



# Crip HumAnimal

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABLEISM AND SPECIESISM

BY MARY HOLMES

**Geertrui** (TRUDI) CAZAUX IS A BELGIAN ACTIVIST, AUTHOR, BLOGGER, AND DISABLED VEGAN.

She holds a master's in criminology and in environmental sciences, and a PhD in criminology. The subject of her PhD thesis was anthropocentrism and speciesism in contemporary criminology.

She previously worked as an educator in a youth center and then as a policy advisor for the Flemish government. She has several autoimmune diseases, which prevent her from maintaining "full-time employment," but she remains active in her chosen field. "Being inspired by ecofeminism, and discovering the relationships between speciesism and racism and sexism also led me to discover the relationships and the connections between ableism and speciesism and that's what I want to explore more on the new platform that I created. That's Crip

HumAnimal." Her stated intent is to explore the relationship between ableism and speciesism, (dis)ability and animality. She remarks that "crip" was once a derogatory term used by the able-bodied, but that it has been reclaimed by the disabled as a point of pride.

She began Crip HumAnimal in the fall of 2018, describing her own exploration into these issues and affording others access. As she states, "I also want it to be a platform for disabled vegans to tell their story, to share what kinds of difficulties they face in the vegan movement, in the animal rights movement, or in society in general." She was diagnosed with her autoimmune diseases some thirty years ago. Cazaux says that up until fairly recently, she was not comfortable revealing her own health issues; while in the workforce she felt this knowledge would hamper her career trajectory. She explains, "Autoimmune diseases often come together, and they have physical impacts on me, but also



what is very common for people with autoimmune diseases is that they have chronic fatigue. I have both physical challenges but also psychological challenges. It's very difficult, for example, to make commitments. That's why I also find it hard to work for an organization because I don't know from day to day whether I will have a good day, whether I will have a bad day. It comes in good days and bad days."

She works on three blogs. "I not only blog on Crip HumAnimal, but I also write on *BrugesVegan*, where I post a lot of restaurant reviews, and I also have a Dutch site *Graswortels*, that's the literal translation of grass roots, where I post articles about veganism, animal rights. Why I prefer to work that way is that there's no pressure on it. If I write two articles in a week that's fine. If I don't write any articles for two or three weeks, then there's nobody that's going to pressure me. There are no deadlines."

Stress and pressure exacerbate her auto-immune flare-ups. She does presentations, but accepts those invitations with a certain amount of trepidation, always wondering if her auto-immune condition will allow her to keep her commitments.

She talked about criminology in the light of classical animal rights literature. "The topic of my PhD was how animals were already incorporated into criminological research. For example—the cruelty link. That's a term to describe where there is domestic violence—woman abuse, child abuse. In those families you will often also find animal abuse, when there are animal companions in the family. But it's always from a very anthropocentric outlook." Animal abuse was not seen as a topic in its own right. Further she states, "The definition of animal abuse that is used is a very anthropocentric one. It's very speciesist. All the definitions of animal abuse in force in legislation throughout the world are very selective, with a very anthropocentric mind frame because they talk about the ways of abuse toward animals, like companion animals, but don't acknowledge that the slaughter and killing of animals in the slaughterhouse is also a form of animal abuse." In her words, "My PhD was an effort to put forth a non-speciesist criminology, a non-anthropocentric criminology that we take animals into account in criminology, but from a non-speciesist perspective."

Cazaux started the *BrugesVegan* blog, written in English, in 2013. At that time it was not easy to find a vegan meal. She concentrates on Bruges, which is the city closest to where she lives. Even though it's a relatively small town, it gets a huge influx of tourists every year. She has

expanded outside of Bruges since then, to other cities she visits in her travels. Now she has over 200 restaurant reviews on her blog. "I started documenting my experiences, so there's now more than 200 restaurant reviews on my blog. Whenever we do a city trip I want to document it on my blog. It's also a way of showing my family and friends, and other people of course, that going out and eating vegan is possible. It's not impossible. It used to be really hard. And sometimes it is hard in some areas. But it has improved quite a lot." Next to writing about her dining out experiences on the *BrugesVegan*, she's also an ambassador for Happy Cow (the worldwide database with vegan friendly restaurants, shops and professionals) and regularly adds new listings and writes reviews.

Cazaux expounded on the subject of ableism, speciesism, and the other -isms. "Ableism is discrimination of people based on their abilities. So there are many examples of similarities between ableism and speciesism, but also between ableism, speciesism, and other forms of discrimination like racism and sexism. They all use the same tactics of devaluation, of objectification, and also of animalization, that is, portraying those who are considered less as animals. So that is also actually the link with speciesism. You could also say that of ableism. Speciesism is actually a form of ableism because throughout history many characteristics have been the demarcation line to say whether you have moral status or not, whether you are considered as human or not. For example, being able to walk on two legs, having rational thought, being able to think rationally, being able to communicate in spoken language. So, those characteristics were seen as something that made you human.

"It also has repercussions for humans who don't have those characteristics. So they were seen and they are still seen as less than humans, and more animal-like. It's also remarkable that throughout history disabled persons have been considered sort of as the missing link in the evolution between animals and humans, so it all hangs together in a system of oppression that I don't think you can say there are individual discriminations among people, amongst each other, but racism, sexism, ableism, speciesism, they are more actually ideologies to enforce a system of oppression."

She then referred to *Animal Rights/Human Rights, Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation* a book by David Nibert. His premise is these are all ideologies which help enforce a global system of oppression. Or,



Cazaux and Boris

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The beautiful Cazaux home where animals live in peace.

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as Gary Francione describes the text. "Nibert presents a highly provocative, engaging, and accessible discussion of how capitalism has commodified the interests of both humans and nonhumans, and that the 'freedom' supposedly provided by capitalism results in the oppression of us all. The animal rights movement—particularly in the United States—has largely ignored the economic underpinnings of animal exploitation. And American progressives have largely ignored the issue of animal rights. Nibert's book is essential reading for both groups."

When asked what motivates Cazaux to do the work she does, she responded, "That's a difficult question, you know. It's being faced with so much injustice and I'm just trying to do whatever I can do to make a difference in the world. That sounds like a very cliched answer but when you feel the horrible suffering of animals and also of humans, of course, and when you realize how connected everything is, I must do whatever is in my capability to do to try and make a little bit of difference in the world."

When asked what her greatest accomplishment thus far was she replied she was proud of her activism, and her thirty-year long relationship with her husband. Beyond that, she commented, "I'm very happy that we give a home to several animals at our home. We live in the countryside and all the animals that come in here are of course adopted animals. It's not always easy. At the moment we have the company of 26 chickens and roosters, several cats and three donkeys. And also two sheep who are now 17 years old, so that's very old for sheep. Whenever I look at them I realize I made a difference in their lives, you know? Probably they wouldn't be here if it weren't for us so I'm very proud to have given them that life, you know? It won't change the world, but it will change the world for that particular animal."

<https://criphumanimal.org>  
<https://brugesvegan.com>  
<https://www.graswortels.org>

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1 *The magnificent Vos at 17 years old.*

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2 *Nora, Cazaux, and Babette.*

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3 *Donkeys in snow at the Cazaux home.*

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