



QUAKER ECO-BULLETIN

*Information and Action Addressing Public Policy
for an Ecologically Sustainable World*

A Tribute to Sandra Lewis *Barbara Day, Keith Helmuth, and Judy Lumb*



The *Quaker Eco-Bulletin* (QEB) editorial team lost a valued member when Sandra Lewis passed away in December of 2011. She joined the QEB editorial team on the second issue in 2001 and was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable member from the beginning. She was always at the cutting edge of environmental and earthcare work, approaching it with great passion. She brought a breadth of knowledge and experience to each QEB, putting it into the larger context of the most current information. She approached each author with love and respect, as we all worked together to make a final four-page QEB that boiled it all down to an accurate, readable piece.

Sometimes the editorial team members were the authors. In the first of those QEBs, the editorial team explored "Changing World View and Friends Testimonies," QEB 6:4, published in July-August, 2006. For this QEB, Sandra contributed *Sandra's Musings on Her Relationship with Nature* written October 6, 2005:

I'll begin with Mystery because for me Mystery is at the heart of all life on Earth. I still marvel that I exist, that I was lucky enough to incarnate in this amazing, beautiful, elegant and infinitely complex place I call home. I did nothing to deserve this opportunity for life, but here I am and—wonder of wonders—all I need to sustain my life is here—water, food, warmth, shelter, other people and other species to keep me company during my sojourn. To me it's unfathomable that some 13 billion years ago there was only hydrogen and helium floating around in space and that everything that exists on Earth today has emerged out of eons of endless transformations of these elements. This is a most profound Mystery to which I can only bow in awe and reverence and gratitude.

I believe the story of the emergence, florescence and sustenance of life on Earth is a sacred story, a story with many different versions that has been told everywhere on the planet from the earliest times when people gathered around the fire to share their wonder at life and learn about their place in the story. People have looked to these stories for guidance about what is sacred, what is important, what is right relationship with other humans and other species, and what they must do to sustain life. In the past we have had elders and wise ones who have passed down hard-won, intimate knowledge about a particular place that enabled the people who lived there to survive and even thrive. Their spiritual life revolved around knowing and acting according to this wisdom. I was born into 20th century life and grew up in a city with very little personal contact with nature and no real guidance from family or school or church about my place in the natural world. I was an adult before my eyes and heart were opened to nature and I've had to piece together the sacred story of how life unfolds on Earth without a solid personal grounding in place and the natural world.

To me the most significant spiritual failure of our time is the loss of belief that we are part of a sacred story unfolding in a sacred place. Instead of seeing ourselves as one actor among many in this story, we see ourselves as the main character in a secular story that exists solely for our benefit. In our ignorance and hubris, we've embarked on a path that is unsustainable for life as we know it. We are ignoring limits imposed by nature, seeking ways to

Quaker Eco-Bulletin (QEB) is published bi-monthly by Quaker Earthcare Witness (formerly FCUN) as an insert in *BeFriending Creation*.

The vision of **Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW)** includes integrating into the beliefs and practices of the Society of Friends the Truths that God's Creation is to be held in reverence in its own right, and that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the Earth's ecological integrity. As a member organization of Friends Committee on National Legislation, QEW seeks to strengthen Friends' support for FCNL's witness in Washington DC for peace, justice, and an Earth restored.

QEB's purpose is to advance Friends' witness on public and institutional policies that affect the Earth's capacity to support life. QEB articles aim to inform Friends about public and corporate policies that have an impact on society's relationship to Earth, and to provide analysis and critique of societal trends and institutions that threaten the health of the planet.

Friends are invited to contact us about writing an article for **QEB**. Submissions are subject to editing and should:

- Explain why the issue is a Friends' concern.
- Provide accurate, documented background information that reflects the complexity of the issue and is respectful toward other points of view.
- Relate the issue to legislation or corporate policy.
- List what Friends can do.
- Provide references and sources for additional information.

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circumvent or eliminate these limits and attempting to enforce our will on the natural world without regard to the consequences for ourselves and the larger community of life and in so doing we are committing spiritual and biological suicide.

One of the deepest mysteries of the sacred story is that life lives on life. All creatures depend on the birth and death of other life forms to survive and thrive. We humans must confront this reality unsentimentally and compassionately with honor and gratitude for all the creativity and sacrifice required to sustain life on Earth. If, as a species, we extract energy and resources from the web of life to meet our needs at a faster rate than they are regenerated, we are robbing future generations of the ability to meet their needs and demanding disproportionate sacrifice of other species. Indeed we risk destroying the very life-support systems on which all life on Earth depends. To me this is sacrilege, this is sin and I believe that we will be called to account. The life force is unimaginably greater than the power of any single species and it will prevail on Earth. If we humans persist in ignoring or attempting to dominate nature's processes we will be eliminated from the story.

I see hope in the re-emergence of an Earth-oriented spirituality and in our ever-growing scientific understanding of how the web of life functions and how it is threatened. These trends are contributing to a shift in human consciousness—the awareness that all life is sacred, connected and interdependent, that what we do to others we do to ourselves. We are being challenged to re-define our place in a sacred story, to walk humbly in the face of the Mystery, to celebrate the creation and give thanks for life as integral to spiritual practice, to embrace and honor our dependence on the creativity and sacrifice inherent in life, to understand how the web of life functions and to look on what we do to sustain it as central to spiritual life, to expand our care and concern to include future generations and other species, to know, cherish and act to protect the natural world where we live, to renounce exploitation and dominance of other people and other species as guiding principles for meeting our needs, and to make choices every day in the light of our understanding of right relationship with other people and with the greater community of life on Earth.

Will this shift in human consciousness and behavior occur in time to avoid the wrath of GAIA? Who knows. In the meantime, I intend to continue working to change my own consciousness and behaviour and to seek community with kindred spirits for the strength, courage and wisdom I need. I'll continue to seek guidance from Spirit and from those who have knowledge of how the web of life functions. I find Quaker belief in continuing revelation and in the movement of Spirit within the beloved community to light the way to truth to be powerful support for this endeavor. I can't think of any better way to spend my time.

When we published a **QEB** by David Ciscel on Natural Capital, Sandra raised very basic questions from the perspective of Deep Ecology that were beyond the scope of that four-page **QEB**. Keith Helmuth suggested that to explore this dichotomy, we could have a Circle of Discernment (CoD), a research mechanism in the manner of Friends developed by the Quaker Institute for the Future. Over a three-year period Sandra skillfully clerked conference calls every two or three months for the **QEB** editorial team with David Ciscel. Each of these calls put us ahead in ways none of us could have done alone. Along the way, several **QEBs** came out of those calls, until finally we knew we were finished and the pamphlet, *How on Earth Do We Live Now? Natural Capital, Deep Ecology, and the Commons* was published in 2011.

Sandra always provided us with the tremendous benefit of her training and experience in clinical psychology. In *How on Earth Do We Live Now?* Sandra wrote the section on Human Nature. She introduced us to many other professionals in the field of psychology, including Sarah Blaffer Hrdy's writings, which described cooperative breeding: that our ancestor's children received human provisioning from members of the community in addition to the mother, which led to the development of empathy and mind-reading in humans.

It is within the framework of cooperative child-rearing where we first experience the feelings and emotions that allow us to develop empathetic bonds and become fully mature social beings. ...

Neuroscientists and others have been studying "mirror neurons" in our brains to understand the biological mechanisms of our ability to empathize. These neurons allow humans to grasp the minds of others as if their thoughts and behaviors were their own through direct simulation—by feeling not by thinking. Mirror neuron circuitry is first activated by parental and community nurture of infants and as this nurture occurs, empathic pathways are established in the brain.

Shelley Taylor wryly points out that while certain skills may be important for survival, "it is unlikely that the brain would have evolved primarily to furnish tactics of deception and manipulation. If so, we might well have tactically skewered one another right out of existence. By ignoring the kinder side of social life, we are left with, you might say, half a brain." And, I might add, less than half a picture of human nature.

We now know from research on the evolution and functioning of the social brain that nurturant experiences in life such as the parent-child bond, cooperation and other benign social relating are critical drivers of brain development and are essential to our success as a species. As Taylor notes, the ability to cooperate and to promote social harmony are survival assets—if you avoid war you are more likely to survive to reproduce, than if you win it. Taylor's work has shown that the "flight or fight" response is only one way humans respond to stress. She draws on biology, evolutionary psychology, physiology and neuroscience to show that humans—particularly females—respond to stress by what she calls "tending and befriending."

To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another. Contrast this with the idea put forward by Rene Descartes in 1637, "I think, therefore I am," which conjures up a picture of a disembodied mind, separate and sovereign over the body and the emotions. Cartesian thought had

enormous influence on Enlightenment conceptions of human nature and has continued to influence western thought up to the present day. Research by scientists in many fields in the last quarter century or so is strongly challenging this view. ...

From the perspective of deep ecology it's no surprise to discover that human development depends on relationship. Deep ecology holds that everything in nature exists in relation to everything else—everything is connected and it's the relationships among the parts rather than the parts themselves that create and sustain the whole. As Jeremy Rifkin suggests, such systems thinking questions the notion of free-market capitalist economics that humans act as autonomous beings, functioning independently in self-optimizing ways each maximizing his or her own individual utility. The science of Ecology is challenging the Darwinian emphasis on the competitive struggle between individual creatures for scarce resources. From an ecological perspective nature consists of "symbiotic and synergistic relationships where the fate of each part is determined as much by reciprocal engagement as by any competitive advantage."

One-hundred years later, Paul Ekman, an American psychologist, began research that would yield the data Darwin lacked—work which has led to an evolutionary approach to understanding human emotion. From this perspective emotions are understood as embodied in distinct, genetically encoded physiological processes universal to humans and shaped by our evolutionary past. Ekman and his colleague Wallace Friesen, developed the Facial Action Coding System (FACS), an anatomically based method for identifying every visible facial muscle movement in a frame by frame analysis of facial expression as it occurs in the flow of social interaction. This tool gave psychological science the first objective measure of specific emotion that could be used by labs around the world equipped to videotape emotional behavior and that had researchers trained in the system who could take the hour it required to code a single minute of behavior. Over the course of the past 30 years hundreds of studies on the correspondence between facial expressions and emotional states have led to a more precise understanding of the place of emotion in the brain, the role of emotion in social life, parallels between human and nonhuman emotion, and how we all have different emotional styles.

We had our last conference call with Sandra on October 19, 2011, to share information and experiences with the distribution of our pamphlet. She told us she knew she was terminal, but she approached it with such grace and courage that we were in awe. Six weeks later she passed away.

Changes at Quaker Eco-Bulletin

We had already decided that *Quaker Eco-Bulletin* would take a hiatus for six months as editorial team member Judy Lumb went to Africa for five months. Judy Lumb's African experience ended with the Sixth World Conference of Friends at Kabarak University in Kenya, which produced The Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice (*below*). The Call should be inspiring and challenging to all our readers. Sandra would approve heartily.

We hadn't even thought about trying to recruit new editorial team members. Imagine our surprise when we got an unsolicited email from Jasmine Krotkov from Montana as a volunteer on October 29th. She brings expertise in layout and design. The new design of this *QEB* is her first contribution. Judy Lumb and Barbara Day will continue on the team, but more volunteer editors, proofreaders, and writers are needed. If you are so led, or know anyone who might be interested, please help us keep *QEB* in print.

The Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice

The Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice was approved on 24 April 2012 at the Sixth World Conference Friends, held at Kabarak University near Nakuru, Kenya. It is the culmination of the FWCC World Consultation on Global Change which was held in 2010 and 2011. It is being circulated with the Conference Epistle.

In past times God's Creation restored itself. Now humanity dominates, our growing population consuming more resources than nature can replace. We must change, we must become careful stewards of all life. Earthcare unites traditional Quaker testimonies: peace, equality, simplicity, love, integrity, and justice. Jesus said, "As you have done unto the least... you have done unto me". We are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole Earth, in right sharing with all peoples. However few our numbers, we are called to be the salt that flavours and preserves, to be a light in the darkness of greed and destruction.

We have heard of the disappearing snows of Kilimanjaro and glaciers of Bolivia, from which come life-giving waters. We have heard appeals from peoples of the Arctic, Asia and Pacific. We have heard of forests cut down, seasons disrupted, wildlife dying, of land hunger in Africa, of new diseases, droughts, floods, fires, famine and desperate migrations – this climatic chaos is now worsening. There are wars and rumors of war, job loss, inequality and violence. We fear our neighbors. We waste our children's heritage.

All of these are driven by our dominant economic systems – by greed not need, by worship of the market, by Mammon and Caesar.

Is this how Jesus showed us to live?

We are called to see what love can do: to love our neighbor as ourselves, to aid the widow and orphan, to comfort the afflicted, to appeal to consciences and bind the wounds.

We are called to teach our children right relationship, to live in harmony with each other and all living beings in the earth, waters and sky of our Creator, who asks, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world?" (Job 38:4)

We are called to do justice to all and walk humbly with our God, to cooperate lovingly with all who share our hopes for the future of the earth.

We are called to be patterns and examples in a 21st century campaign for peace and ecojustice, as difficult and decisive as the 19th century drive to abolish slavery.

We dedicate ourselves to let the living waters flow through us—where we live, regionally, and in wider world fellowship. We dedicate ourselves to building the peace that passeth all understanding, to the repair of the world, opening our lives to the Light to guide us in each small step.

Bwana asifiwe. Apu Dios Awqui. Gracias Jesús. Jubilé. Salaam aleikum. Migwetch. [Praise God.]