FROM MY PERSPECTIVE as a climate journalist and activist, the ascension of an outright climate denialist as the President, with cabinet choices of a half-dozen more, completes the campaign of disinformation mounted by the fossil fuel industry, aided and abetted by virtually the entire Republican Party. The rest of the world stands in absolute disbelief that the world’s leading power, with a strong postwar history of helping the recovery of defeated nations and development of the Third World, has turned its back on the future of civilized order on this planet.

The tragic irony is that this is occurring after a reluctant U.S. finally was party to a successful climate accord in Paris in December 2015, the culmination of decades of agonizing diplomacy. Trump appears to be preparing the way for pulling out of the Paris Accord. Legal experts point out that doing so formally would require almost an entire presidential term. But prominent among the executive orders from his Gatling-pen is a wholesale attack on government scientists, with gag orders issued for all agencies. His leaked memo about dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency may simply be rumination, but he has fulfilled virtually every promise, a feat even the best of politicians could not match. The U.S. has the best tools for data collection and analysis in the world (NOAA, NASA, DOE, EPA), and these tools are being mothballed by executive order. As one government scientist put it with respect to climate data, “We are flying blind.”

So what can we do? The purpose of shock and awe is to make such a gargantuan show of force that the opposition is overwhelmed and collapses. That has not happened, and I don’t think it will. The Women’s March was one of the largest marches ever, with simultaneous marches all over the country, in Canada, and abroad. The attenders I talked to said they were so crammed that marching was not possible; everyone was smushed together, inching along, or marching in place. The overall estimate of three to four million marchers across the country definitely sends a message. But the Trump Resistance involves much more than a one-off day of marching.

Before the election, a retired pacifist Baptist preacher, Mahan Siler, wrote an op-ed for the Asheville Citizen-Times, inviting readers to join his passion: working for social and ecological justice. One person responded. After the election, dozens have joined Mahan and Steve Kagan, the founding pair
of Elders Fierce for Justice, now deep into strategizing a series of actions joining elders and Millenials. Some of these actions will involve civil disobedience.

After taking my cues from 350.org for many years, I now plan to join this vibrant regional group as they move from planning into action. I was with Mahan in the 2013 March for Our Grandchildren, which went from Camp David to the White House over nine days. At 77, he was the oldest member of the group, and his granddaughter Leigh (11), the youngest. At the rally’s finale in Lincoln Park, Mahan was the most eloquent speaker, orchestrating a rainbow bridge of those over 65 with the youngest marchers to create a visual icon of the most important political alliance of our day, between Boomers and Millenials. He called this symbolic bridge the real Keystone, urging us to “take the word back.”

The surge of activism that I observe all around me contains more newbies than veterans. Here in my North Carolina conservative mountain county, many collaborative, overlapping groups have sprung up. I am a co-sponsor of Surviving Climate Change, one of the largest. We focus on making a strong, highly-networked community even more resilient. But as one person said at our first meeting, we still need to work on ways to not only adapt, but mitigate the problem, which means getting rid of Trump and his anti-environmental agenda.

The most focused response to the Trump Coup has come from Indivisible Yancey-Mitchell, with groups in Burnsville, South Toe, and Spruce Pine. *Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda* is a sophisticated, highly organized plan for emulating the Tea Party strategy that emerged out of revulsion to Obama’s election. Congressional staffers who understand how things work in Washington wrote it, with the whole strategy focused upon pressuring Members of Congress in every possible district as relentlessly as possible, especially at publicized events like town halls. On the Indivisible site map, I note eight to ten Indivisible pods across Western North Carolina. Senators Burr and Tillis and Freedom Caucus leader Mark Meadows, our slick congressman, held no town hall meetings during the recent recess, and our local group is pressuring them to change. Meanwhile, a Republican congressman from Alabama commented that his constituents are putting up such a fight on repealing the Affordable Care Act that he doesn’t think a wholesale repeal is politically possible.

The faithful opposition has already won the first court challenge to Trump’s initial “Muslim Ban.” The fact that it was a unanimous ruling indicates that the courts may be our bulwark against fascism, with the federal system of checks and balances eking out survival of our system of government, albeit grievously damaged.

But our biggest legal avenue will be to push the limits of freedom of assembly, crossing the line into trespass and blockage of egress to provoke arrest and a day in court to publicize our cause. Many people I have talked to in this new year, rent by its disruptive politics, have said that they expect they will be going to jail before the year is out. I expect to be among them. Potential targets of these actions are manifold, increasing with every new round from Trump’s pen: federal lands on the giveaway list, Dakota Access and Keystone pipelines, the Marcellus terminus pipeline heading down the Atlantic Coast, not to mention immigrant detention centers, abortion clinics, banks who fund Big Fossil—name your cause. We need to quickly train a non-violent militia to be deployed widely, ready to stand up to what could devolve into a police state.

As events are moving swiftly, panic beckons. But we each need to take the necessary time to discern our priorities, our role in what could become a confused patchwork of actions, rather than a coordinated campaign. These are indeed trying times, but perhaps we are made for these times.

*Bob is a Quaker who trains, teaches, and writes at the intersection of ecology and spirituality. He is a steering committee member of North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light and the ecojustice committee of the North Carolina Council of Churches. He lives on a landtrust in Southern Appalachia.*

“The surge of activism that I observe all around me contains more newbies than veterans. Here in my North Carolina conservative mountain county, many collaborative, overlapping groups have sprung up.”
Bob McGahey

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Quaker Earthcare Witness
P.O. Box 6787
Albany, CA 94706
info@quakerearthcare.org
tel:510-542-9606

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