

ISSUES

Fall 2025

Formerly Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center



Armando. Alonzo. Emerson. Ayman.

By - Samantha Searls, Program Director

Sharing real, personal stories has been at the core of our work over the past few months.

In order to raise public consciousness of the impact of arbitrary policy changes, deceptive tactics, and politically motivated targeting of immigrants, we have to go beyond statistics and hypotheticals and talk about what is happening to individuals in our communities.

In April we received a call from our friends in Dayton at West Charleston Church of the Brethren that one of their community members, **Armando**, had been detained at an ICE appointment. He had been called in to have his ankle monitor removed and Pastor Caleb accompanied him to the appointment. It ended up being a ruse. Armando, a neighbor and member of our community, was lured under false pretenses, detained for nearly three months, and deported back to Honduras without his wife and children.

A similar tactic was used on **Emerson**, a Cincinnati high school graduate and soccer player who has lived in the U.S. since he was eight years old. He thought he was getting

an ankle monitor through the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program but instead was faced with ICE agents who cuffed him in front of his mom, Ada, and soccer coach. Emerson is a big brother, a loving son, a beloved teammate and friend.

In May, ICE detained four people who were shopping at a Kroger, including **Alonzo**. He was detained in front of his partner and daughters, aged 4 and 7, when they were out buying supplies for a birthday party. Alonzo has lived in the U.S. for over three years and is active in his church and community. Even though Alonzo opted for "voluntary departure," a way to leave on his own accord, he was held in a facility in the south for nearly a month before arriving in Guatemala.

Most recently, Imam **Ayman** had his asylum status revoked over false accusations and has been held in the Butler County Jail since July 9. Ayman was granted asylum years ago, after escaping the Egyptian government's attacks on him as a journalist. Ayman is a former chaplain at Children's Hospital and a beloved faith leader at Clifton Mosque. He has provided compassion and spiritual guidance for countless individuals and families across Greater Cincinnati.

The loss and pain that comes from the unjust detainment and deportation of these individuals, and

countless others across the country, cannot be captured in a simple statistic. And though it may be easier to turn a blind eye from a number, it is much harder to turn away from a neighbor.

Their stories have reached thousands through media coverage. They've sparked protests and vigils, drawing people out who've never protested before. They've highlighted the dirty tactics of ICE, warning others of how ICE is operating. More and more people are speaking out against an unjust and inhuman immigration system because they can see and feel the harm it creates.

Armando, Alonzo, and Emerson are all reported to have arrived in their home countries safely. Emerson and his family have moved into a house and have been organizing aid for children in his village. He continues to play soccer and recently joined one of the national teams. Ayman is still detained at the Butler County jail. His case has had some small victories and support continues to grow.

Now is the time to take action and stand up for our neighbors. The Immigrant Dignity Coalition and its rapid response teams are organizing to support impacted families, canvas businesses, share legal resources, and train our community. **Join us.**

A Letter from Shannon Hughes

I am heartened by the communities of people coming together to support, care, and protect each other in response to a demoralizing national trend: investment in care is shrinking, while systems of punishment grow. Immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, protestors, and truth-tellers face criminalization and retribution. The trend toward repression is clear - and so is our call to action. The story goes that this state-sanctioned violence is what keeps us safe. As we have heard said, "It is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail." We know there are other tools, and that this blunt force cannot create the society we believe in.

Broad civil resistance is key to tearing down the pillars that uphold oppressive power. We resist by not cooperating, by slowing the unjust political systems down, and building our own networks of mutual aid and community care.

Authoritarianism aims to divide us and make us feel powerless. We must stand in solidarity. In the coming months, we are dedicated to training people and strengthening coalitions and new networks. We can do this, as long as we are together.

Your support - whether through donations, advocacy, or showing up - helps us resist harmful systems and build alternatives that honor dignity and justice. And in a time when wins can be hard to see, your continued commitment means everything. We strengthen each other.

Join us on **October 29** as we gather to celebrate Ignite Peace's 40th Anniversary and draw hope and courage from one another, from those who refuse to give up on peace and justice.

In Peace,



Announcements

- Ignite Peace invites local businesses, religious communities, organizations, and individuals to align themselves with a powerful movement for positive change by joining us as a **sponsor of this year's Annual Gathering**. Sponsorship packages range from \$250 to \$10,000 and include a variety of benefits and recognitions. Visit Give.IgnitePeace.org/Gathering2025 to learn more and make your commitment.



Founding Partners:

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Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg

Partners:

Anawim Community
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Cincinnati Friends Meeting
Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship
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Congregation of Divine Providence
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40



OCTOBER 29, 2025

ANNUAL GATHERING CELEBRATION

TICKETS COMING SOON
GIVE.IGNITEPEACE.ORG/GATHERING2025



Celebrate our 2025 Award Recipients at our Annual Gathering

Howard and Nina Tolley

Tending the Flame Legacy Award

Nina and Howard's commitment to non-violence became a lifelong passion fueled by the assassinations of Gandhi, the Kennedys and MLK. Nina joined Ignite Peace's Sister Alice Gerdeman for 10 years of weekly Women in Black downtown vigils to protest the Afghanistan war. After his UC retirement in 2011, as Executive Director for UU Justice Ohio, Howard partnered with Ignite Peace's Allison Reynolds-Berry for the 2015 week-long 83 mile Ohio Walk to Stop Executions from death row to the statehouse. The Tollies' long term financial support includes a final estate plan bequest to Ignite Peace.



Valerie Barrett

Bob Maxwell Peace Builder Award

Valerie became involved in protest organizing in February of 2025, and participated in strategic nonviolence training through Ignite Peace. These lessons helped her organize and lead thousands of people in peaceful anti-authoritarian marches with 50501 (fifty-fifty-one) Cincinnati. Her current focus is Stand Up Cincy, an alliance of local pro-democracy organizations she is helping to build.



Laci Gray

Margaret Fuller Peace Award

Laci is the Program Coordinator at CAIN, a local nonprofit in Northside, Cincinnati, that aims to create food sovereignty for all people and strives to be guest-led. Laci is a strong advocate for immigrants in Cincinnati and has been working with Ignite Peace and the Immigrant Dignity Coalition since 2023. She has educated community members on their constitutional rights, organized dozens of volunteers, and has helped to create a mutual aid based rapid response network for immigrants in the Cincinnati region.



Cincy Galaxy Elite 06 Soccer Team

Youth Justice Award

The Cincy Galaxy Elite 06 soccer team organized for justice this summer when their teammate, Emerson Colindres was detained by ICE.

Knowing Emerson was in jail angered his soccer family, especially his brothers on the team. A group of teammates, led by Joshua Williams, Preston Robinson, Braylen Nies-Williams, Alejandro Tepole, and Collin Schneeman, began speaking to the media, fighting for their friend. Emerson was deported back to Honduras a few weeks after he was detained. His teammates continue to conduct media interviews and share Emerson's story, as well as stories of others like him.



The Nation and the Death Penalty

By - Bekky Baker, Program Director

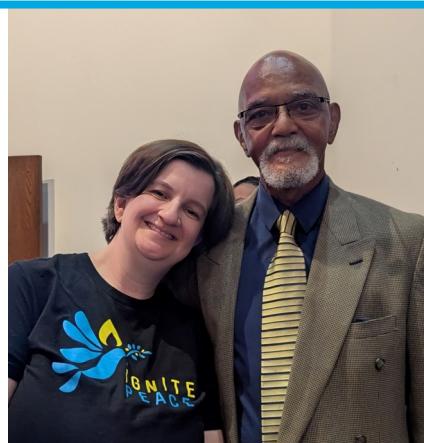
The death penalty remains stagnant in Ohio, while across the country Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee have all resumed executions after multi-year hiatuses. The number of executions this year, 29, has surpassed the total number of executions in 2024. This is the highest number of executions we have seen in one year throughout the past ten years. In South Carolina and Utah they are bringing back firing squads and in Alabama and Louisiana they are using nitrogen gas suffocation. The federal government is calling for a renewal of capital punishment in our nation's capital while parroting the false statement that capital punishment is a deterrent to crime.

Yet, despite all of this, capital punishment is slowly fading from our nation's consciousness. Death sentences have dropped from 310 in 1995 to just 26 in 2024. In the last five years, Ohio has sentenced just two people to death and over the last ten years only 22 people received death sentences. We know we do not need the death penalty and Gallup polling continues to show a nationwide waning of support for capital punishment that echoes Ohio resident's sentiments.

Meanwhile, there is a call to reinstate the death penalty in our nation's capital to be "tough on crime," claiming a death sentence will be a deterrence. Study after study shows that the death penalty is not a deterrent to crime. It is jarring to witness these calls for vengeance and the deployment of the national guard after a multitude of years working to expose and undo the harm of mass incarceration. What does this mean for a state that has garnered bipartisan support for ending the death penalty and hasn't had an execution since 2018?

Despite coming closer than we ever have to ending the death penalty in Ohio, we have still not crossed the finish line. In the meantime, we continue to take the death statute down brick by brick by passing bills like the Serious Mental Illness bill barring people with serious mental illness from being executed and supporting the work of commutations. Creating communities that foster true accountability require us to dismantle our death penalty system and to continue to imagine what new systems will look like along the way.

Elwood Jones's case is finally moving forward! The appeals court just ruled that the prosecution cannot use contested testimony of deceased individuals in a new trial. Connie Pillich stated that the prosecutor's office will not seek to prosecute. Now he is waiting on a decision from the Ohio Supreme Court to see if Judge Wende Cross's order for a new trial will still stand.



Upcoming Events

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

Immigration 101

Tuesday, September 23

6:30 - 7:30 PM

Virtual - Zoom

Immigrant Dignity Coalition

Wednesday, September 24

6:30 - 8:00 PM

Mt. Auburn Pres. & Zoom

Building a Culture of Nonviolence

Wednesday, October 1

5:30 - 7:30 PM

Ignite Peace

Anti-Death Penalty Statewide Working Group

Monday, October 6

12:00 - 1:00 and 6:00 - 7:00 PM

Virtual - Zoom

Immigrant Dignity Coalition

Wednesday, October 22

6:30 - 8:00 PM

Mt. Auburn Pres. & Zoom

Annual Gathering:

40th Anniversary Celebration

Wednesday, October 29

Woodward Theater

Anti-Death Penalty Statewide Working Group

Monday, November 3

12:00 - 1:00 and 6:00 - 7:00 PM

Virtual - Zoom

Strategic Nonviolence in Movements for Change

Wednesday, November 12

5:30 - 7:30 PM

Ignite Peace

Immigrant Dignity Coalition

Wednesday, November 26

6:30 - 8:00 PM

Mt. Auburn Pres. & Zoom



Formerly Intercommunity
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215 E 14th Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

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 Help us to reduce our paper consumption.

Contact: info@IgnitePeace.org to join our e-mail list to receive this newsletter online instead.



Interns Hannah and Kate collected petition signatures as part of a statewide effort to repeal SB1, a bill that targets diversity, equity, and inclusion in colleges. ▲

Barb and Spring represented the Immigrant Dignity Coalition at this year's Festival of Faiths. They shared resources and ways for people to get involved in the coalition. ▼



Powerful in Pink! Jackie, Karen and S. Joyce were among our many Flying Pig team members who took to the pavement this Spring. Together our team raised over \$27,000! ▶

Hundreds of people gathered outside Children's Hospital with signs of support for Ayman Soliman. They shared messages of hope, love and solidarity while demanding justice and mercy for immigrants. ▲



Ignite Peace program director, Bekky Baker, was honored by Ohio Families United Against Police Brutality at their awards ceremony for her dedication to criminal justice reform work. ▲

