. These women share their testimonials of how Afua’s nutritional healing regiments have helped cure their fibroid tumors, cleanse their kidneys and livers, and increase fertility. “Blackhealthvillage” uploaded a video on April 2, 2009 about her Afua inspired kidney liver flush. It has been viewed 19,400 times since then. “Nuru305” uploaded a video “Queen Afua Heal Thyself tips and advise Part I” in May of 2008. Her video has been viewed 6,171 times. Queen Afua gave a video special called “Thanksgiving the Vegan Way” on November 23, 2011. She explains how to cook a healthy vegan Thanksgiving Day dinner. This video received 12,311 views as of November 9, 2012. One of the core themes of all of these videos is the focus of using raw vegan foods to heal womb diseases, such as fibroid tumors and polycystic ovarian syndrome.

In as much as Queen Afua governs her life by the tenets of Afrocentrism, it is necessary to also use it to frame this discussion. I will be using Afrocentrism to explore how Sacred Woman teaches Black women to consume or abstain from certain foods to “liberate” themselves from colonialism and racism. Claiming that Khemetic Egypt is the source of civilization, Afrocentrism argues that the people of Khemetic Egypt were "Black" (Diop 1974). The racial category of "Black" did not exist during the pre-colonial era that Afrocentrism draws its epistemological standpoint from; it is a racial term from the European colonial era onward (Martinot 2010). However, Afrocentrism re-signifies “Black” people having a “superior” lineage that started with Egypt and not ante-bellum slavery. This is a counter-narrative to Eurocentric historiography that rarely, if ever, considers how pre-colonial Africa and Africans have significantly and positively influenced science, art, philosophy, etc. of the modern world (Wilson 1993; Winters 1994). Hence, Afrocentrism can be understood as a response to the centrality of white Europe as the "taken for granted" center of world's intellectual superiority (Winters 2004;
Afrocentrism has been accused of not being “rigorous” by many Eurocentrists because they believe it to be nothing but mythology (Winters 1994). These accusations are an example of discursive power play, between two canons at battle to "prove" the true roots of civilization and how “the civilized” should and have lived (including how one should eat and heal their bodies). Whether Afrocentrism is the “correct” way to view reality or not is not this chapter’s goal. The goal is to understand how and why Sacred Woman employs the fundamental ideologies of Afrocentrism to signify certain foods as either “toxic” or “liberating.” These fundamental ideologies are actually tenets of African Holistic Health. The philosophy of African Holistic Health has two food-related themes: a plant-based diet is the 'true' diet of African people, not the industrialized diet (i.e. meat, dairy, white sugar and white flour); and to heal the Black nation Black women must heal their wombs through Khemetic veganism (Afrika 1994; Afua 2000; Afrika 2004; Allah and Understanding 2010). The next section will explore how Sacred Woman is the Afrocentric response to the commoditization of Black female wombs within the economy of colonial whiteness.

**From Capitalist Commodity to the Sacred Divine: Reclaiming the Space of the Black Female Womb**

I cry a river of tears that heal for the Negro slave woman, my great-great-grandmother, who was forced to part her thighs for the entrance of a pale pink penis to fulfill her owner’s demonic quest to force his way violently into her soft dark womb, leaving his...pardon me, I can’t breathe, I’m still enraged two hundred years later. I still hurt. I still bleed. I’m outraged, feeling fear and helplessness for all my great-great-grandmothers who passed their self-hate, lack of self-esteem, their acceptance of abuse, their internal war down through the bloodline to me...

...I am the Afrakan Woman, crying out my pain, screaming and retching Rivers of Tears from generation to generation. My tears boil up from the bile of plantation slave life here in America the Beautiful. Here, where institutionalized sex factories were brutally imposed upon a stolen people for generations.

I cry for the soft wombs and damaged souls of my Mothers who were forced to bear babies of rage and incest. They were womb casualties in a four-
hundred-year war that damaged them down to their DNA. The wounds go oh so deep within the wombs of the womenfolk of my tribe.

I’m praying... [to] wombs that carried on even after self-inflicted and societal womb violations; wombs that carried on with only one ovary left to fend for itself due to inner toxicity. (Afua 2000:57-58)

This quote from Sacred Woman maps out an emotionally intense genealogy Black females brutalization through the commodification of their wombs (i.e. rape, institutionalized sex factories, and incest. In referring to Black women being “damaged […] down to their DNA” Afua implies that collectively, Black females of the contemporary era are the “damaged goods” that arose out of their socio-historical roles. To understand the context of Afua’s statement above, I will provide an analytical history of the role Black females had in building the U.S. economy and nation during the era of colonial whiteness. This will show how their roles as ‘commodities’ of colonial whiteness, shapes Sacred Woman’s focus on the womb, veganism, and kitchen to “uplift.”

Afua’s focus on the womb parallels the canon of black feminist geography, which also centers the impact of Black women’s wombs in the creation of a capitalist America (Philip 1997; Mohanram 1999; McKittrick 2006). A fertile young Black female signifies the potential to create a healthy, fertile, strong national economy:

If the plantation represents the scale of a town, the auction block figuratively and materially displays a smaller scale-- the body or bodies-- within the town. The slave auction block therefore contributes to the economic and ideological borders of the area because it is necessarily implicit to the town economy...Social difference, instigated through scaled different bodies, therefore materially and ideologically contribute to the meaning of the plantation town. (McKittrick 2006: 76-77)

The auction block becomes the representational site of how Black bodies have been enslaved to harvest nature’s resources for commodification (i.e. cotton, tobacco, cane sugar, etc.). The
auction block is also the epitome of loss of not just human rights, but the right to humanity. 

Black slaves were denied many rights, including the right to practice their indigenous African languages and spiritual beliefs (Fett 2002). Despite having deep knowledge of how to cultivate, grow, harvest plants, as well as cook, most were limited to eating what the master gave them which were barely meager rations (Williams-Forson 2006; Carney 2009). Afua refers to this as “slop” (2006:312).

Furthermore, Black female slaves were collectively responsible for cooking the meals for the white slave master and his family. She was also often required to be a wet nurse for the slave master's babies (Shaw 2004; Williams-Forson 2006). They nourished their white slave masters and families with their culinary labor and milk from breasts, which nourished an entire nation's capitalist based economy (Shaw 2004; Yaeger 2006). She was seen as a hyper-sexualized commodity with no feelings and with "inferior" intelligence (Collins 2000 and 2004). Hence, she was neither “sacred,” nor a "lady" nor "Queen". She was white society’s property and a breeding “animal” (Afua 2000; Schwartz 2006). Those females who have been treated with the highest respect as "ladies" and "queens" in the USA have been white middle to upper class females (Collins 2000 and 2004).

The mere fact that Sacred Woman teaches Black women how to become both “sacred” and a "queen" are discursive healing tools; particularly since “queen” has been prefaced with “welfare” to describe contemporary Black females in the USA (Moynihan 1967). Sacred Woman is re-signifying “queen”, “sacred”, and “feminine” as the “natural” attributes of the “black” woman and her womb. The Afrocentric vegan kitchen becomes the domestic space in which this re-signification takes place: it is the symbolic site of womb empowerment and racial uplift,
representing the “original” power that Black women had within a matriarchal Southern Egyptian system (Diop 1989).

Africa, as representative of the Southern cradle of matriarchy, valued the matriarchal family, territorial state, the emancipation of women in domestic life, the ideal of peace and justice, goodness and optimism. Its favoured literatures were novels, tales, fables, and comedy. Its moral ethic was based on social collectivism. The contrasting Northern cradles, as exemplified by the culture of Aryan Greece and Rome, valued the patriarchal family, the city-state, moral and material solitude. Its literature was characterized by tragedy, ideals of war, violence, crime and conquests. Guilt and original sin, pessimism, all pervaded its moral ethic which was based on individualism. (Diop 1989: xiv)

The narrative above sets the context for understanding how Sacred Woman associates particular geographies from the past, with affecting food ideologies of contemporary mainstream USA. Hence, nothing “sacred” can ever come out of the North, including their dietary philosophies that deeply impacted the USA. However, how does one transform a “toxic” “Northern” twenty-first century American kitchen, into one infused with pre-colonial “sacred” “Southern” culinary practices?

**Sweet ‘Damaged Goods’: Curing the ‘Toxic’ Womb Through Sugar Abstinence**

In the “Sacred Foods” chapter of Sacred Woman, readers are asked to prepare their kitchen to employ the nutritional principles of Khemetic Egypt: “You will need kitchen laboratory tools as outlined in this chapter: a juice extractor, blender, stainless steel pots, an enamel or heat-proof glass pot for brewing herbal teas, jars for various herbs, strainer for herbs, wheatgrass extractor” (Afua 2000:163). These modern culinary technologies become the symbolic weapons to achieve “purification” from the “toxicity” of colonialism. The list of foods that she requires her followers to eat are fresh vegetables and fruits, wheatgrass juice, sprouts, beans, peas, seeds, nuts, whole grains, organic apple cider vinegar, lemons, limes, and nut milks. Recommended are many fresh herbs for "womb healing," such as dandelion leaves and
watercress. The enemies against the womb are refined foods and "flesh foods" that contribute to “intense emotions” of “anger, pain, frustration” (Afua 2000:78). Afua prohibits many foods that she thinks will “damage” the womb, as well as mental health; even vegan foods such as sugar and white flour.

If your joints are in pain and you're stressed out and on the edge, or you suffer from a quick and out-of-control tongue and you're sorry because you keep hurting folks due to loose lips, then check your diet for sugar, white flour, or cocaine - it's all the same. All of these substances have the same debilitating, addictive content. (Afua 2000: 165)

In Afua's Afrocentric logic, sugar is "toxic" and creates "toxic" behavior that causes a Black woman to treat other people around her, badly.

To understand the socio-historical context of Afua’s Afrocentric framing of sugar, it is useful to understand the broader context of how commodities such as sugar have organized the lives of Black people and other descendants of the colonized. Sugar, within the socio-historical context of Europe and the Americas, is not just an edible plant; sugar is an “institution” that is laden with the “images, dreams, tastes, choices, and values” (Barthes 1997:20) of colonial whiteness (Mintz 1985). The “institution” of refined white sugar has its roots in colonialism, imperialism and African slavery (Mintz 1985). Sugar cane was ‘discovered’ by the Europeans, hundreds of years ago. Their desire for this plant led to the enslavement of Africans and other indigenous cultures who were forced to harvest cane sugar (Mintz 1985). Hence, with such a history, it only makes sense that the essence of decolonization for Afua start where it all began: the taking away of indigenous land and enslavement of Black people to satiate the material and food substance "addictions" of European imperialists.28

framework, those who were enslaved to harvest sugar cane are now “enslaved” as “addicts” hundreds of years later (Afua 2000). Afua sees the results of these “addictions” today, among the general population of Black America, such as significant rise in diabetes, ADHD, depression, and obesity. Through Afua’s eyes, refined sugar and white flour “addiction” are the material and symbolic legacies of racialized colonialism that she refers to as “postslavery conditioning” (2000:312).

Within the context of black women, reproductive health, and the politics of motherhood, it is noteworthy that Afua puts refined sugar and flour products into the same category as cocaine “addiction” when she writes, “check your diet for sugar, white flour, or cocaine- it's all the same” (2000:165). What this does imply is that Black women who do not abstain from refined sweets are “addicts”, and that this addiction will create a “toxic” womb, which will then give birth to a “toxic” Black citizen: “damaged goods.” If or when a Black woman becomes pregnant and she has not cleansed her system of refined sugar and flour (as well as animal products), then she will be damaging the fetus and creating an inferior future Black nation (Afua 2000).

In order to understand the depth of how and why Afua connects refined sugar to cocaine as the “downfall” of the Black community, one must understand the history of both sugar and crack cocaine in the destruction of the Black people. Afrikan Holistic Health canon believes that both refined sugar and crack cocaine were utilized to “enslave” Black people: first as chattel slave and then as chemical addicts (Afirka 1994; Afua 2000; Allah and Understanding 2010).

The white mainstream media in the 1980s and 1990 helped to create panic about a ‘crack baby epidemic.’ Symbolized as poor Black females, media would frequently narrate these women as prostitutes willing to do anything it takes to obtain crack cocaine. Essentially, such images symbolized that crack addicted mothers were no longer capable of having a ‘natural’
maternal instinct to take care of their babies. “The pregnant crack addict, then, was the exact opposite of a mother: she was promiscuous, uncaring, and self-indulgent” (Roberts 1997: 156). Despite the thousands of white females who also have been documented as being “addicts” (i.e. prescription drugs, alcohol, and smoking), it was Black females who came to represent the “addicted” mother. This was a convenient trope to already re-emphasize after centuries of white racist myths that constructed Black females as lacking the capacity to be responsible and loving mothers. It also legitimized the commoditization of their wombs during slavery. “The monstrous crack-smoking mother was added to the iconography of depraved Black maternity, alongside the matriarch and the welfare queen. Crack gave society one more reason to curb Black women’s fertility” (Roberts 1997:157). Does Sacred Woman expect Black females to ‘curb’ their own fertility through ‘self-surveillance’ and ‘personal responsibility’ by only ‘agreeing’ to pro-create once she is no longer ‘addicted’ to refined sugar (and refined flour)?

Several times in Sacred Woman, Afua highly recommends that a woman and her male partner only conceive after they have “purified” their system of refined sugar, refined flour, and animal products. She has also suggested numerous times that one’s personality and consciousness are drastically altered into “addicts”, once they consume not only refined sugar, but meat as well. Such an “addict” acts immorally and will think unclean thoughts (Afua 2000: 154). Within this Afuaian framework, the offspring of a sugar addicted mother will behave and think in a way that is “toxic”, therefore perpetuating the myth that Black people and mothers are innately of horrific character.

Afua’s conflation with sugar and cocaine as the same object with the same consequences is multilayered. Her anxiety around sugar and cocaine comes from societal narratives in the 1980s and 1990s, which claimed that babies born to crack-addicted Black mothers were
“irreversibly damaged.” Such “damage” was observed by hospital staff in the neo-natal units who claimed that the infants appeared to be detached and emotionless. “The crack baby, then, was as unnatural as his mother: just as the pregnant crack addict had no maternal instinct, the crack baby lacked an innate social consciousness” (Roberts 1999:157). The anxieties that white mainstream society had about the Black crack baby ‘epidemic’ had much to do with the thought of an ‘irreversibly damaged’ human being that could never be treated or rehabilitated to have a ‘moral consciousness.’ Mainstream media produced myths that told the story of how much of a tax-payer’s burden these Black crack addicted babies would be throughout their lifetime; that they would need the state to invest millions of dollars in them to control them and take care of their chemically induced ‘criminal’ behaviors and physical birth ‘defects.’ Afua’s rhetoric does not exist in a vacuum. Intentional or not, Afua joins a history of female health reformers who were committed to teaching ‘lower class’ women how to birth ‘healthy’ babies and to ‘properly’ take care of their families (see Biltekoff 2002; Williams-Forson 2006).

What must not be lost in my analysis, is that refined sugar is neither “bad” nor “good.” Refined sugar only takes on these characteristics once human beings interact with it, manipulate it for consumption, and construct its meaning to reflect their own interests and desires (see Barthes 1997).

However, her suggestions about abstaining from refined sugar products and equating it with cocaine and “toxic” behaviors, also reflects anxieties about the objects consumed by “lower class” Black people. Earlier critical food scholars have observed that “sweets” are associated more with the “lower classes” while “bitters” are more associated with the “higher classes” (Bourdieu 1984; Barthes 1997). The authors writing within the canon of Afrikan Holisitic Health
are proponents of more “bitters,” less “sweet”, in the diet for a “healthier” spirit, body, and mind (Afrika 1994; Afua 2000; Afua 2008; Allah and Understanding 2010).

Beyond Afrocentric food guides, Sacred Woman is part of a larger body of vegan and vegetarian “self-help” texts within the USA. These text hold center, a fundamental principle: readers are individually responsible for their own health, which can only be achieved through ‘proper’ consumption. ‘Healthy’ bodies are linked to a ‘moral’ body-politic which is then linked to being ‘responsible’ and ‘good’ consumer-citizens. Biltelkoff (2002; 2012) suggests that this is not a twenty first century phenomenon, but rather a type of dietary discourse in the USA that has existed since the end of the nineteenth century. In the next section, I will explore how hetero-normativity, middle-class food reform, and black racial uplift are simultaneously embedded in the meanings Sacred Woman ascribes to culinary equipment and abstinence from chicken.

**Queen Afua’s Chicken-Free Kitchen: Race-Conscious Black Female Empowerment, Middle Class Food Reform Entrapment, or Both?**

Though Sacred Woman employs the nostalgia of the pre-colonial African past to encourage Black females to transition into veganism, Afua’s ‘proper’ diet actually echoes much of the food reformist rhetoric from the late nineteenth century; a particular discourse embedded in it was the assumption that a ‘good’ citizen can be created by consuming the [culinary] values of middle-class hetero-normative USA, obsessed with “purity” and “hygiene” (Gardella 2001; Biltelkoff 2002; Griffith 2004; Shintani 2008; Biltelkoff 2012).

With the onset of domestic science, middle class women in the USA were taught how to create ‘proper’ meals for their families. Hetero-normative and middle-class women’s culinary knowledge became the ‘naturalized’ benchmark of which the lower class was judged by.

This body of knowledge created new classes of nutritional being through categories that conflated the cultural difference of class with the biological difference of nutritional need. Furthermore, by incorporating middle class cultural
preferences into the seemingly empirical science of domesticity, the reform discourse normalized middle class values as the standard against which alimentary deviance, now no small matter, could be measured. (Biltekoff 2002: 61)

The above excerpt parallels much of the ‘healthy’ culinary ideologies espoused in Sacred Woman. Afua refers to particular foods and culinary equipment as either ‘life-giving’ or ‘toxic’/‘demonic.’ Referred to earlier in this chapter, Queen Afua wrote a list of necessary ‘life-giving’ foods and equipment her readers should have:

You will need kitchen laboratory tools as outlined in this chapter: a juice extractor, blender, stainless steel pots, an enamel or heat-proof glass pot for brewing herbal teas, jars for various herbs, strainer for herbs, wheatgrass extractor (Afua 2000: 163)

Embedded in this quote, however, is a particular assumption about the reader: she is financially stable enough to afford such technologies. Many of these items cost over $400 each. Such expensive equipment potentially inhibits a significant number of low-income Black women. For example, depicted in “Sacred Foods” section is a picture of Queen Afua and Ntrelsa Elsa Bernal in a "kitchen laboratory," surrounded by many culinary technologies (see page 84). Most notable is a Vitamix blender, one of the best blenders available on the market. The Vitamix has the capacity to finely grind small raw seeds and leafy vegetables into a smooth texture, palatable for consumption and bodily assimilation. The price of a Vitamix blender with a wet container starts at approximately $449\(^{30}\). If one wants a wet and dry blender container, the package for that starts at $549\(^{31}\). Afua is strict about her requirements, as she dictates what are healthy cooking apparatus and what are not:

We do not want kitchens with microwaves- places to eat flesh, fried food, or fast food on the run. We do want a Healing Laboratory used to heal yourself and your family with juices, live foods, and herbs. Here's the basic equipment that you will
need to create a kitchen of the twenty-first century, one that has been resurrected from and Ancient Afrakan Healing Perspective (Afua 200: 167).

Yes, the concept of healing foods through holistic veganism may come from a pre-colonial era in Egypt, but access to these foods is contingent upon living in a USA as a Black female that has easy food access. Unlike the pre-colonial peoples of Egypt, Afua’s *Sacred Woman* does not consider the socio-economic challenges of trying to afford such a resurrected diet in a capitalist country. In such a time and place, access to a healthier lifestyle is not only based on race, but also socio-economic class status (Gottlieb and Josh 2010). The microwave may seem like an unhealthy culinary tool for her "liberating" diet, but it is also a class marker: many females who are responsible for providing meals for their families or themselves may choose to use the microwave because it is fast and convenient. Cooking from scratch may be healthier, but it also takes more tools and more time.

Afua writes, “Eat fresh, organic fruits in their proper seasons. Eat fruits in solid form or freshly juiced. Canned or frozen fruit is forbidden to those who want a life of ever-flowing blessing” (2000:171). Such a statement immediately assumes that Black females have the monetary and geographical access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Afua does not explain to her readers that even though fresh fruits and vegetables may be the “healthiest” choice, food choice in itself is a “privileged” location in the USA. Those who can most likely gain access to fresh and organic produce are people who are middle to upper class, while canned and frozen produce are what most low-income people have easier access to (Gottlieb and Josh 2010). Afua’s position on how all Black females should ultimately eat a “live foods” vegan diet, using rather expensive foods and equipment, is covertly suggesting that the culinary tools low income Black women need to be reformed.
In the earlier part of the twentieth century, middle-class Black women decided to reform the eating habits of “lower” class Black women.

Using food as one of many platforms, they sought to instill notions of respectability, decorum, and selfhood into the minds of working-class Black women. More to the point, they were hoping to impress upon the larger society that Black women are indeed 'ladies' of decorum and manners, worthy of societal respect, honor, and nationhood (Williams-Forson 2006: 93).

However, unlike scholarship which shows that Black middle class sought to reform Black lower class women’s food practices to impress ‘white’ society (Williams-Forson 2006), Sacred Woman’s reformist food politics do not care to impress ‘white’ society. Nowhere in Sacred Woman are readers asked to consume “live” vegan foods as a means to be recognized as a ‘lady’ and thus enjoy economic mobility within white society. On the contrary, Afua’s rhetoric encourages Black people to eat “live” vegan foods as a way to build a ‘healthy’ Black nation, but without regard to whether or not they will then ‘earn’ white society’s respect (2000:312). It is about surviving in spite of living in a white settler society, but with a caveat: Black women must employ middle-class culinary values to become ‘sacred’ and a ‘lady’.

Within the framework of Afrocentrism, Sacred Woman succeeds as decolonial methodology for Black women. Simultaneously, this Afuaian methodology not only re-inscribes middle-class values, but hetero-normative notions of ‘feminine’ and ‘lady.’ Not one time throughout Sacred Woman does Afua offer the possibility that a Black woman is romantically involved with another woman. Afua asks women how their wombs feel about their relationships and ask many questions, including, "How many men and what type of men have entered your womb space? What was each experience like?" (Afua 2000:51). Several pages later Afua writes:
Our Kitchen Healing Laboratory is where we protect our children from illness and prevent unnecessary childhood disease. We actively feed our children correct substances from our Sacred Lab, where food is our medicine.

Through proper food education we can single-handedly heal our mates from such afflictions as high blood pressure, strokes, and negative health situations with live juices and soups. We deal with strokes through herbal tonics; we help heal prostate conditions and depression with greens from the fields. When things don't go smoothly in your relationship, don't blame him. Just clean up from within. There's nothing wrong with him as a man or you as a woman. You are a divine couple by nature, wholesome, loved. What is wrong here is the fried chicken, spare ribs, and candied yams— the meat, the fat, the sugar that have us acting outside of our natural state of Divinity. Toxic thoughts and attitudes are created by the poisons on our plate. (Afua 2000: 166)

It is noteworthy that Black racial uplift “worthy of respect, honor, and nationhood” should be achieved through a “proper” relationship to meat, and mentioned in the last section, sugar. Although Afua admonishes all animal products, I will give special attention to her condemnation of fried chicken. Afua’s focus on not just any type of chicken food object, but ‘fried chicken,’ joins a decades long debate about ‘liberation,’ Black identity, and Soul Food amongst Black people in the USA (Dunning 1999-2000; Witt 2004; Maddox 2003; Rouse 2004; Williams-Forson 2006; Harper 2010; Hurt 2012). The central focus of this debate has been whether or not Black people can be ‘liberated’ if they continue to eat ‘fried chicken’, the ‘soul’ of contemporary Black American food culture (Witt 2004; Williams-Forson 2006; Hurt 2012). Such a debate is not so much about chicken, as it is about the differing “lower” versus “higher” class meanings that have been assigned to chicken as a food object. Sacred Woman’s suggested abstinence of fried chicken is linked to a history of Black middle class female food reformers. They taught “lower class” Black women how to not only prepare chicken ‘properly,’ but to teach them when and where it is appropriate to be seen eating chicken. For example, “lower” class blacks were advised not to let white society see them ‘sucking on a chicken bone’ in public because it symbolized “poor class” and an inability to assimilate [white] middle class etiquette (Williams-
Forson 2006). However, as an Afuaian inspired vegan, the “proper” relationship that Black women should have with chicken is to not eat it at all; especially “fried chicken.” While particular ways of preparing and eating chicken signified a particular class of omnivorous Black people -- i.e. “fried chicken” as “lower class” and “baked chicken” as “higher class” (Williams-Forson 2006), Afua’s construction of chicken as “toxic” also creates two distinct classes of Black people. It suggests that “lower class” Blacks eat chicken while “higher class” Blacks abstain from it. Many of the food taboos in Sacred Woman are not necessarily as much about veganism as it is about not identifying with the symbolic meaning of post-industrialized “soul food” practices out of which negative portrayal of Blacks have been birthed.

[Fried] chicken is the ultimate signifier of a type of blackness that Afua and the Afrikan Holistic Health community want to disaffiliate themselves from: “lower class” blackness that symbolizes, “I am not conscious” (Dunning 1999-2000). It is common for “race-conscious” holistic health oriented Blacks to believe that racial uplift can only be achieved if one does not eat ‘slavery’ inspired foods (Gregory 1974; Dunning 1999-2000; Rouse and Hoskins 2004; Witt 2004). Historically to the present, chicken and watermelon have been the two most widely utilized food stereotypes to construct Black people as “inferior” (Witt 2004; Williams Forson). White racism narrated the myth that Black people were so “addicted” to chicken that they would resort to “thievery” to eat one. Furthermore, white fears and anxieties conflated Black man’s insatiable appetite for chicken with an insatiable sexual appetite for white women. Such depictions of Black people, through a falsified relationship with chicken, narrated the myth that Black people were innately criminals and deviant, deserving of white violence to protect the purity of the white nation (Williams-Forson 2006).
Chicken as stand alone object/animal, is certainly not “toxic” or “demonic.” However, my analysis of chicken leads me to ask whether or not the Afrikan Holistic Health movement abstains from chicken because of what is signifies (i.e. racist images of Black as “inferior” and “lower class”) or because they believe it is simply nutritionally “toxic”. Is it possible that Afua’s rejection of poultry is influenced by her own middle-class sensibilities and the distorted images of chickens conflating Blacks with “lower class”, “hyper-sexualization,” and “thievery”? What exactly is Afua rejecting?: implications of “lower class” stigma, compromise of health, or both?

A critical race materialist analysis of sugar, chicken, or even crack-cocaine conveys the racial tensions that are bound to rise in a white supremacist society. Such tensions were not only between whites and Blacks; there are class tensions amongst Blacks and the fear they collectively have had of being perceived as ‘deviant’ and ‘subhuman.’ While Black people in fact do collectively eat chicken, white racists used those facts to their advantage. Such distorted truths about Black people have influenced many Black people, such as the Alvenia Fulton, Dick Gregory, the Afrikan Holistic Health community and Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam to disassociate themselves from [fried] chicken by abstaining from it all together (Gregory 1974; Watkins 1976; Rouse and Hoskins 2004; Williams-Forson 2006). For these particular Black people, such abstinence symbolizes “purity” from being “damaged” by legacies of racialized colonialism.32

In the next section, I show how Sacred Woman’s kitchen both uplifts and limits Black women through the Afrocentric meaning of the kitchen as “natural” and ‘feminine’. I also argue that such meanings offer Black women alternative, yet hetero-normative ways, to “protect” Black male [hetero]sexuality from the “damages” of colonialism.

* Sacred Woman * signifies the fusion of hetero-normative gender roles, domesticity, and race-consciousness, through the naturalization of the kitchen as the “sacred feminine”. Implicit in becoming a “conscious” and “sacred” Black woman is the adherence to ‘proper’ hetero-normative gender roles. The kitchen becomes the site where the sacred feminine shall restore what was 'lost' since colonialism: a Southern Egyptian dietary philosophy that produced optimal sexual health and relationships between Black men and women. A sacred woman’s womb cannot build a ‘healthy’ nation without ‘healthy’ sperm. *Sacred Woman* implies that it is the colonizer’s food that turns sperm “toxic” and also makes certain Black males “inappropriately” sexually aggressive:

Sisters, if there is a male in your family who is inappropriately sexually aggressive, get him off flesh foods immediately! The ham, barbecue, bacon, hamburger, lamb, veal- all of it: Throw it out the window! (Afua 2000: 170)

Afua recommends “live” foods and juicing to cure the Black woman’s man from meat-induced sexually aggressive behavior. Within this paradigm, veganism is glorified as the ultimate consumption practice while meat eating is demonized as being the root cause of sexually violent male behavior. Although Afua’s Afrocentric perspective is a particular recasting of male sexual aggression, this is not a new idea, particularly amongst ecofeminist vegans and Grahamites.

Ecofeminism was first articulated in the 1980s. The initial tenets of ecofeminism were environmental stewardship, liberation of nature from capitalism, and anti-patriarchy (Gaard 2003). Eventually, the canon included a line of inquiry that showed how degradation of nature is connected to structural sexism, racism, and heterosexism (Kheel 2008). Since its establishment, many vegetarian ecofeminists began to confront omnivorous ecofeminists with the idea that
animal consumption is also “inherently” linked to sexism, racism, classism and heterosexism (Kheel 1985; Gaard 2003). Dietary choice became the site in which vegetarian and omnivorous ecofeminists waged a moral battleground, debating whether or not meat eating is immoral. A significant number of ecofeminist vegans and vegetarians believe that meat eating amongst men produces pornography and other forms of sexually ‘impure’ acts toward females (Kheel 1985; Adams 1990 and 2003; Kheel 2005; Tuttle 2007; Gaard 2011). Although many vegan ecofeminists have taken this angle, it is Carol J Adams that has become the most influential in associating meat-eating with sexually “inappropriate” behavior towards females (1990 and 2003). Afua’s perspective adds racial-sexual and Afrocentric dynamics to this canon that has rarely, if ever been considered: the role that colonial whiteness and black sexual politics have on meat abstinence.

For centuries, Black people have been seen as hyper-sexualized within the white imaginary. In response, many contemporary Black females have tried to practice a ‘politics of respectability.’ This practice was an attempt to abolish the white mainstream notion that they (and Black men) are incapable of being as sexually ‘pure’ as white people (Wyatt 1997; Collins 2004;). Black men have also been ‘naturally’ criminalized as “rapists” by white USA, while Black women have been ‘naturally’ constructed as sexually promiscuous (Collins 2004). Suggesting that it is a certain type of food that Black men are eating is the cause of their sexually “impure” behavior is an Afrocentric method of fighting against the racist beliefs that Black men have always been that way- even before colonialism. Afua’s vegan rationale is an intervention because she does not trust mainstream white America to change their perceptions about Black sexuality (Patton 2000).
The problem with Afua’s approach, however, is that it puts the responsibility of ‘curing’ sexually “impure” behavior, into the hands of Black females. Dismissed are other methods, such as making male sexual aggressors responsible for their own behavior and then taking it into their own hands to stop it. Instead, the kitchen becomes the place in which Black females are expected to cure themselves, children, and men of sexually “inappropriate” behavior. Such Afuaian framing of the kitchen joins a contentious debate amongst feminist geographers (Massey 1994; Domosh 2001) who observe the kitchen as a site of disempowerment, not agency, for females. For this canon of thinkers, it is not ‘natural’ for females to be caretakers of the domestic or private space, but rather, a social construction that reflects hetero-patriarchal and capitalist configurations of power. Through such lens of feminist geography, Afua's perspective could be interpreted as a site of disempowerment for Black females. Some scholars think that conflating feminine with ‘natural’ falsely signifies her as

as metaphor for Nature (in another characteristic dualism), for what has been lost (left behind), and that place called home is frequently personified by, and partakes of the same characteristics as those assigned to, Woman/Mother/love. (Massey 1994:10)

It may sound “sexist” for Sacred Woman to suggest that cooking a meal to build a “lost” Black nation is woman’s ‘natural’ responsibility. However, read through black feminist and Afrocentric lenses, Sacred Woman’s construction of the ‘feminine’ [kitchen] become more complex: these scholars do not consider how issues of racialization and colonialism have influenced who can be called "feminine" in the USA. Depending on how you are, being referred to as “feminine” is a type of privilege.

During the antebellum and Jim Crow era, mainstream media images of Black females in the kitchens portrayed them as "mammies". To be a mammy was to be "unfeminine" -- i.e. "fat"
and desexualized (Williams-Forson 2006). Afua is not necessarily using "feminine" in the same "oppressive" way as certain feminist scholars. From an Afrocentric perspective, the kitchen has always been the African woman’s "natural" place; it was commoditization of Black females that transformed their role in the kitchen into "unfeminine.” Afua’s re-feminization of the kitchen for Black women becomes the logical next step towards decolonization. It is noteworthy that Afua’s rationale sounds similar to the nineteenth century sexual purity rhetoric of Sylvester Graham. What Afua and Graham both have in common is that “feminine” symbolizes a woman in the kitchen who understands the discourse of civility and racial-sexual purity as a food reform endeavor.

Even though vegetarianism is not the same as veganism, contemporary American veganism has its initial roots in the nineteenth century USA vegetarian movement, led by Sylvester Graham. His beliefs have had a powerful effect on twentieth century practices of ‘healthy’ plant-based (Iacobbo 2004). Graham’s pro-vegetarian philosophies were in response to eradicating sexually “immoral” behavior, such as promiscuity, pornography, and masturbation. He believed that vegetarian dietary and health reform would “redeem” America of its rise in sexually “immoral” behavior (Gardella 2001; Tompkins 2012). Graham believed that white girls and women should keep the national [white] body 'pure' and 'clean' by learning how to make whole grain breads and meals for their family. These females were also expected to teach their families to abstain from sexually ‘sinful’ habits such as masturbation (Griffith 2004; Tompkins 2009). Even though Graham and Afua have completely different investments in racial purity projects, they both believe that a politics of sexual respectability is the responsibility of the woman, and through the avenue of food. The kitchen becomes the site in which proper racial-sexual behavior is literally “cooked up” by mother and wife (Tompkins 2012). For both
Graham’s white nation and Afua’s Black nation, the kitchen is not just site of racialization; it is a site of racial-sexual civility for the creation of both Graham’s white nation and Afua’s Black nation. However, for Afua, whose Black nation must survive in a racially hostile “white-settler” society, the stakes of respectability and racial-sexual civility are higher.

Within the context of Sacred Woman, the institution of slavery not only forced Black people to be away from their own land, eat a diet that was not ‘theirs,’ and unable to practice their African indigenous practices; all of these things also disrupted ‘healthy’ sexual practices and romantic relationships between men and women. Such rhetoric is thematic throughout Sacred Woman, and goes beyond curing ‘sexually aggressive’ males that Afua refers to:

The head of a slave woman’s captive family was the slave master…The stolen woman’s man or spiritual husband could be lynched, sold away, or forced to impregnate other women to provide more potential laborers (Afua 2000:312)

…

Forget about family ties. A little girl growing up without a daddy was our norm on these shores, and it created the postslavery condition that led to dysfunctional families and female heads of families. (Afua 2000:312)

…

Over 50 percent of black women in this country are single parents, because so many of our men keep walking, leaving their children behind to be raised by the mother. Our sons are filling up the jails. Our men are forsaking us for women from other races (Afua 2000:312)

These quotes convey the overall “story” that proper sexual and romantic behavior has been damaged. Towards the end of Sacred Woman, Afua gives advice to create and sustain strong and healthy relationships.

In traditional societies, the husband was a provider for his wife and children. As a result, he received absolute respect from his woman and children. A man built a home for his woman, provided her with jewelry, clothe and/or sewing supplies…The woman, on the other hand, foraged for wild foods and herbs and fuel for cooking and heating. She prepared and served her husband meals. In some cases, she worked the land that he prepared, in order to bring to the table vegetables, grains, and fruits (Afua 2000:337-38).
This is striking contrast to Afua’s support of matriarchal Khemetic Egypt in which women were so ‘powerful’ and ‘revered’, it would seem that they wouldn’t need any man to build a house for them or provide what they needed, let alone ‘serve’ their husband. Is this truly “decolonial” African configuration of a ‘healthy’ family and nation, or subscription to ‘proper’ racial-sexual civility that has been defined by white American middle-class value system? Such a value system has vilified any ‘family’ situation that does not follow these protocols.

Even though Afua never refers to the Moynihan Report (1967), her narration of the “damage” that slavery and the white diet caused, between Black men and women, re-inscribes the very myth that she is trying to eradicate: a ‘healthy’ Black ‘family’ is one in which there are two married heterosexual parents who feed their children proper meals and teach them proper racial-sexual civility. This trope has been used extensively to dismiss single Black parent families, as well at same-sex relationships (Collins 2004).

Decolonization and the Limits of “Returning Home”

Afua’s Sacred Woman has come to symbolize “decolonization” within the African Holistic Health movement. However, despite such symbolism, overlooked is how decolonial politics can still be affected by, and perpetuate, legacies of colonialism. Such legacies are embedded in the heterosexist, hetero-normative, and ableist framing of Sacred Woman’s food liberation politics, as well as its uncritical advocacy of vegan foods derived from an exploitative commodity chain.

To eradicate the effects of racialized colonialism, one must also understand that hetero-normative gender roles, as well as conflating "females" with "nature,” have been integral to the European racial colonial project (Collins 2000 and 2004). It is quite difficult to know if Afua makes these assumptions about what is "natural" because she has, or has not, been influenced by
European colonial rhetoric of "proper" gender roles. Afua believes that one's consciousness and healing beliefs are connected to the geographical place that they are from (as she draws from Southern Egypt). However, no where in Sacred Woman does she reflect how her own ‘race-consciousness’ has been significantly influenced by having been born and raised, not in Southern Egypt thousands of years ago, but in the twentieth century of the USA; a geographical location in which the moral fabric has been woven out of capitalism, hetero-normativity, ableism, and an obsession with making sure the body is "pure" and that people engage in "proper" sexual behavior (Collins 2004; Thomas 2007).

In the United States, the assumption that racism and heterosexism constitute two separate systems of oppression masks how each relies upon the other for meaning. Because neither system of oppression makes sense without the other, racism and heterosexism might be better viewed as sharing one history with similar yet disparate effects on all Americans differentiated by race, gender, sexuality, class, and nationality (Collins 2004:88).

It is also necessary to have a liberation strategy for Black Americans that include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender peoples. Even though Sacred Woman never speaks negatively about people who are not heterosexual, the absence of their inclusion, as well as transgender women, reflects implicit heterosexist framing of decolonization. If hetero-normative Black men and women partnering together is "pure" and "sacred,” then which Black sexualities and genders are not? There is an implicit binary here that stems from the creation of white normative heterosexuality.

Within this oppositional logic, the core binary of normal/deviant becomes ground zero for justifying racism and heterosexism. The deviancy assigned to race and that assigned to sexuality becomes an important point of contact between the two systems. Racism and heterosexism both require a concept of sexual deviancy for meaning, yet the form that deviance takes within each system differs. For racism, the point of deviance is created by a normalized White heterosexuality that depends on a deviant Black heterosexuality to give it meaning. For heterosexism, the point of deviance is created by this very same
normalized White heterosexuality that now depends on a deviant White homosexuality. (Collins 2004: 97)

Once again, Afua never directly says that homosexuality or transgender people are "deviant." However, it is a common belief amongst Black people in the USA to think that it is white people who are the source of homosexuality, and that their value system (including food) turns Black people into lesbians, gays, or "gender confused" (Collins 2004). This belief is clearly articulated in Dr. Llaila Afrika’s work, an African Holistic Health guru and raw foodist in the USA that Afua as worked with, many times (Afrika 1994 and 2004).

Sacred Woman is laden with the rhetoric of ableism too. Such rhetoric conveys that Black people cannot liberate themselves until they are "healthy": as long as a person is "sick", they will never be able to secure freedom. Ableism is a cultural value of whiteness. People who do not fall into the socially constructed category of "healthy", are often not seen as "fully productive" members of society. This is as indicated by anxieties around how both sugar and crack will create a “damaged” fetus.

Like racism, ableism is also essentially ideological, rising from the same, mostly unexamined, "assumption of biological inferiority" (p. 202). It asserts that "people without disabilities are 'normal' and those with disabilities are somehow not equal" (Maluso 2001). Based in discrimination and oppression, it is a "devaluation of disability" (Hehir 2002, p. 3). Ableism is equivalent to the earlier term handicapism, a cultural artifact that was compared to racism and sexism. (Smith 2004: 3)

Most able-bodied people may think of a person using a wheel chair as "disabled" or not the benchmark of "healthy." However, “disabled” can also be used to define those who aren't conventionally "healthy", because they may have diabetes, may be obese, and/or are born with a congenital disease. What is implied in Sacred Woman is that if Black females do not follow a Khemetic diet their “damaged down to the DNA” wombs will not produce "healthy" babies.
One of the most interesting aspects of this purity rhetoric is that there is not one paragraph in *Sacred Woman* that tells readers what human hands have brought Afua or her followers this food that they have most likely purchased. Afua does tell readers that the idea of these “pure” and “live” foods were brought to African people, by African people, and that they are still “ours.” Though Afua’s focus on decolonizing the Black female womb is enacted by focusing on the ‘purity’ or ‘quality’ of the food in the kitchen, it is from the perspective of a Black modern ‘consumer’ within the global food system (versus laborer or harvester living in spaces of coloniality). For Afua, the purity of the food is defined by several factors: is it packaged and processed? Is it from an animal? Is it alkalizing or acidifying? Is it organic or genetically modified? Foods shown below are a display of ‘purity’. However, what must be understood is that the herbs and foods she promotes exist in a completely different context in comparison to the food system of pre-colonial Egypt. Neglected from *Sacred Woman* is the reality of what it means to be a modern-day global North consumer within a globalized food commodity chain upheld by exploitation.

In particular, I take notice of the basket of citrus fruits in the front of this photo:
Afua advises:

Bring angelic forces into your life and the lives of those in your family with fruits such as berries of all kinds, mangoes, peaches, cherries, papaya, red grapes, pineapple, apricots and plums, melons of all kinds, grapefruit, oranges, lemons, and limes (but no bananas). Eat fresh, organic fruits in their proper seasons. Eat fruits in solid form or freshly juiced. Canned or frozen fruit is forbidden to those who want a life of ever-flowing blessings (2000: 171).

Afua was living in New York City when *Sacred Woman* was published. It would have been impossible to grow citrus fruits, as well as mangoes and papaya in a back yard or community garden. The climate prohibits it. Afua draws her food philosophy from a completely different geographical location, climate, and food economy than New York City: pre-colonial Egypt. Afua’s text is asking contemporary Black women to consume fruits and vegetables that have completely different significance than they did during Khemetic Egypt; the latter did not exist in a colder climate. Furthermore, Afua’s narration of matriarchal Khemetic Egypt implies that the food from that era was grown locally by mostly African female agriculturalists that were revered. However, Afua was born and lives in the Tri-State area. Unlike pre-colonial Egypt, her food has been commoditized within a globalized capitalist food system; a food system that cannot exist without the exploitation of millions of human beings. Readers are distracted by 400 pages of stories and visual imagery that narrate an ‘innate’ “purity” of organic produce and whole grains. However, the food objects and culinary equipment displayed in the picture above signifies a complex and invisible situation that is overlooked by Afua: most vegetables and fruit consumed by people in the USA are sourced by exploited labor, even in the case of organic (Guthman 2004; Newman 2009).

Blueberries, grapes, strawberries, rice, soy, wheat and cotton are all “life-giving” vegan items of “liberation” that Afua suggests. These particular commodities are also listed as
potentially being sourced by child labor and slavery (Barna et al. 2011). The US Department of Labor found that: Argentina uses child labor to harvest blueberries, grapes, and strawberries; Belize uses child labor for the harvesting of citrus fruit; and Burma, India, and Mali have all been found to us forced labor to harvest rice. Although cotton is not edible to humans, Afua tells readers to wrap themselves in natural fabrics such as cotton because it is healthier than synthetic materials. Benin, Burkina Faso, Uzbekistan, China, Egypt, and Tajikistan use child and forced labor to meet the demands of global cotton consumption (Barna et al. 2011). Afua’s motivation for vegan-oriented decolonization comes from Black people’s socio-historical role as enslaved harvesters and producers in the commodity chain during the period of colonial whiteness. Several times throughout Sacred Woman, readers are reminded how Black Americans slaves could not take care of themselves very well because they were forced to grow and harvest cotton and other plants all day.

However, post-colonialism has shifted the antebellum role of Black Americans within the commodity chain—in particular, middle class twenty-first century Black citizens like those leaders of Afrikan Holistic Health movement. During this transition from colonialism to post-colonialism to neoliberalism, it was not only Barthes’s whites that entered a post-empire consciousness that upholds the values of the colonizer. To a significant degree, Sacred Woman signifies that resistance to the legacies of colonial whiteness are limited by how neoliberal whiteness has structured even Black’ people’s ‘race-consciousness.’ They seem to collectively recognize colonial whiteness as the ‘racist’ threat to contemporary Black American empowerment; not the new forms of commodity chain slavery that make Black liberation diet possible. Similarly to PETA’s VSG, vegan food is only “pure” if it makes the Black American body-politic “healthy.”
For example, the Queen Afua Wellness Institute website, as well as Queen Afua Heals Facebook (2012) page, reveals that decolonization from “toxic” foods is simply about Black people eating the “right” foods. There are no dialogues or comments that even hint that any of her hundreds of her followers are literate in, or concerned about twenty-first century slavery in the vegan commodity chain. There are no dialogues about how the end of Black antebellum slavery and Jim Crow era means that human slavery and exploitation of raw materials have been transferred to another vulnerable non-white population. Even though I did not expect Sacred Woman to dedicate an entire chapter to exploitation in the vegan commodity chain, it is noteworthy that no where in the book are readers advised to make sure their vegan products and culinary equipment minimize the very types of cruel exploitation (i.e. antebellum slavery) that put the collective Black USA community into their current state of “damaged” health in the first place.

Sacred Woman’s decolonial methodologies actually represent the common trope within most vegan and vegetarian guides in the USA: creating an ethical body and world is an individual responsibility that can be achieved through the ‘right’ consumer philosophy. Even though PETA’s VSG and Sacred Woman’s guides differ drastically in what vegan products they consider “ethical” and “liberating”, what they both have in common is that they are limited to/in the tools of neoliberal whiteness. Such framing of both “animal liberation” (PETA) and “Black liberation” (Sacred Woman) shows how American consumer culture requires myth-making to conceal “knowing” where their products really come from, and how this lack of knowledge maintains their privileged role as neoliberal citizen-consumer in the global North.

In Chapter 4, I turn my attention to an analysis of the Food Empowerment Project’s Ethical Food Choices guide. It serves as an example of what a vegan food guide looks like, that
is both ‘race-conscious’ and critical of the ‘equal’ world that neoliberalism falsely promises to deliver.
Chapter Four: Food Empowerment Project and the Underside of Veganized Modernity

The Food Empowerment Project encourages a vegan lifestyle based on compassion and respect for all forms of life. It is vital that our compassion and respect extend not only to the animals who are so horribly mistreated, but also to the workers who provide us with the fruits and vegetables that sustain us. As consumers, we can promote social justice and equality by supporting farms that value and respect their workers.

-Food Empowerment Project

In this chapter, I will apply decolonial world-systems analysis to the meanings that Food Empowerment Project (FEP) have applied to vegan commodities palm oil and cocoa in their online guide Ethical Food Choices. Through this medium, I will show how FEP re-signifies the “ethical” and “cruelty-free” labels ascribed to Earth Balance® and Clif Bar®; two popular vegan brands in the global North. Such re-signification shows how neoliberal whiteness operates as the central value system for defining industry-approved concepts of what are ‘ethical’ and ‘sustainable’ for particular vegan commodities purchased in the USA.

The Food Empowerment Project (FEP) is a pro-vegan food justice organization whose organizers seek to reveal how individual consumption in the USA, contributes to ‘cruel’ practices such as animal exploitation, human slavery, environmental pollution, and structural racism-poverty-sexism. Lauren Ornelas, the founder of FEP, decided to become a vegan. She documented animal exploitation and worked for Viva! (Vegetarians International Voice for Animals) and Viva!USA. Viva!USA is best known for working with Whole Foods Market to convince them to change policies about the ways that farmed animals are killed for food (Ornelas 2011).
In 2006, Lauren Ornelas founded The Food Empowerment Project (FEP). She was inspired to found FEP after participating in the World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela. In a 2011 August interview, she says:

The concept of Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P.) came to me when I was speaking at the World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela. There were speakers from Bolivia talking about the fight against Bechtel and water privatization; there were talks about immigration (why are goods able to cross borders so freely but people can’t?); there were talks about workers; and, of course, there were talks about the environment. I gave a talk on corporate animal factories and how they impacted the animals, workers and the environment. I was impressed with the global interest from people in Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil and even some from the US; however, I did not know of any international groups working on all of the issues I addressed. This was one of the first things that prompted me to start thinking of a more global approach to food issues (XVO 2011:1).

FEP seeks to educate USA consumer-citizens about the consequences of USA food buying habits and starts from the opposite end of the food commodity chain: landscapes of coloniality that are produced by neoliberal capitalism. FEP’s online Ethical Food Choices (Appendix 2, page 139) guide and Food is Power Brochure (Appendix 3, page 143 for partial brochure) are examples of what a pro-vegan critical pedagogy of consumption looks like. A critical pedagogy of consumption views consumption as a

“site where power, ideology, gender, and social class circulate and shape one another” (p. 325) and would view consumption as “a social activity that integrates consumers into a specific social system and commits them to particular social vision” (Ozanne & Murray, 1995, p. 522). A critical pedagogy of consumption would ask, “What kind of consumers are being created?” and “In whose interests do those constructions work?” (Sandlin and McLaren 2010:15)

FEP’s Ethical Food Choices guide educates the modern consumer about how their choice to stock their kitchen, with particular vegan brands, has direct impact on social and physical landscapes that the companies selling these products do not reveal. Their guides seek to reveal how most American consumer’s “social vision” of consumption has been colonized by the false
promises of neoliberalism and ‘ethical’ consumption. What is noteworthy about FEP is that despite their slogan, “Because Our Food Choices Matter,” they acknowledge that not everyone has food choice. Throughout their brochure and website, FEP speaks about the work that they have done to expose how and why produce workers who are exploited, do not have the same food choice and privilege that higher income people have. Hence, FEP situates themselves as a food justice organization that also wants to educate those with ‘choice’, why and how their food choices matter.

Before I analyze Ethical Food Choices’ condemnation of Earth Balance® and Clif Bar®, I will briefly explain how FEP fits into the model of food justice activism.

Food Justice Beyond a Single [Vegan] Issue

After a long day, most workers go home to run-down housing structures that are unsanitary and often unsafe. They struggle to provide adequate nutrition for themselves and their children. In many cases, workers are unable to afford the very foods they labor to produce. Considering that the average field worker has a sixth-grade education, the children of field workers have little hope of going to college or even finishing high school. The vast majority of families will never have the opportunity to break this cycle of poverty.

-Food Empowerment Project (2011b:1)

One of the central goals of food justice is to fight for a healthy environment, which includes a “healthy” food system. The term “healthy” is expansive, which includes the health of the consumers, the workers, animals used for food, as well as land and water (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). Food justice has a very broad category of organizations representing this movement. However, there are several core themes that underlie most food justice groups. USA food justice advocates seek to transform every aspect of the food system into a more equitable system for all, especially the most vulnerable populations such as low-income and non-white communities (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Alkon and Agyeman 2011). Within this framework, food justice
centralizes solidarity and intersectionality. Food justice has the “potential to link different kinds of advocates, including those concerned with health, the environment, food quality, globalization, workers’ rights and working conditions, access to fresh and affordable food, and more sustainable land use” (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010:7). As a pro-vegan food justice organization, FEP gives special attention to agricultural laborers, racialized minorities, and those living in low-income regions. FEP acknowledges that not everyone has the same access to food, and that food access itself is a social justice issue that should be part of vegan food politics.

FEP joins a long lineage of food justice oriented organizations in the East and South Bay area of California. What FEP and these other groups have in common is that they publicly expose the racial, class, and gender inequalities and inequities inherent in a capitalist society that has commoditized nature and constructed non-white and poor people as disposable and for the advancement of [white] modernity (Heynen 2009; Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Nelson 2011; Peña 2011). One way that the FEP exposes these injustices is through their food guides and brochures that serve as critical pedagogies of consumption.

Earth [In]Balance and Doing what is Right: A Tale of Two Butters

Like PETA, FEP has a website that lists vegan food products for those interested in vegan alternatives. Called “Find Vegan Foods”, once users navigate to this guide, they are met with this introduction:

Food Empowerment Project’s mission is to help people understand how their food choices can change the world-for the good.

To make that a bit easier, below are loads of vegan products that we have taste-tested and feel comfortable recommending! From condiments to non-dairy items to mock meats, you'll find an incredible array of delicious foods.

Some products might be more difficult to find than others, but do ask your grocer to stock them if they aren't readily available.
In order to make this list easier to understand, we have listed products that contain palm oil with a line crossed through them. We were concerned if we left them off, it might be unclear if we knew of their existence or not. If you know of vegan, palm-free foods that are tasty, that we do not have listed, please let us know! (Food Empowerment Project 2011c:1)

After this introduction, one can peruse the guide and see that all of the palm oil-based products have been crossed out (Appendix 4 page 146). Under the ‘butter alternatives’ section, all three products, once advocated by FEP, have now been crossed out: Earth Balance®, Shedd’s Willow Run®, and Smart Balance®. Hence, what was once listed and approved as “cruelty-free” by FEP, has now been symbolized as “unethical.” To learn more about FEP’s advocacy to boycott palm oil products, consumers can click on the blue underline hyperlink ‘palm oil’ with a line crossed through them. Clicking on that link transports the consumer to an alternative vegan space called Ethical Food Choices. Ethical Food Choices tells the story of a veganized coloniality that the commoditization of palm oil and other food commodities/companies perpetuate: slavery, torture, structural racism, food insecurity, and uneven development experienced by non-white and indigenous people of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. It is a different story than what consumers learn from the websites of Earth Balance® and Smart Balance®.

On the website of Earth Balance®, the company conveys to the consumer what their intentions are:

**Doing What’s Right**
We take the health of our planet just as seriously as we take the wellness of our customers, so we put a lot of time and energy into initiatives that support these important issues.
At Earth Balance®, we insist on using only responsible and sustainable sources of palm oil, we just say no to GMOs, and we’re dedicated to making a difference in the organic, childhood health, food allergy and environmental worlds. That’s just how we roll at Earth Balance®. So if you want the inside scoop, take a look at everything we’re doing to build a happier, healthier world.
However, *Ethical Food Choices* conveys a completely different story about palm oil production:

Workers are routinely exploited at every stage of palm oil production around the world. In Colombia, the world’s 5th largest producer, workers struck by the thousands in late 2011 to protest cuts in benefits, subcontracting practices, and precarious work. Carloads of people were brought in to break the strike. Throughout Asia and the Pacific, the extraordinarily toxic herbicide paraquat is being used on palm plantations and endangering workers. Indentured servitude and outright slavery are not uncommon, along with similar human rights abuses of workers.

-Food Empowerment Project (2011d)

How is it possible that these two different entities have two very different perceptions of palm oil? FEP’s interests are in the ‘wellness’ of the indigenous people are being impacted by the commoditization of palm oil. Earth Balance® and Smart Balance®’s interests are in the ‘wellness’ of their customers, orangutans, and profit.

Earth Balance®’s website has a webpage dedicated to ‘educating’ their customers about the current state of palm oil and sustainability.

If you’re not familiar with the palm oil issue, it centers around the serious problems palm oil production creates for endangered orangutans in tropical rainforest regions, including Borneo and Sumatra. These problems include deforestation, habitat loss, and the harming of orangutans and other wildlife. Rather than re-using and re-planting previously deforested areas, some palm oil producers are instead choosing to destroy orangutan rainforest habitat to make way for palm oil plantations, leaving orangutans homeless and vulnerable to starvation, disease, poaching, and other conflicts—all problems pushing the orangutan species closer to extinction. (Earth Balance 2012b:1)

Even though this is one paragraph of an entire page, Earth Balance® does not mention the people who work on the plantation at all; nor do they mention any other human beings who have been affected by palm oil production. They ensure that 70% of their palm oil comes from …
responsible sources in peninsular Malaysia (also a non-native orangutan habitat), which are all members of the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), the leading global organization developing and implementing global standards for sustainable palm oil production. We insist on continuing assurances from our suppliers that all palm fruit oil purchased for Earth Balance complies with the RSPO policies, and we are committed to terminating any suppliers that violate these policies. (Earth Balance 2012b:1)

Throughout the entire page, there is great emphasis on “sustainable” as being equivalent to preventing the extinction of endangered orangutans in deforested tropical areas. Earth Balance® even notes that their support of the Orangutan Foundation International (OFI) will “return 330 wild-born, ex-captive rehabilitated orangutans back to the wild, into biologically-rich, protected forest, where they rightfully belong” (Earth Balance 2012b). This narration of palm oil and “sustainability” gives a particular type of meaning to the word sustainable: ‘sustainable’ means making sure that the orangutan victims of palm oil production are taken care of. Earth Balance®’s concept of “sustainability” does not include the wellness of, or right to self-determination for, the actual human beings that have been negatively affected by palm oil production. The incorporation of Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil standards (RSPO) into Earth Balance®’s concept of sustainability connects Earth Balance® to a ‘reputable’ global organization. This is strategic because it tells the consumer that RSPO is ‘authority.’ Hence, customers need not worry any further about their money supporting a potential company (Earth Balance®) that is not ‘ethical.’

After readers on the page finish reading the above information, they are left with a pleasant image in their heads of orangutans happily frolicking in a ‘biologically-rich, protected forest, where they rightfully belong.’ This is even more appealing to pro-vegan animal rights consumers in the USA who have been narrated a story that Earth Balance® does not support the indirect killing of orangutans. Hence, every time they buy Earth Balance® vegan spreads, they
are using their financial power to save orangutans. However, they are engaging in another form of ethical commodity fetishism.

Those who want to sell things to such people satisfy that need through images that encapsulate or manifest those conceptual categories, rendering them as instances of the categories. I think it likely that people who are not especially knowledgeable will come to take these images as defining a moral value, which is to say ethicality. (Carrier 2010:677)

I would suggest that the ‘not especially knowledgeable’ aspect of his statement is a type of capital of blissful ignorance that companies such as Earth Balance® and Smart Balance® depend upon. The collectivity of USA vegan consumers of palm oil simply cannot know what it is like to live on a palm oil plantation in the global South. How can they know about something that they have never experienced at the visceral level? And how can they analyze that experience through a consciousness that has not been dictated by neoliberal capitalism? Some cultural theorists consider RSPO oil ‘certification’ as a ‘hijacked’ form of sustainability which functions within the logic of neoliberalism (Parr 2009).

In these terms sustainability culture’s call to ‘make a difference’ becomes the valued difference upon which the niche marketing of a profit-maximizing corporate capitalism both depends and thrives. Sustainability’s commodification produces a mass market of vacuous eco-chic consumers making superficial gestures towards environmentalism but more seriously concerned with branding themselves with a badge of green distinction (Allon 2010: 205-206)

For FEP, ‘sustainable’ means that human beings laboring on the land should be able to thrive and survive. They should enjoy optimal health and wellness as defined by themselves and not industry. This is evident when FEP explains to the person reading the Ethical Food Choices that human beings have been enslaved, indentured, sprayed with pesticides, and displaced from their homeland for palm oil production. Also, FEP includes statistics about the non-human animals that have been displaced and/or killed during deforestation process. This has occurred to create
new plantations for palm trees, which involve more than just orangutans. Most importantly, FEP looks critically at the RSPO. FEP researched more to understand if RSPO has alleviated the suffering caused by palm oil. As of 2012, FEP discovered that RSPO certifications for ‘sustainable palm oil’ brands means ‘absolutely nothing.’ Their promises to protect the land and its people have yet to occur (Glüsing and Klawitter 2012). FEP drew their information from the German news outlet Der Spiegel. FEP provides a hyperlink to that article from the *Ethical Food Choices* webpage that I clicked on.

In that May 2012 Der Spiegel article titled “WWF helps Industry More than Environment,” journalists Jens Glüsing and Nils Klawitter are skeptical about WWF and RSPO working together to “protect the rainforest.” The journalists reveal that WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and RSPO advocate the deforestation of rainforest that they have deemed ‘second-class rainforests.’

The WWF argues that some areas are ‘degraded’ terrain, that is second-class forest and wasteland. It insists that plantation monocultures and conservation are not contradictory ideas. The WWF calls this approach ‘market transformation.’ It embodies the belief that more can be achieved with cooperation than confrontation (Glüsing and Klawitter 2012: 2).

There are also other environmental justice activists who have written similarly about how industry has falsely constructed particular parts of nature as ‘disposable’ or second-rate in order to abuse and/or commoditize it (see Solnit 2007). Glüsing and Klawitter ask their readers, “But how exactly is the forest being protected if it has to be cut down first?” (2012:1). The strategy behind FEP connecting readers to this article is to get readers thinking more critically about whose interests are more important: industry’s or the indigenous people and the lands that they and wildlife inhabit. One of the most important ideas that the reader is left with is the notion that just because a company claims ‘sustainability,’ doesn’t mean they will actually do it. Readers
who have clicked on the link from the FEP page read an unsettling idea about one particular corporation’s concepts of sustainability:

Despite claims of sustainability, many companies continue to deforest the area. A concession costs about $30,000 in bribes or campaign contributions, reports a form WWF employee who worked in Indonesia for a long time. ‘Sustainable palm oil, as the WWF promises with its RSPO certificates, is really nonexistent,’ he says. (Glüsing and Klawitter 2012: 2)

Earth Balance®’s own page about sustainability also claims that they source their palm oil from Malaysia and Brazil, not Indonesia. However, in reading the above quoted paragraph, the reader is left with the potential incentive to start questioning even if Earth Balance®’s sustainability initiatives are “ethical enough.” To what degree does profit become the defining factor for sustainability, particularly if RSPO is working with WWF?

Readers of the Der Spiegel article also learn that WWF was initially established and financially supported by incredibly wealthy people with big interests in preserving certain wildlife areas for their own amusement, such as ‘big game’ hunting. The largest financial donations received by WWF have come from Shell and BP oil companies, Monsanto and Cargill as well as backing from nuclear, tobacco, and arms industry. One of the most striking realities implied in the article are the never-ending roles that European colonial configurations of the globe play into palm oil industry’s construction of ‘sustainable.’ Readers are left with the idea that RSPO, WWF, and the palm oil industry are simply legalized forms of colonialism that benefit the same lineage of elite white Europeans colonialist from over four hundred years ago.

Rich Europeans or Americans are allowed to behave as if the colonial period had never ended. They are allowed to shoot elephants, buffalo, leopards, lions, giraffes and zebras, and they can even smear the blood of the dead animals onto their faces, in accordance with an old custom. (Glüsing and Klawitter 2012: 3)

The reference to ‘the colonial period had never ended’ actually reflects an illusion of a ‘post-
colonial’ era (Grosfoguel 2002; Mignolo 2007; Maldonado-Torres 2008). More broadly, this illusion, coupled with the discursive and epistemic battles between Earth Balance®/RSPO/WWF and FEP’s definitions of ‘sustainable’ also have broader implications that FEP and the Der Spiegel article only just began to touch upon: the failure of ‘developmentalism,’ the myth of decolonization, and the globalization of neoliberal whiteness as the ‘common sense’ framework for ‘ethical consumerism.’ Such framework is defined by industry for the global North and West.

Developmentalism can be understood as a product of mid-twentieth century neoliberalism. When understood through the non-traditional framework of decolonial world-systems analysis, “developmentalism” is a process by which the ‘benchmark’ for ‘progress’ is fundamentally rooted in a Eurocentric and white supremacist capitalist framing of reality (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodriguez 2002). Through such ‘white logic’, developmentalism proceeds in a way that does not dismantle the white supremacist underpinnings of colonialism, but actually seeks to strengthen wealthy white European elite’s ongoing possessive investment in whiteness. Ex-colonies are expected to ‘develop’ towards/within the logics of capitalism. Such a system of logic dictates that ‘modernity’ is the ‘universal’ goal of ‘progress’ and ‘civility’ that all people should strive for. This includes the ‘common sense’ expectation that ex-colonial subjects should ‘naturally’ want to commoditize their natural resources. After, they should then use monetary profit to rise out of ‘primitive’ or ‘savage’ living conditions. Developmentalism was, and still is, the global North’s ‘remedy-plan’ for the 500 years of racialized injustice that the formal European and Euro-American racial colonial projects produced. As seen through the traditional world-systems analysis, there are three concrete processes for the ‘success’ of ‘development’ which include …
“self-sustained” economic growth, the consolidation of institutions to protect and further consolidate democracy and the respect for individual rights, and greater access to social projects rooted in emancipatory ideals. However, the concept of development has also predominantly acted as a “comprehensive concept of control” (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez 2002: xxiii).

However, control over what and whom? Developmentalism ensures that the global North continues to have hegemonic control over the natural resources and non-white labor of the global South. However, this is only under the disguise of free market capitalism and ‘democracy for all.’

Developmentalism as an ideology reinforces the autonomous illusion of peripheral nation-states and the evolutionary notion of progress. The central idea is that each peripheral nation-state is ‘independent’ and will pass through the same ‘stages’ of the core states, and that sooner or later the former would mirror-image the latter in the modernization path (Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez 2002: xxiv)

Furthermore, there can be no ‘even development’ of ex-colonies if this imagined future is envisioned through a capitalist framework. After all, the very nature of capitalism demands uneven distribution of resources and wealth that only benefit a small portion of the population who mostly live in the periphery zones (modern) of the world. Uneven development, then, is a logical and necessary condition under capitalism (Smith 2008).

Some decolonial economic theorists have rigorously analyzed the socio-economic fruits of the developmentalist project over the last fifty years (Korzeniewicz et. al 2002). Their research found that class inequality did not decline, since the inception of the developmentalist project, and that by the 1990s, “world inequalities were at their highest recorded level over the past two centuries” (Korzeniewicz et. al 2002:xxv). This is a counter-narrative to the traditional world-systems theories that claimed that the gap between the poor and wealthy have declined considerably since the onset of developmentalism. The remedy to such inequalities of wealth and resources is to transfer the resources from the core (wealthy nations) back to the poor regions and
have them define sovereignty and the right to self-determination for themselves (Gedicks 1994; Korzeniewicz et. al 2002).

The ethical consumerism movement of the global West/North, dominated by a minority of white middle-class consumer-citizens, has become the choice method to return resources and wealth back to the poor regions (Carrier 2007; 2010; Lewis and Potter 2010; Scrase 2011). By transferring monetary resources more equitably through ‘ethical consumerism’ (i.e. Fair Trade, ‘sustainable’), modern consumers believe that they are ‘investing’ in the uplift (modernization) of poor or indigenous laboring communities (Carrier 2007; 2010; Lewis and Potter 2010; Scrase 2011). Through FEP’s perspective, concepts such as investing in the ‘sustainable’ palm oil industry to ‘save’ vulnerable populations are contradictory in practice. FEP’s concerns are valid, as several other scholars focused on such contradictions in the ‘sustainable’ commodities industry and have come to similar conclusions (see: Bacon 2008; Berlan 2008; Allon 2010; Carrier 2010; Hazlewood 2012; Lewis and Potter 2010; Willson 2010).

In 2012, research was published about ‘sustainable’ palm plantations amongst the Afro-Colombian population in southern Colombia. The researchers spent time observing and listening to the lawyers of Palmas del Sur palm oil company, who negotiated ‘sustainable’ palm-oil land use between the Afro-Colombia indigenous population and Palmas del Sur. Throughout the hours long negotiations, the research team noted how the law team constantly used the framework of neoliberalism to define their corporate land use rationalities. This framework dictated the role that the Afro-Colombian village “should” play in a type “green capitalist” development that the village never wanted to participate in, in the first place. Debating land use ‘rights’ was literally mediated through INCODER maps and titles as the ‘unequivocal source of truth,’ despite the fact that the villagers had completely different epistemology of what lands
they had natural rights to. During the negotiations, one of the lawyers for Palmas del Sur openly complained that the Afro-Colombian villages were not ‘taking advantage’ of the ‘many privileges’ that development afforded them. He called the Black community ‘underdeveloped,’ making them solely responsible for their own poverty and their failure to rise out of it (instead of blaming ‘state-endorsed structural racism.’) During these negotiations, the research team realized how ‘development’ was the taken for granted benchmark for ‘rational behavior’ dictated by the corporation (Cárdenas 2012).

The lawyers kept on reiterating how commoditization of the village’s natural reserves, for ‘green’ agro-business development, would greatly ‘benefit’ the Afro-Colombians. However, one of the lead spokespeople for the village, named Aroldo, retaliated against the lawyer’s definition of development. He reframes ‘development’ as a form of white supremacist capitalist aggression towards his people:

> What many people call development, we call aggression. For us, the best thing would be for these lands to have their animals and their plants. Not just now, but always. That dollar sign is what has destroyed and continues destroying. We have created reserve areas as buffers and for reforestation. When we cut down the chanul (Sacoglotis procera), the tatabra (pecari) and the perico21 (sloth) left. They all followed the banks of the Mira River to Ecuador. The animals that lived in Puerto Palma migrated to Esmeraldas. We were not wrong, our ancestors were right. (Cárdenas 2012:321)

This is a strategic response, which turns the neoliberal definition of development on its head. It suggests that its use as a benchmark for ‘progress’ is savage, aggressive, outdated, and incompatible with the true essence of an eco-sustainable economy. Such a strategy “established environmental friendliness as a morally superior criterion of evaluation – a test that Black communities could easily pass” (Cárdenas 2012: 321).

However, the village is caught in a very nuanced dance of trying not to be the ‘ignoble savage’ and trying not to be seen as ‘insurgent’; the latter classificatory label has historically
come with it, state sanctioned violence towards non-white populations who have fought against the colonialist project and its antecedents (i.e. globalized capitalism, Third World Development, neoliberalism) (see Marigold 1994; Featherstone 2009; Eckhard et. al 2012).

Within the rationale of the lawyers and Palmas del Sur, there are two types of Black subjects: ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ Not wanting to be a part of ‘green capitalist’ development as an ‘entrepreneurial partner’ to ‘rise out of poverty’ racially codes one as a ‘bad’ Black Colombian citizen. Even though the lawyer team never used the terms ‘bad Black’ or ‘Black savage,’ the entire meeting was a clear display of racializing Black people through coded language. This example of the Palmas del Sur case is not singular. The findings from this research reinforce the pertinence of the observations made in the Der Spiegel article found on the FEB website: that the elite of Europe and America are “allowed to behave as if the colonial period had never ended” (Glüsing and Klawitter 2012: 3). The Afro-Colombian village ‘negotiating’ with the ‘sustainable’ palm oil industry, shows that for this “post-colonial” region, not much has really changed in terms of how the [neo]colonial project of globalized capitalism seeks ways to rationalize its aggression and commoditization of the global South’s natural resources and indigenous people.

Similarly to the Afro-Colombians dealing with Palmas de Sur, the Afro-Ecuadorian people in San Lorenzo, Ecuador, experience colonial-style relations too. The global North’s ‘green’ capitalists have been capitalizing off of palm oil production for the bio-fuel market of the USA. Palm oil has rapidly become not just a popular vegan food commodity; it has become the central bio-fuel source over the past ten years. “Eco-conscious” car drivers in the global North have been marketed to believe that ‘biofuel’ is the ‘sustainable’ answer to petroleum gas dependent Americans (Hazlewood 2012). Unfortunately, most have been sold this idea without
understanding that to burn and deforest land for planting palm trees is a big contributor to carbon dioxide gas emissions, as well as the devastation of indigenous people’s ecosystems and wildlife (Levidow and Paul 2010; 2011). Research of this bio-fuel palm-oil industry …

[…] links the landscapes of injustice and isolation witnessed in San Lorenzo to a persistent colonial air that permeates North-South relations and that guides present discourses surrounding climate change and alternative fuel technologies. Instead of recognizing global climate change as symptom of an inherent defect of capitalism, the Global North continues to exploit both the Earth and the Global South, enacting new forms of extraction and exploitation that are specific to time and place, but are enduringly colonial. (Hazlewood 2012:124)

Having never viscerally experienced the socio-spatial realities of coloniality that Afro-Colombians, Afro-Ecuadorians, and Indigenous Ecuadorians suffer through every day, most USA ‘green’ consumers simply do not know that the landscapes of palm-oil ‘sustainability’ sold to them create landscapes of violence. They do not know because the “ethical consumerism” or “green” industry has done a superb job of managing this ignorance for them (Carrier 2010) through myth-making. FEP’s stance against palm-oil is a critical intervention against such myths; particularly since so many vegans are using products like Earth Balance® with the assumption that it is a generous act of harmlessness for dairy cows. These assumptions are upheld by major pro-vegan media outlets such as PETA’s VSG, that promote Earth Balance® spreads as one of their favorite vegan brands (PETA 2012c).

Through the use of strategically coded language and meaning attributed to ‘harmless’ labels such as ‘Organic,’ ‘sustainable,’ ‘Fair Trade,’ and even ‘cruelty-free’ (as prescribed to all vegan commodities), the modern American vegan consumer is easily sold on the romantic idea that everyone ‘naturally’ wants to go through ‘development’ and become ‘modern’ like the USA (Scrase 2010). For the ‘eco-conscious’ USA citizen-consumer, it is ‘common sense’ to want to ‘help’ poor non-white people sell their natural resources and/or labor for profit. What will
‘magically’ result is that these indigenous people can eventually obtain the material symbols of ‘civilization’ and ‘modernity’ that the USA covets as a benchmark for ‘logical progress’ (Cárdenas 2012). In contrast, Aroldo and tens of thousands of indigenous people throughout the global South know that these labels have done little (if not more damage) to secure their right to food sovereignty and the right to self-determination (Gedicks 1994; Levidow and Paul 2010). One of the biggest myths of combining ‘organic,’ ‘fair,’ and ‘sustainable’ on the labels of food commodities imported into the USA from the global South, is the belief that this will always produce socially just outcomes and landscapes for indigenous communities of the global South. This is not to dismiss the fact that ‘ethical’ quality assurance schemes have helped thousands of people (see Chandler 2006; Raynolds et. al 2007). However, a significant number of scholars argue that overall, ‘ethical consumerism’ is not the answer to solving global inequities; particularly since a corporate-environmental food regime has been quickly emerging, post-2000, that is undergirded by the logics of capitalism (Friedmann 2005; Malesh 2005; Carrier 2010).

In addition, it is very common for consumers in the global West to confuse the actual meanings between labels like ‘Fair Trade’ versus ‘Ethical Trade’ (see Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2011). Even more confusing are the many pseudo-ethical labels and certifications systems that have been established over the past two decades that symbolize ‘ethical,’ but do not necessarily mean the same thing to the corporation yielding it than it does to the USA ‘eco-conscious’ consumer:

‘Fair trade’ is not the only sustainability label that is used in international food trade, and it is regularly mixed up with ‘ethical trade’, possibly leading to confusion among consumers. Sometimes fair trade is considered part of ethical trade, but in effect they are two different strategies. Both aim at ensuring that trade between ‘South’ and ‘North’ neither harms producer/worker welfare nor destroys the environment at production sites. (Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2012: 137)
Ethical trade is a voluntary label with unique definitions only applicable to the company that creates it. It falls under most large corporations banner of ‘corporate social responsibility.’ The explanation of such labeling is simple: “Other sustainability labels, such as the Rainforest Alliance and Utz Certified, compete with fair trade labeling in the same market. The Rainforest Alliance (launched in 1987), aims to protect biodiversity and promote sustainability” (Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2012: 137).

Positioning the concept of ‘sustainability’ labeling as being part of market competition means that the labels and symbolic meaning behind them have become commodities themselves (Carrier 2010). It indicates that these corporations are more interested in winning the trust of consumers (which means more profit), than they are of preventing the suffering that intensification of natural resource extrapolation. This is indicated in the fact that labels, such as The Rainforest Alliance, are ‘sub-par’ in comparison to the internationally recognized ‘Fair trade’ label. Sub-par indicates that companies more interested in profit. Hence, they are meeting the intense consumer demand for ‘sustainably’ labeled food commodities may be seeking certification through ‘sustainable’ entities organizations that are less ‘fair’, or are known to be less strict, in order to lower sourcing and labor costs and increase profit. For example, “The Rainforest Alliance and Utz labels share many characteristics with fair trade, with the crucial exception of guaranteeing minimum prices for producers and paying a premium for community investments, as this element is unique to fair trade” (Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2012:137). Consumers are not really given enough information about what these two exceptions mean in defining ‘fair trade’ and making a more ethical choice. Who is affected by these exceptions? Are there negative consequences that may not affect the quality of the product, but affect the communities in which the commodity comes from? As a critical pedagogy of consumption,
FEP’s *Ethical Food Choices* works as intervention. It seeks to drastically change the cultural meaning behind “sustainable,” “green” or “ethical” labeling to expose contradictions of ‘green’ capitalism. In the next section, I will show how FEP changes the cultural meaning beyond vegan cocoa, and the vegan mainstream notion that it is ethical and cruelty-free.

**FEP and the Contested Semiotics of Vegan Chocolate: Unpacking the ‘invisible knapsack’ of vegan consumer privilege**

> Even if one manages to escape the trance of hyperconsumerism, few really understand or attempt to follow the globalized political ecology that supports each of their privileges. Fewer still use this knowledge to guide all of their consumption practices. Consumer education in America is daily training in economic privilege and ignorance: it means learning the price of everything and the cost of nothing.


Chocolate in 2012 USA continues to represent power, pleasure, and what some scholars refer to as an ‘invisible knapsack of consumer privilege’37 (Greenwood 2010). This consumer privilege has a colonial genealogy that advocated the normalcy of structural violence to obtain and commoditize ‘addictive’ edible luxuries such as cocoa and sugar cane (Mintz 1986; Moitt 2004; Satre 2005). There has been recent scholarship about ‘fair’ and ‘sustainable’ cocoa products to repair the uneven development caused by colonialism (Berlan 2008; Firdell 2009; Mohan 2010). However, there has been no research into the popularity of non-Fair trade vegan chocolate products amongst vegans who consider it to be ‘cruelty-free.’ This is in spite of the fact that a significant amount of cocoa coming from the ‘cruelty’ of child slave labor.

Vegan chocolate for FEP is a very important food justice issue. What makes FEP unique is that they promote the abstinence from vegan chocolate products in which the cocoa is sourced from child labor and/or slavery in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. While most vegans in America are
bombarded with the semiotics of non-Fair trade vegan cocoa products as ‘luxurious’ and ‘pleasurable,’ FEP re-signifies non-fair trade vegan cocoa products as a symbol of the ‘cruelty’ of coloniality. This is in great contrast to the signification of ‘harmlessness’ and ‘compassion’ that extremely popular pro-vegan outlets such as VegNews and PETA apply to these products\textsuperscript{38}. On the \textit{Ethical Food Choices Guide}, FEP expresses their disappointment with ‘ethical’ vegan products produced by Clif Bar. Clif Bar® has claimed that they are ‘sustainable’ and ‘socially responsible’. However, they do not reveal if they are sourcing their cocoa from child slavery. Furthermore, FEP does not accept Clif Bar’s partnership with the ‘sub-par’ ethical scheme Rainforest Alliance as the ‘answer’ to creating more ethically sourced cocoa.

Rainforest Alliance has come under great critique by Organic Consumer Association (OCA) and the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF). In 2009, these two organizations published a report that exposed problems they saw with Rainforest Alliance as a supposedly ‘ethical’ labeling system. They found that Rainforest Alliance does not allow unionization for its laborers. If the workers cannot form a union to collectively communicate their needs and concerns to Rainforest Alliance, then their needs may never really be understood and actualized. In terms of wages, ILRF and OCA found that a ‘living wage’ for cocoa workers is not guaranteed: “Rainforest Alliance standards require that employers pay workers wages equal to or greater than the regional average or legally established minimum wage, but this standard does not mean that workers will receive a living wage” (OCA 2009:1). In other words, just because employers are required to pay a living wage does not mean that they have done this one hundred percent of the time. OCA and ILRF also found that laborers are not allowed to remove themselves from the work environment dangers without fear of punishment. This includes not being able to leave if they do not want to be exposed to pesticide spraying of the crops.
Rainforest Alliance also does not guarantee maternity leave for female laborers.

In addition to the above labor issues, one of the strongest critiques of Rainforest Alliance is that their certification system only requires that a minimum of 30% of a company’s ingredient source must comply to Rainforest Alliance’s ‘ethical’ requirements to receive the official Rainforest Alliance label. This is in stark contrast to Fair Trade, which requires 100% compliance as well as offers a ‘living wage’ (International Labor Rights Forum 2009). Even though it may fit Rainforest Alliance’s definition of ethical, this lack of labor “rights” does not fit FEPs definition.

In 2012, FEP questioned Clif Bar’s ‘sup-par’ affiliation with the Rainforest Alliance, as well as requested that the company divulge from where they source their cocoa. An incredibly popular brand amongst both ‘health-conscious’ and vegan consumers in the USA, FEP’s focus on them is significant. Clif Bar® is an energy bar company located in Emeryville, CA. This region of California (the East Bay and San Francisco) is the hub of ‘ethical food’ and ‘eco-chic’ living. Their main website, http://www.clifbar.com/, depicts their products as appropriate for outdoor athletes who wish to have convenient access to high energy and protein snacks.

Clif Bar® is particularly interested in creating food for their ‘extreme’ outdoor athletes market, such as marathon runners, triathletes, and rock climbers. In 2007, vegan biking team OrganicAthlete launched their vegan cycling team at Clif Bar® headquarters. The team was sponsored by the number one read vegan magazine in the USA and composed of what appear to be all white bicyclists39. On their “Team Clif” webpage40, Clif introduces 129 athletes and sport ambassadors that they sponsor. Browsing through the images, 122 appear to be white.

The branded image of their first best-selling product, the Clif Bar® is the drawing of a slim figured white able-bodied male hanging from a cliff (rock climbing) with mountains in the
distance. Clif Bar® also markets heavily how 70% of their ingredients are “Organic”, which is an important tenet of the modern day ‘ethical’ consumer in the USA.

Greg Erickson founded Clif Bar® in 1991. On the Clif Bar & Company webpage “Who We Are”, Erickson narrates how a 175-mile bicycle trip inspired him to create a good tasting energy bar. Readers learn that Erickson spent hours in his mother’s kitchen, ‘perfecting’ his first energy bar (Clif Bar Company 2011). On the right side of this story are “5 Aspirations” that he has:

1. Sustaining our Planet
2. Sustaining our Community
3. Sustaining our People
4. Sustaining our Business
5. Sustaining our Brands (Clif Bar & Company 2011)

However, who is that community of ‘our’ and who is outside of it?
At the bottom of the webpage, readers can download their year 2011 Annual Report and read the special edition that highlights their 20-year journey. Throughout the entire brochure, readers learn that through various “social responsibility” projects, Clif is committed to “healthy” eating and “environmental sustainability.” The company provides onsite childcare as of 2010, uses solar energy, is 20% employee owned, and was named “Best place to work” in 2008 by Outside magazine. They make the statement that they are concerned about the ethics of production from field to store (Clif Bar & Company 2011b).

There are about 250 people visually represented in the report. Over 95% appear to be white. There is an image of white male farmer, Nash Huber, looking at his field of organic grains that will be used for Clif products. We see an image of four white Clif sales employees, doing volunteer farming at Down Home Ranch in Elgin, Texas. Interestingly, we don’t read about or see images depicting who and from where Clif sources their cocoa ingredients. Clif also uses palm oil in their products and we do not see the people harvesting it or where it is from (Clif Bar & Company 2011b).

For a company that packages itself as ‘socially responsible’, ‘sustainable,’ and ‘ethical’ over the past 20 year journey, it is quite notable that they do not mention the journey of how palm oil or cocoa make it into their products; particularly since both commodities have garnered a lot of attention over the past few years, due to their connections to human rights violations. Food Empowerment Project took notice of this lack of transparency to Clif Bar’s® customers. On their homepage, FEP writes:

Now, why would a company not want to disclose information about where they source their cacao? We are not asking for company names - only country. Clif Bar acknowledges on their website "that food matters to our families, our communities, and our planet - as our food choices affect the physical, social, and environmental fabric of our lives." They even pledge a commitment to communities worldwide. Yet this now all seems to be empty rhetoric.
We all know why companies like Nike and Apple took so long to disclose information on their supply chains: because they had something to hide. But does Clif?

Recently, Clif Bar announced that they intend to use the Rainforest Alliance certification, a system that imposes the least amount of requirements on the companies that plan to use its seal. Indeed, it's the same certification that Hershey plans to begin using later this year on its Bliss line of products. While we appreciate Clif Bar's effort, our question remains the same: Where do you source your cacao from? (Food Empowerment Project 2011k)

Alluding to Nike®, Hershey®, and Apple® disrupts the narrative depicted on Clif Bar’s website and 2011 year report that construct them to be ‘different’ from those ‘other’ companies that are known to have engaged in severe human rights violations. Clif Bar® is not supposed to be like Nike®, Hershey®, and Apple®, as these companies have not branded themselves as ‘eco-conscious’ or ‘cruelty-free’ the way Clif Bar® has. There has been a tremendous amount of investigative journalism conducted on these corporations that expose their ‘unethical’ practices (See Badiner and Hill 2002; Hartman 2003; Huff et al. 2013.). A significant number of ‘eco-conscious’ citizen-consumers in the USA are familiar with the re-signification of Nike®, Hershey®, and Apple® as ‘bad corporations.’ Hence, implying that Clif Bar® has the same ‘ethics’ as these ‘notorious’ human rights violators is a strategic act of re-signification. In particular, FEP’s action is directed towards the ‘eco-conscious’ and/or ‘vegan’ consumer in the USA. Such a consumer may be purchasing Clif Bar® products as way to perform their sense of justice that is against the mainstream ‘unethical’ food corporations that abuse animals, the environment, and human beings.

In May 2011, FEP sent Clif a formal letter, requesting that they divulge where they source their cocoa. The letter is posted on their FEP website (See Appendix 7 on page 150 for full letter). Below is an excerpt:
When we, along with many of our supporters and your customers, inquired [about the source of your cocoa], we were told: “We actually don’t give origins for any of our ingredients due to the highly competitive nature of organic sourcing.”

As the owners of a company (and a socially conscious one at that), I am sure you are aware of the difficulties companies face when they are not transparent about their supplier's practices. Concerns about competition have not prevented other socially conscious companies from providing us with the information regarding the origin of the chocolate used in their products – we do not ask for the names of the supplier – we simply want to know where the cacao comes from. (Food Empowerment Project 2012e)

In 2012, nearly a year after requesting that Clif Bar ® reveal their cocoa’s country of origin, they did not provide FEP this information. Through Change.org, a petitioning website, FEP then decided to send a petition letter to the company, and asked readers on FEP’s website to do the same by clicking on the hyperlink, “Tell CLIF to raise the bar on child slavery.” On top of the petition letter, there is a picture that readers would never see on Clif, or even Hershey’s®, So Delicious®, and Nestle’s® websites: two ‘sad’ African children who are presumably enslaved on
a cocoa plantation. It is a visual depiction of cocoa production and the underside of veganized modernity. The picture also represents an alternative to the “chocolate is pleasurable” narrative sold to the global North. Below is an excerpt from their petition letter (See Appendix 8, page 152 for the entire petition letter):

Unfortunately, your plan to use Rainforest Alliance certification isn’t good enough. I need to know where your cocoa comes from so I can make an informed decision.

Won’t you step up and tell your customers what they deserve to know?

You’ve pledged a commitment to communities worldwide – now show us this isn’t just an empty promise of social responsibility. (Food Empowerment Project 2012f)

In the petition to Clif Bar®, FEP’s own definition of a ‘social responsibility’ challenges Clif Bar’s®. Embedded in anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and anti-poverty food justice framework, FEP accuses Clif Bar® of not applying the types of ‘ethics’ they claim to be dedicated to in ‘commitment to communities worldwide.’ Hence, while Rainforest Alliance may be ‘acceptable’ certification/symbol of ‘eco-conscious’ commodities to most USA consumer-citizens, FEP’s petition questions Clif Bar’s partnership with a ‘sub-par’ definition of ‘sustainable’ (Rainforest Alliance), as well as their refusal to divulge information about the regions in which Clif sources their chocolate. FEP implies that’s Clif Bar’s® silence most likely means they are sourcing from caca-producing situation akin to slavery, but don’t truly care as long as it doesn’t affect the patronage of their global North consumer base.

I would also suggest that most of the images on the Clif Bar® website depict a white clientele that has a type of socio-economic privilege that usually comes with being able to afford to participate in endurance sports such as triathlons or professional bicycling. These sports are
not usually the pass-times of poor and working class people and people of color in the United States; they are dominated by whites (Wheaton 2004). This is because they require a type of ‘disposable’ income and the luxury of a lot of free time to participate (Palmer 2004). Clif Bar’s website does convey all of the key symbols of ‘ethical’ and ‘sustainable’ food products that the modern eco-conscious consumer is used to accepting as ‘truth.’ However, FEP’s two letters, read through a decolonial world-systems framework, communicate how mostly white socio-economically privileged modern athlete’s bodies are being fed and reproduced by the potential exploitation of enslaved African children harvesting cocoa. Organic cocoa (and palm oil) ingredients may be ‘healthier’ for the mostly white American Clif Bar® athletes depicted on Clif Bar’s website. However, it still does not ensure that the people harvesting ‘organic’ cocoa (or even palm oil) for Clif Bar, are being treated humanely or have the same access to health and nutrition as those depicted. Furthermore, it does not ensure that they are not being forced to partake in a ‘green’ developmentalism. This is because ‘organic’ ethical labeling scheme does not actually tell consumers how the people harvesting and producing the raw ingredients are treated; it simply conveys that the ‘organic’ food commodity itself was not genetically modified or sprayed with ‘harmful’ chemical pesticides (Guthman 2004; Howard and Allen 2006).

The most intriguing aspect of Clif Bar’s products is that they include ingredients that are literally ‘luxuries’ and not ‘necessities’ of survival for the people who consume them. The desires of neoliberal whiteness are dictated as more important than the basic survival needs of an African child harvesting cocoa as a slave. Do the consumers of Clif Bar® actually need palm oil and cocoa to survive? If Clif Bar® were to incorporate Fair Trade vegan cocoa, this action would most likely convince their customers, who signed the FEP petition, to have trust in Clif Bar’s ‘ethical philosophies’ again. Plenty of research has shown how Fair Trade cocoa labeling has
been successful in enticing modern consumers, particularly around coffee and cocoa commodities (see Howard and Allen 2006; Carrier 2010; Chen 2010;). However, even if Clif Bar® were to incorporate Fair Trade chocolate into their products, what does this potentially mean for West Africans who would still be expected to harvest it?

Representing FEP at the “Law and Disorder Conference” conference in Oregon, Lauren Ornelas’s one-hour long lecture primarily educated the audience about the violence of environmental racism experienced by Latino farm laborers in the USA and chocolate slavery forced upon tens of thousands of abducted children in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. She narrates a story about having watched a BBC documentary special that focused on slavery in the cocoa industry. Ornelas tells the audience that the interviewer of the documentary asked an enslaved man who had escaped a cocoa plantation:

“What would you say to a Westerner who eats chocolate?” Basically, he said, “Every time they are eating it they are biting into my flesh; they are biting into my suffering.” And as a vegan, and as an animal rights activist, I thought, “Hmm, that is the exact same thing a non-human animal would say to a person that consumes animals” is that “This Is my suffering.” (http://www.becausewemust.org/beyond-veganism-food-justice/)

For her, this documentary was a pivotal moment for the Food Empowerment Project. The film helped to concretely define their next food justice initiative: re-signifying vegan chocolate to an American audience that collectively have been marketing cocoa as a symbol of ‘pleasure’ and most importantly ‘cruelty-free’ (Ornelas 2011). Throughout the talk, Ornelas reiterates that vegans would immediately not want to eat something that had a ‘little bit of eggs’ in it because they count that ‘little’ bit of animal suffering as “suffering” nonetheless. However, she also hints that it is a contradictory sense of vegan ethics to abstain from eating a piece of a cake that had a ‘little bit of eggs’ in it; yet, these vegans still eat vegan non-Fair Trade chocolate that has human ‘suffering’ in it. Ornelas makes it clear at the beginning of her talk on chocolate that chocolate is
a luxury that human beings do not need in order to survive. Ornelas is using the fundamental roots of ethical veganism (‘harmlessness’ or ‘ahimsa’) to convince vegan chocolate consumers why they should abstain from slave cocoa. During the video, Ornelas tells the audience to visit FEP’s website to learn more about unethical cocoa sourcing. The introduction to that page reads:

> The truth is that consumers today have no sure way of knowing if the chocolate they are buying involved the use of child labor or slave labor. There are many different labels on chocolate bars today, such as Fair Trade Certified, however, no single label can guarantee that the chocolate was made without the use of exploitive labor. In 2010, the founders of the Fair Trade Certification process had to suspend several of their West African suppliers due to evidence that they were using child labor (Food Empowerment Project 2011e).

Similarly to their stance on ‘sustainable’ palm-oil and Clif Bar’s association with Rainforest Alliance, FEP is dispelling the myth that just because a corporation labels a product with an ‘ethical’ symbol, doesn’t mean that this is the absolute truth.

FEP’s skepticism of Fair Trade chocolate, decenters this coveted symbol of global Western ethical consumerism as the authoritative vantage point of ‘knowing’ about a natural resource’s ‘place of origin’ (see Athreya 2011; Raynolds 2012). This decentering is a shift away from the unconscious and uncritical acceptance of Fair Trade as the universal arbitrator of ‘ethics’ in a capitalist moral economy (Goodman 2004; Scrase 2010). Furthermore, FEP suggests that one boycott vegan cocoa that is not Fair Trade. To FEP, this signifies ‘real’ veganism.

It is important to offer ways in which people can make decisions to do their best to not contribute to injustices and cruelties involved in the food industry. This issue is a very difficult one to fully access as the most serious abuses are taking place across the world. However, that does not mean our responsibility is diminished since chocolate is indeed a luxury (though some might feel differently) and not a necessity like fruits and vegetables. Taking all of this into consideration and looking at the research that is available, at this time F.E.P. recommends that people do not buy any chocolate sourced from areas in West African where child slavery is the most pervasive (Food Empowerment Project 2011e).

The above also begins to make a distinct difference between two different material realities: the
geopolitically privileged implication of having access to edible ‘luxuries’ (i.e. chocolate) versus food ‘necessities for survival’ (i.e. fruits and vegetables). The underpinnings of the above quote suggest that consumer-capitalism encourages the unnecessary over-consumption and commoditization of ‘luxury’ resources at the expense of human rights (i.e. child slavery).42

Overall, FEP’s critique of Clif Bar® and vegan chocolate- FairTrade or not- is not really about the singular issue of chocolate. The root of the problem is that American consumerism, ‘ethical’ or not, is simply not being questioned. Hence, this is an ‘ethical’ problem because even ‘ethical consumption’ functions within the logic of neoliberal capitalism (Fridell 2006). The essence of ‘ethical consumerism’ is that the poor laborers of the global South cannot rescue themselves but must solely rely on a small minority of USA ‘eco-conscious’ and ‘Fair-Trade,” usually white, people to buy them out of the social injustice that neoliberal capitalism is actually responsible for. This arrangement is an ‘ethical’ consumerist spin on ‘white man’s burden’ or the ‘White savior complex’ (Athreya 2011). When a research team investigated the Fair Trade chocolate industry and their partnership with West Africa to ensure ‘ethical’ cocoa harvesting, they found that white male corporate elite was the standpoint of which the concept of “Fair Trade” cocoa operated. Furthermore …

[…] the role of large, international NGOs in this tale highlights a strand of the international development discourse that is often swept under the rug: the noblesse-oblige approach to “helping” the benighted poor Black and brown people of the world, whose corrupt and ill-functioning national governments are incapable of helping or enabling them to help themselves. In the “modern day abolitionist” sector of the global human rights movement, latter-day “white knights” have blithely ignored political transformations to the colonial world, and presume to this day, as in the days when abolitionists fought the old transatlantic slave trade, that the subaltern cannot “speak.” (Athreya 2011: 55)

One of the most striking observations that this research team has made is that during “closed-room” negotiations with NGOs and chocolate multinationals, those who have represented a
social-justice and more “humane” and cruelty-free concept of cocoa production have been white activists from the global North, mostly men. Never did the research team witness any type of dialogue that focused on the needs of the indigenous population first, as they were not even invited to speak in “closed-room” spaces. These so-called “activists” …

 […] have focused largely on the project of convincing chocolate companies to offer greater sums of money to northern-based development NGOs to implement corporate-friendly programs. In no cases have those at the table suggested any fundamental reform of the commodity trade toward greater wealth distribution for farmers or greater accountability of corporate investors for exploitation in commodity chains. Quite the opposite: in recent years, tempted by the promise of ever greater sums of development dollars, northern NGOs have welcomed a recent pledge by the U.S.-based Gates Foundation of $23 million in new funding aimed at “helping cocoa farmers to improve their incomes.” (Artheya 2011: 56)

The problem with this strategy is that The Gates Foundation has invested greatly in increasing food production in Africa through genetically modified crops and more industrialized agriculture; it is a type of ‘green’ revolution for Africa. Such a “benign” charitable act actually benefits the multinationals, and furthermore, forces farmers to increase yields in order to increase income, versus simply increasing the prices of cocoa without an expectation of increasing yield. For example, the more crops one grows of cocoa means that prices that farmers would receive for their crop would depress, not increase. It also doesn’t get at the root of the problem, which is that indigenous Africans are simply expected to cater to the cocoa needs of corporations and their global North consumer-base. Once again, the complete eradication of neoliberal whiteness, consumerism, and capitalism are never suggested as the remedy to “helping” Africans exploited within the cocoa industry (Artheya 2011).

**The FEP Vegan Revolution Will Not Be Funded**

Overall, FEP is decoding the semiotics of ‘eco-chic’ and ‘vegan’ mass culture that so
many citizens in the USA associate as being unproblematic, ‘cruelty-free’ and/or ‘ethical.’ However, palm oil and vegan chocolate are only one of many food justice issues that FEP is teaching the USA-based consumer about. Despite the work that FEP continues to do, unlike PETA that receives millions of dollars of donations every year ($33 million dollars in donations in 2010), FEP barely gets the funding they need. As a matter of fact, despite being the executive director of FEP, Ornelas works at FEP without monetary compensation. She must work full time at another paid job to earn a living. Furthermore, Ornelas constantly fights against the collectivity of mostly white and middle class vegans in the USA who prefer to not think about hyper-consumerism, environmental racism, and the social injustices caused by neoliberal capitalism that make vegan food commodities possible.

In 2011, Ornelas spoke about the responses she received from vegans about the intersectional work that FEP does. Implied in her observation is that vegans in the USA are collectively in collusion with keeping an exploitative vegan food commodity chain hidden from their ethics of consideration and care. Furthermore, most do not have an ‘anti-racist’ standpoint when engaging with their vegan practice. During the interview, when asked to reflect on the stereotype that USA vegan culture embodies white middle class privileged vantage point, Ornelas admits that the vast majority of vegans in the USA do fit that stereotype. She also conveys intense frustration when these vegans do not interrogate how racial and class privileges make it possible for most of them to have so many vegan food options (XVO:2011).

Ornelas also expresses how USA vegans do not appreciate or want to utilize the usefulness of FEP’s Food Accessibility research project that explains lack of access to healthy foods by low income and communities of color. She says, “[T]his lack of understanding reflects one of the challenges facing an organization like ours: by connecting these issues, we don’t gain
the financial support of groups that are working solely on veganism or groups working on other forms of food justice” (XVO 2011:1). These overall issues FEP is trying to connect (racism, poverty, corporate capitalism, white middle class ‘easy’ access to food, etc.) force the collectivity of predominantly white vegan consumers and their supporting corporations to acknowledge that with the “freedom” of vegan consumerism comes the “slavery,” “suffering,” “divestment” and “exploitation” of millions of non-white and poor people. In addition, FEP’s definition of what counts as racism are potentially far more unsettling for predominantly white vegan consumers to come to terms with.

To fund FEP would mean to fund a project that unmasks the hypocrisy of neoliberalism as a method of creating equality in the world. Such a challenge for funding reflects a larger problem with USA non-profit organizations in which they can only successfully garner adequate funding if they provide services that help marginalized populations “cope” or “survive” within a broken system (INCITE! 2007). What won’t be funded are the decolonization and dismantling of globalized neoliberal capitalism (Goudge 2003; INCITE! 2007. What if FEP were to recommend on their website that people boycott all vegan products that have been corporatized by major conglomerates who are ‘unethical’? They would risk losing what limited funding they already have; and alienating themselves from potential pro-vegan donors that have deep material investments as privileged modern consumers.

Clif Bar’s constant evasion of FEP’s request to reveal their cocoa sourcing reflects a vested interest in perpetuating the system of capitalism. Though it is noteworthy that Clif Bar® is attempting to be ‘ethical’, the way they narrate themselves and their products literally erases the violence of commoditization in a globalized capitalism economy. It is what spaces of
wellness and modernity look like. Produced through the social ordering and the systematic production of ignorance, these…

…centuries-long determined efforts [are] expended by settler-colonists-become-imperialist-capitalist white racial supremacists to ensure that successive generations of white children would be nurtured systematically with both knowledge and ignorance to grow into confirmed, practicing racial supremacist white adults (Outlaw 2006:197).

Though I do not agree with the usage of ‘white racial supremacist’ to describe Clif Bar’s concept of an ethical commodity chain, I prefer to write that the collectivity of these children (who are now adults) are nurtured systematically to accept neoliberal whiteness as the ‘common sense’ starting point to produce ‘ethical’ food philosophies.
Conclusion

Even though PETA’s Vegan Shopping Guide, Queen Afua’s Sacred Woman, and Food Empowerment Project’s Ethical Food Choices guides orient its readers towards veganism, their approaches, at first glance, all seem at odds with one another. PETA’s post-humanist animal rights engagement with veganism centralizes the unethical treatment of non-human animals. Their Vegan Shopping Guide acts as an ‘easy’ map for fledgling vegans. PETA’s focus on fighting anti-speciesism, through individual consumption, is linked to a significant ethical consumer movement in the USA. This movement’s underlying principle is that one can, and should, vote with their dollars to affect change for the better (Lewis and Potter 2010).

PETA’s pedagogies of protest and ‘ethical’ consumerism have yielded positive results for thousands of animal lives. Over the past decade, the focus of US corporate responsibility has shifted dramatically to be more mindful of animal suffering (Malesh 2005; Kim 2011). Whether or not people are in agreement with PETA’s tactics to help orchestrate this, this achievement must be acknowledged as an excellent strength of PETA’s post-humanist model. This type of corporate responsibility also signifies a tremendous paradigm shift in the way that animals are perceived by the status quo (Adams 2008; Kim 2011).

Simultaneously, the rhetoric of ‘voting with your dollars’ is both liberating and inhibiting. For those who have the privilege of food choice, the Vegan Food Guide becomes the ‘easy’ way to buy oneself into a supposedly ‘cruelty-free’ life. However, this assumed ‘privilege’ simultaneously inhibits a significant number of people in the USA. Inhibited are those who do not have ‘easy’ food choice and access, due to the material and geographical consequences of structural racism and classism.
PETA’s use of Trayvon Martin’s murder serves as both inspiring and unsettling example for anti-racist and animal liberation education. For instance, the Trayvon Martin letter serves as an entrée into both animal liberation and anti-racism. However, PETA’s current engagement with intersectionality, as it applies to racism and speciesism, is also rather simplified and opportunistic from a critical race perspective. Their definition of racism fails to bring the concept of intersectionality up to a more rigorous and ‘critical’ level. Thus, PETA should not only turn the lens onto Black slavery and George Zimmerman as concrete examples of real racism; their lens should also be turned onto themselves and their constituency of the global North. Such lens turning can move beyond antiquated definitions of racism to ask: “Within the context of structural racism, the vegan commodity chain, and neoliberalism, are we also what real racism looks like?” It is the post-humanist and post-racial politics of PETA that prevents them from engaging in this type of self-reflexivity. It also makes it challenging to create a type of solidarity with all beings (including humans) that is not embedded with the contradictions of neoliberalism.

However, such weaknesses can also guide scholars towards innovative research projects, such as examining the globalization of PETA’s neoliberal whiteness onto other nations. PETA has satellite offices throughout the world. What does PETA’s Vegan Shopping Guide look like in some of these countries? Is the PETA American guide merely translated into that country’s language, exporting a type of post-humanist neoliberal whiteness? How does PETA’s China office persuade Chinese omnivores to go vegan through the use of food nostalgia? Reference to grandma’s meatloaf is a successful marketing ploy for PETA USA, but what about China or Brazil?

PETA’s Vegan Shopping Guide is not the only example of contradiction of ‘ethics’ within veganism. Sacred Woman serves as an example of how certain Black people acknowledge
that racism and Black slavery still influence reasons for not only why one chooses to become vegan, but also how one practices it. In the case of Sacred Woman, Afua’s vegan conversion was not inspired by pro-humanist animal rights rhetoric that so popularly defines PETA; it was inspired by the “power” of Khemetic veganism. For her, this is the antidote for “disempowered” Black women living in a white settler society. Focused on Egyptian reverence for the African womb, Sacred Woman teaches Black females how ‘properly’ practiced veganism can empower and inspire them to heal from the legacies of “institutionalized sex factories [that] were brutally imposed upon a stolen people for generations.” Khemetic veganism becomes the “ethical” answer to the “unethical” situation of transatlantic slavery. Through Afrocentrism, we see how Sacred Woman re-signifies the kitchen, food objects, and culinary equipment. Eurocentric notions of Black women as “property”, “unhallowed”, and “unfeminine” are exorcised through “live” foods. As a result, Black women are transformed into “agents,” “sacred”, and “feminine” “queens.” The most powerful strength of Sacred Woman is that it makes visible, and acknowledges, the physical and mental suffering that slavery and current day racism have caused to Black women. This is very important in an American society in which the status quo does not provide structural support to remedy such racism-induced suffering amongst Black females (Wando 2009; Harris-Perry 2011).

However, Sacred Woman also shows us that being a ‘race-conscious’ vegan is not necessarily without its own faults and contradictions. It also reminds us that one’s race-conscious “liberation” can unconsciously replicate the very tenets of colonial whiteness it seeks to eradicate. In Sacred Woman, we see how sugar and chicken come to define two types of Black people: “lower” class “addicts” or “high” class and “conscious”. More importantly, the “conscious” black woman must take “responsibility” for building a new Black nation. Through
‘proper’ nutrition, she must recapture what has been lost: “proper” racial-sexual civility between Black women and Black men of a pre-colonial era. However, such a race-conscious vegan philosophy also parallels particular tenets of whiteness: middle-class sensibilities, ableism, heterosexism and hetero-normative gender roles. These tenets are implicitly exclusionary of low-income, disabled, queer, and non-gender conforming Black women. Such exclusion becomes an obvious weakness of this Afrocentric approach to veganism. However, it also is an opportunity for more research. For example, the hetero-normative framing of Sacred Woman could be used as point of engagement to see if there is a significant number of Black bisexual and lesbian women who have used the text, despite its heterosexist context. If there are, how has it affected their lives? What could a queer Afrikan Holistic Health model look like? Or, is that a contradiction?

The strength of Afrocentrism is its attention to how the Eurocentric mistreatment of Black people has created an unethical health situation for them. However, it is noteworthy that Sacred Woman does not really engage with animal welfare beyond an Afrocentric humanist framework. By this I mean that the animals, as food objects, are vilified as being inherently toxic for human consumption. This vilification comes from how Afua, and the rest of the Afrikan Holistic Health community, see habits such as chicken, pork, and beef eating as a remnant of slavery. Such habits serve as miserable example of the white slave master’s [culinary] value system. Hence, abstinence from eating animals- especially chickens, pigs, and cows- comes not from sympathy with the suffering of animals, but with the meaning that colonial whiteness applied to these animals-turned-food-objects. Within the Sacred Woman volume, there is a brief mention of animal pain and suffering.

If you’re very sensitive, you’re vulnerable to the vibes of someone close to you. When they hug you, you can feel the pain that comes from all those chickens or
cows that were slaughtered to feed him. Forget about cows grazing in the grass. They’re not doing it anymore. They’re being shot up with hormones and antibiotics until they’re all very sick. And we ingest that. (2000:340)

However, such reference to animal suffering is completely over-shadowed by their constant construction of being “toxic” and “demonic” for Black people. Such an Afrocentric framing of animals excludes them from an “ethic of care” that is so fundamental to post-humanism. Post-humanist veganism frames the anti-consumption politics of animals as needing to come from a place of sympathy and care for the pain and suffering animals must endure as the “slaves” of human beings. In contrast, Sacred Woman’s Afrocentric veganism is only in response to the institution of Black human “slavery”, and as such, is only concerned about them. What would an Afrocentric anti-speciesist vegan model look like?

Sacred Woman spends decries how antebellum slavery and Black people’s role as slaves and commodities denied Black Americans a “healthy” life. However, similar to Ingrid Newkirk’s misinformed reference to the eradication of slavery and child labor, Sacred Woman’s understanding of slavery is confined to an antebellum era; and it is also limited to how it currently affects Black Americans. However, the new forms of slavery and racialized exploitation that make so many “live” vegan foods available to Afua and her followers, remain silent in the book. This is where and how the Vegan Shopping Guide and Sacred Woman share a thematic commonality: despite one being grounded in post-humanism and the other Afrocentrism, both advocate veganism as an “ethical” project, but without considering how neoliberalism has shaped their ‘privileged’ relationship to the food commodity chain. In a sense, they uphold the status quo’s investment in ‘coloniality’ by discursively hiding an exploitative food commodity chain. Reflected in this common theme is how post-humanist and Afrocentric framing of “ethics” is limited by one’s geopolitical and epistemological standpoint. What would
post-humanist and Afrocentric veganism look like, from the standpoint of those exploited within the food commodity chain?

In chapter four, I show how Food Empowerment Project’s *Ethical Food Choices* guide moves the vantage point of ‘modernity’ to the geopolitical standpoint of coloniality. *Ethical Food Choices* unapologetically teaches global North vegans that “ethical” labeling schemes such as “vegan”, “cruelty-free,” and even “Fair-Trade” mask ‘coloniality.’ Such labeling schemes only cater to the over-indulgent desires of modernity. Most notably, *Ethical Food Choices* goes where *PETA’s Vegan Shopping Guide* dares not: implied in FEP’s food justice politics is that “ethical” consumption will never be “ethical enough” as long as globalized capitalism exists. Hence, a truly ethical planet can only be achieved through alternative economies. This is one of the greatest strengths of *Ethical Food Choices*, simply because this decolonial approach makes ‘visible’ (at least to the modern global North) the myths of developmentalism that are uncritically accepted as ‘normal’ by most Americans.

However, this strength is also a potential weakness when engaging with FEP’s main audience: the American ‘privileged’ consumer. Ornelas’s long time frustrations with American vegans, and their collective oblivion to both the significance of racism and neoliberalism on ethical consumption, implies this: there are certain truths that those in the USA are unwilling to accept, despite being “educated” about the roots of inequality and suffering by organizations such as FEP. Along these lines, what all three guides imply is that it is far easier to relinquish one’s meat-eating privilege than it is to relinquish one’s global North consumer privilege. People in the USA can be persuaded to transition into new ‘ethical’ dietary philosophies; however, the caveat seems that for a significant number, a new ‘ethical’ diet must not take away their privileged position to enact it through ‘green’ consumer-capitalism and commodity fetishism.
(Torres 2008; Allon 2010; Lewis and Potter 2010; Sandlin and McLaren 2010). Even though much of my focus on commodity fetishism and ‘green’ consumerism took place in chapters two and four, commodity fetishism can also be found in the very small, but slowly growing online vegan Afrocentric health industry in the USA. During my online search, none of the stores I found informed the buyer if the company is ‘conscious’ about the possible human exploitation that make their ‘conscious’ products possible (See Slom 2007; Afrika 2012; Ma’At-Ra 2012; Queen Afua Wellness Institute 2013). While I perused through these ‘conscious’ products of these ‘race-conscious’ sites, I began thinking about Barthes’s post-empire whites; how he thought the relationships white people have with objects is representative of their “ignorance”; an ignorance about post-empire white privilege and the ongoing realities of ‘coloniality’. However, regardless of race and ethnicity, are most of us in the global North Barthes’s “post-empire whites”? If we cannot answer this, then maybe what is needed is a twenty-first century critical race literacy that addresses both USA internal racial dynamics and the differing external racial dynamics that global neoliberalism produces outside of USA borders. This is the type of research that I hope this dissertation will open up within the field of critical food studies.

Even though I suggested that we in the global North are all Barthes’s post-empire whites, I am not suggesting that the violence of white privilege and racism is not a reality for non-whites in the USA. After all, the USA media attention on the racial underpinnings of Trayvon Martin’s murder signifies how Blacks are still seen as “suspicious” and “innately criminal,” deserving of pre-emptive attack—even if they are a child holding a bag of Skittles® and a bottle of Snapple Ice Tea® (Giroux 2012). Within the USA borders in which young Martin died, he was clearly racialized as "Black”. However, he was also holding two clear ‘edible’ markers of neoliberal whiteness: Skittles® and Snapple Ice Tea®. Skittles® has many ingredients, including sugar and
palm oil, neither of which is “ethically” sourced. It is the socio-historical racialization of Haitian blacks as “subhuman” and “inferior” (Fischer 2004) that has made possible, for example, the sugar found in foods like Skittles® and Snapple Ice Tea®. This is because the Dominican Republic is notorious for indenturing Haitians into “slavery-like” conditions to harvest sugar for a demanding Global North and West (Harper 2010b). This phenomenon occurs because, like the indigenous women harvesting tomatoes under horrendous conditions, it is an industry accepted ‘standard’ that Black Haitians should be ‘naturally’ subservient (Fischer 2004).

Shortly after Trayvon Martin was murdered, thousands of people in the USA protested publicly, decrying the fact that a child was killed: a clear sign of antebellum slavery’s lingering legacy of anti-Black racism. To show support for Martin, hundreds of people in the USA sent empty Skittles® wrappers to the police chief investigating Martin’s murder (msnbc.com 2012). In addition, thousands of adults and children could be seen in the USA and the UK holding or wearing Skittles® and Skittles® references in protest (see Gannes 2012).
For these protesters, Skittles® in 2012 was temporarily re-symbolized from “Taste the Rainbow” to a symbol against racial profiling/racism. This is the obvious story that news media outlets such
as Reuters (2012) narrated. However, I also saw a second story: USA and UK Black people are protesting against the legacies of *antebellum* slavery, occurring in the USA, by holding a product produced by Mars, Inc., a corporation that uses modern day global South “Black” slavery for their sugar and cocoa ingredients.

By considering the two stories represented above, and examining how they operate in tension, we realize how the achievement of an ‘ethical planet’, by way of food, is an extremely complex situation for the global North; especially amongst a population of people (Black American) that are collectively recipients of domestic white racism as well as the material beneficiaries of global South racism. PETA’s *Vegan Shopping Guide*, Afua’s *Sacred Woman*, FEP’s *Ethical Food Choices*, and Trayvon Martin Skittles® protesters make clear that ethical consumption is not a simple binary of even ‘good’ versus ‘bad’. Transcending such binaries, and instead examining the tensions amongst these polarities, encourages ways to produce multiple critical pedagogies of consumption and racial literacies using objects as ‘mundane’ as Earth Balance®, Pizza Pizzaz®, or Skittles®.
Appendix
Appendix 1

Trayvon Martin Case Reminds Us: Never Be Silent
Posted by Ingrid Newkirk at 9:43 AM | Permalink | Comments (4)

April 18, 2012

With George Zimmerman's upcoming trial in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, the role that racism may have played in this incident will continue to be a heated topic of debate. And while these discussions may be uncomfortable, they should be welcomed since only by bringing prejudices to light do we have any hope of ending them.

We all have prejudices to dispel: the need to get away from thinking that "I" am important and special and "you" are not, and the frightened mindset that tells us that certain "others" are of no consequence. And homophobia, racism, sexism, speciesism, ageism, anti-Semitism, and other "-isms" not only separate us from one another but also can lead from words to weapons. To read the news is to see a world awash with examples. For this to change, we must ask ourselves whether we can take the uncomfortable responsibility for standing against all violence and oppression, regardless of the victim's neatly compartmentalized "identity." It sounds simple, but is it? A mighty fight is ahead.

PETA's new campaign, "Never Be Silent," is inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." It encourages everyone to speak up for others whose pain is often casually ignored and sometimes even laughed at, to speak up for anyone, regardless of how hard it is for us to relate to them or how alien their behavior, culture, or looks seem to us, including the individuals gunned down for a millionaire's casual amusement, the chimpanzees poisoned in experiments, the elephants beaten to make them perform in circuses, and the foxes caught in steel-jaw traps for their fur.

The temptation not to defend members of other groups is strong and always has been. When Dr. King protested the Vietnam War, many of his most powerful supporters warned him to stay out of it, that it was a different issue. Dr. King replied, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." One form of prejudice often begets another; for instance, people who commit vicious acts of cruelty toward animals frequently move on to abuse their fellow humans as we see when we examine the personal histories of serial killers, many of whom have in common such practices as hunting and decapitating neighborhood cats. But it is the "casual cruelty" and the everyday disrespect that requires our attention if we are to be decent to all.
PETA’s campaign should be included in school curricula. If we can open children’s hearts and minds to animals’ needs, teach them to treat a dog or a chicken as if they feel fear and love and pain — as they do — then they will grow up to understand that we are all worthy of respect. Without that, we are doomed to a world in which those who find us alien, who fear us, can hurt us because we are different from them in some way, and we can do the same to them.

When I was 8, my family moved from England to Asia. The culture in which I had been raised was completely different from that of the other children, as was my clothing, my skin color, my language, and much of my behavior. One boy, who was afraid of me, came up and poked my skin with a stick, in much the same way that many humans still treat other animals. We do not comprehend these other animals’ languages, cultures, and behavior, and they look “funny,” so they get poked with a lot of sticks, figuratively or literally. It isn’t fair to them, any more than it was fair for that boy to do it to me.

Much of our bias is born of misunderstanding, of ignorance. In the days of institutionalized slavery in America, many educated people honestly believed that Africans could not feel pain nor experience parental love as white people do, so it was acceptable to brand slaves and to auction off their children. Not too long ago, well-respected physicians rejected the idea that any woman could ever "be allowed" to go to medical school and earnestly believed that women would faint at the sight of blood. People also genuinely thought that it was acceptable to allow children to work in mills and factories. Although we have, in theory, abolished human slavery, recognized women’s rights, and stopped child labor, we continue to enslave other species who, if we simply pay attention, show quite clearly that they experience parental love, pain, and the desire for freedom, just as we do.

It takes some effort and nerve at first to risk mockery and disapproval for going against entrenched prejudices — even when those prejudices are repulsive and wrong—but we must if we are to have any hope of achieving a just world. Recognizing the fundamental right of every individual to be respected rather than ridiculed and treated as a resource for "our own kind" is deserving of our energy if we believe in social justice. All tyranny, bigotry, aggression, and cruelty are wrong, and whenever we see it, we must never be silent.

This article originally appears on The Huffington Post.

Post to Family & Friends I Posted to Tags: Huffington Post; Ingrid Newkirk Never Be Silent; speciesism; Trayvon Martin

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Tupah AT says...
April 20th, 2012, 7:53 pm

How true and logical this is! If majority of individuals on this planet come with the same idea, this world would certainly be a much much more nicer place to live in. The world based on respect to each other regardless of religion, belief, race, sex, social background.
I have decided to join movements as pioneered by PETA on this same basis...

Tina says...
April 20th, 2012, 10:25 pm
I wish animal abuse would make such a big stir, maybe there wouldn't be so much animal torture if more people would speak up. Yes, the Martin case is a big controversy and should be addressed, but so shouldn't animal welfare. Animal welfare should be given a big push, such as Peta is doing. But we need more notoriety and publicity also for the animals. I am sure that main stream media would take that as an offensive that people and racism can be compared to animals, but in the minds of some, animals are just as important!
Michael says...
April 21st, 2012, 2:04 pm

This is an extremely well-written, amazing article. Thank you.
chander kumar soni says...
April 24th, 2012, 4:36 pm
Appendix 2

Ethical Food Choices

For many people, it can be quite overwhelming to realize just how much suffering and injustice goes into the familiar products that line our store shelves. Whether it be the abuse of animals, the exploitation of workers, the failure to offer healthy foods, environmental devastation, or all of the above, there can be a temptation to throw up our hands in defeat and conclude that it's just not possible to make ethical food choices.

We understand that impulse, and it truly does feel overwhelming at times, for everyone. It's our hope that the resources on this website will help make these choices easier for you. The fact that the problem's scope is large surely doesn't mean we shouldn't do what we can to address them. And, armed with knowledge about the issues, we can do quite a lot through the choices we make.

One of the easiest things we can do is to identify particularly “bad actors” in the corporate world, so we know what products and companies to absolutely avoid. With that in mind, the following are a few examples worth highlighting.

Coca-Cola

Even among companies with egregious environmental and worker's rights records, Coca-Cola stands out.1

In India, Coca-Cola unlawfully pumped 1.5 million liters (400,000 gallons) of water a day from local reserves, leaving farmers without enough water to irrigate their crops, and draining the community's drinking water supply. The company also contaminated fields, wells, and canals in the process - leading to widespread misery and community upheaval - and have sought to mislead investors about the environmental consequences.2

The world's largest beverage company, Coca used 283 billion liters (73.5 billion gallons) of water in 2004 - a fact put in perspective when remembering that we live in a world where over 1 billion people cannot meet their basic water needs.3

In China, separate investigative reports have found a shocking range and systematic pattern of workers' rights abuses at Coca facilities. These include providing inadequate (or no) protective equipment, an excessive use of so-called “dispatch labor,” to avoid standard employer obligations (similar to “employee misclassification” in the U.S.), forced overtime, having workers sign blank contracts, refusal of back-pay, and the denial of the right to unionize. Workers who have protested their treatment were reprimanded with beatings from supervisors.4

In Colombia and Guatemala, there is a long, documented history of anti-union activities at bottling plants on par with the worst episodes in labor history anywhere. This includes the intimidation, kidnapping, rape, torture, and murder of workers...
labor organizers and their loved ones, often via paramilitary forces in collaboration with local management. Unwavering efforts in Pakistan have included extortion, blackmail, abduction, and death threats. Workers in the Philippines report vast labor abuses, as well. In El Salvador, Coca-Cola's sugar suppliers have been caught using child labor in the fields.

In Mexico, Coca-Cola has engaged in a range of predatory activities. To name just a few, their aggressive retaliation against whistleblowers and massive fraud, their standard over-exploitation of water resources, and aggressive marketing of their product to school children and the rural poor (by some counts, 80% of Mexican schools lack even access to water).

The scope of these abuses is staggering and difficult to process, but one thing is clear: anyone concerned with issues of worker justice, environmental responsibility, and the integrity of local communities worldwide should avoid Coca-Cola and its products.

Nestlé

The Swiss corporation Nestlé is the world's largest food and beverages company, with a net profit in 2011 of 9.5 billion Swiss francs ($10.25 billion). It produces iconic products like Nesquik chocolate powder and syrup, as well as Nescafé, Neslite, and popular candies like Baby Ruth, Butterfingers, and KitKat. All told, Nestlé owns more than 6,000 brands worldwide, in markets ranging from “patties” to infant formula.

Nestlé got its start in 1905 by developing a cow-milk formula for babies whose mothers couldn't nurse. Over a century later, its use and marketing remain controversial. While it's well established that breast milk provides numerous health advantages for infants, including protection against infection and disease, Nestlé has aggressively and specifically marketed its formula to some of the most vulnerable communities in the world. This promotion is dangerous to public health because formula must be mixed with water (often either contaminated or in short supply in many countries) and requires sanitation protocols that can easily be misunderstood or difficult to achieve (leading to diarrhea and other life-threatening symptoms for the very young).

Such marketing also flies in the face of the 1981 World Health Organization guidelines on breast milk substitutes (BMS), which prohibits ads for formula with “pictures or text (...) which may idealize the use of infant formula” and give the impression that formula is safer or more nutritious, stipulating that all such products should inform the public that breastfeeding is best. These are mandates that Nestlé has violated for decades.

Indeed, Nestlé has a robust internet presence, specially tailored to sell its infant products across the globe, including extensive multi-lingual translations of ads, superimposed on invariably light-skinned babies, to boost its worldwide sales. As International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) documents, Nestlé formula is advertised in Lithuanian magazine ads, and provided free of charge in Bulgaria. A leaflet distributed in Balawians claims that by using Nestlé formula “diarrhea and its side effects are counteracted,” without mentioning the risks of unsafe water. In Thailand and South Africa, Nestlé has directly given out samples to new mothers, provided health facilities with free supplies, promoted formula to pregnant women and mothers in health facilities, and distributed gift packets to obstetricians, pediatricians, nurses, and general health workers. In Armenia and Indonesia, special displays and posters in grocery stores promote Nestlé formula. The company has given out special branded baby suits and distributes “prescription” forms to clinics for new mothers to take to the store. In return, doctors receive a 10% commission when their patient purchases the formula. In China, Nestlé sends sales reps to shops and supermarkets and donates infant formula to hospitals.

Like fellow beverage giant Coca-Cola, Nestlé uses vast quantities of limited water supplies. It has taken full advantage of water privatization trends around the world, including in the U.S., it has acquired aquifers, employed price-gouging tactics, and polarized communities. The production, distribution, and packaging of its brands of plastic-bottled water – Arrowhead Springs, Calphaga, and Poland Spring – also come with an enormous environmental cost.

The chocolate the company uses for its ubiquitous candies is among the most unethical available. Sourced from West Africa, particularly Cote d'Ivoire, its harvesting relies heavily on child labor. This is unsurprising, given its dozens of workers' rights elsewhere in the world. A lawsuit in California, filed by International Rights Advocates, implicates Nestlé, along with agribusiness giants Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, in the trafficking of West African children to Cote d'Ivoire.
Nestlé’s subsidiaries have considerably ugly stories of their own to tell. For instance, the company also has a significant stake in the “fast” food market, second only to Mars, Inc. in market share worldwide. Nestlé’s brands include KFC, Pizza Hut, Panera Bread, and Little Caesar's. All of these brands have engaged in animal testing. For instance, a paper presented at the 2011 Nestlé Plaque Symposium, details how healthy puppies were infected with canine distemper virus, then fed a probiotic to compare results to a test group, a similar study was later performed with cats. It’s particularly sad irony that some animals are tortured to produce food products for other animals. This is often done simply to enable companies to boast that products are “new and improved.” Even the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has called for the development of new methods that could reduce or replace animal testing.

For all of these reasons, Food Empowerment Project recommends that consumers avoid Nestlé products.

**Monsanto**

It’s hard to overstate the influence that Monsanto, the chemical and agricultural sciences giant, has had over our food we’ve eaten in the last hundred years. One of the largest corporations in the world and a mainstay of the Forbes 500, the company is effectively a gatekeeper to the global food supply.

Beginning the 20th century as a pure chemicals company (producing, among other things, the food additive saccharin, supplied to a fledgling Coca-Cola), Monsanto has had a hand in everything from plastics to digital optics. In the 1930s, it began producing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) for industrial use as lubricants, coatings, and sealants; PCBs are also carcinogens associated with reproductive, developmental, and immune system disorders. Dioxin, a cancer-causing byproduct of PCB production, is very much still with us, and remains a concern for workers, farmers, communities, and consumers. People who consume animal products are at greatest risk, according to a 2005 National Academies of Science report, “animal fat in the diet accounts for close to 50% of dioxin exposure in the United States.”

Monsanto’s “life sciences” arm is most associated with insecticides, herbicides, and defoliants, as well as genetically modified organisms. The company manufactured some of the most infamous chemicals that exist, including DDT (notably profiled in Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring and banned in the US in 1972) and the defoliant known as Agent Orange, which killed at least half a million people in Southeast Asia, sickened millions more, and left a poisonous legacy that impacts local communities to this day.

The company also developed and manufactures bovine growth hormone (rBGH), which has contributed enormously to animal suffering and led to such environmental and public health concerns that it has been banned outright in many places outside the U.S., including Japan, Canada, and the European Union in order to combat the onerously undesirable (and horrifically painful) infections that rBGH and similar hormones cause for cows raised for milk; farmers have dramatically increased the amounts of antibiotics they use. Today, farmers consume 60% of the antibiotics sold in the U.S.

Monsanto is one of the most aggressive forces pushing for genetically modified organisms. Alongside acquiring patents for products like Calgene’s FlavrSavr tomato (the first genetically modified food reviewed and approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for human consumption), it has patented numerous GMO seed lines, aggressively marketed them worldwide, attacked traditional methods of seed saving, and both threatened and sued farmers. It has also patented “Terminator seeds,” which can be planted only once, compelling farmers to buy a new supply every year instead of saving seeds from previous seasons.

Roundup, the world’s most used herbicide, and “Roundup Ready” seeds provide a similar insight into Monsanto’s corporate philosophy. After developing and distributing the highly toxic (and lucrative) chemical, Monsanto genetically engineered Roundup Ready seeds, which are specifically resistant to it. This has led not only to large amounts of Roundup being used in the first place, but to “superweeds” that have developed resistances of their own. There are also concerns about possible gene migration to non-GMO crops, effects on the health of humans and wildlife, and the basic fact that a single company produces both an extremely toxic herbicide and patented seeds tailored to resist it.

Given that is, at root, a chemicals company, it’s no surprise that Monsanto has engaged in horrific animal testing, including contracting tests out to the notorious Huntington Life Sciences. It has also had activists opposed to its business practices surveilled, hiring a subsidiary of the military firm Blackwater to conduct intelligence operations on animal rights and environmental groups.

Given the vast reach of its products, and the scope of its ambitions, Monsanto differs from other companies profiled here. It’s relatively easy to avoid buying Coca-Cola products, for instance, which are generally non-essential junk foods anyway. When a corporation controls most of the world’s corn, it is more difficult to avoid. Complicating matters further, Monsanto also owns a vast network of subsidiaries, many of which, unlike their parent company, market and sell organic and vegan products.
Rather than conceding victory to Monsanto on the basis of its market share, however, there are a few things we can do. Avoiding Monsanto subsidiaries, to whatever degree we can, is essential, and simply going vegan will already eliminate your participation with many of those products. Whenever possible, we can also support local, organic farmers through CSA and farmer's markets or even grow our own food.

These acts may seem small, but they are powerful. At the same time, Monsanto's dominance over the world's food systems—that is, peoples' access to food worldwide; our ability to produce it, the integrity of local agriculture, and even what constitutes 'food' in the first place—requires organized and sustained activism on many fronts. There are efforts afoot to legally require the labeling of GMOs, and many coalitions of concerned people have been confronting Monsanto head-on.

**Palm Oil**

Palm oil, an edible oil derived from the pulp of fruits of the oil palm, is used in margarine, shortening, cooking oil, soups, sauces, crackers, and other baked goods. After soybean oil, it is the world's most widely used oil. In the U.S., palm oil is used primarily in processed foods and often in combination with the more familiar soy and canola varieties.\[47\]

The plantations on which palm oil is produced have required a tremendous amount of deforestation and fostered significant injustice. In Indonesia, more than 27,000 square miles are devoted to supplying the palm oil market, with a huge increase—nearly 11 million tons—between 2000 and 2009. This expansion includes tropical lowland forests and could realistically wipe out entire species.\[48\] The story is similar in Malaysia.\[49\] In Cameroon, proposed locations of palm oil development lie at ecologically sensitive nexus points between already protected national forests, threatening wildlife in numerous ways and undermining local opposition.\[50\] In Colombia, peasant families have been forced off their land and their houses destroyed to make way for palm oil plantations.\[51\]

Deforestation necessarily involves threats to animals living in the regions affected, including direct threats—like poaching or forced removal—and indirect threats like habitat loss, which has been a catastrophe for already endangered Sumatran tigers, Sumatran rhinos, and Asian elephants.\[52\] Orangutans have been shot, kidnapped, and killed in order to clear land for palm oil plantations and to prevent them from eating and destroying young palms. In March 2012, hundreds are believed to have died in fires deliberately started for that purpose.\[53\]

Palm oil is not only a food commodity; it was once the great hope of biofuels. Its cultivation has turned out instead to be a climate change disaster. Establishing a plantation typically requires clearing massive tracts of land and the addition of large amounts of chemical fertilizer to the soil. The process often involves draining and burning peatland, which sends huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. Because of palm oil cultivation, Indonesia has recently become the world’s third largest producer of climate change-causing greenhouse gases, behind the U.S. and China. Leaked data from the European Commission shows that palm oil’s carbon footprint is actually greater than crude oil’s and is only slightly less than that of oil from the tar sands.\[54\]

Due to growing consumer concern about the consequences of palm oil production, industry has joined forces with large environmental organizations like the World Wildlife Fund to promote more “sustainable” methods. Through efforts like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), major producers and processors promise to both continue large-scale production while also allegedly protecting the rainforest and its inhabitants, primarily through complicated offsets, land concessions, and the use of already “degraded” rainforest. As the German news outlet Der Spiegel reported in May 2012, however, these promises haven’t amounted to much: one former WWF employee remarked, “Sustainable palm oil, as the WWF promises with its RSPO certificates, is really nonexistent.”\[55\]

Workers are routinely exploited at every stage of palm oil production around the world. In Colombia, the world’s fifth largest producer, workers struck by the thousands in late 2011 to protest cuts in benefits, subcontracting practices, and precarious work. Carloads of people were brought in to break the strike.\[56\] Throughout Asia and the Pacific, the extraordinarily toxic herbicide parathion is being used on palm plantations\[57\] and endangering workers.\[58\] Indentured servitude and outright slavery are not uncommon, along with similar human rights abuses of workers.\[59\]

Given how pervasive palm oil is and the wide range of products in which it’s found (including many vegan products), it’s important to read the label to know what you’re buying. F.E.P. suggests you avoid palm oil whenever possible.

**How can I help?**

Learning about the “bad actors” in the corporate world makes it easier for us to make informed and empowered choices for ourselves and for our communities, even as we mobilize together for more systemic change. A little bit of knowledge goes a long way in making that change and helping create a more just world for all. To make finding vegan food easier, Food Empowerment Project has created a [finding vegan food guide], please take a look!

*Please note, although Food Empowerment Project is linking to other organizations, we do not necessarily endorse the entire content of their website or mission.*

**References:**

[1] Much of this information is drawn from resources made available by the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke: [foodchoices.php](http://foodchoices.php)
Appendix 3


FOOD EMPOWERMENT PROJECT
Because your food choices can change the world

Food Empowerment Project, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, seeks to create a more just and sustainable world by recognizing the power of one's food choices. We encourage healthy food choices that reflect a more compassionate society by spotlighting the abuse of animals on farms, the depletion of natural resources, unfair working conditions for produce workers, and the unavailability of healthy foods in low-income areas.

For frequent updates on our work, you can follow us online at Twitter.com/FoodisPower, like us on Facebook, and read our blog at http://appetiteforjustice.blogspot.com.

The following pages explore many of the issues we work on. You'll find more details on our websites:
foodispower.org, veganmexicanfood.com

137
Access to Healthy Foods

The United States may pride itself as one of the most prosperous nations, but many communities of color and low-income communities across the country have little or no healthy food options. Consumers in these neighborhoods frequently rely on unhealthy fast-food restaurants or choose from among the paucity of foods at liquor stores and “convenience” markets to feed their families. Others make lengthy trips to higher-income communities—often using public transportation—where full-feature grocery stores are more abundant.

This is a form of environmental racism, in which environmental decisions, actions, and policies result in racial discrimination.

For more information on this issue, please read our study at:

foodispower.org/scc_study.htm

Veganism

As a vegan organization, Food Empowerment Project believes in the power of ethical eating.

Opting for vegan foods (which are free of any ingredients derived from animals) helps alleviate the torment of farmed animals. In this country alone, 10 billion land animals are killed every year. That includes cows used in the dairy industry and hens exploited for their eggs, all of whom end up slaughtered for low-grade products, like hamburger and soup, or are simply killed. In addition, countless marine creatures become “seafood” after being cruelly confined in the artificial environment of industrial-scale fish farms or pulled from the oceans with hooked lines or massive nets, then dumped on fishing vessels to suffocate.

Eating a vegan diet is also kinder to the environment, which suffers the consequences of factory farming.
Farm Workers

Most consumers do not consider the people behind their food: the men, women, and sometimes even children who toil long hours to plant, cultivate, harvest, pick, and pack our fruits and vegetables. Comprised primarily of migrant and seasonal laborers, these workers endure health risks, low pay, and blatant exploitation.

The physically demanding work—constant bending, picking up, and other repetitive motions in often extreme heat and amid fields of toxic agricultural chemicals—leads to illnesses, injuries, or even death, and most farm workers have no medical benefits. And because it is perfectly legal for a child to work on farms alongside a parent, it is not uncommon to find children as young as 5 working long days in hazardous conditions.
Appendix 4

**Find Vegan Foods**

Food Empowerment Project's mission is to help people understand how their food choices can change the world for the good.

To make that a bit easier, below are lists of vegan products that we have taste tested and feel comfortable recommending! From condiments to non-dairy items to mock meats, you'll find an incredible array of delicious foods.

Some products might be more difficult to find than others, but do ask your grocer to stock them if they aren't readily available.

In order to make this list easier to understand, we have listed products that contain palm oil with a line crossed through them. We were concerned if we left them off, it might be unclear if we knew of their existence or not. If you know of vegan, palm-free foods that are tasty, that we do not have listed, please let us know!

Enjoy!

**Vegan Dairy Items/Condiments**

**Butter Alternatives**
- Earth Balance - Natural butter spreads are sold in tubs and jars. Products include original (non-organic), original whipped, Soy Garden (non-organic soybean), Soy Free, and olive oil based. They also have vegan sour cream, cheese, and many dairy-free baking products.
- Chedd’s Willow Run - soy margarine from soy is good for baking.
- Smart Balance - soy margarine sold in tubs and sticks (make sure this says vegan, not sure if all varieties are vegan)

**Vegan Cheese**
- Dalya - shredded Mozzarella Cheddar & Pepper Jack Wedges
- Dr. Cow - Organic, creamy cheese in flavors like Aged Cashew Nut, Aged Cashew & Hemp Seeds, Aged Cashew & Crystal Algae, Aged Cashew & Brazil Nut, and Aged Macadamia
- Follow Your Heart - soy-based vegan gourmet cheese blocks come in Monterey Jack, Mozzarella (it melts and is great on pizza), Cheddar and Nacho Nacho
- Parmal Vegan Parmesan - made from walnuts and nutritional yeast, comes in a shaker bottle (great sprinkled on pasta, salads, and popcorn). Comes in Original and Chipotle Cayenne

**Road’s End Organics** - cheese packets of instant sauces are great for mac & cheese (Cheddar, Mozzarella, and gluten-free Alfredo and Cheddar), they also make a Nacho Cheese Dip in mild or spicy flavors
- Sheese - soy-based cheese. Blocks in Cheddar (smoked, chives, medium and strong), Edam, Cheshire, Gouda and Mozzarella. Creamy style in Cheddar, Chives, Garlic & Herb, Mexican and Original. Great right on crackers!
- Sunerja - soy feta in Mediterranean Herb, Tomato Garlic and Lemon Oregano. Great for green, pasta or rice salads.
- Teese - vegan cheese in Mozzarella and Cheddar and also vegan Creamy Cheddar Sauce and Nacho Sauce
- Tofutti - Soy cheese slices in Mozzarella and American

**Vegan Brands**
- Soy-based cheese: Vegan Grab Slices is a great Parmesan alternative; packaged Vegan Singles (Mozzarella and American) and Tofutti Cheese Singles (cheddar, American, and Pepperjack), and Vegan Chunk Cheese (flavors include Mozzarella and Cheddar), are good...
Appendix 5

Our Favorite Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dairy Substitutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daiya Cheddar Style Shreds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daiya Mozzarella Style Shreds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Balance Natural Butter Spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Balance Soy Garden Natural Butter Spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Balance Vegan Butter Sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Your Heart Vegan Gourmet Cheese Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galaxy Nutritional Foods Parmesan Flavor Grated Soy Topping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love &amp; Joy Nonheat Vegan Cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimic Cream Non-Dairy, Non-Soy Nut Cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice Dream Non-Dairy Beverages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk Soyamilk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Balance Light Original Butter Spread With Flax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So Delicious Non-Dairy Frozen Dessert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tofutti Better Than Cream Cheese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix 6**

**Vegan Shopping Guide**

It's never been easier—or tastier—to give your kitchen a cruelty-free makeover. Major health-food chains chock-full of animal-friendly fare are popping up everywhere, and mainstream supermarkets have become meccas for followers of meat- and dairy-free diets. The best part? With PETA's shopping guide, you don't have to strain your eyes!

PETA combed the aisles of countless grocery stores, poring over ingredient labels, and compiled a list of vegan products for your shopping convenience. So before you grab your canvas grocery totes and head for Harris Teeter or Publix/Migly, check out what's in our virtual store.

You'll find everything on your shopping list and lots more—from the obvious Tofurky Beer Brats and Gardenburger Riblets to the "I can't believe it's vegan!" Kraft Creamy Italian Dressing and Little Debbie Cake Donuts.

We are constantly updating our list, so if you know of a product that isn't currently listed here, or if you find a product here that is not vegan, please contact us.

Aisle 1: Baking
Aisle 2: Baked Goods
Aisle 3: Beverages
Aisle 4: Breakfast
Aisle 5: Condiments
Aisle 6: Produce
Aisle 7: Refrigerated and Frozen Foods
Aisle 8: Snacks
Aisle 9: Staples

**Our Favorite Products**

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**RECENT COMMENTS**

- **treeceagood** commented: Feb 17, 2019 9:13 AM
  
  @gayozone - first of all, congrats on the weight loss. Secondly, you're focusing on protein too much and the fact you tell yourself you can only get it from animals. Something that helped me understand it all a little better was a YouTube video called "103 reasons to be vegan" it's around an hour long, and worth watching! Trust me! Good luck!

- **gayozone** commented: Jan 30, 2013 12:47 PM
  
  I want to go vegan/vegetarian but everything is so carby. I just lost 23lbs on a low carb diet - "Six Weeks To OMG". I ate lots of meat and therefore had lots of protein and managed to eat a low amount of carbs. I don't want to go back to eating lots of carbs.

Appendix 7

May 31, 2011

Kit Crawford and Gary Erickson
Owners and Co-CEOs
Clif Bar & Company
1451 66th Street
Emeryville, CA 94608-1004

Dear Ms. Crawford and Mr. Erickson,

I am writing on behalf of the Food Empowerment Project and our supporters. We are a non-profit food justice organization based in San José, California. Since the late 1990s I have been an avid consumer of Clif Bars, then LUNA Bars and finally Builder Bars. Not only because you make good, healthy, vegan products, but because of the ethics of your company.

That is why those of us at Food Empowerment Project were surprised to learn that your company would not disclose the country of origin from where your chocolate is sourced. Our organization is working to increase awareness of child slavery in the cacao industry and have contacted dozens of companies to find out from where their chocolate is sourced.

When we, along with many of our supporters and your customers, inquired, we were told: “We actually don’t give origins for any of our ingredients due to the highly competitive nature of organic sourcing.”

As the owners of a company (and a socially conscious one at that), I am sure you are aware of the difficulties companies face when they are not transparent about their supplier's practices. Concerns about competition have not prevented other socially conscious companies from providing us with the information regarding the origin of the chocolate used in their products – we do not ask for the names of the supplier – we simply want to know where the cacao comes from.

We would appreciate Clif Bars disclosing the country of origin for its chocolate as well as avoiding the buying of chocolate from places such as the Ivory Coast or Ghana where child slavery has been found.

Again, I have been a longtime supporter of your company, and I really hope we can open a dialogue on this issue. I can be reached via email at lauren@foodispower.org or by phone at 530.848.4021.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lauren Ornelas
Founder/Director
cc: Sue Hearn, Public Relations Director
(Source: Food Empowerment Project 2012e)
Appendix 8

Dear Clif BAR

As a compassionate consumer who is vehemently opposed to slavery in all forms, I was deeply disappointed to learn that your company refuses to disclose the country from which you source your chocolate. You are undoubtedly aware that some 1.7 million children are the victims of human trafficking and slavery in the West African nations of Ghana and the Ivory Coast, which together supply about 70 percent of the world’s cocoa beans.

I understand that the nonprofit Food Empowerment Project has reached out to you asking that you reveal where the cocoa beans you use for your chocolate come from. They are not asking for full supply chain information or grower names – just the cocoa beans' country of origin. Many other companies, including Newman’s Own, publicly disclose where their cocoa beans come from.

Unfortunately, your plan to use Rainforest Alliance certification isn’t good enough. I need to know where your cocoa comes from so I can make an informed decision.

Won’t you step up and tell your customers what they deserve to know?

You’ve pledged a commitment to communities worldwide – now show us this isn’t just an empty promise of social responsibility.

Sincerely,

[Your name]
(Food Empowerment Project 2012f)
Notes

1 There are five fundamental principles of CRT:
   a. CRT recognizes that racism is endemic in U.S. society, deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and even psychologically.
   b. CRT crosses epistemological boundaries.
   c. CRT reinterprets civil rights law in light of its limitation, illustrating that laws to remedy racial inequality are often undermined before they can be fully implemented.
   d. CRT portrays dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self-interest of powerful entities of society.
   e. CRT challenges a-historicism and insists on a contextual/historical examination of the law and society. (Tate in Chapman 2010: 220)

2 Levi-Strauss emphasized the significance of human prepared “cooked” foods over “raw” foods, which he examines in his book The Raw and the Cooked. Interestingly, he concluded that raw foods are connected to “nature” and the “primitive” while “cooked” foods symbolize the performance of culture (Lévi-Strauss 1969).

3 Food as communication, like any language, has a many different grammar structures. For example, in each society, there is usually the accepted dialect that reflects the socio-linguistics of the status quo (“Kings English” versus “Ebonics”) (Smitherman 2000; Yancy 2004). Those that fall outside of the socio-linguistic patterns of the status quo are typically constructed as “lower” or “poor” class (Bourdieu 1984; Barthes 1997). I would add that the ‘veritable grammar of foods’ not only communicate class, but that they signify how individuals and institutions produce as well as experience their racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and geopolitical positions.

4 For example, in Mythologies (1972), Barthes explains how steak has come to symbolize the capacity to give “strength like a bull” to those who consume it, despite their being little credence to this scientifically. This is because of the decades long narratives and images of “nationalism” and “pride” that France has connected to the object of steak- to the point that it is “naturally” accepted as having all the attributes that the myth of patriotic narratives produce (Barthes 1972).

5 I have put this term in quotations because the concept of what is ethical and what is unethical are subjective.

6 Dick Gregory is a significant icon of contemporary American vegans, particularly amongst Black people in the USA. He also represents a larger camp of Black Americans who despite traditional soul food and believe that eating animals is ‘mental slavery’ (Gregory 1974).

7 This organization include Friends of Animals, Mercy for Animals, The Humane Society, Farm Sanctuary, United Poultry, In Defense of Animals, Animal Legal Defense Fund, and Compassion over Killing are other organizations that do similar work to PETA.

8 These organizations include Friends of Animals, Mercy for Animals, The Humane Society, Farm Sanctuary, United Poultry, In Defense of Animals, Animal Legal Defense Fund, and Compassion over Killing are other organizations that do similar work to PETA.
It should be noted that these companies own the chicken processing plants.

Trayvon Martin was a Black teenager, living in Florida, who was killed in 2012. His killer, Robert Zimmerman, has been accused of racially profiling Martin simply because he was a Black teenager walking around in a predominantly white gated neighborhood. Zimmerman claims that he was attacked by Martin, and ‘defended’ himself, however, the teenager was found to be carrying no weapons, only a bag of Skittles® and a bottle of ice tea (Giroux 2012).

Refer to Appendix 1, page 135, to read the full letter by Newkirk.

I conducted this search on November 1 2012. The other two articles found were “Specieism: Anti-animal bias” and “Are Speciest stupid?”


For on VSG comments go here http://www.peta.org/living/vegetarian-living/produce.aspx (Last accessed December 15, 2012)


Such estrangement is reflected in all the books written by Newkirk. None of her books explain racialized-classed food access, exploitation of produce workers, or current day cocoa and sugar cane slavery. The mere fact that there isn’t even a paragraph or two in all eleven books about this is significant. (See: Newkirk 1990; 1992; 1993; 1998; 1999; 2000; 2004; 2006; 2007; 2009).
This is a bestseller list for Black authors.

These videos show Black celebrities speaking about the positive influence Afua has had on their health. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=22CR2j15PSc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22CR2j15PSc) and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLVP6ZvCds4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLVP6ZvCds4) (Last accessed December 1, 2012)

See these URLs for examples of Black females who appreciate Queen Afua’s health guidance: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98NL94RVb4U&feature=fvsr](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98NL94RVb4U&feature=fvsr), [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQcuqVw-ysQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQcuqVw-ysQ), [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUdaZSXYP2k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUdaZSXYP2k). (Last accessed December 1, 2012)


Janer (2007), Miheesuah (2003), and Serrato (2010) all argue that colonialism destroyed the plant-centered diets of Indigenous peoples and brought a carnicentric diet to the New World. Land that had been used for indigenous people's agriculture, were colonized and turned into pastures for animals to graze and be killed for food. In the essay “(In)edible Nature: New World Food and Coloniality,” Janer (2007) explains that once Europeans colonized the Americas, they displaced the original inhabitants from their maize producing land for cattle, which created a meat-based culinary culture, rather than a plant-based one. “The cultivation of maize became increasingly difficult because of displacement and because of the destructive behavior of wild cattle. As a result the prices of maize became prohibitive and Spanish and Amerindians alike grew fond of beef which was plentiful” (Janer 2007: 390).

Joel Fuhrman, Neal Barnard, Barnouiun and Freedman (2005), Freston (2011), and Campbell and Campbell II (2006) have dominated vegan self-help books over the last decade and have no focus on the type of race-consciousness that can be found in books such as Sacred Woman, as well as By Any Greens Necessary (McQuirter 2010), The Vegan Soulfood Guide to the Galaxy (Ibomu 2010), and The Hood Health Handbook: A Practical Guide to Health and Wellness in the Urban Community (Understanding and Allah 2010) It should be noted that the former (‘race-neutral’) approaches to vegan self-help writing far outshined sales in comparison to the latter books.

“A similar conflation of “purity” with relationship between food objects and a people’s socio-historical oppressed position in society is articulated in scholarship about the Black Nation of...”
Islam and “proper” food preparation (Rouse and Hoskins 2004). For NOI, the meaning of self-purification is achieved through “proper” food preparation, including the abstinence of “soul food”. For NOI, “soul food” is the culprit for “polluting” the Black male body; the culinary legacy of slavery and “slave mentality” (Rouse and Hoskins 2004).


34 FEP conducted an in depth research project of Santa Clara country, California, to investigate how much racial/ethnic and class background influenced a community’s access to culturally appropriate and nutritious foods. Their results revealed that it was low income communities and non-white communities that had the highest rates of food insecurity and nutritional related diseases. (Food Empowerment Project 2011h)

35 These groups include Black Panther Party, National Farm Workers Association (later named United Farm Workers), Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Applied Research Center, Greenlining Institute, People’s Grocery, Food First, and Oakland Food Connection. The Black Panther Party has only been recently recognized for their food justice work. See Nelson 2011 and Heynen 2009 as scholars who have brought this to light.

36 Margonis (2006) and Outlaw (2006) on ‘structured ignorance’ and epistemologies produced by living as beneficiaries of colonialism in the USA. They are particularly focused on how white America does not ‘know’ the realities of racialized violence that those non-white people in the USA, and globally, live through on a daily basis. They argue that this is the consequence of most American’s K-12 education in which they learned a ‘sanitized’ version of America’s development and their role in the global economy.

37 Greenwood is drawing from the use of “invisible knapsack of white privilege” coined by anti-racist and critical whiteness studies scholar Peggy McIntosh (See McIntosh 1998).

38 On their website “Snacks” (http://www.peta.org/living/vegetarian-living/snacks.aspx), PETA advocates chocolate products by companies with human rights violations in sourcing the cocoa.

39 Readers of VegNews, the number 1 vegan magazine in the USA, learned about this event in the March 2007 issues of VegNewsletter. See VegNews 2007.

40 Refer to Team Clif Bar webpage here (http://www.clifbar.com/play/team_clif/) (Last accessed December 1, 2012)

41 FEP is not the only one who is skeptical of “Fair Trade” guaranteeing the absence of human rights violations or even socio-economic uplift of poor laborers. There is research that argues that peasant coffee farmers who partnered with Fair Trade initiatives were not lifted out of the debt they have incurred to grow and harvest coffee (Bacon 2008; Scrase 2011; Wilson 2011).
FEP is not alone. Similarly to chocolate, other scholars notes how the Northern consumer of Fair Trade coffee symbolizes two very different material realities:

Similarly, the fairtrade industry has yet to deal in any politically satisfactory way with the ironies of producer communities gaining access to clean water or basic education while Northern consumers comfortably reflect on their daily coffee purchase. Moreover, fairtrade has yet to confront the moral issues of promoting more consumption even in its moralized form as the solution to the problems of development without a deeper reflexive take on current consumption patterns (Goodman 2004: 909)

Implied above is that there is a slight ‘obnoxiousness’ to ‘Fair-Trade’ consumers: that they are collectively uncritical of the irrationality of over-consumerism and its implications in producing spaces in which millions of people have no access to water. This is a symptom of commodity fetishism (Carrier 2010; Daviron and Ponte 2005). As a matter of fact, tens of thousands of people throughout the world have lack of access to clean water, which has been directly connected to the privatization of water by corporations, to make ‘modern’ objects such as Coca-Cola®. FEP dedicates a webpage to the water rights violations of Coca-Cola® and Nestlé®, showing brown and Black women of the global south fighting against these corporations who have polluted their community’s water.

Ornelas told the audience this information during the Q&A session of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies conference at University of California, Berkeley on October 20, 2012.


Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *Critical Race Theory : The Key Writings That Formed the Movement.* New


Eisenhauer, Elizabeth. "In Poor Health: Supermarket Redlining and Urban Nutrition."


Institute, Queen Afua Wellness. "Welcome to the Wellness Store." Queen Afua Wellness Institute, http://www.globalcityofwellness.com/#!store/c10op.


Maddox, Alton H. "Blackface, Fried Chicken, Watermelon and a Lynching - It's Ok." *New York*


Project, Food Empowerment. "About F.E.P." Food Empowerment Project,  

———. "Food Deserts." Food Empowerment Project,  

———. "Produce Workers." Food Empowerment Project,  

———. "Find Vegan Foods." Food Empowerment Project,  


———. "Slavery in the Chocolate Industry." Food Empowerment Project,  

———. "Food Empowerment Project’s Food Availability Study and Gis Maps." Food Empowerment Project,  

———. "Take Action." Food Empowerment Project,  


Reuters. "Demonstrators Hold up Bags of Skittles Candy." (2012)  


