

# Personal Project

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## Behind the Scenes of the Animal Industry

2018/2019

3,172 words

# Content

PREFACE.....	2
My Goal.....	2
Global Context .....	2
PROCESS .....	4
Planning.....	4
Research.....	4
Taking Action.....	5
ANALYSIS .....	6
Analysis of Planning.....	6
Analysis of Research.....	6
Analysis of Taking Action .....	7
Analysis of Final Product .....	7
CONCLUSION.....	9
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	10
APPENDIX .....	11

# PREFACE

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As a younger child I did not have passion for any particular interest. I liked every sport and I liked crafts which I was good at, but I never tied myself down to one hobby. Therefore, when I heard about the Personal Project for the first time I was scared more than the rest of the class; I had no idea what I would focus on. Last year, however, I have done extensive research and decided to go vegan. Many people think veganism is only a diet, but it is more of a lifestyle; you do not consume animals or animal products, but you also do not wear clothing created from animals' skin, do not buy products or cosmetics that have been tested on animals and do not visit or support industries that abuse animals for the entertainment of the public. According to Tony Harris and Ronnie Lee, founders of the Animal Liberation Front, "the definition [of veganism] should go even further" (Kat Smith). They created an addition to the definition in 2017; "[veganism] includes a moral duty to actively oppose animal exploitation by encouraging and educating others to become vegan" ("Veganism"). And so, I decided to dedicate my Personal Project to this particular topic; to educate people about what is really going on in the animal industry. Thanks to combining this project with my personal growth in this sphere, I can say that this was one of the most important journeys of my life. In addition, it was a journey to help so many innocent lives from being murdered, and to help revive our Earth, which we destroyed almost beyond repair.

## My Goal

Even though I already knew what topic my final product would have, specifications were necessary. As for the product, my decision lay between a short book and a speech (see *Appendix no.1,2*). I have chosen to write the short book because I always preferred writing to speaking. I also think that a book lasts forever and reaches more people, whereas a speech is a one-time event that only a certain amount of people can experience. I also had to decide which specific topic I would focus on. Veganism has three aspects: ethics, health and environment. If I were to choose the health aspect, I would have to study and dig deep into biology. If I were to choose environmental aspects, I would have to work with numbers and percentages to show how a meat diet negatively affects the Earth. Ethical and moral aspects of veganism are closest to human compassion and are incredibly effective in opening the eyes of people to this serious issue. And so, I decided that my goal will be to write a short book about the lives and living conditions of animals in the animal industry.

## Global Context

The global context I chose for this project was *Fairness and Development*, as it is most relevant to the direction I want to aim with my product. It talks about "sharing the planet and finite resources with other people and other living things, about the relationships within and between communities and about peace and conflict resolution" (MYP Personal Project, 2017). This global context perfectly describes the issues I want to address in my project;

therefore, it was very easy for me to choose at the beginning. With my book, I am trying to raise awareness to an unfair conflict between human beings and non-human animals; I am trying to show that all living beings deserve the right to live. This global context helped me clear a path towards my ultimate goal.

# PROCESS

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Before figuring out the details of how my book would look like, I joined several vegan activist groups in Bratislava in August (see *Appendix* no.3,4,5,6). It was a great start for me and a push forward. Meeting new activists, voicing our concerns in the streets, seeing animals and hearing their screams in front of slaughterhouses definitely helped convince me that this book was necessary.

## Planning

After I set my goal and joined a group of like-minded people, the next step was to focus on my book. On 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2018, our activist group helped organize a public screening of a newly produced Australian documentary *Dominion* (see *Appendix* no.7). It took place in Divadlo Malá scéna (theatre in Bratislava) and about 100 people attended the event. After seeing the documentary, I decided it would be one of the main sources of inspiration for my book because it focused on the living conditions of various species of non-human animals, contained countless information and evidence, and was very well written. Earlier in my transition to veganism, I also saw a 2005 documentary movie *Earthlings*, which talks about the same topic as *Dominion* does, except that it is divided into five parts – pets, food, clothes, entertainment and science. So during 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of October, I decided to combine these two divisions and make four main parts in my book – food, clothing, entertainment and experimentation – and each part would then be divided into sub-chapters (see *Appendix* no.8,9). For food I decided to write about pigs, cattle, dairy cows, broiler chickens, egg-laying hens, ducks and fish. For clothing I decided to write about fur, leather, wool and down. For entertainment I decided to write about sports, zoos, circuses and oceanariums. And lastly, for experimentation I decided to write about primates, mice and rats, and dogs (see *Appendix* no.10,11).

## Research

Writing a non-fiction book filled with facts and information requires intense research. For each chapter I expected to go through numerous sources. When I started writing a new chapter, I first watched the particular part about it in *Dominion* and then found additional five to ten reliable sources to extend the chapter with more information. I frequently used PETA websites, since they were always the ones revealing the whole truth and had sources to back it up. Many times I had to research specific processes like for example artificial insemination, live plucking or branding of cattle so I was able to write about it with my own words in the book.

When transitioning to veganism I had to make personal research so I knew what I was doing and why. In addition, all my spare time was spent with the activist groups, constantly surrounded by debates about this particular topic. Therefore, many times I knew the things

or processes of killing animals, either because I researched it during my transition or I talked about it with my like-minded friends. But of course, I always had to make sure if it was correct or at least check for specifics, so I could include the truth in my book.

## Taking Action

Research and taking action went hand-in-hand for my project. As mentioned before, for each chapter different sources were necessary. At the beginning of November, I started writing the book (see *Appendix* no.12). I mostly worked during weekends. For every chapter, my first step was to watch the particular part about the chapter either in *Dominion*, *Earthlings* or other kinds of videos from PETA – the reason for this is because it is more comfortable for me to work with video sources. I personally find it easier to study by listening, rather than reading. After watching a few reliable videos about the living conditions and process of production from a mere baby animal to packaged meat, I start writing what I learned. For each sentence that contains numbers or percentages, I turn back to the videos I heard it from or find a new web source and cite it into the given sentence. After finishing with a chapter, I start working together with my father to check for any grammatical mistakes, sentences that did not make sense or any other minor corrections. I decided to seek help in my father because he is a translator and he works with the English language daily. He is incredibly talented in working with text. Later, I start looking for pictures. Since the very beginning, I knew that images are just as important as the text is; most people cannot comprehend the meaning of the text unless they see a visual representation of it. In addition, I believe that seeing what conditions the animals live in and go through every second of their lives evokes feelings of compassion and empathy. Therefore, because of choosing the right pictures with good quality, it usually took me about three to four hours to finish looking for pictures for only one chapter.

I finished the book on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2019. I wrote 18 chapters, the prologue, the epilogue and an interview with a Slovak animal rights activist. Now all that was left to do was print it. Before I even started to write the book, I decided I wanted to print several copies at least for our Final Fair, for any people that would be interested. So in February, I knew I wanted to print out around 20 copies. An older friend, who also printed a book for her Personal Project in the past, recommended to me a place called ExpresTlač located in Petržalka, Bratislava. I browsed their website where they had a calculator of how much it would cost me to print out 20 copies of a 70 page book and it ended up being €75.40, which is quite cheap compared to other printing companies. I ended up printing my book in ExpresTlač and so, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2019, my book came to life.

# ANALYSIS

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I spent approximately 168 hours working on the final product, excluding the unknown amount of hours I spent on recording the process into a journal (see *Appendix* no.12). I am proud I managed to achieve my goal and, hopefully, the amount of time I put into the making of the product is at least a bit visible in the final version. I did, however, notice three grammatical mistakes in the entire book after printing, which was quite a let-down.

## Analysis of Planning

At the very beginning, the book was supposed to consist of only the treatment of animals in the food/meat industry. However, my ideas changed and developed as I realized that there are also other industries that exploit and abuse animals the same way, maybe even more so, as the food industry does. Thanks to the people I surrounded myself with and thanks to my personal journey, I felt like it was a duty for me to mention and write about the suffering of all the animals. I am getting a chance to reach out to more people thanks to this project, so it is important for me to write as much unfamiliar information to really unveil the appalling truth. Therefore, I added the three other main parts – clothing, entertainment and experimentation – and pushed myself to the limits I never thought I could achieve. It turned out to be long and difficult work, but it was very much worth it at the end.

## Analysis of Research

Research was a really tough part of my product. It took some time getting used to, but I did count with this issue when I picked out my topic. Altogether I used around 75 sources for the whole book. For each chapter I used between three to eleven different sources. I am very happy with the sources I used; primarily with *Dominion* because it was a huge helping hand and an outline that pushed me forward. The prologue and epilogue of my book are word-for-word transcripts of what Chris Delforce wrote in his documentary because the texts were so beautiful and motivational. To achieve communication through research in my project, I wrote an email to the production team of *Dominion*, asking them for permission to use their text and quote it as the writing of Chris Delforce (see *Appendix* no.13). I did get a response from them; however, it came after the deadline of my final product (see *Appendix* no.14). In the mail they did give me permission to quote them, but rather as *Dominion* than Chris Delforce. However, due to the deadline, I did not manage to change it.

As a post-script or an ending to my book, I added an interview because I think a subjective, more personal view on this issue was necessary. It was an interview with Kamil Bielik, a 22-year-old Slovak vegan activist, who organizes street activism in Trnava and non-violent disruption protests in Bratislava. He always says “the future is bright and if we fight hard enough, it will only get better”. And that is also a reason I have chosen to do an interview, specifically with him – because the whole book is very depressing and horrifying, and Bielik

brings a very bright ending to it, full of hope and solutions. Turns out, it was a very warm addition to the book.

## **Analysis of Taking Action**

I faced many problems with the visual side of the book. Document Word is quite tricky to work with when you are such a pedant like me. I pasted pictures into the text (meaning the text surrounded the picture; was not aligned with it) so it would be easier for the reader to connect. However, making the pictures large enough to be visible, but not so large that there would not be any space for the text, was sometimes a challenge. I played with the position and size of each photo for extremely long periods of time, many times forcing me out of my time schedule. In Document Word, when I moved a picture only one millimeter to the left, it immediately moved the whole text and suddenly three new pages appeared in my document out of nowhere. It was a delicate process for me, as I pay too much attention to detail, and sometimes it lead to breakdowns or just me giving up for the day. My patience was up to the rim every time I worked with pictures. What I learned from this experience is that I should definitely change my approach and sometimes take things a little less rigorously because in the long-run, it would be better for my health, time management and probably the overall look of the book. Many times I stressed myself out over nothing.

Finding a quality printing company with good prices was the most stressful step for me. The first candidate for printing was my mother's office. They had a printer, it would not cost anything and it would be very convenient for me. However, after finishing my book and doing a trial print one week before the deadline, it turned out that the printer produced horrible quality pictures, which was a huge red flag since the pictures I used already were not such good quality because they were security footage or photos taken undercover. My second candidate was FaxCopy, a company where I often print my schoolwork. After seeing their prices and calculating a bit, however, I found out that it would cost around €132 for only 2 prints of the book, which was incredibly expensive. I started to get stressed out, so I turned to my friend, who managed to help me solve my problem. ExpresTlač had amazing prices and great quality prints. And so, after some communication with a graphics designer from the company, they printed out the copies (see *Appendix no.15*).

## **Analysis of Final Product**

My whole process was very methodical and organized. However, I can see that at the beginning of the book I was more focused than at the very end of the book. I did not have a continual perfection throughout the whole book and sometimes throughout chapters the reader can sense that I let go. When comparing the first chapter (pigs) and one of the later chapters (zoos) I can really sense the difference. In the first chapter I can see how much I was invested, whereas the chapter about zoos was a chapter that did not give the reader much information. I should have been focused and invested the same amount in all of the chapters. I also mentioned the three grammatical mistakes I found after the print. Even



though this let me down very much, I was able to fix them in the PDF file before the final deadline of the product, so it turned out well in the end. Overall, I am very happy I challenged and pushed myself to the limits and added those three additional parts. Throughout this project I managed to convince myself that I am more capable than I think I am which inspires me to do more and strive for better in the future.

# CONCLUSION

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Despite the negative impression it has always had on me, I am glad I experienced this project; it challenged my abilities and writing skills and helped me understand that some things are worth the fight and sacrifice. It cost me countless sleepless nights and stress-filled days, but it was worth every second of the journey. I am incredibly grateful for finding my purpose throughout this project and for passing knowledge onto other people. In the terms of the IB Learner Profile, I have definitely been caring and open-minded, since my product was about saving and helping other living beings and about a new path filled with compassion and love. I was also knowledgeable, since I explored issues that have global significance; I acquired in-depth knowledge of the particular issue too, which will definitely help me in my future personal growth as an activist. And I have been a risk-taker, since I approached uncertainty with determination. I also took a risk in adding the three additional parts to my book and I am happy I did because it made the book so much better.

During our Final Fair, 17 copies of my book were handed out to the interested audience. People talking with me about my project were mostly very touched and emotional. They were angry about the situation and some even cried. I know it may sound weird, but this made me happy because I could see that people do care, they just do not know. The rest of the copies I will give to our school library or to teachers that would want to work with them during lessons with their students. I will also be working with the book a lot in the near future. My activist friend and I plan to translate the book to Slovak and distribute them (both languages) during our street activism to people that are interested. We plan to promote it online too and spread it among vegan communities, so they could recommend it to their non-vegan friends.

This project has been an indescribable experience for me. It was 168 hours of hard work, 70 pages of disturbing reality along with 90 pages of a hand-written journal, €75.40 worth of my personal savings and a priceless journey toward a personal conviction of the necessity to fight for animal liberation. It was very important to me and, altogether, an incredible lesson in my early life.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Smith, Kat. "Veganism is more than just a diet, says new definition." *Livekindly*, 29 August 2018, <https://www.livekindly.co/veganism-more-than-just-diet-new-definition/>. 22 February 2019.

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*MYP Personal Project*. Spojená škola Novohradská, 2017.

*Dominion*. Directed by Chris Delforce, narrated by Joaquin Phoenix, Rooney Mara, Sia, Sadie Sink and Kat Von D, Voiceless: The Animal Protection Institute, 2018.

*Earthlings*. Directed by Shaun Monson, narrated by Joaquin Phoenix, Nation Earth, 2005.

Bielik, Kamil. Email interview. 2 February 2019.

## APPENDIX

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31.5.2018

Today we got to have a discussion with Ms. Špačeková on my topic. Since I still didn't know exactly what I wanted to do or how, we discussed and debated it. She told us what PP expected from us and she also asked,

1.

if I didn't want to make a speech rather than a pamphlet. I told her that a book "never dies" and people could read it anytime, anywhere, whereas if I made a speech, people probably would have things to do, not come and less people would know about the vegan message and that was the opposite of my goal. We also work

2.

24.8.2018

Today I volunteered and participated in an event called Cube of Truth organised by the Anonymous for the Voiceless. It's a square-like formation created from people standing still next to each other facing outward of the square, each person holding either a poster or a lap top with playing scenes from slaughterhouses and dairy/egg farms. The people wear, all black and can't talk. The outreach are people lingering near the square, who come and talk to people that seem interested. They ask questions and start discussions, ending it with advice and recommendations.

3.

# ANONYMOUS for the VOICELESS

animals • environment • health

## MUSÍTE VIDIEŤ / MUST SEES

Nejlepší řeč jakou kdy uslyšíte / Best Speech You Will Ever Hear (YouTube)

101 důvodů proč se stát veganem / 101 Reasons to Go Vegan (YouTube)

Radšej vidličky ako nože / Forks Over Knives (Netflix)

Mléko je děsivé / Dairy is Scary (YouTube)

Pozemšťania / Earthlings (Earthlings.com)

Land of Hope and Glory Česky (YouTube)

This Speech is Your WAKE UP CALL (YouTube)

Cowspiracy (Netflix)

ďalšie dokumentárne filmy na Dokumentarium.cz

## PODPORA / FREE SUPPORT

VeganskaVyzva.cz

Vegan22.com

CubeofTruth.com

## ZDROJE / RESOURCES

Veganskaspolocnost.sk

Soucitne.cz

HappyCow.net

Dcerka.sk

Nutritionfacts.com

## PREČÍTAJTE SI / MUST READS

Jak nezemřít / How not to die (Dr. Greger)

Veganův průvodce (K. Rathousová)

Varenie a RAWenie (Z. S. Antalíková a F. Spinelli)

Food Choice & Sustainability (Dr. Oppenlander)

4.

if he would want to. She also told me about a whole day 'pietny akt' in front of the slaughterhouse in Dunajská Streda - the group will stand in front of a slaughterhouse with transparents for passing-by cars to read and they'll be waiting for animal transport trucks, where they would say their last goodbyes and feed or give them water and make their last moments showing them love and affection. And lastly she mentioned

5.



And lastly, today I borrowed a camera from a friend from the class higher, Michal Kuchár, because tomorrow is the pig vigil in front of the slaughterhouse in Dunajská Streda and I thought I could use some videos or photos for my project. It's difficult getting ready...

18.9.2018

I survived... it was very emotional and tough, but I was there for the animals, not myself. I do have some pictures and some videos that I am going to use in my project. We came there around 7 o'clock in the morning and left around 11:30. We stopped two transports of cows and one transport of pigs. While waiting, we held up the transparencies for cars to see, like last time.

6.

5.10.2018

Today evening was the public screening of the new Australian documentary *Dominion*. I managed to invite three of my friends that consume meat to see what they are supporting. I still feel a heavy, dark kind of rock on my chest from how disturbing the scenes were - some stuck with me till the next day (today). I think this documentary will be a huge pillar of help in my future work on the book.

7.

6. 10. 2018

After seeing *Dominion* yesterday I thought I would write my book only about meat consumption or food industries (+ dairy, eggs). But I did have a chat with my vegan sister and it did bother me that I wouldn't mention other animals that suffer similar fates because of us. So together with my sister, inspired by another documentary *Earthlings* and their

8.

division, I decided that my book will have four main parts:

1. FOOD
2. CLOTHING
3. ENTERTAINMENT
4. EXPERIMENTATION

9.

7. 10. 2018

After further discussion with my sister and thinking I decided each part will have its own sub-chapters. But in entertainment I already thought of sub-chapters: sports (bulls, greyhound racing, horse racing), zoos (polar bears), circuses (elephants) and oceanariums (orcas). In this particular part I can talk more about types of entertainment rather than species of animals like in food: pigs, cows, chickens, fish, etc.

After re-watching *Dominion*, I decided the sub-chapters will be as followed:

10.



## FOOD

1. Pigs
2. Cattle
3. Dairy Cows and Veal Calves
4. Broiler Chickens
5. Egg-laying Hens
6. Ducks (mention foie gras)
7. Fish (mention dolphins and whales)

## CLOTHING

1. Fur (foxes, minks, rabbits, seals)
2. Leather (indian cows)
3. Wool (merino sheep)
4. Down (ducks, geese)

## ENTERTAINMENT

1. Sports (bulls in bullfighting, rodeos, greyhound/horse race)
2. Zoos (polar bears, giraffes)
3. Circuses (elephants, tigers, lions)
4. Oceanariums (orcas, dolphins)

## EXPERIMENTS

1. Primates
2. Mice and Rats
3. Dogs (beagles)

11.

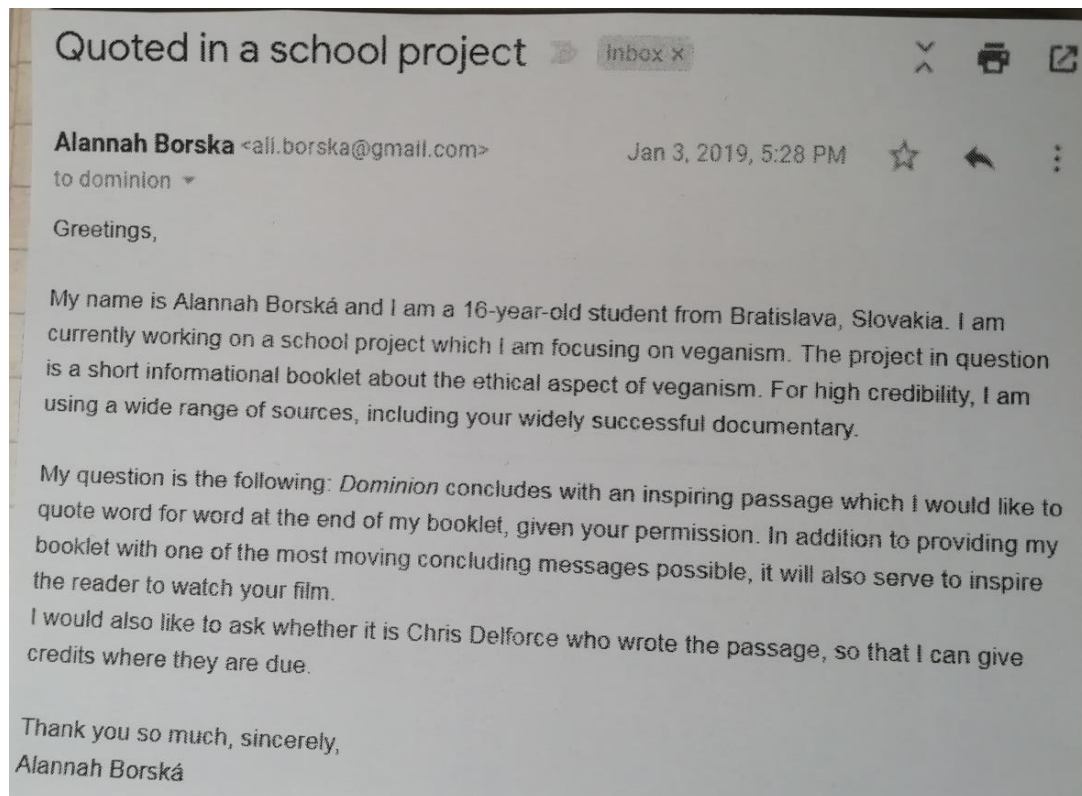
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1.12 = 19:00 - 23:00 = 4h  
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16.12 = 20:30 - 22:00 = 1:30h  
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28.12 = 12:00 - 19:00 = 7h = 7 DAYS  
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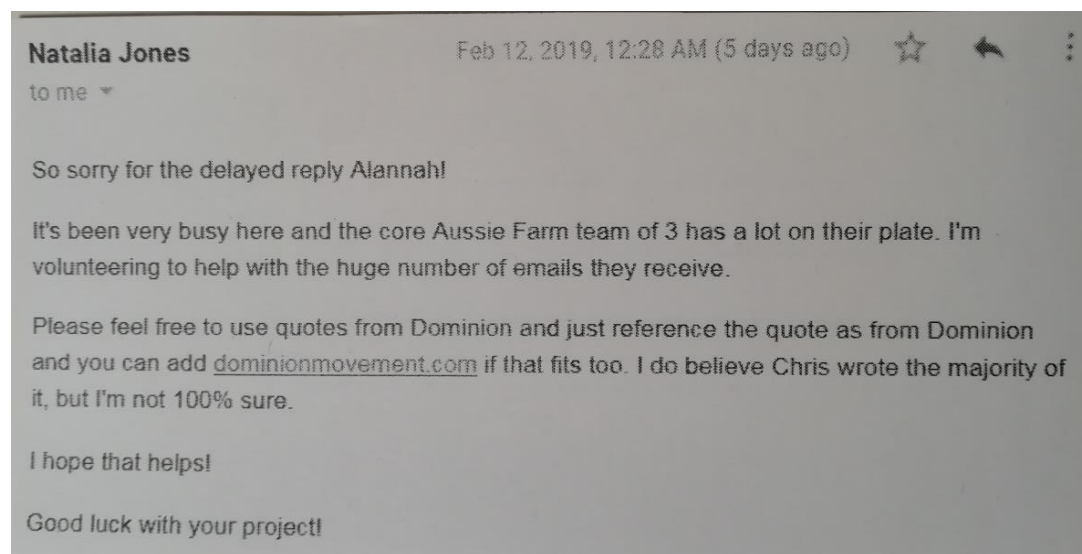
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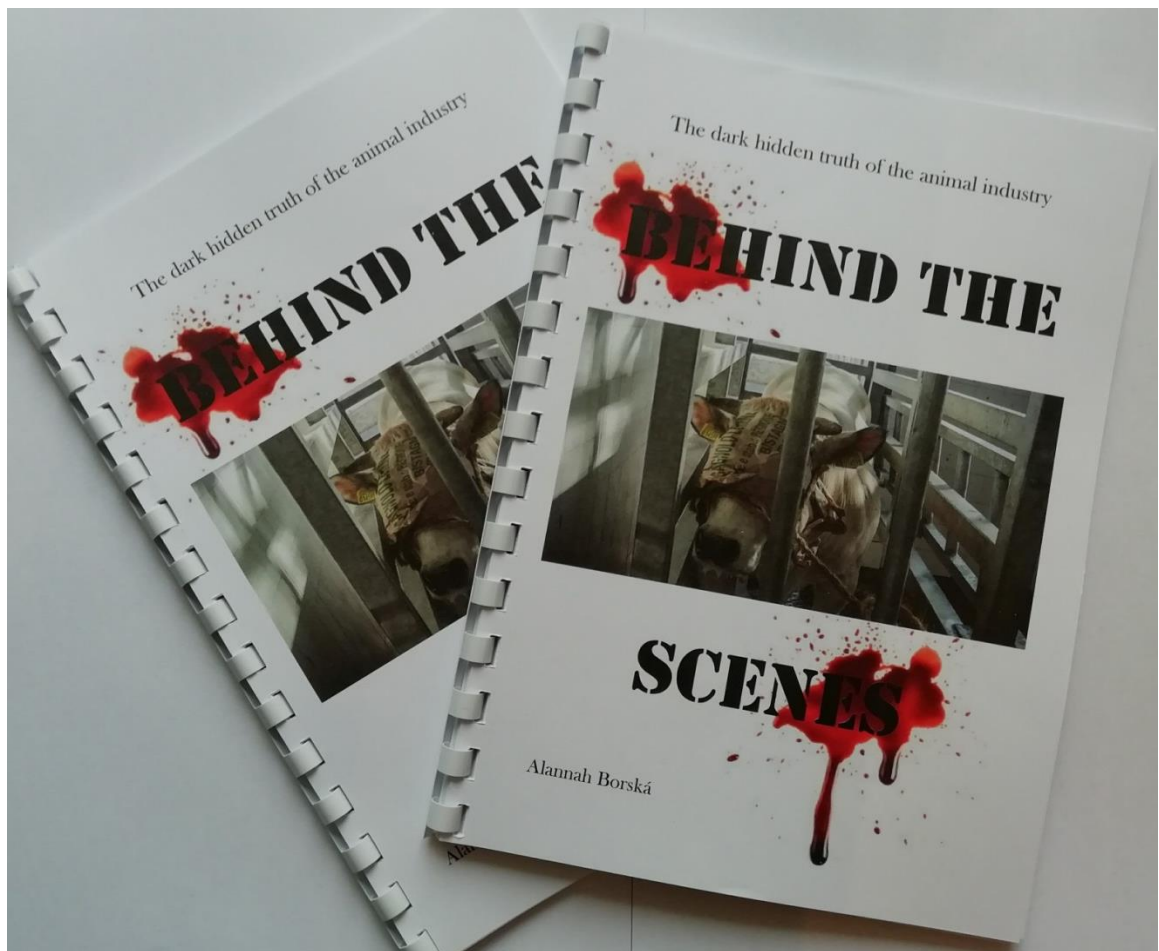


13.



14.





15.