

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a network of North American Friends (Quakers) and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world, emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies.



QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS

Hayley Hathaway
& Ruth Darlington

Build Back Fossil Free

"If we're going to Build Back Better, we need to do better. And that starts by putting Indigenous people and their voices first, before any [fossil fuels] project is put in place...It is our Indigenous right to protect what little we have left," shared Ta'sina Sapa Win Smith, of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation and co-founder of the Cheyenne River Grassroots Collective. She spoke during the Build Back Fossil Free digital rally on January 26 where Indigenous frontline leaders gathered to share stories of the devastating impacts of fossil fuel extraction and infrastructure on their communities, how they have organized to resist, and what we all need to do to protect the sacred now.

Quaker Earthcare Witness recently joined the Build Back Fossil Free network alongside hundreds of organizations. The network unites around three demands:

1. Protect and invest in the Black, Indigenous, Brown, and working-class communities that have borne the brunt of fossil fuel pollution and climate disasters.
2. Reject new fossil fuel projects, including the Line 3 pipeline;

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BEFRIENDING CREATION

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Photo: "We Are Here to to Protect the Water, Revoke the Permits! Rally in St Paul, MN" by Lorie Shaull

From the Clerk's Table



“The Dakota Lakes Research Farm’s primary goal is to identify, research and demonstrate methods of strengthening and stabilizing the agriculture economy... We work with Mother Nature to ensure land is protected, fertile and produces yields to feed the world for many generations to come. This practice results in maintaining and encouraging living soils, clean water, healthy foods and ample wildlife.”

If you show up for dinner at my house, please know that the dinner conversation may include talk about high quality cover crops, beneficial fungi, and ways to get worms delivered successfully by mail. Although I do not own a farm, I am fascinated by regenerative agriculture.

What is most interesting to me is that there is a growing and energetic community of farmers who are working with Earth and cooperating in learning how to best care for the land, the plants, and the animals. They are well aware of the history of chemical damage to the soil that has its roots in the dominator mentality of “It’s my land and I will do whatever makes me the most money from it.” These farmers are teaching us all that a model of community and cooperation provides better food, greater satisfaction, more income for farmers, and a return to values that go deeper than how much money can be made with the “right” pesticides.

All around us, I see slow, deliberate changes that shift us toward values that are completely congruent with Quaker testimonies. I see humans waking up, perhaps at the eleventh hour, to the joy and nourishment that come from working in community, with integrity, recognizing and strengthening the Light in all of us.

Thanks to Carol Barta, who taught us about regenerative agriculture at our QEW Gathering in the Spring of 2020. Thanks to all the farmers who are caring for the land.

Mary Jo Klingel

Mary Jo Klingel, Clerk

Stay in Touch

Editor: Hayley Hathaway,
hayley@quakerearthcare.org

General Secretary:
Shelley Tanenbaum,
shelley@quakerearthcare.org

QEW Clerk: Mary Jo Klingel,
mjklingelft@comcast.net

Our Vision & Witness

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God.

WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God’s Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right, and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth’s ecological integrity.

WE PROMOTE these truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

BeFriending Creation

We publish *BeFriending Creation* to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, news of our actions, and encourage a sense of community and spiritual connection with all Creation.

Opinions expressed are the authors’ own and do not necessarily reflect those of Quaker Earthcare Witness, or of the Religious Society of Friends. The editor is responsible for unsigned items. Please share our work widely and broadly, always attributing it to Quaker Earthcare Witness.

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eliminate giveaways to oil, gas, and coal corporations, and end the era of fossil fuel production.

3. Launch a national climate mobilization to Build Back Fossil Free, deliver jobs, justice, and opportunity for all.

Network members argue that the White House's recent executive orders get us closer to their demands, but don't go far enough. Indigenous Environmental Network's Dallas Goldtooth said, "Together we beat and defeated the Keystone XL pipeline." But the proposed Line 3 and Dakota Access pipeline expansions threaten more destruction and require collective action.

Tara Houska, founder of the Giniw Collective, shared about the Line 3 pipeline. Enbridge's proposed pipeline replacement project would bring nearly a million barrels of tar sands per day from Alberta to Wisconsin. So far, one hundred people have been arrested defending the land, called to "protect the sacred with our bodies and our freedom" (see page 12) and almost 70,000 comments were submitted against the proposed pipeline, but still, the project was unanimously approved. Meanwhile, the 1,172 mile-long Dakota Access pipeline continues to pump crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois, with plans to increase output, even as the US Court of Appeals ruled in early February that the pipeline is operating illegally.

The US must also end leasing and permitting for oil and gas on public lands. President Biden's temporary moratorium on all federal activity regarding the oil and gas leases and protections along the shores of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge need to be made permanent. Bernatee Demientieff of the Gwich'in Steering Committee in Fort Yukon, Alaska emphasized:

Call the US White House at 888-724-8946 and say, "My name is _____, I live in _____. I'm calling to urge President Biden to stick to his promise to ban new oil and gas permits on public lands, revoke permits for fossil fuel pipelines, and stop approving oil and gas export facilities. If the President is serious about addressing the climate crisis, he must keep fossil fuels in the ground and invest in the communities that have borne the brunt of pollution and climate disaster."

"We need to bring human rights and Indigenous-led perspectives to the forefront because white supremacy is why we are in the mess that we are in...so we are asking President Biden to take action, continue to take action, protect an untouched ecosystem that births 40,000 caribou each year in the Arctic Refuge and also stop the leasing that is destroying the habitat and the ability to breathe where my family comes from."

Oil and gas interests are also devastating communities in the southwest. Pueblo Action Alliance's Julia Fay Bernal (Sandia Pueblo and Yuchi-Creek Nation) shared that New Mexico alone has 60,000 oil and gas wells. Ninety-one percent of public lands in northwest New Mexico's Greater Chaco region are already leased out to oil and gas. Bernal declared, "We say Build Back Fossil Free, which means building back from generations of colonial harm in the forms of federal fossil fuel leasing and the utmost disregard and disrespect of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination... It's time to give our waters and our lands a chance at remediation and regeneration."

Sharon Lavigne of Rise St. James said that the US must also say "no" to fossil fuel exports and petrochemical expansion. In Lavigne's Louisiana community, more than 2,000 people, over 70% African American, live within three miles of a proposed plant which would



Graphic by Rebo and Joy
@reboprints @killjoy.mall

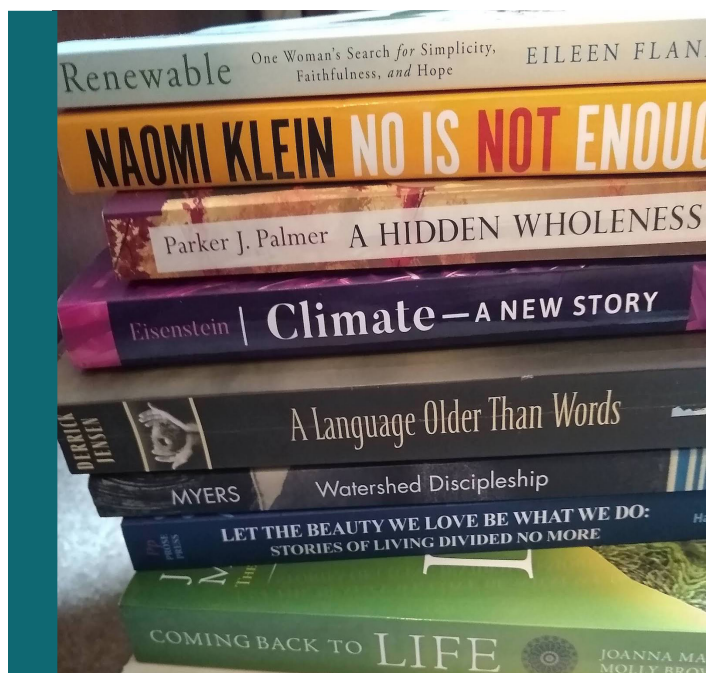
turn excess natural gas into throw-away plastic. They are organizing to prevent the Formosa Plastic plant from being built, working to prevent further harm to people already suffering from high levels of air and water pollution.

At the rally, Indigenous, Black, and Brown organizers from across the country called on us to "Find our bravery!" and do what we can.

Tara Houska reminds us that this struggle is about more than pipelines: "True healing comes from recognition of the harm one has caused and repairing that damage. Only then can you 'Build Back Better.' We want Biden to build back Fossil Free. But equally important we want to build what many in our communities have never had to begin with: equality, justice, and a fighting chance at living to our fullest potential."

Visit BuildBackFossilfree.org.

Hayley Hathaway is QEW's Communications Coordinator, and Ruth Darlington is a member of Medford (NJ) Friends Meeting and clerk for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Eco-Justice Collaborative.



"Each of us approaches Earthcare from the calling deep within us. Some are called to advocacy; some are called to tilt at the political windmills; some of us are called to teach/share with others; some of us are called to regenerative agriculture and/or native plants. Each has its place in Earthcare. It's important to find our own starting place—and that will guide our reading. Reading broadly can also help us find that starting place."

- Hope Ascher, Quaker Meeting of Melbourne

Books to Read for These Times:

Climate: A New Story by Charles Eisenstein. "How changing the 'climate' of our thinking and rhetoric can influence how we deal with physical climate change."

The Parable of the Sower by Olivia Butler. "About empathy/race/environmental justice/pandemics/social change, and a vision of the Seed (almost Quaker, but not quite)." - David Millar, Montreal (QC Canada) Monthly Meeting

Project Drawdown by Paul Hawken. "It is the most amazing resource for anyone interested in climate change." - Liz Robinson, Central Philadelphia (PA) Monthly Meeting

Climate Church, Climate World by Jim Antal. "This book should appeal to all faith communities and has questions for group discussion." - Jeff Gabbard, Fairfield (IN) Friends Meeting

Katherine Fisher, Beacon Hill (MA) Friends Meeting, also shares that "**The Parents' Guide to Climate Revolution: 100 Ways to Build a Fossil-Free Future, Raise Empowered Kids, and Still Get a Good Night's Sleep** by Mary DeMocker has really helped me."

Our Favorite Books

We asked QEW members to share their favorite books. Happy reading!

Transformational Earthcare Books:

Renewable by Eileen Flanagan

The Great Work by Thomas Berry. "He frames Earthcare within the context of an unfolding universe; he speaks of both the need for intimacy and the biggest transition that our living world is facing in millions of years. He paints a breathtakingly big and very compelling picture of the work we face." - Pamela Haines, Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting

Population Bomb by Paul Ehrlich. "He gave the sermon at Stanford University Memorial Church in 1965 when I was a beginning graduate student. It gave me a lifetime concern for human over-population on Earth" - Judy Lumb, Atlanta (GA) Friends

Sunset Western Garden Book. "This book showed me that I could care for the earth in a very hands-on way. I first saw it as a child in the '50s. We can all put our hands in the soil and care for and improve the soil, plants, and whole local eco-system" - Catya de Neergaard, Berkeley (CA) Friends Meeting

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer. "Its emphasis on reciprocity. Never thought of that before reading this. She writes beautifully, and is a botanist, and Haudenosaunee." - Sylvia Mangalam, Halifax (NS Canada) Monthly Meeting. Shelley Tanenbaum agrees, "Kimmerer spoke in words what is in my heart."

The Transition Handbook. "It gave me the tools to engage others so that I wasn't doing things on my own, but in my community." - Carol Barta, Manhattan (KS) Monthly Meeting

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek by Annie Dillard, **Desert Solitaire** by Edward Abbey, and **Refuge** by Terry Tempest Williams. "All three are examples of people loving deeply and seeing clearly the place where they live. I believe that developing a sense of place and recognizing, feeling, the human-earth connections is essential for the future of our planet. All three books awakened in me the search for how to live a deep ecology life." - Ruah Swennerfelt, Middlebury (VT) Friends Meeting.

Jose Aguto

Pleasing the Divine with Evolutionary Love

History is littered with the graceless exits of despots clinging to the chimera of the temptation of secular power for personal glorification above the good of others. We know this from the Gospels as one of the three temptations the devil offered to Jesus, which he in turn rejected, and then returning to the world, offering the premier example of a good and just life, abounding in self-sacrifice and love for all people, and powered by boundless grace, strength and peace of Divine origin.

We of human civilization have not yet had enough leaders who have rejected this temptation, and who have made such love an essential part of their leadership. Thus far, personal and collective ego-driven dominance of others and nature has exerted the strongest torque upon the moral arc of human history. Not without moments of clarity and togetherness, mind you, but in aggregate a downward spiral. Today, climate disruption stands as the most epic manifestation of this devolutionary pride: of individual and collective pride identified by prophets, sages, and intellectuals across many millenniums and traditions as the first and deadliest sin.

"Humility is the antidote. It is a virtue the devil cannot imitate, fake or overcome, and therefore flees from the souls housing, nurturing and cultivating such a sublime presence. Humility is the solid foundation of all virtues." - Confucius

"Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance." - St. Augustine

"Explore the depths of humility, not with your intellects but with your lives, lived in prayer of humble obedience. And there you will find that humility is not merely a human virtue. For there is a humility that is in God Himself. Be ye humble as God is humble. For love and humility walk hand in hand, in God as well as in man."

But there is something about deepest humility which makes men bold. For utter obedience is self-forgetful obedience. . . I must confess that, on human judgment, the world tasks we face are appalling—well-nigh hopeless. Only the inner vision of God, only the God-blindness of unreservedly dedicated souls, only the utterly humble ones can bow and break the raging pride of a power-mad world." - Thomas R. Kelly, *Holy Obedience*

"In a world besotted with messaging expressed and implied, placed before the idol of self-glorification, this sounds like madness. But we cannot solve a problem with the same (multi-millennial) thinking that caused it." - Albert Einstein

The new thinking is to apply the old wisdom.

As you can see by the quotes, these are neither new nor "revolutionary" words. But they are evolutionary, in the sense that we must take this ancient wisdom beyond words and into practice as never before in human history—just as the climate crisis requires action of unprecedented scale. As the environmental and climate crisis is foremost of human moral origin (St. Pope John Paul II, Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis among others), then it starts from within, of Divine Origin, then emanating outward the solutions we need.

I am not there and may never be. Yet with God, everything is possible. And together in beloved community with those who direct the needle of their moral compass resolutely in this direction, even more possible. And together, might we apply humbler spirits and shoulders to the bend of the moral arc towards love, justice, human flourishing, and an Earth restored?

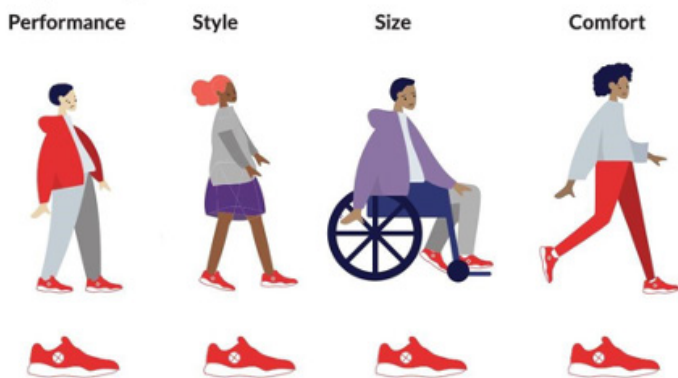
With a new set of leaders and spirit facing some of the most consequential decisions for our and future generations, now is the time. Now is the time to cultivate this spirit, in our space and places, emanating outwards, as leaders ourselves, in a shared journey to protect and advance our common home, and our common future, towards a thriving future.

"For God is Love, and only love can drive out hate, and only light can drive out darkness." - Martin Luther King

Let us today and henceforth, with even just a little more intention, seek to be vessels of humility, light and love—active agents in the uplift and rendering of beloved community during this pivotal moment in history. For we are all a part, and we are all related, and every intention matters. All efforts are welcome. Even just a smidge more towards humility, light and love is pleasing to the Divine.

Jose Aguto is a "cradle-lapsed-current" Catholic working for the Catholic Climate Covenant, and previously with the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

Equality



ei equity
institute

Beverly G. Ward

Equality -> Equity -> Justice: The Transportation Case Example

“Our equality testimony flows inevitably from our belief that there is that of God in every person. If we believe in Equality, we must work for Justice. British Friends remind us: ‘Are you alert to the practices throughout the world which discriminates against people on the basis of who or what they are, or because of their beliefs? Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society’s conventions or its laws. Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest, and fear. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters the desire to serve?’”

– Harold D. Weaver, *Facing Unbearable Truths*, 2008

I’ve been sitting for some time with Friends’ testimony on Equality. Friend Hal Weaver and I have been discussing how Friends’ testimonies do not address justice. Perhaps Friends needed a testimony on Equity.

By now, most of us have seen some version of the graphic to the right (on page 7).

I also have seen the above transportation-related meme, shared by the Equity Institute.

These simple but powerful images explain the difference between equality and equity. Equality begins with the assumption of sameness, “equal footing,” and a “level playing field.” Equity begins with listening to each condition:

“And the Lord answered that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions; how else should I speak to all conditions; and in this I saw the infinite love of God”. – George Fox, Journal, 1647, from Faith and Practice, 5th Ed., British Yearly Meeting

“...the testimony of equality in some ways really might get renamed the testimony of equity because in point of fact what is the same for one person, it may not be the right solution or action for another person. So our deep commitment to seeing the divine in every person leads us to seek the right solution or right arrangement that honors each person’s truth...” – Tom Hoopes, Amesbury Quakers, Equality or Equity? The Quaker Testimony

Equity



ei equity
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As a Quaker and a second generation transportation worker, I am interested in how my discussion with Friend Hal translates into how transportation policies over time have exacerbated inequality in the US. In many parts of the world, equal access to human transportation resources does not and has not existed for some time. (Human transportation means various modes to transmit ideas, materials, goods, services: roadways, railways, airways, fiber optics, coaxial, satellites.) For the last 100+ years, there has been a disproportionate investment in auto mobility throughout the world. And, the consequences have devastated nearly every aspect of life on Earth. Those devastating consequences have

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had disproportionate impacts on low-income and Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) communities in the US.

Some 40 years after its beginning in 1956, it was estimated that the federal investment in the Interstate Highway System alone was \$119 billion dollars. I and others have documented the physical and psychological impacts of displacement caused by the manner in which the Interstate was constructed. Other impacts have included severe harm to ambient air quality, pollution of waterways caused by the runoff from the more than 45,000 miles of impermeable surfaces, and damage to historical and sacred sites. This investment also suppressed the use of other modes, like railways and buses, and was furthered by criminal corporate conspiracies.

During the first half of the 20th century, Standard Oil, General Motors Corporation, and Firestone conspired to end the mass transit trolley system and/or monopolize bus transit.

The results of these investments have left low-income and BIPOC communities dependent on personal automobile use if it was possible to afford it, or if not, use

of underfunded mass transit systems, pedal power, or living in isolation.

I am currently planning a Conference on Advancing Equity in Transportation for September as part of the Equity in Transportation [formerly the Environmental Justice] Committee of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. In preparation for the conference, we shared the following:

“It is now well established that the benefits and burdens of transportation infrastructure investments do not fall evenly across all groups. Automobile access affords the ability to reach a wide variety of opportunities relatively quickly. High-quality public transit, walking, and cycling access often depends on securing relatively expensive housing in highly desirable areas.” In most urban and rural areas in the US, an automobile is necessary for meeting daily needs and participating in community activities.

The Equity in Transportation Committee also shares that “people of color and low-income people in both rural and urban communities



The Sunshine Bus Company, St. Johns County (FL) Council on Aging

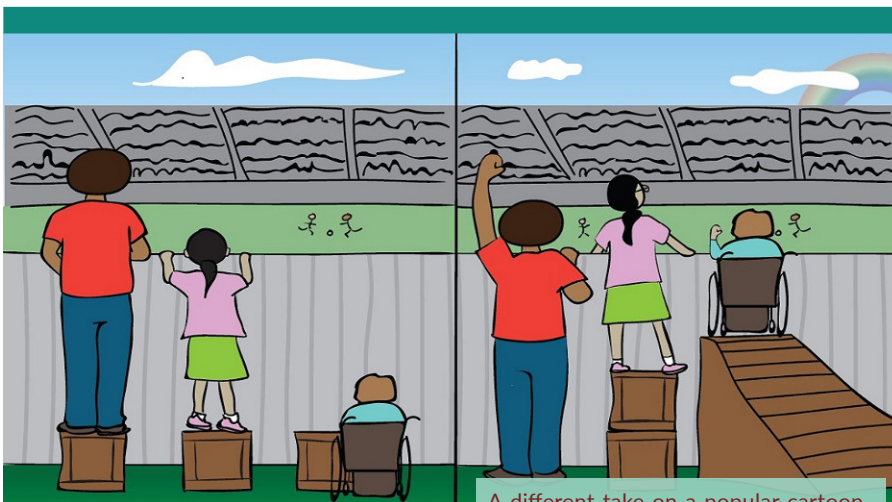
are less likely to own cars and more likely to depend on slower public transit modes. People with disabilities, youth, older adults, and single-parent households, all face additional barriers and constraints as they travel throughout cities and regions to meet their daily needs. The end result is that individuals are prevented from reaching their full potential due to transportation-related issues... Two major crises—global climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic—have accentuated some of these inequalities and revealed significant consequences.”

How do we understand how transportation systems both contribute to and address inequities and inequality? What kind of transportation access do you have in your community? Who makes decisions about mobility in your hometown? How are people “prevented from reaching their full potential due to transportation-related issues” where you live?

As Friend Hal says, “If we believe in Equality, we must work for Justice.” Without justice, there can be no equity.

Conference information can be found at Trb.Secure-Platform.com/a/Page/TransportationEquity.

Beverly G. Ward is the Field Secretary for Earthcare for Southeastern Yearly Meeting. Contact Beverly at fsearchcare@seymquakers.org



A different take on a popular cartoon exploring the differences between equity and equality.

Lauri Langham

Examining Institutional Racism

The intersection between environmental justice and racial justice is a busy one. We recognize how Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) and low-income people are the frontline communities that suffer the first and worst effects of planet destruction and climate change: from the placement of toxic dumps and pipelines to disproportionate destruction from flood and hurricanes.

Many Friends Meetings and Quaker organizations are actively seeking to acknowledge our complicity in institutional and environmental racism, and build organizations that value diversity, respect, and power-sharing. As expressed by Canadian Yearly Meeting “part of our journey is to decolonize our own thinking and sit in the discomfort and pain of confronting where we need to deepen our understanding, bear witness, and transform our behavior.”

How do we create diversity and inclusion? One way is to seek out people being hurt or potentially hurt by environmental destruction and damage. The people in these communities are capable of leading the changes they need. We are called to be supportive of their identified needs and follow their lead, not be the experts. Another way is to examine the conscious or unconscious cultural norms of our organizations to understand ways in which practicing these norms may cause BIPOC and other marginalized groups to feel excluded.

“Part of our journey is to decolonize our own thinking and sit in the discomfort and pain of confronting where we need to deepen our understanding, bear witness, and transform our behavior.”

– Canadian Yearly Meeting

For the past year a group of 60 members and attenders of Durham Friends Meeting in North Carolina has participated in the Racial Equity Learning Arc, (RELA) led by Alexa Broderick, Director of the Equity Paradigm.

It has been a rich opportunity to explore how we can

work towards being a non-racist welcoming and inclusive community. Since August 2019, we have met in groups to examine ways in which cultural and institutional racism have shaped our own identity formation and identify specific behaviors, norms, and expectations that reinforce systems of racism and white supremacy.

One of the tools that we are working with is the document entitled *The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture* developed by Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones in 2001. ([ShowingUpForRacialJustice.org](https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org)). The characteristics are: Perfectionism, Sense of Urgency, Defensiveness; Quantity over Quality, Worship of the Written Word, Only One Right Way, Paternalism, Either/Or Thinking, Power Hoarding, Fear of Open Conflict, Individualism, Progress is Bigger/More, Objectivity, and the Right to Comfort. (These characteristics, it is acknowledged, can also be present in organizations that include or are led by BIPOC.)

Tema Okun states “One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multicultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly multi-cultural organization.”

In an exercise during a RELA session, we considered how we felt our meeting embodied the characteristics. While there was not a strong resonance with all of the characteristics, there were others where many expressed a need and desire to make changes to become a community where diversity, healthy conflict, and power sharing are present.

The RELA program will conclude in the late winter with the final two sessions focusing on themes of balancing power and equitable decision making; and strategic planning for diversity equity and inclusion. Early on, a RELA Steering Committee

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QEW Outreach Worship With Us

Quaker Earthcare Witness is hosting monthly online worship sharing groups in partnership with Friends General Conference via Zoom.

We'll be gathering every last Wednesday of the month until May: February 24, March 31, April 28, and May 26 at 8 pm Eastern/5 pm Pacific. Visit QuakerEarthcare.org to register.

Worship sharing focuses on a particular question and helps us to explore our own experience and share with each other more deeply than we would in normal conversation. It seeks to draw us into sacred space, where we can take down our usual defenses, and encounter each other in "that which is eternal."

Come to Our Steering Committee Meeting

Join us for our weekend-long Steering Committee Meeting April 15 - 18, 2021. We will meet via Zoom to do business and join in fellowship.

QEW PRESENTS! Invite Us to your Meeting or Church

QEW staff, Steering Committee members, and Friends are offering a workshops on a wide range of Earthcare concerns. If you are looking for a way to connect with our work and host an engaging session for community, visit QuakerEarthcare.org/QEWPresents or email hayley@QuakerEarthcare.org.

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formed to work on integrating our learning and awareness into the meeting community as a whole. Activities included our meeting approving a Solidarity Statement written by RELA following the murder of George Floyd, two adult education programs about our experiences with a third being planned, and a plan to have conversations with every committee in our meeting to further discern how we can become an equitable community.

In describing and sharing these efforts to actively engage in anti-racist work in the Durham Friends community, it should be acknowledged that this is a work in progress. Anti-racist work is complex, many layered, and requires long-term commitment on the part of individuals and organizations. Rather than a "fix," it is a process which asks us to recognize our biases, privilege, and how we have benefited from white supremacy; it asks us to learn how white people can be allies, and how to shape institutions to represent and gratefully include those of a diverse background. My hope is that each of us individually and in whatever our larger circles may be, within our Quaker communities and beyond, see with new eyes and ears, and continue the work of building the beloved community of justice and inclusion for all.

Lauri Langham is a member of Durham Friends Meeting and a Yearly Meeting Representative to QEW for North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative).

Mary Ann Iyer, MD

Today's Prayer

Here is this day. What do I bring?

I thank each breath for visiting.

**I embrace myself in my sincere efforts
to do the best I can**

along the lines I know.

And I forgive myself – and others

in our miserable failures

**when our attempts turn out to be
self-centered.**

I am grateful – ever grateful

**for the joys that burst upon my soul
when I catch the simple gestures
of life's offerings.**

Amen.

Mary Ann Iyer is an author, semi-retired physician, and a member of the Brevard Friends Meeting who blogs at MaryAnnIyer.com/blog.

Lee McClenon

EQAT AT 10: Finding Resilience in an Unimaginable Year

In the last few decades, some social scientists studying organizations have recognized that organizations are healthiest when they embrace a bit of unpredictability. In this model, networks are more powerful than individuals. Resilience is more important than brute strength. And a groundbreaking idea can come from anywhere. I currently serve as co-clerk of the Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT), which for the last ten years has been a volunteer-led group that defies a traditional organizational leadership chart. 2020 certainly pushed us, and so I am glad to share some of the things that have supported us to be adaptable in this time in our work for environmental, racial, and economic justice.

EQAT has long celebrated the idea of nimbleness. My mental image of nimbleness is of a mountain goat, hopping rock to rock. The way is winding, but intentional. Our current campaign, Power Local Green Jobs, has focused squarely on Philadelphia's electric company, PECO. For years, we have pushed them to take action against climate change and invest in good green jobs for Philadelphians. And we have hopped from rock to rock, trying to find the best route to that goal. In 2020, we had to cancel many in-person actions, but we testified for hours before our state regulatory body via video call. We couldn't gather shoulder-to-shoulder, but we broadcast our message on a banner from the Schuylkill River

via canoes and kayaks. And in the midst of the pandemic, we expanded our message beyond climate change and jobs and stepped up to join low-income ratepayer advocates in demanding that PECO keep power on for those who need it. A focus kept us together, motivated, and moving. And nimbleness allowed us to adapt to our environment.

In 2020, one place EQAT risked losing our ability to adapt well to change was erosion of casual relationships. The "post-meeting meeting" has often been where some of EQAT's best thinking gets done. But on Zoom, when the meeting is over, there is no snack table. Just click "Leave Meeting," and you're done. Recently, we have started to encourage people to stick around to connect. This has welcomed in some new members and allowed space to share joys and concerns. It has also sparked new ideas that have guided us forward and sharing information across the network. We have learned to never discount what could seem to be just "chit chat" as wasted time.

Flexibility also stems from hope. We have always seen our protest as an active way of saying "Yes" to a more just world. Even as we research, strategize, and plan, we hope that way may open to reveal new opportunities for transformative change. In the midst of



"This is a photo from a socially distanced action where we were very nimble. The other side of the banner says 'PECO: Forgive Bills Now.'" - Lee

prayers and tears this past year, EQAT maintained our hope. We celebrated our 10th anniversary online and we're inspired by all that we have done and how we have grown. We named the cultural principles we want to guide us going forward. We continued our campaign and supported each other in the streets during Black Lives Matter protests. Even while the way has been uncertain and frequently needed to change, a spirit of hope is what keeps us in motion. Of course, flexibility does not fully address the pain we face in this time. There is no single answer for how we continue to be present with suffering and injustice, and work to end it. But as we look ahead to a year that will offer new opportunities to practice flexibility, I am eager to see how we can continue to embrace the tension of focus and openness, to maintain our connection to one another, and to sustain our hope for a just and sustainable world for all.

Learn more about EQAT's cultural principles at [Eqat.org/Our_Values_And_Practices](https://eqat.org/Our_Values_And_Practices)

Lee McClenon is the co-clerk of the Earth Quaker Action Team, a volunteer led nonviolent action group campaigning for climate justice. She lives near Philadelphia, PA where she also practices as a postpartum doula and parent coach.

WATER PROTECTORS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Many of the Water Protectors on-site traveled from the northeast to act in solidarity with Anishinaabe peoples here in Minnesota.

Jay O'Hara, a Quaker from Portland, ME, said, "As a person of faith I am moved to action by a call from Indigenous leadership to protect the water and defend treaty rights from a government corporate power that continues to perpetuate the false Doctrine of Discovery and supremacy. For me this is a call to shared liberation to stop Line 3 and build a new relationship to the earth and among all people."

Jay continued, "...We are a network committed to climate action and racial justice. We follow BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, people of color] leadership whenever we can and practice reparations."

Briana Halliwell, a Quaker from New England Yearly Meeting, said, "I traveled from Maine to stand in solidarity with the Indigenous peoples of northern Minnesota in resistance to the Line 3 Pipeline expansion that cuts through hundreds of miles of Anishinaabe treaty territory. I am here to lift up the voices of the people, animals, landscapes, and watersheds whose voices have historically been unrecognized, erased, or not understood by the patriarchal dominant culture of separation and white supremacy that founded this country and continues to destroy, not honor or create life."

To read the full statement and learn more, visit [Facebook.com/GiniwCollective](https://www.facebook.com/GiniwCollective)

Jan Bronson

Praying for the Sacred Place Where Life Begins



Caribou in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
Photo: FLICKR/ Danielle Brigida

Alaska Friends joined the Gwich'in Nation and many others in an all-out effort to protect the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge during the last days of the Trump administration. On December 3, 2020, the US Department of the Interior announced that it would sell oil and gas leases on January 6, 2021. Fairbanks Friend Cathy Walling received a text from a Gwich'in friend asking Cathy to pray, pray, pray for the Sacred Place Where Life Begins, the birthing grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*.

For six weeks, three mornings a week, we gathered together in prayer for this sacred place. Alaska Friends set the worship intention in motion, and others from far and wide joined in. At the rise of each morning's worship time, we would share news and make our plans for that day or week, following the guidance of Gwich'in leaders. We submitted testimony, spoke at hearings, and participated in two vigils. Anchorage and Juneau newspapers published a Minute (statement) from our yearly meeting about why we support protecting the Arctic Refuge. We called and emailed major oil and insurance companies and asked them not to bid on or underwrite the leases. We made art, took photos, shared a film, and posted to social media. Underpinning it all, we gathered over Zoom for more prayers. Together we prayed for wisdom, open hearts, imagination, and "re-mem-ber-ing." We prayed for the safety of the caribou, pregnant at this moment under the starry skies, for the humans who depend on them, and for the well-being of all wonderfully interconnected life.

Now the six weeks are over. Of the 22 coastal plain tracts offered by the Trump administration, nine leases ultimately sold, almost all of them to the State of Alaska. No major oil or gas company bid on the leases, and the US' six largest banks promised to not finance development in the refuge. Within hours of being sworn in, President Biden declared a temporary moratorium on leasing activity in the Arctic while reviewing its legality. On February 4, 2021, US Rep. Jared Huffman and Sen. Edward Markey re-introduced the Arctic Refuge Protection Act, which would grant wilderness status to the coastal plain while safeguarding the subsistence rights of Indigenous peoples.

The Zoom community we created continues to meet three mornings a week for spoken and unspoken prayer, while we continue to "Try what Love can do."

Visit [DefendTheSacredAlaska.org](https://www.DefendTheSacredAlaska.org) and [OurArcticRefuge.org](https://www.OurArcticRefuge.org).

Jan Bronson is QEW Yearly Meeting Representative, Assistant Clerk for Alaska Friends Conference, and a lifelong Alaskan.



P.O. Box 6787
Albany, CA 94706
Address service requested

Info@QuakerEarthcare.org
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Giniw Collective

Water Protectors Block Line 3

On Thursday, February 4, eight water protectors in Park Rapids, MN, locked to one another with barrels of concrete and a piano, blockaded an Enbridge fueling station and worksite as dozens more held space.

As piano music floated through the early morning light, Water Protectors sang and uplifted the Native-led struggle to protect Anishinaabe territory, sacred wild rice, and stand with Mother Earth. Line 3 poses a 10% expansion of tar sands production; tar sands is the dirtiest fossil fuel on earth.

The location is near the proposed crossing by Line 3 through the Shell River, one of many river crossings sought by [Canadian company and pipeline builder] Enbridge, including the headwaters of the Mississippi River. Last weekend, Congresswoman Ilhan Omar visited the Mississippi headwaters and the Giniw Collective encampment, one of several along the route.

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Photos courtesy of Giniw Collective