

AFSC Midwest Digest – June 2020

Highlights of work from around the region



Memorial to George Floyd in Minneapolis (photo: Shanene Herbert)

The response to the murder of George Floyd is changing the world

The tragic murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police has sparked a powerful movement toward racial justice. Shanene Herbert and nhu richards, AFSC Healing Justice staff in the Twin Cities, have been working tirelessly to support the movement. Read their comments in AFSC's [initial press release](#) and stay up to date with the [YUIR-TC Facebook page](#). AFSC has also issued this [statement](#) about dismantling the entire racist system, joined the call to [defund police](#), and signed onto to this Black Lives Matter [solidarity letter](#) from the immigrant justice movement.



Police in riot gear at a protest in Chicago. (photo: Sarah-Ji)

Chicago staff offer six reasons to defund the police

Mary Zerkel of AFSC [writes](#) that policing in the US was established to maintain white supremacy, it doesn't keep us safe, reform measures haven't worked, and the billions we spend on policing should instead support human needs. In other news: Debbie Southorn of AFSC is [quoted](#) about efforts to free detained youth during COVID-19; Mary is [quoted](#) regarding a national Muslim-led effort to reject Department of Homeland Security grants; and former staffer Shirien [talks](#) about the power of her beautiful graphics.



Iowans show their support for worker health and safety.

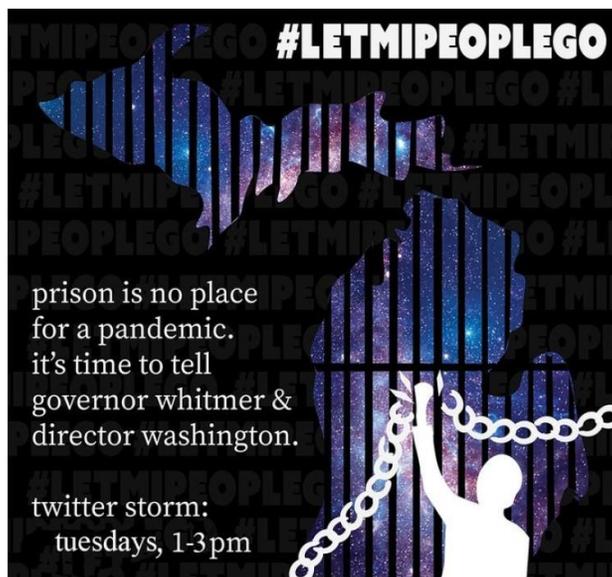
Car Caravan pushes worker safety

Sixty vehicles and over 100 people turned out for AFSC Iowa's recent [Worker Solidarity Procession](#) – past the governor's mansion to the state capitol—to address the continuous outbreaks and worker deaths in meatpacking plants. As Alejandro Murguia-Ortiz, a new organizer with AFSC/Iowa JFON puts it, "We made noise, now let's act!" AFSC is urging everyone to [contact](#) state and local elected officials and demand protection for workers. The Iowa program is also profiled in this [article](#) by CLINIC – the Catholic Legal Immigration Network.



Making the connections between local police and schools in STL

Joshua Saleem of AFSC shares this update: "The call has been made to defund police and defend black futures. For AFSC in St. Louis, that looks like a focus on the connection between local police departments and schools. The statements that school districts are putting out in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade--together with their commitment to 'trauma-informed' practice--mean nothing if they continue to expose black and brown youth to police and security in schools. We're calling on school districts to follow the lead of Minneapolis Public Schools, end relationships with police departments, and invest resources in practices that actually make children safe in schools."



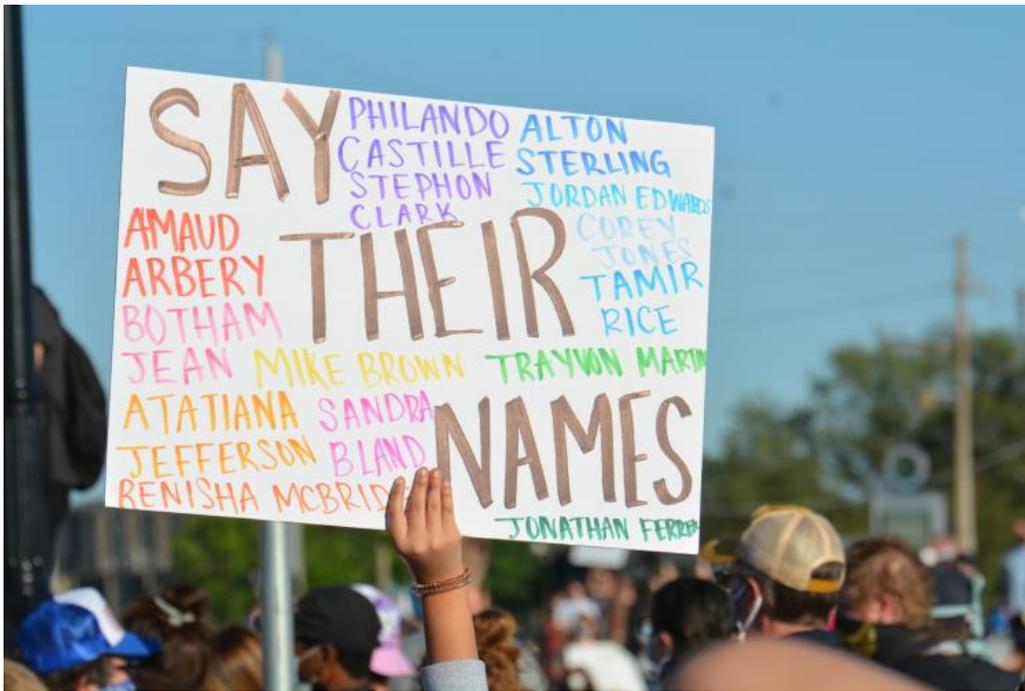
Michigan staff raise the alarm about juvenile lifers and COVID-19

Several years ago, the US Supreme Court ruled that people sentenced to life for crimes committed as juveniles must receive a new hearing. But that hearing has yet to come for many people who now face the threat of COVID-19. “These are people who walked into adult prison as children — and they are saying that what they are facing right now is scarier than that,” said Jacq Williams of AFSC’s Michigan Criminal Justice Program in this [article](#). “I am hearing their voices breaking. I’ve never heard that before.” Also, Natalie Holbrook of AFSC is quoted in this [article](#) about the impact of the pandemic on a ballot initiative.



AFSC honors health care workers in Palestine

COVID-19 has made it clearer than ever how critical health care workers are to our communities. The pandemic has also worsened the humanitarian crisis in Palestine, where more than 50 years of Israeli occupation and 13 years of blockade in Gaza have limited people’s ability to meet their own basic needs. AFSC honored health care workers on June 1 with a [Day of Action](#). Coming up on June 6 is an AFSC webinar on [Annexation and its Aftermath](#) and a three-part seminar series from June 24-July 1 on Unlocking Gaza: Training for Advocates. For more information or to apply, email gazaunlocked@afsc.org.



Short takes

Here's AFSC's [Defund the Police action alert](#) and here are [notes to white people](#) regarding taking part in Black Lives Matter protests....Here are photos from large Black Lives Matter rallies in [Des Moines](#) and [Indianola, Iowa](#)....The Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting wrote an excellent letter-to-the-editor on race and COVID-19 (scroll down about 15 letters on this [link](#))....This [article](#) in The Nation mentions AFSC and the need for a coronavirus cure rather than more war.

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