Four Snapshots from the March

Mary Gilbert
Snapshot 1:

Patti Muldoon and I are kneeling on the floor working on a blue cloth rectangle, painting in the letters
on the banner we designed: "QUAKER WITNESS." It should be useful for many events, not just the People’s Climate March. The paint is three-dimensional, "pearl" in color, and really gleams. It’s hard to manage, like icing that’s too watery to spread on a cake, so you get two low ridges with the cake showing through. We carry on courageously.

Snapshot 2:

I’m tired from being a greeter ("Hello. Can I help you find your faith group?") and am upstairs taking a break in a mall between 58th and 59th Streets. A window wall looks down on Columbus Circle. The faith group block won’t be moving for over an hour, but the March has begun! Fat feeder lines are coming into the Circle, filling the streets. It looks like a huge anaconda coiling sinuously around the Circle and oozing along Central Park South.

Snapshot 3:

The 10,000 of us who filled the assigned block for faith groups have finally started to move. I catch up to walk with people from QEW and with those from my Monthly and Yearly Meetings. The different faith groups are all mixed up together because some are walking faster than others. There is a message there: We really are one group. We may use different words but we are actually in unity on this March.

Snapshot 4:

In the evening my NYC hostess and I check a city channel for news coverage. They show one quick shot of our parade; then one shot of a NY State dignitary ending a speech. Standing next to him was Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, who walked with us. The reporter did not identify Mr. Ban. In the rest of the video we see the reporter standing on 11th Avenue, which runs through an industrial area near the Hudson River. Behind him a few people are wandering around and the “takedown” of various booths is going on. He says the marchers “filled 11th Avenue.” There was no estimate of our numbers or comment on how long it took the March to pass any particular spot. The station had apparently chosen to minimize the event. Infuriating! The next morning the New York Times gave a much more accurate report. But REALLY!

The March is over. Now we begin the real work.