

# Report: Gender Inequality Robs Women of Sexual, Reproductive Rights

Lisa Schlein – VOA News – April 10, 2019

A new report finds gender inequality strips women of their ability to control their sexual and reproductive options and limits their right to choose when and if they wish to start a family. The United Nations Population Fund released this year's State of the World Population report titled "Unfinished Business: The Pursuit of Rights and Choices for All."

Since the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was created 50 years ago, the number of births per woman has dr

opped by nearly half to 2.5 births. Also, there has been a significant decrease in fertility rates in the least developed countries, as well as deaths from pregnancy-related causes.

But the UNFPA reports more than 200 million women worldwide are subjected to unwanted pregnancies because they have no access to modern contraceptives. In addition, more than 800 pregnant women die each day from preventable causes because of limited access to reproductive health services. Two-thirds of maternal deaths today occur in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the report.

Director of UNFPA in Geneva, Monica Ferro, says gender inequality is often used to control women's sexuality and reproduction.

"Gender inequality limits the ability of women to freely make fundamental decisions about when and with whom to have sex, about the use of contraception or health care, and about whether and when to seek employment, or whether to seek higher education," Ferro said.

Women fare best in countries that have invested most in gender-equality policies and programs, Ferro tells VOA, adding that most of these countries are in the developed world.

"If you look at the countries who are the most challenged ones, it is countries where women still face many barriers in accessing health, in accessing especially sexual, reproductive, health and rights," she said.

The UNFPA has set several goals timed to meet the sustainable development goals by 2030, including eliminating preventable maternal deaths, creating universal access to family planning, and achieving zero tolerance for violent and abusive practices that harm women and girls.

# Tongue-tied

By Ragnar Joasson, *The Guardian*, October 26 , 2018

“Coffee and kleina,” reads a sign at a coffee shop in Reykjavik. Not so many years ago, such a billboard would simply have read: “*Kaffi og kleina*” – in the language of the Vikings, the official language of Iceland.

It is a privilege of the few to be able to read and write Icelandic, a language understood by only around 400,000 people worldwide. Icelandic, in which the historic Sagas were written in the 13th century, has changed so little since then on our small and isolated island, that we can still more or less read them as they were first written.

But Iceland is not so isolated anymore, and there are signs its language is facing challenges never seen before. Following the economic crash of 2008, and the subsequent collapse of the Icelandic currency (making Iceland a much cheaper destination than before), tourism has emerged as the largest industry, with 2.5 million tourists expected to visit a country of 350,000 people this year alone.

And everyone is catering to the tourists in English, of course. The importance of tourists to the economy is rapidly making English not only a second language in the service industry, but almost the first language.

There are other warning signs. Icelanders have always been very proud of their literary heritage, boasting that we write and read a lot of books. However, Icelanders bought 47% fewer books in 2017 than they did in 2010

Will Icelandic soon become the second language of Icelanders? All languages evolve, but so far we have managed to help Icelandic adapt to technological changes by creating new words for modern inventions such as the telephone (*sími*), TV (*sjónvarp*), email (*tölvupóstur*) and computer (*tölva*). Further evolution is inevitable. But with the ubiquity of English, is the Icelandic language at risk of disappearing more or less completely?

And this leads to the question: what value does a language have? If it is in danger, should we make an effort to save it?

# Antarctica's melt quickens, risks meters of sea level rise: study

Reuters, January 14, 2019

OSLO (Reuters) - Antarctica's annual ice losses have accelerated six-fold in the past 40 years in a trend that could push sea levels meters higher in coming centuries amid man-made global warming, scientists said on Monday.

They said the East Antarctic ice sheet is thawing at the fringes and adding to rising seas, unlike many past reports which have concluded that the eastern sheet has so far resisted a melt seen on the western side. Ice losses from the frozen continent surged to a net 252 billion tonnes a year in the period 2009-17 from an average 40 billion tonnes from 1979-90, according to the study in the U.S. journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

Overall, the scientists said that the melt of Antarctica added water equivalent to 13.2 millimeters (0.5 inch) of sea level rise over the past four decades.

"That's just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak," said Eric Rignot, a professor of Earth system science at the University of California, Irvine, who led other scientists in France, the Netherlands and the United States. "As the Antarctic ice sheet continues to melt away, we expect multi-metre sea level rise from Antarctica in the coming centuries" with continued man-made global warming, he wrote in a statement. Global sea levels have risen about 20 centimeters (8 inches) in the past century and many other studies have shown a faster thaw from Greenland to Antarctica, threatening coasts from Bangladesh to Florida and cities from London to Shanghai.

The gap was mainly because the PNAS study estimated that East Antarctica lost 57 billion tonnes over the period compared to a 5 billion tonne gain in last year's estimates. Ice sheets can gain mass if snowfall exceeds losses of ice. Antarctica contains enough ice to raise global sea levels by 57 meters if it ever all melted, a process that would require far higher temperatures than now and thousands of years.

# Bad milk

**The Guardian, October 26, 2019**

Known for their distinctive long horns, the Ankole cattle of western Uganda have evolved over millennia to withstand their harsh environment, with its lengthy dry spells and abundance of local maladies such as trypanosomiasis, a disease spread by the tsetse fly. But after flourishing for almost 10,000 years, the Ankole have begun to rapidly disappear.

Farmland is dwindling in Uganda due to the expanding human population, and Ankole require vast areas to graze. Local herders have responded to the pressure by replacing them, cross-breeding Ankole cattle with industrial species such as the European Holstein. But while these hybrids gain favourable genetic traits from the Holstein, producing more milk and meat, and requiring less land to keep, there is a hidden cost.

The genetic adaptations which enabled the Ankole to survive in such a harsh climate are diluted in the new hybrids, which lack the immune capabilities to resist local diseases. Instead of reaping profits, the herders now spend much of their money on antibiotics and pesticides to keep the animals healthy. In Burkina Faso, farmers who made similar decisions have lost almost all of their livestock to disease.

But this problem isn't restricted to impoverished African nations. Across the UK and much of the rest of the world, the cattle farming industry is facing increasing challenges due to environmental pressures as well as the consequences of genetic selection programmes aimed at increasing income.

"If we don't do anything to change this, it could spell long-term disaster for the farming industry particularly in the context of climate change," says Catarina Ginja, a researcher in biodiversity. "The industrial breeds may not be capable of resisting new disease epidemics, which could arise as the climate warms over the next century. We already had some alarming examples of how vulnerable these breeds can be to a deadly pandemic in the recent past, for example the mad cow disease outbreak in the 1990s, although that was unrelated to climate change. It's a serious concern."

# May I have a word... about sports-washing and cover-ups

**Jonathan Bouquet – The Guardian – 28 October 2018**

You would have thought that there was only so much football that could be crammed into the year, wouldn't you?

But it seems not. Fifa, that noted home of sporting rectitude, has plans to launch a global club competition, this one backed by Saudi Arabian money, channelled through Japan's SoftBank.

Whether it gets off the ground remains to be seen, but given Saudi Arabia's present world standing, you would hope it would be hoofed into Row Z. But what interested me about the mooted tournament was it was described as an example of "sports-washing", whereby questionable countries use sport to buff and hone their image and so be cast in a more favourable light.

Not that this exercise has a particularly noble history. Think of perhaps the first example – the 1936 Berlin Olympics or the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. Consider also the Bahrain grand prix or the one in Azerbaijan. But no amount of expensive cars whizzing around circuits in Bahrain or Azerbaijan can obscure their appalling records on human rights. As for Russia... So sports-washing is an interesting concept, but one that is ultimately doomed to fail.

Returning to Saudi Arabia for a moment. I thought Donald Trump outdid himself when he boomed: "They had a very bad original concept... the cover-up was one of the worst cover-ups in the history of cover-ups."

Eh? A journalist has been barbarously murdered and the most heinous thing to Trump is that the Saudis made a complete cock-up of getting their story straight. Mind you, after Salisbury, perhaps the Saudis, like the Russians, could do with a crash course in "excuse-washing".

# Concern about overpopulation is a red herring; consumption's the problem

*Charles Eisenstein – The Guardian, 28 March 2019*

More than half the world's population now lives in countries where the fertility rate – the average number of babies born per woman – is below the replacement level (around 2.1).

This seems good news for anyone concerned about the environment. [...]

For economists, however, and for the public officials they inform, the aging and decline of the population presents not a boon but a threat.

[...]

Economic growth is much easier to achieve when the population is growing as well. In its absence, consumption per capita must grow instead. Indeed, certain countries uphold economic growth as a way to deal with the problem of aging population. This should sober up our celebration of the drop in fertility rates, if they accompany resource-intensive development. And apparently they do: the world over, fertility rates are inversely correlated with industrialisation.

If everyone on Earth lived the lifestyle of a traditional Indian villager, it is arguable that even 12 billion would be a sustainable world population. If everyone lives like an upper-middle-class North American (a status to which much of the world seems to aspire), then even two billion is unsustainable. [...]

Population control doesn't rock the boat very much; it doesn't fundamentally alter the distribution of wealth and power today. Indeed, it plays into a colonialistic narrative that the fecund masses of the global south are to blame for the environmental crisis, and suggests that the solution is more development (with its population-limiting effects). In comparison, it is far more disruptive to the present world order to challenge economic growth, globalisation, and development.

We must examine all aspects, economic and ideological, of our growth-dependent system, starting with the rhetoric of development that upholds an industrial, US/European-style society as the pinnacle of human wellbeing, and extending to the monetary system that drives globalisation and the growth of consumption. Whether in terms of population or consumption, sustainability cannot mean sustainable growth.

## May I have a word... about mobile phone numpties

Jonathan Bouquet – The Guardian – 9 September 2018

“If we are thinking about injury prevention and the dominant ‘safe system’ approach used within road safety, there is actually a strong case for redesigning infrastructure over relying on other methods of changing behaviour.”

So says Shaun Helman, chief transportation scientist at the Transport Research Laboratory. But what particular problem could he be addressing? Cyclists taking their lives in their hands every time they mount their bikes? Drivers who sit in the middle lane of motorways, steadfastly going no quicker or slower than 50mph, thereby causing other drivers to tear their hair out?

No - Mr Helman is addressing those zombies who are glued to their mobile phones, to the discomfiture of anyone else within 15ft. You know the sort - there they go, faces glued to their little screens, oblivious to anyone who might actually want to be getting somewhere, except Mr Numpty has just received a vital message and must stop in his tracks, causing an inevitable collision and dudgeon from Mr Numpty that you have tail-ended him.

Yet far from taking a well-justified cudgel to the back of Mr Numpty’s head for his selfish behaviour, it seems there might a nannyish solution, namely embedding strips of red lights on kerbs to tell mobile phone users to stop at junctions or special lanes on pavements marked as “text walking lanes”.

Has the world really come to this, that pedestrians with a seriously bad phone habit have to be cosseted and mollycoddled? Far better to have a bloke with a loudhailer, at busy places, ready to bellow: “Oi, you, the selfish halfwit, watch where you are bloody well going. Do try acting like a human being and put that phone back in your pocket.” Failing that, I shall insist on my democratic right to barge into these plonkers and cause maximum annoyance. You have been warned, Mr Numpty.

# California Wildfires: Inmates Risking Their Lives to Fight Fires Say It's A 'Cruel Joke,' But Better Than Prison

NEWSWEEK - 8/17/18

As long as California's record-breaking wildfires rage, heroic men and women fight the flames on the frontlines. Firefighters in California work 24-hour shifts in life-threatening conditions. Stress levels are high, but cool-headed, strategic thinking is essential when one small misstep can result in the loss of human lives. In exchange for their efforts, firefighters typically make about \$75,000 plus benefits each year. But a group of 3,400 wildfire-fighting inmates from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation are risking their lives for just \$2 per day and an extra \$1 per hour when fighting an active fire.

"It's a cruel joke," said Deirdre Wilson, a former inmate who served in the Puerta La Cruz fire camp between 2004 and 2005. Wilson, currently the program coordinator for Project Rebound at California State University, Fullerton, said she signed up for the fire program because she saw it as a way to reduce her prison sentence and was desperate to return to her children. Wilson was initially sentenced to seven years, but was released after three years and seven months.

Dennis Dumas, who served at the inmate fire camp in Norco, California, between 2005 and 2007 told *Newsweek* that the prison system needs serious rehabilitation and career counseling reform. "I think that the reward for the work completed and risks taken needs to translate to a clear employment path, not money given to inmates who haven't proven themselves in society." Most firefighters in California are required to become licensed emergency medical technicians (EMTs), but convicted felons are typically barred from receiving the qualification, meaning they can't join Cal Fire when they leave prison. At camp, Dumas underwent a series of rigorous tests and training, and eventually worked his way into a leadership role.

# Open a cookery book to find the recipe for how cultures blend

Kenan Malik – The Guardian – 30 December 2018

They can be faddish. They can be moralising. They can be fluff. But cookery books can also be magical. There is something wondrous about discovering a new way of cooking panang curry, a different take on bread-and-butter pudding, a twist to perfecting a bisque.

Cookery books are, though, about far more than recipes. They are historical witnesses. The earliest recipes are found carved into stone in 4,000-year-old Egyptian tombs, to ensure that servants of nobles could continue serving them perfect flatbread in the afterlife. The first true collection of recipes is probably Roman – Marcus Gavius Apicius’s *De re Coquinaria* (Of Culinary Matters). From around a millennium ago, one finds recipe manuscripts from all the major world traditions.

Until the 19th century, such collections were for the nobility or, rather, for their servants. With the coming of the industrial age, we find new titles such as *A Plain Cookery Book for the Working Classes*. The history of cookery books is also the history of class and gender, of empire and immigration, of mass culture and domestic architecture.

Even more than historical documents, cookery books are cultural witnesses. To bake or to steam or to roast is also to begin to unwrap a culture. The best writers – Claudia Roden, for instance – are anthropologists as much as cooks. At a time when there is much preening about “cultural appropriation”, food is the best reminder that cultures are forever colliding, borrowing, remaking.

I have opened before me Anissa Helou’s wonderful *Feast*, which tells of the food of the Islamic world. Through her Iranian flatbreads, Indonesian crab curries and Indian haleems, Helou provides not just a wondrous journey through myriad tastes, but illuminates in a unique way the commonalities and differences of a vast set of cultures.

And where else would I have discovered how to roast a camel hump?

# San Francisco is first US city to ban facial recognition

By Dave Lee, North America technology reporter, BBC News, 15 May 2019

Legislators in San Francisco have voted to ban the use of facial recognition, the first US city to do so. The emerging technology will not be allowed to be used by local agencies, such as the city's transport authority, or law enforcement. Additionally, any plans to buy any kind of new surveillance technology must now be approved by city administrators.

Opponents of the measure said it will put people's safety at risk and hinder efforts to fight crime.

Those in favour of the move said the technology as it exists today is unreliable, and represented an unnecessary infringement on people's privacy and liberty. In particular, they argued the systems are error prone, particularly when dealing with women or people with darker skin. "With this vote, San Francisco has declared that face surveillance technology is incompatible with a healthy democracy and that residents deserve a voice in decisions about high-tech surveillance," said Matt Cagle from the American Civil Liberties Union. "We applaud the city for listening to the community. Other cities should take note and set up similar safeguards to protect people's safety and civil rights."

"Instead of an outright ban, we believe a moratorium would have been more appropriate," said Joel Engardio, vice-president of Stop Crime SF. "We agree there are problems with facial recognition ID technology and it should not be used today. But the technology will improve and it could be a useful tool for public safety when used responsibly. We should keep the door open for that possibility."

The new rules will not apply to security measures at San Francisco's airport or sea port, as they are run by federal, not local, agencies. Some campaigners unsuccessfully urged for the measures not to apply to local police. While San Francisco's officers do not currently use facial recognition technology, a number of other police forces across the US do.

## **Waitrose to ban glitter from own-brand products by 2020**

**Rebecca Smithers, Consumer affairs correspondent – The Guardian – 14 Dec. 2018**

Waitrose has joined the crackdown on glitter by pledging to ban it from all own-brand products by 2020.

The supermarket chain said its own-label cards, wraps, crackers, tags, flowers and plants will either be glitter-free or use an environmentally friendly alternative.

It planned to use more vibrant foliage in its cut flowers to compensate for the lack of glitter, while new designs would be used for stationery, in particular cards and wrapping paper.

Waitrose said three-quarters of its own-brand cards, wrapping paper, crackers and tags, as well as half of its flowers and plants, were already glitter-free.

Most glitter is made from etched aluminium bonded to polyethylene terephthalate – a form of microplastic that can find its way into the oceans. As well as being an environmental scourge, the substance can pose a danger to people and animals. In January, a woman in Swansea was nearly blinded after glitter from a Christmas card worked its way into her eyeball.

The BBC show *Strictly Come Dancing* banned the use of traditional glitter on the programme this year, while several nursery schools and music festivals in the UK have also axed it.

“Reducing the impact of plastics on the environment is something our customers care passionately about,” said Tor Harris, the head of corporate social responsibility, health and agriculture at Waitrose. “While it is important to eliminate the use of glitter, we will find other ways to make sure our products sparkle at Christmas and throughout the year.”

Meanwhile, Marks & Spencer is introducing a biodegradable alternative to glitter across its fresh flowers and plant range. It could be in use as early as January after a successful trial.

# The case against colonizing space to save humanity

By Kelsey Piper Oct 22, 2018, Vox

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns us that climate change could be shaping up to be even more catastrophic than we feared. Too many world governments are still armed with nuclear weapons that they've nearly deployed by accident on occasion. We're unprepared for pandemics, and technological advancement is bringing within reach new threats to our world.

So do we need a backup plan? Or a backup planet? Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk both seem to think so.

Elon Musk famously founded SpaceX because he was frustrated NASA wasn't getting us to Mars fast enough, and was left worried there was no second chance for humanity. Bezos, too, is worried that Earth will run out of resources, and that by the time we realize we need the infrastructure to get off-planet it'll be too late to build it. He's spent his personal fortune on BlueOrigin, which will begin commercial spaceflight next year. He prefers the Moon as a first target. Unlike Musk, he's not focused on self-sufficient colonies that could survive the destruction of Earth, but on using the resources in space to try to dig us out of our problems here at home.

These proposals have been roundly criticized for their seeming elitism, working on a life raft for the few while most people are left to die. (Musk contests that, saying that it'll be adventurous people, not elite ones, who populate Mars, and Bezos is emphatic that "we go to space to save the Earth.") I was interested in another angle: Would this even work? If you have a few billion dollars to throw at the problem of getting humanity through the next centuries alive, is space colonization a reasonable place to spend it?

# Food waste chief to target 'scandal' of 250m binned UK meals

**Helen Pidd, North of England editor – The Guardian – 31 December 2018**

The government has appointed a food waste champion to tackle the problem of 250m meals being thrown away in the UK each year.

Ben Elliot, a philanthropist and co-founder of the lifestyle group Quintessentially, will aim to help the government eliminate food waste going to landfill by 2030.

He was appointed to the unpaid, voluntary role by Michael Gove, the environment secretary, who described food waste as “an economic, environmental and moral scandal”.

Elliot’s first task will be to oversee the Food Waste Fund, a £15m pilot scheme which will redistribute surplus food, Gove said.

Working with businesses and other stakeholders from across retail, manufacturing, hospitality and food services, he will also support government consultations on the introduction of mandatory food waste reduction targets and redistribution obligations.

Elliot said: “While families all over the country struggle to put food on the table and children still go to school each day with empty stomachs, there continues to be an unforgivable amount of food waste, which is both morally deplorable and largely avoidable.

“As a nation, we need to stop this excessive waste and ensure that surplus food finds its way to people in our society who need it most, and not let it get thrown away and go to landfill.”

In his role as chair of the Quintessentially Foundation, Elliot, who is the Duchess of Cornwall’s nephew, has worked with the Felix Project, a charity targeting food waste and food poverty in London which claims to have diverted up to £1bn of surplus food to those in need.

Currently around 43,000 tonnes of surplus food is redistributed from retailers and food manufacturers every year, the government says. It is estimated a further 100,000 tonnes of food – equating to 250m meals a year – is edible and readily available but goes uneaten. Instead, it is sent away for generating energy from waste, or for animal feed.

# Calls to lower UK voting age as Welsh assembly considers change

*Tuesday 9 Oct 2018 - THE GUARDIAN*

Pressure is growing on the UK government to consider giving 16- and 17-year-olds the vote, as the Welsh assembly prepares to debate the issue. The assembly in Cardiff is widely expected to back plans to lower the voting age in its elections, following the example set by Scotland. However, there are no plans for the Westminster government to give under-18s the vote in UK parliamentary elections or English local elections.

In light of the expected developments in Wales, the Electoral Reform Society is challenging Theresa May's government to create a "united franchise"<sup>1</sup> across the UK. The campaign group's chief executive, Darren Hughes, said: "Votes at 16 and 17 for the UK is now a matter of when, not if. However, without reform soon, the United Kingdom will be desperately divided when it comes to the voting age and how we empower a new generation. We have seen from Scotland that young people are ready and willing to take charge of their democratic responsibility, and many of the voices who opposed a fairer franchise in 2014 now unequivocally support it, having seen young people's huge enthusiasm."

The idea of lowering the age in Wales in time for the next assembly elections, in 2021, will be debated in Cardiff on Wednesday.

Elin Jones, the presiding officer, said: "Empowering young people to vote at 16 is a powerful statement from the assembly that we value their views. Votes at 16 will have to be accompanied by appropriate political and citizenship education and public awareness-raising to ensure young people are encouraged and supported to exercise their right to vote."

"There is a widening gulf between people and politics, which we can help reverse by nurturing active and engaged young citizens. Scotland and now Wales are modernising politics and promoting real civic engagement, inspiring young people to become active citizens. It's time for the UK government to follow suit."

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<sup>1</sup> Franchise : le droit de vote

# We won't let fear consume our lives

**The Guardian, February 15, 2019**

A year ago, at age 17, David Hogg was interviewing his classmates as they hid in a closet from the gunshots they had just heard on their Parkland, Florida campus. Now, the 18-year-old and a small group of friends have become internationally recognized gun violence prevention activists. For nine months after a shooting at their school left 17 students and teachers dead, the founders of March for Our Lives fought nonstop to vote out National Rifle Association-backed lawmakers, criss-crossing the country to hold rallies and voter registration events, as well as to build connections with veteran gun violence prevention activists in cities like New York and Chicago.

Today, Hogg and the other students who first spoke out after the Parkland shooting are focusing on the quiet, unglamorous work of grassroots organizing. The group is training eight regional directors to help build out their March for Our Lives local chapters. They want to prepare for the 2020 presidential election by expanding the national reach of their youth voter registration and turnout operation.

Yes, some of the teenagers are making plans to go to college next year. Yes, they are dealing with grief and exhaustion and backlash. They have had to learn to set some boundaries for the work they are doing, as well as learn how to weather brutal political losses. November's election saw longtime allies of the National Rifle Association win tight races for governor and US senate in Florida, the Parkland students' home state. By early January, a Republican legislator in Florida had filed a bill attempting to repeal the few compromise gun control measures the state had passed after the Parkland shooting.

But the students who inspired school walkouts to protest government inaction have seen enough progress that they want to keep fighting. Youth voter turnout nationwide spiked ten percentage points to an estimated 31% in 2018. At least some of that increase is likely due to March for Our Lives' months of get-out-the-vote efforts.

# Fire people for their beliefs and we might all be out of a job

**Kenan Malik – The Guardian – 13 January 2019**

John Finnis is a reactionary. His views are odious. He believes that homosexuality is “never a valid, humanly acceptable choice” and that mass immigration constitutes “reverse colonisation”.

Finnis is also emeritus professor of law and legal philosophy at University College, Oxford. Last week, students launched a petition to have him removed from teaching for his “record of extremely discriminatory views against many groups of disadvantaged people”.

Critics of the petition have responded by suggesting that, as fellow Oxford law professor Les Green put it, to fire Finnis “solely on the basis that he defends false or repugnant views is a clear violation of academic freedom”. The petition’s authors, Alex Benn and Daniel Taylor, dismiss such arguments as “simplistic”. Finnis may not discriminate against gay people, or be abusive to them in class, but LGBTQ+ students who know his views “may be intimidated, stop contributing and learn less effectively”. Plural societies, they insist, must necessarily limit the academic freedom of academics espousing “discriminatory” views.

Think, however, about the logic of this argument. Should Orthodox Muslims, whose views on homosexuality may not be that different from Finnis’s, also be barred from teaching because their beliefs may cause anxiety to LGBTQ+ students? Should Jewish students have the right to call for the removal of an academic who supports the BDS boycott of Israel that many regard as antisemitic? Should atheist academics who hold that religion is evil, and that the world would be a better place were religion (and hence believers) not to exist be removed if religious students feel “intimidated, stop contributing” and the rest?

In a plural society, it’s not just reactionaries such as Finnis whose views students might find offensive or discriminatory. And once we start sacking people for their political or moral beliefs, it will not just be reactionaries who’ll lose their jobs. Indeed, this is already the case. It’s a not a trend we should encourage.

# Facebook are 'morally bankrupt liars' says New Zealand's privacy commissioner

Eleanor Ainge Roy – *The Guardian*, 8 Apr 2019

New Zealand's privacy commissioner has lashed out at social media giant Facebook in the wake of the Christchurch attacks, calling the company "morally bankrupt pathological liars".

The commissioner used his personal Twitter page to lambast the social network, which has also drawn the ire of prime minister Jacinda Ardern for hosting a livestream of the attacks that left 50 dead, which was then copied and shared all over the internet.

"Facebook cannot be trusted," wrote John Edwards. "They are morally bankrupt pathological liars who enable genocide (Myanmar), facilitate foreign undermining of democratic institutions. "[They] allow the live streaming of suicides, rapes, and murders, continue to host and publish the mosque attack video, allow advertisers to target 'Jew haters' and other hateful market segments, and refuse to accept any responsibility for any content or harm. "

Edwards was responding to an interview given by Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg to America's ABC network, in which he failed to commit to any changes to the Facebook live technology, including a time delay on livestreams.

Zuckerberg said incidents like the live streaming of the Christchurch mosque attacks were the result of "bad actors"; not bad technology and a time delay would disrupt the enjoyment of users who broadcast events like birthday parties or group hangouts.

Edwards described Zuckerberg's comments as "disingenuous", and said the company had refused to tell his office how many murders, suicides and sexual assaults had been broadcast using the platform.

Before the mosque attacks Prime Minister Ardern was an avid user of Facebook live, using the technology to broadcast her formal press conferences, as well as more casual, informal messages from the sofa of her Auckland home, or the kitchen of Premier House in Wellington.

The Guardian understands the prime minister's office were considering what other platforms it could use to broadcast the prime minister's video messages, including a separate, dedicated website, to avoid using Facebook.

# Stop making free with our sensitive personal data

Kenan Malik – The Guardian – 3 March 2019

It's the software that Amazon uses to tell you to buy a book you know you'll never read. And Twitter to persuade you to follow some douchebag. And your local council to tell social workers how to act.

A report by *Sky News's* Rowland Manthorpe, based on research by Cardiff University's Data Justice Lab, revealed that at least 53 local authorities and almost a third of UK police forces are using "predictive algorithms" to determine how to intervene in everything from traffic management to benefits sanctions.

Bristol city council's integrated analytics hub, for instance, uses data on benefits, school attendance, crime, teenage pregnancy and much more to give people a "risk score" that is then used to flag cases for social work intervention.

For local authorities, such algorithms provide cheap solutions in an age of severely reduced budgets. Their advocates insist that there is nothing to worry about, as computers never make the final decision – they simply aid humans. But as a report from the Data Justice Lab observed, in the "context of deskilling and resource limitations in the public sector, the results of data analytics may significantly constrain and guide decision-making".

It's one thing for Amazon to entice me to read Jordan Petersen or Twitter to push me to follow Piers Morgan. It's quite another for public authorities to use similar algorithms, fed with a mountain of sensitive personal data, to determine who may commit crime or be at risk of abuse.

Such data practices, according to the Cardiff University report, "have become normalised before there has been a chance for broader public discussion". The fact that these systems are already in place "will serve as a rationale for their continued existence and a means to foreclose debate". Isn't it time to have that debate before it's too late?

# Ocean plastic predicted to triple within a decade

By Lauren Said-Moorhouse, CNN – March 21, 2018

Without intervention soon, the amount of plastic littering the world's oceans is expected to triple within a decade, a new UK government report warns.

The "Foresight Future of the Sea" report from the UK Government Office for Science said our oceans have seen "unprecedented change as a result of direct human activity and climate change." It identified the rise of plastic in oceans, along with rising temperatures and sea levels and chemical pollution, as some of the biggest problems the marine environment faces.

The report found that 70% of marine litter is non-degradable plastic which is projected to increase threefold between 2015 and 2025.

Experts suggested the government needed to be more strategic in its approach to the sea in order to successfully halt some of the long-term pollution issues.

"The major response is likely to lie in preventing it from entering the sea, introducing new biodegradable plastics, and potentially public awareness campaigns about marine protection," the report said.

The UK economy relies heavily on oceans with 95% of trade traveling by sea. The report also suggested that the UK had opportunities to capitalize on the "ocean economy" (sea-based industries), which it says could double in size by 2030 to \$3 trillion.

Plastic has been found to choke marine wildlife, and has also entered the ocean food chain -- exposing marine life to toxic chemicals that can end up in the food on our plates.

Around 150 million tons of plastic are already floating in our oceans. It is estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in our oceans by weight if current rates of plastic dumping hold.

In December, the UK was one of 193 countries that signed a UN resolution to eliminate plastic pollution in the sea. A month later the UK introduced what it described as one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads, outlawing the manufacture of products containing the harmful plastic particles.

# Cambridge university to study how it profited from colonial slavery

Sally Weale, *The Guardian*, Tue 30 Apr 2019

The University of Cambridge is to launch a two-year academic study to uncover how the institution contributed to and profited from slavery and other forms of coerced labour during the colonial era.

Two full-time post-doctoral researchers will conduct the inquiry. Their brief is to find out how the university gained from slavery, through specific financial bequests and gifts. They will also investigate the extent to which scholarship at Cambridge might have reinforced, validated or perhaps challenged race-based thinking at the time.

Vice-chancellor Stephen Toope has appointed an eight-member advisory panel to oversee the research and ultimately recommend ways to publicly acknowledge the institution's past links to slavery and address its modern impact.

The way universities and museums deal with the legacy of slave-owning benefactors has become a key area of debate within academia, highlighted in recent years by protests from students such as the "Rhodes must fall" campaign at the University of Oxford.

Last month St John's College, Oxford, advertised a new academic post looking for a researcher to examine the university's contribution to creating and maintaining Britain's colonial empire. All Souls College added a memorial plaque commemorating the slaves who worked on plantations in Barbados. The funds from the plantation were left to the college by a former fellow and were used to build the college's library.

The University of Glasgow last year announced a programme of "reparative justice" after a year-long study discovered that the university benefited from the equivalent of tens of millions of pounds donated from the profits of slavery. It pledged to create a centre for the study of slavery and include a memorial in the name of the enslaved.

Announcing the inquiry at Cambridge, Toope said: "We cannot change the past, but nor should we seek to hide from it. I hope this process will help the university understand and acknowledge its role during that dark phase of human history."

# World's first no-kill eggs go on sale in Berlin

Josie Le Blond – The Guardian – 22 December 2018

The world's first ever no-kill eggs are now on sale in Berlin after German scientists found an easy way to determine a chick's sex before it hatches, in a breakthrough that could put an end to the annual live shredding of billions of male chicks worldwide.

The patented "Seleggt" process can determine the sex of a chick just nine days after an egg has been fertilised. Male eggs are processed into animal feed, leaving only female chicks to hatch at the end of a 21-day incubation period.

"If you can determine the sex of a hatching egg you can entirely dispense with the culling of live male chicks," said Seleggt managing director Dr Ludger Breloh, who spearheaded the four-year programme by German supermarket Rewe Group to make its own-brand eggs more sustainable.

"It's not about winning or losing," he added of the worldwide race to find a marketable solution. "We all have the same goal, which is to end the culling of chicks in the supply chain. Of course, there's competition, but it's positive in that it keeps us all focused on that goal."

An estimated 4-6 billion male chicks are slaughtered globally every year because they serve no economic purpose. Some are suffocated, others are fed alive into grinding or shredding machines to be processed into reptile food.

The culling is a messy solution to a thorny problem of modern poultry farming. Humans have bred chickens for one of two purposes: to produce eggs, or meat. Yet half of all the animals bred for this purpose are considered useless. Male chicks lay no eggs and don't grow fast enough to justify the cost of feeding them up for meat. So, they are simply destroyed.

Chick culling has become increasingly controversial. In 2015, a video went viral of an Israeli animal rights activist shutting down a chick shredding machine and challenging a police officer to turn it back on. Consumer kickback has prompted a global race to develop a more humane solution. [...]

# Why we shouldn't all be vegan

THE CONVERSATION - Jan 16, 2019

After decades in which the number of people choosing to cut out meat from their diet has steadily increased, 2019 is set to be the year the world changes the way that it eats. Or at least, that's the ambitious aim of a major campaign under the umbrella of an organisation simply called EAT. The core message is to discourage meat and dairy, seen as part of an "over-consumption of protein" – and specifically to target consumption of beef.

The push comes at a time when consumer behaviour already seems to be shifting. In the three years following 2014, according to research firm GlobalData, there was a six-fold<sup>2</sup> increase in people identifying as vegans in the US, a huge rise – albeit from a very low base. It's a similar story in the UK, where the number of vegans has increased by 350%, compared to a decade ago. And across Asia, many governments are promoting plant-based diets. New government dietary guidelines in China, for example, call on the nation's 1.3 billion people to reduce their meat consumption by 50%. Flexitarianism, a mostly plant-based diet with the occasional inclusion of meat, is also on the rise.

EAT describes itself as a science-based global platform for food system transformation. It has partnered with Oxford and Harvard universities, as well as with the medical journal The Lancet. But we have concerns that some of the science behind the campaign and the policy is partial and misleading.

A shift towards a radically plant-based planetary diet loses the many benefits of livestock – including its deployment on land that is not suitable for crop production, its contribution to livelihoods, and the many other benefits that animals provide. Sustainable, ecological and harmonious animal production really should be part of the solution of the "world food problem", considered from both the nutritional and environmental scenarios. The Earth is an extraordinarily complex ecosystem – any one-size-fits-all solution risks wreaking havoc<sup>3</sup> with it.

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<sup>2</sup> Six-fold = multiplied by 6

<sup>3</sup> To wreak havoc = to cause chaos

# Farm Animals May Soon Get New Qualities With Gene-Editing

VOA News – November 25, 2018

By using a process called gene-editing, the company, Recombinetics, says it may be able to remove problem-causing genetic traits from some animals.

Recombinetics says it can produce cows born without horns — those sharp objects on top of their heads. By using the editing process, the company says it can also breed cows that survive in hot weather. With gene-cutting, it says, pigs could live and never fully grow up. Why would that be a good idea? When male pigs reach puberty, their meat can have an unpleasant smell.

The company must first persuade United States government officials that gene-edited animals are safe, and no different than ones bred the traditional way.

There has been debate as to whether people would want to eat food that comes from gene-edited animals.

Last month, the FDA announced an action plan that described the steps it will take to support both plant and animal biotechnology, while safeguarding public health.

To make this technology more acceptable, Recombinetics is not yet changing animals' genes to greatly increase their growth or productivity. That could make the animals seem too strange to people. Instead, the company says it is adding gene-edited traits to ease animals' suffering.

Cow horns can hurt other cows, animals and people. Animal rights activists criticize the way farmers currently remove cow horns. They use hot irons or a caustic, burning substance to remove the bone.

This is how Recombinetics says gene-editing works: In a laboratory, workers use an instrument called a "molecular pencil" to "erase, or cut, re-write, remove, or add genes." This newly edited gene then would be included when an animal is impregnated.

Last year, the company had a gene-edited male cow without horns. It fathered several cows. They were also all born hornless and are being raised on the grounds of the University of California, Davis. When the female offspring grow up and begin producing milk, the milk will be tested for any problems. [...]

# ILO: Changing World of Work Poses New Safety, Health Risks

Lisa Schlein – VOA News – April 18, 2019

The U.N. labor agency says existing methods of protecting workers from accidents and disease are not good enough to deal with new occupational hazards arising from changes in the nature of work. The International Labor Organization (ILO) is calling for revisions to address physical and psychological problems stemming from the changing job world.

In a new report, ILO estimates find 2.78 million workers die from occupational accidents and work-related diseases each year. It says more than 374 million people are injured or fall ill every year through work-related accidents. The cost to the world economy from work days lost is nearly four percent of global Gross Domestic Product.

The ILO's report warns the changes and dangers posed by an increase in technology could result in a worsening of that situation. It says new measures must be implemented to deal with the psycho-social risks, work-related stress and non-communicable diseases resulting from new forms of work.

It says digitization, artificial intelligence, robotics and automatization require new monitoring methods to protect workers.

Manal Azzi, an ILO Technical Specialist on Occupational Safety and Health, says that on the one hand, new technology is freeing workers from many dirty, dangerous jobs. On the other, she says, the jobs can raise ethical concerns.

She told VOA surveillance of workers has become more intrusive, leading them to work longer hours, a situation that may not be ethical.

“Also, different monitoring systems that workers wear. Before, you would punch in, punch out. Now, you could wear bands on your wrist that show how many hours you are actually working in a production line. And, there is even discussion of introducing implants, where workers can be continuously surveyed on their production processes,” she said.

Another area of concern is climate change. The ILO is positive about the green jobs being introduced. But it says care must be taken to protect people from warmer temperatures that increase risks, including air pollution, heat stress, and newly emerging diseases.

# Allow teenagers to protect themselves from their anti-vaxx parents

By THE LOS ANGELES TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD, MAR 15, 2019

California law gives teenagers the legal right to consent to abortions, obtain birth control, get tested for HIV or vaccinated for sexually transmitted diseases, even if their parents object. Should they also have the right to seek out immunization for other serious and potentially deadly diseases ?

It's a reasonable question here as measles cases continue to surge globally and in the U.S., and faith in vaccinations has eroded to the point that the World Health Organization listed vaccine skepticism as one of the biggest threats to human health in 2019. It's one thing to allow parents to make healthcare decisions, even bad ones, for their babies and toddlers who can't make rational choices for themselves. It's another thing entirely to deny scientifically proven treatment to high school students who fully understand what their parents do not: that the recommended childhood immunizations are safe and not having received one puts them at risk of contracting highly contagious and serious diseases that can lead to lifelong health complications or even death.

A large measles outbreak among Orthodox Jewish communities in New York has prompted state legislators there to propose an urgent measure allowing teens 14 and older to obtain vaccinations, even over their parents' objections. It makes sense to enable more people to obtain safe immunizations because the diseases they protect them from are not minor. Before wide-scale adoption of vaccinations measles killed more than 2.5 million people a year. Even now, the disease routinely kills thousands of people across the globe. A quarter of measles cases are so serious they result in hospitalization. What's more, vaccinations don't just protect the people who are vaccinated; they also raise the general "herd immunity" level that guards against disease outbreaks and protects even those too sick to get immunized.

If kids are old enough to comprehend the danger of preventable disease, they ought to be old enough to take steps to avoid it — no matter what their uninformed parents think.