Quaker Action



Building power in community

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American Friends Service Committee

FALL 2026 VOLUME 107 NUMBER 2



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AFSC joined the People's March in Philadelphia on July 4, calling on communities to commit to resist authoritarianism—and to sign the Declaration of Resistance.
PHOTO: NINA ROTHBERG

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Quaker **Action**

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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.

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COVER PHOTO

Members of the Roots for Peace community gather at the Corazón de la Gente farm in Los Angeles.

Photo: Jayrol San Jose

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Community members gather at the Roots for Peace Open House in Los Angeles. PHOTO: JAYROL SAN JOSE

LETTER FROM OUR GENERAL SECRETARY

Dear Friends,

Quaker philosophy is rooted in several core beliefs. Among them are the ideas that there is a divine Light in each of us and that power lies in community. These ideas are interwoven.

Our light shines the brightest when we come together. In worship. In resistance. In peaceful protest. And in caring for the Earth and each other.

This issue tells those stories of community. Whether we are growing fresh food in urban community gardens or standing with our immigrant neighbors before ICE appointments, every effort is emboldened when it is done together.

This fall magazine is also a testament to the fact that communities aren't broken. And that historically marginalized people are not victims who require rescuing. Instead, our world is plagued by inequality because our systems need solving.

As these pages show, communities are formidable forces. It is time to shift power to them. When we do, we root out injustice and begin to build a better world for everyone.

Thank you for helping to create it.

In peace,

Joyce Ajlouny
GENERAL SECRETARY





PHOTO: JAYROL SAN JOSE

Compassion in action—support AFSC today!

Our AFSC community puts compassion into action every day—working for a world that is more peaceful, just, and sustainable for all.

Supporters like you make all the work you read about in Quaker Action possible. Make your gift today. Or start a monthly gift to support work for peace year-round.

Visit **afsc.org/QA** or give us a call in Philadelphia at 888-588-2372.

SCAN TO DONATE

ALUMNI news



Pat Hunt helped resettle North Koreans after the Korean War. Here, children receive meals through AFSC relief programs in Korea in the 1950s. PHOTO: AFSC ARCHIVES

Pat Hunt worked for AFSC for almost four decades. She directed international workcamp programs, resettling North Koreans after the Korean War with her husband Frank. She also served as the coordinator of Africa programs for 14 years. Pat passed away on April 6 at the age of 105.

Cozine Welch Jr. has been named the Detroit Justice Center's first Formerly Incarcerated Artist in Residence. Cozine is a Detroit-born poet, musician, educator, and performer whose work draws directly from his own experience of incarceration. Cozine was a statewide organizer with AFSC's Michigan Criminal Justice Program. He also performed in a band with fellow AFSC colleagues.

Wilson Riles Jr., a lifelong advocate and activist for justice, died on May 5. Wilson served as regional director of the AFSC Pacific Mountain Region in the 1990s. He served on the Oakland City Council, the Oakland Police Commission, and the California Healing Justice advisory committee.

Terry Messman was the founding editor of *Street Spirit*, an independent newspaper in the East Bay. The paper was dedicated to covering homelessness and poverty from the perspective of those most impacted. For more than three decades, Terry was the program coordinator for AFSC's Homeless Organizing Project. He passed away in May.



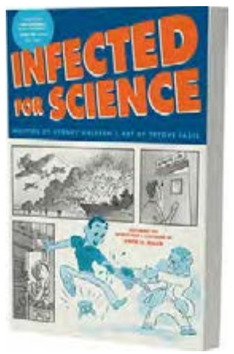
Terry Messman. PHOTO: AFSC ARCHIVES

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



Tonya Histand
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Sydney Halpern recently released a graphic novel, *Infected for Science*. Sydney used AFSC's Archives to write her novel detailing how conscientious objectors during World War II intentionally contracted hepatitis to help advance medical research.



Get Alumni Network updates and join our Facebook group!

AFSC.ORG/ALUMNI

Updates



Distributing drinking water for internally displaced persons in Gaza. *Photo: Saleh Al Toos*

PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

SUPPORTING PALESTINIANS IN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK

Over the past three years, genocide in Gaza has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians. Although a ceasefire was declared in October 2025, the situation remains dire. In the West Bank, too, Palestinians facing violence and displacement need help meeting urgent needs.

AFSC has worked with displaced Palestinians for decades. We distribute hot meals, food parcels, and safe drinking water. We offer essentials like blankets and tents. We distribute hygiene kits with soap, toothbrushes, and menstrual products. And we provide a range of educational activities for children. To date, we have provided lifesaving assistance to more than 1.3 million Palestinians. None of this would be possible without donors like you.

We also organize with people across the U.S. Please join us in demanding an end to U.S. military assistance to Israel, a permanent ceasefire, and unfettered humanitarian access. ■



Kerri Kennedy
ASSOCIATE GENERAL SECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Sign up for our weekly Action Hour for Palestine:

AFSC.ORG/ACTIONHOUR

SURVEILLANCE

STOPPING PALANTIR

The surveillance company Palantir vacuums up huge amounts of data and uses an AI algorithm to combine and analyze everything it finds, including everyday people's personal information.

ICE uses Palantir to conduct raids on immigrant communities. The Israeli military uses it in attacks on Gaza and Lebanon. Yet hospitals, restaurants, banks, and pharmacies also use Palantir's AI in their businesses.

AFSC is co-convening the many organizations pressuring institutions to cut ties to the company through the "Purge Palantir" campaign. Our mapping tool tracks institutions, investors, universities, and politicians tied to Palantir. And our efforts are working.

Earlier this year, the New York City public hospital system committed to not renewing its Palantir contract following the campaign's pressure. The Presbyterian Church (USA) unanimously voted to divest all its Palantir stock, about $2.5 million, in June. And more and more people are challenging the company in their communities. ■



Kenny Morris
CAMPAIGN STRATEGIST, ACTION CENTER FOR CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY



The power of community

An interview with

MARY ZERKEL
MIDWEST REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Q | In your many years working at AFSC, how have you observed the power of community?

I've learned so much from being part of economic justice, peace, and abolition movements. Successful organizing centers the experience of people impacted by the systems we want to change. It works best when it builds community. So, if you go to an organizing meeting and there are kids running around, shared food, and people chatting and catching up–you're doing it right. These folks are in solidarity and will stand up for each other and their neighbors. We've seen it in Minneapolis, Chicago, and L.A.

Q | Can you share some examples of how community action has resulted in positive change?

Most people supported the Iraq War when it began. AFSC organized in 48 states to highlight the human cost of conflict. Where we didn't have staff, volunteers stepped in. These community members came together and created a titanic shift against support for endless wars.

More recently, AFSC has spent the last decade working in coalition to advocate that money for policing be used for things that improve community safety. Last year, our AFSC Chicago Peacebuilding program had a huge victory. We redirected $30 million in funding for Chicago Police Department vacancies to fund other needs. At the same time, we preserved services that help keep our communities safe. Examples include $7 million investment in early childhood education, funding for the Chicago Department of Public Health, and additional youth jobs.

Q | How do we build equitable, inclusive communities?

This is such an important question in the U.S. right now. We are facing rising authoritarianism, which opposes the values of equity and inclusivity. The longstanding use of state violence against marginalized people is expanding. As a result, our collective freedom is on the line. The important thing is not to give up. Neighbors must work together to keep everyone safe, and communities need to resist the loss of their rights.

Q | What's giving you hope in this very challenging moment in history?

Communities won't accept authoritarianism. They're joining initiatives like Commit to Resist, which is part of building a movement of noncompliance–people saying no to harmful policies and yes to the future we all deserve. They're attending our monthly Protect, Resist, and Build webinars, which offer a virtual space to learn concrete skills to build resistance and resilience where you live. I'm motivated by our work to grow community care, mutual aid, and ways for communities to protect each other from bad policies that lead to people getting hurt.

This is a really hard time, but we must rebuild our social infrastructure and build communities that stand up for each other. If it all seems overwhelming, start with a simple gesture. Check in on a neighbor in need and find ways to support them. Every act of care is a seed planted for our shared future. ■

MORE: AFSC.ORG/PROTECT

Community gardens grow food, foster hope, and build resilience

Roots for Peace supports urban farming at the Corazón de la Gente community farm in Los Angeles. *Photo: Jayrol San Jose*

BY MEGAN QUITKIN, CRYSTAL GONZALEZ, AND DEE DEE GREEN

When World War I ended in 1918, hunger persisted and starvation loomed. Quakers and the newly formed AFSC stepped in. We nourished hundreds of thousands of children in Germany, Austria, Poland, and Russia. Since then, our food justice work has spanned continents and cultures.

In the United States, nearly 50 million people live in food insecure households. The workers who produce our food face unsafe conditions and low wages. Discrimination and unfair economic policies prevent people from accessing fresh food. Under the Trump administration, critical programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are getting slashed. People of color are disproportionately affected.

AFSC has long supported mutual aid networks, which play a pivotal role in closing food gaps. Here's how two communities are organizing to make a difference.

Roots for Peace

The Roots for Peace program is based in Los Angeles. Since 2015, it has supported young people of color working for social change. These dedicated organizers tackle racial, health, and economic injustices in their communities. Food justice has always been at the top of the agenda.

When the program began, a group of South Central residents wanted to transform a 30-year-old vacant lot. The goal was to create a shared green space where people could come together to grow nutritious food. There was a complicated history. South Central once had the United States' largest urban farm. It was destroyed in 2006, and warehouses were built on the land. The community suffered a significant loss but was not deterred.

In 2015, Roots for Peace established the Food Growers Network. This group urged the L.A. City Council to allow local people to transform vacant lots. The Council listened and eventually passed the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones policy. Over time, it resulted in urban farms across the city.

The lot transformation began in 2018. Soil and vegetable beds replaced asphalt and gravel. The next year, young people created a bright onsite mural. Its subject was how community can come together to grow a more just and sustainable future.

Community members used ancestral techniques to grow corn. These techniques nourish the soil, conserve water, and protect delicate ecosystems. In 2019, the converted land yielded its first harvest. And the farm was named Corazón de la Gente–Heart of the People. A fitting name given that some 21 families grow food there each year.

In recent times, local raids have targeted immigrants. Corazón has served as a safe haven where community members can gather, share basic items, and provide childcare. And the farm functions as an invaluable mutual aid hub, producing approximately 1,500 pounds of food a year.


PHOTO: JAYROL SAN JOSE


PHOTO: BLAIR MINNARD / AFSC NOLA

Peace by Piece

Vacant plots of land dot New Orleans' 17th Ward. Some are used as dumping grounds. Others are sold to developers keen on building expensive properties. AFSC's Peace by Piece program supports community members seeking to reclaim these spaces. The results are remarkable.

Peace by Piece works with Hollygrove residents to develop the skills needed to bring change and build a self-determined community that controls the cultivation and distribution of its resources. The program uses sustainable urban agriculture as a tool for community care, bringing Hollygrove residents together to grow and share fresh food, care for the land, and build a healthier, more resilient neighborhood. Teaching and demonstrating urban farming, composting, and environmental stewardship to local residents helps to improve conditions for everyone.

Over the past year, staff, alongside 352 volunteers and community members, maintained the Hollygrove Community Farm. Students, elders, and family members distributed over 5,500 pounds of food. More than 2,000 residents have participated in community food shares. And 20 households and the Carrollton-Hollygrove Senior Center recycled more than 4,000 pounds of food waste. This reduced landfill contributions while creating valuable compost.

At monthly garden workshops, Hollygrove residents participate in critical conversations. They discuss food systems, environmental justice, and economic inequality. They deepen discourse and strengthen community ties. Now, planning is underway for a large remediation project. One of the gardens will serve as a resilience hub and include 30 garden beds. It will be powered with green installations, including solar.

These programs demonstrate the power of community. Working in partnership, neighbors have turned vacant lots into vibrant green spaces. They have nurtured bodies and souls. They have built sustainable food systems. And they have shown that it is possible to disrupt inequality and create lasting change. ■

PROTECTING IMMIGRANTS

How communities are mobilizing to keep each other safe

BY MEGAN QUITKIN, ALONSO OLIVEROS, MAGGIE FOGARTY, AND LUPE DE LA CRUZ

Immigrants come to the United States for many reasons. For religious freedom. For economic opportunity. For family reunification. And to escape persecution and tyranny.

People born outside the U.S. have always been vital members of our communities. They are loved ones, friends, neighbors, business owners, workers, and community leaders. And they contribute in every part of our society, from farm country to vibrant cities bursting with creativity.

There is no United States without immigrants. But they aren't always treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. Anti-immigrant sentiment has long plagued this country–and the detention and deportation system built on decades of unjust laws has massively expanded with a recent influx of billions of dollars.

AFSC and our supporters are resisting this agenda of cruelty. By mobilizing. By providing resources to help keep our neighbors safe. And by demonstrating that the strongest communities are the ones that come together to support one another. Here, we spotlight successes in three states.



Pedro Sosa, Oregon Project Voice program director, joins allies at an immigrant justice lobby day at the state Capitol in Salem. *Photo: AFSC Oregon*

IN OREGON

New laws limit ICE

In the first year of President Trump's second term, a surge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrived in Oregon. Emboldened agents began arresting and detaining immigrants. They showed up at preschools. In hospital parking lots. And they ripped families apart, traumatizing children separated from their parents.

As the federal agency terrorized communities, those same communities acted. And AFSC's Project Voice team in Oregon swung into action to support them. This program is rooted in community-based organizing. We train immigrants and allies to safely respond to ICE raids. We also offer an important counterweight to the administration's anti-immigrant agenda and narratives.

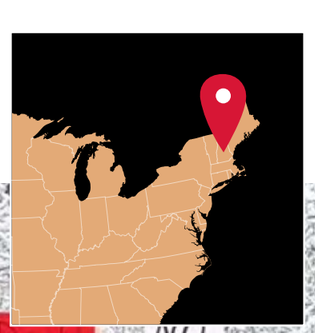
Over the past year, we organized and advocated at legislative events. We showed up in support of immigrants. We joined lobby days with partners and community members. Together, we gave voice to the pain and fear ICE inflicts. We also trained hundreds of people to act as human rights observers. These volunteers report ICE assaults and arrests, so they don't fall under the radar.

As a result of our collective efforts, Oregon passed more than a dozen important laws. These laws make it harder to target immigrants and easier to reclaim rights. For example, federal agents cannot enter public schools and colleges before they give notice. They must also display their name or badge number and agency information. New protections are now in place, too. Immigration status is on the list of protected health information. And civil court proceedings cannot include it.

The Oregon legislature also approved $8 million for the universal representation program. This guarantees free, culturally sensitive legal representation to immigrant Oregonians facing deportation. ■

IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

A small town stops an ICE warehouse jail



On Christmas Eve 2025, The Washington Post published an alarming article. The Trump administration was going to turn warehouses into ICE facilities. Cages would contain tens of thousands of people across the country. Private, for-profit prison companies and ICE would be in charge.

In New Hampshire, the small town of Merrimack made the list. The news was shocking, but a bold base was ready to respond. These community members launched a grassroots campaign. State representative Wendy Thomas backed their effort. Others came on board, including folks who had never participated in any sort of protest.

With support from AFSC and other organizations, the campaign took off. Private group chats sprang up overnight so people could communicate. Residents flooded town officials with calls and emails. They leveraged personal connections. They urged their elected officials to immediately halt the project. And a congressional delegation conducted surveys across the state. These showed that New Hampshire residents opposed the president's plan.

AFSC-trained nonviolence leaders helped to ensure that Merrimack protests remained peaceful. Peacekeepers met with organizers, town officials, and local police before anyone assembled. The town was not accustomed to demonstrations, so it was important to keep things calm. We also wanted to show that the community can come together in a powerful, nonviolent way.

The pressure to halt the warehouse reached the governor's office. Organizers stayed focused. They maintained a clear message of opposition, and their strategy worked. After two months, the administration canceled plans for the ICE facility. This huge win was a testament to the power of community and coming together for what's right.■



Community members protest plans for an ICE warehouse jail in Merrimack, New Hampshire. *Photo: KT Brown*



AFSC staff and volunteers offer water, food, and Know Your Rights information outside the ICE facility in Miramar, Florida, every Wednesday. *Photo: Adam Barkan*

IN FLORIDA

Supporting immigrants outside an ICE facility

Miramar is a south Florida city that prides itself on being an idyllic place to live. It is also the site of an ICE facility where immigrants' futures are often decided. All people, regardless of their status, deserve compassion and respect. This is not what many experience when navigating the U.S. immigration system.

Hundreds of people in Miramar wait hours for their appointments. The conditions are brutal. Long lines. Intense heat. Until a few years ago, there was no shade. People often fainted while waiting to meet with ICE agents.

When President Trump took office in early 2017, the Miramar Circle of Protection Coalition was formed. The goal was to stand with immigrants and affirm their dignity. The efforts worked. The facility added an outside shade structure. Fans were installed. Air-conditioned restrooms were installed in the parking lot.

But much more is needed. That's why our Circle of Protection is at the facility every Wednesday. AFSC's Maria Bilbao leads this work with up to 10 volunteers.

We have a table across the street from the facility in a shady spot. We offer water, coffee, homemade *pasteles*, and clothing. We also serve as a resource hub and provide Know Your Rights information. We share contacts for legal services and referrals to the statewide support hotline that tracks detentions. We also record license plates of cars abandoned by people who had ICE appointments and never returned. We follow up with their loved ones and assist in locating them.

Every Wednesday that AFSC staff and volunteers set up their tables at Miramar, they show us the world that we're working toward. They transform an unwelcoming place into a space where people can find the support and compassion we all deserve.■

Snapshots of global peace

A GLIMPSE OF OUR AFSC COMMUNITY IN ACTION



Africa region youth gathering, Ethiopia:
The Africa Regional Youth Gathering 2026 was designed to strengthen collective African and shared human identity through cultural exchange. Participants discussed shared challenges and their root causes, covering responses to migrants, political polarization, peacebuilding, and social change. Photo: AFSC



Goals for Gaza, Palestine
As the World Cup was played in the United States, AFSC hosted two special soccer matches in Deir al-Balah, Gaza—one for people who had limbs amputated, and one for children. The participating teams symbolically represented countries such as Algeria, Colombia, Belgium, Brazil, and Spain. At halftime, traditional dabkeh dance was performed (pictured). One of the most touching moments of the day was welcoming Mohammad Shaaban, a young boy who lost both of his legs as a result of the war. Mohammad's dream was simple: to play football. By taking part, he became a powerful symbol of resilience, courage, and the unwavering spirit of Gaza's children. Photo: Pal Media Company



Peace Games, South Korea:
Since 2023, AFSC has collaborated with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and the Quaker United Nations Office to pilot over 35 cooperative simulations. More than 700 participants from government, academia, and civil society have taken part. These "peace games" advance dialogue, build common ground, and help participants develop and test peace-oriented approaches to preventing and resolving conflict. Photo: AFSC



Emerging Leaders for Liberation, Pennsylvania
Youth leaders attend Print 4 the People, a migrant rights arts and advocacy fair hosted by the ELL program at the Rotunda in West Philadelphia. The event included the unveiling of locally sourced designs honoring immigrant communities, including screen printing on shirts and bags. Several immigrant rights organizations provided resources and information about how attendees could get involved. Photo: Rachael Warriner



Mother's Day vigil, Colorado:
Community members created art at a vigil to honor immigrant mothers. The event was held outside the for-profit GEO detention center. Photo: Oscar Juarez

Delaney Hall strike, New Jersey
AFSC has supported people in detention and their loved ones for decades. In New Jersey, we provide legal representation to hundreds of immigrants every year. We also document conditions in ICE facilities and amplify the demands of those inside—including people who participated in a labor and hunger strike at Delaney Hall this year, many of whom have since been transferred to other detention centers. Their courage and resilience are an inspiration, and their movement for justice will continue wherever they go. Photo: Henry Craver/AFSC





Love as Action, Iowa:
Friends, members of other faith communities, and people of conscience gather for silent worship. Across the country, Love as Action vigils like this one have called communities to resist authoritarianism and remember our moral obligations to one another. Photo: Jon Krieg



Community training, El Salvador:
AFSC teamed up with Equipo Maíz to offer a training last winter using a popular education methodology. The goal was to build greater capacity and coordination, as well as common agendas. Community organizations, civil society members, and local government officials participated. Photo: Omar Ponce/AFSC

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