



AFSC West Region News – March 2023

Stories of work from around the region

Welcome to the American Friends Service Committee's West Region monthly newsletter. We look forward to connecting with you regarding our shared work for peace and justice. Thanks for your interest and support; please send feedback to WestNews@afsc.org.



Pan Valley Institute (PVI), Fresno

Performance looks at personal, universal life of a Black man in the US

From ArteVism Fellow Rodolfo Robles Cruz: In celebration of Black History month, PVI presented [CODE SWITCH](#) by ArteVism Alumnus Joshua Slack and directed by ArteVism Fellow Rodolfo Robles Cruz. This solo performance was a personal and universal dive into the life of a Black man living in the United States. A writer, performer, photographer, activist, and father, Slack had a successful opening night. More performances are anticipated in Madera, Merced, and Visalia as we tour California's Central Valley with this piece.

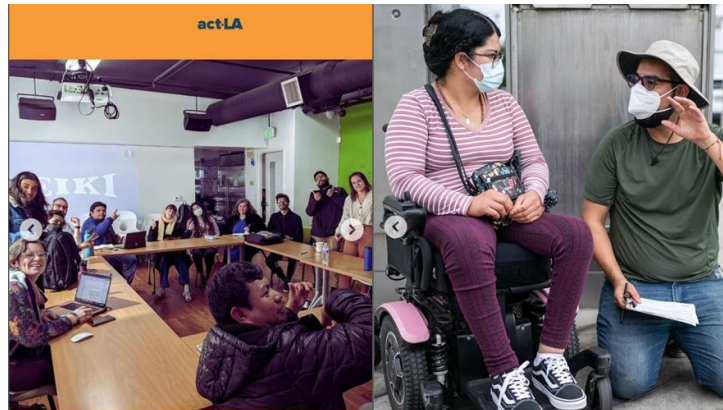
The show was prefaced by the talents of local artists, including Shane Ron Lara, a Champion of Visalia Loudmouth Poetry Slam, who performed some of his rap-style poetry. Arielle K. Jones, a Black and queer writer who is a Best of the Net 2020 Finalist, read a powerful and tender short story. And I Adeficha, a queer, gender-free, Nigerian-American writer and performer who is a powerhouse in the poetry world, read three of their pieces for us. They set the tone for the performance and allowed for a further reach into the BIPOC communities and the conversation of Code-Switching in our world.



US-Mexico Border Program, San Diego

Advocates speak out against Biden’s new asylum restrictions

The Biden administration has announced plans to [institute a ban on asylum seekers](#) who have traveled through another country to reach the U.S. The “administration is replicating some of the worst policies the Trump administration attempted to put forward” and will further endanger migrant lives, says Pedro Rios of AFSC. The administration must withdraw this proposal—and instead protect the right to asylum by providing clear, accessible pathways for all who seek safety. [Take action.](#)



Roots for Peace (R4P) Program, Los Angeles

Working for free transit and community-based safety in LA

From [Instagram](#): Roots For Peace has been supporting ACT-LA's fight for Universal Fareless Transit (free Metro Bus and Rail for all!) and the fight for reimagining community-based alternatives for safety on Metro. Metro’s \$222 million police contract is soon up for renewal. We know that police lead to more harm in the way of disproportionate citations and violence to working-class Black and brown riders. Help us let the Metro Board know that Angelenos do not support relying on police for safety. We demand that the hundreds of millions of dollars be invested in care-first safety strategies, like the Transit Ambassador Program and better infrastructure, such as improved lighting and more reliable, timely service. Please sign and share this [petition](#).



Economic Activism Program, Oakland

Working to end the exploitation of prison workers

“All major retailers in the US have prison labor in their supply chains,” says Noam Perry of AFSC in [The Nation](#). “They just don’t know it, and they don’t know it because they choose not to know it.” The Nation writes, “Activists say the most important step for ending forced prison is to dismantle the legal scaffolding that prevents court challenges: The 13th Amendment must be changed.” Note: The Economic Activism Program is transitioning to become part of AFSC’s new Global Cohesion unit. We wish them well!



The Young Women’s Freedom Center helps 67 Sueños with a mural.

67 Sueños, Oakland

Youth Coach Up builds support systems among youth

From [Facebook](#): Wasss Up Wass Up y’all! Hope you guys are having an amazing day. Our most recent Youth Coach Up (YCU) highlighted our [Youth Justice 10-point plan](#) and used Theater of the Oppressed to connect with youth with one another and practice building support systems within themselves. Because knowledge is power, and power is the youth! Hope to see you join our next YCU.



Christina and Jorge Zaldivar speak at a press conference in Denver.

Immigrant Rights Program, Denver

Colorado family receives great news

For the past 16 years, the U.S. government has tried to deport Jorge Rafael Zaldivar Mendieta, a Denver community leader and member of AFSC's Not1More Deportation project. After years of organizing, a three-year exile to Mexico, and legal appeals, the good news finally came: Jorge is now a permanent U.S. resident and can remain with his wife and five children in the U.S. [Read more.](#)



Patrick Jaramillo addresses the annual farmer gathering. Photo: Angelina Lopez-Brody

People of the Land Program, Albuquerque

Santa Fe Friends host AFSC NM's annual Farmer Gathering

During the last days of February, AFSC New Mexico hosted its 10th Annual Farmer Gathering. It was the first in-person, indoor event since January 2020, and we were very happy to see everyone. Farmers and staff from partner organizations and local government agencies gathered in person and virtually at the Santa Fe Friends Meeting House to reconnect and strengthen relationships. This came after so much time locked down or distancing due to public health concerns. Read [more](#) from Patrick Jaramillo of AFSC.



Healing Justice Program, Oakland

Journalism group honors Healing Justice Program for research work

In April 2022 the CA Healing Justice team published “Equipped for War,” a [research report](#), [data visualization](#), and [call to action](#) to demilitarize policing in California, focusing on the police use of military gear. The report earned AFSC the [James Madison Freedom of Information Award](#) by the Society of Professional Journalists – Northern California earlier this year.



Pedro Sosa of AFSC (center left) with a reminder about the importance of farmworkers

Project Voice Immigrant Rights Program, Oregon-Washington

Building grassroots leadership in immigrant communities

Across the U.S., many immigrants confront injustices in their everyday lives. For over 19 years, Pedro Sosa has [helped immigrants](#) in Oregon and Washington understand their rights. He also helps them develop leadership skills and advocate for more just, humane immigration policies.



Short takes and calendar items

AFSC alums at Just Communities Arizona share their [first annual report](#).... AFSC has joined over 60 faith-based organizations in [calling for cuts](#) in the Pentagon budget.... Check out the latest [news from AFSC's Midwest Region](#).... March 19 is the deadline for [applications](#) for AFSC's next Emerging Leaders for Liberation cohort.... Register for AFSC's [Values-Based Financial Planning webinar](#) set for Wednesday, March 22, 4 pm PT.... Join [AFSC's Annual Corporation meeting](#) in-person or online April 13-15.

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