

QuakerAction



**A commitment to
Middle East peace**

**Gardening project
fosters peace in
Bosnia/Herzegovina**

**Face-to-face with
immigrants' lives**

**AFSC workcamps
continue to educate
and inspire**



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on afsc.org**

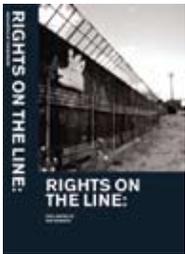
AFSC-TV

Eyes Wide Open: See it and Hear it. Watch videos and hear speeches from Eyes Wide Open exhibits on the road, and experience the new Iraqi exhibit in a virtual reality video.
www.afsc.org/eyes/experience/



"Rights on the Line" documentary

"Rights on the Line" offers a provocative look at the growing role of armed vigilante groups and their attempts to play on anti-immigration scapegoating. Watch the documentary trailer online:



www.afsc.org/immigrants-rights/rightsontheline/

AFSC email newsletters

Now you can get regular updates on immigrants rights with the "No Human Being is Illegal" newsletter, anti-war activism or Israel/Palestine work with the "Faces of Hope" newsletter.
www.afsc.org/email

On the cover

AFSC's Community Gardening Project in Bosnia/Herzegovina helps participants get extra food and income, while fostering inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation. See story on page 12.

Cover photo: Michael Valoris

Share your thoughts

We'd like to know what you think of this magazine and the work of AFSC. Write to us via email at quakeraction@afsc.org or send a note to the AFSC national office at the address listed in the box below. We look forward to hearing from you.

Who we are

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.

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'They come for a dream'

Face-to-face with immigrants' lives

BY WILLIE COLÓN REYES

People are coming here out of desperation. And now there are fewer options to come legally as we [*braceros**] did. They come for a dream.

Octavio Camarena
former *bracero*
Stockton, California

It was a hot June afternoon in Stockton when the young couple with their six-month old infant walked into a windowless room at the Mexican Community Center.

I was on a brief tour of AFSC immigration programs in California's Central Valley, and I watched as Sonia, Pedro, and tiny Iris joined the dozen or so people who had gathered to talk about the status of immigrants' rights.

Sonia was carrying a white plastic shopping bag heavy with cherries. She put some on a Styrofoam plate and quietly set it on the long wooden table in the middle of the room. I guessed (correctly) that she and Pedro were undocumented migrant farmworkers and that the cherries had come from a recent day's labor.

In the free-flowing discussion that followed, the couple shared some harsh realities about their life in the United States.

Sonia and Pedro were indigenous

Zapoteco from Mexico who'd come to the U.S. three years earlier in search of work. Soon after they arrived, the couple worked in an agricultural labor camp where they were virtually imprisoned.

This sparked vivid recollections of harsh working conditions from the former *braceros* at the meeting, like Octavio Camarena, who noted that the present-day camps had been used previously by *braceros*.

More recently, Sonia and Pedro had been robbed at gunpoint in their home—a crime they were reluctant to report because of their immigration status—and then kicked out with no notice when their landlord found out about the incident.

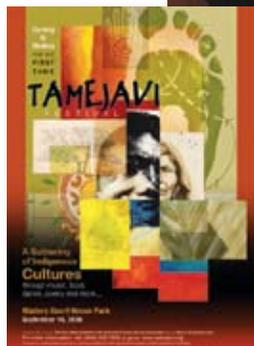
Around the room, people nodded. They'd heard stories like these before, many times.



I met a lot of people during my two days in "the Valley." Everyone was eager to tell their story and happy to have a willing listener. Echoes of Sonia and Pedro's experiences rang through much of what I heard, but no one was letting such abuses define them. Instead, people were creating better lives for themselves.

Rosa Lopez, for example, was excited about a recent series of cultural exchanges organized by AFSC's Pan Valley Institute. She said they were connecting indigenous communities and getting young people interested in fading traditions.

"My children were not born in Mexico, and many immigrant parents are in the same position," said Rosa, an indigenous Mixteca from Mexico. "We want our youth to learn more about their roots. We don't want our cultures to die."



And everyone was still abuzz about the massive nationwide immigration marches and rallies in the spring. It was clear that these events had profoundly altered immigrants' sense of their own power—even those who'd paid a heavy price.

Sandra Carreño lost her job because of her participation in the May 1 immigrants' rights march in Stockton. While Sandra was scared about her future, she wasn't backing off from the struggle.

"I don't want the same thing to happen to others," Sandra said, summing up a common sentiment. "I'm a citizen, but I went to the marches and rallies to support those who are undocumented. This isn't just about immigration. This is also for the betterment of all our communities."

*** *Braceros* were agricultural laborers from Mexico who worked in the U.S. under grueling conditions as part of a government program that ran from 1942 to 1964.**

Willie Colón Reyes is the editor of Quaker Action.

Photos: (top) Rosa Lopez (left) and Estela Galvan of AFSC's Pan Valley Institute; (bottom) dancers at a cultural event in Madera, CA (graphic) poster for a multi-ethnic festival in Madera, CA.



Photos: (top) Willie Colón Reyes; (bottom) Tudor Stanley

A commitment to Middle East

PEACE

Reaching out to civilians in need

BY TAHIJA VIKALO

For decades, conflict in the Middle East has had devastating consequences, but events in 2006 are leading toward a watershed moment that may have profound and long-lasting implications.

As each new crisis has rocked the region, AFSC staff on the ground in Gaza and partners in Lebanon and Israel have reached out to assist civilians caught in the middle of political, economic, and armed conflicts. AFSC also has continued to work toward regional peace and reconciliation by encouraging dialogue around difficult, often controversial, topics.

Earlier this year, AFSC launched an appeal asking for support to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. And when fighting erupted between Israel and Lebanon in July, AFSC expanded the appeal to include aid for civilians in those countries.

In Lebanon and Israel, AFSC is working through partner groups with whom we have well-established relationships.

For example, AFSC is supporting an Israeli group of Jewish and Palestinian women, Isha l'Isha (Woman to Woman), to produce an information kit that addresses a variety of needs, raises awareness about the effects of violent conflict on women, and provides individual and group support to women affected by trauma.

In Lebanon, AFSC supports Permanent Peace Movement (PPM), one of the country's most prominent peace and justice organizations. PPM is helping internally displaced people by providing med-



icine, food and milk for children, and basic hygiene products. The organization also will repair damaged schools so they can receive students at the beginning of the school year.

In Gaza and the West Bank, AFSC relies on the many connections that the Quaker Palestine Youth Program has developed. A committee of young men and women that includes current and former program participants is receiving proposals from youth groups involved in AFSC's Public Achievement program, which encourages civic engagement among young people. Some of the projects proposed so far include:

- collecting and distributing food baskets, school bags, or school uniforms to the poorest members of the community;
- helping women who are sole providers for their families market and sell their products; and
- buying the produce from local farmers and distributing it to poor families.

AFSC continues to be inspired by the efforts of people in the region, especially youth, to find alternatives to violence and their determination to improve their societies.

Our hopes are well summarized by Nour Nouri, an Iraqi member of the AFSC-initiated Middle East Regional Youth Action Network, which helps young people better understand changes in the region and develop projects to improve their communities.

"We are still young and we are just a generation of war... that's our destiny, but hopefully we'll make a better one for our children to come," Nour says. "That's our commitment and obligation."

For more information, please log onto
[WWW.AFSC.ORG/GAZA](http://www.afsc.org/gaza).

Tabija Vikalo is the Program Coordinator for the Middle East and Europe Region.

Photo: (top) an AFSC youth program festival in Gaza bolstered spirits during a difficult time.

Toward a just U.S. policy

In addition to projects in the Middle East, AFSC also works to educate and mobilize people in the United States around Middle East issues. To find out more, please log onto www.afsc.org/israel-palestine.

AFSC, religious leaders begin dialogue with Iranian president

BY PAUL LACEY

On September 20, 2006, I participated in one of those moments that make you proud to be associated with the American Friends Service Committee.

For one hour, a group of 44 religious leaders met with Iranian President Mahoud Ahmadinejad in New York after his address to the UN General Assembly. I was part of that group, along with Mary Ellen McNish, AFSC's General Secretary, Don McNemar, clerk of the Quaker UN Committee, and Jessica Huber, Quaker United Nations Office staff member.

President Ahmadinejad initiated the meeting with the help of the Mennonite Central Committee. It was his hope to discuss religious and spiritual matters with leaders of the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Quaker United Nations Office, which is operated by AFSC on behalf of the Friends World Committee on Consultation, arranged for those meeting with the president to gather and prepare at Quaker House and to debrief there after the meeting.

During our conversation with President Ahmadinejad, we came away believing that he is a person of deep faith, one who spoke reverently of the teachings of the great prophets, whom he identified repeatedly as Moses, Jesus Christ and Mohammed, always saying of each, "peace be upon him."

An hour allows only the merest beginning exploration of a few issues on which further, deeper conversations might be developed and some first impressions of whether we can listen well and speak forthrightly to one another. Within those limitations, we were able to ask the president some of our most compelling questions, and to get, not definitive answers, but markers for subsequent discussion.



For example, we asked the president about his country's stand on nuclear weapons and on his quoted remarks on the Holocaust. On the former question, President Ahmadinejad stressed that his country did not want nuclear weapons for itself. In fact Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Hoseini-Khameni has condemned all nuclear weapons. The president strongly supported developing nuclear energy, which he described as "the cleanest fuel source"

available to us.

In response to the question presented by Mary Ellen McNish, we did not hear him deny that the Holocaust had occurred, but he noted that fifty million innocent people died in the Second World War, and all of them deserve to be remembered.

Neither answer satisfied us, but we learned that President Ahmadinejad was willing to respond to probing questions and hear other readings of these and other issues. Everyone who participated in the meeting hopes that this will build into an ongoing series of meetings with the Iranian Mission to the United Nations and with the president and other officials in Tehran.

This brief, intense, and promising encounter reinforces for us the realization that every dialogue is a chance to bear witness to what one believes and lives by as the truth, an opportunity to connect what we believe within our deepest selves with what we know experientially, and to risk hearing respectfully the deepest life-truths that animate others, even opponents and adversaries.

Paul Lacey is the Chair of the AFSC Board of Directors.

Photo: Paul Lacey (left) shakes hands with Iranian President Ahmadinejad.

Eyes Wide Open:

Iraq war memorial at Wal-Mart gets an unexpected reaction

BY EMILIE SMITH

“Hold Eyes Wide Open in a Wal-Mart parking lot? There is no way Wal-Mart will agree.”

That was the response of AFSC staff members in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, this summer when the Center for Non-Violent Living in Lewisburg asked if the location would be suitable for the state version of AFSC’s Eyes Wide Open exhibit.

The exhibit, about the human cost of the Iraq war, features empty army boots and shoes that symbolize the civilian lives lost as a result of the war. AFSC offices nationwide are mounting similar state exhibits in their regions (*see related story, page 7*).

To everyone’s amazement, Wal-Mart not only agreed but was extremely helpful in identifying the best spot to use, just beside the store’s main driveway. Organiz-



ers even had a few trees for shade, which on two 90-degree days during Memorial Day weekend were a blessing.

Throughout the first day, cars slowed as they pulled into the parking lot. Many people parked their cars and walked over for a closer look. Once there, they pulled out cell phones to call friends with the message, “You have to come see this!”

On the second day, a front page article in the local newspaper brought more people out to the sun-soaked parking lot. These people looked for Nick Berg’s boots. Nick, an independent contractor from West Chester, Pennsylvania, was working in Iraq when he was captured and beheaded.

Nick’s father, Michael, had approached AFSC and asked if we would display a pair of boots for his son. Michael drove from Delaware to be at the exhibit.

Despite expectations to the contrary, many people expressed deep gratitude for the memorial and concern about the war. As one man said to his son, “This is what

Memorial Day is all about, remembering people who have been killed in the war.”

In fact, more people donated to support Eyes Wide Open at Wal-Mart than at any other site in Pennsylvania, feeling it was one small thing they could do in remembrance of lives lost.

As often happens, the effect on those who brought Eyes Wide Open to Lewisburg was just as powerful as the impact on those who came to visit.

“I’ve done many unique things during my life, from taking students to a leper colony, to prisons, or to schools for the blind,” said David Young, the first to suggest the Wal-Mart location, “but none even came close to how this exhibit impacted the public.”

When Eyes Wide Open went to Scranton, Pennsylvania, Mary Ellen McNish, AFSC General Secretary, commented that taking Eyes Wide Open state exhibits to small communities would be a key factor in bringing about an end to this war.

After spending Memorial Day weekend in a Wal-Mart parking lot, we are inclined to agree with her.

More information about the work of AFSC’s Pennsylvania office is online at www.afsc.org/pittsburgh.

Emilie Smith, an intern in AFSC’s Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania office, coordinated the Eyes Wide Open Pennsylvania program.



Photos: (top) George Hagegeorges; (middle, bottom) Paul Wahrmanig

Expanding the impact

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Remembering the human cost of war, state by state

BY MARY ZERKEL

AFSC's Eyes Wide Open (EWO) exhibit has traveled to more than 80 communities across the United States, bringing the message of the human cost of the Iraq war to hundreds of thousands of people. Even so, demand for the exhibit outnumbers the places we are able to visit with the traveling memorial, which now reflects the more than U.S. 2,600 casualties and symbols of Iraqi deaths.

In response, AFSC is creating smaller, state-based versions of EWO. In several states, Friends meetings are coordinating the exhibits.

Each state exhibit features a memorial to Iraqi lives lost and empty combat boots representing the U.S. military casualties from that particular state. They also include information about the war's economic and social costs to that state.

The AFSC Akron and Dayton offices in Ohio and the Chicago office in Illinois piloted the state-based exhibits last summer, with great success.

The EWO Ohio exhibit has visited more than 30 locations across the state and is concentrating on smaller, rural communities. In Illinois, EWO organizers worked closely with AFSC's Truth in Recruitment program, displaying the boots at summer festivals where military recruiters were targeting minority communities. These successes led to the replication of the exhib-

it in 15 states.

Each office or Friends meeting serves as the EWO state coordinator. Working with other groups to find display sites enhances overall peacebuilding work as relationships are built, volunteers are recruited, and funds are raised.

Each state exhibit also varies according to local needs. For example, EWO Oregon is working with a partner group, the Rural Organizing Project, to bring the exhibit to rural communities. Organizers there also helped design the new Iraqi memorials that most of the state exhibits will now incorporate.

In addition to the state exhibits, the AFSC Chicago office is touring the EWO National Guard exhibit, which features boots representing National Guard casualties in Iraq. The majority of National Guard soldiers are fire fighters, police, teachers, and other public servants. Their absence leaves communities at home unprotected, which became even more apparent after Hurricane Katrina. This exhibit has traveled to 25 cities in 13 states since November 2005.

For more information, please contact Mary Zerkel (phone: [312] 427-2533, e-mail: praxisafsc@igc.org), or go online to www.afsc.org/eyes

Mary Zerkel is the Eyes Wide Open program director.

Photos: (top, right column) Scenes from Eyes Wide Open state exhibits.



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



MONTPELIER, VERMONT



PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA



DAYTON, OHIO



CHELAN, WASHINGTON



DULUTH, MINNESOTA

Photos: AFSC staff

News from around AFSC

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Opposing torture in U.S. prisons

Prisoners in isolation are routinely locked at least 23 hours a day in cells no bigger than many closets, alone, for months or years on end. Today, more than 200,000 prisoners around the country are confined in this manner. "Prison isolation is a human rights violation," says Molly Wieser, coordinator of AFSC's new STOPMAX Campaign. "It fits the definition of torture in the United Nations' Convention against Torture."



The STOPMAX Campaign builds on years of AFSC work to eliminate the use of isolation in prisons. Working with current and former prisoners, prisoners' families, community activists, and others, the STOPMAX Campaign has staff in

many states and regions. The campaign is also cultivating campaign partners throughout the country.

Learn more about prisoner isolation or volunteer to help with the campaign by visiting www.stopmax.org

Photos: (top) Afghan classroom; (middle) STOPMAX strategic planning meeting; (bottom) A group of concerned citizens attend a town hall meeting in Syracuse, New York.



HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Healing and teaching in Afghanistan

In the midst of increasing violence in Afghanistan, AFSC staff are leading a process of reflection and meditation using the Qur'an and traditional poetry to help women come to terms with the violence and pain they have experienced. In the past three years, more than 15,000 Afghan women and men have been introduced to the program.

In Parwan and Ghazni provinces, AFSC is training the staff of the Afghan Women's Resource Center and Noor Education Centre to run peer support groups for women and men. Peer support groups "provide skills needed to prevent violence and understand its roots, through activities that also address our participants' psychosocial wellness," says Patricia Omidian, AFSC's Afghanistan country representative.

AFSC is continuing its work with Afghan schools, as well. Last winter, AFSC and a local partner organization sponsored a teacher training for 60 Afghan teachers. And, since 2002, AFSC has built nine schools in Afghanistan.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Staying warm all winter

Last winter, AFSC's CAFFE (Community Advocates for Family Empowerment) Program in Syracuse, New York, helped people keep their houses heated. Through a series of town meetings co-sponsored with Syracuse United Neighbors, AFSC worked to get local residents in touch with their congressman, their utility company, and groups that winterize homes and help with heating bills.

Following a promise made at a town meeting, the utility company's consumer advocate helped dozens of people understand the utility's billing programs and helped many keep the heat on throughout the winter. Soon after residents met with their U.S. representative, he voted to increase assistance for those struggling to pay high heating bills.

With winter on its way, the CAFFE program is committed to helping people understand their bills and advocating for ways to keep the heat on in everyone's house through the cold months. Also, the program is running a second series of leadership development workshops for low-income women.



IMMIGRATION

Iowa summit focuses on immigrants' contributions

In Iowa, the meat-packing, food-processing, construction, and health services sectors are hiring increasing numbers of immigrants reports Sandra Sanchez, director of AFSC's Iowa Immigrants' Voice Project, in Des Moines. They are a crucial part of the economy.

This past August, a first-ever Iowa immigration "summit" brought together representatives from business, government, legal services, the religious community, health care, and social services. Nearly 100 people attended to discuss the impact of recent national legislation on their respective fields.

Concrete actions included establishing an interfaith coalition to educate Iowans on the contributions immigrants make to society, and an agreement by business people to sponsor a media campaign to counteract stereotypical images of immigrants.

AFSC's program also sponsors legal clinics every weekend where ten volunteers handle an average of 100 requests. And thanks to Sandra's work, the state is providing funds for 50 scholarships to interpreting/translating school for bilingual candidates.



PEACE

Israeli and Palestinian youth join AFSC in the U.S.

"Growing up in Israel, I didn't see people who thought much about military service," says Alex Cohn, a 19 year old from Tel Aviv. "It's a part of life. Go to school, go to work, go into the army."

Alex, who was jailed for months for refusing to serve in the Israeli army, spent a month this fall in Philadelphia sharing his experiences with local high school and college students. In Israel, he is part of a growing "refuser" movement that has organized more than 250 high school students not to serve in the army.

Alex is one of six young Israelis—four Jewish conscientious objectors and two Palestinian Israeli activists—and two Palestinian youth group leaders who were chosen to work in AFSC offices in Los Ange-

les, Chicago, Philadelphia, Providence, and San Francisco.

In addition to speaking at local high schools and colleges, the youth activists saw how people promote peace and justice in this country. They also connected with U.S. peace advocates at a U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation conference in Dearborn, Michigan.



"We have a tough life back home," says Lisa Hananiya, a 19 year old who edits a Hebrew-Arabic newspaper in Jaffa, Israel. "For us, we have an everyday struggle with family and friends who think we're wasting our time. We're here in the U.S. to show that there are people in Israel who are working for peace."

"It's important for people to think independently and to try to understand other viewpoints," adds Alex. "I came here to share my experience as an Israeli peace activist and learn about the experience of people in the U.S. Hearing other perspectives helps me do my work back home."

Photos: (top) Alex Cohn, Israeli conscientious objector, (bottom) Lisa Hananiya, Palestinian Israeli activist.

TAKE ACTION

Show your support for immigrants' rights

You can show your support for immigrants' rights with signs, T-shirts, buttons, and bumper stickers, all part of

AFSC's "No Human Being Is Illegal" campaign. Buy them all, and much more, at the AFSC online store: www.afscstore.org.





A tradition of service

AFSC workcamps continue to educate and inspire

BY PAUL MURRAY

For eight weeks, the campers in Valley View, an African-American community of independent land-owning farmers, lived in surplus army tents. They endured the heat and humidity as they launched home building projects, canvassed to register new voters, and assisted in one of the country's first Head Start programs.

On July 14-16, 2006, eight campers and two leaders returned to Canton, Mississippi, for a reunion. Most had not seen each other since 1966. The now gray-haired former students shared memories of their southern sojourn four decades earlier. They revisited scenes of their youthful adventures, including the Canton jail where the group was incarcerated after



joining a civil rights demonstration.

Asked if he regretted his arrest, Ken Zeserson replied, "Absolutely not. I never felt the need to apologize for being arrested while demonstrating for civil rights."

Masafumi Nagao traveled from Japan where he is a professor at Hiroshima

University. As a student at Carleton College, he signed up for the work camp to see a different facet of American society. His Mississippi experience helped prepare him for his current project developing educational programs in South Africa.

Emotions flowed freely when the campers visited families who hosted them. Bill Winfield toured the home of Leothas Nichols and pointed with pride to the ceiling he plastered forty years ago. "More important than the buildings we worked on," he observed, "are the friendships that have endured."

Paul Murray was a Valley View workcamper in 1966

China Summer For the sixth year, AFSC brought together participants from the U.S., Japan, and Korea for three weeks in the Chinese rural community of Xiaoshicun (Little Stone Village) this summer. The volunteers taught middle school students who rapidly improved their English language skills, learned some Korean and Japanese, and studied environmental protection. Local educators say that since AFSC's program began, the rate of girls going on to high school has doubled. In another sign of progress, some of the students from the early years are now returning as teachers.



Semilleros de Futuros From July 3 through August 13, five communities in Mexico benefited from AFSC youth volunteers. In Puebla, the young people built large cement tanks to collect rainwater and ecological stoves

to reduce respiratory problems. In Xicalahuatla, they built a community store. All of the projects were developed with input from community members. The youth also enjoyed cultural exchanges and the challenges of living in rural indigenous communities.

"The project allowed the community to receive something useful," noted one participant. "For me, I was able to connect spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically, and most importantly, I connected with mother earth."

Photos: (left) Earth Day event in China; (above) sharing a moment in Mexico; (right) cultural celebration (Mexico)



Join the Quaker Service Circle

Donors who sign up to make monthly gifts by credit card or check become members of the Quaker Service Circle. Please call Donor Services toll-free at 888-588-2372, ext. 1, or log onto www.afsc.org/give and choose "Monthly Giving."

Photos: (top) Suzanne Murray; (middle) AFSC photo; (bottom) Jaime Reilly



With a hammer and a nail

A former AFSC program builds hope for the future—literally

BY WILLIE COLÓN REYES

In 1961, staff and constituents of AFSC's Farm Labor Program in Visalia, California, had a vision: farmworkers banding together to build each other's homes. At the time, workers lived with their families in substandard shacks without heat, electricity, or other conveniences that most people in the U.S. take for granted.

Fast-forward to 2006, and Self-Help Enterprises (SHE)—which spun off from AFSC and became an independent organization in 1965—has worked with farmworkers and other low-income residents to secure housing loans and build more than 5,450 single and multifamily homes in California's agriculturally rich San Joaquin Valley.

"When I was little, I was embarrassed by where I lived," says Graciela Martinez, who grew up in a farmworker family and is now director of AFSC's *Proyecto Campesino* in Visalia, the successor to the Farm Labor Program. "I wish my parents could have taken advantage of a program like this so we could've gotten out of our two-room shack with no inside plumbing.

"Having a home empowers a child and can bring a family closer together," adds Graciela, who has been active with SHE

since the 1960s. "To me, that's very motivating."

Humble roots

SHE began from admittedly humble roots, as AFSC's Farm Labor Program helped three farmworker families in Goshen, California, work together to build new homes. AFSC also led the successful effort to change an existing U.S. Department of Agriculture housing loan program so that farmworkers and other low-income residents could qualify.

Today, SHE provides a variety of services. For example, the organization's 70 staff members offer credit counseling, help people understand the responsibilities of home ownership, and guide participants through the maze of the home loan application process.

"People work in groups of 10 to 12 families that help each other build their own homes," Graciela explains, noting that, "by the time the homes are done, you have a community."

SHE also develops and owns apartments with community centers that contain computer labs. The centers host resident services such as after-school programs and English as a Second Language classes. SHE now operates nearly 1,000 units of affordable rental housing for low-income families in the San Joaquin Valley.

National recognition

As a result of its success, SHE has gotten national recognition.

Graciela, a SHE board member for ten years and president for the past two, was recently honored with one of eight nation-



wide Dorothy Richardson Awards for Resident Leadership. The award comes with a \$5,000 grant that goes to SHE, and Graciela plans to target the money for SHE's scholarship fund, which benefits the children of families that have gone through the program.

"We present the scholarships during our annual dinner, and it's awesome to see the kids go up, get their award, and speak to the group," Graciela says. "And they're going to college. That was unheard of even a few years ago."

"We need to give our young people a brighter future," Graciela adds, "and a good, safe, secure home provides a path to that brighter future."

More information about SHE and Proyecto Campesino are available online at www.selfhelpenterprises.org and www.afsc.org/pacificmtn/visalia.htm.

Willie Colón Reyes is the editor of Quaker Action.

Photos: (top, bottom) Scenes of SHE in action, (oval) Graciela Martinez.

Photo: Self-Help Enterprises





The power of dirt

Gardening project fosters peace in Bosnia/Herzegovina

BY M'ANNETTE RUDDELL

There's power in dirt. Consider the strength and utility of bricks. The practical and lovely aspect of a colorful pottery platter. The mighty oak with deep roots in the soil.

And in AFSC's "Peace Gardens" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, properly tended dirt produces cucumbers and cabbage, potatoes and lettuce, tomatoes and onions. The gardeners are diverse as well—widows, pensioners, students, refugees, prisoners, the mentally challenged.

AFSC began the Community Gardens Program in 2000 to provide a safe and supportive environment where people from different ethnicities could work side by side to grow food for their families.

In fifteen sites, some 2,000 gardeners have studied conventional and organic growing techniques, children are encouraged to grow their own vegetables, and all the participants learn about protecting the environment. Natural fertilizers are used in the gardens and chemical pesticides are discouraged.

A daily struggle

Life is still a day-to-day struggle for many of the neighbors who meet in the



gardens. Jobs are hard to come by and those who live on a small fixed income need the produce to bolster their nutritional needs.

In addition to seeing their hard work come to fruition at harvest time, the participants value their socializing time, conversations with people they might not see anywhere else, a physical sense of well-being, and increased self-respect.

During a recent visit, AFSC staff Tahija Vikalo was moved by the reflections of a group of widows from Srebrenica who participate in one of the gardens.

"They said, 'You cannot imagine what this garden means to us,'" says Tahija, program coordinator for AFSC's Middle East and Europe region who is originally from Bosnia/Herzegovina. "Working in the garden

also stops the avalanche of horrific memories that used to come to them every day and makes a significant contribution to their winter food reserves."

New challenges

During the past few months, AFSC staff have worked closely with several gardeners' associations to move them toward independence. The leaders are becoming well-versed in setting agendas, planning meetings, assessing the needs of fellow participants, and handling the extensive paperwork (such as negotiat-

ing contracts for land with local municipalities) associated with the gardens.

A new tool to enhance the project is a long-planned handbook that will cover agricultural aspects of the gardens and include information

on how other communities can organize gardening associations on a democratic model.

Just as there is power in dirt, there's power in peace—in the peace of a quiet afternoon weeding a row of beans, sharing a cup of tea with a new friend, and finding common ground in a spirited discussion. The experience of the "Peace Gardens" confirms once again that reaching out to the best in human beings yields a bountiful harvest.

M'Annette Ruddell is a Quaker Action contributing editor. Please turn to page 15 to find out how you can support the "Peace Gardens."

Photos: (top) Young gardeners till the soil; (bottom) preparing produce to make a donation to the Red Cross



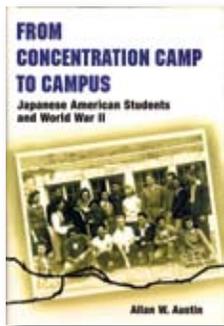


Your turn

A selection of readers' recommendations

This section of *Quaker Action* is dedicated to suggestions about good things to read, see, or hear. From time to time we have asked our readers to send in your recommendations. Here's a sample of works that have inspired or moved some of you lately.

From Concentration to Campus: Japanese American Students and World War II



by Allan W. Austin,
(University of Illinois Press, 2004)

A story of principled action in the face of wartime racism, this book

chronicles the struggle of the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, of which AFSC was a part, to help incarcerated students pursue higher education during World War II. Allan Austin spent time in the AFSC Archives and interviewed many Quakers and AFSC staff members for his research on this book.

~ submitted by Beverly England Williams,
North Branch Meeting, Wilkes-Barre, PA
(See a related story on page 14.)

The Oath: A Surgeon Under Fire

by Khassan Baiev and Ruth Daniloff
(Walker & Company, 2004)

This moving book about humanism in the face of terrorism and despair is the story of Dr. Baiev, a Chechen surgeon, who is now a political refugee and volunteer in a Massachusetts hospital. His first-hand accounts of Chechen resistance fighters and late-night kitchen-table surgeries with local anesthetics will make you think—and

help you be glad for whatever you have. Ultimately, Dr. Baiev's insistence on treating all the wounded as patients, rather than enemies, led to his forced exile due to threats on his life from both sides of the conflict.

~ submitted by George Record, MD,
Burlington, CT

An Expensive Way To Make Bad People Worse: An Essay on Prison Reform from an Insider's Perspective

by Jens Soering (Lantern Books, 2004)

Criminal justice, too easily ignored in our society, is addressed in this book by one who has spent the last 18 years behind bars. He demonstrates, poignantly, that the majority of prisoners are either racial minorities, of limited mental ability, or mentally ill. Many would not be dangerous to others if released. Soering also points out just how much money is spent on incarceration, with little positive result.

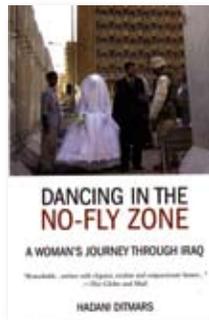
~ submitted by Jean B. Franklin,
Black Mountain, NC

Some other noteworthy books that have come across our desk...

Dancing in the No-Fly Zone: A Woman's Journey Through Iraq

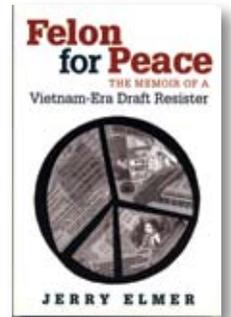
by Hadani Ditmars
(Olive Branch, 2006)

Hadani Ditmars delivers an intimate view of everyday life in Iraq—before and after the U.S. invasion.



Felon for Peace: The Memoir of a Vietnam-Era Draft Resister

by Jerry Elmer
(Vanderbilt University Press, 2005)

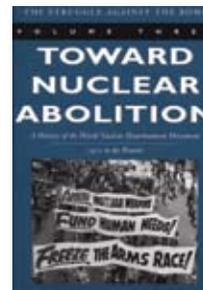


From an earlier age of war resistance

comes a heartfelt and probing look at the successes and failures of the peace movement. Written by a former AFSC staff member.

Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present

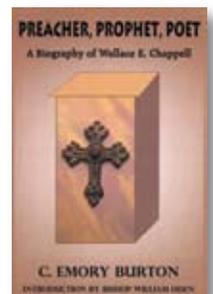
by Lawrence S. Wittner (Stanford University Press, 2003)



This comprehensive volume recounts the dramatic story of the worldwide movement of citizen activists that helped curb the nuclear arms race and prevent nuclear war.

Preacher, Prophet, Poet: A Biography of Wallace E. Chappell

by C. Emory Burton
(AuthorHouse, 2004)



This short, readable volume details the life and thoughts of a progressive United Methodist minister from Dallas, Texas.



Blowing in the wind

A message from AFSC General Secretary Mary Ellen McNish

We've had many reminders that this year marked the fifth anniversary of the attacks of September 11. There were movies, documentaries, televised town meetings, and "made for TV" shows. Some were really good and some were dreadful.

But what I noticed most was the re-emergence of the American flag. I saw it displayed on homes, in restaurant windows, and on cars and trucks.

In my Philadelphia neighborhood, where I am surrounded by fire fighters, nurses, construction workers, postal service and city employees, flags were plentiful. These are good people, great neighbors, and some are good friends. We get along fine, though we often find ourselves on different sides of many important issues.

And so, on this important day of remembrance, my response to what I was seeing around me was to fly the United Nations flag on my front porch. Needless to say, I got many reactions.

Some folks blew their car horns and gave me a thumbs up. Others didn't recognize the flag and wondered what it was. Still



others stopped to talk. "I know you and I never vote the same way," said one neighbor, "but I have to say this situation we're in now is a mess. We have to get out of Iraq."

This is a very good sign. It means that people who feel differently from me are realizing that the billions of dollars spent, the many lives lost, and the contempt for diplomacy and international law have not brought the perpetrators of 9/11 to justice.

It seems people also see that these actions have landed our country in a morass and that there's no moral compass to get us out.

I am proud that AFSC has been an important part of raising this awareness. Eyes Wide Open—and the enormous media coverage it has received—along with candlelight vigils, peace marches and rallies, and a thousand other activities have generated an awakening that will not be stopped.

Mary Ellen McNish

REFLECTIONS

American refugees: The Japanese-American relocation



WWII Japanese-American internee.

Soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States government began relocating people of Japanese ancestry who lived on the West Coast. Some 110,000 people—citizens and non-citizens—were interned. AFSC responded quickly with a vigorous effort to help Japanese-Americans who had been removed to camps.

Yuri Kochiyama, a long-time community activist, was one of those interned. "[Quakers] wanted to help even when they found out that if they showed interest and concern for the Japanese ... they would be looked upon as an enemy," Yuri said during a recent interview at a gathering of AFSC's Third World Coalition in Oakland, California. "But the Quakers were not afraid ... and they helped in many ways."

AFSC established two programs to help get people out of internment camps. The first was an effort to find colleges and universities in Midwest and Eastern states that would be willing to receive evacuees who were already students or were eligible to enter schools of higher education. The other program was geared to the release of those who could find jobs in the same areas of the United States where college opportunities were being sought.

Approximately 4,000 students were assisted in resuming or beginning their college careers, and hundreds of other Japanese-Americans who were released got help as they looked for work and places to live.

Listen to the full interview with Yuri Kochiyama online at www.afsc.org/yuri.



Pam Phan of the AFSC Portland office (left), with Yuri Kochiyama.

Gifts with Heart & Hope

Too much stuff? This holiday season, honor your family and friends with a life-affirming gift to the American Friends Service Committee. Your contribution in their names supports families who often lack even life's basic necessities.

You may buy the gifts noted below or purchase a "share." For each contribution of \$25 or more, you're entitled to a colorful card with art by Anna Oneglia. It includes a gift message and an inspirational quotation. Please see the enclosed envelope for details on ordering



In Bosnia and Herzegovina,

The produce provides much-needed nutrition from AFSC's "Peace Gardens". The gardens also reconnect people across ethnic barriers created by war.

A gift of \$80 can provide hand tools and seed packs for a Bosnian family's garden.

In Afghanistan, where life continues to be harsh, AFSC focuses on education. In cooperation with villages in Bamiyan Province, where there is strong support for classes for girls and boys, we are building and furnishing schools, and training teachers.

A gift of \$45 purchases desks and chairs for three students.

Dengalenga village in Mozambique was founded by refugees fleeing war. It's remote and largely inaccessible, especially during the rainy season. AFSC provides animals such as cows and chickens that increase income and improve the nutrition of the families, carts for more reliable transportation, and ploughs to reduce hand labor.

A gift of \$125 can buy cows and carts for families in Dengalenga.



Tanh Hoa Province in Vietnam

is one of the poorest areas of the country and has low soil fertility. The Service Committee provides high-yield seeds for vegetables, rice, soybeans, and melons, as well as climate suitable fruit trees and biofertilizer.

A gift of \$115 can provide five Vietnamese families with 22 fruit trees.

Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western

Hemisphere. In the isolated Grand'Anse region, AFSC's program includes reforestation, fisheries, and other economic projects, as well as the only health clinic and training center for some 40,000 people.

A gift of \$100 can buy Haitians four female goats.



Across the United States and in more than 25 sites overseas, AFSC promotes justice and equality, provides economic opportunities for those in need, and works tirelessly for a more peaceful world.

Your gift of \$25 will support AFSC's work for peace, justice, and human dignity

To buy Gifts with Heart and Hope: Call toll-free

1-888-588-2372, ext. 1, or online at www.afsc.org/give

or use the envelope found in this magazine.

AFSC uses a holistic approach in our international development programs. We provide both the actual items and education on, for example, proper care and feeding instructions for animals. Your gifts made to these projects will be used in this spirit.

Now your IRA can be an AFSC donor, too

If you are 70½ or older, recent legislation benefits YOU!

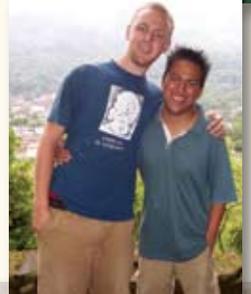
Under the Pension Protection Act of 2006, you can make a gift to a qualified charitable organization such as AFSC using funds transferred directly from your individual retirement account. Here's the best part: You pay NO TAXES on your distribution!

Your gift can be accomplished simply and maximize the benefit of your IRA dollars. Plus, making a gift now enables you to jump-start your legacy and witness the benefits of your generosity to AFSC. However, this opportunity only lasts until December 31, 2007.

Benefits of the Pension Protection Act of 2006

- The charitable distribution counts toward minimum required distributions.
- The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so even those who do not itemize their tax returns receive the benefit.
- You may transfer up to \$100,000 per year directly from your IRA.

To learn more call our Gift Planning Office toll free at 1-888-588-2372, ext. 3, or visit our website at www.afsc.org/irarollover



Photos: AFSC staff



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QuakerAction

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