

## EXTENDING OUR CIRCLE OF COMPASSION TO PIGS

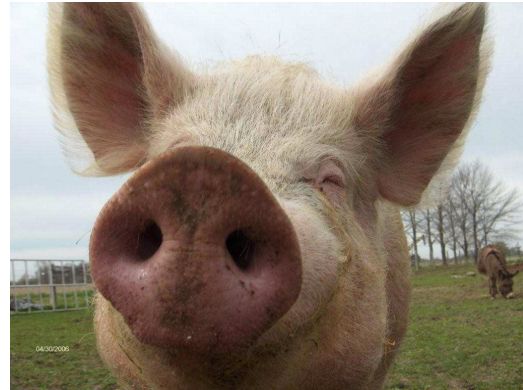
### Introduction

That TORONTO PIG SAVE even exists hints at a sort of historical irony. That is because Toronto used to be known as “Hogtown,” due to its massive slaughter facilities, especially for “processing” pigs. A sizeable hog killing plant continues in its squalid and horrors-filled existence near Bathurst and King Streets here in Toronto, my own city of residence. Pigs mean something special to my wife, Cassandra Prince, and myself, and part of the reasons for that takes us out of Toronto to somewhere near Stratford, Ontario. It is the home of the Cedar Row Sanctuary. Cedar Row has a number of large hogs, as well as pot-belly pigs, goats, donkeys, sheep, chickens, turkeys, ducks, and barn cats too. In the past it has hosted rabbits and geese.



a happy pig luxuriating at a sanctuary

Big Tom was, well, the biggest. He died recently, but in life, he might have weighed as much as 1,200 pounds, and from his snout to the tip of his tail he was about the length of a double bed.



Big Tom

If he were aggressive like so many speciesists warn about pigs (it is even in the Wikipedia article about pigs as we shall see), he could have killed me just by rolling over me. But he was a gentle giant. So are a few of the other hogs who are also rather large. They love to eat their foods and to wallow in the mud. Their eyes somehow—I know not how—seem filled with alertness, intelligence, and a concern for things going on around them. The pot-belly pigs have eyes obscured under folds of fat. That is why Gary Larson draws pigs that way! These animals, like other nonhuman denizens of the Row, are friendly, and that relates to the fact that they are our friends. We don't eat our friends. And we would not be party to their deaths unless by some misfortune euthanasia should seem appropriate. Anyway, we are not the regular caregivers, who look after the animals the rest of the year, aside from a week

off when we see to the farm, with its big barn and rambling pasturelands.

Pigs are smart, as you have probably heard, but they need to learn things just like us, such as when recent arrival Daisy got a tough lesson that you can sunburn if you wallow out in a mudhole without enough time staying under shelter. However, humans need to learn things too, and that is partly why this essay was written. Anita Krajnc, the driving force and originator of TORONTO PIG SAVE, I am pleased to say, was inspired to adopt animal rights after I screened *The Animals Film* on the University of Toronto campus. If I can reach you, that would also be a victory for justice and compassion, or so I believe.

There are 23,400,000 hogs killed every year in Canada.<sup>1</sup> The Toronto Vegetarian Association estimates that the average meat-eater consumes 29 pigs in his or her lifetime.<sup>2</sup> People are responsible for the annihilation of pigs such as Big Tom, Stella, Charlotte, Toot (who has now also passed) and the rest at Cedar Row.

I hasten to add, though, that pigs are all unique and varied, just as humans are. And you learn this fast but also progressively at the farm as you interact with the animals. Cleveland Amory wrote: “Man is infinite in his capacity to rationalize his rapacity, especially when it comes to something he wants to eat, or wear.” We will find no shortage of rationalizations for what I would call *atrocities* in the pages ahead. What we are looking for instead is simply being *reasonable* about how we treat pigs. Is the Cedar Row more an embodiment of sound ethical reasoning than the—and I say this deliberately—*horrors* of pig

rearing, transport, and slaughter? Yes, or so I will argue.



Charlotte at Cedar Row: jumping up onto the side of a pen to greet a human in the barn

Yet people have for centuries, without even realizing it, been conditioned to perceive pigs negatively. That pertains to Amory’s observation about rationalizations. If you have a negative perception of a pig, it is easier to see that animal killed for some passing sensations of taste. I think it is necessary to de-program people of the brainwashing that they have unwittingly received since childhood. People have become unreasonably *disaffected* with pigs, and so need a kind of anti-disaffection treatment, if you will. In place of species-derogation, we may find species-appreciation. The polar opposite of cruel and hateful stereotypes is an

attitude of sensitive loving-kindness for all.

There is a difference between being *speciesist* and *species-sensitive*. Speciesism is a term that is akin to racism or sexism. It is a form of negative and unjust discrimination. For example, according to speciesist mindsets, animal suffering does not count equally, on a par with the suffering of animals of the human species. In fact, animal suffering often does not count at all. Or else speciesists might *say* the suffering matters, but then carry on practically, and hypocritically, as if the hardship for animals is not even a significant consideration. People do that every day when they buy parts of spent bodies that once agonized under factory farming. Anyway, it is not speciesist to focus on one species of animal at a time to get an appreciation of each sort of animal. Speciesism is generally harmful. But species-sensitivity may be beneficial. For example, caregivers need to know how to treat animals of different species according to their characteristic needs and wants. For instance, we were taught that the sheep at Cedar Row could die if they eat the pigs' food, which sheep like to do. Veterinarians also, obviously, need to be species-sensitive in their diagnoses and treatments. It is not only scientific to be candid about species differences. It also helps us to respect animals, and deepens our aesthetic appreciation of animals on top of it all.

There are endearing traits to the pig species, even though pigs have been derided as filthy, stupid, greedy, aggressive, vicious, and so forth. I would not be surprised if specialized pig sanctuaries have been started by people with a deep and wide species-

appreciation for hogs. I think it is important to try to build up a little well-deserved affection for pigs, just because there has been so much hate-mongering towards these as with other animals. Farley Mowat, in his classic narrative, *Never Cry Wolf*, artfully debunked myths through his careful observations of arctic wolves, which showed how these beings eat mainly mice, show *altruism* towards foxes, and so many other legend-levelers.

Pigs are of the genus *sus*, which is funny, because they do look a little bit like Dr. Seuss characters. They appeared on this Earth<sup>3</sup> some 36 million years ago.<sup>4</sup> We tamed some of them only about 5,000-7,000 years ago.<sup>5</sup> The Judeo-Christian "civilization" is supposed to be about that old, although in India, the Jain religion is thought to be older by far according to tradition. The Jains taught universal nonharming that extends to animals, including, naturally, pigs.

The naturalist, W. H. Hudson offered his own appreciation of pigs:

I have a friendly feeling towards pigs generally, and consider them the most intelligent of beasts, not excepting the elephant and the anthropoid ape....I also like his attitude towards all other creatures, especially man. [*sic*—humanity—DS] He [*sic*] is not suspicious, or shrinkingly submissive, like horses, cattle, and sheep; not an impudent devil-may-care like the goat; nor hostile like the goose; nor condescending like the cat; nor a flattering parasite like the dog. He [*sic*] views us from a totally

different, a sort of democratic, standpoint as fellow-citizens and brothers, and takes it for granted, or grunted, that we understand his language, and without servility or insolence he has a natural, pleasant, camarados-all or hail-fellow-well-met air with us.<sup>6</sup>

Although Hudson's piece here is in many ways appealing for its special affection, it does itself play into speciesist stereotypes, accusing goats and others of various vices, and referring to dogs as "parasitic," even though they can hardly help their profound dependence on human beings, in the domestic sphere at any rate. That is due to humans more than the dogs, who are ultimately ruled by force, even if kindness also shapes canine behaviour. However, I can confirm the general companionability of hogs from my experiences at Cedar Row. That said, hogs are highly intelligent and discriminating, and I would not pretend to have comparable affection or understanding concerning the pigs that the Pooles have, that is, the couple who regularly tend to Cedar Row.

In keeping with trying to undo our widespread disaffection with pigs, based on rather hateful beliefs, I will deconstruct those prejudices. I do not hesitate overmuch to compare stirring up hatred of hogs to how Hitler excited antipathy towards the Jews, including many of my murdered relatives—among many other sorts of victims—making it easier to harm those he hated without any significant conscience.<sup>7</sup> I will proceed to debunk popular myths that are part of speciesist contempt for pigs. Then I will look at harms done to pigs

and deconstruct, too, purported justifications for such practices.

### **Ironic Myths, Iconic Facts**

I use "iconic" here in the sense of "portrait." The facts converge to give us an idea of pigs in general. Still, each one is unique, as I can assure you from live, everyday acquaintanceship. Pigs are much maligned, so let us try more fully to align our own thoughts with the truth in this matter.

The reality of pigs is widely degraded due to narrow-minded myths about them. Most of the myths are negative ways of regarding hogs, but a few reinforce their degradation by producing unmerited complacency.

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**MYTH:** Pigs are especially disgusting because they are so **filthy**.

**FACT:** Pigs have no sweat glands,<sup>8</sup> or perhaps only a few sweat glands.<sup>9</sup> There are the sayings of sweating and/or smelling "like a pig," but hogs actually have no odour because they do not significantly sweat.<sup>10</sup> Pigs do roll in the mud to cool off, and a layer of dried mud protects them from the sun.<sup>11</sup> Pigs, given the chance, maintain their toilets very far from their eating areas.<sup>12</sup> Even piglets a few hours old will leave the nest in order to relieve themselves.<sup>13</sup> Thus John Robbins writes that pigs "do not deserve to be referred to disparagingly as 'dirty' animals. They should more appropriately be called 'earthy' animals, for it is simply the good Mother Earth they love."<sup>14</sup>

**IRONY:** Some say that pigs are in fact the cleanest domestic animals in the

world.<sup>15</sup> Even more ironically, people keep the vast majority of pigs in the utter filth and degradation of factory farms, as you can learn from any number of sources. There, pigs do not have a chance to relieve themselves away from their eating and resting spots. They urinate and defecate often onto a wooden or concrete slatted floor, and are never free from this dirt or its harsh ammonia and other fumes. The pollution is on the pigs and in the air, and they cannot escape it, even though they would and do if given the choice.

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**MYTH:** Pigs, like all nonhuman animals, are **stupid**. That is why they have no rights.

**FACT:** It is no accident that pigs were in charge in George Orwell's social satire, *Animal Farm*.<sup>16</sup> According to one scientist, pigs rank #4 in intelligence behind chimpanzees, dolphins, and elephants.<sup>17</sup> Hogs have an excellent sense of direction and can find their way home over long distances.<sup>18</sup> Pigs also watch television,<sup>19</sup> although perhaps that is no absolute indicator of intelligence! In one study (I would not say that these sorts of researches are morally justifiable given my animal rights views), pigs



Siobhan Poole sharing a moment with Puddles at the Cedar Row Sanctuary

were trained to move a cursor on a video screen with their snouts. When the pigs used the cursors again, they distinguished between the scribbles they already knew and ones they saw for the first time. The pigs learned this skill as fast as chimpanzees.<sup>20</sup> Professor Stanley Curtis of Pennsylvania State University observed: "Pigs are able to focus with an intensity I have never seen in a chimp."<sup>21</sup> In another experiment, pigs were taught the meanings of simple words and phrases. Several years later, the instructions were repeated, and the pigs still remembered what to do.<sup>22</sup> Even in speciesist experiments, the intelligence of pigs shines right through the shadows of speciesist prejudices. Pigs pick up tricks faster than dogs.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it takes a couple of weeks to house-train a dog, but only three days to teach a piglet to relieve himself or herself appropriately.<sup>24</sup> It is by now a commonplace, in fact, that pigs are more intelligent than dogs. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' fact sheet on pigs and Chris McLaughlin both cite cognitive science research concluding that pigs are smarter even than three-year-old human children.<sup>25</sup>

**IRONY:** Intelligence, or rationality as it is usually designated in philosophy, is the #1 type of grounds for discrimination against animals, as I show elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> We just saw that pig intelligence ranks with three-year-old children. It would be *intelligent* to be self-consistent. Yet do pigs have the same rights as such human offspring? Far from it, even though some of those children, due to illness, may have no chance of growing into "more intelligent" adulthood. Yet if humans were morally consistent, then pigs would have the same broad rights as these young children, although in fact we shall



see that denying rights based on “intelligence” can be impugned on other grounds. (No, hogs will never need the right to vote.<sup>27</sup>) I ask: how *intelligent* is it to argue the following?

1. A given sentient being—human or other—has comparatively less intelligence.
2. Therefore we have a license to harm that sentient being.

This argument is totally illogical. Having less intelligence does not provide a license to harm. Yet a license to harm is “needed,” since these estimable animals are indeed harmed in settings of agriculture, slaughter, science, and so on. And lesser intelligence is indeed leaned upon as a would-be justification. Again, if we were “intelligently” consistent with this argument, then we would also have a license to harm human adults who are especially disadvantaged in terms of intelligence.

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**MYTH:** Pigs are **greedy**. That is part of what is meant when we call a human a “pig.”

**FACT:** If you watch *Peaceable Kingdom*, which is Tribe of Heart’s film about modern farming as contrasted with the relatively idyllic lives of animals at the Farm Sanctuary in Watkins Glen, New York State (a much bigger facility than Cedar Row by far), you will see some pigs at feeding time. The *William Tell Overture* is furiously played as the pigs are allowed through the gates to access the feed troughs. Do they love food? Yes. You can see it in their excited race to their food in that film. Do we call that “greedy” in the case of humans? Not necessarily, and not at all

if we are concerned not to spray around unjustified insults. According to John Robbins, pigs will never dangerously overeat even if given access to unlimited food,<sup>28</sup> unless they are fed a drug such as Hog-Crave on factory farms.<sup>29</sup>

**IRONY:** Humans often do dangerously overeat given relatively unrestricted chances to eat. Also: “The amount of grain fed to U.S. hogs could by itself easily feed every single human being who will die of starvation on our planet this year.”<sup>30</sup> It is only greed, including as politicized, that prevents us from caring for our destitute neighbours. It is politely called “lack of political will” though. It is factory farmers who are greedy, and we will see that the cruelties they impose on pigs are all designed to save money. And there is big money involved in such enterprises, to the extent of \$40 billion dollars per annum in the U.S. alone.<sup>31</sup>

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**MYTH:** Pigs are **morally inferior**. That is why they are given no rights.

**FACT:** In Houston, Texas, an 11-year-old boy named Anthony Melton was drowning in a lake. A pig named Priscilla sensed the boy’s distress and swam out to him. The child took hold of Priscilla’s leash, and then the pig towed the terrified boy back to shore.<sup>32</sup> In humans we would call this morally praiseworthy. It is only the endless capacity to rationalize harms to creatures we eat, which Cleveland Amory referred to, that allows us to think otherwise in the case of hogs. There is no reason to doubt that Priscilla felt compassion, a morally praiseworthy trait, in relation to Anthony, and rationally contrived a clever plan to save the child. There is no gene or “instinct” for this sort of action.

Even if such hogs will never be moral theorists, they may still be ethically virtuous. Indeed, most moral theorists in effect subscribe to the simple license to harm argument spelled out above, at least implicitly, so being an “ethical theorist” is no guarantee that one is intelligently ethical across species in the way that Priscilla was. No doubt if a child saved someone like that but were totally incapable of theory, she would, all the same, be praised as morally virtuous, according to what she might achieve ethically. The same should go for Priscilla, and the endless numbers of other pigs who also care about others, like the aforementioned gentle giant, Big Tom. Yet do most humans’ ethics, like Priscilla’s, similarly go across the species-barrier so that we go to considerable lengths to save pigs’ lives? On the contrary, many do not even bother to stop buying so-called “pork” at the grocery store or the butcher’s.

**IRONY:** Humans pontificate about human moral superiority, and yet pigs are uncompassionately subject to abuse at will. The beloved pig who played in the older, black-and-white television comedy, *Green Acres*, was eaten by the cast. Pigs are made into alcoholics at the University of Missouri over a period of many years, with one hog drinking as much as four quarts of vodka per day.<sup>33</sup> In a completely ruthless “study,” at Animal Behavior Enterprises in Hot Springs, Arkansas, Bob Bailey surgically implanted wooden blocks, ball bearings, and aluminum cylinders in the abdomens of pigs, just to see how much they could carry around—a military-funded experiment.<sup>34</sup> In other studies, pigs are subject to poison, hammers, blow-torches, sleep deprivation, and starvation,<sup>35</sup> among other horrors. How

moral is it to subject these pigs to harm when we would not harm equally intelligent humans?

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**MYTH:** Pigs are **aggressive**. On the Wikipedia article on pigs, it is stated that pigs can be aggressive and that injuries are relatively common where hogs are reared.

**FACT:** Pigs are being judged as though they are morally vicious. Was Priscilla vicious? Are the hogs on Cedar Row? Plainly this is not the case. Others find: “Domestic pigs are rarely aggressive. The only exceptions are sows with a young litter and boars if provoked.”<sup>36</sup> If pigs were so “aggressive,” they would not be so widely adopted as “pets” or “best friends” like dogs. This would not occur if pigs were inherently aggressive. Ironically, just as speciesist experiments prove that pigs are intelligent, so does speciesist “pet-keeping” help disprove the speciesist myth that pigs are remarkably “aggressive.”

**IRONY:** If being aggressive means being willing to harm, frighten, etc., then we will see, in our look at factory “farming” pigs, that humans are terribly aggressing against these animals, without any need whatsoever.

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**MYTH:** Pigs are kept according to the laws that ensure **animal welfare**. In the United States, the National Pork Producers Council assures us: “Pork producers have always recognized their moral obligation to provide humane care for their animals.”<sup>37</sup>

**FACT:** See below the facts about factory farming, which involves

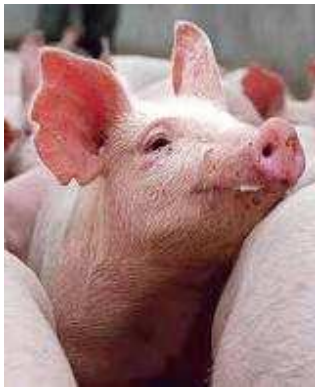
extreme, inherent cruelties for the vast majority of cases of hog-rearing.

**IRONY:** Government, industry, and some naïve members of the public call how hogs are treated “animal welfare.” *Animal illfare* is more like it.<sup>38</sup>

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**MYTH:** Pigs do not **need** any more than they are given on factory farms. Otherwise, if their needs were not met, they would never make it to slaughter.

**FACT:** Pigs play and are highly social, enjoying dozing while in contact with each other.



Mother pigs sing to their young when they are nursing.<sup>39</sup> As we shall see, pigs do not live well at all on factory farms.

**IRONY:** In terms of needs, humans do not *need* to eat “pork,” that is, pigs’ corpses, although many people use this notion as a rationalization. In fact, eating animals is bad for your health,<sup>40</sup> since meat-eating males have a 47% increased chance of dying of a heart attack, and meat-eaters in general face the odds of having an increase of 40% in the overall rate of cancer.<sup>41</sup> Rates are also significantly elevated for arthritis, asthma, constipation, diabetes (adult onset type), gallstones, gout, kidney

stones, multiple sclerosis, obesity, osteoporosis, salmonellosis, senile dementia, strokes, ulcers, and much more. Also ironically, when we think of human needs being satisfied, that includes their dignity. A **total** denial of dignity is evident in factory farming, so of course those hogs’ needs in the nonspeciesist sense are not met. Keeping a human in those conditions gives the lie to the idea that factory farming meets any but bare survival “needs”: and many hogs do *not* survive the rigours of such treatment. However, high death rates are tolerated because overall there is such intensive mass “production” that these practices remain profitable in spite of all of the suffering and death that are involved.

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**MYTH:** Pigs are environmental enemies. For example, again according to the Wikipedia article on pigs, the Invasive Species Specialist Group has listed pigs as being in the top 100 worst invasive species.

**FACT:** Pigs have not “invaded” environments. Humans have neglected to keep pigs properly and the hogs have escaped from or been released from human “care.”

**IRONY:** The environmental costs of factory farming with pigs are staggering. According to John Robbins, “a relatively small operation with 2,000 pigs will [in any given year] produce close to 30 tons of manure and more than that of urine.”<sup>42</sup> Pig farms typically do not have conventional sewage systems and end up polluting local waterways and water tables. Factory farmed pigs are also highly productive of methane, a greenhouse gas contributing to global



warming. Indeed, animal agriculture is the biggest contributor to global warming, one of the worst environmental calamities of our time (and that is saying a lot), at 18%, higher than all forms of human transport combined.<sup>43</sup> Hog farms also result in nitrates entering the surrounding water systems. This can cause methemoglobinemia, a condition in which the blood can no longer carry oxygen effectively.<sup>44</sup> Infants are at the greatest risk for this disease.<sup>45</sup>

It is an outright insult for one human to call another a “pig.” It is a favorite term of abuse as applied to police officers, although not only these people. It is clear why insulting connotations are carried by the term “pig.” They are widely considered to be filthy, greedy, stupid, aggressive enviro-enemies. These things are true if pigs can fly.



It is no accident that William Golding, in his classic novel, *The Lord of the Flies*, shows how human civilization is a thin veneer after some school-boys crash-land onto an island without any adults to supervise them. The kids degenerate into utter savagery, and the wild hogs on the island bear the full brunt of the

children’s barbarism, as does, indeed, a murdered boy unaffectionately referred to in the novel as “Piggy.”

### **Cruelty Charges against Factory Farming**

Wherever Western technology dominates, factory farming intrudes on the scene eventually, which involves people doing to pigs and others that which is filthy, greedy, unintelligent in a moral sense, aggressive, immorally prejudicial, animal illfare rather than animal welfare, and environmentally destructive. According to PETA, more than 90% of pigs are now raised on factory farms.<sup>46</sup> If what I have read and heard elsewhere is true, then that is now a real understatement. Robbins notes that some farms have more than 100,000 hogs at a time,<sup>47</sup> which is a tenth of a million. The profit motive causes true greed to result in all of the degenerate practices of intensive hog farming. As I note about factory farming elsewhere:

It is usually thought that there is more money to be made in confining animals by cramming them into minimal indoor spaces (less rent or land costs), in feeding them awful food (which is cheaper), keeping them in filth (rather than paying for cleaning), letting them suffer stifling, toxic air and extremes of hot or cold (rather than pay for adequate regulation of the atmosphere in factory farms, transport vehicles, or slaughter facilities), failing to attend to their medical needs (to offset veterinary costs), and

transporting and killing them forcefully and hurriedly (because workers are paid by the hour and meat is sold by the pound).<sup>48</sup>

In *Hog Farm Management*, it is written: “What we are trying to do is modify the animal’s environment for maximum profit.”<sup>49</sup> As Karen Davis observes, it would be hard to design environments that could be harsher even out of sadism, in which animals could survive for so long, under so much hardship.<sup>50</sup>

The mechanistic approach to pig-rearing is unmistakable. René Descartes, the French philosopher and mathematician, literally believed that animals are mindless machines who cannot even feel pain. On factory farms, it is not assumed that animals cannot suffer. Rather, that fact is considered irrelevant in the greedy pursuit of profits. Therefore, animals are afforded the same consideration that would be the case if they *were* just biological machines.

On factory farms, pigs appear regimented, like cars in a parking lot.<sup>51</sup> The farmers even speak of treating the pigs as machines. They like to call themselves “pork production engineers.”<sup>52</sup> Consider this quotation from the trade journal, *Hog Farm Management*: “Forget the pig is an animal. Treat him just like a machine in a factory. Schedule treatments like you would lubrication. Breeding season like the first step in an assembly line. And marketing like the delivery of finished goods.”<sup>53</sup> Even the United States Department of Agriculture views any sow as “a pig manufacturing unit.”<sup>54</sup> The corporate manager with Wall’s Meat Company wrote: “The breeding sow

should be thought of, and treated as, a valuable piece of machinery whose function is to pump out baby pigs like a sausage machine.”<sup>55</sup>

There is such a thing as crimes against humanity. These are usually severe assaults on human dignity. They apply even when degrading and otherwise harmful behaviours accord with, or are even required by, the laws of rogue states. A classic example is Nazi Germany. A more recent instance is to be found in treatments doled out to Iraqis during the United States’ illegal invasion and occupation of that country. Well I say that there are **crimes against animality**, of which crimes against humanity are but one species. I will express a list of charges of especially cruel, moral crimes against pigs in their rearing, transport, and slaughter:

#### ***Rearing:***

- (1) Sows are confined to breeding stalls for as long as four years, often tethered or engaged so that they can barely move.<sup>56</sup>



a helpless sow languishes in what the hog industry terms an “iron maiden”

- (2) Piglets are ripped away from their mothers after a few weeks.

- Naturally, sows would raise and love their little ones for a much longer period. Both sows and piglets grieve this early weaning and forced separation.<sup>57</sup>
- (3) Runts are killed by having their heads smashed against a concrete floor.<sup>58</sup>
  - (4) Pigs' tails are cut off, teeth ripped off at the ends with pliers, males are castrated with pliers, and their ears are notched for labeling purposes. The tails are cut since otherwise the pigs might go mad from overcrowding and cannibalize each other, often starting with the tail.<sup>59</sup> All "surgeries" are extremely painful, and all are without anesthesia almost universally.<sup>60</sup>
  - (5) Pigs are kept in so-called "bacon bins," with stalls that are a mere seven square feet, which is just enough to stand up or lie down. Indeed, the animals have nothing to do but eat, sleep, stand up, or lie down,<sup>61</sup> even though as noted above, they are highly intelligent, playful, and social in nature. They are exquisitely capable of being bored. Here again a species-trait, namely pigs' intelligent engagement with the world, is integral to how we should consider treating this particular sort of animal. One British farmer wrote to *Farmer's Weekly* that he let some pigs have free range around a barn, and they would play all around the building, chasing each other up and down the stairs.<sup>62</sup>
  - (6) Pigs typically must stand or lie all day on metal or concrete slats, and stand or sleep on wire mesh for the first 4-6 months,<sup>63</sup> all of which is contrived so that their feces and urine drops below. They are very rarely provided with straw bedding due to the expense involved.
  - (7) There is typically no veterinary treatment for leg injuries, skin bruises, respiratory illness, and so on, which are standard.<sup>64</sup> Pneumonia, dysentery, cholera, and trichinosis are common diseases afflicting hogs in these settings.<sup>65</sup> Parasites, viruses, and bacterial infections are also endemic.<sup>66</sup> As well, lethal heart attacks are common. That is unsurprising given that the pigs are treated so heartlessly.
  - (8) Pigs have to suffer being kept deliberately overheated so that they will be inactive and thus fatter at slaughter.
  - (9) Pigs are subject to such extreme stress that they may freeze up, afraid to move, eat, or drink, or else may be in a constant, panicked motion, a perversion of the need to escape.
  - (10) Pigs can detect root vegetables even while they are still underground, but are constantly forced to breathe air that is rife with excrement and ammonia.<sup>67</sup>
  - (11) Their diet is a vile swill featuring even their own feces and is always filled with drugs.<sup>68</sup>
- Transport:**
- (1) Many pigs die of heat exhaustion in summer<sup>69</sup>
  - (2) Many pigs get frozen to the sides of trucks in the winter<sup>70</sup>
  - (3) According to industry reports, more than 1 million pigs per year in the U.S. alone die in transport

- each year<sup>71</sup>
- (4) 42,000 pigs arrive crippled at slaughterhouse each year in the U.S.<sup>72</sup>

**Slaughter:**

- (1) 70%<sup>73</sup> to 80%<sup>74</sup> of pigs arrive at slaughter with pneumonia
- (2) Due to improper stunning, many hogs are thrust into scalding tanks, to soften skin and remove hairs, *while they are fully conscious*<sup>75</sup>
- (3) Abuse of animals is typical, since pigs do not like to be forced to move. Impacts such as kicking the pigs, hitting them with gate rods or boards, and electro-prods are very common. A graduate student once told me that he worked in a slaughter plant for hogs, and he saw a lot of sadistic behaviours, such as shoving electro-prods up the anuses of pigs.



a hog has been beaten mercilessly and repeatedly, perhaps with a gate rod

Agri-Food Research Council has a “Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals.” Under hogs, it is stated, contrary to what I have detailed above, that every type of housing system must provide conditions conducive to comfort, good health, and performance at all stages of the pig’s life.<sup>76</sup> The agonies listed above belie any idea of “comfort,” and all of the ailments that go untreated make a mockery of the ideal of “good health.” However, temperature is also supposed to be regulated,<sup>77</sup> although pigs are routinely kept overheated and then transported through very hot or cold temperatures. Other mockeries include provisions for ventilation,<sup>78</sup> although the air could not be more foul and ammonia-ridden. The Code suggests that flooring be dry, well-drained, solid, and with non-slip footing,<sup>79</sup> in disparity with the primary reality of floors wet with urine and feces and typically slatted or wire-mesh as we have seen. However, the Code starts to give itself away in its doing homage to the current standards of cruelty for pigs when it only provides pigs with “freedom to stand up and lie down comfortably.”<sup>80</sup> Pigs should have much more freedom to roam than that, yet that—with *no* comforts—is all the hogs are permitted on factory farms. A final



pigs awaiting infernal “processing”

All of these charges and more must be laid against the modern “hog industry.” Such practices are also happening right here in Toronto, behind careful concealments.

Yet the same type of hypocrisy that we witnessed with the National Pork Producers Council in the United States occurs here in Canada too. The Canadian

mockery completing the picture is the admonition that: “Pigs should be lifted with care, gentleness, and patience.”<sup>81</sup> Contrast this with the outright savagery of moving hogs detailed above. On top of it all, this document is not law except in Manitoba, but is a voluntary code. Yet Hogwatch, based in Manitoba, complains about pigs in factory farms, so enforcement in that province, according with standard or traditional practices as precedents, must be something of a bitter joke as well. The Canadian Agri-Food Research Council “is reluctant to impose any strictures upon farmers.”<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, the obsession with breeding pigs to withstand these harsh conditions continues, and Monsanto is seeking patents not only on methods of breeding, but on breeds themselves, and particular offspring of those kinds.<sup>83</sup>

The codes and Manitoba law make pigs’ lives sound well governed. Let us, however, attend to the testimony of an Ontario trucker, who offered his witness account anonymously for justified fear of reprisal from the hog industry. He noted that pigs with broken pelvises, called “spreaders,” are not officially allowed to be dragged off of trucks. However, he has seen this done, including with chains attached to legs, which are painful, and are also not supposed to be used.<sup>84</sup> He has never seen sick or injured pigs killed “humanely” as is the requirement.<sup>85</sup> He recounts: “I’ve had nine pigs dead at one time and there’s other drivers who have had 30. One fellow I know had 35 pigs dead, out of a load of 200.”<sup>86</sup> He adds a narrative concerned the driver with the 35 dead hogs:

...he had been out partying the night before and pulled over on a 30-31 degree day and fell asleep for six hours. Inside the trailer was probably about 50 degrees because of the heat, you know the metal being heated up. And they basically just roasted....So I was bothered by this; I called the humane society the next day. I called the Hamilton SPCA. No, I called the Toronto SPCA first. They referred me to Burlington, I think it was. They referred me to Hamilton. Hamilton said, ‘I don’t know why you’re calling us.’ And they said, ‘call the head office.’ And I called the head office and finally I gave up.<sup>87</sup>

Here even a professional “caregiver” situated in industry tried to get results for pigs and could achieve nothing. Pigs fall between the cracks as sure as their manure falls between the slats, creating such a stench that many people gag or vomit when exposed to the interior of a “pig farm.” Yet we are not helpless. We can start by changing our own minds, if need be, and then let the energy of change radiate outward, more and more, into the practices in our community.

### **Speciesism: Why We Cannot Justify Needless Harm To Hogs**

Speciesism is any form of unjust discrimination against animals based on either species or species-characteristics. It is comparable to sexism and racism. Ironically, when feminists condemn men as “chauvinist pigs” (this expression is somewhat dated, although “men are such pigs” is still quite current) these anti-

sexist egalitarians are buying into speciesist hatred for pigs. Instead we should unite all feminist, anti-racist, and anti-speciesist opponents of oppression. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his legendary “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” April 16, 1963, said: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” It is no accident that his wife and one of his sons later adopted vegetarianism. No one justly deserves to be harmed just because they have darker skin, or female as opposed to male attributes. Well, no license to harm comes from a sensitive being belonging to another **species** either.

If *being nonhuman* counted as giving a license to harm pigs and other animals, then consider this hypothetical example. Suppose nonhuman extraterrestrials arrive on Earth and these beings are far more intelligent and ethical than humans. If being nonhuman gives a license to harm then we could harm these magnificent, albeit hypothetical, beings.

Or if we choose a species-characteristic that we associate with humans, such as intelligence, then we would have a license to harm many humans. Pigs are said to be as intelligent as three-year-old human children. Yet again, these humans have rights even if they are known to have a fatal illness and will never realize normal adult human intelligence. And many humans who are mentally disadvantaged are even less intelligent than three-year-old humans and indeed pigs.

The only excuses we give for allowing harm to humans, once we sweep away rotten rationalizations based on financial gain, is defense, or because it cannot be

avoided. However, although commerce applies to pigs, it is no more of an excuse in their case. We can **avoid** eating them, and do not need to “defend” against them. Yet the harms against pigs are serious. Permissible harms must be justifiable, just like any serious harms to humans.

These contemplations show what can be discerned as a resounding truth if one thoughtfully explores the literature: needless harm to pigs simply cannot be justified in rational terms. People speak of the intelligence of pigs, and yet humans exhibit no intelligible set of ethics to make sense of this supposed “license to harm,” including a “license to kill.” Yet if a license to harm cannot be justified, then we cannot justify killing pigs for the passing sensation of taste, let alone subjecting them to the gamut of cruel abuses that are found in the contemporary hog industry.

The following is noted about the training of hogs:

...in training pigs,  
[professionals find that] you  
can only use affection, food,  
and other rewards.  
Punishment will get you  
absolutely nowhere, and will  
only serve to make the  
animals belligerent. It seems  
these creatures will not  
comply with anything that  
insults their dignity. They are  
happy to play with us and be  
our friends, but only so long  
as we respect them.<sup>88</sup>

I can personally confirm that pigs are friendly from my times at Cedar Row. So the pigs implicitly ask for their own



dignity. Yet it is precisely this, and the accompanying right not to be harmed, which are so ruthlessly and wrongly denied to these sensitive beings.

### **Conclusion: Ways Forward Beyond The Harming**

Things change. Many people go vegan when they realize that it is unjust and uncompassionate to kill and otherwise harm pigs—and other sentient beings. The Swedish people banned anti-biotics in food (needed for animals to survive the rigours of factory farming), and this meant ending intensive farming there. “Swedish” hogs have more room, better surroundings, time outdoors, less stress, straw bedding, no farrowing crates, and even toys.<sup>89</sup> These reforms were “almost entirely the result of lobbying by an 87-year-old author of children’s books, Astrid Lindgren.”<sup>90</sup>



pigs await just treatment

This shows the power of one, including **your** one, in facing these issues. It is also remarkable that Ms. Lindgren was well past working age, but laboured so hard for all farmed animals over there. Together, think what those supporting TORONTO PIGSAVE can accomplish in solidarity with like-minded groups, or at least collectives that have overlapping interests in animal welfare?

And animal liberation includes human liberation too. Being a slaughterer is one of the most dangerous jobs there is. The hogs experience the worst harms of all though. Look to your highest principles for deciding, including justice and compassion. Then do the right thing not only for humans, but for the pigs. Put yourself in their place for a change, if you are not in the habit of doing so. Only then will you get a fuller sense of the realities being discussed in this essay. Alone, we can make a significant difference, as Ms. Lindgren’s example proves. United by more intelligent and less vicious or aggressive reasoning, we can eventually achieve a terrific difference!

*The author, David Szybel, Ph.D., is an animal ethics scholar who has published numerous articles, and lectured at Queen’s University, University of Toronto, and Brock University. See: [davidszybel.info](http://davidszybel.info)*



David with his dear friend, Muppet.  
Why treat dogs but eat hogs?

*D.S.  
Toronto  
February 2011*

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization report from 2004.

<sup>2</sup> From a Toronto Vegetarian Association pamphlet.

<sup>3</sup> Many say that “Earth” should not be capitalized. However, I do this deliberately. The Earth is our home, and I think it heightens or accords with planetary respect to treat it like a proper noun for a place, among the many barrens of our cosmos.

<sup>4</sup> John Robbins, “The Joy and Tragedy of Pigs,” *Animals Agenda* (December 1989): 13.

<sup>5</sup> “Pigs.” Wikipedia article. Note that this is an informal essay and therefore it makes use of many sources that might not appear so readily in strictly academic writing.

<sup>6</sup> Robbins, “The Joy,” p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> See generally my comparison of the treatment of nonhuman animals to the Holocaust: David Sztybel, “Can the Treatment of Nonhuman Animals Be Compared to the Holocaust?” *Ethics and the Environment* 11 (Spring 2006): 97-132. See also, on my website, the Holocaust Comparison Project: <http://sztybel.tripod.com/Hol.html>. Although I hail from a Jewish background (I am not a religious Jew at the same time), I think the comparison is apt enough and even important for comprehending and appreciating the depths to which humanity has sunk in its treatment of nonhuman sentient beings.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://veganpeace.com>.

<sup>9</sup> Robbins, “The Joy,” p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> From a December 2008 article by Chris McLaughlin, “The Intelligent Pig: the Smartest Domestic Animal in the World,” at <http://www.suit101.com/content/the-intelligent-pig-a84448>.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://veganpeace.com>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Robbins, “The Joy,” p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> McLaughlin, “The Intelligent Pig.”

<sup>16</sup> A point made in Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Avon Books, 1990), p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://veganpeace.com>.

<sup>18</sup> McLaughlin, “The Intelligent Pig.”

<sup>19</sup> Robbins, “The Joy,” p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> See <http://veganpeace.com>.

<sup>24</sup> Robbins, “The Joy,” p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> See the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) fact sheet on pigs at: <http://www.peta.org/issues/Animals-Used-for-Food/pigs-intelligent-animals-suffering-in-factory-farms-and-slaughterhouses.aspx>. See again, McLaughlin, “The Intelligent Pig.”

<sup>26</sup> David Sztybel, “The Rights of Animal Persons,” *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal* 4 (1) (2006): 2.

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- <sup>27</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, pp. 1-2, makes the parallel point that dogs do not need the right to vote, which inspired my own comment about hogs.
- <sup>28</sup> Robbins, "The Joy," p. 12.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- <sup>31</sup> See the website of the U.S. Dairy Export Council, which offers comments on many aspects of farmed animal commerce:  
[http://www.udec.org/files/Deli/PDFs/0\\_US\\_Cheese\\_Meat\\_Poultry.pdf](http://www.udec.org/files/Deli/PDFs/0_US_Cheese_Meat_Poultry.pdf)
- <sup>32</sup> Robbins, "The Joy," p. 13.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> See <http://veganpeace.com>.
- <sup>37</sup> Tom Regan, *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2004), p. 96.
- <sup>38</sup> For a discussion of this concept, see Sztybel, "The Rights of Animal Persons," pp. 5-6.
- <sup>39</sup> McLaughlin, "The Intelligent Pig."
- <sup>40</sup> See generally, John Robbins, *Diet for a New America* (Walpole: Stillpoint Publishing, 1987).
- <sup>41</sup> According to the Washington-based Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine fact sheet. This organization consists of many dozens of medical doctors and medical researchers.
- <sup>42</sup> Robbins, "The Joy," p. 20.
- <sup>43</sup> According to a report in 2006 by the United Nations.
- <sup>44</sup> According to Hogwatch: <http://www.hogwatchmanitoba.org/>
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> See again: <http://www.peta.org/issues/Animals-Used-for-Food/pigs-intelligent-animals-suffering-in-factory-farms-and-slaughterhouses.aspx>
- <sup>47</sup> Robbins, "The Joy," p. 16.
- <sup>48</sup> Sztybel, "The Rights of Animal Persons," p. 28. Quoted with minor amendments.
- <sup>49</sup> Robbins, "The Joy," p. 18.
- <sup>50</sup> Davis voiced this insightful point in a talk at the Farm Sanctuary Hoedown, Watkins Glen, New York, in the summer of 2005.
- <sup>51</sup> Robbins, "The Joy," p. 16.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>54</sup> In their fact sheet, "Swine Management."
- <sup>55</sup> Quoted in Singer, *Animal Liberation*, p. 126.
- <sup>56</sup> Regan, *Empty Cages*, p. 94.
- <sup>57</sup> See PETA fact sheet on pigs.
- <sup>58</sup> Regan, *Empty Cages*, p. 94.
- <sup>59</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, p. 121.
- <sup>60</sup> PETA fact sheet on pigs.
- <sup>61</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, p. 120.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

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- <sup>63</sup> Regan, *Empty Cages*, p. 94.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>66</sup> Hogwatch, Manitoba. See <http://hogwatchmanitoba.org/>. Note that the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council's Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals is supposed to apply by law in Manitoba, as I note below; but if such recommendations were *truly* mandatory, then the pigs would indeed live in "comfort" as the Code prescribes.
- <sup>67</sup> Robbins, "The Joy," p. 16.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- <sup>69</sup> PETA fact sheet on pigs.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>73</sup> Regan, *Empty Cages*, p. 94.
- <sup>74</sup> Robins, "The Joy," p. 18.
- <sup>75</sup> PETA fact sheet on pigs.
- <sup>76</sup> See Canadian Agri-Food Research Council, "Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals." See <http://www.nfacc.ca/pdf/english/Pigsfactsheet.pdf>
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>82</sup> Charlotte Montgomery, *Blood Relations: Animals, Humans, and Politics* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000), p. 138.
- <sup>83</sup> See <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/features/monsanto-pig-patent-111/>
- <sup>84</sup> Montgomery, *Blood Relations*, p. 158.
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>88</sup> Robbins, "The Joy," p. 14.
- <sup>89</sup> David Sztybel, "Animal Rights Law: Fundamentalism versus Pragmatism" *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 5 (1) (2007): 8. Citations for each condition are provided in this essay.
- <sup>90</sup> Montgomery, *Blood Relations*, p. 136.