

AFSC Midwest Digest – March 2020

Highlights of work from around the region



Building support for Palestinian human rights

AFSC's educational and advocacy efforts in support of Palestinian human rights is seeing encouraging results. Brad Parker of DCI-Palestine, AFSC's partner in the No Way to Treat a Child Campaign, [writes](#) about growing Congressional support for Rep. McCollum's bill to end Israeli military detention of Palestinian children. Advocacy for people in Gaza is also seeing results as 31 members of Congress joined Reps. Pocan and Dingell in a [letter](#) to Sec. of State Mike Pompeo calling for the restoration of humanitarian relief. AFSC staff are hosting a series of advocacy workshops around the US entitled "Unlocking Gaza." Shown above is a debkah dance team from a "Palestinian Day in Arlington Heights."



Cary Fellow in the Twin Cities on the power of AFSC Freedom Schools

Nhu Richards is the new Cary Fellow working with AFSC Freedom Schools in the Twin Cities. In this [interview](#), she shares, "When I went through Freedom School first as a participant and the next time as a facilitator, I didn't know what to expect, but let me tell you it blew all my expectations out of the water." She adds, "It pushed me to get out of my comfort zone and go for things that matter to me and that have impacted my life in many ways. My interest lies in movement, whatever that may be. Movement that moves us toward each other as a collective. Toward an eco-system and away from our current ego-system, and that means disrupting and dismantling systems that oppress us all."



St. Louis gathering centers children in politics

AFSC in St. Louis supported a recent event hosted by Faith for Justice and the Deaconess Center for Child Well-Being. The event honored Black Heritage by building Black Futures and “provided a space for learning and leaning into Black futurism and radical political power for our children.” Jonathan Pulphus, AFSC Program Associate, wrote this [report](#) on the event and this [opinion piece](#) against a proposal to close more schools in St. Louis. He writes: “We are looking to close more schools while keeping jails open. We hire less social workers and more safety officers. We spend millions on administrator salaries and pennies on teachers alongside staff.”



From dinosaurs to dissenters, Debbie does amazing things

AFSC Chicago’s dynamic program associate, Debbie Southorn, was profiled in this recent [Airgo podcast](#), which introduces her thus: “Debbie is the cofounder of the city's [Black and Pink](#) chapter, was a central figure in the [#NoCopAcademy](#) campaign, and is a founding member of [We Are Dissenters](#), a new group activating students toward anti-militarism and anti-war organizing on college campuses.” Debbie talks about her enjoyment of dinosaurs, too.



New website promotes standards of care and community oversight

The AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program has created [Kites for Liberation](#), a new website designed to raise awareness of the suffering imposed upon incarcerated women and people at Huron Valley Women's Prison in Ypsilanti. The site includes a video from [Siwatu-Salama Ra](#), a social media toolkit with this [gif](#), and information about two bills AFSC is helping move through the Michigan legislature: SB 830, the [Pregnancy Standards of Care Bill](#) and SB 831, the [Community Advisory Oversight Committee Bill](#).



Iowans celebrate successes

Erica Johnson, the director of AFSC Iowa Immigrant Rights Program, writes: "We defeated 2020's anti-immigrant bill in the Iowa Legislature! SF 579 appears to be dead for the session; we'll keep monitoring and let you know if it comes alive again, but for now, let's celebrate! We were able to get all five of our [party platform resolutions](#) introduced in at least five counties and in many precincts! Thank you for wearing your 'immigrants' rights advocate' hat while caucusing! After a year of monitoring conditions at Polk County jail, we met with the sheriff and are working through a list of ICE accountability policies that will shine more light on how ICE treats our neighbors in our county jails!" Maria Alcívar-Zúñiga, a former AFSC Iowa intern and current doctoral candidate at Iowa State, is profiled in this [piece](#).



Restore the Vote rally at the Iowa Statehouse

Bits and Peaces

Iowans rallied at the Capitol recently to end felony disenfranchisement and restore the vote. Click for more [photos](#) from the event and this [action alert](#)....In honor of Women's History Month, check out these [10 Courageous Women in AFSC History](#)....The winter issue of AFSC's Alumni newsletter is [here](#)....[Tell Congress: Support the NO BAN Act!](#) Tell your representative to end the Muslim ban—and any racist ban put forward by the administration, including its attacks on the asylum system. Read [“5 things to know about the Muslim ban”](#) by Peniel Ibe....Friends and friends remember historian and political activist [Jeff Cox](#) of Iowa City.

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