

Kansas City AFSC Year-End Newsletter



**American Friends
Service Committee**

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Turning Combat Boots Into Ploughshares

What should the U.S. do about its bloated, counterproductive Pentagon budget?

On the eve of Veterans' Day, the AFSC's Kansas City program asked elected officials to follow our example, "*Just as we are turning our symbols of war--combat boots--into resources that will keep homeless Kansas Citizens' feet dry and warm this winter, we call upon our leaders to turn our wasteful Pentagon budget into the investments we desperately need to improve the lives of our citizens and our hope for the future—job development, healthcare, education, neighborhood development, housing, safety net programs...*"

On Sunday, November 10, AFSC, with the support of Veterans for Peace, KC Chapter and Iraq Veterans Against the War- Kansas City and Artists Helping the Homeless held a final display of the Missouri and Kansas Eyes Wide Open (EWO) Exhibits and the Turning Combat Boots into Ploughshares: Boot Distribution to homeless veterans and other homeless area residents. (Continued Pg.4 **Ploughshares**)

Your Support is Essential to Our Work

We are thankful for the many ways you and others support our work for peace and economic justice. We use that support to educate, to mobilize and to build the movement to take back U.S. policy from the billionaires and corporatocracy and bring about a world where all can live with safety, respect, and dignity.

The 1% are using their money to manipulate, misinform, and institute policies that serve their interests.

We encourage you to use your money to make a year-end contribution to AFSC's Kansas City Program to help us change public policy to better meet the needs of our community and world. Please use the enclosed return envelope.

We wish you a happy and healthy holiday and New Year. Again thank you for your past support

P.S. Please make this donation above and beyond your contribution in support of AFSC's work around the world.

Meet our New AFSC Peace Interns: Cynthia Odu & Sam Peak

My name is Cynthia Odu, I'm 18 years old, and I'm an AFSC Peace Intern. A little bit of background: I was born in Nigeria, I love to read and write, and my favorite color is black. I'm currently in my second year at Metropolitan Community College Penn Valley, and I'm hoping to graduate in May of 2014. And when I grow up, I want to be an obstetrician gynecologist and use my medical background to advocate for the health and safety of women around the world.

I became an AFSC Peace Intern because



Sam Peak and Cynthia Odu,
AFSC Peace Interns

I wanted to learn how to be an advocate, not only for my future career, but because I wanted to use the skills I learned in the everyday fight for

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Peace Interns)

AFSC Youth Civic Engagement

Since September new AFSC interns Sam Peak and Cynthia Odu have been hard at work learning about social change, federal budget priorities and experiential and popular education training techniques.

Through the *If I Had a Trillion Dollars* (IHTD) youth film festival project they have not only been teaching high school-aged youth about the federal budget, but also working to instill in them a desire to speak out for what they believe. AFSC Peace Interns have led IHTD trainings at nine area schools and youth programs preparing youth to create films about how they would spend the trillions of dollars of the U.S. budget.

Youth are currently working to submit their films to the national

IHTD Film Festival by January 11. Films created by KC area youth will be screened locally at the Tivoli Theater, 4050 Pennsylvania Ave., KCMO on Saturday, January 11, at 11:00am.

Groups whose films are accepted into the national festival will be invited to attend the Washington, DC screening in April. We are also organizing visits to area congressional offices to provide an opportunity for youth to meet with officials or their staff to show their films and advocate for their budget priorities.

Interns are also preparing for the *If I Could Change the World Spoken Word Project*. Last year's project was a great success involving dozens of youth in envisioning a better world and creating and performing spoken word poetry.

Like last year's project we will be conducting training sessions at school and youth group sites and then will invite the most interested youth to attend a day-long workshop to deepen their skills and vision.

Last year youth performed their poetry at the Blue Room, Troost Festival, Synergy Youth Center, Visions of Peace Festival and the Writers Place (cosponsoring the project with AFSC). Stay tuned for this year's performance schedule.



If I Could Change the World spoken word Youth performed at The Writers Place in March 2013.

Peace Interns (Continued from Pg.1)

and equality. In the last four months, I have not only learned invaluable information about the federal budget, and some of the other systems that make the United States tick, I have also learned the importance of non-violence as a tool for social change. I look forward to the months ahead of me, and hope that I give as much to this internship as I am taking away from it.

Sam Peak - I decided to get involved with AFSC because I agreed with their ideals of peace and social justice. In a world that has

become a stage where acts of injustice are daily occurrences, AFSC is always voicing practical and peaceful solutions.

Working with the youth has enlightened me. I'm blessed to interact with them because our visions of a just and peaceful community will never die even though I eventually will. As people we all share a common good,

but some of us believe that achieving our ideals is a fruitless cause. It is our responsibility to break the cynicism that blocks progress, and replace it with visions on how they can realistically achieve a better community.

Working with AFSC has also renewed hope within myself. Our youth civic engagement projects are essential to the youth, but to me as well. They have taught me new possibilities for how I can change the world. We will continue to work with others and help them find the activist within.



Cynthia and Sam lead IHTD training for KCK Youth Entrepreneurs

Move the Money/ Move the Economy

"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it."

This quotation often attributed to Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda, sums up the impact of the forces that have hijacked the federal budget debate. Mega-corporations and the 1% have turned budget policy, through the fabrication of the deficit crisis, into an attack on social spending, Social Security, and Medicare. When asked in a Gallup poll this Spring if they were worried about federal spending and the deficit, 84% responded a "great deal" or a "fair amount." Sadly the deficit hawks have convinced many that the deficit is the problem. But at the same time, when asked to choose which program they would cut, the results were as follows: Social Security-16%; Medicare-23%; the military-41%.

AFSC's Move the Money campaign is working to expose the fallacy of the austerity narrative and to build alliances and mobilize area residents in demanding federal budget priorities that fund real community and human needs.

Our first campaign focused on educating and building support for changes in federal budget priorities through endorsements and passage of a *Move the Money Resolution*. The resolution demanded that we: 1. Create and protect jobs; 2. Eliminate cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and veterans benefits, and to housing... 3. Provide new revenues for these purposes by closing corporate tax

loopholes, and raising taxes on incomes over \$250,000 so that all pay their fair share; and 4. Redirect military spending to these domestic needs.

After we mobilized 21 area organizations to endorse the Kansas City Move the Money Resolution, met one-on-one with KCMO council members, and testified at a Council sub-committee meeting, the KCMO City Council unanimously passed a Move the Money Resolution on April 11. (Go to this link for more: <http://bit.ly/18a30kv>)

Our Move the Money campaign continues its work with a *Federal Budget and Our Community Listening Project* to hear from community leaders about the local impact of the sequester and austerity cuts and about their vision for a better way to meet the needs of our community.

The project's purpose is to change the storyline around the

"The U.S. military budget is funding weapons systems that the Pentagon does not want or need. One of these is the F-35 fighter plane... complete failure...total cost -- \$1.5 trillion. Imagine what we could do if we stopped production of this outdated weapons system and invested in schools, jobs and healthcare. ~Dave Pack, AFSC

Program Committee Clerk, from testimony at KCMO City Council Hearing

federal budget and to build and strengthen collaboration on budget priority actions. We are currently testing listening session questions with friendly leaders and soon will be holding sessions with city and state elected officials, social service and educational leaders and other.

This Spring we plan to communicate our listening project findings through, forums, editorial board meetings, letter-to-the-

editor campaigns and other actions.

Our next Move The Money meeting is December 17, Tuesday, 5:30pm. Contact us to get involved: 816.931-5256 or afsck@afsc.org.



Eva Schulte, CCO; Dave Kingsley, Gray Panthers; Ira Harritt, AFSC; Ester Holzendorf, CSWS; and Dave Pack, AFSC testified at KCMO Committee meeting.

Festival Again Raises Visions of Peace

by Mike Murphy, AFSC KC Program Committee

This year's Friday Visions of Peace at the Crossroads Festival was another rousing success. First Friday is the time for the monthly art walk in The Crossroads District, and attendees of the Festival were a healthy mixture of peace activists and art enthusiasts who just happened upon the event.

Regardless of how or why people were there, they were treated to an amazing array of talented poets, dancers, musicians, and other artists. Musical performers included: Young Nicolette Paige combining folk, reggae, R&B, & soul; Bob and Diana Suckiel, bringing their songs of labor, civil rights, and peace; and Streetlevel Uprising sharing explosive, socially conscious lyrics in a blend of reggae, rock and a laid-back groove.

Woven in between these musical acts were poets and dancers. This was not all spectator sport. There were some interactive segments, as well. One dance troupe even led a peace march through the crowded arts district. And dozens "lent their hands for peace" expressing their visions of peace on their hand with pictures, words and symbols and offering video-taped comments about their creation. It was great to see so many young people participating, especially the youth who took part in AFSC's "If I Could Change the World" Spoken Word Project.

While it is important to bear witness against injustice, it is also important to stand for something, and this event was successful in standing for peace, beauty, and community. The event was organized by the AFSC and supported by over 30 local community, faith, and civic organizations, including.

Most of these groups were on hand to show how they are working hard to make the world a better place.

Check out photos from the Festival at: <http://on.fb.me/18f1dlV>



Diana and Bod Suckiel perform at
Visions of Peace Festival

Ploughshares (continued from pg. 1)

The exhibit included over 200 combat boots tagged with the names of Missouri and Kansas troops and shoes tagged with the names of civilians killed in the Iraq and Afghan wars. Between the fall of 2006 and 2012 the Missouri and Kansas EWO Exhibits were displayed at dozens of colleges and universities, houses of worship, parks, conferences and other venues, and viewed by an estimated 10,000 people.

In addition to the distribution of boots and shoes, Artists Helping the Homeless served over 120 meals and the Salvation Army distributed clothes and homeless resource bags at the event. And over 75 homeless men and women were give boots and shoes at the Turning Combat Boots into Ploughshares event. The remaining 150+ boots and shoes are being distributed to homeless and others in need by the Frank Williams Outreach - Wyandot Center in KCK and the Salvation Army in KCMO

Prior to the retiring of the EWO exhibit brief comments were made by: Ira Harritt, KC AFSC program Coordinator; Kar Woo, Artist Helping the Homeless; Pat McClelland, Vets for Peace; Will Stewart Starks, IVAW and Dave Pack, KC AFSC Committee Clerk. Will Stewart summed up our problem explaining, "*The reason why we're suffering so much as a people is because our priorities are in the wrong place.*" And Pat McClelland urged, "*What made America great was building, we need to build up Uncle Sam, but in a positive way.*" (Video of the comments can be viewed at: <http://bit.ly/18ivSVv>)

The event was powerful and sent a strong message about the need to care for the homeless, veterans and all in need and the necessity to cut wasteful, excessive and counterproductive Pentagon spending.

We express our thanks to Vets for Peace, IVAW, KKFI, Artists Helping the Homeless, Salvation Army and the Frank Williams Outreach Center for their support of this event.

The event received media coverage from the Kansas City Star (article also on "Stars and Stripes") and by Fox Channel 4 TV. Links to these articles and photos from the event can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1eX076g>