

SOUL LIGHT - Nine

THE FOOD REVOLUTION

This week (for a change of focus!) I'd like to share with you an article about food by John Robbins of Baskin-Robbins ice-cream fame...

Fad diet books have sold millions of copies telling people they can lose weight and obtain optimum health while eating all the bacon and sausage they want. The U.S. meat industry has managed to divert attention away from the fact that the animals raised in modern factory farms are forced to endure conditions of almost unimaginable cruelty and deprivation. The USDA is proposing to irradiate increasing numbers of foods to combat the deadly food-borne diseases such as E. coli 0157:H7 that increasingly breed in today's factory farms and slaughterhouses.

Rather than clean up the conditions that produce these pathogens in the first place, the U.S. meat industry has strongly supported food disparagement laws that make it illegal to criticize perishable food products, and then has used such legislation to sue those who challenge their control over your wallet. They even sued Oprah Winfrey for saying that, based on what she'd learned about meat production in the United States, she was never going to eat another burger.

Meanwhile, the chemical industry has mounted an aggressive campaign to discredit organic food. And without the knowledge or consent of most Americans, two-thirds of the products on our supermarket shelves now contain genetically engineered ingredients.

The debate about animal products and genetically engineered foods, and about their impact on our health and our world, is not going to go away. It will be fought in courtrooms and the media, but it will also be fought in people's minds, hearts, and kitchens. In the process, those seeking a more humane and sustainable way of life-for themselves and for our society-will be criticized and attacked by the industries that profit from activities that are harming people and the planet.

Judging by what appears in the mass media, it would be easy to think that people are only interested in the most shallow and trivial of concerns, that all we want is to eat our burgers, that we couldn't care less about how our food is produced and what the consequences will be to our health and to the wider Earth community. But that's a grievous lie, and it dishonors who we are. The truth is, most people care about world hunger, they are deeply concerned about global warming, they abhor cruelty to animals, they know the planet is in crisis, they sense much of the food we eat in this society is unhealthy, they are alarmed about the uncertainties of genetic engineering, and they are looking for ways to express their caring and concern.

I don't care whether you call yourself a vegetarian, a vegan, or an asparagus. I care whether you live in accord with your values, whether your life has integrity and purpose, whether you act with compassion for yourself and for all of life.

I don't care whether your diet is politically correct. I care whether your food choices are consistent with your love. I care whether they bring you health, uphold your spirit, and help you to fulfill your true nature and reason for being alive.

The truth, as has been said countless times, will set you free.

But what is said far less often is that sometimes it first will make you confront habits of behavior and thought that might be limiting you, so that you might attain the awareness to use your freedom for the benefit of your greater self and all of life.

The revolution sweeping our relationship to our food and our world, I believe, is part of an historical imperative. This is what happens when the human spirit is activated. One hundred and fifty years ago, slavery was legal in the United States. One hundred years ago, women could not vote in most states. Eighty years ago, there were no laws in the United States against any form of child abuse. Fifty years ago, we had no Civil Rights Act, no Clean Air or Clean Water legislation, no Endangered Species Act. Today, millions of people are refusing to buy clothes and shoes made in sweatshops and are seeking to live healthier and more Earth-friendly lifestyles. In the last fifteen years alone, as people in the United States have realized how cruelly veal calves are treated, veal consumption has dropped 62 percent.

I don't believe we are isolated consumers, alienated from what gives life, and condemned to make a terrible mess of things on this planet. I believe we are human beings, flawed but learning, stumbling but somehow making our way toward wisdom, sometimes ignorant but learning through it all to live with respect for ourselves, for each other, and for the whole Earth community.

I have written *The Food Revolution* in the belief that-wounded and human as we are-we can still create a thriving and sustainable way of life for all. The restorative powers of both the human body and the Earth are immense. When I walked away from Baskin-Robbins and the money it represented, I did so because I knew there was a deeper dream. I did it because I knew that with all the reasons that each of us has to despair and become cynical, there still beats in our common heart our deepest prayers for a better life and a more loving world.

When I look out into the world, I see the forces that would bring us disaster. I see the deep night of unthinkable cruelty and blindness. But I also look within the human heart and find something of love there, something that cares and shines out into the dark universe like a bright beacon. And in the shining of that light, I feel the dreams and prayers of all beings. In the shining of that beacon I feel all of our hopes for a better future, and the strength to do what we are here to do.

May all be fed. May all be healed. May all be loved.

To find out more about John's book go to www.thefoodrevolution.org

Love and Blessings,

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