

CLIMATE TALK

Two millennials go to Washington

Anya Janssen and Michaela Fisher
Ashland



On behalf of and fully supported by the Chequamegon Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) Chapter, two of us "Northlanders"— Anya a recent Northland College graduate and Michaela a rising senior—traveled to Washington last month to build political will and lobby members of Congress. CCL volunteers presented personalized views about legislation needed to mitigate the global climate crisis and hear from members of Congress. Each of us present our perspectives separately below.

I'm Anya. From my point of view, powerful players who structure our political system, preside over our legislature, and dictate the "free-market," wage fallacious campaigns against climate change proposals. Their disavowal of climate change endangers the lives of future generations. Creating a livable world requires not a call to arms, but instead a joining of hands, spirits, languages, worldviews and actions. By working across cultures and generations, the global climate crisis can be addressed. Members of all societies need to take action at every level of engagement—from local service learning to federal policy reform. Liberty is not gained by one unless it is collectively sought for all.

While configuring my role as an agent for change, I continue to gravitate toward interculturalism as a foundation for climate justice. Interculturalism fosters cultural alliances between neighboring communities of one geopolitical landscape.

In a workshop titled "Reaching Out to Latino Communities," I learned how applies interculturalism as climate justice. According to panelist Mark Magaña, Latino communities traditionally identify as "cultural conservationists." Before the advent of Western environmentalism, communities like agrarian Latino societies have been stewards of the lands they belong to and depend on for survival. Following Magaña's advice, to be a white member of the dominant American society dedicated to intercultural harmony, one must deconstruct internalized and politicized Western postures of objectivity. No longer is it acceptable to operate under the delusion of a 'white-savior' complex. Instead, advocates must find common ground and shared values. Magaña urged white audience members to "establish [our]selves by being a servant" to our non-white allies with authenticity. Panelist Isatis Cintron proclaimed that true equal representation requires a "political landscape that represents the faces of the street" alongside the suits of power.

In a second workshop, CCL emphasized "climate justice." The CCL climate justice team works to embrace different cultural perspectives to better envision climate change solutions. Three goals outline their approach: education, relationship building, and awareness.

I am making a personal commitment to a larger movement to create a livable world. With an open heart and mind, I continue to learn from environmental warriors—the ogichidaa—from the elders' traditional ecological knowledge, from storytellers and healers, from singers and dancers, from keepers and protectors who are the Wisconsin Lake Superior Ojibwe. That which is shared with me will be embedded into my climate action contribution.

I'm Michaela and I wish to address the politics of climate solutions. In a time where we seem so polarized in our views, coming together around something as enormous as climate change might seem impossible. But it's not.

One of the things that impressed me about the CCL seventh annual conference was the focus on bipartisanship. While CCL does have the majority of its members identifying more on the left, I was pleased to discover they have made concerted efforts to include those who might find themselves more on the right. For starters, they have a section of CCL known as the CCL Conservative Caucus. This offers a space within CCL for those who identify as more conservative to network with like-minded people who agree that climate change is an issue that we need to tackle.

During the conference I attended a workshop, "Communicating with Conservatives." As someone who identifies as very liberal, I thought this workshop could help me bridge the gap between myself and those on the right. The program offered a panel of self-identifying conservatives in the CCL Conservative Caucus. They believed that climate change is human caused and needed to be addressed. From them I learned how liberals and conservatives tend to value different ideals differently, as outlined in the book, "The Righteous Mind." They explained how even the phrases you use when talking with someone can make a difference. Remembering to be respectful, and actually listen when people give you their thoughts on climate change can make a huge difference in conversation.

One panelist jokingly advised the audience to tell conservatives, "Climate change is an issue that needs to get addressed. Republicans need to get on board, otherwise the Democrats are going to do something about it without them, and you're not going to like what they do."

I was so inspired by this workshop that I went and purchased "The Righteous Mind." I've only started reading it, but so far it has proved to be fascinating. I may not see eye to eye on many things with conservatives, but the bottom line is: climate change should not be politicized.

It is a shame that we have come to the point where climate change is often divided by party. It shouldn't be. Climate change is a global issue that affects local areas. Climate change does not discriminate between conservatives and liberals. It will continue to affect all of us.

As climate change continues, Wisconsin is going to see overall warmer temperatures, with warmer winters in particular. We will also experience more weather extremes, such as floods and droughts. These changes are already affecting our culture, such as our ability to ski in the winter, travel the ice

road, see the ice caves, and much more.

So I implore you, no matter what side of the political spectrum you are on, to consider what climate change means for you. Because climate change is something we all need to address, together.

Want to learn more about Citizen's Climate Lobby and their proposed carbon fee and dividend bill? Check out their website at: citizensclimatelobby.org

(Anya Janssen graduated from Northland College this spring with a degree in sociology and social justice and is working for the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission this summer. Michaela Fisher will be a senior at Northland this fall and is employed this summer at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center.)