

Rain Bomb

WORK TOGETHER TO STOP CLIMATE CHANGE

I just experienced my first Oregon “rain bomb.” Living 40 years in Lane County, I know this rain was different. If you were outside on Wednesday, June 26, around 3:30 pm you must have felt it too. The fierceness of the driving rain, wind gusts ripping branches from trees and a sudden drop in temperature. Nature felt angry.

I was pruning my melons in the greenhouse and the storm overhead startled me so that I snipped my palm with the clippers and bled profusely. I fear there will be much more bleeding and suffering as the climate crisis intensifies. I stopped the bleeding with pressure and a cloth hankie, but about the climate crisis, I don’t know what to do.

I’ve written hundreds of letters to elected officials and asked pointed questions at congressional town halls, including one where Sen. Jeff Merkley finally announced opposition to the fracked gas export pipeline, the Jordan Cove Energy Project through southern Oregon.

I’ve lobbied and rallied in Salem at least 20 times in the past six years for universal health care, the Clean Energy Jobs bills and the successful Oregon 2019 fracking moratorium. Three times I have made in-person public comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission about all the reasons that the Jordan Cove Pacific Connector LNG export project makes no sense.

I taught dozens of people how to submit public comments to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, which added Eugene’s input to the 43,000 comments statewide (the most ever) which resulted in a denial by the DEQ of the Clean Water Act permit for the project. (The corporation has already reapplied).

At least 10 times I have attended meetings of the Oregon Department of State Lands board meetings, testi-

fying to the board, animating art, leading chants, singing, speaking at rallies and showing up everywhere to oppose the project. I was convicted of criminal trespass, blocking the tar sands oil trains to the two refineries in Anacortes, Washington, for 37 hours two years ago.

I’m working hard in my “retirement,” building the just transition to the clean energy solutions we must have to survive. I helped start 350 Eugene to build a local “climate justice movement” so my children might have a livable planet. Over the years we have purchased three electric vehicles, grown about 70 percent of our own food, become vegetarians, given up flying and consider our carbon footprint with every choice we make.

I say none of this to tout my moral righteousness. I only want to say I have taken what I understand are all the ethical, moral, legal and proper actions available to me as a concerned and responsible citizen. I act not so much for my personal survival, but rather with a strong mother instinct for the threatened well-being of my children and all beings. I love wildlife and wilderness. We’re suffering the loss of 200 species everyday, while living in this Sixth Great Extinction.

What I can’t get out of my head is the article I saw recently by James Anderson, a Harvard scientist. I held close a belief that as clever monkeys, we were sure to figure ways to remove carbon from the atmosphere, which would significantly reduce the effects of the climate crisis. Alas, the biosphere is a complex perfection beyond human engineering, no matter how smart we think we are. It seems there is nothing we can do about the fact that in the past 35 years 80 percent of the permanent ice at both poles has melted, and, by 2022, ice will be essentially gone. Anderson says we cannot recover from this. The lack of ice will start feedback loops in our biosphere that humans will not be able to stop or impact.

As a teacher, mental health professional and a non-scientist, I don’t understand all the implications of this fact, but I do know this is not the world I was born into in 1952. Sixty years of corporations becoming people and parlaying their “free speech” of dollars and power to our elected representatives has left us dissipated, addicted, downwardly mobile, hostile to new immigrants and with income inequality spiraling out of control. Unless Indigenous, we are all immigrants.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez gives me hope that help might be on the way. Oregon can choose a new direction, too. A woman candidate named Doyle Canning is challenging 32-year incumbent Rep. Peter DeFazio in the primary election. The truth is that the current elected politicians in Washington have overseen and abetted the current course of the destruction. Check out Canning for Congress. Time for women and people of color to lead the way.

White men (mostly) in power have shepherded us in this disastrous crisis we face. The intersectionality of the evils of patriarchy, misogyny, white supremacy and greed has brought us to a crisis point. Americans must dismantle our caste system and embrace true justice for all. As an Earth collective, we face a dangerous opportunity. We must get completely off fossil fuels and onto clean renewable non-nuclear energy. Getting it right will be difficult and complex.

The alternative is possible extinction of our species. The enormity of it all can be unbearable. Our main task is to work together. In other words, don’t be just one person. Alone you can do almost nothing. Joining with others who are acting to confront these injustices may not stop the crisis, but it will make the demise of our species more loving, joy-filled and creative. And that makes live worth living for. Love-centered, powerful acts of resistance are our best hope.

In the meantime, I will try to figure out how to protect my tender seedling starts from the next rain bomb and continue to prepare defensible space for the future forest fire that may destroy all I have built and worked for my whole life. ■

Deb McGee is a retired school counselor and mental health provider, organic farmer, climate activist and co-founder of 350 Eugene.

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