



# VIP TRANSCRIPT SERIES

## INTERVIEW WITH HEATHER MILLS



**Heather Mills** is an activist, charity campaigner and United Nations Association Goodwill Ambassador. After campaigning for over 14 years to raise awareness to rid the world of landmines, and fit over 400,000 amputees with prostheses, she was ironically hit by a police motorcycle and lost her lower leg. She found healing in a vegan diet, and has gone on to be a leading world pioneer in bringing the vegan message public.

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## OVERCOMING ANY OBSTACLE TO SHARE THE MESSAGE

DR. WILL TUTTLE: Welcome, everyone, to Veganpalooza 2013. We are honored and delighted to have with us for this session Heather Mills, who's a noted activist, charity campaigner, and United Nations Association Goodwill Ambassador. I think everyone knows she campaigned for many years, over 14 years, to raise funds and awareness to rid the world of landmines, helping to clear over 20 million square meters of mine-filled lands and fit over 400,000 amputees with prostheses. After working in the war, her efforts in this field took an ironic significance when in August of 1993 she was involved in a road accident with a police motorcycle, suffering the loss of her left leg below the knee. She is now a committed patron and activist for the vegan cause. She's worked with Viva! and other organizations, and she's recently been investing a lot of time and money in developing plant-based alternatives to meat and dairy products through her restaurant concept VBites and her multi-award-winning food company Redwood Whole Foods. So there's a lot more we talk about with Heather Mills, but we're just really, as I said, so glad that she can be joining us from Austria on this interview. So Heather, welcome to Veganpalooza 2013.

HEATHER MILLS: Thank you for having me.

DR. TUTTLE: I'm really so glad that we can hear from you about your experience and your wisdom in relationship to veganism. Would you like to tell everyone in the beginning here what it was that really brought you to veganism and how you came to this?

HEATHER: Back in 1990, I went on holiday to what was then Yugoslavia. I actually went on holiday with my husband's at the time ex-wife and kids, which you do, and decided after our holiday, and losing quite a few children, that I would change my life and go and live there. Then the war started. I worked on the front line for a number of years in former Yugoslavia. Then I was coming back to advise the defense secretary on the situation, and crazily, not a scratch, not a landmine touched me while I was on the frontline, but I crossed the street in London, Kensington. It seems that a building had apparently given a false alarm, and the diplomatic police came. One of them was speeding as I stepped out in front of a bus, and took my leg off, crushed my pelvis, punctured my lungs, ripped my head open. While I was in hospital, my leg wouldn't heal, so they kept chopping the leg off more and more. My girlfriend came in, said, "Look, you've got to get out of this hospital. You've been in here for months and months, and your wound is never going to heal. You've got to go vegan." And I was like, vegan? Are you crazy? What the heck is vegan? Vegan, schmegan. She said, "Come with me." So she flew me off to a place in America called Hippocrates. This was in 1994.

DR. TUTTLE: Oh, in Florida. Right.

HEATHER: Yeah, in Florida in 1994. Literally within two weeks of wheat grass and poultices and everything that was possible, I was healed and managed to get my first prosthesis. I wanted to shout about it because it was just unbelievable. I could finally get a leg and walk. So I wrote a small book. I was very much in the public eye at that time, and everyone wanted to know how it was I healed. You couldn't heal in three months in England, how did you heal in two weeks over there? So I wrote the book about it, and everything that I'd learned from Dr. Brian at the time, and that book was then circulated. The money from that started up the first prosthetics collections center because I still had that connection with former Yugoslavia.

Then I was vegan raw for a couple of years before I went to vegan normal. What I started to think about was how are we going to get people to go from full-on steak to eating a plant-based, more healthier foods.

Because unless you're sick or ill or have a big shock experience with animals or something that it moves you, with the environment, there's always something, unless that happens, 99% of the time you're never going to convert from a steak-eating, lobster-eating person to just full straight salads. You have to do the transitional foods. What I've found really interesting over the years – my company VBites is now the biggest vegan food company in the world – but everybody, especially hardcore vegans, which is what I was, was very much against making anything that tastes anything like an animal. But I told them I'm not interested in you vegans. You're already converted. I don't have any interest in feeding you. You know what to eat. You know where to get your protein. You know what's best for you. I'm interested in helping the people that need some education and guidance and to make it a bit easier for them for the transitional food, because obviously once you eat the food, after time your whole taste buds change, your metabolism changes with the faux meats, eventually your taste buds change and you want more vegetables. You want more broccoli and spinach and whole foods, beans, and all the things, quinoa and things that are wonderful for you. But you have to help them get there.

So I started developing lots of fake meats because most of the stuff out there tasted like cardboard. So anyone that tried to convert their steak-eating husband, for example, found it really impossible. So I wanted to make it easier for them. So that's when I started developing lots of different fake meats. I presented them to some guys at McDonald's at the time and tried to get them to go down that route. This was a long time ago, and when we found out that they would only have a budget of 15 cents on a burger, because most of it was intensively farmed with hormones and antibiotics, we couldn't possibly match that making it in the pure way that we do. VBites food, which was Redwood, it was recently changed just to have continuity with all the cafes and restaurants, it's called VBites worldwide now just as of June. We're, in Britain, renowned for being the most ethical and best vegan food company. 80% of the profits from that from my side, not the other directors, goes to feeding kids around the world that don't have access to good food, teaching them, getting them to grow their own vegetables, really putting some education into the system. Then I worked a lot with the New York Coalition for Healthy School Food when it was just starting up so that they could start putting plant-based foods into schools. That's grown and grown, and they're doing amazing work there.

So it's just about whatever you can do to make it as simple as possible. My daughter, she's nine, she's been vegan her whole life. She's healthy and fit and crazy, so crazy, brilliantly-minded, that everyone jokes and says, "Can you just give her a McDonald's so she'll calm down?" She's got endless energy, and it's not a great joke, but I totally get it. So she's a great example to other families that get concerned about the sensational headlines of "Oh, a child died, a vegan child died." Well, because it wasn't vegan. It was a child drinking apple juice and chips. It was not a vegan in the sense of a healthy vegan. So it's just about dispelling the myths.

What I've found works perfectly is that if you give people an easy way over, and nonaggressive and nonjudgmental and noncritical, because when I converted to vegan, I was like born again. I was like, "Oh my god, what are you doing eating that, you shouldn't eat a cow, how can you do that?" This was 20 years. Then I learned over time that doesn't actually work. What really works is say very little and just feed them. And as soon as you feed them, they go, "You are joking that this is a vegan chicken, right?" And I say, "No, no, it is." Then slowly, slowly, we've changed thousands and thousands of people's viewpoints. That's what I've found works. I've tried every other way, and people can do it their way and it might work well for them, but what I've found is feed them great food. If you feed them great food, they don't feel like they're giving anything up. That's why I decided to manufacture these foods, and we distribute to 27 countries, try and enable people to do that transitional period.

So to any high-end vegans, I call them, because they're so nutritionally aware, they know that a lot of the raw and a lot of the real plant-based foods is the best, just have a little patience with those trying to catch

up with you and give them a bit of guidance. I've found that some vegans, like in one of my restaurants in England, this group of vegans came in and my poor waitress came down crying her eyes out. I said, "What's wrong with you?" She said, "Those guys were really horrible to me." Because 80% of the people that come in my restaurant are carnivores. They're very polite and interested in trying things out. And then in come in this bunch of vegans, which is really a shame because it gives veganism a really bad message and why people don't always think it's cool to convert, and had my waitress in tears. And I said, "What's wrong?" She said, "When I gave her the food, she said, 'Don't breathe on my food with your carnivore breath.'" And I just couldn't believe it.

When I've done some speeches, you can get the extreme views of, "You shouldn't be making anything that tastes like meat." It's very short-sighted that anyone could think like that because you're not going to make major global change unless you get into the heart of the carnivore and you replace like for like, what they're eating. I guarantee of all the years of experience that I've had, they eventually move right off it and fill their plate with 90% of quinoa, spinach, broccoli, and everything else, and only 10% of the fake meat. And then eventually, they reduce it to once or twice a week. So just make sure if someone's heavy duty, unless they're sick, obviously, then it's best to go straight to the purest food, for me, the solution that works is always to replace like for like, and the body and the taste buds and everything will change and they'll follow through.

DR. TUTTLE: This is really interesting. I really think it's so fascinating that you had this experience at Hippocrates Health Institute. Last year in Veganpalooza 2012, we interviewed Dr. Brian Clement, who you mentioned briefly there, and whose program helped you so much. It's interesting that you found such tremendous feeling from the raw foods, vegan, lots of sprouting, I know there too. And did that it sounds like for a while, but then realized that the best way to reach the masses is to give them something that is very similar to what they are already eating, except there's no cruelty involved and it's much healthier. Now, there's one question I have. It seems like when you're talking about the terrific work you've been doing in helping to bring vegan meals to people, especially to low income people, like in New York, which is fantastic because of course unfortunately the subsidies from the government all go to the meat and dairy industry. So when we try to make plant-based meals, we don't have that advantage, and so they're more expensive. But you've been able to underwrite these costs yourself, which is wonderful. But I'm just wondering, besides making people healthier, to what degree are you personally motivated by the cruelty to animals involved in meat and dairy, or is it more health reasons? And also do you think it's important or helpful to bring that message to people as part of the message, or do you focus more on the convenience, the taste, and the health aspect?

HEATHER: In order, I discovered veganism purely for the health. Nothing about the animals. I didn't know the level. I know now. And nothing about the environment. I didn't know that. But everyone becomes a vegan for one of those reasons, generally: the health, the animals or the environment, or if they're more evolved, all three. So it all ends up becoming the same group, but how you get started is one of the three, generally. So mine was the health. Then once I knew I wasn't eating an animal, then my eyes opened. I'd drive across fields, and I'd say, "Whoa, those gorgeous little baby lambs. I don't eat that. I don't eat that cow. I don't eat." So that is all. And then I educated myself more and more, and then I started to, I had a history of documentary and filmmaking working at the BBC for a number of years when I was younger. And then I started to make some films, and then I would present the small films and build up to expose films, behind the scenes.

What I tend to do is not put my name with each thing because people get confused when you're juggling so many things. So I would be known as one thing, but actually I would do undercover reporting and investigating pig farms. So I would go in at one o'clock in the morning when there was a full moon and film the whole thing. You can see it on YouTube going into the pig farms. It was from a long time ago.



But the reason I did that was I can't stand hypocritical companies. If you're going to be a company, at that time was Marks & Spencer, a big company in the U.K., and their whole PR was, "We are ethical, we use the finest products, we use..." Well, they didn't. They used intensively farmed pig pork. They were, so they set themselves up. So I'm a little bit different to some of the animal extreme rights charities. I go to the head of the company and I say, "Look, this is what's happening in your company. You might not be aware," because sometimes it just doesn't go on the right chain, and a big company like that, they're not checking, the MV's not checking every single thing. He's trusting his team to do it. I said, "So you might know. I'm informing you. This is the footage. I'm not going to make anything public. Just go ahead and pull your pork because it's not what you claim."

Unfortunately, they didn't listen, so I said, right. So with Viva! we got people to stand outside every Marks & Spencer shop in the U.K. with screens on and we showed video and their profits fell massively. Then they pulled it a week later and stated that they would pull it. And I said, why didn't you do that in the first place? The amount of pork that you sell would take about seven months to gain any profit compared to what you lost when people stopped going in your stores because they were horrified by the truth of the images, the hypocrisy of the company.

So I always try and do things behind the scenes. Then you get some sensible companies that I went to, and I said, "Are you aware that you're using fur and it's from raccoon dogs in China?" And they went, "What? You're kidding. We were told it was fake fur." And I'm like, "No, it's not." So I won't publicly state that company because they pulled it straightaway. They were sensible, and they were a big company. But they had not traced the chain of where it came from, and they had been duped. And that's what led us into the dog and cat fur. I was given a video many years ago by Dennis Erdman, who's one of the directors of "Sex and the City" in L.A. He came to one of my landmine charity galas, and he said, "Look, we've been trying to get this banned for years, but we think you do campaigns well. You have quite a single mind for solving problems." And he said, "Dogs and cats are being skinned alive," and I said, "You are absolutely joking." He showed me this video. It took me ten months because I had to work with this video and raise awareness in the European Parliament with our team.

Anyway, I created a show on CNN on Larry King, and then got Ryan Seacrest to host it, and got the Chinese had to admit to CNN, and I was the producer behind it, "Okay, it did go on." They denied it for years. All I needed was that loophole. "It did go on, but actually it was in the farthest regions of China." So I said, "Well, actually, it's not." And then I showed the footage, and then I showed it was just next to Beijing, and we showed the poor animals that were just being skinned alive, just to save a bullet or to get a skin that had no mark in it, for one dollar. That's all they made. So we did a huge campaign. And to fast forward, we've got the first European ban, the unanimous vote in the European Parliament, to save two million dogs and cats, that and loads of other things, like I worked with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to stop J. Crew from using raccoon dog fur. They said, "We were never using that kind of thing." They wouldn't listen either, so we had to go outside all of their shops, and then they lost a lot of their business and their systems crashed, and they eventually pulled all the fur. Unfortunately, that had to happen because they wouldn't listen and do anything about it.

So I don't normally, these are only about four campaigns I've had to bring to the public, but what tends to happen now is I can work a lot behind the scenes very efficiently with their legal team because all I do now is when I campaign is of abuse on the animal rights side, all I have to do is show them the success we've had with the other big campaigns, and then they immediately agree to pull the line or to do something about it. So it can just be a matter of a couple of phone calls, and you can get the whole thing changed.

So I don't do it in an aggressive way. It's just very much a matter of fact, say, "This is what's happening, here's the proof, are you going to pull it and do something about it, or are you going to keep stating that it's

not that, and then we have to expose you? Which one?" So 99% of the time now – which has managed to keep me out of the public eye for a long time, which I've quite enjoyed – I don't have to keep going public all the time. Because over my 20 years involved with veganism and animal rights and various charities, the only time and the only reasons I've gone to the media or gone on TV is to raise significant amounts of money for the charities that really need it or to raise awareness. But what comes with that, raising awareness, is a lot of criticism because when you're anyone that's tried to be controversial in people's lives, you're going to get chastened for it. After 20 years of being chastened, it's getting a little bit tiring. So I've managed to create quite a system now of an empire that's making a massive difference behind the scenes and then getting lots of other people that are popular and well-known on the campaign and do it that way so it's not being solely dependent on me.

DR. TUTTLE: That's really very inspiring to hear. I think, I hope our listeners remember this, back in 2008 it was really a huge victory for dogs and cats in China when the European Union passed unanimously that they would not import any dog and cat fur from China anymore. That really set a precedent, too. And it's great to hear about these others, I wasn't aware of the J. Crew campaign and these other ones, but I can see, I know you've got the Compassionate Visionary Award and the Animal Rights Activist of the Year Award 2008, as well as the UNESCO Children in Need Award, and other awards. I think it's great to see that you are getting really some recognition for the work that you've been doing over the years in bringing, like you say, behind the scenes, bringing really liberation or at least a lot less suffering for so many animals.

HEATHER: The reason that I agreed to talk today is Elizabeth Kucinich asked me to do this. I'm a great fan of her and Dennis Kucinich. I said, "I rarely do interviews anymore, but since you're asking," and she said that you're a great guy. I said, "Okay, I'll do it." And I suppose my message is that if you're a vegan or you're an animal rights activist or you're an environmentalist, my message has always been to think laterally, and if you want to solve any issue, always put your head in the opposition's mind. Never sit and think about your opinion. You know what your end goal is and what you want your results to be. But always think of the opposition.

For example, the dog and cat fur campaign we've been trying for years and years, and I said, "Why don't we get the furriers on our side?" And they said, "Are you crazy?" I said, "Think about it. We're never going to get a unanimous vote on some of these politicians. You're not going to expect that they all care about animals, but you can get it on consumer duping, and you can get it because China's so powerful. You need to get the other furriers on your side." And they went, "How the heck can we do that?" I said, "Because you say specific dog and cat fur." We all know that we don't want fox and mink and sable, but it's about achieving what we need to do today, and then we move to fox and mink and sable. If you start slating all fur right now when you want to see the dogs and cats initially, and the public can relate to that because the same stupid person that walks down the road with a dog has a fur coat on, you need to get into their heads because they don't connect that fur is fur. So I said, get them on our side. And that's what we did. We said, "Look, it's not good for you, everyone that buys fur is going to think that it's dogs and cats because they're being duped, so you need to get on our side to get this stopped as well." So sometimes you have to work with the so-called enemy and to make a solution.

The same thing with landmines, when we created the biggest landmine-clearing charity in the world. Until we got Diana involved in '97, we only had her involved for eight months, but what we wanted to do was that footage of that one walk through the minefield was so amazing, and everyone in every country wants to do something to pay tribute. So for the greater good, we all utilized on that, and I basically said, "Look, why we don't we, to the companies that won't stop manufacturing, at least get them to manufacture a mine that is inert after six months? And then after six months, you can safely go back to the area, whereas if it's a mine that doesn't have a chemical leakage internal explosion, it's going to lie

there like Vietnam for years and years.” Of course, everyone was horrified. How dare you come up with a new design landmine? But I’m about solutions, and that would have saved millions of people’s lives, But they said, “No. We’re on this side, and they’re on that side.” I can’t encourage anything more important than integration for the greater good and to work with people that you consider the enemy. Think of their minds and what their solutions would be to bring about change. Because unless you do that, everything’s temporary, everything’s short-term, and nothing gets resolved.

DR. TUTTLE: Thanks for stating your position so well and for the examples you’ve been giving on this. Can you say a little bit about your more recent activities? I’ve been hearing a little bit that you’ve been actually getting athletic.

HEATHER: Now I’m going to sound like a complete nutter. Basically what happened was because I went through such media abuse for a lot of reasons, because I investigated the media, I got involved with the Leveson Inquiry exposing the newspapers, all that kind of stuff, because I’m all about righting the wrong. I’m going to always come up with some criticism and abuse. And I just thought, “You know what, my family are tired of this. I need to give them a break and do things behind the scenes.” So my girlfriend said, “Please come skiing. You haven’t been for years and years. Just go on ski holiday.” She managed to convince to go to Austria, close to where I used to drive refugees over, which is where I am now.

We went skiing, and old memories saved, and it was so quiet I just went straight down the hill. Somebody saw me and put a note in the hotel key box and said, “Are you crazy? You know you were doing over 100 km an hour on slalom skis?” I was like, “Was I? I just went straight. I like to go straight.” “It’s really dangerous.” I said, “But it didn’t feel that fast, and my skis weren’t shaking.” The next day I met this guy who came up to me and he said, “You should be a ski racer,” and I said, “Yeah, yeah, very funny. I’m 42.” Then. I’m 45 now. “I’m hardly going to start ski racing.” I was just a recreational skier occasionally. And they said, “No, you should try out for it.” Well, I’d just finished this charity show called Dancing on Ice, which is like Dancing with the Stars but it’s all on ice, so I’ve broken a few bits and pieces. Anyway, they said, “Why don’t you try for it?” And I thought, you know what? I could do all my work, and go between Austria and England, it’s only an hour forty on the plane, and so I tried out for the team. It took me three years, and I finally got onto the Paralympic team a few months ago and broke my cruciate ligament, smashed my scapula, broke virtually everything, learning and developing a prosthetic and finally, because most of the people we race have got one hand or one arm missing. So it’s easier to ski one leg and two outriggers than to drag a prosthesis around. But I can’t because I’ve got metal plates in my pelvis so I can’t stand on one leg. Anyway, long story short, I got accepted on the team, and I’ve won four gold medals and two silver and three bronze, and my fastest time is 127 km an hour now. So I’ve improved.

So yes, when I decide to do something, I do it properly, I focus on it, and now I feel like all my hard work in my life has brought me to this place in Austria. I feel really at peace and really happy. I run my businesses from here and England, and pop to New York to help with the charities I work with there, and basically made my life how I’d like it to be for my friends and my family and me, and yeah. I feel that I deserve this life I have now. And seeing that the one thing in my entire life that I’m doing just for me, one thing, everything else is all about the animals or health or the environment or the people. Skiing is purely for me. But the benefit has been inspiring other people with disabilities, other people with two legs just sitting on the sofa, feeling sorry for themselves about something, to get off and say, “I’ve got two legs. Why don’t I go and try and ski?” And it’s also brought a lot of interest in veganism over here in Austria. So we set up a distribution company here, which is hilarious, because they all keep saying, “Hold on. How can you ski and be this fit at 45?” And then I tell the story, because I’m vegan. “What do you eat?” I eat these products. They’re actually fantastic. “Where do we get them?” And suddenly I went from not wanting to do anything in Austria and just ski to setting up a distribution company here.

So again, it always leads back to veganism and promoting the cause. So once I did it just for myself, but it's become a much bigger thing. What's really interesting, in Austria, unlike England, they've never had the vegetarian movement like we have. There's no preconceived ideas of what Britain has, which is still all vegans are smelly hippies that eat nut roasts and don't wash. They don't have that perception in Austria because their diet is generally pretty bad on schnitzel and casein and all this kind of stuff. But they have loads of organic vegetables, and they've had a lot of heart attacks, so they're very open because they're such a sporting nation. So there are a lot of countries that don't have the preconceived ideas that are actually easier to convert, again, by giving them the vegan schnitzel, by giving them the vegan cheese, the vegan prosciutto. That's what's happening at the moment.

DR. TUTTLE: Right, they don't want to give up their cheese, but they all have vegan cheese instead. I can understand that. My wife is from Switzerland. It's very similar there, I think. That's really, again, enormously inspiring. I've skied for years, and when you talk about going 100, that's 60 miles an hour, on a prosthesis, that's really so remarkable. You really do strike me as someone who's as fearless as you sound when you're talking about some of the things you've done. It's remarkable to be able to take this up in the middle of your life and win medals and then use that as a way to spread the message.

HEATHER: It's crazy, I know. I sometimes look in the mirror and go, "Who are you? Are you completely nuts? What are you doing? You could have such a relaxing life, but you're getting up at five o'clock in the middle of the summer to climb up a glacier, like this morning, and go ski training. And next week I go to New Zealand and Australia. We've got the World Cup, we've got eight races, we have to make sure we keep all our points to get in the Paralympics. I think it comes from my childhood. My mother left when I was nine, and we didn't see her for four years. My father went to prison when I was 14. I became the carer of the family. Started my first business when I was 15, trying to help my mom, and didn't get to finish my education. Started again my 30s to take my degree in nutrition. And just lots of things happened, and I got to a point in my life, how could I have worked in the war on the frontline, not a single scratch, come back to England, lose my leg, crush my pelvis, and puncture my lung? Everything happens for a reason. It's not worth being afraid of anything because when I did take a break last summer, I climbed out of lift, walked for three steps, and snapped my ankle, the only ankle I've got left. So that wasn't skiing. It's no good worrying about how fast you go or what you're doing. The best thing is learn your best and then just throw yourself into it, and get some balance in life, and switch the email off and talk to your friends face to face rather than via 5000 texts. Get back with nature. Be full on and full off, that's the best thing, healthiest thing.

DR. TUTTLE: Wow. This has been a really wonderful time that we've had together. I want to thank you so much for taking some time out of your schedule to be really full-on with us here. Is there any final thing you'd like to say before we end the, you pretty much wrapped it up, but is there any final thing you'd like to say?

HEATHER: Thanks for having me, and I hope everyone's still awake and hasn't fallen asleep, and just be happy and healthy and caring and make a difference and don't give a crap about what anyone else thinks or says and go on your path and do your goals and don't harm anyone and life will be great.

DR. TUTTLE: This has been Heather Mills speaking with us directly from Austria. I want to thank everyone who's been listening to Veganpalooza 2013, and I want to really just encourage everyone to, as Heather Mills really exemplifies so well, really to question the official stories in our society, and as she said so well, live your life. Heather, thank you so much. Thanks for all the efforts you've made on behalf of animals and people, hungry people, war-torn people, the land, and many blessings to you in your life.

HEATHER: And thanks to all the people who helped me do that.