



Winter 2021 Issues

A Newsletter of the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center

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Relentlessly Hopeful for Abolition

By Jessie Frank - Program Manager

Despite having learned in Sunday school that hope (along with faith and love) is one of the three most important spiritual virtues, I've never learned to be relentlessly hopeful. Yes, hope is one of the most critical tools we have as activists and advocates for social change, yet for whatever reason, my tendency toward hope has always been cautious.

So, the fact that I am wildly hopeful that Ohio has seen its last execution is, well, wild. It has been over 2.5 years since the state has executed someone, and in that time, many have begun to question our need for capital punishment. Since Governor DeWine heeded the words of a circuit court judge who questioned the constitutionality of Ohio's

lethal injection method of execution in early 2019, countless other elected officials and community leaders have also publicly questioned, or outright opposed, the death penalty.

Just two months into the new legislative cycle, Democratic Senator Nickie Antonio and Republican Senator Steven Huffman introduced a bill to abolish the death penalty; many legislators from both sides of the aisle have already voiced support for the bill. And IJPC is prepared to see this bill pass before the General Assembly comes to a close at the end of 2022.

That's why we've put together a small cohort of key influencers in the abolition movement to help us build a groundswell of support for abolition among voters as well as elected officials. Over the next two years, we'll work hard and urge our elected officials to voice opposition to the death penalty.

I'm so honored to carry on the tireless work of all the individuals who have been working to end the death penalty for decades. And I am so inspired by those who are mobilizing with IJPC in this current moment to help us end capital punishment for good. If you haven't actively joined us yet in this movement, what are you waiting for? Open those IJPC emails, click the action links, sign your name and be relentless in lobbying our elected leaders for their "yes" votes to abolish the death penalty as soon as possible.

Local Businesses Pledge to End Trafficking

By Samantha Searls - Program Manager

At its core, human trafficking is all about money. It's about how to make money and save money by exploiting people through forced labor. In order to end human trafficking, everyone from the average consumer to the corporate CEO will need to do their part.

Last summer, two representatives from a small consulting business called [Timbelo, Inc.](#) reached out to IJPC after meeting us through the End Slavery Cincinnati Coalition. They had decided their company cause would be to end human trafficking, so they assembled a team of advisors to help them decide what they could do.

In addition to IJPC, the advisory team includes Harold D'Souza from Eyes Open International, Rick Baltzersen from Women Are Gold, and Hannah Barnes and Spencer Hogan from Timbelo. Over the past few months, the team has created a plan to engage local businesses by asking them to make a pledge against human trafficking.

The pledge challenges each local business to educate their network about trafficking, expand and engage in dialogue, establish policies to address trafficking within their organization, collaborate with anti-

trafficking groups, and commit to being a "human trafficking free zone."

After taking the pledge, businesses will receive an occasional e-letter with resources and opportunities to learn and take action. They'll be connected to groups like IJPC to educate their employees further and to learn about local initiatives. In the end, they'll influence their peers and competitors to take the pledge too.

The movement to end human trafficking needs partners from all sectors of society, especially local businesses. Imagine the change their leadership could bring! As the project unfolds, IJPC will be sure to keep you updated on how you can get involved.



A Letter from Allison Reynolds-Berry

It's a new year and you give me hope for the ways we can make a significant impact this year, together. Continuing one of the positive trends of 2020, we won't have executions in Ohio this year and a bill to abolish the death penalty was just introduced with bipartisan support. You've helped us create a team of key stakeholders to ensure southwest Ohio is a loud voice for an end to this barbaric practice.

We continue to be in conversation with those on death row and some who have had their sentences commuted. We recently sent 183 Christmas cards to those on, or recently off, death row. Shawn replied by saying, "I always appreciate y'all going out of your way to let us know we're being thought of and not forgotten in the fight... if it weren't for the tireless work that you all do, it would be a much uglier landscape where criminal justice reform is concerned. So the work, as you know, is necessary in the most serious way. I'm personally 4ever grateful." We know the work for abolition will impact the lives of so many. Your support means a lot as we educate people about the many reasons we need to end the death penalty and invite everyone to make calls to Ohio lawmakers.

Together, we can continue making an impact on the death penalty and all of our shared issues. Please consider [supporting our work](#) for a more just society in the following ways:

- Become a Peace Partner and make your gift monthly to sustain our work
- Give through Qualified Charitable Distributions from your IRA if you're 72 or older
- Give through the transfer of stock and securities
- Leave a legacy for peace by remembering IJPC in your will or trust

A meaningful gift to support IJPC looks different for everyone. Someone on death row recently made a gift of \$4 with a note of gratitude: "Your caring, support, efforts give us hope. Never, never feel you're not appreciated." Last year, we also received an overwhelmingly generous gift from a recently retired business woman who gave \$49,000 after selling her company. We appreciate each and every gift and could not do this work without you. Thank you for your partnership in our mission.



P.S. We recently published our 2019-2020 Annual Report. It's available [online](#) or you can request a hard copy.



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Upcoming Events

For more information and to register visit www.IJPCcincinnati.org/events

March 8, 9:30 - 10:30 AM
Human Trafficking Public Education and Awareness Committee
Online - Registration Required

March 24, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
Immigrant Dignity Coalition Meeting
Online - Registration Required

March 8, 6:00 - 7:00 PM
Death Penalty Committee
Online - Registration Required

April 8, 7:00 PM
IJPC Trivia Night Fundraiser
Online - Registration Required

Awake and Act: Healing Police-Community Relations

By Jessie Frank - Program Manager

Last July, the NonViolence Alliance began its “Awake and Act” event series as a way to connect specific social justice issues to systemic violence. Speakers who are actively working on a certain issue are invited to present (virtually, of course) to participants, who then engage in reflective discussions and are encouraged to take actions to work to create change for a more nonviolent society.

We held our first “Awake and Act” as the cries for justice for George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless others were being shouted from streets across Cincinnati and across our country. Since then, NVA has focused its attention on police brutality, the systemic violence in which it is rooted, and the ways in which police and communities seek to rebuild broken relationships with one another.

Most recently, we learned about Cincinnati’s Citizen Complaint Authority (CCA) from Zeek Childers, its board chair (and a board leader of IJPC). CCA was established as part of the Collaborative Agreement in 2003 as a means to provide independent oversight over the Cincinnati Police Department. They investigate citizen complaints involving serious mishandlings by CPD officers, such as a death in custody or an improper discharge of a firearm.

During our “Awake and Act” event, participants were invited to

consider the limitations of an oversight body like CCA, since, for example, their rulings can determine only whether an officer’s actions followed CPD policy, which might be problematic itself. CCA also has little ability to ensure that disciplinary repercussions are taken respective of certain rulings. Additionally, we discussed police-community mediation and how such a nonviolent method of problem resolution might be beneficial in Cincinnati.

Undoubtedly, the Collaborative Agreement and establishment of CCA is a major accomplishment. But almost 20 years later, CCA faces significant challenges, including a backlog of cases, a need for community awareness of their services, and most significantly a lack of funding. This spring and summer, IJPC is ready to engage in important conversations with the community and with our elected officials about our city’s budget, ensuring that agencies like CCA, whose work has the potential to build important trust within the community and foster nonviolence, are fully funded and prioritized.

Citizenship For All

By Samantha Searls - Program Manager

It’s here. At 353 pages long, the [U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021](#) lays out a roadmap to citizenship for approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States. This bill is the product of years of steadfast organizing and public pressure led by the immigrant community themselves and supported by advocates like you.

Before we celebrate what’s in the bill, it’s important to note what is missing. The bill falls short in this moment of criminal justice reform and demands for racial equity. It still has some exclusions based on criminal records, preventing communities of color that are over-policed and over-incarcerated from accessing immigration programs. There are also privacy and civil liberties concerns with the increased use of surveillance at the

border, as well as concerns about access to healthcare and other life saving programs.

Nevertheless, the U.S. Citizenship Act is a bold first step to building an immigration system that is fair, humane, and functional.

The bill has five sections: (1) Earned path to citizenship and other reforms, (2) Addressing the root causes of migration and responsibly managing the southern border, (3) Reform of the immigrant visa system, (4) Immigration courts, family values and vulnerable individuals, and (5) Employment authorization and protecting workers from exploitation.

The bill creates an 8 year path to citizenship for undocumented families, and a 3 year path for DACA and TPS holders, farmworkers, and others. It clears visa backlogs and wait times, as well as other legal bars. It expands alternatives to detention and calls for accountability within DHS. It even replaces the demeaning word of “alien” with “noncitizen” in immigration law.

[There is so much in this bill](#), but it’s important to note that it’s still just a proposed bill. Now is the time to activate your networks to pressure Congress to deliver on their promises. We need to win relief for as many people as fast as possible, so keep making calls for other bills like the Dream & Promise Act. With enough sustained pressure, we can make H.R. 1177 The U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 a reality for millions of people.

Congratulations to YES (Youth Educating Society) on their 10-year anniversary!



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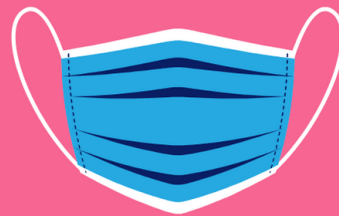
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