

Dear Friends,

It has been a while since our last newsletter, and a lot has happened in AFSC and in the world. There is a deep feeling of increasing conflict happening everywhere: conflict in our politics; conflict and distress in the many communities that we work in and with; an increase in violence; and just a general meanness. There are so many issues that need to be addressed, and so many creative solutions we can offer that come from the wisdom and thoughtfulness of our partners and communities.

I was doing some research online in our archives and came across several documents from AFSC's 75th anniversary. The theme from the 1992 celebration was "Faith, Risk, Change." This theme speaks to me personally, and I believe it speaks to our work powerfully.

Faith: We are a faith-based organization, comprised of staff, committees, and volunteers from many different faith traditions. But faith is much deeper than our traditions—faith is also the faith of the individuals, the communities, and the wisdom they have to offer. Faith gives us the resolution to take risks.

Risk: Risk in being resolute and unafraid to take principled stances and create actions informed by our Quaker values, paving the way for change to happen.

Change: Change is the boldness needed to practice the wisdom, ideas and actions that represent the community's solutions for just peace and general well-being. Through our loving actions, we are creating a movement that changes hearts and minds for a vision of just, sustainable and peaceful communities.

We must counteract the meanness and conflict in the world with love and peaceful, equitable solutions. We must do what was written for AFSC's 60th anniversary celebration: "See what love can do."

Keith Harvey
Director, Northeast Region
American Friends Service Committee



*Above: AFSC Northeast Regional Director Keith Harvey (right) with executive committee members during a 2022 action in in NH.
Photo: Arnie Alpert*



As we reflect on "what love can do" in this holiday edition, we want to acknowledge and celebrate our Wabanaki Program Director Denise Altvater and her 29 years of service. Denise, who recently retired, started working for the New England Region in the early 1990s. Through the years, Denise has been an amazing community organizer and advocate for the health and welfare of indigenous youth, the incarcerated, and for the restoration of indigenous culture and practices to heal from the colonial traumas experienced by the native communities of Maine. Denise's service and journey with AFSC are best expressed by this minute from the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy:

The Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy (FCMPP) is a statewide network of activist Quakers working on current political issues. In recent

Left: Denise Altvater, 2015. Photo: AFSC/Carl Roose

Honoring Denise Altvater

years our major focus has been on strengthening Tribal-state relations, and on Wabanaki concerns.

Some years ago, at an in-person meeting of FCMPP, our guest speaker was Denise Altvater to share her assessment of Tribal matters. In the midst of her presentation, Denise shared an intensely personal narration of her life experiences starting with sudden removal from her family and community followed by pain, abuse, and loneliness in foster care and then the damage that carried over into her life as an adult and mother.

It was a powerful and heartbreaking story that moved us to tears. Denise said that, at that time, we were the first non-Wabanaki group with whom she had shared her life story so deeply. For those of us who were present that day, her telling provided a preface to the subsequent struggle to create the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on mistreatment of Native youth, and to FCMPP's support of that effort.

Denise has served for many years as a capable and caring leader in service to her community and to Indigenous Peoples more widely. Her affiliation with the American Friends Service Committee gave her a special connection to Quakers in Maine all through her working career. We stand in debt to her and in admiration for the varied ways in which she brought counsel, relief, and support to her People.

We honor Denise Altvater upon her retirement and wish her many blessings in the years ahead. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

In gratitude,

Jim Matlack, Clerk, Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy
Shirley Hager, Clerk, Committee on Tribal-State Relations, FCMPP



What love can do through volunteering: Spotlighting the Northeast Executive Committee

Left: NE EC during an action with NH Program. Photo: Arnie Alpert

I am so amazed by the energy, the time and care that our committee members give to our work, and their loving support for our staff. This past year, our regional executive committee came out of COVID-19 isolation and decided to go on the road to meet in person with our program staff, interns and program committees. In the spring, the EC first traveled to Concord, New Hampshire to learn about the history of AFSC in NH. They joyfully engaged with the local program committee and staff, did governance business and held a Witness for PEACE action in front of the NH State House with local Quakers and supporters.

The EC's second outing landed them in Newark, New Jersey, where they met with our Healing Justice staff, interns, and program committee. They bonded around the long history of the work, its origins and growth, and gained a deeper understanding around prison and detention issues and community policing challenges. The work of the program has expanded, and a number of successful initiatives and collaborations have been started including the annual Liberation Summer Camp, campaigns to expose abuses in women's prisons, and our ongoing commitments to provide support for the many immigrants who find themselves in detention.

It is truly something special when we are able to gather and share a meal, get to know and learn from each other, and work together to pursue a more just and peaceful world. We are so grateful for the work of our regional executive committee—thank you!

- Keith

Wabanaki Program

The Wabanaki Program in Maine has been focused on ensuring that all youth have a safe space to come together to find any resources they may need. We have started a hygiene kit initiative that has blossomed into a wonderful resource closet full of water, clothing, hygiene products and home goods that youth may need. We believe that empowered and passionate youth are the future, so we created a space for youth to receive even basic needs they may not have access to at home. Together the Wabanaki Program and the Sipayik (ZE-BY-IG) Boys and Girls Club are working to ensure that youth have someone in their corner.

The Sipayik community is currently facing a water crisis that has been ongoing for many decades now. We have supported the efforts to bring clean water to the community by providing water deliveries every eight weeks to the tribal food pantry and Boys and Girls Club. Water is one of the most basic human rights, and as indigenous people we must fight harder than ever to ensure that our future generations have quality resources.

Immigrant Rights Program

The Immigrant Rights Program partnered with the Prison Watch Program and AFSC's Leading Edge Fellow Andrew Krinks to release the report *Free Them All: The Double Crises of Human Caging and COVID-19 in New Jersey and How to End It*. Testimonies of people who were incarcerated in New Jersey state prisons and immigration detention centers during the pandemic help us understand the nature and scope of the double crisis of human caging and COVID-19, and enable us to chart the course we must take together to end it. (www.afsc.org/document/free-them-all-double-crisis-human-caging-and-covid-19-new-jersey-and-how-to-end-it)

IRP staff responded to a bad 5th Circuit court decision on DACA with Legal Director Nicole Miller and Immigrant Rights Organizer Itzel Hernandez providing support with both a press release (www.afsc.org/newsroom/afsc-denounces-daca-ruling) and a Facebook Live to provide information about the decision and what it means for DACA holders. (www.facebook.com/100064864625311/videos/1057751378258465)

IRP has continued to support NJ Temporary Protected Status (TPS) committee meetings, strengthened the newly formed Immigrant Women's Group, and demonstrated in front of Elizabeth Detention Center, the only remaining detention facility in NJ, to celebrate the one-year anniversary of NJ's anti-detention law.

In its legal work, IRP has had several recent successful cases of individuals who were protected from deportation or granted asylum after being represented by AFSC attorneys. The Newark team represented hundreds of immigrants in their applications to remain in the U.S. and be reunited with their families, and provided legal counsel for people in detention both in NJ and those who were transferred to other states.

New Hampshire Program

NH Healing Justice Organizer Ophelia Burnett is organizing formerly incarcerated people to know their voting rights and engaged them as voters in November's election. She is also organizing impacted people to create a re-entry committee for women coming out of the state prison. (www.publicnewsservice.org/2022-11-07/civic-engagement/voting-after-incarceration-a-tough-stigma-to-overcome/a81387-2)

AFSC-NH just hired a new Grassroots Organizer Intern, Fisto Ndayishimiye, a young man who arrived in NH from the Congo five years ago. As part of his internship, Fisto is the lead organizer of Change for Concord, a grassroots group of young adults organizing for change at the state and local levels.



Grace Kindeke convenes a weekly gathering of Black and African immigrants for mutual support, learning and coordinated activities. The group is called Umokuumani, a name created by combining three of the Kwanzaa principles: Umoja (unity), Kuubma (creativity) and Imani (faith), with the goal of building power and connection among Black and African immigrants in NH.

Maggie Fogarty and Grace are preparing for the 2023 state legislative session which begins in January by hiring a State House Watch researcher, preparing for our weekly radio show, convening the NH Voices of Faith, and convening the NH Campaign for a People's Budget.

Our NH Immigrant Visitation Program returned to active status at the Strafford County jail in mid-May, following two years and two months of no visitation due to COVID. As the co-leader of this program, Maggie visits immigrants in ICE custody at Strafford every week.

AFSC-NH also held its annual program fundraiser, Sharing Our Light, on October 22. Thank you so much to everyone who joined us in-person and online! A video will be posted soon made up of highlights from the event.

Also in October, Grace Kindeke was awarded Youth of the Year by the Manchester, NH chapter of the NAACP. Kindeke was not able to attend the NAACP Freedom Fund event to accept the award, but shared in a video message of thanks, "It is incredible to be recognized for the work that I do by such a well-respected and deeply impactful organization as the NAACP ... I look forward to continuing our work together to make New Hampshire, Manchester and the country at large a much more equitable and welcoming place that makes it possible for all of our communities to thrive." (www.afsc.org/story/grace-kindeke-receives-youth-year-award-manchester-naacp)



Above: NH Healing Justice Organizer Ophelia Burnett (left) with Program Coordinator Grace Kindeke during a Know Your Rights for Incarcerated Community Members event, and (right) new Grassroots Organizer Intern Fisto Ndayishimiye.



New York Healing Justice

The Healing Justice Program in New York hosted its 9th annual Liberation Summer Camp and acknowledgment of the 51st anniversary of the Attica Uprising. The camp, in partnership with Echoes of Incarceration, engaged 25 young agents of change from impacted and ally communities. Together we addressed the 'why'

and 'how' around closing Riker's Island jails, ways to protect yourself and your rights during police encounters, and the socio-economic disparities in New York City arrests—all while working to wards healing in their personal lives. The campers produced three short documentaries and a reflections video.

The Attica Uprising birthed AFSC's commitment to healing justice work and continues as one of the clearest examples of the harm caused by the carceral state. In New York, we helped form the Attica Brothers Foundation as a way to support the living Attica brothers, to maintain and share the archives of the uprising and to bring the voices and perspectives of the Attica brothers to today's work of abolition.

New Jersey Prison Watch

In June, Prison Watch wrote to the Department of Corrections asking what preparations were made for the coming heat of the summer, given the crises last year. As frantic calls came in, our complaints to the Department resulted in state-wide coverage of needed changes. (www.njspotlightnews.org/2022/07/heat-wave-hit-nj-prisons-hard-no-air-conditioning-50-plus-housing-units-edna-mahan-correctional-facility-for-women/)

The Prison Watch Program guided and contributed to *Free Them All: The Double Crises of Human Caging and COVID-19 in New Jersey and How to End It*, and participated in the webinar launching the report, which concludes with an argument of substance for decarceration and abolition.

AFSC also honored Bonnie Kerness, who this year celebrated 50 years with the organization working for housing rights, the end of solitary confinement and improvements in prison conditions, publishing and exhibiting artworks and testimonies by incarcerated individuals, and much more. Learn more about Bonnie's contributions at www.afsc.org/bonnie.



Above: In March, AFSC celebrated Bonnie Kerness and her 50 years of service by sharing an interview between Bonnie and NE Associate Regional Director Amy Gottlieb, recounting her many contributions to communities in NJ.

[Please consider a tax-deductible donation to our Northeast Region](#), which will help support our ongoing work to resist oppression and create spaces for peace, justice and human dignity.

Also remember to check out the AFSC Alumni Page at www.afsc.org/alumni or via our Facebook group at www.facebook.com/groups/234049520577404 to engage with current and former AFSC staff, volunteers, interns and fellows.

Sincerely yours for peace and justice,

Keith B. Harvey
Northeast Regional Director

Amy Gottlieb
Northeast Associate Regional Director

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