

# An Interview with Victoria Moran

by Mark Huberman



*Victoria Moran is a vegan of three decades and an obesity survivor. Her books include Main Street Vegan, Creating a Charmed Life, and The Good Karma Diet: Eat Gently, Feel Amazing, Age in Slow Motion. Her fans range from Michael Moore to Ellen Degeneres, and she was featured twice on Oprah. Moran hosts the weekly Main Street Vegan podcast; directs the Main Street Vegan Academy, an exciting in-person program in NYC to train and certify vegan lifestyle coaches; and she's co-screenwriter of Miss Liberty, a feature film about a cow who escapes from a slaughterhouse. Victoria Moran is on Twitter @Victoria\_Moran and Facebook at Main Street Vegan. Visit her website at [mainstreetvegan.net](http://mainstreetvegan.net).*

## Before asking you about your new book, *The Good Karma Diet*, let's talk about your past works. What was your first book and when was it written?

My very first book was *Compassion the Ultimate Ethic: an Exploration of Veganism*, which was actually my college thesis. I went to college late, around age 30, and traveled to the United Kingdom to study vegans before I was 100% vegan myself, and I got to meet people from the early days of the movement.

## What prompted your interest in veganism? Did you come from a family of vegetarians or vegans?

Not at all. However, my dad was an osteopathic physician from the old days when osteopathy was still more naturopathic, so there were a few sparks of interest in more natural things. He was an ear, nose and throat specialist in Kansas City, Missouri, and I remember as a small child that on the back of his business card he listed dairy products among "mucous-forming foods" to be avoided. So there were little hints of things like that, but nothing nearing vegetarianism. I always loved animals and I was overweight, so the combination of wanting to not harm animals and solve my weight problem brought me to both veganism and natural hygiene.

## Was there one book or one person that opened your mind to this way of thinking?

My mentor was Jay Dinshah, cofounder of the American Vegan Society in 1960. I discovered him sometime around 1970. I was 20 years old and loved what he had to

say about purity, simplicity, and kindness; I knew this was how I wanted to live.

## Where did you learn about Jay?

I had been reading literature from the Vegetarian Society in the U.K. and saw a mention of the American Vegan Society. I contacted Jay and his wife Freya. They sent me literature; we stayed in touch, and he kept believing in me.

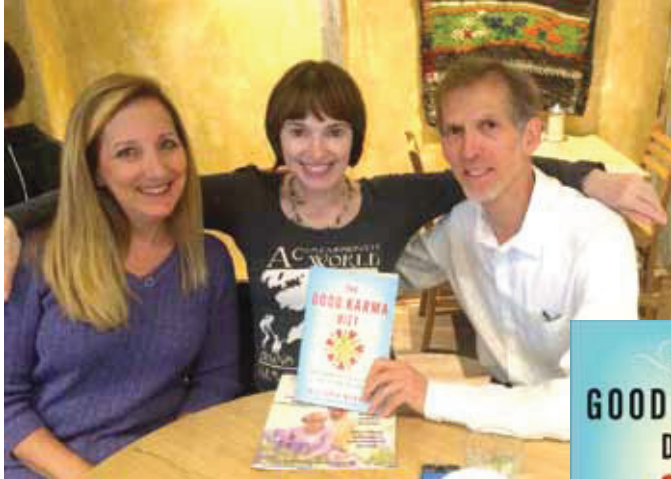
At the time, I was a practicing binge eater, and it was very difficult to be vegan because I would periodically go off on food benders and eat large amounts of junk food and cheese, among other things. So it took me a long time, and I had to come to grips with the psychological and spiritual aspects of my overeating before I could really choose how I wanted to eat. But once I had

that power of choice, I chose vegan.

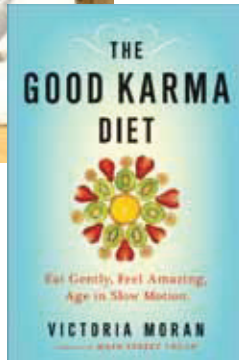
## How did your veganism intersect with natural hygiene and the ANHS?

When we talked earlier, you said that you were dismayed that the vegan movement so often was not a health movement; I've heard that before. But when I was introduced to veganism by Jay Dinshah, I was told that natural hygiene was the flipside of veganism and that you had to have both. Natural hygiene ensured that you would be healthy so that you could continue in this ethical lifestyle, and would give you the energy and the spark that people would be drawn to and want for themselves. And of course, in those days we didn't have processed vegan foods. In fact, we used to say that the great thing about

*"I knew this was how I wanted to live."*



NHA President Mark Huberman and his wife, Wanda, visit with Victoria Moran.



### ty, cross paths with him?

Oh, absolutely. I met him when he first showed up in the early 1980s. I remember meeting him at a vegetarian conference. It was a big deal that he was a medical doctor. Most of our professionals at that time were doctors of chiropractic or naturopathy.

### Another well-known book you wrote was *Creating a Charmed Life*. Tell me about the genesis of that?

It came out in 1999 and is still my most popular book, having been translated into 30 languages. I always thought that there was a lot more magic to living than many people experienced. Even as a little girl in Kansas City, struggling with weight and having divorced parents when parents didn't get divorced, I just had the sense that there was something very special about my life, if I wanted to claim it. The day I really knew that I had a charmed life was when I was 14 years old. I had a one-dollar press pass from a teen magazine, which thousands of girls had, but I used mine very astutely and ended up standing six feet from the world's most iconic rock group at my first Beatles press conference. I remember thinking, as I stood there—and knew that across the street behind a rope were thousands of girls my age wanting to be where I was—that if I played my cards right, this life could be quite stunning. And I also knew that writing would be what would take

me there. I figured over time that if I had this charmed life, and there was nothing special about me, maybe it had a lot to do with attitude. I wrote that book so that other people could discover their own charmed lives, and lots of them have.

### Could you put in a nutshell what it means to have a charmed life and how to achieve it?

A charmed life is a life that has meaning and a good portion of delight. Every life has difficulties, but when you know that there's a purpose, that you're not just here randomly, it helps you get through the harder stuff. That expectant attitude invites in more of the delightful serendipities and fascinating experiences that just make life worth living.

### Do you feel that following a healthful, plant-based diet and lifestyle is the foundation of that charmed life?

I don't think it's the foundation, but I know it's a component. The foundation of a charmed life is deep within each individual. It's spiritual, not physical. But once we know about great food and good living, it's an incredible contribution to a fabulous life. For one thing, when you're eating beautiful, clean food from nature, your bloodstream

*“A charmed life is a life that has meaning and a good portion of delight.”*

veganism was that it protected a person from baked goods. That's the not the case any longer, and health-conscious vegans need to be more discerning.

### And so did you adopt this way of eating lock, stock, and barrel?

I did my best. Like I said, I was a binge eater, and once I made it to veganism, I was a binge eater in recovery. I don't know if you'd call it “early natural hygiene,” but there were things that were promulgated at that time that I just couldn't do, like eating fruit by itself in the morning. I understand now that because of the way I ate for so many years, I'd become sugar sensitive; just fruit by itself simply wasn't grounding enough for me to make it through the morning. It was a learning process to get to the point of knowing what I needed. I believe I've taken the best of what we knew back then and the best of what I've learned since, with all the wonderful studies about plant-based nutrition we have now, and found a way to eat and live that has worked extremely well for me.

### Is your book *Compassion the Ultimate Ethic* still available?

It went out of print after about five years from its original British publisher, but then the American Vegan Society picked it up and they put out their own edition, which they still sell. It's almost embarrassing to think about somebody reading a paper I wrote for college. I believe it was the first book on vegan philosophy and practice to come from an actual publisher.

### From what I recall, one of the other early authors on veganism was Dr. Michael Klaper. Did you, being a vegan author-



is cleaner. You're thinking more clearly. You're seeing life differently. Your life has to be better!

### Do you also find it liberating to be in control of your own health destiny?

You know, that's a very interesting question. To me, as a person in recovery, I don't think of myself in terms of having the control. I think of myself as accepting the gift of health on a daily basis. Peace Pilgrim was a wonderful spiritual teacher back in the sixties and seventies, a vegetarian, and she would say, "Live up to the highest light you have, and more light will be given you." I believe that every day I have the gift to act on what I've learned.

### Speaking of what you've learned, you've been at many NHA conferences over the years; are there particular hygienic physicians or people within the movement that you have found to be great influences and inspirational?

There are so many. I'll mention Dr. Frank Sabatino first. I didn't know him well in the early days. I was kind of in awe of him because he looked like a matinee idol. In more recent years I've gotten to know him some, admire him immensely as a speaker, and love how he sees life and health and how he transmits his wisdom. I also went to many fasting centers during the seventies and eighties and got to know the great hygienic physicians that ran them. One who really guided and mentored me was Dr. Ralph Cinque of Texas—one of the kindest and most patient people I have ever met—and the late Dr. John Brocius of Florida, who was so humble and just wanted to help people with no recognition or glory.

### As someone who has now been an integral part of this health movement for over 30 years, is there some sort of progression of authors that you think deserve credit for really contributing to the enlightenment of thinking that we enjoy today?

Oh, absolutely. I really see this movement as a history of books, and I'm fascinated by that history. The late Rynn Berry, who passed away in 2014, was the author of *Famous*

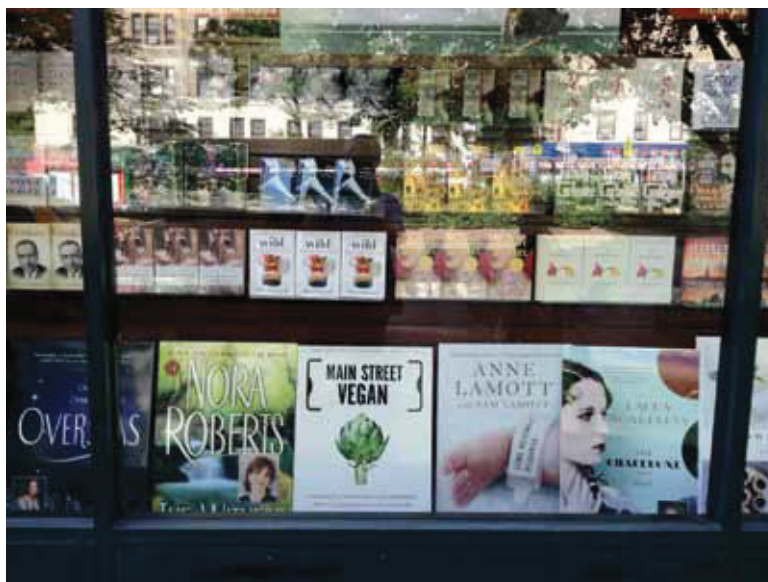
*Vegetarians and Their Favorite Recipes* and *Food for the Gods*. I was fortunate enough to hear him lecture on the history of the vegetarian, vegan, and raw food movements many times, and that helped me see this movement in context. As for pivotal books, in the seventies, Frances Moore Lappe's *Diet for a Small Planet* introduced the idea of being vegetarian to the general public. Then in the eighties came *Fit for Life*, a phenomenon single-handedly responsible for U.S. fruit and vegetable sales going up by 10% for two years running. Then in the nineties it was John Robbins and *Diet for a New America*. In the early 2000s, *Skinny Bitch* became a bestseller, only to be followed by the ground-breaking documentary and companion book, *Forks Over Knives*.

### Does it make it easier for someone like you, who is an advocate of veganism and whole food, plant-based diets, to now have the scientific validation of these principals that come from Caldwell Esselstyn, Joel Fuhrman, Neal Barnard, and others?

It absolutely makes it easier to communicate with people who are open to listening when they hear that the bulk of the science is on our side. There are other people, though, who cherish other ideas, and it wouldn't matter who was telling them that a whole foods, plant-based diet is ideal.

### A few years ago, you personally took veganism mainstream with your book *Main Street Vegan*. Tell me about the inspiration for that book.

After I wrote *Compassion the Ultimate Ethic*, I wrote a guide to low-fat cooking, then *The Love-Powered Diet*, which is about overcoming food addiction. I thought I'd said everything I had to say on veganism and health, so I ventured into the world of spirituality and self-help books: *Living a Charmed Life*, which you mentioned before, and also books like *Shelter for the Spirit*—my first Oprah book—and *Lit from Within*. But in late 2010 I went to a PETA fundraiser and saw footage about the mistreatment of animals, the same kind of stuff I'd seen for 40 years, but that night my heart was particularly open. I just wanted to write them a check for a million dollars, but it would have



On display at a bookstore, Victoria's 2012 book, *Main Street Vegan: Everything You Need to Know to Eat Healthfully and Live Compassionately in the Real World*.



Victoria with her daughter, actor, stunt performer, and wildlife rehabilitator Adair Moran.

bounced. On the way home in the subway I was thinking, “What can I do to help?” And it was almost dictated to me: “Here’s what you can do: Your next book needs to be called *Main Street Vegan*. It needs to have short chapters and a recipe after each one, and be geared to that person you used to be in Wheaton, Illinois in 1983 when you went vegan.” It was great advice, because the book has been extremely successful, and Main Street Vegan Enterprises is the umbrella over everything I do. I have the Main Street Vegan weekly radio show and podcast, the Main Street Vegan blog, and Main Street Vegan Academy, which trains and certifies vegan lifestyle coaches and educators.

### **Do you ever find that restaurants take the simplicity of veganism or the simplicity of eating a plant-based diet and make it more complicated than it needs to be?**

You have to pick and choose, but that’s good. There is a beautiful raw food restaurant here in New York City called Pure Food and Wine, and on any given night, I’ll bet 98% of the patrons are not vegetarian, but rather just people who want to go out for a very interesting dining experience. If people are introduced to a way of life that can save this planet by eating food that is richer than many of us would make at home, I don’t have any problems with that.

### **Do you think that the attraction to veganism and a whole-foods, plant-based diet is that by following this lifestyle we can save the planet?**

Ethics, health, and the environment are the primary reasons people go vegan; any given individual will come to it from whichever of these most appeals to them. I always like it when someone “gets” the ethical piece: that makes it so much more than a “diet” and renders them

much more likely to stay in the fold.

### **So let’s turn to your latest book, *The Good Karma Diet*.**

It’s a two-part program that teaches that if you want good karma in your life in a very basic, feel-better kind of way, eat the foods and engage in the practices that are kind to your body, and your body is going to respond kindly to you. But in the bigger picture, you want to do good for others—all species—because that good is going to come back to you as well.

### **And what is that Good Karma Diet?**

It is a high-green, high-color, high-raw, juicy way of eating! If you really think about it, all veganism is good. If everybody on this planet became a junk food vegan tomorrow the world would be so much better off. I just don’t know if those individuals in their own health would be all that better off. So what we’re doing is bringing it all together in a way that helps the animals, helps the planet, and also gives the individual the kind of nourishment that is going to help them do what I say in the subtitle: Feel amazing and age in slow motion.

### **What is your typical diet at home?**

I eat very seasonally, although all year round I have juice every day; green juice usually, sometimes more of a beet or carrot juice, but usually a green juice. It feels like a transfusion of liveliness and energy. In warmer weather I love smoothies and muesli for breakfast. In winter it’s going to be hot oatmeal, with fresh fruit and ground flax. For lunch, I often have a really big salad and I put “oomph” in them with steamed broccoli, garbanzo beans, black beans, pumpkin seeds, and a nut-based salad dressing like a cashew ranch. In the wintertime when a salad just isn’t as appealing, I’ll use a lot of those same ingredients and make beans and greens. I’ll very quickly sauté some onions and mushrooms and put in some kind of beans and greens, such as kale or arugula or spinach or collards.

### **And can all of these favorites be found in *The Good Karma Diet*?**

Quite a few of them. I actually teamed up with Doris Fin ([feedyourbliss.wordpress.com](http://feedyourbliss.wordpress.com)), a gifted young chef from Toronto who has traveled to tropical paradises where many “superfoods” grow. She calls herself a raw food alchemist and creates combinations of cooked and raw foods that are really easy to make, very yummy, and truly health-promoting.

### **You talk a lot about raw foods. Are you a raw food vegan?**

No. As I explained, in the winter especially, I really do appreciate the warmth and the grounding factor of cooked



foods. I am a raw enthusiast, however, and believe in the importance of including raw foods in any diet.

### Tell me about your Main Street Vegan Academy.

The Academy was an idea that came to me when I knew that my previous book would be called *Main Street Vegan*, which itself has an interesting story. My publisher didn't like "Main Street" and I didn't know what I was going to call the book. However, as chance would have it, I ran into Michael Moore, the filmmaker, on the street; he'd liked one of my earlier books, *Fit from Within*, and he told me it was a great title and that he would talk to my editor. He did, and once she had convinced the higher-ups that it was a great title and Michael Moore said so, it all just came together. Then all these other "Main Street Vegan" ideas started popping up, and the one that popped the most was Main Street Vegan Academy, a program that trains and certifies vegan lifestyle coaches and educators. We do this four times a year, live and in person in New York City. It's a six-day intensive.

We cover every aspect of vegan living: health, ethics, environment, and we also have classes and programs in how to communicate these ideas; and another arm of the program teaches people how to make this a business. We have amazing instructors: Robert Ostfeld, M.D., the cardiologist who heads The Cardiac Wellness Program at Montefiore Medical Center in The Bronx; Marty Davey, a registered dietitian and YouTube star as "La Diva Dietitian," and Michael Parish Dudell, a young marketing guru who was tapped by the *Shark Tank* TV show to write their business books. We also take wonderful field trips since New York City is Disneyland for vegans. We have had 175 graduates from nine countries so far. They're writing, blogging, coaching, opening restaurants and businesses (e.g., a vegan cowboy boot company in Dallas, a vegan cheese shop to open in Brooklyn later this year). Our next programs will be in August and Octo-



Victoria working out.

***"Ethics, health, and the environment are the primary reasons people go vegan."***

### You started on the vegetarian path over 40 years ago and now you have 12 books to your credit, an academy, a radio show, and a reputation. Sounds like you're leading the charmed life that you wrote about.

You know, I would never have believed that being 65, which I am now, would be like this. I don't have any infirmities. I don't have any limitations. I look in the mirror and I'm still perfectly happy with what I see. I'm not 25, but you know what? I wasn't always happy with what I saw then, so it's all good. I've had the incredible gift of being a little part of this huge wave for good, this wave of vegetarianism, of ethical living, of natural living, and enlightened health. And this is a movement with people in it that I admired when I was a school girl and now I'm in it too.

### Thank you for being a part of the NHA family for so many years.

And bless you. You and my many friends in the NHA have been great teachers and great supporters of mine for a really long time. 🌱NHA

You can order Victoria's book on the NHA Amazon Store at: [HealthScience.org/shop/Amazon-Store](https://www.healthscience.org/shop/Amazon-Store)

ber 2015. For more information, people can go to: [mainstreetvegan.net](https://www.mainstreetvegan.net) and click on "Academy."

### You also have a radio show, right?

I do. The *Main Street Vegan* show is live on Wednesday afternoons at three o'clock Eastern time, but it's also a podcast, which means that it's available all the time on iTunes and elsewhere; the archives go back three years. We've had some wonderful friends of the National Health Association as guests, including Drs. Michael Klaper, Alan Goldhamer, Alan Immerman, Colin Campbell, and Joel Fuhrman. It's such fun. (The link to the live show is [bit.ly/hearmsv](https://bit.ly/hearmsv); to access the archives, go to: [tinyurl.com/msvpodcast](https://tinyurl.com/msvpodcast).)