Anti-Immigrant Bill HB 100 Defeated!!

The North Carolina General Assembly ended its 2016 Short Session in late June. During the session, legislators introduced many controversial bills, including several anti-immigrant bills. Among those were an anti-refugee bill and multiple bills targeting community identifications used by many undocumented immigrants, since they are unable to obtain any state-issued ID.

HB 100 doubled down on the anti-immigrant HB 318, which passed last year, severely restricting the use of community IDs like the FaithAction ID, accepted by law enforcement and many city officials in Greensboro as official identification.

HB 100 went further than just prohibiting municipal acceptance of community IDs; it retaliated against cities accepting them by jeopardizing state funding for schools and infrastructure if so-called “sanctuary cities” were reported to the Attorney General’s office. Even anonymous residents could file a complaint if they believed there was a violation of federal immigration law or acceptance of community ID’s by government agencies.

AFSC, the South East Immigrant Rights Network, the NC Justice Center, FaithAction International House, Comité Somos Raleigh and many other organizations across the state advocated against this bill arduously and responded immediately through numerous calls to action, conference calls, and press conferences. AFSC staff participated in lobbying before the closing of the short session, made calls to representatives, and worked to educate about the dangers of this law.

Thanks to our efforts and many other factors, we are happy to announce that House Bill 100 died in the Rules Committee. Even though other damaging bills, such as the limited public viewing of police recordings, were signed by the Governor, the legislature did not pass any more anti-immigrant laws in this short session.

AFSC will continue to advance the positive bills seeking tuition equality for undocumented students when the NC General Assembly reconvenes next year, and to strengthen community power to halt future anti-immigrant laws.

-Citlaly Mora, AFSC Intern

July Quote:

“We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silences encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.” -Elie Wiesel
Immigrant Community Mourns Supreme Court Ruling

On June 23, 2016, the Supreme Court announced its decision in regards to President Obama’s executive actions, Deferred Action for the Parents of Americans (DAPA) and the extension of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). The Court deadlocked in a tie, upholding a Texas judge’s block of the programs which would have benefitted millions of undocumented families. The case will now return to the Fifth Circuit of Appeals. This decision was a tremendous blow to the immigrant community and the activists that organized to improve the conditions of those living in the shadows. The programs would have granted a work permit and protection from deportation for 4.5 million immigrants who were left out Obama’s 2012 DACA executive order.

In response, Greensboro community leaders and affected immigrants gathered for a press conference in downtown Greensboro expressing their disappointment in the decision. Toni Etheridge spoke on behalf of AFSC and many of our allies also expressed frustration and there support to continue to push for deportation relief and alternatives.

On June 18th, there was a filing by the Department of Justice for the case to be heard once again. In this new petition, the federal government specifically asked that a full nine-member court hear the case. Most likely, the case will not be heard until after the general election in November, but this is a step that AFSC, along with other organizations are glad to see are being brought forth. Nevertheless, AFSC will continue supporting the immigrant movement and will not be deterred by this unfortunate roadblock.

-Citlaly Mora, AFSC Intern

AFSC Renews Connections at NC Yearly Meeting-Cons. At Guilford

This July, North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative (NCYM-C) of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) held its gathering at the Guilford College, just blocks from our AFSC office. This year’s NCYM-C theme was “I Love To Feel Where The Words Come From.” As described on NCYM-C’s website, “the Yearly Meeting is “Conservative,” in that it values deeply the statements, words, and practices of those who have come before us…The Yearly Meeting is not politically or socially conservative in the secular sense of that word.” AFSC tries to be present at as many Quaker Yearly Meeting gatherings as possible.

In the last seven months, our country has heard and felt the words from many Americans responding to violence in our communities including United States Attorney General Loretta Lynch, NC NAACP’s Rev. William Barber, families speaking on the behalf of slain loved ones, and presidential candidates, among others. Over the course of three days at NCYM-C, there were also many reflective words shared. James Fernandes, “First Dude” (husband of the Guilford College president) spoke on "Listening to Silence." Jim weaved in elements about John Woolman, American Sign Language and his boyhood state—Hawaii. Guilford College President Jane Fernandes expressed her excitement about this year’s culturally diverse incoming class and shared thoughtful concerns about being held accountable, and doing socially good by all not just a few. Guilford College appears to have a good sense of its direction and its leadership aims to work intentionally to do socially ground breaking justice. There is no time like the present to love where words come from because if you begin with love then there is not much space for anything else.

-Toni Etheridge, AFSC Staff
Greensboro Community Gathers to Respond to Recent Violence

In light of the recent tragedies our country has experienced, Greensboro leaders reached out to the community to host a discussion about the culture of policing in the city. Following the recent loss of life in Louisiana and Minnesota, where two men of color were killed by police officers, and in Texas, where five officers in Dallas were slain in the line of duty, Reverend Nelson Johnson of Beloved Community Center (BCC) reached out to the community to come together at Bethel AME Church for prayer and discussion.

As Joyce Johnson from the BCC called the meeting to order, she asked attendees to be role-models for ourselves, to “talk to, talk with, and talk about,” these events constructively. The meeting progressed and Rev. Johnson, called for an evaluation of the oppressive systems in our society that allow awful tragedies like these to happen. He spoke of the work needed for change, stating that “our greatest challenge is to uproot this culture and to replace this culture, of the systematic oppression of people of color.”

Rev. Johnson ended the community gathering by inviting all to the July 19th City Council meeting in order to urge the City Council to appeal to the state to make police body and dash-cam footage accessible to the public in order to bring more accountability to police officers. Governor Pat McCrory recently signed into law a provision that would limit who has access to police body cam recordings. These recordings will not be considered public record. For full details about law signed by Gov. McCrory see http://tinyurl.com/hcnuef4.

-Ashley Mike, AFSC Intern

Greensboro City Council Considers Resolution on Police Body Cams

Greensboro’s Community-City Working Group went to the City Council on July 19 and shared pointed facts, statistics and urgent pleas to consider a resolution to repeal H.B. 972, a new law denying public access to police body-cam footage. Unfortunately, the Council voted 5-3 against the resolution seeking to repeal the law. The three who supported the resolution were Mayor Pro-Tem Yvonne Johnson and Council members Marikay Abuzaiter and Sharon Hightower. This bill restricts and obstructs the people from public access of video footage recordings from law enforcement, and is an obstacle to transparency.

There were about 150 people at the Council meeting, according to a Greensboro News and Record journalist that came to hear how the Council would rule. A few members from the Community City Working Group, Bay Love, Rev. Cardes Brown, Dr. Claude Barnes, Toni Etheridge and Rev. Ezekiel Ben-Israel, each provided ample reasons why the People’s Ordinance deserved a strong consideration. “If need be, we’ll go out and fill (the chamber) up again, over and over again,” said the Rev. Cardes Brown, who urged the Council to pass the resolution.

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory signed HB 972 on July 11 and the bill goes into effect October 1, 2016. North Carolina is among six states that exclude law enforcement recordings from open records laws, which means there would not be public access. However if your image appears in footage, you can ask law officials to view the recording, but they can deny your request on the basis of many cited reasons listed in the bill.


-Toni Etheridge, AFSC Staff
“If you take the time to talk to them, they’ll listen,” said Noah Amerson’s mother. Shayna Lee and I sat together on the bleachers and watched as the beginning of the basketball practices for the season got underway. Her son, Noah, worked hard on the court trying to learn to dribble the ball. He hadn’t played basketball before, and he was working with his very patient coach, Dominic, to get it right. As Coach talked, Noah listened, eventually beginning to succeed. Noah is part of the Greensboro Warriors, a basketball team that is part of a program that James Welch, alongside other volunteer coaches and assistants created to offer underprivileged youth of color in the community an affordable opportunity to stay active and engaged with a sport as well as an opportunity to learn about their heritage.

Teaching kids with guidance and patience is one of the many things that head coach and team manager, James Welch, envisioned when he started crafting this basketball team in early June. At that same time, Welch, who is affiliated with the Beloved Community Center and the Black Lives Matter movement, presented his idea to Toni Etheridge, coordinator of AFSC’s Peace and Economic Justice Program, who saw potential in Welch’s vision. AFSC provided some support to the team and I attended team practices in order to document their progress. Welch envisions an even more successful year in 2017.

-Ashley Mike, AFSC Intern

AFSC House Party A Success!

On Friday, July 8, AFSC donors and program participants gathered at the home of Ann Marie Dooley to celebrate our recent accomplishments and offer financial support to continue our important work for peace and justice. Guests enjoyed delicious food and drinks, live music by a guitarist originally from Mexico, enlarged photos of recent AFSC activities decorating the walls, and a custom-made AFSC jeopardy game. Thanks so much to Ann Marie, Tom and Elizabeth for helping us pull off such a great event! This was the first of a series of house party fundraisers we plan to hold as we move into AFSC’s Centennial year.

Want to celebrate AFSC’s 100 years by hosting a house party? Let us know at LKhamala@afsc.org.

Share Your AFSC Story

Were you an AFSC staff member? Volunteer? Did AFSC impact you, decades ago or just recently? Dozens of people have already shared their stories on AFSC’s new website, “Peace Works” (peaceworks.afsc.org). “Peace Works is an online space where anyone can share their stories and experiences with AFSC, whether it was 50 years ago, 20 years ago, or today,” says Tonya Histand, AFSC’s centennial director. “People are also welcome to add stories for their parents, grandparents, or others who played a role in AFSC’s history.” Visitors to the Peace Works website can read others’ stories, explore AFSC’s history, and view rarely seen archival photographs.

Adding your story to Peace Works is easy.
1. Visit peaceworks.afsc.org
2. Click “Tell your story.”
3. Create an account with your name and email.
4. Follow the instructions to complete and submit your story for publication. You can fill out several, if your AFSC involvement spans different times or areas of work. Want help? Contact peaceworks@afsc.org.

Welcome Andrew!

Andrew Willis Garcés, who is joining our NC Immigrant Rights team, was born in Memphis, and grew up there and in Guadalajara, Mexico. He and his partner recently moved to Greensboro to be closer to their families in the South, and to contribute to movement work. Andrew has helped coordinate campaigns to stop police-ICE collaboration in Texas, supported janitors to win unionization fights in the midwest, and recently helped a national network of white people working for racial justice occupy police union offices in six cities. He loves making ice cream and geeking out about popular education.