Finally, on October 29th in Oakland there will be a program on art and social change. We also work with them through the Afghans for Afghans knitting project.

2001 to provide relief in Northern Afghanistan as the bombs were first falling. Different artworks on the same theme. Visit both to get the full impact!

A provocative exhibit on the human cost of the war in Afghanistan, “Windows and Mirrors,” comes to San Francisco and Oakland, October 6-30th. Each location will feature a different set of murals created in response to the war. Please visit both, and for a preview, visit “Windows and Mirrors” at www.windowsandmirrors.org.

The exhibit opens on October 6th at the University of San Francisco, in Kalmannovitz Hall, at 2130 Fulton Street. Join us for an Interfaith Peace Vigil at 5 pm in the Kalmannovitz Amphitheatre (near St. Ignatius Church) followed by an Opening Night Reception in 251 McLaren Hall.

On October 13th, we’ll hold a reception at Oakland’s Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California (1433 Madison Street between 14th and 15th near 12th St. BART). The reception will begin at 5pm and will feature Matt Southworth of the Friends Committee on National Legislation and Iraq Veterans Against the War. Matt will also speak at the University of San Francisco location on October 13th.

And on October 20th (SF) and October 22nd (Oakland) Suraia Sadeed of Help the Afghan Children will speak on her experiences as part of the U.S. diaspora’s response to the war in Afghanistan. She’ll share from her new book Forbidden Lessons in a Kabul Guesthouse. AFSC partnered with Help the Afghan Children in 2001 to provide relief in Northern Afghanistan as the bombs were first falling. We also work with them through the afghans for Afghans knitting project.

Finally, on October 29th in Oakland there will be a program on art and social change, with the Oakland forum featuring youth activists.

Please contact Adam Barrett at barrettah@gmail.com to make arrangements for group visits, and remember these exhibits feature different artworks on the same theme. Visit both to get the full impact!

American Friends Service Committee
Pacific Mountain Region
65 Ninth Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Visit the Pacific Mountain Region on the web at www.afsc.org/pacificmtn, where you can see a listing of our upcoming events, descriptions of our current programs, and media from some of our recent projects.

You can also friend us on Facebook by searching for AFSC SF.
History was made by prisoners in solitary confinement at Pelican Bay, when they went on hunger strike in July to protest the conditions under which they live – many for decades – and the questionable practices that put them in “security housing units,” (SHU), as they are euphemistically called. 6,400 prisoners joined the strike at one point or another, at 13 prisons around California. A large coalition, of which AFSC was a part, formed in solidarity. Hundreds remained on strike for three weeks, after which some small concessions were made, and a number of promises to change some practices. The challenging part is for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to actually implement these changes.

AFSC was involved from the beginning, receiving the information from those inside, joining the coalition, and then serving on the mediation team for the strike. After it was over, Laura Magnani, interim regional director, was asked to testify at legislative hearings, to speak to the ways that solitary confinement qualifies as torture under United Nations definitions. Assembly member Tom Ammiano, chair of the committee, promised to introduce legislation.

The greatest success of the strike was that prisoners focused national and international attention to an issue AFSC has researched and spoken about for years. The Department has had to respond, albeit reluctantly and slowly. The prisoners chose a non-violent approach to bring about change, and they worked across most cultural and ethnic groups to reach agreements and make decisions. There was media coverage of the strike in the NY Times, including an editorial, NPR, Democracy Now, LA Times, Sacramento Bee to name a few.

Speaking Truth Changes Policy

AFSC’s homeless newspaper, Street Spirit, has filled its pages in recent months with the unfolding story of the SHU ban in Berkeley, CA. Originally before the City Council, the proposed ban was considered a “done deal” by many as a result of intense behind-the-scenes tactics by business people. However good social policy requires transparency, which is precisely why AFSC has published Street Spirit since the mid-nineties. Often the mainstream press ignores people at the bottom of the economic ladder and life gets worse for them under such invisibility.

However our editor, Terry Messman, who has been at the forefront of economic justice issues for decades, jumped into the fray calling. 6,600 prisoners joined the strike at one point or another, at 13 prisons around California. A large coalition, of which AFSC was a part, formed in solidarity. Hundreds remained on strike for three weeks, after which some small concessions were made, and a number of promises to change some practices. The challenging part is for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to actually implement these changes.

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Secure Communities dividing families

Life for Daria and her family changed drastically in just a matter of days. The resident of Lindsay, a small town in Tulare County, was another victim of the US Secure Communities program, after her brother was deported for a minor traffic violation.

After coming to this country for a better life, Daria, who has three children said “They deported (my brother) for no reason.” Earlier this year her husband was also deported after Immigration and Customs Enforcement received information about his immigration status through fingerprints shared by the California Highway Patrol. In his case, he was stopped on suspicion of driving under the influence.

“He passed the sobriety test,” Daria said, “Then they asked him for a license and since he doesn’t have one, he showed the officer a Mexican ID,” she narrated. “They took him into custody… took his fingerprints and told him he was going to be deported.” Daria’s brother was the primary financial support for the family. Now Daria, a farm worker, has to not only provide for her three kids but also take care of her grandmother, who is under dialysis treatment, and her mother, who was recently diagnosed with cancer. They were both under her brother’s care before he was deported.

The practice of Secure Communities is becoming a heavier burden for a lot of families. Even though President Barack Obama announced recently that his administration will use “prosecutorial discretion” and concentrate efforts on higher-priority cases that involve criminals, this announcement came too late for families like Daria’s.

In Tulare County alone, a total of 283 people have been deported through this program between October 2008 and February 2011, according to statistics by Immigration Advocates Network. “It is a difficult situation,” said Daria. “Sometimes I wonder what’s going to happen with my kids if one day they come and deport me,” she said.

AFSC offices around the country are monitoring cases like Daria’s and exploring ways of challenging the enforcement practices.

Young Organizers Connect in CA Central Valley

“José Chavez, Minerva Mendoza, and Juan Santiago are energetic young leaders, dedicated to working for immigration justice and widening horizons for their families and neighbors. (They were also the first three students to complete AFSC’s newly inaugurated year-long apprenticeship program.) Working with staff mentors, Joso, Minerva and Juan followed a curriculum developed by AFSC staff in Fresno. Through the program they learned Quaker history and values, AFSC history and organizational structure, popular education theory, and the methods of participatory research. They also chose a hands-on project closely related to the cultural organizing work practiced by AFSC’s Fresno program, contributing their own insights along the way.

Each apprentice then chooses a hands-on projects closely related to the cultural organizing work practiced by AFSC’s Fresno program, contributing their own insights along the way. José and Juan took the lead on organizing the annual Day of the Dead celebration in Fresno, a well-loved and festive tradition. They dedicated it to the memories of international leaders who gave their lives to nonviolent struggles for human and civil rights. These leaders included Mahatma Gandhi, Bert Corona, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Emma Tenayuca, and Susan B. Anthony. They also built into the event an opportunity for immigrants to publicly share their own stories, aware of the importance of such first-person testimonies in the struggle to overcome anti-immigrant propaganda.

Essential to AFSC’s cultural organizing approach is that no one comes to this country empty-handed; we all have things to contribute. This has been essential in building trust among the Central Valley’s farm worker population, which includes immigrant groups from many countries and cultures.

All three apprentices were involved in forming a new cross-cultural youth organization in the Central Valley. Inspired by an interfaith youth event at which she represented the Fresno program and learned about the First Amendment, Minerva is working to organize follow-up opportunities for youth to continue gathering and taking actions together.

Having completed the program, the apprentices have remained in close contact with their AFSC mentors -- a great benefit for them and for the Service Committee.

Hunger Strike

At Pelican Bay, where prisoners in solitary confinement at Pelican Bay, when they went on hunger strike in July to protest the conditions under which they live – many for decades – and the questionable practices that put them in “security housing units,” (SHU), as they are euphemistically called. 6,400 prisoners joined the strike at one point or another, at 13 prisons around California. A large coalition, of which AFSC was a part, formed in solidarity. Hundreds remained on strike for three weeks, after which some small concessions were made, and a number of promises to change some practices. The challenging part is for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to actually implement these changes.

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Above: “Sitting a human right.” Scores of protesters brought chairs to downtown Berkeley and held a sit-in in solidarity with homeless peo- ple. Photo: Lydia Gans