

AFSC representative report to Chapel Hill Friends Meeting

April 2021

Naveed Moeed

2020-21 has been an eventful year for AFSC. Like many of the organizations we support as a meeting it has been deeply affected by the Pandemic. The work, however, has continued regardless with staff showing great fortitude in a time of Covid.

AFSC nationally and globally

In the past year, AFSC has pivoted to address core needs arising from the pandemic. We are working in communities to help them address immediate problems as we work with them to shift the systems of power.

As a result of the Pandemic, the dangers of incarceration continue to multiply exponentially, making every cell and cage a potential death chamber. In response AFSC launched their #FreeThemAll campaign working for the immediate release of people from behind bars as we continue to work for a future without incarceration. In January AFSC launched an initiative called "Under the Mask," an effort that documents ways that governments around the world are using the COVID crisis to restrict civil liberties. Alongside this existing programs and campaigns internationally have grown strength. I would like to highlight here the Israel

AFSC just completed a new 10-year strategic plan that challenges us to take bold action. You can [read the plan in its entirety here](#). The plan articulates a global vision of work on the intertwining issues of economic justice, just responses to migration and displacement, and just and sustainable peace. There is a distinct move, indicated in the plan away from localizing concerns and to more global-thematic concerns which can tie in worldwide with the work of AFSC. The plan was informed by deep listening – to Friends, to partners, and especially to the affected communities. AFSC will be sharing the Strategic Plan with Friends and Quaker meetings/churches in the coming months so see how Friends can best engage with us in the coming years. There is a strong drive to deepen roots with Friends so we can help renew the world we live in and together shift systems of power to bend toward justice.

AFSC locally (North Carolina and the South Region)

The work of AFSC locally continues to grow! This has been an eventful year for the South Region and NC in particular. AFSC helped with the evolution of Siembra NC, into its own fully fledged organization. This was a group that the local AFSC had birthed and nurtured and its time had come to make its own mark in the world. We also said goodbye to our local director, Kelly Morales, who now serves as Siembra NC's director!

The immigrant rights program hired a new director (Isabell Moore) and a full-time "Organizing" fellow (Terrell Dungee). Terrell will work to support solidarity committees in six NC counties to

recruit and train volunteers for ICE watches. This rapid response network, informed and led by immigrant voices, creates greater safety for immigrant neighbors. Isabell's background in organizing, along with Kelly and Siembra NC, provide local Friends in our area a golden opportunity to work with multi-racial basebuilding, Black-Brown alliances grass-roots movements. We hope to invite Isabell and Tyrell to the Meeting to talk more about the work and engage us in opportunities to help.

The South Region Executive Committee has also seen an influx of black leadership which supports the work of AFSC in the entirety of the South Region (from Texas, right up to Maryland).

Upheaval

While the work locally, nationally and globally is strong, there is nevertheless continued upheaval in the organization.

In 2020, there were further program cuts which also affected the South Region (losing one program). Additionally, there was a drive from staff, to listen more deeply to the voices of diversity within AFSC. Leadership in AFSC setup listening sessions under an Inclusive Community and Justice Task Team (ICJTT). These were meant to see how the voices of marginalized within AFSC can be heard and lifted in the context of the new strategic plan.

The response in these listening sessions was vocal and it is hoped leadership will listen to these voices.

A restructuring process, to bring the organization in line with the new strategic plan, is also underway. A significant group of staff are concerned, in this process, regarding shifts to a more top-down structure and increased authoritarianism within AFSC. Despite the process not being completed some staff have already been informed their roles may no longer be required. Discussions with staff, governance (formed mostly of Quaker volunteers) and leadership continue. We hold them all in the light.