



# 2020 Annual Report



**American Friends  
Service Committee**  
**ARIZONA OFFICE**

# Message from the Director:



It is the ultimate understatement to say 2020 was a difficult year. And as with most social problems, those who are most marginalized are the most vulnerable. COVID19 demonstrated this in the starkest of ways, with huge breakouts inside prisons all over the state and devastating social, economic, and health impacts on communities of color.

AFSC-Arizona was among the first to sound the alarm about the unique threats the virus posed - organizing sign-on letters to the Governor, Corrections, and the Health Department demanding immediate action to protect people inside. We reached out to networks of incarcerated people and their families to collect real-time information about the availability of masks, soap, and protective equipment inside prisons. We offered family members information on the virus and how to stay safe. When it became clear our state government was refusing to act, we brought people together to do what the state would not—collect donations of soap, feminine hygiene products, and toiletries and sent them to prison units across the state.

This response is an expression of the core value of our work:

**We belong to each other. We take care of each other.  
No matter who, no matter what.**

This is the heart of abolition - a radical love that acknowledges the inherent worth and dignity of all people.

In the midst of a deadly pandemic, we demonstrated our communities' capacity for care. When faced with the stark reality of systemic racism in policing and other systems, we stood in solidarity with worldwide uprisings that affirmed the preciousness of Black lives. In a year of divisive politics, we saw voters turn out in record numbers to call for change to our drug laws.

**This is the core of our vision for a world without destructive systems of incarceration.** We can and will create a culture in which substance abuse and mental illness are treated instead of punished; where harm is repaired for all; where accountability means healing, building community; and restoring trust. This is the world we all deserve to live in.

**Please join us in making this vision a reality in 2021.** Your generous support helps us respond to the needs of those most impacted by the current system while cultivating their leadership in creating something better. Thank you for being part of our community of care.

With hope and gratitude,

Caroline Isaacs, Program Director



# Expanding Our Work

We are grateful for the generous support of these foundations:



## Introducing Enrique - ReFraming Justice Organizer



In September, we were thrilled to welcome **Enrique Olivares-Pelayo** as the new **ReFraming Justice Organizer** in the Tucson office! Enrique has previously worked in Harm Reduction Outreach as a team member of Sonoran Prevention Works. His experiences as a formerly incarcerated person living with substance use disorder informed his work as an advocate for marginalized people and those impacted by our criminal punishment system. He is currently pursuing a double major in English and Creative Writing through the University of Arizona's Honors College, and is a proud Scholar in the Ronald E. McNair Achievement Program. Enrique brings his lived experience and deep understanding of the brokenness of the current system, as well as his vision, passion, and vibrant energy to the work.

## Responding to COVID19

At the outset of the COVID19 pandemic, AFSC-Arizona established two goals for our work in response to the unique threats of COVID19 in state prisons:

1. Protect people in prison.
2. Get people out.

We developed a multifaceted strategy to meet these goals. We collected documentation from families and people inside state prisons that basic hygiene supplies like soap, disinfectant, and toilet paper were not being distributed.

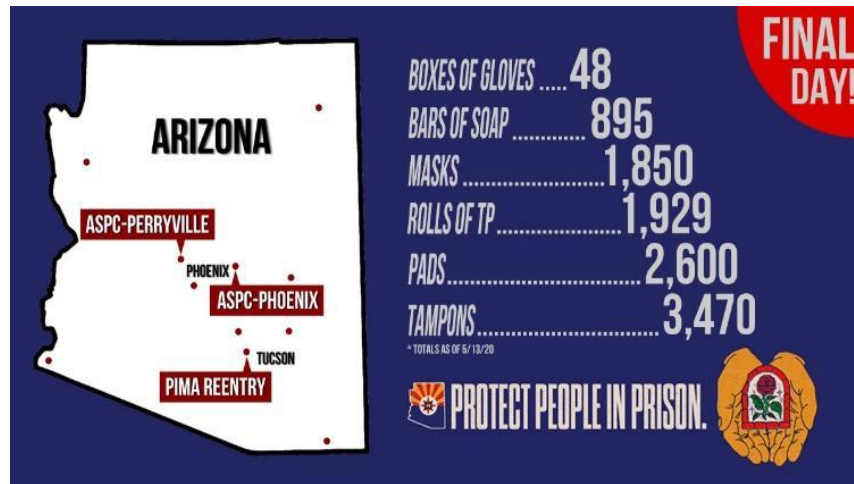


In addition to our advocacy efforts to hold the Arizona Department of Corrections accountable and ask the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to intervene, we felt it was important to mirror for people inside prison what many in our communities were doing on the outside—sharing resources, offering help, and showing care and concern. Mutual aid is a way for families of incarcerated people and others who care to take concrete action to solve a problem.





Over the course of this campaign, which ran from April 14 through May 13, we delivered to three different sites a total of:



## Masks Mandate - #MaskUpAZ #NoExceptions

An executive order from Governor Ducey on June 17<sup>th</sup>, lifted the ban on cities and counties from being able to implement their own local coronavirus restrictions. Within the week, 52 municipalities enacted a mask mandate to protect citizens against the spread of the coronavirus. The Arizona Department of Corrections, however, continued to punish people inside who wore masks.

AFSC-Arizona initiated a plan to reach out to the leaders of cities and counties that hosted state prison facilities and ask them to pressure ADC to extend the order to include people inside the facilities. A formal letter was written and dispersed to the City Council members, Mayors, and County Boards of Supervisors, on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.

Using Governor Ducey and the AZDHS's own logo, we recreated our own to communicate that all people should have the opportunity to protect themselves, especially those who cannot socially distance in prison. We appropriated his hashtag - #MaskUpAZ – and added an additional one to say #NoExceptions, that all people in Arizona should have this opportunity.



*Social Media Image distributed by Arizona Government*



*Social Media Image distributed by AFSC-Arizona*

We received numerous responses over the next week, such as this one, from the Mayor of Goodyear, where the Perryville Women's prison is located:

*Thank you for reaching out and bringing this issue to the Mayor's attention. She shares your concern about the health and safety of all residents of Goodyear, including the inmates and employees within Perryville State Prison. Unfortunately, the purview to regulate policies at that facility falls to the state. To that end, the Mayor has been in contact with Governor Ducey's Office to advocate for the issuance of masks to all of those residing in Perryville. It is our understanding that his office is working to ensure masks become available to all inmates in state facilities by the end of this week. The Mayor will continue to be diligent to ensure that this request comes to fruition. Again, thank you for making us aware of this matter.*

One June 29<sup>th</sup>, six days following our letter to local leaders and twitter storm, Governor Ducey announced at his weekly COVID19 press conference that masks would be provided to and distributed in all ADC prison facilities.

## ReFraming Justice

### ReFraming Justice Leadership Cohort

The ReFraming Justice project, conceived and led by AFSC-Arizona program coordinator Dr. Grace Gámez, amplifies the voices of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people and their families, and provides participants with tools and opportunities to lead the movement to end mass criminalization and incarceration in Arizona. In this spirit, AFSC-Arizona created an **advisory committee of directly impacted experts** who provide valuable input and direction on the work that we do.



A section of RFJ Leaders (from left) Charlene Schwickrath, Ashley Cooper, John Fabricius, Dr. Grace Gámez (ReFraming Justice Coordinator), Adrienne Kitcheyan, Alexandria Pech and Vicky Campo.

These **ReFraming Justice (RFJ) Leaders** work closely with staff on planning and developing meaningful work that centers the needs, perspective, and experiences of directly impacted people. This core leadership team helped guide and enroll other impacted people into the RFJ project and amplified the effectiveness of AFSC-Arizona's anti-punishment movement work by participating in speaking engagement opportunities, media interviews, writing opinion pieces and blogs, advising us on our legislative direction, traveling to conferences across the country, and other important AFSC-Arizona work. You will see their contributions reflected throughout this report, and you can learn more about the members [here](#).

In 2020, accomplishments of our Leaders included: serving as panelists on virtual summits, passing the Arizona bar exam and Character and Fitness Committee, advancing to 'all but dissertation' in their PhD programs, being accepted into graduate school, helping other directly impacted people gain their right to vote back in time for the election, securing entrepreneurial grants for businesses...and demonstrating the courage to thrive in spite of the challenges 2020 presented.

### ReFraming Justice Day at the Capitol 2020

AFSC-Arizona's second annual ReFraming Justice (RFJ) Day occurred January 21 and January 22, 2020. The evening prior to the Capitol events, Grace Gámez led a panel discussion of directly-impacted women and



men on the importance of investing in people while they are incarcerated. The panel was highlighted by Wayne Kramer, legendary guitarist of MC5 and founder of [Jail Guitar Doors](#), a music program for people who are incarcerated. Jail Guitar Doors donates musical instruments to people in prisons and jails across the country, including some in Arizona.



*Matthew Charles makes remarks at the Arizona State Capitol Rose Garden*

Following the panel, Wayne Kramer led a band of Arizona musicians, most of whom received instruments through Jail Guitar Doors when they were incarcerated, through an energetic performance of rock classics.

The following morning, leaders and AFSC-Arizona staff met at the Arizona State Capitol for a full day of legislative education and advocacy. A press conference opened the day, with ReFraming Justice Leaders sharing their experiences to enlighten lawmakers on the many reasons reform is needed in the state. Speakers included a woman whose husband is currently

incarcerated; a father who has been reunited with his son post-incarceration; and [Keynote Speaker Matthew Charles](#), the first beneficiary of the federal First Step Act.

After the press conference, our ReFraming Justice Leaders led advocacy teams to meet with Representatives, Senators and other state leaders, including the Secretary of State, Katie Hobbs. In total, leaders met with 24 officials to discuss the topic areas of collateral consequences, conditions of confinement, and substance-use disorder.

Our amazing Media Arts Intern Nate McKowen worked with Joe Watson to produce [this beautiful video](#) documenting the day.



*MC5 guitarist, Wayne Kramer, with RFJ Leaders visiting legislators on ReFraming Justice Day 2020.*

# Reducing Prison Populations

## Bipartisan Legislation

The 2020 legislative session began with some strong bills being introduced through the AFSC-Arizona bipartisan coalition. Bill topics included areas to address the prison population, collateral consequences and harsh sentencing structure of Arizona. Some of the highlights include:

- Provided increased earned release credits for people with “non-violent” convictions (HB2808)
- Defelonized syringes, allowed entities to provide clean syringes for people using injectable drugs and increased overdose prevention programs (HB2608)
- Removed restrictions on eligibility requirements for deferred prosecution programming (HB2236)
- Allowed the removal of convictions from public record via a tiered-year system based on felony class (HB2893)



However, as with most aspects of 2020, the COVID19 pandemic resulted in an abrupt end to the legislative session. Most bills stopped moving through committees in March following the passage of a minimalist budget designed to keep government running. This meant that none of the criminal justice reform bills were able to pass or be signed into law. Our work will continue in 2021.

## Second Chances Ballot Initiative

The ***Second Chances, Rehabilitation & Public Safety Act*** ballot initiative (or the Second Chances Act) was filed on February 18, 2020, with the Arizona Secretary of State's Office.

The initiative included four key Criminal Justice Reform components:

1. It allowed people in prison who are serving time for non-dangerous offenses to rehabilitate themselves prior to release by allowing them to earn additional earned-release credits for good behavior and participation in rehab programs.
2. It gave courts discretion to impose lesser sentences for non-dangerous offenses when doing so is justified in the interest of justice, taking into account input from victims, individual circumstances, and rehabilitative options.
3. It clarified when a non-dangerous offender may be sentenced based on "a historical prior felony conviction."
4. It established a fund that will provide services for victims of violent crime to reduce unaddressed trauma and ultimately prevent future crime, and to address trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by first responders in the line of duty.



RFJ Leaders Gerald Williams, Alexandria Pech, and Deborah North gathering signatures in Tucson

During May and June, ReFraming Justice Leaders ran a volunteer effort to gather signatures to put the Second Chances Act on the November ballot. In less than two months, volunteers pulled together across the state to supply COVID19-safe opportunities for people to sign the petition. AFSC staff and RFJ leaders ran a "Democracy Drive-Thru" at a church parking lot in Tucson every Saturday for five weeks. People drove up, stayed in their cars wearing masks as volunteers (also in masks) brought them sanitized petitions and pens.



Leaders also aided by organizing and recruiting other directly-impacted people: delivering petition sheets to people in various parts of the state and by gathering signatures on their own. As word spread via social media, more and more people asked to get involved. [Watch this great video](#) documenting the signature-gathering effort.

Sadly, despite the hard work of so many people and broad-based support among voters, the initiative was removed from the ballot after a successful legal challenge brought by outgoing Pima County Attorney, Barbara LaWall.





# Impacting Change in Arizona

## To make a donation...

**Log onto our website,** <https://afscarizona.org> and click on the “Make a Donation” button on the “Contact Us” menu.

**Write a check** and simply mail your contribution to our office:

103 N. Park Ave., Ste. 111, Tucson, AZ 85719.

**On your check, be sure to earmark your contribution for the Arizona office.** Simply write “Arizona office” on the memo line on the bottom left corner of your check.

*☐ Please note that if you do not explicitly state on your check or otherwise in writing that you want your donation to go to Arizona, it will automatically be deposited into AFSC’s national general fund.*

**THANK YOU!**



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