

« “You’re not going to be in this weird... cult.”
semi-annual update, leap year edition »

susiecagle at riseup dot net

The Reluctant Vegan: “He’s not vegan—he’s crazy.”



image courtesy of the one and only Dave Warwak.

As a journalist, I’m not ashamed to admit that crazy vegans make for really fun news stories. But as a vegan, I sometimes have trouble reading past the headlines.

For the last few weeks I’ve watched the drama around school teacher and loudly proclaimed vegan Dave Warwak play out in Google News. In a soy nutshell (if you, too, winced at those headlines): Warwak, 44, went on a personal mission to convert the students in his art classes at Wisconsin’s Fox River Grove Middle School to veganism. As soon as the news hit the papes, Warwak was fired.

I don’t doubt that Warwak meant well. He just went

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She is currently the director of the Oakland Projects, which is producing [Shine in Peace](#) to tell solutions-oriented stories about gun violence through narratives and data.

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vegan(gelical) in January, he's used to molding impressionable young minds, and he probably thought he was doing the right thing. Tactless proselytizing looks much better from the inside—just like for religious teachers who've similarly been fired for leading prayers in class.

It's not totally the media's fault for characterizing people such as Warwak and the countless irresponsible "vegan" parents as vegan first and crazy second: that's how they portray themselves. And when the vegan community stays quiet in implicit support it only makes it easier for the next crazy vegan to run with their unfounded moral righteousness. Even worse when they're loud, misinformed and on the offensive defensive.

Vegans across the country have taken up Warwak's "cause"—the same Warwak who just crashed the middle school homecoming parade, and handed out cards that said Santa Claus "is a lie," and, "Naming a rock, a banana, does not make it food." Clearly he teaches art, not English.

Yet Warwak champions are popping up everywhere, from PETA ("Sound the alarm!"), to Meetup.org groups in Chicago, to Manhattan activist-bloggers.

Take Elaine Vigneault, for example.

"It's yet another example of how vegans are painted as 'crazy' and our ideas are not taken seriously," she writes. Unfortunately for Elaine, a lot of us are crazy: bat-shit, balls-to-the-wall, all-out freaking crazy. And the less that reasonable vegans differentiate themselves from the crazies, the more the entire world will go on believing that we are humorless ascetics.

Unfortunately for the rest of us, however, the humorless ascetics appear to be winning. Elaine says vegans "should be rude and obnoxious," because we are the enlightened, and should spread our wisdom among the evil-doing masses. Well, that's basically what she says. "Needlessly killing millions of animals is far beyond rude and obnoxious... And people who do it, people who promote it, and people who buy it deserve a little dose of the uncomfortable, rude reality."

I guess that's why not a lot of religious extremists hold teaching positions in public American schools, right? Because the uncomfortable, rude reality is just too tempting? Elaine claims Mr. Warwak didn't have "some vegan cult he was recruiting for," but when this kind of

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obnoxious attitude prevails, and the preaching continues, and converting the damned and absolving them of their sins is priority #1, that's not truly the case. It just gives people more reason to block out, marginalize, alienate and fire the crazy.

You have to give people a reason to take your ideas seriously, especially if you're challenging their entire paradigm. I don't know one vegan who chose "the lifestyle" because they saw a disgusting PETA video or were yelled at for wearing leather. Making friends and influencing people is not about breaking them down. This isn't a debate about animal rights or veganism: it's about being a responsible, non-crazy adult.

And it's also about not taking yourself so seriously. Because really, I for one think Warwak, PETA, Vigneault and the rest of the gang are hilarious.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, October 16th, 2007 at 2:53 PM and filed under [animals](#), [death by veganism](#), [our nation's youth](#), [people are crazy](#). Follow comments here with the [RSS 2.0 \(XML\) feed](#). [Post a comment](#) or [leave a trackback](#).

Comments (6) to "The Reluctant Vegan: "He's not vegan-he's crazy.""

1. **Elaine Vigneault wrote:**

Point 1:

You know, I have a lot of friends who are above average intelligence. In fact, I'd say ALL of my friends are smarty-pants. That doesn't mean average people don't exist.

You wrote:

"I don't know one vegan who chose the lifestyle because they saw a disgusting PETA video or were yelled at for wearing leather."

Your personal life experiences are not the end all and be all of reality.

Just because you don't know anyone who attributes their veganism to the abrasive methods some folks use, doesn't mean they haven't been influenced by them and it doesn't mean there aren't people out there that "disgusting PETA videos" influence.

Point 2:

Radio

[OPD Arrests Protesters for 'Lynching'](#)

-- East Bay Express

[Out of the Tents & Into the Chambers](#)

-- East Bay Express

[After the Fall of the Tents](#) -- the Atlantic

[Occupying the Commonwealth Club](#) - SF Appeal

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[Oakland's Occupations: The First Six Weeks](#) -- GOOD

[Don't Fuck With Oakland](#) -- Citizen Radio

[Occupy Sketchbook](#) -- Cartoon Movement

[Occupy Oakland: Inside the 11/3 Police Actions](#) -- Alternet

[Occupy Oakland: Inside the 10/25 Raid](#) -- Alternet

[Appropriat!](#) -- MDF/GIA Reader

[What Every Woman Should Know](#) -- Cartoon Movement

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Take a close look at your argument. Substitute the name of another marginalized group and reread it.

It doesn't matter how non-mainstream Warwak is. He's a little odd, so what? Most art teachers are. It's really not relevant how eccentric he is. Warwak was teaching his students about false advertising, compassion, integrity, and truth.

If you really don't think kids deserve to learn the truth just say so. But don't go around calling people names like "crazy" just so meat-eaters won't call you crazy.

Point 3:

I do not appreciate being called crazy. I am not crazy. Do not defame me. Attack my argument, not me.

Posted on 16-Oct-07 at 7:22 pm |
[Permalink](#)

2. **kathryn wrote:**

Suzie, personally I'm with you. Good post, excellent argument. You can't shove your opinions down other people's throats - we all have the right to make up our own minds.

Just because someone doesn't agree with you, doesn't make them evil, child abusers or perpetrators of a crime. They just don't agree with you.

Posted on 25-Oct-07 at 2:53 am |
[Permalink](#)

3. **Randy W. Sandberg wrote:**

Susie,

Several hundred years ago African Americans were thought of by the majority of people as "lowly animals" (i.e., chattel). Abolitionists of the day, calling for the end of slavery, were thought of as crackpots, cRaZy dreamers, agitators, etc. Fast forward to the Civil Rights Movement. Same thing. Martin Luther King Junior gave a brilliant speech stating African Americans want ALL of their rights HERE in the United States NOW. He was hated by many people and even called a communist by

[Cat Bonnet How-To -- the Hairpin](#)
[The Shake of Things to Come -- the Awl](#)



comics series

[I'm Here from the Government](#), stories from the Census -- the Rumpus
[Nine Gallons](#), second installment published by [Microcosm](#)
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the FBI.

The list of people who were brave enough to tell the truth to the world even though the world wasn't ready to hear them is long and bloody. But, if it were not for these brave "agitators" where would we be now? I take the bus to work everyday and thank goodness for all the brave "Rosa Parks" of the past that had the guts to stand up against injustice and do what was needed to be done.

Veganism: The boycott of an evil industry that enslaves nonhuman animals is still in its infancy similar to the abolitionist movement to end the Slave Trade in the late 1700s and then the abolitionist movement in the 1800s to end slavery altogether. Social injustice movements generally begin with a handful of people who against all odds do what is needed to wake the sleeping masses up and eventually persevere. Thus, if someone has the guts to nonviolently educate his or her class about veganism I applaud them. Just like I applaud those brave folks of the past who dared to teach that cRaZy theory of evolution.

In conclusion, Susie, please think about people of the past who tried their best to educate others and were wrongly shot down for it AND remember that it's thanks to them, for example, that it is now "mostly" excepted that the world is not only round but is NOT located in the center of the universe.

Sincerely,

Randy William Sandberg

Webmaster

<http://www.AbolitionistApproach.com>

Posted on 01-Nov-07 at 4:37 am |

[Permalink](#)

4. **this is what concerns me: »**
vegertainment: all "green," no good(e)
wrote:

[...] for ABC, "The Goodes," about a family of vegans who mean well but fall into a lot of the usual guilt-laden traps. Of course the frustrating thing is that vegans are a perfect target for great, slightly nuanced [...]

Posted on 20-Jun-08 at 2:27 pm |

[Permalink](#)

5. **warwak wrote:**

Fox River Grove parents, your school system is actively keeping gravely serious information from you and your children. People deserve all the information so they can choose wisely about things such as living an extra 10 to 12 years or never having to worry about many cancers, heart attacks or strokes.

I am simply offering information and have not forced food or beliefs down people's throats. Imagine if just saying or writing something could force people to change.

It is not a "personal choice" when you are eating my friends and you are ruining my world. My tax money subsidizes your "personal choice." When you made your "personal choice," did you ask the animal if you could confine, torture, and murder him or her? When you made your "personal choice," did you ask me if I mind all your pollution and devastation? Just because we personally make selfish choices does not make them "personal choices."

Humane education reinforced with a vegan school lunch will end school shootings and create a generation that cares. When children see that adults care enough to change, they will care in turn. This is too serious of an issue to leave alone just because some wish to eat unimpeded.

<http://www.nwherald.com/articles/2008/06/21/opinion/letters/doc485dbfa4cofOf465862684.txt>

Posted on 22-Jun-08 at 2:02 am |

[Permalink](#)

6. **joel wrote:**

you're soooooo cute and right, susie

Posted on 30-Aug-10 at 8:13 am |

[Permalink](#)

Name: *Required

Email: *Required (Never
published)

Website:

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VERYPLAINTEXT THEME BY SOME DUDE NAMED SCOTT ¶ FEED ME: ENTRIES RSS & COMMENTS RSS
