

# Quaker Action

RESISTING THE  
CONTINUING  
COST OF **WAR**



Farming for social change  
pg.8

The power of words  
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Restoring the right to vote for all  
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American Friends  
Service Committee

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# Quaker Action

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## WHO WE ARE

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice as a practical expression of faith in action. Drawing on continuing spiritual insights and working with people of many backgrounds, we nurture the seeds of change and respect for human life that transform social relations and systems.

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Poor People's Campaign march and rally in Washington, D.C.  
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## So many ways to support courageous work for peace and justice

By donating to AFSC, you're supporting both local campaigns and international diplomacy—helping to create communities where every person can live in safety and peace. There are many ways to give to AFSC to help this vital work continue.

Find the option that works best for you at [afsc.org/QAspring20](https://afsc.org/QAspring20), or contact our Donor Services team at 888-588-2372.

Antiwar protest in Washington, D.C. earlier this year.  
Photo: Carl Roose/AFSC



Dear friends, With so much attention on the upcoming elections, it's worth noting that AFSC, as a rule, does not take a position on any political race. In a time when so many things are seen through a partisan lens, that actually gives us an advantage. We can work on lasting change—no matter what party or personality is in office. We can go places others cannot. We are not beholden to party loyalty, which lets us remain principled in telling inconvenient truths.

For instance, free of partisan concerns, AFSC and partners are building a moral case for a world free of violence, inequality, and oppression. As a lead organization on the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, we're calling on lawmakers on Capitol Hill and in local

government to support a transformative political agenda that includes workers' rights, voting rights, health care, housing, education, peace, and much more. I hope that you find this work as energizing as I do—and that I will see many of you at the campaign's national march in Washington, D.C. on June 20 (read more about it on page 11).

In traveling to Indonesia recently, I saw another example of how AFSC staff and partners from diverse backgrounds are bravely working for human rights and dignity in the face of increasing restrictions on free expression, worship, and political engagement. Despite the obstacles, young people and other community members are working to create inclusive communities that we all deserve. It is always a joy to meet such

courageous people. Their commitment to our common mission sustains me.

Every AFSC program is an expression of the Quaker belief that each person has "that of God" in them—everyone is equal and should be treated with dignity. Together with your support, we are working for long-term, systemic change so all societies have laws and institutions that respect the worth and equality of every person. We will stop at nothing less.



In peace,

*Joyce*  
Joyce Ajlouny  
General Secretary

# ALUMNI NEWS & NOTES

Get Alumni Network updates  
and join our Facebook group!

[afsc.org/alumni](https://afsc.org/alumni)



Maria G. Zavala, Fernanda Quiroz, & Amy Epper-Epstein. Photo: Cynthia Price

In 1977, **Amy Eppler-Epstein and Cynthia Price** met at a work-camp in the outskirts of Salinas, California, where they helped with the construction of San Jerardo, a cooperative housing community built by and for Mexican American farmworkers. Recently, the two longtime friends met up in California for vacation and visited San Jerardo, meeting some of the families who now live there.



Cynthia Price and Amy Eppler-Epstein. Photo: Cynthia Price

**Allan Solomonow** joined AFSC in San Francisco in 1983 as director of the Middle East Peace Program, where he worked for 27 years. He passed away at home in January.

Congratulations to **Fatema Ahmad** on being appointed executive director of the Muslim Justice League, which educates, organizes and advocates for human and civil rights that are violated or threatened under national security pretexts. Prior to joining the organization, she worked for AFSC in North Carolina as part of our Communities Against Islamophobia project.

Longtime AFSC staff member **Beth Binford** died on Jan. 4 at age 91. Beth began her life-long connection to AFSC as a writer and editor in 1962. She later initiated a recycling project in Philadelphia to raise funds for AFSC that continues today, so far generating more than \$600,000 to support our work.



Beth Binford. Photo: AFSC

**Wafa Shami**, who worked for AFSC as the Middle East Peace Education Program coordinator in Los Angeles, recently published a children's book, "Olive Harvest in Palestine: A story of childhood memories."

A human rights activist for over 75 years, **Judith Kolokoff** served as regional director of AFSC's Pacific Northwest Region. She passed away in December in Seattle.

Do you have news to share? **Email us at [alumni@afsc.org](mailto:alumni@afsc.org)!**

# News from around AFSC



A migrant family rests at a shelter in Guatemala. Photo: Carlos Sebastián, *Nómada*

## Emergency response to support asylum seekers

Since October 2018, large numbers of people have been traveling north through Central America in migrant caravans—finding safety in numbers as they seek refuge in the U.S. or Mexico.

In January of this year, a caravan of about 4,000 people attempted to travel through Mexico, where they were met by violent immigration enforcement, including pepper spray and drones. Subsequently, about 2,000 migrants were deported. Many others were detained and subjected to family separation and inhumane conditions of isolation.

In response, AFSC launched an emergency campaign to support the people of the migrant caravans. Thanks to AFSC supporters, our staff in Latin America are now helping provide food, shelter, and hygiene kits to thousands of migrants. They are also serving as human rights monitors and documenting what they witness to prevent further abuses. With your support we will continue advocating for policy changes to ensure family reunification; care for vulnerable groups such as women, children, and seniors; and access to detention facilities for human rights organizations.

“We’re grateful for the support from those who share our belief in treating people with the dignity and respect we all deserve—while working in the long term to address the root causes of migration and create safe, inclusive communities,” says Luis Paiz Bekker, Latin America regional director.

 **MORE:** [afsc.org/migrantcaravan](https://afsc.org/migrantcaravan)

## Mobilizing against nuclear weapons and the climate crisis

On April 24-26, leaders, activists, and A-bomb survivors from across the world and the United States will gather at The Riverside Church in New York City for The World Conference. The event, which will mark 75 years since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, takes place in the days before the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference at the United Nations.

“With increasing threats of war, rising tension between world powers, new arms races, rising seas of the climate crisis, and continued violence against people of color, we’re organizing to create the foundation for real security for future generations,” says Joseph Gerson, conference organizer and AFSC disarmament coordinator.

Speakers will include international peace, climate, and justice movement leaders, and activists, scholars, and diplomats. On April 26, thousands will march to the U.N. to deliver more than 10 million petition signatures urging the fulfillment of the NPT’s promise of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

 **MORE:** [worldconference2020.org](https://worldconference2020.org)





Photo: AFSC/Africa region



## A new program in South Sudan

Since 2013, South Sudan's civil war has killed an estimated 400,000 people, displaced four million more, and plunged parts of the country into famine. In October 2019, AFSC launched a new program there to address trauma among people working to build peace throughout the country.

"The overwhelming majority of South Sudanese have been affected by trauma, leaving many feeling powerless and preventing them from effectively engaging in society," says Africa Regional Director Kennedy Akolo. "This includes peacebuilders who do the critical, yet very difficult, work of conflict healing and reconciliation."

In its pilot phase, the South Sudan program will provide trauma healing training to 32 staff from grassroots community-based organizations (particularly those supporting women and youth), faith-based organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. These staff will also be trained as "trainers of trainers," equipped with skills and resources to reach out to hundreds more individuals.

The program will draw lessons from AFSC's ongoing work with Somali refugees in the Daadab Refugee camp in Kenya as well our program in Burundi, where partners provide trauma healing to those displaced by civil war and election violence.

"Trauma healing is a process that requires time—and if secondary trauma is not healed, it can be transferred to others," Kennedy says. "There is an urgent need to support peacebuilders in healing their own trauma so they can help to heal others."

## AFSC in the media

*AFSC staff are working hard to make change on the ground—and in the news. Here are some of the highlights:*

### On the Pentagon budget

"The next president has an opportunity to direct the national conversation about the real moral issues of our day and influence our national priorities. It is crucial that those who represent us intentionally shift us away from prioritizing military spending over human needs and toward a positive vision of the future in which all are included and cared for."

—Joyce Ajlouny, general secretary, and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, for *The Nation*

### On ending child imprisonment

"Our mission is to make sure all children have the opportunity to return to their homes, communities and schools—whether they are immigrants in migrant jails, young people of color trapped in the U.S. prison system or Palestinian children locked up in military detention."

—Kristin Kumpf, director of Human Migration and Mobility; Lewis Webb, Jr., director of Healing Justice; and Jennifer Bing, director of the Palestine Activism Program for Truthout

### On bystander intervention when we witness harassment in public

"If we don't speak up for each other, the number of people being targeted is going to be expanding... That kind of violence or that kind of incident becomes normalized."

—Lucy Duncan, director of Friends Relations, for CNN

# Andrew Tomlinson

## Director, Quaker Union Nations Office (QUNO)



Photo: Nathaniel Doubleday/AFSC

**Q:** Tell us about the history of QUNO.

**A:** In 1945, in the final months of the most destructive conflict the world has known, world leaders came together in San Francisco to sign the Charter of the United Nations, stating as their purpose “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.” Friends participated in the San Francisco conference, and two years later, in 1947, the same year as Quakers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Quaker United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva were established. Seventy-five years later, QUNO continues to flourish as a shared initiative of the global Quaker community, and receives critical administrative and financial support from AFSC.

**Q:** Why is it important for Quakers to be at the U.N.?

**A:** Today, the problems facing the world are more fearsome than ever, and it’s never been more clear that we need global cooperation on all kinds of issues. The U.N. does three important things: First, it’s a forum where global norms on peace are debated and formalized—including on issues like migration, climate change, and building sustainable peace. Second, it’s a place where the world comes together to seek common ground on issues of peace and security—particularly in responding to crises. Third, the U.N. itself is an important actor in most, if not all, countries affected by conflict and fragility.

Historically, Quakers have also seen the U.N. as a place where they can have an outsized impact. If you can influence the development of global standards on peace that affect the policies of governments, aid agencies, and financial institutions around the world, then you can have an impact much larger than would be possible at a community or national level alone. The key is to link the big policy discussions with the experience and insights of local communities, and this is where the partnership between QUNO, AFSC, and other Quaker organizations can be so effective.

**Q:** How does QUNO influence international standards and practice related to peace?

**A:** Our staff works directly with diplomats, U.N. officials, and nongovernmental organizations to achieve change. That work is based on Quaker-rooted values and ways of working, with an emphasis on facilitating relationships, convening spaces for stakeholders to deal with differences through dialogue, integrating the voices of those with lived experience of peace and conflict, and lending support and encouragement to people working at the U.N. to enact policies and practices that actively build peace and address conflicts nonviolently. We also maintain Quaker House near the U.N., providing a place where diplomats, staff, and partners can meet to discuss issues in a quiet, off-the-record atmosphere.

**Q:** Can you give an example of the impact QUNO has had?

**A:** One recent example was the creation of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a blueprint for achieving a more sustainable future for all. Its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals, addressed important issues like poverty, health, and education, but it soon became clear that those goals were not taking hold in countries that were poorer or affected by conflict. That’s because those previous goals didn’t address key drivers of peace—including issues such as inclusion, human dignity, and good governance.

For the SDGs, QUNO worked hard to ensure peacebuilding perspectives were enshrined in the new development framework, building on the yearning for peace that clearly emerged from the U.N.-led consultations that involved thousands of people from all over the world, and acting as a catalyst in mobilizing support for an agenda based on peace, justice, and inclusion. As a result, one of the 17 goals that all countries (including the U.S.) have agreed on for 2030 is Goal 16—the Peace Goal—which is focused on peace, inclusion, justice for all, and effective and accountable institutions. This is consistent with the vision QUNO works to advance at the U.N.—taking a long-term approach to ending and preventing conflict, addressing its root causes, and engaging a range of stakeholders in promoting sustainable and people-centered strategies for peace.

# FARMING for SOCIAL CHANGE



Four communities  
growing food,  
sustainability,  
and justice.

**BY CRYSTAL GONZALEZ, DEE DEE  
GREEN, SAYRAH NAMASTE, AND  
DOMINIQUE STEVENSON**

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Community farms and gardens play a vital role in building more just economies, improving community well-being, and addressing climate change. AFSC has a long history of supporting communities impacted by oppression gain more control over their own food system, including in New Mexico, New Orleans, Baltimore, and Los Angeles.

Read more about how these four AFSC programs in the U.S. are farming for social change.

South LA Farms.  
Photo: Sonia Tuma/AFSC

## Addressing climate change in Albuquerque

Fidel Gonzalez looks out over a plot of land, surveying the rows of dirt that will be planted with tomatoes, peppers, and more come spring. He graduated from AFSC's yearlong farmer training program in 2010 and has been growing organic fruits and vegetables for his local community ever since.

AFSC's program in Albuquerque, New Mexico helped him purchase solar panels to minimize his use of fossil fuels, and he built a mobile solar unit to bring to farmer's markets where he sells smoothies made from his produce. He also uses low-till methods to reduce the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere.

"I align myself with nature," says Fidel, who is also a community activist and Aztec dancer.

"Right now, nature is moving. Many refer to it as climate change."

Today, Fidel works with AFSC to train more farmers in sustainable agriculture. He's the president of the farmer cooperative incubated by AFSC, which has 15 member farms. All of the food the farmers grow in the cooperative—several thousand pounds a year—stays in the local community, including area schools. The cooperative models an alternative to large agribusiness, which has a history of exploiting workers and natural resources and driving climate change.

"I have to care for the Earth that I am on," says Fidel—a sentiment shared by hundreds of farmers who have worked with AFSC over the years to practice sustainable farming.



Photo: Sayrah Namaste/AFSC

"I have CARE to CARE for the EARTH that I am on."

Fidel Gonzalez, New Mexico farmer



Photo: Nathaniel Doubleday/AFSC

## Community organizing in New Orleans

In 2017, AFSC partnered with the Hollygrove Neighbors Association and St. Peter A.M.E. Church to build a community garden on a 3,600-square-foot parcel owned by the city. There, young people learn to grow their own food—including mustard greens, okra, melons, and herbs—that they harvest and share with families and neighbors in the Hollygrove community.

The project is one way AFSC's Peace by Piece New Orleans Program supports Black youth and young adults in becoming leaders as they work with Hollygrove residents to build an alternative food system that nourishes the local community and promotes economic development.

"Our curriculum teaches the art of gardening and urban farming," says Program Director Dee Dee Green. "It teaches methods of sustainability—planting, harvesting, composting—while raising awareness of food insecurity in areas of the city that are strategically denied access to fresh and local produce."

The program also helps residents organize workshops and forums on climate change and other pressing issues. When New Orleans installed cameras across from the garden, Peace by Piece began an awareness campaign, Stop Watching NOLA, to inform residents of the pervasive surveillance plan initiated by the city in the name of "promoting public safety." Peace by Piece joined with other anti-surveillance groups to form a coalition opposing the installation of hundreds of police cameras throughout the city and the expansion of surveillance technologies to track and target individuals.

"Every community has a right to determine what safety is for them, and government surveillance does not ensure safe neighborhoods nor does it prevent crime from happening," says Dee Dee.

This year, The Hollygrove Neighbors Association will purchase the city-owned community garden lot, thanks to a generous donation from Live Oak Friends Meeting in Houston. And soon AFSC will help community members expand the garden and its programming to nearby Paul L. Dunbar Elementary, where an edible school yard is underway.



Photo: AFSC

## Reclaiming a neighborhood in West Baltimore

The Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of West Baltimore has one of the highest rates of poverty and gun violence in the city. It's also the site of Gilmore Homes—just next door to where Freddie Gray was arrested in 2015 before dying in police custody.

“Since the 1960s, so much of West Baltimore has been leveled, and the continuous process of demolition has taken away so much from the community, including its population,” says Dominique Stevenson, director of AFSC’s Friend of a Friend Program. “Children are growing up in the midst of nothingness, when instead our city should be emphasizing more rebuilding and renovation.”

Over the years, Friend of a Friend has worked with the community to revitalize the neighborhood, including transforming an empty quarter-acre lot owned by the city into a community garden in 2016. The garden includes a chicken coop and more than 30 garden beds. An aquaponics system is in the works—for growing fish and plants together in one integrated system and using fish waste, instead of soil, to provide nutrients for the plants.

People know this is a safe space where all community members can feel welcome and engage in conversation,” Dominique says. “The garden also brings in people from outside the community to see there is more than just violence and poverty here. There is beauty and resilience.”

In the summer, young people from the neighborhood take part in young farmers’ programs. And throughout the year, about 200 volunteers lend a hand, helping with planting, cleaning, harvesting, and organizing community events. Among them are college students and formerly incarcerated people who participated in a mentoring project Friend of a Friend facilitates for people in prison.

For the past few years the community has been working toward taking full ownership of the program, which is expected to happen this fall.



Photo: Lorena Alvarez

## Growing food and power in Los Angeles

In South Central Los Angeles, participants in AFSC’s Roots for Peace Program are using urban farming to increase community access to healthy foods, improve neighborhood wellness, and address racial and economic injustice. In 2018, they began to realize the long-term vision of transforming a vacant lot into a community farm and meeting space for social justice organizing.

“The farm is important for my health—and the health of the earth,” says Blanca Lucio, a cancer survivor and Roots for Peace community leader.

In its first year, the farm produced over a thousand pounds of produce for 15 participating migrant families, hosted a robust youth internship program, and held events addressing sustainable agriculture, climate change, emergency preparedness, and immigrant rights. In October 2019, Roots for Peace, along with partner All Peoples Community Center, received the City of Los Angeles’s Good Food Champions Award.

Says Program Coordinator Eli Tizcareño, “This farm is an important neighborhood asset, a green sanctuary for residents, and part of larger efforts to address climate change and food apartheid in L.A.”



# RESISTING THE CONTINUING COST OF WAR

As part of the Poor People's Campaign, AFSC and communities across the country are demanding elected officials rethink our nation's priorities.

BY ARNIE ALPERT

More than 50 years ago, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. warned that “a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

Dr. King's moral equation—spoken at a time when the U.S. was raining bombs and napalm on the people of Vietnam—still applies today. In December 2019, Congress approved more than \$738 billion in military spending, and under the Trump administration, tensions with other countries have intensified, raising the potential for conflict.

Since 2018, AFSC has supported the new Poor People's Campaign, a mass mobilization inspired by King's vision and led by poor and working people to end systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, and militarism. On June 20, we will join thousands to march on Washington, D.C.—demanding lawmakers rethink our nation's budget priorities and adopt the campaign's moral agenda.

As the campaign has noted, ““Since Vietnam, the United States has waged an ongoing war against diffuse enemies, siphoning massive resources away from social needs. Out of every dollar in federal discretionary spending, 53 cents [go] towards the military, with just 15 cents on anti-poverty programs.”

That's one reason why poverty has gotten worse in the five decades since Dr. King died while standing with striking garbage collectors in Memphis. Excessive military spending equals worse schools, deteriorating housing, and a frayed social safety net.

We also know that aerial bombardment equals civilian deaths. Fossil fuel consumption by military vessels and aircraft equals tons of carbon injected into the atmosphere. War equals ecological devastation. And extreme violence equals lasting trauma for both perpetrators and victims.

But there's another illusion—impossible to avoid in communities across the U.S.—which says military spending equals jobs. For a case in point, in New Hampshire, BAE Systems, with more than 6,000 employees, is one of the state's largest



Photo: Jon Krieg/AFSC

employers. It matches charitable donations from employees, and a BAE executive sits on the board of the local United Way. In other words, BAE looks like a good corporate citizen with a billion-dollar annual impact on New Hampshire's economy. But like the wages it pays to workers, BAE's largesse is a product of the war economy, specifically from selling electronic parts for bombs, aircraft, and other technology to the Pentagon and other weapons makers. BAE is among the 10 largest Pentagon contractors. It also spent nearly \$4 million on lobbying in 2019, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. BAE's former president was the Republican candidate for governor of New Hampshire in 2014. After leaving BAE, its former public affairs director headed the state's Department of Resources and Economic Development, which encouraged foreign sales of locally produced military hardware.

BAE is a prime example of what President Eisenhower called the “military industrial complex.” While the jobs it creates are real, the military spending equals jobs equation doesn't hold up when we ask what would happen if funds were spent elsewhere. “For the same amount of spending, clean energy and infrastructure create 40% more jobs than the military, healthcare creates 100% more, and education 120% more,” says University of Massachusetts economist Heidi Garrett-Peltier,

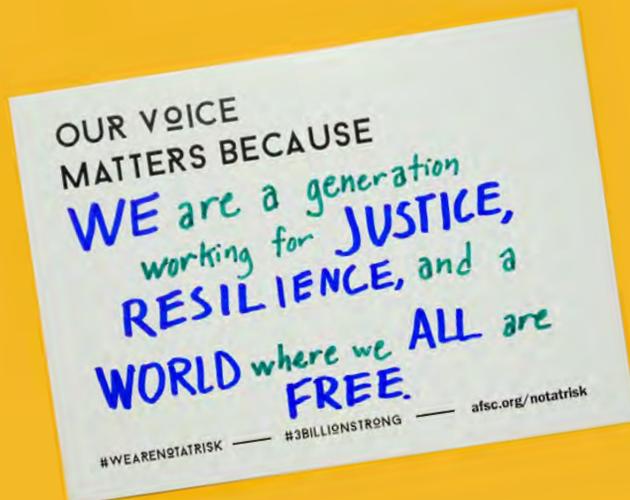
We might say that the equations that join military spending to jobs can be disproved. But that's not just a mathematical process—it's a moral and political one. More than 50 years after the first Poor People's Campaign, it's well past time to tend to our spiritual health by changing our nation's priorities. We don't have as much to lose as we might fear, and we have a lot of ground—moral and economic—to gain.

*Arnie Alpert is co-director of AFSC's New Hampshire Program. He plans to retire in June after 39 years with AFSC.*

**Mass Poor People's Assembly & Moral March**  
Saturday, June 20

Join AFSC and the Poor People Campaign in Washington, D.C.!  
[poorpeoplescampaign.org](http://poorpeoplescampaign.org)

# The power of words



Around the world, youth leaders are challenging—and changing—the way we talk about young people.

BY RONNA BOLANTE



Photos: Nathaniel Doubleday/AFSC, Omar Ponce/AFSC

When Sophia Burns was a high school student in southern New Jersey, her school implemented a policy prohibiting students from carrying water bottles or backpacks that weren't see-through.

"We were told the policy was to discourage students from carrying weapons, drugs, or alcohol," says Sophia, who recently served as a Young Leaders for Change fellow with AFSC. "But what it did in reality was perpetuate stereotypes about youth, always suspecting us of doing something wrong rather than addressing the real problems we deal with in our everyday lives."

In the city of San Salvador in El

Salvador, Omar Ponce says he can't remember a time when he didn't feel stigmatized as a young person—not just by government authorities and others in power, but also by the world outside of his country.

"Whenever you hear people talk about youth in El Salvador, they talk about crime, gangs, and violence," says Omar, 26. "Those narratives have negative impacts on how young people see themselves and how they are treated by others in our society."

Every day, youth around the world—particularly those who are poor and of color—experience the impacts of these harmful narratives, facing discrimination and other barriers in pursuing their

education, finding jobs, or navigating interactions with authorities.

That's why youth leaders in AFSC's Youth in Action (YIA) global network are working together to change perceptions of youth in their respective communities. In 2018, YIA launched the "We Are Not At-Risk" social media campaign to transform the words and narratives we use to talk about youth in our everyday conversations; in schools, nonprofits, and other institutions; and in the media.

"Historically words have been used to oppress Black and brown people and help those in power maintain their power," says Nia Eubanks-Dixon, AFSC director of youth programs. "Today, words like 'at-risk,'



*"Today, words like **"at-risk,"** **"marginalized,"** and **"minority"** are used for the same purposes. Not only do these terms dehumanize youth, they shift blame to young people instead of to the oppressive racist systems that exploit them, their families, and communities."*

—NIA EUBANKS-DIXON,  
AFSC director of youth programs

“marginalized,” and “minority” are used for the same purposes. Not only do these terms dehumanize youth, they shift blame to young people instead of to the oppressive racist systems that exploit them, their families, and communities.”

The “We Are Not At-Risk” campaign was created to call out and change those linguistic behaviors, urging people to take a pledge to rethink their words, attend local education events, and share what they’ve learned with others.

In the campaign’s first year, more than 1,000 pledges were taken by community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, and colleges. Several of them took steps to change the way they talk about youth:

- In Philadelphia, the Department of Human Services agreed to adapt the language it uses in its Request for Proposals to meet the We Are Not At-Risk guidelines.
- The Grants Professional Association widely distributed guidelines among its 2,800 members, sparking much-needed discussion among grant professionals.
- YIA participants spoke at the National Immigrant Integration Conference, the Alliance for Peacebuilding conference, and several universities—encouraging organizations to move away from racist colonial language and work with youth to adopt new wording.

In January of this year, YIA members built on the momentum of the “We Are Not At-Risk” campaign by focusing their attention on the media. “At a time when media plays such a pronounced role in our lives, it is especially necessary to think deeply about the consequences of negative and biased representation of young people,” Sophia says.



*"At a time when media plays such a pronounced role in our lives, it is especially necessary to **think deeply** about the consequences of negative and biased representation of young people."*

—SOPHIA BURNS  
Former Young Leaders for Change fellow

According to one media study by Mori for Young People Now, one in three articles about youth are focused on crime or anti-social behavior. What’s more, young people were only quoted in 8% of those stories.

As part of this year’s campaign, YIA members and allies are urging media outlets, journalists, and bloggers in their communities to pledge to rethink their depictions of young people.

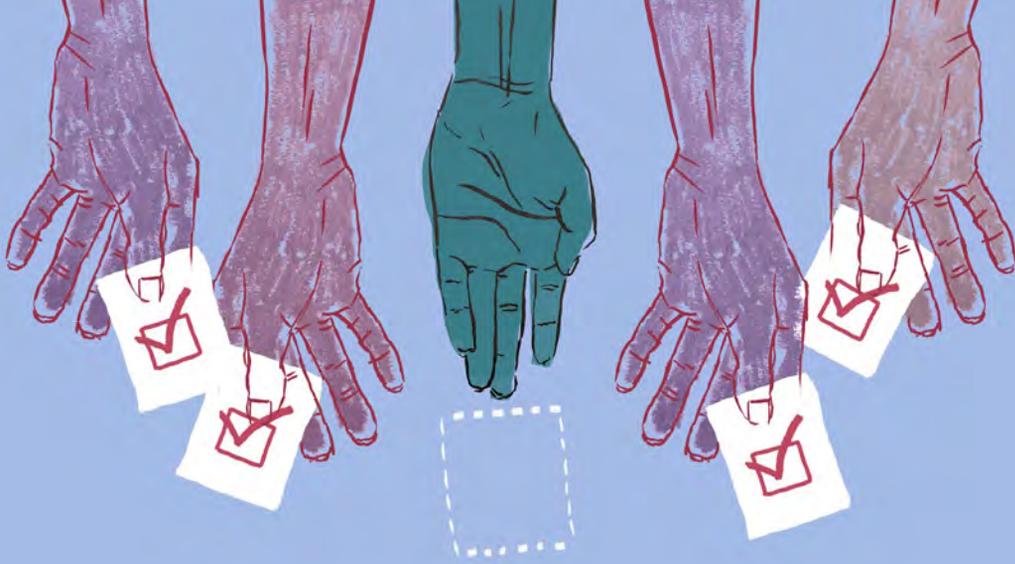
Youth are also providing guidance to the media on telling more well-rounded stories and organizing educational events to train students and other community members on how to talk about youth by focusing on their assets and potential.

Cherri Gregg was one journalist who was moved by the campaign. “As a journalist who covers communities that are very vulnerable—and many times mischaracterized—when I heard of a new movement to change the narrative when it comes to youth, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up,” she said during her Philadelphia-based radio show. “Over the years, I’ve worked hard to be very mindful of the words that I use to characterize a variety of communities.” She also instructed listeners, “At the end of the day, take a pause: Are you using stereotypes to characterize others?”

Changing how the media and our society talk about young people is a long-term effort, Sophia and Omar say. But through “We Are Not At-Risk,” more youth leaders around the globe are tapping into their power to tell their own stories—and create the future they want to see.

“Through the campaign, youth deepen their analysis of systems of oppression and their root causes, which helps us confront them more effectively,” Omar says. “We’re also engaging more partners, organizations, and allies who can support us in our resistance.” ■

🌐 **LEARN MORE:** [afsc.org/notatrisk](https://afsc.org/notatrisk)



# Restoring the right to vote to all

BY LEWIS WEBB, JR.  
*Healing Justice Program Coordinator*

It's time to end felony disenfranchisement and restore voting rights to those involved in the criminal justice system.

In November, many of us will cast the most important votes of our lives while millions of other Americans will once again be denied that right. Today six million Americans are barred from exercising their right to vote because they have felony convictions. Most are Black and living in poverty.

While several states have made some significant reforms over the years, felony disenfranchisement remains the longest-standing form of voter suppression in the U.S. And it's past time for us to end it once and for all.

Coupled with more than 40 years of mass incarceration, felony disenfranchisement has silenced the African-American's political voice in ways that echo the "Black codes" of the 1860s and the Jim Crow laws of the 1950s. Today, one in 13 African-Americans are denied the right to vote because of a felony conviction, according to The Sentencing Project.

The injustice of felony disenfranchisement has penetrated the electoral process in all but two states in the U.S. Outside of Maine and Vermont, where people can vote from their prison cells, the denial of this fundamental right is devastating and far reaching. Political

engagement is quashed, and political strength is decimated—resulting in perpetual and intentional powerlessness of people of color and the poor. This strategic incapacitation of people fuels continued poverty, is driven by systemic racism, and stymies notions of equal and human rights.

Not only does felony disenfranchisement contribute to the class and race bias in the electorate, it has generational impacts. As more and more African-Americans and other people of color are disenfranchised, their children and grandchildren become less politically engaged and don't vote, and their communities continue to lose out on needed resources.

Until we restore the right to vote to all, our elections will be undemocratic—and the results illegitimate.

Several states have made progressive reforms to address felony disenfranchisement in recent years. Not only is it critical that we build on those reforms, we must ensure they are implemented as intended. In 2018, for example, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment to restore the right to vote to more than a million people with felony convictions who had been subject to

lifetime disenfranchisement. But last year, the governor signed into law the equivalent of a poll tax to disenfranchise them again.

**In 2019, we saw progress made in other states:**

- Nevada restored the right to vote to anyone convicted of a felony upon release from prison, applying to an estimated 77,000 people.
- Colorado restored voting rights to people on parole—about 11,467 individuals.
- New Jersey restored voting rights to more than 80,000 residents on probation or parole.

These policy changes are steps in the right direction. What happens in 2020 and beyond is up to us.

This summer, more than a dozen young people will join efforts to end felony disenfranchisement by taking part in AFSC's Liberation Summer Advocacy Camp in New York City. In partnership with Let NY Vote, campers will learn how to advocate against felony disenfranchisement and develop a social media campaign to register formerly incarcerated people to vote.

As millions of people across this country continue their struggle to be recognized, I'm reminded of the words of my friend Larry White. Larry voted for the first time at age 77 after over 40 years of being disenfranchised. He told me, "I now matter, my opinion counts." Let's end this injustice now.

## Here's what you can do today:

### Tell your governor:

#### Restore voting rights to all!

Visit [afsc.org/restorevotingrights](https://afsc.org/restorevotingrights) to email your governor today.

Spread the word by sharing our action on social media.

### Ask candidates if they support ending felony disenfranchisement.

You can do this by seeking out a candidate for any public office; asking them where they stand on issues you care about, including ending felony disenfranchisement; and documenting their responses to share with the public. Visit [afsc.org/birddogging](https://afsc.org/birddogging) for resources.



**SNAPSHOT**

# A look at AFSC around the world

Indigenous-led climate crisis march in Des Moines, two days before the Iowa caucuses. Photo: Jon Krieg/AFSC



- Left to right, top to bottom:
1. Card-making party for people serving lifetime sentences; Philadelphia
  2. Rally to end death by incarceration; New York
  3. Meeting of AFSC staff in Asia; Indonesia
  4. Farmer, activist, and dancer Fldel Gonzalez; New Mexico
  5. Fundraiser for the Arnie Alpert Action Fund; New Hampshire
  6. Convening on youth and nonviolent elections; Ethiopia
  7. Vigil protesting detention of Jorge Zaldivar; Aurora, Colorado
  8. No War With Iran rally/march from the White House; Washington, D.C.
  9. No War With Iran action; Miami
  10. We Are Not At-Risk campaign; El Salvador
  11. Mural memorializing Anastasio Hernandez Rojas, who was killed by border agents; San Diego
  12. Rally in support of immigrants with Temporary Protected Status (TPS); Washington, D.C.

Photos: Nathaniel Doubleday/AFSC; David George/RAPP; AFSC/Indonesia; Alicia Lueras Maldonado; Nathaniel Doubleday/AFSC; AFSC/Africa Region; Gabriela Flora/AFSC; Carl Roose/AFSC; Lis-Marie Alvarado/AFSC; AFSC/EI Salvador; Pedro Rios/AFSC; Carl Roose/AFSC



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**Today  
we work for a more just  
and **peaceful world.****

**Tomorrow,  
with your help,  
we will do the same.**

Leave a legacy of peace. Name AFSC in your will, trust, or as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, and sustain movements for social change for generations to come.

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Call Alyssa Chatten at 1-888-588-2372, email [GiftPlanning@afsc.org](mailto:GiftPlanning@afsc.org), or visit us online at [afsc.org/wills](https://afsc.org/wills) to learn more.

"Home is Here" rally in  
Washington, D.C.  
Photo: Carl Roose/AFSC