

# Let's Reth ink

## IS MEAT ESSENTIAL?

Discussing colonialism, necropolitics, rights of man and your diet.

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# COVID19 AND MEAT PROCESSING INDUSTRY



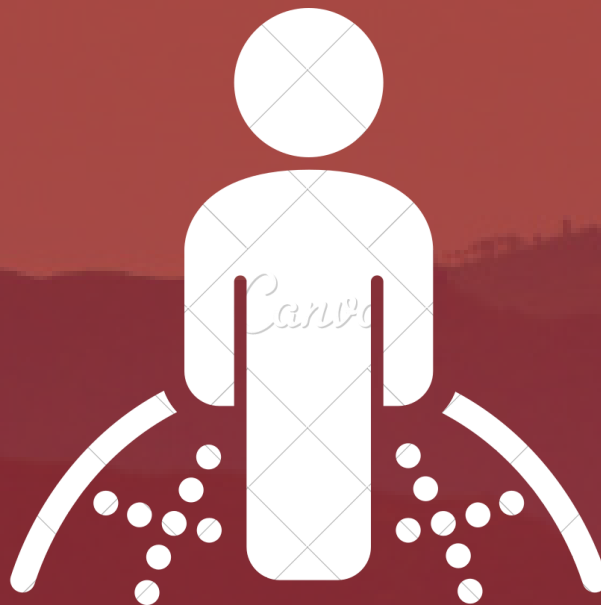
**WORKERS ALL ACROSS THE UNITED STATES ARE SUFFERING FROM INADEQUATE WORKERS PROTECTION, SAFETY, AND RIGHTS AMIDST THE PANDEMIC. HOWEVER AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS PANDEMIC TYSON FOOD FACTORIES, THE LARGEST MEAT PROCESSOR IN THE UNITED STATES, HAD FAILED TO TAKE PREVENTATIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES TO HELP THE MEAT-PROCESSING WORKERS. ON MAY 10TH, 2020 THE REPORTED NUMBER OF TYSON WORKERS THAT HAD CONTRACTED COVID19 WAS 1,031, A THIRD OF THEIR WORKFORCE-- MANY ON VENTILATORS AND THREE DIED (SWANSON, 2020). STILL TODAY, THE PROCESSING LINES DIDN'T STOP, EVEN AFTER PROCESSING PLANTS CLOSED, TRUMP DECLARED THEM AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANY REOPENED, BUT WITH DUE TO ABSENTEEISM RELATED TO COVID19 THERE WAS A SLOWER PRODUCTION . YES, WORKERS WERE PROVIDED WITH MASKS, REGULAR TEMPERATURE CHECKS AND PLEXIGLASS BARRIERS TO CONTINUE THEIR WORK. HOWEVER, THIS DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT THEIR JOB DOESN'T ALLOW THEM TO SOCIAL DISTANCE AND INVOLVES UNSANITARY FLUIDS. ON TOP OF BEING EXPOSED TO COVID19, MEAT-PROCESSING WORKERS HAVE HISTORICALLY EXPERIENCED EXPLOITIVE AND DEGRADING WORKING CONDITIONS, SUCH AS WEARING DIAPERS TO ENSURE THE LINE DOESN'T SLOW DOWN, LOW-QUALITY PROTECTIVE GEAR WHEN PACKAGING COLD CHICKEN THAT CAUSED A WOMAN CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME ON HER HANDS AND EVEN AS FAR AS A MAN LOSING A LEG THAT GOT CAUGHT IN A MACHINE, ONLY AFTERWARDS TO BE DEPORTED (GRABELL, 2017). SO, IS MASS PRODUCTION OF MEAT ESSENTIAL?**

# Who are the Meat-Processing workers?

## Rights of Man vs Rights of Citizens

The capitalist state is addicted to cheap labor. Many of the Tyson workers are Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), immigrants from Bosnia, Mexico, Myanmar and the Republic of Congo, many of whom do not speak English (Swanson, 2020). An unknown number of workers are undocumented due to constant changes of part-time and full-time workers. In addition to their undocumented statuses, they are more likely to be subjected to power because unlike a "citizen" they are not the immediate bearer of sovereignty (Agamben, 1998 p.76). There is an overt separation between humanitarianism and the rights of man compared to politics and from the rights of the citizens, that then lead to the violation of rights (Agamben, 1998 p.76).

The meat-processing industry plays a role in recruiting people who are undocumented because they are less likely to complain about hazardous working conditions or low wages (Grabell 2017). This is the state of exception for many undocumented workers as they fear disemployment and deportation much more during this time. Many continue to go to work because of fear of losing their job or simply not being able to feed their families. These workers are essential to our nation, yet, are not protected by the nation. People who are undocumented do not have easy access to federal help or any welfare as citizens do.





Their fear of deportation stems from the fact that bodies are also subjected to the biopolitical border enforcement, beyond the border and the border control of 100 miles inland policy if detained in these spaces. In the livestock industry, there have been many cases in which workers get experience constant ICE raids, employers expose their workers' legal status to ICE in order to avoid having to handle legal affairs after their workers have been injured or demand more. This is to destabilize the everyday lives of immigrants to the point where social reproduction is impossible (Coleman and Steusse, 2014 p.38). This social reproduction means that folks cannot begin to create better lives for themselves and for their next generations. It continues to perpetuate the same systemic oppression and inequities. By not being able to live their life, maintain a power, they become a subject upholding the work of death(Mbembe, 2003 p.14).

## HOW THESE BODIES ARE FURTHER SUBJECTED

Necropolitics explains how the governing has the power to choose who to make live and who to let die under the effects of colonialism and predominantly focuses on the right to kill (Mbembe, 2003 p.16). The subjected body suffers more on every level of indoctrination, violence and control. This is an extreme case of body regulation. President Trump and those in power have decided that undocumented people working in these production lines can die because they do not have rights in this nation. Even if they did have rights, they already decided these workers must endure this. Yet, they are essential to keep the production of meat going, establishing the statement that the commodity of meat is more important than the lives of those who make the commodity.



Western capitalism began with and has is maintained by exploiting the people who are colonized and marginalized. This job and hazardous working conditions being just one of all the larger structural issues, many low-income immigrant BIPOC face. Many are directly impacted by lacking: access to healthcare, exclusion for their undocumented status, criminalization of their racial identity, knowledge to dominant language and current systems. In addition, if they have many more identities that are also not accepted by society or deemed "normal", they continue to face more oppression. Their hazardous job is a structural violence that has been normalized because the commodities that citizens of the U.S. need are considered more essential than their lives. This has allowed an indoctrination of the society to continue to demand meat because they "must" consume meat.

## MASS MEAT PRODUCTION AS A FORM OF COLONIZATION



Whytner explains the “ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself”(Whytner, 2003 p.260). Currently, indoctrinated people attempt to become or continue the modern man, which is a cycle of normalizing coloniality and it's connection to the mass consumption of meat. Colonizers used many methods to harm who they colonized, including weaponizing food. People that were colonized were forced to assimilate by changing their diets and it impacted the cultural, social, and even gendered significance attached to such mass consumption of meat (Alvarez, 2019). Alongside violent conversion into faith, specifically many Indigenous cultures were forced to change diets because the Spanish colonizers wanted “their” food readily available(Alvarez, 2019). Colonizers brought the idea of the “right” and the “wrong” foods, fundamentally appointing their diet of bread, meat and alcohol superior. Indigenous women were to reproduce Spanish cooking—the source of superior Spanish bodies, to create civilized meals and people. Once again this idea that the “new” man is being established and has the correct ideologies. This diet included many non-native plants and farmed animals(Alvarez, 2019).

# Continuing the Man..

Farmed animals and specifically cattle farming lead to economic and land expansion of the United States. White settlers pushed cattle ranching, which removed and dislocated thousands of Indigenous communities and almost led to bison extinction. This shows how space was an exercise of sovereignty and was violated (Mnembe, 2003 p.26). In the 19th century, there was a demand for more capitalization of livestock which led to the new agribusiness of animals we know today: the mass production and line of meatpackers (Pfeifer 2019). The system was declared a technological advancement but for who? From 1806 through 1906 workers in the slaughterhouse were poorly paid and were immigrants (Pfeifer 2019). The main difference is that they were from Central and Eastern Europe but the harsh working conditions and disregard to immigrant life continues the same.

The mass meat production has also enabled the democratization of beef. Meat is more accessible than other substantial products. The belief that having the ability to consume more meat, including certain types of delicacies or certain parts of an animal enables the idea that to be successful, is to eat more meat. So essentially, by even consuming more “ethically” or sustainable meat, that is usually more expensive, you're still contributing to this ideology of class difference and the end goal to be able to consume these meats. This connects to forced acculturation of the colonized as explained earlier and how it persists. This idea and effort has traveled around the world as the “man” spreads the “narrative that says to be successful in America is to eat beef, therefore it's successful in a poorer economy to eat beef” (Pfeifer 2019).





## HOW DOES NECROPOWER PERSIST?

The suppression of knowledge and awareness of this violence towards people and the surrounding environments is what has allowed this necropower to hurt them. They simply have continued these norms of accepting mass production of livestock. We are instilled from a young age to not question what we are taught (Robbins, 2012). Part of necropolitics is instilling norms that may not actually benefit the whole society. We've taught men to connect their masculinity to consumption of meat. We've associated vegetarianism to be a concern for health. These are just two examples. The livestock industry and American culture has indoctrinated us to believe that the meat we consume is only a commodity and not connected to environmental racism, exploitation of workers, abuse of animals and overall an example of the issues of capitalism within a settler colonialist state.

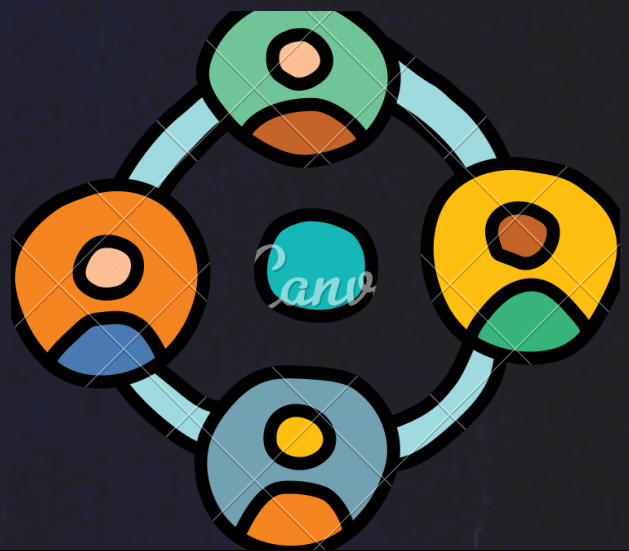




# VIOLENT DECOLONIZATION

In order to decolonize our diets and minds we cannot support a system that was designed to feed the colonizers and now preferred social groups such as citizens and those in power. Violent decolonization must mean removing ourselves from consuming meat that was processed in this mass production system and creating new ways to foster the restoration of nationhood to the people and commonwealth (Frantz, 1963 p.35). This may look like community gardens, gardens in our backyards, eating less processed foods, not exploiting animals and only eating them when necessary, giving land back to Indigenous people, creating polyculture agriculture and overall changing our relationship to food and land we cultivate from. We can create a new man based on allowing less connection of food to wealth, colonization, and oppression, and strive towards a more community-based participation, unlearning and willing to learn from each other on how to sustain one's individual health, life and environment(Frantz, 1963 p.35).

While in many places around the world people who are poor and not, have maintained a plant-based or substantially less consumption of meat than the United States. It's important to realize that there are many people in the U.S. that have inequities in which there is more accessibility to fast food meat and processed foods. Therefore while advocating for the end of mass production of meat to help workers and animals you must also advocate for communities that do not have accessibility to not eat more nutritional foods and actively fight to end the other oppressions we all suffer. The commodification of animals as an industry is connected largely to exploiting marginalized communities and is rooted in the legacy of colonization.



## SO IS MEAT ESSENTIAL?



**SO IS MEAT ESSENTIAL? IS YOUR DIET ESSENTIAL? CAN YOU CRITICALLY THINK HOW MEAT CONNECTS INTO YOUR LIFE? IS YOUR CONSUMPTION OF MEAT MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO PROCESS IT? CAN YOU OPEN YOUR MIND TO A PLANT-BASED LIFESTYLE AS PART OF A REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE? OVERALL, THIS IS WHY WE MUST DEMAND THE GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT OUR UNDOCUMENTED COMMUNITY BUT ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT ARE ESSENTIAL WORKERS AT THE MOMENT. THEY MUST STILL GET SUPPORTED AS THEY ARE EXPOSED TO A DEADLY VIRUS AND SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE WHILE WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY. MASS PRODUCTION OF MEAT IS A PRODUCT OF COLONIALISM THAT CONTINUES DUE TO NECROPOWER. MEAT IS A COMMODITY THAT SHOULD NOT BE VALUED MORE THAN LIFE ITSELF. LET'S PROTECT ESSENTIAL WORKERS AND WORK TO STOP THE INDOCTRINATION OF THOSE WHO CONTROL AND OPPRESS PEOPLE.**

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### Link to Photos:

1. [agri-pulse.com/articles/13557-new-guidance-recommends-social-distancing-in-meat-plants](https://agri-pulse.com/articles/13557-new-guidance-recommends-social-distancing-in-meat-plants)
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