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Overview of Profile - Frances Moore Lappé

Frances Moore Lappé is an advocate for a plant-based-diet who rose to fame as a groundbreaking author of several books on diets and democracy. Lappé promotes ethical vegetarianism as a way to address food scarcity in the world, branching diets with social, political, economic, and ecological issues (Jorgensen 2015). Her 1971 debut book *Diet for a Small Planet* revolutionized the way that we think about food. She exposed the environmental harms caused by meat production and argued that hunger is human made because land that could be used to feed humans is devoted to feeding livestock (Lappé 1991, Marchese 2019). When her work was first published, people were scandalized by the cultural shock of transitioning away from the meat heavy diets that are typical in the U.S. To address this, Lappé would often use the popularity that vegetarian recipes in her books received as a gateway to bring awareness to the political issues that provided the foundation for her recipes (Aubrey 2016). As her work became popular, she used food as a perspective to address foundational questions on the failures of modern systems of democracy. Currently, and in her more modern works, Lappé strives to articulate the connection between hunger and democracy, often quoted as saying that “hunger is not the result of scarcity of food but scarcity of democracy” (James Beard Foundation 2008). Although vegetarians still make up a minority of 5% of the population with only a 4% increase in vegetarians from 1971 to present day, vegetarianism is accepted as mainstream in popular culture (Jorgensen 2015). Before Lappé, anyone who questioned meat centered diets was considered as questioning American way of life, but now eating meat is recognized as contributing to many environmental problems, especially the increasingly pressing issue of climate change, and meat is understood as a poor calorie converter (Lappé 1991). In effect, because vegetarianism is an individual choice, the connection between accepted theory and widespread application is disjointed.

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