



# SouthStar

Newsletter of the South Region, American Friends Service Committee • Fall 2016

*“Equality is the soul of liberty; there is, in fact, no liberty without it.” — FRANCES WRIGHT*

## BALTIMORE COALITION TRANSFORMS VACANT HOME INTO COMMUNITY CENTER



This spring and summer, the AFSC’s Friend of a Friend program partnered with several grassroots organizations as well as a coalition of Friends and supporters in a focused effort to make a lasting mark in West Baltimore’s Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood by transforming a vacant rowhome into a hub for community leaders, activists and youth.

The Tubman House, located at 1618 Presbury Street next to Gilmore Homes in Baltimore, is owned by the city, but is not legally inhabited and before recent renovations was much in need of repairs. With help from the Reclaiming Our Lives initiative, the [Coalition of Friends](#) and others, Friend of a Friend was able to oversee improvements to several rooms in the house and the adjacent corner property so that they can be safely used as community space.

Since its founding, the Tubman House has been central to groups supporting the revitalization of Sandtown and Gilmore Homes, working as a meet-up point for protests, vigils, town hall meetings and press conferences. Because of its

location next to the memorial to Freddie Gray, the site has also received attention from media crews who have visited since Gray’s death in April 2015. More recently the block also hosted [The Grassroots Global Justice Alliance People’s Caravan](#), an activist group that came to engage Sandtown residents in solidarity while traveling between the Republican and Democratic national conventions.

Although many locals have been enthusiastic about the development of the house, Friend of a Friend continues to negotiate with the City of Baltimore in order to find a long-term solution regarding the future of the property, which originally was slated for

demolition.

“When residents have spoken about what they want for their community, I think it would behoove the city to take heed,” says former Friend of a Friend associate Taalib Saber about the strong neighborhood support for the house. “It’s not just a bunch of outside activists coming in—it’s the community ... changing the dynamic of Gilmore Homes, and Baltimore in general.”

Resident support includes even area gangs, who have voiced that the center should be a safe zone for activists and young people.

An earlier project organized by Friend of a Friend and the Coalition of Friends to replace basketball hoops at Gilmore Homes proved that with cooperation of residents and community leaders, positive change could take place even if the city is reluctant to move—in this case the coalition worked through red tape to successfully install new hoops, making the court usable again.

Tubman House officially opened its doors in the spring and since then has offered a variety of services



*New planters for a community garden decorate the improved property next to Tubman House.*

*Continued on page 2*

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2016 has been an amazing year for AFSC's South Region—one filled with new challenges, but also new allies and new goals as we make strides in our work across the South.

We'd like to thank those allies and supporters for helping to make this work possible—whether it be sponsoring anti-militarization trainings in our capital, connecting Miami youth with their roots through art or fighting housing injustice in Atlanta. While these initiatives serve many different communities in different ways, they are all connected by AFSC's mission to promote lasting peace with justice.

With your help, our programs continue to move forward in the tradition of nonviolent activism.

- AFSC's South Region Staff



*Above: Candles burn during a vigil for Freddie Gray at Tubman House on the anniversary of his passing.*

*Tubman House continued from page 1* including farming classes for children three times a week, as well as dance classes and movie nights to engage neighborhood youth. There are political education courses available to adults and a chance to enlist in Team Tubman, which plans community outreach projects. [Right to Housing Alliance](#) has also stepped in as a

partner to help with weekly sessions.

In a [piece produced by Baltimore's 88.1 WYPR](#), Friend of a Friend program director Dominique Stevenson emphasizes the liberation aspect of the house. "You can reclaim space ... and make [it] useful to the community. You also have power, no matter how much you've been told you're powerless." Resident Akoya Watson agrees: "There is definitely a need for something like this, for the children in this neighborhood specifically." Parents in Sandtown who have seen multiple West Baltimore recreation centers close in recent years may see Tubman House as an option for filling a gap in the city's resources for youth.

Next steps for the house include updating its water and electrical systems, further improving the space as Friend of a Friend and supporters find new ways to utilize the property for the neighborhood's benefit.



**American Friends  
Service Committee**

The *South Star* is published by the South Region, American Friends Service Committee.

### Editorial Committee

Bryan Vana  
Ann Lennon

Design by  
Beth Spence  
Bryan Vana

Photography by Bryan Vana  
unless otherwise noted

**Atlanta Regional Office**  
75 Marietta St., Suite 501  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Phone: (404) 586-0460  
Fax: (404) 586-0465

**Associate Regional Director**  
Ann Lennon

## SHARE YOUR AFSC STORIES!



Are you a current or former AFSC intern, program participant, staff member or supporter? Help us celebrate our upcoming centennial in 2017 by sharing your experience with AFSC on our new [Peace Works](#) website! We'd love to add your account to the growing collection of stories about our work for peace over the past 100 years.

Visit [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)  
for extended articles  
about the South Region

Donate Now

# AFIS MIAMI HOLDS SUMMER CAMPS FOR #MADRETIERRAKIDS PROJECT

This summer, AFSC’s American Friends Immigrant Services program held two weeks of camps for the [#MadreTierraKIDS](#), a project aimed at challenging anti-immigrant stereotypes and hate speech in politics and society regarding immigrant children, their families and their culture.

We want our kids to tell their own stories in public spaces—to local authorities, to reporters and through social media; We want to show the human face of migration and change the narrative about immigrant children, in particular those coming from Central America and Mexico; We do not want to depict children as powerless victims of an unjust immigration system; We want our children to recognize their own value and advocate for themselves. We want to make them grassroots leaders that support community building initiatives; We want to foster their creativity so they feel the power of imagination; We want to make them feel proud of remembering their roots and backgrounds and be able to recognize the intrinsic rights and values all kids and families have in



*Madre Tierra KIDS camp and action photos by AFIS staff*

the world no matter their immigration status.

Our group is comprised of kids from Central America and Mexico that crossed the U.S./Mexico border unaccompanied or with a family member. Others are U.S.-born with undocumented parents. Their ethnicities are: Latino, Garifuna and Guatemalan Maya. The ages are from 7 to 12; half of them live in low-income urban areas of Miami migrant and half in Homestead, a semi-rural community. Knowing that Miami Dade County is among the [top five U.S. counties receiving unaccompanied children](#), and that Miami also has a large number of undocumented families, we know it is vital to create safe spaces for these kids.

This is a bilingual (English and Spanish) program because we recognize the importance and the value in speaking many languages. During our family visits one of the moms told us that her son had said that Spanish was ugly, that he didn’t want to speak. For us it is really important to reinforce that speaking Spanish is not something one should feel ashamed of. But many of the kids in our program do not only know English and Spanish, we also have a kid who understands Garifuna and

other kids understand Mayan languages. By bringing kids from different backgrounds to the program, we highlight the many immigration stories and diversity of Central Americans and Mexicans and at the same time recognize the similar experiences they have faced as immigrants living in the United States.

We have seen many social justice programs dedicated to teenagers; however, not much has been done for our kids. We recognize the importance of children having a voice and leadership role within the immigration debate. We also see how critical it is for us as social change makers to develop preventative social justice, environmental and cultural programs for our kids.

Through these camps, we have been able to transform racism through learning about culture, music, photography, drawing, painting and dancing—instilling a sense of pride and self-respect in our youth!

**- LIS-MARIE ALVARADO, AFIS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING COORDINATOR**



# IN WV COAL MINING DISASTER, A CEO IS HELD ACCOUNTABLE

History was made in a federal court in West Virginia in April when [Don Blankenship, former CEO of Massey Energy, was sentenced to a year in prison](#) for actions leading up to the 2010 Upper Big Branch disaster, which killed 29 coal miners.

By coincidence, the verdict came on April 6, 2016, six years and a day after the tragedy.

Although thousands of U.S. workers die on the job every year, this case marked the first time that a CEO of a major company was held responsible. And the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) played a role in bringing this to pass.

[AFSC's roots run deep in West Virginia's coal country.](#) They go back nearly a century when a fledgling Quaker organization sent roving Friends to investigate hard times there in 1922 and come up with practical solutions.

They extend through the New Deal era, when Friends were instrumental in shaping federal relief policies in mining areas devastated by the Great Depression. And in the coal boom of the late 1970s, the organization even helped prepare the first women miners for work underground.

The AFSC West Virginia Economic Justice Project stood with miners in the 1989-1990 Pittston coal strike, providing material and moral support. It stood with the United Mine Workers of America in other struggles for workers' rights and to preserve promised benefits to retirees in the wake of corporate shell games and bankruptcies.

And, through the work of Beth Spence, who retired from AFSC at the end of 2014, it helped bring about this verdict.

Beth is a native of Logan County, West Virginia in the heart of the state's coalfields. Most of her life has been spent in coalfield struggles for justice.



*Above: Since the 1920s, AFSC has provided support to coal miners and their families in West Virginia. Below:*

*A memorial for miners killed in the Upper Big Branch Mine tragedy, taken during a service in 2010. Photo: Beth Spence*



Her first big effort was the 1972 Buffalo Creek Disaster, when an illegal coal dam owned by Pittston Coal Company burst and killed 125 people, wiped out over a dozen Logan County communities and left thousands homeless.

Beth was later active in the historic Miners for Democracy movement and the Black Lung movement, which helped win recognition and relief for miners who suffered from this often fatal disease. She mentored several AFSC staff in West Virginia and worked for the organization from 2001 until her retirement.

Given her background, it was not surprising that she was asked to serve on independent investigative panels

commissioned by then Gov. Joe Manchin (now a U.S. senator) to investigate Massey fatalities at the 2006 Massey Aracoma mine fire, which killed two miners.

Under the leadership of former federal mine safety chief Davitt McAteer, Beth was the lead writer of [a report on the incident](#) that helped pave the way for the most severe criminal penalties levied against a coal company to that date. The report was also used in subsequent lawsuits by the families of those who died.

When in the wake of Upper Big Branch, Gov. Manchin again tapped McAteer to lead an investigation, Beth was again recruited to take part. She spent most of a year on task—listening to testimony, talking with family members, and even going underground. She was the lead writer in [a book-length report](#) the team released nearly five years ago.

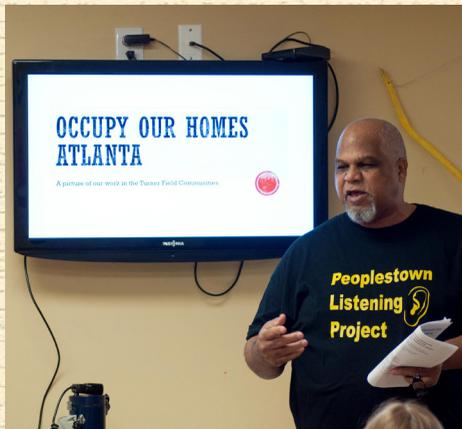
This report was the first of several on the disaster to be released by the miner's union, the federal government, and the state of West Virginia. All subsequent investigations backed up the original report.

Rather than merely documenting technicalities, the report by Beth's team chronicled the "culture of deviance" which prevailed at Massey as well as the politics of coal.

It's safe to say that this report helped provide a blueprint for federal prosecutors, who indicted Don Blankenship in November 2014.

When asked to comment on the verdict, Beth had this to say, "While a year in prison is a small price to pay for 29 lives, the sentencing of Don Blankenship sends a loud message to corporate leaders that they can no longer place profits above the safety of workers. They will be held accountable."

**- RICK WILSON, WEST VIRGINIA  
ECONOMIC JUSTICE PROJECT DIRECTOR**



*Above: Residents educate and demonstrate on the issue of housing justice in Peoplestown, Atlanta, GA.*

## SOUTH PROGRAMS TEAM UP FOR ATLANTA HOUSING BUS TOUR

On Saturday, March 19th, people sprang into action to prevent displacement in Peoplestown. The day began with a bus tour of neighborhoods that will be affected by the Turner Field development deal and ended with the Peoplestown Rally and March Against Displacement. The bus tour was made possible by support from the Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America and Peoplestown Revitalization Corporation. We are also grateful we had students and professors from Georgia State and Georgia Tech with us on the tour.

We started the day off with introductions to the work that is happening around housing justice in the Peoplestown, Mechanicsville and Pittsburgh neighborhoods. Columbus Ward (pictured left) discussed his work in Peoplestown with the Peoplestown Revitalization Corporation throughout the years. Residents shared the history of previous development deals in the area and how those neighborhoods have been affected.

First stop on the tour was Stanton Oaks, formerly Boynton Village, in Peoplestown. Sherise Brown shared her experience with Stanton Oaks/Boynton Village. Mrs. Brown explained how

tenants organized to make sure that Boynton Village remained affordable even after being bought by a different company. She spoke about her experiences with the tenant association at Stanton Oaks and its renovations, where they ensured that the complex got a new 20-year HUD contract. Folks had the opportunity to ask questions about how to navigate the process.

The next stop on the tour was City Views at Rosa Burney in Mechanicsville. Deborah Arnold shared her background of organizing tenants to protect City Views' affordable, quality housing.

Tour participants then were able to meet staff from Atlanta's Peace by Piece—an AFSC program whose mission is to support and mobilize Black youth and young adults through political education and organizing in order to realize sustainable, sovereign and equitable communities rooted in Black love. Joel Dickerson and Khadijah Austin, both from Atlanta, spoke about their experience jumpstarting a community program in the area. Farajii Muhammad spoke about his experience heading AFSC's Peace by Piece chapter in Baltimore, MD.

The final stop on the tour was Tanya Washington's House: 148 Atlanta Ave. SE in Peoplestown. Once everyone got off the bus we

joined Tanya and her neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Darden and Ms. Mattie Jackson on Tanya's yard, where everyone listened to spoken word and residents' stories. Along with Georgia State Senator Vincent Fort, our hosts recounted the history of Peoplestown, including recent gentrification and the fight for their block of homes. In solidarity with this fight, participants were asked to rally around the area slated for demolition.

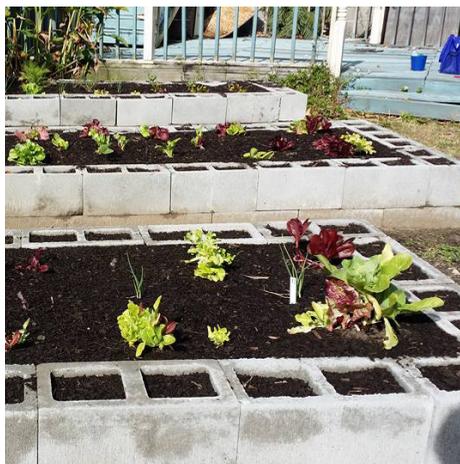
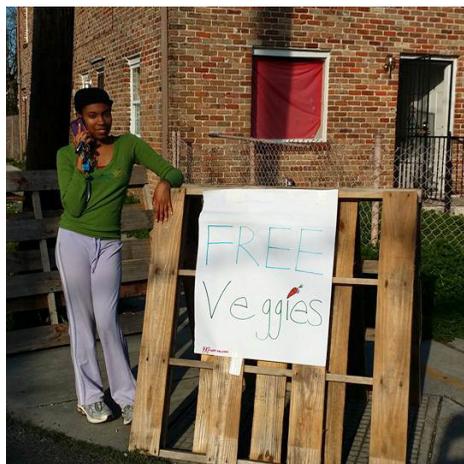
As we marched around the block, we stopped and placed "Rezoned for gentrification" signs in lots where houses used to stand. All of the houses between Tanya's Dardens' have been bulldozed. Throughout the march we chanted and sang to let our voices be known to the neighborhood that "we shall not be moved."

The rally left Ms. Jackson, Tanya and Mr. and Mrs. Darden feeling energized, supported, and filled with a great positive energy. We encourage folks to sign and share their [online petition](#). Big thanks to all who participated!

#peoplestownwillnotgodown

- TIM FRANZEN  
ATLANTA ECONOMIC JUSTICE PROGRAM

# MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE: THE CORNER STORE



Humans have basic needs in order to survive: food, water, and shelter to name a few. Unfortunately, easy access to good quality tools for survival are hard to come by in some neighborhoods. Availability and affordability are just some of the challenges that affect nutritional choices in food deserts. In Hollygrove, the Hollygrove Market and Farm does theoretically provide one source of fresh fruits and vegetables, but proximity isn't always the mark of accessibility. At Peace by Piece, we realized there was a better way to get quality produce to the local community.

The market sits near the edge of the predominantly Black Hollygrove neighborhood. Folks come from all around the city to shop there and others have their goods delivered. Despite accepting EBT cards, most of the neighborhood's residents shop elsewhere. Passing by the Market on a near daily basis, I'm often hard-pressed to find Black citizens, especially those native to New Orleans or living in the Hollygrove area, shopping there. I was baffled to say the least.

It had been a while since I have been inside Hollygrove. I asked about the staff and the relationship to the community. It turns out, there's not a single Black staff person in the

*Above: The New Orleans neighborhood of Hollygrove has become the pilot location for a new Peace by Piece project which will focus on local, sustainable farming nurtured by community leaders and youth in an area where resources to fresh produce is limited. Photos: Tabitha Mustafa*

market. One of the lead growers is Black; he's from Texas. Without any real connection to Hollygrove, New Orleans or Black folks, it was clear that partnering with Hollygrove Market was not the way for Peace by Piece to make quality produce more accessible to low income residents and people of color in the neighborhood.

Everyone knows that if there's no other business in the hood, there is always, without fail, a corner store. In the small portion of Hollygrove between the levee and Carrollton, Earhart and Palmetto, there are several corner stores, and they are always packed.

After examining the fresh food options—or the lack thereof—available in the corner stores, it became clear that this could be a partnership worth building. The Palestinian owned stores usually stock staples like cabbage, potatoes, onions, and carrots. That's about it.

In thinking though our plan we

remembered that there's often a disconnect between the Black and Palestinian communities in poor neighborhoods. We weren't sure what, if anything, could come of the proposed partnership.

Peace by Piece went to the corner stores and explained that young Black folks in the community were growing vegetables. We asked if the owners would be willing to sell our organic non-GMO produce to the community at fair prices. They said yes. One owner responded, "The kids are doing it? Of course, we'll do it for the kids." Whatever issues adults may have due to nuanced expressions of oppression that come up in daily interactions were seemingly lost when the store owners were able to help youth provide basic needs for their neighbors.

Starting in summer 2016, this pilot program will take off in the Hollygrove neighborhood. We're hiring young Black staff from the neighborhood to grow the program into something that is of the community, by the community, and for the community. There's no other way it will work.

**- TABITHA MUSTAFA, NEW ORLEANS  
PEACE BY PIECE PROGRAM ASSOCIATE**

# YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL VISITS D.C. & BALTIMORE



Organized by AFSC's Chicago and Indianapolis, IL staff, this year's [Humanize Not Militarize](#) youth film festival in Washington, D.C. was a great success, drawing entries from all over the country and a wonderful group of young people who were able to meet each other in person and participate in workshops and leadership training sessions.

The young filmmakers gathered in both Baltimore and D.C. to strategize around what they thought society needs to become more humanized and less militarized, starting with pointed questions: What do you really need in your school, community, country or world to thrive? How does militarism meet these needs? How does it force people to migrate from one community or country to another, and how can that be changed?

Fernando Jimenez, an intern with

*AFSC program participants from across the U.S., including from the South Region's NC Peace & Economic Justice Program (bottom left), strategized and protested against militarization in their communities.*

AFSC's NC Peace & Economic Justice program, wrote and edited [his own film 10](#) for the festival—a thoughtful, focused piece that challenges the roots of militarism and encourages people to speak up and band together in opposition of its negative effects.

“So why not fund education, public services and implement more immigrant integration,” Jimenez rhymes, “and yes, this is the concept of humanization, because to humanize is to make something more humane or civilized.”

After wrapping up a weekend of



collaborative and productive sessions with Baltimore's Peace by Piece program and a premiere of their films at D.C.'s famous Busboys & Poets, the group turned its attention to the National Mall, where on the third day of the event participants staged an action to draw attention to the negative impacts on militarism.

Using a movable display of boxes they had crafted between trainings, the youth created a pop-up wall symbolizing the interlocking systems of oppression and broke it down, then rebuilt it emphasizing the opposite sides of the boxes to show what a community looks like without militarization. The action was filmed and reflected upon in organizer Debbie Southorn's piece [“7 lessons from youth on militarism, grassroots resistance”](#) on AFSC's website.





**American Friends  
Service Committee**

## **South Region**

3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 212  
Baltimore, MD 21211-1848

**Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Baltimore, MD  
Permit No. 4984**

---

## **AFSC SOUTH REGION PROGRAMS**



### **ATLANTA**

75 Marietta St., Suite 501  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
Phone: (404) 586-0460

#### **Associate Regional Director**

Ann Lennon

#### **Atlanta Economic Justice Program**

Tim Franzen

#### **Peace by Piece Atlanta**

Joel Dickerson

### **BALTIMORE**

3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 212  
Baltimore, MD 21211

#### **Friend of a Friend Program**

Dominque Stevenson  
Phone: (240) 707-0110

#### **Peace by Piece Baltimore**

Farajii Muhammad  
Phone: (240) 707-0384

### **GREENSBORO**

529-D College Rd.  
Greensboro, NC 27410  
Phone: (336) 854-0633

#### **NC Immigrant Rights Program**

Lori Fernald Khamala

#### **NC Peace & Economic Justice Program**

Toni Etheridge

### **MIAMI**

#### **American Friends Immigrant Services**

Lucio Perez-Reynoso  
1175 NE 125th St., Suite 417  
North Miami, FL 33161  
Phone: (305) 600-5441

### **MISSISSIPPI**

#### **Peace by Piece Mississippi**

Mason West  
Phone: (205) 617-1737

### **NEW ORLEANS**

#### **Peace by Piece New Orleans**

Dee Dee Green  
1137 Baronne St.  
New Orleans, LA 70113  
Phone: (504) 565-3596

### **WASHINGTON, D.C.**

#### **DC Peace & Economic Justice Project**

Jean-Louis Peta Ikambana  
1822 R St. NW, First Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
Phone: (202) 544-0324

### **WEST VIRGINIA**

#### **Appalachian Center for Equality**

Lida Shepherd  
501 Elizabeth St., Room 12  
Charleston, WV 2531  
Phone: (304) 356-8428

#### **WV Economic Justice Project**

Rick Wilson  
1201 Porter Creek Rd.  
Milton, WV 25541  
Phone: (304) 743-9459