Dear Friends,

I hope this summer edition of the Northeast AFSC newsletter finds you and your families are doing well during these very challenging times. Many of us are still staying close to home and wondering what the future holds. As we enter summer, the dormancy of winter has given way to an awakening and renewal that brings forth new life in spring.

Although we have been working from home, our staff and program work continue. Even though most of our staff live in the three northeast states where the COVID-19 virus has had some of the highest numbers of infections, they continue to organize, advocate, and provide services in partnership with the many communities in which we work. Our outreach and gatherings have been virtual as we continue to build community, till the soil, plant seeds and ring the bell of peace and social justice.

We have learned so much during these three months at home, even as we are communicating via video and unable to be in physical proximity to our colleagues and communities. We have learned that even under challenging circumstances we can respond to injustice with justice and to fear with love and presence. Our colleagues are hearing devastating stories from people in prison and their families who are living in terror of what we know the pandemic will do inside our prison system. We are supporting immigrant communities where people have lost family members and lost income. We are supporting native communities facing the same crises. We have lost some of our own.

And yet, we keep fighting, we keep moving, and we keep on, always keeping in mind that there is light at the end of this darkness. We do that in community, with each other, and with all of you.

We are so proud of the staff here in the Northeast. They are amazing! Here are some highlights of the work we continue to do.

Healing Justice Program

The Healing Justice Program in New York and New Jersey has intensified its accompaniment efforts in response to the impact of COVID-19 in prisons and jails. By providing guidance and support to those incarcerated and their loved ones while pressing our respective governors and other representatives to protect those incarcerated and release those most vulnerable. Check out a blog piece about this work here: [https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/covid-19-spreading-us-prisons](https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/covid-19-spreading-us-prisons), and sign this petition which has reached over 9,000 people: [https://www.afsc.org/action/tell-your-governor-and-ice-protect-people-prisons-jails-and-detention-centers-covid-19](https://www.afsc.org/action/tell-your-governor-and-ice-protect-people-prisons-jails-and-detention-centers-covid-19)
Prison Watch

Bonnie Kerness, Prison Watch staff, has worked extensively with the People’s Organization for Progress and the ACLU of NJ to lift the devastating effects the coronavirus could potentially have within the prisons in New Jersey. To date, seven letters have been sent to community advocates, prison wardens, county commissioners, the NJ Commissioner of the Department of Corrections, state legislators and to the governor. We also continue to respond to letters from inside lifting pandemic and other concerns.

Our Hope Lives for Lifers continues to support lifers and long-termers by advocating for just and robust clemency in New York.

The sounds of loud protest and calls for justice and accountability have been raised throughout the country, and around the world, in response to the increase in incidents of deadly police violence against people of color. This movement has given us the opportunity to build community, deepen our partnerships, and continue to learn and to educate others about the inequities of the criminal justice and police systems and their effects on communities of color.

We are also looking forward to our Liberation Summer Camp, which for safety concerns will be virtual.

Immigrant Rights Program

Nicole Miller, Newark staff, posted a blog outlining the most recent outcomes of the Immigrant Rights Program’s advocacy efforts. We started by asking 40 organizations to sign onto a letter requesting that detainees be released due to the virus in congregate living situations. Read the blog entry here: [https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/protecting-immigrants-covid-19](https://www.afsc.org/blogs/news-and-commentary/protecting-immigrants-covid-19)

Phenomenal news: A federal judge in NJ has issued a temporary restraining order that orders the release of three IRP clients from detention. (Two clients who were also included in this federal litigation were previously released.) Lauren Major and Anna Byers took a lead role in the filing of the group habeas petition on behalf of the five clients, with critical support and assistance from Laura Rodriguez, Matt Johnson and the rest of the detention team, who all worked tirelessly under incredibly difficult circumstances to get this done. One particularly vulnerable client will reunite with his family in Texas and the team worked through the night to make the necessary travel arrangements, with a family member now en route to accompany the client back home.

We will of course be sharing more info about this huge and hard-fought victory, but I did want to acknowledge and lift this amazing effort!
With great excitement around the U.S. Supreme Court decision to uphold Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), there is still significant work to do to help make DACA permanent and to move forward legislation for a humane and just immigration system. See the AFSC’s immigration website for action ideas and support: [https://www.afsc.org/key-issues/issue/defending-immigrant-rights](https://www.afsc.org/key-issues/issue/defending-immigrant-rights) and tell Congress to provide permanent protections for DACA recipients—and create a roadmap to citizenship for all immigrants: [https://www.afsc.org/action/tell-congress-provide-permanent-protections-daca-recipients%E2%80%94and-create-roadmap-to-citizenship](https://www.afsc.org/action/tell-congress-provide-permanent-protections-daca-recipients%E2%80%94and-create-roadmap-to-citizenship)

**Poor People’s Campaign 2020**

The Poor People’s Campaign: June 20-21 National Call for Moral Revival was a major success! This virtual gathering was informative, invigorating and deeply moving. The AFSC is a national endorser of the campaign, working in several local communities on behalf of poor and low-income communities. Our general secretary Joyce Ajlouny was featured several times during the event, speaking on behalf of the Service Committee.

Locally, Sophia Burns, our Robert Andrew Stewart Fellow, has been engaging Friends in and around the Philadelphia metro area about the Poor People’s Campaign (PPC). She has developed a workshop highlighting the history and work of the PPC mostly working with and in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Chapter of the PPC. Join the AFSC in supporting the PPC: [https://www.afsc.org/video/join-poor-peoples-campaign](https://www.afsc.org/video/join-poor-peoples-campaign)

We have organized an action for Facebook Live for Friends Meetings, to toll the bell in remembrance of those killed by police and to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

**New Hampshire’s Arnie Alpert retires from the AFSC**

Arnie Alpert, co-director of the New Hampshire Program, was recently featured on NHPR’s *All Things Considered* to discuss some of the successful campaigns of his career. Alpert’s deep and lasting contributions as AFSC staff over 39 years, including helping to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a holiday in New Hampshire and pushing to abolish the death penalty in the state, will be highlighted in a retrospective in our fall newsletter. Listen to the full NPHR interview here: [https://www.nhpr.org/post/longtime-nh-civil-rights-activist-arnie-alpert-retires](https://www.nhpr.org/post/longtime-nh-civil-rights-activist-arnie-alpert-retires)
Peace and Economic Security Program

The World Conference went virtual

As the world began to shutter in the shadow of the coronavirus, the world conference scheduled to be held at Riverside Church in NY had to be cancelled as an in-person event. Joe Gerson and the conference coordinating committee hustled to make this a virtual gathering, and it was an amazing success. With language dedicated rooms, there were about 2,000 (?) people who were able to participate in the conference. (Screen shot of conference, below)

Additionally, as part of our work coordinating the U.S. dimension of the Global Days on Military spending, we organized two nationwide briefing calls, one with Lindsay Kogshgarian of the National Priorities Project and Bill Hartung of the Center for International Policy, and the other with Shalley Gupta Barnes (a co-author of the Poor People's Campaign's Moral Budget), and Mark Dunlea, an original co-author of the Green New Deal initiative. On the other side of the pandemic there will be increasing calls to cut U.S. military spending and to fund health and other needs. The calls provide some of the movement building analysis that will move us forward in this regard. We had more than 200 participants. The URL for the recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKUYU6xefhQ


As you can see, the important work continues as our amazing staff and volunteers put the Service Committee's values into action: “Each one, teach one.” We, like the rest of the world, are living in hope to be in the physical presence of our colleagues and partners—but until then, we press on. Please know that your continued support is always greatly appreciated.

Please consider a tax-deductible gift, which will help fund our important work to help bring down the walls of oppression, creating a space for peace, justice and human dignity.

Please also check out the AFSC Alumni Page online at www.afsc.org/alumni or via our Facebook group at www.facebook.com/groups/234049520577404 to engage with current and former AFSC staff, volunteers, interns and fellows.

Sincerely yours for peace and justice,

Keith B. Harvey
Northeast Regional Director

Amy Gottlieb
Northeast Regional Director