To most, food is just something one eats to satisfy the feeling of hunger. But that isn’t the case for those who classify themselves as punks, usually in this study anarchists, antiracists, and feminists living in the Seattle area. In this article, Clark studies the way punks use food not only to create an identity, but also to challenge a hegemonic, white and male-dominated society.

A popular place where punks of radical thought gather together to discuss ideas while enjoying vegan food is the Black Cat Cafe. This place is anything but the norm, in terms of sanitary conditions, cleanliness and the type of food served. It represents their rejection of “the human domination of nature…with White, male and corporate supremacy.” (Clark 2008: 412) Anything that is cooked, processed or packaged is the opposite of what these punks seek, which is raw food, a metaphor which they use to mean wild, closer to it’s organic state. (Clark 2008: 412) Their food choices give them a sense of power, of control, in a society where they have little to no influence.

Many punks choose to go vegan, despite the fact that it is often viewed as a feminist practice. But that isn’t how they see it; instead, punks say that to eat animal-based products is to support animal bondage. (Clark 2008: 416) By this they mean that factory farms where animals are raised are often places where animals are treated inhumanely, pumped with hormones and antibiotics, and eve tortured in horrible ways. (Clark 2008: 416) By going vegan they are in sense protesting these practices.

Food is also a way to display gender and power. Meat is often associated with masculinity while vegetarianism is associated with feminism. (Clark 2008: 415) They are conforming to the standards of a society that tell them what they should eat so they can look a certain way.

In the 1990's, there was emerged the natural foods movement, which was aimed at offering more healthy food options to the general public, but of which the punk scorned, saying it “fed egos more than bodies.” (Clark 2008: 418) reworded this sentence a bit but it needs more work They derogatorily name these foods “Yuppie,” or “individualistic,” and “White.” Nevertheless, natural foods stores such as the Puget Consumers’ Co-op are often targeted for theft by these same people because they contain food that punks prefer, but aren’t suitable to eat because of the high prices and marketing represented there. Only after the food is associated with the act of stealing is it acceptable, transforming the cooked food into something contaminated. Punks also practice Dumpster diving even though most of the food in dumpsters is processed, non-organic or commercialized. It is only because garbage is socially classified as revolting or rotten that the act is seen to condemn society.

The impression I got from this article is that people who generally don’t have a lot of power in society search for various ways to feel some sense of control over their lives. In this case and for this group of people, it was through food. What they ate, how they got it and what it stood for all had equal weight for them. They were vegan not only because it was healthier, but also because it protested the cruel treatment of animals and differentiated them from a society that they looked disapprovingly upon.

Good choice and interesting commentary