**Supressing veganism: the construction and reproduction of a dominant state imposed belief system**

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**Abstract**

Marti Kheel (2008a) proposes that “veganism is a practice that ecofeminists can support as a natural expression of caring” (p. 233). Earlier in 1990 and 1995 Carol Adams identified a relationship between the oppression of women and that of non-human animals, referring to veganism in the context of a developing body of ecofeminist theory (1995, p. 219, n20).

Vegan belief however, can be argued to be supressed by the state in the interests of a dominant ideology of the economy which processes, through oppressive structural mechanisms, both women and non-human animals. For example, black female poultry workers employed to scrape the insides, and pull the lungs out of, five thousand recently slaughtered chickens per hour. Both groups of living beings are subject to appalling conditions and treatment and the situation constitutes an example of interlinked oppression (Nibert 2004; Torres, 2007).

Nibert (2004) argues that an understanding of the wider framework in which oppressive forces operate is required in order to effectively articulate an alternative system of social organisation. Kheel (2008b) states that “by shedding light on the root causes of social problems, ecofeminism can help us to deepen our capacity for empathy for all living beings, thereby helping to bring about a world of peace and respect for all living beings.” For Kheel, the interesting question to be answered is not “why are you vegan?” But, “why do you eat other animals?” (Kheel, 2008b). If veganism is the way forward for ecofeminism then an analysis of the way in which the state views veganism is thus required. This is achieved through a critical realist approach.

Vegan belief as a comprehensive ethical belief system has been recognised as a valid belief system by the European Court but benefits from no substantive provisions in daily life. Vegans suffer inequality, humiliation, are ridiculed, abused, and suffer degradation on daily basis (Cowles-Hamer, 1993/1994; Cole & Morgan, 2009; Cole & Morgan 2011)

This paper explains comprehensive ethical veganism and puts forward the view that veganism is supressed at an institutional level. It asserts that patriarchal law (both its male bias and its patriarchal view of nature) as it stands cannot recognise or provide for those of vegan belief and illuminates the structural mechanisms which maintain and promote a false comprehensive “natural necessary and normal” (Joy, 2010) perspective of dominant culture. The paper identifies how the features of current social organisation disallow vegan validity and how dominant ideology and vegan ideology are mutually exclusive paradigms for human social organisation. For example Equality Audits do not typically accommodate the vegan, and the vegan is silenced and disempowered by a dominant discourse which renders it invisible.

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**Jeanette Rowley**

**Brief autobiography**

Jeanette Rowley is a Doctoral researcher at the University of Lancaster researching Vegan Belief and Equality Law under the guidance of Dr. Mark Butler. Jeanette is also a Fellow of the United Kingdom Higher Education Academy and works as an Academic Advisor in North West UK. Jeanette is a lifelong activist in the movement for animal rights and has been vegan for around 30 years. Current research focuses on interlinked oppressions and the way in which acknowledgement of vegan belief in law can enhance both the lives of human beings and that of other animals. Toulouse 2012 will be Jeanette’s first professional conference in the field.