

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

November 2015

A Forum on Gunmen

What would we do if a man with a gun entered our meeting? Following the warnings to Quaker Haverford and s Bryn Mawr colleges (see below), Meeting held a forum on how we should deal with this. We have been asked to give here an account of the forum

Much of the advice on nonviolence concerns demonstrations, achieving some goal, like King and Gandhi or reasons for adopting nonviolence – pragmatic, moral, or philosophical?

But, given the warnings to Bryn Mawr and Haverford, how should Quakers confront a man with a gun? Ken had practiced nonviolence only once, in a March on Washington. Meeting teenagers, had a banner. A man grabbed it and ran off. What should a Quaker do? Ken, unable to think of anything else,, just spoke to him, without any visible effect. But there was no gun. Janet once defused an argument on a London bus; she had diverted their attention away from each other to her.. Does this indicate an approach?

Suppose a man walks into the meetingroom right now,, holding a gun, What would our thoughts be?

Would our nonviolence justify tackling him, wresting the gun away from him? This might be a way to prevent greater violence by him. And we have notified police of graffiti, meaning that armed police have entered our campus...

What should we do, collectively, as a meeting, here and now?. In Charleston, people in quiet bible study were attacked by someone who had sat with them.

A few years ago the Congregation of the Goddess met here, severely threatened and scared.. We invited them to come but with no armed guard. We said we would guard them. Four or five of us skulked in the undergrowth, watching for an intruder. But what would we have done? He might have been armed. Ken said he had had no idea.

So, if a man entered, with a gun, should we rise, and stand in front of him, as Quakere in Britain at a LYM meeting did, when a man rose and spoke obtrusive words? Should one of us rise and say, “Shoot me, not these others”? “ Should we speak calmly, welcoming him? Ask him what he needs? And who should do this? Our Clerk? Or should we sit in silence, heads bowed,, hoping he will be calmed by our silence? What would AVP do?? HROC, the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities project in Kenya/

There is advice, to individuals, from the internet. “Talk to the shooter. If you have nowhere to go, nowhere to hide and no other options, your best bet will be to talk to the shooter. Do not beg for your life or try to get him to feel sorry for

Calendar

1. Sunday
Potluck lunch at 11.30 a.m..

8. Sunday
Forum – Social Inequality and Residential Economic Segregation,
with Jim Spickard.

15. Sunday.....
Meeting for Business, 11.30.

Weekend 20-22. ...,
Silent retreat at Lebh Shomea.
SCYM Representatives Meeting at Greene Family Camp

25. Wednesday
Midweek Meeting, 7.00, Gary’s home.

29, Sunday
Forum –. End of Life and Last Wishes,
with Susan Schleicher

We want you to follow the Spirit, which we have sought to follow, but which must be sought anew in every generation.

The treasurer reported that e had paid for repairs to the HVAC, flooring, and for rekeying, throwing the Sinking Fund into negative and reducing Operating Cash. Our SCYM contributions will be made in October. Other expenses are typical but monthly contributions to Meeting are 10% below budget..

The Clerk brought a concern regarding further consideration of the previous week's forum on our response should a gunman enter Meeting.. A decision as to how to discuss this fur will be made later. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee report concerned the need for funds to support immigrant families on their next journey. The committee has agreed to lead forums on the following topics:

Nov Economic inequality in San Antonio.

Dec Update on the refugee situation.

Jan: Work on anti-racism.

Feb: Environmantal concerns: Reserch and where we're going.

Mar: Environmental Concerns: What we can do.

The committee will also review Meeting's donations to other organizations. The report of the Ministry and Oversight Committee concerned Friends' expressed preferences for afterthoughts after meeting for worship. Susan will lead a forum on last wishes before death. Friends have expressed these on a Meeting form but these are mislaid. They must be found and stored safely, and reviewed every two years. Gretchen will be holding a potluck study group each month at 623 Mission st., supper at 6, discussion at 7, exploring the Quaker faith.

It was agreed that handicrafts could be included in the December book exchange arranged by Michelle.

Meeting closed in silence.

Immigrant Watch

Georgia Detention Watch is calling for the closure of Stewart Detention Center The #ShutDownStewart Coalition is honored to have the support of SOA Watch again this year, drawing the connecting between US militarization in Latin America and immigrant detention/deportation in the U.S.

The vigil will begin with speakers and musicians at the Lumpkin town square. After a 1.7 mile procession, the vigil will conclude with directly impacted voices and musicians at the gate of Corrections Corporation of America's Stewart Detention Center, named one of the 10 worst immigration detention centers in the United States.

Gretchen, Lee, and David have a wonderful article in the October *Friends Journal*. In it they describe how Meeting became involved, with RAICES, the Interfaith Welcome Coalition, and St. Mary's University University law students in aiding refugees from violence in central America. Fathers are separated from their families, and mothers and children are detained in inhumane conditions at Karnes and Dilley. Gary has been conducting interviews with the families to document their fear and desperation. Meeting has been part of the larger group of San Antonio churches involved in this humanitarian work.

Pathway to Peace

The Quaker Public Policy Institute will hold a meeting and lobby day in Washington on November 12-15. Go to http://fcn.org/events/annual_mee ting/ 2015/ to find out more.

"Last year, we were over 430 strong as we lobbied for diplomacy with Iran — and it worked. The success of the Iran deal is a testament to. . . the pro-peace, pro-diplomacy movement. You

made a difference. Join us as we continue our Quaker witness and lobby to build a pathway to peace. . . .

This November, we'll be asking Congress to prevent violence before it starts. The U.S. too often waits until war or atrocities begin, and then it only provides military solutions. But it doesn't have to be that way. We believe that by paying attention to warning signs, the international community can respond before deadly conflict erupts."

Miscellany

In London there's a police constable, Gary Collins, who has amazing face recognition. In a police van once, a gang leader asked who had recognized him. Collins raised his hand. The man said, "Man everybody in prison is talking about you!" Nowadays, when they meet on the street, the gang leader asks Collins to say who those with him are. When Collins gets them right they do a high five.

That's in England. In America Collins perhaps would never have admitted to recognizing the gang leader. He would surely risk being shot later. But in England police and, presumably, gangs, don't shoot. Guns are rare. And, apparently, gangs and cops can greet each other on the street.

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Columbus Day, a day of tragedy for Indians from the Arctic to the Antarctic Circle. Though Pope Francis may feel otherwise, an Argentine, where few Indians exist to express themselves. Yet, Francis did not listen to the complaints of the Indians of California when he canonized Junipero Serra.

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For-profit prisons. And now, for-profit colleges, criticized for substandard care. The words "for-profit" are getting a bad reputation. The USA grew to its present size and wealth by the efforts of men for profit. Yet now we face gross inequality, with a wealthy 1% gaining most from the profits.

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Deepak Chopra wrote his book, "God," about a series, through history, of seekers after God. In it, he says, "the Baal Shem Tov [founder of Hasidism] uplifted the simplest of lives . . . The poorest are the servants of God and the Baal Shem Tov believed that to live was to serve God." Chopra goes on to say, "We no longer see the poor as God's beloved children; a gloss of shame and pity covers our eyes when we look on unending poverty."

The poor loved by Baal Shem Tov were peasants. How would he look upon our urban homeless, alcoholics and mentally ill who land up on the streets, people evicted from their homes, those losing jobs, students in debt, and refugees? Krugman reports that Danish citizens, supported by a welfare state, are also happier than those elsewhere. Does this disqualify them, and perhaps us, from an easy route to God's love?

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"Hispanics" are mostly descendants of the victims of the Hispanic conquerors who imposed their language on them, even to the point of giving them that name. This conceals the many cultures of the Americas south of the Rio Grande.

But the cultures north of the Rio Grande are concealed also under the name "native Americans." The name "America" is not theirs. It was brought by the conquerors of North America and is now imposed on them.

Yet how can we name them collectively? They needed no name for the inhabitants of the continent. Is there a name they would now prefer? Jonathan Hook tells us that they accept the name "Indians," from Columbus's speaking of the first inhabitants he saw as being "in dioa." Yet even this is a European import. We use the name "Inuit" to refer to the peoples spread across the

Arctic Circle from Alaska to Greenland, and this is probably justified, though it originates in one area.. They regard “Eskimo” as pejorative.

“Friendmarcelle,” on the eve of her visit to Philadelphia, in the streets of Lower Merion Township, near where Pope Francis would soon be eating and sleeping for a night: I stopped to say a prayer. It was a prayer of gratitude that this pope was making God's love, forgiveness, and presence more tangible for people. As I prayed, I realized that in praying for his visit, I was in some measure joining with him in his desire to make God's mercy and healing more available across the earth.”

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A Friend (not here) has drawn up this to-do list for his Meeting:

Human rights for women  
Emerging leadership of youth and women  
Abolishing slave trading and sexual abuse  
Ending the for-profit prison industry  
Pursuing racial equality  
Reducing the media culture of fear promoted against Muslims  
Climate change and the preservation of natural resources  
Supporting the rights of Indigenous people to protect their sacred lands from degradation  
Ending war and poverty and human rights abuses.

That list is exhausting even to read it!

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After WWII, the present Director of the British Museum was sent by his parents to school in Hamburg for three months. “I was terrifically conscious that this was a city the R.A.F. had totally destroyed and the British had occupied,” he said, referring to the Royal Air Force. “I was expecting silent hostility, but quite the reverse.” There was admiration for the British and the decency of their occupation, he said, “and this was beginning of the puzzle of how the Germans live with their history.”

Not decent, we're sure, only the British. The USA contributed so much to restoring the whole of Europe after WWII. The aftermath of WWI was quite different, with Germany suffering from the “peace” terms, and electing Hitler as a consequence. “Decency” reflects decency. That of God in everyone.

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In a volume named *Peace* published by the San Antonio PeaceCENTER, Arun Gandhi writes a preface. In this he speaks of those who “possess” the truth regarding God, and those who “pursue” it. We do not possess it, but neither do we pursue it, racing to catch it. We seek it in silent stillness.

## **Guns on Campus?**

Quaker Haverford and Quaker-beginnings Bryn Mawr colleges, in the suburbs of Philadelphia, received warnings that threats had been issued to schools in Philadelphia. This news article in the *NY Times* raises the question of what Quaker principles have to say about protecting students and staff from a threatening and unknown gunman, not yet recognized. Anxious to know, we read on. But, apart from an irrelevant comment from the joint director of safety for both schools, there was no other information.

There is always the question, for Quaker teachers,, as to what they should do if such a threat enters their classroom. Stand before him to shield the students? Speak calming words? Assure him that he is not, by Quaker principles, about to be shot? But what should a whole school do? It is one thing for police to apprehend an intruder. It is something quite other to incite a gunbattle between police and that intruder.

## **Nonviolence: Public protest**

From a Scottish Friend: "As Friends we have never been satisfied that corporate statements and personal witness are enough. We have always sought to give a practical expression to our faith. Action has taken various forms and has included public protest, the relief of suffering, reconstruction and the removal of the causes of war through mediation, reconciliation, disarmament, building the institutions of peace, promoting social justice, and getting at the roots of conflict and violence in our personal behaviour.

I do not wish to deny that on April 4th, the anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, I was inside the Faslane Submarine Base, and that I was there as a deliberate act. However, I pled guilty to the charges because had I done otherwise I would have been guilty of far greater crimes against my conscience and against humanity.

If I may, I would like to outline very briefly the reasons for so acting, not so much as mitigation of guilt, but rather as a declaration of intent, for as long as those bases remain, I must continue to act as my conscience guides.

My charge is that I entered a protected area without authority or permission. My claim is that I had authority – the authority of my Christian conviction that a gospel of love cannot be defended by the threatened annihilation of millions of innocent people. It can never be morally right to use these ghastly weapons at any time, whether first, or as unthinkable retaliation after we ourselves are doomed.

I acted also with the authority of the nameless millions dying of starvation now because we choose to spend £11.5 billion on Trident whilst a child dies every 15 seconds.

I am further authorised by my 13-year-old Vietnamese god-daughter whose guardian I am. She was adopted and brought to Scotland to take her away from the unspeakable horror of the Vietnam war. If all that I have done is to bring her closer to the nuclear holocaust, I stand convicted by her of the most cynical inhumanity.

I am charged under an Act giving control and disposal of land to the Queen, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, the Commons assembled in Parliament and eventually the Secretary of State. I believe the world is God's creation. This beautiful, delicate world in all its infinite wonder is threatened with extinction. That to me is blasphemy.

And so, out of love, love of my god-daughter, love of my world, I had to act. If I see that base at Faslane as morally wrong and against my deepest convictions – as wrong as the gas chambers of Auschwitz, as wrong as the deliberate starvation of children – then by keeping silent, I condone what goes on there.

On April 4th, I made a choice. I chose to create the dream of another way. My only crime is not working hard enough, or long enough, or soon enough towards the fulfilment of the dream. If my actions were a crime, then I am guilty."

Helen Steven, 1984

## **Teaching Morality**

David Brooks, in the NY Times, speaks of how universities, religiously founded, taught spirituality and morality but lost their basis and became secular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And he says they are now having to reconsider this, to justify their existence in a world of digital courses taken at a distant computer.

This leads us to the thought – how much better a nation, then, was the USA in the 19<sup>th</sup> century than at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup>? It had practiced slavery, supporting it with religion, until a savage and bloody civil war ended it, both sides supported by religion. It made war on Indian nations, subduing them, seizing their sacred land, and in some cases forcing them to move, as in the terrible Trail of Tears. It expanded its territory by war.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was striving to end the Jim Crow vestiges of slavery. It had fought wars, with justification and without. It had faced and accepted moral arguments for sexual equality. It faced down a brutal Communist dictatorship, which succumbed. It policed the world, but with nuclear weapons.

How much worse was this nation in 1999?

## **Prisons for Profit**

For more than a decade, AFSC has worked in Arizona to end mass incarceration.

Like many states, Arizona hires for-profit prison companies to manage its correctional facilities. "At AFSC, we believe that private corporations should never benefit from locking people up. In our years of work, we've seen how prison privatization puts the pursuit of profits ahead of the needs of taxpayers, people who are incarcerated, and prison employees.

In July, a series of riots in a privately run prison in Kingman, Arizona, shed further light on the true cost of incarceration for profit. Incensed by years of mistreatment by the company that managed the facility, Management and Training Corp. (MTC), prisoners took out their frustration on the prison itself. The damage rendered several units uninhabitable, and thousands of prisoners were evacuated to other facilities.

AFSC released an investigative report on the riots, based on interviews with prisoners and staff. Our report revealed several contributing factors to the riots, including chronic understaffing at the prison, poor management of the facility, and mistreatment of prisoners. The report detailed:

- Insufficient medical care for prisoners

- Inadequate cooling in the facility, where temperatures average nearly 100 degrees in July

- Repeated sanctions of MTC by the state for failing to fill staff vacancies

- High turnover for prison guards at Kingman, who are among the lowest paid in the state

- Mistreatment of prisoners by guards, who relied on pepper spray and other heavy-handed approaches to discipline prisoners

After the release of our report, Arizona's governor canceled the contract with MTC.

Throughout the U.S., AFSC is supporting communities that are working to end mass incarceration in many important ways. I encourage you to read the latest issue of *Quaker Action* to learn more about these efforts and how you can get involved. "

Caroline Isaacs, AFSC

From *Quaker Action* : The Quaker Network to End Mass Incarceration seeks to contribute to the nationwide effort to end mass incarceration by achieving the following specific goals:

- Facilitate an exchange of resources, programs, stories, and information to help each individual and organization become as effective as possible.

- To help individuals and organizations readily find others who are active in their area of interest or who are working in their geographic area.

- To facilitate respectful, thoughtful, dynamic discussions through which we learn from each other.

- As initiatives emerge, to support them through joint campaigns and strategy.

- To get involved, please visit [QNEMI.org](http://QNEMI.org).

## **ATCF Lives (Austin tan Cerca la Frontera)**

Dear ATCFistas,

"Last Thursday, Suzanne, her brother, Jimmy, and son Pascual and I packed up a car full of school supplies, stuffed animals, and baby items and headed South to Piedras Negras. The temperature broke 100 degrees--here in Austin and on the border.

After a warm welcome at the CFO office, we sat around two long tables and shared a meal. Each CFO organizer who joined us for lunch contributed her own home-made dish. We laughed

and listened and learned. They shared with us their experiences, strength, and hope as women who are becoming more and more empowered to defend their dignity and rights. They talked about the ways in which finding their own power as women serves as a catalyst for inspiring unity with their children and with other women at work.

We accompanied them on two house visits to deliver some of the schools supplies. Yohana, the fiercely dedicated woman in the pink CFO organizer shirt, handed the bags to the children and reached out to connect with her co-worker, now a great-grandmother. This is what solidarity looks like.

Thanks to the generosity of two Methodist Churches and our organizers. Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera was able to once again provide school supplies for 53 schoolchildren in Piedras Negras and Ciudad Acuña. "Although children are the direct beneficiaries of this project, its primary purpose is to benefit the Comité Fronterizo de Obreros (CFO). This is in keeping with ATCF's policy of 'solidarity, not charity.' Many single mothers make up the workforce of the maquiladoras, and although they desire education for their children, the wages they receive are not enough to cover school supplies. When the CFO provides these supplies, it strengthens their community." Adelante, adelante, que la lucha es constante.

In solidarity,

Bianca, Interim Director

(Josefina will be back in October!)"

Josefina, you will remember, was secretary of AFSC's regional office until it closed. She tells us she is now a grandmother.

Should there now be an SATCF?

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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