

# MARStar

December  
2010

Newsletter of the Middle Atlantic Region, American Friends Service Committee

*"Each of us is put here in this time and this place to personally decide the future of humankind."*

– CHIEF ARVOL LOOKING HORSE

## Human Rights in Pittsburgh

BY BROOKE McDONALD



*Angelina Winbush*

The civil rights movement was an epic struggle to expose and eliminate deeply embedded practices of racial inequity. It remains the preeminent social movement of our time. Yet, despite immeasurable success, the civil rights movement did not change the economic and social systems that relegated blacks to low-wage jobs, perpetuating inequality and injustice.

A human rights movement goes beyond civil and political rights and also encompasses economic, social and cultural rights. Working for human rights is a way to provide solutions for change beyond existing civil rights models. It is a way to bring together disparate groups under a universal framework.

AFSC's Pennsylvania State Program is using a human rights approach to help a group of young people learn about justice. The Racial Justice through Human Rights projects will guide youths as they design and implement an activity that peacefully addresses racial or ethnic injustice in the greater Pittsburgh community.

The group is racially, culturally and geographically diverse. Participants gather from small towns, city suburbs and four different Pittsburgh neighborhoods. They represent Catholic schools, city schools, schools that are majority African American and schools that are mostly white. Religions range from Muslim to Jewish to Catholic to Protestant.

Angelina Winbush, a 16-year-old tenth grader, is one of the group's members.

Angelina enjoys sports and is eager to go to college and learn more about sports medicine. She loves tennis and track and participates on teams at her neighborhood school even though she is home-schooled. And she cares about her community.

Angelina has two goals, she wants to graduate from college and join the Peace Corps. Perceptive for her age, Angelina is eager to prepare for her future job by working to improve her own community. "This project has opened my eyes to a lot of questions and topics I would not normally think about. I don't live in the suburbs and some of the group members do so. Learning about how they see things differently has given me some perspective and scope."

The young people have been exploring identities and what makes each of us special. A discussion about discrimination and the ways in which people can be perceived in our society followed. Group members talked about times when they felt they were being unfairly treated. Angelina said, "I was really surprised that some of the group members were so open and were willing to share things that were very

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# Help us empower people to shape a secure future

Dear Friends,

I have to say that this has been one of the best years ever for the Middle Atlantic Region. We have accomplished so much, with so very little. I'm really proud of our staff and Executive Committee.

At the end of December I will be returning to my home in Seattle, leaving with MAR spirit in my heart. Fond farewell and thank you, Friends and Supporters. In January our dear Friend and colleague, Howard Cell, will be stepping down from the position MAR Executive Committee Clerk and will again commence stewardship as Interim Director for the AFSC Middle Atlantic Region. The Region is in great and safe hands with Howard.

From helping to shape policies that address poverty and discrimination; to supporting real transformation within prisons; bringing others by the hand to embrace the relevance of human rights; documenting deadly worker safety violations and always, always promoting peace; MAR programs continue to empower people, young and old, to shape a secure future for themselves and their communities.

I am asking that you please consider a donation to a Middle Atlantic Region program fostering a new generation of young people to become agents for peace and justice.

A \$60 contribution can fund one week of travel and food stipends for an intern in Baltimore,

MD or Washington, D.C. A \$100 contribution to the Appalachian Center for Equality can directly support Khiry Starghill (read more about him on page three). Or a \$200 investment in the Empowering Voices for Peace and Justice Program in Pittsburgh will bolster the resources necessary to keep an intern working on the Racial Equity through Human Rights project (featured on the front page).

Please send in your contribution using the enclosed envelope. Join us as we work with a future generation of leaders.

Adios y Siempre en Paz,  
*Nina Laboy*  
Interim Regional Director

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## New MAR program directors

The Middle Atlantic Region welcomes Miafere Jones and Dionne Bartley.

Mia joins us as the Director for the Youth Empowerment through Conflict Resolution program in Baltimore.

Over the past year Mia has been working part-time with AFSC developing peer mediation programs. She has teaching experience and also worked with a high school conflict resolution project in Philadelphia.

As a former Baltimore City Public School student, Mia volunteered with numerous organizations and is already busy using those experiences to increase the capacity of the Youth Empowerment program.

Dionne joins us as the Director for the Appalachian Center for



Mia Jones

Dionne Bartley

Equality in Logan, West Virginia.

Dionne is a native of Logan and served on AFSC's New Empowerment for Women advisory committee as a junior member during her high school years.

Most recently, Dionne worked as a teacher and prior to that as a litigation paralegal.

As a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and CASA board member, Dionne has experience advocating for the safety and well-being of youths.

# Writing our own destinies

*“Nobody gets to write your destiny but you. Your future is in your hands,” said President Barack Obama. “And nothing—absolutely nothing—is beyond your reach.” This past September, President Obama encouraged America’s youths to work hard and get as much out of education as possible. He challenged them, saying, “We need every single one of you to develop your talents, skills and intellect so you can help solve our most difficult problems.”*



*Khiry Starghill*

The American Friends Service Committee makes the same challenge to youths, working with them to address issues of poverty and lack of educational opportunities in Logan County, West Virginia. The Appalachian Center for Equality (ACE) allows low-income African-American students to take advantage of a variety of opportunities to ensure that they continue education past high school.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, youths who don’t complete high school find it difficult to achieve financial success in adulthood. In 2007, the median income for someone with less than a high school diploma was \$23,000, compared to \$48,000 for someone who obtained a

bachelor’s degree or higher.

Khiry Starghill plans to be on the positive side of those statistics, and he has even bigger aspirations. Broadway is the goal, but the next step for the Logan High School senior begins in the fall of 2011 at Marshall University, where he will major in theater.

For two years Khiry has been a member of the male mentoring group sponsored by ACE. During that time, he has had the opportunity to make college visits that helped him determine the best school for him.

“I learned that Marshall was one of only two colleges in the state that offers a four-year degree in theater,” he said. “Because of the mentoring group, I got to visit the fine arts department and meet the director.”

Khiry’s passion for theater is evident. Even with school and a job at a sandwich shop, he finds time to perform each summer in outdoor theater productions in Logan. For the past four years, he has been part of the large ensemble cast of the historical drama, “The Aracoma Story,” and last summer he had the featured role of the Candy Man in “Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.”

Khiry says the mentoring group also has played an important role helping him develop his social skills.

“I’m like a lot of African American males in this area,” he said. “I was raised by women. We don’t have stable male figures. That’s the piece that’s missing for us.”

The mentoring group has provided Khiry with opportunities to “hang out with male friends.” The young men have shared common experiences, developed trust and provided support for each other under the guidance of adult mentor Rickey French, who, in Khiry’s words “really cares about us.”

The group took a camping trip last summer, and members regularly meet for dinner.

“Our leader, Mr. French, is very interested in how we’re doing in school, and he keeps an eye on us,” Khiry said. “It’s a bond we all have, being around a group that’s like a family. It’s so good to have a place of stable common ground.”

Khiry believes that nothing is beyond his reach and he believes in his fellow group members as well. “We genuinely care about each other’s successes.”

## Did you know?

**80 percent of participants in ACE mentoring programs continue onto higher education.**



*The Logan County high school graduation rate is 73 percent, compared with a national rate of 85 percent. (Census Bureau)*

*The dropout rate among African Americans, Hispanics and low-income students is nearly 50 percent. (Gates Foundation)*

*In 2008, young adults with a bachelor’s degree earned 96 percent more than young adults who did not earn a high school diploma. (National Center for Education Statistics)*

*Dropouts from the class of 2008 will cost West Virginia almost \$1.7 billion in lost wages over their lifetimes. (Alliance for Excellent Education)*



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## Human Rights in Pittsburgh

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intimate. I was impressed with how close we had all become in just a few weeks.”

Angelina also opened up to the group. “I think people stereotype me because I am home-schooled. They think that I am nerdy and that I sit at home all day and that I am not involved in the community.” But she felt like the group members reacted well when she told them about herself. “They were interested in learning about a typical day for me. It was good for them to actually talk to me so that they didn’t have to make assumptions.”

The participants’ different backgrounds keep the conversations and discussions lively and varied. To be an active member requires skills in listening. At an early session, group members learned techniques for active listening. Angelina said, “I think that it is easy to say, ‘listen to people’ but we did a lot of exercises that made



***Pittsburgh students design an ideal community using a consensus process.***

me really practice that skill. Doing it right is not as easy as you think. I have been trying to practice listening outside of the group.”

She realizes that listening is an important step to building community. It is a tool she plans to use both in Pittsburgh and when she enters the Peace Corps, where Angelina will be one of the many faces of the human rights movement.