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Multispecies Disposability: Taxonomies of Power in a Global Pandemic

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Abstract

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Keywords

animality, race, power, pandemic

Cover Page Footnote

We would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and the editors for their generous feedback on our manuscript.

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Introduction

Numerous authors have offered critical commentaries on the COVID-19 pandemic through various media platforms. These include critiques of industrial animal agriculture as a primary source of zoonotic viruses undermining global health from ecological and animal advocacy perspectives (Foer and Gross; Sentient Media). These also include discussions about institutionalized racism, as manifested in the harms experienced by agricultural workers on farms and inside meatpacking plants, or the increased vulnerability to COVID-19 exposure in many dispossessed Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities ('COVID-19 in US Poultry Plants'; Robinson).

Our paper bridges these conversations regarding animal exploitation and racialized violence. To date, there is ample scholarship theorizing how racism and speciesism are mutually reinforcing and deeply interconnected oppressions (see Deckha; Harper; Jackson; Ko; Struthers Montford and Taylor). Our goal is to reflect on how recognizing the co-constitution of racism and speciesism might guide advocacy, especially in light of the pandemic and its specific contours. As explored below, critical race scholar Claire Jean Kim's work is especially useful in this task. While the bulk of our analysis centres on depictions and experiences of East Asians, particularly the Chinese, the logics and dynamics of oppressions we elucidate can be applied to help understand how processes of racialization and animalization also harm other People of Colour, including Indigenous and Black peoples.

We apply Kim's rich analysis of taxonomies of power to make sense of the interwoven multispecies catastrophes of racialized animalization and animalized racialization shaped through the COVID-19 pandemic. Kim's theory and insights offer much to deconstruct the imbricated forms of oppression involved in the pandemic because of the potential her work suggests for how movements for social, animal, and environmental justice might mobilize through mutual avowal. Kim defines the 'ethics of mutual avowal' as an 'open and active acknowledgement of connection with other struggles' (20). Mutual avowal 'takes seriously the imperative of challenging domination's multiple dimensions', while holding space to allow for critique of the practices and positions of connected groups (Kim 182).

In addition to applying Kim's theory to the multiple racialized and animalized dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope to interrupt the animal and environmental movements that have seized upon the pandemic to forward their agendas. While the fight against animal and environmental-related harms remains globally urgent, the movements at times ironically circulate humanist and speciesist discourses in service of their causes. By focusing, for example, on the supposed backwardness of East Asian wet markets, the animal movements resuscitate deeply colonial and racist tropes grounded in the animalization of human groups; thus, the animal movements thereby not only unconsciously (and at times, consciously) perpetuate racism but also, crucially, further calcify the speciesism that these movements primarily seek to undo. In such cases, the dominant animal movements reinforce oppressive logics that co-constitute both racism and speciesism; therefore, they even fail to address the speciesism they seek to dismantle.

Even when not explicitly demonizing the animal practices of various 'Others', we witness a chronic unwillingness of the Western animal movements to acknowledge how such condemnation of wild animal trade and East Asian wet markets ricochet within white supremacist and colonial contexts. Western animal movements' discourses are made stickier precisely because the condemnation of animal practices lends itself so easily to the already historically embedded and contemporaneously intensified – and de-naturalized – 'foreignness' of such Othered animal practices, regardless of diligent efforts by some to emphasize that 'we' do the same things to animals 'here'.

The experiences between and among groups of humans and nonhuman animals widely vary; we reject attempts to draw equivalences among them. Yet, nonhuman animals and racialized humans have endured some of the worst violence enacted during the pandemic. These groups share what we call multispecies disposability, anchored in colonialism and global capitalism, which cast human and animal Others outside of the proper domain of 'man'. Thus, we aim to unseat the Western primacy of 'the human', one who is 'civilized', white, able-bodied, straight, etc., as the only true subject. In turn, we question myriad forms of power that enable and legitimize constructions of this category, which makes abject – and ultimately expendable – innumerable members of our species and beyond. As Kristen A. Hardy

demonstrates, '[f]or "dehumanization" to even be an intelligible idea, there must exist an underlying hierarchy in which human and nonhuman differences are understood as meaningful criteria of evaluation against universal, trans-species norms and ideals'; therefore, we should ask 'what sorts of ontologies or "ways of being" are reinforced' if we uncritically accept 'the notion that to be portrayed as "other than human" is automatically to be reduced to a state of lesser being' (189-190).

Historical Animalization of East Asians

As COVID-19 spread across Europe and North America, East Asians in Western nations proliferated the statement 'I am not a virus' through art, social media, and public actions (Garcia; Fouché; Chen). Why Asian people feel the need to assert their humanity at this moment harks back to a long history of anti-Asian racism and violence in the West that continues today. When feeling threatened, dominant white society often depicts East Asians as dangerous pests and diseases to be expunged, menacingly described within racist discourse as the 'Yellow Peril'. Such history continues to entangle racial violence and nonhuman animal exploitation in the COVID-19 crisis. For example, Dakota Holmes, an Indigenous woman in Vancouver, was recently punched in the face and told to 'go home' and 'go back to Asia' while she was out walking her dog and sneezed due to seasonal allergies (Ghoussoub).

White colonialists and racists have historically justified violence against BIPOC by positioning them in proximity to anyone or anything deemed 'subhuman'. Such ideologies are metastasizing in the midst of the pandemic. From the racially inflected critiques of wet markets in Wuhan to the viral outbreak at a slaughterhouse in Alberta, and the subsequent vilification of its largely Filipino workforce, we witness how social hierarchies that harm both BIPOC and animals permeate our society, including our food systems (Croteau).

Contemporary Racialization & Wet Markets Critiques

Critiques of wet markets in and outside of the animal movements inevitably emerge alongside anti-Asian, specifically anti-Chinese, colonial legacies. Mobilization against Asian wet markets in the West taps into wider political and cultural landscapes, in which animal practices operate as key markers of national, cultural, and individual differences. For example, white Westerners often point to how and which animals racialized groups consume as indicators of their supposed depravity. In May 2020, Canadian musician Bryan Adams lambasted Chinese people's 'bat eating' as the source of COVID-19 in a racist Instagram tirade (Lorinc).

Beyond Adams' and others' more patently racist remarks, many privileged animal advocates and non-advocates alike are rushing to condemn Chinese 'wet markets', the commonly held origin of COVID-19. International animal advocacy organizations, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and Animal Equality, have launched campaigns urging the United Nations and World Health Organization to ban and shut down all wet markets (Sullivan; Animal Equality). These condemnations of 'wet markets' display what Kim calls 'single-optic vision, a way of seeing that foregrounds a particular form of injustice while backgrounding others' (19, original emphasis). For one, they fail to clearly distinguish between 'wet markets' from the 'wildlife' or 'live animal markets' within them (Kappler). Moreover, wet markets often supply much more affordable food to people than dry markets (Zhong et al.). The foregrounding of wet markets as the single origin and sole propagator of problems related to the pandemic prevents us from pairing our critiques with a strong anti-racist commitment. A more complex analysis is crucial in order to expand our critical conversations into the larger global wildlife trade, and industrial animal farming, in ways that are responsible to the material lives of humans and animals.

Meanwhile, anti-Asian racism is spiking, and hate crimes, in general, are increasing (Buscher; 'Elderly Man Attacked'). The US-based organization, Stop Asian American and Pacific Islander Hate (Stop AAPI Hate), recently noted a startling 6603 hate incident reports against Asian and Pacific Islanders through March 2020 to March 2021 (Jeung, Yellow Horse and Cayanan). In one case of verbal harassment, a student in Chicago, Illinois recounts,

I was in class, the professor was having hoarse cough symptoms. She emphasized at the time that she did not have COVID-19 because she had never been to China. I was the only Chinese student in class, and she knew that I was from China. The students began to discuss the Chinese eating bats, snakes, and dogs. The teacher didn't stop it.

The deadliest of these recent hate incidents against East Asians occurred in March 2021, when Robert Aaron Long, a 21-year-old white man, murdered eight people, six of whom were Asian Americans, in a killing spree that targeted massage businesses in Atlanta, Georgia (Singh). As the COVID-19 death count climbed, the US stoked racist discourses and conspiracies about the so-called 'kung flu' and 'Chinese virus', terms derisively repeated by President Trump (Ganguly et al.; Rogers, Jakes and Swanson, respectively). Given this highly charged xenophobic and sinophobic backdrop, we urge those who denounce 'wet markets' in Wuhan and elsewhere to simultaneously mount an anti-racist critique. Without a strong condemnation of 'animal-linked racialization' (in which animal practices mark various groups as 'Others'), we risk fuelling racist sentiment and attacks, regardless of intention (Elder, Wolch and Emel 184).

While the sharp increase in hate incidents against Asians is alarming (Jeung, Yellow Horse, Cayanan), Western nations such as the US have a history of marking various oppressed groups as 'foreign' and 'Other', especially in times of economic scarcity and crisis. For example, as Kim notes in her book *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age*:

As economic conditions worsened in the 1870s, white Californians increasingly cast the Chinese as a degenerate race encroaching on and invading white spaces, posing a moral, medical, and economic threat to the nation. Menacing, swarming, pestilential animal images became stitched indelibly into the body of the Chinese. The only answer was to expel the pests from the body politic and keep them out. (53)

In the West, marginalized animal practices, such as those of Chinese wet markets, are generally unaccepted, unlike Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). As Kim contends, non-naturalized and Othered practices can serve as the 'low-hanging fruit' for attack because, as is in the case of the US, the dominant culture is not obviously and economically invested in them (Kim 78).

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, the indictment of non-Western and particularly Chinese animal practices will continue to entrench these racist legacies, especially unless we resist their racist and xenophobic import. Although animal suffering in wet markets has equivalent counterparts in Western CAFOs, Western industrial animal practices are not labelled ‘savagery’, ‘barbarism’, or used as racist symbols of a supposedly ‘backward’ nature of entire peoples. These discourses find their roots in Western racism and colonialism, which animalize non-whites to justify their exploitation and violence against them. We see efforts to directly confront these legacies in the words of Chinese-Canadian filmmaker, Yung Chang. In a recent CBC interview about his film *Wuhan Wuhan*, Chang challenges stereotypes and underscores the heterogeneity of Chinese people, particularly those in Wuhan. He states, ‘I wanted to show audiences that Wuhan isn’t a backwards wet market village, that it’s a thriving, cultural, cosmopolitan hub in China. It’s an important city of 11 million people. I wanted to cut through the vitriol, and headline-grabbing sort of salacious descriptions that seemed to isolate the city as the epicentre of a virus, and go beyond that a little by showing the human side of Wuhan.’ (Chattopadhyay). Later he offers, ‘Something else I wanted to say, and through the characters I follow, everyone is an individual in this film. China is not a monolith’.

Racialization and Animalization: Colonial Co-Constructions

In contexts such as the US and Canada, the production of racial categories is inextricably bound to the animalization of various humans, who were never recognized as fully human in the white colonial imagination. As Kim, drawing on the work of Donna Haraway, potently asserts, ‘Animality and nature have been integral not incidental to the production of racial difference’. These enmeshed ‘taxonomies of power’ of race and species means that we cannot divorce animal advocacy from calls for racial justice (24).

Kim draws our attention to the fluidity of social constructions of humans and animals: the ways that not only the general figure of the animal is mobilized against those marked non-white by European colonialists, but also more specifically how animals and those humans positioned as animal-like within racist/imperialist machinations are hierarchically ranked. That

is, Kim demonstrates that it is not simply the degraded status of ‘the animal’ that is mobilized in service of the racist imperialist project: specific animals figure differently from others, closer or farther from the dominant Western versioning of ‘the human’.

In conjoined oppression, racial categories are also stratified, constructed over space and time in dynamic relation to each other and to other species. In other words, race does not intersect at one fixed point with species; they evolve in dynamic and shifting relationality. Reflecting on the ‘synergistic taxonomies of race and species’ (18), the primary concern of Kim’s work, she underscores, ‘The less-than-humanity of one type of being reverberates across time and space with the less-than-humanity of the other. In contemporary American life, the taxonomies of race and species continue to shape what Ruth Wilson Gilmore describes as “group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” and do a great deal of work defining who is a grievable life and who is not’ (Kim, 18). Consider how, for example, rats elicit less empathy within the Western imaginary than many other animals and are homogenized and reduced to a dangerous disease vector, a scourge to be eliminated. They are widely exterminated or ‘sacrificed’, contradictorily understood as both cause and cure of human disease, as invading pests or experimental subjects, respectively.

Animalization/Racialization of Bats and the Chinese

White supremacy’s animalization of humans and oppression of nonhuman animals are mutually reinforcing processes. Animals also distinctly lose in this co-construction as they are often profoundly objectified within Western contexts, ideologically stripped of their individuality and idiosyncrasies, relegated to the status of object or machine for economic gain (Noske). Although some animals fare better than others, Western societies tend to conceptualize animals as perpetually lacking, as always inferior, forever failing to reach humans’ evolutionary zenith. Racist rhetoric marshals animals’ degraded status, materially reinforced through institutions and industries, against human groups to denigrate them. Racists thus liken Black peoples, Indigenous peoples, and POC to animals through ideologies and practices underpinned by debased

understandings of animals; these understandings also justify ongoing harms against nonhuman animals.

Bats, for instance, figured early in the pandemic as the emblematic COVID-19 animal. Michelle T. King observes that the demonization of both bats and the Chinese ‘has manifested itself in popular visual forms as well’ (239). For example, in April 2020, Canadian athletic apparel company, Lululemon, faced backlash when one of its art directors posted a T-shirt design entitled ‘bat fried rice’ to his social media account, which features a flying Chinese takeout box with bat wings, with the words ‘No Thank You’ written on the box in chopstick font (King 239). While bats were regarded acrimoniously prior to the pandemic, a reputation already encumbering conservation efforts (see López-Baucells, Rocha, Fernández-Llamazares), this difficulty is now likely worsened through their association with the current virus’ zoonotic leap.

With eerie foreshadowing, López-Baucells et al. comment on the connection between bats and viruses: ‘the fact that an increasing number of virus outbreaks is largely attributable to human encroachment in natural areas is rarely publicised’. Prior to COVID-19, López-Baucells et al. further report, ‘emerging zoonotic viruses (bat-related or not) have often led to direct persecution of bats, extermination campaigns and destruction of bats’ roosting sites’. Popularly constructed as ‘mice with wings’ or ‘flying rodents’, bats in North America edge toward – if not occupy – the reviled category of vermin, with numerous insurance companies insisting that, despite homeowners claims to the contrary, bats are not in fact vermin (for example, Haylor, Freyer, & Coon).

We hear little about bats’ subjectivities within popular accounts, as they are commonly rebuked as disease-vectors, particularly in our pandemic era. Drawing on Kim’s appeal for mutual avowal, we might pause to consider the lives of bats outside their disease carrying capacities. As the animated bat in ‘The Truth About Bats’ TED-Ed talk laments, ‘like Batman, I’m often misunderstood. People think I’m scary, strange, and dangerous. If they only knew my story, though, I’d be cheered as a hero’ (Wray). Similarly, in a recent TED-Ed video, ‘Why Bats Don’t Get Sick’, Arinjay Banerjee refers to bats as ‘winged wonders’, and petitions viewers ‘to

protect these animals from harm, and ourselves from infection, humans need to stop encroaching on bat habitats and ecosystems. . . . From plant pollination to pest control, bats are an essential part of our ecosystems, so why are they known as nature’s villains?’

Discussion of bats’ rich subjectivities helps unsettle their rampant homogenization and objectification, key processes in the colonization, animalization, and oppression of humans and other animals (see Corman, 2020). While Kim only minimally engages cognitive ethology (the study of animal minds and behaviours) or extends discussion of animals’ lives beyond suffering, we argue that such inclusion complements her practice of multi-optic vision, ‘a way of seeing that takes disparate justice claims seriously without privileging any one presumptively’ (19). For example, biologist Gerald Kerth describes bats as among the ‘most gregarious’ and ‘most diverse’ of all mammals, highlighting their intricate sociality, including colony and fission-fusion dynamics that have long only been associated with primates, cetaceans, and carnivores. He remarks on the growing research into bats’ ‘striking cooperative behaviors’ and ‘surprisingly complex social systems’ (738; for more on this topic see Jorge Ortega’s edited collection, *Sociality in Bats*, 2016).

Bats have their little-known advocates. Bat World Sanctuary, for instance, has added to their efforts in light of the COVID-19 pandemic by directly addressing the negative social constructions and treatment of these already maligned animals. The organization, which promotes bat rehabilitation and education, features resources exploring the question, ‘Why are bats always blamed for epidemics like Coronavirus and Ebola?’ The sanctuary offers an earnest defence:

The important thing to understand is that bats aren’t just flying around willy-nilly spreading diseases to humans. It’s the way humans are treating bats that is allowing these diseases to spread. For example, humans are hunting and eating bats (a common practice in Africa and Asia), encroaching on bat habitat to raise livestock and build homes, and even harvesting bats for the cruel exotic pet trade.

To wrest the blame from bats, and place it squarely on humans, Bat World Sanctuary attempts to confront the diabolization of these animals and take a bat’s-eye view of the pandemic. They

stress that while bats are held responsible for human viral infections, wild animals avoid contact with humans ('Bats and COVID-19', Bat World Sanctuary, 2020). They also emphasize the following:

There has been a lot of hysteria globally about bats and their role in the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020- 2021. People have panicked, afraid to be anywhere near bats for fear they will be infected with SARSCoV2, the causative virus for COVID-19... The prevailing theory, as of late December 2020, is that the virus originated with a species of horseshoe bat that is commonly found in China. However, genetic studies suggest that the virus mutated between 40 and 70 years ago and adapted itself to a new reservoir host... Despite their best efforts, researchers have as yet been unable to identify what species may have become the new reservoir host, with or without developing illness, after exposure to urine, feces, or other bodily fluids or tissues from the original host species. Over time, the virus mutated again within the new intermediate reservoir, ultimately becoming able to infect humans. With no natural immunity to the virus, a global pandemic was born.

They further accentuate that it is rare for bats to directly transmit lethal viruses to humans. While the sanctuary provides a commendable counter-narrative to mainstream discourse, unfortunately the sanctuary does not underscore the colonial and capitalist processes that have led to the exacerbation of animal-to-human zoonotic jumps. 'Humans' here are homogenized, with no recognition of how inequalities affect human-bat/wildlife relations.

The bat eating associated with Chinese wet markets, key to the West's COVID-19 creation story, took an already culturally-vilified creature and subjected them to both symbolic displacement and intensified demonization as pests/vermin/ 'disease reservoirs' (Lopez-Baucells et al.) through their monstrous transfiguration as 'food'. Bats face a kind of race/species double jeopardy as these animals are 1) widely recognized as inedible within Western contexts, and 2) bought and sold by people and in sites racially marked as foreign, filthy, and cruel. These uncivilized 'transgressions' serve to amplify the supposed transgressive essence of the Chinese and their proclivity toward animality (repeatedly slipping across the human-animal divide).

Indeed, they are conceived as precipitating a global threat. Such images stand in opposition to the socially sanctioned confinement of Western-designated food animals and the fictionalized ‘sanitary’ Western slaughterhouse, a proper place for killing. In her case study of anti-Chinese sugar advertising in late 19th and early 20th century British Columbia, Donica Belisle observes this similar dynamic in how white settlers have constructed and relied on a purity/polluted binary to push for white racial purity through a ‘racialized discourse of food cleanliness’ (53).

In the persistent colonial imaginary, Chinese people (and other East Asians) experience unique forms of epistemic violence due to their position within the colonial racial hierarchy, as they hover at the human/animal borderlands, understood as ‘pestilential beasts’ and ‘unmitigated threats’ to American civilization (Kim, 56). These stereotypes are galvanized by centuries of racism directed toward Chinese people and as mentioned, disgust at their eating habits. Similarly, King maintains that ‘[f]ood and eating habits, both real and imagined, have always been primary sites of marking Chinese difference, ever since Westerners first came into contact with Chinese populations in large numbers during the late nineteenth century’ (239). Geopolitical tensions and economic rivalry between China and the West have historically paralleled a rise in ‘Western fear and disgust of Chinese foodways’ (King 239, 241). Further examining this connection, Kim highlights an 1870s American trade card for rat poison called ‘Rough on Rats’, and its associated proclamation, ‘The Chinese Must Go!’ alongside an image of ‘John Chinaman’ about to eat the rodent. As Kim explains the iconography, ‘The Chinese, as supposed rat eaters, are “rough on rats” but they are also like rats and deserving of the same end. Both are pestilential vermin to be dispatched without mercy’ (57).

Mutual Avowal: Disrupting Linked Oppressions and the Need for Collective Solidarity

Recognizing these overlaps between racism and speciesism allows us to tackle both forms of oppression together. Indeed, as Kim petitions us, ‘This is not an either/or choice. To the contrary, my argument is our interpretive success depends on our ability and willingness to engage with these two taxonomies of power, race and species, at once – and to understand their connectedness’ (15, original emphasis). For instance, it is by design that workforces inside

meatpacking plants, which account for some of the biggest recent COVID outbreaks, strategically employ ‘animalized humans’ whose lives are hidden and made disposable (Chadde and Bagenstose; ‘64 Workers Infected’; Dryden and Rieger; Wolfe; Bejan).

The recent Royal Canadian Mounted Police criminal probe into the COVID-related death of a 51-year-old Mexican immigrant, Benito Quesada, spurred by the powerful efforts of his 16-year-old daughter, foregrounds the extreme expendability of meatpacking employees: the Cargill plant in High River, Alberta saw one of the largest workplace COVID-19 outbreak in Canada, with at least 950 staff testing positive. According to Seglins, Rieger, and Singh:

The written complaint suggests Benito Quesada died due to criminal negligence and alleges the following failures by Cargill to prevent the spread of the virus: The company failed to provide adequate PPE; workers on production lines were not physically distant; lunchrooms were crowded, with tables less than half a metre apart; company medical personnel cleared workers for duty despite positive COVID-19 tests or symptoms; workers faced unpaid, temporary layoff if they didn’t report for work out of fear of the virus; workers were promised a \$500 bonus for not missing a shift over a two-month period.

Incentivized by a company bonus, Quesada took measures to isolate at home, but continued to work in hopes of providing for his family. Further, in Spring 2020, CBC conducted an investigation that found sick workers who tested positive for Covid-19 or showed symptoms were ‘cleared for duty’ by a company nurse (Seglins et al.). In addition to such vexed COVID-related concerns, these frequently immigrant, racialized, and economically oppressed workers carry out some of the most physically and psychologically traumatizing labour involved in killing animals (Leibler et al.).

While the corporations operating Western slaughterhouses largely escape condemnation for creating unsafe working environments, the migrant workers they employ are often blamed for the spread of diseases in their communities and workplaces (Dryden). The victim-blaming of workers already vilified as foreign threats and disease carriers increases pre-existing risks: the state continues to subject them to invasive and non-consensual medical procedures, further

rationalizing their indefinite confinement, deportation, and denial of essential services (Flores; Manian). In Canada, Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) are being hit the hardest by the pandemic (Cabana; Luciano and Foster). Losing their jobs means that TFWs also lose their official status, along with all the social services and healthcare hinged on their employment.

As noted, castigation of the wet markets can contribute to, and echo within, the broader anti-Asian racism that is riddling the West. This has significant consequences for Asian people who face even more racism in light of COVID-19. When white Westerners' focus on non-Western animal practices, without an overt anti-racist, anti-classist, and anti-colonial framing, they lend fodder to the xenophobic and sinophobic rhetoric that drives Trump's and others' fearmongering and blame-shifting. Outside of any one individual's specific arguments against, or about, wet markets, these efforts exist within broader white supremacist and colonial contexts.

As anti-racist scholars and activists have long shown, there is no innocent place outside of race (Grundy, Jiang, and Niiya). This understanding is shared not only by many anti-racists but also by intersectional and anti-colonial animal advocates, such as lauren Ornelas (founder of the Food Empowerment Project) who challenge the dominant single-issued, self-identified 'color-blind', and often liberal animal and vegan movements that refuse to acknowledge their complicity in human oppression (2016). As Kimberlé Crenshaw argues, 'the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately' (1244). Kim's analysis, which builds on but also shows the limitations of Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, helps explain why it is not coincidental that agricultural farm and slaughterhouse workers throughout Canada and the US are disproportionately Black, Latinx, and East Asians (Kim and Freccero; Wells and McLaughlin; 'Meat and Migrants'). The subjugation of Black and Brown people within such unsafe and precarious employment is both an expression of structural racism and a direct result of slavery and settler colonialism (Jackson; Rotz).

Failure to resist the racism produced by animal-linked racialization damages our collective solidarity in defence of the health of human lives, animal lives, and our shared planet. Racism in animal advocacy erases the labour and contributions of activists who belong to groups targeted by racist and xenophobic rhetoric. Racialized activists often feel doubly encumbered, oppressed, alienated, and disempowered by their white Westerner counterparts who refuse to examine their

historically produced privileges, and who take advantage of unequal power dynamics in pursuing social change. For the movements to effectively combat the massive and profound problems that drive animal exploitation, they must build coalitions that recognize the relevance of issues often deemed extraneous, including anti-racist struggles. Indeed, at the root of pandemics such as COVID-19 is a globalized capitalist food production regime that prioritizes maximizing profit, such that the intensification of farming and killing animals contribute to wide-ranging ecological destruction ('Environmental Impact'). Removal of wildlife habitats and mass confinement of animals on farms and in markets create conditions that facilitate the growth and spread of zoonotic viruses (Johnson et al.). Understanding the multiple dimensions of a crisis empowers us to practice mutual avowal and recognize the entanglements of our struggles.

Conclusion

Without including an explicit anti-racist approach in their animal politics, the animal and food justice movements in the West will continue to alienate people who might be sympathetic to animal issues but feel concerned about the single-optic focus. The domination and control of our food systems will not be dismantled and transformed without mutual aid between activists around the world who fight for the common goal of creating just and sustainable food systems. The irony occurs when, in the scramble to raise awareness of animal cruelty, white people rely on racist rhetoric firmly rooted in the animalization of human groups. This is not just about being critical of celebrities like Bryan Adams, and others who make racist statements, but a call to include an anti-racist analysis every time we critique animal practices from privileged positions.

Cast outside of the sphere of the properly 'civilized' white human, Chinese people are condemned as a subhuman taxon, failing to achieve their humanity. During the pandemic, the practices linked to the crisis continue to be saturated by larger social constructions regarding Otherness, whether we like it or not. Our conversations about animal practices will potentially prop up racist tropes, or ideally, resist them. Horrendous exploitation of human and nonhuman animals remains ubiquitous within our globalized food systems; to change these systems, we need to account for the real and implicated issues of race, class, and culture, along with human and nonhuman suffering, which profoundly shape them.

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