

AFSC Midwest Digest – May 2020

Highlights of work from around the region



Lifting up the wisdom of young people during the pandemic

The AFSC St. Louis [newsletter](#) for May includes an update on the #RonaResistance314 Youth Art Contest, with winning entries—including Graces’s, above—announced on [Facebook](#). The newsletter also includes young people’s wisdom on safety during the coronavirus pandemic and this recap of [St. Louis work in 2019](#), written by Jonathan Pulphus. AFSC in St. Louis is a part of a coalition of organizations calling for local and state officials to adopt certain Covid-19 related [demands](#) around protections for the working poor, the unhoused, and those caught up in the criminal legal system. AFSC co-signed this [letter](#) on the school-to-prison pipeline.



Making sure youth voices are heard in the Twin Cities

AFSC continues work with St. Paul Public Schools, holding virtual community-building circles and hosting implicit bias circles for one of the schools. Staff recently organized a [Be Heard Townhall](#) for youth to hear how they’re doing during this time and generate interest for the youth agenda organizing work that will happen later this year. AFSC continues to do coalition building with other organizations, as well. For lively updates and interviews, check out the [Youth Undoing Institutional Racism-Twin Cities](#) page on Facebook.



A Palestinian youth arrested in East Jerusalem (Photo from DCI-P)

Building support for Palestinian children detained by Israel

Jennifer Bing writes that [interest is building](#) for the [No Way To Treat a Child](#) (NWTC) campaign, which was buoyed recently by [UNICEF's call](#) for the release of all Palestinian children held in Israeli detention. Jennifer Bing has been leading a number of webinars on NWTC, including one set for this [Sunday, May 17 at 6 pm CT](#) on how to advocate as faith-based advocates. Jihad Abusalim of AFSC joined Jennifer in organizing a three-part seminar on Gaza for students nationwide. Students had the chance to meet people on the ground in Palestine, learn about its history and acquire new advocacy skills. Click [here](#) to donate in support of elders in Gaza during the pandemic, and stay tuned for a June 1 Day of Action in support of health workers in Gaza.



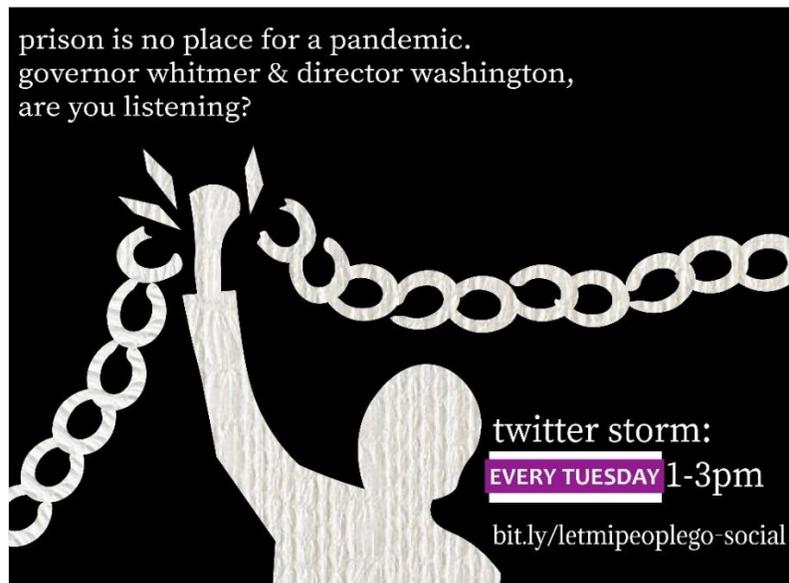
Joining the call to #FreeThemAll in Chicago

Debbie Southorn and Mary Zerkel of AFSC helped organize a large rally to show the love to young people locked up at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center in Chicago. More on [Facebook](#). Earlier, Mary led a national webinar releasing a new report on [Criminalizing Mental Health: A Report on Anti-terrorism Initiatives in Illinois](#). Mary wrote this blog on the Believers Bail Out and joined with Zareen Kamal to call for [standing up to anti-Asian Racism](#). Debbie led this skills-building webinar for youth activists on [how to use the Freedom Of Information Act](#) (FOIA).



AFSC leads efforts in Iowa to protect immigrant workers

With thousands of immigrant workers in meatpacking plants having tested positive for COVID-19, and several already dead from the virus, AFSC has been leading a broad coalition from around Iowa to share worker stories with Iowa's elected officials and urge them to commit to standing in solidarity with food processing workers. Erica Johnson of AFSC has organized teleconferences for essential workers and their families to detail how the industry failed to respond adequately to the COVID-19 pandemic and share their requests for continued protections and transparency. Media coverage includes these [TV](#) and [public radio](#) reports. Workplace safety videos are available in [Spanish](#) and [English](#).



AFSC keeps focus on people incarcerated as the pandemic spreads

The AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program is keeping the pressure on state officials to act on behalf of thousands of people in Michigan prisons who face illness and possibly death because of the rapid spread of COVID-19. Natalie Holbrook of AFSC is quoted in these [Buzzfeed](#) and [Michigan Daily](#) articles, and she wrote this op-ed in the [Detroit Free Press](#). Jacq Williams of AFSC partnered with "The 24-Hour Plays" on [COVID and Incarceration](#), in which actors created monologues based on experiences shared by currently and formerly incarcerated people, their families, and the advocates supporting them in this pandemic.



AFSC staff in the Midwest can handle the cold.

Short takes

Sharon Goens-Bradley, Interim Regional Director of AFSC's Midwest Region, has written this annual letter (as a [webpage](#) and as a [PDF](#)) to Friends and Yearly Meetings throughout the region. We look forward to connecting with Friends during their online YMs this summer....Shanene Herbert of the Twin Cities Healing Justice Program is one of several people featured in this [blog](#) about how AFSC staff are taking care of themselves during the pandemic....Check out this round-up of [AFSC's COVID-relief work](#) and this [video](#) of an AFSC-led Meeting for Worship to #FreeThemAll....AFSC's Spring Alumni newsletter is available [here](#).

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