



Friends World Committee
for Consultation

WORLD OFFICE

How does God call us to act?

An Online Conference with Friends worldwide (22.02.2020)

A Transcript from Speaker Five – Anya Nanning Ramamurphy

What part do Quakers play in creating a sustainable future?

Hi my name's Anya and I am a lifelong Quaker based in London, England. I have been involved in climate and social justice campaigns at various points throughout my life, and in February I became involved with the school climate strike movement (also known as Fridays for Future). I have since joined UK Student Climate Network, which is a youth-led environmental organisation, mobilising and organising the climate strikes in much of the UK, and have also had the privilege of representing and speaking on behalf of Quakers on multiple occasions. Having these opportunities has been an honour, but has also made me realise that I could not have done it without the support I've received from a number of people and groups throughout my life. Something which I believe Quakers in Britain do really well, is support their young people. My confidence, organisation, knowledge, and leadership skills are largely because of the support and experience I've received at Quaker events. I have had the privilege of regularly attending Britain Yearly Meeting and Quaker events for under 18s; I have been on planning committees and have facilitated a wide range of events and groups. My confidence has grown, thanks to my Quaker community, and I believe that this is very important. Giving young people and also marginal communities skills, opportunities, and a voice is one important way that Quakers can help build a sustainable future. The skills I have learnt have helped me in my campaigning and activism. I, as a young person, have been given the opportunity to voice my views and have them listened to and respected. I was privileged to speak on behalf of Quakers at The Time is Now mass lobby, in London. Speaking alongside many other faith leaders was such an honour. I, as a young Quaker, was given this opportunity. Are there opportunities that Quakers can offer to other marginal groups, to give them a voice?

We believe that there is that of God in everyone. It means that equality is absolutely at the core of our faith. Everyone should be given the same chance to a happy life no matter their age, background, or where they live. Quakers are a global community, and we have the responsibility to look after everyone (within our community and beyond). The climate crisis is not something which is distant from us, it is at the forefront of many Friends' lives. There are those in our community who are feeling the drastic effects of climate breakdown. As a

European Friend, I can't help but feel partially responsible for this breakdown. It has been driven by the actions of the western world for centuries. Colonisation of the global south, facilitated mass oppression and exploitation of people, land, resources, and the environment. We destroyed natural sea defences, tore down natural habitats and carbon capture, used the land for our own benefit and ignored the impacts and horrific results of our actions, because it was convenient for us. Now countries of the global South, even though they are contributing the least to climate change, are facing the brunt. These include members of our community and world family of Friends; we need to recognise their suffering and stand with those in the global south, as our neighbours. The American Quaker testimony of Community is key to my message for what role Quakers play in creating a sustainable future. We can support one another as a community; as Helen Keller said "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much." It is also important that we give space for those less privileged to speak out. Indigenous people and local communities are the ones most often ignored, but are the most effective stewards of this planet and we can't forget that. We need to allow ourselves to be led by those in the global south. We must still take action, but be willing to listen to and hear the needs of those that are suffering.

The climate movement has, recently, grown a lot of public and media attention. Large school strikes and Extinction Rebellion protests have interrupted 'business as usual' and forced the general public and those in power to think about the issue at hand, and hopefully respond. However, the climate movement by no means has only just started or just taken off. This has been going on for decades, and those in affected communities have been calling for action for a long time. It is important not to forget this.

Another key testimony is Truth. The truth is often hard, especially when we have to take responsibility for wrong doings which have had harsh consequences. But it is so important that we accept responsibility for this. I acknowledge that I, as a part of the western world, am largely responsible for this climate breakdown. The truth is there and we need to acknowledge it and take responsibility to make the changes necessary to reduce the impacts. Unfortunately, there are many (including Quakers) who are still in denial, whether about their own responsibility or the fact that the earth is heating and the climate is breaking down. This is something that we need to work on changing. Our outreach can help with this. A friend of mine said that "Our outreach encourages others to act in a sustainable way. We are known for sustainability." We need to use this privilege and ability to teach people the Truth, and help our friends and neighbours accept this Truth.

Climate breakdown is rooted in inequality. The fight for climate justice is not just the fight to slow down climate breakdown, but also the fight for social justice for all, which includes safety and security. Peace is one of our key testimonies, and climate justice must continue to be central to our peace work and concerns. Climate breakdown will fan the flames of war and injustice which grows the inequality between marginal communities and those more well off. The fight for climate justice incorporates our fight for peace and social justice. Without this justice, we will never solve this problem for the long term.

Many in the climate movement are calling for system change which is absolutely needed: without system change, we will not be able to make the drastic changes that are needed,

but it is also important to think about our individual lifestyle as we are also part of the system. Two other Quaker testimonies are simplicity and sustainability. For me, living simply (in relation to the climate movement) is about not buying or using things which I do not need. It doesn't mean I have to live an uncomfortable life – that is not living simply – it's about understanding what I need as opposed to want. It's also about using objects and materials for their full life: I can reuse plastic containers and paper bags; I do not need to buy new clothes or a new phone every month. Britain Yearly Meeting Advices and Queries 41 explains this well: "Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?"

For me, sustainability is not just about being environmentally friendly and sustainable, but it's also about how we live out our life and action. We need to remember that campaigning and activism, or even just general life, can be challenging and hard. We need to be sustainable with our own energy and time, in order to continue a sustainable movement. It's important that we, as individuals, take time out to reflect, recuperate, and recharge in order to prevent burnout or harm to ourselves and/ or others. For me, this is a key part of our sustainability testimony.

Finally, as Quakers, we have a strong history of fighting against injustice, and we must continue these fights. It will be hard, but it is necessary and we can't ignore it. We must take leadership and live out our faith in the world in the hopes that others will follow us. Let's remember George Fox's words: "Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one." *George Fox, 1656*

We must act as patterns and examples not just on sustainably living, but also as examples of standing up for justice, giving a voice to those without power, raising young people who seek the truth and who are willing to stand up for what is right. What patterns and examples can we be?