

Food Ethics in Practice: How to Work with Your Institution to Create Sustainable Food Practices

What's Your Story?

Human Rights &
Welfare

Moral & Ethical
Obligations

Environmental &
Climate Impact

Public Health



Prepared and presented by Rev. Dr. Christopher Carter (christophercarter@sandiego.edu)



Why does this matter to you?

My Story

Many institutions, particularly academic institutions, may have a general idea that our food choices are having a significant impact on ecological well-being yet they are choosing to do business as normal.

Persuading them to change will require ecological and economic data to support your argument.

Convincing them of the urgency of this issue requires them to *feel* the negative impact of animal agriculture from those who are victimized.

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Robert Martin & Joe Carter



Robert Martin

- Born in Mississippi in 1935
- Works in fields from 8-12, drops out of school to work year round.
- The conditions he endured were abhorrent.
- Gratefulness.

Joe Carter

- Born 1882 in Louisiana to Spanish (Basque) Immigrants, first "Carter" born in America.
- Plantation overseer
- Marries one of his fieldworker's daughter, who was Black.



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Farm Animal
Welfare

Climate Change

Environmental Impact

Land Resources:

Livestock, for the production of meat and milk, is the world's largest user of land resources, with pasture and land dedicated to the production of animal feed representing 70% of the total agricultural area.

Water (Mis)Usage:

The production of animal proteins requires vastly more grain, water, and land than the production of plant-based proteins. Producing 1 kg of animal protein requires about 100 times more water than producing 1 kg of grain protein.

Agriculture accounts for 70 per cent of global water withdrawal.
(FAO)

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Farm Animal Welfare

Aquatic Animals

- We extract about 109 million metric tons of fish from the oceans per year.
- Overfishing and intensive fishing practices greatly reduce biodiversity.
- Vast amounts of non-target animals are routinely thrown back into the ocean (“bycatch”). Some target animals have a bycatch rate of up to 98%, meaning for every 2 target animals, 98 non-target species are thrown back into the ocean dead or dying.

Common Practice for Factory Farmed Animals

- Ear notching, tattooing, and branding animals (to mark and/or track them).
- Artificially inseminating and continuously impregnating animals for breeding and/or milk production.
- Creating a high concentration of animal waste, thereby contributing to rise of diseases (in both farmed animals and laborers), increased use of antibiotics, and increased risk of antibiotic-resistant pathogens.

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Climate Change

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' report on livestock's impact on climate change states that animal agriculture "currently amounts to about 18% of the global warming effect—an even larger contribution than the transportation sector worldwide."

Given that the majority of the global poor rely on the agriculture sector for food and economic security, global climate change disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized people, and especially women.

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Human Rights & Welfare

CAFO &
Slaughterhouse
Workers

Food Insecurity

Mental Health

With respect to human impact, industrial agriculture disproportionately harms Black, Indigenous, and poor people in the US and Indigenous and poor people globally.

Whether it is access to clean water in Flint, land sovereignty in Standing rock, or food injustice in Black communities, it is clear that *environmental practices are always racialized and racializing practices are always environmental.*

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CAFO & Slaughterhouse Workers

Racial Hierarchy, Racism, 100% Turnover rate in Smithfield Plant in rural NC; Immigration

- "At the Slaughterhouse Some things Never Die" by Charlie LeDuff
- "ICE Arrests Hundreds in Mississippi Raids Targeting Immigrant Workers" by Miriam Jordan

Exploitation of Prison Labor

- "They thought they were going to rehab. They ended up in chicken plants" by Amy Julia Harris and Shoshana Walter

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Food Insecurity & Access

- **Our domestic food system is structurally racist.**
 - From "food desert" to "food apartheid."
 - Food apartheid in Black, Rural, and Poor communities. Food security & poverty strongly linked.
- **Rural communities - the very places where our food is grown - are suffering**
 - Rural communities make up 63% of counties in the United States and 78% of counties with the highest rates of overall food insecurity
 - 84% of the counties with the highest percentage of children at risk for food insecurity are rural .
- **Food Security and Farming are Women's issues**
 - Women are the foundation of the third world agricultural economy, even though they receive only a fraction of the land, training, economic support (i.e. credit) and agricultural training as men.
 - Women, on average, comprise 43% of the agricultural labor force in developing countries and account for an estimated two-thirds of the world's 600 million poor livestock keepers.
 - In Africa women constitute 52% of the total population, yet they make up about 75% of the agricultural workforce, and produce and market about 60-80% of their food. As a whole women produce more than half of the world's food and provide more than 80% of the food needs in food-insecure households and regions

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Farmer Suicide Crisis

- Sadly, in 2016 the Center for Disease Control released a study showing that people working in agriculture, including farmers, farm laborers, ranchers, fishers, and lumber harvesters, take their lives at a higher rate than any other occupation in the US.
- In South Africa, the suicide claims for insurers increased 20% in 2016 and has been attributed to farmer suicides. In the state of Andhra Pradesh in India, which has a population in the millions, has been recording rural suicide rates in the thousands.
- Between 1996 and 2000, half of Sri Lanka's recorded suicides were agricultural workers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/06/why-are-americas-farmers-killing-themselves-in-record-numbers>

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Public Health

- Studies have discovered an increase in respiratory, neuro-behavioral, and mental illnesses among the residents of communities next to factory farms. In a major study, residents in the vicinity of a large pig farm were found to have “higher reporting of headaches, runny noses, sore throats, excessive coughing, diarrhea, and burning eyes.” A separate study determined that pregnant women and children are especially susceptible to factory farm emissions.
- Waste from factory farms poses a serious risk for nearby residents. Manure and urine are generally stored in open-air pits known as lagoons which are susceptible to spillage.
- The overuse and misuse of antibiotics in the meat industry is contributing to the rise of antibiotic-resistance in the U.S. and across the world. This serious public health issue is estimated to kill 10 million people a year worldwide by 2050. In the U.S., antibiotic-resistant infections cause over two million illnesses and 23,000 deaths each year, costing society between \$55 billion to \$70 billion each year.

<https://www.livekindly.co/living-near-factory-farm-bad-news-personal-health/>

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Moral & Ethical Obligations

The majority of the world's spiritual & religious traditions have proscriptive obligations to care for our neighbors. This "care" is rooted in the notion of a common humanity.

However, coloniality has fractured our understanding of the human person such that "human" is implicitly understood to be white or white performativity.

This is the underlying challenge we all face, we have to humanize those who suffer because of our neglect and we must not dehumanize those who are slow to act, rather we must discern what is preventing them from doing what we know to be morally obliged to do.

Racial Empathy Gap - by Jason Silverstein

<https://slate.com/technology/2013/06/racial-empathy-gap-people-dont-perceive-pain-in-other-races.html>

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