

Selections from  
Spirit Rising:  
Young Quaker  
**Voices**



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## INTRODUCTION

These pieces are reprinted from *Spirit Rising*, a publication of Quakers Uniting in Publications (QUIP), which came out in 2010 (ISBN 978-1-888305-86-9). Its aim was to gather the voices of teenage and young adult Friends, ranging in age from 19 to 35, from around the world and across the theological branches of Friends. The submissions were gathered by an editorial board of young adult Friends from Bolivia, Canada, Kenya, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. For more information about QUIP, contact the organization at [www.quakerquip.org](http://www.quakerquip.org)

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I recently came back from a Quaker Leadership Program trip to Las Cañadas Ecovillage in Mexico, where I spent a week eating food grown within a ten-minute walk of where I slept at night, washing my hands and my dishes with captured rainwater, and using composting toilets. My traveling companions were the other members of a work crew that had come to Las Cañadas to learn how this piece of land went from being a cloud forest to a cattle ranch, and how it is slowly becoming a cloud forest again.

During the days we worked in the fields with Don Adán, a toothless, sun-worn *campesino* with twinkling eyes and a ready laugh. I wondered how we must have appeared to him, this group of relatively affluent North Americans who traveled to southern Mexico to work with our hands and our bodies in the hot sun. What did Don Adán make of our eagerness to spread sheep manure compost over a field of corn and beans? We sang as we shoveled, and I thought about Don Adán and me, about the nature of work, and about what my college educations (both of them) have prepared me for in life.

My trip pulled into very sharp focus a question that has been on my mind in one form or another for the whole of this past year. *How shall I live?*

It is a very simple question, so simple as to be totally overwhelming. I am in the thrilling and terrifying position of being able to approach this question with openness and sincerity, with a field of possible answers that is nearly limitless.

That the question of how to live is so prominent in my life feels like the culmination of several years of building awareness. Along with many other people, I have recently become painfully aware of how dependent I am for my very existence on distant lands and distant people, and of how poorly my values are

expressed through the relationships that sustain me. As for many others, this journey started for me with an awareness of how far most of our food travels to get to us and of how ecologically and socially destructive conventional agricultural practices are in many parts of the world. Several years ago, I began to make an effort to buy more of my food from local growers who use agricultural methods that are more in line with my values. Last year I planted my own garden. This year, as the prices of food and other commodities have steadily risen, I have watched my choices move increasingly into the mainstream.

Yogis like to talk about the pain that comes with the moment of realization that one is not living up to one's potential as a human being. This awareness necessarily precedes any positive change, but it is painful nonetheless. For me, the awareness of where my food comes from led to a whole series of other painful realizations about how my basic needs are met and about how little control or even knowledge I have with respect to these things. In thinking about how to live, I have been actively searching for communities that have achieved at least some autonomy with respect to their food supply, their water supply, their energy supply, and the treatment of their waste. It is this search that brought me to southern Mexico, to a cloud forest turned cattle ranch turned agricultural cooperative.

Now, as I contemplate this question of how to live, of how to move from painful awareness to real change, I feel that my heart is being pulled in two directions. On the one hand, I am a thoroughly urban person. I love being able to walk, ride my bike, and take public transportation to every place I need to go. I love corner markets and corner bars. I love neighborhoods and dog parks and community gardens. I love salsa clubs and coffee shops and twenty-four-hour diners. I am also convinced that if our species is to have a future on this planet, we must find a way to make cities work, since over half the world's population now

lives in them.

On the other hand, I love the great outdoors. I love walking through woods, swimming in lakes, working in the sun. I love quiet. I love stars. In a rural area it seems possible that I might find or help create a community that handles its own food, water, energy, and waste needs; whereas in a city, this task is so daunting as to feel nearly impossible. I loved being at Las Cañadas, and yet, as much as I respect and admire the life in which I was immersed there, I can't shake the feeling that the question of how I myself shall live has an entirely different answer from the one that is expressed there.

I am searching for a lived praxis, a way of being in the world that reflects my values. I might call myself an environmentalist, but most environmental rhetoric feels hollow to me. My environmentalism is spiritual. It is based on the four Quaker pillars of Simplicity, Integrity, Peace, and Inner Light, not on a belief in Progress or a deep and abiding faith in Technology. Furthermore, I don't believe we can protect nature without protecting each other. My environmentalism is a search for the Good Life, a life of abundance and joy that requires exploitation of neither people nor planet. I suspect that my search will be a lifelong endeavor.

This piece previously appeared on the author's blog, [wanderphilia.blogspot.com](http://wanderphilia.blogspot.com)

CARING FOR NATURE  
BY BOKYOM JIN

Before I became a Friend, I was ignorant of living with nature. I'm still not good at making friends with nature but trying to be a good friend to her. The friends I have met are people of nature. They love and take care of nature. I can't forget the beauty of my Friends' beautiful gardens. Quakers might have known that nature heals human beings.

My husband and I live in a semi-country neighborhood. We moved here from a noisy city recently. Trees, water, birds, various plants, fish, stars, and the moon. We bow to them when we encounter them to show our respect for them. Busy life snatches our right to live peacefully. At our wedding, we promised to balance between work and rest and take care of the earth through a simple life. I realized that there are many ways to help heal the earth. Nature heals us while we human beings hurt her. As I'm connected with my Quaker friends all over the world, I'm united with nature because I'm part of her. True religion leads to respect for the earth and all life upon it.

This excerpt is from a longer essay, "Living as a Friend in Korea."

TO BE FRIENDS WITH ANIMALS  
BY ANDREAS HERNANDER BRAND

*A spark from the One  
In every creature.  
You give us of your self,  
All of us, without exception.  
Give us likewise of your peace.*

A concern that I have carried and been engaged with as a Quaker is care for our fellow creatures. Creation and nature also lay near my heart, but this text will focus on animals.

We Quakers say that God's Light is in every person. It's no great leap to think that the spark of God's essence or the inner Christ can also be found in other creatures. Maybe it can be found in all living things, or at least in all conscious life. Personally, it's hard for me to believe that only people have this inner spark. I believe that both humans and animals are shaped by God's hand and that we received the inner spark when God blew his spirit into us and gave us life.

Is there a difference between the inner Light of humans and that of animals? I believe that they are identical in their essence, but can vary in their function. I believe that animals didn't break their close relation to God in the Garden of Eden, as humans did, so the animals live in harmony with their inner godliness and so live morally. People, on the other hand, have turned from God and don't live in the same constant accord with the inner Light, but yearn to. Thus, the Light acts as a guide to community with God and to what is right and wrong. Even though people and animals have a spark of God's essence we are not the same as God. Only a part of us is in God's image. Otherwise we are different than God— God is much more than that essence and transcends it. I don't intend to argue tediously

about whether humans or animals are nearer God, just that we have a small piece of the Great One.

*Hear, Oh God,  
Care for my suffering siblings,  
Animals in nature and animals in captivity.  
Help us people to see the consequences of our behavior.  
Help animals to endure and to be freed.*

As a pacifist, I want to avoid violence against a person because that would cause violence to God himself, that piece of God in the person. If animals also have that inner Light, our pacifism must extend to include animals. It follows that we don't have the right to kill them with intent—to eat them, to wear their skin, or to use them for research. Naturally I feel that way because I'm interested in minimizing animal suffering that comes from large-scale animal husbandry, but also because of the religious reason that I don't want to harm my fellow creatures that have Christ's Light. There are many links between my commitment to animals and my commitment to nature. One is that by not eating my fellow creatures I preserve God's nature; that preserves natural resources for producing the animals' own food.

It seems important for Quakers to attempt to practice a Christlike life, to try to live as He taught. Jesus broke many of the norms of his time; among others, He expanded the idea of "our neighbors" to include not just our own family or ethnic group, but also the stranger and "least of us." Who is the "least" and stranger that we should see as our neighbor? Yes, not just children and the poor—animals are also a good example. They are relatively powerless against people and cannot make their voices heard when we oppress them—who will take care of God's "least" creatures, our neighbors, in their oppression if not I who follow Jesus and am Quaker?

*Highest on Earth,  
lowest in heaven—,  
we humans.  
Lowest on earth,  
highest in heaven—  
you sparrows.  
First on earth,  
last in heaven—  
my people.  
Last on earth,  
first in heaven—  
my sparrows.*

But what about the fact that they ate meat in the Bible? Even if the Holy Spirit is an important authority for me as a Quaker, so is the Bible. I think two things about the Bible on this subject. Before the fall from grace, Adam and Eve lived in harmony with the animals as vegetarians in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve in the first book of Moses: "I give you all of the fruit-bearing plants of the earth and all trees for their fruit, that you may eat from them." This relationship with animals and their food is an ideal that we should try to return to; it was the original balance of creation. As a Quaker, I am not satisfied to just believe in that; I must work toward it in my own life. I believe that even though the Bible speaks of other uses for animals during the time it was being written, the Holy Spirit inspires me to behave differently today. Possibly God finds it more important to lead us today to care for the animals than it was during biblical times. There are, after all, many more human stomachs to fill today than there were then with the population growth, and moreover animal husbandry is now done on a large scale. Those factors make it more important to not eat animals today than in biblical times. Today's animal production leads to

much more animal suffering than in the past.

*Bee, horse and shepherd—  
We are Your children,  
Jesus friend,  
each other's siblings,  
different but the same,  
equally loved in Your eyes.*

I'm glad that I'm not the first and only Quaker who is concerned about animals. On the contrary, this concern is broader in the Quaker community than in many other Christian communities. In the seventeenth century, Quakers had John Woolman, who preached that we should show mercy rather than cruelty to animals. He himself avoided using a whip to hurry horses. I'm proud to find myself in the same tradition as such a pioneer. Even if many Quakers, then and now, have been role models in their concern for animal welfare, there is still more work to do in the community. A concern for animals is still behind more classic Quaker ideas like the Peace Testimony. But, of course, there's no reason why we can't be engaged on several issues; the only constraint could be a lack of time. I would like to see the animal-rights issue move from the periphery to the front of the agenda. The fact that I'm grateful to see it on the agenda at all is something that needs to change. Thoughtfulness about animals must become Quakerly through seeing what ideas the inner Light finds for consequences.

Slavery didn't end overnight with Quakers, though they were pioneers in that realm. Aren't there enough webs now that we no longer need animal-derived food on our dinner tables and at our communal meals? And not just, like today, as an alternative to vegetarian food? Apart from vegetarian eating, there are many other issues around animal welfare that

the Quaker community should work on more actively. Today there are projects in many lands for building schools and peace, and easing poverty. I would like to see more projects that deal with improving use of animals for transportation, ban farms where people misuse animals and projects for preserving biological diversity. When we collect money and support other organizations' projects, we can work with humanitarian organizations like Djurskyddet Sverige, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (RSPCA), and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Working for human rights can expand to include work for animal's rights.

*Love me, Christ,  
as you love the animals.*

What can Quakers and others who share my concern for animal welfare do? One important thing to emphasize is that I as a Quaker want to work in a peace tradition with these questions. That means that I won't use force or threats against people to reach my goals. With love and activism, I'll spread my message. Those who contribute to the oppression of animals are not my enemies but individuals who deserve respect even if I don't sympathize with their behavior.

I'll write letters to the editor [of newspapers] for the sake of animals. It's hard to know how much impact those letters have, but that's an easy way to work on behalf of animals. Furthermore, it's easy to be involved broadly on behalf of animal welfare issues—from circuses to animal research. Something that is also hard to measure in terms of impact is street demonstrations. When I began to work on behalf of animals, I went to many demonstrations on the street and at mink farms, but today I prefer more religiously grounded methods. For example, I participated in a Christmas prayer

action with likeminded friends outside a slaughterhouse. Around Christmastime we prayed for animals at the slaughterhouse and lit candles—which wasn't completely without media attention, a nice secondary effect. I hold readings on eco- and animal-rights theology in various halls and, as a devotion, I usually pray that animals' sufferings should be eased.

*Let the inner Light  
that is in all creatures  
light up  
and help us understand  
that the Light is in us all.*

When, as a teenager, I began to have a concern for animals, it was primarily a philosophical and secular cause but, with time, it became more religiously motivated, motivated by a great love for animals. I believe that it is important that one's activism is not just based in practical convictions that peoples' use of animals is wrong. I believe that activism connected with God and love of creation leads to an activism that reaches to our innermost depths. The protection of animals must go hand in hand with the desire to follow God's will and with wonder over his creation.

Since I met my wife, Louise, who is a zoologist with a focus on animal welfare and a great love of animals, I've gotten better grounding for my work. From having been an engaged city-dweller, I now live out in the country with nature and have many animals in the yard. Living near animals and nature leads to a natural fellowship with them toward a deeply satisfying plan. The more I live in harmony with God's creation, the more I feel a mission to protect them.

*Your creation  
Is connected with you,  
Is connected with each other,  
Is connected with the beginning and the end.  
Never separated from you,  
not the greatest and also not the least.  
Your creation*

Translated from the Swedish by Kori Heavner

Three of the prayers used above were published in *Alla Varelser Ropar till dig: en djurvänlig bönbok* (*All the creatures are calling to you: an animal friendly book of prayer*), edited by Annika Spalde and Tobias Herrström, 2008.

REFLECTIONS ON A QUAKER CHILDHOOD  
BY LIV HENRY

I eat leaves. Onlookers have been disturbed by the six-foot-two giant of a girl swooping down to pluck at the undergrowth with a casualness usually reserved for nose-picking or public spitting. In childhood, I came to know the subtle scents of the plants, their secret names, and through a perilous process of trial and error, which were good to eat. And eat I did, gorging myself on sultry hibiscus, indulging to excess in sweet lippia leaves, growing fat on the natural knowledge I gained with each discovery.

This natural knowledge was the basis of my childhood, an odd kind of youth of perpetual bare feet, bedtime stories from *National Geographic*, and tofu substitutes for every possible food. During the sullen summer months, I steeped in the swimming hole of Bull Run Creek instead of the chemical marinade of a conventional pool, whose chlorine depths were disappointingly free of beavers and water snakes. My frantic escapes from harassed wildlife provided more entertainment than any inflatable toy. Delivering lambs in the spring was more delightfully gory than any television show, and the bouncy newborns were more endearing than their static, stuffed imitations. Getting lost in the rollicking Blue Ridge foothills was encouraged, just as bee stings were celebrated as character building.

Left to my own juvenile devices in a vast organic playground, I discovered a necessity of self-reliance that did not exist in society: the world of prowling teachers, suspicious nurses, and attentive mothers. Alone but not without resources, my blossoming cuts were treated with the clear gelatin of jewel weed and then bound with stachys leaves, while clothes ripped in play were pinned with hawthorn spikes. Far from watchful eyes, my

ten-foot fall from a rickety hunter's nest had to be dealt with in painful, bloody isolation.

There is something about the American South that nurtures legend, that cradles, spans, and slaps it into infamy, and in such a tradition the fame of Randy Peyton's herd was born. Rumored to have three of the most unpredictably violent bulls in the county, the herd overwintered on Suicide Hill, prime sledding territory for reckless tobogganers such as me. Confident that no temperamental cows would harass a person of my backwoods skill, I had barely entered the pasture when I was deftly surrounded by a ring of meaty Anguses out for blood. Inspired by a recent infatuation with Jack London, I dove to the ground and packed snow in an arc above my head, burrowing an icy, camouflaged cocoon. The cattle remained still, motionless menaces. It was a charged standoff, my personal Cold War. A little past nightfall, the herd, bored with their fruitless vigil, moved on. Erupting from my wintery stronghold, I galloped home, frozen and utterly humbled. This benign rebuke of my childish hubris inspired in me a profound humility.

The authority of Mother Nature over her human children was a lesson thoroughly instilled in me by a band of murderous cows, by a provoked wasp horde, by a ruthless river current. But what I learned and understood in childhood is still unrecognized and disregarded by the vast majority of adults, who fill the wetlands and wonder why floodwaters ravage their homes, who poison the air and lament their diagnosis of lung cancer, who sit prostrate in front of the television like piglets suckling from a sow. It is this breed of adult that triggered in me a Peter Pan like dread of growing up.

Eighteen now, and confronting this looming threat of adulthood, I try to maintain my girlhood habits, my simple wonder at life. But the battering ram of "progress" makes casualties of so many wild, free things, tempting my spirit



toward cynicism and despair, for the forces of industry and vice have felled so much that cannot be resurrected. However, with this new and strange maturity comes a snapping, striving sense of purpose that holds me hostage with its urgency, refusing me sleep, hunger, and peace. The need to protect wilderness is all-consuming and undeniable, like I am but an instrument of some greater design. Life and living things are so much more precious to me now because I understand their capacity to be lost. I am all too eager to fashion a new world, a better world, in which no child is taught that it is dirty to eat leaves.

BIRD SHADOWS  
BY L. CALLID KEEFE-PERRY

My God is the god in the next room,  
cooking unseen feasts and humming;

the ache of the moment before the rain  
when you're sure the whole June  
cloud is ready to burst through  
though you haven't felt a single drop;

the photographer's ironic smile  
after her darkroom discovery  
that in the background of a misfire  
she has captured two lovers gazing  
longingly at each other's meals;

the dandelion blade that insists  
adamantly that it must reside directly  
in the middle of your neighbor's  
blacktopped suburban driveway;

the sight of the shadow of a bird flitting  
by the sill near the bed of an aging Grace,  
who can no longer move but counts herself  
lucky because at least she can still see.

This is my God:

expectant and grinning

wild and near.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Laurie Picard, a member of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, is a Peace Corps Volunteer in the agriculture program in Nicaragua.

Bokyom Jin is a member of Seoul Meeting. She works for children, teenagers and their parents as a therapist studying psychology at a graduate school. She and her husband, Sunghun Han, recently adopted a three-year-old daughter, Jinhee. The family have attended Daegu worship group since they moved from Seoul.

Andreas Hernander Brand, a member of Sweden Yearly Meeting, is a Christian Quaker and works as a teacher in religion and philosophy.

Liv Henry, a recent graduate of George School, is currently an Environmental Journalism major at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. She is a member of Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

L. Callid Keefe-Perry travels in the ministry under a minute endorsed by New York Yearly Meeting. He gives great acknowledgment to the power that language has to transform lives and dreams. At various times he identifies himself as a storyteller, minister, and poet. Occupationally he is a public school teacher; vocationally he is interested in theopoetics and the practices of early Friends, including issues of transformative discipline within monthly meetings.

Marie-Helene Drouin is a member of Derby Local Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting.

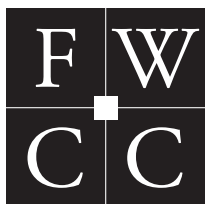
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## QUERIES

Following are some queries about the text, which you may wish to use for reflection or study, individually or with others.

1. How did your childhood affect your relationship with nature?
  2. Do you consider animals as among the least of God's creatures?
  3. How have you changed your life in response to ecological concerns?
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Friends World Committee  
for Consultation

SECTION OF THE AMERICAS

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## ABOUT THE WIDER QUAKER FELLOWSHIP

The Wider Quaker Fellowship is a program of Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas. Through our mailings we seek to lift up voices of Friends of different countries, languages, cultures and Quaker traditions, and invite all to enter into spiritual community with Friends.

The Fellowship was founded in 1936 by Rufus M. Jones, a North American Quaker teacher, activist and mystic, as a way for like-minded people who were interested in Quaker beliefs and practices to stay in contact with the Religious Society of Friends, while maintaining their own religious affiliation, if any. Today, WQF Fellows live in over 90 countries, and include non-Friends, inquirers, Quakers living in isolated circumstances, and active members and attenders of Friends meetings and churches. Wider Quaker Fellowship depends on the financial support of its readers to provide this service.

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