

When we speak of *Total Liberation*, we are very upfront and honest about what we mean: We encourage all anarchists – the individuals who question authority and go to war with cops and fascists in the streets, to connect with the vegans who utilize tactical diversity to speak out, disrupt, liberate, and fight tirelessly against the everyday violence of human supremacy. And we encourage all of these same anarchists and vegans to connect with the straight edge individuals – the ones who'd rather reclaim and weaponize their minds and bodies against chemical escape than make the CEOs of the alcohol and tobacco industry richer.

Authority demands that we remain silent, civilized, and law abiding in order for capitalists to continue profiting from turning our bodies into individualized graveyards for slaughtered animals and dumpsters for their intoxicating chemical vices.

We have two choices in life: compliance or resistance. Do we stand on the sidelines or in the streets?

Some of us have made our decision:

A life of rebellion against the death machine.

No matter how hopeless, defiance over defeat.



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# STORIES *of* TOTAL LIBERATION Volume #2



## Vero (Minneapolis)

I was introduced to both anarchist thought and concepts of animal liberation at a very young age. Growing up, my mom was a mostly plant-based vegetarian who spoke very openly to me about the atrocities of animal agriculture, and I knew for a long time that once I was able to choose for myself what to eat, I would want to be vegan. When I was around 12 my father and I faced an eviction that left us homeless. This led me to start thinking more critically about the systems in place in our country and to realize more of how violence is created, both from one poor person to another and from corporations and the government onto the citizens. It wasn't until I made friends who were more well-read than me that I was able to put the proper vocabulary onto what I was seeing.

Once I could consider myself an anarchist, the draw to punk and hardcore music felt natural. I got into old school punk first, and from there old school hardcore. Straight edge, let alone vegan straight edge, wasn't something I took seriously until I started going to shows in my community and started seeing that it was still a lifestyle that was alive and well. Seeing so many people right in front of me with x's on their hands, who were both young and old, changed something for me.

I started learning more and more about straight edge and what it means and looks like to different people, until eventually deciding to claim edge after I lost another friend to a drug overdose. I went vegetarian for a while as well around this time, then vegan once I "felt sure I could commit", which is totally dumb looking back on it.

Living in impoverished communities makes it very easy to see how drugs are a tool used to dismantle poor families and minds. People buy and sell drugs in order to escape impoverished conditions or cope with issues they don't have better ways to handle. For people in less dire circumstances, drugs are a way to kick-back and not think about the things that keep them up at night. Drugs, alcohol, and nicotine all keep poor people poorer, in and out of jail, away from leading happy and healthy lives, and ultimately enslaved both in mind and body.

Animal agriculture is a relatively similar cycle of profit driven violence, where animals are enslaved and harmed in order for profit and control. All forms of violence are political and are either directly for profit or due to massive wealth disparities created by profit driven societies that cause poor people to harm one another.

Being vegan straight edge to me is about recognizing the right to quality of life that all sentient beings deserve. All humans deserve a chance to experience the world with an un-poisoned mind, free from captivity and free from having their



transform eco-systems into concrete parking lots for corporations like Walmart etc. With the expansion of industrial civilization comes the continued destruction and erasure of wild habitats.

With industrial expansion being at the core of every form of government it makes no sense to be a socialist or a communist, a republican or democrat. The very existence of government, borders, police or socio-economic systems is the antithesis of freedom. Based on my experiences with intoxication culture and seeing the way humans treat nature as a resource for exploitation and consumption I refuse to put trust in any politician or government. Industrial civilization by design positions itself as an enemy of the wild and free. Industrial civilization - like intoxication culture and like human supremacy – consumes life like a plague.

Identifying as Straight Edge is simply a communicative way of expressing my feelings of hostility toward intoxication culture as a whole, along with the ways it is used by colonial power to destroy people inside and out. Becoming vegan was simply an existential reconnecting with a primal empathy deep within that had been buried by all of industrial society's human supremacist propaganda and social conditioning. I am an anarchist because I reject the authority of the police, government, capitalism and any other entity that attempts to subjugate me.

For me, being an anarchist means understanding myself as an animal connected to the earth – not a human supremacist elevated above it. There are no politicians to vote for nor any political party to come save me. I choose to stand on my own – or with other anarchists if desired - and fight in the spirit of every animal killed by industrial society. I stand alongside every animal still alive and fighting to this day. Total liberation is a declaration of war against all who stands against the wild.

bodies being used as a tool for profit (through drug addiction, jailing, wage labor, etc.) All animals deserve to be treated with respect and to be free to roam and experience life without being confined, brutalized, and murdered for profit.

Hierarchical thinking is the death of compassion. You do not necessarily need to be well read on theory or have all the right words to explain yet in order to understand this. Know that you are no better than someone who uses drugs, who is in jail, who is without a home or job, and know that you are not better than or more deserving of using an animal who is incapable of doing harm.

Participating in animal agriculture is violence and is always a choice. Go vegan, get sober, and own up to your choices. You get to choose how much longer you put what is easy over what is right.

### **Tracy (Malasia)**

As someone who grew up in a small town somewhere in the northwest of East Malaysia Borneo, I often struggled to fit in due to my unconventional/alternative lifestyle. I'm 33 now, nearing 34 and I just don't give a flying screw anymore, I finally embraced myself! I started to consider myself as a non-conformist to social norms when I discovered punk subculture and music through western media during my teenage years.

Although I was exposed to punk music through family members as a child, I couldn't fathom what "punk" actually stood for. Reminiscing back in 2013 (I was 21), an online friend introduced me to straight edge. I was intrigued by it, I felt resonated to it, I immediately halted and thought to myself that I've been straight edge most of my life without even realizing it! Somehow, I regretted that I occasionally consumed alcohol at 18 years old due to peer pressure, (clearly I was in the wrong circle) but they were not to blame as I defeated my own conscience.

I've always had an ick to an idea of intoxication/promiscuous culture overall. (Which is why I chose celibacy). I've also witnessed the way alcohol addiction got to my family members and I've sworn to break the generational pattern, so I did wholeheartedly.

Fast forward to 2021 (I was 28 going 29), I felt like I was having a spiritual awakening all over again upon discovering vegan straight edge.

In addition to adherents abstain from substance abuse, being vegan is obviously a huge extension to straight edge lifestyle besides the hardcore punk music as it's fundamental primarily. I recalled being featured in a straight edge interview post on Instagram by a fellow VVX brother from NZ who gathered everyone

with this conviction around the globe and through them, I was inspired to go vegan. I somehow detested that I didn't go vegan way sooner despite knowing how wrong it was to consume animals as food to survive. (Clearly I was fighting my own cognitive dissonance). I also realized that eating plant-based doesn't equal veganism. Although I only purchased cruelty-free products beforehand, I was still contributing to animal suffering, exploitation and murder by eating them.

It all seems to connect in one way or another; part of living a vegan straight edge lifestyle is also fighting for a total liberation. The world system is beyond redundant and anarchy is the only hope. There should be no rulers, no masters, no hierarchies, no man-made bullshit derived from the supremacist role of domination.

Let us resist their authoritarian control and power over us! Abolish capitalism and colonialism – as well as ending animal exploitation and intoxication culture! Although we may be perceived as “savages” for wanting a world without laws and colonial order, we will not back down and we will keep on fighting back for the sake of our freedom! Vegan Straight Edge for all eternity! XVX

**“Residual afflictions begone!”  
by Asra (Indianapolis)**

The fear was endless, and the gorging incessant - I was but a stagnant mass. Blubber, paranoia and surrender...what else was there? The abyss became a familiar home, and despite the faith in brighter days, it seemed my life was stuck. It was over. My heart cried for something more, but how could I achieve it from the smothering gloom which sapped mine very life from me? What did food become but another drug? Sugar and salt mine addictions. Abundance of something to fill a void. The weight of the world had pressed me firmly into the mounds of filth, and I labored for each breath as I went to bed each night agonizing over if I my heart would stop in my sleep and all the things I dreamt of left unfulfilled. All I had then were my dreams.

However, the most peculiar, terrifying and joyful thing about life is that it goes on.

Change is the way of all things! With time you begin to see it more clearly even if it is only in the periphery at this moment. The littlest of things may seem so minute and meaningless, yet, to you reading this, I beseech thee to recognize just how important those things are. I was but once a frightful kid seeking security and predictability, avoiding new horizons as best I could, for mine life was mired but a chaos which hitherto left me battered. I still do carry that phantom within mine recesses, and everyday I seek to crumble away the grip of

very strong. I finally managed to quit eating meat and became a vegetarian in 2009. I still had my cheese though!

It's amazing how completely oblivious one can be to something for so long though. A year later I began dating someone who worked for PETA. She was vegan, and for every animal rights related statement she made I had (what feels now to be utterly embarrassing) the most ignorant response to. Despite my teenage political awakening with intoxication culture, systemic racism, patriarchy, capitalism and government, I had always considered non-human animals to be these mindless creatures who just kinda went along with whatever we humans told them. Due to this narrowed perception I never imagined non-human animals expressing anger, frustration, sadness or resistance. My vegan girlfriend finally decided that since words didn't seem enough to get through to me it was time to show me some videos. It was then and there that my entire worldview changed. It wasn't just the brutality or all the blood and gore – it was the personal resistance each of these animals put up against being led to death. Each cow, chicken and pig fought back until the last breath. Their refusal to go without a fight was so strong they often had to be subdued with electric shocks or cattle prods, a captive bolt or beaten with clubs. I remember feeling rage. I felt rage in response to what I was watching, and then I felt rage in response to the fact that all of the dancing chicken advertisement signs and smiling cow packaging had worked on me for so long. Marketing psychology at work disguising the brutal reality behind the neat packaging. My refusal to consume meat was no longer simply health-related.

Going vegan in 2010 was different back then compared to now since vegan food is much more widespread and accessible now in 2026. But 16 years later my rage is still the same. My transition from vegetarian to vegan was quick due to the realization that dairy (or animal secretions) are just as much a product of the same torture and violence as meat (or animal flesh). From watching those slaughterhouse videos I was able to make the connection that all the meat and dairy I was consuming were't simply “food products” but mutilated body parts of those whose lives were violently taken. These mutilated body parts are sold under the idea that non-human animals exist for humans consumption. Despite the abundance of health problems and diseases caused directly from consuming the flesh and secretions of those animals we consider “food”, people continue to consume them either out of comfort, habit, tradition or culture – almost completely oblivious to the emotions and personalities of every animal killed.

I realized more and more over time how capitalism – and industrial civilization all together – intentionally upholds this disconnection between human animals and non-human animals in the name of maintaining control and domination over nature. This control and domination allows those corporate-backed humans in elevated positions of socio-economic power to destroy ancient rainforests, or

fitting in or “looking cool” by drinking or smoking versus dying from it. My moms experience didn’t exist in a vacuum. Drug overdoses and domestic violence due to alcoholism were a common occurrence where we lived. I’d be lying if I said the trauma related to my moms near-death experience ended there. My moms boyfriend was an alcoholic who habitually inflicted both verbal and physical abuse on both of us. My mom stood up and protected me as best she could until eventually kicking him out. But having been exposed to those experiences at home and around my neighborhood I learned a few things about intoxication culture.

Years later in high school an older teen made a statement after I had finished explaining to him that I didn’t drink, smoke or do drugs. “Oh your’re Straight Edge!”. I didn’t know what *Straight Edge* was so I kinda laughed and said “alright sure – I’m straight edge!”. A month or two later another older teen came up and said that he was straight edge too. This time he showed me the cd cover of a band called Minor Threat. I also noticed a shirt he was wearing which was a Youth of Today fist with a big X on the back. That day, at the age of 16 I realized I was not the only one who refused to drink, smoke or do drugs. I realized a movement that started in the 80’s was something I had already felt in my own personal way, inspired by my own life experiences.

Ever since then I have come to understand more about intoxication culture. Intoxication culture is like a plague carefully designed by capitalism to both create life-long profits through addiction, and disrupt any and all liberatory potential for those seeking bodily autonomy and self-preservation. Furthermore, intoxication culture utilizes habitual consumption and addiction as a way to distract people from the problems in the world that create the desire to chemically escape in the first place. As a teenager witnessing the destructive power of drugs, drinking and smoking I couldn’t help but notice how the police, drug dealers and liquor stores took advantage of conflicts created by addiction. While drug dealers and liquor stores made profit from addiction, police used intoxication culture as an excuse to physically brutalize or kill those struggling with addiction or even just inebriation. A cycle of destruction persisted year after year. While heroin, cocaine and other “hard drugs” were illegal, alcohol and cigarettes were legal despite the domestic violence and bodily destruction they caused. It became abundantly clear to me that police, capitalists and government never cared about people. As long as people were destroying themselves – either with illegal drugs or with alcohol or nicotine – the system continued on as normal.

Over the years I began making the connection between Straight Edge and health. I didn’t drink, smoke or do drugs but I loved eating the fuck outta McDonalds, Burger King and just about anything with extra cheese. I tried quitting them a few times but failed. The addiction to grease and cheese was

phobia so that I may be free of the aether wires which digs into mine vitae. Looking back at that frightful person from so many deaths ago, I am left with a feeling of bewilderment and more than anything I feel that I am alien to myself.

Straight edge is a principle which I've held onto all mine life, even if for many years I had no word for mine refusal. Twas a promise to mineself to not fall into the labyrinth from which much of mine kin had perished; twas a proclamation of mine individual strength, even if for many years I couldn't see it. Even as a tot I was hiding my dad and grandma's cigarettes from them so they wouldn't poison their flesh. I was introduced to the term in my teenage years as I discovered punk at the same time I was becoming radicalized against these systems of control, and the more I learned, the more I saw that straight edge meant more than just not drinking, doing drugs, smoking. It became so much more. It became a rejection of addiction.

Egoism, to those who've studied up on the ideas presented, know that tis more than just the rejection of external powers of control, indeed, tis the rejection of all control, even internal. Even you may become a slave to the idea of yourself, but also you may be a vessel for a desire left unrestrained, which, with great pressure, builds until it begins to consume you - it hollows you out. Addiction is this psionic parasite which kills with whispers. Straight edge, as it means to me, overlaps so much with mine egoism, for it means standing stalwart against any intruder which would capture the essence in motion and restricts it warping into new things. My pursuit has been trying to monitor the urges in my life and doing away with them as one would with alcohol or cigarettes. There are no good addictions, for addiction means subservience.

To be anti-subservience, to be anti-hierarchy, to wish for all conniving heads to roll, one must also look towards the buried gleam which peaks from the Earth, a sprout begging for thy attention: veganism. If one slavery is tolerated, then what slavery may the masters wish to implement next? Fauna art mine kin, for we struggle to see the Sun rise across unbroken meadows of writhing color. I lament that tis a recent development that I could rip myself from a carnivore's apathy to dare to care, yet still I have and ne'er shall I return to such a sustenance; ne'er shall I falter to offer mine tithe to the ministries of massacre...how far I've come from those days of lifting tofu just to taste what it's like and raw cashews to make milk. Far from the days of gagging on every vegetable and fruit, and proclaiming that I was allergic to every food in the school cafeteria!

Nothing has been more rewarding and eye opening than solo travel. I make my own pace, I find myself in the world, and in my wake I've left pretty notes for fellow waywards who have adventure in their hearts. By being xvX and anarchist, have I not already tread hidden paths through the brush? Why not stride through the thicket to find the alcoves and oases? I have already found

such things. Still water glimmering with larva as mosquitoes steal from my veins, with cool winds tickling my skin and a broken lawn chair at the waters edge - graffiti of giggling monsters stained to derelict concrete coffins home to critters a plenty, and totems of the primordial offering the soul with sustenance.

All change begins within us, and few things are beyond our grasp – every barrier may be rendered scrap. Every step starts with the whisper of the destination. Every journey seems insurmountable before you've tread the paths. If the fields shan't once more glimmer green and teem with blotches of vibrancy, then once the sands come, let them run red and may the monuments vainly claw for air. When I die may I go with a howl aching in my throat.

### **J (xmemoriestoburnx) (Baltimore)**

I went vegetarian at 9 years old because eating animals made me cry, and I probably would have done it earlier if I'd known it was an option. I was labeled the blue-haired SJW (growing up just a little before the "woke" era began) from a very early age. Even as a young kid, it just seemed very obvious to me that everyone should get the chance to live and be happy autonomously. It took a while for me to find the ideology and language to become a raging vegan straightedge anarchist, but those basic core values were always there.

My dad was a severe alcoholic (language that's a little silly, because isn't alcoholism of any kind severe?), so I grew up gaining a lot of first-hand experience with the horrors of addiction. Between being around him and being part of an older friend group who lived to party, I was addicted to alcohol and nicotine by 14 years old. Addiction is a very clear and prevalent problem in my family tree, but beyond that, I was swept away by intoxication culture. Having fun and getting wasted were synonymous. Being belligerently drunk, acting like a fool, becoming incoherent and barely able to function – instead of being embarrassing lapses of judgment, these were badges of honor while we all reminisced the morning after.

My environment and my lifestyle solidified a crucial fact in my brain: substance use = happiness.

The alcohol industry and many others rely on the prevalence of this accepted truth in the consumer, both consciously and subconsciously. And it *works*.

All together, that's how things went for a while. Dedicated to vegetarianism and animal welfare (but still not vegan yet), staunchly fighting for "equal rights" and a better world (but still far from an anarchist), and a fierce believer in autonomy and intentionality (but not even considering getting sober). A lot

When I was 26 I went vegan. I went to a hardcore show in western Massachusetts. All the bands were younger than me and also vegan. I said to myself what the fuck is my excuse? So the next day I just went for it. Everybody knows deep down there's something fucked up going on. I needed to confront that in myself. Any reason I had not to go vegan I realized was absolutely trivial when it came to what the animals of the world are being subjected to by mankind. Going vegan is the LEAST we can do as revolutionary minded people. Anyone who wants to talk that way and hasn't taken this basic step is just posturing in my opinion.

I found that the hardest barriers to veganism and sobriety were mental ones. In practice, going vegan was not actually that hard. Since going vegan my brother, drummer, and now guitarist are all following suit. I'm not claiming credit for what they are doing but it is cool to see how this kind of thing ripples out. It's powerful stuff. This translates to actual innocent lives being saved. Ive found that the best way to enact change is through my actions not my words. We are part of a movement going on right now, and we got to where we are by organizing shows and mobilizing young people, not saying self satisfying shit to get ourselves off. Our hearts and minds are all in the right place and I will continue to push the vegan straight edge until I die.

### **Flower Bomb (Nomadic but originally from Chicago)**

While in elementary school one day I was called into the office for a family emergency. I was told my mom was in the hospital after suffering a stroke. After my moms boyfriend picked me up and got me home I was able to talk with my mom before she underwent an emergency Carotid Endarterectomy – a procedure that clears plaque from the carotid artery in order to restore blood flow to the brain. While on the phone with her, and in the middle of her attempting to calm me, she blacked out. I could hear panic in the background moments before my aunt, who was beside her grabbed the phone and told me to pray for my mom. I remember feeling my body go numb with dread. It wasn't all at once though. It started with my finger tips, spreading to my hands and arms, then worked it's way to my head. With every passing minute a flash of memories of my mom telling me bedtime stories, taking me to the park and just thinking about her smile. And now I had just listened to her die.

Hours after her black out I get a call from the hospital. She was alive and stable. The surgery was successful. It felt like she was given a second chance. The doctor told her the plaque build-up was from all the cigarettes she had smoked over the years. That day was the first day she stopped smoking cigarettes and consuming alcohol after 30 years of doing so. The next few weeks after that experience I began wondering how many other kid's parents might encounter the same near-death experience one day. I began questioning the importance of

Unfortunately, devoting ourselves entirely to animals and nature is impossible in these circumstances, as the world is rapidly descending into fascist hell, and Poland, in particular, is rapidly doing so. I want to speak primarily about veganism and our planet, and I don't care about humanity. But still, when the state deprives my comrades of the right to choose their own bodies for abortions, and when the level of hatred and violence against queer people and migrants, which includes me and many of my comrades, grows, When refugees are denied their basic right to asylum, I cannot help but be distracted by these issues and devote at least a small portion of my time and resources to them, at least as a continuation of my demonstration against all collective identities on which any xenophobia and system of oppression and exploitation is built. And without all of this, the existence of civilization is impossible. So, to some extent, this struggle is also aimed at liberating the earth and animals.

**Ethan  
(Boston)**

Growing up I discovered punk rock around the same time I discovered alcohol and drugs. I thought they went hand and hand and couldn't imagine one without the other. Through the years drinking and using got me into more and more trouble and made my life increasingly miserable, and eventually overtook my life to the point where I wasn't going to shows any longer and hardcore was no longer a central part of my life. When I was 22 I finally went to rehab and AA and got sober. I was still far from vegan or straight edge, that would take a few more years.

About 2 years later I moved to Pittsburgh PA and hardcore took a bigger role in my life again. Pittsburgh is a punk town, and it allowed me to reconnect with what I truly loved which is hardcore punk and anarchy. I remember going to a show that filler distro put on and the stuff just took me back in. I was sucked back in, ended up claiming edge because i felt like i could make a bigger impact and i would take a lot of my punk friends to AA meetings and help introduce them to sobriety.

A few years after that I ended up moving back to Boston where im from originally. I started the band im in now, Sue and one by one all the members claimed edge. I guess the sober lifestyle appealed to us all. Some of us are in recovery some aren't. The band has given us the a platform to push the straight edge thing. We only do all ages shows, we want to make the lifestyle appealing to young kids. If I had been given another option at that age I could have saved myself years of needless suffering. I see a lot of these kids getting into straight edge and it really makes me feel like everything I went through led me to this point, to be a positive example in the community. You can't resist the systems of power in our society if you don't have a clear mind. But a clear mind is only the first step.

of *almost* seeing the light, if you will...but not quite.

Veganism, straightedge, and anarchy are so intertwined with each other, and I think that my journey is a true testament to how connected these things are. Moving towards all three happened simultaneously, each value being inspired by the others and jump-starting a rapid process of self-discovery.

Sobering up came first. I quit alcohol and nicotine in October 2022. I'd tried to quit nicotine a few times before, but it never stuck for more than a couple days at best, and while my alcohol consumption had slowed down in the most recent year or so, I wasn't even thinking too hard about quitting for good. I'm still not sure what exactly made me decide to do it or why it worked. One day, I'd just had enough. I'd been on hormones for a couple of months and was starting to realize how little of my life I had lived on my own terms. I was mourning a childhood I never had, and while a lot of that had to do with being trans, I was starting to realize that it was also about substance use. Choosing to start taking testosterone was so liberating, so assuring, so empowering – it felt as though I was finally in control of my own existence for the first time, and it didn't have to end there. So, I looked in the mirror, and I told myself it was time. I stopped drinking and smoking/vaping cold turkey (although I wasn't about to quit smoking weed any time soon), knowing that if it was going to work, it had to be definitive and all at once. I don't know how much I actually believed in myself at the start, but once I made it past two weeks, I felt invincible.

After a couple months of sobriety, I had started to reexamine a lot of things about myself, especially regarding my outlook on the world. Growing up with my mom who worshiped Obama and Biden and played MSNBC all day and night, I thought about things with pretty intense neoliberal blinders on, but I was finally starting to get suspicious. I was paying attention more and more. I was having more conversations where I found myself contradicting my own party affiliation and starting to get extremely confused about what political labels even meant. I was already becoming my truest self in lots of other ways, so it felt ridiculous not have a firm grasp on what I believed.

I talked to my chosen parent about why they're an anarchist and tried not to gasp out loud when they told me they don't vote. I looked into what the big deal was about Bernie Sanders and why socialism was a scary word. I read Kropotkin, I watched bread tube. And as I made my way through the list of political ideologies, I found myself forming opinions even further to the left every time. This period of insatiable leftist research also led me to the ALF. I'd heard about them before, but not in detail, and during a very peaceful-protests-only time in my life, so this time was completely different. I watched interviews and rescue footage and documentaries and my mind was blown. I suddenly felt astonished at myself for not being vegan already, almost dirty for thinking vegetarianism was good enough, for convincing myself that veganism was just too difficult. I

went vegan in February 2023.

I was starting to feel truly alive for the first time and I was so inspired learning more and more about anarchists and direct action and radical/militant veganism. It felt like everything I knew about the world, the government, capitalism, my own morals...*all of it* was falling apart at the seams in the best way possible. I'd spend full days deep diving the Anarchist Library and exploring so many new ways to harness these intense emotions and discoveries I was having.

This led me to music. Of course, I'd heard of Earth Crisis before, but I started listening to bands like Vegan Reich, Arkangel, xApothecaryx, EcoStrike...this was also my first semblance of a direct gateway into hardcore.

I got top surgery in October 2023, and in preparation I had to stop smoking weed. I was a diabolically unhealthy stoner even/especially after sobering up, and I truly don't know how I justified that to myself besides "it's better than the other options" and "you can't get addicted to weed" (right). But my transition was more important, and I'd quit addictions before, so I jumped into my tolerance break with the comfort of knowing I could start smoking again once I'd recovered. That time came, though, and I hated it. I was having panic attacks and regretting smoking every time I did and found myself wondering why I ever even started. I had made such a habit of smoking ritualistically throughout the day, so I decided to try to break out of that and only smoke when I actively wanted to. I never did again.

In the late summer of 2024, I spent a few months in Palestine doing protective presence in the West Bank (my dispatch can be found at [olivetreehugger.notepin.co](http://olivetreehugger.notepin.co) if you're interested), and when the most meaningful time of my life ended in me getting arrested and deported by the Shin Bet, I found myself back home in Turtle Island feeling lost, hopeless, and devastated. Devastation – the emotion that led to the flipping of the switch. For the first time in two years, I was truly terrified of relapsing.

Other than work, I barely left my room after I got back. My sister had become pretty active in our local hardcore scene while I was gone, and while I didn't really get it at all and had no interest in leaving the house much less going to a show, she was finally able to convince me to come along after a few months of my depression blackout. My mind was blown. I went to a crust gig at a punk house and a hardcore show in the back of a restaurant in the same night. It was the weirdest shit I'd ever seen and I immediately wanted to know when we could go to another one.

This was like the final piece of the puzzle.

As I became more active in the punk and hardcore scenes, I started to make

the form of clashes with the police. Back then, we thought people had finally woken up and decided that we, too, needed to mobilize.

Some of us threw Molotov cocktails and fired flare guns at courthouses and administrative buildings. Some also scattered small, homemade anti-tank hedgehogs made of nails on the access roads to police stations. There were also raids to destroy cameras in areas where mass protests were expected.

However, liberal speakers quickly seized the initiative, calling for peaceful protest, despite the protesters' initial successes. The protest degenerated into a clown show with slavik circle dances and singing, while People were tortured and killed in pretrial detention centers. People increasingly began to run from the police and increasingly rarely interfered with the arrests of other protesters.

One particular moment is etched in my memory. That day, a very large protest was taking place in the area where I lived. Despite being on the outskirts of the city, several thousand people gathered there. At some point, the bastards arrived. At first, there were only two minibuses, from which about 15 riot police jumped out. A couple of others and I started shouting that we needed to line up and lock arms so they couldn't pull anyone out and take them away. At one point, I turned my head and saw that the huge crowd that had just been behind us had already run several dozen meters away (from 15 acabs!!!). The next moment, I saw the cosmonaut running toward me and started running away myself.

All this sobered us up and reminded us of what the average person is like. We finally moved away from this humanistic bullshit and focused primarily on animals and nature. After this, many of our former comrades gradually distanced themselves from us at various times. As it turned out, many didn't really understand why we were doing all this, and some even started eating corpses, as I later learned from mutual friends. This further fueled my misanthropy.

For several years now, some of my comrades and I have been living and operating in Poland, as the regime in Belarus has become more restrictive and it's no longer safe to be there. My anti-civilization period began in full force here.

Here, my gang and I began to integrate into the vegan activist community, and subsequently began organizing our own actions. For example, we've borrowed the screen-based protest format from Anonymous for the Voiceless, organized several small protests against animal shows in our city, visited sanctuaries, and so on.

Initially, the group didn't do anything particularly radical—leaflets and graffiti at night, film screenings, lectures, forest cleanups, fundraising for political prisoners, and selling charity distros at concerts. Our views were essentially leftist, but with a bias toward veganism, ecology, and Belarusian ethno-anarchism (perhaps in your context, this term has a more problematic meaning, but in Belarus, this was the term used by those who opposed Russian/soviet imperialism and the erasure of Belarusian identity and language that Lukashenko's pro-Putin regime has been and continues to be engaged in. Ethno-anarchism in Belarus didn't include racism or xenophobia).

But over time, our views evolved, we became angrier, and our actions more radical. Like everyone else, I gradually became disillusioned with the egalitarian perception of society. Belarusian society ignored authoritarianism and political repression and was extremely passive. While we, almost all still schoolchildren, risked our freedom, the average persons sat on the couch, absorb shit from TV, stuffing their mouths with corpses, and pouring vodka down our throats. These people don't care about our struggle, even for their own rights. To say nothing of migrants, women, LGBT people, and especially animals and the mother Earth.

Because of all this, I began to despise the idea of consolidation, both around class and around Belarusian national culture. It's better that there be few of us, but at least I'll be surrounded by those who are truly like-minded me. Not those who happen to share the same label with me.

All this occurred against the backdrop of reflection on truly important issues—ecological collapse, the mass cyclocide of non-human animals, and technological progress threatening both nature and human freedom. Over the years, all of this began to seem far more pressing than the problems of the hairless monkeys who were themselves the cause of all this horror.

As a result, partly under the influence of my colleagues, partly through my own reflections, I arrived at something close to anarcho-nihilism and radical ecocentrism.

But the real culmination of the development of my worldview occurred in 2020.

Then, due to the elections, mass protests erupted for the first time in over 20 years. There was much horrific police violence, as well as brutal mass torture in pretrial detention centers, but at first, there was also a harsh popular reaction in

more and more straightedge friends. Shows became one of the first true forms of social gatherings I could regularly go to without a focus on substances or any pressure from the people around me to partake. While there's usually at least a few straightedge people if not a ton at any show, everyone respects it regardless, so I'd never have to worry about someone not taking my sobriety seriously. A straightedge gig headlined by Statement of Pride is one of my fondest earlier memories of getting to see how strangely magical being in that environment can be.

Fast forward, and now I play in a trans (vegan) straightedge band with my closest friends and family. We are so lucky to be able to play so many different kinds of shows despite being a metalcore band, we constantly find ourselves playing punk and hardcore bills. I think it speaks to how interconnected all of our scenes are, but also to how rare it is to find queer straightedge bands and spaces. It has been really special to hear from people at our shows who have felt seen by us or who have been inspired to go vegan or edge or feel safe around us...it all goes way beyond the music. Looking back on where I came from to now, it honestly makes me tear up to think that I get to represent in some small way the fact that you can survive addiction, you can realize who you are, and you can celebrate all of it without involving substances.

My friend from God Instinct once said at a show "with all the pain and suffering that I experience, I have the clarity to see it, to get to understand it, and to get to know myself. I don't hide from it." I think that's the most special part of the whole thing. You really never know yourself to the fullest until you embrace *all* of yourself. Coming out as trans and being straightedge changed my life forever for the better for that reason.

So much of my addiction was rooted in feeling out of control, incapable of making a real impact on my own life, much less the world around me. Ironically, it was becoming straightedge that opened my eyes to how untrue that was. Vegan straightedge is a daily commitment to bettering myself and the world. It is a boycott of the industries that rely on our apathy and ignorance to continue their mass abuse. It is a refusal to dampen the vast range of emotions that drive us to stand by our values. It's a promise to hold each other accountable and strong, and to practice harm reduction both within and outside of the straightedge community.

It's a refusal to accept that we – *all of us, not just humans* – don't have autonomy or hope or the ability to strive for the lives we want for ourselves and each other.

Shoutout to Warzone Distro, whose catalog and mere existence were critical in my journey to where I am today :) DIY Conspiracy and Anarchist Library too.

There are so many bands that have helped get me and keep me here too, but to name a few, thank you Moral Law, xElegyx, xApothecaryx, Statement of Pride, Limp Wrist, God Instinct, Life Force, xForever Warx, xDeliverancex, World of Pleasure, Liberate, Catharsis, Earth Crisis, Arkangel...

xvx saves lives – including your own.  
xvx forever, death before detransition.

### **Goga (Poland)**

My journey to veganism and straight edge wasn't long, taking only six months. It all started in Minsk in 2017, where I was born and raised. I was 14, hadn't yet gone to concerts and didn't know anyone in the local subculture environment, but I became interested in punk rock, antifa, and anarchism. I was drawn to all of this because this culture, while on the one hand aspiring to be aggressive, also opposed all forms of xenophobia. This appealed to me because, although the era of skinheads and active street warfare in the post-Soviet space had largely passed, a significant portion of my peers emulated football fans, many of whom supported far-right football clubs (the most popular of these in our country were Dynamo and Torpedo). This frustrated me greatly, as I'm not heterosexual, and I've had a decidedly negative attitude toward racism since childhood. Around the same time, I became a vegetarian for about six months—it didn't make much sense, as I didn't attach much significance to it.

My life changed dramatically in the summer of 2017, I think, when I started hanging out with punks, hardcore kids, and skinheads in my city. So one day, I went for a walk around town with some guys I barely knew. Among them was a punk activist, a relatively "reputable" guy. This punk was the first vegan I'd ever met. I spent the entire day talking almost exclusively to him, and that one conversation was enough for me to realize that up until that moment, I already knew too much to be content with vegetarianism alone. Literally that same day, I went vegan and finally decided to live the rest of my life sober (even though I hadn't drunk or smoked before).

I've always had a somewhat complicated relationship with straight edge. I've never had any desire to quit and start using, but for me, the question of how radical I should be toward other people has always been a difficult one. I guess I could say I'm a militant vegan, but not a militant straight edge. I agree that violence against large alcohol and cigarette producers is completely justified, and I believe straight edge is something most people need, but I'm not ready to say it should be imposed on absolutely everyone and all societies. This question is also difficult for me because Belarus has very strict anti-drug laws. A 14-year-old child can get 12 years in prison for working in a drug shop. Even for weed.

Under these conditions, it was justified for me to speak out radically against the alcohol and cigarette industries, from which, by the way, the state in Belarus makes huge amounts of money, but I didn't want to support the state's repressive narratives against users of illegal substances.

But I radicalized very quickly regarding veganism. This happened largely because I was already an anarchist by the time I became vegan, and the very idea of violence in response to oppression didn't repulse me, much less violence against the largest, oldest, and most brutal system of exploitation in history. My radicalization was also greatly influenced by the fact that my veganism often caused me conflicts at school with teachers, peers, and even other punks. And the more you argue with corpse-eaters, the more you see the inconsistency of their arguments, coupled with laziness, cynicism, cruelty, and arrogance.

Punks were especially infuriating. I basically don't understand how a punk can speak of protest unless they're vegan. Going vegan is literally the most significant thing any modern person can do—it's impossible to influence the world around you in such a way through any other ordinary action. For the most part they were the same lazy and indifferent bastards as most people in general, and vegans were a minority even among them.

It was then that I began to think more about ecology. I've had a very superficial interest in everything related to biology since childhood, and I was amazed at how much fragmentary knowledge was enough to understand how radically a vegan lifestyle reduces the harm I cause to the environment. And most importantly, almost no one talks about it.

Gradually, more and more of my acquaintances and friends became vegan and simultaneously became involved in activism – human rights, anarchist, and environmental. A little later, I joined them, and this happened after I met Vyacheslav and Marina Kosinerov. In the Belarusian public sphere, they are known primarily as human rights activists who help political prisoners. However, Viacheslav also had extensive experience in street antifascism. In the past, when the Minsk football club MTZ existed, which was supported by antifa, he beat up many Nazis :) and both of them, of course, identified themselves as anarchists and sober vegans. Because of their activism, they had a lot of problems with the police, and Vyacheslav even managed to spend some time in prison. Looking ahead, Vyacheslav and Marina greatly influenced the formation of my views and we have been involved in activism together for about the last 9 years.

Some time after meeting the Kosinerovs, I joined an affinity group that included them and a few other friends.