

# FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

## June 2015

### Fair: Success; Asylum: Denied

On May 16, Meeting Friends rallied to support the Fair, collaborating with Interfaith Welcome Coalition and RAICES to raise funds for Central American Refugees. On May 18, an immigration judge ordered Lesly Cabrera back to Honduras.

Lesly and her son, Edward, spoke at a FMSA forum about the experiences that led them to flee their home and seek refuge with a family in the U.S. Friends raised funds to buy him a computer to better learn English and complete his high school work. It is cases like theirs that led Meeting to take an active part in refugee relief.

The Fair is one part of the effort to bring attention to the plight of refugees. We put up tents, sold food, drinks, books, jumble, children's items, with all proceeds going to the funds. Guatemalan handicraft sales went to Friends Peace Teams, and guest vendors sold plants, jewelry, herbs and jams, donating 10% to the funds. The combined effort raised over \$1,000 for the bond and travel funds, not counting what IWC collected separately.

Community building was a side benefit of the Fair, both within Meeting and the Interfaith groups, and with our neighbors and the wider community. Refugee families, whose bond has been paid by RAICES, joined the festivities. Our first-hand knowledge of their stories brings us together.

According to the Express News, the judge told Lesly "he found credible her testimony" that she was active in an opposition political part and organized protests, and that she and her son were threatened by the local gang. It was not enough to warrant asylum. Lesley plans to appeal and Edward's case is separate.

So, if Meeting decides to have another Fair next year, we hope the detention centers will be closed and these families will be settled in the U.S. But if not, we will continue our support of immigration reform. If immigration is not the persistent problem, we will surely find another to support.

Gretchen

### Calendar

5. Friday.....  
Memorial meeting  
for Sal D., 6.30,  
meetingroom.  
7. Sunday..... ..  
Potluck lunch at  
11.30 a.m..  
14.Sunday.....  
Meeting for Busi-  
ness, at 11.30.  
World Refugee  
Day Celebration,  
Center for Refugee  
Services 8703  
Wurzbach, 5.00-  
8.00pm.  
19. Friday, Prayer  
Retreat, Haven for  
Hope &  
Celebration Circle,  
3 – 5pm.  
21.Sunday.....  
Contemplative  
Singing, 9.00-9.45  
Forum - Esperanza  
Peace and Justice  
Center, with  
Graciela Sanchez  
24. Wednesday  
..... Midweek  
Meeting, 7.00,  
Gary's home.  
28, Sunday ..... ..  
Forum – The  
Psalms: Favorite  
and Personal.  
Bring your  
favorites for  
worship sharing.

**Re-Cap of the Fair** The Meeting set up tables for books, home baked goods and drinks, children's toys and a long jumble sale. There was a kids' corner under the old mesquite tree where children painted each other's faces and Mimi made portraits.

Next to them was the table for Interfaith Welcome Coalition which raised funds by selling ribbons to tie on to a frame and blow in the wind. RAICES was there with literature. Near the street, Friends Peace Teams sold handicrafts handmade in Guatemala and Celebration Circle was represented by literature and a strolling musician.

Three Guest Vendors had plants & jam, pink grapefruit & juice, and jewelry & herbs. Finally, we sold Protect Refugees tee shirts. In the center of the parking lot, children created chalk art, while two teenage Trash Masters kept the whole place clean and tidy.

The mood was both joyful and playful. The bright tents attracted neighbors and people just driving by. Some friends who came to set up stayed all day. The Sense of the Meeting was: Let's do this again next year. Gretchen



## Personal News

Marian's daughter, Susan, after many years of suffering, died peacefully in a hospice at the beginning of May with Marian present, as she, and Marian, would have wished. We are with Marian in her sadness and in her joy at Susan's peaceful release from suffering. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Marian said, positively, "Today would be Susan's 50th birthday but she probably is too busy re-arranging Heaven's library of science fiction books to notice a birthday."

David said, "We are now visiting Natalie and her parents. One of her first questions was, "Are you going to stay a decent amount of time?" Today, hiking, reading and working on her math in a fun way." We'd enjoy seeing Natalie too. She was a delight.

We see that Jim S is currently working on a research project involving the topic of "what's happening to religion". He is writing about religious shifts, religious decline, religion and violence, etc. (Unless that news is already out of date.)

In his Facebook, Kyle Farmbry (remember Kyle?) says, "The Chancellor just told me that I should drop the "acting" from my title and order new business cards. I guess that means I am officially Dean of the Graduate School at Rutgers Newark."

Gretchen was delighted with the turnout for the Quaker Fair! So many helpers were there. Faith H came from Wimberley with her son Ian and his friend, who were very helpful around all the stalls. We are glad to hear that they are safe and unharmed by the raging Blanco River floods since then. Lori's husband was also tremendously helpful, fixing things whenever they went wrong. Gary was the peripatetic treasurer. Visitors to the fair were probably a mixture of people searching for garage sale bargains, people coming to support the Interfaith Coalition's work for immigrant mothers and their children, and the merely curious..

A memorial meeting will be held for Michelle's brother, Sal on June 5. He died after a long illness which incapacitated him and during which she cared for him. We received a notice that Jude Filler, Friend from Austin who has been holding meetings of the San Antonio Carcinoid Cancer Support group in the meetinghouse, was in MD Anderson hospital in Houston and in need of platelets, blood cells which stop bleeding. We hope she is now in remission.

Visitors! Most of our visitors, of course, are from San Antonio. But, this year so far we have had visitors from Austin, Blairgowrie Scotland, Rio Rancho New Mexico, Boerne, Leadville Colorado, Pocono Lake Pennsylvania,, Boulder Colorado, Corpus Christi and, of course, Jeff Perkins

from Philadelphia who spoke to us about Friends Fiduciary.

## Meeting for Business

Meeting for Business commenced with a traditional advice:

*Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.*

Meeting for Business was short. The minutes of the April meeting were read and approved and the Quaker Fair discussed. Thereafter there was only one item of business, the Treasurer's report. That was very brief, Donations to the RAICES bond fund raised the balance to \$1,300. Rain increased lawn care expenses this month. A computer was bought for immigrant Edward C. No other news was given.

Meeting closed with silence.

## World Refugee Day

MUSIC MAKING: Every Saturday evening from 5 to 7 for the last few months Mar Gutierrez and Dana Clark have been meeting to make music with refugees at the Center for Refugee Services (CRS) at 8703 Wurzbach. We see music as an important tool to help individuals who are new to this country adjust to a new culture and build community. That fits with the mission of CRS, which is to promote the wellness, self-sufficiency, and successful community integration of resettled refugees and their families.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY: On Sunday June 14 from 5:00 to 8:00 pm CRS will host the 6th annual World Refugee Day there. In past years we have heard some amazing performances by refugee groups, and last year the drum circle was a captivating blend of percussion traditions from around the world. This year the drum circle will be even bigger, and you are welcome to participate.

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From AFSC: The U.S. policies of militarizing the border with Mexico put immigrant communities living near the border at particular risk. AFSC works to end these harmful policies and support the individuals who are impacted.

The militarization of the U.S. - Mexico border includes the use of drones, military helicopters and combined use of local and federal law enforcement. This military-style response gets more punitive as border deaths rise and human rights violations abound.

## Mary Dyer

The *Sunday Faith* section of the *SA Express-News* contained a full-page article by Eric Lane, president of the SA chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, on the execution of Mary Dyer in 1660. She, you will remember, was a Quaker executed by John Winthrop and the Puritan colonists for being a Quaker, actually for returning to the colony after a near-execution and being warned that she would be executed on any future occasion.

While she stood then for her freedom to worship in her own, Quaker, way, William Penn later founded Pennsylvania, where people of any faith were free to worship in their own way. Penn also insisted on fair dealings with resident Indians, though Charles II had "given" the land to him. He and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Quakers practiced what they preached. We hope we do. In 1661 the king ordered that the execution of Quakers was to end.

Thankyou, Eric Lane. And Charles II.

## Bed Quota

Have you heard of the "bed quota"?  
From Laura Boyce, of AFSC:

I want to share with you a terrible secret of U.S. immigration policy: immigration detention centers across the U.S. are required to house 34,000 detainees per day. They're mandated to keep those beds full. This means people who get detained in one of the 250 facilities can stay for days, weeks, or even years so the quota is met each day. No other law enforcement agency is forced to operate on a quota system.

I'm sure you can imagine the terrible consequences of the bed quota for immigrants and their families. AFSC, and we, are working to stop detention and deportation of immigrants, which needlessly tears families and communities apart. Many current U.S. immigration policies are unjust—not only the detention and deportation, but also the increased militarization at borders. We strive to point this country on a path away from militarism and toward more peaceful and just immigration policies.

Detention is not the only problem facing immigrants. Your gift to AFSC will also help us create fair immigration policies that protect human rights, provide a path to citizenship, and address the root causes of migration. We face serious obstacles and well-funded opponents, but we know that with perseverance we can succeed. One of the first steps is getting rid of policies that promote inhumane practices and violate human rights.

Please stand with us.

[Editor's note: Giovanni Peri, professor of Economics, reports that "Research on US data shows that high immigration cities experienced higher wage and housing price growth. Immigration had a positive productivity effect on natives overall, but important distributional effects. Highly educated natives enjoyed the largest benefits while the less educated did not gain (but did not lose much either)."

[But economic worries are not the only ones afflicting opponents of immigrants; unfortunately, immigrants frequently, even normally, incite opposition. In the United States, French, Roman Catholics, Irish, Italians, Polish, Chinese, and Japanese, etc., were at one time and another feared for their dilution of "native" Americanism. Australia has had similar experience.

[Detention centers are often operated by private corporations; the centers at Karnes, Pearsall, and Dilley are private. More detainees mean more profit for these companies. ACLU says that the detention of refugees is more expensive than merely to supervise them at large.]

### **Central America – AVP**

We know that Val disappears from Meeting for several months at a time. She is off to Central America encouraging Alternatives to Violence projects across the region. Here are some effects:

"I learned how to live with others and how to listen to the thoughts and ideas of the other guys. And we really like that people like you all visit us and that society sees that we are not what we appear to be – that we collaborate and respect others. Thanks so much!"

Youth in an El Salvador Youth Detention Center

"A time when I felt wanted, loved and respected was . . . when we received our first AVP workshop, as I understood that I am a person of value and that anything is possible for me."

Student in Guatemala

"I am very interested in integrating AVP into the school curriculum. From there, I'd like to introduce it to the public schools at the departmental (State) level. I have experienced success with the youth who have participated in AVP workshops in the way in which they are able to improve their behavior, and therefore, their ability to live more peacefully."

Director, Comunidad Esperanza, Guatemala.

And now Val is leaving as Coordinator of this work, to work nurturing new programs and facilitators. A Working Group governs the work. If you are interested in being part of the group, speak to Val.

## Burundi Situation

In the past month election violence has erupted across Burundi, killing 18 and wounding many more. One week the violence escalated and a man was burned alive during protests.

This central African country has plunged into its worst crisis since the civil war ended nine years ago and left 300,000 dead. A fragile peace is unravelling and our peace-builders are working desperately to prevent more violence. Peace Direct

### Statement on Burundi, Standing for Peace and Reconciliation May 2015

African Great Lakes Initiative of Friends Peace Teams; American Friends Service Committee; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Friends United Meeting; Friends World Committee for Consultation; Quaker Peace Network Africa; Quaker Peace and Social Witness Quaker Service Norway; Quaker United Nations Office, New York

*“We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever; and this is our testimony to the whole world.”*

-George Fox, 1660

“As organizations that are part of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) we are deeply concerned by the situation in Burundi. We grieve the loss of life and injuries that are taking place, as well as the fact that over 100,000 people have fled the country in the last few weeks. Our faith teaches us to respect all humanity and that peace is possible despite even the darkest moments of unrest. Our work in the world leads us to believe in the power of people to come together across lines of conflict.

Throughout the last four centuries Quakers have worked for peace in this world. The Evangelical Friends Church of Burundi, founded over 80 years ago, has engaged in efforts to build a future where all God’s children are able to heal together and live in harmony. Work in health and education were the early contributions of this faith community in Burundi. Over the last twenty years, trauma healing, reconciliation, and violence prevention have been a hallmark of Friends’ work in Burundi.

We know that a path out of the crisis in Burundi is still possible and stand in support of all those who work for a peaceful and just path forward. We hope that you will join us in holding Burundi in the Light and take a moment to prayerfully consider some of the ideas that Burundian friends have told us are important. The following thoughts have particularly resonated with us:

First, it is important for everyone to reject violence and work toward a political resolution to this crisis – a resolution that ensures all Burundians share in the shaping of their country and brings forth a process of deep reconciliation.

Second, we lift up the importance of dialogue. It is vital for people with different views to come together for discussion and seek shared solutions.

Third, in recognition that many Burundians are suffering, we encourage those on all sides of the political divide to be led by a spirit of concern for the well-being of the country, rather than individual ambitions.

Finally, our work has led us to believe that responding to individual moments of crisis is important but true peacebuilding is a long-term endeavor. Thus, we urge everyone to look at ways to support prevention of violence now, as well as ways to support peace- building in the months and years ahead.

Along with Friends in Burundi, we call on all people of faith to continue to pray and know that God can bring healing. We urge you to join us in supporting a political resolution by Burundians that avoids deadly conflict and leads to lasting peace and justice for all. As Hebrews 10:24 directs us, “let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

We will continue to hold all Burundians in the Light and support the work of peacemakers.”

[Note: the statement quoted at the beginning was that of Quakers, among whom Fox was primary,

to Charles II.]

## Miscellany

Faith is Strengthened Through Ceremony, says an article in Foreign Policy. It cites a number of examples of “minority” faiths. Is that what we do? Sitting silently? Centering down? We tend to think of ritualistic ceremonies as empty forms. But for many they presumably have a deep meaning which we don’t feel.

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Judge Roy Moore is the Chief Justice of the state of Alabama, but he actually said that “God’s law” could be used to overrule the U.S. Supreme Court. He apparently sent out a letter defying a federal judge's ruling, ordering probate judges not to give out [gay marriage] licenses, and he couldn't care what the U.S. Supreme Court has to say. - (Huffington Post, 2/9/15)

Now he’s saying that Justices Ginsburg and Kagan should be impeached for presiding over a same-sex marriage ceremony. Interestingly, Quakers have argued that they cannot take up arms as draftees as it is against God’s law. But they did not argue that God’s law superseded the constitution in an American court of law. just in God’s heavenly court. It took American laws allowing conscientious objection for religious reasons to grant them exemption.

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The United States is going through a time of transition. The New York Times recently reported two difficulties. One is that of the police, everywhere, who are having to deal with a decreasing respect and political influence for their unions. The other, with a specific Texas example, is the increasing number of Muslims. There are now 200,000 in the Dallas area

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Emma Hohenstein, writing in the Friends Journal of her sojourn in Morocco, quoted a Moroccan Muslim: Nawaz said it quite finally, “No religion, whether it’s Islam, Christianity, or any idea based on Scripture or texts, is a religion of anything. Islam is a religion. It will be what Muslims make of it. And it is the sum total of the interpretation that Muslims give to it. So it’s not a religion of war. It’s not a religion of peace.” In that sense we can see that Christianity has been a religion of peace and at other times a religion of war when people made it that way. Our leading is to invoke peace.

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What is your opinion of heaven and hell? Is there an afterlife? And what are the qualifications for going to either of these destinations? Is there anywhere in between? In the human world there are many gradations between the highest reward and the direst punishment. Does God recognize such gradations?

And what do you mean by the term “spiritual?” Without any required doctrine Friends are likely to contain members of many different beliefs. What are yours?

Let us know (the editorial “us,” meaning me.)

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“Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.”

Should we delete these words from the Statue of Liberty? Or add a disclaimer, “Annulled in 1962,” or some such date? Or can we just shrug and say, “Well, that was then, in New York.”?

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“Too many fathers who never see their daughters . . .” From a poem by Sterling Duns on QuakerSpeak. A sad, sad, truth. Too many daughters who never know their fathers. Sons, too.

Anthropologists did much work in determining the important kinship systems of people around the world. In importing Africans into slavery here, America destroyed their kinship systems. Now we are destroying our own. Those sons and daughters spoken of by Sterling Duns

have no kin to speak of, unless their maternal relatives take them in and welcome them. The union of families through the marital union of their daughters and sons is now rare. Not least by the movement of family members thousands of miles away but still within this continental nation.

What will the effect of same-sex marriage be on this?

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Rabbi Michael Lerner, co-founder of the Network of Spiritual Progressives,, released the following statement:

"We recognize . . . that it will only be through external pressure that Israelis will be able to move their right-wing government to consider seriously the steps they would need to take to reverse their current direction and provide Palestinians with the rights that we Jews correctly struggled to achieve for ourselves in creating the State of Israel. The chances of that pressure emerging are increased now that the Pope has taken the moral leadership to recognize Palestine. Mazel tov – congratulations--to this inspired Pope!"

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As Quakers, we do not celebrate any particular day, holding that all days are equally sacred. So, can we celebrate Mothers' Day? It has no religious meaning, but it implies that we don't remember Mothers the rest of the year, so let's do it today! We should do it all the year. It's the same principle.

So then, what about Midsummer's Day, Labor Day, Hallowe'en, birthdays?

### **Gathering in the Divine Mystery:**

Friend Michelle Martin asks us these questions:

"During worship, prayer, or social witness do you ever feel drawn into a profound spiritual unity with God and others?

Has regular spiritual practice led to a sense of deeper grounding in God, Christ, or the Light in the activities of your daily life?

Have you had spiritual experiences that involve God's love, heavenly peace, inward voices, visions, senses, knowings, leadings, or fiery spiritual energy?

Would you like to enter a deeper communion in which you might hear and discern more clearly the leadings of the Spirit?

Have you found ways to gather with Friends who share similar experiences and spiritual longings?"

### **And — FCNL in Burundi**

My friend in Rwanda emailed me last week that his refugee camp has doubled in size almost overnight as Burundians seek shelter across the border. A colleague of FCNL's in Burundi told our lobbyist Theo Sittler that he fears another violent chapter in "the country's fratricidal history." These are warning signs. . . 300,000 were killed next door in Burundi during a 12-year civil war. Now we have the imperative to act before violence breaks out.

The tensions are not new. FCNL staff have been working with Quakers and other peacemakers in Burundi for years to support local peacebuilding efforts, protect space for free media and encourage the U.S. government to act. Two years ago, we warned the administration and Congress that the 2015 elections could lead to violence.

Now the situation has gotten much worse: The current president decided two weeks ago to seek a third term in violation of an agreement; an estimated 40,000 refugees are streaming into neighboring countries; the government has arrested scores of people and shut down radio stations and social media. And the Supreme Court in Burundi declared the president had the right to run for a third term. But it did so to the point that a dissenting judge fled the country before the ruling.

The U.S. State Department has acted quickly to condemn the president's violation of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. But the U.S. can and should do more -- see FCNL's

recommendations to Congress and the administration We hope President Obama will speak out in support of efforts in Burundi and the region to address this crisis peacefully.

We have the opportunity to act to support those working for peace in Burundi before the crisis turns into blood bath.

Sincerely, Jim Cason, Associate Executive Secretary for Strategic Advocacy

## Poems

Cleanse yourself of the bloody curse  
that prowls this aching land.  
Spirits come – it is your night -  
and who knows how to stand?  
But a wind with tender rain  
will soothe your desert soul,  
and a voice you cannot name  
will guide and make you whole.

*Mark*

## This Month's Query

*Do we foster an understanding of our Quaker identity — faith, testimonies and practice – such that all may find spiritual nourishment and growth?*

*Meeting for Worship is held on Sunday at 10 a.m., followed by refreshments and a Forum discussion at 11.30, usually lasting until about 12.45. Children are invited to join worship for the first fifteen minutes, after which they may go to join with the Young Friends program. Child care is available during Forum.*

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