

AFSC Midwest Digest – July 2020

Highlights of work from around the region



Distributing aid and supplies to Gaza elders in Beit Hanoun during the coronavirus pandemic

Putting Gaza back into the conversation on Israeli annexation

“Why has the Gaza Strip been excluded from the conversation on annexation?” [writes](#) Jihad Abusalim of AFSC. “This question has haunted me for months, and upon the deadline for Israel’s bid to annex parts of the West Bank, it begs more attention.” Read these [stories](#) from elders in Gaza, check out this [joint Quaker statement](#) on potential annexation and [take action](#). Mark your calendar for the next [No Way to Treat a Child](#) webinar on Tuesday, July 28 at 11 am CT.



Former AFSC Michigan staffer Ron Simpson-Bey

Advocating with and for people in prison

This [Politico article](#) about the work of the National Lifers Association to advocate for people in prison before and during the COVID-19 pandemic features former AFSC Michigan staffer Ron Simpson-Bey and quotes Natalie Holbrook, who directs the AFSC-MI Criminal Justice Program. Jacq Williams of AFSC is quoted [here](#) about legislation that would offer new protections for people in prison who are pregnant.



St. Louis work focuses on real student safety

In the AFSC St. Louis July [newsletter](#), Jonathan Pulphus thanks people for being involved in the campaign calling for St. Louis Public Schools to defund its present policing model and invest in #realstudentsafety. “Due to your support,” he writes, “we are currently at 1000+ signatures on our [Change.org petition](#) and are in the process of meeting with the superintendent to move our efforts forward.” Joshua Saleem, who directs the program, shares this [press release](#) with organizations’ demands to end policing in schools.



AFSC Twin Cities staff Ebelin Morales, left, and Nhu Richards

Work continues for racial justice in the Twin Cities

Shanene Herbert, director of AFSC's Healing Justice program in Minnesota, [talks about how community members are continuing to come together](#) weeks after the police murder of George Floyd. Shanene turned the camera around and [interviewed](#) organizers of a recent [Youth Will Rise March](#) sponsored by AFSC's Youth Undoing Institutional Racism. Organizers wrote: “As Black youth and POC youth, we have walked through the flames of trauma with police brutality and racism all while still being expected to go school and work to support ourselves and our families.” Stay up to date on the [YUIR Twin Cities Facebook page](#).



Black Lives Matter community memorial in Chicago

Chicagoans work to defund, get police out of schools

AFSC in Chicago joined with other groups to issue this [report](#) on why it's time for the Chicago Public Schools to divest from the Chicago Police Department, an effort that has come within one vote of success. Keep up with this work on Twitter by checking out #CopsOutCPS and #PoliceFreeSchools and following staffers [Mary Zerkel](#) and [Debbie Southorn](#). Mary is quoted in this [article about surveillance](#) and blogs on reimagining [community safety](#) and why we need to [stand with protesters](#). Check out the latest [#NoCopAcademy post](#) and all of AFSC's resources on defunding police [here](#).



Midwest staff Jesus Palafox (upper left) and Jody Mashek (upper right) join colleagues from New Jersey and DC in celebrating the DACA decision.

Celebrating a win on DACA, standing with meatpacking workers

AFSC and partners across the country celebrated the recent US Supreme Court decision upholding DACA. See this [press release](#), [video](#) and public radio [story](#) from Iowa. Jesus Palafox and Jody Mashek of AFSC joined Facebook Live presentations in [Spanish](#) and [English](#). This past week, AFSC Iowa participated in a week of action against Tyson Foods, joining over 120 organizations in signing onto a [letter sent to its largest shareholders](#) "to urge the company to take immediate additional action to protect the safety and wellbeing of its workers related to coronavirus exposure."



Celebrating Migwe Kimemia's service with AFSC

Hillary Curran of AFSC writes: June 30 marked Migwe Kimemia's last official day as staff with AFSC and the end of AFSC's 56 years of work in Dayton.

In his nearly 18 years with the organization, Migwe brought attention to the needs of immigrant and refugees in Ohio. Migwe propelled the Dayton program into a beacon of support and hope for those new to the US. Because of his deep community ties and positive attitude, 915 Salem Avenue was often one of the first places immigrants and refugees came when they needed assistance and a much-needed sense of community.

Throughout his time with AFSC, Migwe's high level of expertise and deeply-rooted analysis resulted in his ability to effectively advocate for immigrants as they faced barriers and challenges. Migwe was able to leverage his knowledge into tangible gains in policy and advocacy work, and in the last few years worked with college students to develop organizing skills and systems of accountability on their respective campuses.

Migwe's work was housed in a building that was donated to AFSC by a Quaker in 1964. At one time a regional hub, the building was home to several programs that focused on community and race relations, human rights, criminal justice, economic justice, and advocacy for youth and community members.

It was important to Migwe and his community partners that after the program was laid down the building go to a like-minded organization doing peace and social justice work. In accordance with those wishes, AFSC is currently in the process of donating the building to the Dayton unit of the NAACP.

In a minute of appreciation to Migwe, the Midwest Executive Committee quoted his own words: "I believe everybody has a role to play, whether they're immigrants or not. Everybody has a gift you bring to this world. Let us share those gifts. We can make a difference. You alone can have all the gifts you have, but you cannot do everything alone. There is a value in coming together for the common good." Please join us in celebrating Migwe's accomplishments and his long tenure with AFSC. Here is a [photo tribute](#) to him.



American Friends
Service Committee



Central Iowa Immigrant Emergency Support Fund COVID-19 UPDATE

\$118K

*Total amount needed for
immigrant families
waitlisted for aid in Iowa*

114

*families waitlisted
as CIIC raises
more funds*

\$851

*is the average
grant amount for
one family*

Short Takes

The Central Iowa Immigrant Emergency Support Fund, organized by AFSC and partners, has [assisted](#) 167 families in Iowa affected by the pandemic with over \$131,000. More than 100 families are still waiting for financial assistance; you can donate [here](#)....Tatjana Rebelle and Robert Awkward, former AFSC interns in Indianapolis, respectively write about [what real change requires](#) and this "[group text to my white friends](#)"....David Drake, a Des Moines Friend and incoming president of the national Physicians for Social Responsibility, led a successful coalition effort to have Des Moines' mayor sign this "[Back from the Brink](#)" [resolution](#) to prevent nuclear war.

Grateful for your support

Your gifts of time and money make a real difference. Please support AFSC by [donating](#) now; please consider becoming a Partner for Peace by donating monthly. Thanks for sharing this [subscription link](#) for the Midwest Digest, and check out AFSC Midwest on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#). Thanks!



**American Friends
Service Committee**