



BeFriending Creation

Newsletter of Quaker Earthcare Witness
Affirming our essential unity with nature

Volume 30, Number 3 • May–June 2017

Friends Help Ban Fracking in Maryland

By Karie Firoozmand

ON APRIL 4, Maryland's Governor Larry Hogan signed legislation prohibiting fracking in the state. This is a huge success for the individuals and organizations that have been working together for this goal for several years, as well as a precedent for other states. I have been working on the fracking issue in my home state since the beginning and helped organize my fellow Friends to take a stand. Here's what happened.

About 10 years ago, at the same time Pennsylvania's shocking list of woes from fracking became national news, fracking in Maryland also became an issue. Drilling companies had previously signed leases with landowners in our state, and figured they would just wait until it was legal to frack.

Multiple attempts were made to postpone or ban fracking, with mixed results. In 2011, then-Governor Martin O'Malley signed an executive order delaying fracking while its public health and environmental impact were studied. Even before the executive order expired, the first ban bill was introduced. However, it got just two supporting votes and died in committee. In 2014, another ban bill faced the same fate. Then in 2015, the Senate passed a fracking moratorium that also called for updated regulations. It passively became law when Gov. Hogan avoided signing it.

During this time, environmental and health organizations and concerned citizens had come together to form the Don't Frack MD coalition of over 100 member groups. The needle of public opinion moved considerably. Fracking had become a household word, and the movement had matured.

With a governor who had, during his campaign,



Quakers at interfaith sit-in on the Statehouse steps in Annapolis, Maryland.

referred to Western Maryland as a "gold mine," and the moratorium expiration of October 2017 looming, it was obvious that the time to do something had arrived. It was time to try again and propose a bill that would prohibit fracking once and for all.

Senator Joan Carter Conway chaired the relevant committee. She started the 2017 legislative session by saying of the forthcoming ban bill, "It'll never pass." As the session progressed and the pressure on her only grew, Sen. Conway introduced a competing bill that would create another moratorium. Her proposal would have allowed a county-by-county statewide vote on fracking. This would have been a non-issue for counties where no gas underlies the ground and an easy win in places where voters were against fracking in massive numbers, but it would have left Western Maryland hanging out

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BeFriending Creation

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We publish *BeFriending Creation* to promote the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness, stimulate discussion and action, share insights, practical ideas, and news of our actions, and encourage among Friends 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 (Quakers). The editor is responsible for unsigned items.

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VISION AND 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.

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Earthcare Calendar

June 10, 2017. Deadline for article submissions for July-August 2017 *BeFriending Creation*

REPORT BACK: QEW Marches & Lobbies for Climate, Jobs, and Justice in D.C.



MEMBERS OF QUAKER EARTHCARE WITNESS and Friends from across the country marched together at the People's Climate March on April 29 in Washington, D.C. alongside 200,000 people. Across the country, another 100,000 marched in sister mobilizations. Temperatures of over 90 degrees in D.C. helped us make our case

for climate change action. The march extended over 20 blocks down Pennsylvania Avenue, starting near the nation's Capitol and ending by surrounding the White House.

The day before the mobilization, QEW teamed up with the Friends Committee on National Legislation to gather and prepare for the march with a lobby training, a Spirit-filled silent worship, and a potluck dinner at Friends Meeting of Washington.

Equipped with the message, "March Today, Lobby Tomorrow," FNCL's Legislative Representative on Sustainable Energy and Environment, Emily Wirzba, shared tips and strategies with us on how to develop effective relationships with our elected officials. She encouraged us to invite our U.S. Representatives to join the bipartisan House Climate Solutions Caucus, which is "committed to finding economically viable bipartisan policy solutions that address the impacts, causes, and challenges of our changing climate."

Learn more at fcnl.org.



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Contribute: Have an idea for an article? A poem? A photograph? A prayer? A report from your community's earthcare work? Send submissions to hayley@quakerearthcare.org.

Dear Reader,

Support for earthcare is growing.

Many of us were part of the March for Science, and QEW led the Quaker contingent at the Climate, Jobs, and Justice March in D.C. in April. Polls show that the number of Americans supporting protection from pollution is increasing. Shockingly, however, the U.S. Federal government is attempting to shut down efforts to improve air and water quality, conserve natural ecology, and convert to renewable energy.

Many communities are resisting—this issue reports how Friends were involved in successfully achieving a statewide ban on fracking in Maryland. New York and California (the 14th and 5th largest global economies, respectively) serve as models for climate plans. Localities are choosing wind and solar for their power. **We are seeing a growing awareness of our connection to the natural world and finally understanding that our lives depend on it. At the same time, the environment is being threatened as never before.**

As Quaker Earthcare Witness, we are called to take faithful action to prevent the most catastrophic effects of climate change and create resilient, Spirit-led communities by working together. **We need your help to sustain and strengthen our work. As a member of our network, can you show your support by making a contribution?**

How do we build a sustainable and life-enhancing future in these challenging times? Our work this season strives to answer that question. With your help, this summer we will:

- Revise and publish our **Earthcare curricula** for adults and First Day Schools
- **Advocate for environmental justice** and a right relationship with the Earth by working in coalitions with allied groups and organizations
- **Use our Quaker voice** to support indigenous rights and climate justice
- **Spread the word** about Friends' witness through our print and online publications
- Amplify Earthcare through **inter-visitation** at yearly meetings and Friends' gatherings
- **Fund hands-on sustainability projects** throughout the world with our mini-grants program
- Lead an **Earthcare Coalition of NGOs** from the world-wide African diaspora to inform the U.N. High Level Political Forum about food sovereignty, land retention, and access to water.

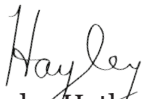
QEW grew out of a strong leading among Friends that our future depends on a spiritual transformation in our relationships with each other and the natural world. Over the past 30 years, we have grown a solid network of Friends throughout North America and we want to keep growing.

We must meet the challenges we are facing by doubling our efforts. Please consider upping your usual donation so that we can. We are grateful for your support and your commitment. Together, we are making a difference in the world.

In Friendship,



Shelley Tanenbaum
General Secretary



Hayley Hathaway
Publications Coordinator



To donate to QEW, send a check made out to “Quaker Earthcare Witness” to P.O. Box 6787, Albany, CA, 94706 or donate securely online at quakerearthcare.org/donate

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to dry. The gas industry trade group easily could have blanketed Western Maryland counties with a public-information campaign that would present the facts to their own benefit.

However, Sen. Conway was wrong, and the whole thing went in an unexpected way.

The Maryland House of Delegates passed the ban bill on March 10. It crossed over to the Senate, where no fracking bill had yet come out of committee.

Then, in a truly stunning move, Gov. Hogan held a press conference on March 17 to announce that he supported the ban and would not veto it. Jaws fell open, including mine. This was a reversal of his “gold mine” view of Western Maryland, and I’m still not sure exactly why he did it.

I suspect it had to do with the perfect storm of low gas prices, the small amount of gas in Maryland to begin with, and the roar of public opinion and massive grassroots lobbying and activism. He probably saw that he would make himself unpopular if he vetoed a ban bill.

The ban bill got out of committee with a vote of eight to three. It passed the Senate with a vote of 35 to 10. Gov. Hogan signed it into law on April 4.

Where were Quakers in all of this?

In 2014, the Chesapeake Quarter created a Fracking Working Group. Its members had come together at the March quarterly meeting and worked for over a year; we were part of the effort that resulted in the moratorium.

In the fall of 2016, a group formed again, including members of the first group. That group started its work before the 2017 legislative session and succeeded in getting an in-person meeting with Sen. Conway. On February 2, six Friends from Stony Run and Homewood Meetings met with Sen. Conway to express our concern and hear her position.

We needed to keep our concern in front of her, so we organized phone calls to her office; we knocked on doors in her district to get more support; we sent 60-some valentines to her, describing how fracking would break our hearts. We sent St. Patrick’s Day shamrock cards reminding her that our future isn’t a matter of luck.

On March 2, about 20 Friends and friends joined a 1,000-person rally in Annapolis to demand the ban. We marched behind a bright blue banner with the message, “Quakers for a Fracking Ban.” We knew that we could not speak for all Quakers, but the spirit moved us to speak for

Fracking 101

Hydraulic fracturing, commonly called fracking, is a drilling technique used to extract natural gas or oil from deep underground. Fracking is a controversial practice that has been shown to lead to dangerous and damaging results.



Communities’ water sources can be jeopardized by the leak of chemicals used in fracking; companies are not required to disclose the chemicals used; fracking uses an enormous amount of water, which depletes local water supplies and produces toxic wastewater; and recently, earthquakes have been occurring in areas with fracking wells, raising concerns among environmental advocacy groups, scientists, citizens, and others.

Visit QEW’s website at quakerearthcare.org/fracking to learn more.

ourselves. We were indeed Quakers for a fracking ban. A week later, during a faith-themed sit-in, Quakers with our banner were present again. Several were arrested that day, as planned. Our demand came from a settled

intention to voice a deep desire to protect the water, land, air, people, and animals of Maryland.

We kept Friends and friends updated on the situation—sometimes it moved very fast—and urged phone calls to various lawmakers. It took a lot of tenacity to keep making phone calls, but we felt the support from our meetings.

Sharing the news at various stages of success was a thrill. Sharing this story is a thrill too, especially because it ends with the questions: What might we do next? How might our Quaker experience open us to the work of protection? ♪

Karie Firoozmand is a member of Stony Run Meeting in Baltimore. She has a particular leading to work for clean, renewable energy through nonviolent direct action campaigns.

Juneau's Journey Toward Renewable Energy

By Margo Waring

JUNEAU, ALASKA COULD BE A MODEL for cities across the nation. A new non-profit called Renewable Juneau is trying to make this happen. Our mission is to “Promote local, renewable energy to create a healthy, prosperous, and low-carbon future for Juneau.”

We decided to keep our focus local because there are so many actionable opportunities accessible to us. And we sure are glad that we did! In the wake of this election, organizing at the local level is more important than ever.

Juneau has had hydropower fueling its residents' electric needs for over 100 years, but a study from last year revealed that electricity is only 20% of our total energy usage. That's why we're trying to step it up and meet 80%-100% of our heating and transportation needs with hydropower as well.

One local company is helping meet Juneau's needs with exciting innovations. They're building a district heating system for our downtown area that would be powered by a seawater heat pump. Alaska already has seawater heat pumps operating in at least two public buildings (saving taxpayers millions of dollars) so we know that the technology works. Juneau would be the first city in North America to have such a system heating homes and businesses.

Additionally, Juneau has the second highest rate of electric vehicle ownership per capita in the U.S. Who would think? It's because we are perfectly situated with a very small road system and 100% hydropower.

We have broad support for renewable energy, but there's still work to do. Even though Juneau's city council adopted a climate action and implementation plan in 2011, Juneau's carbon emissions have continued to increase. In reality, very little action or implementation has occurred. An updated Energy Plan was drafted in 2016, but has received strong pushback from the Chamber of Commerce and other interests, despite residents' support. That's part of why we formed Renewable Juneau.

Our main methods are education and advocacy. We are educating our neighbors about renewable options at the individual level, while advocating for strong action at the municipal level and a regulatory environment that promotes renewables and reduces fossil fuels.

We began this year with three campaigns:

- Supporting the Juneau Energy Plan and calling for the Assembly to commit to 80% reduction in fossil fuel emissions by 2045.

- Promoting heat pumps for space heating. Public education focuses on: “What are they? How do they work? How can you get one? And what are the options for financing your upgrade?” Meanwhile, we are working with local installers to

find out what can help the industry grow, such as training more technicians.

- Rejecting the proposal to bring natural gas to Juneau. Our utility company was bought out in 2014 by a company from “down south” who owns both hydro and natural gas facilities. They want to move beyond the electric market to displace home heating oil with natural gas.

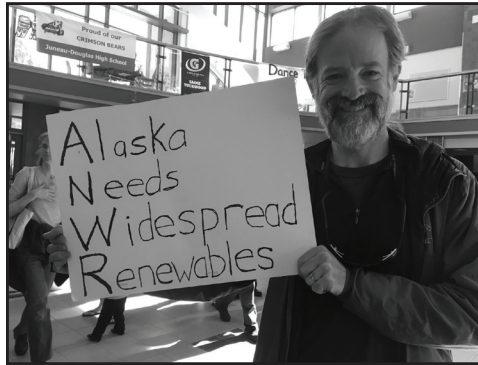
The exciting news is that we're only a few months old and we've already crossed our first major campaign off the list. In February, our utility decided to put natural gas on hold indefinitely. While we can't take all the credit for this important win, we know that the conversations we had with legislators, Assembly members, regulators, and allies helped to keep this project from being automatically green-lighted, which seemed to be the likely outcome at the beginning.

We then added a fourth campaign. We have partnered with the Juneau Electric Vehicle Association to promote the use of electric vehicles in Juneau.

We are lucky to have many strong allies in this mission. In April, we hosted the local Earth Day celebration in partnership with the March for Science. The Fair highlighted heat pumps, electric cars and boats, local food, local schools, advocacy groups, and an indigenous dance performance.

Renewable Juneau is building momentum. We are raising money and promoting our work on social media (see us on Facebook and our website renewablejuneau.org). We are on our way. ♻️

Margo Waring is a retired State of Alaska employee who now has more time to devote to climate action. Margo's poetry has been published in Tidal Echoes, Cirque and The Atlantic.



Mike Hekkers at Renewable Juneau's Earth Day Celebration. Photo: Danielle Redmond

Environmental Author Cynthia Barnett Talks to QEW

Cynthia Barnett, the author of three books focused on water: *Rain: A Natural and Cultural History*, *Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Crisis*, and *Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.*, shares her insight on climate and water with QEW Publications Coordinator Hayley Hathaway.



Author Cynthia Barnett. Photo: John Moran

You now have written three books on the subject of water. Why water?

Water was the sweet spot where a personal and professional passion lined up with a great societal need. I was a water-lover since childhood—the kid who had to be dragged from playing in the ocean, the pool, the bathtub, or even the rain. Then in my years as a journalist covering many different stories, water really began to stand out as this crucial resource whose future was decided by an extraordinarily small group making often questionable decisions: Why was that groundwater permit granted when the aquifer is already depleted? Why does that developer get to fill in the wetland? Sometimes a journalist gets obsessed, and that's what happened with me and water.

*Your first book, *Mirage*, was released in 2007. How has the landscape, literally and figuratively, changed since then?*

Mirage foresaw this strange story of water scarcity in the American East, one of the most water-blessed regions in all the world. Like so many issues, we've made progress at the same time we've slid back. Americans are using less and less water overall, even amid population and economic growth. Yet we haven't gotten better at taking care of our natural waters: laying off groundwater pumping, wetlands drainage, river diversions and the like.

How has your work influenced the response to the water crisis in your home state of Florida? Have you seen its impact beyond the state?

Mirage published at the right time,

when people were already beginning to open their eyes to human-caused scarcity. The drought of 2007 had an enormous influence to help Floridians understand what I call "America's illusion of water abundance." In Florida and around the U.S. today, many more people and communities discuss water ethics. My continued frustration is that at the same time so many are engaged and living differently with water, some interest groups and elected officials continue to stand in the way of making water sustainability systematic.

You describe and call for a water ethic. Can you share what you mean and what we must do to get there?

At its most basic, a water ethic means living with water today in a way that doesn't jeopardize fresh, clean water for future generations and ecosystems tomorrow. There are two straightforward ways to get there: using less and polluting less in all sectors of the economy.

As activists and people of faith with a deep concern for Earthcare, where can we look for inspiration and guidance?

Again, I take solace and faith from history. A half century ago, the United States cleaned up industrial pollution so severe that major rivers would burst into flame. We restored sewage-killed bays, their seagrass and fish. We stopped dam building in the American West—including the terrible idea of damming the Grand Canyon. And of course Quaker communities have done so much more than this; your work on Abolition is the perfect example of how a small group of people can beat the damaging dominant paradigm by



RAIN

A
NATURAL
AND
CULTURAL
HISTORY

CYNTHIA
BARNETT

appealing to morals, ethics and humanity. This will ultimately be the case with water and climate.

How do you respond to people who are not convinced that climate change is a threat?

This is about shared values. The key is moving the conversation out of the political realm and into a more unifying realm: future generations, quality of life, helping the poor, whatever common ground you can find. I find social media is hopeless when it comes

to engaging people who have been co-opted by the deniers. Face-to-face conversations are best.

Another thing to remember is that only about 9% of Americans truly deny climate change. They are just the loudest, and they happen to be in charge at the moment!

What we see all over the country is that once your community has experienced the extreme rains, the heat, the sunny-day flooding, whatever it is, you want to roll up your sleeves and work on climate change. ☞

BOOK REVIEW

Water Water Everywhere, but...

Reviewed by Brad Stocker

SOMETIMES IT MAKES MORE SENSE to review an author than a book. This is the case with Cynthia Barnett, an environmental journalist who has spent years studying water. Rarely have I read more than one book of non-fiction by the same author. Now Cynthia Barnett falls into this small group alongside Thomas Barry, E.O. Wilson, and Bill Bryson. Ms. Barnett has written three books with the central theme of water running through them all: *Rain: A Natural and Cultural History*, *Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Crisis*, and *Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.* She does what many in science fields fail to do: she writes intriguing and interesting narratives about hard subjects in ways that non-scientists enjoy.

While *Mirage* specifies Florida in the title, it is important to notice that it also speaks to the entire eastern part of the U.S. Most of us are familiar with the droughts and water issues, even water wars, of the land west of the Mississippi, but are far less familiar with the same issues in the east. We have been fed the myth that there is an unlimited abundance of water in the east. That lie, as it has been for all other of Earth's resources, has only recently come into full light. Do not be fooled into believing that this book is not relevant because you live outside of Florida. It uses the west's water situation as models of what the east should and should not do.

“Do not be fooled into believing that this book is not relevant because you live outside of Florida.”

Blue Revolution's title invokes notions that many hold forth as essential to real and necessary change. Though Ms. Barnett's blue revolution is a far softer one than some would wish, it is nevertheless one that deserves careful discernment. Not only does the book trace the history of water, power, and life as they are inextricably linked, it also highlights the need for a strong water ethic. She shows that where a bioregion has instituted a sound water ethic, there is a positive turnaround in the humans' relationship to water.

I found that *Rain* is my favorite and the most entertaining. As always, she writes with knowledge and wit. The book is another look at humans' connection to water through a primary source. As precipitation does, the stories within cross the false borders of political boundaries. She travels to the wettest town in the world at the edges of India to find it is suffering from climate change's impact on its fame. She visits a location that is renowned for capturing the essential aroma of rain and discovers that aromas are very cultural and personal. The small tidbits of information she weaves craftily into the whole are in themselves fascinating but also serve well as conversation openers. The one I have taken to gatherings is that the image of a raindrop that we have become accustomed to seeing is contrary to reality. The thinner part of a real raindrop is at the bottom not the top.

I highly recommend Cynthia Barnett as an author who teaches without pain and in so doing invites us to learn more. Whether you read one or all of her books, I am sure that you will discover information and facts that are new to you and that you will have well spent your time. ☞

Brad Stocker, Ed.D., an educator for many years, is currently most concerned with earthcare and earth literacy. His family is bilingual/bicultural and he and his wife, Tere Campos, write, play, and care for their elders and grandchildren.

Ecological Living at Quaker Retirement Community

By Elizabeth Boardman

PERHAPS, IF WE HAD ASKED THEM, our grandchildren could have told us before we came here to Friends House what benefits we would accrue by moving out of the big family home to a small apartment. And now we could tell them the advantages of a communal apartment complex where people deliberately share and “go green” in terms of water, energy, and resources of all kinds.

Friends House is a Quaker retirement community in Santa Rosa, California. Many of the 80 or so people living in apartments here came from single-family homes. The adjustment to a smaller personal living space was always a temporary challenge.

But in these days of concern about climate change, an important pay-off is immediately visible. The life style at Friends House is far more ecologically sustainable than the way we were living before, especially for those of us (about 80%) who are single.

Who really needs more than a living room, a kitchen alcove, a bedroom, and a bath, when there is plenty of community space to share? Our garden tools are in the communal tool shed, our extra books are in the Friends House library (about 5,000 books total). We each share



Friends House residents (including Elizabeth in the middle) looking at butterfly larva on one of the milkweed plants put in at Friends House last year to attract Monarch butterflies.

laundry facilities (one washer, one dryer, one clothes line, and an ironing board and iron) with about 12-15 others, and there is virtually never a waiting line. (No quarters required, either!) Cece comes with the vacuum cleaner once in two weeks and Antonio mows the lawns, so we don't have to own or store those machines. In many places, grass that needs watering and mowing has been replaced with drought-tolerant native plants.

Only about half of Friends House residents own cars, and about a third of the cars are hybrids or electric. We have a rule for pedestrians about facing towards on-coming traffic when we walk “the Ring Road” around the campus, so that we will see the inaudible electric vehicles coming near us. Those with cars share the cars or rides, and the whole community owns a van and hires a driver to transport many at one time, so that our carbon footprint is modest. For trips away, many of us take trains, not planes.

We old ladies and gentlemen are wary of using too much gas and electricity. Many of us capture first-flow cold water to use on potted plants and in the johns. The basic design of the place is geared to maximization of sun and shade according to the season. Many of our roofs have solar tubes and solar panels, and more are expected soon.

Every “cottage” apartment is on the ground floor with its own little garden. The lawns and patios are shared by groupings of 15-20 apartments. The vegetable gardens “out back” belong to the whole community. And the harvest from the 50 fruit trees is shared and used to the max, “drops” and all, with jars of jellies and jams lasting long into the cold season or sold at the annual Holiday Faire to raise funds for the Resident Support Fund. Most of the money for



Friends House residents share their enthusiasm for protecting endangered species and living simply and communally.

that fund comes from “Susan’s Table,” right up in the front lobby, where residents, staff, and well-wishers alike recycle clothes and small objects. Books, on the other hand, get donated to our big library. If they are not shelved there, they get sold online by an enterprising resident committee, again for the benefit of the Support Fund.

Instead of a large formal dining room with assigned seating, we have a modest communal café where all who come (including guests and staff members) are welcome to sit anywhere as they arrive, and choose from a limited choice of healthy foods, always with vegetarian choices.

We are pleased to be living so light on the land. Perhaps this is the sustainable way that everyone should be living these days—except perhaps families with growing children. Indeed, more and more younger adults live, like us, in shared housing or small apartments, using Uber or public transportation instead of private cars, eating at restaurants and from modest take-out vendors instead of maintaining a big kitchen. This life style is based on respect for Mother Nature and for one another. ♪

Elizabeth Boardman is a member of Redwood Forest Friends Meeting, and a resident and a board member at Friends House.

May We Rise up From the Earth



May we be grounded with the strength of the earth,
May our love for the planet burn bright like fire,
May visions of wholeness rise up on wings of air,
May our actions flow with the ease of water,

And may the dance of elements
Lead us in Spirit-led Action
With and for Mother Earth,
Our only home.

Julia Bixler Isaacs

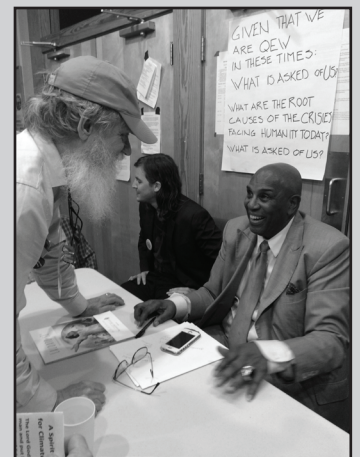
Julia Bixler Isaacs is a member of Madison Monthly Meeting and wrote this on the morning of 4/29/2017 (day of the People’s Climate March) and completed it on 5/14/2017 (Mother’s Day).

QEW Celebrates Community at Spring Steering Committee Meeting



“Given that we are Quaker Earthcare Witness in these times, what is asked of us?” This query laid the foundation for QEW’s Spring Steering Committee Meeting at Atlanta Friends Meeting April 20-22. “We came together to support each other and continue to inspire each other,” reflects QEW’s General Secretary Shelley Tanenbaum.

On Friday night, we visited with three local Atlanta climate activists, including Reverend Dr. Gerald Durley, a long-time civil rights leader who has now turned his faithful action toward the environment. He reminded us that “God gave us a powerful and ecologically balanced world” and we are its stewards. He then challenged us with a powerful message: “Climate Change is an equal opportunity destroyer. What are you going to sacrifice? What are you going to risk?”



Above: QEW Steering Committee members Christopher Haines, Beverly Ward, and Mary Ann Percy. Right: Reverend Dr. Gerald Durley.

Continued from page 12

oligarchic corporate infrastructure for our survival. Overspecialization deprives us of core life skills which means that we're unable to holistically and autonomously take care of our own basic food needs.

As a population we are fed, clothed and housed by corporations focused on profit rather than people. Compound that scenario for those whose primary food is "take out," is prepared or heated up from a box, comes from a fast-food restaurant, and/or who are two generations removed from parents who knew how to cook "from scratch."

What Would Food Sovereignty for the Most Vulnerable Look Like? We Begin with Land Retention and a Global Platform.

Prior to the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, a New York-based Earthcare Coalition of organizations drawn from African Diaspora nations asked, "What would it take to mount a concerted move toward relocalization of food production and sovereignty among marginalized people of African descent as climate disruptions become the norm?" (Cue reminiscent images of hurricane Katrina survivors crowded into the New Orleans stadium and on their rooftops.)

At the time that was an ambitious, even audacious question for allied organizations working under the aegis of the U.N. International Decade for People of African Descent to ask. The group's intent is to propel food sovereignty and water access onto the front burner of awareness among the 200,000,000 people in the African Diaspora over the course of the next eight years. Forty-six million of those 200 million reside in the U.S., and the Coalition's specific outreach target is those among that group who are most vulnerable to climate change.

In the aftermath of the election, promoting autonomous localization of food production in communities of color has taken on a whole new urgency. The subtext of the "America First" refrain is the executive branch's cannibalization of the cherished conventions and structures meant to protect us all.

This is particularly alarming for people of color since the new administration cherishes a White nationalist definition of "America." With more aggressive extraction of fossil fuels, the undoing of environmental protections, and blaming of societal ills on Muslims, immigrants, Latinos, and "the Blacks," the handwriting is on the wall.

Black land retention and its use for food production in the American southeast and Diaspora countries are

Help the QEW-led Earthcare Coalition organize the event "Support Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting the African Diaspora" at United Nations Headquarters during the High Level Political Forum in July. Visit quakerearthcare.org/unitednations to learn more about our campaign and make a donation.

the top priorities of the Earthcare Coalition convened by African-American representatives of Quaker Earthcare Witness to the United Nations and stalwart allies. To that end, Coalition members design and promote implementation of cooperative economic models that connect young, returning generation farmers to elder growers.

The urgency of reckoning with drought, flooding, increased storm frequency and intensity, population displacement etc., etc. is already upon us. The Earthcare Coalition is thinking through pragmatic, local, actionable responses to food- and water-resource management that meet the specific needs of people of African descent.

"African-American farmers in the Southeast can anticipate more climate uncertainties and extremes..."

African-American farmers in the Southeast can anticipate more climate uncertainties and extremes as they struggle to hold on to their birthright land amidst attempted land grabs. The challenge is compounded by the fact that the agencies designated to help Black farmers prepare for the impact of climate change are those which are historically responsible for racial

discrimination and disenfranchisement of Black growers. Further, rural poverty and migration from the rural south have eroded the once vibrant African American mutual aid networks.

The U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will provide a platform from which the Earthcare Coalition working on the International Decade for People of African Descent can reach the Diaspora in the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. The Coalition raises awareness about how relocalized food systems might ideally look and how people in the Diaspora can share and implement Afrocentric solutions. In July of 2017, the Earthcare Coalition will offer and televise the first in a series of events at U.N. Headquarters and

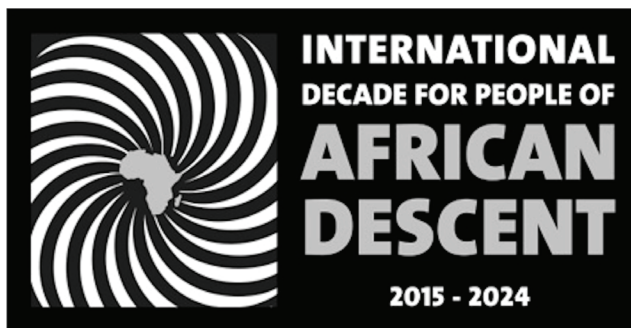
locally throughout the Diaspora at the U.N. High Level Political Forum (HLPF). A succession of Diaspora-wide events will build and prepare networks for concerted climate-change action in the domain of food production and water management.

The HLPF is a U.N. forum which brings together all member states and specialized agencies for official meetings, special events, side events, and educational sessions. The HLPF is the primary mechanism for the review of countries' implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by UN member states in 2015.

We Heal Fragmentation.

A primary goal that frames the Coalition's work is the healing of schisms which have divided people of African descent in North and South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa for 400 years. Centuries of deliberate and methodical fragmentation for profit has scattered people of African descent like seeds across the globe. This systematic division has had both geographical and deep psychological consequences. The vestiges of the latter have perhaps inflicted the worst wounds.

In the final analysis it is the quality of our relationships that will get humanity through the eye of the climate-change needle. The Coalition's solutions-driven focus is generating transnational conversations which strengthen bonds among African-Americans and their counterparts in the Diaspora to yield food-production strategies. Food sovereignty is "the right of people to healthy and culturally-appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods." The Earthcare Coalition underscores the need for people of African descent to define, own, and manage their own sustainable food and agriculture systems.



We Build Evolutionary Culture.

Events at U.N. Headquarters and throughout the Diaspora over the course of the decade, through 2024, will punctuate and highlight Afrocentric food production innovation. However, the ongoing bedrock work is the revolutionary-evolutionary act of weaving an international web of interconnectivity among nodes of historically atomized people.

The challenges and lessons learned from past Diaspora movements such as Pan-Africanism inform the Coalition's process. Working with emergent network theory and evolutionary culture-building methods, the Coalition is intentionally cultivating a collaborative culture.

To that end, the Coalition has established issue-specific "circles" using socio-cocratic governance and decision-making processes. Sociocracy democratizes power and distributes authority while enabling autonomy. As Sociocracy for All founder Jerry Koch-Gonzalez frequently states, sociocracy is a lived process in which the social-movement adage "everyone is heard" is authentic and experienced rather than intellectualized.

The Black Belt Justice Center (BBJC), Washington DC is inaugurating the Coalition's Land Retention and Use Circle. This circle brings together non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the U.S., the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa which, like the BBJC, "serve...farmers, landowners, and communities [of African descent] in efforts to retain and increase landownership; to create sustainable land-based cooperatives and entrepreneurial businesses; and to ensure intergenerational and community wealth."

Tarsha Gary, Houston TX-based chef and founder of the environmental organization, Ecotone, is coalescing a Food Education Circle comprised of Diaspora food historians, educators, and instructor-chefs. This circle works to reconnect African-Americans with fresh food consumption, African foodways, and a rich heritage of working with the earth. Each offers a dimension of the relocalization map for Diaspora food production. f



Tarsha Gary, founder of the environmental organization Ecotone, is coalescing a Food Education Circle that works to reconnect African-Americans with fresh food consumption, African foodways, and a rich heritage of working with the earth.

This article was originally published on the Grassroots Economic Organizing Editorial Collective's website. Pamela Boyce Simms is an evolutionary culture designer who convenes the Mid-Atlantic Transition Hub. She currently works with international Quaker, Buddhist, and African Diaspora Earthcare networks.

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Relocalization Among the Most Marginalized in an “America First” World

By Pamela Boyce Simms

LET’S KEEP OUR EYES ON THE PRIZE and not be distracted. Let us remain focused, not only on surviving the current U.S. administration, but on building the foundation for thriving in the oil-constrained future on the horizon. Let’s ensure that we cover the basics: access to food and drinkable water as the new U.S. Secretaries of State, Interior, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Energy facilitate further degradation of the environment and accelerate the frequency of climate change disruptions.

We have choices. We can choose to purposefully live into relocalizing food production wherever we are. This is all the more imperative for the most vulnerable and marginalized among us who are scapegoats in an unabashedly “America First” world.

Global society has crossed the threshold of an existential crisis. The Global South, people of color in particular, walked across that threshold back in the early 1970s. Increased frequency of climate-change-



Will Scott Jr. is an example of a move toward relocalization of food production as climate disruption becomes the norm, working with the organization African-American Farmers of California and running his own farm. Photo: AP Photo/GosiaWozniacka

induced natural disasters, worsening variability in rainfall patterns, droughts, flooding, and heat stress have plagued Caribbean, Latin American, African, and island nations for over 40 years. With the advent of the new American administration, the flagrant fusion of American corporate and state power will hasten climate change and unfettered resource depletion. We are ALL now racing toward the edge of the cliff! To relocalize production is to grow wings rather than plummet. We have choices.

What’s the big deal about relocalization of food production? If corporate food-delivery systems were to shut down due to a climate disruption or for any other reason, cities in the United States would have an average of three days of resources available for the sustenance of the population. Most of us are dependent upon an

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