Anti-immigrant bills debated
Tuesday, April 11th marked an important day for immigrants at the General Assembly. Two anti-immigrant bills, House Bill 471 and Senate Bill 145, were heard and debated in their respective Judiciary Committees.

Immigrant and advocates from El Pueblo, FaithAction and the ACLU attended the committee sessions and got an inside glimpse of the challenges facing immigrants in today’s political climate. Shocking to those present was the sheer amount of misinformation being shared and accepted among certain legislators. Some legislators passionately emphasized the “tremendous financial burden” that undocumented immigrants impose on North Carolinian taxpayers, leaving out that immigrants are taxpayers themselves, a critical part of our state economy and major contributors to social programs from which they themselves receive no benefits. When some senators attempted to raise questions about the implications of the legislation, they were silenced by accusations of nit-picking and delaying.

Natalia de la Cruz, a high school student with El Pueblo, as well as ACLU and FaithAction staff, presented heartfelt testimonies on behalf of those who would be harmed by the bills. Although ultimately the bills were both approved by straight party-line votes, this is not the last legislators will hear from these immigrant rights advocates. Next stop for these bills: Finance Committee.

Milena Wuerth, AFSC Intern

Tuition equity bill introduced
Finally some good news! NC Senators Chaudhuri and Van Duyn have sponsored Senate Bill 652 “Increase Access to Higher Education” to grant tuition equity to undocumented students in North Carolina. The proposal would allow students who attended school in North Carolina for at least three consecutive years before graduating would be eligible for for residential tuition. The bill was introduced by a Democrat and referred to the Rules Committee, making it difficult to move forward in a Republican majority legislature, but we hope it will garner support.

We look forward to lobbying for this bill during the 5th annual “Undocugraduation” happening on May 17 for tuition equity for the thousands of students residing in the state that want to access higher education.

Bill would allow drivers’ licenses
NC Rep. Pricey Harrison has introduced House Bill 877 titled, “Safer Roads and Communities Act”. This bill makes the argument that in order to increase the safety of state roads and our communities we should issue driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants. Those without social security numbers would undergo a criminal history check and be fingerprinted when applying. Immigrants cannot have more than three motor vehicle violations in the past ten years, excluding violations for driving without a license. People with only an ITIN number or passport could apply as long as they have resided in NC for at least two years.

This bill would provide relief to thousands of immigrants who cannot obtain driver’s licenses and would reduce the fear that many face when it comes to driving but having the necessity to do so in order to go to work, take their children to school, and move around. We will continue to monitor this bill and all others as they move in the NCGA.

-Citlaly Mora, AFSC Intern

Find updates on the above mentioned bills and more: http://bit.ly/NCnewsletterApril15
Protect Greensboro, a grassroots alliance that seeks safety and sanctuary for marginalized groups held a Bystander Intervention training in April. AFSC interns helped facilitate the training for 25 community members alongside other community organizers.

The training was held at the Central Carolina Worker Justice Center and included bystander basics, scenarios, and discussions about the best way to intervene and be an active ally for groups or individuals who are targeted in our community. The bystander intervention resulted from many community conversations and a climate where we see more hate crimes, hateful incidents, and more marginalized communities being targeted not only in our localities but all over the country.

Community members were able to walk away with concrete ideas and put into practice the best ways to get involved while at the training. If you would like more information about this training or resources please contact AFSC.

-Citlaly Mora, AFSC Intern

GROUPS PUSH FOR JUSTICE IN JOSE CHARLES’ CASE WITH POLICE

On July 4th, 2016, Jose Charles, a small 15-year old young man was assaulted by a group of kids at the Fun Fourth Festival in downtown Greensboro. The police encountered him when he was injured and in need of medical help. Instead of helping him, they brutalized him further. When Jose Charles coughed blood on a police officer, he was charged with assaulting an officer.

His mother, Tamara Figueroa has worked tirelessly to pursue all available official channels to get justice. Now, “Operation Transparency” alongside community members are supporting the family in getting justice in yet another case of police misconduct in Greensboro that has been brought to city council’s attention.

On Tuesday March 7th, Greensboro City Council voted 5 to 4 to view the body-cam video themselves. The Police Citizen Review Board (PCRB) also watched the video footage of the police encounter with Jose. The PCRB released their decision in the case and said they disagreed with the police findings. They are awaiting the review by the City Manager.

The District Attorney has offered Jose Charles a plea deal that includes him to admitting to an assault on a police officer, despite the video footage contradicting that version of the events that transpired last July.

Community organizers took action. They circulated a petition that garnered over 1,000 signatures and presented an ultimatum to City Council on April 12th, 2017: take action by your May 2nd, 2017 meeting -- the last one before Jose’s May 11th court date -- or we will take action to do what we can to protect this child. Jose is still scheduled for another court date on May 11th, even though the City Manager has not completed his review and the City Council has not viewed the video as promised.

GSO Operation Transparency is preparing to take dramatic action on May 2nd during city council’s meeting if council or city manager Jim Westmoreland do nothing to halt or at the very least delay Jose’s prosecution. If you would like to be involved and support Tamara Figueroa and Jose Charles the group is encouraging you to come to the next Greensboro city council meeting at 5:30 pm this upcoming Tuesday.

-Citlaly Mora, AFSC Intern
On the morning of April 4th, a group of about 30 immigrants and allies from across central North Carolina met at the El Pueblo headquarters in Raleigh to kick off Immigrant Day, an event organized in response to a recent surge of anti-immigrant bills introduced in the state legislature.

The day started with an hour-long crash course in lobbying by staff of the NC Immigrant Rights Alliance and El Pueblo, which included overviews of the harmful bills and tips to effectively communicate with state legislators. After the session, the advocates were split into groups according to county and headed to the NC General Assembly.

Throughout the morning, the groups met personally with about a dozen state representatives and senators, dropped in on the offices of several more, and handed out thank you cards to those who have supported immigrants in the past.

At noon the advocates regrouped for a press conference, during which immigrants, refugees and allies shared their stories, pointed out the grave problems with many of the bills, and urged legislators to oppose the anti-immigrant legislation. Representative Meyer of Durham and Senator Chaudhuri of Wake County both spoke out in support of the immigrant community and appealed to their colleagues to consider the importance of immigrants to our state.

Following the press conference, some members of the group proceeded to hold a creative action involving a piñata outside the office of Representative Cleveland, the primary sponsor of multiple anti-immigrant bills, before being forced to leave by security. Back at the El Pueblo office, the Immigrant Day lobbyists shared lunch and debriefed on the events of the day. Although it seems the legislative battle over immigrants rights is far from over, the participants’ presence and actions at the General Assembly clearly sent the message to every legislator with whom they interacted that immigrants are not afraid to raise their voices in the face of opposition.

-Milena Wuerth, AFSC Intern

**IMMIGRANTS’ LOBBY DAY AT THE NC LEGISLATURE**

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**AFSC FIRST DAY /SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM NOW AVAILABLE**

An 8-week curriculum introduces youth to AFSC’s key issues and allows them to explore how those issues connect to Quaker testimonies. The last two weeks are an intergenerational experience, where elders can share their stories of AFSC with the youth and other members of the meeting and upload them to the Peace Works site. The curriculum is now available for download on the website! [https://www.afsc.org/document/afsc-centennial-first-day-school-curriculum](https://www.afsc.org/document/afsc-centennial-first-day-school-curriculum)

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**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY**

March 8th marked the global celebration of International Women. Although in the United States it is not a recognized holiday, in many countries around the world the day is a holiday in recognition of the women in our world, their contributions, and the push for gender equality and women’s rights.

AFSC, along with other organizations celebrated International Women’s Day on March 15th at the YWCA High Point. This global theme this year was centered on being “Bold for Change” and the events highlighted the changes needed to achieve gender equality here and world wide.

The celebration included poems, dances, and cultural foods cooked by local women, many being refugees living in High Point. High Point University students also had presentations and projects all over the room that focused on the Arab Spring and women activists that were involved in the Middle East during that time.

AFSC was proud to be part of the event that included diverse voices and recognized all the diverse voices of women we have in our local cities striving for equality, justice, and peace.

-Citlaly Mora, AFSC Intern
UPCOMING EVENTS!

TRIAD UNITE CALLS FOR MAY DAY ACTIONS IN GREENSBORO

May 1st is International Worker’s Day and a “Day Without Immigrants, and workers across the country and the world will come together to strike, march, and rally to shut down the hate and build solidarity in our communities. We call on the Triad community to unite on this day in celebration of people’s struggles to defend the most vulnerable in our society and fight for a better world for all. Working families, immigrants, refugees, the LGBTQ community, women, Muslim communities, and people of color are being targeted by both the state and federal government policies. While the future is uncertain, it has never been more clear that we need to stand up and build a united front to fight back and win the vibrant and diverse future our community deserves.

Join for a mass rally on May 1st: at Greensboro Center City Park (200 N Elm St, Greensboro NC) from 4-6 PM.