

BETWEEN THE SPECIES

Imagine: A Critical Examination of Activist Methods

LISA KEMMERER
Montana State University

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Imagine a solar system somewhere in the Milky Way with a planet rather like our own hosting a plethora of interconnected communities, including Cabbels, Prickens, Physhes, Durckies, Hums, and Pips. Everyone on the planet has much more in common than of difference—at the end of the day they are all sentient, willful beings, all of whom are genetically related.

On this revolving orb, the community of Hums holds the upper hand, and lacking sufficient internal moral constraints, they have found it in their interest to exploit other communities for what they believe to be their purposes, including scientific interest, taste-bud pleasures, medical experiments, entertainment, field and office labor, companionship, color enhancement, and music—despite affordable, readily available alternatives. In short, they exploit individuals from neighboring communities as a matter of power and convenience, indifference as it were, despite having no need to do so. And in order to do so cheaply in order to maximize profits, Hums have developed bizarre and cruel practices, approaching individuals (even unto death) as if they were inanimate objects.

Pips have largely been controlled and manipulated for consumption—for taste-bud pleasures. Toward this end, Hums force Pips to reproduce, take away their young, and transform their youthful bodies into bite-sized parts. In the consumption industry, Pips are housed in filthy lodgings where they are denied friends and families, seeking and enjoying preferred foods, creating comfortable places to rest, and growing old in community. Most Hums are not aware of such sordid details regarding the exploitation of Pips, which happens behind closed doors. Anyway, most Hums enjoy consuming Pips, and are disinclined to explore what happens before Pips hit their plates.

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Nonetheless, at least some Hums live where they see Pip transport trucks pass into large gates, never to be seen again. Hundreds pass by every day, into gates that closed behind them, and not a single Pip ever returns. Some Hums became genuinely uneasy about what might be occurring behind closed gates, and at some point began to ask questions. They looked into the matter and discovered the ugly details of Pips consumption, which then reached the public. As as Hums became aware of what was going on in the Pip industry, some were so terribly pained by the truth that they began to took action.

Activists entered camps, returning with images of what they had seen, which they posted on Wave in order to inform other Hums. They spoke out to anyone who would listen, lobbied leaders for change, rescued Pips and took them into their homes, and some even sabotaged the Pip exploitation machinery. Increasingly, their most effective methods of activism were blocked by those running the powerful Pip exploitation food industry, and channels for change narrowed even as the enormity of the problem became somewhat better known.

It was about this time that Hum activists began standing at the gates, simply watching Pips go by. Seeing that the Pips were hot and distressed, having traveled far in crowded conditions with no attention to basic needs, some pushed cool-pacs into the transport wagons. As they did so, they took pictures to put on Wave, hoping that the larger community would see something of what the activists saw and experienced, hoping tht distant viewers would see fear in the eyes of the Pips, remember that Pips are individuals very similar to Hums, and perhaps stop eating Pips, maybe even join the movement for change.

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Activists who stood at the gates of death stayed within the confines of the law: They did not confront those running the transport wagons—or anyone else in the exploitation industries. To be clear, their goal was not to rescue the passing Pips—that was impossible under current laws, in the face of Hum culture and habits, and given the extensive, well-established, empowered machinery of Pip exploitation. Their goal was to watch, and the assumption was that Wave posts would bring change. These activists called themselves PipSave.

Annoyed by the exposure, a transporter sued an activist, bringing the movement into the limelight. A few years later, an activist was run over and killed by a transport wagon, again thrusting these activists into the mainstream public view. And they actively recruited new members so that more and more activists were bearing witness. No skills were required. There was no inherent risk involved. Each activist was free to decide whether they would watch once for ten minutes or be present every day all day. And because not all were in communities with local Pip factories, they stood at the gates of transport for members of other exploited communities—Cabbels, Prickens, Phishes, or Durckies. Still, all who bore witness to *any* transport truck were considered part of the PipSave movement. And they all posted pictures on Wave.

For a decade, PipSave grew until there were nearly 700 PipSave “groups.” That said, PipSave did not keep “group” records, providing no account of activities and no measure of effectiveness—no means of assessing commensurate returns for time, energy, and activist dollars spent. Naturally, in light of limited energy and resources, some Hum activists began to question the effectiveness and worth of PipSave. Some objectors argued that PipSave was not actually saving Pips—or even taking any

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action to save the lives of the Pips passing by—but they *were* terrifying them by approaching transport wagons and thrusting objects through the bars, further traumatizing and stressing Pips (or those from other exploited communities), who feared Hums (for very good reason). These objectors also noted that there were plenty of images of Pips going to death on Wave, and so there was limited value from adding yet more photos. Some went so far as to say that PipSave seemed nothing more than a means of self-flagellation or, worse yet, a gruesome form of voyeurism. Others were concerned about long-term negative effects on activists—indeed, PipSave activists frequently noted that they could “never forget” the eyes of Pips going to their death.

While the integrity of the concerns and interests of PipSave activists were not in question, for all of these reasons, PipSave objectors encouraged activists to choose more effective methods—or develop novel forms of outreach and rebellion. And what do you think? Is it an effective use of activist time and energy for hundreds to witness those exploited as they disappear into killing industries, sometimes thrusting some form of momentary relief through the bars, posting photos of their experience? If not, what method might *you* recommend? What is the best path forward?

Activists who sincerely hope to end such cruel and senseless exploitation would greatly appreciate your reflection on the subject.