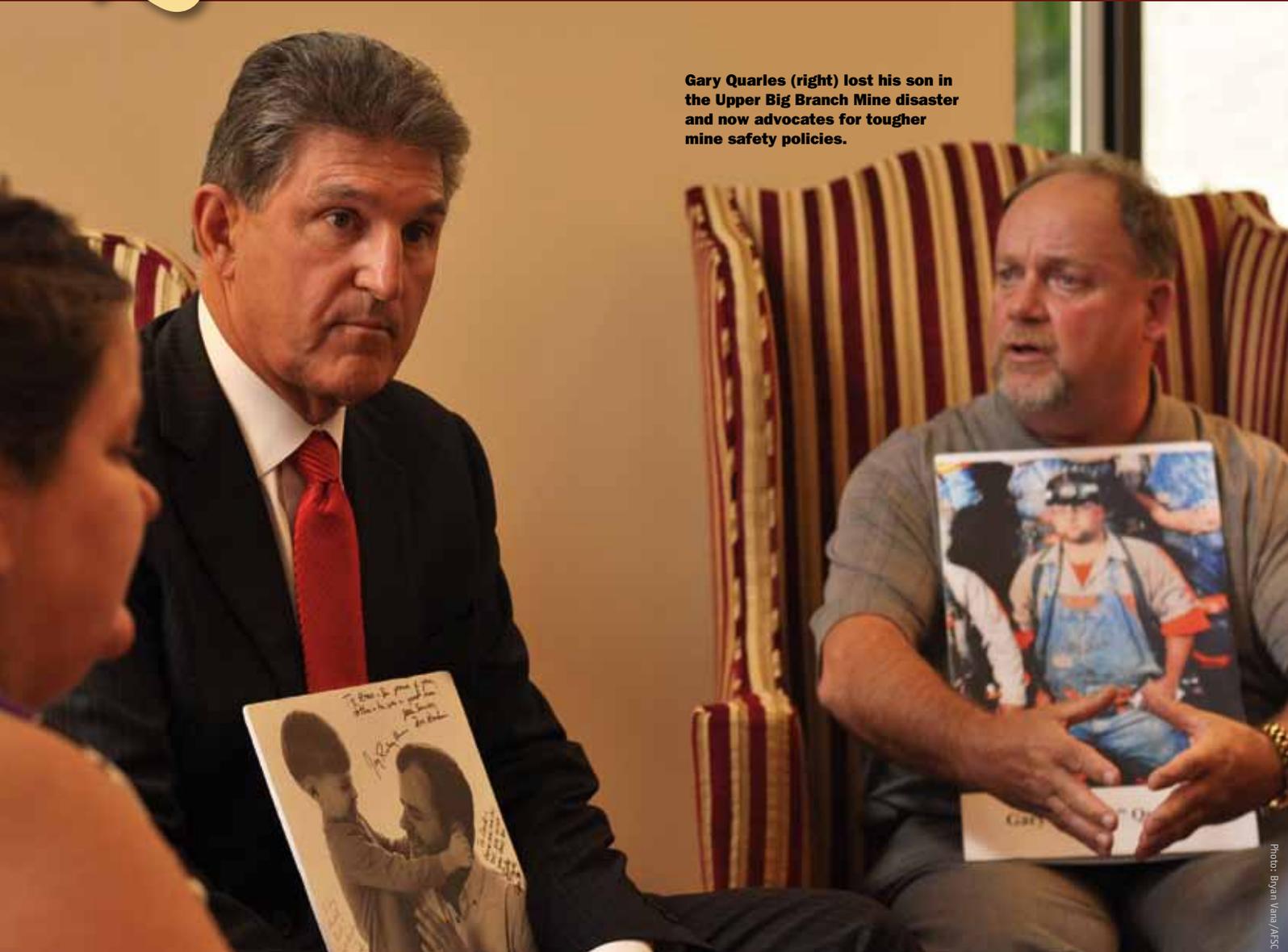


QuakerAction



Gary Quarles (right) lost his son in the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster and now advocates for tougher mine safety policies.

Photo: Bryan Vanev/AFSC



**American Friends
Service Committee**

www.afsc.org

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 The Quaker idea of “right relationship”
- 4 Communities invested in education
- 6 Putting a face on federal policies
- 8 Understanding economic justice

In right relationship

From the depth of need and despair, people can work together, can organize themselves to solve their own problems and fill their own needs with dignity and strength.

— CESAR CHAVEZ

Dear Friend,

In 1695, Quaker economic reformer John Bellers advocated for universal health care, vocational training, and sustainable employment.* Bellers saw that everyone paid a price when some communities were trapped in a cycle of poverty, poor health, and ignorance. He argued that improving the economic well-being of the poor would impact all of society by alleviating the social disorder and violence that accompanied poverty then as they do now.

Bellers' proposals arose from the Quaker idea of "right relationship"—that our well-being is connected with the well-being of others and with the earth. Bellers did not succeed in persuading the English Parliament or the upper classes of his day to adopt his proposals. However, his ideas influenced Robert Owen and other critics of the Industrial Revolution. They encouraged cooperatively owned and managed businesses as a vital alternative to the prevalent model that exploited and undervalued workers.

For many decades, AFSC has been guided by this same understanding of right relationship as we work with marginalized communities struggling for economic security. Sometimes this work begins with providing for basic needs, as we did with the families of West Virginia coal miners during the Great Depression or with the Zimbabweans who were displaced from their home villages to bare, open fields at the edge of Harare.

But finding right relationship always requires much more than a handout.

Our best work supports people in developing their own means to sustain themselves and overcome injustice. In West Virginia, the feeding program for miners' families quickly grew into the Mountaineers' Craftsmen Cooperative, where miners produced chairs, tables, and other traditional Appalachian crafts for sale (for more, see page 11). In Zimbabwe at the Hatcliffe Extension, we helped



General Secretary Shan Cretin (left) helps build a door for a new home in Hatcliffe Extension during a 2011 visit to Zimbabwe.

neighbors form cooperatives to learn woodworking, welding, and other skills that allowed them to build and furnish their own houses, replacing the tents and shanties that first provided shelter with brick and cinderblock homes.

And right relationship means working to change government policies that have been stumbling blocks to economic progress. In West Virginia, AFSC continues to work to ensure mine safety regulations are in place and enforced. In Zimbabwe, AFSC stood with residents of Hatcliffe Extension as they successfully petitioned the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises to bring water and electricity to a cooperative factory that would allow their new businesses to grow.

Throughout these difficult economic times, AFSC continues to be guided by the vision of an economy grounded in right relationship, sometimes developing economic alternatives, sometimes working to ensure that our public policies provide opportunities for those most in need.

In this issue of Quaker Action, we have included many stories of how AFSC works to create strong communities through working for healthy economies. As John Bellers understood more than 300 years ago, when we invest in health, education, and capacity-building, every community can fulfill its own needs with dignity and strength.

In peace,

Shan Cretin
General Secretary

* Keith Helmuth, "The Quaker Peace Testimony, Economics, and the Common Good." Friends Journal, Dec. 2011.

AFSC organizes community responses to regressive legislation in New Hampshire

BY ALEXIS MOORE

Pressure to balance the budget has put at risk many services and policies that protect New Hampshire's most vulnerable residents—as well as the health of its relatively strong economy.

But Arnie Alpert and Maggie Fogarty, AFSC's program coordinators in New Hampshire, have worked relentlessly to not only defend economic rights, but also empower the state's residents to know when and how to take a stand.

And it's worked. In the last two years alone, they have helped hold the line on bargaining rights for public and private sector workers, keep affordable housing policies in place, stop the re-legalization of predatory "payday" loans, and preserve as much of the state's already thin safety net as possible.

Among the tools they have used to mobilize allies for direct and grassroots lobbying is a weekly e-newsletter, State House Watch, to which hundreds of

subscribers look for legislative updates and alerts. Distributed on Fridays since 2010, it has quickly become a trusted source of timely information.

"Each week we report on the latest outrages and victories, but also give readers details about upcoming public hearings and votes so that they can make their voices heard," says Arnie, who also writes opinion articles for state newspapers and makes frequent appearances on radio and television. "We aim to pass the 'Goldilocks Test' in each issue [by including] just the right amount of detail."

Arnie points to their nonpartisan approach as another reason for this success. Refusing to write off any legislator or other elected official based on political affiliation has helped them build coalitions with nontraditional allies and find opportunities to work within the system.

"New Hampshire has a distinctly open form of government, which makes it possible for faith-based activists and other social justice advocates to get a hearing, even when the overall mood is hostile to

what we stand for," he says. "We strive to be consistent with our Quaker testimony of looking for that of God in everyone and not demonizing adversaries. And we believe that's made the difference."

For example, local police chiefs have joined the effort against mandatory police involvement in immigration enforcement. And major business groups have supported affordable housing policies and joined opposition to mandatory immigration status checks by employers.

The three-to-one Republican majority in both houses of the legislature makes it challenging to mobilize a nonpartisan response at times, but it's a challenge that can be addressed with the right approach. "We find common ground across the aisles," says Maggie. "We are not a partisan organization."

Facing regressive legislation in their own states, other AFSC programs have also found success—in Arizona, standing in the way of the expanding private prison industry, and in Ohio, defending workers' right to organize.

"We strive to be consistent with our Quaker testimony of looking for that of God in everyone and not demonizing adversaries. And we believe that's made the difference."

Arnie Alpert,
AFSC NH Program Coordinator

(On left) Maggie Fogarty at a New Hampshire rally last year. (On right) An immigrants' and workers' rights rally in front of the Dover, N.H. city hall building.





In this outdoor classroom in Myanmar, students are learning not only to read and write, but to think critically and ask questions about what they are reading.

Photo: Russell Peterson/AFSC

Holistic teaching methods benefit children and communities in Myanmar

BY WILLIE COLON

For a nation as isolated as Myanmar (Burma), information is a precious commodity.

That's why school principals are excited and eager to learn new things, such as methods for child-centered education. Through visits cosponsored by AFSC to neighboring Asian countries, they get to do just that.

"When I came back [from an exchange visit], I established a student council in my school to help me and the teachers improve the school," one principal notes. "The children are very proud and happy to serve on the students' council and have given us very good ideas."

Until recently, the government of Myanmar spent less than 2 percent of its gross domestic product on health and education, so Buddhist monasteries started

schools to provide basic secular education to poor children who could not afford the official schools. In 2009, AFSC began working to support civil society efforts to improve livelihoods and educate children.

To date, AFSC's program has helped train about 40 school principals (abbots) in school management, including exchange visits. Another 160 teachers from 40 schools have taken part in one of the program's 10-week teacher training sessions that go beyond basic literacy and numeracy to foster self-awareness, critical thinking, and eco-friendly life skills.

"I learned about healthy eating and healthy living and how this is linked to our environment and our food," one teacher says. "I am happy to be able to teach this to the children, and together we have made an organic garden in the school so that we can get organic vegetables whenever we need."

An estimated 1,600 children have benefited indirectly from the trainings.

While recent political reforms have eased some restrictions, the educational needs of the nation's poorest people remain the same.

"The daily lives of ordinary villagers have changed little," says Patricia DeBoer, regional director of AFSC's programs in Asia. "Monasteries will continue to be centers of community activity, and monastic schools will still be needed to educate the poorest children."

➤ **HEAR MORE**
AFSC staff talked about the trainings in Myanmar and other work in Asia this summer. Go to afsc.org/myanmar-call to listen to a recording of their conversation.

Budget cuts, healthier communities the focus for Los Angeles students

BY WILLIE COLON

Drastic budget cuts in Los Angeles have hit the educational system hard, but with help from AFSC, students at one high school are organizing to mitigate the effects of the crisis.

Lincoln High School in East Los Angeles has lost nearly 40 percent of its teachers and seen class sizes nearly double. Students also are losing the opportunity to learn outside the classroom as supplemental courses are being cut.

Enter AFSC's Roots for Peace program. "We want to build youth leadership and support healthier communities," explains Anthony Marsh, director of AFSC's program in Los Angeles.

To these ends, the program first worked with students to establish a Friends Peace Garden. Drawing inspiration from AFSC's work on youth-led community improvement projects in Palestine (*see sidebar*), the work now is expanding to include civic activism.

"We have created an outdoor learning space and want this to become a social justice learning garden," Anthony says. He would like students to deal with the low morale caused by the budget cuts and engage with the city and school district to discuss ways that money can move back into the schools.

The work at Lincoln began in February 2011 at the request of students who had heard of the two other Peace Gardens in Los Angeles schools that AFSC's Peace Education Program helped establish.

Students grow a wide variety of produce that includes lettuce, bok choy, tomatoes, and mint. They share the produce with the school and surrounding community.

"Working with AFSC has provided my students with a holistic learning experience they otherwise would not have had," says Lincoln teacher Daniel Alamo. "They are learning to create life through

Solidarity messages cross Gaza border

The siege and blockade of Gaza has cut off its residents from the outside world for more than five years.

So when a call went out asking AFSC staff to send messages of solidarity to colleagues and participants in the Palestine Youth Program, many jumped at the chance. Among them were students at Lincoln High School and staff from the Los Angeles Peace Education Program.

Along with a photo of the new mural at their Peace Garden, the Los Angeles staff and students sent a message that read, in part:

[We] have taken inspiration from the work in Gaza. In fact we have borrowed many ideas on how to develop civic engagement projects from the public achievement curriculum that you use in Gaza... Thank you for the wonderful work that you do!

"The mural in Los Angeles—and all the messages—really touched the staff and youth in Palestine," said Peter Lems, AFSC's program director for Iraq and Afghanistan. He compiled all the messages into a document titled, "Greetings and good wishes to our Gaza colleagues," which he delivered during a recent visit to the region.

"Everyone asked what Americans know about Gaza and the young people who live there," Peter said. "The messages of solidarity stimulated conversations about next steps and the hope of young people in Gaza to connect with others in the U.S. and around the world."



a garden, and through the process, change the school landscape. My students have been given the opportunity to not only envision change but also be part of it."

Lincoln student Gabriel Gutierrez adds, "The garden really does [improve the school] because it extends our capacity to do more for the community."

Changing hearts and minds

BY WILLIE COLON

A FSC's tradition of bringing constituents to meet face-to-face with lawmakers is providing a beacon of hope for change within a frustrating political climate in Washington, D.C.

"Amid all the powerful influences on a member of Congress—moneyed special interests, party politics, media spin—the final cards are held by their voters. Money doesn't vote," says Aura Kanegis, director of AFSC's Office of Public Policy and Advocacy in Washington. "At the end of the day, policymakers work for their constituents, and the direct voice of constituent experience has unrivaled power to cut through political noise."

And the emotional impact of their testimonies is undeniable. "While change doesn't happen in one conversation, face-to-face sharing of the real-life implications of policy decisions can help to break the grip of slick special interests and pat political talking points," Aura explains. "Over the long run, those voices of direct experience can impact the perceptions, assumptions, and motivations that drive a policymaker's decision process."

► **WEB EXCLUSIVE**

Learn more about the families who shared their personal testimonies with federal policymakers this past summer. Photos, stories, and related content about their time in Washington is online at afsc.org/dc-delegations.



Photo: Bryan Vana/AFSC

Emmanuel at the White House Domestic Policy Council.



Photo: Bryan Vana/AFSC

Sarah before deportation testimonies in the Kennedy Caucus Room at the Russell Senate Building.

Families split by immigration policies

This past summer, AFSC's Immigrant Rights Program organized a group of 70 adults and children to travel from Newark, N.J., to Washington to seek justice for families divided by U.S. immigration policy.

During a congressional briefing attended by 90 policymakers, four of the young people spoke about their experiences.

"The President has asked for the undocumented to come out of the shadows, and my aunt and uncle have, but they still have not found a pathway to citizenship," 23-year-old Florinda Beqiri told the gathering. "They go to weekly and monthly

check-ins and are treated with hatred and disrespect by their Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE] officers."

The delegation made personal visits to members of Congress and urged them to ensure that ICE exercises its discretion widely and favorably to allow immigrants to stay, waive any barriers that separate families, and support legislation that promotes family unity.

"This was the most exciting trip for me," said 11-year-old Larry Zabaze, whose family is from Cameroon. "I did not know that Congresspeople can listen to kids."

Miners' relatives on safety



Photo: Bryan Vana/AFSC

Deb Koehler-Fergen, who lost her son Travis Koehler in a work-related confined space accident, sits in a private meeting with Upper Big Branch family members.

In June, AFSC's West Virginia Economic Justice Project staff accompanied family members of three of the 29 miners killed in the 2010 explosion at West Virginia's Upper Big Branch mine. While in Washington, they urged lawmakers from both parties to take action to improve mine safety and stiffen penalties for mining companies that knowingly, willingly, and recklessly place miners' lives at risk.

Fighting back tears and carrying a photo of his son wearing miner's gear, Gary Quarles offered a tribute to his son, 33-year-old Gary Wayne Quarles, who left behind two young children in addition to his grieving parents.

"This wasn't just my son. This was a heck of a man," Gary said. "A good man. We don't want another family to go through what we've gone through."

Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis (second from left) with Upper Big Branch family members.



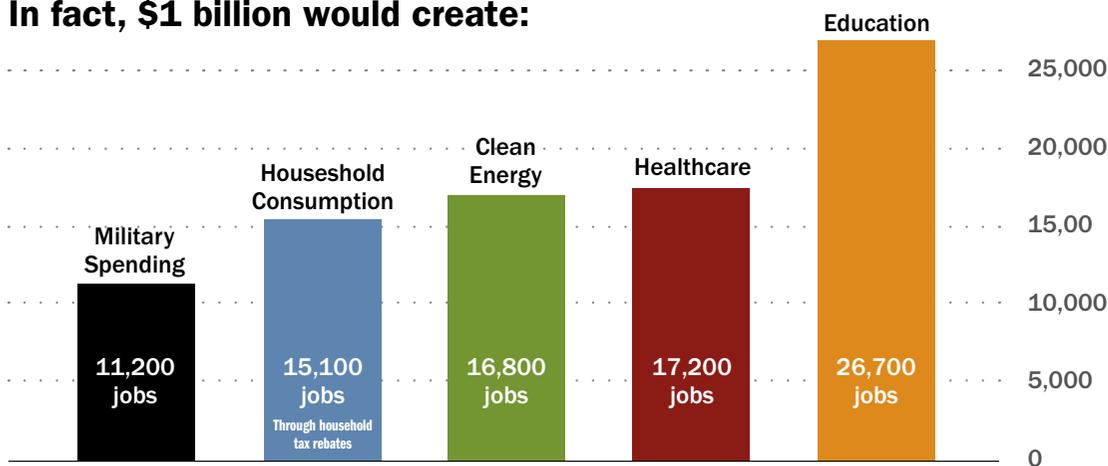
Photo: Bryan Vana/AFSC

Another good reason to cut military spending

Job creation is a hot topic in Washington, so when policymakers consider scaling back the defense budget, those who object often cite the economic benefits of military spending—including the jobs it creates.

But economists and researchers have shown that the same amount of money can create even more jobs when allocated in other, less destructive ways.*

In fact, \$1 billion would create:



* Robert Pollin, Heidi Garrett-Peltier, James Heintz, and Helen Scharber, "Green Recovery: A Program to Create Good Jobs and Start Building a Low-Carbon Economy." Political Economy Research Institute at University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2008.

View and share this graphic online at afsc.org/infographic/military-jobs

What is economic justice?



This mountaintop removal site at Kayford Mountain in West Virginia shows one way that the coal industry has extracted resources out of the state. Inset: Rick Wilson speaks to students about West Virginia politics, energy policy, and social and economic justice.

Photos: Bryan Vena/AFSC

BY RICK WILSON

This is an excerpt from a full length article, “Economic Justice 101,” which appears in the October 2012 issue of Friends Journal (www.friendsjournal.org), a monthly magazine focused on contemporary Quaker faith and practice.

I’ve worked on economic justice issues for the American Friends Service Committee for over 20 years. Coming as I do from West Virginia, the importance of this kind of work is pretty much self-evident to me. The late great Senator Robert C. Byrd described my home as,

a state whose rich resources have been largely owned and exploited by outside interests. Absentee owners, while living outside the state, wrested from the West Virginia earth the wealth that made them rich—rich from the toil and sweat and blood and tears of the people in the hill country who worked out their lives, all too often, for a pittance.

I realize, however, that these kinds of issues, fortunately, aren’t necessarily front and center for everybody. With that in mind, here’s one person’s introduction to the subject and a standing invitation to

join in. In a world of real and artificial scarcity, there’s plenty to go around. And it’s steady work.

What is economic justice?

My flip answer is to say that I haven’t really seen any yet but hope to recognize it when I do. It might be easier to define what working for it means. I found a powerful working definition in the pages of Walter Benjamin’s “Illuminations.” Benjamin was a radical and somewhat mystical Jewish literary and social theorist who tragically committed suicide when he was unable to escape from Nazi occupied Europe.

In an essay titled “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” he spoke of “a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist.” Benjamin believed that those refined and spiritual things were nevertheless important and that they “manifest themselves in this struggle as courage, humor, cunning and fortitude,” all of which come in handy in this kind of work.

(Especially humor and cunning, in my experience.)

He argued that such things “have retroactive force and will constantly call into question every victory, past and present, of the rulers.”

A simpler but equally powerful defi-

nition comes from labor history. According to legend, in the Lawrence, Mass. textile strike of 1912, waged primarily by immigrant women, a striker carried a sign that said, “We want bread, but we want roses too.” In other words, the struggle is not just for food, clothing, shelter, and decent working conditions, but for leisure, culture, and education as well.

Indeed, it is the struggle for all those things people need in order to thrive and reach their full potential. As James Agee put it,

I believe that every human being is potentially capable, within his ‘limits,’ of fully ‘realizing’ his potentialities; that this, his being cheated and choked of it, is infinitely the ghastliest, commonest, and most inclusive of all the crimes of which the world can accuse itself...

To read the rest of the article, including why economic justice matters and how you can work for it, go to www.friendsjournal.org.

► LEARN MORE

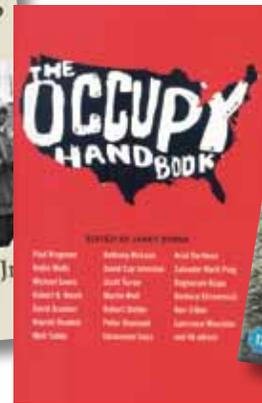
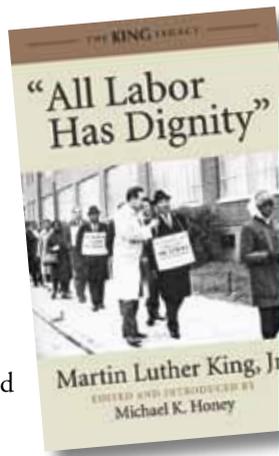
AFSC’s West Virginia Economic Justice Project, which Rick coordinates, works on statewide issues affecting low-income and working families. Go to afsc.org/wv-video to watch a short video about its work.

READER'S GUIDE

Economics matters

COMPILED BY TONY HERIZA

Mired in the “economic crisis,” people around the world are calling for just and sustainable economic policies at the local, national, and global levels. Members of AFSC’s program staff recommend these resources to help you understand the complex issues and imagine a more humane economic order.



WHAT'S WRONG?

Economic Collapse, Economic Change: Getting to the Roots of the Crisis (2011)

By Arthur MacEwan and John Miller

99 to 1: How Wealth Inequality is Wrecking the World and What We Can Do About It (2012)

By Chuck Collins
(Also see *Chuck's TEDx talk: tinyurl.com/tedx-collins*)

Inside Job (2010) – DVD

Directed by Charles Ferguson
This documentary exposes the corruption and greed behind the crash of 2008.

JosephStiglitz.com

Find books and articles by the Nobel Prize-winning economist.

Inequality and the Common Good
Data and analysis from the Institute for Policy Studies illuminate the corrosive impacts of inequality.
www.ips-dc.org/inequality

VISIONS OF A DIFFERENT FUTURE

Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth (2009)

By David Korten
Locally based, community-oriented economic alternatives

“All Labor Has Dignity” (2011)

By Martin Luther King, Jr., edited by Michael Honey
A new collection of Dr. King's speeches on labor rights and economic justice

America Beyond Capitalism: Reclaiming Our Wealth, Our Liberty, and Our Democracy (2011)

By Gar Alperovitz
Democratizing our economic system from the bottom up

Breakthrough Communities: Sustainability and Justice in the Next American Metropolis (2009)

Edited by M. Paloma Pavel
Urban strategies that benefit entire metropolitan regions, including low-income communities

Holy Cooperation!: Building Graceful Economies (2009)

By Andrew McLeod
Theological support for cooperative economics

New Priorities Network

Works to cut military spending and increase investment in jobs and public services
www.newprioritiesnetwork.org

The Occupy Handbook (2012)

Edited by Janet Byrne
Essays on our economic disaster and avenues for change

The Other Game: Lessons from How Life Is Played in Mexican Villages (2008)

By Phil Dahl-Bredine and Stephen Hicken
In some communities, sharing and inclusion are the highest values.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ECONOMICS

Colorlines (Race and Economy)
www.colorlines.com/economy

Dollars and Sense Magazine
www.dollarsandsense.org

Economic Policy Institute
www.epi.org

Money as Debt
www.moneyasdebt.net

NPR – Planet Money
www.npr.org/blogs/money

United for a Fair Economy
www.faireconomy.org

Washington's Blog
www.washingtonsblog.com

YES! Magazine
www.yesmagazine.org

GET INVOLVED

AFSC Coffee Project
www.equalexchange.coop/afsc

Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy
www.steadystate.org

Fair Trade Resource Network
www.fairtraderesources.org

Fixing the Future
www.pbs.org/now/fixing-the-future
www.fixingthefuture.org

TimeBanks
www.timebanks.org

Transition Network
www.transitionnetwork.org

READER'S GUIDE ONLINE

Go to afsc.org/readers-guide for an extended version of this list, links to online resources, and information on where to purchase many of these books.

DONOR PROFILE

Martha Gwyn, a lifetime contributor

BY THERESA KIRBY

Born to a Quaker family in an Indiana house that had been a station on the Underground Railroad, Martha Gwyn heard mention of AFSC in her formative years. But her personal involvement really started in the 1940s when she was a student at Earlham College.

“The work camp movement made a big impression on me,” Martha says. “It accomplished things. It made friends. It contributed to a community in nearly every case. It did lots of things.”

Her first work camp was in a segregated black neighborhood in Indianapolis, where she spent her weekends sharing meals, working on community projects, and participating in meetings for worship. She later went to California and Minnesota for longer work camps, where she built houses, helped with plumbing, supported an insurance cooperative, and worked in fields rescuing crops.

After World War II, Martha volunteered in European work camps at institutions that housed refugees, mainly young people from Eastern Europe who had escaped west. She also recalls remodeling a girls’ foster home in Switzerland around 1950. They had to rely on trucked-in water after American tanks drove over weakened pipes and broke the water mains.

At 88, Martha is rich in memories and experiences. She enjoys talking about the community efforts she’s been part of, from her college days to her time in Hawaii, where she was active with Honolulu Friends Meeting. She also fondly recalls camping trips with her husband Robert, a professor at the University of North Carolina and an active member of the community, and their eight children, seven of whom were adopted from a variety of countries and backgrounds.

Through the years, Martha has remained an active supporter of AFSC. Recently, she set up a gift annuity. “I wasn’t deciding as part of a one-time event or a two-time event,” she notes. “I was responding to one of the basic ongoing happenings in my life.” The annuity provides her with a steady income stream, and at the same time helps ensure that AFSC’s work for peace and justice will continue long into the future.

“Anyone who knows anything about AFSC—you know why to support it,” says Martha. “There are no limits to what the AFSC can do that’s constructive.”



Martha and her husband, Robert, sightseeing outside of Kingston, Jamaica in 1982.

The annuity provides Martha with a steady income stream, and at the same time helps ensure that AFSC’s work for peace and justice will continue long into the future.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Great Depression-era Appalachia

The Great Depression brought joblessness and hunger to Appalachia's coalmining districts, which were already struggling from a major decline in demand following World War I.

Herbert Hoover asked the AFSC in 1932 to revive its feeding program in the region using money left over from the American Relief Administration Children's Fund. The Service Committee agreed to do this, but it soon became apparent to those carrying out the project that more than just feeding needed to be done, especially because it appeared the mining industry might never fully recover from the economic collapse.

Miners were underemployed, if employed at all. Most knew only mining and felt inadequate in attempting any other form of employment. For many reasons, miners and their families were reluctant to leave the place where they were born and had lived all their lives.

Learning of handwork and various crafts associated with the region, AFSC representatives saw a way for miners to



redirect their time and talents. If they could be trained to create these traditional crafts and assisted in developing a market for them, the miners would be able to supplement any income they still earned from work in the mines, or shift from mining altogether.

Thus the Mountaineer's Craftsman Cooperative Association was born. Miners learned woodworking techniques and soon began creating furniture that was sold in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, raising a total of \$43,000 from 1933-36 (more than \$700,000 in today's dollars).

Make a lasting investment in peace



By simply including a one-sentence provision for AFSC in your will or trust, or by naming us as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, you make a long-term commitment to Quaker service.

These bequests help sustain our peace-building efforts in communities around the world.

Please let us know if you have acted to remember AFSC in your estate plans so we can welcome you as a Friend for the Future, a designation you'll share with hundreds of fellow AFSC supporters.

For more information about how to make a legacy gift to AFSC, please call our Gift Planning Office at 1-888-588-2372, send an email to giftplanning@afsc.org, or visit our website at afsc.org/giftplanning.



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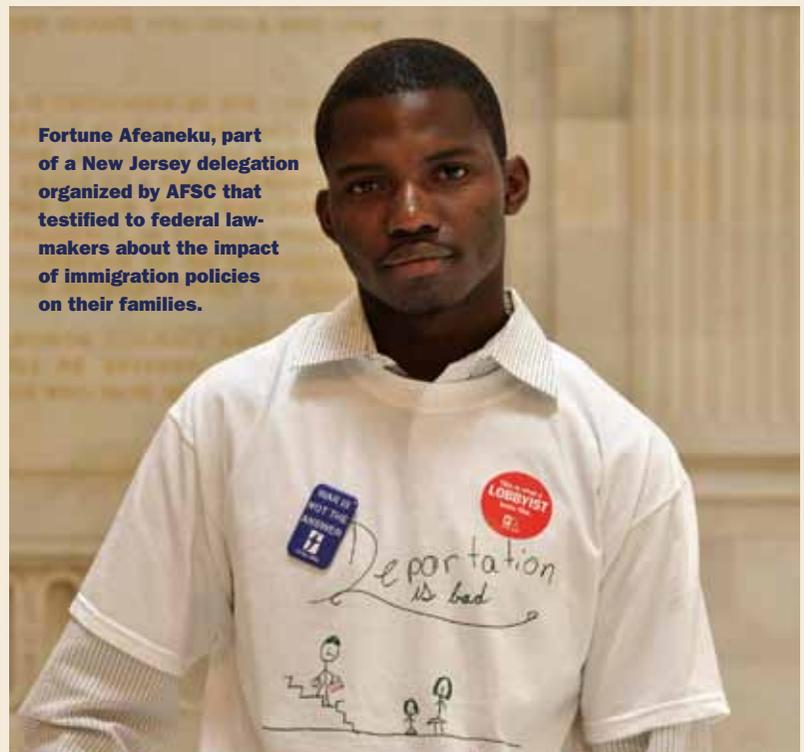
**Fall 2012
Volume 93, Number 3**

What *really* strengthens communities?

Inside, read about AFSC's work for economic justice for communities, including:

- **Organizing New Hampshire citizens to stand up for their economic rights**
- **Training Burmese monks who run schools for poor children**
- **Connecting lawmakers with families directly affected by immigration laws and mine safety policies**

Plus: A look at job-creating budget alternatives and "What is economic justice?"



Fortune Afeaneku, part of a New Jersey delegation organized by AFSC that testified to federal lawmakers about the impact of immigration policies on their families.

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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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