

Baltimore Quaker Peace & Justice Committee

An Occasional Missive / September 2015

Baltimore Quaker Peace & Justice Committee works to keep the peace testimony a living concern and responds to problems of social inequities and human needs.

Friends' Peace Testimony

Friends have a settled intention to practice love and to make peace. Since their beginnings over 300 years ago, Friends have been led by their commitment to the ideal of peace to renounce wars and violence. We are called as peacemakers to deal with the violence and aggression within ourselves, to find ways of living in harmony with ourselves and neighbors. Friends need to wage peace boldly and positively. The promotion of peaceful methods of conflict resolution, of peace education and research, of international exchanges, of world-wide standards of human rights all are positive ways.

Healing Justice:

American Friends are asking, **What does it mean, individually and collectively, to create a strategic nonviolent revolution against injustice—not only against the prison system, but against America's recurring forms of racialized social control?**

The U.S. imprisons more people than any other country in the world, and the effects have been devastating for people on both sides of the prison walls—destroying families and communities instead of moving our society closer to peace and healing. Momentum is growing across the country to overhaul our criminal justice system. Here in Baltimore we are working to support racial equity in our courts and communities:

- **Vigil Theme: Black Lives Matter/All Lives Matter**

The theme for the weekly peace vigils during rush hour on Charles Street continues to be: Quakers Stand for Peace & Justice: When Black Lives Matter, All Lives Matter.

To say that "black lives matter" does not mean that black lives are more important than other lives, or that all lives don't matter. The systemic

devaluing of Black lives calls us to bear witness that oppression takes many forms.

We have taken up this witness in response to the reality that racial oppression continues in our city and many others around the nation, and that oppression continues to take ever-changing forms, built on a national legacy of slavery, racism and legal structures that perpetuate inequity and injustice.

- **Court Watch; Campaign to End Money Bail in Maryland**

The Peace and Social Justice Committee continues with its weekly trips to observe dockets of the Baltimore District Court, typically on Fridays, with a particular concern to observe the Court's treatment of accused individuals who lack the means to post bail. This concern arose for Baltimore area Quakers after the shockingly high bails set for some youth who were arrested during the protests following the death of Freddie Gray in police custody, in April 2015.

The Committee continues to study the matter, under the concern that

- the money-bail system in Baltimore and Maryland discriminates unfairly against poor individuals and communities;
- pre-trial detention imposes often devastating consequences for households in the forms of job loss, lost wages, disrupted schooling, and more;
- the current system makes millions for the private bail bond industry but fails to assess risks to the public, and
- more fair, accurate, and cost-effective risk assessment measures are being adopted in many other states.

Friends gather at Stony Run Meeting House and travel to watch different dockets at varying locations of the Baltimore District Court, including bail review, violations of parole, and expungement hearings. On some occasions, the presiding judge has met with Friends after the docket concludes, to discuss Friends' concerns regarding bail review, bail bonds, and alternatives to present practices. The court watchers report their observations to the Peace and Social Justice Committee.

If you are interested to join in the Court Watch, [contact](#) Kathryn Monnell or Barbara Bezdek for the next scheduled watch dates and locations.

Learn More:

Bail in America: Unsafe, Unfair, Ineffective – <http://www.pretrial.org/the-problem/>

[Quaker Network to End Mass Incarceration](#) seeks to facilitate an exchange of resources among individuals and organizations; connect people with advocacy efforts in their area; and organize joint campaigns in our communities and states. Contact Lucy Duncan, AFSC director of Friends Relations: lduncan@afsc.org, 215-627-2667.



DOCUMENT [America behind bars \[infographic\]](#)

Download the infographic to see the costs of mass incarceration on communities across the U.S.

STORY [From slavery to mass incarceration](#)

AFSC's Kamau Franklin discuss why addressing America's prison problem means confronting our racist past and present.

Learn about racial inequalities in Maryland's criminal justice system, from Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, <http://www.ma4jr.org/racial-inequality/>:

- **Graphs tell the story.** The Prison Policy Initiative published [graphs](#) showing Maryland's incarceration rate and the comparison between white and black persons in the incarcerated population.
- **Mass incarceration and communities of color.** This [article](#) reviews the current trends and impact of [mass incarceration](#) on communities of color, with a focus on criminal justice policy and practice.

Weekly Vigil, Monthly Potluck, Peace videos.

We sponsor a video series on peace in the new American century, the first Friday of every month, following the weekly Peace & Social Justice Vigil (Fridays 5-6 pm on

Charles Street in front of the meeting house) and a potluck supper. Here are the movies for the next three months:

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2015: *CRUDE* (USA, 2009, 100 min.) is directed by Joe Berlinger. This documentary follows the progress during 2006 and 2007 of a \$27 billion class action lawsuit brought against the Chevron Corporation following the drilling of the Lago Agrio oil field, a case described by activists as an “Amazon Chernobyl.” The plaintiffs of the class action lawsuit are 30,000 Ecuadorians living in the Amazonian rainforest who claim their ancestral homeland has been polluted by the oil industry.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2015: *NOSTAGLIA FOR THE LIGHT* (Spain, 2010, 90 min.) is a documentary by Patricio Guzmán which addresses the lasting impacts of Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship. Guzmán focuses on the similarities between astronomers researching humanity’s past, in an astronomical sense, and the struggle of many Chilean women who still search, after decades, for the remnants of their relatives executed during the dictatorship. The director narrates the documentary, which includes interviews and commentary from those affected by the coup and from astronomers and archeologists.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2015 -- GENTRIFICATION K[NOT] (USA, 2013, 47 min.) is a documentary by Baltimore filmmaker Jude Lombardi. She is an activist, social worker, sociologist, and former professor. The film explores the meaning of the term *gentrification* and how it functions as an element of a system that displaces people from their communities during the Baltimore Quaker Peace & Justice Committee

More [Peace videos](#) are described here.

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## **Take a Stand: Torture Is A Moral Issue**

Please join the over 10,000 people who have already endorsed the following [Statement of Conscience of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture](#). Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions hold dear. It degrades everyone involved -- policy-makers, perpetrators and victims. It contradicts our nation's most cherished ideals. Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable. Nothing less is at stake in the torture abuse crisis than the soul of our nation. What does it signify if torture is condemned in word but allowed in deed? Let America abolish torture now -- without exceptions. [Find out more...](#)