

Animal Liberation

By Samantha Mbodwam

If you encountered a burning building with both a human child and a puppy, which one would you save? Although you may shed a tear at the thought of the wailing dog, there is good reason to believe that your answer is leaning towards the child. *But why?* This is where the beginning of *speciesism* arises, which is what Peter Singer in *Animal Liberation* discusses as “a prejudice or bias in favour of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species”—human life must be protected at all costs.

In essence, the term “speciesism” is utilized to discuss the point of view that an individual’s status as a human being makes them entitled to moral rights that we are not obligated to give to animals. Social systemic power imbalances and the flaws in how we socialize in a toxic manner but also how we treat animals as well, for we treat them as if they are less worthy of life due to their socially constructed inferiority. It may be argued that it is ethically appropriate to consume animals due to the concept of “survival of the fitness,” but that does not justify the cruelty that animals must undergo through the food production process. In essence, if society continues to categorize and judge based upon species, it allows for space of other forms of other discrimination to develop as well.

The discourse surrounding speciesism is just a specific extension of a process of social categorization, “the natural cognitive process by which we place individuals into social groups,” as discussed in a social research project conducted by BC Campus. This process is what leads to the segregation and mistreatment of animals within American culture especially, for animal lives are socialized to be worth less than that of humans, and humans have been established as the *master race*. People are able to view social categorization as an issue when it is in respect to sub-groups of people within the human species, but the same logic is not applied when it comes to other creatures.

Society ought to focus on the ethical needs of all living beings as individuals instead of strictly throwing beings into certain categories to justify the unjust treatment of creatures who breathe, feel, and live just like humans do. Through this type of approach at looking at animal life in a more justified manner, people can develop an overall more well-rounded sense of empathy and compassion for life in general. Even if an individual were to not agree that animal life is the equivalent to that of a human, there can hardly be any harm in advocating for a greater amount of empathy in the world.