

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) Yong Adult Friend Report on PYM FCNL Network

My name is Joey Hartmann-Dow and I'm here as a Friend, as a Young Adult Friend (I've heard this is important), as a representative of the PYM FCNL Network and a member of the FCNL General Committee, as an activist, a citizen of the United States of America, and a citizen of the Earth. I wanted to let you know how all those identities come together and brought me to where I am now.

I first came into relationship with Friends Committee on National Legislation by way of a push from a Friend. They said, "This is important, you are important, you should team up." I attended Spring Lobby Weekend (begrudgingly!) in 2014 with expectations of feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and disappointed in our government. Somehow, over a few days, FCNL sneakily transformed me into a hopeful lobbyist. I entered my representative's office on Capitol Hill alone, prepared, centered, and, I believe, effective.

I left DC inspired, and surprised that I could feel so significant as one person, and one part of the story. I had lobbied on ending the Authorization for Use of Military Force, an issue on which I certainly did not feel like an expert, but that I knew with my whole spirit was something that needed to be addressed in Congress. I was impressed by the smooth organization of that conference – how calm and prepared I felt in my new lobbying shoes. I was immediately energized by the four "We Seeks" that define the mission of their operation:

*We seek a world free of war and the threat of war
We seek a society with equity and justice for all
We seek a community where every person's potential may be fulfilled
We seek an earth restored*

I felt supported by the logical and radical concept of using morality as a common denominator. It felt right to say, "I know we have different views but I think we can agree that a society with equity and justice for all is something worth working for, and here's what I think will help make that happen."

And, as a young adult finding my way in the world, I feel warmly supported by the staff of FCNL, and by PYM. Both have been making significant efforts to make this important work accessible to young people. *This is so important.* Having that kind of spiritual and financial support fuels me (literally) to keep going. Specifically, PYM sponsored eight YAFs (Young Adult Friends) to attend FCNL's Annual Meeting and Lobby Days in November, and five for Spring Lobby Weekend in March (are any of those people here?) The reality is that many YAFs are so transient that they don't feel connected to

their home meetings, or a new meeting, enough to ask for support, so getting support from the larger network of PYM is critical, and we are so grateful.

So now here I am – I'm in it. I'm a member of the General Committee, I'm a representative of the PYM FCNL Network, and I'm an organizer in FCNL's newly formed Advocacy Corps. But FCNL is not just the small (and incredibly effective) staff in DC, or the 200 general committee members across the country, it's not just Quakers, or even people of faith. It's a community, and a resource, and a model of social justice work that needs to be done.

I'm 25 years old, and since I was a teenager I've felt embarrassed to be an American. I didn't want to be associated with the reckless consumerism, the racism, the violent greed I associated with our history and our current system – character flaws I had learned to despise growing up in Liberal – and Quaker – circles. It was through difficult, open-minded conversations that I finally realized that my disassociation would not change a powerful country that desperately needs to change. I needed to be an American. I needed to be heard as one, and to be heard, I needed to speak.

But I thought I was already speaking, right? I told Facebook how I felt, and my liberal friends supported me with dozens of clicks. I complained to my mom about the broken system. She was very sympathetic. But eventually I had to admit that, although my mom is important, and social media is a critical tool, the reality is that sweeping political change comes from... policy. And did you know that our representatives are hired by their constituents to take our concerns to the nation's government? Since none of my representatives have accepted my friend requests, I'm stuck with writing to them and meeting with them to let them know how I want to be represented. It's still a little overwhelming, because the system is complicated, and what impresses me over and over again is how easily FCNL prepares ordinary people to talk to their representatives... Who here has lobbied before? Sometimes it's hard, right? It's good though, keep doing it. You're doing great.

I'm anxious – I'm eager – to be a proud American, and FCNL is helping me get there. I'm leaving tomorrow to take part in a training for the Advocacy Corps, which is a new program from FCNL that supports young adults across the country to organize lobbying in their hometowns, for Congress to address climate disruption as a bipartisan, moral issue. It is no wonder to me that FCNL is growing, because they're doing awesome work, and I'm proud to be a part of it.

I want to thank the Peace and Concerns Standing Committee clerk Steve Gulick and liaison Anne Creter for their support of our ministry, especially in providing extra funds for Young Adult Friends to attend Spring Lobby Weekend this year. I also want to welcome the two FCNL staff here with us at Sessions, Christine Letts and Mary Comfort Ferrell; thank you for being here. There are a couple times that anyone is invited to

meet them: Tomorrow at breakfast you can look for the *War Is Not The Answer* sign; and Saturday at the conversation tent.

I also want to invite Friends to attend the PYM FCNL Network's workshop this evening, it's called "Engaging the Other – Working for Justice in a highly polarized Congress". You can also check out our display table right outside here.

Finally, I want to thank YOU – thank you everyone who has been active with FCNL. We couldn't do it without you.

Thank you.

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