



Today I'm in Williston, North Dakota learning about fracking and the community around it.

I believe stopping climate change is one of the most important challenges of our generation. Given that, I think it's even more important to learn about our energy industry, even if it's controversial. I encourage all of you to get out and learn about all perspectives on issues you care about too. Regardless of your views on energy, I think you'll find the community around this fascinating.

Here are some things I found interesting:

The invention of new techniques to fracture rock (fracking) to extract oil led to a boom where tens of thousands of workers moved from all around the country to pursue new jobs in this industry. This sudden influx of mostly men tripled the size of the town in just a few years. When oil prices dropped, some of this industry left and so did many people. This has led to some unique community dynamics.

First, the ratio of men to women in the city is now 10:1. That's actually lower than 30:1 at its peak.

Men come into town to work on the rigs for two weeks on and then often go home to another state for two weeks off before they work again. In Williston, they live in "man camps", which are basically cabins with 6 people in bunk beds. They come here because these are good jobs where people with a high school diploma can make \$100,000 a year.

The women I met said they feel safe, but they had unique stories. Some told me about finding out their boyfriends had families back home. (They thanked me that Facebook has made it harder for these men to live double lives.) Another woman told me she has never paid for a drink her whole life.

This gender imbalance has led to crime though. It is well-documented across the world that societies with many more men than women have more crime.

Second, the fact that the population fluctuates with oil price makes it hard to invest in long term social infrastructure.

The school superintendent told me about how the school system went from shrinking and closing schools to surging from 500 to 1,500 students in less than a decade. The local pastor told me about his challenge building community by encouraging people to set down actual roots in the area. A local realtor told me that no one had the capacity to build the amount of housing required in the boom, so two-bedroom apartments that used to rent for \$400 / month were suddenly renting for \$2,500 / month. And now after the boom, some infrastructure is overbuilt while some is still underdeveloped.

Third, the energy industry is at the center of politics here. When the Dakota Access Pipeline was approved, that removed \$6-7 per barrel of cost from producing oil in the region, which brought more investment and jobs here. A number of people told me they had felt their livelihood was blocked by the government, but when Trump approved the pipeline they felt a sense of hope again. That word "hope" came up many times around this.

One person told me the night the pipeline was approved, people lit fireworks and rode trucks with American flags down Main Street to celebrate.

It's interesting to see this perspective when science overwhelmingly suggests fossil fuels contribute to climate change, which is one of the great challenges our generation will have to deal with.

Many people I talked to here acknowledged this, but also feel a sense of pride that their work contributes to serving real needs we all have every day -- keeping our homes warm, getting to work, feeding us, and more. They believe competition from new sources of energy is good, but from their perspective, until renewables can provide most of our energy at scale, they are providing an important service we all rely on, and they wish they'd stop being demonized for it.

I believe we're closer to powering our society by renewables if we work at it, and doing so is extremely important for our future. For our part, Facebook has committed that every new data center we build will be powered by 100% renewable energy.

There's a lot more to say here, but overall I'm grateful for the opportunity to see a community with such unique social dynamics. It puts the stability most of our communities enjoy in perspective.

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