New report shines critical light on so-called “anti-extremism”

Do so-called “anti-extremism” tactics harm Muslim and Arab communities? WBEZ takes a critical look at a federal program known as Countering Violent Extremism that’s reinforcing government surveillance of Muslims. The interview is based on a new report, co-authored by Debbie Southorn of AFSC. More in this blog from Mary Zerkel.

What do you do when you witness anti-Muslim harassment? Check out AFSC’s resources on bystander intervention, including printable posters in English and Spanish. Please spread the word about AFSC’s Countering Anti-Muslim Racism in Classrooms webinars set for April 2 and 11. Registration is at afsc.org/counteringwebinar.
Standing with the people of Gaza

“Do you know what else is painful regarding what’s going on in Gaza, besides violence and what our families go through?” asks Jehad Abusalim of AFSC Chicago. “Repetition. Repetition can be brutal. Every time we have to make the case for why we shouldn’t be killed en masse and why bombs shouldn’t be falling on our heads and homes.” Check out Jehad’s interview with Amy Goodman on Democracy Now!, and read Jennifer Bing’s moving story.

Ahmed Abu Artema recently completed his nationwide speaking tour about Gaza. Learn more about the March 30 Day of Action in solidarity with Gaza and a film showing on April 17, Palestinian Prisoners Day. Take action here to end the blockade and support AFSC’s relief effort for elders in Gaza.

Young Iowans travel to DC to lobby for immigrant rights

America Duran Oropeza and Hugo Bolaños joined hundreds of other young people from around the U.S. at a Spring Lobby weekend organized by FCNL and supported by AFSC. On Monday, April 1 at 11:00 CT, America and Hugo will talk (online and FB Live) about new legislation supporting Dreamers and people with TPS, as well as work to defund ICE and CBP.

On March 31, Erica Johnson, who directs the Iowa Immigrant Rights Program, will receive a “Continuing the Legacy of Cesar Chavez Award” at a community event hosted by Des Moines University. Jody Mashek, who directs the Legal Services Program, remains in high demand for talks on Immigration 101 and her experiences at the border. Subscribe today to AFSC Iowa’s monthly e-newsletter to learn more and take action.
Tackling systemic racism

"It feels good to be in an environment where nobody hates anybody and everybody loves everybody," said a participant in AFSC St. Louis Freedom School/Alternative Spring Break. “You could just feel the good vibe when you walked in.” Youth ages 15-23 are analyzing systematic racism and taking practical steps to organize against it, building relationships and practicing healing from the oppressive systems at work in St. Louis and across America.

AFSC staff Joshua Saleem and Jonathan Pulphus gave a “shout out to the young people, co-facilitators, panelists, catering services, and deaconess for coming together around an excellent workshop!” Read Jonathan’s reflections on his first year with AFSC and check out this challenging game of Black Jeopardy.

Advocating for justice in Indy

AFSC Indiana is pleased to welcome Abdullah Olson as the Cary Fellowship Intern. Abdullah is also an organizer with Muslim Youth Collective, which shares his vision of creating inclusive and empowering spaces for Muslims to lead movements against all manifestations of injustice. He is currently studying Islamic Psychology and cares deeply to further the field of Muslim mental health, while also advocating for his community through justice-oriented interfaith work.
Upcoming events in Indy include a March 31 rally for Peace in Venezuela, an April 26 Passover for All and a May 4 Communities Against Islamophobia training. Some great photos from a March event, “Celebrating Solidarity and Courage,” are here.

AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice staff (from left) Korbin Felder, Natalie Holbrook and Demetrius Titus

Working for change in Michigan

The AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program was mentioned in an article about much-needed bail reform and a piece about an innovative prisoner doula effort. In early March, AFSC co-sponsored a “Day of Empathy” focusing on “promoting three important pieces of legislation: Dignity for Incarcerated Women, Clean Slate, and Raise the Age.” Stay tuned for more information about lifers and people serving long sentences – and how we can work to bring them home.
How to reclaim radical

The Twin Cities Friends Meeting House will host the next AFSC Freedom School April 4-7. People from ages 14-23 will learn about the history of race in the U.S. and how to organize for change. Learn more by following Youth Undoing Institutional Racism-Twin Cities on Twitter.

A story by Sharon Goens-Bradley, Midwest Associate Regional Director in St. Paul, is included in this Women’s History Month collection about inspiring women.

Bits and Peaces

Learn more about how we can #DefundHate and take action to end ICE and support people with DACA, TPS and DED…. Check out this piece on why criticism of Israeli policy is not the same thing as anti-Semitism…. Des Moines Valley Friends sent a letter to Iowa legislators opposing the reinstatement of the death penalty. Friends have a new website, too….Have you heard about AFSC’s new alumni network? You can join here or via the Facebook group; invite your AFSC friends to join, too! And come to the alumni dinner at the AFSC Corporation meeting.

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