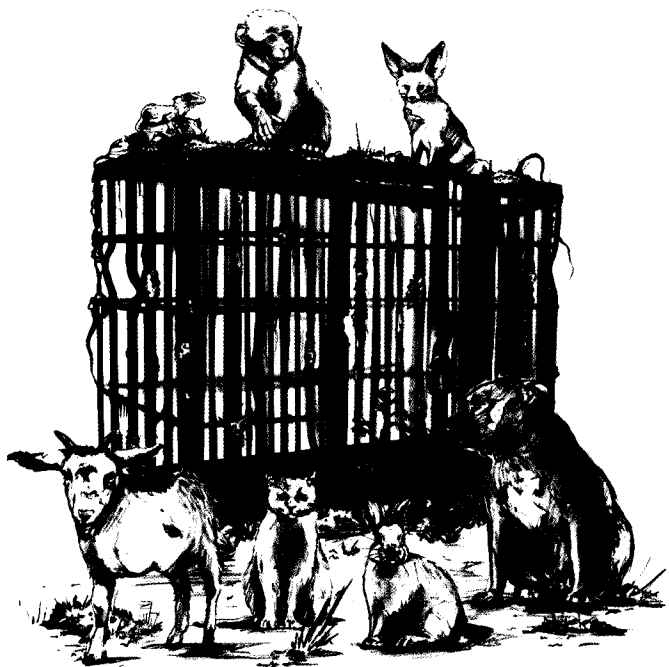


# **Radical Companionship: Rejecting Pethood and Embracing Our Multispecies World**



**Aiyana Goodfellow**

# **RADICAL COMPANIONSHIP**

**Rejecting Pethood & Embracing Our  
Multispecies World**

*...a theory and praxis*

*by Aiyana Goodfellow*

*In honour of animals and animality.*





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## Introduction

Radical Companionship is a developing theory for evolving our relationships with others through an anti-speciesist lens. 'Developing' is the key word here; I don't pretend this is an answer to anything, instead I see it as a compilation of ideas that relate. I feel that it's important to develop our own individual pedagogies and frameworks, rather than copy and paste the ideas of others – this approach means we can be more active in the development of our own political consciousness and bring something irreplaceable to our respective communities. With this in mind, I hope that Radical Companionship contributes to your own understanding of the world, as writing this has for me.

The ideas behind Radical Companionship generally focus on human-nonhuman relationships, particularly those we share with "companion animals", or as I say in this writing animals colonised into pethood. I have decided to focus on animals colonised into pethood since they are often sharing the same space as humans, and for this reason a particularly interesting dynamic exists between the human and the 'pet', a dynamic I feel is often dismissed when discussing animal rights or animal liberation. 'Pethood' is worth examining in its own right, but also in how it relates and exists within intra-human relationships as well. Contrary to protecting oppressive pethood, to be a radical companion is to connect with the animality in

all of us.

I hope this theory can be applied practically, and perhaps if we can improve our relationships with other animals we live with (or rather, with those who are forced to live with us), we can gain a better understanding of nonhumans altogether. At a basic level, Radical Companionship is a way of creating thoughtful interspecies relationships in a way that evokes liberation-oriented principles. Radical Companionship is flexible – and to an extent vague – so there is lots of space for growth and additional thought. This theory is a refusal of the binary dualism between humans and nonhumans. I wish to embrace the chaos of multispecies anarchy.

There are many ‘seedlings’ or foundational points to Radical Companionship, four main roots which ground the theory and a final chapter on concepts we can use for our liberation and growth. This is a simple and ever-evolving guide to the concept of Radical Companionship which will hopefully provide some insight into how we can all be better animal accomplices.

Evolution until revolution,

*Aiyana*

London, 2021



## Chapter One: Seedlings

*This chapter describes the foundational ideas of Radical Companionship, including points of inspiration, important things to understand, and ideas that carry throughout the essay.*

### Defining Anti-Speciesism

To understand anti-speciesism, we must first ask ourselves 'What is speciesism?'. It's a difficult question to answer as a person with human privilege. Although I am animalised through being Black and queer, I am a human animal so could never understand speciesism in all its pervasive depths.

*Speciesism is a set of irrational beliefs and prejudices in various forms and degrees, which reproduce political and social structures that yield power and privilege to human animals over other species of animals.*

#### *Species Revolution<sup>1</sup>*

I find the word 'irrational' particularly interesting as speciesism is a corruptly justified irrationality. We make speciesism socially acceptable by telling our-

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.speciesrevolution.org/speciesism/>



selves formalised, systemic violence is a necessity. We weave the deceitful narrative that nonhuman animals' place in the world is below us, to be used by us – at 'best' as an accessory. Much like all oppressions, speciesism and ableism are linked in that all those complicit weaponize ideas of rationality, morality and civility by internalising the indoctrination that nonhumans and disabled people don't feel, are less intelligent, or capable than us leading to their socially inferior position.

*...the ableism inherent in capability-based defences of human supremacy also highlights the hazard of defining "human" by means of a particular ability. That brings us to the ability most commonly claimed as the reason for human superiority and the rationale for human supremacy: rationality. Homo Sapiens means, literally, "wise man" with the sapiens meant to distinguish our species from allegedly less intelligent members of genus homo. Apart from the hubris of thinking of ourselves as the smartest of all, this designation centres cognitive capability as the very definition of humanity.*

*patrice jones, Speciesism and Ableism<sup>2</sup>*

Humans may be animals with the ability to reason and

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<sup>2</sup> <http://blog.bravebirds.org/archives/3225>

philosophise, but as wonderful as these things are, they can and are used as weapons. As we shall explore in a later seedling, reclaiming our animal bodies (as well as minds) is essential to the work of liberation from a cognitive-centric existence. Supremacy and authority of all kinds are protected by the ignorance of one's own privilege, therefore rendering nonhuman animals invisible is both a protection and rationalisation of speciesism. By keeping exploitation facilities out of sight and out of mind, most of us are butchered from the idea that we are inflicting harm on nonhuman animals and that they can feel harm in the first place, as well as disconnecting us from witnessing the aliveness and beauty (beyond 'cutification' and fetishisation) in animals and animality.

Alternatively, the group Anti-Speciesist Action<sup>3</sup> defines speciesism as "a belief of human superiority leading to the systemic oppression, exploitation and discrimination of nonhuman animals." 'Human superiority' is the key phrase here. Anthropocentrism, human supremacy and systemically enforced hierarchies in general, are the reason for Radical Companionship's existence. Radical Companionship and anti-speciesism as a whole, are rejections of all kinds of supremacy – particularly anthropocentrism – and instead about embracing the multispecies and horizontal. In that re-

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<sup>3</sup> <https://huntsabsireland.com/speciesism>

gard, I'd define anti-speciesism as "actively rejecting the ideology of human supremacy, the interpersonal violence of ownership-based human-to-animal relationships, and the institutional, deliberate colonisation, degradation and exploitation of nonhuman animals."

## **What is Animalisation?**

*The domain of the "human" or "humanity" is not about whether or not one belongs to the species homo sapiens. Rather, "human" means a certain way of being, especially exemplified by how one looks or behaves, what practices are associated with one's community, and so on. So, the "human" or "humanity" is just a conceptual way to mark the province of European whiteness as the ideal way of homo sapiens. This means that the conceptions of "humanity/human" and "animality/animal" have been constructed along racial lines.*

*Syl Ko, Aphro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters by Aph Ko and Syl Ko*

Human-ness is a creation of supremacy, to uphold the human/animal divide that permeates all aspects of our societies. 'Human' in the binary sense is associated with whiteness (and in extension all dominant

social identities e.g., being cisgender, a man, heterosexual, able-bodied) because whiteness has historically been and still is the ideal way of homo sapiens according to a colonialist and supremacist standard. The binary animal exists as the dangerous opposite to the human and it's because of this dichotomy that one ironically cannot exist without the other. Humanity, whiteness and all other oppressive hierarchies rely on the oppressed, meaning human is only seen as 'better than' or 'good' because human exists in spite of animal, not because human is factually, inherently superior. The binary animal (which in this context includes animalised humans) is othered, dirty, aggressive, hypersexual, unintelligent and lacking in morals, feeling and worth...among many other negatively-associated traits. When we animalise a homo sapien, we dress them up in this binary idea of animality as well as the social roles and values (or lack of value) that we place on actual nonhumans. It's a way of gatekeeping humanity for white, cishet, able-bodied, neurotypical, class privileged men – those groomed into oppressiveness.

## **Patriarchy & Pethood**

*The necrophilous person can relate to an object—a flower or a person—only if he possesses it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses possession, he loses contact with the*

*world...He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life.*

*Erich Fromm (via The Pedagogy of the Oppressed  
by Paulo Friere)*

Oppressors are taught to uphold the social power they are given at any cost. In a capitalistic society, where wealth equals worth, power is currency. But wealth is not only monetary. A cornerstone of upholding this structural power is dominance – or in the words of Fromm, possession. In order to achieve this possession, we must turn living things – whether they be a river, a donkey, a human, a pigeon – into objects. To objectify is to possess, because we love control and in the act of controlling, we kill life.

White-patriarchal-capitalistic-speciesist masculinity encourages us to feel gratification and fulfilment through ownership, possession and violence. Speciesism and all oppressions uphold coercive rape culture in the ways that they devour, animalise and are inherently non-consensual. Any system of oppression is a system of autonomy violation. If we think about it, the existence of 'pets' or 'companion animals' – both terms that don't sit well with me since 'pet' is the language of speciesism and 'companion animal' implies it is the role of the nonhuman animal to provide us with friendship – started as a non-consensual rela-

tionship: domestication forcefully colonised them into a subservient pethood, genetic modification edited them to fit our needs and be dependent on us, and breeding and family separation made them profitable props. None of this is chosen by them. Whilst autonomy is essential to liberation, there are numerous ways that domestication makes animal sovereignty just out of reach. In this case, we human animals must reckon with the weight of upholding a dynamic forged in repression and violation, these relationships with extreme power imbalances, like the ones between humans and nonhumans, are things that require critical engagement if we are to break the cycles of domination and pethood.

Pethood is the hierarchy of ownership where human needs are centred above the binary animal and is an oppression within many oppressions. In the context of nonhuman animals, we buy and adopt them because we want companionship, amusement, or status and demand that they fit into our lives with little regard for theirs. So much of what we see socially as a 'good pet' is really just someone who makes ownership easy e.g., someone who is loyal (read: submissive and afraid); someone who is good (read: forced to follow rules and live to the timetable of oppressive figure); someone who is cute (read: innocent, available to fetishise and cutify). It is this status, this faux-visibility that domesticated nonhumans experience which may be interpreted as relative freedom – however this

is a simplistic view. A significant difference between a nonhuman imprisoned in a fur farm and a nonhuman forced to live in a human home, is proximity. Both people are oppressed by speciesism, but the latter has a closer proximity to human-ness and easier access in occupying human spaces...but as a silenced presence.

*...the awareness one has when one realizes that one's existence in particular spaces is contingent upon how others feel about one being there. In my case, silenced presence describes my realisation that parts of me, if not all of me, remain unseen by those in power because they are more comfortable seeing the idea of me that they have created within their worldview rather than my reality.*

*Christopher Carter, Prophetic Labrador: Expanding (Black) Theology by Overcoming the Invisibility of Animal Life and Death*<sup>4</sup>

We have created a human-centric worldview of animals colonised into pethood and smooth over this truth by telling ourselves we 'love' them – but what kind of 'love' is based on ownership?

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<sup>4</sup> [https://0e3fb91a-d286-4df8-9446-f752519054e7.filesusr.com/ugd/7d0564\\_6e0e693c056f4eccb2a759bf1b645871.pdf](https://0e3fb91a-d286-4df8-9446-f752519054e7.filesusr.com/ugd/7d0564_6e0e693c056f4eccb2a759bf1b645871.pdf)

We supposedly reserve 'love' for animals colonised into pethood and 'consumption' for those murdered by the industrial animal agriculture system, the fur industry, the hunting industry and more, but the affection we have for nonhuman animals we call 'companions' is not love, and is most definitely consumption. We consume by fetishisation when choosing particular 'breeds', colours and sexes of animals, even saying they are "cute enough to eat"! We consume by possession – we don't see animals as friends but as property. Consuming goes way beyond the literal eating of flesh and secretions, past even mass murder through culling or experimentation and extends to the cultures, personhood and souls of our nonhuman kin. Therefore, aiming to include nonhumans exploited for other reasons in the identity of pethood, does nothing to liberate anybody from the human/animal divide. By creating a binary of friends vs. food, not only do we exclude all the other numerous interactions we have with nonhumans and many variations of speciesism, but we convince ourselves that our love for them can exist outside of the realms of speciesism, that humans have the jurisdiction to choose some species of nonhuman animals – by loving them, or assigning them 'pethood' – to be exempt from an institutional system of oppression. Are we so egoistic that we believe that our 'love' and 'friendship' as their oppressors can somehow save them?



*PET, noun: a domestic or tamed animal kept for companionship or pleasure*

*treated with special attention or evoking particularly strong feelings*

*Oxford Dictionary*

So, if human supremacy and speciesism separates domesticated or colonised nonhumans into categories pertaining to their usefulness to us (e.g., working animal, farm animal, companion animal) I'd argue that the same could apply to animalised homo sapiens. Perhaps light-skinned Black and brown people who have a privilege upheld by colourism, are the pets of whiteness due to their proximity to it. We can also think about the similar fetishisation of 'pure' and 'mixed breeds' of nonhuman animal pets and the fetishisation of mixed-race human children. White women and children are the pets of white cis-men, due to their proximity to whiteness, cisgenderness and a patriarchal masculinity. When language like 'bitch' is used or when we enforce ideologies like 'children should be seen and not heard' we're enforcing ideas of pethood under a misogynistic, ageist and speciesist society. These groups of human people are allowed space in the white ideals of innocence, cuteness, attractiveness in exchange for (mostly taught or forced) submission. Pethood is a racialised, gendered, age-ed

and species-ed dynamic, interlinked in that they force us into roles of hierarchy: the human, the man, the adult, the white person is an autonomous, decision maker with humanity and the 'pet', the nonhuman, the non-man, the child, the non-white individual is weak, passive and exists to be fetishised.

The human is the master domesticator, of themself and of others, whether this domestication be intra-human or extra-human. As the human domesticates and animalises, they must also domesticate and animalise themselves.

*Although the situation of oppression is a dehumanized and dehumanizing totality affecting both the oppressors and those whom they oppress, it is the latter who must, from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for a fuller humanity; the oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he dehumanizes others, is unable to lead this struggle.*

*Paulo Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Whilst the oppressions we enforce and privileges we hold are our responsibility to unlearn, we cannot lead the struggle. The colonial human, through the animalisation of others becomes the hyper-aggressive, soulless, and detestable binary animal that they created

in the first place and therefore, it is not our so-called love, compassion or empathy for nonhuman animals that will bring about liberation, but the oppressed themselves. We must allow ourselves to be led by the wild, out of our self-made confinements and back to roots of our animality.

*Speciesism enables Homo Sapiens to profess a wisdom unique among beasts, yet Homo Carceralis would be a more appropriate moniker, as our species is arguably the only one known to imprison itself within myriad institutions of domination. Most species cannot be domesticated, and every life form will struggle against anything that stands in its way. Yet we create ever more complex societies, imprisoned like Russian dolls within the borders of states, wage slavery, patriarchy, in metropolises of hostile architecture and sterility, boxed up in our coffin-like apartments and resorting to the cold comfort of the internet for some sense of connection to our fellow humans. Of course, there is resistance and attempts to forge an independent and free existence, but for the most part we are content to build our own prisons and work as each others' screws. Wildlife is a reminder of another part of us, a part that has been largely suppressed over the course of millennia, a part our rulers work every day to keep down, and which we frequently keep in check in ourselves and each other.*

*Anonymous, Biocentric Anarchy<sup>5</sup>*

Radical Companionship is inherently anti-pet. This doesn't mean anti-animal, but is a rejection of the role of pethood, whether occupied by nonhuman or human animals, and is a rejection of the role of owner. As we move forward, we must discard pethood in all its forms. Possession and ownership of living things, capitalist accumulation and 'devourism' are all forms of oppression.

## **The Ends Reclaim the Roots**

In March 2021, I wrote an essay on my website about my theory of 'devourism'. The essay was specifically in regards to 'white devourism' or how whiteness consumes Blackness, Black people and Black culture through colonialism, erasure, capitalism, appropriation, objectification, sexualization and more. Devourism describes the libidinal and ever hungry ways of ownership. It does not only pertain to whiteness, but also to humanness as a whole. White supremacy is a system of unchecked ego. Egoistic principles that are internalised by most humans, white or otherwise. To counter this, we need to let go of our property, let go of what we have devoured, including the people we own

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<sup>1</sup> <https://network23.org/anarcho-gardener/files/2020/05/Biocentric-Anarchy-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [www.aiyanagoodfellow.com](http://www.aiyanagoodfellow.com) (my blog has since been moved to another platform)

and the benefits of said ownership.

The concept of devourism speaks to a capitalist culture that values property over the people, turns property into wealth and equates wealth with worth. 'Civilization' as defined by whiteness is moral, enlightened and advanced, thriving off of individualism and accumulation that trickles down from the rich and bourgeois and becomes the territorialism of impoverished, overpoliced hoods and ends, often with mostly immigrant, Black, and brown residents. Communities that are then re-colonised through gentrification.

Not gonna lie my experience with this topic is limited, but in London where I live, this territorialism is rife as people try to protect the very little they have with a rugged violence that often results in death. The post-code wars that are waged between the North, South, and East boroughs of London, are a result of scarcity and lack of options. Struggle is romanticised under capitalism and people are brainwashed to think that survival is a ladder and the only way out is through the devourism that destroyed our communities in the first place. Those who do escape are met by jealousy – there is a collectivism in capitalism, the idea of committing 'to the team', committing to the wars, to the postcode, and not forgetting where you came from. Yet, this kind of unity will of course never allow us to escape these environments. We need to embody a camaraderie that fights for the protection of people

over postcodes, that recognises our real enemies. Enemies like the police that stop and search us, that murder us. The racist schools that kill our cultures and exclude us. The prison and immigration systems that criminalise our existence. The inner-city confinements which restrict us and block off our access to the world, to nature, and to other animals.

*The prison industrial complex is inextricably linked to the animal industrial complex in the shared ideological space as well as the very physical realities they both occupy. Until these systems and prisons that incarcerate humans and other animals are deconstructed, including the prisons inside our own heads that make us resistant to change, liberation will continue to elude us all.*

*Kristy Alger, Five Essays for Freedom: A Political Primer for Animal Advocates*

Noticing the ways in which our minds, bodies, communities and environments are occupied by the state, capitalized off and consumed is not an original thought, but seeing devourism through the lens of anti-speciesism and animalisation gives it new light. It is quite plain to notice the unmistakably clear ways we devour nonhuman animals through systemic enslavement, violence and state-sanctioned, as well as socially supported, murder. The ways we are severed

by the human/animal binary is a form of spiritual deformation. The enslavement of both Black and brown people and the land together is a historical and often painful affiliation, whether it be through picking cotton and sugar cane in the West Indies, North and South America during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and African people forced to pick cocoa, human trafficking in the fishing industry, lynched bodies hung from trees, the destruction of native lands through all kinds of colonisation and wars waged across the world. All examples of how we and the Earth are extracted from and violated, not separately, but in tandem with each other.

Connecting with our multispecies world and reclaiming the space in nature we have been denied by colonialism and capitalism is essential. It means the people at the ends, edges, margins of society burrowing back into the earth and into the soil. It means the re-rooting of our ancestral sufferings so we may reimagine ourselves and what we can grow to be. Liberation is a garden of rest, an escape from the metallic, monotonous violence of the inner-city. I believe it is our power, particularly the power of young Black people, who will be the revolution. It is humans who enforce violence in such depth, but it is all animals and all people who will develop community and create peace.

## Politically Queer, Politically Animal

I'd like to play with the idea that our marginalised identities are where we can find liberation. For example, in life I've observed there are two types of queer: there is queer as in having an LGBTQ+ identity; and there is Queer is in wanting liberation from and rejecting predefined societal boxes, norms and the idea of being trained into white supremacist civility. Whilst these two kinds of queerness can exist within one person at the same time, Political Queerness (the latter) fits firmly within the ideas of Radical Companionship as it's defined by its lack of strict definition and is something inherently liberatory. Political Queerness is a want for self-determination. Political Queerness is decolonialist in recognition of historically non-binary experiences of sexuality and gender, especially within Black and brown communities but also across the world.<sup>7</sup> Political Queerness is not just an identity and therefore can be engaged with by non-queer, allied individuals. In this way, we can use our othered-ness for liberatory advantage.

Importantly, 'animal' is also a rejection of human-made oppressive constructs, especially since non-

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<sup>7</sup> I recommend: [https://medium.com/@janelane\\_62637/the-splendor-of-gender-non-conformity-in-africa-f894ff5706e1](https://medium.com/@janelane_62637/the-splendor-of-gender-non-conformity-in-africa-f894ff5706e1), G. G. Bolich's book 'Conversing On Gender' & the work of Alok V Menon



human animals don't exist within these frames at all. Therefore, their existence is a most direct and clear form of political resistance against a capitalistic humanity. This shows us that taking inspiration from other animals is vital - humans can acknowledge our supremacy and speak about how we've been socialised into humanity, whilst also being Political Animals. Similarly to Political Queers, Political Animals fight for liberation not assimilation. Political Animals recognise the wonderful animality in all animals outside of human/animal binary definitions, reclaim animality for ourselves and respect the varied animality in others. Political Animals may not be animalised homo sapiens or nonhumans, but strive to be accomplices to the plight and liberation of the animal.

## **Animal Accomplices**

All the world's a stage and activists merely players, performing roles of revolution. Sometimes, activism and the 'role of the activist' can become a routine rather than resistance as this repetition and predictability takes away all opportunity for strategic attack. Predictability and stagnancy is the death of liberation as it imitates the robotic echoes of capitalism itself. By assigning ourselves the 'role of the activist' we end up conforming into the very society we are supposedly rallying against. This also means we legitimise certain kinds of action over others, as more in-fitting

with this regulated position, which is controlled by the systems and its benefiter themselves. When activism becomes a job, this means taking up the obligation and responsibility that comes with it. The weight of the world and all its problems rest on the shoulders of the change-maker, and the result is often a paternalistic attitude to social transformation.

*A division of labour implies that one person takes on a role on behalf of many others who relinquish this responsibility. A separation of tasks means that other people will grow your food and make your clothes and supply your electricity while you get on with achieving social change. The activist, being an expert in social change, assumes that other people aren't doing anything to change their lives and so feels a duty or a responsibility to do it on their behalf. Activists think they are compensating for the lack of activity by others. Defining ourselves as activists means defining our actions as the ones which will bring about social change, thus disregarding the activity of thousands upon thousands of other non-activists. Activism is based on this misconception that it is only activists who do social change — whereas of course class struggle is happening all the time.*

Andrew X, Give Up Activism

On a similar note, as is something that happens with many terms, 'allyship' is becoming watered down, passive and mainstream, a word on the same tired wavelength as 'activist'. For this reason, I present animal accomplice as an alternative to describe people who act in solidarity rather than charity in support of nonhuman animals and their human abettors.

This solidarity includes, but is not necessarily limited to:

- **Supporting the Abolition of the Police and Prison System**

Carceral systems based on fear, strict rules and punishment exist in many places in our society, including against nonhumans (more on this when we discuss 'Consent & Communication'). Farms, zoos, aquariums, circuses, testing labs and more, are all examples of institutionalised imprisonment of nonhuman animals. Police exist to protect property and profits, upholding capitalism – which commodifies all animals. This also includes understanding that legal does not equal good, and illegal does not equal bad. The genocide and systemic murder of nonhumans is lawful everywhere in the world and to achieve freedom, we will have to break those laws. Animal accomplices know that animal liberation will never be achieved under our current systems.

- **A Decolonial Method**

Recognising that nonhumans are colonised people and that decolonisation must also include non-humans is essential. This in action could mean educating ourselves on the native and non-native plants and animals in our communities.

- **Assisting Animals in Need of Care**

Whether companion, free-living or farmed animals, we can assist with their ill-health, injuries, sickness and disability by supporting their right to medical treatment.

- **Being Accountable**

As says the second framework point of the Anti-Speciesist Arts Collective<sup>8</sup>, "as humans who do not speak the many languages and dialects that other animals do and therefore have limited communication with them, we understand that non-humans cannot critique us in our allyship. This means humans must take on the responsibility of acute self-critique and be careful in the actions we take when advocating for animals. Know that

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<sup>8</sup> <https://antisppeciesistartscollective.weebly.com/our-framework.html>

we will make mistakes so be ready to think critically about yourself and others."

- **Adopting a Total Liberation Stance**

Understand that oppressions are fundamentally connected and that it benefits all to be against every kind of oppression. This gives us more in-depth knowledge of oppression, the parallels between them and the inspiration on how we can fight against speciesism – especially due to possible cross-species communication barriers, it's important to listen to marginalised voices speaking on accomplice-ship so we can learn how to be better radical companions.

*Ally has also become an identity, disembodied from any real mutual understanding of support.*

*The term ally has been rendered ineffective and meaningless...There exists a fiercely unrelenting desire to achieve total liberation, with the land and, together. At some point there is a "we", and we most likely will have to work together. This means, at the least, formulating mutual understandings that are not entirely antagonistic, otherwise we may find ourselves, our desires, and our struggles, to be incompatible. There are certain understandings that may not be negotiable. There are contradictions*

*that we must come to terms with and certainly we will do this on our own terms.*

*But we need to know who has our backs, or more appropriately: who is with us, at our sides?*

*Indigenous Action, Accomplices Not Allies<sup>9</sup>*

## **We Are Utopia**

*Freedom isn't a pre-configured future utopia; it is a lived experience by those who have the courage to reclaim their lives as their own here and now.*

*Flower Bomb, Decomposing the Masses: Toward Armed Individuality<sup>10</sup>*

Radical Companionship is based on the idea that freedom and future can be found and created within ourselves and our communities, the evolution before the revolution. The practice of liberation is one that must start today. Inner-utopia can be created by taking part in community care and mutual aid, practicing

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<sup>9</sup> <https://indigenouaction.org/wp-content/uploads/accomplices-not-allies-print-friendly.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/flower-bomb-decomposing-the-masses-towards-armed-individuality>

accountability, liberatory education, exploring gender-fluidity, using rest as resistance (see Nap Ministry<sup>11</sup>), finding joy and anything else you want to see happen in the future.

Our identities can exist without those parts of ourselves being in the context of oppression. We can move beyond ideas of colonised vs. coloniser or oppressed vs. oppressor as these are the creations of devourers themselves. This does not mean we ignore history and its important effects on today's world, but that when we decolonise (which is to say, look to and move towards the future) we let go of the labels, binaries and definitions that created the colonial world. Our socialised ideas of Blackness, animality and disability are only so because that's what we've been taught, but Blackness, animality and disability do not only occur within the realms of colonialism and repression.

*Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature... Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together--that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler--was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. The settler and the native are old acquaintances. In fact, the settler is right when he speaks of knowing "them" well. For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that*

*is to say, his property, to the colonial system.*  
*Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth*

Understanding that 'we are utopia' means part of "survival pending revolution" (Huey P. Newton) is finding small pockets of liberation right now. Revolution is an ongoing struggle – but it doesn't begin with a riot. It begins with us setting up the communities and frameworks to withstand the riots, occupations and inevitable violence that comes with uprising. It begins with planning, negotiation and trusting in each other. Radical Companionship is an attempt to apply this in relation to our connections with nonhuman animals.

### **What Makes Companionship Radical?**

Angela Davis describes radical as to grab something by the roots. The roots of human and nonhuman existence on this planet have always included interdependence and community as something vital to our survival. However, as Western European colonialism destroyed nature because of (white) humans' aim to be separate from it as well as the subsequent rise of capitalism, companionship is becoming something less and less familiar.



*Brother, sister, friend – these are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, and my friend is my scheme for getting on.*

*Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth*

Everyone is a(n animalised) monster – a murderous settler or a native savage; animal filth or human scum; a Black n\*gger or a white devil; a rich “pig” or a poor pleb – however, with radical companionship, we aim to grasp back at these roots and reclaim a way of living where we exist as part of our local, inter-webbing ecosystems rather than as enemy to them. Instead of nature and animality being in contrast to us, we must understand that we are intrinsically connected to it – I believe this could be described as an animal inclusive step towards decolonisation.



## Chapter Two: Roots

*Radical Companionship's core ideas when it comes to evaluating and elevating our relationships with nonhuman animals. Whilst theoretical, chapter two tends to take a more practical, directional approach to anti-speciesism but also caregiving in a way that rejects pethood. These are roots that will grow, be built upon and become stronger.*

### 1. Affirming Animals

Affirming animal personhood is the first root of Radical Companionship and the most necessary to understand. Having the skill to affirm animal personhood gives us the ability to apply the other roots of Radical Companionship as they are all overlapping and interconnected.

Respecting animals means never dismissing or minimising the experience of nonhuman animals through recognising that nonhumans exist as themselves and are not here for us. We cannot see nonhumans through the lens of humanity because this sets it as the standard when personhood is not defined by us. But what is personhood? Or more specifically what is animal personhood? When animal is mentioned here, I am not necessarily discussing the binary, un-

truthful idea of the animal or of animality as a whole, but of what biologically defines an animal. An animal is a multicellular organism of the kingdom of Animalia and like all organisms, we require nutrition and energy, we respire, reproduce, grow and develop, respond to our surroundings, move inside and outside our bodies, control our internal conditions and excrete. However, these are merely the conditions that mean we survive, the things that prove we are living things, but not necessarily the conditions that affirm us as people. To affirm someone as a person means to support and protect not only their right to have the things they need, but also the things they want. In the context of nonhuman animality and caregiving, this affirmation means not just making sure they have the things to keep them content but also recognising what can support them as an individual.

The words personhood or person could be interpreted in the legal sense, as it is heavily connoted with citizenship, non-liberatory-politics and humanity. Or it could be recognised as 'the people' like when we say **POWER TO THE PEOPLE**. Power to the working class, the nonhumans, the racialised, the unhoused, and marginalised in their collective autonomy and strength. I prefer the latter. A person is somebody who lives, loves, feels, and wants. It is not exclusive to a particular species, gender, race, ability and so on. The personhood I describe can also be related to a sense of 'being'. We often define beings as 'living things', a

word that can apply to all animals and plants. Also, in-tying with the aforementioned seedling, being here in the now is significant to the idea that we are utopia. Animality is wide, vast, un-monolithic, un-contained. Decolonising our minds should include cutting out the idea that we must be civilised and controlled and understood to be worthy – our societies reduce the expansiveness of gender, the universe, the deep sea, animality, space, art and the individual to a simplified box of social respectability. We lose so much by trying to control everyone and everything, there's so much to be said about allowing things to breathe and grow.

Affirming human animality is also important. For human animals, it can mean knowing that we are not robots of the capitalist machine. We must recognise the fact that we are animals and that is okay. Animality is beautiful. For nonhuman animals it may mean seeing them in their nonhuman-ness and fully accepting, embracing and encouraging it. Nonhumans are non-human, they are not "just like us" but are autonomous individuals with agency. Therefore, animal accomplices reject the victimisation of nonhuman animals. Victimisation is a form of oppression when it deems non-humans as voiceless, erasing their ability to consent and resist. Victimization means humans, as oppressors, can insert themselves into a position of saviourism and completely goes against an ethic of solidarity and being an accomplice. We must ALWAYS refer to animals as survivors of speciesism and agents of lib-

eration. Delete the idea of the passive animal from your mind – animals are alive and fight to be so every single day.

Victimisation also comes in the form of trauma porn media that explicitly and graphically displays animal death. As well as being triggering for human mental health, footage such as this can sometimes be a form of human-centrism as through viewing this we can allow ourselves to centre our pain, our righteous anger and our guilt. In her 1981 speech 'The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism, Audre Lorde said "Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness." If our journey to understanding the plight of nonhuman animals begins at self-centred guilt, ignorant to the true autonomy of nonhuman animals, how can we break out of the cycles of capitalist repetition and changelessness? Most of the ways humans interact with other animals are through speciesist violence. To the wider speciesist world, these occurrences may seem passive and normal, but what we are not taught to recognise is the underlying violence in reinforcing nonhuman existence as objects, food, or

pets. When we share videos or images of nonhuman animals being assaulted or killed (particularly if out of context and on social media platforms designed for desensitisation) we are also violating their consent. They deserve the dignity to not have their pain and anguish broadcast to the internet, especially when we cannot ask for permission. They are consumed, like the devourist systems that oppress them. It serves a victimising mindset to display masses of faceless and nameless murdered nonhuman animals, reducing them to incomprehensible facts and figures rather than individuals, rather than people with agency. They are 'mass-ified' and mystified, thought of as only existing in the present, their only future being imminent death. Yet, if we traced the histories of those millions of individuals, we would soon see that all species have culture, custom, and a history of resistance in their blood. Instead, we can share images/videos/stories of nonhumans in places of rest, community, and joy as well as uplifting the many stories of nonhumans biting back. Nonhuman animals are in a constant state of rebellion and the saviourist human must be reminded that animals are the leaders of their own liberation.

Victimisation is a tool of pethood in that it invalidates the person colonised into pethood. Domesticated animals, whilst having a silenced presence, are more generally visible than animals violated outside of the destructive pethood industry but their choice is still stifled. Whilst (hyper-)visible because of their proxim-

ity to humans, they are fetishised particularly in the form of cutification. The practice of rejecting victimisation must extend to avoiding human centric activities which involve using nonhuman animals as entertainment props (e.g., by dressing them up, training them to do tricks for amusement). These activities are at the time of writing especially prevalent across social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok to name a few.

Across films and social media, we see a trend of victimisation. This makes sense when we think about the self-gratifying, temperamental and ignorant ways of the internet. It is a brilliant tool, yes, but it has the ability to encourage performative behaviour and feed our paternalistic egos. With this mentality, it is easy to think of nonhuman animals as “livestock” in need of “stewardship”. In our attempts at anti-speciesism, critical thinking is essential. Being directly analytical and aware when it comes to our interpersonal relationships like those we share with domesticated non-humans, challenges us. And it starts with the basic – respect.

## **2. Respect & Relationships**

Inter-species communities are based on interdependence however, when it comes to companion animals,



human supremacy means that we have the upper hand. Domesticated nonhumans will have to rely on us for food, shelter, healthcare, and more which means it's our responsibility as caregivers to honour their needs and wants, beyond what will just keep them alive. This begins with a commitment to not centring human experiences as well as having a politic of mutual respect.

Speciesism and patriarchy are interlinked in that they are both systems of ownership and because of this, love and respect are often conditional. We should not have to love the nonhumans around us to respect them, especially as in a patriarchal society, much of what we define as "love" is based on domination and ownership. Carceral patriarchal relationships are intertwined with the nuclear family model, which has, post-Industrial Revolution, become the Western default. In the nuclear family unit under a white, cisheteropatriarchal society, the "man of the house" owns the wife, children and animals. This sense of ownership is carried through all the humans in the house; wife owns children and nonhumans; children own nonhumans; nonhumans own nobody. This hierarchy of possession also pertains to the amount of power each member of the family has -- the husband who owns the most people, has the most power and nonhuman who owns nobody has no power.

Whilst animals colonised into pethood may be "one

of the family" there is an unwritten contract of ownership and obligation within this structure. It does not escape me the ageism in play here, and its connection to speciesism. In general, anti-child ageism is terribly unrecognised and under-discussed within politically conscious circles, and in this case the role of the human adult within the patriarchal family arrangement is essentially one of responsibility. Responsibility, ownership and authority are the so-called burden of the colonialist, paternalist or otherwise oppressive figure. Whilst the white man's burden is to civilise the savage and the human's burden is to domesticate the beast, the adult's burden is to discipline the child. All these dynamics are a power imbalance of pethood. The child represents submissiveness, moldability and innocence – they are the blank page for the parent to draw on, the clay to be moulded, the mess to be tidied. The child is nothing at all without the intervention and hands of the adult figure...or at least, that is what authoritarian, ageist hierarchies tell us.

Another link between human youth oppression and nonhuman animal oppression is that of cutification, which describes a kind of fetishisation often specifically about someone's perceived cuteness and innocence, rendering them a silenced presence. Cutification allows for adults and humans to feel entitlement to 'pets' and children. Invasive questions and statements like 'Where did you get it?', 'I want one!', 'How old is it?' or 'Is it a boy or a girl?' are commonplace

when referring to either nonhuman or human babies. Through this, the cutified becomes an accessory and a product, so perhaps one of the reasons human adults prefer to adopt the small or young is because they can cutify them whereas when we get older and become more aware of the world, we stand up for ourselves and the 'owner' cannot as easily cutify or mirror their expectations onto us. This cuteness and innocence is not awarded to all children. Innocence is a concept particularly projected onto white upper-class women and children, so consequently is not awarded to the working class, brown and Black people. Black children in particular bear the brunt of toxic cutification's dangerous opposite – adultification. Black children are flung into responsibility and guilt, perceived as dangerous, criminal, animal. Like animalisation, adultification blurs the lines between binaries, in this case the split between child and adult. Marginalised children, exist in the grey area between innocence and corruption. The legal language that oppresses us youth, predominantly the word 'minor', carries with it clear connotations of sub-being or depersonisation. Comparably to nonhuman animals, children are also the legal property of their parents or guardians with limited options in life depending on the decrees of adults around us. Human children and nonhuman animals are all minors. This same paradigm could apply to some disability – what minors have in common, whether they be so by age, species or even disability, is that they are often in need of constant care. How-

ever, everybody needs care and support all the time so adopting a style of community that shares this responsibility means nobody becomes a 'burden' or a pet. Animal accomplices strive to be in solidarity with all those who need and receive care, in the knowledge they themselves also need it too.

There is a parental proverb that emphasises the expected gratefulness that young people should display for having been fed, clothed and sheltered. Capitalist patriarchy tells us all relationships are transactional and that we must unquestioningly "respect our elders" to avoid the punishments of deprivation, detention, exclusion, being grounded and in some cases physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Prisons, schools, homes and in extension all society is built on carceral logic. This is a society of abuse in that it grooms us into oppressiveness and starves us of connection. Our first relationship experiences are formed with authority hidden under the guise of patriarchal love. Our education systems are rampant with repression. Our childhoods are, even at the best of times, littered with domestication. In contrast, interspecies relationships become our chosen family. We can reclaim and re-define family as something based on mutual respect, aid, individuality and freedom. Our chosen family and friends can include plants and animals of all species and begins at a horizontal approach to community. Respect is not built on fear, and love is not grown through requirement. They both begin with choice,

autonomy and anarchy.

*Deciding not to base a relationship on a foundation of entitlement is about respecting other's independence and self-determination.*

*Andie Nordgren*

Relationship anarchy is the "application of anarchist principles to intimate relationships. Some especially important values include autonomy, anti- hierarchical practices, lack of state control, anti- normativity, and community interdependence" (Wikipedia). Relationship anarchy is a model often used in intra-human relationships, but I believe it can also be applied to our relationships with nonhuman animals (with the intimacy part being about general connection rather than sexuality). Relationship anarchy can quite easily be applied to Radical Companionship.

For example, understanding that animals have autonomy and respecting them is one of THE most essential parts to Radical Companionship. Anti-hierarchy means decentring humans, understanding that we have human privilege and dismantling our biases. It also encourages us not to place human relationships as more important or valuable than nonhuman ones, just because society values our species over others. Autonomy and anti-hierarchy can only exist in full-

ness if there is a lack of state control. The state and capitalism commodify relationships and the people in them, trying to make us fit into the box of 'acceptability' (read: white society, ownership, carceral patriarchal relationships) so anti-normativity is key. Respectful, anti-speciesist relationships between nonhumans and humans are rare: we remember that most human interactions with them are as dead "things" due to the necrophilous society we live in. Therefore, community interdependence is key to identifying the personhood and alive-ness within human and nonhuman communities. This interdependence is a survival method as much as an attempt to find utopia within each other. Despite what capitalism has tried to ingrain into us, isolation, ownership and accumulation is not where we find fulfilment and joy – it's within ourselves, each other, and our communities. Although humans impact the world heavily (and often negatively), nonhuman animals affect Earth too and show agency in doing so – we exist in webs of interconnectedness where we all bounce off each other and mould each other's lives, appreciating the necessity of everybody's presence. Our world is naturally communicative.

### **3. Consent & Communication**

*We look down on the ways nonhuman animals communicate—not only assuming a clear hierarchical divide between the way human beings share infor-*

*mation and the myriad ways other animals do, but assuming that this divide is morally consequential.*

*Sunaura Taylor, Beasts of Burden*

Consent is an essential part to all relationships, including our human-nonhuman interactions. As mentioned, speciesism and human supremacy, as systems of domination, ownership and devourism, are inherently non-consensual, so the need for understanding how to give, receive and understand consent is paramount. But you may ask, how can we ask for or discuss consent with nonhumans when we can't always communicate with them? It's good to take note of the obstacles with nonhuman-human communication because we all speak completely different languages. For example, prey animals like horses have extremely subtle and physical ways of speaking whereas dogs, having been the first animal that humans domesticated (read: colonised), have a long history with our species and therefore those connections are much easier to navigate. To be able to implement inclusive consent practices means that it is necessary to learn about different ways of communication. This applies to our intra-human relations too, for example, disabled humans may be nonspeaking and may converse through sign language, writing, technology and much more. With regard to nonhumans, being species-specific and researching the language in which the non-humans you most often come into contact with speak,

can be really helpful. As humans have privilege over nonhumans and have colonised the world to cater to us, we should work on nonhuman terms.

This also means listening to nonhumans without the pretext of our own humanity. It may mean 'not putting words in their mouth' or assuming who they are. Wait for them to tell us, if they want to tell us. There is a difference however, between putting human standards onto nonhumans and applying your personal and individual understanding of emotion to interactions with nonhuman animals. The former reinforces the idea that 'human' is default and correct, whilst the latter may help us deepen our connections with them. Of course, there will be decisions that we make for nonhuman animals, like when it comes to their reproductive rights, which may be assumed to be in the 'best interest' of the animal. Take this with a pinch of salt – we cannot actually know the best interests of someone who we can't ask that question to, discuss the risks and implications with. It's only in their so-called best interest because nonhumans live in a speciesist world. We should not be comfortable or happy with this. We cannot get comfortable within any part of speciesism, because by making any choices for nonhumans we are being speciesist by erasing their agency. It is non-consensual, this is an irrefutable fact. So everywhere possible, we must take the utmost care, attention and time to respect them, their bodies and their consent.



In Arluke and Sanders 'Regarding Animals', they wrote "People perceive [animals colonised into pethood] as both objects to be possessed and used and individual beings to be understood and loved, companion animals have a liminal status that results in a distinctly ambivalent general cultural orientation to them." The way we perceive nonhumans colonised into pethood, should always fall out of this dichotomy. If these two things can be true at once, does that take the validity away from either thought? If two things can be true at once, is there connection and intertwined-ness with both? Instead of choosing possession and love, I propose we move away from these ideas altogether. Radical Companionship and anti-speciesism are not actions of 'love', 'compassion' or 'goodness' but of necessity, the recognition that we need to embrace co-existence with the emergency of a crumbling world. Capitalist humans are killing us, killing nature. Now is the time to embrace animality and finally move on from the binaries that incarcerate us. This is why anyone can adopt Radical Companionship – you don't have to be an 'animal lover' per se, just someone who respects the autonomy of others enough to find new ways to live that occur beyond oppression and won't result in needless death. Considering this, we understand it is vital to form meaningful boundaries within the existing relationships between human and animals colonised into pethood. Establishing a practice of consent, boundaries and effective communication is essential.

The following can be read as a simple guide with thoughts on how we can respect boundaries and be more thoughtful with our caregiving. Some examples of this could be...

- **Allowing nonhumans to flee from uncomfortable situations** - such as when an unfamiliar person comes into their territory. Considering their space is crucial to having a mutually respectful relationship. It may be the case that nonhumans in your home are not allowed on your sofa or bed (which is a fine boundary to have, provided the nonhuman person also has somewhere warm and comfortable to rest) and the same goes for other animals - maybe they also don't want you in their space. Just as you ask them to respect your boundaries, listen to and respect theirs.

- **Avoiding unsolicited interactions** – often humans ask for the consent of nonhumans through humans e.g., a human visitor to your home may ask you (a caregiver) if they can 'pet your guinea pig'. Behaviour like this reinforces ownership as if the caregiver can consent for the other animal. Always ask for consent to interact, touch and play with nonhumans directly to the nonhuman. They are the only ones who know whether they want this. Reach out your hand, speak to them and see whether they react positively or not. We are not entitled to 'pet' them,

by doing so we are invading personal space and violating boundaries.

- **A rejection of carceral-ity and carcasses**  
– with our many interactions with nonhuman animals, we tend to objectify them and turn them into empty boxes to be filled by the will of the human. As carcasses. Dead things. As mentioned in Chapter One, we kill life through this possession. It's easy to disregard the actions of a nonhuman as 'bad behaviour' when we don't take into account that these behaviours are telling us, the caregivers, something. Why would we, when we are taught that nonhuman animals don't talk at all? If we are practicing Radical Companionship, it's our duty to listen.

Maybe they need to go outside more, or have more interesting or entertaining things to do indoors. Maybe they are simply displaying the natural behaviours of their species. An alternative to carceral logic or assigning them 'goodness' or 'badness' based on the ways they express themselves or communicate, could be implementing a system of no positive nor negative reinforcement. Instead of praising someone for doing what you wanted or shouting at them for doing what you didn't want, you could simply observe and affirm or redirect.

For example, you are out walking with a dog but you need to go back inside so you call them to come with you. They do. Instead of saying "good girl/boy/dog" (which could be patronising and a form of cutification), you could simply say "Thank you." Or if they don't come, go to them and encourage them (without aggression or impatience) to follow you. Affirm or redirect.

Another framework we can use when approaching caregiving is something called Montessori. Although created with human children in mind, I think there is much value in its points when it comes to animals colonised into pethood. This is not an infantilisation of nonhuman animals and can only be seen so if you view young people as less-than. Similarly to children, nonhuman animals (particularly those who are injured, disabled, or domesticated) may require caregivers to guide them through life. Seeing how both groups of people are 'minors' in a patrichal family unit, it seems to make sense to find practices that can works both ways.

In 1870, Italy, a woman called Maria Montessori was born. Throughout her life, she worked with human children who had mental and cognitive disabilities and developed a learning practice to help those people (as well as non-disabled human children) thrive and grow. This practice is known as 'Montessori'. Montessori is based on seven principles; play is work, inde-

pendence, hands on learning, respect, freedom within limits, observation and prepared environment. I'm going to explore each of these points through the lens of Radical Companionship.

1. **PLAY IS WORK** is the idea that play should be taken incredibly seriously, as importantly as we deem work – although, since Radical Companionship is anti-capitalist, we also recognise that 'jobs' only exist to uphold capitalism. Play is often the way that animals (including humans) express themselves. We should do all that we can to find out how a particular individual (and species) in our care plays.

*In contrast to human-with-human play, in which competition is a central factor, human-animal play does not have winners or losers since keeping the play interaction going is the primary shared goal. In addition, because [human animal] and [nonhuman animal] players have different levels of mental and physical ability...participants must learn to adjust their efforts in order to sustain the play interaction.*

*Beck and Katcher (1996), Between Pets & People*

This is a great example of how we can learn from non-human animals. They tend to have an ethic of care over conflict, whereas the capitalist human prefers competition often destructively and at the expense

of other animals and the rest of nature. Nonhumans of many species often rest, play and experience life without the guilt that human animals ingrained with capitalism may feel. Observing animality may be one of our best chances at unlearning this.

2. INDEPENDENCE means encouraging exploration and by not acting like the state by micro-managing someone's life, but allowing the nonhumans in our care to have responsibility for themselves, their belongings, and their environment.

3. HANDS ON LEARNING is a point that could apply more to us. Humans should take a hands-on learning approach to Radical Companionship, anti-speciesism and understanding nonhuman animals including being 'species-trauma-informed' (more on that later).

4. RESPECT is a theme we've been exploring consistently throughout this essay. It could be a practice of following the nonhuman animal in their choices, movements and so on, rather than centring ourselves.

5. FREEDOM WITHIN LIMITS is not the end goal. It's a compromise, something we can do right now, in order to give nonhuman animals the most choice we can in the current circumstances. It's about providing multiple safe options, and letting them choose what they want to do. e.g., with toys, food, (that is in

line with their dietary requirements and preferences), exercise, their decision to stop and smell objects and nature and more.

6. OBSERVATION means noticing nonhumans around you; their habits, what they like, dislike, their interests. It means allowing them to exist without over-intervening. They are capable individuals and will make their own decisions.

7. PREPARED ENVIRONMENTS are spaces of accessibility, routine and freedom (within limits). This means keeping things at the nonhumans level to make things accessible to them. Rather than sticking them in a human home, we can create spaces specifically designed or organised for them. Routine can be helpful when caregiving, it gives both the cared-for and caregiver a blueprint to work with and build off of – whilst allowing the opportunity to keep it interesting.

These may seem like very simplistic ideas, and it's likely that many animal accomplices may be doing all of this already, but being more aware of these basic things can help improve our relationships with non-humans. The above can also provide a sort of guide for discussing Consent & Communication with other humans who are not nonhuman-animal-aware or anti-speciesist and might be engaging in interpersonally

oppressive behaviours with the nonhumans in their homes.

*Most of the footage that surfaces from inside farms was gathered at night. While there are clearly some very practical reasons for this, these are the hours that belong to them as much as any moments possibly can in these places. All of these farming units are generally modelled on identically cold and mechanical formats but each one we enter is completely unique, because autonomous individuals - even in their millions - can never be identically cold and mechanical. Along with this, their response to human interaction should never be assumed. For many, we are the hosts of extreme trauma, our every motion, touch and sound is a memory and the only boundaries left in place are often disregarded in the mission to "show them the only kindness they've ever known".*

*We are not automatically granted a responsible understanding of nonhuman communication and in these places built to obliterate the faintest shadow of consent, the "little" things seriously count. Awareness of how our eye contact, body language and gestures can either fuel or combat their fear is vital. This applies to those now living in sanctuary too, often depicted as the most blissful places in the world, they still hold so much sadness and individuals who will have witnessed incomprehensible*



*things. More often than not, physical unchaining is only half the struggle.*

*ZEROFOURSIXEIGHT, Consent in Places Devoid of It<sup>12</sup>*

Existing as a marginalised being under oppression is traumatising by default and nonhuman animals are industrially disabled, both physically and mentally. Whilst ZEROFOURSIXEIGHT talks of the effects of farming on nonhuman animals, those colonised into pethood are also genetically modified, torn from their families, bred and operated on. But this shows us there is a crossover between animal exploitation industries and the thick trail of survivors it leaves. Nonhumans who are abused by vivisection, free-living animals affected by deforestation, those attacked by the fur and skin harvesting trade will all need care if and when they are liberated. This means that they could all potentially occupy the space of the pet, as we can easily manipulate our relationships into a pethood dynamic with anybody we care for in a speciesist society. We must be vigilant with ourselves.

Generally, the legitimacy of species-based trauma is under-recognised and dismissed, not only because

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<sup>12</sup> <https://antisppeciesistartscollective.weebly.com/resistance-assistance-blog/consent-in-places-devoid-of-it>

speciesist societies don't see nonhumans as capable of feeling and experiencing suffering, but also as the system will only want to validate specifically interpersonal pain. Once we acknowledge the bigger picture and see that it is capitalism and institutions that are abusive, we lean towards revolution. This means it is very important to be 'animal trauma informed', and be aware of the specific experiences that someone may have gone through because physical unchaining is only half the struggle. But how do we do this? As someone who has not given care to many animals who have experienced intense suffering like this, I offer the words of the humans behind the dog sanctuary Hounds of Liberation, Oz and Keith, whose residents have experienced species-related trauma. They speak about two residents, Minnie and Jules...

*How can we best look out for trauma in our companions? Observe, I guess. Sound obvious but I think it's so easy to get lost in our own world, our own worries and social media and we miss subtle signs. We are all at risk of this, the world we live in is a gauntlet of distractions. I am always doing my best to keep an eye out on [the] dogs' behaviours... We have had to go through some tough times and chaos to find what works and doesn't work for our dogs. Minnie, for example, is extremely protective of me and Keith. She's jealous. She wants me and Keith all to herself and she has gone for some of our dogs who have come to close to her while she's*

with us. So now we know what to look out for with Minnie, how her body language and facial expressions change. The sounds she makes to say, "Okay, I'm about to raise hell." and so that helps us avoid her getting into a boxing fight with the other dogs. Minnie also suffers from sleep aggression. She lived on the streets from being a puppy so she had to learn to fend for herself and get tough. She had to learn to fight for her right to live on the streets. Fight for food. Fight for a spot to sleep. When Minnie is disturbed from a deep sleep she goes on the attack. She doesn't mean it. She's dissociated. When she comes around you can see she doesn't understand what's happened and goes up to me or the dog she's gone mad at to lick and say sorry to. So, we now know that she has to sleep on the couch downstairs where she won't be disturbed by mistake and it's also to keep the other dogs safe from her wrath hahaha!

With Jules, I know from walks with him that he is scared of people, especially men, so we make sure that we take him to the hired field that is secluded or to a quiet woodland area. If people approach we take a diversion and move away from people so as to keep Jules feeling cool and calm. His body language says it all. He tries to run away or he drops to the floor with his tail tucked right under his back legs. That body language tells me when he's not coping. I now know what situations lead to that

*body language. If we have to have someone come to the house, I take him upstairs into our bedroom and close it off for him with toys so he has his own space far from anyone that's in the house he doesn't know. This rarely takes place because I don't like Jules having to be sectioned off in his own home, it's his home, but if circumstances mean we have to let someone in, we are prepared for that.*

### *Hounds of Liberation*

From this, we can gauge that observation is key, calling back to the Montessori approach mentioned earlier. Whilst we are not experts on other animals' language, as they can only ever be the true experts, we can learn to recognise their behaviours. Nonhuman animals can be and are both mentally and physically disabled, and a 'prepared environment' includes one that takes into account someone's trauma needs and makes that space accessible to them. Remember we are not their saviours or rescuers, but their caregivers and that means sometimes sacrifices have to be made on our behalf. As well as a liberatory necessity, caregiving can be seen as a form of interpersonal reparations. By this, I do not mean the "payment of damages" by a state that has no conscience to care about the pain caused, but an action with a fundamental focus on repair and restoration, a way to tip the scales a little before the instrument or system of oppression is destroyed completely.

In *Armed Joy*, Alfredo M. Bonnano wrote sarcastically "No matter what, the bosses must 'pay' for their wrongs. Very well! We will carry the Christian ethic of sin, judgement and reparation into the revolution. As well as the concepts of 'debt' and 'payment', clearly of mercantile origins." The relationships between the coloniser and the native, the enslaver and the enslaved, the owner and the pet, are not as binary as they seem. I mentioned a while back that we can exist beyond these labels. This is true because we are socialised into oppression, whilst not an excuse, we cannot bring this ethic into a liberatory future. Interpersonal reparation, in the form of caregiving, must not come from a disgruntled feeling of debt or obligation but one of choice. It must begin with autonomy and informed consent. We must be aware of how our own traumas, lives and problems may be projected onto those nonhuman and human animals in our care, how that may affect us and how we can be accountable. All this before we discuss the urgent need for anti-speciesist animal protection. We must, as the saying goes, put on our own mask first.

I am not oblivious to the fact that consent in its truest form is not always possible in a society built on violation. The continual legacies of speciesism and its ongoing trauma are undoable and unforgiving. We have colonised nonhuman animals to the point where they have to rely on us - their colonisers, abusers, oppressors - to survive in a world that we are destroying and

making more hostile by the day. It is no secret and never should be. This is something we must recognise and reckon with as a species and, in the words of Audre Lorde, something that we cannot accept and therefore must change.

#### **4. Animal Futurism**

Animal Futurism is the practice of investing in animal futures and seeing the future as one where nonspeciesist interspecies relationships thrive. Animal applies to both humans and nonhumans as we collectively embrace a multispecies world, and Futurism relates to the idea that 'we are utopia'. Animal Futurism is not a goal – it's unreachable, because no matter where or when you are, in the world and in time, there is always a future and therefore always opportunity for (more!) freedom. Animal Futurism could include being specific and informed about the animal species in your area, investing in mutual aid and sanctuary, writing and reading theory, assisting animals to liberation, caregiving and so much more. The possibilities for the future are endless, as are the possibilities for supporting nonhumans, practicing Radical Companionship and being an animal accomplice. Since Animal Futurism applies to humans as well, we must also be aware of intra-human oppression and liberation. Anarchism, Political Queerness, total liberationism and much more, are all forms of Animal Futurism too. Humans are not left out

of the equation here...including those who are on-the-ground and underground, existing as the backbone of anti-speciesist action. Those animal accomplices who take risks, and do all the necessary and radical things that we love to praise and talk about but do not always tangibly support.

Within the animal rights sphere, supporting animals so often lives in the dichotomy of influencer/saviour vs. sanctuary, here Unoffensive Animal lists the many other kinds of Animal Futurist action we can show up for...

*Sanctuaries are worthy of as much (economic or otherwise) support as we possibly can muster. But where is the nuance on "support sanctuaries, not saviours"? Over the past couple of years, this dichotomy has created a bilateral concept of where money should go. And if you choose one, it is wrong, and if you choose the other one, it is right.*

*The problem is, sanctuaries are not the only worthy cause to support. From anti hunt groups who spend their time searching for traps or standing between the wild and the hunter, to direct action groups doing whatever they need to do to make the animal industry tumble, many worthy causes are lost in the lack of nuance. Those organising effective campaigning need support to take their campaign to the*

next level. Those who spend night after night coding the encrypted applications you use to organise, or the browser to search your information, for free, need support. Those creating anti media, like us, or like Biteback, or Crimethinc, or 325, need help to upkeep web servers and technology to keep bringing that media to you. The folks who organise Food not Bombs and feed as many folks as possible on the street? You guessed it. How about the folks who access farms and breeding centres to provide the wider audience with the photos and videos we all use during outreach? And the folks in prison who cannot eat vegan unless they buy from commissary? And those who were arrested during a civil disobedience action and need to cover a fine? There are many, many avenues within our movement that need all the support we can give.

*Unoffensive Animal, DONATE TO SANCTUARIES,  
NOT SAVIOURS(?)*<sup>13</sup>

Nobody should be made a martyr or sacrifice for the so-called greater good because there is nothing greater and more prevalent than the now. We cannot abandon the human animals taking risks to bring about liberation and to build this we need to give each other the tools to survive.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://unoffensiveanimal.is/2021/02/15/donate-to-sanctuaries-not-saviours/>



*We don't recruit into the insurrection, we build up each other's capacity to revolt by supporting our survival today...At the end of the day, I just think people are viscerally afraid of interdependence, and our aversion to accountability is just an expression of thus base fear.*

### *Abolish Time*

Radical Companionship is an effort to be accountable humans in our interactions with nonhuman animals. If I've understood anything through writing this, it's that interdependence is key. The longer we shy away from this and stay comfortable in individualistic passivity or a capitalist collectivism, the further away we are from freedom or change on a personal or community scale. The idea of doing is crucial. We know the world we want to create and that means we have to create them, rather than waiting for them to happen. It's easier said than done because words are only blueprints, but things won't change unless we change them; we don't want big capitalist corporations running the food system so we should be creating community gardens and fridges, worker cooperatives and the like. We know we hate speciesism so we should be investing in Animal Futurism. Although I despise the despair and exhaustion that comes with catastrophising and apocalyptic thinking, it is an inescapable fact that we are running out of time as the Earth, and its many brilliant ecosystems are being destroyed by capitalist

humans. We need the future right now. We need alternatives and subversions, not reform and tinkering. We can't "fix the world" but must instead find and live out another way.

*All too often the Human attempts to find finality via solutions because the domesticated animal that we know as "Human" has a technological basis for viewing the world. And due to this technological basis, problems are seen like...broken clocks or cars or mechanical issues that can be \*fixed\*. Fixed like the social constructs assigned to us at birth or the psychiatric chemicals used to standardize our complex behaviour...What the Human fails to realize is that everything is in flux...always moving, changing, expanding including their own intellect - if they have the courage to allow it!*

### *Flower Bomb*

In the words of Ursula Le Guin "the imagination is truly the enemy of bigotry and dogma." Creativity is essential if we're going to work towards a better future. We need bright and bold imaginations to design theories, concepts, ideas, and actions that will lead us there. Anti-capitalist practices like uncaged, radical art are a great way to create futurisms in the now. What I love about radical art practices, is the accessibility; everyone has art within them because art is a natural

occurrence. Art can be anything and everything and can always be made for free, using scraps of now and inspiration from old as resources to create something new. Art is natural and can be connected to the reclamation of nature and interspecies interactions. All kinds of animal species sing, dance, design homes, dream, procreate and so much more, yet capitalism forces us to forget our instincts, to forgo our ingenuity. In fact, regulating and erasing colour has been used as a tool of oppression. In fashionista and gender scholar Alok V Menon's book report on Chromophobia by Scottish artist David Batchelor, they write "the Western psyche seeks to renounce colour, homogenize it, remove it of its complexity and depth. [Batchelor] argues fear of corruption or contamination from colour haunts Western culture." and that "...German writer Johann Wolfgang van Goethe once wrote 'savage nations, uneducated people and children have a great predilection for vivid colours'". Interestingly, 'savage' nations, 'uneducated' people and children are some of the least indoctrinated people around us. It's this uncivilised by whiteness, uneducated by white academia, undomesticated, uncaged nature that will be reason for our liberation. Uncaged art is the exercise of colouring outside the lines, using any medium, in any space we want. Uncaged art is taking down corporate adverts and putting up community art, reclaiming our neighbourhoods. Uncaged art is the graffiti on the street, uncaged art is singing off tune, uncaged art is poems of grief that nobody ever

hears because it was just for you, not for capitalism to monetise. Allowing ourselves to be uncaged and truly express ourselves without judgement are moments of freedom. Relish in those moments of big and small rebellion. These bursts of creativity are what might inspire us to find more, more and more and more...until we are all uncaged.



## Chapter Three: Growth

*In this final chapter I briefly examine how love, violence, care, grief, and joy are practices of liberation.*

### What is Love?

In the previous chapters, I have mainly written of love as a curtain to disguise the possessive ownership that pervades our relationships in a capitalist and patriarchal society, but now I wish to recontextualise it in terms of liberation. Whilst love for other nonhumans is not a necessity for caregiving or anti-speciesism, I do believe it's important to find a love for freedom. Love is often seen as something soft, gentle and in patriarchal terms 'feminine'. I propose a different approach to love, or at least widening our perspective of it. I originally wrote this piece on my blog but have edited it for Radical Companionship.

*I'm going to die for the people. Because I'm going to live for the people. I'm going to live for the people because I love the people.*

*Fred Hampton*

Many people seem to believe that having a pedagogy of love means we need to be soft and calm. Love can be soft, it can be calm...but not always. The word 'love' has been manipulated to tone police those experiencing the anger of living in an oppressive world. They tell us that people would listen better if we acted more 'civil', if we weren't so 'aggressive'. Their idea of a liberation that suits them comes neatly packaged, easily digestible and unchallenging of the systems and corruption in place. Faux freedom comes in a slight change in law, a bigger cage, a 'nicer' prison, but we know, as Audre Lorde said, that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They warp the white-washed words of MLK to tell us our anger had no place here. That our rage doesn't matter. Language like this is used to encourage us to be quiet and as they smother us into near silence it becomes easier for oppressors, white-appropriating-spiritualists, colonisers, capitalists, boot-lickers and the like, to ignore us completely.

I'd argue this idea comes from a white, cisheteronormative, patriarchal and binary understanding of love and care. Whilst patriarchal manhood and "maleness" is supposedly inherently aggressive and assertive, patriarchal womanhood and "femaleness" is submissive, and assumes the role of carer. In this way, we might see love as passive, when in fact it's passionate.

*I love my family with a passion, I would kill and die for them. It's a feeling I'm sure many can relate to because love is all encompassing - that's why it hurts so much when we lose it. In a political and freedom-thinking sense, self-defence is an act of love. Assisting nonhumans to liberation is an act of love. Mutual aid is an act of love. Burning down prisons are acts of love. Feeding people is an act of love. Rising up in a slave rebellion is an act of love. Rioting is an act of love.*

*These actions, often viewed as violent, extreme and deplorable by those against radical and liberatory change, are all acts of love in defence of ourselves and the People. These actions are the 'self-care' I want to engage in. Respecting and loving our communities enough to resist and to fight for freedom are actions that cannot be contained in patriarchal ideas.*

*I will kill and die for what I love; I love freedom and therefore all those who want it too.*

## **Kinds of Violence**

Violence permeates every aspect of our world and even in a utopian nonspeciesist society we can't escape it. This begs the importance of knowing the dif-



ference between varying types of violence. I mention three here, but it's likely there are more.

## 1. Oppressive Violence

We live in a "death festering climate of oppression" (Paulo Friere) where colonialism and its ever-ongoing after-effects still reverberate across the world, where fear and carceral punishment is used as a means of control and repression, where the state has a monopoly on violence to the point where such violence is even capitalized on, turned into a consumable, trademarked product of entertainment. Oppressive violence is seen as the only legitimate kind of violence, and is normalized to become part of a white, Western and capitalist culture.

## 2. Resistive Violence

This is the violence of the people. The violence of a love that craves freedom, a rage that comes from backed into corner with a knife and finding the only way out is to fight. Resistive violence is essentially resistance against oppression, and therefore criminalised, delegitimised and dismissed. Devourers will not give up their accumulations and powers without a fight, so it's this necessary resistive violence that will mean we can achieve liberation.

### 3. Existive Violence

Interestingly, capitalism tries to present the lie that it is an existive violence as if scarcity, division and imbalance are natural, unavoidable occurrences. The common image of the poor person pulling themselves up by the bootstraps encourages the idea that wealth and success are due to singular capability, as well as poverty and oppression being the fault of the individual.

However, true existive violence is one of survival – not in the sense of resistance against oppression but of the essential cycles of life that keep our ecosystems running. It is the lion who catches the zebra, or the owl who gets the mouse. Existive violence is violence – I mean, it's not peace. However, I am careful here not to condemn animals who eat other animals as a necessity. The predator/prey dynamic is not a systemic oppression like that of racism or ableism. Is not violence without reason, nor violence used to achieve unnecessary power. There is a difference between “devouring” (which is consuming with no end or purpose other than to accumulate and destroy) and simply eating to live. Existive violence can and should be avoided in certain circumstances, for example, a nonhuman in the care of a human should always be non-violently protected from predator animals. We can appreciate both predators and prey whilst also taking measures to protect the potential prey in our care.

My point here is that not all kinds of "violence" are inherently bad. Violence can be helpful, can be good, can be oppressive, can be needed, can even be neutral. Violence is not a monolith and can be an act of oppression and death as well as an act of love and care.

## Care: Community and Sanctuary

The care we discuss in Radical Companionship is not a paternal, pastoral or patriarchal. Authentic care challenges the capitalistic idea that animals and the earth are objects to be extracted from and devoured. Radical care practices are brave in thinking beyond capitalism and embracing a world of multispecies anarchy. There are many ways to approach this, and one theory I thought valuable to note is 'Full Spectrum Community Care' coined by Eshe Kiama Zuri.

*full spectrum community care embraces the wholeness and the messiness of community support, and places the focus on all, not individual or isolated needs. full spectrum community care means no one is left behind. full spectrum community care sees the necessity of staying skilled and prepared to provide support to all who need it and understand that this is an ongoing and ever evolving task. full spectrum community care is bringing peo-*

*ple together to support those most marginalised, those seen as 'undesirable' by the state and to actively participate and work with our communities to ensure we are able to provide for ourselves the love, care, support, resources and skills we need to survive and thrive in the face of adversity and oppressions*

*Eshe Kiama Zuri, Full Spectrum Community Care*<sup>14</sup>

What I really like about Full Spectrum Community Care (FSCC) is that Eshe mentions messiness. This is a hard truth to accept – growing community and support will be difficult and messy as times because of our prolonged disconnection from each other. Placing the focus on all is so important to Radical Companionship, because companionship is a mutual effort. Despite the fact that it is not based on love for the individual, the mutual effort happens because both parties have a shared want and need for freedom. There is a necessity to stay skilled and prepared because care is not an individual or temporary need, but a collective responsibility. Liberation, support and care are all ongoing.

On this note of ever-evolving, here is another thought I'd like to bring up - Multispecies Micro-Sanctuary.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://eshekiamazuri.com/fsc>

It's interesting that sanctuary within animal liberation circles is so heavily defined by hard, relentless work when a sanctuary should be a place of rest. The reality of the sanctuary for nonhuman animals, may be so as the trauma of speciesist exploitation subsides a little and yes, it's true that human animals must engage in restorative action to provide reparations for the harm we have caused and continue to. However, the aim is to create - or sustain the sanctuary that is Earth which we already live on - places of indulgent abundance. Abundance is the enemy of capitalism, it's not synonymous with hoarding wealth or devouring but exists with equity, community and interdependence.

The image of sanctuary we so often hold is of a "farm" sanctuary, with pigs, cows, chicken, sheep and other farmed animals. This limited view of what sanctuary can be is a hinderance when we attempt to increase access to participation in sanctuary caregiving. At the time of writing, potential readers of this theory will be arguably far and few between. Those interested in freedom, especially one that is species-inclusive, are not a majority, so creating spaces of multispecies microsanctuary are important. Microsanctuaries mean that the responsibility of creating sanctuary does not fall onto a few individuals who look after many, but more focused groups and individuals sharing the work and creating micro-communities of Radical Companionship. For example, a group of anti-speciesist individuals in one area could aim to look out for the do-

mesticated and free-living animals in their community. Practices of multispecies microsancutuary already exist through local rescues and volunteers, hunt saboteurs, earth and water defenders among others. On a very simple, every-day scale this could mean carrying around sugar water for thirsty bees, stopping cars to allow nonhuman animals to cross roads, having a bird feeder in your garden. If we think of our neighbourhoods as places of sanctuary for which we are responsible we can start to embed these practices into our everyday life, taking care of our animal and plant neighbours and learning more about the worlds around us. Multispecies sanctuary can happen at any time, anywhere, each new small cooperative growing the collective all over.

Whilst not an expert, ecologist or biologist, I think we can also be aware of and want to provide supportive habitat(s) to wild species, in ways that are safe for them and also animals who have been colonised into pethood or otherwise domesticated. We can understand that free-living species are the true inhabitants of this land, whilst humans and domesticated species are tied up with colonisation. This does not mean we get to "play God" by erasing and editing the world how we see fit, but maintaining a space that is supportive, nurturing, safe, and sustainable for all life that does and could coexist there. Coexistence is indeed a key way to see it: the world is not human property on which animals are living, but as an ecosystem.

At the moment, humans still developing anti-speciesist practices; continuous action against the institutional, ideological, interpersonal and internalised oppression that is speciesism and recognising its connections to all other kinds of subjugation. Speciesism and its all-encompassing ways, will inform the way our societies are for generations to come. It will take years of mutual aid, fostering community, Radical Companionship and redistribution of resources and wealth to 'eradicate oppression' – but to achieve it, we must believe a nonspeciesist world is possible. We know this because we can embody the utopias we want to see in the world, because if we believe this is possible for the future then this can also be possible for the people of right now. Multispecies Sanctuary embraces the interconnectedness of the world as it already is, reclaiming what has been lost, redefining humans as animals and as nature. Multispecies Sanctuary describes an ethic of accountability for harm previously or generationally caused, as well as understanding care – both for the community and the self – as a collective effort.

## **The Grief That Lives Underneath Trauma**

When we harm, we must take accountability and that often includes taking a look at why we did so in the first place. As mentioned in 'Consent & Communication' of the previous chapter, the principle of reparation must exist as part of our caregiving approach as

well as an understanding of species-based trauma. Trauma is a reality experienced both by the harmed and the harmer, so even as the suffering of nonhuman animals does not compare to our own, humans must take responsibility for the cuts we rip into ourselves that allow us to do the same to others. It is this disconnection that means we need to build multispecies sanctuary and embrace community care – these things are not new but forgotten, violently erased by the forces of colonialism and capitalism. Trauma is a normal response to oppressive violence, resulting in the disassociation from ourselves, our earth, our animality. We become disconnected from our deepest desires which stand in contrast to the greedy, libidinal ways of human devourism. To heal and grow, we must reclaim the roots, reconnect to our desires, the animal desire for life and living. A desire for liberation.

But as we move towards more healing we will grieve what we never had. Even with the hope I hold onto, with perhaps foolish desperation, I grieve the old human I will probably never grow to be. The truth of our world is that my life will be cut short as oceans and river rise, as the ground quakes, as the air clogs up. I grieve the world we deserve to have been born into: liberation and love in endless abundance. I grieve our ignorance and those we've lost and killed for the sake of our own privileges. Every time I admit to the harm I have caused and to the brokenness and severance that lives within me, I grieve. Perhaps that is why so



many are afraid to be awake and aware, preferring to remain frozen in this hell on earth.

My grief is a reminder that I choose to thaw, to build community, to love and to care. I honour nonhumans when I grieve with them. And so, even through the pain, I smile because that is the greatest weapon I have. Animal resilience is resistance.

## Joy in the Face of Death

History is a graveyard where the ghosts of speciesism roam, dead survivors. Existence is chaos, and whiteness, capitalism and human supremacy fearfully seek to organise and binarise. In the face of death, loss and fear that seem to encompass the very world we live in, it is easier to find despair than anything else. And yet, liberation cannot be born of terror. We will grow it from love, resistive violence, community care, healing, and joy.

*We all believe we have experienced joy. Each single one of us believes we have been happy at least once in our lives. Only this experience of joy has always been passive. We happen to enjoy ourselves. We cannot 'desire' joy just as we cannot oblige joy to present itself when we want it to. All this separation between ourselves and joy depends on our*

being 'separate' from ourselves, divided in two by the process of exploitation. We work all the year round to have the 'joy' of holidays. When these come round we feel 'obliged' to 'enjoy' the fact that we are on holiday. A form of torture like any other. The same goes for Sundays. A dreadful day. The rarefaction of the illusion of free time shows us the emptiness of the mercantile spectacle we are living in. The same empty gaze alights on the half empty glass, the TV screen, the football match, the heroin dose, the cinema screen, traffic jams, neon lights, prefabricated homes that have completed the killing of the landscape. To seek 'joy' in the depths of any of the various 'recitals' of the capitalist spectacle would be pure madness. But that is exactly what capital wants. The experience of free time programmed by our exploiters is lethal. It makes you want to go to work. To apparent life one ends up preferring certain death. No real joy can reach us from the rational mechanism of capitalist exploitation. Joy does not have fixed rules to catalogue it. Even so, we must be able to desire joy. Otherwise, we would be lost.

Alfredo M. Bonnano, (Armed) Joy

When we talk of joy it must be desired by us and happen on our time, not by the clock of capitalism. We desire autonomous joy in the face of two kinds of death: the death that is forced happiness and fake smiles as

well as the death that enforces the illusionary finality of capitalism. Like death, we can become so broken down we feel that burnout and submission is an inevitable "fact of life". When we do this, we forget that dead people talk. Multispecies interconnectedness shows us life is ongoing, that the Earth is a place of beautiful, tiny impacts; words, sounds, names, dates, lives, deaths that continue to affect us today. There is nothing we do that doesn't make a difference and there is everything we can do to change this apparent finality of capitalism. By saying these things, I don't wish to deny the reality of death or domination but instead laugh in the face of it. Laugh in the mindless, robotic face of oppression and repression, and its destruction. With loss comes grief and mourning, yes, but also a celebration of life itself, of theirs, of ours, of all of nature. Joy, like revolution, is contagious and "spreads like a forest fire" (Malcom X). Joy comes from resistance, the reclamation of the self and adrenaline-filled smiles as we remember our own aliveness. I also believe play is an act of joy, whether with other animals or within ourselves, play is a reclamation of our childhood and the days we've lost to labour. Play is a weapon, as we "dance of the ashes of the ruling class" as we "sing the songs of insurrection" as we experiment, create, theorise and bring to life the joyful utopia we're imagining. Joy must be our aim as it is tied in with freedom. Freedom itself means the death of oppression, but also the beginning of a new life.

## **This is Not a Conclusion...**

*Nothing is created or destroyed, it just moves around a bit.*

*Tyson Yunkaporta, Unbranding Our Mind<sup>15</sup>*

Despite the many theories, ideas and half-developed thoughts written here in this book, we should understand that there are no solutions. Just like there are a multitude of animal, plant, fungi and bacteria types and species on Earth who impact this planet every day, there is no one way to go about existing in the world and there is no one way to change it. Our lives are constant acts of survival. Survival, often because of capitalism and how under it we have to earn the right to live. But survival can become resistance and resistance leads to revolution.

Radical Companionship is a praxis full of conversation points, topics and so many more things to think about and research in more depth. This not a conclusion – this is impossible to write about over just a few pages, especially as it's a theory (or many perhaps) that is still, and always will be, growing.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://forthewild.world/listen/tyson-yunkaporta-on-unbranding-our-mind-235>

What is a Radical Companion? We talk of Radical as in at the roots, the trunks, stems and leaves. Supremacy is egoistic and humanity would have itself act as the sun, but truthfully, we are as grounded and fundamental as the rest of nature. We are so small in this world: be comforted in the insignificant importance of yourself. A Companion is a friend, a comrade, an accomplice and animal.

I hope one day this essay is irrelevant. I hope you are reading this looking back at these words with a fond smile on your face, having survived, revolted and found joy, freedom, care and the most radical companionship.

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Thank you to myself, for finishing this with my terrible concentration and perfectionism. And to everyone at Active Distribution who has helped make this book a reality.

And much gratitude to you, reader. Thanks for sticking to the end.

## **About the Writer**

Aiyana is a writer, liberator and DELINQUENT based in London. He generally writes and speaks about animality, Blackness, queerness, ageism and all its intersections. They are a Black, queer, neurodivergent creative who runs the Anti-Speciesist Arts Collective, has a badly edited podcast called We Speak of Freedom and is the co-founder of NEUROMANCERS. Most importantly, she really, really loves soya chai. Radical Companionship is their first published book.

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## **The Radical Companionship Project**

The Radical Companionship Project was born as a way to collectively discuss and explore this theory. So far, it includes an anti-speciesist study group (with members from all over the world) and a mutual aid network for animal caregivers. To learn more, visit [www.radicalcompanionship.com](http://www.radicalcompanionship.com).





Active Distribution have a large selection of pamphlets and books about animal rights, veganism and anti-specism as well as many other interesting things. Below are a few suggestions.

From Animals to Anarchism, Dysophia 5. a discussion pamphlet on animal rights and anarchism.

Animal Liberation and Social Revolution, A vegan perspective on Anarchism.

Challenging Ideas on Human-Nonhuman Relations.

Animal Liberation by Peter Singer. A classic philosophical text on animal rights.

The Animal Rights Debate by Carl Cohen and Tom Regan

The Sexual Politics of Meat by Carol J. Adams

The Vegan Guide by Alex Bourke and Ronny Worsey.

Beasts of Burden, Capitalism, Animals and Communism.

Biocentric Anarchy by Anonymous

all the above are available from

**[www.activedistributionshop.org](http://www.activedistributionshop.org)**

Exploring the rarely discussed dynamic of pethood, Aiyana Goodfellow speaks of reimagined relations between species, starting with the seedlings, expanding into the roots and blossoming into growth. The relationships we have with 'animals colonised into pethood' reveal the kind of humans we really are: a balance of theory and practice, this book is a guide to unlearning the oppressive tendencies within all of us. Filled with the hope, passion, and rage of a Black, queer, fifteen-year-old writer, Aiyana asserts that to be a radical companion is to connect with the animality in all of us.

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