
**You now have written three books on the subject of water. Why water?**

Water was the sweet spot where a personal and professional passion lined up with a great societal need. I was a water-lover since childhood—the kid who had to be dragged from playing in the ocean, the pool, the bathtub, or even the rain. Then in my years as a journalist covering many different stories, water really began to stand out as this crucial resource whose future was decided by an extraordinarily small group making often questionable decisions: Why was that groundwater permit granted when the aquifer is already depleted? Why does that developer get to fill in the wetland? Sometimes a journalist gets obsessed, and that’s what happened with me and water.

**Your first book, Mirage, was released in 2007. How has the landscape, literally and figuratively, changed since then?**

*Mirage* foresaw this strange story of water scarcity in the American East, one of the most water-blessed regions in all the world. Like so many issues, we’ve made progress at the same time we’ve slid back. Americans are using less and less water overall, even amid population and economic growth. Yet we haven’t gotten better at taking care of our natural waters: laying off groundwater pumping, wetlands drainage, river diversions and the like.

**How has your work influenced the response to the water crisis in your home state of Florida? Have you seen its impact beyond the state?**

*Mirage* published at the right time, when people were already beginning to open their eyes to
human-caused scarcity. The drought of 2007 had an enormous influence to help Floridians understand what I call “America’s illusion of water abundance.” In Florida and around the U.S. today, many more people and communities discuss water ethics. My continued frustration is that at the same time so many are engaged and living differently with water, some interest groups and elected officials continue to stand in the way of making water sustainability systematic.

**You describe and call for a water ethic. Can you share what you mean and what we must do to get there?**

At its most basic, a water ethic means living with water today in a way that doesn’t jeopardize fresh, clean water for future generations and ecosystems tomorrow. There are two straightforward ways to get there: using less and polluting less in all sectors of the economy.

**As activists and people of faith with a deep concern for Earthcare, where can we look for inspiration and guidance?**

Again, I take solace and faith from history. A half century ago, the United States cleaned up industrial pollution so severe that major rivers would burst into flame. We restored sewage-killed bays, their seagrass and fish. We stopped dam building in the American West—including the terrible idea of damming the Grand Canyon. And of course Quaker communities have done so much more than this; your work on Abolition is the perfect example of how a small group of people can beat the damaging dominant paradigm by appealing to morals, ethics and humanity. This will ultimately be the case with water and climate.

**How do you respond to people who are not convinced that climate change is a threat?**

This is about shared values. The key is moving the conversation out of the political realm and into a more unifying realm: future generations, quality of life, helping the poor, whatever common ground you can find. I find social media is hopeless when it comes to engaging people who have been co-opted by the deniers. Face-to-face conversations are best.

Another thing to remember is that only about 9% of Americans truly deny climate change. They are just the loudest, and they happen to be in charge at the moment!

What we see all over the country is that once your community has experienced the extreme rains, the heat, the sunny-day flooding, whatever it is, you want to roll up your sleeves and work on climate change.

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