



# Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 663, Interview with Torre Washington

**Mariann Sullivan:** Welcome to Our Hen House, Torre.

**Torre Washington:** Thank you very much. I'm happy to be here.

**Mariann:** I'm thrilled to have you. We had a little trouble connecting, but I think we're here now and hopefully our sound will hold up.

I'm excited to talk to you about a bunch of things and obviously about body building. Though that's not really my area of expertise \*laughs\* but the thing that I'm really dying to talk to you, I'd love to start off with is, it kind of starts in your childhood, I think.

And I think the major influence on your becoming vegan was when your family moved to Jamaica. You had originally lived in the US, I think, and then you moved to Jamaica and you learned about Ital. And I love Ital restaurants. I get to them once in a while, when I'm in the right place, but I don't know a lot about all of the connections and I really want to hear from somebody who does.

And so can you just start out telling us a little bit about your story and then we'll get into some of those connections?

**Torre:** Yes. I'd be more than happy to. It truly is an honor, a pleasure to be able to tell my story because you know, not often our story gets told where people will actually listen to it. Cause you know, with our day to day activities in life, we're always in a rush and go, go, go, go.

So I'll be happy to, Mariann, thank you so much. Again, it's my pleasure to be here, I'm looking really looking forward to this podcast. So I was raised vegetarian and the reason I was raised vegetarian was my mother, who was raised Catholic herself, by her parents, decided to move into a different sect of religious practice which was Seventh Day Adventist.

And Seventh Day Adventists, as you may or may not know, they are one of the blue...I think what is it called? Blue dot or blue note? Type of...

**Mariann:** Right! I know what you mean and I can't remember it either!

The blue something...really healthy people! \*both laugh\*

**Torre:** Yeah. And they based one of their beliefs on a health message and this health message was living off the land, as much as possible. And vegetarian is the food type that they chose. Now, what that means is they still may have consumed milk or eggs that may have been in the food, but not necessarily put in by themselves.

And so I was raised that way by my mom for about nine years. And then after about nine years due to her financial instability, I will say, because we were living in Alabama at the time. She spoke with her parents and asked if we could live there in Jamaica, because my mother is Jamaican of origin, if we could live in Jamaica with her parents.

And so we moved to Jamaica. We lived in Jamaica for about three, almost four years. And the reason we moved to Jamaica, like I said, was financial instability. But of course my Jamaican grandparents didn't have any idea about veganism or vegetarian, anything of that sort. In Jamaica, you know, they eat pretty much everything. From the rooster to the tooter, that's what they call it. From the nose to the tail.

But she really requested that her parents not feed us anything from a pig. And this is based off of the religious practice of Seventh Day Adventists and in the Bible of "thou shall not eat unclean meat," which is considered pig, anything with hooves. So moving from vegetarian to that, we basically were not vegetarian anymore.

So when living there in Jamaica, we moved away from our vegetarian roots, but once we moved back to The States... You know, I learned more about being Jamaican and Rasta in Jamaica, but it's not until I moved back to South Florida and getting with cousins and friends and aunties and uncles who were Rasta, of practice, that I learned about the Ital way of life.

And the Ital way of life is, typically...the terminology comes from Rasta. Rasta always is about I and I. I and I meaning I am one with the most high. So I is myself and I is also God, Jehovah, Jah. Rastafari that's where we get I. So they like...the terminology of I usually replace a lot of the first parts of the word. So

natural...not nat, they want it to be Ital. You know, of God. And so this is where Ital comes from.

And Ital is very strict. In that no salt, no sugar. Even down to the point of using coconut shells or the earth, anything from the earth, as your plate and you know, your hands more as utensils or something that's made out the earth. Because it's all about going back to the essence of life and that's where...The Garden of Eden, things of that nature...comes from.

Because Rasta, which is also considered Nazarite Vow, has Christian origins in its roots but has transcended more into the Second Coming being of Emperor Haile Selassie from Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. And that's where your savior comes from, in that sense.

So Ital became more of a lifestyle once I moved to South Florida. Because most of my colleagues, we started to really research into Rasta and we had identified more Rasta and we started to grow our locs and understand the wisdom that comes with growing the locs. So Ital was really my start.

**Mariann:** And it's completely vegan, right? But it's not just completely vegan.

**Torre:** In that...what do you mean by completely vegan?

**Mariann:** Well, I mean, that there's no animal products?

**Torre:** Right.

**Mariann:** That's my understanding. But it's also, it's very focused, if I understand correctly and correct me if I'm wrong, on being natural and really eating fruits and vegetables like whole foods, uh, what we would call whole foods.

So it's a very, I mean, it's both a healthy and almost symbolic lifestyle. As you said of The Garden of Eden. It's both spiritual and just physically very healthy. Am I right?

**Torre:** That is correct. Because if you think about it, too, when the Rastafarian way of life actually started with the Ital there was no tofu...I mean, tofu was around, but not in Jamaica. It was more so in China and Asian countries.

And so Rasta was eating yam, dumpling, you know, starches. Cho cho, root from the ground, potatoes, beans, peas, rice, all types of veggies and fruits.

That's all. So basically strictly whole foods. Lots of corn. Roast corn is one of the biggest things consumed. Where, you know, you put the corn husk on the grill and you roast it. Bread fruit, bammy, all of these things that just come from the ground and come from the trees. Plantain, banana, star fruit, you know.

Now it's making me hungry! \*both laugh\* So things are the things they typically ate. Now, there were sects of Rasta that lived more so by sea. And those, particularly, were fishermen. And they started to institute fish.

And that's, you know, that's where my Rasta and vegan kind of changed. Because when I looked at the real true heritage of Rasta and Ital. Ital is no fish, no chicken, no nothing, just straight whole foods and fruits. I didn't want to be considered a hypocrite. And I made sure that I was fully plant only, plants and fruits only. And that's how I found out later, at a later date, that it was called vegan because you know, the terminology vegan didn't exist in Jamaica.

And I know the terminology actually didn't come about until about, I dunno, the early 19 hundreds or middle 19 hundreds, something like that.

**Mariann:** Yeah. I think it might have been the 1940s.

**Torre:** Right.

**Mariann:** It's so...I feel like I don't know enough about Ital eating and I'm learning...even though I know a lot about food and veganism, I just feel like it's under-appreciated and too little attention has been given to this, to these customs, in the vegan movement and just generally, do you agree?

**Torre:** Yes. Yes. I also agree because you know, if you think about it too, a lot of people tend to identify with the culture, the look, and the music, but they don't recognize the lifestyle that also comes with it.

And, you know, then there's the recreational usage of, I'm gonna go there, with marijuana. Marijuana was not really a recreational thing. It was more so of a spiritual connection with the universe. Connection with God, connection with oneself and one being and one's surroundings. It wasn't just, "Oh yes, Rasta man just get high." It wasn't about that.

And now a lot of things have changed, you know? So a lot of people will grow lots, listen to Reggae music, smoke ganja or herb, but they really won't take on the Ital way of eating.

**Mariann:** Boy, is that typical or what? Just as soon as you've mentioned to people, in any context whatsoever, that maybe they shouldn't eat meat, all of a sudden it's like, "Oh, whoa! That's just crazy!"

**Torre:** Right. Plenty of times, I see it. I see a lot of Rastas that will go into the shop and get chicken or they'll get fish because they assume that that's close enough. You know, as long as they have the locs, they like reggae music and, you know, they can smoke ganja and dress up like a Rasta, that's good. You know, they don't realize that there's more to it.

You know, the Ital, it's all connected because you are connecting with the universe and connecting with the earth and the animals and all the sentient beings around the globe that, you know, are part of this. And all, that's why I and I, it's not just I, it's we. I and I is also together as a group. Rasta has always been about love and Ital. That's where the Ital came from as well, it's about love. You love the animals just as much as you love each other so you don't want to consume them to get what you need.

**Mariann:** That's another thing that I hardly ever hear associated with Rasta or with Ital, is that it's not just health, but it's also...well deep respect for nature, that I've certainly heard. That it's very, very important to live in a natural, in balance with the earth, lifestyle. But I haven't heard so much about the respect for the animals. Has that been particular to you or do you feel like that's a really important principle in Rasta?

**Torre:** I would say particularly to me and what I mean by that is you're right. Because Rasta mostly came about from Jamaica. And if we go back to a long time ago, even probably now, most Jamaicans don't really have their animals or pets inside with them. When I was raised with my grandparents, it was "dogs stay outside."

So the dogs were always outside and you didn't bring them in the house. And even though cows and chickens just pretty much roamed around it wasn't uncommon to have people just have a goat just to have curry goat the next day. You know? So the respect for animals wasn't truly there. I think more and more as people start to understand, or like a Rasta would say overstand, the connection of nature in the animals and humans, that it has grown a little more in popularity now with some Rastas, with the movement. But more so with me, because I didn't have that thought process either because when Rastas...

Rasta's also revolutionary. What I mean by that is the Mau Mau tribe are one of the tribes of Africa, I believe they were looked up to in Jamaica, I could be

wrong. They were also part of the revolution against the British, but they also grew their locs to kind of have a warrior look. And so Rastas picked up on this. And so the Rasta and revolution came from that because we also were condemned lower than animals. Animals sometimes got more say than people of our skin tone, I'm saying. So that's another avenue of where we kind of felt less than animals. So it's like, "Why these people give the animals more praise than they do us?" That's almost as if to say we took it as a slap in the face. So that's why most Rasta don't really give animals that type of presence in their lives.

**Mariann:** Yeah, that's really interesting. I really like your thought that it is because the world has changed and people aren't necessarily living in rural Jamaica where animals are just...but, you know, live in the world of factory farming and just hideous exploitation, that these ideas are shifting.

And it actually, you know, I've spoken to a couple of African activists, of late, vegan African activists. And it reminds me so much of what you're saying. And a lot of what they talk about is decolonizing the diet. And it seems to me that that has a lot to do with what Rasta was about too. Just decolonizing the diet and getting away from colonialism.

Does that resonate with you as well?

**Torre:** Yes, because you know, in the past you have the terminology of...meat was for the kings and queens. The peasants ate more of the grains and the rice. So we wanted to identify with being wealthy. So we wanted to eat meat. And so that's a colonialized...colonial way of thinking.

And so understanding that we don't necessarily need that meat in order to feel as though we have come or we have risen. You know what I'm saying? We don't need that.

**Mariann:** I totally know what you're saying. I think that's a really interesting point. Yeah. It's not a matter of imitating and just going in the direction others have gone. It's a way of finding a new way forward and a much more positive and powerful way forward.

So I love the idea that it's all evolving and, you know, I guess most of your interviews don't start off by talking about this, but it is definitely the topic I was really fascinated by. But of course, when you're interviewed you're usually talking about your career as a bodybuilder.



I'm just curious to know, during the time you have been competing, and you've been vegan that whole time, I believe. You talked about starting out in South Florida, but then entering into the body building world. Things probably have changed a lot for vegan athletes, but when you were starting out, people must have thought you were nuts.

**Torre:** Well, the irony of it all is I looked up to superheroes in the comic books. And I just loved their physiques looked and then they had this super-human strength. Whether it be the ability to heal very quickly, and this agility and the strength. And I started drawing these characters because I wanted to emulate their look because I felt insignificant, because I was short, so I didn't have the attention from the women at the time. So I felt like I needed to do something drastic in order to get me the confidence within myself. So I started reading up on bodybuilding because I saw that they looked like the characters that I wanted to be. Superman, Wolverine.

And when I saw Arnold Schwarzenegger, he represented, cuz he took bodybuilding and made it into a fantasy of being an actor. He started acting in all these movies and he had this look that was sort of something that me as a youth wanted to emulate. And so when I realized that he was doing body building, I started doing it and didn't think anything of the fact of how I was eating, because I felt I was still putting on muscle. I was lean and defined. So I didn't think anything of that.

But when I saw... I wanted to compete while I was in middle school, believe it or not, but it never happened. And then I went on to high school, continued to work out, and then I moved on to college.

And so when I was in college, my workout was after class or in between classes. And I just worked out and helped people here and there because people liked how I looked and they asked me for help. I was vegan at the time and people were just baffled, like, "what do you eat to keep that muscle?" Even though when I look at then and now, I'm bigger now than I was then. And so I didn't start competing until 2009 because I went to one of my old friends from Florida.

He was living in Atlanta and I was living in Alabama at the time. And someone told me, "yeah, he's competing now." And I was surprised because I never thought he was that type of person to do that. So I went to one of his competitions and I saw how he looked on stage and it reminded me of the superheroes that wanted to emulate. And I thought good at the time, until I saw him on stage and I said, "OH WOW! His abs are REALLY defined!"

When I asked him about competing, he was surprised cause he said, “but you're vegan!” And I said, “So? Let's go.” And I surprised him. To this day, I have well exceeded his level of success in bodybuilding. It took him multiple shows to win a pro card, it took me two. Then I went on to gain five more and then the most prestigious one that he never got, but he did start my progress or start my journey. Because without him helping me to get started, who knows where I would have been. So I always give him, you know, great gratitude for getting started, even though he wasn't sure if I could do it eating the way I eat.

**Mariann:** Well, I'm really glad that you stuck with your eating because it sounds like it worked for you and it worked for showing people that it is possible.

So I'm gonna go back to the question that you said people were constantly asking you. So what do you eat?

**Torre:** So, when I was raised, like I said raised vegetarian and eventually going back to vegan. And I say vegan as a term, because I'm not really one to stick to labels because I know when we get labels, we get put in a box.

But I like to eat pretty much anything that is not from an animal. So what I mean by that is I'm not one of those “it has to be raw” or “it has to be this” or “it to that,” because I know...what I see lately is when someone sticks to one type and they say “it's because of this”, they have the tendency to come off of it because it didn't work for them. Right?

So my staples have always been tofu. Tofu was really one of my things I could have easily. When I was in college, I could make scrambled tofu, have rice potatoes, asparagus, broccoli, brussel sprouts, all types of beans. Baked beans, black beans, lentils, you name it. All type of beans. So that was my staple.

And then I started finding out about Seitan. OH! Seitan has been another staple because of its high protein content, which really has been helpful for me with bodybuilding, because I'd rather eat than...I used to be so against supplementation, when it comes to like protein powders or anything of that nature, because I was really into, I wanted to eat the food, I wanted to consume it, digest it and have it go to my system that way. Which to me was more satisfying than drinking something.

Now mind you, if I were to make a protein shake or shake out of kale, berries, nuts, seeds, that's different. It's more fortifying because you're breaking down the cell walls to allow the food to be digested. It's not finely processed. It's just



me blending it right there in front of me. So I would love to do that. The only thing about when you do it that way, it's the balance of the macronutrients, when it comes to the carbohydrates, fats and proteins. The shakes are, the powders are, more processed to where you get more of the protein out of it and less carbohydrates, that's only difference. But those are my staples: seitan, tofu, tempeh. I eat them pretty much all the time. My favorite carbohydrate source is Japanese sweet potatoes.

**Mariann:** Oh, I love...they're like my favorite food.

**Torre:** Yes!

**Mariann:** Why do people eat American sweet potatoes when Japanese ones exist?

**Torre:** I have no idea. I say this to them all...

**Mariann:** I eat them every day.

**Torre:** Me too! Listen, when I tell people about them and they go and taste it, they are changed forever. \*both laugh\* They say, "How I didn't know about this back then?" And man, Mariann. They're so good.

**Mariann:** Oh, they're the best you.

Do you know about Okinawa? People in Okinawa have always...just like it's their staple food and it is a blue zone. That's what the word is that we were trying to think of before, it's a blue zone. They live forever! And their staple food is Japanese sweet potatoes.

**Torre:** Man any way: baked, boiled. Oh my God. It is, it is...I don't understand.

**Mariann:** And so satisfying. Yes.

**Torre:** Yes. You can eat a whole one, just like it's nothing!

**Mariann:** Yeah, just the best. So you've been talking a few things about protein and how you get it, but do you ever have trouble getting enough protein given what you do, given the body building? That must require really high levels of protein or am I wrong?

**Torre:** So, you know, the irony of it all is when I first started bodybuilding, I didn't have anyone helping me as far as how much of what to eat. They were just telling me, "eat this, eat that." And so I never really sought out how much protein I was pulling in. Until I started getting more popular within the community of bodybuilding.

So people would ask me all of the time. So I was like, "Let me check." At the time for the first eight years of my competitive life, I was getting about 50 gram to a hundred grams of protein, which to an average bodybuilder, that's a little. And so it's not until I hired a coach because I realized that every great coach, because I'm a coach myself, has a coach.

Therefore, you have someone that holds you accountable and helps you to strive to better. And this coach suggested me increasing my protein intake based on science and the understanding of how the body performs with protein intake when it comes to heavy, consistent, intensive weight training. And being that I was going to start doing a calorie deficit, which is, where my calories are at a maintenance, let's say at 5,000. And once you want to start losing fat versus muscle, you increase your protein intake to kind of hinder muscle loss or muscle waste. That's what the protein does because your body starts to look for sources of energy, which calories are energy and the calories come from fats, proteins, carbohydrates, macronutrients. So it'll look for sources of calories and energy and it can take it from the muscles, therefore that's what causes your muscles to kind of deplete themselves and get flatter.

So by increasing the protein intake, we're giving the body another source of energy from the protein you're intaking versus it going toward the muscle. Therefore you're hindering that muscle loss. Increasing my protein did assist in me being able to put on size more and also hold size, but it was all done by plants. Because now with the seitan in there and having to do less shakes in order to get my protein and it's all...lupini beans...it's so amazing to see all these beans and think that the foods you recognize are really good sources of bringing in great macronutrients.

**Mariann:** Did you have trouble finding a coach who would work with you given that you were following a vegan diet?

**Torre:** No, actually, because I saw him work with other people and, of course, they weren't plant based or vegan or that nature, but I just saw what they did their bodies. I knew that the food wasn't gonna be a problem because I had been doing it for so long.

And the one thing that he changed was like I said, with the protein intake and me being able to, cause I always competed with a high carb intake and basically we just switched it. We increased my protein and lowered my carb. Now then as we get closer to a competition, we increased the carb, lower the fat, lower the protein.

And what that does is it causes the muscles to absorb more water and fill out to make you seem bigger because your skin is so tight, because there's less fat there between the muscle and the skin. So now I look bigger and people will automatically assume, because of how filled out the muscle is, that like 99% of the bodybuilders in the IFBB are using enhancements or drugs to increase their size. I'm not, but...

**Mariann:** 90%!?

**Torre:** Oh yeah.

**Mariann:** Wow.

**Torre:** So it's automatically assumed that I'm too.

**Mariann:** Yeah, that's unfortunate. That's a disturbing, disturbing number. So do you feel like being drug free and steroid free has set you back at all in the bodybuilding world? Are you able to make up for it?

**Torre:** It set me back in the sense that I am not gonna get as big as they are because you know what the drugs do is they enhance and speed up the muscle protein synthesis, that's the breakdown of protein into creating muscle. It quickens the pace. And so they can put on muscle much quicker than so in four months they can add 10-12 pounds where I might add half a pound to a pound.

**Mariann:** Yeah, that's really disturbing. You also mentioned coaching and I wanted to talk to you about it because I know you have a coaching program.

So who comes to you? Is it people who wanna be professional bodybuilders? Is it people who just wanna get in shape? Like, who is your program for?

**Torre:** My program's for the general public, people who want to get in shape, people who want to learn about the lifestyle of being vegan.

Because I have two programs. One is Nourish, which is a basic foundation to understanding your food. Because before I was doing the tracking, I always was

keen on intuitive and I would eat to what I wanted my body to look like based on my portion size. And so what that does is, in this current day and age, we eat a lot.

We eat and waste a lot. So we pack our plates and we finish it and then we do it over and over. Let's say we do that four times a day. And then we wonder where all this weight loss is and these different issues that come about. When we eat, what we're supposed to eat, and what I mean by eat, supposed to is just the amount. When we eat a certain amount, our body absorbs it and it's able to digest it properly we can utilize that for what the body is meant to do.

So I developed my program based on portions. If you wanna lose weight, gain weight, maintain, that's how it's set up. It's set up on point system to where you calculate your points that you need for the day and all the different recipes abide by these points.

And you can always change things out because some people don't want the tofu or soy based beans, soybeans in their lifestyle, so they can change that out. And that's for those looking for the vegan side of nutrition.

And then the bodybuilding side, the bodybuilding is not about a person wanting to be a bodybuilder. It's just building muscles on their body, you know, skeletal muscle that we all want to or should want to strengthen just to help us generally for better quality of life.

Because one of the things that tends to happen most with people as they age, they start to lose muscle. And so just doing cardio actually doesn't strengthen you enough to where, as you age, your muscles aren't able to handle a fall, these things, or sometimes you need to catch yourself. Just things of this nature that tend to more so as you age. You get a lot of people breaking their hips when they fall because they don't have the muscle strength to catch themselves, to hold themselves, to protect their joints, protect their bones from these different falls. So it's just a foundation training. Which sometimes we need to go back to in order to make sure that what we're doing when it comes to weight training is prevention.

**Mariann:** Well, that sounds great. And you're absolutely right. As a person who is aging, more rapidly than I would like to think. \*laughs\* Yeah. It's the truth. You know, like there's a long period in the middle of your life when you can kind of, not exactly, but kind of ignore what's going on with your body. But once you get old, you can't anymore. You have to build those muscles, or they disappear on you. Yeah. Scary.

So I'm really excited to hear about this program. I think a lot of people will want to know about it. And there was one more question I wanted to ask you before we left. And it's about body building, I don't know a lot about body building, but I was thinking about it a lot when I was thinking about this interview, and it almost seems to me like both an art and a sport, do you think of it that way?

**Torre:** Yes. And you know, oftentimes the sport of body building gets a bad wrap. And one of the reasons is, what I mentioned earlier, the excessive use of drugs in order to attain a physique that's not natural. And if you think about it, in this world, most people are excited by unnatural. They want something that creates attention.

And so when the invention or the uses of drugs started to occur and the body was just getting bigger, massive, where people were having these muscles on their skeletal structure that naturally wouldn't happen. It created entertainment. So people were entertained by it, even though they knew it was nothing that could be obtained naturally. They just wanted, they were entertained to see how far we could push the body, and so they were that's when they said it's not a sport. And so then there's also this other aspect of it, it almost can be considered narcissistic. Where you're constantly looking at yourself and wanting to improve, that you tend to self indulge and don't look at other people or the world in a way that's fine because they're not you, you kind of stand out on your own.

And so that's where it also got the narcissistic aspect of it. So the art form is, it's akin to a sculpture or an artistic blank slate, where now you can shape your body in the way that you you want it to be. And that's one of the aspects of my program when I do customized program, is I look at the person as...because I have an engineering background, where I disassemble your body, you know, reassemble it the way you want it to be. You know, that's the sculpting that I do, just like I do it myself, is symmetrically, I wanna have more of a symmetric look, proportionate where my waist to shoulders are in such a proportion that it makes my waist look even smaller. My legs are big enough to where I have sort of an X shape, you know? So these things are what they think about when they're drawing cartoon characters, because it's fascinating because you're thinking, "man, how can I achieve that?" So the art and the sport aspect of it is it takes a lot of mental stamina and strength to be able to deal with lifting hard and heavy and intense in a calorie deficit, because your average individual can just say, "you know what? I feel like eating some chips. I'm gonna eat a whole bag."

There are times in our, for example, I have a competition coming up. I know this podcast is in September, but I have a competition in a week, less than a

week, I can't just go and eat bag of sweet potato chips. I have to be careful and keep my calories in check and you know, that's tough for most people. I can go to a vegan event, look at all the delicious food and know that, "Eh, I'll be fine." Some people can't do that. You know, they think, "you know, just one burger will be fine," you know, or "let me eat a whole Japanese sweet potato," which I would love to, but I have to make sure I only get a hundred grams, which gives me 19 grams of carbohydrates, you know, and I have to understand that.

So it's mentally challenging because you become irritable when your sugar hasn't gone up based on the food that you consume. And so I've seen it, but lately I've been able to deal with it. And so a lot of people, once they get started, because someone mentions they should do it because they have a good look. A lot of them don't make it because it's tough. And then subjected to some people sitting in front of a table telling you "you don't look good." And so you have to deal with that. Being, "huh? Am I gonna take it personally or look at it as they tell me I don't look good, but I know how hard I work and what more can I do?"

And so for me, the judges always tell me you are the smaller version of exactly what we're looking for. So how I take that is how can I, for myself, improve? What can I create? What can I make look better? Can I increase the depth and the 3d topography of my body, meaning how much can I make the muscles on my back, stand out?

You know, things of that nature, that just simple, small areas that I can work on to strengthen my look for myself, because I already know based on the eyes of the judges, since I'm not as big as the rest of the guys, I'm not gonna get that first place. Because I'm not gonna go that route. And they know this. And so I haven't really spoken out about it much because, you know, I don't wanna also have them like, "oh, this guy here he comes is gonna come talk about him being the only natural guy..." and this, so, yeah.

**Mariann:** Yeah. It's bad enough that you're vegan! \*laughs\*

**Torre:** Yeah, if I were to win and being vegan, that would just put a big wrench in the community that all they eat is chicken, turkey, beef, all of that stuff and its push push, push...even more now. I think ever since vegan has grown, the opposing side has been pushing even harder.

Like I'm seeing it more. It has grown more where, you know, just the fact that there's this guy called liver king, you know, he eats raw animal parts and says that that's the best way to live.



**Mariann:** Oy, he's gonna die of some toxic disease, I'm sure. No, I guess that's not surprising. They're push, you know, veganism has taken a strong hold with athletes and it's not surprising that there would be pushback.

They push back on everything, but that's really fascinating. It kind of brings me around. I'm gonna take this interview full circle. I didn't realize it would, but do you think your background like that you had such a strong spiritual background with Rasta in your early days, and I'm sure that stayed with you at one extent or another throughout your life, has helped you with the amount of discipline it requires to do your body building?

**Torre:** Yes, because I also have a sense of integrity. Integrity to me is very important because as I mentioned, when I decided to really go Ital, it's because a lot of the people around me who claim to be Rasta still ate chicken and still ate fish. And I looked at it as that's not the way it's really supposed to be. I took that early on and they never did.

I think eventually one of them came around, but for the most part, most of my colleagues kept going and decided to go probably even further. And even in the Seventh Day Adventist way of life, I've run into numerous Seventh Day Adventists who eat chicken because, you know, they feel like, "oh, as long as I pray over it. You know, and in the Bible, God says, all this is fine to eat now."

And so, you know, I'm not that type of individual. And if I'm gonna set my mind for something, I'm gonna hold forth, hold steadfast on that. And so you're right. Basically what you said, my spiritual upbringing, Rastafari Ital way of living has helped me maintain my discipline within this sport.

And then within this fitness, bodybuilding world. And to this day, I still have people asking me questions about how I do it and how I'm able to maintain and compete with them. But their first thing is that I'm natural, it's not until they find out later that I'm also not eating meat, that they're little dumbfounded. And then they're, "Wait a second, you can't be natural because how are you still looking like that and competing with us, but you're not eating any meat? None whatsoever." And I all I can do is shrug my shoulders and say, "man, I just continue to work."

**Mariann:** Yeah. It sounds like you're very happy with what you eat. And it sounds like that you're leading a life that does have integrity, which, you know, probably is a lot more rewarding than what you would be getting from taking those drugs. Or eating those dead birds.

So, I'm so glad you were able to join us today and thanks so much for being here.

**Torre:** No, I appreciate you taking the time and appreciate your patience. You know, with my lifestyle sometimes, you know when it comes to my clients, getting ready for a competition, different things that could happen in life, it takes you just making the decision and putting yourself your foot down saying, "you know what? Let's just do it." Yeah. So I appreciate your patience with me for getting this.

**Mariann:** We did have a little trouble putting this together, but we're here and I'm really glad we are. So thanks so much, Torre. It's been great.

**Torre:** It's been a pleasure and I really appreciate you. Thank you so much.