

Quaker Action



Practicing transformative solidarity

Community safety
beyond prisons and
policing
pg. 7

Sustainable farming
in El Salvador and
Guatemala
pg. 11

Campaigning to
divest from Israeli
occupation
pg. 15



**American
Friends
Service
Committee**

Fall 2022 Volume 103 Number 2

Contents

In El Salvador, communities exchange seeds and other local products as part of their work for food sovereignty. See page 11. PHOTO: OMAR PONCE/AFSC



CONTENTS

- 2 Letter from our general secretary**
- 3 Alumni news**
- 4 Updates from AFSC**
- 6 Q+A: Defending human rights in border communities**
An interview with Pedro Rios, director of the U.S.-Mexico Border Program
- 7 Our North Star: A vision for community safety beyond prisons and policing**
We need transformative alternatives rooted in healing and human dignity. AFSC's "North Star" guides our work toward that future.
- 11 Returning to the roots**
In El Salvador and Guatemala, community members practice ancestral farming techniques.
- 15 Divesting from the Israeli occupation**
Read how AFSC and partners waged a successful campaign to get General Mills to stop manufacturing Pillsbury products on stolen Palestinian land.
- 16 Emerging Leaders for Liberation**
AFSC has launched a new program that helps young people strengthen their social justice and leadership skills. Meet three of this year's participants.
- 18 Staff Spotlight**

Quaker Action

Published by the
American Friends
Service Committee

Who we are

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) promotes a world free of violence, inequality, and oppression.

Guided by the Quaker belief in the divine light within each person, we nurture the seeds of change and the respect for human life to fundamentally transform our societies and institutions.

Managing Editor

Ronna Bolante

Editors

Mark Graham
Theresa Kirby
Layne Mullett

Design

Aija Suuta
Carl Roose

Contact

quakeraction@afsc.org

American Friends Service Committee

1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Tel: 215-241-7000
Toll-free: 888-588-2372

Cover photo

Alia Lahlou and Lalla Kaber participated in AFSC's Dialogue and Exchange Program gathering in Morocco in June. The event brought together cultural organizers and activists from Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, and other countries to discuss the role of art in their work for social change.

Photo: Mohamed Morchidi



Letter from our general secretary

Participants in our first ELL cohort in Philadelphia.
PHOTO: YAZEED KAMALDIEN/AFSC

One of my favorite highlights of 2022 so far was meeting AFSC's first cohort of Emerging Leaders for Liberation.

Our new activist leadership program brings together young people involved with AFSC's programs as well as Quaker colleges and meetings. Earlier this year, participants met in Philadelphia to learn, strategize, and energize each other as they deepened their social justice skills. (You can meet some of them on page 16.)

I'm so inspired to see young adults from across our programs come together in solidarity, thirsty to engage with others, to put their ideas into action. Powerful examples of hope and love in action like these couldn't have come at a better time. It has been another year of uncertainty and not feeling as connected as we would like. With times remaining tough for so many of us and our friends around the world, our work with communities challenging root causes of oppression is increasing critical.

Today your support means so much in our work for a more just and peaceful future for all. Thank you for being a part of our community of changemakers. I hope the stories in this issue of Quaker Action give you some hope and a feeling of solidarity to cherish.

In peace,



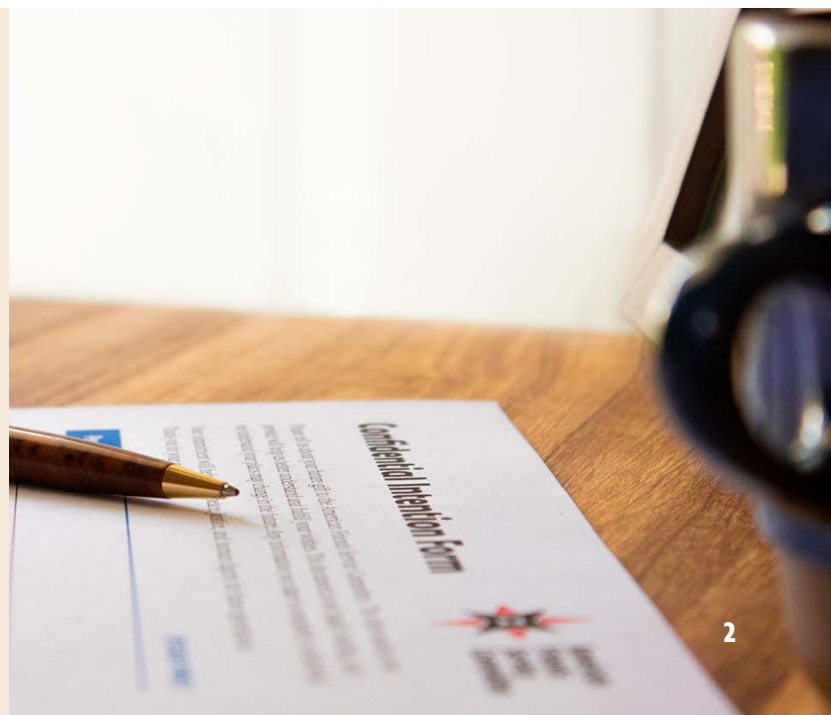
Joyce Ajlouny
General Secretary

Your good intentions *can* make a difference!

Leaving a gift to AFSC in your will helps promote peace, justice, and human dignity for generations to come.

Already included AFSC in your plans? Use our confidential form to notify us of your future gift so we can help fulfill your wishes. There is no obligation, and you can make changes anytime.

Call 888-588-2372, email GiftPlanning@afsc.org, or go to afsc.org/legacy to learn more. Thank you!



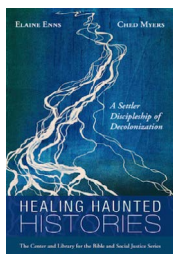
Get Alumni Network updates
and join our Facebook group!

afsc.org/alumni



Tonya Histan

Director of Public Engagement



Ched Myers, who worked for AFSC in Pasadena, recently co-authored “Healing Haunted Histories.” The book addresses the continent-wide theft of Indigenous land that made possible the establishment of the United States and Canada.

Kitty Bergel was a fundraiser for AFSC for 22 years, based in Pasadena, California. Kitty passed away on July 29 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Dr. Maria Alcívar-Zúñiga, who interned with AFSC’s Iowa Immigrant Rights Program, is a winner of the 2022 Karas Award for Outstanding Dissertation. Maria now serves as the executive director at the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence. She focused her dissertation on the strength of Latinx immigrant parents in Iowa in the context of restrictive immigration policies and legal violence.



John Korty worked in the AFSC audio-visual department in the early 1960s. He produced “Language of Faces” for AFSC, which he later called his most personal film. John, who died in March, was best known for a series of ambitious television movies that examined racism, disability, and other social issues.

IN MEMORY



Stephen McNeil

Former longtime AFSC staffer

For decades, **Stephen McNeil** worked in AFSC’s San Francisco office. Before retiring, he last served as director of the AFSC Peacebuilding Program in the Bay Area. He passed away on June 18.

Photo: AFSC/Bryan Vana

As a student at Middlebury College, **Steve Early** became active in the student movement against the Vietnam War. He went on to serve as the Vermont field secretary for AFSC from 1971 to 1972. Steve recently published “Our Veterans.” The book explores the physical, emotional, social, economic, and psychological impacts of military service and the problems veterans face when they return to civilian life.



In the 1980s and '90s, **Willie Brown III** was clerk of AFSC’s New England Regional Executive Committee as well as serving on the Board and other administrative committees. He passed away on May 31.

After World War II, **Lucretia Evans** moved from St. Louis to Philadelphia to work for AFSC before traveling to Finland and Germany, where she worked in post-World War II reconstruction. On Jan. 13, Lucretia passed away just after turning 101.

Do you have news or stories to share? Email us at alumni@afsc.org



AFSC's Jennifer Bing and Jihad Abusalim at a launch event for "Light in Gaza."

GAZA

New book features voices from Gaza

What could the future of Gaza look like? A new book from AFSC, "Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire," speaks to that question.

The New York Times reviewed the book, writing, "the searing collection anthologizes works by Palestinians from Gaza—some residents, some refugees—describing their lives under occupation and amid the ongoing struggle for freedom."

For 16 years, 2 million Palestinians in Gaza have lived under Israeli military

blockade—with devastating effects. Today most Palestinians in Gaza rely on international assistance to survive. Even children have lived through multiple Israeli bombings on Gaza, including this year.

"Light in Gaza" brings the essays and poems of 11 Palestinian writers from Gaza to people around the world. We hope readers are inspired to stand in solidarity with Palestinians in this important political moment. •

Get your copy today:
afsc.org/LightinGaza



Jennifer Bing
Director, Palestine
Activism Program



Illustration: AFSC

CALIFORNIA

Exposing police militarization

Last year, California enacted a state law, AB481, to help create accountability in police use of militarized equipment, including armored vehicles and tear gas. AFSC's Healing Justice Program researched the holdings of dozens of police departments in California. Then we helped local activists use the new law to advocate for policy changes.

Our collective efforts paid off. In Santa Cruz, activists convinced council members to require police to publicly disclose information on their use of assault rifles. In Culver City, community members successfully advocated for limits on the use of certain weapons. And in Alameda County, community members helped stop more weapons from being supplied to a local jail with a history of violence against people in its custody.

Communities are also having long-overdue conversations about the militarization of local police, with support from AFSC. Militarized responses are traumatizing, and disproportionately impact communities of color. As one participant said, "I didn't even know we had an armored vehicle. Is it appropriate to try to normalize our children to its presence?"

More: afsc.org/equippedforwar



Jennifer Tu

Ristad Fellow,
California Healing Justice
Program



Tori Bateman

Policy Advocacy
Coordinator

UNITED STATES

New hotline spotlights military recruiter abuse

Recruiters have long worked in schools and communities to get young people to sign up for the military. They often target low-income students and students of color for enlistment.

In some cases, recruiters abuse their power. They harass young people, lie about military service, make false promises, and even threaten violence.

AFSC has seen an uptick in people reaching out about abusive military recruiters. It's important for Congress and the Department of Defense to understand just how pervasive these incidents are. That's why we've reopened our Military Recruiter Abuse Hotline.

Since this spring, we've collected dozens of reports of military recruiter abuse through our hotline and online form. With the consent of those reporting, we will use the information to advocate for policy changes to stop recruiter abuses. We are also connecting people who have reported abuse to trained counselors when appropriate. •

Do you know someone experiencing abuse from a military recruiter? They can report it by visiting afsc.org/hotline or calling 202-483-5370.

Defending human rights in border communities

An interview with **Pedro Rios**, director of AFSC's U.S.-Mexico Border Program

Q: For years, AFSC has worked to expose widespread abuse by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Could you tell us more about the problem?

A: CBP uses militarized enforcement strategies. Their actions are harmful, sometimes even leading to migrant deaths. They have violated the rights of migrants and border community members with impunity. The Border Patrol, which is part of CBP, is charged with enforcement between ports of entry. It has an egregious history of responding with violence.

“Congress should not continue funding an agency that mistreats migrants and abuses its authority.”

Q: As part of the Southern Border Communities Coalition (SBCC), you recently helped expose cover-up units within Border Patrol. What was happening?

A: Since at least 1987, the Border Patrol has been using secretive units to mitigate civil liabilities in cases of misconduct or excessive force. These unsanctioned units have been known to conceal, obstruct, and destroy evidence.

SBCC learned about the units after researching the death of Anastasio Rojas in San Diego. In 2010, Anastasio—a 42-year-old father of five—was brutally beaten by over a dozen border agents, leading to his death. In that case, secret units withheld and corrupted evidence and falsified government documents.

Our coalition discovered this mishandling of cases wasn't limited to Anastasio's death. It was systemic and maliciously done to prevent accountability for malfeasance and



Pedro Rios

Director, U.S. Mexico Border Program

Photo: San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium

abuse by Border Patrol. There are countless other cases where these units kept families from seeking justice after agents violently took the lives of their loved ones.

Q: What actions did the coalition take?

A: We contacted members of Congress to alert them that Border Patrol's secretive units were working outside the law, without a congressional mandate to investigate cases. Elected officials responded to our concerns. Our efforts moved the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to act. He announced that the secretive units would be disbanded this fall.

That was a positive step. But we continue to call for Congress to reopen cases where Border Patrol obstructed justice through these unlawful units. It's one piece in our ongoing work to stop CBP abuses and ensure that migrants' rights and dignity are respected.

Q: What else is AFSC doing?

A: AFSC directly supports people harmed by border enforcement agencies. We help individuals file complaints when they experience abusive treatment. We also lead human rights leadership workshops so community members can advocate on their own behalf and exercise their collective power through community organizing.

Together, we address the lack of accountability and transparency within CBP agencies. We advocate for more oversight. We also urge Congress to cut funding for CBP. Congress should not continue funding an agency that mistreats migrants and abuses its authority. •

Our North Star

A vision for community safety
beyond prisons and policing

ILLUSTRATION BY
MOLLY COSTELLO

We all want to live in safe, healthy communities. But prisons and policing do not keep us safe.

Every year, the U.S. spends about \$80 billion to imprison people and another \$123 billion on policing. Yet we still have high rates of gun violence. Today over 1.8 million people are locked away and they are disproportionately poor people and people of color.

Instead of a system based on criminalization and retribution, we need transformative alternatives rooted in healing and human dignity.

AFSC's "North Star" guides our work toward that future. This vision includes seven guideposts on the path toward abolition.



EMBRACE HEALING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Our justice system should be grounded in dignity, restoration, and community.

Imagine if we had systems in place to help people heal from harm— systems that support both accountability and transformation. That would be a significant step toward greater community safety.

To become safer, we need to invest in proven solutions like restorative justice practices and community based re entry programs. We need to teach young people mediation and conflict resolution skills. And we need skilled, unarmed emergency response teams to help in emergencies.



Photo: Joshua Saleem/AFSC

MISSOURI

Restorative justice in schools

In St. Louis, AFSC trains high school students in peer mediation so they can help other students resolve conflicts peacefully. Peer mediation is one alternative to suspension or expulsion. It is also a way to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline.

AFSC supported a peer mediation program at Northwest Law Academy High School for nearly a decade—and saw suspensions drop significantly. In August, we launched a similar program at Vashon High School.

GUIDEPOST TWO

INVEST IN PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

Everyone should have access to food, health care, mental health services, and housing.

Incarceration has failed as a response to violence, drug addiction, and mental health problems. The “war on drugs” has locked up millions of people while overdose deaths increase. Families and communities have been torn apart. And mass incarceration has not made our communities safer.

Here's what does help keep us safe: Living in communities where all people have fair wages, great schools, and affordable health care.

Addiction and mental illness are public health issues. Our response should be prevention and treatment, not punishment. Directing resources toward health and wellness is critical. So is funding for public education, jobs, housing, food access, and environmental protections.

SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED REENTRY

People returning from incarceration should be welcomed and set up to succeed.

Everyone deserves a second chance. But that's hard to come by for people released from prison. Most face "collateral consequences," including barriers to housing, employment, and voting. These consequences set people up to fail.

Instead, incarcerated people should be prepared for release. Communities should be resourced to support them. Prison and parole administrators should support successful re-entry. And state and local policies should facilitate reintegration.



NEW YORK

Accompanying people inside prison walls

Larry White (pictured above)—who spent 32 years in prison—created the Hope Lives for Lifers Project, with support from AFSC and partners. Since 2013, the project has helped people serving life or long sentences in New York seek parole, clemency, or sentence reductions.

Each person receives a manual for mapping out their path toward release. The project also offers trainings, discussion groups, and peer mentoring to help them succeed—as well as opportunities for participants to advocate for their rights.



MICHIGAN

Ending perpetual punishment

In Michigan, AFSC helps people serving long sentences access parole. We also advocate for policy changes to give all people the chance to come home.

Our Good Neighbor Project pairs people in prison with people out of prison in a "co-mentorship." Through letters and other correspondence, they learn from each other—promoting healing and transformation.

You can hear directly from people serving long sentences through our online story collection at:

LETMETELLYOUMI.ORG

GUIDEPOST FOUR

DECARCERATE

We need to reduce the number of people behind bars.

Our current laws and policies send a lot of people to prisons and jails—disproportionately Black and Brown people. Many are there for years or decades. Others are placed under other problematic forms of state control, such as parole and probation.

We need to bring people home.

We can start by ending harsh sentencing laws and stopping the use of bail and detainers.

END CRIMINALIZATION AND SURVEILLANCE

Law enforcement policies should never target people based on age, race, religion, or origin.

Racially targeted policing has fueled mass incarceration. Women and LGBTQ people can land in jail for acts related to poverty, child welfare, drug use, survival, and self-defense. “War on terror” surveillance programs target Muslims, Arabs, Black people, and immigrant communities.

We must reject measures that normalize surveillance.

END PRISON PROFITEERING

No one should profit from human suffering.

Corporations are heavily invested in incarceration. As communities have worked to reduce prison populations, these companies have developed new ways to profit. While they have pivoted to “rehabilitation programs,” health care services, and reentry services, they have not changed their approach. Their focus is their bottom line, in a system that emphasizes punishment.

We need to abolish private prisons, private detention facilities, and all attempts to profit from incarceration. Divesting from corporations profiting off the prison industry is a good place to start.

Are your investments supporting the prison industry?

Visit our Investigate site, where you can screen your investments.

[AFSC.ORG/INVESTIGATE](https://afsc.org/investigate)

REPLACE POLICING WITH COMMUNITY-CENTERED SAFETY

Communities are innovating to end their reliance on police—and succeeding.

Police do not serve and protect our communities. In countless examples, they target, detain, and kill people—disproportionately Black, Brown, and trans people. Politicians spend millions of taxpayer dollars to further militarize law enforcement—while denying needed funding for schools and health care.

Our government should work for all of us. Money can and should be moved out of police budgets to fund new approaches to public safety.



MORE RESOURCES

Explore our North Star: **[AFSC.ORG/NORTHSTAR](https://afsc.org/northstar)**

Watch videos from AFSC’s webinar series “Community Safety Beyond Policing”: **[AFSC.ORG/CSBP](https://afsc.org/csbp)**

Are you part of a Quaker Meeting? Several meetings are considering minutes of support for AFSC’s North Star. Contact our Friends Relations team to learn more or schedule a presentation: FriendsRelations@afsc.org

RETURNING TO THE ROOTS

In El Salvador and Guatemala, community members practice ancestral farming techniques to create a healthier, more just future for all.

By **Josseline Acuña**, Regional Officer of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, Latin America and the Caribbean, **Victoria Leonard**, Guatemala Field Officer, and **Omar Ponce**, El Salvador Program Officer



PHOTO: OMAR PONCE /AFSC

In the rural community of San Julián in western El Salvador, a group of women hike along the hillsides. They carry hoes, trays of seedlings, and sacks of natural fertilizer. Over several hours, they work the volcanic soil with their tools and bare hands—in the same way their ancestors did. With constant care, they know they will soon harvest fresh vegetables to nourish their families and communities.

San Julián is one of several communities where women and young people are leading sustainable agricultural projects, with support from AFSC.

In both El Salvador and Guatemala, AFSC works with local partner organizations to create opportunities for people to gather and learn from each other. Participants analyze how capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy impact their lives—and share how their communities are organizing to protect their human rights. Participants also learn sustainable farming methods, receiving supplies and support to start projects of their own.

Their efforts come at a critical time. In El Salvador, communities are dealing with the impacts of transnational corporations that have exploited land and resources through commercial agriculture operations and the use of toxic chemicals. Some companies have privatized water resources, exacerbating El Salvador's water crisis.

In Guatemala, communities also face struggles with foreign interests. Hydroelectric megaprojects have depleted natural resources, leading to environmental destruction and the displacement of communities.

Practicing sustainable agriculture is one way that communities are resisting. People are revitalizing ancestral farming practices. They are caring for their communities and the Earth. And they are building food sovereignty and a more just, local economy that works for all.

Here are some photos from a few of these efforts over the past year.



PHOTO(S): AFSC GUATEMALA

GUATEMALA

Nebaj, Quiché

Tomatoes are a key ingredient in traditional dishes in Guatemala. But in the highlands of the western part of the country, they're extremely difficult to grow.

That has changed for the Ixil Mayan community of Nebaj, Quiché. Last year, AFSC helped community members build greenhouses to protect their crops from heavy rains and grow more produce. Since last year, families have been able to harvest plenty of tomatoes in Nebaj—as well as peppers and other vegetables.

The project is done in partnership with local organization Chemol Txumb'al ("Youth that weave knowledge" in the Ixil Mayan language).

The project provides women with opportunities for leadership in agriculture, which is traditionally led by men in Nebaj. Today six women are responsible for the greenhouses in their communities.

That includes community members like Jacinto Ceto, 25.

"I feel inspired to continue working in agriculture," he says. "It connects me with my culture and that [is something] I want to pass on to my son."

I feel inspired to continue working in agriculture, It connects me with my culture and that [is something] I want to pass on to my son. —JACINTO CETO, AGE 25



GUATEMALA

Chimaltenango

Last year, a group of Mayan Kaqchikel women in Chimaltenango, Guatemala created a community garden of medicinal plants using ancestral farming practices.

The women are all members of AMEB (Association of Women Entrepreneurs Balamayá), a local partner of AFSC. They completed the project with their daughters and sons and with support from AFSC.

Today basil grows in the garden alongside rue, wormwood, insulin, thyme, peppermint, mugwort, and chamomile. Each has been used historically by the Mayan people for medicinal purposes. The community plans to dehydrate plants to make teas or infusions. These will be distributed through another upcoming project—the construction of a medicine bank.

Participants are working to recover the practices that their ancestors used for centuries to care for community members. They also want to restore faith in the use of medicinal plants.

The garden was spurred by concerns about the health of local families—and the lack of resources for health care. “We asked ourselves: How did our grandmothers treat these diseases,” says Lucía, a Kaqchikel Mayan woman and leader. “And it was there, in that space of exchange, that we retook the grandmothers’ and grandfathers’ advice, through the practices of caring for the land, choosing seeds, caring for the plants, and harvesting the crops.”





EL SALVADOR

San Julián and Cuisnahuat

The Agroecological School brings together women from 14 communities in western El Salvador. The region is home to most of the country's Indigenous population.



I dream of having a healthy plot, taking care of our Mother Earth, taking care of our health, and also involving more young people in agroecology and being an example for them. —SOFIA, AGE 15

Participants learn sustainable agricultural methods that are in keeping with their ancestral values. They learn how to conserve Native and Creole seeds. They also learn to identify transgenic seeds (ones that have non-native genetic material that can harm the ecosystem). And they learn to manage pests and disease through organic methods.

The school was founded by local partner ANADES (New Dawn Association of El Salvador) in 2017 and is now supported by AFSC.

Every year, participants harvest tons of healthy, organic vegetables—including green beans, green pepper, corn, and tomatoes. It's more than enough to feed their families and neighbors and sell at local markets. In fact, ANADES and AFSC are looking for additional venues where women can sell what they've grown.

Sofia (pictured), age 15, is one of the youngest and newest participants in the program.

"I dream of having a healthy plot, taking care of our Mother Earth, taking care of our health, and also involving more young people in agroecology and being an example for them," she says.

How we got General Mills to divest from the Israeli occupation

In August 2020, AFSC launched a campaign to get General Mills to stop manufacturing its Pillsbury products on stolen Palestinian land. The products were coming from a factory in an illegal Israeli settlement in occupied East Jerusalem. Israel had annexed this area in violation of international law following the 1967 war. The factory is using land, water, and other resources that were forcibly taken from their legal Palestinian owners.

AFSC worked with partner organizations, community groups, congregations, and the general public to pressure General Mills. Together, we decided to launch a consumer boycott of Pillsbury products.

This June, we got the good news: General Mills had divested its business in Israel. Pillsbury products would no longer be produced on land stolen from Palestinians.

The victory is a major step forward in the struggle for Palestinian rights. Here's what made it happen.

MOVEMENT BUILDING

From the start, the campaign was a collective effort. It was coordinated by the Palestinian Boycott National Committee and steered by a broad coalition of organizations, including AFSC.

In February 2020, the United Nations published its first-ever database of companies involved in the illegal Israeli settlement enterprise. General Mills' violations earned it a spot on that list—one of only seven U.S. companies named. This presented an opportunity to confront the corporation about its longstanding involvement in the Israeli occupation.

AFSC is a General Mills shareholder, and we made the most of our position. We organized several faith investors in engaging General Mills to explain our concerns. We also raised the issue at shareholder meetings. We wanted everyone who had a stake in the company to know it was violating its own human rights policy.

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

We created an online form so anyone could email the CEO of General Mills. We asked supporters to stop buying Pillsbury products until the company made a change—and to let the company know. More than 10,000 emails were sent during our campaign.

The visibility of our campaign grew when Charlie Pillsbury and four other descendants of Pillsbury's founders joined us. They endorsed the campaign, announcing they would boycott the company that bears their name.

Coalition partners Jewish Voice for Peace and SumOfUs created petitions and a social media campaign. Women Against Military Madness held protests at General Mills' headquarters in Minnesota. American Muslims for Palestine organized a virtual bake-off. They asked participants to make dishes without Pillsbury products and share photos on social media.

From Oakland, California to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, local groups picketed in front of grocery stores. They urged retailers to de-shelve Pillsbury and talked to shoppers about the campaign.



We included the iconic Pillsbury in our campaign, using this costume and creating a Twitter account for the @WokeDoughboy.

MOVING FORWARD

Today, there's a consensus in the international human rights community that Israeli authorities are committing the crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people. In February, Amnesty International issued a report citing "massive seizures of Palestinian land and property, unlawful killings, forcible transfer, drastic movement restrictions, and the denial of nationality and citizenship to Palestinians." The report joined previous similar analyses by other prominent Palestinian, Israeli, and global human rights organizations.

Corporations are often complicit in these rights violations. That also means they can and must play a role in bringing change. Just like General Mills, other corporations will act to protect their bottom line. It's up to all of us to help ensure that profiting from human rights violations doesn't pay.

To learn more, visit our Investigate website. Use our tools to see if you are invested in the Israeli occupation—and take the first step toward cutting your ties with apartheid.

LEARN MORE AT [AFSC.ORG/INVESTIGATE](https://afsc.org/investigate)



PHOTO: RAQUEL SARASWATI/AFSC

EMERGING LEADERS FOR LIBERATION

BY NATHANIEL DOUBLEDAY

Digital Media Manager

This year, AFSC launched Emerging Leaders for Liberation (ELL) to help young people strengthen their social justice and leadership skills. Over eight months, youth get trained on anti racism, organizing, advocacy, nonviolent direct action, and more. They also develop projects to address systemic issues in their own communities.

“It’s vital that young people understand how much their voices matter and the power they have to create change. We need to continue investing in their leadership for a better future for everyone.”

—**MARIANA MARTINEZ**
ELL Program Director

The inaugural cohort of ELL participants includes 30 young people from 15 states. Many have worked with local AFSC programs or are part of Quaker meetings or colleges.

Here are three of this year’s participants.

EMERGING LEADERS FOR LIBERATION



Julie Flores-Castillo, 18
Red Bank, New Jersey

As a child, Julie learned firsthand the injustices faced by immigrants. She also knew she needed to do something about it. “I was born here, but I have loved ones who are undocumented,” Julie says. “There’s always been this underlying fear of something happening to them. Unfortunately, I experienced that when my dad was deported when I was 14.”

At age 15, Julie got involved with AFSC’s Immigrant Rights Program in Red Bank, New Jersey. She took part in rallies and lobbied legislators for permanent protections for DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipients and all immigrants. She also helped people who do have citizenship register to vote.

“It means a lot to me to be out there with other young people advocating for our immigrant communities,” Julie says. “It shows our young people that there’s so much more than what we deem ourselves to be or what the system deems us to be.”



Lex Colleen LaFrese, 22
New York City, NY

Alexis was a college freshman when she got involved in organizing for changes in the criminal legal system. Since then, she has worked on campaigns to reform parole and stop the prosecution of minors as adults.

Her classes in sociology helped her see the need for humane, community-based alternatives to prisons. They also helped her connect with abolitionist organizations, including AFSC.

“Our current system is so inhumane that I feel like there’s no way to fix it,” says Alexis. “We need to close prisons, get people back into the community, and find other ways for people to be accountable for the harm that they cause without putting them in cages.”

For her ELL project, Alexis is working with Katal Center, a local group in New York City, on a new campaign to shut down Rikers Island and reinvest those funds to meet community needs.



Romero Ortiz, 20
Miami, Florida

Romero knows art is a powerful tool for activism. As a member of AFSC’s Seed of Resistance program in Florida, he has worked alongside other young people to use art to challenge unjust policies, including immigrant detention.

“I feel like art is a form of communication that can be used to put out messages and feelings that can’t be expressed in words,” Romero says. “Art gets people’s attention.”

As part of ELL, Romero and other participants are taking inspiration from their work with Seeds of Resistance. They are organizing an art exhibit—of their own works and others—to convey the impacts of gentrification in Miami and the nearby town of Homestead.

“ELL has been a learning experience for me,” Romero says. “Learning how to take a leadership approach to this work, instead of being just a volunteer, and how to work with other people—it’s been really fun!”

BUILDING GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP IN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Pedro Sosa (with sign) and other community members handing out masks, educational materials, and food during 2020 COVID 19 relief efforts. PHOTO: BETH RONK

Across the U.S., many immigrants confront injustices in their everyday lives. The presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) stokes fear among community members simply driving to work or dropping off their kids at school. Those who labor as farmworkers often face low wages and unsafe working conditions.

For over 19 years, Pedro Sosa has helped immigrant communities in Oregon and Washington understand their rights—and advocate for more just, humane immigration policies. As director of AFSC's Project Voice Immigrant Rights Program, he facilitates Know Your Rights workshops for 300 people every year using a popular educational approach. He also trains communities in how to respond to immigration raids.

"I don't lead them," Pedro says. "I

create space for people to come together, analyze injustices in our immigration system, and discuss what we can do about it."

Pedro also provides immigrant groups with trainings to foster grassroots leadership. These collaborations have led to successful advocacy cam-

"I create space for people to come together, analyze injustices in our immigration system, and discuss what we can do about it."

— PEDRO SOSA

paigns – from winning overtime pay for farmworkers to funding universal legal representation for immigrants. "Pedro has been instrumental in helping us do our work with a community focus," says Cristina Delgado, leadership and advocacy program manager of local organization Adelante Mujeres. "We're better able to talk about issues in ways that help people understand how policies affect them."

Find more events and actions
at afsc.org/getinvolved

GUIDES & TIPS

A guide to protesting

The right to peaceful protest is one of the cornerstones of a healthy democracy. Whether you are new to protesting or have been doing it for decades, use these tips to help you be safe, prepared, and get your message across.

[AFSC.ORG/PROTEST](https://afsc.org/PROTEST)

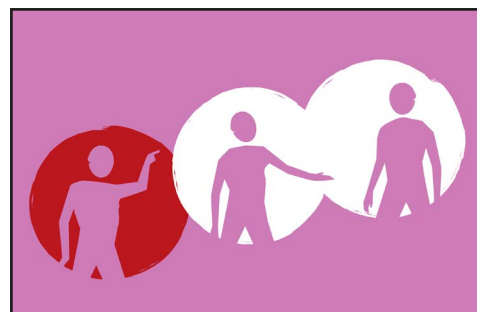


LEARN MORE

Bystander intervention

Have you ever wondered what you should do if you witness violence or harassment in public? Use these tips to assess how to intervene while considering the safety of everyone involved.

[AFSC.ORG/BYSTANDERINTERVENTION](https://afsc.org/BYSTANDERINTERVENTION)





**American
Friends
Service
Committee**

Quaker action for a just world

1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
afsc.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
American Friends
Service Committee

**Quaker
Action**

Fall 2022 Volume 103 Number 2

Your monthly gift powers peacebuilding!



AFSC supporters make the work you read about here possible—and so much more!

When you give monthly, you become an AFSC Partner for Peace. Partners for Peace invest in the long-term work needed to make change—while helping AFSC meet pressing needs around the world.

To learn more, visit
afsc.org/QAmonthly
or call our team
in Philadelphia at
888-588-2372.