

# AFSC Midwest Digest – April 2020

*Highlights of work from around the region*



## Working nonstop to save the lives of people incarcerated

Even before COVID-19 became the overriding concern for everyone in the US, the staff of the [Michigan Criminal Justice Program](#) were sounding the alarm about the life-threatening danger the coronavirus poses to people in prisons, jails and detention centers. Working closely with [partners](#) and family members, AFSC has been a leader in calling upon the governor to release people and for corrections staff to protect everyone. Most recent media include articles in the [Detroit Free Press](#) and the [Detroit News](#). AFSC staff continue to work with advocates and state legislators (photo below) to improve standards of care and [conditions for pregnant prisoners](#).



*From left: Michigan State Sen. Stephanie Chang, Ashley Scott, Sen. Erika Geiss and Siwatu-Salama Ra*



*Car protest outside the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center*

## Solidarity takes many forms as Chicagoans step up

Debbie Southorn of AFSC played a major role in a recent solidarity [caravan](#) outside jails in Chicago. (The New York Times [reports](#) that the Cook County Jail is the largest known source of the coronavirus in the US.) Colleague Mary Zerkel offers these blog posts on [how to make a cloth mask](#), [how to start a mutual aid network](#), and [how we can still care for each other](#) across distance.

Do you have current or former youth in your network who could benefit from training on filing a FOIA? The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) law requires government agencies to share information with the public when requested. Anyone can use FOIA to get information; it's easier than you might think, and this research can help when you're organizing a campaign. On Wednesday, April 29 at 8 pm CT, Debbie and Citlali Perez will lead a webinar on how to use FOIA to work for justice. The webinar is intended for youth under 35 and will last 30 minutes. (Older participants are welcomed but asked to hang back.) The registration page is [here](#).

**SKILL UP** WEBINAR SERIES FOR ACTIVISTS


2 PRESENTED BY THE AFSC ALUMNI NETWORK

**How to utilize the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**

**April 29**  
9pm EDT

**PRESENTERS:**  
Debbie Southorn & Citlali Perez,  
AFSC Chicago  
Peacebuilding Program

**LEARN MORE** [afsc.org/skillup](https://afsc.org/skillup)



# COVID-19

## IOWA IMMIGRANT EMERGENCY FUND

A \$2 Trillion Coronavirus bill has been signed, but many in our communities are left out. So far, undocumented families cannot qualify for support from most government agencies. Please support our Emergency Immigrant Relief Fund, that will provide support for undocumented families and individuals.

Please donate as generously as you can. If you are privileged enough to still be collecting salary and expect to receive a government stimulus check, please consider donate a portion or all of your check.


The Iowa Sanctuary Movement, a project of AFSC Iowa is accepting donations via Walnut Hills UMC. All funds will go to undocumented families and individuals being affected by this COVID-19 pandemic.

If you want to request funds call AFSC Iowa at 515-274-4851.

**DONATIONS ACCPETED:**

**ONLINE**  
<https://www.whumc.org/online-giving/>  
Select "Immigrant Emergency Relief Fund"

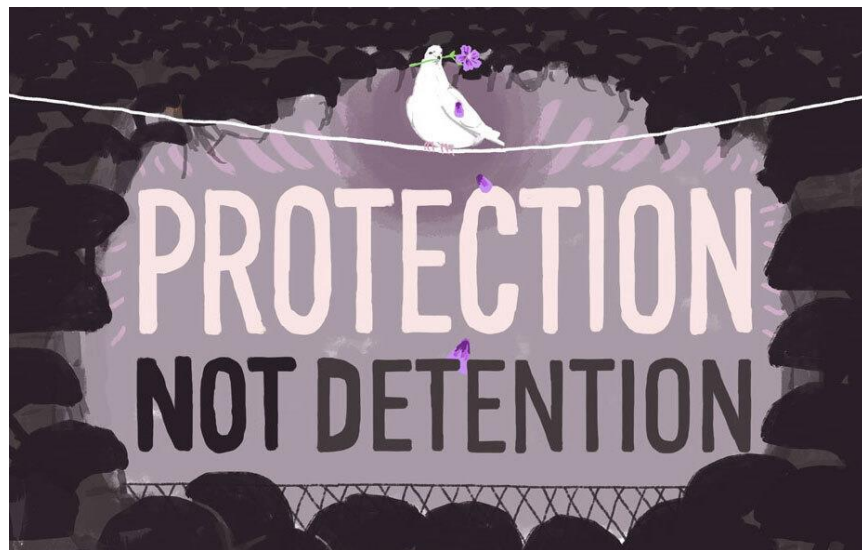
**CHECKS**  
Walnut Hills United Methodist Church  
12321 Hickman Rd. Urbandale, IA 50323  
Please note "Immigrant Emergency Relief Fund" in the memo line of the check.



## Iowa launches Immigrant Emergency Fund

The Iowa Immigrant Rights Program is trying to get 100 people to [donate](#) at least 10% of their stimulus check to undocumented families and individuals. Erica Johnson, who directs the program, is conducting this [workplace survey](#) regarding COVID-19. She writes: "We're calling together all of the community response teams that exist around the state and inviting other allies/immigrants' rights advocates and community leaders to share reports and resources for how to best respond to needs in our communities in this moment. The safety networks (like community response teams, the ICE statewide reporting hotline and the [Iowa Sanctuary Movement](#)) we've been building for the last three years were originally designed to respond to attacks from ICE and the Trump administration. We think that there is a role for these teams to play as we respond to this global COVID-19 pandemic."

AFSC co-signed a [letter](#) with ACLU Iowa to the governor regarding COVID-19 and prisons and jails and has joined with others in [petitioning](#) the US Supreme Court to delay its decision on DACA. Stay in touch on [Facebook](#).



*[AFSC graphic](#) by Aija Suuta*

### Lifting up people in Palestine as the pandemic threatens lives

AFSC is urging everyone to sign this [petition](#) demanding that Israel release all Palestinian child detainees amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Early in this crisis, Jihad Abusalim of AFSC expressed [these concerns](#) about the potential impacts of the virus in Gaza. His colleague, Jennifer Bing, was recently joined by great Chicago volunteers Joyce Cassel and Paula Roderick for a [Zoom reading](#) of prayers for Good Friday. (The accompanying [prayer booklet](#) lists Palestine as the Sixth Station of the Cross.) Jennifer [blogs](#) about celebrating Passover and Easter online.



### Can the Coronavirus cure white supremacy?

That's one of many provocative questions raised by the Twin Cities Healing Justice Program. "It took a global pandemic and hundreds of years of asking for basic human rights for people of color for the country to pass legislation to boost struggling families and businesses, pulling trillions of dollars out from under the rug, money that has been there all along, to do this. And it only took one month. The difference? This pandemic is also affecting white, privileged people." Engage this conversation on the [Youth Undoing Institutional Racism Facebook page](#).



## Youth art contest asks: how can the community provide support?

Jonathan Pulphus of AFSC writes on [Instagram](#) that St. Louis Program “is hosting a [#RonaResistance314](#) challenge around the coronavirus. Youth can submit entries for five spots worth \$100 each by posting a video of visual art, poetry, rap, skit, etc., around the prompt. Winners will be announced on Wednesday, April 29. Use the [#RonaResistance314](#) hashtag and tag [@yuir stl](#) or [@YUIRSTL](#). Lift up youth voices around this pandemic!” Also note that AFSC St. Louis is searching for a half-time Potts Intern. The [application deadline](#) is May 10.

## Learn more and help out

Check out AFSC’s [COVID-19 resource page](#) and [help impacted communities](#)....See why using [war metaphors](#) in relation to COVID-19 is unhelpful.

## Grateful for your support

Your gifts of time and money make a real difference. Please support AFSC by [donating](#) now; please consider becoming a Partner for Peace by donating monthly. Thanks for sharing this [subscription link](#) for the Midwest Digest, and check out AFSC Midwest on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#). Thanks!



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