

## Vegan Freaks Interview with Gary Francione – Part 2 (June 26, 2008)

Transcribed by David Stasiak

Revisions by Benjamin Schmeiser

**Bob:** I want to also get you to talk about some of the critiques that have been made against some of your theory and one of the things that I found interesting in the book when I was reading it was your responses to Cass Sunstein and for those people who haven't read the book yet, and I hope everyone will go out and buy it, because it's a great book, but –

**Gary:** I just found out yesterday, I put it on the website, Columbia is having a sale until August 1 and you can get the book for 50% off. And so you can get a hardcover book for \$20 which is nothing these days.

**Bob:** That's great!

**Gary:** You can go to the Columbia university website or you can link to it my going to [www.abolitionistapproach.com](http://www.abolitionistapproach.com) which is Anna's and my website. And I also want to announce to your listeners that early in July, Bob and Jenna are going to come and set up our podcasting equipment so that we can get into the podcasting business. Yeah, so you can get the book. Go ahead, I'm sorry I didn't mean to interrupt you.

**Bob:** That's, ok. We'll make sure to mention all that again too.

**Gary:** Yes, yes.

**Bob:** You have a response to Sunstein. Let me set up his argument very quickly and you can correct me if I'm being a little too hasty, but Sunstein basically argues that the property status of animals is really not an impediment to providing better protections for them. As examples, he says things like, "You own your house but you're not allowed to blow it up whenever you feel like it." You own a stereo, it's your property, but you can't play music as loudly as you want as you have neighbors nearby who care about you doing that. And what Sunstein does is he uses that as a way of talking about how merely the property question does not prevent the recognition of certain other kinds of obligations and interests. And I'm wondering if you could discuss your response to these critiques and why you think Sunstein's critiques are ultimately wrong.

**Gary:** Well, let me say, I have a lot of respect for Cass, I think he's a really smart guy and he's a nice guy and I like him personally very, very much. I disagree with him because...I've never disputed that we can regulate our use of animal property better than we do. We clearly can, I mean, there's nothing that necessarily stops us. We could decide tomorrow, for example, that we're going to enact a whole bunch of regulations on our use of animals that wouldn't end animal use, but would provide significantly greater protection for animal interests. We could do that. If we did that, it would drive up the price of animal products – and I'm confining most of my comments to the use of animals for food is the most important use of animals because we're killing 12 billion animals alone every year, every other use sort of pales in comparison, we can talk about specific other uses, but I'm directing most of my comments to the use of animals for

food – but if we were to do that. Could we in theory pass a law tomorrow that says, ‘No more intensive farms. We have to have farms that look like 19<sup>th</sup> century, early 20<sup>th</sup> century factory farms’ and we describe those with some required legal specificity and we said no more intensive agriculture. All animals have to be produced on family farms and they have to have these characteristics. Could we do that? Could we do that as a matter of ‘could we?’ and the answer is, ‘sure, sure we could’. It would only result in the price of animal products going wild and you’d probably have a revolution. It’s not clear to me what it takes to get the American people upset. Gas prices seem to be getting them upset. But let me tell you something: if you got rid of intensive agriculture tomorrow and you were to require that all animals be produced in family farms sorts of settings, the price of animal products would go up dramatically. Sure demand would go down – even though demand is pre-stable for many of these products, the price would become so extreme that demand would go down and it would really affect producers and consumers. And you’d probably have a lot of upset people and you’d probably see a greater political reaction than we’ve ever seen about anything.

So, in response to Professor Sunstein’s analysis, I agree with Cass that we could do more to regulate how people treated their animal property, but the problem is it’s an economic matter. Every time we protect an animal interest, it costs money to the extent that we’re not getting an economic benefit in return for that expenditure. Then what we’re doing is – however you want to think about it – we’re taxing the ownership for use of animals or we’re imposing an opportunity cost that is not justified by the production costs of the product. And that causes the price to go up. And at some point in time, demand will be affected. There are other things to think about as well and that is: we live in a world that’s very different from the world we lived in in the not too distant past in that we have these free trade agreements now...

**Bob:** mmhmm.

**Gary:** ...and they govern most of the world basically. And many countries are part of more than one regiment. But in any event these free trade agreements generally are thought to prohibit imposing restrictions on importing things for moral reasons. So even if – this is a problem that’s occurring in Europe – even if you have – like Austria for example has gotten rid of battery eggs. Again, I’m not all that familiar and I’m repeating what I’ve read and I’ve not looked at the actual laws in part because I don’t read German.

But Austria I believe has either abolished or has significantly reduced the number of places that are using conventional battery cages. What I have read is that they have banned them. Nevertheless, egg demand in Austria has increased and egg production has increased. And so whatever is happening in Austria it’s not affecting the demand. Demand is going up and production is going up. And even if production were to be affected, even if the price of eggs got to the point where it was so high that demand was affected, you can’t stop a member nation of the EU from importing the eggs from say Poland or Spain or whatever or places that basically have no non-conventional egg production. I mean Spain is like 95 or 98% conventional battery egg production. So the extent that the prices went up in Austria, you could just import it. You could import the eggs and there’s nobody that could stop you from doing that. So to the extent that the demand is there then the product will come in. This is happening in Britain because a number of meat producers in Britain have made some changes where they have moved away a

bit from the intensive model. And some of the larger chains are selling meat that they claim to have been produced in more humane settings. And to the extent that that is making prices go up, meat is being imported from places that don't have those standards. So to the extent that the demand is there, you're going to have that demand. This is a problem that we didn't really have – and you're more of an economist than I am, actually, virtually anyone is more of an economist that I am – you certainly are, you've been trained in this stuff. But I don't think we were really looking at something like that fifty years ago. These free trade regimes are actually making it so that if country X passes some regulation and it does actually have an effect on demand, then what's going to happen is the product is going to come in from some other market. You can't stop it. I mean, isn't that correct?

**Bob:** Absolutely. It could begin through an unfair barrier in a trade.

**Gary:** Yeah exactly. And another thing to keep in mind here that a lot of animal welfare people just don't seem to understand is, when you increase the price of an animal product, there are two things that are important to keep in mind here. Point number one is that the demand for many animal products is fairly what, was we say 'inelastic', in the sense that you can raise the price and demand isn't going to be affected. I mean, obviously, at some point demand will be affected. But you can raise the price certainly a couple of cents. To the extent that egg prices go up a couple of cents, it's not going to affect the demand for eggs, because the demand for eggs is fairly inelastic. Now at some point, if it goes up \$10 an egg, then demand is going to be affected.

But the sorts of increases that we're talking about – the sorts of increases from conventional battery eggs to cage-free eggs and free range eggs, particularly now since some producers that are going to the cage-free and the free range models, are just constructing these enormous barns. So instead of the birds being in the small battery cages they're just in one huge cage and they're all walking over each other and urinating on each other, defecating, and they're still fighting, it's just horrible. Most of these places are just again taking advantage of what they perceive to be the economies at scale. And as the egg producers get better at this and as they figure out ways to sort of cut down on the number of eggs that get cracked or that are not retrievable because the birds are walking around or whatever, they'll get better at that, and they'll increase the efficiencies of those methods of production. But even now, they don't really have a lot of experience particularly here with those methods of production. Even now the cost increase is not all that great, so it's not really going to affect demand. So the argument that regulation affects demand is nonsense. Because most animals welfare regulation don't even increase cost, they reduce production costs, and if anything, prices will go down. Certainly prices don't go up. But even in those situations where prices do go up moderately, the demand for most of these products is such that consumers will continue to consume at the same level because the demand is what we say is 'inelastic'. That there aren't substitutes for those products, so people will go to fewer movies or something or they'll do other things to economize, but they'll continue to buy the same number of eggs.

But the other point is even to the extent that people say, "Well, the price of this animal product has gone up," that doesn't mean they buy tofu. I mean, this is another crazy idea that sort of underlies the welfarist mistaken way of going about thinking about these issues. And that is – because I hear welfarists all the time say, "Well, it's going to increase the price and then people

will buy vegetables.” And the answer is: ‘no they don’t’. If the price of beef goes up, people don’t buy tofu. They buy pork, they buy chicken, they buy fish, whatever. If the price of pork goes up they buy beef, they buy chicken, whatever. At some point in time if they can’t afford any of those products, they’ll buy processed animal products in cans or frozen or whatever.

**Bob:** That’s right.

**Jenna:** You see that happening now with the price of the grain going up, the price of meat and dairy has gone up. So you don’t really see the demand overall dropping. People, like you said, aren’t buying vegetables.

**Gary:** No. As a matter of fact, I think that the demand for animal protein – here I’m really getting in uncharted territory because as I said I’m not an economist. But my working premise here is that the demand for animal protein is infinitely elastic. Inelastic rather. In the sense that however much you raise prices, people will continue to buy animal products, they’ll just buy different ones. And the whole theory of animal welfare is that by regulating you will increase price and decrease demand. I’ve had welfarists make that argument to me very explicitly: “Well, but we’re going to regulate and by regulating we decrease demand.” And the answer is: ‘what’s your proof? What’s your proof of that?’. In fact there doesn’t seem to be any proof of it, it seems that first of all the regulations don’t increase price. Secondly, to the extent they do, it’s minimal. And it’s offset by this fact that then the producers are able to say, “Oh, you can feel better about this product because it’s being made more humanely.”

**Bob:** And I also think that what we see increasingly too are companies that are tying a lot of their business model to these kinds of products. I mean, look at Wholefoods. Wholefoods ties a significant proportion of their business model to animal compassion, and whatever they want to call it, to these kinds of products. So, if in fact it made no economic sense, if that argument were true, we wouldn’t see businesses using it as a way to make profit.

**Gary:** Absolutely. Absolutely. And what’s really tragic about it is. Again I don’t think that any animal exploitation, however humane, can be justified. But it’s not that Wholefoods is only selling meat from animals who live on factory farms and killed them in some kind way, if that’s even possible. It’s not that at all. Darian Ibrahim who – I think he’s at the University of Arizona although I’m not sure – but he did an article in which he argued that the Wholefood animal compassion standards were no better, were not significantly better than conventional standards. So, what happens is that Wholefoods is saying “Oh well we’re really concerned about the welfare of animals so we have this animal compassionate program.” And you’re right, you see these people, they’re tying their businesses to these notions, but the cash value of what they’re doing, the actual practical benefit of what animals are getting from this is minimal if at all. And what ends up happening is, you end up making people feel better about exploitation. And that in and of itself has the effect of encouraging people to continue to consume. Which is why you are seeing story after story after story after story – all you need to do is to get on the internet and do some superficial research and you will find thousands of stories about people who are returning to eating meat because they were concerned, for them it was an issue of...

**Bob:** An issue of what? We lost that.

Gary: I'm sorry – it's because of my call waiting, I hate call waiting, I should actually get rid of it. It should stop now – That what happens is many people became vegetarian or vegan because they bought the suffering argument. They bought the argument that the reason why it's wrong to eat animals is because animals suffer. I agree, animals suffer and we shouldn't make them suffer, but it goes beyond that. We shouldn't take their lives. However nicely we treat them. It doesn't matter whether I'm really nice to you. I shouldn't show up at your room tonight while you're sleeping and put a gun to your head and blow your brains out. You wouldn't feel anything but it would be wrong. But we've never really bought that argument when it comes to animals. That painless death is still a harm. In part because – and again this is what I discuss in *Animals as Persons* in the new book – the history of our thinking about this came out of the idea that animals didn't have an interest in their lives. So it was okay to kill them. If they live pleasant lives and kill them in a relatively painless way, that's an okay thing to do. And that's the idea that sort of dominates even the movement now. Because that's Singer's view and even though Regan argues against animal use he still says in the situation in which you've got to make a choice, you're morally obligated to choose the human over the animal because humans care about their lives more. And so I think that this whole way of sort of approaching the issue is problematic.

But what we're seeing now is people who say, "Well, I became a vegetarian because I was concerned about animal suffering, but now I can go to the store and I can buy certified humane raised and handled." That's one of labels that HSUS and a lot of these other organizations sponsors and promotes, the 'certified humane raised and handled' label. Or PETA and Farm Sanctuary and these other groups supporting the animal compassionate standard of Wholefoods. The RSPCA in Britain has a Freedom Food or whatever logo. And so now people feel that they can go to the store and they can buy their corpses and their animal products that have been certified to be humanely produced and they feel good about that now. And so if anything, this welfarist nonsense is perpetuating and continuing the consumption of animals. That's why it doesn't make sense. And let me just say, you raised an issue before about the welfarists saying "Why can't we all get along?" and the answer is...some of my best friends are welfarists now [laughter]. It's simply a question of disagreement. The one thing that I find really peculiar about these welfarists is they can't discuss this stuff. They can't discuss it. I'm happy to debate and discuss with anybody about this. As a matter of fact, I believe you tried to set up a debate between Singer and me on *Vegan Freaks* and he declined to do so.

Bob: I did. He declined.

Gary: Yeah. And my view is that let's talk about it. Let's talk about it. I'm happy to debate it and discuss it with anybody. If I'm wrong about things I will be happy to acknowledge that I am wrong about that but you know what? No one is making any arguments that make any sense to me. Nobody's making any valid or sound arguments about why they is that I'm wrong, they just tell, "Oh, we don't agree with you." That's fine. It's interesting but it's not much use. And so my view is, 'Hey look let's talk about it'. I don't think that people who are welfarists are bad people. I mean it's not that I'm saying that they're morally iniquitous people, I just think they're wrong.

When somebody says to me, “Why can’t we all get along?” and the answer I don’t have animosity towards people anyway I just think they’re wrong. But what they’re really asking is “Why won’t you support welfarist reform?” When somebody says “Why can’t we all get along?”, what that’s code for “Why won’t you support welfare reform?” And the answer is, because I think it’s misconceived on a number of different levels. First of all, I think it’s theoretically wrong because if animals are morally significant we shouldn’t be using them however humanely we treat them and therefore we shouldn’t be promoting their use however humane it is or isn’t, number one. Number two, as a practical matter animal welfare doesn’t work. All it does is ensure greater production efficiency and it doesn’t provide any significant protection for animal interests, what it does do is it makes people feel more comfortable about animal exploitation, what it does do is give a series of meaningless, useless campaigns to these animal welfare organizations which then fundraise off of the supposed victories which aren’t victories at all. And that’s why I think it’s just wrong. And so when somebody says, “Well, Why don’t you want to spend some time talking to colleges, why don’t you want to go to Rutgers and get Rutgers to go cage-free?” and the answer is, because life is short and to the extent that I have time to spend on animal advocacy, which I spend a great deal of my time on, I would rather educate people about veganism rather than telling people that they can discharge their moral obligations to non-humans by eating cage-free eggs. When in fact, I think that’s morally wrong because I don’t think they can discharge their moral obligations to animals by eating cage-free eggs, number one. And number two, I think as a practical matter cage-free eggs are not a significant improvement over the battery cage anyway. So what is it that we’re talking about here?

**Bob:** Yeah and promoting veganism works, because I’ve seen it work from people who are teenagers up to people who – actually, I had two people out of my class who were in their sixties and they went vegan. So the whole ‘Oh it’s possible to be too old or you’re too set in your ways’ argument: that is just complete crap. Anybody can go vegan, and I’ve seen it work.

**Gary:** Absolutely. And this idea that a lot of people aren’t going to go vegan – well, that’s true a lot of people aren’t going to go vegan. But you know what? I don’t care what it is you’re promoting, I mean you’re promoting cage-free eggs, a lot of people aren’t going to eat cage-free eggs. A lot of people don’t care, a lot of people just don’t care about morality. So what are we going to do? Are we going to have a movement that sees that person as the person we’re trying to get and the answer is, some people it doesn’t matter what your movement looks like, they’re really not interested. And so we shouldn’t ratchet our movement – I was going to say **our** movement, there ain’t no movement – ratchet **the** movement down so that we’re trying to cater to – or cater for I guess is a better preposition – the person who doesn’t give a darn about morality at all. There are a lot of people out there who actually do care about morality. There are a lot of people who are wonderful, who really do care about these issues, they just don’t think clearly. We live in an age where people watch a lot of television, and it’s amazing anybody can think at all after watching television. But people just don’t think clearly about the issue, they need to be educated about the issue, they **can** be educated about the issue.

You and I as educators have had that experience of talking about this issue and talking about veganism as a matter of common sense. I mean it drives me crazy when you have these animal people who portray veganism as something that can only be done by the ‘super people’, the

people who really are devoted and dedicated and it's only the special people. That's nonsense. Anybody can be a vegan, it's easy to do, as a matter of fact it's extremely easy to do.

Bob: It is.

Gary: And certainly it's incredibly easy to do in a place like the United States. It's easy to do virtually anywhere. But it's particularly easy to do here. To the extent that you want processed vegan foods which are not nutritionally good for you anyway, but to the extent that you want vegan junk food, this place has got more vegan junk food than any place on the planet.

Bob: That's right.

Jenna: That's true.

Gary: So you can satisfy your cravings for 80 zillion milligrams of salt and chemicals and all sorts of stuff and still be a vegan. So it's very, very easy to be a vegan. And I'm just tired of this "Oh, it's too hard to be a vegan." If you tell people it's too hard to be a vegan then you're doing a disservice to veganism. I always tell people it's extremely easy to be a vegan. And they say "Well, I have to research it" and it's like, what the hell do you have to research?

Bob: Just go do it.

Gary: It's not all that difficult, it really is very, very easy to be a vegan and to live in a very healthy way. And we are so confused. If I hear one more NPR story about the effect of ethanol on corn prices and have one more person talking about how the problem with corn prices is ethanol and should we be concerned – yes, we should be concerned about global warming, but when people are starving...actually there was a program I heard not long ago in which someone was arguing that yes, we ought to be concerned about global warming, but it's really horrible because people are starving because of these high grain prices and it's the high grain prices caused by ethanol. You have to sort of catch your breath when you hear something like that because to the extent that ethanol and ethanol production is causing corn to go up, it's miniscule in terms of the fact that what's really causing the price of grain to go up – apart from just speculation, economic speculation, which is what's driven up oil – is the fact that you have places like India and China are increasing their meat consumption. And people all over the world are increasing their meat consumption, which is causing the price of grain to go through the roof. It's not ethanol, ethanol is only a small piece of the puzzle.

The much larger piece of the puzzle is meat consumption and dairy consumption. It's animal protein – putting aside the moral issue – is an incredibly inefficient way of feeding people. It takes between six and twelve pounds of plant protein to produce one pound of flesh. It takes a thousand times more water than it does to produce...I mean, it's an inefficient way of producing food. And what it's doing is – animal agriculture is causing the price of grain to go crazy. It's not ethanol. Ethanol is a small part of the problem. Animal agriculture is putting the world's water stock, which is diminishing to the point now where we're having serious drought issues, where the people who predict the future – I don't mean fortune tellers. What do you all call economists who talk about future trends? I forget, there's a name for such people – but where those people are saying, the problem in the future, the economic problem which is going to cause massive

devastation is water scarcity. And animal agriculture is the prime culprit for that. And animal agriculture as we know from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations says that animal agriculture is as bad if not worse than fossil fuel consumption in terms of greenhouse gases and global warming.

Bob: That's right.

Jenna: mmhmm.

Gary: So what are we doing? It seems to me that the morality of it, the health aspects of it, and the environmental and human rights issues all point in one direction and that's veganism. And this idea that we're telling people, 'Eat cage-free eggs'. I find that obscene on a number of different levels: morally wrong, not good for their health, and it's perpetuating an elitist way of consumption. You know? It's because we have the money to buy this stuff, we do it. And we condemn a substantial part of the world's population to starvation – and I'm not saying that's the only reason why that people starve because there's a lot of political corruption and all sorts of other things – but I mean it's a bad thing to do and all of the arrows point in one direction, and that is veganism. It's what makes sense as a moral matter, as a matter of health, as a matter of ecology and human rights. It's devastating what we're doing to other people, human and non-human.

Jenna: Definitely. And so that's in a sense the easier argument to make and you said earlier that if you were going to argue against something like vivisection or experimenting on animals you sort of have to ramp up your argument. But you do talk about this in your book in another chapter, so can you briefly discuss some of the ways that people can articulate a meaningful response to this difficult argument? Because a lot of people don't think it's morally wrong to use animals for their benefit.

Gary: Well, I have a chapter in *Animals as Persons* in which I talk about the necessity of using animals in experiments and there are two parts to the chapter: the first part of the chapter deals with the claim that – you know many people believe, because they're told, we need to be using animals in experiments. Putting aside the moral issue, that there's no way we can get this knowledge unless we use animals. Again put aside the moral issue and just focus on what we might want to call the 'practical issue'. Is animal use the only way we can get particular sorts of knowledge? And the first part of the article, I argue no it's not – there are certainly a lot of questions about that. That is, to say animal use is necessary in order to get this information is a complicated assertion. For example, let me give just give you one example of where a claim like that becomes complicated. We say, "Well, if we want to find a cure for a particular disease, we need to use animals." Well, that assumes – I mean, we live in a world of limited resources so we're only going to spend a certain amount of money on a problem anyway. We can only spend a certain amount of money on a problem. And the decision to do animal experiments, even if they will result in useful information, is a decision that we make and we ignore other ways of solving the problem. For example, we spend lots of money doing animal experiments to try to find cures or treatments for AIDS. And the amount of useful knowledge that we have gotten from doing animal experiments, in terms of understanding AIDS, is minimal. We've learned very, very little actually. The affective treatments have all been developed in humans. Now, the

problem is that we don't want to spend money – I mean, we spend money on however much money we spend on animal experiments to find cures or treatments for AIDS. You want to really reduce the number of new AIDS cases? Then pass out condoms, pass out needles to addicts, educate kids and other people about safe sex, spend all that money on those sorts of things and you will dramatically reduce the number of new cases of HIV. But we don't want to do that. Because we don't want to educate people about safe sex, we don't want to distribute condoms and we don't want to distribute needles to junkies, we don't want to do that.

Bob: You know what's interesting too, I was just reading in one of those magazines Time or Newsweek today that 70% of all cancers come from lifestyle choices.

Gary: Absolutely!

Bob: And so it's the same thing, right? It's education about the lifestyle choices, but we don't want to do that.

Gary: Absolutely. I mean, if you take all the money – I mean, you'll never eradicate cancer, there will always be some. But if you want to dramatically, really, super dramatically cut down on cancer, take all the damn money which is being used for cancer experiments and educate people about lifestyle changes. About not eating meat, not eating dairy. Getting some minimal exercise. Not smoking. Not consuming alcohol in large amounts. Things like that. Educating people about things like that.

Bob: In large amounts, I like that.

Gary: I'm sorry, what?

Bob: You said not consuming alcohol in large amounts, I like that.

Gary: In large quantities. And I don't want to offend any straight edge people out there. You educate people about lifestyle changes, you will cut down dramatically on the number of new cancer cases. But what do we do? No, we don't want to do that because to the extent that we do that then the meat industry gets upset, the dairy industry gets upset, the cigarette industry gets upset, the alcohol industry gets upset. People make money in this country from other people getting sick. And that's a fact of life in this place that nobody makes a buck in our system unless other people get sick. And so there really isn't an interest in preventing, there's an interest in intervening once people have gotten ill. I mean, if you took the money that we spend on cancer research and we put it into education and lifestyle changes, you would cut down dramatically on the number of cancer cases. And when I make this argument to people, they say, "Well, you're still going to have people, what about the people who have cancer and they're not going to get cured?" And the answer is, they're not going to get cured anyway. I mean, they're not going to get cured anyway. And at some point in time you have to ask yourself the question: should we be spending zillions and zillions of dollars...if we could in fact eradicate 70 to 80% spending the money that we're spending on research and development of treatments and cures, much of which involves animals, if we were able to eradicate 70 to 80% of it, maybe even more, wouldn't that be a better expenditure of the money than worrying about the 10% whose cancer we can't cure or

who are going to get in anyway because of genetic reasons or for whatever other reason, they're going to get it. We should do everything we can to help everybody. But the bottom line is everything's a trade off. Everything's a cost-benefit analysis. So, I mean the idea that we should continue to spend trillions of trillions of dollars so that we can cure everybody; the answer is, we're not going to do that anyway. That's silly. That's just Santa Claus thinking, that's Easter Bunny stuff, that's not going to happen.

**Bob:** Excellent. So is there anything else that you would like to touch on? Any other pieces of your book that you think are worth mentioning on the show that we haven't gotten to yet?

**Gary:** Umm, no. I do want to emphasize what I said before about – this is a matter of sincere intellectual dispute. That is, those of us who are concerned about animals really need to think about these issues. And need to discuss them. And the idea that I think that PETA's controlled-atmosphere killing campaign is a bad idea, doesn't mean that I'm an enemy and it means that I disagree. And I think that what one of the problems with the movement is this – and again I use movement loosely. But one of the problems with the animal 'phenomenon' or whatever you want to call it is that there is no discussion. And that anybody who disagrees is labeled an enemy of the people. And it's interesting because I wrote *Rain Without Thunder* in 1996 and it resulted in an enormous amount of animosity, people were very angry that I wrote the book, and of course they had nothing to say about it, they had nothing in substance to say. The level of sophistication of response was basically, 'Francione thinks that we ought to harm animals as much as possible because that's the only thing that's going to cause a change' and the answer is Francione never said that. That's outrageous. That's a silly, mischaracterization, misrepresentation of what I said. But I wrote that book and basically people in the movement got so upset, mainly the large organizations got so upset, that basically everybody stopped promoting my work, everybody stopped promoting my books, they stopped inviting me to the conferences, they weren't even interested in having the discussion. And it's only because the internet came along, and the internet's basically made it possible for people to communicate with each other and we don't have to use large corporate organizations anymore, we can talk to each other like you have your podcast, zillions of people listen to it. And that's only because we're not on the scene yet, but you'll have competition in the near future.

**Jenna:** Uh-oh.

**Gary:** But right now, you're talking to thousands of people who listen to Vegan Freaks radio. And you wouldn't have been able to do that in the not-too-distant past. Your views would have been suppressed by the large organizations the way my views have. And what's really interesting is there's no discussion. There's no discussion. People aren't really willing to confront these issues and sit down – look, if somebody thinks I'm wrong, tell me how it is I'm wrong. I'm more than happy to debate these things. Obviously I have a limited amount of time, I have a lot of things to do, so I can't debate it with everybody, but I tried to debate it with Singer, he wasn't interested (or he wouldn't do it). And I'm happy to debate with folks who have something to say.

The problem is is that a lot of animal people don't believe in debat or discussion. The moment you disagree with anything that PETA says or anything that Wayne Pacelle says or anything that one of the other icons says, then you are an enemy of the people, and you're harming animals –

or whatever loony things these people say. And I just want to say that to the extent that that's what we've become, then we really are a cult. Because that's what cults do. Cults basically say "Here's the orthodoxy. And you aren't permitted to depart from it. You depart from it and you have sinned." And that's what the animal thing, or large parts of it at least, have become. I think it's one of the reasons why Vegan Freaks has grown the way it's grown, is because most of the people who are involved with your forums and listen to your podcasts and stuff are people who are sort of outside of that. And they are alienated and they're not interested in the sort of cult aspects of it and so they turn to alternative sources like you.

But the problem is is that the movement – again, using it loosely – has become a cult. And it's also got this sort of big business sort of feel to it too because we're talking about millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars. Some of these organizations, like HSUS has... I looked recently, it was just extraordinary, I think it was over 200 million dollars in its reserve. We're talking about a big business here. And so, the animal thing unfortunately has become part big business and part cult. And as long as it's that it's never going to go anywhere. As long as it's that, it's never going to shift the paradigm. As long as it's that it's never going to anything to reduce animal use or in any significant way reduce animal suffering – again I want to make it clear that would not solve the moral problem, the problem is use, the problem is not treatment, treatment is a problem, it is not the defining problem as I see it – the problem is use. But we're never going to see any changes as long as it's a business cult. And that's the problem. The problem is those who disagree are unwilling to discuss it. And I think until we sit down and start talking about these things, then there's no chance of coming to any common ground because people don't talk. Anybody who disagrees is just discounted – I understand why because, in a sense, promoting veganism... I thought it was interesting, some months ago Dan Matthews of PETA was interviewed by somebody. And he said that about half of the members of PETA were vegetarian. He didn't even say vegan. He said about half of them were vegetarian.

**Bob:** About half?

**Gary:** That's what he said. And I think that was in the Orange County weekly. I have it on one of my blog essays, I link to it. I think Dan said, it was in the Orange County weekly, but that's the right figure, he said about half of our members are vegetarians and the other half think it's a good idea. And that's not an exact quote, but it certainly is very close to an exact quote. And I thought that was curious, I thought that was really interesting. It speaks volumes, because an organization like PETA in a sense can't afford to take an unequivocal – PETA can't afford to take the position that veganism is the moral baseline because...

**Bob:** They'd be alienating half of their donors.

**Gary:** Because half of their membership is not even vegetarian, let alone vegan. And I don't even know how many of the vegetarian half that Dan was referring to, are vegan. So in a sense, these organizations almost can't afford to promote veganism in the sort of way that I'm saying that they ought to be promoting it, because they'll lose membership. So if you want your animal corporation to continue to grow and be big and bring in zillions of dollars so that you can fly people all over creation so that they can hobnob with rock stars and go naked rather than wear fur, if you want to make that sort of money, then you have to have a broader appeal. The problem

is the broader appeal ends up losing the message because you end up telling people, the most radical aspect of your message is they ought to go to Kentucky Fried Chicken and eat gassed chicken rather than electrically-stunned chicken. I mean, that's what it's become. The rallying cry has become, 'Let's gas the chickens rather than electrocute them or stun them electrically or whatever'. And that's really sort of sad.

Bob: Wow. That is sad. But this is the thing: your books provide a way out of that. They provide a way forward, they provide a new way of thinking about these issues, the challenges, the standard way of thinking about what the movement gives. And so for those reasons I would encourage everyone to become familiar with your work, and especially with this new book which I think provides a really nice job of kind of summing up a lot of your thought to date, so I think that's one of the best parts about the book. Can you tell people again where to get copies of your book?

Gary: Yeah, you can get it online at any of the online stores, you can get it at bookstores, most of the large books store chains are carrying it. But as I said, Columbia till August 1 has a sale on the hardcover – they will put out a paperback copy at some point. But the copy that's available now is a hardcover copy and they've got a sale on all of their animal titles. They have a number of animal titles over at Columbia University Press and all of their animal titles are on sale at 50% – and there are a number of really fine books – but the one to buy first is **Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation**. And you can go to the Columbia University Press site or if you go to Anna and my site, the Abolitionist Approach, which is [www.abolitionistapproach.com](http://www.abolitionistapproach.com), then I have as my announcement on my homepage the link where you can go to Columbia University Press and you can get the book for 50%. And so, \$20 these days for a hardcover book is nothing.

Bob: It's a good deal.

Gary: And it's a very good deal in terms of the economics of it. And I tried in the book, Bob and Jenna. I mean, the first chapter is really a statement of my theory, my view that animals have – when I talk about animal rights, I'm talking about the one right not to be property and I explain what the problems there are and why property is a problem. And the other essays try to sort of update some of my earlier work and put it into present context. And then I try to explore things as I mentioned before about the history of the development of the welfare movement and welfarist thinking. I deal with animal experimentation, as I was describing in response to Jenna's question and I talk about ecofeminism and about some of the other issues.

I hope it will be a – I try to make it accessible. I mean, I try to make the book something that anybody who's really interested in engaging the ideas and is willing to put some effort in can understand. I try to make it comprehensible and accessible. And I hope that it will be and I hope that – it's very clear a debate has started. That's the one thing that's absolutely clear. I still use the expression 'animal rights' quite a bit but I almost always use it in conjunction with the concept of abolition, because the problem is that animal rights has become so diluted because everybody who likes animals, irrespective of how much meat they eat and how much leather they wear and how many rodeos they go to, call themselves an animal rights person. And that's in part because the animal organizations have so devalued that conceptual currency by referring to

anything as animal rights. And so, I want to make it clear that when I talk about animal rights, I'm talking about abolition of exploitation and that means certain things. And I explain why I think abolition, why an abolitionist is committed to certain moral ideas and, most importantly, veganism. And I am also very concerned about the drift of at least some segments of the movement towards violence. I am, as I said in one of my – I know I will upset some of your listeners – I am violently opposed to violence, I really do think that the genesis of this idea is this whole concept that we are the continuation of the peace movement. In many ways those of us who are trying to promote veganism, promote abolition of exploitation, really shift the paradigm away from property, what we're trying to do is broaden out what started along time ago as the peace movement. And the problem is violence. The problem is we treat animals like animals. And we also treat humans – once we've defined a group of humans, we animalize them. And we've done that historically. Every group of people that we have done nasty things to, we analogize them to animals and then it becomes alright to do anything we want to do with them because they're animals and we can do what we want to with animals. And this is all related to this notion of violence. And the violence that we do to non-humans and the violence that we do to humans. And so I really do think that we need to rethink we're going and what this is about. I also find it disturbing that you have some of the people who support violence –

Bob: They're not even vegans!

Gary: They're not even vegans and they're busy lecturing the rest of us about why violence is necessary, I just find that absurd and beyond belief. And it's a topic that I touch on in the book and it's a topic I'm exploring more now in some of the writing I'm doing now that the concept of 'ahimsa' or non-violence is really essential, as I see it, to this whole enterprise. And so I really hope that I can trigger discussion amongst the non-cult members, those who haven't yet drunk the kool-aid and who are still capable of some critical thinking and who are interested in some critical thinking. And I wish you'd re-extend the offer to Peter Singer, and let's debate the origins of animal welfare and let's talk about animal welfare and let's talk about Bentham and Mill and let's talk about Singer's views about the lack of interest in life that animals, or at least some animals have and talk about those things.

Bob: It'd be a lot of fun. But the last time I tried, he wasn't very into it. I'll try again though.

Gary: Try again!

Bob: I would love to have Peter here –

Jenna: But you're going to have your own show too, so –

Gary: I know, but it's going to take a while. I'm going to try my best and Anna and I are really sort of excited about this but it's going to be a while before we get to the level that Vegan Freaks –

Bob: Oh I doubt it.

Gary: – has gotten to. But I think it would be great to debate Singer and at least if we did it on Vegan Freak it wouldn't be our forum it would be someone else's. Someone else's playground for us to deal with. So please, ask Peter again, if he wants to do it I think it would be a fun thing to do.

Bob: Cool. Well, Gary, thank you so much for being on the show.

Gary: Thank you both very, very much and hi to everybody in Vegan Freak Land and I hope you're all doing well and I hope you're all getting the veganism as of yesterday and staying with it because it's the most important form of political activism in which we can engage.

Bob: Well, there you go. No better note to end on than that one.

Gary: Thank you both very much.

Jenna: Yes, thank you, Gary.