Designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, “ACT for America,” the largest Islamophobic group in the country, scheduled rallies for June 10 in cities across the nation, purportedly in the name of defending women’s rights. This messaging was a cover for their anti-Muslim agenda, as evidenced by statements from their founder, Bridgitte Gabriel, who has said that “every practicing Muslim is a radical Muslim” and that Muslims are “a natural threat to the civilized people of the world.” The rallies were even scheduled in the middle of Ramadan, a holy month for Muslims. Immediately after ACT publicized its plans, communities in every one of those cities began planning counter-protests to stand against Islamophobia and their messages of hate and fear.

Here in North Carolina, there was an immediate interest in planning a counter-protest to the anti-Muslim rally in Raleigh, but not all community groups took into account Muslim leadership. As organizers with Muslims for Social Justice (MSJ) and Movement to End Racism and Islamophobia (MERI), we had been faced several times with this issue: How do you organize a powerful collective response when others have started responding without you? We found that most groups we talked to were very supportive of our leadership, especially when it came to planning a collaborative effort across organizations and groups. We decided to hold our rally, “United Against Racism and Islamophobia,” at Halifax Mall, an outdoor space a few blocks away from the ACT event at the capitol. Our rally would show a unified front against hate, and then leave space for a direct action for those who wanted to peacefully disrupt the ACT event.

The goals of our rally were to communicate the same message to all—that community members and organizations needed to work together outside of reactive events; and to encourage some rally attendees to join the action to counter-protest ACT’s presence at the capitol.

On the day of our “United Against Islamophobia” rally, June 10, we had a diverse crowd, both ethnically and politically, of about 300 people. Our rally was women-led with all women speakers—in and of itself a response to ACT’s claims that they were standing up for the rights of Muslim women. A young Pakistani Muslim American shared her personal story of growing up in North Carolina after 9/11 and the discrimination she faced. She talked about how after the election, she avoided leaving her apartment for fear of being targeted for who she was.

We also handed out cheap colorful instruments and noise makers to encourage people from our rally and to join the action and march around the capitol to drown out the anti-Muslim speakers in a creative “noise protest.”

What struck me most about the noise protest was the diversity—there were parents with babies in strollers next to experienced anarchists. We were effective in drowning out ACT’s speakers and shutting down their event, but the most important thing was that we were effective in building an unusual sense of cooperative spirit between a wide range of people that day—which I’m hoping we can build on in the months and years ahead.

-Fatema Ahmad

Fatema Ahmad is the former Communities Against Islamophobia (CAI) intern for AFSC NC. We congratulate Fatema on her new position as deputy director of the Muslim Justice League in Boston!
FAITH ADVOCACY DAY AT NC LEGISLATURE

A new (lobby) day, a new approach to tackling the anti-immigrant sentiment manifested in several bills currently stalled in the NC legislature. On the morning of June 8th, faith leaders and supporters gathered at El Pueblo headquarters in Raleigh for the start of Faith Advocacy Day, an effort to demonstrate the intersections of spiritual belief and conscientious action in support of the immigrant community.

Following a brief lobby training by the El Pueblo staff, the group headed to the General Assembly for a series of meetings with legislators. Although it seemed much of the legislators’ attention was focused on the budget (which was in its final stages at the time), the participants reported that their meetings were “respectful and productive” and they gained useful insight into the conflicting interests at play in the legislative immigration debate. In the afternoon, the group reconvened on the Bicentennial Mall facing the legislative building for a public press conference. Organized by the NC Immigrant Rights Alliance and NC NAACP, speakers included faith and organization leaders including Fatema Ahmad of AFSC. Their messages centered around the common theme that our faiths drive us to reject injustice and embrace one another as equals. Reverend William Barber, founder of the Moral Monday movement, followed a statement by Ezequiel, a young boy speaking on behalf of his father who is set to be deported at the end of the month. Barber delivered a gripping call-to-action relating Ezequiel’s story, and that of countless other immigrants, to that of the Bible’s Ezequiel, who was an exile in an unfamiliar land.

From start to finish, the day demonstrated the power of faith to mobilize and humanize, to bring us together as people who believe that there is a greater force of good which lives within us all and which drives us forward in this fight for justice.

-Milena Wuerth, AFSC Intern

SEEKING INDEPENDENCE FOR JUANA ON JULY 4

On the July 4th holiday, organizers took actions to continue to push for Senator Thom Tillis to support Juana Ortega Tobar. Juana is the first person to enter sanctuary in North Carolina in recent years, and she continues to take refuge in St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Greensboro. As the one month mark of her stay in sanctuary passed, supporters continued to push for the support of Senator Tillis, this time by hosting a cookout on Independence Day in front of his High Point office.

Juana’s family and other supporters went to the senator’s High Point office the week before, to ask him to meet with Juana and handed him a giant invitation to the cookout they would host in front of his office on July 4th. While the letter was accepted by his staff, he did not show up at the July 4th cookout, signified by an plate of pie at an empty seat.

This direct action sought to urge his intervention. While Sen. Tillis enjoys the holidays with his family, Juana continues to await relief from deportation and her family worries about her well-being and future. Following the theatrical cookout, about 40 people gathered at St. Barnabas to show support for Juana during this difficult time.

Juana’s family also met with Rep. Ted Budd to ask for his support, and they will continue to pressure other representatives to take action. AFSC and Juana’s supporters will continue to push for a resolution and for a Stay of Removal so she can reunite with her family. If you wish to sign up for shifts with Juana or make a contribution to the family, you can contact St. Barnabas.

-Citlaly Mora, AFSC Intern
In September 2015, North Carolina’s legislature passed HB 318, a law stating that government officials could no longer accept certain documents such as the Matrícula Consular and Faith Action IDs as proof of residency or identification. In addition, HB 318 declared that municipalities could not declare themselves to be sanctuary cities.

In the fall of 2016, Guilford College students Nick Fakhoury and Michelle Harris, from instructor Krista Craven’s year-long Capstone course, partnered with the North Carolina Justice Center (NCJC) to research HB 318’s impact on North Carolina’s immigrant communities. Nick, Michelle, and other Community & Justice Studies majors at Guilford researched how HB 318 was being implemented by all 100 county Registers of Deeds (RoDs). NCJC especially wanted to learn RoDs’ required documentation for acquiring marriage licenses and birth certificates. NCJC hoped to use this information to decide the most effective course of action in keeping with their mission of legislative advocacy, policy research and advocacy, litigation, and grassroots empowerment of North Carolina immigrants.

After contacting RoDs in every county, and using a collaborative data analysis process with NCJC, researchers determined there was little uniformity from county to county, with many employees having little to no knowledge of the bill at all, while others were aware of HB 318 yet sometimes refused other previously acceptable forms of identification.

Further analysis revealed the ten county RoDs with the most restrictive policies and ten which were most expansive.

Researchers then interviewed both documented and undocumented immigrants to learn how and to what extent these inconsistencies may affect immigrant communities.

Overall, researchers learned that immigrants were experiencing the same inconsistencies as had been observed from the RoDs interviews, many of which caused considerable hardships when attempting to access these vital government services. Several immigrants were forced to return to RoDs numerous times with various documentation, while a few took months to acquire birth certificates and marriage licenses as they waited for more recent or acceptable documentation from their birth nations. Immigrants also experienced dismissive and rude employees who were of little help when informing them of why certain documents were unacceptable and which would suffice. Others received conflicting information from visit to visit, as various employees gave them different requirements. Both documented and undocumented immigrants shared deep frustrations resulting from HB 318’s restrictions, along with increasing concerns for the stability of their communities, and all expressed heightened fears of arrest or deportation of family.

Researchers plan to continue interviewing members of immigrant communities in other NC counties to increase their understanding of HB 318’s impact and to provide NCJC with the knowledge they’ll need to take effective action on behalf of North Carolina’s immigrants.

-Michelle Harris, AFSC Intern
Featured events

**Waging Peace: 100 Years of Action, AFSC Centennial Exhibit**
August 27–November 5, 2017
Guilford College Art Gallery
5800 W. Friendly Ave. Greensboro.
exhibit.afsc.org

**Centennial Gala Celebration**
Saturday, September 9
2pm Tour of Underground Railroad Tree
Info: LKhamala@afsc.org
5:30-8pm Gala Celebration at Guilford College Hege Library
RSVP: BFritz@afsc.org

Additional events

**We Answered with Love Reading**
Tuesday, September 19, 7pm
Scuppernong Bookstore, Greensboro
Book event with Nancy Learned Haines, author of We Answered With Love: Pacifist Service in World War I
Info: khood@guilford.edu

**Civil Rights Walking Tour**
Saturday, September 30
Walking Civil Rights Tour of downtown Greensboro followed by panel on AFSC’s desegregation work in North Carolina.
Time & Location TBD
Info: raleighbailey@gmail.com or ssumerford@triad.rr.com

**Nonviolent Direct Action Training**
Saturday, October 7
New Garden Friends Meeting, Greensboro
Led by Ready the Ground
Info: jcmirand90@gmail.com

**Graveyard Tour**
Tuesday, October 31, 8pm
Graveyard Tour of New Garden Friends Meeting Cemetery, focused on AFSC connections
Info: mcarter@guilford.edu

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**Planting the seeds of peace & justice**

*Celebrating AFSC’s Centennial in North Carolina*