Welcome to this first edition of the American Friends Service Committee’s West Region monthly newsletter. We look forward to connecting with you more regarding our shared work for peace and justice. Thanks for your interest and support, and please send feedback to Jon Krieg at Jkrieg@afsc.org.

Pan Valley Institute, Fresno

Resilience leads to publication of Syrian cookbook

After two years of arduous work, the Pan Valley Institute of AFSC is glad to share the PVI’s latest community book publication, Syrian Recipes from Home, by Nour Al Mshantaf.

At the book release in Fresno, Nour read a segment of her story followed by Myrna Martinez, PVI Program Director, who shared the story behind the making of the book. Despite many challenges, this work was instrumental for Nour and her family to ease their memories from home and their disrupting journey while becoming refugees. While Nour’s story is unique to her, it reflects the resilience of countless refugees.
Immigrant Rights Program, Denver

New AFSC resource to help people facing deportation
AFSC recently published a new online guide: “Crossing South: Resources for people returning to Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.” The idea for “Crossing South” came from the Not1More Table, an immigrant-led community group supported by AFSC in Colorado. “As the Trump administration ramped up attacks on immigrant communities, several Not1More members faced the risk of a family member being deported,” says AFSC’s Gabriela Flora, who co-coordinates the Not1More Table with immigrant leaders. The guide offers information on getting affairs in order before leaving the U.S., safety tips upon arriving in a country, and a list of local organizations that can help. You can support this effort by donating here.

Economic Activism Program, Oakland

Is your 401(k) OK?
AFSC’s Economic Activism program added new features to Investigate: the information hub and investment screening tool that focuses on companies involved in mass incarceration, military occupations, and border militarization. If you have a pension fund, you may be invested in these companies through mutual funds. Owning company stocks means you have a financial stake in the company’s success and therefore in whatever the company does. You can use Investigate to search for any major U.S. mutual fund to see if it includes any of the companies in our database. Our newest feature allows you to sort these funds to find alternative investments that align with your values. You can also use Investigate to target an institutional investor asking them to divest from these companies.
People of the Land Program, Albuquerque

Climate strikers made a difference in New Mexico

AFSC New Mexico was happy to partner with Rio Grande High School students in Albuquerque as part of the Global Climate Strike. The students wanted to be part of the solution to climate change, so they cleaned up trash from a historic 300-year-old farm and acequia (our traditional waterway). “Climate change scares me,” said freshman Ever Godina. “I want to travel the world and see all these places. I want to fix things so that when I can finally travel, I can see all the beautiful places.” Read more from AFSC Program Director Sayrah Namaste.

US-Mexico Border Program, San Diego

Marking the 25th anniversary of Operation Gatekeeper

“The militarization of border communities did not start with President Trump,” writes Pedro Rios, director of AFSC’s U.S.-Mexico Border Program, in the Washington Post. “Twenty-five years ago, the Border Patrol launched ‘Operation Gatekeeper’ with President Bill Clinton’s approval. It was a massive undertaking, involving the construction of walls and fences along parts of the border that were easier to cross and dramatically increasing the Border Patrol’s personnel and the technology it uses for border surveillance, trends that continue to this day.” He concludes, “Instead of continuing to spend billions to expand failed policies, Congress must cut funding for Customs and Border Protection and invest in revitalized border communities.”
Arizona Program, Tucson

Allies vs. accomplices

On the latest episode of AFSC Arizona’s ReFraming Justice Podcast, we seek answers to some important questions within the movement to end mass incarceration: Who can we trust as collaborators? Should we work with law enforcement and other system actors to achieve change? The If Project’s Rafael Batain and Timo Padilla of Sustainable Nations try to answer those questions and more. Find out more about AFSC’s work to reduce the size and scope of the criminal punishment system and a proposal for legislation for a citizen advisory board.

Roots for Peace Program, Los Angeles

A Full Year of Harvest for Roots for Peace!

Los Angeles’ Roots for Peace program had an abundant year growing their team, their programs, and the first year at the South LA Community Farm. We grew many crops ancestral to our homelands, including the four siblings (maize, squash, beans, and amaranth), papalotl, and cempasuchitl flowers. Youth led a public forum called “Salud para la Gente: Planting Seeds & Collective Healing” where young people created and distributed a zine, created artwork for the state-wide campaign #Health4All, and hosted a panel of four organizations working for racial, immigrant, and environmental justice in LA. The Community Farm has quickly become a place for growing and sharing food, youth leadership, intergenerational dialogue, and building community resilience. Follow Roots for Peace on Instagram to learn more about this and our programming!
67 Sueños, Oakland

Curious what a plantitas zine might be about?

Then you should visit AFSC Oakland’s 67 Sueños on Instagram to find out more about the healing benefits of nine California herbs. The zine was created by Jocelyne “Joce” Cruz, an AFSC intern from Antioch College, and contains information on the medicinal properties and applications of plants such as laurel, white sage and mugwort. Learn more about tinctures, salves, decoction, poultice and drying herbs. Download the zine here.

Project Voice Immigrant Rights Program, Oregon-Washington

On the move for justice

Pedro Sosa shares the photo above from the recent Portland climate justice march, which included a strong emphasis on immigrant justice. Pedro reports that AFSC is continuing to assess the needs of different communities as they respond to ICE raids in Oregon. AFSC’s office has moved to Salem, where AFSC will start organizing for International Human Rights Day (December 10) and International Migrants Day (December 18). In the past, AFSC has organized cultural events, workshops and mobilizations to mark these important dates. Stay tuned!
Community Justice Program, Seattle

Seattle youth make a Freedom Ride to New Orleans

Earlier this summer, AFSC Seattle’s Youth Undoing Institutional Racism completed a #FreedomRide to New Orleans to join with other YUIR people from across the country at the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond. In August, Seattle participants reported about their trip at AFSC’s Tyree Scott Summer Freedom School. “It was so wonderful to be in the space with all of you as we worked together to think about creating an anti-racist, humanistic AFSC with young people and their families,” writes Nia Eubanks, who coordinated the gathering for AFSC. “The last day brought tears to my eyes to see so many warriors that are truly about liberation and love.”

Healing Justice Program, Oakland

Youth address militarized, racist policing

At a Town Hall on Oakland police, military equipment and racist policing co-organized by AFSC on October 3, we heard powerful testimonies by courageous youth affected by militarized and racist policing. AFSC is bringing together community and advocacy groups to campaign for a city ordinance that will submit Oakland PD’s acquisition and use of militarized equipment such as tank-like vehicles, assault weapons, flash bang grenades and battering rams to transparency, required use policies, and decision by the city council. For more information, contact: John Lindsay-Poland, tel 510-282-8983.
Bits and Peaces
AFSC’s Economic Activism program joined with AFSC staff from around the country to organize a two-day conference entitled “Preparing for 2020: Advocating for rights, justice, and freedom in Palestine and Israel.” Oakland-based staff Dalit Baum and Noam Perry led a panel discussion on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)….AFSC West Region Executive Committee member Rae Abileah is quoted in this story about her great uncle, Joseph Abileah, who was considered Israel’s first military refuser. “There’s always been a Jewish resistance to Zionist ideology and colonial repression,” Rae said. “We don’t have to accept things. We can say no. The more we know people who refuse the status quo, the more courage we get” ….Tell Congress to protect asylum seekers and cancel Somali debt….Are you a former AFSC staffer, intern, fellow or volunteer? Check out AFSC’s Alumni Network…. Learn more about the many ways AFSC connects with Friends.

Your support matters
Your gifts of time and money make a real difference. Please be in touch with any West Region program by visiting afsc.org, and support AFSC by donating today. Thank you!