



**American  
Friends  
Service  
Committee**

## **AFSC Midwest Digest – February 2024**

*Stories of work from around the region*



AFSC staff (from left) Mary Zerkel and Asia Smith protest at a UPS store in Chicago.

### **Protesting the corporations behind Cop City**

Community members in Chicago and other states recently took part in AFSC’s Stop Cop City week of action. We held actions to pressure corporations like Home Depot and UPS to end their involvement with Cop City—and stay out of policing in our communities. Thank you to all who joined! See photos from the events on [Instagram](#).

Asia Smith, who recently began her service as Chicago Peacebuilding Director, said, “After attending a vigil for the forest defender and Stop Cop City activist Tortuguita, who was murdered by police in Atlanta, AFSC delivered a letter to UPS calling on the CEO to divest from funding Cop City.” [Learn more and get involved.](#)



## Second Look legislative updates

On January 25, Natalie Holbrook-Combs, director of the AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program, joined a panel of experts to provide statewide criminal legal updates. The Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration (MI-CEMI) organized the event.

Natalie shared these [updates on Second Look legislation](#). The bill would create a resentencing route for anyone who has served at least 10 years of their original sentence. The court would take a variety of evidence into consideration.

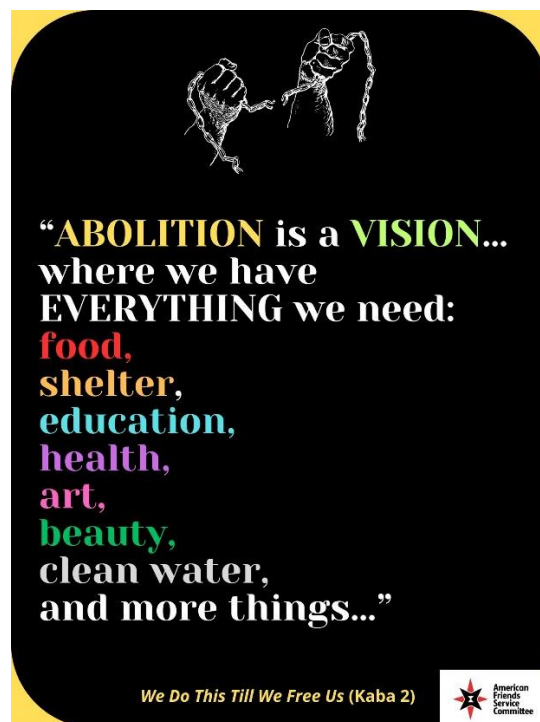
Second Look envisions resentencing as a collaborative effort among the individual seeking resentencing, the judge, the prosecutor, and the victim's (or victims') family. It does not guarantee resentencing or earlier release. It merely allows imprisoned people to apply to have their case reexamined. For more information, please visit this [Second Look resources page](#).





## Youth board promotes restorative justice in the Twin Cities

Brynne Crockett, director of the Twin Cities Healing Justice Program, reports that staff are continuing their work with the S.A.F.E. Youth Board to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. (SAFE stands for Students Accelerating Fiercely Everyday.) The board helps youth learn their rights, how to handle police encounters, and how to use restorative justice practices while building up relationships among students. Genuine safety is at the forefront and is foundational for learning. The goal is to decrease suspensions and expulsions. Brynne adds that AFSC receives good support from school administrators.



## Building peer mediation in St. Louis

In St. Louis, Organizing Fellow Alex Jones is building AFSC's peer mediation program. Alex says the city's public schools have a carceral history and lost their accreditation for several years. There's heavy policing in the schools, with metal detectors and bag checks. There's lots of punishment. AFSC intervenes and brings in restorative practices so that students are better able to resolve their own issues without retribution or punishment. Students see the benefit.



Hector Salamanca in 2015

### **AFSC alum testifies against anti-immigrant bill in Iowa**

Hector Salamanca has a long history of volunteering and working with AFSC in Iowa, including with our Governing Under the Influence project prior to the 2016 election. A former DACA recipient and now a US citizen, Hector was back at the state capitol recently to tell lawmakers to [reject a proposal](#) to require proof of citizenship for in-state tuition.



### **ICJ rules Israel's actions in Gaza are plausibly genocidal – what to do?**

Recently the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an order that calls on Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent genocide. It also called for immediate measures to ensure humanitarian aid is reaching people in Gaza. This is a historic decision that should serve as a call to action for all those who have stayed silent in the face of these atrocities. Read [AFSC's full statement](#) and [share these graphics](#) on social media. Also, [tell Congress](#) to restore funding to UNWRA, the main provider of aid in Gaza.



### **Short takes**

The Midwest Region is very pleased to welcome three new members to its regional governance group. Above, from left, is Greg Corbin, Steve Tamari and Jon Shafer....AFSC's Emerging Leaders for Liberation is now accepting [applications](#) for its 2024 cohort....

The Minneapolis City Council has passed the nation's strongest [resolution](#) calling for a ceasefire in Gaza....Save the date: the next AFSC Friends Liaison call will be April 25 at 6 pm CT....Check out the [winter issue of AFSC's alumni newsletter](#)....Tell Congress: [Expand the Child Tax Credit!](#)

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