



## AFSC West Region News – June 2024

*Stories of work from around the region*

Welcome to the American Friends Service Committee's West Region monthly newsletter. Please send feedback to [WestNews@afsc.org](mailto:WestNews@afsc.org).



From left: Myrna Martinez Nateras, Minerva Mendoza and Pedro Sosa

*Pan Valley Institute (PVI), Fresno and Oregon-Washington Project Voice*

### **“Picking up the pieces of what being a migrant means”**

On May 28, AFSC staff from Oregon and the Central Valley in California took part in the fifth of six installments of AFSC's Migrant Justice Webinar Series. They **shared** about issues faced by immigrant workers in various sectors and offered an analysis of the current conditions. They lifted up some ideas and opportunities for advocacy to ensure that all workers are able to access labor protections.

Myrna Martinez Nateras, PVI Program Director, said the agricultural industry generates a vast amount of wealth for corporations yet leaves 23% of its workers living below the poverty line.

Minerva Mendoza, PVI Program Associate, shared about her family's experiences as migrants, dating back to her grandfather's participation in the Bracero Program. Her father recently had to go back to Mexico due to a lack of health care or retirement fund. “We're still picking up the pieces of what being a migrant means,” Minerva said.

Pedro Sosa, who directs AFSC's work based in Salem, Oregon, said migrant workers live with fear while facing hatred and racism. AFSC's work includes taking educational materials to workers in the fields to help them learn how to protect themselves from high temperatures and advocate for their rights.



*US-Mexico Border Program, San Diego*

### **AFSC speaks out on Biden’s border order**

On June 4, the Biden Administration issued an Executive Order that would shut down the U.S.-Mexico border based on the number of people seeking entry. AFSC spoke out against the decision in this [press release](#).

“Who does it protect to terrorize families? Who does it serve to close the door on families seeking safety and a better life?” said Adriana Jasso, Coordinator of AFSC’s US-Mexico Border Program. “Our border communities don’t want more walls and border closures. We want policies that give everyone an opportunity to thrive, no matter where they were born.”

In the [New York Times](#), Pedro Rios, who directs AFSC’s US-Mexico Border Program, said it’s been “business as usual” at the border, with the only change being fewer people crossing recently. AFSC assists people who are migrating by providing them food and water.





Jordan Garcia (left) and Silky Shah

*Immigrant Rights Program, Denver*

### **Colorado staff decry border order, host “Unbuild Walls” author**

[Colorado Public Radio](#) quotes Jennifer Piper of AFSC, who said Biden’s recent orders “directly contradict President Biden’s commitment to rebuild the asylum system and they also violate the refugee convention.”

Piper adds, “And furthermore, I don’t believe they’ll deter migration. These policies don’t get at the root of what causes people to migrate. They’re just making that migration more dangerous and more deadly.” Read [more](#).

Earlier this week, AFSC Colorado hosted a live event with Silky Shah, Executive Director of Detention Watch Network, and Jordan Garcia of AFSC. They discussed [Unbuild Walls](#), Shah’s book that explores US immigration policy and its relationship to incarceration.

The book offers perspective on the intersections of immigrant rights, racial justice and prison abolition. This is a critical read as ICE’s contract with GEO Group in Aurora, Colorado will expire.



*People of the Land Program, Albuquerque*

### **Putting the “U” in evaluation**

The AFSC New Mexico evaluation sharing took place May 22 at the Barelas Community Center in Albuquerque. Fifteen people – including community members, AFSC NM Program Advisory Committee (PAC) members, and AFSC staff – enjoyed a wonderfully catered dinner of local food. Marty Jacobson (above), an evaluator with META Associates, shared preliminary data and participants’ comments regarding AFSC NM work over the past two years. His evaluation was based on surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews with farmers, teachers, partners, and members of our PAC. Committee. Read [more](#) from Patrick Jaramillo of AFSC.



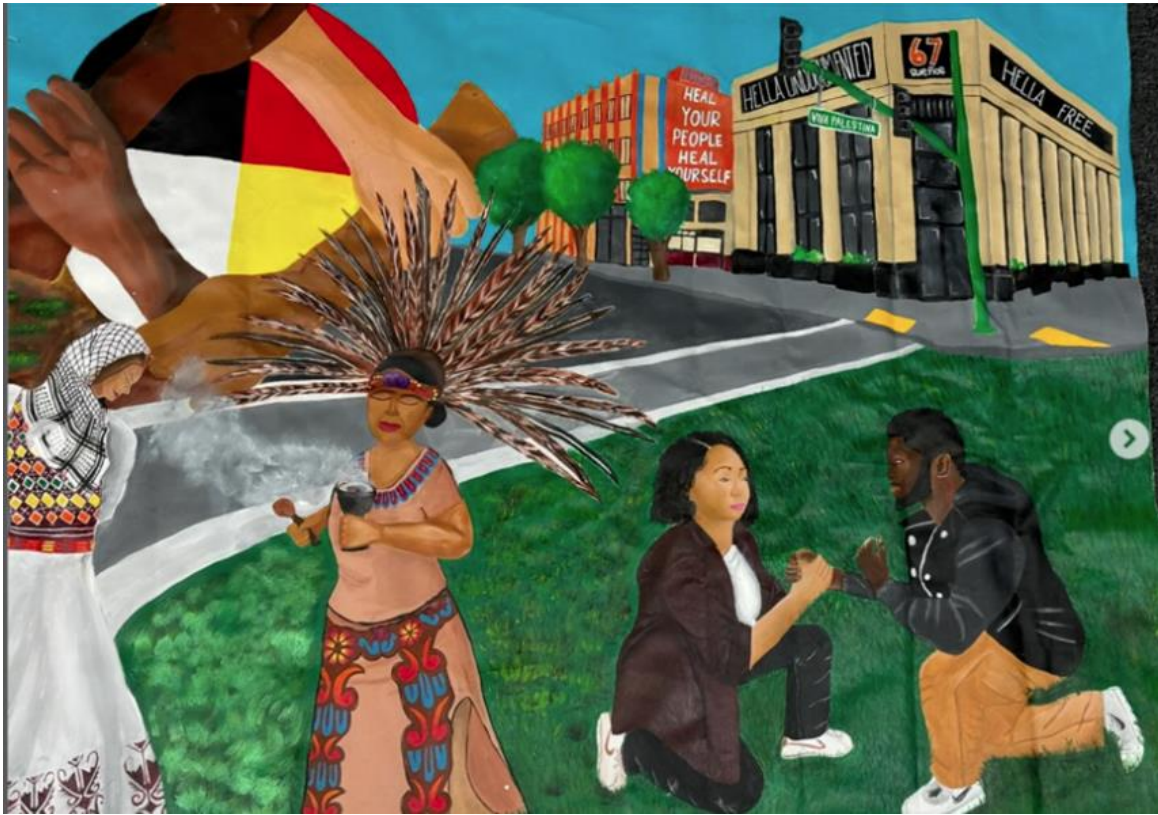
*California Healing Justice Program, Oakland*

### **SF police fail to comply with state law on use of military equipment**

In 2021, AFSC helped advocate for a new California law, AB 481, that requires more transparency from local police departments on their use of militarized equipment. Now, we’re helping communities hold police departments accountable in publicizing that information—and calling for change to those policies. One [recent example](#) is calling on San Francisco to fulfill its legal obligations.

John Lindsay-Poland of AFSC says the generally good law has "significant limitations" since "there are no real ways to address violations of the law." The text of AB 481 has no penalties in place for law enforcement turning in annual reports late, or not turning them in at all.





67 Sueños, Oakland

## **New banner reflects unity, solidarity and shared struggle**

From [Instagram](#): This year's (Heal Your People Heal Yourself (HYPHY) cohort decided to wrap up their year by having a showcase where they invited their families to witness all the learning they had done throughout the year. One of the components of this showcase was the beautiful banner (above) they brainstormed and painted together.

The theme was In Lak'ech -- "you are my other me." They wanted to reflect the varying ways in which there is unity, solidarity and shared struggle among communities of color. They also wanted to be sure to remind everyone that we are in deep solidarity with the people of Palestine and their continued resistance. Throughout the banner you will find imagery that speaks to intergenerational healing, migration, solidarity, and culture.

## **Short takes**

Double your gift today in support of [AFSC's Refugee Response Fund Matching Gift Challenge](#).... Check out Joyce Ajlouny's [visit](#) with Pope Francis at the Vatican....Learn about a [win on Gaza](#) at UC Santa Barbara....AFSC's Action Center for Corporate Accountability calls on all universities and institutions to withdraw their support of Israeli human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Check out their [new resource](#)!



*Roots For Peace (RFP) Program, Los Angeles*

### **Visitor from Chiapas, Mexico shares biodiversity of the Milpa system**

Crystal Gonzalez of AFSC writes that Irene Nich (above) recently shared participant research on the Milpa system among indigenous communities in Chiapas. She highlighted the biodiversity of traditional farming methods, which in her research includes an average of 25 edible plant species intercropped in a single collective "Milpa" area.

Irene described the negative impacts and loss when corn monocropping and corn GMO and hybrid seed enter a community -- resulting in loss of culture and health of traditional communities. She is part of a movement to preserve the knowledge and practice of the Milpa system. Urban farmers in South Central shared memories of their participation in the biodiverse Milpa system in Mexico and their commitment to growing diverse "quelites" (greens) in Los Angeles.

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