

Testimony for the People's Hearing to Investigate FERC
Friday, December 2, 2016
National Press Club, Washington, DC

My name is Marla Marcum. I am a United Methodist minister and a Founder of the Climate Disobedience Center. I am here today as a volunteer organizer with Resist the Pipeline, a Boston area grassroots group committed to building a culture of resistance to fossil fuel business-as-usual. For the past year and a half, we have been doing this work in opposition to the Spectra AIM pipeline with particular focus on the West Roxbury Lateral portion of that project.

I am grateful for this convergence of kindred spirits, and I feel compelled to deliver a message about what FERC, the fossil fuel industry, and all of their accomplices can expect if they continue to follow a business-as-usual pathway.

It is appropriate that my testimony falls near the end of the day because the tools I use – and the tools I support others to use – are a last resort of people who have exhausted all reasonable legal means of resistance to dangerous, unnecessary, and unwelcome fossil fuel infrastructure projects. You have heard hours of testimony today from people who have engaged FERC's regulatory process with the kind of discipline and dedication that should be met with gratitude by a responsible regulatory agency.

In contrast, FERC treats our input with contempt. This is absurd.

As I listened to the testimony of so many courageous and loving people, I became more and more overwhelmed by the absurdity of any claim that FERC operates as a *regulatory* body. Because humility is a virtue, I took a moment to look up the verb regulate in order to be sure I understand its meaning – *reg-u-late: control or supervise something by means of rules and regulations*.

So what exactly does FERC regulate?

Our collective testimony suggests that *the only thing that FERC controls and supervises by means of rules and regulations* is the voice and will of the public.

WE – REPRESENTATIVES OF IMPACTED COMMUNITIES – WILL NO LONGER BE REGULATED BY THE FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION.

I am here to declare that Fossil Fuel business-as-usual is over.

Given what we know about the impacts at every step of fossil fuel business-as-usual – it is clear that construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure is morally indefensible.

In the past year, 194 people – ranging in age from 15 to 89 years old – have been arrested blocking construction on the West Roxbury Lateral portion of the Spectra AIM pipeline. This is not a stunt. This is a sustained campaign of principled nonviolent civil disobedience engaged at just one of the points of harm created by this project.

I am here today to make clear that the culture of resistance to fossil fuel business-as-usual is growing, and we bring into this fight a kind of power that FERC and the industry cannot withstand. We are bringing our bodies, our spirits, and our deep love for one another and for future generations.

In early June, I read that people in Pakistan were digging mass graves in advance of a predicted heat wave. A gravedigger who was interviewed expressed gratitude for the foresight, saying “Thanks be to God that this year we will be prepared.” When I saw a photo of one empty mass grave, I recognized that it was a long, narrow trench – it looked just like the pipeline trench we had been fighting in West Roxbury. And when that heat wave came and they filled up that grave, they did so by laying bodies head-to-foot, wrapped in white sheets. That photo looked like a pipeline.

In late June, 250 people gathered at our pipeline trench in West Roxbury to acknowledge and mourn the fact that this trench would be responsible for creating mass graves (for now, in other parts of the world). And in solidarity with their colleagues in Pakistan who were forced to stand over that mass grave and make sense of it for their community, Boston-area clergy practiced their own mass graves eulogies, **and we all mourned the fact that we have entered the era of anticipatory climate mass graves.**

The police were there in force to keep us from disrupting construction, so we went away after our observance to convince them that we were finished for the day. But we came back two hours later, with 13 people taking their places in the trench as a symbolic mass grave and 12 others joining them at street level, refusing to leave. These 25 people blocked construction for two hours, as nearly one hundred others stood on the sidewalk in solidarity and showing their support for this action.

One of those who entered the trench was 21 year-old Sophia Wilansky. You may have heard of Sophia. She missed her Nov 22nd court appearance with her co-defendants because the day before, her arm had been severed by a concussion grenade targeting her as she demonstrated with the peaceful Water Protectors at Standing Rock. I am grateful to the Water Protectors on site who saved her life. While we were in court, Sophia was in surgery in Minneapolis in an attempt to save her arm.

The militarized police response to peaceful Water Protectors at Standing Rock is a national shame that we must resist. And we have no reason to imagine that such brutality will be confined to that struggle. But we will not be deterred by coercive force. Ours is a movement led by spirit-filled bodies – paramount among them, the Water Protectors at Standing Rock.

I am also here to declare that the guilty verdict handed down today in Peekskill, NY in the case of the Montrose 9 – who peacefully blocked access to equipment necessary to build the Spectra AIM pipeline – will not deter us.

This is because the grassroots culture of resistance is growing, and we are visionary.

We expect our federal regulatory agencies to protect and promote the health, safety, and long-term sustainability of our communities, but the days of waiting for the leadership of such agencies are over.

Over 800 people signed our pledge to support active resistance to the construction of the West Roxbury Lateral. Over 400 of them committed to nonviolent civil disobedience – risking arrest – if necessary to disrupt this project.

Most of the people who have taken this pledge have never done anything remotely like this. They are not activists moving from cause to cause. They DO NOT want to risk arrest in order to protect their communities. But they have tried every other option available to them, and they have come to the end of legal options.

The elected representatives of West Roxbury at all levels of government have fought for their constituents, but FERC ignored their voices, too.

I have been reflecting in recent days on these words attributed to Saint Augustine: “Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they don’t remain as they are.”

For now, we see that we need to build our own hope by nonviolently and courageously harnessing the power of our anger.

Our numbers grow every day. If FERC will *only* seek to regulate *our* power, then we will take the lead with the only power we have to transform the system in this situation. We will shut it down with our bodies, sustained by our love for one another and the world that is threatened by the most powerful industry in the history of this world.

We need you to get ANGRIER with us. We recognize that this will require COURAGE.

I believe that together we are equal to this task.

-Marla Marcum, marla.marcum@gmail.com