THE TOTAL LIBERATION ACTION RESEARCH TEAM: RE-MEMBERING
PRACTICES OF HOLISTIC, CREATIVE, AND COMPASSIONATE JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

THE TOTAL LIBERATION ACTION RESEARCH TEAM: RE-MEMBERING PRACTICES OF HOLISTIC, CREATIVE, AND COMPASSIONATE JUSTICE

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In this thesis, I argue that industrial society must radically re-evaluate and re-member its relationships with the more than human world if it wishes to pursue justice and sustainability, pursuits which are crucial to the continued existence of life on earth. I argue that those involved in justice and sustainability movements must recognize the critical intersections of animal liberation with justice for the earth and humans; and that those involved in movements for animals must find ways to practice groundless solidarity with all those resisting corporatism, patriarchy, racism, colonialism, sexism, classism, ablism, transphobia, homophobia, and ecocide. I argue that we must start here and now by coming together to form our own communities; cultivating spaces to ask critical questions; and practicing more creative, compassionate, and holistic activisms that call for the liberation of earth and all animals—both humans and other than. By cofounding and participating in the development of a Total Liberation Action Research Team at Northern Arizona University, I present evidence that the frameworks of total liberation and artistic resistance offer alternatives to dominant, mechanistic, dismembering, single-issue, one-size-fits-all organizing models and inspire more holistic, creative, and compassionate activisms that are necessary to cultivating truly just communities.
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Finally, I would like to acknowledge all animals (including humans) who have been killed or are being exploited/tortured/killed at this moment by the stark realities of an industrial, capitalist, dismembered and dismembering society; whose suffering is so often made invisible. In terms of nonhuman suffering, an estimated 15 billion or more nonhuman animals have been slaughtered during the time it took me to write this thesis. During the minute or more that it will take most people to read this page, an estimated 50,000 or more will have been slaughtered (Adams, 1990, dedication).
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Monk seal,
Swim me out beyond the ice floes, mama. Where are you? Boots squeeze my ribs, clubs
drum my fur, the white world goes black with the taste of my blood...
African elephant,
sway me through the jungle. There still must be jungle somewhere. My heart drops with
green secrets. Hose me down by the waterhole; there is a buckshot in my hide. Tell me
old stories while you can remember...
Wolf,
Your tracks are growing fainter. Wait. Wait. This is a hard time. Don’t leave us alone in
a world we have wrecked.
-Joanna Macy

Introduction to the Problem

Currently, an anthropocentric, industrial civilization dominates our world,
disconnecting many from the wonder and pain of the other than human animal world and
leading instead to its exploitation and consumption. In this world, dismemberment haunts
our language, our psyches, and the stories we tell ourselves about our place in world; “we
have engaged in a process of purposeful and systematic forgetting” of the suffering we
inflict on the more than human world (House, 1999, p. 49). This violence is fueled by
neoliberalism’s ideology of “Progress”, which promotes monocultures that ultimately
serve the interests of an elite few and are rooted in the shocking and dismembering
enclosure of imaginations, bodies, cultures, economies, and resources. Militaristic and
profit driven political responses to the pressing environmental and social issues of our
time are largely rooted in this ideology and create further divisions within the world.
These divisions manifest both physically (the increasingly policed U.S.-Mexico border)
and psychologically (the internalized discrimination against those categorized as Other).
A quick glance at the world around is evidence that the onward march of this “Progress”
does not facilitate the espoused economic liberalist utopian dream, but instead
concentrates wealth while facilitating dystopian realities. As the horrors of this world grow larger, the more incentive there is “to grab for sedatives, ideologies, or final solutions” (Macy, 2007, p. 100). These incentives enable the privileged to cling even more tightly to mechanistic thinking, to fragmented stories of rationalized violence.

Neoliberalism’s ideology of “Progress” dismembers compassion and imagination, thriving on a politics of impossibility in which there are no foreseeable alternatives to institutionalized violence. This “Progress” standardizes the range of appropriate questions, thought, emotions, and selves that perpetuate it, corroding curiosity and creative consciousness. The violence of neoliberalism feeds on this mechanistic compartmentalization of our world and consciousness, the division of art from life, heart from mind, and liberation movements from one another. In a world with this many problems, justice is frequently fought for as a series of disconnected single issue struggles, each peppered with its own blind spots and hierarchies of oppression; otherization bleeds into our movements. Oftentimes, “Each group identifies the oppression with which it feels most comfortable as being fundamental and classifies all others as being of lesser importance” (Collins, 2000, p. 229). Injustice is perpetuated by the inability to imagine a way out that doesn’t trample over others seeking the same thing. Within neoliberalism’s politics of impossibility, justice and sustainability become zero-sum games which necessitate someone else’s slaughter.

**Fragmented Sustainability Movements**

Within mainstream sustainability movements, the human versus nature split is frequently examined, but the human versus animal and human versus other human
dualisms are not. Many well-meaning environmentalists and activists within western sustainability movements rarely ask the question: For whom are we “sustaining” the world? Some examples of this include focusing on populations (of color) control, avoiding the discussion of environmental racism, and fearfully discussing the migration of “illegals” and climate “refugees” who “use up all of our resources” and “pollute our neighborhoods”. As Park and Pellow (2011) explain in *The Slums of Aspen*, These “nativist environmentalists” are “essentially crying ‘reverse environmental racism’ because they view immigrants not only a cause of environmental harm, but as a kind of social contamination, a form of pollution harming whites” (p. 10). Park and Pellow continue, “Environmental privilege can be challenged only when larger systems of power are undone” (p. 15). I believe that this privilege includes that of being a human in a culture that slaughters an estimated “31.1 billion [nonhuman animals] each year, 85.2 million each day, 3.5 million each hour, and 59,170 each minute” (Adams, 1990, dedication).

Meanwhile, even within social and environmental justice groups and more radical circles of sustainability movements, the discourse about animal oppression is frequently one of “humans” and ecological “systems” first, which silences or prevents the discussion of individuals affected by nonhuman oppression. When it is discussed, often the focus of the conversation centers far away from “farmed” animals and instead on the plight of more “wild” species, such as polar bears. Karen Davis (1995) explains this from a critical feminist lens, “Animals summoning forth images of things that are ‘natural, wild, and free’ accord with the ‘masculine’ spirit of adventure and conquest idolized by our culture” (p. 196). The commodification and slaughter of individual, “domesticated”
animals even in “sustainable, humane” agriculture is often understood and spoken about as its own separate and less significant issue.

Environmentalism challenges us to think about how we view and treat the weaker and more pacific beings in our midst, be they nonhuman or otherwise… Do we believe that a weaker creature is less entitled to justice and compassion than more vigorous types? Do we suppose that creatures whose lives we humans have wrecked do not have paramount moral claims on us? Environmentalism has a tendency to blame such victims… Adherents of environmentalism have rapped animal rights advocates on the knuckles for caring about ‘little things,’ like individuals and beings with feelings. (Davis, 1995, p. 202)

Within sustainability movements, there is also much discussion on the naturalness of eating and using animals. This manifests as an admiration/appropriation of indigenous ways of knowing and relating to the other than human world—sometimes in an attempt to avoid making statements that perpetuate black and white thinking and neocolonialism, but also in attempts to justify what is considered to be the “humane” slaughter of animals by a largely white environmental movement that wants to have their steak and eat it too.

**Fragmented Movements for Animals**

In the face of social and environmental crises, the call for animal liberation is frequently questioned as unrealistic, sentimental, or insensitive to the crippling oppression of human beings all over the world. As stated above, animal advocates are often “rapped…on the knuckles for caring about ‘little things,’ like individuals and
beings with feelings” (Davis, 1995, p. 202). In response, the dominant discourse on animal rights within the movement is frequently dismissive of the roles of imagination, emotion, and compassion—instead relying heavily on theory to justify its existence. This perpetuates the patriarchal, colonial, and neoliberal project of enclosing compassion and creativity by claiming only certain ways of knowing (read: science) as legitimate. Socha (2012) explains, “Parameter-setting patriarchy has decided that sympathy, sentiment, sarcasm, complaint and anger are not suitable within the realm of sober critical debate, not in the debate of the philosopher, the woman or the artist” (p. 223).

Additionally, animal rights organizations such as PETA are exemplary of using racist, colonizing, classist, and sexist activist tactics. These tactics include a largely white, middle class movement using pornographic images of women to entice the male gaze of our female-objectifying culture to go vegan; vilifying indigenous and non-European cultures for their “barbaric” treatment of animals; blasting slaughterhouse and factory farm workers as the evil perpetrators of grotesque animal abuse without an examination of their working conditions; and targeting and shaming people who do not have access to or do not choose vegan foods, rather than focusing on the societal structures that perpetuate the slaughter and exploitation of animals (human and nonhuman). These tactics of animal rights activists have incited well-deserved criticism from many fighting for social and environmental justice, including the Peruvian, vegan, DIY activist blogger identifying as La Loba Loca,

pero for reals what up with the amnesia? Who the fuck are the people that create the most waste and use up the most resources in the world? Who da
fuck is related to the people that own Monsanto and all that horrible shit?

(2013)

**Introduction to the Solution**

_The truth of that beauty will be found only when you have completely dropped everything that is mechanical._

-Krishnamurti

Within sustainability movements, there is a need to drop mechanical justifications for not questioning the logic of human supremacy that necessitates the slaughter and exploitation of animals—a need to recognize that “the liberation of devalued groups of humans or of other animals is unlikely in a world that increasingly uses both as fodder for the continual growth and expansion of transnational corporations, particularly agribusiness” (Nibert, 2002, p. xiii). Most simply, there is a need to recognize what many of us feel intuitively—*business as usual isn’t working*. There are no “50 small things” that we can do to save the planet. There is a need to begin truly thinking differently about the way in which we relate to those who are vastly different from us—whether they be people, cows, or flowers. There is a need to ask and live the questions, “How does our industrial culture deaden and disconnect me from the nonhuman world? How have I experienced the voices and solicitations of [that] world? How might a re-enchanted relationship to the world manifest itself in a practical way?” (Curtis, 2012, p. 1) There is a need to not only “hear within us the sounds of the Earth crying” (Thich Nhat Hanh), but to hear one another, to hear even “the cluck of a chicken” (Davis, 1995, p. 203). There is a need to cultivate spaces within social and environmental groups to discuss animal liberation, and a need to cultivate spaces within animal liberation groups to discuss social
and environmental issues. The consequences of not thinking holistically about liberation
and sustainability are too great.

**Total Liberation and Artistic Resistance**

These crucial connections are being made by many activists who call for “a
politics of total liberation which grasps the need for, and the inseparability of, human,
nonhuman animal, and Earth liberation and freedom for all in one comprehensive, though
diverse, struggle” (Best, Nocella, Kahn, Gigliotti, & Kemmerer, 2007, p. 2). The
multiplicity of crises we face demand that we remember ourselves as “experiencers of
compassion” and cultivate a plurality of practices “to test everything we have ever
learned about interconnectedness and courage—to test it now when it could be the end of
conscious life on this beautiful water planet hanging like a jewel in space” (Macy, 2007,
p. 106, 184). A politics of Total Liberation is dependent upon rejecting hierarchies and
the systematic dismemberment of bodies and minds, humans and other animals.

These kinds of connections have also long been made by many artists in
resistance movements. A more artistic resistance insists that we liberate our imaginations
by embracing uncertainty as we imagine liberation, “creating the possible out of the
impossible” (Esteva, 1998, p. 205). Embracing a politics of uncertainty means
acknowledging that this process is messy, imperfect, and there are no blueprints. It
“allows for contingent connection and the hiddenness of unfolding”, an unfolding of
grassroots activism which can express itself in a multitude of ways, cultivating the
“conditions of a less predictable and more productive politics.” (Gibson-Graham, 2006,
p. xxxi).
By addressing the roots of the ideological crises facing the world today and embracing uncertainty, fluidity, peculiarity, and an activism of art and compassion; by denying artificial divisions, standardization, and instrumentalism; by joining hands with all that is fluid, peculiar, shape shifting, and mysterious in its resistance to enclosure, we can cultivate a more holistic activism.

**Sustainability and Animal Liberation Here?**

The same fragmentation of movements discussed above exists within many sustainability and social justice initiatives here in Flagstaff, at least within the circles of the Northern Arizona University to which I belong. Rooms of people studying and working for sustainability and social justice initiatives have filled with tension—and everything from tears, shrieks, disinterest, and stony silence—whenever animal oppression/liberation has been brought up. Talks of veganism and animal liberation within the NAU Action Research Team (ARTs) program have frequently met with scoffs; rolled eyes; gentle calls to do more research; or requests to change the topic to something more pressing, less complicated, and less offensive. Sound familiar?

The tension between sustainability and holistic visions and practices of justice persists in much of our local politics, frequently manifesting as a resistance to examination of social and environmental privileges of many kinds—whether they be whiteness, maleness, or humanness. Isn’t it strange, that some of us (including animal welfare/rights activists) can meet to discuss and decide the fate of other species and groups of people without a) ever having interacted with them or witnessed their suffering firsthand? or b) ever having contemplated the role we play in perpetuating that suffering, fueled by our own reluctance to feel uncomfortable and examine the complexity of our
blind spots? Isn’t it strange that there is so much local celebration of sustainable “beef” production—without welcoming critical questions about the slaughter of those animals, or the violent history of cattle ranches being used to colonize the southwest and displace native peoples? The destructive mechanics of neoliberalism that fracture society and movements on a macro scale persist within our local politics. Within the ARTs program, individual ARTs function in virtual isolation from one another. Many of us have become disenchanted, burnt out, and even bored with the work of social justice within this structure.

A Total Liberation Action Research Team

But, I have also found there to be a community of professors, ARTs facilitators, students, artists, activists, and community members who wish to practice solidarity between movements and care deeply about systemic animal oppression and its intersections with sustainability, social, and environmental justice. This group of people has inspired this project and the creation of a team within the ARTs to challenge the fragmentation of our politics and consciousness that make justice (especially for animals) a taboo topic within discussions of sustainability. In the creation of a Total Liberation Action Research Team, we have come together to explore the question: What can more holistic practices of activism look like?

This paper seeks to explore the plurality of answers to that question. My central research question is “What can we do as activists to creatively address nonhuman animal oppression and cultivate a vision and practice of Total Liberation within the NAU ARTs program?” In researching this question, I continue my theoretical exploration of the frameworks of Total Liberation/Critical Animal Studies and Creative Strategies for
Social Change/Radical Art as Activism, with the objectives of exploring creative activist practices of engaging imaginations and transcending the hierarchies of oppression and otherization that fragment our movements and mindbodies. These interconnected frameworks inform my participation in the development of the Total Liberation Action Research Team, which will in turn allow me to explore these questions through my own experience and observation of our group process.

The Core of My Argument

*To remake the world and found societies based on human understanding of parity, compassion, and justice, we have to forgo the pleasures we get from others’ pain. We have to get our hands dirty and pull out the roots of oppression. Anything else is just plucking from the stem.*

-Kim Socha

I argue that there is a need within the sustainability movement to recognize the legitimacy of and act in solidarity with calls for animal liberation. We need to recognize how speciesism, the “belief system that legitimates and inspires prejudice and discrimination” against nonhuman animals, perpetuates unjust and unsustainable power structures and serves the colonial project of commoditizing and destroying the earth (Nibert, 2002, p. 17). We need to recognize the roots and webs of oppression the bind our liberation movements to one another, to see that “Both capitalism and patriarchy are, by necessity, founded on violence. The woman’s domination is the forest’s domination, is the Third World’s domination, is the homosexual’s domination, is the chicken’s domination.” (Socha, 2013, 211) We need to recognize animals as sentient individuals who are already resisting the massive host of injustices industrial society enacts against them every second of every day. We need to remember and celebrate ways of thinking about and living in the world that are holistic and intersectional. We need to practice
fluid, compassionate, creative, spontaneous, and peculiar aktivisms that transcend single-issue politics and black and white thinking. We need visions and practices of justice that are avant-garde! That is, “we can begin to challenge the patriarchy, violence, and capitalism triumvirate by challenging the influence of unconstrained reason, a project of the Surrealists. Rather than supporting the human/animal binary,” we need to “begin to think holistically about how deeply those patriarchal roots are embedded in Western soil.” (Socha, 2012, p. 53) And, we need each other. Humanity is as deeply dependent on and entangled with the web of life as we have always been. Our wellbeing is still inextricable from that of the nonhuman world, and we are plagued by our repression of the pain that we perpetuate.

**Project Overview**

In Chapter 1, I introduce the ways in which both mainstream sustainability and animal rights movements within the U.S. perpetuate oppression and hierarchy, which I argue are ultimately unsustainable and unjust. I introduce the frameworks of total liberation and artistic resistance as offering paths to more holistic activisms. I then examine how the fragmentation of movements has manifested locally from my own perspective, and how this has formed and informed my central research question and the development of a Total Liberation Action Research Team. I conclude by outlining my argument that in our various struggles to cultivate truly just and sustainable communities, we must find creative ways to practice solidarity with movements for animal liberation.

In Chapter 2, I review some of the literature of the frameworks of Total Liberation/Critical Animal Studies and Creative Strategies for Social Change/Art as
Resistance. I investigate how together, these two frameworks can be used to engage imaginations and transcend the hierarchies of oppression and otherization that fragment our minds, bodies, and movements.

In Chapter 3, I detail the context and process of my research and data analysis, as well as my relationship to it. I explain why I chose critical, feminist action research methods and autoethnography, which I argue are re-membering methodologies. I attempt to locate myself within this research by telling some pieces of my life story. I introduce the history and objectives of the Total Liberation Action Research Team. In this chapter, I call attention to the both the possibilities and limitations of this research.

In Chapter 4, I discuss my findings and analysis, using the above methodologies to explore the plurality of answers to my central research question. Using the themes of Total Liberation, Creative Strategies for Social Change, and Collective Wisdom as guides, I discuss my findings and analysis through the use of narrative. In this chapter, I tell the story of the Total Liberation Action Research Team.

In Chapter 5, I summarize my arguments and research from the previous chapters. I then argue for the necessity of the Total Liberation ART community and its contributions to cultivating a more compassionate, holistic, and artistic practice of activism within the NAU ARTs program. I conclude my thesis with a call to action.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will offer a theoretical exploration of two literary frameworks with the objectives of investigating creative strategies to engage imaginations and transcending the hierarchies of oppression and otherization that fragment our minds, bodies, and movements. The first framework is Total Liberation and Critical Animal Studies; the second is Creative Strategies for Social Change or Artistic Resistance.

The framework of Total Liberation and Critical Animal Studies will help contextualize my central thesis question by exploring the questions: What is Critical Animal Studies (CAS)? What is total liberation? How are both inseparable from the cultivation of just communities?

The framework of Creative Strategies for Social Change will explore the questions: What is the role of imagination, art, and mindfulness in social transformation? How can we cultivate a consciousness which is both critical and creative? How can we nurture a culture/politics of compassion, creativity, and possibility by engaging with the complexity and uncertainty of social transformation?

Before diving into analysis, I include a poem that I wrote while exploring these frameworks. “Only the Knocker” is a poem that I wrote after reading Timothy Pachirat’s (2011) book Every Twelve Seconds, from which the title is borrowed. Told from the perspective of a cow in an industrial slaughterhouse, “Only the Knocker” is intended to represent both literally and metaphorically how the matrix of oppression perpetuated by capitalism and industrial society dismembers bodies, sight, compassion, and responsibility. Though it may, “Only the Knocker” is not intended to sensationalize, anthropomorphize, to speak for or speak on behalf of cows. This poem is rather my
meager attempt to bear witness to, listen to, re-member the resistance of, and resist in
solidarity with all the animals who have been killed or are being killed at this very
moment by the industrial machine fueled by our comparatively silent consent. It is my
attempts to wake up from the slumber of speciesist ideology, to use the medium of poetry
to “peculiarize the world”, at least in metaphor, in the words of anarchist poet Jesus
Sepúlveda (2005).

The peculiarization of the world… not only opens the mind and
disconnects the human brain from the machine of ideology, but it also
breaks the shop windows of all commercial chains, negates authority and
shouts with a clear and pristine voice, ENOUGH!

This piece is intended to be performed.
Only the Knocker

If you listen carefully enough to the hundreds of workers performing the 120 other jobs on the kill floor, this might be the refrain you hear: “Only the knocker.” It is simple moral math: the kill floor operates with 120+1 jobs. As long as the 1 exists, as long as there is some plausible narrative that concentrates the heaviest weight of the dirtiest work on this 1, then the other 120 kill floor workers can say, and believe it, “I’m not going to take part in this. I’m not going to stand and watch this.”

-Timothy Pachirat

All the hands that pull us from our mothers
All the hands that fuck us on “rape racks”
All the hands that pull our babies from us
All the hands that shove us
All the hands on steering wheels and electric waves
That push and
Crush
Us, all our bodies
Shit and piss covered and
So close we can barely recognize each other—
These are the only hands we know

And the pair of hands that squeeze the trigger on the hot steel gun
Are the hands they hope will kill us
As the metal walls that squeeze our shaking bodies still
Is the embrace they hope will fill us
With some sort of peace to die in
Yes, if we make it this far, the hands and gaze of the knocker
Are the hands and gaze “the lucky” die in
Not in the further down hands holding knives
Not in the even further down hands on the disassembly lines
Still, some of us will know them
And still we will resist
Until our bodies bleed out,
Every ounce of this “production”
Will shake because it lives.

We will not know the hands of the man
Counting money upstairs
He will not see
Our eyes roll around in our heads
Nor our blood on his hands
We are “numbers to be sorted”
We are “dollar signs to be made”
We will not know the hands that wrap
Our dismembered corpses in cellophane
We are lies in constant fabrication
We are everything your society forgets
We are “beef”
WE ARE FLESHE
We are “already dead”
BUT WE CAN STILL SMELL THE BLOOD SPEWING FROM OUR SISTERS’ HEADS

We are here to be lined up and fucked with electric prods
Because every 13 seconds wouldn’t be fast enough
According to someone
WE ARE HERE TO BE KILLED
But no one will say
Who?
Has made it this way.

But we want to know,
Who
does the dirty work
for who?

While you don’t address us,
We will address you.
Every pair of hands that forgets
Is a pair of hands we resist
And we will not go
Willingly through this machine
That sorts, kills, and rips.

Even after we are dead
It will take an army
to pull apart
Our bodies from our heads
And while you who might remember them
Debate our sentience
We are already bodies in resistance and
We do not consent.

You will not know
All these hands that shove us,
That push and
Crush
Us, all our bodies
Into commodities
You can swallow,
But you will know
The pair of hands that shove us,
That push and
Crush
Us, all our bodies
Past your lips into hollow
Mouths whispering delicious lies
And building cement walls to keep our suffering inside
Though it bleeds into your bodies
While your faceless hands scream for more
And your society denies
The slaughterhouse
kill floor.
Framework I: Total Liberation and Critical Animal Studies

Unfortunately, unlike car parts on an assembly line, these ‘products’ are living beings that move, often causing the shooter to miss his mark. They are dismembered while still alive and conscious. They resist... These beings resist at every point of their captivity and torture... We, too, should resist... We should resist in solidarity with souls who long for freedom they’ve never known.

–Tashee Meadows

It is imperative that we no longer speak of human liberation, animal liberation, or earth liberation as if they were independent struggles; rather we need to speak of total liberation... A truly revolutionary social theory and movement will not just emancipate members of one species, but rather all species and the earth itself.

–Steven Best

Arguments for animal liberation ask the question: Why human superiority? This question moves beyond the animal welfare and animal rights arguments which ask of the average American: What’s so special about me that I might justify the cruel and excruciating death and dismemberment of 21,000 sentient beings simply to satisfy my appetite—or even one such cruel death? (Foer, 2009, p. 121) Arguments for animal liberation move beyond exposing the horrors of industrial agriculture, and ask for us to confront our ultimate conception of Otherness and the means by which we might justify even what are called “humane” killings (Best, 2010). Arguments for animal liberation ask us to confront speciesism, and our own dismembering thought processes that are not unlike a slaughterhouse disassembly line.

Within and outside of the animal rights and welfare movements, the animal liberation movement is most known and criticized (and even considered ‘terrorist’) for its participation in direct action tactics, which include breaking into buildings, breaking open cages, and burning down slaughterhouses. The Animal Liberation Front (ALF), whose masked members engage in direct action tactics, do so under the guidelines of taking “all necessary precautions against harming any animal, human and nonhuman” in the
liberation of “animals from places of abuse… and [placement of] them in good homes where they may live out their natural lives, free from suffering” (quoted in Grubbs, Loadenthal, 2014, p. 185; for full list of guidelines, see Appendix C).

These are only some of the tactics of the animal liberation movement, but within a speciesist society that views those liberated animals as corporate property, these provocative tactics have become a focal point of tension. Stressing the importance of transcending fragmentation within liberation movements by embracing a plurality of critical theories and activist strategies for animal (human and nonhuman) and earth liberation, animal liberationist Steven Best (2010) has called for a politics of “Total Liberation”, describing it as:

the theoretical process of holistically understanding movements in relation to one another, to capitalism, and to other modes of oppression, and to the political process of synthetically forming alliances against common oppressors, across class, racial, gender, and national boundaries, as we link democracy to ecology and social justice to animal rights.

Originally the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs (CALA), the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) was formed in 2001 by Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella “to challenge the repression of animal and Earth liberationists and provide credibility to radical theories and actions from the Earth and animal liberation movements” (“History”, 2014). The ICAS website (2014) defines Critical Animal Studies (CAS) as “rooted in animal liberation”; “a radical, interdisciplinary field dedicated to establishing a holistic total liberation movement for humans, nonhuman animals, and the Earth” (see Appendix D for “The Ten Principles of Critical Animal Studies”).
In exploring the literature of Total Liberation and CAS, I will examine the relationship between these fields and the concepts of anthropocentrism, intersectionality, groundless solidarity, compassion, sentimentality, and transcending dualisms. Through this exploration, I argue that Total Liberation and CAS provide a framework for cultivating a more holistic, compassionate, intersectional, and pluralistic vision and practice of social and environmental justice.

**Anthropocentrism and the Human/Nature Split**

*The crisis that threatens our planet... derives from a dysfunctional and pathological notion of the self. It derives from a mistake about our place in the order of things. It is the delusion that the self is so separate and fragile that we must delineate and defend its boundaries... that as individuals, corporations, nation-states, or a species, we can be immune to what we do to other beings.*

- Joanna Macy

*Human being is not so much a value-neutral biological fact as a violent political fiction.*

- Adam Weitzenfeld and Melanie Joy

Within the literature of Critical Animal Studies (CAS), as well as ecofeminism and the works of various environmental activists, anthropocentrism and ideologies of human supremacy are frequently cited as the roots of environmental and social injustice. While others defend the ideology of “humans first” as natural, CAS theorists and activists Weitzenfeld and Joy (2014) argue that anthropocentrism, just as white-supremacy, is not natural or innate to the human condition, but rather a “historical outcome of a distorted humanism in which human freedom is founded upon the unfreedom of human and animal others” (p. 4). They argue that this otherization is rooted in the socially constructed, Western dualisms of human/nature and human/animal—what Franz de Waal calls the “willful blindness to the human-like characteristics of animals, or the animal-like characteristics of ourselves” (quoted in Weitzenfeld, Joy, 2014, p. 7). Carol J. Adams
(1990) argues that this construction of nature and other than human animals as Other has been used to justify and perpetuate “the Cycle of Objectification, Fragmentation, and Consumption”, through which all that does not fit in the category of “human” becomes food or fuel for the capitalist machine (p. 58).

This ideology of human domination persists within environmental and social justice movements, especially within more mainstream discourse. As Steven Best (2010) articulates, “The Left concern is with fisheries, not fish; with forests, not its nonhuman inhabitants; with “resources” for human use, not animals with intrinsic value.” People are the dominant focus within social justice movements, and “the environment” for human use is the dominant focus within environmental justice movements. That focus sometimes includes the continued existence of “key stone” species as a whole, but very often this comes at the cost of individuals who make up those species. Within sustainability movements, many argue for animal welfare but rarely animal liberation, which is frequently dismissed as naïve as well as racist towards indigenous peoples who consume nonhuman animals. While racism persists within animal rights movements and absolutely must be addressed, the destructive anthropocentrism of western culture that permeates its movements for sustainability must also be addressed. Most models for sustainable agriculture still systemically commoditize and slaughter animal bodies—however “humanely”—for human ends. Best (2010) continues, “Left ecological concerns stem… from a position of ‘enlightened anthropocentrism’ (a clear oxymoron) that understands the importance of a sustainable environment for the future of human existence.” CAS argues that the story of human specialness functions to fragment the wellbeing of human from nonhuman, making them appear to be a zero-sum game in which humans
“naturally” become the priority. Critically examining and deconstructing the human/animal dualism could provide justice movements with a deeper analysis and more holistic understanding of the intersections of oppression and liberation.

Currently, the story of human superiority is based on the premise that capacities for reason and language are uniquely human and that it is these qualities, above all others, that define what it means to be human. The concern for a group’s uniqueness and place in nature’s hierarchy has gripped humanity for centuries. Two features become apparent in exploring the history of this concern. One feature is that this concept of humanity “is not objective, fixed, and universal” but rather has been continuously adjusted and redefined, frequently for the benefit of specific groups of people at the expense of “human and animal others” (Weitzenfeld, Joy, 2014, p. 8, 4). As Stephen Clark asserts, “It is not that we have discovered [nonhuman animals] to lack a language but rather that we define and redefine, what language is by discovering what beasts do not have” (quoted in Weitzenfeld, Joy, 2014, p. 7). Joan Dunayer (1995) continues,

How would humans fare if expected to learn another species’ method of communication…? Even if other species did lack the capacity for some typically human type of language and reasoning, why should this capacity be the criterion for superiority? Because it is the one that we possess? (p. 21)

The other feature is that this process of defining and defending the boundaries of humanity has been an inherently violent one. Weitzenfeld and Joy (2014) refer to this “violent political fiction” as the “anthropological machine”, and describe four acts of violence that it performs:
First, [it] performs what Bell (2011) calls an ‘auto-vivisection,’ the violence in the creation of a human-animal binary that alienates humans not only from themselves—their bodies, passions, and experiences—but also from fellow creatures who co-inhabit their world (p. 166). Second, homogenizing all nonhuman sentient life under the term ‘animal’ is a representation of violence that negates the specificity and positive attributes of each being by defining them generically through something ‘human’ they all lack…Third, by abstracting the non-substitutable subjectivity of ‘human’ life from the anonymous facticity of bare life—a life reduced to mere biological persistence stripped of distinction and integrity—‘animal’ becomes an object to be ordered, ranked, aggregated, and molded to economic and political means. Fourth is the final material and political manifestation of the exclusionary and sacrificial logic of anthropocentric humanism: the institutionalization of the noncriminal management and destruction of animal life in the service of the state and economy risks extending into the management and sacrifice of the ‘animal life’ of humans (e.g. Nazi Germany’s eugenics and mass slaughter of humans) (Patterson, 2002). (p. 8)

Throughout history, the same dismembered logic used to justify the commodification of nonhuman beings—and subsequently the horrors of factory farming, the fur and cosmetic industries, vivisection, sport hunting, and all manners of systemic nonhuman oppression—has been expanded to justify the exploitation of any being perceived as Other, and has enabled a forgetfulness and distractibility within industrial
society that serves the ends of its suicidal, growth-obsessed behavior. As Patrice Jones’s (2011) argues, a primary way industrialized societies facilitate systemic animal abuse is through this forgetting of that which makes us uncomfortable. Jones states, “The ease with which we forget facilitates animal abuse and all other atrocities that tend to make us sputter and reach for the word ‘unspeakable’: child abuse, nukes, poverty in the midst of plenty” (p. 53). Jones is echoed by critical feminist, race theorist, political activist, and prison industrial complex abolitionist Angela Davis, who argues that this lack of critical thinking about human-animal relationships is a symptom of capitalism and colonialism:

The fact that we can sit down and eat a piece of chicken, without thinking about the horrendous conditions under which chickens are industrially bred in this country is a sign of the dangers of capitalism, how capitalism has colonized our minds. The fact that we look no further than the commodity itself, the fact that we refuse to understand the relationships that underlie the commodities that we use on a daily basis. Ask yourself, what is it like to sit down and eat that food that is generated only for the purposes of profit and creates so much suffering? (Harper, 2012)

Forgetting, never asking, or dismembering one’s consciousness, becomes easier in modern society than feeling the heavy pain perpetuated by neoliberal and neocolonial consumer lifestyles.

I use the word “dismemberment” not to sensationalize, but because I believe it is the most honest in terms of our consent to the treatment of the natural world and specifically nonhuman animals—it conveys the violence of that treatment, the “dangerous splitting” of the human conscience and repression of pain necessary for it to
continue, and the institutionalized cutting away of humanity from the more than human world (Macy, 2007, p.105). I first came across the term being used in this way in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, by Carol J. Adams. She states: “Butchering enacts a literal dismemberment upon animals while proclaiming our intellectual and emotional separation from animals’ desire to live.” (Adams, 1990, p. 51) Adams uses the slaughterhouse disassembly line as the current model for industrial society:

One of the basic things that must happen on the disassembly line of a slaughterhouse is that the animal must be treated as an inert object, not as a living, breathing, being. Similarly the worker on the assembly line becomes treated as an inert, unthinking object, whose creative, bodily, emotional needs are ignored… They must view the living animal as the meat that everyone outside the slaughterhouse accepts it as, while the animal is still alive. (1990, p. 80)

It is through this dismemberment that we are denied the experience of relating to other sentient beings, that we are denied that we might come to see “this landscape of shadowed voices—these breathing shapes” as “our family” (Abram, 1996, p. ix). We aren’t simply disconnected from nonhuman beings in that we are most likely to experience them as commodities or property (pets, food, clothing). By our language the lives and sentience of nonhuman animals are made absent from us, and this dismemberment of the truth justifies an oppression that bleeds into all of our relations.
Animals and Intersectionality

The historic and fictitious human-animal dualism that is thought to protect the sovereignty of humans is also ironically the very mechanism that legitimates their sacrifice... Just as whiteness was invented and deployed to divide and conquer the multiracial working class... so too may the 'cult of humanity' function to maintain the market and cultural imperialism of white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy through people’s complicity with and celebration of its technological, globalizing “progress.”... The definition of humanity has been a reflection of a particular group of elite men’s perceptions of themselves in opposition to those they ruled over and classified as their others: animals, women, foreigners, disabled people, and more.

-Adam Weitzenfeld and Melanie Joy

Against the claim that such comparisons trivialize the suffering of human groups, we argue that in order to redress oppression rooted in the culture-nature dichotomy we cannot simply attempt to ‘elevate’ certain human groups from the nature side of the dichotomy to the culture side. Instead, we must deconstruct the entire dichotomy.

-Fitzgerald and Pellow

Auschwitz begins wherever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks ‘they’re only animals.’

-Theodor Adorno

As argued in CAS, the thought process that justifies species superiority mirrors that which allows one human population to claim superiority over another, and these fabled hierarchies are then used as justification for the exploitation, manipulation, oppression, and dehumanization of those supposed inferior—people of color, indigenous peoples, women, children, foreigners, disabled persons, the queer, the poor, the elderly, “and more” (Weitzenfeld, Joy, 2014, p. 8). “What we consider to be the speciesist paradigm has never been the simple binary opposition between ‘humans’ and ‘animals,’ but the complex interaction of speciesism, racism, classism, nationalism, etc., which crystallizes a narrow yet historically changing group of masters who give themselves the name ‘human’” (Kappeler, 1995, p. 334). As Best (2010) states,

The exploitation of animals provided a model, metaphors, and technologies and practices for the dehumanization and enslavement of
blacks. From castration and chaining to branding and ear cropping, breaking up families, and auctioning, whites drew on a long history of subjugating animals, and were used liberally throughout the international slave trade of the 15-19th centuries… Dominating animals provided not only the technologies used for dominating other humans, but also the conceptual framework.

Within CAS, intersectional-multiracial feminism has served as a foundation “for developing a holistic analysis of intersecting human and nonhuman forms of oppression”, having “emphasized the importance of examining unmarked categories and the role of relationality, delineated how the meanings given to those categories are socially constructed, and challenged dichotomous thinking that reifies these intersecting forms of inequality” (Fitzgerald, Pellow, 2014, p. 31, 33). CAS scholars Grubbs and Loadenthal (2014) argue that this framework of intersectionality must and can continue to be expanded to include analysis of relationships between human and nonhuman animals.

![Diagram showing intersections of racism, speciesism, homophobia, sexism, ecocide](image)

Figure 1: "Sexism", n.d.

Many feminists, womanists, and ecofeminists have long made connections between the oppression of human animals, nonhuman animals, and the earth. In jones’
(2011) article in *Sister Species*, “Fighting Cocks”, she humanizes animal rights and makes connections between abuse of humans, women, and nonhuman animals by arguing that the decision to eat meat is “something you do to somebody else’s body without their consent” (p. 47). A. Breeze Harper (2011b) also discusses these connections in her critique of the logic that has historically enabled the vivisection (live, un-anesthetized dissection) of animals and women of color. She explains how in both cases, this “cutting up animals while they are alive” is carried out for the benefit of those in positions of privilege who can afford whatever new treatments have been developed through the torture of otherized bodies (Harper, 2011b). In her video titled “Intersections: Black female slave vivisection, non-human animal experimentation, and the foundation of Western gynecology”, Harper (2011b) states,

Marion Simms, who… is considered the ‘father’ of gynecology in the west… would actually experiment on these women [African American women slaves]… without their consent. When you’re a ‘slave’ you’re property and don’t have any say in what white people do to you. What Simms was trying to do was solve the problem of fistula among middle class white women… He was using black women’s bodies to solve this problem. He did this without anesthesia, and one of the women he did on, he did this more than thirty times. I mean, he cuts their vaginas, their wombs, without anesthesia, can you imagine that? … We all know that… the case of these black women is not singular. Experimenting on beings, human beings, nonhuman beings, has been a reoccurring problem… One of the reasons I integrate Black Feminist theory and activism with animal
liberation and veganism is that I believe the same mentality that makes it okay to conduct cruel experiments on the black women in Dr. Simms’s “care”… is the same mentality that continues to allow nonhuman animals to go through incredible hell, from factory farmed animals to animals used for testing cosmetics… to animals used for vivisection…

This mentality has historically manifested in the horrific mutilation of many otherized bodies for the benefit of individuals in positions of power, who often genuinely believe that the sacrifice of certain individuals will bring about progress of some kind. Harper (2011b) asks “And isn’t it funny that those people…who always talk about how, ‘well, this one being will have to be sacrificed for the greater cause of humanity,’… they’re always in the power of position where they will never be that being or that person?”

In examining this question, Nibert (2002) provides a thorough historical account of the intersectionality, what he calls “entanglements”, of the oppression of humans and other animals in Animal Rights/Human Rights, effectively showing how this oppression has primarily been perpetuated by and for the economic benefit of those in positions of power and privilege and how speciesism has laid the foundation for colonialism (p. xiii). Exploring the industries of entertainment, agriculture, fashion, and science, Nibert (2002) explains that the three basic ingredients of this oppression are “economic exploitation”, “unequal power, largely vested in control of the state”, [and] “ideological control” (p. 13). Through detailing this history of “entanglements”, Nibert and others in CAS show how the Human/Nature and Human/Animal split has been expanded into additional colonizing dualisms—such as Civilized/Savage, Civilized/Primitive, and First World/Third World—which have been used by those in positions of privilege to
rationalize the structural oppression, incorporation, and appropriation of all those
categorized as the latter, “motivated primarily by economic self-interest” (Nibert, 2002,
p. 237). A. Breeze Harper (2010) exposes the various injustices perpetuated by this
narrow self-interest of the “civilized” consumer:

Production of addictive ‘civilized’ substances such as refined sugar,
processed flesh foods, chocolate, and coffee take away and often pollute
land that could be used to grow whole foods that can feed the
malnourished and starving human beings of this planet. Even more
important, human beings and nonhuman animals and the ecosystem suffer
greatly because of our First World addiction to unmindful, human,
egocentric consumption… I wonder, has America confused our addictive
consumption habits with being ‘civilized’? The British who sipped their
sugary teas considered themselves civilized, despite the torture and slavery
it took to get that white sugar into their tea cups, along with the cotton and
tobacco they used. (p. 24, 28)

These “food” staples have colonized diets, minds, and bodies. As Claudia Serrato,
founder of the blog *Decolonial Food for Thought*, states, “Not only has our land been
colonized, but so have our bodies. How? Through the imposition of a heavily meat,
dairy, and processed food diet coupled with a capitalist, patriarchal food/agricultural
Diet” or “SAD”, and makes connections between this diet, colonization, and the
oppression of women, indigenous peoples, nonhuman animals, and the earth: “Just as
rape came with conquest, so did the idea that the brown female body we call the land and
everything that inhabits her dwellings like the (feminized) animals are for the taking.” Food is one of many intersectional justice issues affecting humans, nonhuman animals, and the earth that is being explored by indigenous and CAS activists, who argue that a politics and practice of Total Liberation must include

breaking down the structures that uphold the colonial system--including the colonial ideologies imposed on indigenous peoples. This total destruction must occur through revolutionary decolonization which has two central tenets that are closely connected: that of liberating consciousness through self-transformation, and revolutionary actions against the structures of colonialism. (Colling, Parson, Arrigoni, 2014, p. 58)

Ideologies of human supremacy exemplify the same “linking postulates” of the “Master Identity” described by ecofeminist Greta Gaard (2004, p. 24). Nonhumans are subject to “backgrounding”, when humans view themselves as independent from the larger than human world on which all life depends, as well as to “radical exclusion, in which the master magnifies the differences between self and other and minimizes the shared qualities,”—for example in the magnification of the human capacity for reason and the minimization of the nonhuman capacity to experience fear and pain (Gaard, 2004, p. 24). Under this dangerous ideology, nonhumans also experience “incorporation” in the perception that humans alone are chosen to have dominion over the earth, and in consequence all nonhumans are objectified through “instrumentalism, in which the other is constructed as having no ends of her own, and her sole purpose is to serve as a resource for the master” (Gaard, 2004, p. 24). Also common to oppressive ideologies is obvious
contradiction. The oppression of the other is justified by both their being closer to nature as well as their being “against nature” (Gaard, 2004, p. 26). Queer bodies are often condemned for being “against nature” but also “too wild” aka “animal”, while arguments for animal liberation are condemned as being “unnatural” and out of touch with the food chain—though “we’ve killed the part of it that would naturally eat us, and… there’s nothing natural about breeding for genetic modification, captivity, and systemic mutilation” (Meadows, 2010, p. 153). When recognizing the dangers of such supremacist ideologies, we can understand the reasoning behind Best’s (2011a) argument that we “cannot correct our course and inspire deep moral and institutional changes without a posthuman foundation that defines moral and social progress in ways that transcend anthropocentric and speciesist ideologies in favor of a radical broadening of ethics and community”. Understanding and building upon the framework of intersectional-multiracial feminism is fundamental to this task.

Groundless Solidarity

Since our struggles are interconnected, the liberation of one cannot be achieved without the liberation of the other. We would only continue to perpetuate a hierarchical ordering of beings if we fought to eradicate speciesism but not racism, sexism but not classism, heterosexism not speciesism, so on and so forth. We have one common goal: to liberate ourselves and others from the systemic injustices of modernity.

-Nicoal R. Sheen

There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

-Audre Lorde

The hierarchies described above permeate within and fragment social movements. As Best (2011) argues, “The hierarchical tradition always sought to marginalize, repress, and silence the voices of complementarity.” Just as discussions of speciesism become heated within environmental and social justice groups because the well-being of humans
and nonhumans is discussed as zero sum, discussions of racism, homophobia, transphobia, ablism, classism, and sexism within these groups also become heated. Oftentimes, “Each group identifies the oppression with which it feels most comfortable as being fundamental and classifies all others as being of lesser importance.” (Collins, 2000, p. 229) We see this occur over and over again.

Within the animal rights movement, classism and racism manifest as slaughterhouse workers get blamed by a largely white, middle class for the abuse and slaughter of animals, without an examination of their wages, working conditions, the oppressive structures affecting their lives and work, or what Timothy Pachirat (2011) calls “zones of privilege… and confinement” that dismember responsibility and enable the “construction of a killing ‘other’ even on the kill floor” (p. 241-242, 159). As long as the slaughterhouse is understood to be a specific location quarantined off from the rest of society, the rest of us are free to turn our backs, close our eyes, and continue consuming its products while concentrating blame on slaughterhouse workers. In reality, “the slaughterhouse is not a single place at all” (Pachirat, 2011, p. 236). Industrial society is both the fabrication department and the kill floor.

We also see racism manifest within corporate media coverage and American society’s “sensationalizing and reprimanding DMX and Michael Vick for animal torture and cruelty, while ignoring the ‘animal gaming’ pastimes of white privileged males” (Harper, 2011, p. 75). Within radical environmentalist groups such as Deep Green Resistance, we see transphobia manifest as the exclusion of trans-women from women’s circles and a formal stance that denies the legitimacy of trans-women’s experiences (Earth First! Journal Collective, 2013). These are just a few examples of how
hierarchical power functions to dismember responsibility, consciousness, and justice movements.

This oppressive cognitive dissonance is so prevalent it is even used within fast-food advertising campaigns, such as Chik-Fil-A’s “Eat Mor Chikin” advertisements, which portray a movement of cows (Chik-Fil-A) that want to make “burgerz extinct 4ever” by getting people to choose Chik-Fil-A instead of fast food joints that serve hamburgers (Eat Mor Chikin Cowz, 2014). There are so many issues with that advertisement that I don’t cover here, but suffice it to say for now that within CAS, scholars and activists argue that we should not have to choose the oppression (in this case, slaughter) we’d like to perpetuate when joining a liberation movement, like the Chik-Fil-A advertising campaign glaringly suggests. This competition and zero sum understanding of justice is just one of the ways that capitalism continues to colonize and co-opt our minds and justice movements. Hierarchies of oppression fragment groups who could be allies from one another and silence discussions which could deepen creative and critical consciousness in the midst of grave oppressions and environmental crises. Best argues that we must redefine our concepts of “Progress” to address these hierarchies of oppression and bring about a holistic paradigm shift:

Progress can no longer entail the zero sum game of human “gain” at the expense of animals and the environment. Rather, a deeper concept of progress eliminates the opposition between human and nonhuman animals, between society and nature; it understands the profound interrelatedness of all aspects of our planetary ecology and enables us to become good citizens of the biocommunity .. (2011)
Nibert (2002) also argues that racism, ableism, classism, sexism, and speciesism are not prejudices but ideologies which “legitimate [the] existing or desired social order” and must still be examined within liberation movements (p. 8). He argues that “social changes that will lead to the liberation of both humans and other animals will and must be inseparable” (Nibert, 2002, p. 236). If we only consider only our own individual interests in our examination of social and environmental justice issues, we are acting in a false reality, forgetting or ignoring that we are a part of a much larger web of relations, and that the consequences of our decisions do not affect us alone. If we suggest that by extending equal consideration to nonhuman beings, we risk having to reevaluate our dominating relationships with the rest of the natural world, including plants—amen. In the midst of the suffering inflicted by the institutionalized dismemberment of bodies and memories which threatens the entire earth community, it seems that questioning its oppression in all forms is a risk worth taking.

Putting intersectional, holistic, and pluralistic concepts of justice to practice, CAS and Total Liberation scholar-activists Sarat Colling, Sean Parson, and Alessandro Arrigoni (2014) describe “the practice of ‘groundless solidarity’” that “has become the backbone of anarchist organizing”:

Groundless solidarity is a realization that there is no grounding to a claim that one form of oppression is central and all others merely peripheral… Groundless solidarity claims that all resistance to domination is essential and necessary. Embracing this view would mean that environmentalists—would realize that animal, queer, Black, and worker liberation is required to adequately dismantle the political structures that keep us oppressed. In
essence, groundless solidarity provides a theoretical grounding for the belief that ‘no one is free while another is oppressed’ and imagines resistance to the state, capitalism, or even civilization not as a ‘movement’, which embraces hegemonic thinking, but as movements.” (p. 64)

Practicing groundless solidarity is a means of re-membering movements and transcending internalized hierarchies of oppression. The principles of groundless solidarity are echoed throughout CAS and Total Liberation literature. As Nicoal Sheen (2012) states: “Total liberation is not concerned with single issues politics, which only serves to stifle the progress of social justice. Total liberation does not dabble in ‘When our liberation is achieved, we will then fight for your liberation.’”(p. 1-2) This practice of groundless solidarity resists capitalism’s attempts to colonize/dismember bodies, minds, justice movements; embraces holistic understandings of how power functions in the world; and creates space for a colorful culture/politics of compassion that transcends industrial society’s sterile rationalization of systemic violence.

**Total Liberation and Sentimentality**

*Emotions, from grief to compassion to rage, are necessary tools for the holistic activist. Compassion and fury are often prompts to action, as opposed to theorizing, writing, and rationalizing oneself into oblivion.*

-Kim Socha

The glorification of “reason” and reductionist understandings of the world has been used to craft, sterilize, and ideologically justify the orderly mess of industrialized and institutionalized violence that dismembers, sorts, and processes the world today. “Reason” is constructed as the antithesis of “emotion”, other ways of knowing, and
animality. We see many examples of this, including the western mythological dualisms of man/woman, reason/emotion:

…from Aristotle on, women’s bodies have been seen to intrude upon their rationality. Since rationality has been construed by most Western theorists as the defining requirement for membership in the moral community, women—along with nonwhite men and animals—were long excluded. Until the 20th century this “animality” precluded women’s being granted the rights of public citizenship.” (Animals and Women, 1995, p. 1)

In many discussions about animal liberation, it seems that many narratives which discuss emotion are often dismissed as “sentimental” or lacking rational, logical, theoretical foundations—as if intelligence, emotion, and compassion are separate lenses through which to understand the world. However, there are animal liberationists building upon the work of feminists who have long argued that emotion is powerful and deeply connected to any and all fights for and practices of justice, as the activist-authors of Sister Species demonstrate. These authors make powerful connections between feminism, ethics of care, and animal advocacy; provide inspiring arguments for animal liberation; make apparent the sexism and sexualized violence in the dairy, egg, and meat industries; and detail the violence in the practices of vivisection, cockfighting, and the bushmeat trade. Sister Species is a book of stories by women refusing to separate emotion and reason in articulating oppression as well as their holistic visions of justice. Socha (2012) also argues that the solution is not for animal liberation activists to abandon theoretical arguments but instead “to allow other forms of knowledge to coexist with it”, acknowledging that “reason/emotion is another dualism in need of dissolving” (p. 225).
In cultivating a paradigm for animal liberation and a practice of holistic activism, challenging Western hierarchies and enclosures of intelligence by validating and reclaiming emotion is essential. This means we should be more than ready to get sentimental. As Socha (2012) brazenly articulates, “Animals don’t like to be tortured, and that is reason enough to not torture them. How do we really know? We know because we just know. *We don’t have to prove it through the language of patriarchy.*” (p. 233)

**Total Liberation: Re-membering Minds, Bodies, and Movements**

By exploring the many ways in which the matrix of sexism, racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and speciesism operates in our world, CAS and Total Liberation literature provides a foundation for a holistic and intersectional understanding of oppression. By denying single-issue politics and calling for a politics of radical decolonization and groundless solidarity, CAS and Total Liberation provide frameworks for practicing power *with*. In addition to deeper analysis of structures of domination, CAS and Total Liberation re-member a pluralistic, holistic, intersectional vision and practice of liberation that transcends movement-fragmenting hierarchies of oppression. By echoing long made feminist challenges to the patriarchal dualisms of emotion/reason, CAS and Total Liberation literature provides a framework for participating in liberation with our whole selves and consciousness, with our full creative energy.
Framework II: Creative Strategies for Social Change

Standardizing culture and civilization are a product of the expansion of instrumental reason, which is manifested psychologically as the projection of the ego over nature...This is the sickness that is transmitted in the pipeline of ideology. In this whirlwind, only art and poetry liberate and de-alienate. This liberating action is rooted in counterculture… Poetry and art prevent the standardization of peculiarity. Artistic language suggests, instead of describing comprehensively, the immediate presence of being. Art and poetry dismantle the reduction driven by intellectual control, allowing its practitioners to become a part of totality. This transformation is called authenticity or one’s own voice, that is, the genuine that exists in everyone.

-Jesus Sepúlveda

As artists... it is our obligation to enact our own internal revolution, a private insurrection inside our own skulls. In this uprising we free ourselves from the tyranny of consumer culture. We overthrow the programming of advertising, movies, video games, magazines, TV, and MTV by which we have been hypnotized from the cradle. We unplug ourselves from the grid by recognizing that we will never cure our restlessness by contributing our disposable income to the bottom line of Bullshit, Inc.

-Steven Pressfield

Creativity is about embracing and engaging with a culture/politics of uncertainty and possibility. According to Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992), “Creativity is the ability to respond to all that goes on around us, to choose from the hundreds of possibilities of thought, feeling, action, and reaction that arise within us, and to put these together in a unique response, expression, or message that carries moment, passion, and meaning” (p. 243). This is reflected in the phenomenon which Steven Pressfield calls “the War of Art” and what Gary Snyder calls the "life that courses under and through and around empires", a peculiar and shape shifting resistance to enclosure, to the dominance of “Progress” (or any one story), and to the dismemberment & dualistic compartmentalization of the world and our many selves (Pressfield, 2002; Hawken, 2007). “Our own internal revolution” to “overthrow [our] programming”, creativity is inseparable from resistance and activism (Pressfield, 2002). Practicing and cultivating “magical”, mindful, creative consciousness as acts of self-care and self-liberation; and queer, postmodern, post-capitalist, avant-
garde, and total liberation activism are all part of this phenomenon (Greenwood, 2005). My research specifically seeks to explore some of the current manifestations and creative practices of this countercultural “lineage [which] can be traced back to healers, priestesses, philosophers, monks, rabbis, and artists ‘who speak for the planet, for other species, for interdependence, a life that courses under and through and around empires’” in the untamed intersections of decolonizing, postmodern, post-capitalist, mindful, magical, spiritual, queer, feminist, radical liberation activism, and my own experience (Hawken, 2007). Here I focus on some of the literature that explores the creative strategies of peculiarity, mindfulness, intersubjectivity, dependent co-arising, uncertainty, possibility, lived art, love, and laughter.

**The Practicality of Imagination**

*Real solutions will come from breaking free of the crippling world of mechanistic assumptions.*

-Vandana Shiva

Ecofeminist and environmental activist Vandana Shiva (2008) says: “You cannot solve a problem using the mind-set that created it. Mechanistic thought creates monocultures of the mind.” (p. 121) Jesus Sepúlveda (2005) argues that industrial culture is steeped in mechanistic thought that standardizes the appropriate range of thought and emotion, and reduces art to decorative commodities. Clarissa Pinkola Estes argues that industrial culture frequently categorizes the true artist as quite mad and her visions as naïve. Within the literature stressing the importance of imagination and creativity as tools for social change, many hold the view that these imagined alternatives and critical questions are not naive, but are rooted in a grounded understanding of the worlds’ interconnectedness; and that they are not only helpful but necessary in cultivating a more
just world. If we can’t imagine alternative realities, how can we criticize our realities or even begin to create alternatives? Imagination is key. Einstein himself cited the power of fairy tales, and so do many of the artists within this framework claim the power of creativity as it represents the re-enchanted, peculiar, compassionate, and liberating consciousness. Park and Pellow (2011) state: “If some of these answers seem radical or farfetched today, then I say wait until tomorrow. Soon it will be abundantly clear that it is business as usual that is utopian, whereas creating something new and different is a practical necessity” (p. 210).

**Reclaiming Animality and Peculiarity**

*One of the most insidious attacks on the wild self is to be directed to perform properly, implying a reward will follow (if ever)... It is play, not properness, that is the central artery, the core, the rain stem of creative life. The impulse to play is an instinct. No play, no creative life.*  
-Clarissa Pinkola Estes

Playful and creative acts resist the dominant mechanistic paradigm that conditions us to be “proper” and perpetuate destruction. This paradigm isn’t easy to break out of. Steven Pressfield (2002) says, “Most of us have two lives. The life we live, and the unlived life within us.” Hitler himself, at one point, attempted to pursue the life of an artist. “At eighteen he took his inheritance… and moved to Vienna to live and study. He applied to the Academy of Fine Arts and later to the School of Architecture.” (Pressfield, 2002) But, alas, “It was easier for Hitler to start World War II than it was for him to face a blank square of canvas.” (Pressfield, 2002). Because the conditions exist that make it easier for some to commit or perpetuate heinous acts of genocide than it to live an artistic and free life, the process of creating art is revolutionary. Breaking free of the mechanistic
paradigm means bursting through the seams of the industrial, self-censoring straightjacket of domestication. Sepúlveda (2005) explains this as a process of “peculiarization”, “Uncivilizing oneself” and becoming savage (p. 100-101). Peculiarity reflects the understanding that “the ideological machine of standardization homogenizes with its titles of identity” and that there is nonetheless a “necessity of creating identity blocks in order to resist the cultural, economic, and military penetration of the civilizing order” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 48-49). Peculiarity challenges dominance and counters “Progress’s” culture of conformity; it says that there are many different ways to exist. Not being civilized means being outside of standardization. For example, to pronounce a word erroneously according to the dictionary, in opposition to common sense and the phonetic rhythm of the language, or to go against the given use of a particular linguistic community is to throw a rock at the tyrannical minute hand of uniformity… Uncivilizing oneself means breaking with mediocratic homogeneity. To liberate oneself is to grasp the uniqueness of each and every one, that which constitutes the innate peculiarity of the being. (p. 100-101)

The process of peculiarization and uncivilizing oneself provides a framework for reclaiming human animality and wildness and transcending the hierarchical dualisms of human/animal, civilized/savage, and imagination/reality. Becoming peculiar and uncivilized is not a matter of being a good subject or a bad subject to civilization, but of becoming a non-subject—“undoing ourselves from all that… not only negates human animality, but also denies its pleasure-giving and rebellious nature” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 97). It is freeing our psyches, thoughts, and emotions from the grips of civilization’s
dismembering paradigms. “‘Savagery’ is liberating oneself from the poverty of progress… ‘Savagery’ is, among other things, the only possible richness, because it brims with peace, abounds in time, and has life and spontaneity to spare.” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 102) Peculiarization challenges globalization’s ideology of standardization, objectification, and commodification, by treating all beings as whole and unique entities. This fosters a reenchantment to the world because “every aroma, every color, every form, every taste and every ripple create a landscape whose unique and unrepeatable drive opens the doors to appreciation of beauty” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 49). Peculiarization honors our direct experiences and perceptions over economic, scientific, and political experts, and those perpetuating capitalism’s systems of oppression and encourages radical activism. Peculiarity provides a framework “to create a better understanding of totality and the self… to steer consciousness toward aesthetic reason” and away from the instrumentalism of capitalism’s “Progress” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 108).

**Art, Consciousness, and Social Change**

In many ways, discussions of the importance of creativity and imagination within social movements are echoed and supported by Macy’s (2007) discussions of consciousness, mindfulness, intersubjectivity and dependent co-arising, which stress the importance of self-awareness and self-liberation. The framework of intersubjectivity offers a worldview and a language which address our crisis of “dysfunctional and pathological notion of the self” by placing ourselves on a continuum with the larger than human world with the understanding that “we are indeed many pairs of eyes peering at each other out of the same living body” (Macy, 2007, p. 152; House, 1999, p. 190). While some might ask, what’s so radical about these concepts? Intersubjectivity is this
perception of the world as ““an intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles” (Abram, 1996, p. 39). It is outside the western mechanistic paradigm and provides metaphors and stories that can empower us to move through our despair so that “our grief for what is lost may become a vision of what might be regained” (House, 1999, p. 213). This framework cultivates an understanding that if we do not take care of ourselves or practice presence as we try to improve the world, the harm we inflict upon ourselves will radiate into our work—our solutions will perpetuate dismemberment despite our deepest intentions to make something whole and beautiful. It also is a framework for understanding that our “private insurrections” can never be solely private, but must be intrinsically linked to action (Pressfield, 2002).

Dependent co-arising is seeing that “the institutions of our society co-arise with us… As collective forms of our ignorance, fears, and greed, they acquire their own momentum, enlist our massive obedience, and depend on our collective consent” (Macy, 2007, p. 43). This framework empowers us to make our visions of sustainability and justice our reality through both action and intention. The dominant, industrial, exploitative, oppressive systems which currently run the world depend on our inability to “suffer with” those we view as “other” and our capacity to tell stories which justify the commodification of those we deem to be of lesser importance than ourselves (Macy, 2007, p. 106). Transforming this system means transforming our mindscapes through actively remembering and telling the truth of our relations, exposing the lies of these dismembered stories. “By virtue of their dependence on our participation”, our institutions can be transformed by our refusal to accept the current reality as the best
possible, and our collective imagining and cultivating of just alternatives (Macy, 2007, p. 52). These frameworks of intersubjectivity and dependent co-arising provide ways of understanding the importance of a more artistic activism, and of the importance of cultivating creative consciousness that is outside mechanistic paradigms.

A Politics of Uncertainty and Possibility—No More Masters

“What was this all-knowingness about the world? Where did this disparaging sense of certainty come from, the view that anything new would not work?”

-J.K. Gibson-Graham

“Our movements are trying to create a politics that challenges all the certainties of traditional leftist politics, not by replacing them with new ones, but by dissolving any notion that we have answers, plans or strategies that are watertight or universal. . . . We are trying to build a politics . . . that acts in the moment, not to create something in the future but to build in the present, it’s the politics of the here and now.”

- John Jordan

We need to foster a ‘love of the world’… rather than masterful knowing, or melancholy or moralistic detachment… There could be a greater role in our thinking for invention and playfulness, enchantment and exuberance.

- J.K. Gibson Graham

The ideology of “Progress” is rooted in an understanding of the world that claims it is the only way and therefore alienates humanity from experiencing the fluidity that it is to be alive in the universe. Neoliberalism defines knowledge and theory in reductionist terms, in which “every creature is converted into a digit easily archived” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 36). “Progress” conditions us for a monocultural understanding of the world and our place in it, and functions to erase from humanity’s memory that there is a wisdom and intelligence to mystery and uncertainty, which it paints as naïve idealism. This ideological enclosure of the truth divides society and leads to violence because differences are denied the ability to coexist. “Progress” rationalizes domination and
inaction, conditioning us for unresponsiveness and impossibility. Its claim to absolute truth denies the peculiarity of each being, each culture, and each moment. Western Academia is plagued by this enclosure of intelligence as a kind of “mastering” – we go to graduate school to receive “Master’s” degrees and become “experts”. Total liberationist Adam Weitzenfeld (2011) calls for “a different moral vocabulary”, “empty of narcissism, purity, and self-certainty”, arguing that “the strong moral discourse of right/wrong, good/evil, superior/inferior, etc. seems to cut-off conversation and inquiry with colonized and marginalized others, turning ethics into a winner-take-all debate that creates vicious opposition rather than building solidarity across movements and interests.”

The politics of “not knowing” or “weak theory” discussed in A Postcapitalist Politics counters this divisive claim to truth with idea that “the goal of theory [is] not only to extend and deepen knowledge by confirming what we already know—that the world is full of cruelty, misery, and loss, a place of domination and systemic oppression” but “to help us see openings, to help us to find happiness, to provide a space of freedom and possibility” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 8, 7). The politics of “not knowing” brings us into the peculiarity of each moment and each space. Not knowing helps to expand the imaginative horizons of what we believe to be possible and to complicate our understandings of the world. Gibson-Graham (2006) explains: “Possibilities multiply along with uncertainties, and future possibilities become more viable by virtue of already being seen to exist, albeit only in the light of a differentiating imagination” (p. xxxii). The creativity of weak theory allows for the coexistence of diverse approaches and agendas, rather than looking for one unified solution to social and environmental injustices. This not knowing does not mean that “we simply cannot know” whether something is unjust
or not; but rather that the processes of responding to such injustice and cultivating liberation movements mean engaging in a politics of uncertainty. This politics of uncertainty also challenges the way that grassroots movements are evaluated for their effectiveness, as it posits that it is foolish to act as if one has a foolproof plan for achieving social and environmental justice. This challenges much of the backlash against social and environmental activists, for whom not having the solution is often viewed as proof of the impracticalities and impossibilities of their critiques and dreams. In the culture of “Progress”, not knowing appears dangerous and those who dare to dream of a better world are often effectively silenced or ignored if they do not claim to have a ready-made solution to be implemented. Embracing a politics of uncertainty “allows for contingent connection and the hiddenness of unfolding”, an unfolding of grassroots activism which can express itself in a multitude of ways, cultivating the “conditions of a less predictable and more productive politics.” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. xxxi). Not claiming to have all the answers allows for interpretive space, in which the peculiarity and creative energies of communities can be realized.

The practice of weak theory is also a tool of queer theory, which Daring (2012) explains as seeking to make “a given set of ideas strange, to destabilize dominant understandings and underlying assumptions” (p. 14). Here, not knowing takes the form of the question: “What might politics look like if we began looking at identities in ways that do not treat them as fixed, monolithic, and eternal?” (Daring, 2012, p. 13) The fluidity of politics through the lens of queer theory challenges the certainties and reductive assumptions of ideology. “Queer serve[s] as a space for critiquing identity and playing with theory, bodies, power, and desire that [doesn’t] need to be reducible to easy
definitions.” (Daring, 2012, p. 11) One of queer theory’s tools for cultivating a politics of uncertainty is called “reading for difference rather than dominance” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. xxxii). Queer theory makes space for a spectrum of interpretation and possible actions by questioning the certainty of what a given society perceives as “normal”. Queer counterculture stretches moral imaginations by positioning itself in the creative space that flows around established norms of oppression.

**Avant-Garde, Lived Art, and “the Spirit of Love and Laughter”**

“Be wild; that is how to clear the river. The river does not flow in polluted, we manage that. The river does not dry up, we block it. If we want to allow it its freedom, we have to allow our ideational lives to be let loose, to stream, letting anything come, initially censoring nothing. That is creative life. It is made up of divine paradox. To create one must be willing to be stone stupid, to sit upon a throne on top of a jackass and spill rubies from one’s mouth. Then the river will flow, then we can stand in the stream of it raining down.”

- Clarissa Pinkola Estes

*Life should be lived as if it is a work of art. And art should be experienced in life: not in salons, libraries, museums, or the mausoleum-homes of the ultra-rich.*

- Jesus Sepúlveda


- Aldous Huxley

In Oscar Wilde’s *The Critic as Artist*, he states “What is termed Sin is an essential element of progress.” For many artists and nonconformists throughout history, their art was considered sinful because they often dangerously challenged the oppressive ideologies of their time. Perhaps their imaginations and “aesthetic reason” enabled them to see the injustice that those in power sought to hide (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 108). Perhaps it is because they allowed themselves the freedom to create what they felt inside of themselves, “censoring nothing” (Estes). Oscar Wilde was persecuted for his erotic
writing and expression of his own queer peculiarity, and died destitute in the streets. Chilean folk singer Victor Jarra was shot in the head for singing in protest to Pinochet’s implementation of neoliberal economics and violent suppression of the people who disagreed with him.

To create art is to give color to our experiences and paint over ideological barriers that others impose on us. The “Sin” of this activism often results in persecution, and yet “without it the world would stagnate, or grow old, or become colourless” (Wilde). Estes and Sepúlveda argue that we should seek to live our art, and not see it as separate from life. For, “by maintaining art and life in dissimilar spheres”, neoliberalism’s “instrumental thinking divests life of certain basic values like solidarity, integrity, dignity, tenderness, etc.” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 51) To live artistically is to dare to imagine and embrace the uncertainty, the fluidity, and the peculiarity of the world, echoing the words of Clarisa Pinkola Estes (1992): “one must be willing to be stone stupid, to sit upon a throne on top of a jackass and spill rubies from one’s mouth” (p. 243). It is from this kind of “aesthetic reality” that “all the possibilities of the imagination would open” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 107-108). Creating art is however we break silence—it is how we remember our critical consciousness, compassion, and wildest dreams. “Without mincing words, without apology, embarrassment, or fear of causing distress, [we…] tell the truth about [our] experience of this world.” (Macy, 2002, p. 106)

Gibson-Graham (2006) discusses some of the creative, fluid tactics of the Reclaim the Streets (RTS) movement, which takes over public spaces in order to create a common space for celebration. Reclaim the Streets uses public space as its canvas, and spontaneity as its paint.
Rebecca Solnit observes that ‘humor, creativity, outrageousness, and exuberance were among the group’s hallmarks…RTS’s incendiary carnival spirit, global Internet communications, and tactics of temporary victory became part of the vocabulary of what came next, the global justice movement. RTS decomposed itself into the soil from which new flowers sprang.’” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. xx)

The art of spectacle is also discussed by Socha (2012) as a strategy of street theatre “to engage the public and give voice to subaltern counterpublics” and which “signifies public spaces taken over, however briefly, by private individuals via semi- to moderately-scripted performance that necessitates audience feedback and consideration” (p. 213-214). Socha (2012) refers to these interactive spectacles as “Happenings” and through them the binaries of public/private, actors/audience, activist/passersby, and art/everyday life are broken down and all become participants (p. 214). Socha discusses tactics of a street theatre/activist group called The Orange Alternative:

- The Orange Alternative’s version of fun involves Happenings, orchestrated performances, nonsensical graffiti, mock trials in public forums and, their most prominent symbol: little people dressed as dwarves. Therefore, in case of mass arrests, the police will become part of the absurdity as they are filmed putting handcuffs on orange-clad characters from folk tales. (2012, p. 214)

- It isn’t enough to tell the truth, to make reality visible. Echoing Oscar Wilde, “If you want to tell people the truth, make them laugh or else they’ll kill you.” In addition to making the truth visible “with the tools of love and laughter”, spectacle must also make
alternative possibilities visible, creating alarmingly imaginative spaces that are both destructive (of oppressive norms) and creative (of liberating possibilities) (Socha, 2012, p. 21). What Kim Socha calls “the destructive-creative spirit of ‘love and laughter’” of artistic activism represents a playfulness and wonder that opens up spaces and makes them more comfortable, more free, so that communities are able to tap into their most important resource: their imaginations (p. xi). Happenings, such as the one described above, speak about reality in a way that it deconstructs it and taps into emotion, imagination, and fantasy. Avant-garde says: When the norm is oppression, “it is time to go gaga” (Halberstam, 2012).

**Art as Emancipatory Dialogue**

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) states, “art is emancipatory” when “it fuses thought, feeling, and action and helps its participants see their world differently and act to change it” (p. 103). This emancipatory dialogue is the place where stories, psyches, and selves are remembered and connected through resistance to the compartmentalization of our experience. Through the use of collective art as dialogue, the action research team itself could become a queering dialogue of resistance to the structures and methodologies that silence and dismember emotion from thought, thought from action, art and healing from activism, and activism from theory and self-care. Art as dialogue manifests in the form of creating collective art projects; publicly sharing and distributing poetry and prose as resistance; co-creating street theatre tactics and demonstrations; holding public impromptu meditations; and simply encouraging creative and peculiar thinking.

Embracing these kinds of artistic activism strategies is empowering because “aesthetic reason” encourages a re-enchantment to our own individual and collective
creative energies—it shows us that we are powerful and capable of creating something beautiful, and that we don’t have to box ourselves or our imaginations into artificial categories into which nothing actually fits (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 107). “But still the vision exists, one encompassing ‘coming to believe in the possibility of a variety of experiences, a variety of ways of understanding the world, a variety of frameworks of operation, without imposing consciously or unconsciously a notion of the norm’ (Brown, 1989, 921).” (Collins, 2000, p. 237) When we take risks to make radically creative space, we experience freedom. This uncertain space is where we take our dreams to dance and become reenchanted to the world’s possibility, like Alice, daring to “believe as many as six impossible things before breakfast” (Lewis Carol). From this uncensored space, the seeds of hopes and ideas can be nurtured and creative, just, and sustainable alternatives can bloom.

**Conclusion**

Critical Animal Studies and Total Liberation scholars and activists provide a framework for generating critical questions about and transcending hierarchies of oppression and otherization through their critical, intersectional analysis of animal (both human and nonhuman) oppression and their holistic conceptions of liberation. Those advocating the artistic practices of peculiarity, mindfulness, intersubjectivity, dependent co-arising, uncertainty, possibility, lived art, love, and laughter provide frameworks for re-enchantment that transcend systemic dismemberment and make life into a free-falling work of art that defies “Western myths and rational traditions in the name of freedom” (Socha, 2012, p. 21). Art as emancipatory dialogue does not require the separation of
self-care from community building; nor self-expression from truth telling; nor life from art. Artistic Resistance does not speak of its own “efficiency”—because it exists outside of dominant, linear, compartmentalized conceptions of “Progress.” Instead, it speaks of unlimited possibilities. Together, the bodies of literature of Critical Animal Studies and Artistic Resistance provide frameworks for re-membering and imagining creative and compassionate alternatives to the “hierarchical, violent system of production, consumption, commerce and governance that inherently views” humans, other animals, and the earth “as variables to be manipulated for the benefit of a minority” (Park, Pellow, 2011, p. 15). Both Total Liberation and Artistic Resistance transcend single-issue politics and re-member those aspects of our lives and world that are being dismembered. Together, these bodies of literature re-member frameworks for cultivating a culture/politics of compassion and possibility.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions.
-Linda Tuhiwai Smith

In this chapter, I offer a detailed account of my research process, as well as a description of the context that has facilitated that process. I explain why I chose critical, feminist action research methods, coupled with the self-reflexive method of autoethnography. I dive into a theoretical overview of the critical, feminist epistemology that informs research that attempts to re-member relationships, consciousness, and a truth that includes the history of western research as an oppressive institution which dismembers and colonizes human and nonhuman mindbodies in the name of Progress. I discuss the role of critical, feminist methodology in “talking back to”, challenging, and transcending that institution of research which is both dismembering and colonizing (Smith, 2012, p. iv). I then describe the history, values, and objectives of the Total Liberation Action Research Team, the case study for my research exploring creative strategies for cultivating a vision and practice of holistic justice within the NAU ARTs Program. I attempt to re-member myself to my research by examining my own privileged position, relationship with my research and participants, and challenges in attempting to do anti-oppressive research. I discuss in what ways my life experience, bias, and standpoint have informed my choice to study Total Liberation, interactions between myself and Total Liberation ART participants, my observations, and my analysis of them. I also call attention to and detail the limitations of this research. Embracing these uncertainties and limitations, I provide details as to my process of data analysis, including the questions and theoretical frameworks which have helped guide it.
My Process

By using various aspects of the methodologies of Feminist, and Liberatory action research and auto-ethnography, drawing inspiration from elements of critical dialogue and militant ethnography, I participated in the development of the Total Liberation Action Research Team (ART) from fall 2013 to spring 2014. I wanted to gain hands on experience community organizing around issues of animal oppression and their intersections with social and environmental justice. Through my participation in the cultivation of the Total Liberation ART, I engaged in conversation and activism with other students and activists in the community. My methods for data collection included participant observation as well as photographing Total Liberation Action Research Team events and materials to document the strategies we developed for addressing animal oppression. I used my participant observation of the collective process of the ART to review and reflect on our meetings, events, actions, meeting notes, promotional materials, correspondence, proposals, and collective evaluations.

I rooted my research methods in the theoretical framework of critical, feminist methodology with the hope that “becoming a vigilant reader of emancipatory and critical social science… may be useful in doing anti-oppressive research.” (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 282). I believed, and still do, that challenging the Western institution of research and its perpetuation of hierarchies and enclosures of intelligence, is crucial to cultivating a holistic and just practice of research. Before I detail the specifics of my research, I turn now to a brief exploration of the epistemology of critical, feminist methodology that has informed my efforts to become an anti-oppressive researcher.
Re-membering Research: Critical & Feminist Methodology

While science-based vivisectors test and conduct hands-on research on nonhuman animals such as pigs, monkeys, rabbits, dogs, and cats, theoretical vivisectors detach themselves by using an apolitical objectivist methodology when discussing the concept and status of nonhuman animals. Critical Animal Studies is not only opposed to the physical exploitation, torture, and murder of nonhuman animals by scientists, but it also is strongly opposed to the theoretical analytical dissection of nonhuman animals, which is not concerned with their oppression.

- Anthony J. Nocella, John Sorenson, Kim Socha, and Atsuko Matsuoka

Feminist research is committed to challenging power and oppression and producing research that is useful and contributes to social justice. It provides space for the exploration of broader questions of social justices because of the ways in which feminist have sought to address multiple forms of structural inequality, such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, as well as gender. Research is political work and knowledge building is aimed at empowerment, action, and ultimately social transformation.

- Sharlene Hesse-Bieber

Anti-oppressive research methodologies blossom from alternative epistemologies that challenge and transcend the paradigms of domination, standardization, and fragmentation that the western institution of research is founded upon. As Brown & Stega (2005) argue in *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous and Anti-oppressive Approaches*, “anti-oppressive research is not… methodologically distinctive, but epistemologically distinctive” (p. 282). They argue that it is the examination of relationships—specifically “relationships of the knower, the known, and those who want to know”—that is the crucial piece of this distinction (Brown & Stega, 2005, p. 282). I believe that critical and feminist methodology re-members research in various ways. It re-members the history of the institution of research; it re-members other ways of knowing that have been dismissed by western institutions of research as valid and useful; it re-members research participants as individuals to be in dialogue with rather than objects to be studied coolly from a distance (or up close with a scalpels and teasing scissors in the case of research conducted on nonhuman individuals—and historically,
within speciesist and racist societies, on humans considered to be so/other “dehumanized” groups); it re-members the consciousness, corporeality, ethics, standpoint, relationships, and responsibility of the researcher to the research as well as society; and it re-members the potential interconnectedness of theory, research, and liberation.

Where dominant research methods dismember the researcher from those being researched as well as objectify and otherize those individuals, critical and feminist methodologies re-member the subjectivity of all those involved in research and have often “‘talked back to’ and ‘talked up to’ research as an institution of knowledge that is embedded in a global system of imperialism and power.” (Smith, 2012, p. iv). These methodologies examine the history of these institutions of research, and recognize that research is a social justice issue for both human and nonhuman animals. These methodologies expose the foundation of western science, which has been and continues to be built upon the torture of both human and nonhuman animal bodies, usually in the name of “Progress” and for the benefit of those in positions of privilege. Smith (2012) discusses how otherization and colonization have gone hand in hand with research:

Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized. It is regulated through the formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms, and the institutions that support them (including the state). It is realized in the myriad representations and ideological constructions of the Other in scholarly and ‘popular’ works, and in the principles which help to select and recontextualize those constructions in such things as the media,
official histories and school curricula... The different ways in which these encounters happen and are managed are different realizations of the underlying rules and codes which frame in the broadest sense what is possible and what is impossible. (p. 8)

Re-membering this history of research as an oppressive institution that is not and has never been purely evidence based or neutral, critical and feminist methodologies argue that “personal experiences and feelings as well as artistic and spiritual expressions are… useful ways of knowing”—and call for researchers to practice and recognize more wild, imaginative, and holistic methods of research that transcend sterile, removed, colonizing, paradigms of knowledge validation and redefine what is possible (Cancian, p. 190).

Along with recognizing alternative ways of knowing, critical and feminist methodologies call for researchers to “know” rather than “know about” and “research with” rather than “research on” by entering into a reciprocal dialogue with research participants (Whitely, 1998, p. 185). In Black Feminist Thought, Collins (2000) explains that “Dialogue is critical to the success of this epistemological approach… whereby power dynamics are fluid, everyone has a voice, but everyone must listen and respond to other voices in order to be allowed to remain in the community…” (p. 237). Dialogue allows for the decentering and interruption of dominant voices, re-members the researcher to those individuals they are entering into research with, and “generates practical, embodied understanding” (Juris, 2007, p. 166).

While western research functions by dismembering the researcher from their emotions, compassion, and experience (as well as ethics!) in order to claim its objectivity and validity, critical and feminist methodologies point to the dangers of this
compartmentalization of the researcher’s consciousness. Collins (2000) states: “Ideas cannot be divorced from the individuals who create and share them”—and neither can emotions without serious consequences (p. 215). Collins continues: “The ethic of caring suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process” (p. 215). Naples (2003) echoes this understanding of the importance of emotion in research: “Emotions are always present in personal interactions in ethnographic work. Here the feminist perspective is useful in reminding us that emotions can form an important basis for understanding and analysis.” (p. 63).

These methodologies stress the intersectional nature of oppressions and their construction through processes of knowledge creation and validation, calling for more critical and justice-oriented paradigms of research. Because critical and feminist methodologies re-member research as inherently political, they call for research “aimed at empowerment, action, and ultimately social transformation” that goes “‘beyond documenting what is to proposing an alternative and imaginative vision of what should be’ (Maguire, 1987, p. 104)” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p.150). Critical and feminist epistemologies argue for the importance of questioning and exposing the injustices and inconsistencies in our thought and research processes, recognizing that often “the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors’ tactics, the oppressors’ relationships” (Lorde, 1984, p. 123). It is this critical, imaginative, holistic, intersectional, and self-reflexive paradigm which inspired my choice of research methods.
Self-Reflexivity: Me in Relation to my Research

Whether practicing reflexivity takes the form of critical self-reflection and internal conversations within the self… or active dialogue and discussions between researcher and participant, identities are unhinged. Reflexive interrogation shakes up the boundaries between researcher and participant as a questioner of others. Roles are exchanged—researcher as participant and participant as researcher. And it is this fluidity, this crossing of boundaries and borders, that creates a potential common space for knowledge building.

-Sharelene Hesse-Bieber

My subjectivity as a twenty-four year old, white, middle class, able-bodied, cisgender, queer, small-town, American, female human being within academia and various oppressive structures presents its own opportunities and challenges while attempting to practice anti-oppressive research. It is with the desire to begin to address those challenges, as well as disclose and locate myself within my research that I share my story, as is often the custom in critical and feminist research.

My family is of Jewish and Eastern European decent, though I was not raised in any religious practice. My mother was living in Atlantic City, raising my sister, going to college part time, and working several jobs when she met my father. They got married, he adopted my sister, and they moved to a small suburban town called Absecon, where I was born and raised. My father worked as a lawyer and supported us financially and in our educational endeavors. He also played the piano and wrote comical musicals with his friends. I remember my father taking us on family vacations to Disney Land and Hilton Head, and I don’t remember ever having to worry about money. My mother worked as a homemaker, gardener, and artist, and she frequently discussed spirituality, yoga, meditation, and her dreams with me. She supported us emotionally and instilled in me a deep respect for spirituality and love of art, plants, and animals. I took dance, art, and karate lessons off and on, and did well in school thanks to my mother’s determination in
getting me to sit down long enough and helping me through my perfectionist tantrums. My sister was always spinning clever and magical stories, and caused me to believe in various fairytale phenomena. My parents separated when I was in middle school, and my family struggled with its history of mental illness, addiction, and subsequent dysfunction of which I was only then becoming aware.

Through it all, my mother remained passionate about the environment and animals. This meant that our house was always freezing or hot to save energy, and that she was always taking in injured and stray animals to nurse them back to health, and that when she cooked, she cooked mainly vegetarian meals. It meant that she shared my helpless fury whenever the town clear-cut another forest to make way for a strip mall, bank or parking lot. It also meant that my mother was always receiving mail from various nonprofits asking for donations, and I would sort through them to throw away those letters with photographs of tortured animals so that she wouldn’t be upset. I remember feeling frustrated by the cycle of sending money, receiving thank-you’s, and then receiving more letters with more haunting photographs asking for more money. I remember thinking that whatever difference our money was making, it never seemed to be enough.

I left home after I graduated from high school and went to University of Delaware, where I studied International Relations because of my budding interest in social and environmental justice. During my sophomore year, I lived in the University’s “Global Community”, with students from Palestine, South Korea, China, and Japan. I decided that I wanted to travel. I applied for and received a grant to work as a teacher’s assistant for a nongovernmental organization in Kolkata, India, where I was enchanted by
my new young friends and their communities, but increasingly wary of the effects of capitalism and unharnessed development. I began questioning an economics that left the well-being of the Earth, human beings (specifically non-white, non-American human beings), and nonhuman animals out of the equation. I started the long process of becoming painfully aware of my own privilege at the expense of others. I graduated from University of Delaware and spent a year back at home, reconnecting with my family, working as a receptionist and file clerk at my father’s law office, volunteering at a local CSA, painting, and reading anything about social and environmental justice that I could get my hands on before finding the Masters in Sustainable Communities program at NAU, packing my bags, and moving west.

I came into the Sustainable Communities program looking for hands on experience community organizing for a more environmentally and socially just world, but having little idea what that would entail. The more I learned, the more I became disenchanted by the dominant “one size fits all” models of organizing and disturbed by the racism, sexism, and speciesism that permeated the sustainability movement and consciousness of those eager to build a better world, but who rarely asked for whom? The more I learned, the more I became intrigued by the tensions that arose from asking that question. I was especially interested in the tensions between arguments for sustainability and the question of animal oppression. All of my various life experiences—from my sister’s fairytales, to my father’s focus on education, to my mother’s art and compassion for animals, to recognizing my family’s struggles and privileges as structural—contributed to my interest in studying and practicing a holistic, intersectional, and creative activism for animal liberation. Whenever the topic of the commodification, use,
and slaughter of individual animals for human benefit came up, however, discussion became heated. Many would argue that animal liberation was neither a sustainable nor ethical movement, and that we needed to consider the wellbeing of humans first and foremost. One argument that stuck with me was that the dominant discourse and activism in animal rights and animal liberation movements was frequently colonizing, racist, classist, and sexist. Rather than push me away from the animal question, these arguments pushed me towards more of them. I was full of them.

And I wasn’t alone!

**The Total Liberation Action Research Team**

Okay, so at first there were only 2 of us. But we came together with our questions and we wrote an independent study for ourselves about Animals and Social Justice. Through that study, we began working to create an Action Research Team to help us explore our questions outside of our books. And then there were three of us. Immersed in a social and environmental justice program but without opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions or activism addressing animal oppression, Sustainable Communities graduate students Kelly Slutz, Misty Emerick, and I came together having found ourselves asking the questions: *What can we do as activists to creatively address animal oppression and cultivate a practice of Total Liberation that includes the wellbeing of humans, animals, and the earth? What are the connections between nonhuman and human oppression? What can be done to help create alliances between animal liberation activists and other social justice activists? How is animal liberation inseparable from the cultivation of sustainable and just communities?*
We chose the name “Total Liberation” for our Action Research Team because we felt it reflected our shared belief that all oppression is connected and our collective vision for a creative activism that is intersectional, pluralistic, holistic, compassionate, and inclusive of all living beings. Together, we became a collective study of the process of becoming and doing action research specifically highlighting and seeking to address nonhuman animal oppression. The initial objectives of our ART, which we expected to shape-shift and grow with the visions of new participants, included cultivating spaces within the university and community for:

- Discussing of total liberation and the entanglements of human and non-human oppression;
- Exploring, developing, and participating in decolonizing, anti-racist, queer, and feminist grassroots activism strategies for total liberation; and
- Creating alliances and collaborating with other student and community organizations in cultivating a vision and practice of sustainable holistic justice.

The information that I collected as part of this team was accessible to the public and could be observed by anyone wishing to attend a Total Liberation ART meeting, action, or event. Nonetheless, so that everyone was aware that I was doing this research, I formally informed all members of the ART from the start about my research and obtained their written consent by explaining as well as giving them a letter (Appendix A) detailing my research question and methods, and addressing any questions or concerns they had about this research project.
The NAU ARTs Program as Context

In many ways, the existence of the NAU ARTs program facilitated the development of my research question and my ability to explore it. Developing and participating in the Total Liberation Action Research Team was the applied part of my thesis as well as my case study on cultivating an activist practice to creatively and mindfully address animal oppression. Originally my thesis question had been: “What are activists doing to participate in a politics or practice of total liberation?” But the presence of the NAU Action Research Team program created space for an exciting shift to include myself and my peers in that question, so that it became: “What can we do as activists to creatively engage in a practice of Total Liberation within the NAU ARTs program?” Because the NAU ARTs program is therefore the context for my research project, I will attempt to quickly explain its objectives and structure here.

The NAU ARTs program is made up of over 10 action research teams of “first year seminar students, returning undergraduates, masters students in the sustainable communities program, and community partners”, each with its own focus—from community gardening to immigration reform (“Campus and Community”, 2013). The program as a whole has the objective of cultivating sustainable and just communities, through the creation of opportunities for students and community members to come together in learning communities and hands-on grassroots experience around whatever social and environmental issues they are curious and passionate about. Developing this action research team within this context had many benefits, such as access to student resources like funds, faculty support, opportunities for student outreach and collaboration
with other ARTs, and potential sustainability even after the founders of the Total Liberation ART leave the university.

**Feminist Participatory Action Research**

For my first research method, I chose to use various aspects of Feminist and Liberatory action research, drawing inspiration from elements of critical dialogue and militant ethnography. Through this fusion of participatory action research methodologies, I was able to explore my central research question through hands-on, direct participation in the Total Liberation ART. As militant ethnographer Juris (2007) explains: “This means helping to organize actions and workshops, facilitating meetings, weighing in during strategic and tactical debates, staking out political positions, and putting ones' body on the line during direct actions…” (p. 165).

There were many benefits to choosing action research as a method. Most noticeably, my research was within the context of a university Action Research Team program so the structural support for this method of research already existed. I was also interested in social justice and total liberation activism and action research methods “include political action, especially actions that cultivate ‘critical consciousness’ and are oriented toward structural change, not toward adjusting people to oppressive environments” (Cancian, 1996, p. 190). Additionally, I wanted to enter into and help bring together a community of student and activist researchers that I could research and do actions with rather than on. As feminist researcher Reinharz (1992) explains, “In feminist participatory research,[the hope is that] the distinction between the researcher(s) and those on whom the research is done disappears” as “the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risk” (p.
Feminist and critical participatory action research seeks to break down dualisms of academic/activist, as researchers must reflect upon their own direct activist participation. Juris (2007) states: “One has to… become entangled with complex relations of power, and live the emotions associated with direct action organizing and activist networking.”

Lastly, I chose this method because I wanted to help bring together a community that could continue working together to creatively address animal oppression even if its founders were to move on.

Using participatory action research, I recorded and reflected upon my perception of the group experience and the overall process in developing and practicing a politics of total liberation. In addition to compiling and reviewing meeting notes, promotional materials, correspondence, proposals, and collective evaluations, I took field notes of my observations as well as my interpretations of them during and after all meetings, actions, and events using the following questions and concepts as guides. I reflected upon the following questions individually as well as collectively with the Total Liberation ART:

From what standpoints are we exploring animal oppression? How can we creatively address animal oppression? How is oppression being discussed, addressed, resisted, transcended, and perpetuated? Who will benefit from what actions we take? What is working? What is not working? What is challenging and how can we better engage with these challenges?

I also used the frameworks of Total Liberation and creative strategies for social change to inform my reflections on the group’s process, asking: How does the framework of Total Liberation demonstrate itself or arise within the group? What does a practice of Total Liberation look like? How does it differ from theory? What are its limits? How
does the framework of creative strategies for social change demonstrate itself or arise within the group? What do creative strategies for total liberation look like in practice? What are the roles of imagination, art, and mindfulness in this process? What are their limits?

Because I used the method of participatory action research, I also evaluated the participation in the group by reflecting upon the questions: How are the ART’s roles and responsibilities being shared? Who initiates meetings and events? Who comes to the meetings and events? Who facilitates them? Whose voices are being heard? Whose aren’t? How else are community members participating?

Autoethnography

Subjectivity doesn’t infect your work, it enhances it. Making links between your own experience and your work is healthy... Official stories can be at odds with individual stories, whereas core beliefs or experiences can permeate every aspect of our lives.

At their best, myths and stories can teach us compassion and make us live more fully. But just as myths and stories are lost in the wider world of research, the world of research contains many missing stories.

-Tessa Muncey

I incorporated elements of autoethnography into this process of note-taking and reflection because I wanted to know and tell the missing stories of this research project. I felt that there was still a degree of dismemberment without room for self-reflection, for an observation of the act of participant observation itself, how it affected me as an individual and my politics, and how my individual experience and standpoint radiated into and was transformed by my research.

Autoethnography—the methodology of self-reflective writing “characterized by artistically constructed pieces of ‘text’ that evoke the imagination and increase the

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reader’s understanding”—re-members the subjective consciousness, imagination, and body of the researcher as situated in the research. As Muncey (2010) states, “The text and the body that generates it cannot be separated… This makes it a corporeal experience that rejects the notion that ‘lived experience can only be represented indirectly through quotations from field notes, observations or interviews’ (Denzin, 1992a, p. 20)” (p. 28).

Questions that guided this process included the ones listed above under Feminist Participatory Action Research, as well as ones which focused more on my own experience as a researcher. These questions included: How am I relating to my research and participants in the Total Liberation ART? What is my experience as a researcher? How do my physical, emotional, and psychological states and moods affect my research, and vice versa? How are my questions, ideas, and beliefs changing? How is my life affected by this research? What excites me most about this research? What do I feel is most challenging for me in this project? Why? What inspires me to continue?

I was able to explore the above questions while incorporating creative writing and poetry, which researcher Tessa Muncey (2010) argues can “trouble both the conscious and the unconscious into looking at new ways of reflecting on experience.” (p. 82). Along with my field notes, I wrote poetry and prose reflecting on my experience in dialogue with the Total Liberation Action Research Team, the actions we took, and our overall group process. I used the method of creative auto-ethnography to help tell the story of my experience within the Total Liberation ART and reflect upon what it might mean for the larger sustainability and liberation movements. In practice, my use of autoethnography and participatory action research as methods often happened
simultaneously. This allowed for my continued exploration of imagination, art, and mindfulness even within the writing, reading, and sharing processes of research.

**Methodological Limitations**

*No one group possesses the theory or methodology that allows it to discover the absolute ‘truth’ or, worse yet, proclaim its theories and methodologies as the universal norm evaluating other groups’ experiences.*

- Patricia Hill Collins

Even in combining these methodologies of participatory action research and autethnography, I recognize the imperfectability and uncertainty of this research. In the work to practice re-membering and anti-oppressive forms research, power dynamics, prejudices, and privilege are nonetheless present in some form. One of the limitations of this research is the lack of diversity within the case study population of the Total Liberation ART. As far as demographics, the majority of those who became involved in the ART were NAU students in the Sustainable Communities graduate program, between the ages of 23-35, who self-identified as female and Caucasian—though I do not wish to diminish the involvement of undergraduates, community members, and others who did not belong to these identities. I believe that the overall homogeneity of the Total Liberation action research team reflects larger structural inequalities in American society, as well as the general homogeneity of the NAU campus, and even more specifically, the SUS program. There also may be some aspects of the Total Liberation approach that encourage certain racial and gender orientation and exclude others. I believe that this lack of diversity presents an important question to explore in analysis of the Total Liberation ART’s approach as well as our recruitment practices. A research project over a larger
sample on the demographics of activists, students, and communities organizing for Total Liberation would be extremely valuable to the field of Critical Animal Studies.

I also recognize that the context of the NAU ART program, while on the one hand facilitating the development of the Total Liberation ART, may also bring up some important questions about the possibilities and limitations of university funded activism. For instance, in what ways does the presence of the ARTs program both facilitate and present unique challenges to student led activism? To what lengths will the university support student led social and environmental justice activism? Will actions taken to bring awareness to and possibly shift university policies regarding the use of animals prevent the ART from getting institutional funding, support, or recognition? What (and whose) discourse will be used to secure funding and support for the development of the Total Liberation Action Research Team? How will it differ from the discourse used by students and faculty directly participating in the ART? In the words of an activist who posted on the Total Liberation ART Facebook page, “Does the university help or hinder liberation?” Though these are not my central research questions, they represent the context that has facilitated and transformed those which are. I believe that further investigation on the possibilities and limitations of university sponsored (and monitored), student led activism across a larger sample would yield intriguing and important results. I encourage other researchers to explore these questions, and regret that I was unable to give them equal attention as my central research questions.

Additionally, there is the issue of time. Ideally, I would have at least a year of observations before beginning the writing process. However, I only had one semester. I
believe that conducting a similar study over a larger period of time would yield more insight into the possibilities and challenges of the Total Liberation ART.

Lastly, I recognize that the knowledge created through this research reflects a politics of here and now specific to this time, space, and community. As Babbie (2004) states, “field research is generally not appropriate for arriving at statistical descriptions of large populations.” (p. 309). A research project that focused on activist groups organizing for total liberation over a larger sample would yield more conclusive results and give more insight for the larger social movement.

Embracing these imperfections and uncertainties, it is my hope that this research has helped co-develop dynamics which echo the intentions of J.K. Gibson Graham (2006): “Far from attempting to achieve a pristine interaction untainted by power, our project needed to mobilize and direct power, and to make sure that it was used to foster rather than kill what we hoped to elicit-passionate participation in the project.” (p. 134). My standpoint both limited and created openings for the exploratory process of the Total Liberation Action Research Team. My own access to some of the resources of the university, for instance, was able to be extended to non-student members of the ART. Other benefits to members included gaining hands on experience in community organizing around animal, environmental, and social justice issues; cultivating community spaces for the discussion of animal rights; and cultivating understanding around the ethics and sustainability of animal exploitation and slaughter. In addition, through this research, I am developing and distributing an organizing handbook as a tool for current and future members of the Action Research Team & First Year Seminar.
students, as well as starting a course for a First Year Seminar on Animal Rights and Holistic Justice.

Everything that contributed to my interest in studying and practicing a holistic, intersectional, and creative activism for animal liberation created openings for others to do the same—just as their interests created openings for me. These openings, I believe, are crucial to cultivating a more holistic practice of justice. It is my hope that this project will inspire other activist communities seeking to address animal oppression holistically by offering insight into a “politics of possibility”, allowing “future possibilities [to] become more viable by virtue of already being seen to exist, albeit only in the light of a differentiating imagination” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. xxxii).

Analysis

Using the questions listed under Feminist Participatory Action Research in combination with those listed under auto-ethnography, I recorded and reflected upon my experience after all meetings, actions, and events as well as the overall process in developing and practicing. I then analyzed the results of this research by systematically reviewing my notes and reflections using those questions as a framework.

Also guiding my analysis of our group process was the discussion of collective wisdom in The Power of Collective Wisdom and The Trap of Collective Folly:

Collective wisdom emerges over time in relationship to immediate needs and larger visions. It is a way of working with others that integrates what is practical, tangible, and resilient with the twists and turns that constitute the road of life. Collective wisdom invariably involves possibilities, opportunities barely glimpsed and some yet to be imagined. Neither solely about a moment of profound insight
nor isolated to one person or group, collective wisdom is a deepening of collective understanding; it is the way we can come together to address our social world and the need for its repair. (Briskin, 2009, p. 169-170).

This text helped me form the additional questions for my analysis: What was the underlying value system of the Total Liberation ART and how did it manifest in our group process? How did members work to create a safe space and trust with one another? What opportunities for collective reflection were there? What practices of mindfulness, if any, did the group use? In what ways did we practice or neglect to practice those elements which cultivate collective wisdom—“deep listening”, “regard for emergence” and creativity, honoring “different perspectives as fundamental to the whole”, and creating bonds with one another? (Brisken, 2009, p. 170) How did the ART experience and confront potential collective follies, such as polarization, “proving what we know”, or creating an “illusion of agreement and unity”? (Brisken, 2009, p. 113, 135)

Through this systematic analysis, I gained a deeper understanding of the practice and vision of the Total Liberation Action Research Team and its role in cultivating spaces within the university for discussing the entanglements of human and animal oppression; exploring, developing, and participating in decolonizing, anti-racist, queer, and feminist grassroots activism strategies for total liberation; and collaborating with other student and community organizations in cultivating a vision and practice of sustainable holistic justice & community organizing.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The narrative method requires that the story be told, not torn apart in analysis, and trusted as core belief, not ‘admired as science’.
-Mitchell and Lewter

...in the darkness we invent our own stories.
- Alberto Manguel

In this chapter, I discuss my findings and analysis, using the methods of Feminist Participatory Action Research and Autoethnography to explore the plurality of answers to my central research question, “Within the NAU ARTs Program, how can we creatively address nonhuman animal oppression and cultivate a vision and practice of Total Liberation?” Using the themes of Total Liberation, Creative Strategies for Social Change, and Collective Wisdom as guides for my analysis, I recognize that these themes, as well as the group process and projects, manifested together within our group in various ways that were very difficult to pull apart from one another. I anticipate that even their attempted separation in analysis would inevitably become blurred. In the hopes of honoring and most accurately portraying that interconnected process of these themes co-arising within our group process of cultivating a vision and practice of Total Liberation, I discuss my findings and analysis through the use of narrative. Interweaving my own reflections, poems, artwork, and journal entries as well as reflections and artwork of the group, I attempt to tell the story, or several stories, of the Total Liberation Action Research Team’s (also referred to as TL) process of becoming and doing action research that seeks to creatively address the oppression of nonhuman animals. This story is not told in a strictly linear or chronological order, but rather told as my memory recalled them. As I poured over notes and reflected on my experience with the Total Liberation,
the following series of blended stories emerged in their own more spontaneous and cyclical order, not unlike diving into the pensieve of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series. I explore and analyze various themes in the group process as well as our current and past actions and projects. I aim to present these creative strategies as unfolding processes, mini-chapters, and glimpses into the larger Total Liberation ART story, rather than as finished products.

**Cultivating a Vision and Practice of Total Liberation**

*Mia and I are sitting on a rock in the SSLUG garden, eating lunch during a break in our Permaculture workshop. It’s sunny and warm and she’s talking to me about being vegan and her job working with people who think that’s crazy. We wonder together what it will be like in the graduate program we will both be starting in a few weeks. What will the other students and professors be like? What kind of work will we be doing? Will people be interested in animal oppression, in looking at the intersections of sustainability and justice that includes animals? The sun sprinkles onto the ground through the leaves.

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We’re sitting in a classroom with no windows, at four long tables arranged in a large rectangle. Mia and I are excited to be leading a conversation about animal oppression. This is the first opportunity we’ve ever had to do so within academia. Filled with adrenaline, I feel alert, present, and prepared. We are discussing Steven Best’s articles about Total Liberation. We keep our questions simple and our voices calm and deliberate. After a few moments of fairly agreeable discussion, a student to my right bursts out, “But this is ridiculous. We can’t talk about animal rights. The world has way
bigger problems. Humans are still fighting each other, starving. People can’t care about these things when they are struggling to survive. This is a privileged issue.” Her aggravation cuts through the space like a knife. Another student jumps in, “What about plants? Are we going to start talking about plant liberation next?”

I’m talking with a professor about the Total Liberation movement, about my interest in groups organizing to address both human and animal oppression. His eyes glaze over within a matter of seconds. I trip over my words, losing confidence. The next time I see him, I don’t say what I want to say when he asks what my thesis ideas are. I tell him I don’t know, that I get a new idea every week. He chuckles with encouragement.

At home, I’m sitting at my desk, stuck, I think about changing my thesis, to focusing on art as activism in the Flagstaff Community. I talk with my roommate over a rather large, sloshing, glass of red wine; decide that’s what I’ll do. I get in bed and roll over to go to sleep.

I sit up in bed, having awoken suddenly from a vivid and grotesque dream. In the dream, I am struggling to swallow an entire, live chicken. And once I finally get it down, I bend over, unable to stand. Uncontrollably, I begin projectile vomiting blood, all over myself, all over my bed, all over my desk—over and over, covering everything in sight. The dream goes on and on, and I am sickened by it. Awake, I think to myself—well, scratch that.

I’m doing my thesis on animal liberation.
At first there were only two of us. We were surrounded by the opinion that animal liberation was not as important as social and environmental justice issues that affected human beings. We didn’t know what we would become together, we only knew that we were passionate about animal liberation and needed to create a space in which we could learn more about and engage in that work. Through an independent study, we began working to create an Action Research Team to help us explore our questions outside of our books.

And then were three of us. We came together having found ourselves asking the questions: What can we do as activists to creatively address animal oppression and cultivate a practice of Total Liberation that includes the wellbeing of humans, animals, and the earth? What are the connections between nonhuman and human oppression? What can be done to help create alliances between animal liberation activists and other social justice activists? How is animal liberation inseparable from the cultivation of sustainable and just communities?

We sat around a table downtown, scribbling down phrases and sharing our purposes for being there. One of the first things that we did in the Total Liberation ART was to choose a name and construct our mission statement around the framework of Total Liberation and Critical Animal Studies. We chose the name “Total Liberation” for our Action Research Team because we felt it reflected our shared belief that all oppression is connected and our collective vision for a creative activism that is intersectional, pluralistic, holistic, compassionate, and inclusive of all living beings. The initial objectives of our ART, which we expected to shape-shift and grow with the visions of new participants, included cultivating spaces within the university and community for:
• Discussing total liberation and the entanglements of human and non-human oppression;
• Exploring, developing, and participating in decolonizing, anti-racist, queer, and feminist grassroots activism strategies for total liberation; and
• Creating alliances and collaborating with other student and community organizations in cultivating a vision and practice of sustainable holistic justice.

Crafting a mission statement gave us clarity and focus and a way to communicate our purpose to others. Using our mission as a guide, we constructed a Facebook page as well as several flyers to promote the Total Liberation Action Research Team. We posted the flyers all over campus, as well as in cafés and shops downtown. We sent emails out through the Sustainable Communities program list serve. We spoke with our friends, colleagues, professors, and other organizations. We met with the director of the ART's program and chair of the Community, Culture, and the Environment program to discuss the formation and mission of our ART. We held our first open meeting on the fifth of November, in 2013. We slowly began growing, as more and more of our friends, classmates, and community members began showing up at our meetings.

Having this original mission statement gave our growing community a foundation to refer back to guide our actions, discussions, process, and projects. One Total Liberation ART member affirmed that “In the midst of emotional and personal hardship and confusion, the TL vision has been grounding and clarifying.” Another expressed, “Our mission statement is crafted in a careful way” and is “nonhierarchical, decolonizing, and not ego-centric”. Members went on to agree how the careful crafting of our mission
statement helps us to prevent potential collective follies, such as polarization, “proving what we know”, or creating an “illusion of agreement and unity” (Brisken, 2009, p. 113, 135).

With Total Liberation as the purpose of our action research community, together we began exploring animal oppression from the standpoint of our own perspectives, as feminists, as immigration reform activists, as humans, as well as the standpoint of those animals being oppressed. The framework of Total Liberation demonstrates itself within our group in many ways. In my own reflections, it appeared in the form of questions such as: How can we creatively and holistically advocate for animal liberation? How can connect the work of animal liberation to earth and human animal liberation? One member explained that oppression is being discussed, addressed, resisted, and transcended through the nature of our mission statement and intentional work addressing hierarchy and dualisms. Another member reflected upon our work as “living” our mission statement.

TL members expressed that imagination, art, and mindfulness define how this group sustains itself. The framework of Creative Strategies for Social Change arises in various ways within the Total Liberation ART. For me, it formed the questions: How can we both look inward and work to create something beautiful in such a violent world? How can we adequately respond to the crises of our time, in time and without rushing?—without being co-opted, or being sucked into the capitalist productivity or mechanistic paradigm that perpetuates violence and dismembers presence? How can we both fully be here and act now to create a more free and just world, not sometime in the future, but here and now? Can there be Total (inward, outward, mind/heart/body, human, animal,
How can we cultivate places to explore these questions and share in the creation of harmonious ways of living and dying—of an activism that is whole rather than fragmented? How can we use art, mindfulness, and imagination in this process? I believe that these frameworks have become the core bonds of our group, and continue to express themselves in our collective practices of unrestrained brainstorming and dreaming; sharing and advocating for vegan and just food; creating zines; holding critical conversations; crafting our values statement; holding collective reflections; practicing mindfulness at meetings; collaborating with other ARTs, community members, and organizations as well as the larger CAS movement; striving to practice groundless solidarity; and creating art with one another. These questions and practices have allowed us to co-create projects and actions—such as the Really Real Food Challenge and Café, a Veganic Garden, and our First Friday Fundraiser—which reflect our visions of Total Liberation for earth, humans, and nonhumans. This is how we are cultivating a vision and practice of holistic justice.

Sharing Food and Creating Zines

In the lounge on the top floor of SBS-West. Sitting around a smooth, dark, wooden table, covered with white booklets that read “Total Liberation Zine, None are free until all are free”. Leigh and I are binding them together. Ty is at the sink, washing purple and green lettuce; at the counter, cutting fresh sourdough bread, covering them in jalapeno jelly and
chopped walnuts. Ty places the food in the center of our wooden table, smiling. We begin our meeting with our mouths full of flavor, eyes rolling in pleasure, laughing softly through our full cheeks.

TL members have expressed that sharing food together is both “grounding and opening”. We practice sharing food by bringing vegan food and snacks to meetings as well as holding vegan potlucks. Our first action was a Decolonize Vegan Potluck that we had the weekend before Thanksgiving with students from the Queer & Ally Action Research Team and the Sustainable Communities program, to discuss through conversation and art, the history of genocide, consumerism, and industrial slaughter behind that holiday, as well as to show support for those of us with marginalized identities (such as LGBTQ and undocumented individuals), for whom the idea of going home for the holidays means something else entirely.

As part of this event, we provided the materials for those attending to create zine pages that would become a part of our collaborative Decolonize Vegan/Total Liberation Zine (Appendix E), the pages of which are included in the rest of this chapter for purposes of honoring the many voices and passions of those involved in its creation, as well as the Total Liberation practice of artistic activism. The zine pages that I have included in this chapter do not have captions because I believe they speak for themselves.
The purpose of this zine was to create, compile, and incorporate art and information about animal liberation, veganism, and decolonization in a way that is accessible, creative, interesting, and allows for multiple voices and perspectives to be heard. Creating this zine provided us an opportunity to write and create around issues that we were each passionate about.

Participants also wrote and recited poetry during the potluck and shared their zine pages with one another. Some students created pages about animal liberation, others critiqued Thanksgiving, and another artist created a page about the colonization of the Southwest landscape. Despite discussing a variety of oppressions through our art, this event was also playful. At the request of one attendee, we all took turns creating haikus on the spot, and many of us ended up speaking in haikus for the rest of the night.

We continue to provide space at our meetings and critical conversations to create artwork for future Total Liberation Zines. Creating zines together allows us to make connections between animal, human, and earth liberation through art, which we can then distribute and share with others in the community. We have shared these Zines at public events having to do with social justice and sustainability, such as the Stoking the Fire of Democracy Community Forum at the Murdoch Center; and our Power Training with the Immigration ART. We have distributed them to our classmates, professors, and friends. We have also left them on bulletin boards, in cafés downtown, and in the Women and Gender Studies and Sustainable Communities Program lounges. We also sometimes carry them

Language impacts the way we think about other animals...
Farmed animals are not at their essence meant to serve as agricultural commodities. They are defined as livestock, but that is not what they are. They are not farm animals. They are farm by humans.
Each is an individual.
A someone not a something

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around with us in case we strike up conversation with someone who is interested in animal liberation. We have been printing them in batches of forty to fifty at a time, and plan on having them to distribute at future events.

Creating zines together also allows us to connect with each other, learn from one another and our areas of passion and interest, and spend time silently reflecting together. At one of our meetings, we spent the first half hour creating zine pages in relative silence, together absorbed in our own imaginations and creations. Rather than just jumping into the meeting, sharing that space with each other was grounding and opening, like our practice of sharing food. We are planning on continuing to share local, vegan food with one another by having a pot-luck meeting for our community partners, holding spontaneous pot-lucks on the university green, and starting a Really Real Food Café as part of our Really Real Food Challenge.

**Advocating for Just and Vegan Food**

_Rey looks around the room, “I’d just ask us all to think about the farm animals that are not here in the room right now, to think about their experience as we deliberate adopting a vegan policy for the ARTs, starting with this spring’s symposium.” Another ARTs leader whispers loudly in disbelief, “We’re doing this NOW?”_

Aside from these larger projects, the Total Liberation ART is also advocating for just and vegan food (rather than just vegan) by asking the ARTs to adopt just and vegan food policy, starting with this Spring ARTs Symposium. This project began when a member of the Total Liberation Action Research Team brought to the group’s attention that the ARTs Spring symposium was planning on serving meat. She crafted a letter to
the Symposium planning committee, and asked the rest of the Total Liberation ART for suggestions and support. The team decided to work together to advocate for a vegan ARTs symposium, feeling that the decision to serve meat “concern[ed] us greatly, as a part of the family of the ARTs and our commitment to holistic justice that includes a critical awareness of non-human animals.” In the email, we stated that, “we think serving a vegan meal at the symposium is a great way to engage the community in a more holistic approach to our ARTs work and really help to showcase how we, as an ARTs community, lead by example.” Members of the committee supported our concern for serving meat and suggested that the ARTs should have a no-meat policy. We sent another email, greatly appreciating their support and continuing to push for taking all animal products off of the menu:

We recognize all food produced by Sodexo, including vegetables, is largely done so through unjust labor and farming practices (and share the dream & desire to source this food locally in the future!). However, as we can choose what we order from them, we advocate choosing food that perpetuates the least harm possible. We stand by female farmed animals whose legal status is property and whose reproductive systems are exploited.

The symposium committee quickly responded with support as well as a request that we should speak to the entire ARTs at a biweekly ARTs meeting in order to make a collective decision about this. As we brainstormed about how we would facilitate this
ARTs meeting, one TL member pointed out that, “As far as having a vegan symposium, the real problem is that our decision is constrained. We’re all dipping out of the real problem.” We went on to discuss that the real problem was that there was a corporate monopoly on the food we serve, even at a symposium for social and environmental justice.

Members of Queer &Ally ART, one of which was also a member of Total Liberation, were facilitating the ARTs meeting that week and facilitated a conversation about what it means to support one another’s causes and engage in the work of social justice prior to introducing the question of a vegan symposium, which Total Liberation ART members facilitated. Some leaders were frustrated that we were having the conversation, saying that it was already too late and that we could “just protest the meat balls.” Some members of other ARTs were very concerned about an all vegan symposium not being able to provide students with enough food or protein, while others asked if vegan was truly the least harmful food option, if industrial mono-cropping and chemical use was also harmful to the earth, soil, plants, and wildlife and suggested that we should consider doing further research. Others said that we should stress that it is factory farming (not meat eating in general) that we are boycotting, in order to avoid making generalizations that are racist towards indigenous peoples who consume animal
products. It was an emotional and tense discussion, but after a half an hour, we were able to come to consensus on having a vegan ARTs symposium. I felt triumphant, but other TL members and allies were angry. One TL member crucially pointed out afterwards that the discussion centered on food and being able to feed people rather than animal liberation. Another laughed, “We clearly have a lot more work to do.” Due to limited time, we offered to lead or partner with anyone who was interested in leading a critical conversation about veganism and animal liberation open to all who are interested in continuing the conversation. In a later reflection, another member suggested that giving a presentation or leading a discussion specifically about total liberation prior to our push for a vegan symposium would have allowed for a more productive conversation.

**Critical Conversations and the Total Liberation ART Values Statement**

We came up with the idea to lead a critical conversation about veganism and animal liberation from our practice of regularly holding such conversations for ourselves and anyone interested. In a collective group reflection, members pointed out that that our practice of holding deeper critical conversations has been a way for us to practice those elements which cultivate collective wisdom—“deep listening”, “regard for emergence”, honoring “different perspectives as fundamental to the whole”, and creating bonds with one another (Brisken, 2009, p. 170). Members explained how our use of critical conversations has allowed us the space to
discuss questions and ideas further, as well as allowed us to connect on a deeper level than during our normal weekly meetings. Our practice of critical dialogue has also been a practice of “not knowing”, but learning with one another. One member who joined the ART after attending two of these conversations said that these conversations facilitated a welcoming openness about our ART—“I know I can bring an idea and it will be engaged.” Another member expressed the quality of these critical conversations as “free, flowing, and magical”. I especially felt that way during our first critical conversation, when we ended up discussing somehow, nearly everything.

_The room feels electric. The sun shifts through the trees and through the window into the lounge. It’s a Friday afternoon. There are five of us. Somehow, we are discussing quantum theory again, and everything from what it means to be human to what it means to be alive._

This first critical conversation was a spontaneous meeting that we planned only a few days in advance, but announced publicly and promoted through our Facebook page. Our “Conversation about Social Justice, Animality, and Dehumanization” was held to discuss thoughts on the word and use "dehumanization" that is used frequently in social justice discourse, and its implications in a speciesist society. We asked: “How is it reflective of the human/nature & human/animal divide used to further the colonial project of exploiting, policing, and oppressing specific human, animal, and earth bodies? Who defines what is ‘human’?” Someone who was not a member of the ART had asked me these questions, and I told them that I didn’t know, but would love to sit down with them and anyone else interested to explore this question—and the TL critical conversation practice was born!
We discussed a variety of complex concepts that flowed into one another, including speciesism, dehumanization, animality, consciousness, and reality itself. Several of us expressed the need for language/consciousness/action shifts that are inseparable from one another. Other ideas discussed included quantum theory, embracing our animality as well as our “dark sides” (though not associating animal with bad or dark), recognizing a plurality of realities, cultivating new ways of expressing “dehumanization” that can be applied to those who are not considered human (such as “diminishing another’s existence”). We discussed recognizing that ‘humanity’ has historically been an oppressive institution/social construction that gains meaning by excluding “human and animal others” (Weitzenfeld, Joy, p. 4).

We held our next critical conversation two weeks later, and called it “Transcending Hate: Challenging Transphobic and Speciesist Environmentalism”. This critical conversation was inspired by the concerns of several Total Liberation ART members after learning about the transphobic and anti-vegan stance of the radical environmental organization Deep Green Resistance (*Earth First! Journal* Collective, 2013). We discussed how these stances are problematic, as well as explored the faulty logic behind them through conversation and the use of articles and videos. At the end of the conversation, one Total Liberation participant asked what we wanted to do next, whether we would like to issue a statement or simply let the conversation stand for itself. We decided that we would create a values statement about our stance against transphobia and speciesism. We also agreed to hold regular public, critical conversations from which we would continue to build upon our values statement and strengthen our collective understanding around topics of interest. A TL member claimed that committing to this
continuous, emergent process of critical dialogue and co-developing a values statement is one of our more “creative, brilliant, and peculiar” practices. Another pointed to these conversations as one of the ways that the ART provides nonjudgmental space for “growing and learning”. I believe having these conversations allows us to proactively confront challenges and deepen our visions and practice of holistic justice.

As far as oppression being perpetuated, we reflected that we are a predominantly feminine, white identifying group, and wondered how the group process would go as far as the group becoming larger and more diverse. The group collectively expressed our need to engage more critically with race, asking: “Is our resistance active or passive? How are we practicing our value of anti-racism?” Another ongoing challenge is that our mission statement claims we are a vegan space, however not all members are vegan. In reflecting on potential “collective follies”, TL members reflected that this could be a potential “illusion of agreement or unity” and voiced the need to resist making assumptions about or “doing lip-service” to veganism; while others expressed the fear that veganism is too rigid. Another blind-spot discussed by the group was our academic backgrounds and use of lofty language. Several expressed the worry that the language we use is really learned, intimidating, and inaccessible to most people—though a new member expressed that she did not feel that way, and felt very comfortable asking questions about terms and ideas she was unfamiliar with. Another group member stressed that we should continue deepening our examination of the oppression of earth and human beings, even with our focus on animal oppression, so that humans, animals, and earth can all benefit from the actions we take. These challenges then informed topics proposed for upcoming critical conversations:
• Veganism: What are our definitions and understandings of the term “vegan”? How might we apply and expand Veganic thinking?

• Race: How does being a predominantly white space impact identities? What is our practice of anti-racism?

• The University and Liberation: What are the benefits and limits of university sponsored activism? How can we make sure that our language is accessible?

In addition to these topics, the Total Liberation ART is working with a professor in the Political Science and International Affairs program to arrange a critical conversation and Skype session with ICAS (Institute for Critical Animal Studies) co-founder Anthony J. Nocella II, who has said that he would be more than happy to speak with us. We are ecstatic about this opportunity and are currently brainstorming what topic would be most helpful to discuss with him. The Total Liberation ART practice of critical conversations that has allowed us to create bonds with one another and strengthen our own vision and practice of Total Liberation is now opening doors for us to connect with the larger CAS and Total Liberation movements.

Connecting with ICAS and Total Liberation

In addition to planning a critical conversation with Nocella, several of us from the Total Liberation Action Research Team are excited to be traveling to Houston this April to present on a panel together at the annual Institute for Critical Animal Studies Conference. In addition to exploring the visions, challenges, process, practices, projects,
and actions of the Total Liberation ART, this panel explores the role that the team plays in cultivating spaces within the university for:

- Discussing the entanglements of human and animal oppression;
- Exploring, developing, and participating in decolonizing, anti-racist, queer, and feminist grassroots activism strategies for total liberation; and
- Collaborating with other student and community organizations in cultivating a vision and practice of sustainable holistic justice & community organizing.

Through attending this conference, we will have the opportunity to speak and connect with scholars and activists from all over the world who have dedicated their life work to the liberation of animals, rooted in holistic and intersectional understandings of justice. By attending this conference, we will have the opportunity to create more connections between our Action Research Team and the larger Total Liberation and Critical Animal Studies movements, as well as explore a plurality of visions and practices for liberation.

**Connecting with Each Other: Mindfulness Practice & Mindful Action**

_Leigh asks us to close our eyes if we would like. Her voice is strong and steady. I close my eyes. Leigh begins to guide us in a loving kindness meditation: “Imagine a loved one, and say to them, ‘May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease.’ Imagine someone you do not know very well, and say to them ‘May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease.’ Imagine those who you will never know, and say to them, ‘May you be happy, May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease.’ And when you are ready, turn inward. Say to yourself, ‘May I be happy. May I be healthy...”)_
The Total Liberation ARTs’ practice of mindfulness has taken many forms, such as sharing our passions and stories, practicing active listening, having “check-ins” at the beginning of meetings, reflections at the end, and art creation throughout. Some members and I also practiced mindfulness outside of our official meeting spaces, drawing from Starhawk’s (2005) meditations and rituals in *The Earth Path*, such as her “Sacred Intention” meditation which asks, “What is sacred to me? What do I care about so strongly that I can’t bear to see it compromised or destroyed? What would I take a stand for? [...] Are your best energies directed toward bringing about your cherished vision of the world?” (p. 39) In other words—*why are you here?*

In a collective reflection, one member reflected that the mindfulness practice of “sharing why we’re here has enabled us to dream together and build trust with each other.” Another said that providing space for questions and reflection at the end of meetings has been extremely valuable to our group process. Many members of the group agreed that connecting to one another’s stories and passions was one of their main inspirations for staying involved in the face of challenges. “Seeing our partnership and passions” was echoed over and over again as a key source of inspiration for the group. Other practices that were cited as sources of inspiration for TL members included practices of presence in “everyone showing up each week”, “being engaged together”, and sharing roles and responsibilities and mindfully rotating the facilitation of meetings between group members.

Because maintaining our relationships with one another was agreed to be a huge source of sustainability, support, and inspiration for the group, TL members also called for more mindfulness in our relational work with one another, stressing the importance of
holding more one on one meetings with each other specific to Total Liberation. Members asked that we share our stories more often with one another, to prevent the sameness of our group from “overshadowing our differences”. Other members asked that we have more check-ins at the beginning of meetings, and make both space and time for us to position ourselves and our various identities within our work. As one member asked and asserted, “What does it mean to be a white, queer, woman involved in this work? The relationship between our personal and communal struggles is important.” We discussed the possibility of having “opening” mindfulness activities at our meetings to ground us in our work together, such as yoga and meditation practice. As one member articulated, we needed to have space and time to say, “Here we converge, here is where we’re at, and here we go!”

In response, mindfulness is becoming a more formal practice within the ART in the form of our commitment to regular deeper collective reflection, meditation, and intentionally positioning ourselves within our meeting spaces. At a recent meeting, one member led us in a guided meditation, asking us to silently repeat the mantra “may they be happy, healthy, safe…” to those we love, those we don’t know, and ourselves. After leading this exercise, this member received good feedback and we proposed continuing our more formal mindfulness practice in future meetings. The next meeting, we participated in a “What’s on my mind” activity that a member developed, where we wrote down all of the things on our minds on
a piece of paper and then placed our papers in the center of the floor prior to beginning the meeting.

My own individual experience practicing mindfulness fluctuated throughout my involvement with the Total Liberation ART, but informed my presence within our work. The more I practiced mindfulness, the more I was able to feel present and enjoy the challenges of working to cultivate a vision and practice of Total Liberation. I reflected in a journal entry:

If I am not present in my own work, I can speak about holistic/re-membering practice and yet remain dismembered from it. If I think, I’ll just get this one more thing done--I’ll eventually be free to enjoy the moment, to create something beautiful, I am using time and image to dismember myself. This reflects a “conflict at the very root of [my] being” that splinters outward into my relationships with my classmates, friends, family, and strangers (Krishnamurti, 2005, p. 126). If I suffer in my work, if what I am doing is dependent upon conflicts within myself, whatever I create will ultimately be steeped in dismembering paradigms…

Exploring my journal, I recognize that the effects of regular meditation are very positive for me, and that this positivity radiates outward into my relationships with the world, my family, my friends, and even strangers. Because for those of us involved in work of any kind, who hasn’t experienced the ticking-time-bomb-intensity of a friend or colleague perpetually on the verge of a mental breakdown? It’s not good for you, and it’s not good for them. Developing a meditation practice is helping me to feel more relaxed,
grounded, balanced, and present. I feel more myself, more alive, more connected to others and myself than times when I do not practice meditation regularly. Regular meditation allows me to cultivate feelings of wholeness, even in moments when the conflicts of the world, my emotions, and thoughts seem overwhelming.

_Alone in a tent in New Mexico, I hear the wind rushing through the trees, around the mesas and towards us and away. I lie in my sleeping bag. Above me, I imagine the black sky above everyone I love, every being who has ever lived. Our blanket and our mystery. Familiar, home. Ever-expanding. Us._

My own experience practicing mindfulness has caused me to believe that true mindfulness is _not_ a passive process, or one of accepting things the way they are, or one of seeing only the beauty in the world, or one of being in a blissed out state of mind while the world falls to pieces and you do nothing but let it burn. Mindfulness practice keeps me in touch with the things that truly matter to me, and allows me to respond more effectively to the conflicts around me. Mindfulness helps me to recognize the usefulness of imaginative, peculiar, and creative consciousness.

Through my observation and analysis of mindfulness practice, both collectively within the Total Liberation ART and individually within my own practice engaged with the ART, I have come to believe that mindfulness is linked with just action. This mindfulness is a re-membering and consciousness raising practice which can help people move beyond the industrial paradigm’s pressure to produce, consume, and be perpetually distracted. It is a practice of not only _waking up_ to how mysterious it is that we are here at all, but also to how essential it is that we re-member a consciousness-social transformation that honors _that_ in all life. I believe that mindfulness can help move
through many of the challenges that TL members expressed, such as tension in relationships in the face of having so much to do, exhaustion from feeling in tension with what one member termed “this crazy fucking world”, swimming in confusion, resisting the productivity mindset of capitalism, and what another termed member “getting past the hump of helplessness”. As one member asked, “What is my relationship with the ecologically unjust world that I have come from and also lives within me?”

When members reflected upon how their participation in the ART was affecting them on a personal level, many stated that it caused them to be more aware, critical, and mindful in their questions, decisions, and actions. Members stated that participating in the Total Liberation ART that pushed them to engage in critical questions about animal oppression that they had previously wanted to avoid. They stressed that this was both a personal and communal process, and linked consciousness shifts with shifts in action. One member stated that their inspiration for being a part of the group was its action and “fast progression”, and exclaimed “We’re actually doing stuff!” Another member expressed that they were likely to take on too much responsibility both in and outside of the ART, and so needed to be more mindful of time commitments.

All of these reflections, questions, and practices together have inspired my inclusion of a “Prevent Burnout! Shift Paradigms! Mindfulness Practice” section in the Total Liberation ART Handbook (Appendix E). These insights have also informed the ART’s agreements to practice mindfulness and holistic activism in the form of relational work, story sharing, check-ins, meditation, and regular collective reflections to provide a space of support and inspiration.
Collective Reflections

Our first official collective reflection outside of a weekly meeting space lasted over two and a half hours, but members expressed that it was necessary, and “essential to the sustainability of our group dynamic.” The reflection was facilitated by asking a question, then having space for members to meditate, reflect, and/or free write on it for one to two minutes, and then discuss the following questions: How are your questions, ideas, and beliefs changing? How is your life affected by this research, and vice versa? What excites you the most about this ART? What is most challenging about being a part of this ART? Why? What inspires you to continue? How did members work to create a safe space and trust with one another? If you didn’t feel like we did, what were those areas where we failed to establish this? What other suggestions for improvement do you have in this area? How did the ART experience/confront potential collective follies, such as polarization, “proving what we know”, or creating an “illusion of agreement and unity”? How did we practice “deep listening”, “regard for emergence” and creativity, honoring “different perspectives as fundamental to the whole”, and creating bonds with one another (Brisken, 2009, p. 170)? Within the TL ART, how is oppression being discussed, addressed, resisted, transcended, and perpetuated? What do creative strategies for TL look like in practice? What are the roles of imagination, art, and mindfulness in this practice? What other questions do we have for one another?

These questions were drawn from my analysis questions. Sharing them with the group in this collective reflective space was illuminating. I realized that these were the kinds of questions that we needed to be asking each other, not just questions I needed to be asking myself. I have never been a part of such a powerful “evaluation” of sorts,
which usually consist of mechanically asking the simple questions, “What are we doing well?” “What is challenging?” While that process of evaluation is also helpful, I think that this reflective practice of the Total Liberation ART has provided deeper insights for us collectively and individually.

The group collectively agreed that we should hold collective reflections regularly, at least semesterly or quarterly, and include a list of reflection questions in the Total Liberation ART Handbook to draw from for evaluations at the end of our weekly meetings as well. From our group practice of collective reflections, we have been able to begin working on expanding our agreements. Through our practice of collective reflection, we have been able to strengthen our connections to one another and the work we do, problem solve the challenges we are facing, and share inspiration with one another. These group reflections allow us to recognize and respond to our collective and individual strengths, needs, and challenges in practicing holistic justice.

**Groundless Solidarity and Mapping Power**

_A young man exclaims, “I never thought about sexism within the dairy industry before! I guess I knew the cows had to be milked... but to make milk, they have to be artificially impregnated and pregnant constantly—and that seems like a real pain! That’s sexual violence, and we see it everywhere, in guards’ sexual abuse and rape of undocumented women, and all throughout society.”_

Another practice of the Total Liberation ART is using the Total Liberation principle of groundless solidarity as a framework for understanding and discussing power and social justice. This practice broadens the scope of our critical thinking and makes
connections between the passions of our members, as well as other movements. This practice takes the form of critical dialogue; power mapping movements, oppression, and liberation; collaborating with Q&A, the Immigration ART, and other action research teams; and supporting the events and actions of other social justice groups.

Our practice of groundless solidarity means that we continuously push ourselves towards “connections made, or at least attempted, where none existed before” (Walker, 1983, p. 5). Our practice of groundless solidarity has meant that we challenge ourselves to move beyond single-issue politics. This is an interesting balance, because it has meant that people have joined the Total Liberation ART not necessarily because their first passion was animal liberation. I was originally worried that this could water down the potency or create tensions around our original purpose of animal liberation. However, I have found it to be the opposite. It has stretched us to truly try to function as holistically as possible, and brought people into the conversation of animal liberation that might not have been interested without making the connection to human and earth liberation. And somehow, it hasn’t slowed us down. Instead, it has made our critical conversations, actions, visions, practices, and process more potent and effective.

One member of the Total Liberation ART who is also part of the Immigration ART invited TL members to help facilitate a “Power” Training using this understanding of
groundless solidarity. Several TL members and I volunteered to partner with the Immigration ART for this event. Because the Immigration ART was planning on including a power-mapping exercise, we decided that the Total Liberation ART would facilitate a discussion on how power and single-issue politics often operate to fragment movements from one another. We shared the history and mission statement of the Total Liberation ART, mapping out the various structures of power over, and discussing the connections and interactions between sexism, racism, capitalism, classism, ablism, speciesism, homophobia, transphobia, and colonialism in order to demonstrate how there is no such thing as a single issue struggle, or in the words of Nelson Mandela, that “to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that… enhances the freedom of others.” We broke into smaller groups, working with those who were in different ARTs from us, and discussed what issues and oppressions our movements were trying to address, how those oppressions interact with each other, and what a practice of groundless solidarity between our movements might look like. In my own group, I worked with two students from the Immigration ART. They told me that their ART was addressing racism, classism, sexism, nationalism, and corporatism. We discussed the sexism within the dairy industry; how the border functions to Otherize and dehumanize people, enclose resources, and tear apart both human and nonhuman families; and how agribusiness and the prison industrial complex confine animals and people for profit. We said that we could practice groundless solidarity with one another by doing more than going to one another’s protests and actions—but also by going to one another, having critical conversations, collaborating, continuing to deepen our understandings about these issues, and practicing compassion and empathy for others, regardless of whatever
category society sorts them into. Groundless solidarity embraces the connections between our struggles but also the differences—the peculiarities.

In my own practice of engaging with the framework of groundless solidarity and practice of mapping power within the Total Liberation ART, I have gained a deeper understanding of and ability to communicate the connections between struggles for justice and systems of oppression. The ART’s practice of groundless solidarity has helped us to begin cultivating a holistic vision and practice of justice for earth, animals, and people that rejects competition and zero-sum understandings of justice. Practicing groundless solidarity has meant rejecting hierarchies of oppression and seeking out our blind spots through critical conversations, collective reflections, mapping power, and trainings. Practicing groundless solidarity has been a way for the Total Liberation ART to both build internal discussion and engage in dialogue with other activist groups.

Creating Art Together

Imagining and creating art together has become a way of sustaining and expressing ourselves as well as cultivating creative and peculiar consciousness. One member of the ART exclaimed, “If we didn’t have this imaginative space, I would have been a depressed mess the first week!” Other members expressed their agreement. “At the core, we’re addressing system of hierarchy and why society is unaware of oppression, through our artwork.”

In addition to creating art together through critical dialogue, sharing food, creating zines, and practicing mindfulness, we recently arranged and met for an “Art Date” to begin creating artwork for both a future café space as well as to sell to raise
funds for that space. One member brought a dog companion, who walked across the canvas that another TL member and I were painting in a moment of spontaneous collaboration. As we quickly brought him outside to wash his feet before he could paint the rest of our house, his prints dried into the canvas. It prompted us to have a conversation about creativity as shared animality; art as wild, uncontrolled, uncensored, animal; art as not uniquely human, but as a collaboration between all nature. We conversed about how we are not separate from nature, it inspires and shapes us, and is us—we are nature painting about what it is to be alive,

*errupting color onto*

*That tidy silence of*

*“civilized” and “standardized”*

*Blank canvases.*

Another member and partner from another ART worked on creating cards out of paper that the dog had also coincidentally left muddy paw prints on. Someone else worked on creating prayer flags to be hung outside our café, in order “to bring people’s eyes to the sky and atmosphere”. As she reflected on her process, she expressed that as she created her flag, she thought about the ways in which the fabric she had bought had gotten into her hands. She decided to return the unused fabric and buy recycled fabric instead. She explained that the shape she had cut out was meant to represent how creative energy flows back against all that tries to squash it. She later reflected that creating art together and sharing
our projects and visions with one another was a great bonding and relationship building experience as well as “mesmerizing, celebratory, and joyous!”

Another TL member painted a piece of wood and began painting the lines of the poem “Poet for the Gay Games” by Staceyann Chin in *Word Warriors* (2007, p. 373). She painted the lines in red, “The time to act is NOW before you open the door to find they have finally come for YOU.” When sharing her reasons for designing this piece, she explained that she was currently reading *The Book Thief*, a book about the holocaust, and reflecting on how all oppression is connected and rooted in the same silence.

Two members of the Total Liberation ART and I also collaborated on a creative project titled “A Pink and Just Community Model”, through which we wrote poetry, crafted a values statement (Appendix F), defined the “pink and just” community, evaluated the “pink-ness” and “just-ness” of the university, and led our capstone course in a collective poetic brainstorm activity while wearing pink tutus and tiaras.

Using the… values of decolonization, peculiarity, fun and playfulness, animal and total liberation, holism, collective leadership, critical consciousness, creativity, diversity, decentralization, reciprocity, and free space, we have written a poem—“La Loba”—to help us re-member creative ways of thinking about and seeing the world as a skeleton for this model, to help us re-member the bones, *the silly, the hysterical, the strange, the furious, the still dreaming, the still wild parts* of self… We [developed] a community model using this poem as an alternative starting point to the dominant, mechanistic paradigm that brainstorms in lists, facts, and to-do lists. Inspired by the concepts and art of weaving, intersectionality, and
fluidity, we have woven our values and poem through the four systems of power structure, resource use, and education, to create a model for a Pink and Just community as both an evaluative and imaginative tool for other communities.

In reflecting collectively on the role of art within the Total Liberation Action Research team, members expressed that the use of art allows us to get outside the bubble of academia. One member claimed, “Artwork and emphasis on that forces us to step outside of academic bubble, art is what we do best!” A non-student member expressed similar sentiments, “Art is my favorite part of this group. It allows me to make more connections.” Creating art together allows us to exercise our imaginations, and move beyond mechanistic thinking. Creating art together has been a form of self-care and expression, as well as a way of both building internal discussions and engaging in dialogue with people outside of our group (through distributing zines, setting up spaces for community members to make zines, and selling our artwork at public events). While some members said that they do not consider themselves to be artists, others quipped that we are all creative and creating together allows us to push and support each other. “We are co-creating all that we are.”

My own experience participating in creating art with and for the Total Liberation ART, as well as in reflecting on this experience through the use of poetry, has helped me to embrace and revive my own creativity, imagination, compassion, playfulness, and
My own experience echoes that voiced by the group—creating art has sustained and informed my participation in a more holistic and free activism, even while in academia. Creating art with Total Liberation ART has changed the way I see the world around me and encouraged me to find new ways of speaking about the things that matter.

*Because my tongue refuses to hold the weight*

*Of your justifications.*

*Because my tongue refuses to hold the weight*

*Of your machines.*

*Because my tongue refuses to hold the weight*

*Of your mechanistic justifications.*

*Because my tongue refuses to savor systematically violated corpses*

*And speak of justice in the same vein.*

*Because my tongue*

*longs for warmth and life and the right words;*

*prefers the softness of hers;*

*is happiest tasting*

*love, pleasure*

*that comes*

*justice,*

*and pressing itself into the sound*

*'this'
Dreaming Wildly

In our process of brainstorming to create projects and actions, the Total Liberation ART has cultivated a practice of collectively imagining and dreaming wildly—or playful, utopian, brainstorming. As one student articulated, “We’re focusing on Total Liberation, which is an impossibility. Therefore, we have to create this utopian, imaginative space, recognizing the tensions of our realities.” I believe that this imaginative practice is one of the frameworks of art as emancipatory dialogue and peculiarization, which honors our direct experiences and perceptions over economic, scientific, and political experts; providing a framework “to create a better understanding of totality and the self… to steer consciousness toward aesthetic reason” and away from the instrumentalism of capitalism’s “Progress” (Sepúlveda, 2005, p. 108). Encouraging creative and peculiar thinking has enabled us to become re-enchanted to the world’s possibilities as well as our own individual and collective creative energies. This practice has frequently filled us with fire as much as with giddiness, laughter, and hope—as when several of us walked around my yard pointing and exclaiming what a wonderful spot it would be for a café; or when we came up with the name “the Really Real Food Challenge”; or when we imagined ourselves having spontaneous potlucks on the university green and sharing food…

Talking back to the too loud rationality
That twists the truth like sticky candy
That seals our mouths closed and
Turns us rotten
With impossibility.

I believe that our process of brainstorming and dreaming together mirrors the
with strangers that pass; or when several of us reclaimed the playful power of the color pink and put on tutus and tiaras to facilitate the creation of a collective poetic brainstorm for a graduate capstone course. This practice has also renewed our determination in the face of opposition and other obstacles. Dreaming is another way that we sustain ourselves in this work, and keep on imagining ways around and over obstacles and discouragement. Dreaming together has also led us to create big projects. These projects include the Really Real Food Challenge and Café, starting a Veganic garden plot on campus, planning a First Friday Art Walk fundraising event, and developing a First Year Seminar course on Animal Rights and Holistic Justice.

**The Really Real Food Challenge**

*The Really Real Food Challenge believes that all human beings have the right to grow, share, and eat just & healthy food.*

*The Really Real Food Challenge invites you to search out, support, grow, cook, & share just & healthy food in your community!*  

*The Really Real Food Challenge is a challenge to the social and environmental crises caused by industrial and corporate agriculture.*

- The Really Real Food Challenge Brochure (Appendix G)

Inspired by the Food Not Bombs Movement and in the style of their “Really Free Markets”, we are in the process of dreaming up and creating an outdoor, slightly off-campus "Really Real Food Café" project to offer local, vegan, nutritious food & information about just food to students and community members. In March, we started our “Really Real Food Challenge” and began distributing information about vegan, local, and just foods as well as calling for alternatives to a food system that has institutionalized violence towards earth, animal, and human bodies. As part of this challenge, we are
planning to attend Meatless Monday and Real Food Challenge Events; create and display public art; distribute our Zine; share information about the Total Liberation ART, just foods, and our “Really Real Food Café” project; and invite students to “join the movement for real and just food in Flagstaff” (The Really Real Food Brochure, Appendix G). Through this challenge, we hope to push students to go beyond NAU’s Real Food Challenge, which asks that Sodexo (the corporate supplier of NAU’s food) commit to supplying students with at least twenty percent of what they define as “real” food, which includes the category of “humane” animal products” (Real Food Challenge, 2014). In response, the Really Real Food Challenge asks that students choose “health and justice for humans, health and justice for animals, [and] health and justice for the planet”:

The founders of the Really Real Food Challenge believe that real food means just food—food which is nutritious, fairly traded, organic, native, ecologically grown, locally grown, community shared, and cruelty free. The Really Real Food Challenge believes that cruelty free means: from farm to plate, no people and no animals were harmed, and the Earth was treated with respect… Real food is NOT packaged with lies about the “happy” cows and “humane” exploitation or slaughter. Real food prioritizes the wellbeing of all those with whom we share the planet… Real food can NOT be owned or patented. Real food does NOT pollute our water, land, air, or earth. Real food supports the health and diversity of
humans, nonhumans, and ecosystems worldwide… Choosing Really Real Food creates compassion in an otherwise dehumanizing economy. (The Really Real Food Brochure, Appendix G)

The Really Real Food Challenge is an attempt to focus and root our ART on the issue of food for the time being, through which we can highlight the intersections of earth, animal, and human liberation and work with local food justice activist groups in an attempt to create just communities here and now. It is a call to students to join us in dreaming wildly, to use their hands, kitchens, voices, and imaginations to demand more than a promise of a twenty percent commitment to “real” food. The Really Real Food Challenge is our invitation to students to choose local and just food options off campus, while acknowledging that the fight for food justice must be fought on all fronts. Through this challenge, we are building partnerships with the SSLUG and SNAIL Action Research Teams, the Flagstaff CSA, local farms, as well as local foraging communities.

**Veganic Garden Plot**

Also as part of our Really Real Food Challenge, Total Liberation’s proposal for the creation of an on campus Veganic Garden Plot (organic and no animal products/labor) was recently accepted. We have begun planning what we are going to plant, and collecting palettes for a vertical greens garden. Though the benefits to wildlife will be more precisely determined once we know what we will be planting, the Veganic Garden will function as a sanctuary for local birds, bees, butterflies, etc.—a place created with the interests of humans, nonhumans, and earth in mind. Using the least amount of resources and inspired by permaculture design, veganism, and organic gardening, the
Veganic Garden will provide a small habitat and sanctuary for local wildlife, use less water than grass or other typical plants used in campus landscaping, eliminate the use of harmful pesticides and animal products (the majority of which we believe are produced unethically and unnecessarily), and cultivate critical and creative conversation around topics such as veganism, animal liberation, human labor, and food justice. In brainstorming about this space, we have discussed that it could also have several spaces for sitting, meditation, and mindfulness practice, offering students the chance to take a break between classes to breathe and relax. We are also dreaming that art will have a place in the garden, especially art that speaks to the importance of practicing mindfulness and remembering human-animal connections as we work and dream together to cultivate just communities. The Veganic Garden is intended to start the conversation of food justice and veganism far from the factory farm, offering instead a vision for hope and possibility for grassroots alternatives for an ethical and sustainable agriculture. The space itself, as well as the fruit, conversation, and mindfulness that it provides space for, will hopefully greatly benefit Flagstaff wildlife, humans, and people.

**First Friday Fundraiser**

To fundraise for its Really Real Food Café and Veganic Garden Plot, the Total Liberation ART created artwork to sell during a first Friday Art Walk. We collaborated on this fundraiser with the owners of a local, vegetarian café, who invited us to use their café space and expressed support and excitement for collaboration on the Really Real Food Challenge as well as for the concept of Total Liberation. For this event, we had face painting, seed planting, and community collage making stations, as well as live music and poetry. The café owners kept their kitchen open and were fairly busy the
whole night. We distributed Really Real Food Challenge brochures and flyers for a really against deportation. We set up a table to sell our paintings, photographs, t-shirts, handmade journals, animal magnets made from recycled corks that held protest signs, total liberation pins, zines, and cards.

This event helped us to make money as well as connections. By promoting the event through Facebook and flyering downtown, we attracted community members interested in justice for animals, people, and earth. Conversations flowed about the Total Liberation ART, our values, mission, and projects. Conversations flowed about artwork and activism. Some of our activist friends read poetry on various justice issues. A café worker came up afterwards and told us he felt “called to action” after hearing our poetry. The café owners told us that this was their favorite event. Some attendees left to check out other venues but came back shortly after, reporting “this is where it’s at!”

I believe this was a successful event because we envisioned it to be fun and filled with activities, food, and artwork—and then made it a reality by reaching out to a café which shared similar values. We were excited to be there and they were excited to have us. The fundraiser was mutually beneficial, bringing business to the café, awareness and support to the dreams of the Total Liberation Action Research Team.

**Developing a Freshman Seminar for Critical Animal Studies**

Once upon a time several of us dreamed of having our own animal liberation course at NAU. We brainstormed potential activities and assignments—such as having students work in the veganic garden and café; volunteer at an animal sanctuary; and create and publicly share poems from the perspective of a consumer, nonhuman animal,
and worker in various industries of animal use. After having several meetings with the
directors of the ARTs and First Year Seminar programs, this dream is being realized
fairly quickly! NAU’s First Year Seminar program will be offering FYS 121 "Animal
Rights - Holistic Justice" next fall, to be designed and taught by TL founders, which will
work directly with the Total Liberation ART. In this course, students will explore the
connections between human and animal oppression, discussing how the matrix of sexism,
racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and speciesism operates in our world. From this
foundation, students will explore the sustainability and ethics of animal use in agriculture,
entertainment, fashion, and science and examine the arguments and the tensions within
the animal liberation movement. Students in this course will have opportunities to gain
hands on experience in veganic gardening, creating public art, planning their own actions
promoting the wellbeing of animals, and collaborating with other community groups
through participation in the NAU Total Liberation Action Research Team. Through this
hands-on experience, students will explore the question: As we work to create a just
planet, what does it really look like to remember human-animal connections within our
own communities? Developing a First Year Seminar is a huge step for our ART and all
those interested in the creation of radically just communities that see the intrinsic value in
all life.

As these wild dreams become a reality for our ART, we are increasingly
recognizing the power of our creative practice of brainstorming and supporting one
another in this practice. As one TL member articulated, “having confidence in the face of
skeptics” and “getting past the hump of helplessness” is a central challenge in cultivating
a vision and practice of justice. I believe that one way we can address these challenges is
by continuing to support one another’s hope and love of the world in the face of despair. Wildly brainstorming together, “censoring nothing”, has not only allowed us to create bonds with one another and feel more connected to our group work; it has challenged our own ideas of what is possible and increased our capacity to both dream and act to create alternative realities with “the destructive-creative spirit of ‘love and laughter’” (Estes, 1992; Socha, 2012, p. xi). Dreaming together has been both a way to build our internal group discussions and relationships with one another as well as a way to change the university through the development of a veganic demonstration plot, Really Real Food Challenge, and First Year Seminar. Dreaming together in this way has been exciting and allowed for us to more fully share our passions and whole selves with one another while developing a long term visions and projects that we can practice here and now.

**Conclusion**

*We are sitting in our capstone class, the same classroom we had our permaculture course in before starting the program. We are all sharing our success stories in the program. One student shares a story about looking about how we relate to the more than human world. Veronica, another member of TL, shares about the radical activism of the Undocuqueer movement in Flagstaff. Mia and I talk about the veganic garden. Between the coffee I just chugged and my love for the work, I am so excited that I know I am speaking a mile a minute. A classmate raises his hand and says that he will be here during the summer and would love to help us if we need anyone else to help with watering. A friend tells us that we have made a difference, by following our dreams and our hearts; that people are caring more and more about animals, and believing more and more in the work that we are doing—that the paradigm of our program is shifting.*
Another tells us that we have persevered in the face of all the opposition around us, coming even from our professors—that by not engaging in the negativity but continuing anyway, we have been able to affect change. Someone else asks, “Your enthusiasm is wonderful. How will you maintain such a positive outlook when you encounter future opposition?”

Jay looks out the window and contemplates aloud, “Academia is an arena... for performance and production.” And I wonder, what are the possibilities and limits of our activism?

These are hard questions—and I believe good reasons why we should continue to live them. We need to find out how we can persevere in the face of them, and find ways in which to flow around them or begin again elsewhere. The frameworks of Total Liberation, Creative Strategies for Social Change, and Collective Wisdom have manifested as the Total Liberation ART’s evolving practices of sharing food, creating zines, advocating for just and vegan food, holding critical conversations, connecting with the larger Total Liberation and Critical Animal Studies movements, connecting to one another through mindfulness, holding collective reflections, engaging with the framework of groundless solidarity, mapping power, creating art together, and dreaming wildly. These practices are also ways in which we can creatively engage with the Total Liberation ART’s collective challenges of practicing liberation within a predominantly privileged and institutional space; positioning ourselves and our identities within our work; applying, challenging, and redefining veganism; “having confidence in the face of
skeptics”; “getting over the hump of helplessness”; feeling exhausted; supporting one another emotionally; resisting the productivity mindset of capitalism; and addressing tension in our relationships with one another and the world.

These challenges and practices are the Total Liberation ART’s lived exploration of nurturing a culture/politics of compassion, creativity, and possibility by engaging with the complexity and uncertainty of social transformation. These challenges and practices represent the Total Liberation ART’s process of becoming and exploring the questions generated from the central question, “Within the NAU ARTs Program, how can we creatively address nonhuman animal oppression and cultivate a vision and practice of Total Liberation?” I don’t think our group intends to have all the answers to the difficult questions that have brought us together, but cultivating this space with everyone in the Total Liberation ART has made me realize that not claiming to have all the answers allows for interpretive space, in which the peculiarity and creative energies of communities can be realized. Dreaming and creating together has allowed us to engage in a practice of liberating our imaginations and talking back to a politics of impossibility. It has made me realize that we should embrace and live the difficult questions, and has inspired me to believe in the power of small groups of people with wild hopes and dreams.
CHAPTER 5:
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the previous pages I discussed some of the ways in which the neoliberal ideology of “Progress” standardizes, co-ops, and dismembers consciousness, compassion, and creativity. I discuss the ways in which this dismemberment of consciousness translates to an “auto-vivisection”—or literal dismemberment of human, nonhuman, and earth bodies (Bell, 2011, p. 126). I also discussed the ways in which the ideology of human supremacy and hierarchies of oppression fragment movements for social and environmental justice and sustainability, both globally and locally within our own efforts here in Flagstaff. I demonstrate how Total Liberation and Critical Animal Studies provide a framework for remembering the oppression of animals and its critical intersections with social and environmental justice; while the literature of Creative Strategies for Social Change/Radical Art as Activism provides a framework for remembering our consciousness through a more uncertain, “uncivilized”, compassionate, mindful, spontaneous, sentimental, and playful practice of activism (Sepúlveda, 2005). I present an argument that the practices and visions of the Total Liberation ART re-member consciousness, bodies, and movements even in the face of opposition and other challenges. A review of literature and my participation in the founding and collective process of becoming the Action Research Team, along with my own life experience have led me to these ideas.

In this chapter, I summarize my argument for the necessity of the Total Liberation ART community and its contributions to cultivating a more compassionate, holistic, and artistic practice of activism within the NAU ARTs program. I then return to my research question and reflect on what I feel turned out to be some of the best strategies to
creatively address nonhuman animal oppression and cultivate a vision and practice of Total Liberation within the NAU ARTs program. I conclude with a call to action.

The Necessity of the Total Liberation Action Research Team

*Without community there is no liberation...*

-Audre Lorde

The Total Liberation Action Research Team community is doing groundbreaking work within the ARTs program. TL is asking tough questions about what it means to be a sustainable community, to be human beings who have come together in the practice of social and environmental justice. TL is creatively challenging the dominant “one size fits all” models of organizing and the racism, sexism, and speciesism that permeates the movements and consciousness of those eager to build a better world, but who rarely ask for whom? To this, we echo words of the founder of Q&A; we have to ask this question for the simple reason that, “We are here, together.” The Total Liberation ART is remembering compassionate, holistic, and creative visions and practices of justice and sharing them with the ARTs as a whole. In the words of one TL member,

The work of Total Liberation is necessary to the sustainability movement. If we’re only addressing certain types of oppression and empowerment, only those will be fixed. The reality of the instability of our planet and its finite nature requires that our approaches be completely holistic and our solutions address the oppression of all living things. This needs to happen in all our movements. It can’t just be at the Institute for Critical Animal Studies. Holistic practices of sustainability and justice need to happen everywhere.
The ART itself, its practice and visions of justice, has been (and continues to be) formed by the partnership between many different ART leaders and participants, from the Immigration, Q&A, SSLUG, and Public Achievement Action Research Teams. It is not one project here or there that has been a collaboration between these groups—but the formation of the team itself, which has been working together and meeting at least once a week for the past year to create and practice holistic activisms. Some of these leaders are working three or more jobs and overnight shifts, writing their theses, and facilitating other ARTs; and they show up every week.

This dedication is a testament to the necessity of the Total Liberation Action Research Team and the space it has cultivated within the ARTs, NAU, and Flagstaff. Members of TL have consistently expressed their feelings of being connected to the mission and visions of our team. Members have expressed feeling that the work we are doing is not only important, but absolutely necessary, and that they believe in it. We are starting necessary conversations about the complexities of oppression and liberation. We are living, breathing proof that the calls for animal liberation and a more artistic, messier activism are not a waste of time or impossible in a world with such complex oppressions—that these calls in fact explode with possibilities essential to the practice of cultivating truly just and sustainable communities. As one member stated, “This is an essential intersection—I can’t not do this work while engaging in social justice activism.”

We have our ups and downs, of course. And we definitely do not agree on everything. We don’t have all the blueprints for how to practice holistic justice, but we have some fairly good questions. In the words of one member, “Maybe the Total Liberation ART isn’t totally holistic but it is a part of a holistic solution.” We have times
when we all feel powerful, times when some of us feel as if we’re swimming upstream while others feel on top of the world, and times when we all feel exhausted.

So, we haven’t thrown open the cages of animals within our own university’s animal testing facilities, but in our complexity and our own blind spots, I believe we are beginning to throw open our own psychological cages, moving, dreaming, and shape shifting—practicing holistic justice as a perpetual process of becoming. We are not a finished product and I don’t believe that we will ever want to be. I believe that instead of perfection—we seek to become, to be here, to find each other, to learn and live our ideas and art out loud, to speak and act now, through building a community and a more expressive and compassionate practice of justice. In the advice of Kurt Vonnegut,

What I had to say to you, moreover, would not take long, to wit: Practice any art, music, singing, dancing, acting, drawing, painting, sculpting, poetry, fiction, essays, reportage, no matter how well or badly, not to get money and fame, but to experience becoming, to find out what’s inside you, to make your soul grow. (n.d)

Re-enchantment to our creativity, to our souls, what we can do and achieve is as necessary to activism as breathing. Becoming means falling in love with the rides of our various struggles for justice—it means we need to find ways outside of the dominant, mechanistic paradigm to “evaluate the effectiveness” of the work we do. It doesn’t mean not being critical about our work, but rather speaking out and acting without censoring our utopian visions in fear of opposition, rejection, being misunderstood or labeled naive.

In the words of Audre Lorde (1980),
Next time, ask: What's the worst that will happen? Then push yourself a little further than you dare. Once you start to speak, people will yell at you. They will interrupt you, put you down and suggest it's personal. And the world won't end.
And the speaking will get easier and easier. And you will find you have fallen in love with your own vision, which you may never have realized you had. And you will lose some friends and lovers, and realize you don't miss them. And new ones will find you and cherish you. And you will still flirt and paint your nails, dress up and party, because, as I think Emma Goldman said, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."
And at last you'll know with surpassing certainty that only one thing is more frightening than speaking your truth. And that is not speaking.

**So what can we do?**

My central research question was, “What can we do as activists to creatively address nonhuman animal oppression and cultivate a vision and practice of Total Liberation within the NAU ARTs program?” Looking back at the practices and strategies of the Total Liberation Action Research team, I believe that our practices of dreaming, creating art, and holding critical conversations through the frameworks of Total Liberation have facilitated much of the success we’ve had so far as a group.
Through the ambitious and holistic framework of Total Liberation, we have been able to recognize the necessity for revolutionary shifts in consciousness and dream up large, exciting projects that we (and others) believe in and connect with. Our critical
conversations, artwork, and dreaming practices blur into one another. As we dream up the Really Real Food Challenge, discussing Sodexo’s monopoly on campus food, we discuss prisoner AND chicken solidarity. We recognize the need to talk with Sodexo workers whose livelihoods depend upon the university’s contract and other community organizations already working on food justice issues. We discuss how Sodexo profits off of the confinement of people (through its choke-hold contracts with prisons, universities, and other controlled populations) and animals (through its use of factory farms). We discuss how Arizona’s profit centered and backwards immigration laws tear apart families, holding them in prisons and deporting them back across borders that also separate and threaten wildlife. We recognize that the torture of animals is not just profitable for agribusiness or perpetuated by campus food contracts, but also for pharmaceutical companies and a science that, in the words of one TL member, “demands bodies” to manipulate, dissect without anesthesia, destroy, and discard. Recognizing these connections through the lens of Total Liberation, our Really Real Food Challenge becomes a call for an end to animal exploitation, an end to all corporate holds on food, an end to all deportations, and an end to the construction of all borders and cages in the name of profit and progress, which we recognize as death sentences to countless individuals. Sodexo is just a starting place.

Our practice of creating art is entangled with these arguments, questions, conversations, and projects. We create art to spread awareness about these issues and distribute and sell our artwork to raise money for our Really Real Food Café and Veganic Garden. We create art to begin thinking creatively about holistic and compassionate grassroots alternatives to the various crises of our times. We create and share art as
activism because it is far more exhilarating than an activism without art. We dream together and create art through our visions of justice.

So, with the urgency of social and environmental crises affecting our earth and fellow beings fueled by ideologies of supremacy and corporatism, what have I learned that we can do?

We can speak. We can speak about animal liberation and cultivate a plurality of spaces to do so with others, in order to cultivate a plurality of unique holistic practices and visions of justice. To those of us who do not see ourselves as artists, we must ask ourselves to reconsider our conceptions of art and our own capacities for creativity. Why does the work we do not feel like art to us? Why do we not believe we are artists? Couldn’t our lives become richer if we saw ourselves as such?—if we were able to do work that felt like art to us, that we felt impassioned by? The more we speak in whatever our mediums are—whether they be paint, pen and paper, poetry, journalism, protests, teaching, workshops, flyers, zines, music, food, gardens, dance, street theatre, radio, satire, or direct action—the easier it will be for us to find one another and know that radically holistic visions and practices of community and justice exist. Once we know that we are not alone, acting in accordance with our values becomes much easier. We can speak about animal liberation despite rolled and glazed eyes and repeatedly changed topics because chances are if no one wants to talk about something that involves privilege of any kind, there’s some kind of violence being perpetuated by our silence. We can speak with our voices shaking, thoughts racing, words stuttering, hands trembling, cheeks blushing, angry, confused, tired, freaked out, and not-knowing anything for certain. Through speaking, we can challenge zero-sum politics and the dismemberment of our
movements. We can create spaces to speak together, openly and directly, about difficult questions and challenges in our groups and as individuals—even and especially as they arise in our activist groups.

We can also listen. Both listening and speaking mean examining privilege and violence. We can listen to voices, experiences, and movements different from our own. We can listen to one another within our groups, meeting outside more formal meetings and public events to actually know each other, our ideas, passions, challenges, and activisms. We can listen to one another within our group meetings by trying to really be present with one another, open to tough questions that we might not have answers to. We can meet with people we want to know or work with and listen to them. We can listen by supporting other questions and movements that are denied space by dominant voices and movements. We can listen by resisting in solidarity with all who are resisting racism, neocolonialism, patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ablism, classism, corporatism, nationalism and the whole mess of oppressions that dismember animal and earth bodies and consciousness. We can listen by looking inside ourselves. We don’t need to be dependent on or obsess about “the experts”. We can learn a lot from our own mistakes, successes, and experiences in following our intuitions. We can be artists and activists. We can practice reflexivity, mindfulness, and action. They don’t have to be separate things. We can get sentimental—listening to our emotions, locating ourselves within our bodies and our work—instead of theorizing until our heads fall off.

Using our passions as a compass, we can also look outside ourselves for inspiration. We can continuously draw from a variety of models, handbooks, concepts, and dreams rather than get sucked into dogmatic, outdated, one-size-fits-all organizing
models. We can look at movements like Food Not Bombs and Total Liberation; blogs like Loba Loca, Sista Resista, and Return the Gayze; performance activists like Pussy Riot, Dark Matter, GLITTERFESTO; and more. We can follow what inspires and electrifies us. We can opt for more fluid practices of organizing that are accessible, relevant, and exciting. We can craft our own models and handbooks, then leave them unnamed and unfinished to give them room to grow and change. We can reflect about these different practices and ask each other difficult questions about them. We can tell each other which activism practices feel alive and which feel boring, rehearsed, inaccessible, or irrelevant. We can focus on those that feel right and adapt them to our unique visions and passions.

**Conclusion: Call to Action**

*Pull all your strings. Play every chord.*

-Andrea Gibson

The time to act is now, the place to speak is here, and we don’t need roadmaps any more complicated than our hearts. We can choose to drop our defensive and distracting mechanisms that keep us fragmented and unresponsive. We need to start listening to our deepest and wildest selves, our compassion and our anger, the core of ourselves that knows that something is wrong with corporate projects of standardizing consciousness; compartmentalizing our life from art and work; and systematic destroying the world, its diverse communities, and living beings for purposes of profit. In the words of one TL member, the time is now to “take a radical stance that refuses a ‘sofies choice’ and choose to never make decisions that perpetuate any kind of violence.” We don’t have to play justice and sustainability like zero-sum games which necessitate someone else’s
slaughter. The ‘Eat Mor Chikn’ cows lied. So did the CEOs of humane and happy animal “production”. And so did we when we discussed sustainability without justice; when we discussed oppression and liberation without animals. In the words of animal liberationist Kim Socha (2013),

The storybooks lied… We have seen, heard, smelled, and felt their terror under the tyranny of humans, and it is not acceptable. We have walked past their packaged flesh and reproductive emissions in the supermarkets, and it is not all right. The truth of animal commodities has been exposed.

(p. 233)

We can start right now, and resist in solidarity with all beings, human and other than, who are living, resisting, surviving, dying, being killed, already killed by the stark realities of a mechanistic, reductionist, profit oriented society.

We can seek out others interested in art and justice and band together to craft values, conversations, ideas, poetry, manifestos, and meals together. We can use our imaginations, our hands, our voices, our kitchens, our desires, our dreams, our “silly ideas”, and our peculiar selves to start here and now.

We can live our lives as works of art.

We can say

*NO to fences,*

*NO to deportation,*

*NO to unfair working conditions,*

*NO to corporate exploitation,*

*NO to corporate confinement,*
NO to institutionalized slaughter,

NO to rape,

NO to cages,

NO to prisons,

NO to clear cuts,

NO to discrimination,

NO to the standardization of thought,

No to the commodification of bodies,

NO to routine,

No to boredom,

NO to ego-centric and profit centered politics,

NO to patriarchy,

NO to white supremacy,

NO to human supremacy,

NO to enclosure and domination of any kind,

NO to otherization within our movements,

NO to black and white thinking.

NO to business as usual & “the bottom line of bullshit, incorporated”,

And we can say

YES to compassion,

YES to empathy,

YES to community,

YES to solidarity,
YES to disagreements and discomfort,
YES to dancing,
YES to sentimentality,
YES to critical questions,
YES to creative ideas,
YES to peculiarity and difference,
YES to spontaneity and playfulness,
YES to fluidity,
YES to messiness,
YES to imperfection,
YES to dreaming,
YES to speaking,
YES to listening,
YES to big ideas,
YES to complexity,
YES to uncertainty,
YES to ups and downs, and
YES to becoming.

“And freedom rears its beautiful head.” (Socha, 2013, p. 233)
WORKS CITED


*Eat Mor Chikin Cowz*. Retrieved February 26, 2014 from https://www.facebook.com/EatMorChikin

Emerick, Misty; Richter, Bethany and Mara Pfeffer. (2014) *A Pink and Just Community*.


Grubbs, Jennifer and Michael Loadenthal. (2014). From the Classroom to the


Dear Participant:
You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through the department of Sustainable Communities at Northern Arizona University by Mara Pfeffer that involves research. The researcher is required to receive your informed consent before you participate in this project.

Mara Pfeffer will explain to you in detail: (1) the purpose of the project; (2) what you will be asked to do and how long your participation will last; (3) how your personal information, if collected, will be kept confidential; (4) if you will receive any compensation; (5) the benefits; and (6) potential risks of participation.

Your participation in research is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there are no penalties or loss of benefits or services that you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate and then withdraw or skip a question there are also no penalties or loss of benefits or services. Whether or not you choose to participate in this project will have no effect on your relationship with NAU now or in the future.

A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss it with the Mara Pfeffer. Feel free to ask questions to help you understand the project. A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.

1. PROJECT PURPOSE:
The purpose of this project is to explore my thesis question: “What can we do as activists to creatively address animal oppression within the NAU Action Research Team program?” Through co-founding and participating in the Total Liberation Action Research Team, I will observe the creative strategies that are developed and used to address animal oppression, as well as the overall group process, and consider what they might mean for larger social movements.

2. EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES:
Through this research project, I will use the methods of participant observation and feminist action research. Procedures include my participant observation during Total Liberation ART meetings, events, and conversations about the ART that I am a part of. My participant observation will include note-taking and may include direct quotes from participants, but not without informed consent. As a participant in this project, you will not be required to
participate in any procedures outside of regular Total Liberation meetings and events that you wish to attend. Your participation in this project can be any length that you wish and can be discontinued at any time.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY:
Participants are not required to provide any personal or contact information in this project. I will not use the names or identifiers of any participants in my thesis without their informed consent.

4. COMPENSATION:
There will be no financial compensation for participating in this project.

5. BENEFITS:
The benefits of participating in this project include gaining hands on experience in community organizing around animal, environmental, and social justice issues; cultivating community spaces for the discussion of animal rights; and cultivating understanding around the ethics and sustainability of animal use in agriculture, entertainment, fashion, and science. In addition, through this research, I will develop and distribute an organizing handbook as a tool for current and future members of the Action Research Team & First Year Seminar students, as well as a curriculum for a First Year Seminar on Animal Rights and Holistic Justice.

6. RISKS:
Every effort will be made to minimize risks to participants. There are minimal risks to those who participate in this project. Meetings and events will be held in public spaces within the community. No participant will be pressured to join, participate, or answer group questions they are uncomfortable with.

The dated approval stamp in the header of this information letter indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. Contact the Human Research Protections Office at 928-523-4236 if you have any questions about: (1) the conduct of the project, or (2) your rights as a research participant, or (3) a research-related injury. Any other questions about the research project should be directed to:

Mara Pfeffer
Sustainable Communities
609-432-0617
mp787@nau.edu

Dr. Janine Schipper
Sociology
928-523-7482
Janine.Schipper@nau.edu
APPENDIX B: Measurement Tools

Questions for Analysis

Using the methods of feminist action research and participant observation, I will reflect upon the following questions individually as well as collectively with the Total Liberation Action Research Team:

1. From what standpoints are we exploring animal oppression?
2. How can we creatively address animal oppression?
3. How is oppression being discussed, addressed, resisted, transcended, and perpetuated?
4. Who will benefit from what actions we take?
5. What is working?
6. What is not working?
7. What is challenging and how can we better engage with these challenges?

I will also use the literary/theoretical frameworks of Total Liberation and creative strategies for social change to inform my reflections on the group’s process, asking:

1. How does the framework of Total Liberation demonstrate itself or arise within the group?
2. What does a practice of Total Liberation look like?
3. How does it differ from theory?
4. What are its limits?
5. How does the framework of creative strategies for social change demonstrate itself or arise within the group?
6. What do creative strategies for total liberation look like in practice?
7. What are the roles of imagination, art, and mindfulness in this process?
8. What are their limits?

Because I will be using the method of participatory action research, I will also evaluate the participation in the group by asking the questions:

1. How are the ART’s roles and responsibilities being shared?
2. Who* initiates meetings and events?
3. Who* comes to the meetings and events?
4. Who* facilitates them?
5. Whose* voices are being heard?
6. Whose* aren’t?
7. How else are community members participating?

*Generally, is it the same 1-2 people? No personal identifiers will be used unless requested by participant.
APPENDIX C: Animal Liberation Front Principles

- “To inflict economic damage on those who profit from the misery and exploitation of animals.

- To liberate animals from places of abuse, i.e., laboratories, factory farms, fur farms, etc., and place them in good homes where they may live out their natural lives, free from suffering.

- To reveal the horror and atrocities committed against animals behind locked doors, by performing nonviolent direct actions and liberations.

- To take all necessary precautions against harming any animal, human and nonhuman.

- Any group of people who are vegetarians or vegans who carry out actions according to ALF guidelines have the right to regard themselves as part of the ALF.”

(Best & Nocella II, 2004, p. 8)
APPENDIX D: The Ten Principles of Critical Animal Studies

1) “Pursues interdisciplinary collaborative writing and research in a rich and comprehensive manner that includes perspectives typically ignored by animal studies such as political economy.

2) Rejects pseudo-objective academic analysis by explicitly clarifying its normative values and political commitments, such as that there are no positivist illusions whatsoever that theory is disinterested or writing and research is nonpolitical. To support experiential understanding and subjectivity.

3) Eschews narrow academic viewpoints and the debilitating theory-for-theory’s sake position in order to link theory to practice, analysis to politics, and the academy to the community.

4) Advances a holistic understanding of the commonality of oppressions, such that speciesism, sexism, racism, ableism, statism, classism, militarism and other hierarchical ideologies and institutions are viewed as parts of a larger, interlocking, global system of domination.

5) Rejects apolitical, conservative, and liberal positions in order to advance an anti-capitalist, and, more generally, a radical anti-hierarchical politics. This orientation seeks to dismantle all structures of exploitation, domination, oppression, torture, killing, and power in favor of decentralizing and democratizing society at all levels and on a global basis.

6) Rejects reformist, single-issue, nation-based, legislative, strictly animal interest politics in favor of alliance politics and solidarity with other struggles against oppression and hierarchy.

7) Champions a politics of total liberation which grasps the need for, and the inseparability of, human, nonhuman animal, and Earth liberation and freedom for all in one comprehensive, though diverse, struggle; to quote Martin Luther King Jr.: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

8) Deconstructs and reconstructs the socially constructed binary oppositions between human and nonhuman animals, a move basic to mainstream animal studies, but also looks to illuminate related dichotomies between culture and nature, civilization and wilderness and other dominator hierarchies to emphasize the historical limits placed upon humanity, nonhuman animals, cultural/political norms, and the liberation of nature as part of a transformative project that seeks to transcend these limits towards greater freedom, peace, and ecological harmony.
9) Openly supports and examines controversial radical politics and strategies used in all kinds of social justice movements, such as those that involve economic sabotage from boycotts to direct action toward the goal of peace.

10) Seeks to create openings for constructive dialogue on issues relevant to Critical Animal Studies across a wide range of academic groups; citizens and grassroots activists; the staffs of policy and social service organizations; and people in private, public, and non-profit sectors. Through—and only through—new paradigms of ecopedagogy, bridge building with other social movements, and a solidarity-based alliance politics, it is possible to build the new forms of consciousness, knowledge, and social institutions that are necessary to dissolve the hierarchical society that has enslaved this planet for the last ten thousand years.”

(Best, Nocella, Khan, Gigliotti, Kemmerer; 2007, p. 4-5)
APPENDIX E: Total Liberation ART Handbook

TOTAL LIBERATION ACTION RESEARCH TEAM HANDBOOK

HOLISTIC COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR ANIMALS, PEOPLE, AND THE PLANET
HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is for anyone interested in the NAU Total Liberation Action Research Team, or in doing holistic and compassionate activism that promotes the wellbeing of animals, people, and the planet! This handbook is here to:

• Share the team’s history, context, mission, artwork, research, and informational/promotional materials; and
• Sustain and pass along the organizing practices, agreements, and values that the team has found useful so far, as the group continues to grow and be transformed by new members each semester.

Take whatever is useful / accessible and leave out or change the rest. This book wants you to scribble and draw all over it. It would love for you to tear pages out and put your own in, to fill it with even more useful tools, notes, quotes, and articles; to incorporate your own activist artwork. This book wants to remember you, your questions, and your ideas.
Total Liberation Action Research Team History

Immersed in a social and environmental justice program but without opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions or activism addressing animal oppression, we came together asking the questions:

- What can we do as activists to creatively address animal oppression?
- What are the connections between nonhuman and human oppression?
- What can be done to help create alliances between animal rights/liberation activists and other social justice activists?
- How is justice for animals inseparable from the cultivation of sustainable and just communities?

In the Fall of 2013, we became an official Action Research Team. Our choice of the name “Total Liberation” reflects our shared belief that all oppression is connected and our collective vision for a creative activism that is holistic, compassionate, and inclusive of all living beings.

The Total Liberation Action Research Team (ART) is a collective of students, artists, and community members which “champions a politics of total liberation which grasps the need for, and the inseparability of, human, nonhuman animal, and Earth liberation and freedom for all in one comprehensive, though diverse, struggle; to quote Martin Luther King Jr.: ‘Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere’” (Best, Nocella, Kahn, Gigliotti, & Kemmerer, 2007, p. 2).
ACTION RESEARCH TEAMS, TOTAL LIBERATION, AND CRITICAL ANIMAL STUDIES—WHAT?

The ARTs (Action Research Teams)
The NAU ARTs program is made up of over 10 action research teams of “first year seminar students, returning undergraduates, masters students in the sustainable communities program, and community partners”, each with its own focus—from community gardening, to public education, to immigration reform (“Campus and Community”, 2013). The program as a whole has the objective of cultivating sustainable and just communities, through the creation of opportunities for students and community members to come together in learning communities and gain hands-on grassroots experience around whatever social/environmental issues they are passionate about.

Total Liberation
The concept of Total Liberation challenges “single issue” politics and sees the wellbeing of humans, animals, and the earth as deeply entwined with one another. Its concepts and demands are distinct from the demands of the animal welfare movements (which seek to improve the conditions under which animals are used and killed) and single issue animal rights movements (which seek to secure legal recognition of and rights for certain animals but may not examine the roots of their oppression). Embracing a variety of theories and strategies to bring about justice for animals (human and nonhuman) and the earth, animal liberationist Steven Best (2010) has called for a politics of “Total Liberation”, describing it as:

the theoretical process of holistically understanding movements in relation to one another, to capitalism, and to other modes of oppression, and to the political process of synthetically forming alliances against common oppressors, across class, racial, gender, and national boundaries, as we link democracy to ecology and social justice to animal rights.

Critical Animal Studies
Originally the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs (CALA), the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS) was formed in 2001 by Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella “to challenge the repression of animal and Earth liberationists and provide credibility to radical theories and actions from the Earth and animal liberation movements” (“History”, 2014). The ICAS website (2014) defines Critical Animal Studies (CAS) as “rooted in animal liberation”; “a radical, interdisciplinary field dedicated to establishing a holistic total liberation movement for humans, nonhuman animals, and the Earth”.

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Part I: Total Liberation Art
Mission, Agreements, Values
Statements, and Articles

My body will not be a tomb
for other creatures.
MISSION STATEMENT

Fall 2013, Spring 2014

The objectives of TL ART include
• cultivating spaces for the discussion of total liberation and the entanglements of human and animal oppression;
• exploring, developing, and participating in decolonizing, anti-racist, queer, and feminist grassroots pedagogies & activism strategies addressing animal oppression; and
• collaborating with other student and community organizations in cultivating a vision and practice of sustainable holistic justice & community organizing.
agreements

Spring 2014

• We commit to upholding our mission and values statements, and having critical conversations around those parts of these statements that we wish to revisit, redefine, or change.
• When we have new members,
  – We will meet with them one on one to get to know one another.
  – We will have an orientation on the first meeting of the month.
• For our weekly meetings,
  – Roles will be rotated, such as facilitating, note-taking, leading meditations, art activities, etc.
  – The agenda will focus on realistic goals and actions.
  – We will set an agenda before each weekly meeting with the planned time included in the agenda for each item.
  – The agenda will fit the essential items within the first hour.
  – The first few minutes of each meeting will be dedicated to some form of check-ins, and introductions for new members.
  – We will have an evaluation at the end of the first hour.
  – From 7-7:30, there will be space for less formal discussion and resource sharing.
• We will schedule working meetings for specific tasks as needed.
• We will hold regular public, critical conversations around topics of interest from which we will build our values statement.
• Each semester, we will meet for collective reflection on our group process at least once.
• We will work to provide a safe vegan space rooted in an intersectional and holistic approach to justice that includes the earth, human, and nonhuman animals, though members do not have to be vegan, where anyone can ask questions.
• We will provide resources for those who are interested.
VALUES STATEMENT

Spring 2014

(Working Document)

Using Critical Conversations (see resources for organizing) around different issues as they come up, collectively discuss any issues or challenges with doing this work and come up with a value to add to this statement.
The ARTS Welcome Total Liberation

Vegan, nutritious food and
the go-ahead to move forward
with their vision. After a hosting
of a potluck dinner, now the
members can present their
ideas to arts program
new members and present their
work. They quickly needed to be
accepted into the arts program
or their proposal would fall.

The first idea this fall of
Total Liberation on campus
was a collaborative project
which was a collaboration between
members and local artists to
create and present an event.

The arts program

ARTS January 2014 Newsletter
Part II: resources for organizing
CREATING AGREEMENTS

“Begin with a round or with people in pairs or threes to answer these questions:

• When have you had a really wonderful group experience? How did you feel? What made it empowering and exciting? How did people treat each other?

• What practices or agreements might you want to bring to this group from that positive experience? Generate a list.

• How has it been working together so far in this group? What has worked well? Are there practices we already have that we want to formalize into agreements? Add them to the list.

• What has not worked so well for you or felt frustrating or disempowering? Are there patterns we want to change? What agreements might we make about them? Generate another list—patterns we want to change or avoid.

• Now, have you ever had an awful group experience? What made it awful? Can we learn from that experience about patterns or behaviors we want to change or avoid? Add them to the second list.

Let’s look back at our vision, our values, intention and goals. Are these agreements in alignment with our larger vision? Are we missing anything?

Ask for volunteers to take the lists and compile a set of agreements.

How will we communicate these agreements to all group members? New group members?

How will we hold each other accountable for keeping these agreements? What happens if someone violates the agreements of the group? Whose responsibility will it be to hold that person to account, and how will they do it?”

*The Empowerment Manual, Starhawk, p. 41*
DREAMING AND BRAINSTORMING

Purpose: To create a collective vision. To honor the direct experiences and perceptions of participants over "experts". To become re-enchanted to the world's possibilities as well as our own individual and collective creative energies. To imagine ways around and over obstacles and discouragement. To create big projects and long term visions that members are excited about.

Process: Set aside time to dream and brainstorm together. Pick a justice issue that you are passionate about that connects to the mission of your group, and brainstorm projects that would help address that issue. Without talking over each other, spit out and write down all the ideas that you can. Ask critical questions, but try not to shoot down anyone's ideas simply for seeming "too big" and "impossible". Try entertaining some crazy ideas and big projects. It's often those ones that people will feel most excited and inspired by.

Drawing from *As the World Burns* by Derrick Jensen and Stephanie McMillan
SETTING GOALS

- "Review the work already done on vision, values, and intention.

- Go around the circle and have each person speak to the question: "What are some of your personal goals that you hope to realize through the work of this group?" (In a very large group, divide the group into smaller groups or threes)

- Brainstorm common goals. Take 10 minutes and write them up.

- Look at list and identify whether there are goals you all hold in common, goals you disagree about, goals that are more important to some people than to others.

- Are any of these goals in conflict with one another? Will we need to find some kind of balance between them?

- Do we have the resources, skills, allies, and knowledge we need to achieve these goals?

- If not, do we need further training? More resources? What else?

- Which of these goals are within our power to achieve?

- Which depend partly on outside circumstances or luck?

- Do these goals fall into an order?

- Are there goals we need to achieve first so that later we can work toward other goals? What order do these goals fall into?

- Is there a time frame for these goals? Are there deadlines? Can we create a timeline for them?"

*The Empowerment Manual, Starhawk, p. 38*
PRE AND POST-MEETINGS: SETTING AN AGENDA, REFLECTING, EVALUATING, AND RESOURCE SHARING

Setting an Agenda & Choosing a Facilitator

Before your meeting, collectively agree on a meeting agenda and purpose. It might also be helpful to write a time dedicated for each item on your agenda. Choose a facilitator or two to prep for/run the meeting and keep everyone on task. Try to rotate these roles each week. It helps to decide a week ahead of time... So you might actually set an agenda and choose a facilitator for your next meeting at the end of each meeting.

Reflections and Evaluations

You might find it helpful to follow up your meeting with a 1-2 questions to see how everyone is feeling and how things went. These questions can be pulled from “Collective Reflections” or they can be simpler, such as:

• How are you feeling about today’s meeting?
• What went well?
• What could we do better next time?

Make sure everyone has a chance to talk!

Resource Sharing

Another useful post-meeting activity is resource sharing. Bring articles, ideas for activities, websites, dvds, and books to swap with other members if you have come across anything interesting or useful that week. If there is a particular resource/book you have been unable to find, ask other group members if they would be willing to help or loan you one of their own.
CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

**Purpose:** To build collective understanding about complex issues that members are interested in discussing. To allow the space to discuss questions and ideas further, as well as connect on a deeper level than during our normal weekly meetings. Our practice of critical dialogue has also been a practice of “not knowing” or “proving”, but learning with one another.

**Process:** Set some time aside every few weeks to meet as a group and collectively reflect on a topic of interest or tension within your group. You might invite any community experts that have more experience in the topics you are discussing. Bring resources to the conversation or ideally provide those resources to participants a week ahead of time so that it is easier for everyone to engage in the conversation. Basic structures for the questions driving the conversation might be:

- How do we (re)define __________?
- What do we do if __________ happens within our group?
- What do you think about __________?
- How do we engage with the challenge of __________?
- Can we agree on any values about this issue?
- If so, what? (Incorporate into value statement)

Some examples of past/potential critical conversations include:

- How do we define “veganism”?
- What do you think about the term “dehumanization” in relation to justice for non-human animals?
- How do we engage with the challenge of transphobia/racism/sexism/ and other oppressions within environmental, animal, and social justice movements?
POTENTIAL TERMS TO DEFINE AND REDEFINE

- Ableism
- Abolition
- Accessibility
- Agribusiness
- Animal Welfare
- Animal Liberation
- Animal Rights
- Anti-globalization
- Anti-racism
- Capitalism
- Carnism
- Classism
- Colonization
- Compassion
- Consensus
- Corporatism
- Critical Animal Studies
- Ecocide
- Enclosure
- Environmental Justice
- Environmental Racism
- Decolonization
- Domination
- Feminism
- Globalization
- Grassroots Activism
- Groundless Solidarity
- Hierarchy
- Holistic
- Homophobia
- Industrialism
- Intersectionality
- Nationalism
- Power
- Privilege
- Queer
- Racism
- Sexism
- Social Justice
- Speciesism
- Sustainability
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Total Liberation
- Transphobia
- Veganic
- Veganism
- Vegetarianism
- Vivisection
POWER MAPPING AND GROUNDLESS SOLIDARITY

**Purpose:** To use the concept of groundless solidarity as framework for understanding and discussing power and social justice. To challenge ourselves to move beyond single-issue politics. This practice broadens the scope of our critical thinking and makes connections between the passions of our members, as well as other movements.

**Process:** Map out various structures of power over, discussing possible connections and interactions between them. Break into smaller groups and discuss what issues and oppressions your groups/movements are trying to address, how those oppressions interact with each other, and what a practice of groundless solidarity between your movements might look like. Some examples of connections made in previous power trainings:

- **Sexism and Speciesism** – Female cows’ and hens’ reproductive systems are exploited by the dairy and egg industries.
- **Racism, Colonization, and Speciesism** – The categorization of Indigenous peoples as “savage” and “animal” by Europeans as justification for their oppression.
- **Corporatism, Classism, Racism, Speciesism** – Agribusiness profits off of contracts with controlled populations, like prisons and universities, and oppressive “profit and efficiency” driven conditions for factory farm workers and animals.

"GROUNDLESS SOLIDARITY IS A REALIZATION THAT THERE IS NO GROUNDING TO A CLAIM THAT ONE FORM OF OPPRESSION IS CENTRAL AND ALL OTHERS MERELY PERIPHERAL." - COLLING, PASOOL, EMIRAY
SPECTRUM OF ALLIES

Purpose:
"The Spectrum of Allies is a tool to help you decide which groups are most and least likely to support your organization or campaign, and which fall in the middle. The idea is to reach out to the groups that are closest to you and not waste time trying to convert the groups that are most resistant to your demand."

Steps:
• "Clarify your goal.
• Brainstorm all the groups that have the potential to affect whether you attain your goal.
• Put them in order of most and least resistant to supporting you on the pie chart.
• Make a plan about how to reach out the group that’s closest to you."

Strategic Action for Animals, Melanie Joy, Appendix 1
Diagram from http://tavaana.org
COLLECTIVE REFLECTIONS

Purpose: To strengthen participants’ connections to one another and the work we do; to problem solve the challenges we are facing, and to share inspiration with one another. These group reflections allow us to recognize and respond to our collective and individual strengths, needs, and challenges.

Process: Set some time aside every few months or so to meet as a group and collectively reflect on your group process. Either switch up the facilitator or have each member ask one of the questions. Leave a few minutes after asking each question for quiet reflection and writing before sharing.

1. How are your questions, ideas, and beliefs changing?
2. How is your life affected by this research, and vice versa?
3. What excites you the most about this ART?
4. What is most challenging about being a part of this ART? Why?
5. What inspires you to continue?
6. How did members work to create a safe space and trust with one another?
7. If you didn’t feel like we did, what were those areas where we failed to establish this?
8. What other suggestions for improvement do you have in this area?
9. How did the ART experience/confront potential collective follies, such as polarization, “proving what we know”, or creating an “Illusion of agreement and unity”?
10. How did we practice “deep listening”, regard for emergence and creativity, honoring different perspectives as fundamental to the whole, and creating bonds with one another?
11. Within the TL ART, how is oppression being discussed, addressed, resisted, transcended, and perpetuated?
12. What do creative strategies for TL look like in practice?
13. What are the roles of imagination, art, and mindfulness in this practice?
14. Other questions?
PART III: PREVENT BURNOUT!

WHAT'S ON MY MIND
OPENING MEETINGS WITH MINDFULNESS

Check ins

Instead of rushing into agenda items, you may want to intentionally leave space or open meetings by asking how everyone is doing, or providing an outlet for members to feel grounded and connected to one another. Sometimes these kinds of check-ins happen organically, but often they happen individually between a few members rather than collectively amongst the whole group.

Besides simply asking how everyone is doing, you might provide time for a free write or conversation on something that is challenging or inspiring at the moment. You might also ask members to write down everything that is on their mind (see cover page for this section) and then share out a few things.

A Loving Kindness Meditation

You may want to begin a meeting with the following short meditation, or something like it. Have someone read the following aloud, allowing time in between instructions. You may even want to put on some relaxing music.

Close your eyes, and find a comfortable position. Try to take this time to focus on your breath for a few moments.

Imagine a loved one, and say to them, 'May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease.'

Imagine someone you do not know very well, and say to them 'May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease.'

Imagine those who you will never know, and say to them, 'May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease.'

And when you are ready, turn inward. Say to yourself, 'May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I be safe. May I live with ease.'
SHARING ARTWORK AND FOOD

Creating “Zine” Pages

At any event or meeting, provide participants with small pieces of paper and materials for writing, drawing, coloring, and collaging if possible. Choose a theme or several and offer time for participants to create a page (or several) for a zine on that topic. Invite group members to share out about their pages. Scan these pages or keep in a folder for future zine projects! You can then distribute your zine as a creative way to bring awareness to an issue your group is passionate about, or even sell for suggested donations of a few dollars to raise funds for a group project.

Creating Art with Recycled Materials

Consider collecting old corks, t-shirts, and other re-usable materials for future craft projects. In the past, we have been able to raise funds by selling artwork made from recycled materials (see our animal magnets made from recycled corks on the title page for Part III). Using recycled materials saves money and helps conserve precious resources. Set aside a day once in a while for interested participants to create and share their artwork with one another. These pieces can be used to decorate group meeting spaces or sold at fundraisers to raise money for group projects.

Potlucks!

Cooking and sharing delicious food with one another is a great way to connect with your group and leave time for non-work centered conversation. Even just bringing a few snacks to meetings makes the space more welcoming and relaxing. Make sure that the group is on the same page about what kinds of food to bring—especially in regards to animal products and food allergies!
Remembering Your Intentions

A Sacred Intention

“Sit in a quiet spot and relax. You might want to meditate on the questions that follow, or journal about them.

Ask yourself, What is sacred to me? What do I care about so strongly that I can’t bear to see it compromised or destroyed? What would I take a stand for? Risk myself for?

When you know the answer, consider for a moment what the world would be like if our social, political, and economic systems all cherished what is most sacred to you. In what ways do they already? In what ways would they need to change? What would change, in your daily life? In your community? In the world around you?

Can you describe that world in a few sentences or paragraphs?

Do you want to bring that world into being? Do you feel responsible toward it? If so, that is your sacred intention.

If not, what is your intention for your life? What are your goals?

Now consider how you spend your time and energies. Are your best energies directed toward bringing about your cherished vision of the world? Toward service of what is sacred to you?

If so, congratulations. Is there anything you need, support or opportunities or luck, to help you in that work? Who can you ask for support, in the human world? In the larger realms of the universe?

If not, what is blocking you? How would your life change if you were to put your best energies toward creating a world that cherishes what is sacred to you?

What do you need to make that change? Support? Opportunity? Courage? Luck? Who can you ask for support, in the human world? In the larger realms of the universe?

If you desire that change, affirm your sacred intention. Say, “It is my sacred intention to create a world that cherishes _______________.”

The Earth Path, Starhawk, p. 39
The grain required to make enough ethanol to fill your tank just once could feed a human being for an entire year.

Your point is...?
BOOKS

Organizing and Collaboration
- *Strategic Action for Animals* by Melanie Joy
- *Hungry for Peace: How you can help end poverty and war with Food Not Bombs* by Keith McHenry
- *The Empowerment Manual* by Starhawk
- *Organizing Cools the Planet* by Hilary Moore and Joshua Kahn Russell
- *The Power of Collective Wisdom* by Alan Briskin, Sheryl Erickson, John Ott, and Tom Callanan

Animals, Politics, and Society
- *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows* by Melanie Joy
- *Eating Animals* by Jonathan Safran Foer
- *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights* by Bob Torres
- *Sistah Vegan: Black female vegans speak on food, identity, health and society* by A. Breeze Harper
- *Sister Species: Women, Animals, and Social Justice* by Lisa Kemmerer
- *The Sexual Politics of Meat* by Carol J. Adams
- *Green is the New Red* by Will Potter
- *Defining Critical Animal Studies* by Nocella, Sorenson, Socha, and Matsuoka

Environmental & Food Justice
- *Soil Not Oil* by Vandana Shiva
- *Stolen Harvest* by Vandana Shiva
MOVIES AND WEBSITES

- Blackfish
- Bold Native
- Earthlings
- Food, Inc.
- Forks Over Knives
- The Ghosts in our Machine
- Speciesism: The Movie
- If a Tree Falls: The Story of the Earth Liberation Front
- The Witness

- http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org/journal-for-critical-animal-studies/
- http://www.greenisthenewred.com/blog/
- http://sistahvegan.com/
- http://www.carrism.org/
- http://opinionossoftheworld.com/
- http://www.satymag.com/jun05/jonesbridges.html
- http://vine.bravebirds.org/
- http://sistersofresistance.wordpress.com/about/
- http://www.understandingprejudice.org/readroom/animals.htm
Part V: Promotional Materials

Curious about where your food comes from?
Concerned about your diet and how it is affecting your health & the environment?
Want to promote the wellbeing of the earth, people, and animals?

Hungry for options?
Hungry for change?

JOIN THE MOVEMENT FOR REAL AND JUST FOOD IN FLAGSTAFF!
• Detailed Flyer
• Meeting Flyer
• 2013 Symposium Poster
• Zine Pages
• Really Real Food Challenge Brochure – For Students
• Really Real Food Challenge Brochure – For All Community Members
• First Friday Fundraiser Flyer
• First Year Seminar Flyer
TOTAL LIBERATION ACTION RESEARCH TEAM

The Total Liberation Action Research Team is a collective of students, artists, and community members who have come together asking the question: What can we do as activists to creatively address animal oppression? What are the connections between nonhuman and human oppression? What can be done to help create alliances between animal liberation activists and other social justice activists? How is animal liberation inseparable from the cultivation of sustainable and just communities?

TLART "champions a politics of total liberation which grasps the need for, and the inseparability of, human, nonhuman animal, and Earth liberation and freedom for all in one comprehensive, though diverse, struggle. To quote Martin Luther King Jr.: 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.'" (Best, Nocelle, Kohn, Gigliotti, & Kemmerer, 2007).

Our choice of the name "Total Liberation" reflects our shared belief that all oppression is interconnected and our collective vision for a creative activism that is holistic, compassionate, and inclusive of all living beings.

The objectives of TLART include cultivating spaces for the discussion of total liberation and the entanglements of human and non-human oppression; exploring, developing, and participating in decolonizing, anti-racist, queer, and feminist grassroots pedagogies & activism strategies addressing nonhuman oppression; collaborating with other ARTs and community organizations in cultivating a vision and practice of sustainable holistic justice & community organizing.

Weekly Meetings:
Thursdays, 6-7 pm
@ Firecreek Coffee, downtown.

For more information please contact us at mp787@nau.edu, ks2387@nau.edu, or mle65@nau.edu or visit us on facebook at https://www.facebook.com/totallib
Total Liberation
Interested in promoting the liberation of humans and nonhumans through a holistic, creative, compassionate approach to activism? Join the newly formed Total Liberation ART for our next meeting!

When:
Thursdays, 6-7 pm

Where:
Fire creek Coffee Company
22 East Route 66

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" - Martin Luther King Jr.

Visit or contact us at www.facebook.com/totallib for more info!

Total Liberation
Interested in promoting the liberation of humans and nonhumans through a holistic, creative, compassionate approach to activism? Join the newly formed Total Liberation ART for our next meeting!

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Visit or contact us at www.facebook.com/totallib for more info!
Total Liberation Action Research Team
Vegan? Vegetarian? Creative? Compassionate?
Interested in activism for social/environmental justice? Animal rights?

Come to a Total Liberation Action Research Team Meeting, be a part of the action! For more information, visit or contact us.

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/TOTALLIB

TOTAL
Liberation
ZINE

ANIMALS
ARE THE
MOST VULNERABLE
OF THE
DOWNTRODDEN

* EATING ANIMALS

DOWNER

animals that can no longer stand, and because they are no longer usable for meat are left to die, slowly

* EATING ANIMALS
why is taste, the crudest of our senses, exempted from the ethical rules that govern our other senses? why doesn't a horny person have as strong a claim to raping an animal as a hungry one does to killing and eating it?

* EATING ANIMALS IS A RIGHT!

EAT / DEMAND ACCESS / SUPPORT
- LOCAL
- ECOLOGICAL
- ORGANIC
- SUSTAINABLE
- NATIVE
- SEASONAL

LEONARDO DA VINCI

MY BODY WILL NOT BE A TRASH CAN FOR OTHER CREATURES

"Not only has our land been colonized, but so have our bodies. How? Through the imposition of a heavily meat, dairy & processed food diet, coupled with a capitalist, patriarchal food agricultural production paradigm."

- CLAUDIA SERRATO
  FOUNDER OF DECOLONIAL FOOD FOR THOUGHT
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An injury to one is an injury to all.

Compassion over Greed.

In the words of Leo Tolstoy, "As long as we are food, we are in danger of being eaten. And to act so is to think of our own life only. Therefore, if we are food, we must act for others. A man can live and be healthy without killing animals for food."

The diagram illustrates the concept of compassion over greed, emphasizing the importance of living in harmony with nature and avoiding harm to other living beings.
**But where do you get all your protein?**

There are lots of sources of vegan proteins!
- Greens: spinach, kale, peas, beans, broccoli
- Peanut butter
- Hemp, soy milk, almond milk
- Peanuts, almonds, cashews
- Quinoa, lentils, tofu, tempeh, sprouted grain bread, oatmeal, chickpeas
- Edamame, sesame, sunflower, flax, poppy seeds are just a few options...

"**Decolonization is any lived experience which does not legitimate colonization.**"

- Claudia Serrato
  Founder of DeColonial Food
  For Thought

"Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet."

- Albert Einstein

This world is the locus of the sacred.
F.A.Q. ABOUT VEGANISM!

1. Why don't you eat eggs or milk?
   It's not that the animals used are killed; actually, all female cows & chickens are eventually killed—once they are "spent"—when they reach sexual maturity. All are then disposed of in whatever way is most convenient for the farmer, be it by gassing or drowning. The eggs & milk are by-products of this process.

2. Every year millions of Americans celebrate the GENOCIDE of Native Peoples.

THANKSGIVING

Language impacts the way we think about other animals...

Formed animals are not—
at their essence—meant to serve as agricultural commodities. They are defined as livestock, but that is not what they are. They are not farm animals. They are formed by humans.

Each is an individual.

A Someone

not

a something

For as long as Man continues to be ruthless destroyer of Lower Living Beings, He will never know Health or Peace.

As long as Men massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed, He who sows the seeds of murder Arm cannot reap joy & love.

Pythagoras
6th Century B.C.

Sow seeds of Love & Compassion
A lot of focus of veganism is on food...

But have you considered?
- clothes
- footwear
- soap
- toiletries
- accessories

Be conscious in all aspects of your life 😊
CHALLENGE
REAL FOOD
REALLY
THE

flagstaff
support just & delicious

REAL FOOD
FOR REAL
JUST FOOD
JOIN THE MOVEMENT
BEAT THE SYSTEM

people and partners
want to promote the health of our nation's
by providing nutritious food that is
made from whole foods.

REAL FOOD
REALLY
THE

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HEALTH & JUSTICE FOR THE PLANET

The parallel relationship of those with whom we share the planet on our ability to secure food is a food system that is dominated by global systems. It is imperative that we use the power and knowledge from our food system to bring about a sustainable and healthy food system.

HEALTH & JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE

The reality food challenge is a call for action. It is a call for us to support our local food systems and to use our food to bring about a healthier and more sustainable world. This is not only a call for action, but it is also a call for change. We must work together to create a world where food is accessible to all and where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

What is the reality food challenge?

It is a call for action. It is a call for us to support our local food systems and to use our food to bring about a healthier and more sustainable world. This is not only a call for action, but it is also a call for change. We must work together to create a world where food is accessible to all and where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

Smart city food challenge

This is not only a call for action, but it is also a call for change. We must work together to create a world where food is accessible to all and where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

In order to achieve this, we must first address the issue of food waste. This is a problem that needs to be tackled at the local level, and it is one that we can all do our part to solve. We can start by changing our own habits, and by supporting local food systems that are committed to reducing food waste.

Food is a human right, and everyone has the right to have access to healthy and nutritious food. This is a right that we must fight for, and it is a right that we can all do our part to protect. We must work together to create a world where food is accessible to all and where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life. This is the reality food challenge.
UNTIL ALL ARE FREE

EAT DELICIOUS VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN FOOD!

SUPPORT LOCAL ARTISTS AND ACTIVISTS DANCE!

JUST FOOD IN RAGS/TARR!

JOIN THE MOVEMENTS FOR ANIMAL LIBERATION AND

LOCAL ACTIVIST ARTWORK

TOTAL LIBERATION ZINES

FREE PRINTING

MORE TO COME AT THE FAIR LIBERATION

FOR SALE/DONATION

HE S. SAN FRANCISCO ST.

FROM 5 PM TO 9 PM

APRIL 4TH, 2024

FRIYAT MORNING GLORY

MORNING GLORY AT THE TOTAL LIBERATION ACTION RESEARCH TEAM INVITE YOU TO

WINE AND TEA

COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE CHARTER

LIVE MUSIC & PARTY

GREAT YOUR OWN SING SONGS

FREE

FIRST FRIDAY AT MORNING GLORY
“UNTIL ALL ARE FREE”

Coming This Fall 2024: Enroll Now!

—CEZAR CHAVEZ

“WHEN WE HAVE BECOME NONVIOLENT TOWARDS ALL LIFE WILL WE HAVE LEARNED TO LIVE WELL WITH OTHERS.”

Participating in the Total Liberation Action Research Team!

Planning Actions, Fundraisers, and Events

Vegan and Vegetarian Cooking
Volunteering at Local Animal Shelters
Crafting & Sharing Public Art & Activism

**Gain Hands-On Experience In**

FSL21: Animal Rights - Holistic Justice

Attention Animal Lovers & Wannabe Activists!
APPENDIX F: “A Pink and Just Community Model” Values Statement

**Values Statement**

The Pink and Just Community calls for revolutionary decolonization, knowing that this land was stolen from indigenous humans and nonhumans through colonial genocide.

The Pink and Just Community stands in groundless solidarity with all that is fluid, peculiar, spontaneous, shape shifting, uncivilized, and mysterious in its resistance to the domination and enclosure of our world, imaginations, bodies, cultures, knowledge, and selves. In the Pink and Just Community, Animal Liberation is Total Liberation.

The Pink and Just Community transcends anthropocentrism, neoliberalism, consumerism, standardization, commodification, industrialization, instrumentalism, reductionism, and black and white thinking.

The Pink and Just Community reclaims the feminine and playful power of the color pink in ALL shades—as the color of the womb, the color of flesh, the color of the erotic, the color of sunrises and sunsets, the color of cycles, the color of lips, light, and love; the color of the matrix of life. In the Pink and Just Community, PINK is powerful.

The Pink and Just Community re-members the discarded, the forgotten, the silenced, the caged, the “ugly”, the silly, the hysterical, the strange, the furious, the still dreaming, the still wild parts of self.

The Pink and Just Community is a place of collective leadership; a place of becoming; a collective work of art.

The Pink and Just Community asks a lot of questions.

The Pink and Just Community respects and celebrates diversity of race, gender, age, ability, sexuality, religion, and species as well as diversity of gifts, needs, desires, experience, and ways of knowing.

The Pink and Just Community celebrates peculiar, mindful, critical, compassionate, holistic, intersectional, and creative consciousness.

The Pink and Just Community celebrates!

The Pink and Just Community is de-centralized and DIY.

The Pink and Just Community creatively and justly shares and sources space, time, energy, food, water, shelter, clothing, power, and information—which it views as precious, common, resources—NOT enclosable commodities.

The Pink and Just Community is rooted in radical acts of reciprocity.

The Pink and Just Community is home to those with wild dreams and the freedom in which to realize them.

The Pink and Just Community is not for sale.