Dear Friends,

I write to you today to say we must stay at it: we must stay in the struggle for a more just and peaceful world; we can't give up. So much is happening in our region and in the world today—at times it may seem overwhelming, and you feel like just dropping out. I implore you not to do so.

I read a piece written by the late Howard Zinn that truly inspired me to keep going—to stay the course, as they used to say. It left me with this: we cannot allow ourselves to become too discouraged by daily events. We must keep our eyes on the prize. Zinn’s editorial states:

The rights of working people, of women, of black people have not depended on decisions of the courts. Like the other branches of the political system, the courts have recognized these rights only after citizens have engaged in direct action powerful enough to win these rights for themselves. - Howard Zinn

We must continue to build a movement to adopt persuasive causes that influence and engage communities with which we work, in order to make positive changes that will move our country and the world to a more just and peaceful place. I ask that you join us in this powerful and challenging effort.

I ask that you join us in the fight for the rights of immigrants. The xenophobic and brutal atmosphere surrounding people seeking safety and what they hope is a better life in this country is beyond troubling. We believe that better and more humane immigration policies are possible. Our programs in the Greater Boston area, New Hampshire, and New Jersey have worked closely with immigrants on temporary protective status (TPS), representation in courts, community organizing, leadership training, etc. Learn more about our Newark, NJ Immigrant Rights program.

Several of our programs are working with young people. These programs focus primarily on developing leadership skills and helping young people visualize themselves as part of the solution to issues that affect them. It’s so important for youths to find their confidence, their voice, and their place in the world. Our youth work is visible in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Maine. Read about our New York Healing Justice Program here.

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It would be naive to depend on the Supreme Court to defend the rights of poor people, women, people of color, dissenters of all kinds. Those rights only come alive when citizens organize, protest, demonstrate, strike, boycott, rebel, and violate the law in order to uphold justice. - Howard Zinn

The AFSC has been a long-time proponent of a more equitable criminal justice system. The prisons in every state reflect a disproportionate amount of people of color both men and women. This has a devastating effect on families, children of the incarcerated, and whole communities. We work against the privatization of jails and prisons, abusive treatment in prisons, mandatory minimums, re-entry into the community, and more. Our programs in New Jersey, New York, Maine, and New Hampshire lift these concerns and bring them to the forefront whenever possible. Click here to read more about our New Jersey Prison Watch program.

Finally, I want to remind us all of the constant threat to our planet. We must recognize the effects of climate change on our everyday existence and join with the thousands who stand for protecting our future. Also, the increase in nuclear arsenals throughout the world makes our peace work that much more important to prevent conflict and war. The AFSC’s Peace & Economic Security program works with its partners around the world and at the UN to reduce the possibilities of nuclear conflict, reduce our military spending and move those moneys to the human and social needs of the people. Meeting people’s basic needs such as shelter, food, water, clothing and employment can do so much more to prevent conflict than billions of dollars spent on guns. These are some of the things of which Howard Zinn was speaking that can help us develop an economy that works for the people, instead of profiting off of the people.

I’ve led you to a sampling of our programming, but I invite you to check out all of the work we are doing throughout the region on our website. Also, I ask that you consider making a financial contribution to the region or program of your choice. Thank you.

Sincerely yours for peace and justice,

Keith B. Harvey
Northeast Regional Director

Your tax-deductible gift will help fund our important work to bring about peace, justice, and human dignity in Cambridge and across the Northeast Region.