Become a Good Neighbor
The Progressive Magazine recently wrote about Michigan’s “Good Neighbor Project,” a co-mentorship program that pairs free-world participants and incarcerated people serving long time in Michigan prisons. This co-mentorship is vital to shifting public perceptions about crime and our criminal justice system, which directly influences policy.

“What has putting people in prison changed?” asks free-world participant Earl Lundy. “Let’s look at why they’re there. Let’s look at root causes.” For more information about the program, please contact Demetrius Titus of AFSC.

Israel blacklists AFSC and 19 other groups over BDS
“Ironic” is one word to describe Israel’s recent announcement that it was blacklisting AFSC and 19 other groups because of their support of the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). As Rabbi Brant Rosen explains, AFSC has a long history of working for human rights for all people in the Middle East. Jennifer Bing joins Brant on this QuakerSpeak video and this WBEZ interview.

Jennifer shares her thoughts about the first intifada in this podcast and writes here about a budding intifada in Congress. On January 16, AFSC will mark the 10th anniversary of the 2008 Israeli offensive against Gaza with this event in Chicago featuring Gazan writer Jehad Abusalim and AFSC staff. If you’re interested in joining AFSC’s work, consider applying for this job opening by January 31.

Hoosiers confront Islamophobia, Muslim Ban
One look at the packed calendar of AFSC in Indiana will give you a good sense of that program’s work confronting Islamophobia. On January 13 and 20, AFSC interns are hosting Communities Against Islamophobia trainings for Muslim youth. On January 22, AFSC’s book club will be looking at how charges of anti-Semitism are used to silence proponents of human rights.

To mark the one-year anniversary of President Trump’s first Muslim Ban, AFSC will hold a press conference on January 26 and a teach-in on January 27. For more information and to get involved, please contact Erin Polley.
A reason for hope, and a welcome to new staff in St. Louis

In the latest newsletter from AFSC in St. Louis, program director Joshua Saleem writes: “With each new headline that makes it known how systems of oppression are at work in St. Louis and elsewhere, the knowledge that everything must change gives us hope. It is a reminder that the time for those who would use their power to take advantage of the most vulnerable is limited. Indeed, everything must change, and in this season that is a reason for hope.”

Joshua is pleased to announce the hiring of Jonathan Pulphus as AFSC’s new program associate in St. Louis. “Whatever space I’m in, whether it’s at Saint Louis University or in Ferguson, I want to be a change agent,” Jonathan told the St. Louis American. “Young people must assume the responsibility of leadership in this movement moment.”

Calls to Congress needed on TPS

Earlier this week, President Trump ended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Salvadorans living in the US. Read AFSC’s statement on this decision and tell your members of Congress to support the American Promise Act and Legal Permanent Residency for all TPS holders. This piece describes why we should care about DACA, TPS and all of our immigrant neighbors at risk of detention and deportation. Join AFSC’s live webinar on creating Sanctuary Everywhere on January 18.

Iowans ramp up work for immigrant rights

Bitterly cold weather hasn’t slowed AFSC’s work in Iowa in support of immigrant rights. Over the holidays, AFSC staff and volunteers accompanied people to their ICE check-in at the Federal Building. Sandra Sanchez coordinated the sending of greeting cards to ICE detainees in county jails and spoke on TPS. Jody Mashek gave an overview of immigration legal matters for the Iowa Peace Network’s Open House.

Heading into the new year, plans include a Democracia en Acción workshop at the State Capitol on January 13 and an Immigrant Advocacy Day on January 25. While prospects for progressive change are slim this session, AFSC is working with partners to propose an immigrant-friendly legislative agenda, moving away from being on the defensive and instead working to change the narrative in support of immigrants in Iowa.

If that sounds overly ambitious, you haven’t met program director Erica Johnson yet. Contact her to join in the struggle.

Jonathan Pulphus, Jr. (second from left) was the 2014 recipient of the Jamala Rogers Young Visionary Award. Shown here with previous honorees, Jonathan is the new AFSC program associate in St. Louis.
**Chicagoans resist Islamophobia and police violence**

To help us listen to the people we want to lift up and support, Hoda Katebi, who works on AFSC’s Communities Against Islamophobia program, shares these ideas for diversifying your social media feeds for the new year. AFSC’s work with #NoCopAcademy moves into the new year with new energy, offering school tours and an event highlighting the resistance to 100 years of violence by Chicago police.

**Sharon Goens-Bradley hired as Associate Regional Director**

We are pleased to announce that Sharon Goens-Bradly has been appointed to the Associate Regional Director in the Midwest, working out of the St. Paul office. Sharon served for five years as the Minnesota Healing Justice Program Director.

In her new role, she will assist the Regional Director in providing strategic and creative leadership in the Midwest Region as well as supervision of program staff and volunteers to give regional and local expression to broader organizational goals.

AFSC is now hiring a Program Director for the Healing Justice office in St. Paul. The application deadline is January 16. The program's mission is to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline through education, anti-racist organizing and restorative practices.

**Short takes**

Take action in support of immigrant rights leader Ravi Ragbir….Here’s a video of AFSC General Secretary Joyce Ajlouny’s talk at the Centennial celebration in Des Moines, and here are photos from Oberlin….Having trouble coping with bad news? Here are some tips….AFSC and Friends in Iowa are mourning the passing of Sherry Hutchison, who was a pillar in the peace and justice community for many decades. Jeff Kisling shares this post and photos.

**Thanks as always for your support**

Your gifts of time and money help AFSC shine a bright light. Please consider supporting AFSC by becoming a Partner for Peace and sharing this subscription link for the Midwest Digest with anyone you think might like to connect with AFSC’s creative work in the Midwest. Thanks!

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Sherry Hutchison performs with the Raging Grannies at an AFSC Iowa event in 2011. Sherry recently died at 98.