

Pro-vegan website outs apostate meat-eaters

Apostasy (Wikipedia): “The formal disaffiliation from or abandonment or renunciation of a religion by a person”

In the Middle Ages, apostates were harshly punished. Some were tortured and burned at the stake.

More recently “defectors” from repressive regimes have been condemned, and in some cases hunted down and assassinated.

Though it sounds like hyperbole, I deliberately choose the term “apostate” to refer to ex-vegetarians who renounce their dietary convictions and join the fold of omnivores.

Lapsed followers of a particularly devout form of vegetarianism—veganism—have been singled out for punishment by a singularly vindictive vegan group, whose identity remains obscure. They are “outing” meat-eaters on the extremist website www.exvegans.com.

On this site—which is the electronic version of those pillories and stocks that used to be used to punish miscreants in Colonial America—you can enter the name and personal data of a former orthodox vegan who has gone to the dark side. You (the denouncer) are encouraged to enter everything you know about the person, including the year they became vegan, and the year they “sold out.”

Additionally, you are invited to upload a photo of the miscreant and even provide a link to their website. An interactive map provides you with a state-by-state roll call of ex-vegans—just in case you may be passing through.

One ex-vegan, Berlin Reed, is now author of a book *The Ethical Butcher*. Mr. Reed, who is a former anarchist, and apparently non-white, qualified for special castigation on the exvegans.com website:

“Here we have yet another person hiding behind anarchism to justify their selfish behavior,” the entry reads. “No surprise he’s a part of the most shamed part of an already shamed subculture: The ‘anarchist people of color.’ Eye roll.”

You get the idea.

Full disclosure: I’m one of those vegan apostates. Soon after college, I decided to take proactive steps to detoxify my body. I had been a smoker and had consumed an indiscriminate diet. I turned to macrobiotic vegetarianism to optimize my health.

Macrobiotics is a Japanese-influenced form of veganism in which adherents eschew animal protein (except for small portions of fish in some cases), dairy and eggs. The diet is based on whole grains, beans, soy products, seaweed, certain vegetables, some nuts and a little bit of fruit.

I lost weight, and my energy and focus improved. I gained a sense of self-mastery from a disciplined diet and lifestyle. I maintained this way of eating for over ten years, throughout med school and early medical training, which wasn’t easy.

Once, during my internship at Bellevue Hospital, one of the senior physicians urged me to get checked for hepatitis because my skin was yellow. I assured him that it

was because of all the kale and collard greens I was consuming.

In addition to remaining svelte, I also cultivated a profound sense of moral superiority. After all, I wasn't part of that unwashed multitude engaging in indiscriminate gourmandizing. I looked with disdain at people who were enjoying steak, eggs, chicken, even fish.

In the world of the vegan, animal protein and fats epitomize the evil inherent in the Western Diet. That fit in with the view, prevalent in the '70s and '80s, that fat literally clogged the arteries and fed cancer cells.

The new-think is that the opposite may be true: Sugars and starchy carbohydrates may potentiate heart disease and cancer via insulin resistance, the root cause of many degenerative diseases.

Late in the '80s, after I had begun my medical practice, dry skin, musculoskeletal problems and allergies began to plague me. A metabolic profile revealed me to be excessively *alkaline*. The answer was to include more fat and animal protein in my diet.

I had to swallow my pride, which wasn't easy. I had to abandon the exclusivity that veganism conferred upon me. Within weeks, my problems resolved. I have since been an omnivore.

To the credit of vegans, this much is true: modern meat, fish, eggs and dairy products are often repositories of unsafe levels of environmental pollutants and toxins. So it is imperative to seek organic and wild-sourced products whenever possible.

It is also true, however, that with the exception of dairy, animal products are an integral part of our evolutionary heritage. When monkey-like protohumans learned to hunt and fish they added important sources of calories and building blocks for their evolving brains. Cholesterol and omega-3 fatty acids are integral to brain function and not easily synthesized when on an exclusively vegan diet.

So if you're a vegan due to strongly held moral beliefs about killing or exploiting animals, I respect you. But if you seek to proselytize on the basis that yours is THE "natural" human diet or that it is healthier than a carefully chosen omnivorous diet, then I have a problem with that. The science, though often misappropriated by vegetarian ideologues, simply doesn't support it.

What I especially deplore are efforts to stigmatize well-meaning individuals who seek the truth about diet and have reconciled themselves to their biological underpinnings by including judicious selections of animal protein in their diets. When that happens, veganism assumes the status of a cult, not a lifestyle choice.