Friends,

This spring, I was arrested for the second time in my life. Honestly, the decision to get arrested in the protest organized by #DemocracyAwakening was an easy one to make. I strongly believe that we should take every opportunity to fight against Citizens United, protest laws that prevent Americans from voting and champion fair consideration of President Obama’s Supreme Court nominee. The arrests were well planned and the U.S. Capitol Police were extremely professional and prepared.

What I didn’t plan for was my four-year old son’s questioning. The day before my arrest, Zander asked me, “Daddy, why are you getting arrested?” and reminded me that we should listen to the police and follow the law. What was I to say?

Our cover story discusses what happens when environmental defenders from around the world defy the rules or when the rule of law fails them. They take action because their government, multinational corporations or other entities threaten their family, their community, their environment or their way of life. These defenders are being attacked and sometimes killed. Recently in Honduras, Berta Cáceres — a dear friend of Friends of the Earth, a Goldman Environmental Prize winner, an environmental activist and indigenous leader of the Lenca people and co-founder and coordinator of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) — was murdered. Her death sparked international outrage over human rights abuses in Honduras and the lack of justice for activists that are slain, imprisoned or harassed around the world.

In the United States, it’s easy to dismiss the struggles of Berta and others because we can look to the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and a rule of law that allows citizens to defend themselves against the kinds of abuses that Berta and others experience. While not perfect, our laws provide a sanctioned framework for challenging our government and corporate polluters. However, these laws are under attack by dark-monied interests.

For anyone trying to understand what’s at stake in the United States and how our country’s future impacts the rest of the world, our board chair, Arlie Schardt reviews “Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right” by Jane Mayer. “Dark Money” describes the coordinated financial attack by Charles and David Koch and their circle of rich friends to fundamentally recast the role of our government’s relationship to its citizens. This well-resourced and sophisticated network is attacking key democratic protections like environmental laws, voting rights, constraints on money in politics, the social safety net and affordable health care, to name a few. This is a must-read book.

As I marched to the U.S. Capitol to get arrested, both “Dark Money” and Berta’s death were in my thoughts. I wish that everyone, such as Berta, who fights for their rights to a healthy environment, clean air and water, had the same legal avenues and protections that I have, including the freedom to speak out without fearing for one’s life. I also thought about the dire consequences for our country if the Koch brothers succeed in their quest to remake the United States into their deregulated libertarian corporate-driven utopia.

So when my son asked me about getting arrested, I told him I loved him and there are beliefs that I have; sometimes you have to follow those beliefs and disobey the law for what’s right.

We are privileged to live in a country that allows the majority of people to discuss environmental injustices without the threat of death. We must fight to protect that freedom of speech for all people. We also have a deep responsibility to ensure that governments around the world provide the same rights and freedoms to their people. The world has suffered far too many losses of leaders like Berta. We need to defend the defenders.

In solidarity,

Erich
Get involved in issues and debates affecting human health and the planet by signing up for Friends of the Earth action alerts. Visit www.foe.org
Throughout much of the world, where people depend directly on lands, rivers, forests and soils, defending the environment is not a luxury; it is a necessity of survival and a cultural imperative. And because the economic pressure to extract resources by any means penetrates all levels of government and society, those who dare to defend the environment and their communities’ interests are often marginalized, criminalized and directly targeted for kidnapping or far worse.

According to Global Witness’s 2015 report “How Many More?” 116 land defenders were murdered in 2014; 40 percent were indigenous and 12 of them were in Honduras. As the Global Witness report finds, “The true orchestrators of these crimes mostly escape investigation, but available information suggests that large landowners, business interests, political actors and agents of organized crime are often behind the violence.”

Berta Cáceres, a widely loved and world acclaimed environmental defender and co-founder of the Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras, was assassinated on March 3, 2016. Such a tragic and high-profile assassination has helped cast a spotlight on the dangers facing environmental and land defenders – especially indigenous peoples – in Honduras and many other countries. Despite efforts by Friends of the Earth U.S. and Friends of the Earth International to pressure the Honduran government and the U.S. State Department for justice, the situation in Honduras remains dire.

At the time of this writing, weeks have passed since Berta was killed by unknown gunmen in her home. Berta’s COPINH colleagues remain at risk. Gustavo Castro Soto of Friends of the Earth Mexico, witnessed Berta’s murder and was illegally detained in Honduras, despite having suffered two gunshot wounds in an attempt on his life. Rather than investigating the many instances of death threats and murder attempts on Berta prior to her killing, the Honduran government called the killing “a crime of passion and a botched robbery,” and has focused its investigation on COPINH itself.

Berta’s killing, the targeting of COPINH and the lengthy and arbitrary detention of Gustavo Castro fit a pattern of criminal persecution of environmental...
and human rights defenders across the hemisphere, including the illegal criminalization of their advocacy by the state, by corrupt police forces, judicial systems and private interests.

While Berta knew the risks for herself and for COPINH, they refused to be bullied; instead they vocally and actively challenged the corporations that sought to destroy the territory of their indigenous Lenca communities. The same is true of many people in many countries: Nelson García, an active member of COPINH, was killed by unidentified gunmen March 15, after he protested an eviction order from the mayor of Rio Chiquito, the town where he lived; a young Indonesian farmer named Indra Pelani, who advocated for the rights of tenant farmers against the corporate takeover of their lands by palm oil and paper companies, was killed in February 2015 while traveling to a rice harvest festival in Sumatra. Rigoberto Lima Choc, a Q’eq’chi Mayan activist, was killed last September hours after a court upheld charges he filed denouncing a massive spill of toxic waste pollution by a palm oil company in Sayaxché in Guatemala’s Peten region. Edwin Chota and three other indigenous Asheninka activists were killed in Peru in 2014 for vocally opposing illegal logging in the Amazon.

These are just a few individual names that, thanks to the efforts of global environmental groups, get into the headlines. In each case, the governments did little to investigate or pursue justice; and none of the multinational interests involved were held accountable. This speaks to a systemic problem, at all levels. In Uganda, for example, Friends of the Earth has campaigned for justice for local farmers displaced by a palm oil project run by African company BIDCO — supported by Wilmar International, for years. In September 2015, Ugandan President Museveni said he, “...wanted bullets to kill those bad-hearted people,” referring to anyone opposing the palm oil project;
effectively serving a potentially fatal notice to local activists struggling for justice.

In Nigeria, where Wilmar International is working with the government to develop palm oil plantations, no proof exists of local opponents being physically assaulted; but their land was seized, their crops destroyed and a clear message was sent that dissent will not be tolerated. In Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, where Friends of the Earth worked with local groups to document palm oil related abuses in September 2015 for our report “Up in Smoke,” a local activist we met with has been criminalized and was jailed shortly after our investigation was carried out.

All of this underlines the fact that, even as a few dramatic cases of outright murder give focus to a generalized brutality against environmental defenders, this is part and parcel of the broader structural violence that systematically undermines universal human rights every day, generally in the name of economic development.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) recently brought up Berta’s case on the floor of the Senate following her assassination and asked, “Why is this? Why are the
All of this underlines the fact that, even as a few dramatic cases of outright murder give focus to a generalized brutality against environmental defenders, this is part and parcel of the broader structural violence that systematically undermines universal human rights every day, generally in the name of economic development.

most vulnerable people who traditionally live harmoniously with the natural environment so often the victims of such abuse and violence?”

“There are multiple reasons,” said Leahy, answering his rhetorical question, “including racism and other forms of prejudice. But I put greed at the top of the list. It is greed that drives governments and private companies, as well as criminal organizations, to recklessly pillage natural resources above and below the surface of land inhabited by indigenous people, whether it is timber, oil, coal, gold, diamonds or other valuable minerals. Acquiring and exploiting these resources requires either the acquiescence, or the forcible removal, of the people who live there.”

Whether it is palm oil, which requires huge areas of land to achieve an economy of scale sufficient to serve the global market and generate global profits, or hydroelectric dams, for which at least 40 people have been openly murdered since 2005 in Central America, Mexico and Colombia, large infrastructure requires large expanses of land.

Beyond broad campaigning to reign in the plunder of natural resources, there are a number of concrete things that can be done to defend and protect nature’s defenders. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has already made one binding ruling – Kawas v. Honduras – that held Honduras responsible for the murder of an environmental defender. More such cases must be brought, and their findings used to hold national governments accountable for their role in these abuses.

The U.S. State Department can and should cut off military and police aid to governments that repress environment and land defenders; the State Department can also put in place mandatory protections for environmental activists in high-risk countries. The United Nations has recently appointed a special office dedicated to protection of human rights defenders; these protections need to be extended specifically to land and environment defenders as well, and through this the UN needs to work to decriminalize environmental advocacy.

Perhaps most importantly we can find ways to directly support the defenders on the front lines by sending funds and material support, writing and sharing articles, and even joining delegations to participate, firsthand, in their struggles.

Learn more and take action at: foe.org/forests

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"DARK MONEY": HOW THE KOCH BROTHERS UNDERMINE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

For the millions of Americans distressed about our government’s slide from democracy to plutocracy, The New Yorker staff writer Jane Mayer’s assiduously documented “Dark Money” is the most important book in over a decade.

It is the story of how Charles Koch, head of the Wichita-based Koch Industries, began mapping out a plan—some 40 years ago—to create a vast network of right-wing organizations, funded by the super-rich, that would utilize newly-created think tanks, along with hundreds of innocuously named “nonprofit” organizations, to manipulate philanthropic dollars to influence colleges, universities, the courts, state houses, Congress and the presidency.

Joined by his brother, David—today the richest resident on the island of Manhattan—the Koch brothers persistently overcame one setback after another to pursue two primary goals: reduce taxes for the rich, and destroy government regulations—especially those designed to protect our environment and public health (Koch Industries has been a serial violator of hundreds of environmental, health and worker-safety protections. In 2012 Koch topped the EPA’s list of 8,000 companies producing toxic waste and carcinogenic chemicals).

The brothers grew up under the powerful influence of their authoritarian father, Fred, who expanded Koch Industries in part by building an oil refinery in Stalin’s Russia and another for Hitler’s Third Reich in Germany.

The latter, completed in 1935, was crucial for Hitler because it possessed the technology to refine the high-octane fuel necessary for Germany’s fighter planes.

Fred Koch was also a founding member of the John Birch Society, which was (and is) so delusional that it considered President Dwight Eisenhower to be a communist. Charles was also a member of the Society, which may help explain his almost pathological hatred of government.

Hence in the early 1980’s, the Koch brothers developed a blueprint to “pull the government out by its roots.” While there were many setbacks along the way, their persistence has paid off.

Among the achievements (to mention but a fraction) fueled by their network of an estimated 18 billionaires and 400 multi-millionaires—who meet semi-annually at Koch-sponsored seminars in posh, carefully guarded Western resorts—are:

• Creation of the Tea Party.
• Free-market, anti-regulatory programs in some 238 colleges and universities—from Stanford and Brown to North Carolina State, with the epicenter at George Mason University, a public Virginia college just outside Washington, D.C.: o With millions of Koch dollars, the George Mason economics department became, Mayer reports, “an incubator for the supply-side tax cuts in the Reagan administration that hugely advantaged the rich.” (During Reagan’s eight years of supply-side economics, the national debt tripled.)
• The conversion of such formerly blue and purple states as Wisconsin and North Carolina into extreme-right governments and even courts.
• Redistricting of congressional districts to greatly increase the number of safe seats for Republicans in Congress.
• Blocking efforts to address climate change.
• Spending $130.7 million to help the Republican Party build a huge majority in the 112th Congress.
• Funding “ALEC,” the American Legislative Exchange Network, a political think tank that drafts right-wing legislative proposals which are then adopted by many states.
• A national outbreak of concern over voting fraud, driven by tax-exempt Koch allies such as the Bradley Foundation, the Heritage Foundation and the Kochs’ own “Americans for Prosperity,” resulted in measures seeking to require official photo ID’s in 37 states. There is essentially zero evidence of such voter fraud.

The list is endless—and breathtaking in its sweep. But far more significant than any other accomplishment of the “Kochtopus” is the Supreme Court’s 5-4 Citizens United decision in January 2010.

In one fell swoop, the “Roberts Five”—all of whom swear undying fealty to following precedent—eviscerated over a century of campaign finance reform, thereby opening the doors to the tidal wave of money (much of it from secret donors) now drowning our electoral system.

The strategy and tactics that set the stage for the Citizens ruling was largely developed by a string of 501(c)4 “social welfare” tax-exempt groups that were part of the Koch network.

Still, for all its many victories in turning America’s elections into a cash bazaar, the Koch machine twice failed to win its biggest trophy of all—the Presidency of the United States—when Barack Obama scored decisive victories in 2008 and 2012.

Determined to learn how such setbacks could have occurred, the Kochs invested millions of dollars in intensive public opinion research. What they discovered was that while citizens may like the notion of smaller government and lower taxes in general, they reject the specific measures that are part of such a goal.

They learned that Americans are not as mean-spirited as they and their allies would have it. Most Americans, they found, support diversity, not intolerance. They support less money in politics, not more. They support environmental and public health protection. They support efforts to combat climate change. They oppose voter suppression.

But has this new knowledge of their fellow citizens led the Kochs to moderate some of their extremist goals? Ummm, no. What the Kochs decided instead is that all they need is an image makeover!

The “new” Kochs are now presenting Koch Industries—via an enormous national PR campaign featuring lavishly produced TV commercials—as humane, caring, socially responsible. Watch for it tonight on your local channel.

Learn more and take action at: foe.org/democracy

By Arlie Schardt, board chair, Friends of the Earth
NEW SCIENCE AND BIG PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT TO SAVE POLLINATORS

It’s been quite a season for Friends of the Earth’s BeeAction campaign. The efforts to protect bees, butterflies and other essential pollinators have bolstered a shift in the marketplace, state policy wins and the fight against corporate capture of our federal regulatory system.

The good news: The marketplace is shifting

Home Depot, one of the two largest home improvement retailers in the U.S., announced that it has removed neonicotinoid pesticides, a leading driver of global bee declines, from 80 percent of its flowering plants and will phase them out completely in plants by 2018. This announcement follows the hard work of bee activists across the country that made phone calls, delivered letters and showed up in front of Home Depot’s stores demanding change.

Home Depot’s shift is part of a larger change across the nursery industry. Greenhouse Grower’s 2016 “State of The Industry Survey” found that 64 percent of nursery growers are eliminating the use of neonicotinoids in production this year. This change is a testament to the power of bee activists fighting in their own communities for retailers to eliminate bee-harming chemicals.

Most recently, bee activists have been taking the fight to Ace Hardware and True Value. While both stores have said they are “willing” to follow the lead of Home Depot and more than 30 retailers across the country, they have yet to make a full commitment to remove plants and products from store shelves that contain neonicotinoid pesticides. Until they do, more than 33,000 Friends of the Earth members are vowing to take their business elsewhere.

The bad news: Too many birds, bees and butterflies face extinction

A new international report on pollinators, “Pollination” by United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) highlighted that more than 40 percent of invertebrate pollinators — wild bees and butterflies — and 16.5 percent of vertebrate pollinators — bats and birds — are facing extinction. This is alarming considering that three-fourths of the world’s food crops, including coffee, apples and chocolate, depend on these insects and animals for pollination. Native bees also contribute as much as $577 billion to global food crops.

Nature, one of the most prominent peer-reviewed science journals, also released a study saying monarch butterflies would need nearly a five-fold increase to return to safe levels. Why have they declined so much? According to Nature’s study, “Quasi-extinction risk and population targets for the Eastern, migratory population of monarch butterflies” glyphosate (aka Monsanto’s Roundup®) — the most widely used herbicide in the world is wiping out herbicide-resistant GMOs like milkweed, which monarchs rely on for food.
Federal inaction: States lead the way on pollinator protection

The Environmental Protection Agency released its preliminary assessment of the most widely used neonicotinoid, imidacloprid, in January and concluded that it poses a risk to honey bees. Despite its own analysis, public concern and mounting scientific evidence, the EPA has yet to take action to eliminate imidacloprid and other neonicotinoid products currently on the market.

Meanwhile, at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, federal scientists whose research calls into question the use of toxic pesticides like neonicotinoids and glyphosate are being censored. Friends of the Earth and allies called for a public and thorough investigation which the USDA agreed to do in February. A petition was created on behalf of more than 10 scientists that documented the censorship and harassment.

We saw a whopping surge of support as 140,393 Americans signed the petition urging the USDA to stop silencing its scientists and called for Catherine Woteki, the USDA Under Secretary who is ultimately responsible for overseeing the integrity of the agency’s research, to resign her post immediately.

Next, Friends of the Earth is taking the fight to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, which is responsible for ensuring that agencies like the USDA act in the public interest. The GAO has criticized the USDA and the EPA’s failure to implement measures to protect pollinators; now we need their support on scientific censorship. Already, more than 40,000 people have called on the GAO to launch an investigation.

In response to federal inaction, states are leading the charge to protect pollinators. This year, in part thanks to Friends of the Earth members and allies, Maryland passed the Pollinator Protection Act with bipartisan support in the state House and the Senate. This makes Maryland the first state in the country to pass a bill to eliminate the retail sales of all bee-killing neonicotinoid products and label plants pre-treated with them. The bill is on the Governor’s desk waiting for his signature. The passage of Maryland’s bill is a big victory for bees. Next, it’s vitally important that other states, the EPA and Congress follow the lead of Maryland by taking action to ban the use of these pesticides to protect bees, our food supply and the environment.

In the coming months Friends of the Earth and the bees need more people across the country to organize and build pressure for change in the marketplace and in their communities. Grassroots actions will help us push the EPA to do its job and restrict pollinator-toxic pesticides.

POLLINATOR PROTECTION POLICY

Join us by passing a pollinator protection policy in your community and encourage your local Ace and True Value garden retailers to commit to eliminating bee-killing pesticides.

KEEP THE HIVES ALIVE TOUR

Join the tour! From June 13 to 22 we’re collaborating with a number of beekeeping, environmental, food and farming groups to raise awareness about the plight of pollinators and how toxic pesticides contribute to their decline. The seven-city tour will occur right before and during National Pollinator week and end in Washington, D.C. to urge the EPA, the USDA and Congress to take action on toxic pesticides and support sustainable agriculture.

Tour goals include: (1) Use credible science and real beekeeper perspectives to highlight the role pesticides play in pollinator decline to counter misleading PR campaigns by pesticide companies like Bayer and Syngenta; (2) Give beekeepers a voice in the press and among policymakers; (3) Garner media coverage to put pressure on the EPA, the USDA and Congress to act; (4) and organize key constituencies and bring new groups into the movement to protect pollinators at the local, state and federal level.

Learn more and take action at: foe.org/beeaction

We hope each event can serve as a local organizing opportunity for folks to highlight local or state campaign victories as well as advance current policies and campaigns.
KEEP IT IN THE GROUND MOVEMENT

The Obama administration announced a moratorium on new coal mining while they conduct a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement of the federal coal leasing program on the environment; including climate change.

There has not been a comprehensive environmental review of the federal coal leasing program since 1979. Friends of the Earth filed suit, along with the Western Organization of Resource Councils, to compel the Department of Interior to conduct a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement of the coal leasing program in November 2014. In August 2015, the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia dismissed the litigation. Friends of the Earth and the Western Organization of Resource Councils appealed this dismissal in November 2015.

BEE-FRIENDLY BILL PASSED IN MARYLAND

Maryland led the fight to save the bees as the first state to eliminate consumer use of neonicotinoid pesticides. This is a major victory in the fight to protect pollinators, which may inspire other states and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to follow. Alaska, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Vermont and Virginia have introduced bills to restrict neonicotinoids.
A bipartisan group of senators voted in mid-March to block Sen. Pat Roberts’ (R-Kan.) legislation, dubbed the Deny Americans the Right to Know (DARK) Act, which would have prevented Vermont and other states from labeling genetically modified foods. The bill would have established a discriminatory and voluntary system reliant on QR codes, websites and toll-free numbers to disclose GMO content. A similar bill, which passed last year in the House of Representatives, took away states’ rights to label and regulate GMO crops. Our Food and Technology Program Director Lisa Archer responded to the news, “Friends of the Earth strongly supports mandatory GMO labeling and applauds the senators who stood against the DARK Act, an undemocratic and desperate attempt by junk food and chemical corporations to keep Americans in the dark about what we feed our families.”

In-N-Out Burger publicly announced in late February that it is committed to serving “beef that is not raised with antibiotics important to human medicine.” The fast food chain made the statement in response to a Reuters reporter’s question regarding a letter by more than 50 public interest groups, including Friends of the Earth, pressing the company to stop serving beef raised with routine antibiotics. The coalition followed up with a letter that asked the company to clarify its antibiotics policy by publishing it on their website, including a clear timeline with key benchmarks for progress. They also asked In-N-Out to adopt a third-party audit to independently verify that the company is making progress toward phasing out routine antibiotics use from its meat supply chain.
A generation is entering the climate change fight. They bring fresh ideas and energy to continue the battle against climate change deniers and bad climate policy, and are approaching solutions in new ways. They are employing new and old technologies with a perspective that connects the various dots of our issue focuses. Not only do they understand that pollution, environmental degradation, social injustices, corporate power and money in politics are the driving factors that continue to fund climate change denier politics, they believe that climate change is real and caused by humans. Who are these new players with the environment at the forefront of their minds and lives? Millennials.

We spoke with a few millennials who are figuring out how to address and educate others about the serious impact climate change is having on our present and future generations.

Adam Levy is a scientist and reporter for the peer-reviewed science journal Nature. He has a doctorate in atmospheric physics from the University of Oxford and has created a YouTube personality who breaks down climate change in humorous and accessible ways, aka ClimateAdam. ClimateAdam is mischievous, a little lacking in self-awareness and crucially funny. Talking with Adam about climate change and his alter ego he says,

“Climate change is a huge hurdle for humanity, but it’s also an incredible opportunity. Never before have we been presented with such a genuinely global threat, that we have such fantastic tools to overcome. Although it can seem insurmountable, we know now that the solutions are in fact already available.

My YouTube channel is all about making this huge, complex and often an alienating problem more relatable. I hope to communicate key issues about climate change in a way that reaches and engages diverse groups of people. Hopefully this can help motivate more action on climate change.”

When we asked Adam whether he’s more optimistic or pessimistic that we as a global society will do what’s necessary to prevent the worst effects of climate change, he said that his isms fluctuate daily.

“We have left things very late, and it’s hard to see how our behaviour at the moment can limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, or even 2 degrees. But at the same time, there have been developments that have given me huge hope. I never thought I’d see a global climate deal, and certainly not one that aimed for 1.5 degrees. And I didn’t think I’d see global emissions stall while economies continued to grow. These are encouraging signs, but they’re just the first tiny steps. We need to keep working to make sure the journey continues.”
Devi Lockwood is a poet, touring cyclist and storyteller who is traveling the world by bicycle and boat to collect 1,001 stories about water and climate change from people she encounters. When she thinks about climate change and the role she sees for herself, she recalls the places she has been and the friends she has made:

“When I think of climate change, I think of Tuvalu. In this Pacific island nation of 11,600 citizens, the highest point is only 4 meters above sea level. The seas have been rising at a steady rate of 4 millimeters per year since the Australian government started monitoring the main wharf in Funafuti in 1993. In the event that Tuvalu disappears underwater, New Zealand has agreed to accept the country’s citizens. A number of Tuvaluans have already moved to New Zealand; not just immigrants, they are “climate refugees.”

She also thinks about her Tuvaluan friends, Losite and Alofanga and Angie and Susey, and wonders “[w]hat will become of their home in the years to come?

When I think about climate change, I think about how the personal is political is ecological. We are all connected.”

Social change doesn’t happen in an instant. Attitudes shift slowly. How do we know if a protest is ‘successful’? Progress is cumulative. Movements inspire movements. Social change inspires further social change. I wish you had asked: what movements inspire me and give me hope? The answer: #BlackLivesMatter.”

Antonia Sohns is a water-energy analyst and consultant for the Thirsty Energy initiative at the World Bank who has an MSc in Water Science, Policy and Management from the University of Oxford. She graduated from Stanford University in June 2010 with a B.S. in Earth Systems, Oceans track. Occasionally, she also writes blogs at Friends of the Earth for our Oceans and Vessels program. When it comes to the scope, the impact and opportunities of climate change, here’s what Antonia had to say:

“Climate change will challenge all regions in different ways. For example, some will be faced with more flooding while others struggle with drought. Countries with more resources will be able to prepare for anticipated extremes far better than those nations that don’t have the same fiscal and institutional resources. The most vulnerable people will therefore be the most affected by the impacts of a changing climate.”

Antonia sees her role in addressing the many issues of climate change as that of a journalist. She “hope[s] to help those communities prepare for more variable climatic conditions through planning, and in reporting on their situation so policies may reflect the realities already happening on the ground.”

Considering people like Naomi Klein, Pope Francis, Bernie Sanders and others have said that to truly fight climate change, we must also address: inequality, democracy, our global energy economy, etc. Antonia agrees that in order to address climate change we must tackle these issues and ensure a more stable global energy economy. She sees these issues as interconnected and offers this solution: “By increasing participation in government and decreasing inequality, efforts to combat climate change will be made stronger.”

“By increasing participation in government and decreasing inequality, efforts to combat climate change will be made stronger.”
As a lover of storytelling and the human experience, Theo Constantinou founded Paradigm Magazine. Paradigm seeks to record and share a living history of the human experience, highlight the diverse perspectives that shape our world and emphasize connection above contrast. Recently, Theo traveled to Bahia El Torito, near Ushuaia, in Argentina to work on a reforestation project.

Theo shared his thoughts on climate change, the scope and impact, and he feels that it “may now be beyond our reach.” He is also deeply concerned about how the Antarctic ice sheet and Greenland glacier melts will and are forcing “citizens located in major cities near water...to become climate change refugees. It seems as though world leaders are already having a difficult time handling the current refugee crisis which is only a fraction of that potential displacement of peoples.” He is also concerned and “fears that those individuals who maintain power and control the world’s energy do not wish to relinquish this lucrative exploitation...corporations need to stop influencing politicians and leaders with money that maximizes their profit [which] doesn’t take into account the toll it has on our environment and people.”

Even though correction seems nigh, he still has hope through action to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. He offers a few solutions to combat this pervasive threat:

“We must work together as nations to find sustainable energy solutions and as individuals to minimize our energy consumption.”

“Communicating environmental messages to those I encounter and how they can start being active members in a global ‘fight’ against climate change by implementing...small disciplines into their lives is also essential.

He also suggests locally educating young people and for all to consider future generations by changing our own behaviors:

“For anything to take long-term shape there needs to be a critical mass of people changing their immediate habits that have a negative impact on the planet. It can be done, time is against us but we must persist and lead with our actions.”

From their individual endeavors and their collective motivation to fight climate change in creative ways, it’s apparent that the torch of environmental activism is being carried by the nation’s youth. Whether talking with Adam, Antonia, Devi or Theo, we gather that they all know in their bones what Theo eloquently shared during his interview: that “it is imperative as millennials that we not only address climate change but also implement long-term solutions to old systems that need to be broken.”
Friends of the Earth will host its annual meeting of the membership on Thursday, June 9, at 2:30 pm in the Washington, D.C. office.

Chris Pabon is running uncontested for one slot on the Friends of the Earth Board of Directors. Members may cast votes at the annual meeting. Additionally, members may vote by proxy ballot. To do so, copy or clip the mailing label from this newsmagazine and mail your vote to the address below or fax to (202) 783-0444.

Board Election
Friends of the Earth
1101 15th Street, NW
11th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

If you would like to attend the membership meeting please contact Julie Dyer at jdyer@foe.org or by phone at (202) 222-0714.

Chris Pabon

From the Great Smokey Mountains to the peaks of the Andes and from the waters of Seattle’s Puget Sound to the banks of the River Rhine, Chris Pabon has both witnessed the beauty of nature and the terrible sadness when it is despoiled in the name of Wall Street profits. Chris is an accomplished fundraiser, having raised millions of dollars from individuals and institutions over a two-decade span of working in Washington. Ten of those years were spent at Friends of the Earth raising money for many of its programs which back then were in their infancy. He remains the longest tenured fundraiser to serve in the national headquarters. He currently serves as the Development Director for the Project On Government Oversight. In 2013, Chris returned to Friends of the Earth to serve on its Board to once again bring his expertise to benefit the organization that has been a large part of his life. In addition to being a frequent traveler, Chris speaks Spanish fluently and some basic German. He is an advocate for renewable energy and for mass transportation.

Friends of the Earth Action will host its annual meeting of the membership on Thursday, June 9, at 2:45 pm in the Washington, D.C. office.

Brent Blackwelder is running uncontested for one slot on the Friends of the Earth Action’s Board of Directors. Members may cast votes at the annual meeting. Additionally, members may vote by proxy ballot. To do so, copy or clip the mailing label from this newsmagazine and mail your vote to the address below or fax to (202) 783-0444.

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If you would like to attend the membership meeting please contact Julie Dyer at jdyer@foe.org or by phone at (202) 222-0714.

Brent Blackwelder

Brent was most recently president of Friends of the Earth from 1994 to 2009. In his 40-plus years of environmental advocacy he has been active in campaigns to reform foreign aid, save forests, protect rivers and advance human rights. He was an architect of significant legislation to protect natural resources and clean up pollution. Brent helped expand the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System from eight rivers in 1973 to more than 250 today. He also helped eliminate more than 200 dams and stream dredging projects, which would have destroyed rivers, wetlands, wildlife and areas of significant scientific value. He is the founding chairman of American Rivers, one of the founders of the Environmental Policy Center and Environmental Policy Institute, and was the chairman of the board of directors of the League of Conservation Voters. Brent holds a bachelor’s degree from Duke University, a master’s from Yale University in mathematics and a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Maryland.
Thousands of Americans mobilized in Washington, D.C. to reclaim our democracy as part of the weeklong Democracy Spring, and subsequent Democracy Awakening demonstrations. All the events sent an unapologetic message to Congress: the people will not stand by while our democracy is sold to the highest bidder, and the rights of individual citizens go ignored.

Every day began with rousing speakers, political discussions and reunions which gave way to a rally and march along Delaware Avenue to the U.S. Capitol. Some 50,000 people from as far as Alaska, California, North Carolina and Ohio participated throughout the events, including more than 1,400 who were arrested.

Beyond the traditional activists, the crowds were composed of families wheeling small children in strollers and shielding them from the midday sun; grandmothers sporting black T-shirts which read, “unarmed civilian;” WWII-era Veterans for Peace and many young people barely old enough to vote. The issue of who controls our democracy has united members of the environmental, religious, political, human rights, business, advocacy, civil rights and other communities who understand how their respective issues are connected and exacerbated by the outsized influence of money in politics.

Who inspires us? The thousands of people who acted upon their convictions and lent their voices and bodies on behalf of all Americans. Even more inspiring than their chants about widespread voter suppression and the corporate interests that pollute our democracy, was the strength of their belief in the intrinsic rights and duties of a participatory democracy. Each of these people inspire Friends of the Earth’s staff and its work.
Emerging sustainability frameworks

Friends of the Earth launched the new report series, “Emerging Sustainability Frameworks,” which looks at how new development banks in China and Brazil are redefining the landscape of international development and sustainable finance.

As the global economy evolves, development finance is increasingly provided from banks in the developing countries themselves. In particular, China Development Bank, China Export-Import Bank, and the Brazilian Development Bank, or BNDES, have emerged as major players in influencing where and how development finance is allocated.

Learn more: www.foe.org/sustainable-finance

Good food now

Friends of the Earth is partnering with environmental, worker justice, human health and animal welfare organizations in a historic campaign to ask the nation’s largest restaurant company — Darden: owner of Olive Garden and other popular chains — to improve its labor practices and sustainability by committing to five Good Food Principles.

Why Darden? Through its popular restaurant chains, the company employs 150,000 people and serves more than 320 million meals a year, making Darden Restaurants our nation’s leading casual dining operator and a major influence on our food system.

Learn more: www.good-food-now.org

Up in smoke

Friends of the Earth released, “Up in Smoke: Failures in Wilmar’s promise to clean up the palm oil business,” which reveals how the conditions created by global palm oil companies Bumitama Agri and Wilmar International have allowed devastating forest fires to burn out of control in Indonesia.

"Up in Smoke" examines five plantations owned by the two companies in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia and shows that, despite both companies adopting high-profile policies prohibiting burning, deforestation and exploitation of peat lands, their operations have flouted national laws and their own sustainability policies by draining, developing and ultimately destroying high-carbon peat lands. Learn more: www.foe.org/UpInSmoke

Extreme genetic engineering

Recent research in genetic engineering and synthetic biology has enabled scientists to artificially redesign life. Although currently limited to microbes, the speed of government oversight can’t keep up with the rapid pace of genetic engineering and synthetic biology development. This report examines the health, regulatory, social and ethical questions about proposals ranging from genetically altering human gut bacteria to altering human embryos and reproductive cells to produce permanent, hereditary genetic modification of future children and generations. It also examines the systemic and commercial incentives to rush newly discovered biotechnologies to market, regardless of any social utility, and ahead of appropriate, transparent assessment and oversight. Learn more: www.foe.org/human-engineering