

BARIFIED OT VEGAN

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A Quick
Guide to
Summer
Foraging

Create a
Wildlife
Garden

Buddhism,
Veganism &
Climate
Change

What's
the Buzz?

Why Vegans
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Honey

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Linda Fisher

On her Native American Heritage, veganism, art, communicating with animals and interacting with Mother Earth.



Microsanctuaries

A Micro-Manifesto

By Justin Van Kleeck

As ethical vegans who are also interested in helping animals living in this world right now because of humans, my partner, Rosemary, and I began to rescue farmed animals in order to get them out of the agricultural system—not to give them “better” living spaces in which they were still exploited, but to get them out once and for all.

We started the Triangle Chance for All microsanctuary, and from that The Microsanctuary Movement, around two hens: Clementine and Amandine. All of our rescue efforts on typical “pet” species took on a new quality when we transitioned to farmed animals. Once we rescued these hens from a shelter and began to interact with them as individuals, not as abstract concepts, the notion of being “vegan for the animals” took on a profound new importance.

Living amongst such wondrous beings, we began to reconsider – and to deconstruct – the ideal of an animal sanctuary. In late 2013, we had moved to a three-acre property outside of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where our view consists of a wall of trees rather than rolling pastures. But, in the course of applying vegan ethical considerations

to the two hens suddenly residing in our house, we decided that we could scale the model down and get creative with *what we have*, not what we think we “should have,” in order to provide permanent shelter and care to our rescues. We began to see ourselves as building a “microsanctuary.”

Much has happened in the intervening two years since the lovely Clem and Am came into our lives.

Fortunately, they are still living here with us, along with many other old and new residents of the microsanctuary. In every moment though, they and the other roosters and hens who live here with us remind us of the value and importance of *every* life—even the lives that a speciesist, commodifying, cravenly capitalist society tells us are worthless. Baby chickens cost a couple of bucks at most, and roosters are “worth” even less; in a throwaway culture that concocts all sorts of selfish notions about what is “good,” these beings are the lowest of the low.

But to us they are everything.

Let us be clear about this: A microsanctuary is as much about ethos as it is about property sizes and resident



numbers. A microsanctuary is grounded on the idea that *sanctuary is a state of mind*, and building one's (human) life around the well-being of (non-human) animals is not only important but *central* to the ethos and ethic of veganism.

A microsanctuary can be any space run by a vegan (or multiple vegans) that is home to rescued animals and emphasises their health and happiness above all else. So someone with a rescued house rooster is just as much a *sanctuary* (by virtue of being a *microsanctuary*) as a million-dollar non-profit with hundreds of acres and hundreds of animals.

This is important: We have to question the conceptual cultural categories we vegans inherit—such as “food” animal and “pet”—and we have to stop accepting the agricultural model as the ideal for these beings we are supposed to respect. This is what microsanctuaries are doing.

By throwing out the *ideal of what a farmed animal sanctuary “should” look like*, Rosemary and I were able to really think about what sanctuary *means* for the residents and the caregivers in situations like ours. It is a revolutionary relationship and way of living, for modern

vegans; it involves completely rethinking our perspective on the world and redefining ourselves in the (radical) role of caregivers.

This sense of dedication to the direct service of rescued farmed animals, as a way to end their exploitation, is what lies at the heart of sanctuary—and on an

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individual level truly defines a microsanctuary. To understand ourselves as vegans in light of the relationships we have with these beings is not only what defines our existence as co-habitants of a microsanctuary, but also shapes our notion of why we do what we do and where our moral obligations as vegans truly lie: to the animals.

Seen in this light, veganism is no longer so much >



All photos in this story are by
Rosemary Van Kleeck

a negative orientation, in the sense that we are trying to *not* cause harm or *not* be part of exploitation. It feels so much more positive to have a direct role in the care of the very individuals for whom most of us went vegan. Rosemary and I are and always have been vegan for the animals; saving and sustaining the lives of as many of them as we can has given our veganism so much more depth, meaning, and relevance. *Make no mistakes here:* Microsanctuaries are meant to be radical spaces, just as microsanctuary vegans *need* to be a radical force.

What we seek is a world in which no individual being is used as a means to an end, and no individual being is made to feel (or be treated as) lesser than for any reason. That will only be possible with a staggeringly comprehensive overhaul of everything that we know in our modern life. It cannot happen if we keep bringing humans into the world as we do, and keep consuming in the ways and amounts that we do, and keep pretending that the human species has some special significance in the universe that makes it more valuable than any other, and keep rationalising why it is okay for us to benefit from the suffering and exploitation of other beings so that our way of life can keep humming right along. We as a species, as a culture, as a society, need to learn humility, and we need to recognise the value of other lives as much as we need to understand the tragedy of forcing them, without consent and for our pleasure, into existence. Cleaning up chicken poop daily is a wonderful way to make that learning happen. Go do it. **BV**



Justin is the president of the *Triangle Sanctuary for All*, based in the US and co-founder of the Microsanctuary Movement. He is also a freelance writer and editor, who has written for *Our Hen House*, *Vegan Publishers*, and *Project*

Intersect, among others. All of Justin's work, as his life, centres on and starts with veganism and animal rights, and from there extends to environmentalism, sustainable and local food production, individual empowerment, education, and economic and social justice, to name a few. To find out more about Triangle Sanctuary for All [visit the website](#) and [connect on Facebook](#). You can also find out more about the [Microsanctuary Movement by clicking here](#).





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