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QuakerAction

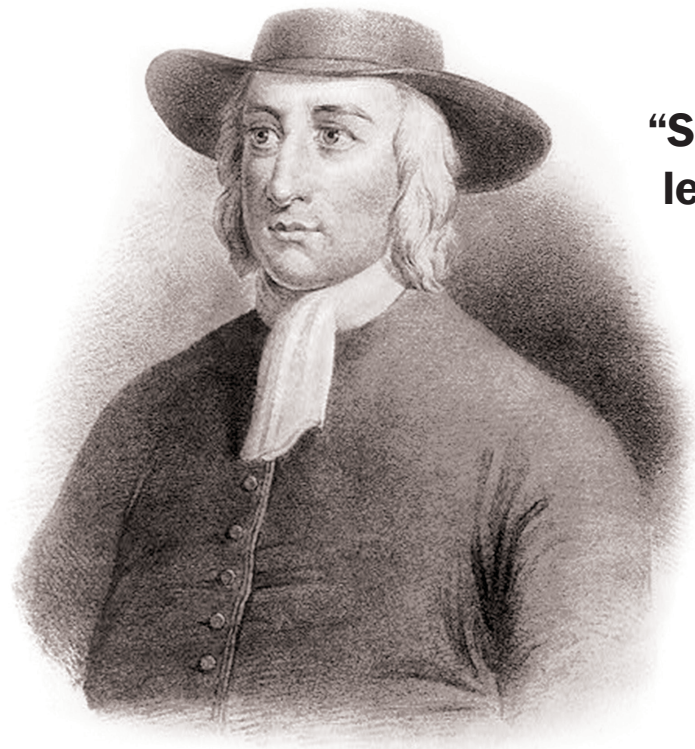
Let your
life speak

After fleeing to the Congo (DRC) to escape war, Elisabeth Cimpaye returned to Burundi. She now lives in a community healing from the trauma of war.



**American Friends
Service Committee**

www.afsc.org



**“So let your lives preach,
let your light shine ...”**

—GEORGE FOX

Friends,

The core idea behind Quaker faith and practice is that living is more important than doctrine, that our lives express our central commitments and faith. Parker Palmer reminds us, “Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.” What we say and do reveals what we have come to understand through living, through listening, and through making mistakes and reflecting on them. Learning and living occurs in community and often the most vivid and important inspiration arises when we encounter a person whose life is a beacon, kindled with a spiritual fire that moves them to courageous action.

Bayard Rustin, Quaker activist and chief organizer for the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, lived such a life of inspiration. Last fall, Rustin posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom honoring his life and work for equality and dignity for all people.

Rustin is best known for being the organizer of the March on Washington, but he also shaped the nonviolent philosophy of the movement. In 1956, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. invited Rustin to come to Montgomery, Ala., to help with the emergent bus boycott. King’s home had been bombed in February of that year, and in response, King applied for a concealed carry permit in Alabama.

The state was reluctant to grant such permits to African-Americans; King was deemed “unsuitable” and the permit was denied. So instead, he kept his guns at home.

When Rustin arrived at King’s home, he was disturbed that he was greeted at the door by armed watchmen. When Rustin visited King with journalist Bill Worthy, Worthy almost sat on a pistol. Rustin said, “Watch out, Bill, there’s a gun on the chair.” Rustin helped King realize that nonviolence was a way of life, not merely a tactic, and persuaded him to learn about and adopt the principles of Gandhian nonviolent direct action.

Rustin lived with remarkable integrity—he never hid the fact that he was gay, never bowed to the judgments others made about his sexuality. He said, “My activism did not spring from my being gay, or, for that matter, from my being black. Rather, it is rooted fundamentally in my Quaker upbringing and the values that were instilled in me by my grandparents who reared me. Those values are based on the concept of a single human family and the belief that all members of that family are equal.”

Bayard Rustin lived the life he did because he was Quaker. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), though including people of many faiths and of none, does what it does because it is Quaker. Our work embodies principles that arise from Quaker faith. When

we enter a community, we listen first before we take action. We meet people where they are, and we are led by the people with whom we work because we see that of God in each of them. We understand that personal circumstances arise within larger systems, so we work on multiple levels. We seek heart change, community change, policy change, and system change, knowing that peace and justice depend on harmony at all levels. Our experience has confirmed the power of love to transform lives—not just the lives of those with whom we work, but our own.

In every community, we encounter people like Bayard Rustin, letting their lives speak and inspiring others to take great risks in the belief that together, we can create just and lasting peace. This issue of Quaker Action includes many stories of people who act from the same principles that animate Quaker faith. The Buddhists call

such spiritual fellow-travelers “kalyanamitta” or “spiritual friends.” These Quaker kalyanamitta heal wounded communities and create peace by living in a way that prefigures a peaceful world. I hope that these stories will inspire you, just as your lives and your support inspire us.



In peace,

Shan Cretin
General Secretary

In this issue



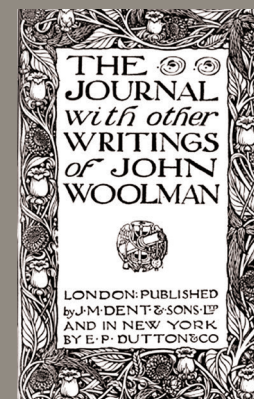
Page 6

Reflect, then act—that’s how Florence Ntakarutimana approaches trauma healing in Burundi and Rwanda. Believing that there is something good in everyone, she facilitates healing with people who have perpetuated violence and experienced it, showing the way to understanding trauma, listening, and trust.



Page 10

What drives the courageous people who carry out the work of AFSC? From diplomatic meetings in China to Congressional hearings in Washington, from fields in North Korea to Guatemala City streets, AFSC staff talk about why they dedicate their lives to the struggle for peace and justice.



Page 12

Quaker activists around the world draw inspiration from John Woolman (1720–1772), who sought to seamlessly integrate inward spiritual reflection with ethical outward action. He models a way for spiritual activists to stand strong in their convictions while working gently with others for change.



Page 14

From St. Louis, Quaker activist Sandra Tamari calls for more people to examine how their lives contribute to war and injustice. She shares the story of activists speaking out to stop a water-services contract between their city and a company that profits from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.



Niyonu Spann

“Fear and the status quo are strong ... I bring a taste of freedom.”

Waking up to wellbeing

Niyonu Spann, a healer, musician, and creator of the faith-based anti-racism workshop, Beyond Diversity 101, answers questions about her lifelong spiritual journey from fear to wellbeing.

Q: You became Quaker—experienced your “convincement,” in Quaker terms—during a visit to a yearly meeting where the topic of discussion was South Africa and divestment. How did this moment fit into your faith journey?

A: Because I grew up in a Baptist/Christian family, my first language included God and Jesus and wanting to really understand and know Jesus and God. I always engaged in very intense questioning, whether it was in my high school years, hearing the language of “inviting Christ to be my personal savior,” or later, in college, “receiving the holy spirit” and speaking in tongues, or after I got married and first encountered Quakers, where I felt at home in the sense of having a personal relationship with God.

I married someone who was the general secretary for the Friends General Conference, so our honeymoon was traveling to

yearly meetings. It was at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting that I felt convinced that this was my home. ... There was a core of real listening for God’s guidance. This brought together all my experiences among Friends, being plunged into the political worlds of

Quakerism. It is the discernment aspect of Quakerism that draws me in the most.

Q: You’ve said that you founded Beyond Diversity 101 after your own fundamental awakening to the “courage of heart”—that uncovering the fullest possible truth as people of oppressor and oppressed groups requires seeing beyond those divisions to our oneness.

How did you arrive at this awakening?

A: [Something shifted] in my questions about my relationship with God once I had children. All of a sudden, the questions that I had always had about judgment—God’s judgment and sinfulness—took on another meaning because now I had these children

that would live beyond me and would have their own children. My compassion and care for the world became much more relevant.

I started to recognize my fear: “How do I protect them from all that’s here?” When fear came up, I started tracking that fear. I realized that fear was at the center of how I had been talking about God. Something broke open in my searching: I saw this connection between root-level fear, beliefs about fear, and wellbeing. What I came to see was that being blessed and loved was God’s first gesture. I felt I could have a relationship with God that was based on wellbeing.

I began to explore the notion of fear. I asked myself, “Why would you, Niyonu, be able to love and forgive people more than God would? Why would God have less ability to do that?” This led to a new understanding of justice and of grace as well as the release of a deeply rooted fear. It was the door to receiving the work of Beyond Diversity 101, which is grounded in “we”—in “you are me.”

How people feel about justice shifts how people operate. Instead of looking to find guilt and punishment, we recognize the truth of what we’ve done, and honor that. When you bring that to the conscious level—that shifts how people see. The hope with Beyond Diversity 101 is that it really is about tuning the instrument to do the work that it’s called to do.

Q: There are times in work for social justice that it feels as though we are moving backward. How do you push through that to the change you are working for?

A: It’s very much related to spiritual understanding. In whatever system we’re talking about, the skill that needs to be developed is one of discernment. If you’ve done any developmental physical practice—like yoga, playing tennis, playing an instrument—there are steps you are taking in the practice. Sometimes it feels

as though you are moving backward. You might have just felt as though you’ve mastered something—a scale or a technique—then it feels as though you can’t do it the next time.

You have to stand back to really see whether there’s real movement. This is where the discernment lies. There is something about whole-systems change/transformation and staying open to the sense that something surprising might make a difference. One question that is helpful is, “What could we do right now that would be very scary, what of all the things on the list makes you go, ‘Huh?!’” Let’s do that one. It’s the ability to take the risk to do whatever it is that will move you deeper. That’s important—go deeper into truth.

I think all of that gets complicated in whole-system change, telling the truth in the moment, seeking to be fully conscious in the use of power. My call oftentimes is to work in systems that want significant change and to help offer frameworks that push the real work forward. In these contexts, usually the fear and the status quo are strong and pulling in the other direction. I bring a taste of freedom. I don’t have a lot of attachment to the outcomes. I’m clear that I’m supposed to bring these perspectives, to serve as a midwife. I tend to come to those who are in labor or having a difficult pregnancy. ■

Excerpted from Lucy Duncan’s 2012 interview with Niyonu Spann. To read the full interview, go to afsc.org/niyonu-spann, where you will find more on breaking through racism to wholeness in Niyonu’s post, “Dis-heartened: On recognizing the disease that killed Trayvon,” and in a video of her 2013 keynote address with Lucy at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.



SPIRITUALITY MEETS ACTIVISM

Insights from people living out their spiritual commitment to love and justice are published regularly at afsc.org/friends, home of AFSC’s Friends relations blog, Acting in Faith. Through personal reflections, interviews, and audio stories, the blog explores the intersection of spirituality and activism, bringing news of AFSC’s work to Quakers and activists around the world.

You can subscribe to the monthly Acting in Faith e-newsletter at afsc.org/friends. And go to iTunes to subscribe to the Acting in Faith podcast, which features stories of the origin of AFSC’s grassroots work and interviews with Quakers living out their faith in the world.

“Unless pain is transformed, it will be transferred.”

—RICHARD ROHR

Transforming pain

Photo: AFSC/Neah Monteiro



Florence Ntakarutimana. Photo: Desire Nzeyimana

Burundian healer Florence Ntakarutimana uses the power of storytelling and community to help peace blossom in people and places affected by the violence of war, poverty, and other traumatic experiences.

I first met Florence Ntakarutimana of the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) program in 2012 when I visited a peace village outside Bujumbura, Burundi. As one of my hosts, she brought together perpetrators and victims of the decades-long conflict who had participated in the trauma healing workshops that HROC conducts in Bujumbura and elsewhere, sometimes in partnership with AFSC. The participants gathered in a small Friends church in the village and told me how the workshops had affected them.

Each of them told stories of transformation: victims talked of forgiving horrendous acts perpetrated against them, and perpetrators talked about how they had reconnected with those they had harmed and had been healed from the shock of their acts. Listening to these stories of deep and seemingly lasting change, it sounded like the workshops must work magic for there to be such healing. I wanted to learn more.

In 2013, when I participated in a three-day HROC workshop in Baltimore at Stony Run meeting, Florence served as one of the three facilitators. During the workshop, a woman who was a trauma nurse talked about how, with physical trauma, the wound often needs to be abraded, opened, and exposed in order for there to be healing; if the wound isn't cleaned and opened, it festers and can get worse and cause the loss of a limb, or even death.

This is true with wounds of the spirit,

too. People can suffer spiritual death if they hold their wounds too tightly; they can let their hearts turn to stone.

Recovering from perpetrating and experiencing violence

HROC was developed by members of Friends (Quaker) churches in Burundi and Rwanda with support from the African Great Lakes Initiative and AFSC. After the conflict and killings in both countries, there was a sense that there hadn't been any opportunity to heal, either for victims or perpetrators. Friends in Burundi and Rwanda saw that unless there was some way to recover from acts of violence, the cycle of violence would continue. They also felt that both perpetrators and victims needed healing, so from the very beginning they brought together Hutus and Tutsis—people who may have directly harmed one another—for the workshops.

The principles of the program are very consistent with core principles of Quaker faith, including “there is that of God in everyone” and that people have within them a sense of what is right and can draw upon that to recover from what they have done or experienced.

Florence began her association with HROC as a participant in the program. When we talked recently, she told me her story and more about what she has seen through facilitating workshops and bringing the program to many regions in Burundi and beyond.

—LUCY DUNCAN

Interview

LUCY DUNCAN (LD): Would you be willing to tell me a bit of your own story in relation to the conflict and killings in Burundi?

FLORENCE NTAKARUTIMANA (FN): I was born in 1976 with a Hutu father and a Tutsi mother. In 1993 the war broke out between the Hutus and Tutsis. During the crisis my father was a “chef de zone,” an area manager, for the ruling Tutsi party for that time.

During the crisis people were not happy with him being a ruler in the Tutsi political party. Hutus in the community were asking him to kill my mother. He couldn't do that.

When the crisis broke out, we fled from the community to my aunt's house. My aunt was jealous of our life; she was asking for beer and clothes from us. We were not able to give her those things. She wasn't happy and poisoned my mother. My mother died in 1996.

We fled from my aunt's house and stayed in a community with another family. I was the firstborn and still in secondary school, my father had to come from the province to bring money and food for us to survive.

Then one day he was traveling from where we were staying. The Hutus from my community shot and killed him. They said, “You married Tutsi and didn't kill her. You are ‘ICITSO’” (meaning somebody who works for an ethnicity that he doesn't belong to). I stayed with my cousin, cared for my siblings. Life was not easy. Fortunately I met Dominique Niyonkuru, a born Quaker, when I was 18 and we married in 1999. Now we are blessed with four beauti-



Florence facilitates a Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (HROC) workshop on active listening. Photo: Elin Henryson

ful children, two boys and two girls; they are 12, 10, 8, and 3½.

There is distance between my aunt and me because of fear, but I have forgiven her. Her children come to my house. She acknowledges what she has done, but she has shame for what she did.

When I used to tell this story, I would cry. The reason I can tell this story without it making me upset now is because of HROC, which gave me the opportunity to heal.

LD: Tell me about the trauma healing workshops.

FN: We believe there is something good in everyone. We invite victims and perpetrators—rich, poor, educated, non-educated—to come together. We invite ten Hutus and ten Tutsis, women and men in the same number, whenever we offer a workshop.

Each workshop has 20 participants. We believe people were affected at the individual and community level, so we work in com-

“We believe there is something good in everyone ... We don’t lecture—we facilitate the process.”

munities. And Burundi society values the sense of community more than individuality. We spend three days together. On the first day we learn about trauma: what are the causes, what are the symptoms, what are the consequences? We don’t lecture—

we facilitate the process.

On the second day, we discuss listening skills to prepare people for listening, sharing their stories. There is power in storytelling. The hearts of people are broken, and they need to be listened to. In my seven years of leading workshops, the causes of trauma are not only the crisis, they are also polygamy, rape, poverty...many, many things cause trauma. Many people did not have a chance to bury or remember or honor their loved ones during the crisis. People need to remember and mourn. We share about grief and the stages of grief, and the stages of healing from grief. People learn about traumatic anger, because if this is not worked out, people will seek revenge. The second day is a day of crying, of emotions. Facilitators are always Hutu and Tutsi, men and women, to keep the balance.

On the third day of the workshop, we talk about trust. In healing from trauma, trust-building needs to be done together. We do a blindfolded trust walk. Each person is led by a person of another ethnicity and they learn they need one another. They talk about how living an unhealed life is like being blind and that they are ready to help one another and help others. We talk about trust, using a metaphor of the tree of trust and the tree of mistrust. We discuss about the roots and fruits of the tree of mistrust, reflecting on what we see in our selves, families, and communities. We do the same for the tree of trust. People bring up the roots and fruits of trust in our communities and families. People always tell us that they see the tree of mistrust growing big in their communities, and that they wish to have the tree of trust, and then discuss in small groups how they can replace the tree of mistrust with the tree of trust. When you sow love, understanding, and forgiveness, you harvest peace. When you sow mistrust, you harvest killings or revenge—violence.

At the end of the workshop, we talk about what’s next. They often suggest forming small groups to meet once a week to talk. In some communities we have peace and democracy groups to monitor the elections; we saw very good results, many saved lives because of these groups. When guns were distributed, they were reported and confiscated early, so people were safe. We sometimes give goats; a Hutu and a Tutsi share the goats. Internally displaced people visit the peace villages or surrounding communities and they share the goats. They call the goats, “Peace,” “Reconciliation,” “Forgiveness.” There are peace and democracy groups that meet once a week and exchange credit to care for one another. There is another project where Hutus and Tutsis and ex-combatants meet once a week to make biosand water filters, they give one another clean water. They receive water, life, from someone who may have killed a brother or sister. These are all initiatives to stay connected and help support longer term change.

We organize advanced three-day work-

shops where people learn about how to deal with their emotions and others’ emotions that come up when they hear other people’s stories, and three-week trainings, in which people learn how to facilitate workshops and become healing companions in their communities, to do a follow-up of healing because healing is a process. They learn

“I fell in love with Quakerism. To me this is my right place. Quaker faith is a process of reflection and action: You learn, then you do it. HROC, so much based on Quaker principles, is my everything.”

the process for two weeks, then facilitate a workshop in the community, and then do a last week to finalize the training. We organize a community celebration with the participants. We sing, we dance, and people give testimonies. People from the whole community come and hear participants’ stories. In this way we have established the program in eleven of the seventeen provinces in Burundi.

We have introduced HROC in primary schools to help students and teachers to heal...

LD: How has your Quaker faith influenced your life and your approach to healing?

FN: I saw and experienced how my husband treated me and my siblings. It’s not

automatic that he would have taken them in when he married me. I learned about Quakers at The Great Lakes School of Theology—where I got a bachelor’s degree in Christian leadership—in Burundi. I learned the doctrines, what Quakers did in the past, like George Fox and John Woolman (*learn about John Woolman on page 12*). I fell in love with Quakerism. To me this is my right place. Quaker faith is a process of reflection and action: You learn, then you do it. HROC, so much based on Quaker principles, is my everything, it is my doctor, my everything.

LD: What is the relationship of the on-the-ground healing and reconciliation processes and the governmental ones?

FN: When people are changed, they can stand up and say “no” to violence. When something happens in the community, people who have been in our workshops often will run to the healing companions instead of to judges. But there is another level we have not reached—there needs to be a truth and reconciliation commission, which we have been working for some time. The people are changed, are ready for change. [But there is still action expected from the legislature with regards to improving the law that will be accepted by the people and conform to international standards].

LD: What gives you hope?

FN: People are aware of the consequences of violence. Before it was not like that. People take ownership of their problems. We still need the international community to change things at another level. Things are discouraging politically, but maybe healing will trickle up from the communities?

Thanks and blessings to the supporters and partners of AFSC and HROC. Together we are rebuilding torn hearts and communities. ■

ON THE COVER: HEALING FROM WAR

Elisabeth Cimpaye returned to Burundi after fleeing to the Congo (DRC) during the conflict. She now lives in Maramvya Peace Village in Bujumbura Mairie. Her story of healing from the trauma of war is featured in the documentary “Life after Conflict in Burundi,” recently produced by AFSC. Go to afsc.org/burundi to learn more.

Soulful work

AFSC staff on how they let their lives speak

“In our work we need to use both mind and soul, and I know—it is not just a belief—that every human being has a spark of God within, therefore, every person’s dignity is worthy of overcoming anything.”

—SANDRA SANCHEZ



Linda Lewis

Country Representative for
DPRK (North Korea)



Marco Bonilla

Field Officer, Guatemala



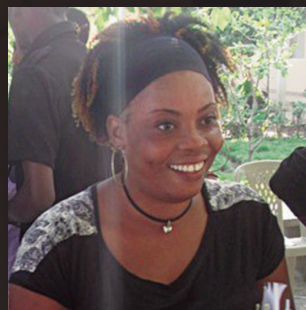
Fadjiri

Senior Program Officer,
Indonesia



Sandra Sanchez

Director, Iowa Immigrant
Rights Project



Natacha Francois

Facilitator, Haiti



Alissa Wilson

Africa Public Education and
Advocacy, Washington, D.C.



Jason Tower

Northeast Asia Quaker International
Affairs Representative (based in China)



Eisha Mason

Associate Regional Director,
West Region

What attracted you to the work of peace-building?

LINDA LEWIS: Just out of college, I joined the Peace Corps and was sent to South Korea, where I lived with a farmer family in a small village and worked on a rural community development project. ... After a career spent as a professor of anthropology and East Asian studies, the chance to work again for change at the grassroots level, this time with North Korean cooperative farm partners, is both an enormous challenge and an unexpected blessing.

ALISSA WILSON: AFSC approaches its peacebuilding advocacy as an opportunity to bring the voices of its partners from around the world to people in the policy community.

NATACHA FRANCOIS: Seeing how AFSC launched conflict transformation activities with parents, students, and staff of St. Charles Borromée School [in Haiti]: This was my greatest source of motivation. It

really took me to heart to provide my assistance to youth in my community.

MARCO BONILLA: Being part of a project that empowers young people who live in communities marked by social exclusion and helping them solve their conflicts through nonviolent actions—it’s amazing.

FADJIRI: I was in 12th grade in 1998 and in Banda Aceh [Indonesia], where I went to school, the civil war did not affect us. But the conflict did affect my hometown and I was also affected when I visited. I saw with my own eyes when someone was shot to death for supposedly joining the Free Aceh Movement. His body was then left in front of his house. A school near my house was set on fire. (NOTE: After fleeing to a refugee camp, and then being kidnapped by rebels in Aceh, eventually Fadjiri became a university student and humanitarian activist.) Human values are the basis for me to work on issues of peace because when I saw

people lose their rights ... their sense of humanity was diminished due to terror or having to follow what is deemed right by the majority. Based on that, I had to do something.

EISHA MASON: I wanted to work in an organization that had the capacity to make real impact—experience, resources, a national presence, and a tradition of leadership—taking on the unpopular causes before they became popular. I wanted to work on social justice and also be able to be in a conversation about the spiritual dimension of the work—quite simply, love.

Is there a single incident that made you realize your work reflects your values?

SANDRA SANCHEZ: When I was offered this job, the very same day I got another job offer from a big corporation with more pay. Even though we needed the money, I decided that working for AFSC was a match for me to

work in a place that reflects my values.

ALISSA WILSON: I feel my work most reflects my values when I’m able to accompany an AFSC partner on a visit to Congress or the U.S. State Department.

NATACHA FRANCOIS: In Martissant [Haiti], there was an incident with two bandits belonging to two different gangs who have sworn to kill each other. Our peace promotion activities were an opportunity for them to start working together. I saw them making the kiss of peace and apologizing. This experience has strengthened my source of inspiration.

Which quote inspires you?

JASON TOWER: “True human goodness, in all its purity and freedom, can come to the fore only when its recipient has no power.” Milan Kundera, author. I find his notion inspiring, and something that all in positions of power should reflect on.

SANDRA SANCHEZ: “No problem is solved

by the same consciousness that created it.” Albert Einstein

MARCO BONILLA: “Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” Mahatma Gandhi

FADJIRI: “To save the world we have to change the heart of men.” Master Chen Yen, the monk and the founder of the Buddhist humanitarian organization, Tzu Chi

ALISSA WILSON: “Show up, pay attention, do the best you can, and don’t be attached to the outcome.” This quote was in an email that went viral over 10 years ago and is based on Angeles Arrien’s work.

EISHA MASON: “Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice; and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.” Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Whom do you see in your mind’s eye as you strive to overcome obstacles?

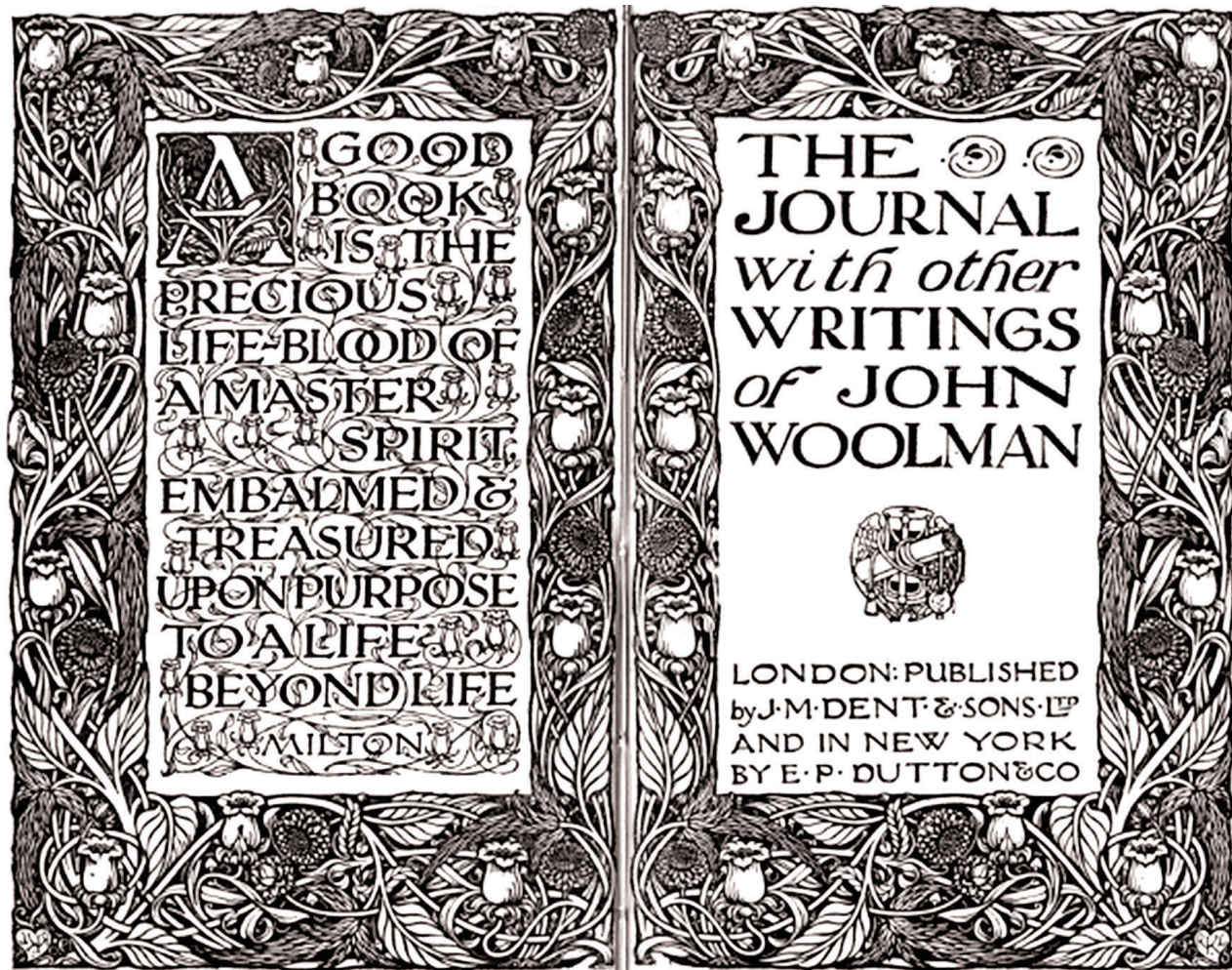
FADJIRI: Otto Syamsudin is probably the

most important Acehnese human rights activist and has become a national figure as well. Under very difficult and dangerous conditions, he has actively and consistently promoted the enforcement of human rights.

LINDA LEWIS: Our partners in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Sometimes it’s necessary to step back and remember the program’s larger goals to get beyond temporary setbacks and frustrations.

JASON TOWER: Over the past year, it is the memory of my late college advisor, Dr. Ralph Renner, that I have reflected on when faced with particularly difficult moments. A Jesuit priest who dedicated himself to making college possible for inner-city youth, he would work countless hours to open doors for people who might not otherwise have opportunities to see beyond their immediate environment. ■

—ALEXIS MOORE



John Woolman's Journal and Other Writings. Photo: Public domain image via the Gutenberg Project

Leading the way

Ethical, bold, and open-minded, 18th-century Quaker John Woolman was an abolitionist and advocate for the poor and oppressed. Michael Birkel, author of “A Near Sympathy: The Timeless Quaker Wisdom of John Woolman,” shows how generations of spiritual activists have found guidance in John Woolman’s life and writings.

Today, many Quakers take inspiration for activism from their forebears in the faith. Some look to the earliest generation of Friends, who, in the 17th century, boldly shook the English countryside with their call to a life lived in radical attentiveness to the Light. Others find support from powerful figures such as Lucretia Coffin Mott (1793–1880), whose work in the United States embraced nearly all the social reform movements of her day, including the abolition of slavery, women’s equality, the rights of Native Americans, peace, prison reform, religious freedom, and temperance. The life of John Woolman (1720–1772), a tailor, traveling minister,

and social reformer from colonial New Jersey, is another source of strength and encouragement for many. Ahead of most others in his time, John Woolman took courageous ethical positions as an advocate for justice for the poor, the enslaved, and the oppressed native peoples of North America. To Quaker activists today, his writings offer a way to stand strong in one’s convictions yet work gently with others to persuade them to change. John Woolman’s “Journal,” published in 1774, both records profound spiritual experiences and tells the story of his outward activism. His honest self-examination gently invites readers into reflection on their

own lives and beckons them to a spiritual openness and vitality. **An integrated life** Religious communities often experience a tension between members whose primary focus is the inward life of contemplation and prayer and those who are chiefly social activists. John Woolman wrote that a religious life can be a seamless fabric of inward and outward work. He wrote “that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator and learn to exercise true justice and goodness,” not only toward all people but

also toward the animal world, such as the horses that provided transportation and pulled plows in that pre-mechanical era. He noted that the mind was inwardly moved “to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible being” but also to love God in all God’s manifestations in the visible world.

A simple life John Woolman simplified his life to attend to what mattered most. He had been a shopkeeper, with increasing sales every year; he said, “The road to large business appeared open,” but that he felt “a stop in my mind.” He chose the humbler lot of a tailor upon serious consideration that “Truth did not require me to engage in much cumbersome affairs.”

Liberated from greed and the desire for wealth, he found time to pursue his calling, which for him meant promoting justice for those marginalized in his day, including the enslaved, the poor, and Native Americans.

Rooting out oppression In his “Journal,” John Woolman described his visits to slaveholders to persuade them of the evils of slavery. In a manner that reaches back to the actions of biblical prophets and foreshadows recent tactics for social protest, he would not simply talk, but also enact his concerns.

At times, he chose to travel on foot to visit slaveholders, in order to better understand the life of the enslaved, who would have no horse. He wore undyed clothing and would not eat or drink from silver vessels—silver being mined by enslaved people. He refrained from sugar, another product of unpaid labor. When visiting slaveholders, he left money to pay for the services of the enslaved people whose labor supported his visit. The point of all these actions was not to maintain his own personal purity or innocence, but rather to “appeal to the pure witness” within others who could recognize the truth of his words and actions.

For John Woolman, the same greed that expressed itself in slavery also led to ill-treatment of Native Americans and to oppression of the poor among English colonists.

His essay, “A Plea for the Poor,” called

for a voluntary material simplification of life and a more just redistribution of goods. The essay gently questions the very notion of property rights when they violate human rights. Unusual for his day, John Woolman developed a theology of labor, in which he maintains that God intended moderate labor for all, including domesticated animals. “Under the guidance of Pure Wisdom, our otherwise unbridled desires for wealth are bounded, and we are motivated by love rather than selfishness,” he wrote. When we want more than is consistent with universal righteousness, we either labor too hard ourselves, or we find a way to get others to do the work instead. This is the root of oppression.

Peace Greed lies at the roots of war and social injustice. John Woolman warned his readers of the dangers of injustice cloaked in respectability:

Wealth is attended with power, by which bargains and proceedings contrary to universal righteousness are supported; and here oppression, carried on with worldly policy and order, clothes itself with the name of justice and becomes like a seed of discord in the soil; and as this spirit which wanders from the pure habitation prevails, so the seed of war swells and sprouts and grows and becomes strong.

He challenged his readers to test “whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these our possessions.” When influenced by divine love rather than greed, we “feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the creation.”

Along with other Quakers in his day, John Woolman was a pioneer in war tax refusal, and he has been an inspiration to war tax resisters to the present.

Openness to the truth of others In an era when most English colonists held Native Americans in low esteem, John Woolman described his motivation to spend time among a Lenni Lenape settlement with words that show his openness to a genuine meeting of minds and souls:

Love was the first motion, and then

a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth amongst them.

He undertook a treacherous journey through a war zone to visit the Lenni Lenape in Wyalusing, and after witnessing their struggles, felt a deep empathy for them. Never content merely to blame others for the ills of this world, he held up his own life for examination:

And here I was led into a close, laborious inquiry whether I, as an individual, kept clear from all things which tended to stir up or were connected with wars, either in this land or Africa, and my heart was deeply concerned that in future I might in all things keep steadily to the pure Truth and live and walk in the plainness and simplicity of a sincere follower of Christ.

Openness to new leadings John Woolman’s writings do try to persuade his readers of the truths that he has seen, but he did not hold himself forth as final revelation. Instead, he pointed to the source of truth that reveals itself anew in every generation. People in every age should “take heed to their own spirit” because truth continues to unfold. His era could not be concerned about climate change, but ours must be.

John Woolman’s influence extended beyond his life and beyond the Religious Society of Friends. He inspired later abolitionists, proponents of simple living and ecologically based values, advocates of war-tax resistance, and champions of social justice. A multitude of readers continues to be moved by the gentleness and striking degree of self-honesty and integrity in his “Journal.” ■

—MICHAEL BIRKEL

Michael Birkel is Professor of Religion at Earlham College. Inspired by John Woolman, he has been active in promoting interfaith understanding. His new book on North American Muslims and how they understand their sacred text, “Qur’an in Conversation,” will be published in 2014.

What we could do

Palestinian-American Sandra Tamari, a member of the St. Louis Religious Society of Friends, recounts how a small group of St. Louis activists brought the boycott and divestment movement for justice in Israel-Palestine to their city—and how their impact was felt across the world.

We didn't think we could do much. Eight activists from the St. Louis Palestine Solidarity Committee showed up at St. Louis City Hall on a Wednesday afternoon in December 2012 with hand-written stickers, hoping to postpone approval of the city's proposed water contract with Veolia, a company complicit in Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights. We knew it was a long shot. We had only learned about the contract days before and didn't have much time to mobilize a campaign. To our pleasant surprise, our efforts helped change Veolia's corporate practices, and in October 2013, the company pulled out their contract bid.

Veolia is a major target of the Boycott,

Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement to compel Israel to abide by international law through economic activism, and the company has lost over \$16 billion in contracts following campaigns across the globe citing Veolia's complicity in Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights. Veolia profits from Israel's occupation of the West Bank by providing services, such as trash collection, water services, and bus lines, to illegal Israeli settlements built on Palestinian land. Palestine activists joined with groups supporting the environment, labor, corporate accountability, and public utilities to form a coalition to oppose Veolia.

Our coalition to "Dump Veolia" steadily grew. On July 2, 2013, the St. Louis City

Public Utilities Committee of the Board of Aldermen hosted a public hearing to accept citizen testimony regarding the contract. Over 150 citizens packed the hearing room in City Hall on that rainy summer evening to ask the city to oppose Veolia. Paul Moriarty, a philosophy professor and member of the St. Louis Palestine Solidarity Committee, testified by saying:

We are connected to the rest of the world. When I was younger, I was part of the anti-apartheid movement. I think that if we were doing business back then that was supporting the apartheid government of South Africa, we would have recognized that as a concern for us at the local level.

We have an obligation to refuse to do business with companies that violate human rights.

One by one, citizens testified against Veolia. A city official asked the crowd if anyone not employed or contracted by Veolia was there to speak in favor of the contract. No one raised their hand. The hearing lasted three hours and much of the time was spent hearing testimony from Palestinians about Veolia's operation of bus lines in the West Bank for the exclusive use of Jewish settlers. Palestinians are excluded from some of Veolia's buses because they run on settler-only roads in the West Bank.

In an attempt to neutralize the testimony on Veolia's operation of segregated bus lines in the West Bank, David Gaddis of Veolia, said:

Regarding the buses . . . there are 130 bus lines that run. There are three of those buses that ask for an ID, and it is a work permit. It has nothing to do with race, religion, or any of those sorts of things.

Shane Cohn, an Alderman for St. Louis' 25th Ward, interjected: "Except that those work permits are issued based upon where you live and who you are."

It was an amazing and dramatic moment. Having heard testimony from several Palestinians about their lived experiences of Israel's discrimination and abuses, it was a member of the Board who challenged the Veolia executive; our message was heard and understood by a city official who then took a public stand in favor of Palestinian rights.

In late September 2013, Veolia sold its bus lines in the West Bank to an Israeli company. It was one of the most significant victories since the BDS call was made by Palestinian civil society associations in 2005.

Those who wonder how localized actions such as our work in St. Louis can have any effect on a conflict as seemingly intractable as that between Palestinians and Israelis now have a clear answer.

As a Quaker and a Palestinian, I am proud that the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is at the forefront of U.S. support for the BDS movement. In 2008, AFSC's board approved an investment screen aimed at companies that facili-

NETWORK OF QUAKERS WORKING FOR GRASSROOTS CHANGE

How do we bring the transforming power of love that we experience in our places of worship out into the world to create communities of love and resistance?

AFSC connects Quakers with grassroots change through its Meeting/Church Liaison Program, which provides ways for congregations across the U.S. to engage with their local communities, learn from one another's efforts, and join in a wider movement for social change.

The network includes congregations working on specific issue-areas such as mass incarceration, immigrant justice, and just and lasting peace in Israel-Palestine. AFSC offers liaisons monthly phone calls, resources to support local action, and an e-newsletter about AFSC's work. To participate, please email LDuncan@afsc.org or call (215) 241-7062.

tate Israel's violations of international law. In 2011, the AFSC joined with a coalition of human rights organizations under the banner "We Divest" to press TIAA-CREF, the largest retirement provider for people in the social services and non-profit sector, to divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation.

of nonviolence, justice, and peace, we are required to take risks and be challenged about our comfort and privilege. We must examine how our lives contribute to war and injustice, and expend time and energy on efforts that oppose corporate crimes. John Woolman confronted us: "May we look upon our treasures, and the furniture

Popular resistance in Palestine—in support of nonviolent, effective means to achieve freedom from military occupation, equality for Palestinians in Israel, and justice for the millions of Palestinian refugees—needs Quakers' action.

Several yearly, quarterly, and monthly meetings have adopted minutes supporting BDS campaigns. In September 2012, Friends Fiduciary Corporation divested all holdings in Veolia because of "environmental and social concerns." Friends Fiduciary also sold all shares in Hewlett Packard and Caterpillar because of their complicity with Israel's occupation.

Despite these impressive actions, the number of Quakers involved remains relatively small.

Popular resistance in Palestine in support of nonviolent, effective means to achieve freedom from military occupation, equality for Palestinians in Israel, and justice for the millions of Palestinian refugees needs Quakers' action. As supporters

of our houses, and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions, or not."

Sustainable activism for boycott and divestment of companies and institutions that maintain Israel's discrimination of Palestinians is a hopeful movement committed to equality and justice. Veolia's sale of its discriminatory bus lines in the West Bank shows the power of this tactic. It is my hope that more among us will explore how they can be part of this struggle for human and civil rights. ■

—SANDRA TAMARI

Go to afsc.org/lasting-peace to get involved.

Donor profile: Arlene Kelly and Helene Pollock

A deep commitment to AFSC fuels decades of service



Arlene Kelly and Helene Pollock. Photo: Willie Colon Reyes

For decades, their lives have interwoven with and been enriched by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). But Arlene Kelly and Helene Pollock have also given back time, energy, and financial resources to the organization they say has provided them with seminal, unforgettable experiences.

“We have a deep, deep commitment to the organization as it reflects the values that we espouse,” Helene explains.

Arlene and Helene have been together for 36 years, but their connection to the Service Committee predates their own relationship. Arlene, a retired social worker, first became aware of the organization after joining the Society of Friends in college.

After graduation, she volunteered for an AFSC work camp in Germany in 1959.

“That was a very stretching experience,” Arlene recalls. “I had never traveled much. When my mother said goodbye, clearly she thought she’d never see me again!”

Her involvement with AFSC deepened when she was asked to serve on the AFSC Board of Directors in the early 1980s. She credits her time on the Board’s National Affirmative Action Committee for deepening her commitment to diversity.

After another break, she rejoined the Board in the mid-1990s, serving on the Board’s Human Resources Committee and later working as interim director of AFSC’s Human Resources Department. She joined

the Board again in 2006 and, among other assignments, clerked the Simplicity Implementation Committee before becoming clerk of the Board in 2009—just as the organization was grappling with one of the worst financial crises in its history.

Helene is quick to point out a quality in Arlene’s leadership that helped contribute to AFSC’s turnaround. “Arlene is unshakable. She’s not affected by things that might cause others to cringe or give up,” Helene says. “It’s like the ballast in the boat, keeping a firm eye on moving forward.”

For her part, Helene, who’s also a Quaker, has had a long affiliation with groups working for human rights and social change in Latin America. So when Arlene recommended her for AFSC’s Latin America panel in 1987, she jumped at the chance. She spent a dozen years on the panel, including several years in a volunteer position, coordinating recruitment for AFSC’s work camps in Mexico. Her paid work was at Haverford College, most recently as Director of Quaker Affairs.

Now retired, both women are pleased to continue supporting AFSC financially through charitable remainder trusts and gift annuities.

“Neither of us has a philosophy of handing money down through family if there’s no need,” Arlene says. “We prefer to turn it back to the general good.” ■

—WILLIE COLON REYES

RECEIVE INCOME FOR LIFE WHILE YOU ADVANCE QUAKER SERVICE

AFSC has offered a variety of life income gifts, such as charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts, for over four decades and they remain an attractive option for many supporters. In exchange for your gift of cash or appreciated property, AFSC agrees to pay you and/or another named beneficiary tax-advantaged income for life. A gift annuity provides guaranteed fixed income, while a charitable remainder trust provides variable income with the potential for growth over time.

At the gift’s maturity, the remaining balance passes to AFSC’s endowment, helping ensure that our work for peace and justice continues for generations to come. To request a confidential illustration or for more information, please contact AFSC’s Gift Planning Office at (888) 588-2372, by email at GiftPlanning@afsc.org, or online at afsc.org/giftplanning.

Powered by community

As the daughter of a community advocate, Vera Parra developed her social consciousness at a young age, but it wasn’t until she joined New Jersey’s community of immigrant-rights advocates that she felt the power and strength to keep working for change.

While accompanying a man—father to three U.S.-citizen children—to his check-in with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Vera witnessed ICE detain him on the spot and deport him the next day. “It was before I really had a national network that could push back,” she says. “I felt such loneliness in that moment—powerlessness, feeling like I was throwing my whole body up against this crazy system that destroys families and is driven by profits.”

Vera interned with AFSC’s Immigrant Rights Program in Newark and then spent a year as an organizing fellow there, gathering stories about local police involvement with federal immigration enforcement while building a grassroots coalition to work for change. During that time, she says, she realized that “the power to counteract that [sense of powerlessness] comes

from the relationships that we have with... those of us who are committed to working together, fighting together, loving together, taking care of one another.”

In late 2013, Vera took an organizing job with a national faith-based network through which she is continuing her work with the immigrant community in New

“I felt such loneliness in that moment—powerlessness, feeling like I was throwing my whole body up against this crazy system that destroys families and is driven by profits.”

—VERA PARRA

Jersey. She took with her AFSC’s vision for a just world, based on Quaker principles.



Vera Parra. Photo: AFSC/Nathaniel Doubleday

“There aren’t a lot of organizations that think outside of the current debate. The current [immigration] bill is not going to stop detention and deportation. AFSC profoundly refuses to accept the terms of the [immigration policy reform] debate, and pushes for a vision that is worth fighting for,” she says. ■

—NEAH MONTEIRO

Watch a short documentary about Vera’s year at AFSC—go to afsc.org/vera-parra.

A peace-minded poet

In Julio Cuestas’ home of Cuba, the economic crisis lowered incomes and caused food shortages. This put a strain on families and communities, making Julio’s goal of creating a culture of peace particularly challenging.

Working with organizations like the Martin Luther King Center in Havana and the Cuban Quaker Institute for Peace, an AFSC partner, Julio—a Quaker poet—is learning and sharing the tools of conflict transformation.

Communities where he has shared this knowledge have seen the benefits. People now embrace conflict as an opportunity and are trying to solve problems in a loving

and peaceful way, demonstrating an understanding of conflict as necessary for communities to grow and evolve.

“I feel great satisfaction from this kind of work,” Julio says, “because conflict transformation is not only about filling our lives with light as Quaker peace testimony, but it’s also about engaging community members in different activities to show that when people work joined by love, changes are possible.” ■

—MONICA PORTILLA

Read some of Julio’s poetry and learn about the Cuban Quaker Institute for Peace at afsc.org/julio-cuestas.



Julio Cuestas.

News from around AFSC

Poster exhibit tells 60-year history of boycotts

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the Center for the Study of Political Graphics have created a traveling poster exhibition highlighting diverse historical boycott movements from the 1950s to the present. “Boycott! The Art of Economic Activism” features 58 posters from more than 20 boycotts, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott, United Farm Workers’ grape and lettuce boycott, divestment from South Africa to protest apartheid, boycotts of corporations using sweatshops, the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS), and many others. The exhibit opened in Washington, D.C. in Sep-



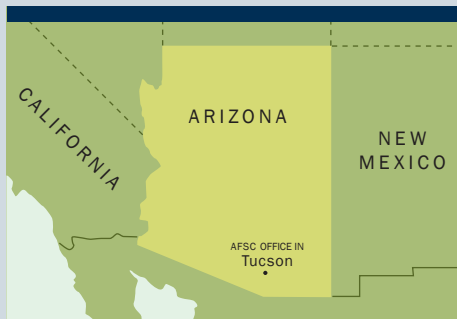
Photo: AFSC/Martha Yager

tember 2013 and will travel to many locations across the U.S. over the coming year. More information at afsc.org/boycott.

Mistreatment in Arizona’s privatized prison medical facilities

In Arizona, where correctional health-care is privatized, AFSC’s staff published a new report detailing the mistreatment of prisoners in need of medical care. “Death Yards: Continuing Problems with Arizona’s Correctional Health Care” follows on the heels of an ACLU lawsuit charging that prisoners “receive such grossly inadequate medical, mental health, and dental care that they are in grave danger of suffering serious and preventable injury, amputation, disfigurement, and even death.”

Around the country, the AFSC report has generated interest among attorneys involved in lawsuits over neglect and abuse, advocates for prisoner rights, and labor unions fight-



ing for representation in privatized facilities.

The Arizona Department of Corrections has essentially banned the report from being distributed to prisoners, claiming that it contains confidential medical information. In fact, AFSC obtained explicit permission from all (living) people whose cases are documented. AFSC is in negotiations with the department to lift the ban.

Myanmar institutions lay foundations for peace and stability

What can be done to prevent genocide? Last November, staff members of one of Myanmar’s leading nongovernmental organizations took steps to find out. They visited Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where AFSC arranged for them to talk with Cambodian researchers and survivors of the Cambodian genocide of 1975–1979. When



they heard from researchers about the risk factors for genocide, the visitors came to a hard realization: all eight known risk factors for genocide currently exist in their own country. Since then, AFSC’s partners in Myanmar have created exhibition materials and used them to introduce peace messages in communities divided along

religious and ethnic lines.

AFSC also continues to support teacher training for monastery-run community schools, which care for poor children who cannot afford to attend the state schools. Recently, a new cohort of teacher trainers was trained, expanding the reach of child-centered education—and opportunities to contribute to stability and peace—to additional monastic schools in Myanmar.

Healing process begins as people give testimonies in Maine

“There is truth, healing, and change in this process,” says Denise Altvater, who directs AFSC’s program in Maine. She was speaking of the first public-statement gathering by the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Wel-



fare Truth and Reconciliation Commission, held in fall 2013 in Sipayik, also known as the Passamaquoddy Pleasant Point Reservation. Fourteen people came forward to give testimony during the three-day event.

As late as 1984, decades after the federally sponsored Indian Adoption Project tried (and failed) to show that Native children would be better off with white families, Maine still had one of the highest rates of removal of Native children in the country. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is charged with uncovering the truth, promoting healing, and making recommendations for moving forward. Denise worked for more than a decade to help lay the foundation for this historic effort, and will continue to support the Commission’s work in the months ahead. ■

—THERESA KIRBY

Snapshot

A look at AFSC around the world

Gwyneth Wilkinson reads a poem at the 50th reunion of the summer 1963 Citizenship Education Project. Photo: AFSC/Bryan Vana



Left to right, top to bottom:

1. Testifying about living on low wages; Concord, N.H.
2. Teacher training for Buddhist nuns; Myanmar
3. Opposing U.S. military action in Syria; Des Moines, Iowa
4. Community cleanup; Cite Soleil, Haiti
5. Vigil to stop deportation; Centennial, Colo.
6. Training for Palestinian youth; West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territory
7. May Day march; Portland, Ore.
8. Painting peace messages; Cite Soleil, Haiti
9. Reclaiming a public park; El Limón, Guatemala
10. Dignity Dialogue on Immigration Reform; Forks, Wash.
11. Calling for higher minimum wage; Concord, N.H.
12. Citizenship Education Project reunion; Warrenton, N.C.

Photos: AFSC/Arnie Alpert, AFSC/Russell Peterson, AFSC/Jon Krieg, Ecole Mixte la Liberté, Elizabeth Murphy, Palvision, Doug Yarrow, Ecole Mixte la Liberté, AFSC/Javier Reyes, Emiliana Aguilar, AFSC/Arnie Alpert, AFSC/Bryan Vana



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Living courageously

GAZA STRIP—In Nusseirat Refugee Camp, young women advocate for education rights at a center for children with Down syndrome.
Photo: AFSC/Middle East Regional Office

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Who we are

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that promotes lasting peace with justice, as a practical expression of faith in action. Drawing on continuing spiritual insights and working with people of many backgrounds, we nurture the seeds of change and respect for human life that transform social relations and systems.

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