



Migration and the Climate Crisis

By Clarence Edwards and Ali Rahnama



As early as 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that the greatest single impact of climate change might be on human migration. The recent Quaker Statement on Migration also recognizes this: "The line between chosen and forced migration is frequently blurred by factors including...the climate crisis."

This is largely because climate change does not impact all people and all parts of the world in the same way and at the same time. It triggers problems like desertification, drought, more frequent and more extreme storms, rising seas levels, and hunger.

Human beings have been migrants for thousands of years; it is a longstanding and very normal phenomenon. For many people, the motivation to migrate often involves a mixture of push factors, but increasingly, scientists see them arising from changes in the climate.

Migration is, too often, a matter of life and death for millions of people around the world seeking to escape conflict or natural disasters. The number of these forced migrants has skyrocketed.

The Brookings Institution reports that in 2017, 68.5 million people were displaced all over the world—more than at any point in history. More than one-third of these refugees were uprooted by sudden weather events, including floods, forest fires and intense storms.

What has turned the human impulse to migrate into a crisis are the sheer numbers involved, compounded by laws, physical walls, and the definitions that government have constructed to keep migrants

away. This situation has been worsened by populist leaders of rich countries who, because of the impact of migrants on their economies and societies, support tighter restrictions on migration.

The prognosis is bad for this complex mix of migration and climate change. According to the 2018 World Bank report "Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration," over 143 million people across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America could be forced to move within their own countries to escape the slow-onset impacts of climate change.

(continued on page 2)



An estimated 200,000 marchers descended on Washington D.C. in 2017 for the People's Climate March, including these two Quakers. FCNL Photo.



Flooding in the Seattle, Washington, area. Photo by Konstantin32.

(continued from page 1)

Cross border migration will also be impacted by climate change. According to the International Organization on Migration, there were around 272 million international migrants in the world in 2019, or 3.5% of the global population.

Since the 1970s, the United States has been the top destination for migrants, even if the government has decreased the number of refugees it resettles.

However, migration triggered by climate change is not simply an issue for developing economies. “Internal climate migrants do not necessarily stop at [national] borders,” says the World Bank report.

The United States will potentially face its own challenges with internal climate migration. A study published in Nature Climate Change estimates that 13 million people along U.S. coasts could be displaced by the end of this century due to rising sea levels. Most live in the Southeast, especially Florida.

Scientists predict that in the next decades, migration of hundreds of millions of people around the globe is inevitable due to climate change. These movements are going to be a true trial of the limits of national and global governance and social bounds.

As a Quaker organization, FCNL believes that both the causes and the destructive impact of climate change

must be urgently addressed not only by individual countries but also by the global community.

While the Biden administration has rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement and made climate change a centerpiece in the government’s work, his administration will need to do more to meet the humanitarian crisis of mass climate migration.

Solving this interlinked crisis of migration and climate change requires new and all-inclusive solutions. FCNL’s approach in resolving the climate crisis—and its impact on migration—has been focused on enacting policies that puts a price on carbon emissions.

While it is only one piece of the climate crisis, the logic is simple and should be adopted by both Republican and Democrat members of Congress. Taxing carbon emissions encourages industries to reduce their carbon footprint. At the same time, it raises funds to enable communities of color and low-income neighborhoods to adapt to climate change. (See page 3 for FCNL’s Carbon Pricing Principles).

Today, public discussion of climate change and migration are often held to the exclusion of the other issue. However, as FCNL continues to seek justice—both in migration and climate changes issues—these issues must be one and inextricably linked.

Clarence Edwards is FCNL’s lead lobbyist on sustainable energy and environmental issues. Ali Rahnama is FCNL’s lead lobbyist on immigration and refugee issues. 

Climate Change: The Defining Crisis

“Climate change is the defining crisis of our time and disaster displacement one of its most devastating consequences. Entire populations are already suffering the impacts, but vulnerable people living in some of the most fragile and conflict-affected countries are often disproportionately affected.

“Refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and the stateless are on the frontlines of the climate emergency. Many are living in climate ‘hotspots,’ where they typically lack the resources to adapt to an increasingly hostile environment. The domino effect of disaster upon disaster triggered by climate change battering already impoverished communities, leaves them no time to recover.”



Letter from the Clerk: Searching for the Next General Secretary

By Ron Ferguson



Dear Friends, It is with mixed emotions that I share the news with you that FCNL General Secretary Diane Randall informed the Executive Committee in February that she will leave Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) at the end of 2021—“with a clear and grateful heart.”

For the past ten years, Diane has fostered the growth and strength of FCNL among Friends and on Capitol Hill. At the 2010 Annual Meeting when the General Committee approved her appointment as the first woman to head the organization, Diane told those gathered that FCNL “must be bold, strategic, and relentless in our advocacy.” In 2021, we are that and far more.

With gratitude to Diane for her leadership in staying true to the vision of the world we seek and to Friends’ faith and practice,

the Executive Committee has approved a way forward to select the next FCNL general secretary.

During the Executive Committee meeting in February, the Personnel Committee—with Lynn Oberfield as clerk; Dorsey Green, Mary Lou Hatcher, Ron Ferguson, as members—proposed the creation of a search committee. It was approved, along with the approval of Deanne Butterfield as its clerk.

The Executive Committee also approved the Personnel Committee’s recommendation to engage a consultant to help develop the General Secretary position profile through interviews with the staff, General Committee members, and other stakeholders in order to be responsive to ways FCNL and the world have changed since the last search.

In the coming weeks, the Personnel Committee and the Search Committee clerk will nominate a Search Committee of seven to eight people, subject to the approval of the Executive Committee. We hope to bring a General Secretary candidate forward for approval during the 2021 Annual Meeting, Nov. 18–21.

In the weeks and months ahead, we will keep you informed of the process and ask for your help. We have much prayerful work to do and are committed to finding the right leadership for FCNL as the organization heads into the future.

Ron Ferguson

Ron Ferguson
Clerk, on behalf of the FCNL Executive and Personnel Committees 

FCNL’s Carbon Pricing Principles

FCNL believes that as support for carbon pricing grows in Congress, these principles can help guide policymakers in advancing climate legislation.

A Sufficient Price and Border Adjustment. The most important element of a carbon price is its effect on carbon emissions. The price should be high enough to accelerate the decline of carbon intensive industries and spur investment in low carbon technologies. A carbon price should be paired with a border carbon adjustment to prevent carbon leakage and preserve U.S. competitiveness vis-à-vis foreign manufacturers.

Regulatory Changes. If carbon pricing legislation includes a regulatory moratorium, there should be an environmental integrity mechanism to ensure that the moratorium is lifted if the carbon fee isn’t achieving the desired reduction in emissions.

Protect Vulnerable Communities. A carbon price should promote economic equity and follow the “polluter pays” principle to ensure that the costs are not borne by the most vulnerable people, who should be helped, not harmed, by this policy. Not only is this fair, but it will also contribute to greater social cohesion and strengthen the roots of

a sustainable economy that can offer opportunity to all Americans.

Dialogue. FCNL recognizes the challenge of finding common ground, but it also believes that this moment in history is calling upon America’s political leadership to rise above partisanship and do what is needed to protect people and the planet.

FCNL believes that an effective price on carbon can make a significant contribution to stabilizing the earth’s environment and building a world where people and their communities can flourish. 

The Roots of Environmental Justice

By Clarence Edwards



You need not look far from FCNL's headquarters to see environmental injustice in action. In the neighboring city of Baltimore, a large incinerator burns most of the city's garbage. Although it converts the waste into electricity, it is also Baltimore's single largest source of industrial air pollution.

The incinerator is located in a predominantly African American section of South Baltimore, an area with a legacy of industrial pollution.

I saw the impact of industrial pollution while growing up in Baltimore. I accompanied my mother to her teaching job at a community college in Dundalk, in Baltimore County. Steelmaking and shipyards formed Dundalk and Baltimore's backbone; to this day the legacy of heavy industry, industrial plants, and oil terminals continues to fall largely on low-income and marginalized communities.

The impact of industrial pollution on people's health is well documented. For example, a 2017 study commissioned by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation concluded the Baltimore incinerator costs \$55 million annually in health problems.

To this day the legacy of heavy industry, industrial plants, and oil terminals continues to fall largely on low-income and marginalized communities.

Pollution from the incinerator doesn't only impact South Baltimore, but also the surrounding counties where fine particles from the incinerator's white smokestack fall.

Environmental justice is simply an issue of fairness: Black, brown, Indigenous, and low-income communities should no longer be burdened with the legacy of pollution.

It is defined by the Environmental Protection Agency as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

The roots of modern environmental justice run deep in the Religious Society of Friends. Early Quakers already understood the interdependent relationship between people and the planet.

In the 1700s, Quaker leader John Woolman stated that "the produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age."

In an era when people and the planet face challenges that would be unimaginable to Woolman, the Quaker commitment to justice and environmental protection aligns with today's calls for recognition of the rights of minority and low-income communities to a healthy environment and the need for environmental justice.



The harm caused by Baltimore's Wheelabrator Incinerator costs \$55 million annually in health problems.

Today's understanding of environmental justice stretches back to the Civil Rights era: to 1968 and the Memphis Sanitation Strike.

But its pivotal moment occurred in 1982, in Warren County, North Carolina, a predominantly Black county with 90% of its people living below poverty level.

In a community less than 50 miles from my family's home in Rocky Mount, civil rights groups protested a landfill to dump soil contaminated with toxic waste called PCBs. The protesters were unable to stop it, but they brought public attention to the fact that people of color and low-income residents are often the ones who live in the most polluted environments.

A 1987 report by the United Church of Christ, "Toxic Waste and Race," confirmed this. Three out of every five African Americans and Hispanics live in communities with toxic waste sites. Race was the most significant factor in siting hazardous waste facilities.

FCNL is committed to ensuring that environmental justice is actively addressed by our legislators, just as they did with the American Rescue Plan.

Progress has been made in the 39 years since the Warren County protests, but a lot of work remains to be done. Today, there are people who still live, work, and play in communities adversely impacted by environmental injustice—like Flint, Michigan, and the area called Cancer Alley between New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

Environmental justice wasn't on the priority list of the previous administration. Today, FCNL is pleased that the Biden administration has placed environmental justice at the center of its environmental agenda.

As a Quaker organization, FCNL is committed to ensuring that environmental justice is actively addressed by our legislators, just as they did with the American Rescue Plan. The latest COVID-19 relief bill included \$100 million for environmental justice grants, including \$50 million to address disproportionate environmental or public health harms and risks in vulnerable populations.

FCNL is looking at new legislation—like carbon pricing bills and the Build Back Better Plan—through an environmental justice lens. More importantly, we will be lobbying in support of the newly reintroduced Environmental Justice for All Act (H.R. 2021) and its companion bill in the Senate.

It is a comprehensive bill that will address environmental disparities in vulnerable communities across the country. The bill was reintroduced by Rep. Raul M. Grijalva (AZ-03), chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, and Rep. A. Donald McEachin (VA-04). Sen. Tammy Duckworth (IL), co-founder of the Environmental Justice Caucus, introduced a companion bill in the Senate.

FCNL's incoming class of community organizers—the Advocacy Corps—will focus on environmental justice. With them, our advocates, and staff, we will strengthen our partnerships and lobby in solidarity with groups who have been on the frontline of environmental justice for decades.

Clarence Edwards is FCNL's lead lobbyist on sustainable energy and environmental issues. [f](#)

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One Roof Grows 118 Trees

By Mariah Shriner



FCNL's buildings features 27 solar panels and a living roof, covered by sedum plants. Photo by Furbish Co.

When FCNL installed 27 solar panels on top of the Quaker Welcome Center (QWC) in December 2019, it might as well have planted 118 trees. Since the panels became fully operational, FCNL has prevented the equivalent of more than 15,000 lbs. of carbon emissions from being released into the atmosphere. That's the equivalent of 118 trees.

In 2020, the total electricity generated by the QWC's rooftop solar panels was 8.9 megawatt hours (MWh). With one MWh potentially powering as many as 900 homes, this means that the QWC's solar panels generated enough electricity to power 8,000 homes for one hour.

These year-old solar panels are one way that FCNL continues to live into its commitment to seeking an earth restored. With an emphasis on sustainability and stewardship in its buildings on Capitol Hill, FCNL is putting its faith into daily practice.

FCNL's main building, facing 245 2nd St., was the first Silver LEED certified structure on Capitol Hill. FCNL earned this accolade after its renovation in 2005. Last year, the building was upgraded to Platinum LEED, the highest award in the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program. The program measures and defines what a green building is.

FCNL's current site and its two adjoining Civil War-era townhouses were acquired in 1958. By the early 1990s, the townhouses needed to be rebuilt.

The FCNL General Committee decided that the new building must reflect Quaker values of simplicity and environmental sustainability. They selected a firm experienced in green buildings and appointed a woman as project architect.

The renovation, completed in the mid-2000s, included a green roof, a geothermal heating/cooling system, bamboo flooring, and large energy-efficient windows to maximize natural light while still providing needed insulation.

Although the Quaker Welcome Center was not submitted for LEED certification when it was completed in 2017, it follows the same green building principles architects adopted for the main building, including recycled materials and energy-efficient windows. Today, FCNL's buildings offer more opportunities for additional green innovations, like the new solar panels.

FCNL's 245 2nd Street structure is not only the first LEED-certified building on Capitol Hill—it is also the first to be heated and cooled by geothermal energy. FCNL's geothermal system includes 10 wells, each plunging 350 feet down into the earth, to use natural heat to keep the building warm in winter and cool in summer. Its living roof, covered by sedum plants, also helps cool it in the summer.

Geothermal systems like FCNL's can cut energy bills by up to 65% compared to traditional heating and cooling units. In 2011, a cooling tower was installed beside the QWC patio to improve its efficiency.

In 2018, FCNL's geothermal system was examined by consultants to see what more could be improved. Many of their recommendations are being implemented. Ato Stephens, facilities coordinator, reports that in addition to the solar panels, FCNL has made substantial advancements in recycling old electrical equipment and improving indoor air quality.

More projects are on the works this year to further improve the sustainability of FCNL's buildings. The buildings stand as effective witnesses for an earth restored as FCNL lobbies Congress on energy and environment issues.

Mariah Shriner is a Young Fellow with FCNL's sustainable energy and environment program.



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Spring Lobby Weekend 2021

March 20–22, 2021

#EndPoliceViolence

567
Registrants

249
First-time
Attendees

42
States

143
Lobby Visits

325
Lobbyists

10
Member-level
Visits

Spring Lobby Weekend 2021 had the highest number of registrants since the program started. A video summarizing the weekend is available at www.fcni.org/slw. Graphic by Wesley Wolfbear Pinkham.

Q&A: All of Nature Is Connected

With Shelley Tanenbaum



How would you describe the work of Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW)?

QEW's work comes from a spiritual center that sees all of nature as connected. From this spiritual core, we focus on ecological integrity and environmental justice. As a network, we share stories of what Friends (and others) are doing to support Earthcare, and we share resources and offer a space for reflection and contemplation.

QEW's mission is to seek right relationship with Earth and unity with nature. What does that look like to you in terms of policy change?

First, we have to consider how our actions impact all people—this requires a commitment to environmental justice. Further, we have to consider how our actions impact ecological systems for now and into the future. I would also like us to recognize the rights of nature.

Many QEW Friends feel aligned with the traditional wisdom of Indigenous communities—the sense that “we are all related.” We have been supportive of Indigenous-led actions such as opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline, and several other pipeline struggles.

We hear a lot about the ecological crises wrought by climate change, but what sorts of social crises do you foresee? What crises are happening already?

Socially, we are experiencing environmental and climate injustice—that some people are disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental degradation. We see this whenever there is extreme weather. People with the least resources and who are least likely to have contributed to creating the problem often experience the most damage and hardship.

It is widely reported that long-term drought as well as dangerous social situations in Central America led to mass migration north. It has long been accepted that the conditions that sparked the Syrian civil war were

drought and a mass migration from rural to urban areas. I see two avenues for addressing migration: First, we need to recognize that there will be increasing migration due to extreme environmental conditions for at least the next 50 years and that migrants have a right to be treated fairly and humanely. Second, we need to provide assistance to countries that are facing these extreme conditions.

Is it possible that we see climate migration within the United States? If so, what might that look like?

We might already be seeing it, as people leave areas that experience more frequent wild weather or fires resulting from long-term drought.

We know that the biggest polluters are often a handful of massive entities, whether that's corporations or even the U.S. military. How do you toe the line between tackling environmental issues from a personal standpoint and from a systemic standpoint?

This question often stalls Quakers. The thought process can be, “If I'm not living 100% environmentally, I can't advocate for policies along those lines.” But that means you'll never act on anything.

It's important to do what you can and realize that you are part of a bigger picture. If we don't advocate for systemic change, we'll never make significant changes.

How can people support your work?

Go to our website to check out our message and resources, donate, and spread the word. We are available for online workshops with monthly and yearly meetings. We're also hosting worship sharing with Friends General Conference on the last Wednesday of every month—join us!

Shelley Tanenbaum is an environmental scientist and is general secretary of Quaker Earthcare Witness (www.quakerearthcare.org). She is a member of Strawberry Creek Quaker Meeting in Berkeley, CA. Interview by Alex Frandsen.

Join us for **Thursdays with Friends**, our twice monthly online conversation about the political topics that matter to you, hosted by FCNL General Secretary Diane Randall.

More info and register at fcnl.org/twf