

Rose Evans (1928 - 2015)
From [The Writings of Vasu Murti](#)

Pro-life vegetarians and vegans can be found within the "consistent-ethic" movement: pro-lifers opposed to capital punishment.

The Seamless Garment Network (SGN) is a coalition of peace and justice organizations on the religious left. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has signed the SGN Mission Statement:

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"We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, the arms race, the death penalty and euthanasia.

"We believe these issues are linked under a consistent ethic of life. We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected."

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Mary Rider, a ***practicing*** Catholic (*arrested for protesting both the death penalty AND abortion -- when I first met her in 2002, she was pregnant with her eighth child!*) and Executive Director of the SGN, wrote in *Harmony: Voices for a Just Future*, a "consistent-ethic" periodical in 2002:

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"So we teach our children to walk softly on the earth and to embrace nonviolence as the only legitimate means of conflict resolution, on both a personal and a global level.

"We are aware of the excessive, privileged life we lead as educated, first world U.S. citizens and of the responsibilities to which our privilege calls us. We try to live simply. We eat low on the food chain. We try to buy nothing new..."

"We try to respect all life and carry that message forward in all we do... Because we value people and relationships over things... First world consumption kills people around the world..."

"Pollution, environmental devastation, corrupt governments, war, sweatshops... all are a result of our desire to buy more at a lower price..."

"We believe each person has a right to live a valued and respected life free from hunger and discrimination..."

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A significant number of Seamless Garment Christians are / were vegetarian or vegan: Rose Evans, Ruth Enero, Rachel MacNair, Al Fecko, Carol Crossed, Bill Samuel, Mary Krane Derr, Mary Rider, Father John Dear, etc.

Rose Evans, a political liberal, a widow and a grandmother, a pro-life Episcopalian, fond of Hindu spiritual masters like Eknath Easwaran, Buddhist spiritual masters like Thich Nhat Hanh and fond of Buddhism in general, was the editor and publisher of *Harmony: Voices for a Just Future*, a "consistent-ethic" periodical on the religious left, from the late 1980s through 2004.

Rose served on the Board of the Seamless Garment Network (SGN), first as its Secretary, later as its President. The July 2001 issue of *Harmony* reported:

"Rose Evans was recently elected President of the SGN Board. She is the proprietor of Sea Fog Press, which publishes *Harmony*, and has also published two books on animal rights, *Friends of All Creatures* and *The Whale's Tale*. She has been in witnesses for peace, against the death penalty and against abortion. She is an Episcopalian, a vegetarian and a former special education teacher."

Harmony described itself as "an independent journal promoting a consistent ethic of reverence for life."

In the July 2000 issue, Rose wrote:

"*Harmony* is a member organization of the Seamless Garment Network. Like all member organizations, we are committed to the Seamless Garment Mission Statement of consistent respect for human life.

"But we are a separate organization, not an official publication of the Seamless Garment Network. We discuss many issues related to respect for life in addition to the SGN's issues. We discuss a wide range of issues, including many controversial issues. We have published essays affirming sexual abstinence, and others affirming gay and lesbian rights.

"And we support some life issues beyond those that the SGN supports -- animal rights, for example...

"The SGN has a wide and diverse membership. Its members are united in affirming the consistent life ethic. Some members are Christian, some are Buddhist, some are of no religion... the consistent life ethic unites us."

One of Rose's two books on animal rights, *Friends Of All Creatures*, aimed at grade school children, was endorsed by Dr. Michael Fox of the Humane Society and Lewis Regenstein of the Fund for Animals. The book's description reads:

"Awareness of the brotherhood and sisterhood of all living things runs like a golden thread through the history of humankind. Friends of All Creatures joyfully explores this vision... A rich array of cultures is represented. The book ranges from Jewish prophets and rabbis to Jains and Buddhists of India, Egyptian saints of the early Christian Church, Taoists and Buddhists of China, Japanese Emperresses, Islamic saints and poets, Saint Sergius of Russia, Mexican opponents of bullfighting, Anna Sewell, Henry Bergh, Mahatma Gandhi, and many others.

"Reading this book is an experience of human nature at its best, a chance to see the compassion and courage of the people who are friends of all creatures."

Rose described herself in the June 1998 issue of *Harmony*:

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"How did I come to embrace the consistent ethic of respect for life? I can remember having a feeling of concern for living things from my childhood on. My family was very compassionate toward animals. Deer frequented our yard. A family of skunks once nested under our shed. My mother put milk out for them. Both she and my brother rescued many strays. That attitude has stayed with me. I am a vegetarian, and when I first started Sea Fog Press (Harmony's publisher) our first book was a history of advocacy for animals all over the world..."

"When I first heard of abortion (we didn't learn about it as young people do today), I was horrified at the idea that anyone would kill a baby in the womb. As it became a more common topic of discussion, and more central in the public mind, I felt a solid sense of opposition in my heart. I joined a San Francisco pro-life group, and did a lot of organizing and speaking for the pro-life position.

"This was a few years before Roe v. Wade. California was one of the first states to change its longstanding, protective abortion laws, so people began to organize in defense of life in the late 1960s. Many of my colleagues were also San Francisco liberals, people who had been in peace marches, often Irish and Italian Catholics, some African Americans, quite a few Democrats. However, in time, more and more right wing extremists flooded into the organization, its direction changed, and it focused more and more on conservative politics and condemnation of gay and lesbian people, so I resigned.

"The pastor of my own Episcopal Church was the late Leon Harris, who achieved considerable local renown for his early welcome of the influx of hippies, and his kindness, assistance and protection of them. (The Diggers, a radical peace and justice group, had an office in our church.) He was deeply Christian. He was strongly supportive of the pro-life cause, and helped us in many ways. There was a sprinkling of other Episcopalian pro-lifers, mostly pretty progressive people.

"I was against the death penalty, but there wasn't a lot of activism about it for many of these years, because we had a long holiday with no executions -- a holiday that ended only a few years ago.

"I married and spent some years as a mother and homemaker, and then when my children were old enough, I took education courses and got a degree in the education of exceptional children, and a credential as a Specialist, Severely Handicapped."

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As early as the 1980s, when the animal rights movement had made inroads in academia and was first making headlines, Rose Evans, the widow of a university professor, had already written an editorial asking, "Animal Rights: Where Should A Pro-Lifer Stand?"

Rose wrote in May 1992:

"Polls indicate that 80 percent of Californians would prefer a sentence of life without parole to the death penalty, and support it only because they fear that killers will be released, endangering innocent lives.

"One of the tragic things about the current state of affairs is that almost all of the state's 'liberal' Democrats have come out in support of the death penalty. I've never seen so many 'seamless shroud' types! (As opposed to 'seamless garment' people who oppose the death penalty and abortion, the 'seamless shroud' is an expression to describe the position of those who support both."

In the October 1992 issue of *Harmony*, Rose wrote:

"Before the Reagan-Bush years, it was unheard of to see people living and sleeping in the streets. Now they are everywhere. San Francisco has a pretty mellow climate, but people died in the streets of hypothermia last year.

"For 27 years, we did not execute anybody. Now we have an active death penalty, we've carried out our first execution, and we have many more people waiting to be killed.

"Our prison population has doubled. (*Mostly nonviolent drug convictions.*)

"We have many abortions, and many are driven by economic desperation. Medical services for poor people has deteriorated, and some counties don't have one obstetrician who will accept Medi-Cal (our state's version of Medicaid) women as patients. 'Choice' is a joke for women who can't get medical care, housing or any support.

"Tragically, most of our 'liberal Democrats' running for office here are not only supporters of legal abortion, they are also supporters of capital punishment.

"Consistent-ethic folks are in a dilemma... My own solution, like co-editor Carol Crossed's, is to vote as well as I can in these terrible circumstances, but give my work, my money and my energy to JustLife and all the consistent-ethic candidates I can find."

In the July 1993 issue of *Harmony*, Rose wrote:

"The death penalty increases, and in an amazing burst of pro-death psychology, even evidence of innocence is dismissed by our courts, and the execution of apparently innocent people proceeds with a very considerable amount of public indifference.

"Police work is unnecessarily violent, from the repeated beatings and killings of arrestees (almost all of them belonging to racial minorities) to the impatient violence of the assault on the Branch Davidians, ignoring the time-proven rules of hostage rescue and confrontation defusing.

"The war on drugs continues to impose savage sentences... One-third of our soaring prison population (including many women and mothers) are jailed on drug charges. Young people who have no hope of meaningful, decently paying jobs, are jailed when they turn to drug dealing, one of the few economic fields open to them.

"The more than a million and a half abortions a year continue, and the medical literature abounds with descriptions of the new techniques for effective abortion of older infants in the late second and third trimester, with their stronger and tougher tissues."

Rose wrote in terms of a secular slippery slope argument, familiar to pro-lifers:

"The killing of children has long been seen as the worst of atrocities, but this is acceptable to many in our ideological wars. Child abuse increases in tandem.

*"All of these things have one root: *toughness* -- a hard indifference; a grasping for quick and violent solutions, no patience, no gentleness, no compassion."*

Similarly, in the December 1993 issue of *Harmony: Voices for a Just Future*, in an article entitled "How Will we Revere Life?", editor Rose Evans wrote:

"This editor has long been aware of the relative success of the Dutch support system for pregnant women, compared to that of the U.S. The Dutch abortion rate is a minute fraction of the American. I believe the rate for young women in their teens is about one-twentieth of the U.S. rate. And this is done not so much by restrictive laws (although there are some restrictions) as by real social support for pregnant women and mothers.

"The situation for pregnant women in the U.S. who don't have assured income, family support and medical insurance is abysmal and getting worse. Choice is a joke. Women don't have money for decent food, decent housing, or decent medical care, nor adequate support after the child is born."

Rose Evans wrote in favor of the the legalization of marijuana for therapeutic (medicinal) purposes during the first half of the '90s. Rose, born in 1928, considered it a crime that many of her elderly friends in her age group, suffering from numerous afflictions, were denied marijuana for medicinal purposes.

Like former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, Rose favored of drug legalization as well as open, honest talk about sex.

In the late '90s, when Lesley Dove, founder of LIFELINK, a pro-life and pro-animal organization in England, expressed reservations about legalizing prostitution, Rose said problems such as contracting STDs, prostitutes being assaulted, pimp violence, etc. would not exist if prostitution were legal. And if any sex workers were abused or attacked, they could report the crime to the police without the fear of being arrested themselves.

When "Lucius D. Shappy" a former Republican, posted links to anti-gay websites on the Democrats For Life email list in 2000, Rose immediately posted in response: "Why are you attacking gays? Many gays are pro-life. Why are you attacking gays?"

Rose wrote in *Harmony* in January 2000:

"Some policies that oppress:

"The war on population -- the promotion of abortion, sterilization and enforced 'family planning' in developing nations.

"Violent overthrow of elected governments which appear to menace western monopolies -- successful in Chile and Guatemala, attempted in Cuba and Nicaragua.

"Alliance with third world elites and dictatorships, and provision of arms and resources, as in El Salvador, Indonesia and Columbia.

"Use of international trade agreements to impoverish workers and cripple independent third world economies, and destroy environmental protections, as with GATT, NAFTA and the World Trade Organization.

"Use of international monetary organizations such as the World Bank, IMF and AID to undercut local economies, force countries into export agriculture, and force their governments to cut education, health, and other social services. Third world debt -- in many cases incurred by U.S. supported dictators -- has been a powerful tool for control of third world governments.

"The attempt to gain power over farming worldwide, by the monopolistic control of seeds, pesticides and fertilizers."

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Harmony dealt with issue which are only now beginning to receive attention in the mainstream media. In the July 2001 issue, for example, Mary Smith of Elmira, New York wrote in about labeling genetically altered foods.

Rose told me she usually voted Democratic, because even if the Democrats are pro-choice, they support programs like childcare and welfare which reduce the demand for abortion. She was aware of the political reality pro-life Democrats face in the Democratic Party. She said when a woman identified herself to former California Governor Jerry Brown as a pro-life Democrat, he responded cynically, "There aren't very many of you, are there?"

But Rose was hardly an "old-fashioned Democrat"! In a phone conversation with Rose in 2000, when I expressed reservations about the Republican strategy of packing the courts with conservatives -- *a narrow liberal majority on the Supreme Court had recently preserved Miranda rights!* -- Rose mentioned another recent Supreme Court decision as well. She said she supported Bill Bradley in the 2000 Democratic primaries and voted for Al Gore in the general election. More recently, Rose spoke favorably of Elizabeth Warren.

And Rose was just as critical of Democrats as she was of Republicans! She wrote in *Harmony* in February 2001:

"Those voters who wanted to vote Democratic for social justice reasons faced a major dilemma too. Clinton, the candidate of the Democratic Party, once the party of poor and working people, does not measure up. His administration took extremist pro-abortion positions pushing pro-abortion programs on foreign nations even when they do not want them.

"Beyond that, his administration has not supported the social justice programs many Democrats hope for. Working people have suffered layoffs and the disappearance of jobs that can support a family. Clinton has supported many programs and treaties that caused good U.S. manufacturing

jobs, that used to pay well, to vanish -- exported to China, Indonesia and other countries where labor is miserably paid, and overworked...

"So the U.S. voter has no ideal choices. Both major candidates supported the death penalty, the sanctions on Cuba and Iraq, NAFTA and GATT and other trade deals that damage the environment and American workers. Consistent ethic folks struggled to find the choices that they thought least harmful, and to support the handful of politicians whom they largely agreed with."

In 2002, on the SERV (Society for Ethical and Religious Vegetarians) email list, Robert Andrews, a vegan Episcopalian in Arkansas, wrote about contacting Christian pacifist groups like the Mennonites, and asking them at one point if they were vegetarian. They were slow to respond, and it soon became obvious they weren't vegetarian.

Perhaps thinking along the lines of a "slippery slope" argument and/or the belief that war is the *karma* for killing animals, Robert Andrews said, perplexed, about meat-eating-pacifists: "The cause of war is in front of them (on their dinner plates)."

I forwarded Robert's words on to Rose, and she responded eloquently. Rose cited a story told by Gandhi about a general who wanted to keep casualties on the battlefield to a minimum, and in doing so, gradually developed a respect for all life. She said once people start talking about life issues, it leads to an open-ended inquiry about respect for all life.

While I would like to believe Rose, I am not as certain. People weren't flocking to join the vegetarian and anti-vivisection societies when abortion was illegal. They didn't see the obvious double-standards and hypocrisies: obsessing over the 'silent screams' of the unborn while ignoring the very real screams of animals... protecting mentally handicapped children while experimenting on chimpanzees, etc.

Banning abortion did **not** foster a climate of respect for life so that people were ready to move on to animal rights. Sometimes I think the only reason pro-lifers are taking a serious look at animal rights is that if sentience rather than species membership is the criterion for personhood, then insentient humans like the unborn might be at risk.

(Not acknowledging the possible rights of the unborn until pro-lifers acknowledge the very real rights of animals might be a bargaining tool in the ongoing discussion between animal activists and pro-lifers.)

Rose wrote in the September 2002 issue of *Harmony*:

"The United States (largely through the CIA) has overthrown legitimate governments and replaced them with torturing dictatorships. In Iran, such a plot ousted Prime Minister Mossadeq, with the result that the Shah, who we supported, ruled increasingly through terror. The same thing happened in Guatemala, where democratically elected President Arbenz was thrown out, and replaced by a dictatorship that conducted a reign of terror and murdered thousands of Indians. Again, in Chile, President Allende was overcome and murdered, and the Pinochet regime ruled through murders, tortures and disappearances. When the Nicaraguans successfully overcame their

brutal U.S. supported dictator, the U.S. supported the brutal contras to try to destroy the Sandinista government.

"This immoral foreign policy continues right to the present, regardless of which party is in power. We have supported the Indonesian government while it invaded and oppressed East Timor and the Chinese government while it occupies Tibet. We are blocking multinational aid to Haiti, keeping Haitians in dire hunger and poverty, while we pressure their elected President on behalf of his right wing opponents. We enforce sanctions on Iraq, causing misery and death to thousands.

"We provide arms and aid to the repressive governments of Columbia, which is engaged in a war with a largely native resistance movement.

"And one more place where we are supporting oppression is Israel.

"This state, like ours, had a beginning in idealism and hope. Americans of my generation remember the joy at the founding of Israel, after the horrors of the Holocaust. We were aware of some abuses, a few massacres, but we thought them unusual, not policy... And certainly an overwhelming number of us believe that the United States should be committed to the welfare and safety of Israel.

"But the oppression that the government of Israel is currently inflicting on the Palestinian population of the occupied territories is very much an American responsibility, because our funds and our weapons make it possible. The current position of the U.S. government, supporting the invasion and persecution of all the Palestinians people because of a few suicide killers is unjust and indefensible. The reports that international peace people send back from the West Bank and Gaza are horrifying.

"U.S. support and aid to any government should be conditional on policies of peace, justice and human rights."

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Although supportive of animal rights issues, Rose was unimpressed with pro-choice vegans, saying they won't eat a clam, but they have no qualms about killing an unborn child.

Like many pro-lifers, including some pro-life liberals, Rose compared Australian philosopher Peter Singer (author, *Animal Liberation*) to Hitler, because he advocates not just abortion, but infanticide as well.

When I pointed out the sad irony that Peter Singer lost three of his four grandparents in the Nazis' concentration camps, Rose calmly replied:

"And I've seen the Israelis use Gestapo-like tactics on the **Palestinians**."

(And Rose was aware that the argument that Hitler was a "vegetarian" is a thoroughly debunked myth!)

Rose endorsed my 2003 book on religion and animals, *They Shall Not Hurt or Destroy*, while it was still in manuscript form, and even provided free advertising for it in *Harmony*. She was impressed with my research on the long history of animal advocacy, concern for animals, and vegetarianism in Christianity. And like Norm Phelps, Spiritual Outreach Director for the Fund for Animals, who passed away months earlier, she saw the necessity of reaching out to the religious communities on animal issues. She allowed me to contribute articles on animal rights and other related topics to *Harmony* on a regular basis between 1992 and 2004.

But Rose was apprehensive during the first half of the '00s when I was submitting articles on church-state separation and secularism as a member of Americans United for Separation of Church and State to the *Stanislaus Connections*, a monthly peace and justice newspaper out of Modesto, CA.

She didn't see the necessity of completely secularizing American politics to level the playing field so animal rights activists could reach mainstream American society with their message without facing religious discrimination. Rather, she saw it as a possible threat to the traditional sanctity-of-life ethic, which is mostly religious in nature.

"We're the **religious** left!" she exclaimed.

On the other hand, when Pete & Debby Wakeham, founders of PEACH ("Peace, Ethics, Animals, and Consistent Human rights"), a pro-life and pro-animal organization in England, said they were thinking of leaving the Seamless Garment Network because they found it "too religious...", Rose laughed. She said there are atheists within the SGN.

And when I mentioned to Rose that polls have found 90 percent of American Jews supporting abortion rights, Rose acknowledged it and said, slightly amused, if they are pro-life, they tend to be atheists, like liberal columnist Nat Hentoff, or Doris Gordon of Libertarians For Life.

Rose said she voted for John Kerry in 2004. When an interview with Jimmy Carter appeared in 2005, where he said the Democratic Party had gone too far in its support for abortion rights, Rose commented that he didn't do much about abortion when he was president.

I'm indebted to Rose for a political education. In 2011 - 2012, I was dating Adeline Lopez, a beautiful Latina. Rose took an immediate liking to Addie and was pleased to see us together.

But my favorite memory of Rose is from the fall of 2008, weeks before the election.

I had staffed a table at the World Vegetarian Festival in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, with help from my dear friends Lalita devi dasi (Leona Rose Oster) and her husband David Oster.

We visited Rose, surrounded by a few pets and her immediate family, including her grandchildren. Rose, understanding none of us touch caffeine, warmly received us as guests and offered us herbal tea. Lalita presented Rose with a copy of the *Bhagavad-gita*, Hinduism's most sacred scripture.

Rose, fond of Buddhism, and appreciative of all the world's great religions, was already familiar with the *Bhagavad-gita*, and graciously accepted the gift.

Lalita mentioned that her own middle name was "Rose" during the course of the evening. Rose, aware that capital punishment is a possible point of contention between Krishna devotees and the religious left, loudly voiced her opposition to the death penalty.

Perhaps Lalita was genuinely touched by seeing a sweet old lady who had dedicated her life to peace and justice issues, including vegetarianism, and was accepting of other religions. As our visit came to an end, Lalita, usually prim and proper, went over like a little girl and hugged Rose!

It was a touching moment for all. We can all take solace in knowing that according to the *Bhagavad-gita*, the conscious self is separate and distinct from the physical body, and its existence continues even when the body is deceased.

"As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change."

"That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul."

"For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain."

"As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones."

--Bhagavad-gita, chapter two, verses 13, 17, 20, and 22