



Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 690, Interview with Dr. Milton Mills

Mariann Sullivan: Welcome to Our Hen House, Dr. Mills.

Milton Mills: Thank you, it is great to be here.

Mariann: I can't believe it's taken us this long to have you here! I am thrilled! Because you've been doing this for a while. You are one of the OGs of this movement and touting the health benefits of a plant-based diet for a very long time before a lot of other people were.

So in all those years, what have you found to be the most common misconception that you've run into about plant-based diets? And I'm kind of curious as to whether it's changed over the years.

Milton: Sure. I mean, the number one misconception that people have, and it stems from what we are taught, certainly in western societies, is that we are omnivores. And people are brought up believing that they need to have animal foods in their diet in order to have the best nutrition or complete nutrition. Therefore, when you start talking to them about eliminating animal foods from their diet, instantly they become very concerned that they are in danger of missing out on important nutrients and, if they have children, that they might be exposing their children to a diet that won't give them all of the nutrients they need to develop properly.

So that is the overriding and persistent misconception, misapprehension about plant-based diets. And yes, it has changed somewhat over the years. I actually went plant-based, initially vegetarian, later on, I transitioned to vegan, back in 1974 when I was a teenager. Back then, it was something that people thought sort of the hippies and weirdos did.

Mariann: Right. I remember those days.

Milton: Yeah. The health-nuts kind of thing. And that certainly has changed quite a bit, and there is now a much greater appreciation for the health benefits associated with plant-based eating. Certainly, the impact on the environment and climate, and that's evidenced by the amazing transformation that is taking place in terms of just the understanding of the word vegan. That you weren't speaking Klingon or some weird, strange dialect. *Mariann laughs*

People understand that vegan is a thing, and it's a good thing. And now you can go into the store and get vegan products, which I think is mostly a good thing. There're some areas of concern, but we'll leave that for later.

But what's really encouraging is that veganism, my impression, is that it is far outstripping vegetarianism. That people are not stopping at vegetarianism, and you don't see, for the most part, products advertised as vegetarian. They're advertised as vegan, which is a great thing. So yeah, things have changed, certainly not nearly enough.

It is like with so many issues in our society and culture. There can be significant change and change that we will notice, but we can't become too comfortable with that or too relaxed in thinking that, "Oh, that means that things have really evolved or that the society has taken great steps." Because as we're seeing with women's rights, as we're seeing with the assault on voting rights for people of color, the craziness that's going on down in Florida with LGBTQ rights and the banning of black history, and just all of these fascistic tendencies...these impulses are still widespread and are always looking for a way to come back into the mainstream. It's like water. If there's a crack, it's going to find it. And before you know it, you have a flood in your house.

Mariann: That's totally true. Totally true. We can never rest. Things can go backwards so easily. The biggest block for people and what has changed is that as more and more people do go vegan and more and it becomes more mainstream, it's going to eat into that biggest block because every healthy vegan is a testament to the fact that you can be a healthy vegan

Milton: Absolutely.

Mariann: Every person who goes vegan and lives vegan openly is making a difference.

So I totally want to get into you talking about this idea that people believe, and I think it's completely true, that humans are natural omnivores. And I know this is an entire talk that you give, and you can't give it right now, but it's so important.

Can you just give us the basics of some of the evidence for why even some vegans may think this? And think that, "Oh, that's why we have to take B12 and whatever." That it's not natural to be vegan, but I'm going to do it anyway for the animals or whatever. Why is all of this wrong? Just the quick version of all of that information that you get out there about this issue.

Milton: Sure. To kind of jump onto an imaginary drone and hover over our society and look at its history, what you see is that the themes and ideas that sort of have governed and driven Western science, Western thought, Western philosophy have grown out of Western behaviors.

And so when, for instance, people were starting to look to actually try and define nutrition, what were nutrients, what was appropriate, and then once you've defined it in terms of its scientific nomenclature, then to define what constitutes a healthy, nutritious diet. The problem is they started with what they saw, meaning they started with what people were already eating, and they made some mistakes in their assumptions. For instance, one of the really misleading impressions that early nutritionists got was that they looked at societies where people had been restricted to a staple crop, right?

So that they were, say, mainly eating, I don't know, corn or rice, or some artificially restricted plant food based on agricultural traditions. And they contrasted those societies with places where people had ready access or easier access to animal foods. And depending on which societies they were looking at, they did see what appeared to be a healthier population in those early societies where people were including animal foods in their diet. Therefore, they conclude, "Well, this makes sense because we need these animal foods."

But more sophisticated and later reevaluation has shown that, number one, the societies they were looking at had restricted diets, not only in terms of the type of food that they're eating, but also in calories, and that it was the calorie restriction that was primarily accounting for their reduced growth patterns, their smaller stature and so forth.

Again, because they were eating just a limited type of plant food. Yes, there were certain vitamins and or minerals that they may not have been receiving that people who were eating animal foods were receiving. Why is that?

It's because... We all know that we have an innate desire to eat a variety of foods, even at a single meal. Our taste preferences just drive us to want to have different flavors at a meal. Now, one of the ways that we as humans have tried to get around these restricted diets we've created for ourselves down through

history is that we use seasonings to add flavor and variety to an otherwise bland diet.

But what I'm arguing in this book that I'm working on is that this innate desire for variety is nature's way of ensuring that we, by eating a variety of different plant foods, would have more complete nutrition and it would ensure that we would get all of the various vitamins and nutrients and so forth that we would need. And that if we were eating in that natural way, there would not have been a problem because, again, other studies have shown that when people eat a varied plant-based diet that is comprised of different plant foods and so forth, that they're actually healthier than people that eat animal foods.

But in these early studies, they compare these people who were restricted in calories and in variety to people who effectively allowed the animals to do the gathering that they should have been doing. So you see, the animals were out there gathering all these plant foods, storing these nutrients and minerals in their bodies, and that's why the people had access to them, plus the additional calories and that's why they appeared to be healthier.

But these early researchers were only looking at growth patterns, adult height, weight, so forth. What they weren't looking at was long-term health. What we now know and have known for over a hundred years is that populations that eat animal foods in significant amounts over time end up developing chronic diseases and die sooner with oftentimes grievous diseases.

So that, I think, was a large part of the reason that we have been so misled and misinformed by scientific research into nutrition and health. And let me just throw in one other thing about Western medicine because this is an ongoing pet peeve, for lack of a better expression, of mine. And that is that Western medicine, number one, developed from a very patriarchal male-centric dynamic.

And what I mean by that is the entire interaction in western medicine is you go to the temple, you see the priest, and you cede all authority to that person. And that person then evaluates you and tells you what you will do. He'll give you whatever amulets or whatever to get you healthy, and you must do what you are told.

It's great for doctors; well, let me say for some doctors because it makes them feel like saviors of the world. They're super people. You know, "I save lives, and at the top of the whatever, and I get to walk around in this white coat and feel like I'm God on Earth." And it's not that great for patients. And certainly not when it comes to chronic disease.

I mean, it does work well for things like trauma and infectious diseases, or I should say it works better because I think it is always best to make your patient, as much as possible, an integral part of their care so that they understand what's going on and they can work with you and do their part to totally heal.

But certainly, if you fall off a ladder and break your arm, you want to go to the hospital and let him do his thing. Okay? But it also helps if they can tell you, “Oh, by the way, if you take some vitamin C and you do this, and you do that, it's going to help your arm heal better.” But you know, they don't know a lot of that stuff.

So that was part of the problem. But, Western medicine came into its own when the major things killing people were infectious diseases, postpartum infections, pneumonia, and so forth, and traumas. And so it was easy for it to kind of develop with this very physician-centered, God-complex dynamic.

And Western medicine has as its core principle the disease model, meaning that the belief is that there is, for every disease, some pathogen or disordered process that the physician can step in, identify, and then prescribe medication or therapy to remedy. And again, that is true for infectious disease. It's true for postpartum infections when doctors would deliver babies and not wash their hands and pass on bacteria to women that would ultimately kill them. But it is not that true for chronic diseases that result from a lifetime of disordered eating.

Mariann: And that's exactly what happens. You go, and your cholesterol is too high, and they give you a medication instead of mentioning that you could do something about why your cholesterol is so high

Milton: Because they don't know, for the most part, and they not just give you something for your cholesterol, but it's something that has a whole slew of side effects. I should say potential side effects.

I don't want to come across as being anti-medication because I'm not. In my own practice, I try to use a combination of traditional medicines where appropriate, even when treating chronic disease, with the idea of, “We're going to use these medicines hopefully as a bridge to get you into a diet and lifestyle that will help your body heal itself from this.”

Mariann: Right. And you give your patients that message. That if you're willing to do this diet, this is the diet you could follow that would help you. Too many patients, I think, don't even get that information.

Milton: Oh, no, they don't because physicians, by and large, are not taught about the connection between diet and chronic disease in medical school. They're taught the disease model. That heart disease happens because cholesterol is too high, and the way you deal with that is you put them on a statin, or you put them on some other drug.

Mariann: Is that changing at all? I've been hearing that for so long and it doesn't seem to shift.

Milton: It is changing glacially. There are a few medical schools around the country that have started to try to incorporate teaching tracks that seek to educate students about the role of nutrition in the development of chronic diseases.

One of my very good friends and colleagues, Dr. Lakshman Mulpuri, helped develop a nutrition course for medical students while he was a student at Wayne State Medical School in Michigan.

And I've heard tell that Harvard is working to incorporate nutrition into its basic science courses. To what extent they're doing it? I don't know. There is some movement, but again, it's never at the rate or in the way that I think it needs to be.

Mariann: Yeah, absolutely. For one reason or another, I happened to be researching or just Googling type two diabetes the other day.

I was curious, because of a conversation I had, about whether the knowledge that it's diet related is out there. And it's not! It's crazy.

There are all these theories about what's causing the epidemic of type two diabetes. I wouldn't say that diet is never mentioned, but it's my knowledge or opinion, from everything I've learned, that it's completely diet related. That's why we have type two diabetes, and that's what everybody should be looking at.

And we all live in our own little bubbles, and I was shocked to find how small my bubble of believing that type two diabetes is a completely diet-related disease that can be completely addressed by diet is a very small bubble indeed.

Milton: Yeah. Well, I would probably say it is largely diet-related because there are a few little quirks in there that can, depending on when someone is diagnosed, how far gone they are, they may or may not be able to completely reverse it.

But I will say, just as a general rule, at least 85% of people with type two diabetes could put it into remission and come off their medicines if they went completely plant-based. And the other 15% would end up taking much less medication. So if they were on insulin shots, they'd be able to come down to pills.

Mariann: Right, it's not necessarily an on or off. You can improve your life a lot.

Milton: And that's important because that translates into years of life saved and also a monumental reduction in diabetes-associated disease because the problem with diabetes is, and I'll just give you a quick and dirty analogy I use.

I don't know if most people have ever either made or seen someone making a pineapple upside-down cake. It used to be my favorite cake when I was growing up, and so I watched my mother make it all the time for me. The first thing you do is you melt some butter or margarine in a pan over some heat, and then you pour in sugar, and you slowly stir it until that sugar and butter caramelizes.

Well, every cell in our body is wrapped by a membrane made of fatty molecules. Our body runs about a hundred degrees Fahrenheit. And once the level of sugar in the blood goes too high, you start to get that process of caramelization.

Mariann: Wow. That is so graphic. What a great image.

Milton: So the higher it is, the more of that caramelization process happens, and that's where you get the damage. And it affects every organ!

Mariann: Diabetes is just the most hideous. It's a fatal illness that kills you step by step by step. It's just a dreadful thing.

Milton: If people would only make the appropriate changes...

You know the story of Cassandra, right? The Trojan priestess. She was a sister of Hector and Paris, and she offended one of the gods, so they cursed her to always prophesy the truth and never be believed.

Mariann: Right. Yeah. Now it's coming back to me.

Milton: And it drove her crazy, and she ran around the city screaming, "I see Troy in flames!" And that's what I feel like sometimes.

Mariann: I so identify. Why don't I have that myth...yeah. I'm changing my name. *Dr. Mills laughs*

Milton: She's kind of one of my poignant heroes because I know! Like, I feel you, Cassandra! I get it. You want to tear your hair out.

Mariann: But it's not the only truth. And I want to ask you about...because there are so many people, even people who I know are animal rights oriented, who are in the medical field or whatever, who tout the health benefits of a whole foods plant-based diet, but just stick to the health arguments and don't like to go near the animal arguments. And you are not one of them.

I have this quote that I absolutely love, I'm going to read it. "Killing animals is a gateway to losing our moral center and throwing our moral compass off."

So I want to know how deeply you think that, how deeply rooted that killing animals is to what has made us go awry. And I do believe that human society has gone awry in many ways.

And I'm also curious as to whether you're afraid of getting pushback for that and not being believed, thinking that you're just selling people a vegan argument,

Milton: Okay, I'm going to answer this question in what may seem like an odd way, but it's a way that is very central to who I am and why I actually went plant-based.

I actually became plant-based after I joined the Seventh Adventist Church, and the Seventh Adventist Church recommends that its members become plant-based because the Bible teaches that is the diet God designed us to eat.

Right there, first chapter Genesis. God told Adam and Eve, "Be vegans." In essence, He told him that they were going to be fruit-based vegans. Later on, after they kind of messed up and had to get thrown out of the garden, He enlarged the diet to include what Genesis refers to as the herbs of the field, which would be legumes, grains, root vegetables, and so forth.

I'm saying that to say that I have very deep spiritual beliefs. I know that a lot of people may not share those, but I do. And recently, I have been re-examining the Bible, and something sort of leapt out at me that hadn't occurred to me before, and this is what it is. Everybody is familiar with the passage where after God creates Adam, He's talking with his son, and they say, "It is not good for

the man to be alone.” And if you ask people, “Okay, what did God do after that?” 95% of people will say He created Eve.

And that's what I thought, too, until I reread the Bible. It's not what the Bible says. The Bible says after they say, “it is not good for the man to be alone,” it says, “and out of the ground, God created all of the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth and brought them to Adam to give them names.” And if you really contemplate what that is telling you, it is profound and it is mind-blowing! Because one, it is telling us that our first companions were the other creatures that God put here. But that God recognized the sentience of these creatures, which is why He brought them to Adam to give them names.

Mariann: Right. They needed names, and they were good company. Yeah. If they were not sentient and conscious, they wouldn't need names, and they wouldn't be keeping him company. That's a really, really beautiful reading.

Milton: Right. So what made me think about this recently is that number one, why did God even let us into His mindset? Why did He think it was important for us to understand that He put animals here to be our companions?

He could have just... Genesis could have just said, “and God created this, and He did this, and He did this, and He did this, and boom!” But He didn't. He let us into His thought process. “I don't want this human to be alone, so I am going to provide these other creatures to be his companions.” And then, from actually observing them with their mates, that's when Adam turned to God and said, “Hey, I don't have a mate.” And that's when God put him to sleep and created Eve.

So the point, from a very spiritual aspect, for me is that our relationship with our other creatures on this planet is supposed to be much deeper, much closer, much more intimate, and much more caring than we have appreciated because Western society has poisoned our thinking into looking at animals as commodities, as things, as machines to be used and abused. And clearly, that is not what God intended.

And so I have made the argument, and I will continue to make this argument. I do say that the health basis for veganism, in my mind, is the foundational argument for being plant-based. Because the fact that we are strict herbivores by design and physiology, anatomy, and natural history, and that can be shown because when we depart from that diet, we get sick and we die, means that for our benefit, for the benefit of the planet, we should stick to that diet. It's what's best.

And if that is true, then it makes it that much more heinous and egregious that we deliberately willfully visit cruelty, abuse, and death on these innocent creatures. I mean, that's, for lack of a better word, sick!

Mariann: Yeah, sure is.

Milton: I mean, my brain cells are just kind of like having a little seizure because I can't find the words to express the emotion that I have that we're supposed to be plant eaters.

It's what's best for us. And instead, we go out and we kill other creatures. And before we do it, we subject them to lives of misery and abuse. That is just evil and extreme!

Mariann: And like the synergy between all of the arguments, the fact that it's best for us, it's saving the animals, it's best for the planet.

It's killing...we're killing the planet! The fact that all of these things work together is so powerful.

Milton: Exactly. Exactly. And I think it's important because I've heard a lot of people say, "Oh, I'm vegan for the animals." And the subtext there is that, "I'm willing to sacrifice my health to save these animals." But the problem I have with that argument is that- number one, suffering is suffering, and in my mind, it does not make sense to substitute human suffering for the suffering of other animals because you're not decreasing suffering in the world.

Number two, while Jane Smith may have that sacrificial impulse to say, "I know it's harming my health, but I'm going to do it because I love bunnies." 90 plus percent of the rest of the world's population will not harm their health or the health of their children to help other animals.

That's not a winning argument, but it's a completely unnecessary argument.

Mariann: Totally. Yeah.

Milton: Because we should be plant-based, and the fact that we aren't is just unconscionable and indefensible,

Mariann: But it does kind of bring up the whole topic of healthy veganism. Getting back to the health argument in a kind of different way.

I mean, a lot of people seem to think that just going vegan is enough to keep you healthy. We know that's not true. You can have cotton candy for breakfast, donuts for lunch, and a can of Coke with every meal. Like, that is nonsense.

I think if I'm getting your point right, it's important not only to be vegan for the animals but to be vegan for yourself, and that means being a healthy vegan.

So what are your rules here? I mean, it's not just a matter of cutting out meat, dairy, and eggs. I know this is a big topic, and you're writing a whole book here, and you know we can't do the whole thing, but what are your basic rules?

Milton: Before I delineate those, let me say this- that we live in America. And America was founded on this idea of individual autonomy and that we are free to do what we choose to do as long as it does not infringe on the rights of someone else. And so I want to be clear that vegans have the right to eat junk food, vegan junk food if they choose to.

I mean, I would choose that they not do it that often or to their ultimate detriment. But I want to avoid the specter that there are these little electric vehicles roaming around the city with a V flashing on the top, and the vegan police are driving them, and if you mess up your diet, we are gonna...
laughing

Mariann: You know, personally, I'd be fine with it. I would be fine with forcing people to be vegan if I could, but I know I can't.

So yeah, we have to go another route.

Milton: We're not going to break in your house, snatch all your food, and put you in jail! *laughs* So, vegans can do stupid things just like non-vegans. So that being said, the broad principles that I outline...so let's start with the meat analogs because that's a big question that people have all the time.

And one of the more specious arguments is that meat-eaters will say *in a gruff voice*, "Well, those roasts and Beyond burgers are really processed. And they're..." I'm like, my response to them is, look, there is nothing more processed than a hamburger. Okay? It looks nothing like the animal it was taken from. And if you don't believe me, climb into a pen with a living bull and get some hamburger from it. Okay? With your bare hands.

Mariann: Yeah. Nicely said. I also like to point out that animals are really machines for processing perfectly good plant food plants into cholesterol, high saturated fat, like really unhealthy food. It's processed in every way.

Milton: You're absolutely right. And I'll tell you, I sometimes make a facetious argument that if you're gonna eat meat, we need to stop burying our relatives and just have the funeral and then send the body to the butcher for processing because meat is meat, right? *both laugh*

But anyway, I'll leave that alone.

Well, let me finish what I wanted to say about the meat analogs. There was a study done at my medical school alma mater, Stanford, that compared Beyond burgers to beef.

And it was a crossover study. They had two groups. For the first four weeks, one group ate beef hamburgers, the other group ate Beyond Burgers. At the four-week point, they crossed over. What they showed was that while the people were eating the Beyond Beef Products, their cholesterol plummeted. Their trimethylamine oxide, which is a very toxic compound that is related to cancer, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and a whole bunch of other...dementia... whole bunch of other issues, plummeted. Their blood pressure came down, and they lost weight. So by a wide number of biometric markers, their health improved. When they went back to eating meat, they went the opposite direction. People who had been eating meat, when they switched to the Beyond Burgers, again, those biometric markers improved.

We also know from the Adventist health studies- the Adventist Church is comprised of people who have long used meat analogs. Originally they were made by them (unintelligible) And, again, both Adventist one and Adventist two health studies have shown across the board that Adventists live an average of 11 years longer than the average American, that they have less heart disease, less cancer, less diabetes.

Mariann: Yeah, that's a really excellent point. Even though the diet is not necessarily what we consider this super healthy whole foods plant-based diet, it's still that much better.

Milton: Exactly. So, my point is that you can include these things in your diet judiciously, and they can be part of a healthy diet.

Now the fundamental principle is this- the bulk of what you eat should always be unprocessed plants. Okay. Or minimally, let me say, minimally processed plants, right?

Mariann: Like cooking is okay.

Milton: Yeah. And you know, if you wanna mash your potatoes and throw some oat milk in there, that's cool too. What horrifies me is when I think about the way the average American eats because people eat mainly meat!

Mariann: They really do.

Milton: When you look at what's on their plate, it's a giant slab of dead flesh and a sprinkling of vegetables! It's like, no wonder everybody's dying and sick.

Mariann: I mean, you go to any restaurant...virtually, I mean, things have gotten better because there might be a vegan option. But it's the one option in the sea of dead animals.

Milton: Exactly. Exactly. And again, The vast majority of what they're eating is dead tissue. You know, I look at these commercials for this Tovala crap that, you know, they mail these meals to these people, and they put it in this little oven and scan a code...and it's like a huge slab of meat and a couple of vegetables! And I'm like, this is what is killing you, people!!!

This is what will cause you to die because your digestive tract was not made for this. Your physiology is not made for this, and you are essentially living your life as a carnivore. You're gonna be sick, you're gonna be unhealthy, and you're gonna die well before your time. Oh, by the way, you gonna also look like crap for most of it.

So you always want to make sure that the majority of what you're eating is unprocessed or minimally processed plant foods and, you know, if you want to chop up a little Beyond Burger or Beyond Sausage or something, or have a seitan cutlet or something like that as part of that overall meal, as long as the majority of what you're eating is that plants, I'm good. You know what I mean?

Mariann: I love it. It keeps it nice and simple. Like, you don't need a book to understand that.

You're writing the book, of course, so people should buy that book, but you don't really need a book to eat plants! As minimally processed as possible. That keeps it nice and simple.

Milton: And variety! Variety. So you want to make sure you're getting some green leafy plants at least three times a week. Legumes, in one form or another, at least three times a week because the longest-lived populations on Earth are those that eat the most beans. Whole grains and fresh fruit.

And those are the overriding principles. And then, as with people, it is true for our diet. The more colorful your diet, the healthier you'll be. And that's also true psychologically when it comes to your friends. *Mariann laughs*

Mariann: Actually, that really leads me to, I think it leads me... You have been very outspoken on racism and diet. Racism and racism, not even just vis-a-vis diet, and I just don't want to leave this conversation without going there.

I picked out another quote, and it said, "Being a black man in America prepared me to be vegan."

Milton: Well, number one, thank you for appreciating that quote because, for me, that is a deeply profound statement, and it's true.

And what I'm trying to get at to people is that from an early age, as a black kid, as a black teenager, as a black man, I'm told, "you're not as good. There's something wrong with you. You can't be trusted. You are defective in some way." And the only way that I was able to achieve is to reject that socialization and those ideas and that poisonous societal way of viewing me as a black man and to know within myself that if I am doing the appropriate self-examination. If I am making sure that I am educating myself appropriately and acting on solid, worthwhile moral principles that I am as good or better than anyone else.

And therefore, when I became convinced that a plant-based diet was, in fact, the healthiest diet for me, it didn't matter to me that most people weren't doing it. They were wrong. It was easy for me to see that.

Mariann: They frequently are.

Milton: Yes. Yes, exactly. You know, when I went to medical school, my first advisor used to try to intimidate me and say, "Well, Mil, are you ever gonna be a real doctor?" That was literally water on the back of a duck. I mean, I'm just

like, “You are the one who is confused and don't know or see the truth, and eventually, hopefully, you'll live long enough to learn it.”

Mariann: Boy, that is exactly how I think every vegan feels about being vegan. Every vegan who's able to stick to it in spite of the ridiculous pushback that they get from every place. Whether it's about the animals or about health or whatever... just saying, “No, the rest of you are all wrong.” And you have to have that ability. So I totally hear you. I think it's an amazing analogy. It really speaks to me.

I mean, I don't know when it is that you said that, but as I said in the beginning, you've been doing this for a long time, and I would imagine that for a long time, you've felt like a voice crying in the wilderness and all alone with this. But, I'm just wondering whether you feel, particularly with the growth of Black veganism, that we're reaching a different point and you're a little bit more in the mainstream than you have been for most of your career.

Milton: You know, it's emotional for me to think about these things.

The short answer to your question is yes, but it's so much more than that because, over the years, I have received messages, *getting emotional* um, from, um... I'm sorry. I'm a bit of a crybaby. Things just really affect me emotionally.

Mariann: Please. Please feel comfortable and go where you need to go.

Milton: There was one mother who wrote me, and she said, “You know, when I decided to go vegan, I was really worried about my children, and I was getting all of this pushback from my family. They were telling me I was gonna hurt them,” she said, “Then I saw your lectures on are humans designed to eat meat and I knew I was doing the right thing.”

And so that's just one of them. I've gotten a number of, from Australia, from Europe, these emails and messages where people have said how much help the work that I've tried to put out there has been to them, and it's helped them understand the rightness of what they're doing, and they've used it to educate other people.

So, all of those things to me are like little tokens from Heaven to let me know that I am doing the right thing and that I am making a difference, which it's not always the thunderstorm that makes the biggest difference. It's the quiet flood that really changes the landscape.

So I know I've done what I was commissioned to do, and the things that I've done have really helped people, and that's the thing that is most important.

Mariann: Yeah, I'm happy that you feel, and I think you're right, that you're starting to see the fruits. That there are harbingers of change certainly going on.

Milton: Well, one other little vignette when I was approached by the directors of *What the Health*, Keegan and Kip, when they approached me to be in *What the Health*, I was completely surprised because I wasn't even aware that they were aware of the things that I've done.

And, I remember at the time thinking, “eh, what the heck? It can probably do some good.” I can't tell you how many Black people over the years have come to me and said, “I didn't think veganism was for Black people until I saw you.”

One of my very good friends now; we actually met in person and became good friends; she had lupus that was destroying her body. She was having problems with different organ systems. Her doctor was ready to put her on methotrexate in addition to all these other drugs, and she watched *What the Health*, and she told him, “You know what? I'm gonna try being plant-based first.” He told her, “If you do that, you're gonna die.”

She said, “Well, I'm gonna do it anyway.” Within, I think, six months, she was off all of her meds. She's been in remission ever since. I met her when I went to New Rochelle, New York, to do a lecture and this very striking, very tall African-American woman just came up to me in tears and threw her arms around me.

She said, “You saved my life.” *becoming emotional* And then she told me her story. So God has let me know that I've done some wild things.

Mariann: In just the shortest amount of time we have really seen, and largely due to your work, and I'm sure, to that movie and other ways that the word has gotten out, how we've seen it go from most people saying “veganism is a white thing” to Black veganism being totally at the leadership of this movement.

Milton: And my thing is I tell people, “Look, don't walk in the room with your head down. Don't walk in the room quiet. It's time to be militant when it comes to being vegan. Because we know we're right!” Okay. We don't want be arrogant, but we can be militant.

Mariann: Nicely put.

Milton: Because I'm just not going to put up with people telling people to eat poison and do things that we know are going to harm them and result in disease and death.

It's like, why are we silent anymore? This is crazy. It's like watching people drive off a road that we know is washed out, and they're going to go off the cliff. It's like, are you crazy?

Mariann: Yeah. I mean, maybe they'll be offended. Maybe they won't like us.

Who cares? Who cares?

Milton: Exactly.

Mariann: Speak the truth!

Milton: You know, when people tell me, “you're being offensive,” I'm like you don't know offensive until you've seen someone dying in a hospital from a preventable disease. That's what's offensive. Okay? Spare me.

Mariann: I could talk to you all day. I wish we had the time, but I'm going to have to let you go.

But before I do, I do want you...you mentioned that you're working on a book. I just want you to tell people a little bit about that. And do you have a projected date? Or did I just give you a stomach ache asking you that question? And also, aside from the book, how can people find out more about your work?

Milton: Yeah, so the book is...I don't have a projected date because my perennial issue is trying to navigate that area between work and time to write.

Mariann: Yeah, I can't even imagine.

Milton: But it is the holy grail of my life. It is the thing that I have to do before I leave this earth. It's all of the lectures and things that I have put together, I've extracted, and research I've done for the book.

It will be called *Diet by Design*. Which I think is a very beautiful title. And, hopefully, another couple years, and I'll get it done.

Mariann: All right. We're all waiting. No pressure.

Milton: Yes. In the meantime, people can go to my website. The name is kind of long, but it's very descriptive. It's DrMiltonMillsplantbasednation.com because that's my goal, a plant-based nation, so it's just DrMiltonMillsplantbasednation.com.

Mariann: I highly recommend going there and looking at your enormous collection of videos. Really, on every topic. The people who are frustrated that this interview didn't go longer can find out a lot more there.

Thank you so much for joining us today, Dr. Mills.

Milton: Oh. Thank you, guys, for inviting me. This has been really a pleasure. Absolutely.