



Fall 2021 Issues

A Newsletter of the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center

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Rebuilding What We Had is Not Good Enough

By - Samantha Searls, Program Manager

It was one year ago that I wrote an article for the IJPC newsletter stating that the newly-elected Biden Administration shouldn't just restore our immigration system to what it was under President Obama. I explained, "Our immigration system has *never* been fair or humane to all people." It doesn't matter how friendly a politician appears to be; what matters is taking concrete action to create something better than what we had before.

Although the Biden Administration has taken some actions to address our broken immigration system, there is still a long way to go for compassionate and comprehensive immigration reform that surpasses the policies of previous administrations. The most visionary gesture from the Biden Administration so far has been working with Congress to introduce a groundbreaking piece of legislation, the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, that would [create a path to citizenship](#) for nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants if passed.

While that bill hasn't moved forward, Congress has included some protection for immigrants in the Build Back Better Act through a provision that would [protect 7 million people from deportation](#) and grant them access to work permits. The bill passed the House in November but still faces a tough journey in the Senate. We've also seen legislative victory as the most inclusive [Dream & Promise Act](#) ever passed the House in March and had a hearing in the Senate in June.

This year, the Biden Administration has used the powers of the executive branch to undo some of the Trump Administration's harmful policies and to set new ones. The Department of Homeland Security [reinstated tiered enforcement priorities](#) similar to what the Obama Administration used, countering President Trump's strategy of detaining and deporting anyone who is undocumented. The new priorities have successfully led to fewer arrests and influenced the [Butler County Jail](#) to

stop holding immigrants after lawsuits demanded better treatment. Yet, the priorities are open to interpretation and are subject to ICE agents' discretion, which could lead to unfair enforcement practices.

When it comes to DACA, the Biden Administration was forced by a judge to [draft a new rule](#), with the stated goal to "preserve and fortify" DACA. Instead, this new rule, which was open to public comment this fall, opened up the possibility of taking work permits away from DACA recipients.

There are so many things we could examine from President Biden's first year: the mistreatment of immigrant essential workers, over one million deportations, mixed status families being blocked from stimulus payments, using Title 42 to expel asylum seekers at the border, and more.

This year has proven that we can't sit back and assume that everything will be fine now that a less extreme administration is in power. Now is the time to work harder and use this moment to win real change that's bigger, better, and bolder than what we had before.



In August 2021, YES came back in person after what felt like years of being on Zoom. This year we have a new location at Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church, four new Advisory Board Leaders, and a great new crowd of members. Despite the challenges, we still find a way to continue learning and having fun, while being COVID-safe.

A Letter from Allison Reynolds-Berry

Thank you to each of you who joined us in person or virtually for our [2021 Annual Gathering, The Art of Justice: Creative Visions for Peace](#). I was overwhelmed with the incredible energy in the room, and thrilled to see new IJPC supporters next to those who have been with us since IJPC's founding. Kristen Barker, recipient of this year's IJPC's Bob Maxwell Peace Builder Award, reminded us of the power of people, that when committed groups of individuals come together and set intentions, we are six times more likely to manifest what we are focused on. As we revisit our annual goals and look ahead with hope for 2022, I know we are incredibly powerful because of the commitment and intention each of you set along with IJPC.

On behalf of all of us at IJPC, we wish each of you and our world, a peaceful New Year.



Upcoming Events

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

Dec 13, 6:00 - 7:00 PM

Death Row Pen Pal Committee Meeting

Dec 15, 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Immigrant Dignity Coalition Meeting

Jan 4, 6:00 - 7:30 PM

The Damaging Myths of Human Trafficking

Jan 10, 9:30 - 10:30 AM

**Public Education and Awareness
Committee on Human Trafficking**

Jan 12, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Anti-Death Penalty New Year Meeting

Jan 12, 7:00 - 8:00 PM

Southern Ohio Anti-Death Penalty Meeting

Jan 19, 4:00 - 5:00 PM

Peace Programming in the New Year

Jan 24, Jan 31, & Feb 7, 7:00 - 9:00 PM

**Race and Racism in Cincinnati 3-Part
Docuseries Screenings**

Jan 26, 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Immigrant Dignity Coalition Meeting

Jan 26, 7:00 - 8:00 PM

Southern Ohio Anti-Death Penalty Meeting

February 4, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

**Greater Cincinnati Anti-Human Trafficking
Conference**

April 15, 12:00 PM

Way of the Cross for Justice

Thank you for supporting IJPC! Increase your impact through planned giving!

Become an IJPC Peace Partner: Help make IJPC more sustainable by becoming a recurring donor - monthly, quarterly, annually, the choice is yours! Your recurring gift allows us to better anticipate individual contributions and gives us a foundation in planning our programming for the year. You can make a recurring giving plan online at give.classy.org/IJPCPeacePartner

Give an IRA Charitable Donation: Make giving easy by rolling over your RMD from your IRA directly to IJPC. This is an easy way for you to support IJPC and save money on taxes. Just talk to your IRA custodian and ask them to issue a check directly from your IRA, payable to IJPC. Then simply ask your custodian to mail the check to IJPC.

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Death Penalty Abolition Is In Sight

By - Bekky Baker, Program Manager

On November 18th, I watched Melinda Dawson approach the stand to give testimony at the fourth hearing for Ohio House Bill 183 which would abolish the death penalty. Melinda became an anti-death penalty advocate after the murder of her mother and subsequent wrongful conviction of her husband, Clarence Elkins, in 1998. Clarence spent nearly seven years on death row before Melinda was able to exonerate him through her own investigation. It had been a long day already as Melinda took the stand and it was nearly lunch time, but her words drew the attention of everyone in the room. In her testimony she described the trauma of that experience, her eviction from her home via law enforcement, the lack of resources offered to her, and the growing pain inside her. It was by far the most powerful testimony of the day.

It is the courage and vulnerability of people like Melinda who have tirelessly shared their stories and re-lived their gut wrenching experiences time and time again in the service of others that gives me hope. Hope that we will see the end of this arcane and vengeful practice so that we can grow communities that support healing. As 2021 comes to an end, the [NoDeathPenaltyOH coalition](#) is planning for the hurdles death penalty abolition has to jump in 2022.

Right now, we are waiting as Ohio HB 183 is poised to be voted out of committee to go to the Ohio House floor for a full vote, from there it will head to the Senate. Now, more than ever, it is important to remember stories like Melinda's and the reasons why we advocate for change.

Nonviolence in Every Day Life

By - Naomi Gonzalez, S. Louise Akers Fellow

During these last few months I have been immersed in researching nonviolence. I've read books on the philosophy of nonviolence and on historical and present day nonviolent movements. I've attended trainings explaining nonviolent communication, bystander intervention, and how to de-escalate tense situations and prevent violence. I've taken online courses on strategic nonviolence and on how to plan and sustain nonviolent campaigns and movements. And finally I've watched or participated in numerous webinars covering everything from the basics of nonviolent philosophy and action to self care for activists. I've learned so much that my brain (and my Google Drive) is brimming with new knowledge and ideas.

However, I think the most surprising thing

Ohio has never been this close to abolishing the death penalty and the momentum we have been building is infectious. As I look towards the new year, I look forward to the meetings, conversations, letters, visits and events yet to come, knowing that I have many partners, volunteers and community members engaged in this work by my side.

Organizer and educator, Mariame Kaba says, "Everything worthwhile is done with other people," and I am so grateful to be doing this work with all of you.



Members of the Church of the Resurrection joined IJPC at our interfaith vigil to end the death penalty.

I've learned is how all encompassing nonviolence can be. I've spent most of my professional life in academia and when I learned about nonviolence it was usually through specific historical movements such as the Civil Rights Movement or anti-war movement. In class there might be occasional comparisons and discussions about current nonviolent movements such as Black Lives Matter but the discussion usually centered around goals and tactics of the movement.

During my time at IJPC, I have learned that nonviolence encompasses so much more than brief studies of historical nonviolent movements. Nonviolence is both a way of life and a strategic decision. Successful nonviolent movements need to make smart decisions in choosing which tactics to use and when, but members need to be able to communicate and nonviolently work through conflict.

Learning about the history of past movements, whether successful or not, is important but so is keeping up with the latest research on best practices. Nonviolent action did not begin or end with the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s. And while it is vitally important to act and speak nonviolently towards others, whether opponents, allies, or potential supporters, it is also necessary that we learn to be compassionate towards ourselves. Nonviolence is not simply something we have to "do" during a specific movement or campaign, but it is something we can practice everyday.



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The Art of Justice: Creative Visions for Peace

Thank you for sharing space, enjoying art, and honoring local peace and justice advocates with us at our 2021 Annual Gathering, **The Art of Justice: Creative Visions for Peace**. Special thanks to our featured artists, award recipients, sponsors, and volunteers for making this event possible. If you missed the event, you can find the video recording and photos at IJPCcincinnati.org/live-2021.

Thank you to our Annual Gathering sponsors!

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