

AFSC Midwest Digest

Some Highlights of Work from Around the Region — March 26, 2018

Earlham students break for justice

“There is a community working on making things better, and there is strength in collaboration,” said an Earlham College student involved in this year’s [Alternative Spring Break](#) with AFSC in Indiana and Chicago. A highlight of the trip was attending a [rally](#) at a sanctuary church in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood organized by AFSC, Jewish Voice for Peace and American Muslims for Palestine. The event featured remarks from Rep. Luis Gutierrez and organizers on the historic [legislation](#) currently in Congress calling for the end to Israeli military detention of Palestinian children.

According to Erin Polley and Jennifer Bing of AFSC, much of the week was spent learning about Gaza and preparing for the “[Gaza Unlocked: Hearing in the Heartland](#)” on April 21 in Indianapolis. Please come! Students developed social media promos for the hearing and committed to taking on volunteer roles at the event.

Iowans say a loud “NO!” to anti-immigrant bill

Hundreds of immigrants and allies [rallied](#) at the Iowa Capitol this week to urge legislators to reject a proposal that would punish local governments which limit law enforcement cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). AFSC partnered with 17 other groups in resisting SF481, currently before the Iowa House. Click for [video](#) and [photos](#).

Prior to the rally, AFSC staff [Sandra Sanchez](#) and [Berenice Nava](#) were interviewed about the bill. Jody Mashek continues to offer free legal screenings for TPS holders in March, in cooperation with [Iowa Justice For Our Neighbors](#). Intern Ricky Corona [spoke](#) recently about DACA at Iowa State. And AFSC Iowa Director Erica Johnson [received](#) a prestigious human rights award for her work. (More [photos](#) here.)

Dayton program steps up work with African immigrants

Migwe Kimemia, AFSC Program Director in Dayton, reports that the recently-appointed New African Immigrants Commission in Ohio will soon start making visits to communities around the state, starting with [Dayton](#). AFSC has been successful in ensuring that the Commission is gender-balanced.

Sarah Michieka, a Cary Intern with AFSC, said one recent highlight has been working with people at Bowling Green State University, “where we were able to partner not only with African students’ association but also with the global village initiative that has similar goals to our office.”



Earlham College students on an Alternative Spring Break with AFSC visit the Arab American Family Services Agency in Bridgeview, outside of Chicago.



Hundreds [rally](#) at the Iowa Capitol against an anti-immigrant bill. Click for [video](#) and [photos](#).



Erica Johnson, second from left, is presented with the Mary Louise Smith Human Rights Award by members of the Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission. Read her moving acceptance [speech](#) and see more [photos](#).

Keeping up the struggle against oppression in Chicago

If you think that \$95 million in harmful development in your neighborhood would be a bad idea, then you'd be in full agreement with the young people who are leading the [#NoCopAcademy](#) effort in Chicago. Debbie Southorn of AFSC is providing key support to this push for investment in people and communities rather than greater oppression.

Mary Zerkel of AFSC joined with others on this recent [webinar](#) on resisting surveillance as part of AFSC's [Sanctuary Everywhere](#) work. AFSC has been partnering with Chicago Teachers for Social Justice in an eight-week [series](#) "Countering Islamophobia in Classrooms and Schools." Mary says, "The whole idea behind these eight sessions is to have an action plan at the end." Stay tuned!

Growing food and justice in the Twin Cities

Sharon Goens-Bradley reports that AFSC in the Twin Cities has been in the right place at the right time to launch a community garden, connecting experienced growers with middle-school children. AFSC is continuing its partnership with the St. Paul Public Schools, which has an extensive pilot project in restorative justice practices. Sharon adds, "Since there will be 12 schools in the district, opportunities will be good to have a district-wide impact." Staffer Dominique Diaddigo-Cash will also be developing Know Your Rights trainings based on AFSC's [Sanctuary Everywhere](#).

Article focuses on AFSC's work in St. Louis schools

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch recently published this [article](#) about AFSC's restorative justice partnership with Northwest Academy. Joshua Saleem, Program Director, says AFSC is working with students to "further change school culture, asking them to present demands to their school administration before the end of the school year." AFSC is also shining a light on St. Louis' city budget, 55% of which goes for public safety, and a majority of that for police. AFSC will work to encourage young people to speak about *their* priorities at a public hearing in April.

Jonathan Pulphus adds that the premiere of AFSC's [documentary](#) on the school-to-prison pipeline will be March 29. "We have a Facebook [event](#) if you have folks to invite. And we'll be having a screening of 13th, a [movie](#) by Ava DuVernay, also addressing the school-to-prison pipeline."

Michigan Criminal Justice Program continues with commutation reviews

AFSC staff in Michigan are continuing to help people in prison craft their commutation requests as the governor completes the final year of his term, often seen as a politically safe time to commute sentences. Staffer Korbin Felder adds that AFSC is partnering with the ACLU as part of their [Campaign for Smart Justice](#), which deals with a wide-range of criminal justice issues.



Chicago's 37th Ward residents outside of Alderspersion Mitts' office after being mistreated by staff during Ward Night. More at [#NoCopAcademy](#).



Chicago artist [Monica Trinidad's](#) graphic says it well.



Students at Northwest Academy of Law and Social Justice in St. Louis

AFSC experts on North Korea tour Iowa, talk peace

Linda Lewis and [Dan Jasper](#) toured Iowa recently at the invitation of Jeff Kisling, [blogger](#) and Clerk of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative). AFSC has been working for decades in North Korea on agricultural development and humanitarian connections. Linda and Dan shared with Friends and others at Bear Creek and Des Moines Valley Friends Meetings—and even toured the farm at Scattergood Friends School. Media included this [TV report](#), [radio show](#) (starting at the 2:25 mark), [video](#) and [photos](#). (Special thoughts to Jeff and family following the recent passing of his father, Burt Kisling.)



Mark Quee (left), Farm Manager at Scattergood Friends School, gives a tour to AFSC staff Linda Lewis and Dan Jasper. More photos [here](#).

International Women’s Day observed in Chicago

AFSC helped celebrate Chicago Palestinian Women’s Activism on March 10. Panelists included “distinguished community members who are involved with Palestine organizing and advocating for Palestinian liberation in the diaspora.” Learn more [here](#). Jennifer Bing of AFSC traveled to DC for more lobbying on the [McColum bill](#) in support of [Palestinian children](#). “The Midwest is strongly supportive of this initiative,” Jennifer says, “and we have lots of great Midwest Reps speaking out for Palestinian rights.” Contact [Jennifer](#) if you’d like help lobbying your Member of Congress.

Short takes

Brant Rosen, AFSC Midwest Regional Director, has penned this powerful [blessing](#). On March 26, Brant will speak in Chicago along with Naim Ateek [“Toward a Palestinian and Jewish Theology of Liberation”](#)....Check out Lucy Duncan’s [article](#) on Gaza and this Friends Journal [piece](#) on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)....[Tell Congress](#): Protect hundreds of thousands of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) holders from deportation....Kathryn Johnson [explains](#) why we should welcome all migrants with compassion and humanity.

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Above, Earlham College student Lobsang Palmo. Below, Earlham students and AFSC staff gather on Monument Circle in Indianapolis. Read [more](#).

