

AFSC Midwest Digest – February 2023

Stories of work from around the region



A memorial to Tyre Nichols and Keenan Anderson in Chicago (photo: Mary Zerkel)

Police killing of Tyre Nichols should remind us of five lessons from 2020

In the face of normalized police violence and ongoing systemic racism, Mary Zerkel of the Chicago Peacebuilding Program [writes](#) about why we need to keep pushing for community safety for all beyond policing. Lessons from 2020 include:

1. Reformist reforms don't work.
2. We need police out of traffic stops.
3. We need police out of mental health response.
4. Police must stop targeting social justice organizers.
5. We need alternatives to police response to keep all community members safe.

AFSC Michael McConnell Youth Fellow Alicia Brown says, “Treatment can never happen with police or inside a prison. It’s just continued trauma, just more threats and violence, just more trauma when they’re in crisis.”

If you want to take a next step to help you avoid calling the police, [sign our pledge](#) to Think Twice About Calling the Police. You’ll receive information about upcoming webinars, study groups, and other resources to work with your community to keep all of your neighbors safe.



Freedom School in St. Louis (photo: Camron Rhodes)

Working in St. Louis toward alternatives to policing and prisons

Devonn Thomas, director of the St. Louis Healing Justice Program, says their work organizes Black youth to develop and advocate for alternatives to policing in our region. Through community organizing, coalition building and research, AFSC builds toward a world where local high schools and universities center real student safety. This includes increased access to mental health resources, funding for educators and improved school conditions as alternatives to carceral practices.



A rally for Second Look legislation in Michigan (Photo: Shakeb Ahmed)

Advocating for Second Look Legislation in Michigan

Natalie Holbrook, director of the Michigan Criminal Justice Program, says AFSC is continuing to focus on [ending life and long sentences](#). This is a basis for moving away from retribution, isolation and punishment and towards life-giving models rooted in healing, community, accountability and transformation. Second Look legislation would make everyone who has served 10 years or more eligible to apply for resentencing by their sentencing judge or successor. Join AFSC and partners for a [Day of Empathy](#) at the statehouse on February 23.



Jihad Abusalim of AFSC speaks on [Aljazeera](#).

Tell Congress: Stop funding Israeli oppression, violence against Palestinians

[Congress must act now](#) to end U.S. military assistance to Israel. As Israeli forces continue to take Palestinian lives and displace entire communities, the U.S. must take immediate action to end the violence and realize a just and lasting peace. Jihad Abusalim of the Palestine Activism Program, says on [Aljazeera](#) (beginning at the 8-minute mark) that “the US must hold Israel accountable.”



Participants in the Twin Cities “Unapologetically YOU” event (photo: Eric Burling)

Experiencing creativity as a means of resistance

Two members of the AFSC Twin Cities Youth Undoing Institutional Racism (YUIR) Board recently shared their thoughts about art. Adia Hickman, 15, said “I love art because it allows people to get away from their life stresses and bring to life what’s on their mind and heart.” Siham Abdi, 21, said, “I love art because of how boundaryless it is! I can think of and create anything I like without feeling the burden of trying to put it into a box.” Follow [Twin Cities’ work on Instagram](#).



Short takes

AFSC alumni with Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice share their [January movement update](#).... AFSC's second annual Emerging Leaders for Liberation (ELL) program is open for young adults looking to deepen their social justice and leadership skills. [Please share this invitation broadly](#), invite current program participants to enroll, and [join us on February 8 at 7 pm CT for an information session](#)....

...[Join us for The Black Quaker Lives Matter Film Festival & Forum \(Feb. 4-April 9\)](#): Joyce Ajlouny, Keith Harvey, and Hal Weaver will kick off this special series of events, co-sponsored by AFSC, to celebrate Quakers of color who have courageously worked for a more just, peaceful world. They will be discussing the legacy of Bill Sutherland on Feb 4. The festival will host screenings every other Saturday at noon CT on Zoom followed by a Q+A.... [Rex Friend](#), former AFSC Central Region EC member from Oklahoma City, passed away recently.

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