

Finding Common Ground

Author, Advocate Courtney White Unites Groups at Odds through Regenerative Agriculture



“Courtney, the Berlin Wall fell down up here.” These were the words of a Forest Service District Ranger back in 1998. He was talking about the wall between ranchers and environmentalists in the region, and people passing out the hammers and helping with the teardown were, and still are, called the Quivira Coalition. Courtney White, the subject of this month’s interview, co-founded Quivira in 1997 because he was dismayed and disheartened by the nasty, unceasing legal and ideological dogfighting over the disposition of western lands. He thought it might be a good idea, for example, if environmentalists heard from scientists about the importance of fire to restoring grass. Or if ranchers and farmers heard from a peer about the advantages of moving livestock around, and heard it while conservationists and environmentalists were in the room. As the ranger indicated, the simple idea of bringing people together to relax the grip around each other’s throats and learn a few things, turned out to be terrifically well-timed and apt. After 17 years as director of Quivira, White decided to concentrate full-time on writing books, of which the eminently useful Two Percent Solutions for the Planet is only the latest example. Reached at home in Santa Fe, he graciously agreed to reflect on the past two decades of building coalitions and opening eyes.

Courtney White

ACRES U.S.A. Could you think back to your time in the Sierra Club and some of the frustrations or ambitions that led you to found the Quivira Coalition?

COURTNEY WHITE. You bet. I’m glad we’re doing this because it feels a little bit like the exit interview that nobody did. I’m an urban boy; I grew up in Phoenix not involved in agriculture in any way. I was a classic environmentalist worried about wilderness and wildlife, things like that. I was active in college as what you would call a checkbook environmentalist, meaning I wrote my check to the Sierra Club, wrote letters to the editor, that kind of stuff. It wasn’t until

1994 and the mid-term elections in Congress, when Newt Gingrich and his friends stormed the capital and threatened a whole bunch of environmental legislation, that I actually became active in the environmental movement. I became a foot soldier in the pushback against that effort to wipe out a whole bunch of important environmental legislation. I went to meetings; I joined the local executive committee of the Sierra Club and organized workshops on water, wilderness and so on. As I put in that volunteer time for the Sierra Club, two things happened. One, I grew a little discouraged about environmentalists’ attitudes toward rural people. It was pretty antagonistic, and there was an

Interviewed by Chris Walters

effort in the national Sierra Club at the time to end logging on public lands. It was called Zero-Cut. There was a national referendum, meaning every member could vote on whether to direct the leadership to take a policy position opposing all logging in National Forests. This was a big step, a reaction to some things going on nationally. A small group within the organization wanted to take this extreme position rather than work with local communities or work on anything like sustainable logging practices. It was an all-or-nothing position regarding logging in National Forests. It was understandable on one level. There was a lot of frustration in the environmental movement about lack of progress and corporate behavior toward natural resources and the way the federal government dragged its heels on reform. I sympathized, but their prescription was like dropping a 100-pound anchor directly on rural people. It ended jobs. It ended businesses. It ended incomes. Not surprisingly, when this policy passed and the club made a big deal about it, here in northern New Mexico where I live, the traditional 400-year-old Hispanic villages were outraged. There's a long tradition of sustainable, family-scale wood gathering, wood-cutting, logging that would have been shut down by this policy if the Forest Service had actually adopted it. So the Hispanic community here was extremely upset at the Sierra Club, and I thought for good reason. This is not how we solve problems. A couple of environmentalists were hung in effigy at the capital in Santa Fe. I was very unhappy and discouraged by the fighting that went on. Everybody just pitted themselves against each other. It was a take-no-prisoners approach to both environmental issues and to the jobs issue. I began to wonder why environmental prescriptions always seem to come down hardest on rural people. There was never any looking for sustainable solutions, common ground, or problem-solving. It was just everybody rolled up their sleeves and went into the boxing ring to see who could win.

ACRES U.S.A. Had the Sierra Club people done any research into how this would actually affect communities?

“It was a matter of trying to break down these barriers and talk about the land, water, the food. Once you start having those conversations the tribal boundaries begin to dissolve because they realize that we all eat food, we all love wildlife, we all worry about the health of the land.”

WHITE. A little bit. It was a case where in the big picture they wanted this big policy, but at the local level it played brutally in communities that were dependent on timber. As the local Sierra Club group, we tried to push back against the national policy because we knew it was the wrong policy for these very poor communities in northern New Mexico. We took some grief for it. The attitude was don't buck the system, we already voted on this. But the answer to your question is no, they didn't do a lot of research. This was the mid-1990s and the idea of sustainable, regenerative natural resource management was largely dismissed by the environmental community. So there was no talk about how to manage forests sustainably, it was just clear-cut or nothing. Either you supported the forest service and you supported destructive forest management or you went for a zero-cut policy.

ACRES U.S.A. What did you do as events unraveled?

WHITE. Personally I rebelled against it. Part of it was my nature, my background. I kept asking questions – isn't there some other way? Isn't there another approach? Isn't there a way to manage forests to sustain local jobs? The irony is that in northern New Mexico we have some very overgrown forests due to past forest management and fire suppression issues. There's plenty of work to be done to thin these forests, or start some small businesses related to pellets, chipping and so on, but all that was off the table with this policy. There was no cutting, not even for home use. A lot of communities here use wood to heat their homes because of poverty. So it all blew up in

public, in the press, in demonstrations. It was very disheartening on a number of levels. Then I met a rancher who took a very different approach toward livestock and grass management. His name was Jim Winder. Jim ranches in the southern part of New Mexico. He actually joined the Sierra Club, as he put it, to see what the other side was up to, and he also was looking for common ground.

ACRES U.S.A. What made Jim stand out?

WHITE. He managed his cattle holistically in the style of Allan Savory's teachings and thinking, what we would call today rotational grazing or planned grazing. Jim believed that if environmentalists understood what he was doing, they would be supportive. I'll never forget the day I walked into a statewide Sierra Club meeting and there was a cowboy hat on the table, and I thought, “Wow, there's a rancher here, what's going on?” This was when there were letters to the editor every day, it seemed, denouncing ranching. Jim came to the meeting expressly to meet environmentalists. He wanted to tell them he was ranching differently, that he moved his cattle around according to certain natural principles of grazing management. I was very intrigued – here was Jim saying, “Let's not fight over grass, there are ways to manage landscapes and have all the ecological values that environmentalists want in the same place.” That message really caught my attention, so I approached Jim and told him this was all news to me. I didn't know anything about cows or ranching. Jim said to come on out to the ranch; he actually organized a big tour. This was

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January of 1996, and that tour basically changed my life. Jim knew more about ecology than any environmentalist there, and that included me. Jim knew about the mineral cycle, water cycle, the nutrient cycle and solar energy cycling. He knew about decomposers, plants and grass types. It was an eye-opening, life-changing discussion. I realized I was completely ignorant of all these things, yet I was willing to take a position on an environmental issue. I understood that was wrong. And there was one other part that was important. On the tour was a vocal anti-grazing activist who tried very hard to provoke Jim. He took an antagonistic attitude toward cattle, very doctrinaire. It was the way that Jim answered those questions. He answered them patiently. He answered them with good ecological responses and explained how he managed his cows. Listening to Jim, there is a third way here, there is a path through this which is what Jim was doing. It's ecology; it's reasonableness; it's sound practices; it's what we ended up calling the radical center.

ACRES U.S.A. What does that term mean to you and your cohort?

WHITE. "Radical center" is a term coined by Bill McDonald, who is a rancher in southern Arizona. He's also one of the founders of the Malpai Borderlands Group, which is a radical centrist nonprofit that works collaboratively on large landscapes to solve problems. They were one of the very first collaborative conservation nonprofits in the West, about 23 years old now. The idea was that we could energize this radical center if we were willing to hang up the boxing gloves and talk about real problems. What Jim was saying to the environmentalists was, look, let's talk about ecological function on these landscapes. Let's talk about plants and water and animals, and let's make everything healthy by making the land healthy which was also the same process used to make land productive for cattle, the same process used to help wildlife. A big light went off in my head – "Wow, there actually is a way through this conundrum." It means finding this radical center

where we can all work that's been hanging up our political agenda so we can work together. There's no reason to be fighting. We actually can work this out. So I approached Jim and said, "Let's start a nonprofit." Let's wade directly into the grazing wars, the timber wars, the endangered species wars. Let's try peacemaking, but let's try peacemaking built around sustainable practices. Jim said "you bet," and we started the nonprofit Quivira Coalition in 1997. I pulled in fellow conservationists and got Barbara Johnson to work on communications, and we just took a running leap off this cliff. I remember our very first workshop in Santa Fe in June of 1997. We put out the word that we were going to try this radical centrist approach to the grazing issues in the Southwest, and I literally crossed my fingers – would anybody show up? The tenor of the times from Washington, D.C. all the way down to the ground was fight, fight, fight. Knock out the other guy as quickly as you can. The other guy is the bad guy. What you're doing is wrong, what we're doing is right. I wanted to see if positive rather than negative energy could solve these problems. We put the word out and 50 people showed up! It was a workshop on progressive ranching and the radical center. The folks in the audience, including ranchers who drove long distances to be there, were pretty fired up about this idea of finding answers to these long-running problems. I felt like we were onto something good, so we decided to give it a run and keep going. So that's how Quivira got started. One thing led to another. Our workshops grew. We started an annual conference – this year will be the 15th – to create a forum for the radical center, then enlarge it and energize it in the Southwest. It went well – we got a lot of positive press in the beginning and through the years. A lot of people interested in finding these answers. We got a lot of pushback from the environmental community; we got a lot of pushback from the ranching community. That's why I use the term "the conflict industry." You could make a living just brawling.

ACRES U.S.A. Would it be fair to say there were virtually tribal forces with a vested interest in keeping the conflict going?

WHITE. Oh yes. It was like World War I. Everybody was in their trenches and not willing to come out. They had been dug deep for 20 years, going back to the '60s and '70s. The tribes were in their trenches and pretty much just shooting at each other hoping that they would knock out the other tribe. It wasn't just environmentalists and ranchers, but everybody was in a silo or in a tribe. The scientists were in their silos, the federal land managers were kind of in their silos. It was a matter of trying to break down these barriers and talk about the land, water, the food. Once you start having those conversations the tribal boundaries begin to dissolve because they realize that we all eat food, we all love wildlife, we all worry about the health of the land. At first some of these folks were not willing to have those conversations. I think they were just afraid to talk to each other. Maybe they were afraid that they would find that they had more in common than they knew. Quivira became a way to allow folks to have those conversations, to realize that these tribal boundaries were not as rigid as everybody seemed to think. We took an early vow to not do legislation and not do lawsuits – we were determined to start over at the grassroots. I think Quivira is sort of the ultimate grassroots organization because we were focused squarely on the grass and the roots! Our early workshops took place on ranches where we went out and looked at grass and soil and talked about it. I think vowing not to do lawsuits and not to go the legislative route created breathing room for folks to have these conversations. There still is a large hunger for that. Unfortunately, there's still tribal warring going on in the West today. Much less so than when we got started. I think we were successful. It wasn't just us – lots of folks were willing to cross boundaries and talk to each other. If you look at where the West was in 1995 and where the West is today, there's been some substantial progress. We don't have the

timber wars, the grazing wars and the endangered species wars like we did.

ACRES U.S.A. Can you give an example of a bridge you were able to build or an agreement you were able to forge?

WHITE. Well, we didn't do agreements. We weren't about signing things. It was more about being a forum for talking about things. What Quivira did is try to walk the talk of this radical center. We did a lot of demonstration projects. These were on-the-ground, mostly ecological-type things directed at showing folks how these things work, and at the same time we encouraged ranchers, farmers and scientists to talk with each other. Early in Quivira's life we met Bill Zeedyk. Bill is an agrarian restoration specialist. Bill came up with an innovative, low-cost way of repairing damaged streams and creeks. I've written a lot about Bill over the years. It required a collaborative approach, sustainable or resilient management of these landscapes. It required folks to work together on the ground to put these ideas in place, whether private landowners or public land managers. It required regulatory agencies to consider new management schemes, and in 2001 I was approached by a fishing organization in Albuquerque to try to help restore a stream in northern New Mexico called Comanche Creek, which had been heavily damaged over the decades by poor management, heavy timber logging and overgrazing. It was prime habitat for New Mexico's state fish, the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout, which was in trouble. The system had come unraveled ecologically. The fish was struggling. This was on Forest Service land, the Carson National Forest, and folks were threatening to sue. I got a call from someone in this fishing organization who wanted to try a different approach. I secured some funding from the EPA, got the cooperation of the Forest Service and a grazing association up there, and we embarked on a restoration plan designed by Bill Zeedyk to restore Comanche Creek to ecological health. It was highly collaborative – we brought in a whole bunch of different folks including livestock operators, volunteers and environmen-

tal groups. The idea was, "We all care about this place, the Comanche Creek watershed. If we butt heads all of it'll continue going downhill." We started a process that continues to this day; we have a big summer project every year up there. The amount of restoration and healing that goes on is absolutely incredible.

ACRES U.S.A. What is the starting point for this kind of process?

WHITE. First and foremost we have to understand that a lot of land is in poor health, and you don't know that if you aren't land literate to some degree. You look out across these landscapes, and if you don't know what you're looking at, you don't know if it's healthy or not. You might have a mental idea of whether it's healthy, but actual ecology is sometimes elusive. So then you bring in folks who can diagnose what's wrong with the land, and you bring in folks who begin managing it sustainably, get the creeks back into shape through restoration activities. It takes a village. It's not about declaring it to be wilderness and walking away. It's not about saying it's only here for cattle and nothing else. It's about mixing all our conservation and agricultural needs together in a way that's resilient, productive and profitable for all living things.

ACRES U.S.A. "Land literacy" is a great concept. Has the environmental movement become more literate about the land?

WHITE. It's a term that I picked up from Aldo Leopold who famously took his students out onto farmland or forestland in Wisconsin. He'd point to the ground and say, "Tell me what's going on here." More often than not his students wouldn't know because they couldn't read the landscape. Then he would teach them – how does water move across here; what's happening with this sign of erosion over here; what's causing this. That idea of not being able to read the landscape really came home to me as I waded into these issues. I was illiterate. I personally didn't know what I was looking at until I started talking to Jim Winder and Bill Zeedyk and other folks. Then

I began to understand the parts of the landscape I was looking at, what a pedestal was, what sheet erosion was, how the water cycle worked – literally the syntax of land. Then I could start figuring out what this landscape was telling me. I think many folks know parts of that language. I think ranchers know parts of that landscape. Environmentalists know other parts, but it's like only being able to read every fifth word in a paragraph. That's what land literacy is, being able to read an entire paragraph, not just the words that you're familiar with. To the ranchers that meant understanding more about the conservation value, the wildlife and those things that environmentalists wanted for the land. For environmentalists, it was understanding the agricultural potentials here, why it was important for farmers and ranchers, which meant learning new words. What's so neat about this is that fundamentally the key words are the same – soil, erosion, energy cycling, nutrient cycling – those kinds of things.

ACRES U.S.A. How did you realize the link between economic and ecological resiliency?

WHITE. Let me go through the history a little more, how we got to resilience which we put in our mission statement after about 10 years. In the beginning we were mostly concerned with what we called the new ranch, bringing folks together and talking about the landscape, the early meets and greets and talks. Then it started to happen and collective energy started to flow around the region as folks realized they had a lot more in common than differences. As I did my research and ran the organization I became aware of larger concerns, climate being one, but also drought and scarcity issues. Also I got involved in the food part of things. Quivira was given a ranch to run in 2004. It was called a grass bank, an idea about how to manage federal grazing allotments for a greater ecological good by taking cows off other landscapes and putting them onto grassland. Running a ranch was a challenge for us as a nonprofit, especially for a city boy conservationist. Suddenly I was a dues-paying member of a New Mexico cattle growers asso-

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ciation as a permittee on a federal allotment of 37,000 acres, riding cows. Talk about jumping in the deep end with both feet! I grew to understand the challenges faced by ranchers and farmers from direct experience, particularly how to pay your bills. We had a board member rancher who said the grass bank has all the costs of a ranch and no income, which was exactly right. We solved the problem by shifting its focus to local food production, particularly grass-fed meat direct-marketed into Santa Fe.

ACRES U.S.A. It was a doorway into another side of things.

WHITE. This was a big step for my evolution, a side of the real world. I ended up going to the Slow Food summit in Italy as a delegate, a meat producer, which is still mind-boggling for a boy from Phoenix, Arizona. As a consequence, I really began to think a lot about food, water and ultimately resilience. Resilience means you bounce back from a shock of some sort. The idea came to me one winter when a huge snowstorm shut down both major highways that go into Albuquerque, and a reporter wrote a story asking how long would it take for Albuquerque's grocery stores to be emptied of food. The answer was only six days. I thought, "Boy, that's not resilient, that's a serious problem." That led me to thinking about how we handle shocks, how we handle change, how we handle drought and climate change. These are all questions of resilience. Some are slower than others, but nevertheless they're still shocks to the system. I dug into the literature and read a book called *Resilience Thinking* by two Australian scientists, Brian Walker and David Salt. We ended up shifting our focus as an organization to these questions of building both ecological and economic resilience for rapidly changing times. This was 2006, 2007 and 2008. Today, of course, these rapidly changing times are what everybody is talking about. Big storms, big drought, crazy weather, what folks now talk about as the new normal. Whether it's intense rainstorms or big snowstorms or prolonged

drought, we'll certainly be looking at greater and more protracted shocks to our systems in the future. Now I see the word "resilience" everywhere. Of course, ranching is the epitome of resilience. Ranchers who have been in business for a long time had to weather droughts and downturns and all the challenges that come with managing land, while turning a profit. I think they have a lot to teach us who live in cities about resilience. Ranching has been around a long time. Wallace Stegner called it one of the few western occupations that was truly renewable, because if they managed their land well it was certainly resilient ecologically. Anyway it all more or less flowed together – local food, grass-fed meat, restoring ecosystems to health, cooperative management, collaboration, working across boundaries – all these things build resilience. Nature likes diversity. Most natural ecosystems are very diverse. That builds stability into them so they can handle a shock. A good example is a forest fire. There's a classic shock to a system, and if the forest is resilient it will come back and be healthy again. If it's not healthy then it could go through a threshold or type-change to a different kind of ecology.

ACRES U.S.A. You gave a talk recently where you spoke about human nature and aggressive versus conciliatory modes of behavior. We've all noticed a deep-seated, emotional, sometimes religious reluctance to concede the reality of human-influenced climate change – the defining crisis of what is being called the Anthropocene era. It strikes many people as either sacrilege or simply preposterous that the awesome creation we inhabit could be wrenched out of shape by humans. Dispelling despair over the issue was obviously your motive for writing *Two Percent Solutions*. What do you notice about this issue as you give talks around the country?

WHITE. Maybe the best way to explain it is to tell you what happened next, which led to the books, starting with *Grass, Soil, Hope*. When we first brought up the idea of building resilience to climate change there was

a lot of resistance, if not outright hostility, even among our friends. What changed for me, and it was on par with the first day I spent at Jim Winder's ranch, happened in the summer of 2009 when someone sent me a publication from the World Watch Institute called *Mitigating Climate Change Through Food and Land Use*. Up until then I'd pushed away the climate side of this partly because the emotional resistance was so intense among our friends. I just didn't want to deal with it. But when I opened that publication up and read that the five mitigating strategies for climate were increasing soil carbon, farming with perennials, climate-friendly livestock management, protecting open space and restoring degraded watersheds, I thought, "Holy smokes! We're doing this anyway!" It has this climate benefit on top of it. You want to do these things for food and water, for land and people, and oh by the way, it mitigates carbon dioxide. Thus in *Grass, Soil, Hope* and then *Two Percent Solutions* I profile the Sidwells, who really are the best ranch managers I know here in New Mexico. I call them carbon ranchers. They took over a degraded ranch and restored it. It became healthy, diverse, and it sequestered more carbon, but he wasn't looking at it as a climate change strategy. He was producing food, and he liked seeing all that grass on his ranch. That's when I realized this was a way to talk about climate without having to wade directly into those emotional boxing matches.

ACRES U.S.A. You spotlighted the issue at a Quivira conference, didn't you?

WHITE. We called our annual conference Carbon Ranching in 2010, and I invited everybody I knew who was working on soil carbon sequestration. I think it was one of the first conferences ever to directly address this issue. We took some grief for it. Some folks came to the conference quite skeptical or outright in denial about climate change. We pitched it as a food conference, a soil conference and a water conference, not a climate conference, but everybody who got up and spoke

talked about it that way. “Here are the reasons to do these things, and oh, by the way, it also pulls down the carbon in the plants.” That went well. It seemed like a good strategy, and it led directly to me writing *Grass, Soil, Hope* which Chelsea Green published a year or so ago. It turned out that a lot of other folks were also on the same track, and a number of similar books came out at the same time. In fact, there seems to be a mini-explosion in the soil carbon story in the past four or five years. We started Quivira with talking about the radical center, about climate, conservation, about Allan Savory’s approach to grazing management, and then we grew it to ecological restoration, working in creeks trying to get land to function and encourage land literacy. Then we scaled up from there to looking at resilience in larger landscapes. After I waded into all this the soil carbon part came along as a way of doing all of the above. That’s very much what led to *Two Percent Solutions*, a lot of other people were asking these same questions. How do we cross-cut all these concerns with sustainable, regenerative practices? Meaning that it’s not just about ranching, it’s also no-till and technology and solar panels and aquaponics. They all link together in this larger picture of how we manage our future, how we build resilience for what I think we all now understand are pretty big challenges coming down the road.

ACRES U.S.A. Then the attitudes are shifting pretty fast?

WHITE. At the conference we do we’ve featured similar themes, and the climate change skepticism has largely evaporated. There’s been a lot of change over the past four or five years, I think because most people see it in their backyards. They see stuff going on that’s not normal. That’s been interesting to watch. Quivira specialized in finding heretical ideas and putting them out there. We did a conference in 2003 featuring Jo Robinson, who got up and talked about the benefits of grass-fed meat, and we took heat for it. Ranchers came up to me saying, “Courtney, you can’t be talking about feedlots like that. You know this grass-fed

thing, it’s just hippie stuff.” That was 2003 and of course grass-fed took off. In fact, some of the ranchers who were critical eventually went into grass-fed meat production themselves. We’ve tried to prospect, look out for what’s coming down the road and try to stay on that edge. I think we’ve done a pretty good job. It’s also a credit to many other people doing innovative work in a lot of different places. I get excited by the human capacity to innovate. We’re problem-solvers, and we’ve been problem-solving for a long, long time. We tend to create our own problems as well and then we have to solve them, but nevertheless we’re a very creative, imaginative species, and that’s a lot of what I tried to capture in *Two Percent Solutions*. I do worry sometimes that we’re in a race between the imaginative, creative, positive side of our personality and the rather destructive side of our personality, and right now I’m not sure which side is going to win that race.

ACRES U.S.A. Do you think this idea of regeneration has a lot of potential for getting past those old binary-thinking barriers? Are you excited by the potential of this regenerative idea?

WHITE. You know I am! I’ve struggled over the years with the nomenclature of our movement – if you think about how many different words have been used to describe good grazing practices, whether it’s rotational grazing, rapid rotational grazing, intensive management, planned grazing, and then extend that to farming and maybe ecological restoration. The word “sustainability” was hot for a while, and a lot of folks, myself included, never warmed up to it. I think there’s a consensus now settling on “regenerative.” It’s what I hear more often these days when I talk to folks. It seems to be the best word to describe collectively what we’re all doing. I think the public, when they hear it, understand better what it means than with sustainability. The idea of regeneration, of birth and growing and starting over again – I think folks get it. I also like the fact that its exact opposite is degen-

eration, which folks also understand. We want regenerative agriculture, we don’t want degenerative agriculture, and we want regenerative practices not degenerative practices. I’m part of the group called Regeneration International which came together in 2015 and went to the Paris climate talks to push the idea that regenerative practices can solve a lot of problems.

ACRES U.S.A. How did the ideas of Regeneration International fare at the Paris talks?

WHITE. I think Paris was a watershed moment – the world is going to be before Paris and after Paris. Before Paris we were all trying to make our case, waving our arms, trying to catch people’s attention, make a case for soil carbon, for regenerative agriculture, for whatever it is we’re advocating. Now with the agreement being signed, despite its flaws – and I worry about its implementation – after Paris we don’t need to make that case anymore. Now we need to try and do this work. André Leu, who is president of the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements, told me there was an agreement signed in Paris before the big one

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that puts money toward soil carbon increases on farmlands. He declared this to be one of the most important moments in the history of agriculture, because now soil is considered officially a mitigation strategy for climate change. It gets us past agriculture just being part of the problem. I think he's right. We have a lot of work ahead of us in terms of implementing these practices. What happens next is a big question mark of course, but I'm hopeful about that. There were lots of different groups in Paris. The diversity of people and their causes was remarkable. I wandered around

a lot just soaking up the energy of the moment, of the people.

ACRES U.S.A. It would be helpful to get *Two Percent Solutions* translated into lots of languages.

WHITE. I hope so. That's what I see my role now is, I'm trying to take these messages to larger audiences. I feel like I did a lot with the nonprofit, with Quivira, we worked at the grass-roots for many years. I stepped back from that to write these books, trying to take these messages to bigger audiences. I left the organization to

continue that journey. I don't know quite what that means, but I'm going to focus on writing. I have children, our twins are 17, and I wonder what I can do to help them inherit a better world, a more resilient world. That's my motivation now. I think I can best do it by writing.

Courtney White's *Grass, Soil, Hope: A Journey through Carbon Country* and *Two Percent Solutions for the Planet: 50 Low-Cost, Low-Tech, Nature-Based Practices for Combatting Hunger, Drought, and Climate Change* are available from Acres U.S.A.; acresusa.com or 800-355-5313.