



**American
Friends
Service
Committee**

AFSC West Region News – December 2021

Highlights 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

“My grandfather was a Bracero.”

In 1961, Albino Mendoza Aguilar migrated to work in Gilroy, California as part of the Bracero Program, designed to bring Mexican workers to fill the labor shortage during and after World War II. His granddaughter, Minerva Mendoza of AFSC PVI, [writes](#) about how such history informs our push for Citizenship for All and why advocates should work for long-term solutions rather than piecemeal legislation. Learn more by watching this [discussion](#) about a new book of memoirs of the Bracero farmworkers—and [take action](#) today.



La Posada Sin Fronteras - photo: Pedro Rios

US-Mexico Border Program, San Diego

Binational celebration recalls biblical command to welcome the stranger

A venerated Christmas tradition across the Americas, La Posada is a re-enactment of the biblical story of Mary and Joseph who, while sojourners in Bethlehem, were forced to seek shelter on the night of Jesus' birth. In our time, when the idea of welcoming the stranger—and migrants themselves—is under attack, AFSC's 28th annual binational celebration, [La Posada Sin Fronteras](#), took on added significance.



Brenda Verano, R4P Youth Facilitator

Roots for Peace (R4P) Program, Los Angeles

Youth create signs for their community garden

Over a series of five Fridays, young people with R4P gathered at AFSC's Corazón de la Gente community farm in South Central Los Angeles for laid back, fun art sessions where they created signs for the garden's plants, trees and community space. Check out more—including visits from pollinators—on [Instagram](#). Please share the news of this [Youth Farm Intern](#) opening; applications due January 14.



AFSC New Mexico farmer-to-farmer learning circle

People of the Land Program, Albuquerque

Farmers discuss innovative ways to feed their communities

Building on the model of AFSC New Mexico's Farm to Food Bank program, local farmers Joseluis Ortiz of Dream NM Farm and Casey Holland of Chispas Farm recently shared—through a virtual AFSC farmer-to-farmer learning circle—their projects for feeding their communities. AFSC NM Co-Directors Patrick Jaramillo and Sayrah Namaste [write](#) about the gathering and share this [video](#).



Rally at the Oregon Capitol for Citizenship for All

Project Voice Immigrant Rights Program, Oregon-Washington

Oregon rally calls for Citizenship for All

Pedro Sosa of AFSC is quoted in this [article](#) about the need for a pathway to citizenship for all immigrants, including farmworkers who maintain our nation's food supply. Pedro adds, “Indigenous people from Central America come to this country for new opportunities because when the Europeans arrived, they stole everything, and they still do.”



67 Sueños, Oakland

Listening to the wisdom of youth

From [Instagram](#): “In honor of the Black Panthers and the Young Lords, some hyphy [Help Your People, Help Yourself] town youth created a 10-point plan of their own! It’s featured on our [Radio 67 Episode 4 podcast](#) dropped on International Migrants Day, December 18.”



Immigrant Rights Program, Denver

AFSC and Together Colorado successfully lobby senator

US Senator John Hickenlooper's office hadn't recently articulated support for a path to citizenship in the reconciliation package prior to an event AFSC hosted with [Together Colorado](#) and the [Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition](#). AFSC’s Not1More and Together Colorado members met with his staff to express the importance of his voice in this moment right before our event. After the event, Senator Hickenlooper issued a statement to [NoticiasYa Colorado](#) in support of citizenship in the reconciliation bill.



photo: KTVU

Healing Justice Program, Oakland

Focusing on militarized equipment for police and sheriffs in California

AFSC is supporting activism for fully implementing a new state law, [AB 481](#), which provides an important state-wide transparency and civilian control requirement for militarized equipment used by law enforcement. Pushing back against police narratives of militarization, AFSC is putting together a large database of police militarized gear and tools for activists and elected officials to challenge this equipment. Stay tuned!



Arizona Program, Tucson

AFSC Arizona to become Just Communities Arizona in the new year

On January 1, 2022, AFSC-Arizona will transition to an independent, non-profit organization called [Just Communities Arizona](#) (JCA). “As our new name implies, this new organization will build on our successful work by uplifting and strengthening community-led solutions that create safety completely outside the punishment system,” Executive Director Caroline Isaacs says. “We will build a reverse pipeline that frees people and resources from the punishment system and delivers them back into the hands of their communities.” We thank the staff and volunteers of AFSC Arizona and wish them the very best.

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A US-based credit reporting agency and data broker that provides US immigration authorities with information that enables them to locate people targeted for deportation.

High-Tech Surveillance of Immigrants

Economic Activism Program, Oakland

Progress on data sharing with ICE, prison phone industry

Along with movement partners, AFSC's Economic Activism Program's [Investigate](#) project learned that [Equifax](#), one of the three large credit reporting companies, has stopped sharing certain information with ICE. Equifax receives and aggregates data from the largest utility and telecom companies about their customers in order to help them locate people with missed payments.

But Equifax was also selling these data to [Thomson Reuters](#), which allowed ICE and other law enforcement agencies to use it to find people they want to arrest or deport. In October, the utility companies directed Equifax to stop selling their information to third parties like Thomson Reuters. Unfortunately, Thomson Reuters still holds its existing data and is still providing it to ICE and other law enforcement agencies, and Equifax is still sharing other types of information, for example on jail bookings.

In addition, through its ongoing research, the Investigate project found that the third largest provider of telecom services to U.S. prisons has left the industry. [Lumen Technologies](#), previously known as CenturyLink, finished selling off its prison phone business back in August. The company did not make any public statements about its divestment, demonstrating perhaps that it understands its former role in this exploitative industry can damage its future business. Following Lumen's divestment, almost the entire prison phone industry is in the hands of a few private equity firms, with no publicly-traded companies involved.

Short takes

Tell the US Senate to [pass the Build Back Better bill](#)....AFSC urges the Senate to reject the Parliamentarian's ruling and [create a pathway to citizenship for all](#)....Joyce Ajlouny of AFSC is quoted in this [press release](#) opposing sanctions and ensuring Covid vaccine access for everyone....AFSC's Under the Mask project has released these [ten best practices](#) for governments to take during and following pandemics.

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Founded in 1917, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is an international Quaker organization that works on many social justice issues, including immigration, mass incarceration, youth civic engagement, and human rights in Palestine/Israel. With programs in 24 states and 15 countries, AFSC engages communities experiencing marginalization in the pursuit of shared security, based not on arms or coercion, but rather on creative nonviolence, sustainable economics and respect for all peoples.