



# Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 685, Interview with Krista Hiddema

**Jasmin Singer:** Welcome to Our Hen House, Krista!

**Krista Hiddema:** Thank you for having me, Jasmin. I am literally thrilled to be here!

**Jasmin:** So excited, also! So many things to chat about with you.

First of all, where are you right now?

**Krista:** So I live about two hours north of Toronto in Canada, in Ontario, and it is super cold, and there is a ton of snow, but other than that, it looks pretty when you look outside, but you don't really want to go out there for too long.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I'm actually not that far from you. I'm in Rochester these days. So, I could get to you by late lunch, I would say.

**Krista:** Well, you are more than welcome! \*laughs\*

**Jasmin:** Okay, thank you!

So, lots of things to chat about; I'm glad we both have our tea cups here. What are you drinking, by the way?

**Krista:** Oh, coffee. I am a coffee gal.

I have a good two to three cups every morning, and then that's it for the rest of the day.

**Jasmin:** I'm drinking something called MUD/WTR, which I just learned about it, and I bought it, and I like it!

Okay, so enough about our morning drinks for now. We'll talk about our evening drinks later! \*both laugh\*

**Krista:** Indeed.

**Jasmin:** Well, you probably need evening drinks every now and then, given the subjects that you've been studying lately. A lot of your recent work has had to do with, shall we say, the state of the movement. Which brings up the question- what do you mean when you talk about the movement? Whom does that encompass?

**Krista:** Yeah, so my doctoral dissertation was very focused on the farmed animal advocacy movement. Now there's a lot of phraseology that's used. We talk about the animal rights movement, the animal welfare movement. I chose the phrase animal advocacy movement because, really, at the end of the day, most of the groups are not doing rights work.

So I chose that phrase, but I meant it in an inclusive way. So for our listeners, they might call themselves animal rights activists or animal welfare activists. It's really that space. The majority of my research was focused on those doing farmed animal advocacy, but some of the additional research that I am working on currently is going to be a bit more inclusive of that.

**Jasmin:** Oh, okay. Tell us what that is before we jump into everything else.

**Krista:** Sure. So I have just finished structuring a research study. It is going through University Ethics at this very moment in time. I'll be releasing the research in, I think, late January, or early February, and it's going to be very specifically related to sexual harassment in our movement.

There's going to be a quantitative component to it, where I'm working with a colleague of mine, who is an expert in statistical analysis, and then there's going to be a qualitative component, which is my area of research, and it will be introduced on my blog. So I would kindly ask that anybody in the movement take a peek at my blog from time to time, and we will be looking for as many people to respond as possible.

**Jasmin:** And what's the blog? Can you say the url?

**Krista:** Yeah, absolutely. So my website is drkristahiddema.com, and there's simply a page called Blog, and it will be there.

**Jasmin:** Amazing. And we'll link to it in the show notes as well. So you just said again, I wanna make sure I'm clear.

You just said again, people in the movement, so are you talking about anybody working to change the world for animals and, more specifically, farmed animals, whether they're employed and being paid within the institutional animal rights movement or not?

**Krista:** Yes, great question, and I really appreciate the clarification, Jasmin.

So I am very firmly in the view that everybody within the movement, whether you are a paid activist or a volunteer activist, is equally important. And in fact, I have a governance model that I've introduced in my dissertation that very purposely ensures that both vocational, in other words, paid, and non-vocational, in other words, volunteer, are equally valued.

My research, however, has been very focused on vocational activists, and my upcoming research in connection with sexual harassment is also specific to vocational or paid activists. The reasons for that, Jasmin, are that in particular, the legislative groundwork that is applicable to paid activists is quite different than that applicable to volunteers.

So it has been and is my current focus, and so that part of it, in terms of being part of this upcoming research, it will specifically be for those who are paid.

**Jasmin:** Okay. Good to know. Very interesting.

I always think...the movement, like we don't get a club card, and I'm always trying to think about what it actually means, and so I've heard the term, the institutional animal protection movement, and I have taken to that a little bit.

Okay. So for your Ph.D., you interviewed a number of women regarding their employment experiences in the movement. What were your goals?

**Krista:** Yeah. So, Jasmin, I personally joined the movement in late 2012, and I'll keep saying the movement if that's okay.

Yeah, really good point. I've actually made a quick note of the word institutional movement. I may well adopt that myself.

**Jasmin:** Oh, actually, before you continue, let me give credit where credit is due. I heard that from Michelle Rojas-Soto first. She was the one, when I was

interviewing her on Our Hen House, she kept saying that, and I was like, “Oh, that’s good.” So it's Michelle, whom I first heard it from.

Go ahead. So tell us about the goals.

**Krista:** Okay. All right, go, Michelle!

Yeah, so, for me to share the goals, I want to take a teeny step back. So I had been in the for-profit sector for a little over 20 years, and I had been in a very senior human resources role. I was the only non-lawyer partner of an employment law firm in Toronto for 10 years. In fact, I was the senior partner, and I ran the firm. So I had been mired in HR for upwards of 20 years, at that time.

I joined the movement in about late 2012, and I became the head of Mercy for Animals in Canada. And when I first joined, I genuinely believed it was my dream job. I had been vegan for many, many, many, many years, decades in fact, and really had envisioned that I would retire at MFA. That would be my life for the rest of my life.

And when I first joined, I had spent a huge amount of my career working for small organizations that really didn't have a lot of organizational structure from an HR perspective. And MFA was no different, and it was very normal, as many young organizations don't have that kind of structure; they haven't quite gotten to it yet. They're focused on other things. Again, completely understandable.

The longer I was in the movement and met more and more people, I really came to realize that some of the issues that existed were, quite frankly, shocking. And I personally experienced and many friends and colleagues experienced workplace conduct that I hadn't even seen at some very large organizations that were very male-dominated, like the tech sector, like the legal sector.

And it was so surprising to me that I really felt that I had no choice but to do this work and to really take a deep look at what was going on in the movement. So my intention was to say, “Gosh, what is actually happening?”

To look at it, to sort of undertake the research, from a feminist perspective. In other words, to engage in deep research, qualitative research, that provides people the opportunity to deeply share their stories.

And that type of research, that type of qualitative research, we learn a lot from indigenous spaces and how they do research, and it's more than a survey. It's a

deep discussion. And through that process, not only did I learn more about what was happening, I had some very surprising outcomes. And it also allowed me to work with the women and build a list of recommendations.

So my deep hope was to get a better understanding of what was actually happening and come up with recommendations about how the working conditions for people in our movement could improve and thereby doing better work for animals.

**Jasmin:** Okay. Well, I definitely wanna dig into what the outcomes were and what the recommendations were, but just so that I'm further setting this up so that I understand all aspects of how you put this together.

Why did you conduct this study solely with women subjects? And out of curiosity, were they all cisgender women?

**Krista:** So they were not all cisgender. And I did do it only with women because women make up approximately 80% of the movement in Canada and the US from a vocational perspective. So I looked at significant amounts of research, both that has been done by Faunalytics, they did a 2020 study that included demographics, and there were a number of other studies, one that was done called Where the Boys Aren't. And another one was, Nobody's Paying Me To Cry. So there were a number of other studies that had been done that looked at the demographics of the movement in Canada and the US, and because the vast majority were women, I felt that it only made sense to do that study with women.

Now, I do want to be clear for listeners that my upcoming research, particularly around sexual harassment, is for all genders. It is not specifically for women.

**Jasmin:** Okay. Well, you'll have to keep us posted about that.

So you have posited the question, how are the principles of care that are sought for more than human animals by farmed animal advocacy movement organizations applied to the women activists that they employ? Can you expand on that?

**Krista:** Yeah. So as vegan activists, and certainly for your listeners...I've been an activist for many, many years. What we really look to do is we're looking for members of the general public to expand their circle of compassion, to not only include the cats and dogs that live in our home but to include farmed animals in

that circle of compassion. And we're saying, "We need you to care about pigs, and we need you to care about chickens and cows and turkeys."

But yet the question really was, "Are we caring about each other? Are we caring about the people that do the work?" And primarily, those people are women. And what the research ultimately ended up sort of resulting in is that there really wasn't the level of care applied to women in our movement, again, vocational activists in our movement, that we are asking other people to extend to farmed animals.

**Jasmin:** How many women did you talk to?

**Krista:** So I met with and worked with 33 women across Canada and the United States. And through that process, I did reach a level of what we call saturation. So we did find that over time that there was sort of repetition. And when we reach that level of saturation, it's also a cue to us that we feel that we have a pretty deep sense of what's gone on.

**Jasmin:** And are they all still currently employed in the movement, or at least were they still employed in the movement when you interviewed them?

**Krista:** They were employed in the movement when I interviewed them. And I'm sort of going through the list in my head right now. I know one has left for personal medical reasons.

Another has left for effective altruist reasons. Quite frankly, she was an ED that left and just felt that she couldn't continue the work, and I'd have to really go back and check my list. But the majority are still around; a few others have also left.

**Jasmin:** Okay. And we'll get into the EA stuff in a little bit, as well.

All right, so the last question is a setup; sorry, but I feel like this is all kind of important to know. What is the range of types of employment? Like what kinds of roles were you looking at in the people whose experiences you were asking about?

**Krista:** Yeah, so the roles ranged from women who were executive directors, to women who were lawyers and were practicing law in the movement. There were women that were working within the context of corporate outreach, and women in the context of government outreach. There were some that were

hands-on animal care providers in sanctuary. That's a pretty good overview. Again, I'd have to go back and check exactly, but it was quite a range.

They ranged in terms of age, significantly. The oldest individual was 60, and the youngest was about 22. There were individuals who, I think it was four, identified as living with a disability. There were individuals who identified as being part of the BIPOC community, or members of the global majority. So it was a very strong range in terms of gender, in terms of sexuality, color, et cetera.

**Jasmin:** Okay, cool. Good to know. All right, so let's get into it. Were they all seriously dissatisfied with their experiences?

**Krista:** You know, for me, I don't really think about satisfied or dissatisfied. I think more about some of the major challenges, and the major challenges really were...And this is the part that really surprised me. When I undertook the research, I didn't expect to hear about issues with effective altruism.

To be frank, Jasmin, I expected to hear women sharing issues around sexual harassment and perhaps bullying, and I expected to hear women talking about low pay, a lack of group benefits, but the EA component of it, I didn't expect. It was very much a surprise to me, and it was this combination of the women being silenced. So that, I think, stood out to me the most.

So we talk as activists, regardless of the type of activist we are. We talk about ourselves as being people who have an obligation to speak up. Now, I don't believe that animals are voiceless at all. So I don't like saying, "Hey, I am a voice for the voiceless." But I do like talking about the fact that it's our obligation to elevate their voices, to raise their voices, to help their voices become heard.

And what I saw, rather, in this research, was very much that they were silenced. They felt that they couldn't talk about what was going on. They couldn't talk about their own concerns with the type of advocacy that the organization was undertaking. They couldn't talk about their experiences of being sexually harassed because they were told repeatedly, and I heard this over and over, "If we say anything, we're hurting animals."

**Jasmin:** Wow. Okay. That is surprising.



So can you elaborate a little bit about what they meant? I mean, I realize not one experience was the same as everyone else's, but how were they being harmed by EA?

**Krista:** I think there are a couple of challenges with EA, with effective altruism, that a number of the women discussed.

I think one of the biggest problems was that the women did not feel that they could even talk about the fact that they had concerns with effective altruism. Virtually every single woman told me that they were deeply concerned with how pervasive EA was in our movement as a form of advocacy and that they were silenced in that if they said even one word against EA, they would potentially lose their jobs and be entirely blackballed from the movement.

That is something I heard repeatedly. In addition to that, I recently posted a blog on the challenges with effective altruism and, Jasmin; I will share with you that I received countless personal emails back from individuals telling me the same thing, literally thanking me for even making note of the challenges of effective altruism, telling me that they wished they could do the same. And that in and of itself is probably the single biggest problem.

If we, as a movement, look at the actual numbers, we have to know, Jasmin, that we are losing. And I know that is not something anybody wants to hear, but the reality is, per capita meat, dairy, and egg consumption globally is on the rise, per capita. So this is not to do with the population rise. Per capita is increasing. And look, I've been a full-time activist for well over a decade and sort of a volunteer activist for years before that, and nobody wants to hear that. But it is the truth. If you go to a source like Our World in Data, which is one of the best sources out there, the website is simply [ourworldindata.com](https://ourworldindata.com), or maybe it's dot org, actually.

But we're losing, and we're in a position where the vast majority of activism that has gone on in the last 10 years has been based strictly on EA welfare work. Cage-free eggs is a primary example, and we're not even allowed to talk about the fact that it may not be the best form of activism. And what we also see, and the women talked about this as well, is that it's this compulsion to believe that it's only this kind of activism that works.

And the reality is, it's not working. So we are not in a position to even have conversations about the fact that maybe it's not working, because what we see is a disproportionate amount of power in the hands of a few, particularly wealthy



donors and other individuals that are in influential positions within the effective altruist movement that are guiding this work.

And instead, what we're failing to do is we're failing to contemplate that all successful social movements have ecologies that are broad, that they have strategic milestones, that they engage in multiple forms of activism, and in fact, some of the best work that I have ever read and that I deeply believe is the work of Bill Moyer, and it's called *The MAP Model of Social Movements*. It was a 2001 book.

What Moyer talks about is that there are four activist roles. One of them is called the Citizen, one of them is called the Rebel, one of them is called the Change Agent, and one of them is called the Reformer. And that each of these roles is equally valuable because we know that social movements take place over long periods of time and that it's important for all this type of activism to occur.

And instead, what we see is silencing. And we, in fact, Jasmin, also see a lot of infighting where one group speaks poorly of another group, where one group denigrates the tactics of another group, and where one form of activism seems to be given greater authority. They seem to be given greater sums of money, and they're also somehow elevated in a way that makes them seem more valuable to the movement and to animals, and it simply is not true.

**Jasmin:** So tell me more about the silencing of women and what would they say if they could?

**Krista:** Well, multiple women told me that if they said anything about effective altruism, they would be afraid that they personally would lose their jobs, that their organizations would lose funding, and that they would never be able to work in the movement again. That is something I heard over and over and over again from almost all of the women.

**Jasmin:** Wow. That's interesting. I must say, and this is possibly a little bit of a side note, but I think another problem with silencing women in the movement and in other realms as well, is NDAs, and I have actually had very difficult secret huddled conversations with women about this and how a lot of women are paid off, basically, to not tell their stories. And in my anecdotal experience, this has been all women whose stories have been erased. Do you have any thoughts on that?

**Krista:** Well, first of all, that is absolutely true. NDAs are, up until very recently, they've been standard practice when engaging in any form of, usually, termination. It's usually in the context of the cessation of employment.

And what is most common is that there has been a matter that has been uncovered, something that has been distasteful, like sexual harassment or some form of bullying. Usually, it is the woman who gets offered a package, as it were, and as part of that package, she's given money, and as part of getting that money, she has to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

So NDA stands, of course, for non-disclosure agreement, where in essence, it is a more formal type of silencing. Now there are issues around whether these NDAs are even enforceable, but we can leave that for a different discussion. Maybe Mariann can talk about that at some point. But what's been interesting that's been happening in law, both in Canada where I am and in the United States where you are, is we're seeing non-disclosure agreements actually being not only overturned in certain jurisdictions but that they are definitely looked upon in an unfavorable light.

So I can share with you that there's an example here in Canada. It was in a very small province called Prince Edward Island. It's our smallest province. They became the first Canadian jurisdiction to actually limit the use of NDAs by employers for victims of harassment and sexual misconduct. And this idea of silencing is really what empowers predators.

When this piece of legislation in Canada received what we call Royal Assent, it's a different process in Canada than it is in the United States. But even speaking up, the council, in this case, talked about the fact that it is confidentiality in and of itself that causes women to suffer greater abuse because there's less accountability, less knowledge, and it really provides an opportunity for predators to repeat their behavior, right?

So when we silence people, we're in a position where we are not only silencing them, but we're empowering predators. And something that concerns me in our movement, quite frankly, is that because we are a movement that is constantly attracting new young women, in particular, but men too, non-gender conforming people too. But again, the majority are women. These new women may not know the history of who some of these predators have been. And for that reason, Jasmin, I named names in my dissertation. I won't name them here, but for those who are interested in reading about actual named individuals, I think it's a very important thing to do because we talk in our movement about silence empowering those who are consuming animals, right?

And we need to look at sort of this idea that we can't silence ourselves. Where are we as a movement when we can't have an open dialogue, right? About what's working and what's not working, and where are we as a movement when we are in a position where we're denigrating each other in terms of forms of activism, and we're not having honest discussions about the fact that we're not winning.

And I can certainly share for American listeners; I think that makes up the majority of your audience. The act that was similar to the one that I noted in Prince Edward Island was called The Silence No More Act. And that came into effect in the state of California. And that came into effect on January 1st, '22.

And it was a piece of legislation that prohibited employers, again, from requiring NDAs to be signed for a victim to receive a settlement of workplace harassment or discrimination.

**Jasmin:** Oh my God, I wish that had been sooner! I happen to know for...I mean, this wasn't in my notes to talk to you about, but I'm telling you...I mean, it's not surprising to you, but it might be surprising to some of our listeners. I've had many conversations with women who needed the money and therefore took it. I mean many, and I know this is a broader problem beyond just the animal rights movement, but within the animal rights movement specifically, it's very, very heartbreaking.

And I have seen, because people confide to me, which I hope I'm not breaching that by talking about it in generalities here, but I have seen racial discrimination and inequality in the payouts. I mean, it's fucked up.

**Krista:** Yep. Yep. It is infuriating. And we think about the time, the energy, and it's these women who are the ones who end up leaving, Jasmin, and most of them leave the movement entirely.

I can tell you that I personally, during my time as a vice president in this movement, as a paid activist, and now I'm a consultant, of course, but in my time as a paid activist, I had two of my own employees who worked for me, who were sexually harassed and who left the movement because of it.

So, the other thing we're not talking about is we're not talking about the talent, the amazing talent, that has left the movement because of these things. And women who are saying, "Look, I love animals, and I'm not willing to tolerate this in my life."

And I can tell you one other thing, Jasmin, and I've actually asked this person if I could say this also in generalities. I know one woman who actually almost committed suicide because of a situation of being sexually harassed by a leader in this movement. So this is a pervasive issue, and unless we name names, it is only the power of naming names that facilitates change.

And if we look at the work of somebody like Audra Lorde, she had a beautiful poem in 1978, that she called *A Litany for Survival*. And if you'll allow me just to read just these few lines, Jasmin, because they are beautiful.

So for some of our listeners who don't know, Audra Lorde is a black lesbian academic. She is an orator and a poet. And in her *Litany for Survival*, Audra Lorde says (paraphrased), "If we speak, we are afraid our words will be used against us, and if we do not speak, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak knowing we were never meant to survive."

**Jasmin:** Oh God damn it, Krista, it's early. You're making me all goopy.

That's powerful. That's really everything, isn't it? That's exactly what you're talking about.

**Krista:** Yeah. It is! And it's what we all do. We are activists, Jasmin.

Like if somebody ever asks me what I do for a living, you know, you're at the proverbial cocktail party. I'm an activist. I am an activist. Period. Full stop. And what do we do as activists? We must raise our voices! We must raise our own voices, the voices of animals, the voices of marginalized people, and our own voices and the voices of our peers and of our friends.

I spend a huge amount of my consulting practice doing sexual harassment training for organizations in our movement. I help them write policies. I train internally on what we call "designated persons" to ensure that there are at least two people within an organization who have specialized training. And one of the things I talk about a lot is bystander intervention, where if you see something happening within your own organization, even if it's not to you, and you become a witness to inappropriate conduct, speak up. Go tell somebody who has the ability to act and help make change.

Silence empowers these predators, and the majority of the predators who have been the most problematic in our movement are still in the movement, and the interesting part is that many of them are very vocal effective altruists. Now, please understand, I am not suggesting that everybody who's an effective altruist

is also a sexual predator. I am not saying that. So please don't send me any emails saying, "What were you saying?!?"

But there are some parallels there; that are these very influential men who are still around, and it's all these women that have left, and what is this unbelievable talent that continues to leave our movement because they will not work within this context.

We are not taking care of ourselves. We talk about self-care, and we talk about, "Gosh, I need to do meditation, and I need to do yoga, and I need to..." I know you did tap dancing at one point.

**Jasmin:** Oh, and I'm taking, I literally, when I'm done with this interview, I finally found an adult tap class, and I'm going to be registering for it here.

Anyway, go ahead. That was an important aside. Continue.

**Krista:** No, it's an important aside because I remember reading that about you going, "That is so cool! I need to go tap dancing!"

But what we're not talking about is, "Well, wait a minute. Burnout in our movement is exceedingly high. Turnover in our movement exceeds the rates that exist within the US, within Canada generally, and in the not-for-profit sectors. Our turnover rate is exceedingly high in this movement." And yes, I'm talking about vocational activists still.

And then I think to myself, "Well, let's do some super basic math." We know that vegans, people who literally call themselves vegan; I'm not talking about people who are including more plant-based options in their menus, but people who are literally card-carrying vegans, right? You're still looking at about 2%. That has not changed significantly over the years. And now we have to say, of those people, how many are even working age? How many are willing to work in this movement for lower pay?

So this number gets remarkably small, and we're not treating these people like the unbelievably wonderful activists that they are and giving them safe places to work in.

**Jasmin:** There's something you mentioned before that I jotted a note down about, and I'm paraphrasing, so feel free to correct me; relating to the fact that the vast majority of work being done in the institutional farmed animal protection movement is EA based, and so my question is; Do you not feel that

the institutional farmed animal protection movement has a wide array of tactics to create change?

**Krista:** I think that a wide array of tactics exist.

I think what we are significantly missing is that the wide array is not balanced. So if we even look at the numbers, one of the biggest funders in our movement, and again it's pretty open information, is the Open Philanthropy Project, or OPP for short. They are an EA organization; they are founded by an EA-minded individual, and the amount of money that has been spent on cage-free egg work and other (welfare) work within our movement, I'd have to actually pull the number, but it is astronomical. I have the number in my dissertation, so it's not that other work doesn't happen. It's that the majority, the vast majority, the overwhelming majority is welfare.

And not only that but these other forms of activism are often denigrated. They're often looked down upon. You know, particularly things like open rescue, and all of that work is fundamentally important, and it is not balanced.

**Jasmin:** Something keeps striking me, and I'm not sure how completely related it is to this, but I feel like saying that when Our Hen House started, 13 years ago this month, and someone said to us, someone who was giving us some seed money, said, "How are you gonna continue to have people to interview? I feel like you'll run out."

And, of course, we're in year 13; we could do this every day for the rest of our lives and not run out of people. But part of the reason why is because we have very broad strokes, at Our Hen House, for how we describe and define people who are working to change the world for animals.

I've recently interviewed two novelists, a filmmaker, an artist, a photographer, a lawyer who's not within the movement, teachers, and things like that. And so I might be kind of coming from the tiniest different point of view because I see the movement as this broad category of people who care about animals and, in some capacity, are devoting their lives or their work to working toward change.

That being said, I worked for Farm Sanctuary, I worked for Viva! USA as well, back when it existed, and obviously, there's still Viva! in the UK, but there was briefly Viva! USA, and I know what you're talking about from that perspective because it was a sort of homogenized experience.



It was still like, this was 15, 20 years ago, so it was well before me too, and it was a very different experience than what I see as the world now. But that's partly because I busted out of that bubble, and I was like, "Oh my gosh. There are people who haven't even heard of these organizations who are devoting their lives to the exact same things we are devoting our lives to."

So can you just speak to that? I'm not actually sure what my question is. I just want your perspective.

**Krista:** I love that. And by the way, I want to, just for a moment, take what you said, Jasmin, which is beautiful. I love artists and novelists. And that is amazing. And by the way, Moyer, in this *MAP Model of Social Movements*, would call that the Citizen; that's the type of activist. So the Citizen refers to ordinary citizens involved in activism. So, by the way, that's a beautiful segue into this model. And I think one of the things that we as a global overall movement are missing is sometimes referred to as a global objective or a grand objective.

It's often also referred to as the grand objective approach. And what I fail to see, or what I wish I could see, is that we don't have a real glue that's holding us all together. And there's a beautiful example on the Freedom to Marry website, for those of you that are interested, it's [freedomtomarry.org](http://freedomtomarry.org).

The Freedom to Marry movement really is a beautiful example of this idea of a grand objective approach, where they all share this one objective of how they're going to move forward and there is a deep holding one another up. It's constantly supporting one another within that various framework.

And I find that in our movement, we don't have this idea of this grand objective where we all understand the importance of all this other type of activism. Our Hen House is certainly unique in that where you are holding up all sorts of different forms of activism, but I would love to see that replicated in a more broad way, that everything is important.

Open rescue is important, novels are important, it's all important, and care-based work is important. Sanctuaries are important. You mentioned Farm Sanctuary. I was formerly the president of Happily Ever Esther Farm Sanctuary for six years.

And if I look at something that occurred there, so for those of you that don't know, Happily Ever Esther Farm Sanctuary was built for a pig, her name is Esther. Esther the Wonder Pig. And you know, something that happened to us at



the sanctuary was that Esther got sick, and I will circle back to why this is relevant to what you said, Jasmin. But Esther got sick, and in Canada, there was not a machine that was big enough for her to fit into. So we couldn't have her diagnosed.

And one night, one of Esther's dads and I were on the phone, and we were very worried about Esther. We didn't know what we were going to do. So what happened was Steven, one of her dads, said to me on the phone, "Krista, I think we need to buy a CT scanner for Canada." And I start laughing like, "I don't know what you've been smoking over there, but we are not buying a CT scanner." \*both laugh\*

Well, we kept talking, and he convinced me that we needed to buy a CT scanner. And to make a very long story short, we raised \$650,000 US over a period of three months. We bought a CT scanner. We had it delivered to the University of Guelph Veterinary Hospital. It was a massive, massive undertaking. I could tell you there could be a whole podcast about that alone.

But we had the scanner delivered, and we had it set up, and Esther was diagnosed with breast cancer, and Esther underwent surgery, and it was an extremely valuable and important undertaking. And Esther is still with us today. What's interesting is that after the Esther scanner, that's what we dubbed it; we called it the Esther Scanner.

After the Esther scanner became slightly more well-known, philosopher Peter Singer went to social media. He did a video on imtv.com or something, or. vegantv.com. I can't remember the website at the moment, but he literally, in this video, talked about the fact that he thought that this \$650,000 was a waste of money.

He felt that getting this scanner to help one pig was simply not a good use of money. He, in fact, compared it to buying a camera; it was kind of a weird thing where he said, "When you buy something like a camera, you just don't go buy the first camera. You think about it." So, I don't know.

It was very interesting that he compared Esther to a camera, but...and he talked about the fact that this was a massive waste of money, and I wrote to Peter Singer to talk to him about the importance of care in our movement. I asked to speak to him, he did not respond to me at the time; but I wrote about this in an upcoming book that we have coming out in a couple of weeks where I actually write about the importance of care-based activism.

So here is an example of a different type of activism that's being publicly denigrated by somebody as noteworthy and as well-known as Peter Singer.

**Jasmin:** Of no relation.

**Krista:** Right? Oh yeah, oh my gosh! \*laughs\*

**Jasmin:** I had to say that! Though admittedly, when it works to my benefit, I might call him dad. In any case, right now, of no relation. \*both laugh\*

**Krista:** But you know, here we are with somebody as noteworthy and as high profile as that denigrating another form of activism. And here we are doing this in our movement over and over again. And he denigrated it based on the effective altruist philosophy of what's called consequentialism, where there is the notion that in order to do the best good, you have to, in essence, pre-contemplate the consequences and what that's going to look like.

It's a little more complicated than that. I explain it a little bit more in my dissertation, but the reality is he takes this quantifiable notion of \$650,000, decides without knowing much about it, without even having talked to me or any of us, and publicly talks about it being a waste of money. I mean, that is not holding one another up, that is not having a grand objective, that is not being engaged in a supportive movement that really fundamentally is about understanding social justice theory, that posits in the clearest of terms that all forms of activism are necessary.

**Jasmin:** I mentioned to you before we started recording that in 2015, Mariann and I took part in a debate with Peter Singer. I'm not sure I mentioned that part.

It was with Peter Singer and John Bokman, I believe, and it was at NYU. It was recorded, and there is a recording and a transcript available. We put it in the show notes. And it was basically about effective altruism, which at the time was only just entering the zeitgeist for animal rights purposes, and we were the contrarians. And when you, Krista, were just mentioning sanctuary work, care work, the arts, you didn't say media, but I'll throw media in there. What do all these things have in common? They're not easily quantifiable, and so they're written off by effective altruists. That, to me, is one of the biggest problems. And that was the case we were making way back when and unfortunately, no one listened to us because we just felt deeper and deeper.

Now, I'll throw something else out there for you, when you talk about the funding and the fact that there is so much money, and it really is a staggering

amount going toward EA work, Our Hen House applied for a grant from ACE, which is an EA organization, and it was specifically a movement building grant, and we didn't get it.

Which like honestly, if you asked anyone who's familiar with Our Hen House, "What is it?" They'd be like, "Well, it's a movement-building organization that produces podcasts." It's literally exactly what we do. And so, we asked for feedback, "Why didn't we get the grant?" And we were basically told that it was not focused enough, or something along those lines; it was a while ago. So I think that therein lies at least part of the problem, which I think is exactly what you're saying, especially when we talk about what we feel is important as creative people who have been changed in the world.

It was theater that introduced me to AIDS activism. That was my first job outside of college; I was an AIDS activist because theater introduced me to that. That's what introduced me to animal rights activism, where I've made a career in writing and media, which I feel is hugely important to creating change. But apparently, the people who write the checks at ACE don't agree

**Krista:** Right. Oh my gosh, Jasmin. I feel like I could answer that in a hundred ways with just an enthusiastic yes.

If I go to my doctoral research, one of the very first questions I asked all the women was, "How did you come to this movement?" And the overwhelming majority came through the arts. One of the women talked about going to see a certain band.

It was a band I personally had never heard of, but I'm also 54 and listen to James Taylor in my free time. So if it's not James Taylor, it's The Indigo Girls. So that's about it!

**Jasmin:** Oh my God, okay. So like exactly the same movie taste, I mean music taste, and probably movie taste also. But go ahead.

More on James Taylor and Amy Ray later.

**Krista:** Oh yes, please. So, I had never heard of this band, but it was kind of a punk-ish; sorry, I know I sound like I'm 90 years old, but that's how she came to the movement. Somebody else watched Legally Blonde or one of those movies where she was, again, I haven't watched those movies, but one of those movies where had to do with vivisection.

You know, when we talk about effective altruism, and we talk about things like the trolley dilemma, and we talk about these things, it is not how normal people live their lives. So it's all fine on paper, but it simply is not translatable into real life.

When we are looking at money. So I found that number I was looking for earlier, Jasmin. So between February 2016 and December 2021, the Open Philanthropy Project gave, hold on to your seat chair arms, or whatever you've got going on there...

**Jasmin:** Hold onto my MUD/WTR, got it!

**Krista:** Oh, right. Hold on to your MUD/WTR, and I give you \$176,449,870 US to farmed animal organizations, the majority of which was given for cage-free egg initiatives and the balance for other works such as poultry welfare, things like increased light levels in barns, et cetera, et cetera.

That number, if you have not spit out your MUD/WTR yet, you will in a moment. But again, it's this idea; there's no balance. So not only do we not have balance, but we're not even allowed to talk about it somehow. And not only are we not allowed to talk about what isn't working, we're not allowed to talk about the fact that many, many, many women are experiencing the most egregious working conditions and continuing to do the work because they love animals or leaving the movement altogether.

Something that always struck me, and by the way, I gave a talk at Animal Rights National Conference in 2019 about the problems with effective altruism. But one of the things that had always struck me at ARNC, which has been replaced, so to speak, by another conference, but one of the things that struck me was always whenever you went to the opening plenary at the Animal Rights National Conference; there was always that question that was, "Hey, if this is your first conference, put your hand up."

An overwhelming majority of people would put their hand up, and there would always be sort of, "Yay!", clapping. "Oh, isn't that great?" And I would sit there thinking I would feel better if we had greater longevity. Not that there were constantly so many new people; yes, we need new people, but shouldn't we be applauding those who have stuck it out?

Or is the problem that there are so few of us? If I look at Mercy for Animals, just as an example, I think I might know three or four people there left anymore, and I've only been gone four years. The turnover in the movement, not just at

MFA, in general, the turnover in our movement is so high, and we need to be looking at what are the reasons for this. And a huge part of it is the employment conditions, which include this inability to talk about what is and is not working.

**Jasmin:** So, how can we talk about it? I mean, we're talking about it here, but we're fairly safe. So, how do we change this?

I mean, how do we start these conversations? How do we embolden women and non-binary people to be able to bring things up without worrying about whether they will be ousted or... What's the solution?

**Krista:** I have a couple of ideas. Some of them are easy fixes, and some of them are a bit harder and longer fixes.

So the easy fixes, for every listener, doesn't matter if you're a vocational activist, volunteer activist, or whatever you do. Learn a little bit about social justice theory, and I'm not suggesting that everybody reads some textbooks, but learn a little bit about the importance of multiple forms of activism. Learn a little bit about social justice theory. The MAP model is a really good one. It's right in my dissertation. You can download my dissertation and even just type in MAP model; you don't have to read the whole dissertation. You could go to Google "Bill Moyer, MAP model." So really, just learn a little bit so you can empower...

It's kind of like when you first went vegan, and somebody was asking you what's wrong with milk, and you had to kind of learn how to answer that question. Learn a little bit about this so you can have these conversations with each other. The other thing is whenever you see inappropriate conduct, for those of you that are in organizations in the institutional movement, speak up.

You need to go and tell somebody when you see things like workplace harassment and bullying; you need to speak up. So speak up and be an activist for each other, and you, as an individual, the other thing you can do is support all of the other activism that's going on. Don't get involved in the infighting and denigrating of other work. Support other work, whether it's sharing on social media or whatever that might be. Deeply understand that all of it is important.

For your listeners, Jasmin, who are in a leadership role. You need to work with your boards of directors to talk about prioritizing healthy workplaces. You need to go to your board and talk about the importance of creating internal healthy places where people feel valued.

It is a huge undertaking, but it needs to be as important as your programmatic work. It needs to be as important as your fundraising work. It needs to be as important as your care of your volunteers. So really, the other part that you can do in a leadership role is educate your donors about the importance of spending money and time on creating HR programs and processes: better salaries, better group benefits, and good policies on sexual harassment.

And if you are a board member, one of the biggest issues we have in our movement is ineffective boards. I mean, just look at what happened at HSUS, and it happened because of an ineffective board. So if you are a board member, take it seriously, educate yourself on what it means to be a board member. I introduced, Jasmin, in my doctoral research, and I'm creating a program right now on something called The Care Model of Nonprofit Board Governance. I am creating a model where I'm going to be helping boards learn how to ensure that every element of the work you do, not just your fundraising, not just your programmatic work, is fundamental. But at the bare minimum, if you are a board member, understand what those obligations are.

And then, Jasmin, there are some other things that are definitely more challenging. I've been asked to start a discussion and support group for women, particularly those who wanna talk about the challenges of EA and how they approach it internally. So I'm looking at a way to do that now.

**Jasmin:** Excellent, excellent, excellent.

**Krista:** Please reach out to me. There's a "contact us" on my website, [drkristahiddema.com](http://drkristahiddema.com). Contact us. I'm setting up this program, I'm not even sure exactly what it's gonna look like yet, but I've been asked by a number of women to start a support group so that we can help give you language to help talk to your organizations.

And then some of these bigger issues that are very much on my mind is how we create some kind of a grand objective approach. How do we do that? And I'm looking at, like I said, the Freedom to Marry, and maybe this support group of women will help me come up with some great ideas about how we can do that.

And look, last but not least, I have had this other idea floating about in my head, and it is very much just a seed, but I've thought about some kind of a values council for our movement. I'm not sure what it would look like, but some kind of shared values where we all, at least at minimum, adopt an understanding of how social change occurs, and recognizes the importance that all groups play.

It might provide some opportunity for goal setting. It might even help with conflict resolution. We've seen a lot in our movement of groups suing other groups. There's a lot of internal litigation. I've been involved in some of it as an advisor. There are ways that we can look at conflict resolution that don't end up spending time and money. There are ways that we can share that we're not sharing, like good sexual harassment policies, and we're all reinventing the wheel in multiple places that does not help animals.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. We need more HR people, I think, right?

**Krista:** Yeah, we do. And talented good people. I was the vice president of HR for one of the largest software companies in the world, called SAP, and we had 50,000 employees. We can share better. If HR people need policies, email me, and I will help you.

And look, if we do not focus on collective power, then we are never going to win because unearned power, money-based power, is the very definition of privilege. And unearned power is what is right now, the engine behind much of what's happening in our movement.

It is power in the hands of a few, and without collective power and solidarity, we are not going to win.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. Gosh. You know, I mentioned in 2015 that Mariann and I did that talk. You said you did it also around that time. Going back in time even further. 2007, I think, for the New York City activists listening, I was in New York City then. There was this kind of very well-known, at the time, to the animal rights movement, debate that happened at Jivamuktea Cafe, where basically, in this ring, you had the welfarists, and in this ring, you had the liberationists, and there was this argument that went on. I feel like it never went anywhere.

When I flash forward 15 years, I hear all of this money is being spent on cage-free, for example. It's like, whatever happened to this side of the room?

It's upsetting, and I don't wanna be here in another 15 years having this conversation. So, we need a massive interruption in programming in order to change things.

It can't just be a conversation that happens at Jivamuktea, and then we all go about our evenings and complain about each other. It has to be more of more concerted effort. That being said, I have been asked this question, and I am



curious what you have to say about it. Do you feel there is room for both the bean-counting of the effective altruists and the storytelling of other aspects of the movement?

**Krista:** I think I'd like to answer that by saying I think there's room for everything provided that it's balanced, and I think that the reason I answer in that way, Jasmin, is because nobody really knows what's going to work. Nobody. Anyone that says they know what's going to work, that, in and of itself, is a massive red flag to me.

Nobody knows, right? So I think that there is room for everything, provided again, that it is balanced, that it is respectful, and that there is shared...I hate the word power, but...that there is a shared collective power, I guess, is the way I would like to say it.

**Jasmin:** I feel you. Yeah.

**Krista:** That there's collective power, and right now, it is not that way. It is so imbalanced. And that is the greater problem here; is the power in the movement rests with so few, and it is a lack of balance. The money and power are hand in hand and in parallel.

Also, what's happening is this massive turnover of employees and likely volunteers as well. I can't say that for certain; it wasn't my research area, but it's oddly parallel. Those parallels are a little too close for me to think they're a complete coincidence.

**Jasmin:** Last question for the purposes of this, though, I do hope you stay on with me for a few minutes extra for our bonus content with the flock.

Given everything that we've been talking about and the balance of power, that should become more balanced and all of that. Best-case scenario, what successes do you think are at least possible in, say, the next 10 years?

And I know I'm asking you to think creatively and to look in your crystal ball, but let's say that we can get significantly better at the problem at hand. What can be accomplished?

**Krista:** You know, first of all, I love crystal balls, so I'm totally all about that. So that's a great question. I guess a couple of things. Number one, if I were to sort of really massage that crystal ball, what I'd like to see is greater attention being paid to internally healthy workplaces, and it's very doable.

We're not looking for something that doesn't exist elsewhere. There are repeatable processes; there are talented people, and this is very doable to commit to strong organizational practices from an HR perspective. There is no question that that is very doable.

The second thing that would drive this is better board governance. I am very, very concerned about the lack of governance in our movement. People become board members because they're somebody's friend, or they're somebody's uncle or next-door neighbor. And governance, in and of itself, is generally hierarchical. Certainly, the law, at least in Canada and the United States, provides that boards are the ultimate authority.

So, we can't necessarily change the law, but certainly, good boards can approach their work in a way that's (the least) hierarchical as possible. They can be more collaborative. And by doing that and combining good organizational practices, that is a really, really important one. And I would greatly appeal to funders.

Any funders listening to this, please, when you fund organizations, don't just look at their programmatic areas. Ask for information about turnover. Look at other forms of activism, like podcasts and like...I mean, gosh, look at things like *Blackfish*. And that film and what it did to places like SeaWorld and you know, and I'd like funders to also apply organizational metrics to their decision making. Ask about the culture of the organization. So these are things that are all extremely doable and important.

Now, some of these other things, like some of these ideas I have in my head, like having a values council, might be pretty tough. I'm not going to pretend it wouldn't be, but this idea that we have healthier workplaces. Boards take their roles very seriously. Funders start having a more broad perspective of activism, and we all, every single one of us, have a better understanding of how social change happens. Take that time.

Just like you had to learn about what happens to mother cows in dairy, and you had to learn how to answer that question when your family and friends asked. Learn a little bit about social justice theory. Learn a little bit about being able to really be in a position to empower yourself to have good conversations with other activists, be positive with other forms of activism, and really speak up for each other and speak up internally for the type of work we're doing.

I mean, those are things I think are very doable, Jasmin.

**Jasmin:** I'll throw in something that I've only recently learned I wasn't doing, which is- trust your gut, women and non-binary people! I have been through so much therapy, and so much coaching, and it was only recently that I was like, "I am not trusting my gut."

My gut has been removed by the patriarchy, and I'm taking it back. \*laughs\*

**Krista:** You know what? I could not agree with that more.

In fact, I do executive coaching in our movement, and I was talking to somebody the other day, and I said to her, "When you say that, what happens in your body?" I said, "Just take a minute. What happens in your body?"

We are physical creatures, and we are emotional creatures. Take back the care. Take back the emotion because when we go at our work in this cult of numbers, this cult of rationality, it is not how real people live. It is not feasible. It is not realistic.

Go look up the trolley dilemma. What would you do if there were five people on one track and one on the other? Would you just pull the lever and go over the one, or would you actually ask a contextual question? Who is the one? Is it my mother? Is it my sister? Is it my best friend? We have lost context and nuance in this movement, and context and nuance are how every single one of us live our lives every single day.

It is context, nuance, and actual real circumstances. We don't live our life based on numbers, Jasmin. You live your life, and you wake up, and you see how your wife is and how your animals are, and that helps govern your day. Just like I wake up and see, "Where's my husband? What do we need to do today? How are the cats? How are the dogs? What's going on? Do I need to visit my 90-year-old mother? Do I need to..."

This is how we live our life, Jasmin? And it is how we need to do our activism as well, through care, compassion, context, and nuance.

**Jasmin:** So beautifully said. It's like there's this thing I do on my end when I'm recording.

If the guest is saying something that I think is particularly profound, I hit this thing called Mark Clip so that we could consider it for the social media blurb. And I have hit it so many times, that the person is going to be like...I'm sorry to

Jocelyn and Vicki, who are going to have to figure out what to put on social media.

And I also want to say, not as a shameless plug, but I have also, in the last year, started coaching within this movement. And I'm glad that we're doing that because there are a lot of people who come to me; I would say almost everyone whom I work with wants to either work within the movement, like switch careers, or somehow strengthen their activism.

I think that's like a hundred percent of the people who come to me, and if there is this sort of new generation, even if they're not necessarily young, quote-unquote, this new generation of people coming into the movement, and we're starting slowly to peel back the layers, then there is hope there.

**Krista:** Yes, there is. And speak up; you're activists, folks! Speak up.

You sit at Christmas dinner and tell your parents that you're not going to...well, I don't even go to Christmas dinner because of that reason. \*both laugh\* But, those of you that go, you're like, "I'm not going to eat this animal!" You're speaking up there. You're holding a sign, and you're speaking up in a city that you're protesting in. Speak up internally.

**Jasmin:** So true.

**Krista:** Good grief. Why is it that we've gotten to this place where we can't speak up internally? You know why, Jasmin? Because we've been told that if we do, it hurts animals. And that is so antithetical to who we are, and why we have bought into this is mind-boggling to me.

Speak up. Speak up.

**Jasmin:** Thank you so much. I just marked the clip three more times, just FYI.

Thank you so much, Krista. Please reiterate for our listeners how they can read your dissertation, and read your chapter in the new book that came out, which we didn't really get to talk about, but it is called *The Good It Promises, the Harm it Does*, and it was edited by Carol Adams, Alice Crary, and Lori Gruen. You have a chapter in that.

You're also obviously doing really important work, so how can our listeners learn more about it?

**Krista:** Please go to my website, [drkristahiddema.com](http://drkristahiddema.com), and you'll see a picture of me with a pig. That's Esther.

I do write quite a bit in my blog about everything to do with, mostly human resources. I try to empower activists about what their rights are. I've written in my blog about everything from sexual harassment to...I wrote a blog about menopause and what your rights are, as a woman going through it myself. I talk about that in the workplace. I talk about other issues within the workplace. My most recent blog was indeed on the problems of effective altruism.

Feel free to reach out to me. Remember that I do have a new research study coming out about sexual harassment in this movement, and that will come out sort of late January, or early February. And there are two ways that folks can participate. One will be quantitative, and it will be a very short survey, with 20 questions. And that will be managed by a colleague of mine who's a statistical academic.

And then, I'm going to be working with somewhere between 10 and 20 activists in a qualitative way. And I would be thrilled if some of you would be willing to work with me. So please do that and speak up for each other.

Be positive. Educate yourselves on how social movements exist. Don't be silent. Silence is not an answer; just like it's not an answer in our advocacy, it's not an answer in this movement. Speak up about the challenges you are having in the workplace because we need you to stay.

We need you to be a long-term sustainable activist. We need you to be here 10 years from now, side by side with Jasmin and me working for animals

**Jasmin:** As the popularized logo for the AIDS movement said so eloquently and succinctly, "Silence equals death."

Thank you so much, Krista. I really appreciate everything that you're doing, and I know that there are a lot of troubling things that we talked about, but ultimately having you spearheading this work is really giving me a lot of hope.

So I am ending this interview on hope, despite the sad part. So thank you for joining me today. Please hang on the line for a little bit. We so appreciate you.

**Krista:** Thank you, Jasmin. Thank you to your listeners.