

End Speciesism

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77 billion. What does this number represent? It represents the number of animals that are killed for food every year. Today, I'm going to talk about something that I think is very important. Over the past two months, I've completely cut meat – including fish and dairy products – out of my daily diet. However, I used to eat animals almost every day.

10 years ago, I adopted my dog, and he is my best friend. I've loved animals since I was a child. However, one day, I ate steak while watching a video of dogs and cats. When I was 14, I had work experience at a livestock farm. Cows there were so nice and adorable, but I ate beef for lunch at the livestock farm. We are taught that we should be nice to animals, and like me, many of you like animals. However, two videos made me realize how horrible what I have done to animals was. One of them is shared on Instagram by Dante, an animal conservationist in Okinawa. In the video, chickens are confined in a small cage, and pigs are abandoned even though they are still alive. Another video was about the sad truth of dairy castles. In the video, cows are being tied up and a female cow being raped to produce as much milk as possible. The videos shocked my heart because these

animals have wants, needs, happiness, and sadness like us. However, they can't tell us that they want us to stop hurting them. The meat I enjoyed eating was a part of an animal who wanted to live. A cow was suffering for my milk. When I think about them, I feel angry at myself; however, they made me realize that killing animals for food was discrimination. So, I decided that I was one of those who would raise their voices for animals.

According to the official Okinawa website, Okinawan people eat "Agu" pork that is a traditional Ryukyu pig, and it came from China 600 years ago. Also, in Okinawa, even goats are eaten. In short, a lot of animals have been killed for food on this island over the years.

So, what can you and I do as individuals and what difference can we make? According to the Nippon.com website, annual consumption of meat per person in Japan in 2016 was 31.6 kilograms, and this was the highest on record. According to the Japan Dairy Industry Association, annual consumption of milk per person in Japan in 2019 was 31.1 kilograms. That means you can help reduce consumption of meat and milk by quitting buying or by cutting down on how often you eat or drink them. Have you ever heard of "Meatless Monday"? It is a global movement that encourages

people to reduce meat in their daily lives. You can help animals by not having meat only on Mondays.

Let's say you are given this option: kill animals for yourself or save them. I'm sure that most people would choose the latter. All that is left is to put words and thoughts into action. For me, veganism is about equality. We have to fight against speciesism just like we fight against racism or sexism. I hope my speech will change the way you think about animals and has been a good opportunity to think about them. Thank you.