



One Issue: Animal Liberation

We are occasionally asked why the Animal Rights Coalition is a “multi-issue” organization, instead of working solely on helping people to adopt a vegan diet.

The Animal Rights Coalition mission states that ARC is “dedicated to ending the suffering, abuse, and exploitation of non-human animals through information, education, and advocacy.” One of the most important things about ARC is the consistency of our message and actions. ARC started out as, and has firmly remained, an *abolitionist* animal rights organization – which means that we challenge the dominant conversation that humans have about our relationships with other species. Most people view other animals as *commodities* for humans to use and own, and we view other animals as *persons* who are here for their own reasons and deserving of personal and bodily integrity.

So, while some may consider us a multi-issue organization, the reality is that there is only one issue – animal liberation – and no matter what subject we’re talking about, we’re having essentially the same conversation again and again – emphasizing that animals matter in their own right, outside of what they can provide for humans, and that it is not justifiable for us to exploit or abuse them for any reason.

As one facet of the conversations we have with people, we encourage them to adopt a plant-based (vegan) diet. However, we believe that veganism is about more than what one does and doesn’t eat. Veganism rejects the commodity status of animals, and with animals as commodities in more than just the food production system, we have a moral imperative to protest the use of animals in labs, circuses, the clothing industry, etc.

Veganism is a value system that embraces a “do the least harm possible” ethic. Recognizing this, ARC welcomes the wide diversity of our members and supporters. We accept people at all stages in their journey towards more compassionate lives, understanding that awareness is an on-going process, and we reach out to other contemporary social justice movements seeking to end oppression in any form, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia.

We recognize that each person takes a different path to a compassionate life and that there are many facets of animal rights work. Some may be outraged by the hunting and trapping of wolves; others may be heartbroken by the killing of unwanted cats and dogs; and still others may cringe at the thought of ducks being force fed to produce *foie gras*. All of these have great importance in their own right and, as

a whole, contribute toward a multi-dimensional understanding of our moral obligation to view and treat other animals as individuals worthy of respect¹. The important concept is that no matter what path a person takes in the journey towards a compassionate life, the world will be better for it as every act of kindness helps to build momentum for a kinder world.

¹ As patrice jones, author of *Aftershock*, wrote in her blog: “At AR2008 I heard one too many advocates of personal veganism as the path to animal liberation assert that farmed animals must be the focus of our activism because they represent the greatest number of exploited animals. But we can’t afford to see activism as a zero-sum game in which attention to one problem detracts from another. What we all have to do is develop an integrated analysis in which we understand how all of the problems are linked and then find ways to show solidarity with those working on different issues (or by means of different tactics) while using not only utilitarian [*bringing the greatest good to the greatest number*] but also strategic [*e.g., where can *I* do the greatest good, given my own resources and positioning? where are the best opportunities for decisive intervention right now? what needs doing that nobody else is doing? etc.*] and compassionate [*whose suffering is unbearably acute?*] calculations in deciding how to spend one’s own limited supply of time.”