

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

### **Karma and your plate.**

Caveat emptor: This Humane Society video (full version available [here](#)) is very upsetting, and may be best to watch on an empty stomach. Ordinarily shunning the vegetarian soapbox, sometimes I make exceptions. Today's blog entry is meant more to talk about persuading through good karma, and through increasing good karma through our relationship with food. One of my greatest inspirations for receiving and spreading good karma -- and thus good persuasion for our trial clients -- is my law partner Jay Marks. Like Ray Romano and Jerry Seinfeld, almost everyone likes Jay. He has no big ego, no hidden agenda, and no pretenses. He genuinely likes people, takes time from busy days for them, and cares about them. He is a meat eater, so is an example that one needs not be a vegetarian to be a great human. As a relative who's a pescovegetarian (a misnomer) has told me over the years, "It's not what goes into your mouth, but what comes out of it." Fair enough. Nevertheless, we are all interconnected -- all humans and non-human animals -- so it helps me to know about the karma connection between me and those around me, including how happy or miserable are their lives. Consider my veganism, for instance; that does not automatically avoid the supermarket shelves including fruits and vegetables that have been picked by mistreated migrant workers. It is worth paying more to a food distributing source that focuses on harm reduction to its workers, the environment (of course, meat production causes much more pollution and world hunger than plant food production), and to injustice in general. Were I still a meat eater, I would have similar concerns about the treatment of the animals arriving on my plate, and the workers raising, slaughtering, butchering, and selling them. In that regard, this week comes a report of the Humane Society's revelation (see the news release) that one of the nation's major meat distributors -- including for the national school lunch program -- repeatedly violated laws against abuse of cows ready for slaughter. As the Washington Post reports: "Video footage being released today shows workers at a California slaughterhouse delivering repeated electric shocks to cows too sick or weak to stand on their own; drivers using forklifts to roll the 'downer' cows on the ground in efforts to get them to stand up for inspection; and even a veterinary version of waterboarding in which high-intensity water sprays are shot up animals' noses -- all violations of state and federal laws designed to prevent animal cruelty and to keep unhealthy animals, such as those with mad cow disease, out of the food supply." Not for queasy stomachs -- but essential to watch to know the reality of it all -- is the Humane Society's video of this investigation into mistreatment of cows at the slaughterhouse, shown above. As animal rights activist and lawyer Roger Galvin is characterized as saying in 1987, just two years before I finally met him at an animal rights rally in Washington, D.C.: "Mr. Galvin, now a specialist in animal-rights cases, pointed out that rights in this country have been gradually extended to formerly disenfranchised groups, like blacks and women. 'The next step is to go beyond the species barrier to other species who are sentient and thinking creatures,' he said." Thanks, Roger and Jay, for the great karma. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Persuasion at 19:20