

AFSC Midwest Digest

Some Highlights of Work from Around the Region — December 31, 2016

Supporting good neighbors in Michigan

"With all the craziness that goes on in the world, my co-mentor has shown me that there are still young people out there who care." So writes Latonya in the Good Neighbor Project [newsletter](#) of AFSC Michigan's Criminal Justice Program. The next training for the project will be January 4 in Ypsilanti. Natalie Holbrook, director of the overall program, writes [here](#) about the need to end life sentences and [here](#) about the joys and challenges of being released from prison. She's also quoted in this [article](#) about the growth in the number of mentally ill prisoners in Michigan.

Welcoming a new director in Iowa

AFSC Iowa is pleased to announce the appointment of Erica Johnson as the new director of our immigration program in Des Moines. She'll begin this new position on January 23; please join us for a welcoming [reception](#) on January 25. In other Iowa news, please click [here](#) for information about the next immigrant youth video contest. Former legal services assistants Jessica Ceballos shares about her [journey](#) while Kenia Calderon is profiled in the [New York Times](#).

Reflecting on over three decades of peace work in Kansas City

The year-end [newsletter](#) of AFSC Kansas City includes a number of reflections from staff and volunteers about the remarkable work of the office over the past 30-plus years, along with news of upcoming events such as the annual [MLK Holiday Community Forum](#). Work with young people has often been at the heart of the program, from conflict resolution trainings to Help Increase the Peace workshops to Social Change Institutes. Ira Harritt has directed that work with passion, determination and creativity.

Transformative work in the Twin Cities

"In schools, typically when a student is disciplined, they are removed from the classroom," explains Dominique Diaddigo-Cash, AFSC's program associate in St. Paul. "In a restorative school, when a wrong has been committed, the relationship is restored through dialogue. The shift from a punitive culture to a restorative one is transformative." Young people involved in AFSC's Freedom School and Youth Undoing Institutional Racism are using what they've learned to start a Black Liberation Project and explore the possibility of a truth and reconciliation commission for victims of racialized state violence. Read more [here](#).



Demetrius Titus, left, directs the Good Neighbor Project in Michigan while Joshua Saleem directs the Peace Program in St. Louis. They're pictured above at a fundraiser for AFSC's Middle East Program in Chicago.



Erica Johnson, above, will start with the Iowa Program in January. Ira Harritt, at right, has directed peace work in Kansas City for over 30 years.



At right, Dominique Diaddigo-Cash, AFSC Program Associate in St. Paul

Journalist from Gaza completes tour in the Midwest

Mohammed Omer recently completed a US speaking tour, accompanied by AFSC's Jennifer Bing, with stops in Chicago, St. Louis and Indianapolis. In this [WBEZ radio interview](#), Mohammed compares US deportations, mass incarceration and Gaza. Take action now to stop the Israeli military detention of Palestinian children by signing this [petition](#) to the next US Secretary of State; if [Australians](#) can make progress on this, so can we! Check out the latest [update](#) on the trial of human rights activist Rasmea Odeh and these [photos](#) from a December fundraiser for AFSC Chicago's Middle East Program and partner organizations [Palestine Legal](#) and [Jewish Voice for Peace](#).

Anti-harassment materials on their way

What would you do if you saw an act of bias against a person based on their religion, race or gender identity? Check out these [bystander tips](#) developed by AFSC's Communities Against Islamophobia project, headed by Mary Zerkel, and this [story](#) (with a mention of AFSC) on the work of the [Center for New Community](#). Midwest Regional Director Brant Rosen offers these [thoughts](#) on the proposed [Muslim registry](#).

Crafts and t-shirts help brighten the holidays

Opening a few weeks before the holidays, a pop-up store in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood featured crafts, mosaics and t-shirts created by immigrant youth who are active with AFSC's Youth Peacebuilding and Justice Program, directed by Darlene Gramigna. A t-shirt with a butterfly image says it well: "Human not illegal."

Cleveland says no to corporate power and money in politics

The Cleveland City Council recently joined 21 other communities in Ohio and hundreds across the nation in [calling on Congress](#) to pass a constitutional amendment ending constitutional rights for corporations and money being defined as free speech. AFSC's Economic and Political Justice Program in Northeast Ohio has been a leader in Ohio's Move to Amend work. Greg Coleridge of AFSC also penned this [letter to the editor](#) on seeking common ground after the election; he's also quoted in this [article](#) about campaign donations.

Standing with the water protectors at Standing Rock

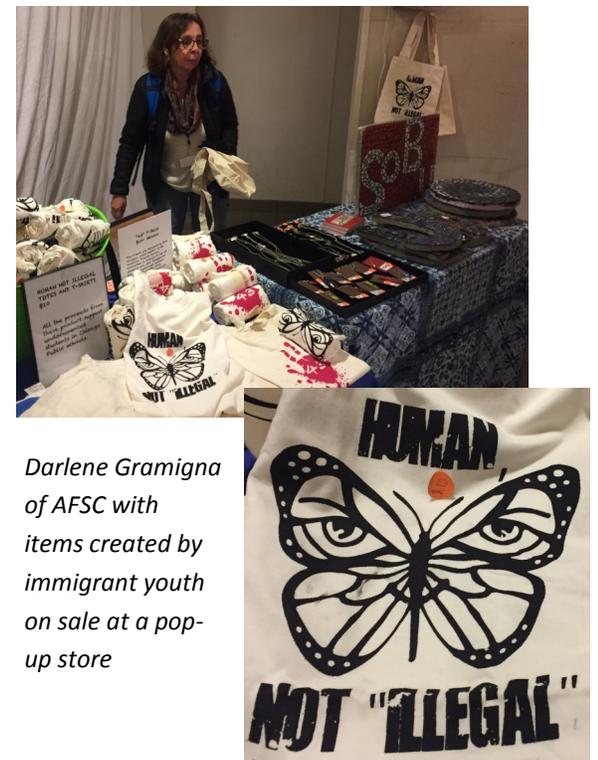
Friends and others cheered the Obama Administration's decision in early December to deny a permit for drilling the Dakota Access Pipeline beneath Lake Oahe in North Dakota. Blogger-extraordinaire Jeff Kisling of Indianapolis shares his thoughts about healing [here](#), and Des Moines Valley Friends members wrote about their trip to Standing Rock [here](#). A [court case](#) in Des Moines filed by landowners is challenging the Iowa Utilities Board's granting of eminent domain for the pipeline.



Mohammed Omer, right, on WBEZ radio



Jennifer Bing of AFSC, center, with friends at a joint fundraiser in Chicago



Darlene Gramigna of AFSC with items created by immigrant youth on sale at a pop-up store

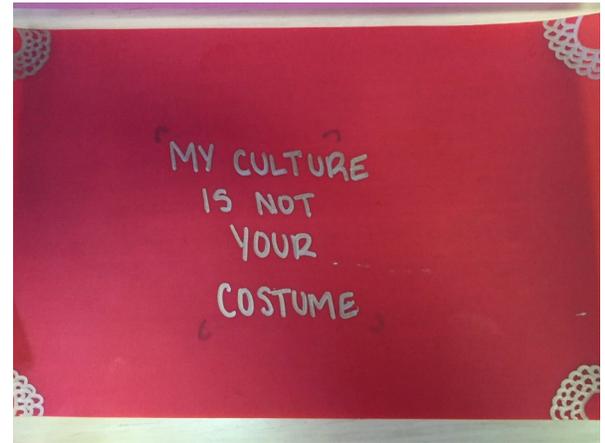
Bits and Peaces

AFSC has created this resource [page](#) in support of the [Movement for Black Lives](#)....Brant Rosen shares this [blog](#) on “Hannukah, Syria and the Perils of Empire”....Debbie Southorn of AFSC Chicago writes this [blog](#) about the Coins, Cops and Communities [toolkit](#)....And Claire Cumbie-Drake, a member of the Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting, [writes](#) about the UN’s work to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Double your support!

Your support is the reason AFSC has been working for peace and justice for a century. Please join me in supporting AFSC before the new year and double your gift by clicking [here](#).

Please share this new [subscription link](#) for the Midwest Digest with anyone you think might like to keep up with AFSC’s creative work in the Midwest. *Thank you!*



A helpful reminder from the AFSC Freedom School in St. Louis. Winter dates will be announced soon!



Some members of AFSC’s Midwest staff gather at the [National Museum of Mexican Art](#) in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago in December. At far right is Monica Trinidad, a friend of AFSC who created this altar in collaboration with [Black Lives Matter—Chicago](#).