

# AFSC Midwest Digest – October 19, 2018

*Highlights of work from around the region*



*Toni Bunton calls for better prison conditions and a second chance for people serving long sentences in Michigan.*

## New AFSC Michigan report on long-term prisoners

[Ending Perpetual Punishment: The Case for Commutations for People in Michigan Prisons](#) outlines the importance of paying attention to people who are serving life and virtual life sentences and documenting the successes and transformations of women and men who served long time and are now released. “This report asks us to rethink how we address violence in our communities,” says Natalie Holbrook, author of the report and director of AFSC’s Michigan Criminal Justice Program. She writes [here](#) about how you can get involved.



*Jody Mashek of AFSC, left, and Lynne Howard of Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting rally in support of immigrant rights in Iowa.*

## Iowa legal worker assisting families at the border

Jody Mashek, director of the Legal Services Program for AFSC in Iowa, is [working](#) in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Mexico this week thanks to a generous stipend from the Catholic Legal

Immigration Network, Inc. “It’s important to me to bear witness to the impact that the Trump administration’s immigration policies are having on families who arrive at the border seeking refuge from dangerous security situations in their countries of origin,” Jody says. “I want to do what I can to make their arrival in the United States a little less frightening.” Follow Jody’s accounts on the [AFSC Iowa Facebook page](#).



*Joshua Saleem directs AFSC work in St. Louis.*

## Restorative justice work “changing the climate” of schools

Programs in St. Paul and St. Louis continue to work with young people through AFSC Freedom Schools, Youth Undoing Institutional Racism (YUIR) and the promotion of restorative justice practices in schools. “Since the peer mediation program began in 2013, the number of student suspensions has decreased significantly,” Joshua Saleem of St. Louis says in this [interview](#). “This year alone, peer mediation helped prevent 15 to 20 suspensions. Beyond the numbers, students play a lead role in shifting the school from a punitive to a restorative discipline model.”



*Episcopalians (and some AFSC staff) gathering in Austin, Texas take a [stand](#) for Palestinian rights.*

## Momentum builds for Palestinian human rights

If you ever despair about the lack of courage in Congress, check out Jennifer Bing’s [article](#) about Rep. Betty McCollum. Nearly one year ago, McCollum introduced an historic bill in Congress in

support of the human rights of Palestinian children and, thanks to your advocacy, [HR 4391](#) now has 30 co-sponsors. Join Jennifer on October 30, 7 pm CT for a [webinar](#) on the No Way to Treat a Child campaign.

Read more on the [Gaza economy](#), companies [complicit](#) in the Gaza blockade, and an important [move](#) for justice by the Episcopal Church. Stay tuned for more on the new “My Life Under Blockade” [essay contest](#) and follow [Gaza Unlocked](#) on Twitter. Join staffer Jihad Abusalim and others at Pendle Hill for a December 14-16 [conference](#) on “What does justice look like? Moving towards a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel.”



*AFSC Chicago summer interns and staff*

## New report calls for new priorities in Chicago

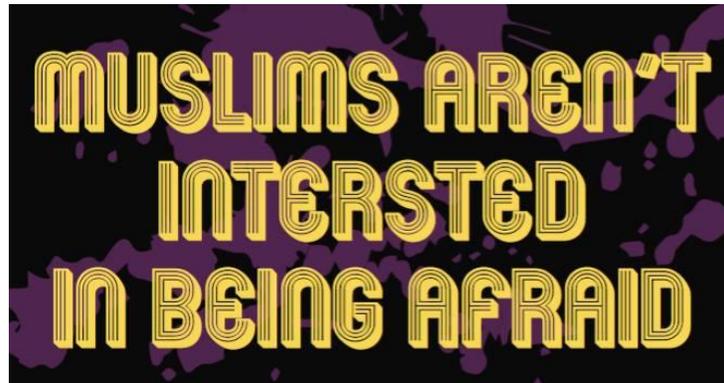
As community members organize against plans for a new police academy in Chicago, a new [report](#) shows that most residents want public resources to be devoted to education, youth programs, and other services that would strengthen their communities. #NoCopAcademy recently won the 2018 Bold Campaign Award from the [Chicago Grassroots Collaborative](#). The youth-led effort now has over 80 endorsing organizations, including [Teachers for Social Justice](#), [Organized Communities Against Deportations](#), the [Chicago Dyke March Collective](#) and the [Chicago Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression](#).



## Also in Chicago, working to end secret surveillance

“Every major civil liberties group in the country has raised the alarm about Countering Violent Extremism (CVE),” said Mary Zerkel of AFSC in this [Arab Daily News story](#). “But the program has only grown and spread. Now that it’s here in Chicago, the government needs to provide the public with records that show what it’s doing here and why.” More good resources are available at [Communities Against Islamophobia](#) and [StopCVE.com](#).

Come to an AFSC [fundraiser](#) on November 15 in Chicago to support all of the amazing work of our volunteers and staff! If you can’t make it, please consider a donation anyway!



## Bystander Training returns to Indiana

This Sunday, the Fairfield Friends Meeting in Camby, Indiana will host a [Bystander Training](#) facilitated by AFSC. Friends write that “the training can help you to defuse the situation and show how you are an ally for persons who are oppressed in our country.” In Indy, AFSC’s Book Club will discuss The New Jim Crow on October 22. Earlier, the Muslim Youth Collective curated an art exhibit entitled [Muslims Aren’t Interested in Being Afraid](#).



The New African Immigrants Commission meets in Cincy.

## Working with new African immigrants in Ohio

Migwe Kimemia, who directs AFSC work in Ohio, writes [here](#) about the Ohio New African Immigrants Commission (NAIC), which is now fully empaneled, and [here](#) about the launch of an AFSC youth-led civic engagement strategy. Migwe adds: “I will be accompanying Somtochukwu Okafor, Ohio Program Intern, to the Ohio Governor's Office for a civic

engagement study tour this week. She will participate in the NAIC Public Meeting at the Capitol. I will then travel to Cleveland to meet with African student leaders at John Carroll University and Cleveland State University over this weekend.”



*Tom Roberts*

## Indiana Friend spreads the good word

Midwest Executive Committee member Tom Roberts writes: “My recent contribution to broadcasting the admirable work of AFSC was in distributing literature, pins, and bumper stickers at the annual [Indianapolis Festival of Faiths](#) event. A couple of Friends Meetings (Fairfield, and Indy 1st Friends) had tables (along with 65 other faith communities and service organizations). With this year's theme of ‘Compassion through Action,’ highlighting the myriad concerns addressed by AFSC offered a perfect segue to conversations about Friends' testimonies and worship.”

## Bits and Pieces

AFSC Iowa developed these [questions](#) for candidates and this [toolkit](#) for getting ICE out of Iowa....Natalie Holbrook is attending the [Harm Reduction Conference](#) in New Orleans this weekend....Read more about how to resist the latest anti-immigrant proposal about [public charge](#), [A Day in Gaza](#), a proposal to [stifle protests](#) in DC, and an October 24 [webinar](#) about AFSC's work in Mexico....Check out Brant Rosen's new [book](#) of Jewish liturgy, his blog posts on [Gaza](#) and the [arc of the moral universe](#), and his [talk](#) in Des Moines this week on Anti-Semitism....Iowa Friend and AFSC supporter Wanda Knight is remembered in this [obituary](#).

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