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Employers, Got Vegan: How Ethical Veganism Qualifies for Religious Protection under Title VII

EMPLOYERS, GOT VEGAN?: HOW ETHICAL VEGANISM QUALIFIES FOR RELIGIOUS PROTECTION UNDER TITLE VII

By
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“There is no fundamental difference between man and animals in their ability to feel pleasure and pain, happiness, and misery.”

—Charles Darwin

Currently, employees who decide to go vegan for ethical reasons have no protection at their workplaces. Their employers are free to refuse to accommodate their beliefs whether that be through refusing to accommodate an employee who will not wear the leather piece of a required uniform or refusing to provide a vegan food option at work parties. As more and more Americans make the shift to a vegan lifestyle, this protection is needed now more than ever. This Paper analyzes how an ethical vegan may qualify for employment discrimination protection under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. In doing so, it argues that under the conscientious objector standard expressly adopted by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, ethical veganism should be protected as a religious belief. Such a claim would open the door to requiring employers to reasonably accommodate their ethical vegan employees’ requests.

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