



Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice

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Support Asylum for Emilio and Oscar Gutiérrez Soto

Emilio Gutiérrez Soto and his son Oscar continue their fight for asylum and protection from violence if deported to Mexico. Their cases demonstrate one of the many ways in which the US immigration system is broken.

As an award-winning investigative journalist, Emilio revealed pervasive corruption and violence in the Mexican military and drug cartels. He then received retaliatory death threats and violence toward his family. Seeking safety, Emilio and Oscar fled to the United States in 2008.

Emilio and Oscar followed all the proper asylum processes. They entered the country through a legal port of entry, declared themselves, and asked for asylum. Emilio and Oscar were immediately separated and detained by ICE for several months. Despite continued compliance and a compelling asylum case, they have endured inhumane treatment and many obstacles.



The status of the case remained pending for eight years, during which time they remained in the country and worked. In 2017, their case for asylum was denied. Emilio hired a different attorney to begin the appeal. In December 2017, during a regular check-in, ICE arrested Emilio and Oscar and slotted them for immediate deportation. Due to the tireless advocacy of press freedom organizations and supporters, their deportation was temporarily stayed but they remained in detention in Texas.

While in detention, The National Press Club awarded Emilio with the John Aubuchon Press Freedom Award, which honors journalists who “embody the struggle to advance press freedom and open government.” Emilio was also selected for the prestigious University of Michigan Knight-Wallace Fellowships for Journalists. In July of 2018, Emilio and Oscar were finally released and allowed to move to Ann Arbor so that Emilio could accept the fellowship.

In March 2019, a judge again denied the Emilio and Oscar’s asylum – stating that the case lacked evidence that Emilio had denounced corruption through his work as a journalist and that the case lacked evidence that he would face torture in Mexico.

Emilio continues the appeal process for asylum and has expressed his gratitude for those who have shown solidarity. Several members of Congress, including Rep. Debbie Dingell, are trying to halt Emilio’s deportation. Please join ICPJ in supporting Emilio and Oscar’s asylum appeal and prevent them from being deported to Mexico, one of the deadliest countries for journalists.

ACTION ALERT:

Support Emilio & Oscar Write Your Representatives

Go to: www.ICPJ.org

1) Fill in your info. 2) Modify the letter or add a personal touch, if desired. 3) Hit “Send Letter”. That’s it. Letters are automatically addressed and sent to your representatives.

Thank you!

Forum: Supporting Asylum-Seekers

Hosted by the Washtenaw Congregational Sanctuary and ICPJ

Sunday, June 30, 2019 — 2 PM – 5 PM

**Location: The Church of the Good Shepherd, United Church of Christ
2145 Independence Blvd, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104**

For more information, email: Info@ICPJ.org

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Spring/Summer2019

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A Tribute for Ron Gregg

Written by Pastor Donnell Wyche, ICPJ Board President

It's really difficult to summarize a life of caring, advocacy, and dedication to those at the margins. I met Ron Gregg five years ago when he reached out to me to see if I would join the ICPJ board. After meeting with Ron and hearing about the important work that ICPJ does in our community, I said yes. The best thing I've done in the past five years was saying "yes" to Ron. After joining the board, I knew I was in for a wild and exciting ride as I learned more about ICPJ, the work it does to create a more just and peaceful world, and the direct impact that advocacy has in the lives of those most vulnerable.

Ron appreciated who I was, who I am, and who I am becoming. I always felt seen by Ron. He understood what I had to offer to ICPJ and to our community and asked me again to partner with him. This time in the more mundane aspect of non-profit work. The finances! He asked me to join him on the Sustainability Committee which is just a fancy name for the fundraising committee, and this is where I discovered more hidden passions and energy that Ron possessed. I knew that Ron was a business owner and a former lawyer, but he also had the ability to write a detailed financial report, something, I really appreciate. We partnered together on getting our reporting updated and then our partnership really took off when he invited me to join the executive committee of ICPJ to help the organization as it started its next 50 year chapter. Looking back, I'm realizing that Ron was just really good at asking and getting me to say yes!

Then Ron made another request, this one surprised me. He asked me to become the chair of the board for ICPJ. Usually I consider myself pretty ambitious, but I was new to grassroots organizing for peace and justice, and I didn't have the years of time spent in the field or the experience that Ron had. I had no interest in just padding my resume and I was already focused on leading my congregation; I knew this new role would require work. So, this new ask was going to be challenging and had a few obstacles, but Ron believed in me. He wanted who I was to help impact ICPJ, and in the process ICPJ has taught me a lot about myself while providing opportunities for me to grow, discover my voice, and passion for liberation of those held in bondage. He saw something in me that I couldn't quite see in myself. For this I am grateful.



***Ron Gregg worked tirelessly for
Peace & Justice. His leadership
continues to serve as
inspiration.***

***Our thoughts and prayers are
with Mary and his family.***

Because of Ron's original invitation, I've been able to meet so many incredible people who are working tirelessly for a more peaceful and just society. People I just wouldn't have met without Ron's invitation and partnership. There is so much more to tell you about, all of the meetings, the back-and-forth, the disagreements, the dueling soups we made for last year's ICPJ fundraising event. But I will say for someone I only saw twice a month, Ron had a larger than expected impact on me. I grieve his sudden departure from my life. But I will cherish every gift he gave me.

Youth Arts Alliance and ICPJ Connect

Written by Heather Martin, Youth Arts Alliance

Youth As Cultural Leaders is a collaborative project that seeks to build, enliven and SUSTAIN youth-driven spaces for the arts in Ypsilanti zip codes that are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system. Youth Arts Alliance (YAA) is building a music and art studio space at Parkridge Community Center that is exceptionally equipped for the creative practices of growing artists. At the same time, building on the long standing history of Parkridge Community Center as an active cultural center for Ypsilanti residents.

YAA will provide high-quality, results driven arts programming to serve as a catalyst for young cultural leaders; in the form of both weekly workshops and intensive arts camps. In each of the YAA Project workshops, young artists will create both individual and collaborative outcomes about their lived experiences, ideas and solutions to the issues they feel most impact their families; as the experts of their neighborhood and the authors of their narratives. This project is made possible through funding from the In Our Neighborhood grant program by Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, Washtenaw County Juvenile Court and Washtenaw Community College.

During Spring Break, Youth Arts Alliance kicked off its first intensive mural camp and 15 young people joined in this effort to create a mural and offering creative energy to the soon-to-be music studio space. YAA teaching artists, Yusuf Lateef and Akili Jackson (pictured) facilitated an exploration of symbols and logos, their meanings in our life stories, and how they define and influence the

communities we call home. Young artists reflected on their connections to the historic Adinkra symbols of West Africa, and the visual power those symbols give to personal narratives and community connectedness. Through these practices artists created a mural that reflected their lived experiences and hopes for the future.

ICPJ is a treasured partner in this effort. Many organizations, institutions, artists, musicians and community members have woven their support for young artists. Resources and people power are making it possible for young people's artistic practices to grow and thrive! Curious on how to support our continued momentum? We have lots of ideas! We've thought about ways ICPJ members could share positive updates about the youth with their families and probation officers, support and cheer for youth as they showcase their art, and staff the studio so the youth can keep creating and healing. We look forward to finding impactful ways that ICPJ can support our innovative and community-centered project.



So, you want to know what is going on in Washtenaw County's Peace & Justice Network?

Visit: <http://www.icpj.org/events-calendar/>

Let us know if you want to publicize peace & justice meetings and events on the calendar: Info@ICPJ.org

THANK YOU!

ICPJ thanks all those who helped make the Charlie King and Annie Patterson concert possible!

Thank you to our generous concert sponsors!

Jan Wright & Don Ulisse

David Wright

Bryan & Layale Weinert

Emmeline Weinert

Rich Stahler-Sholk

Ann & Pat Rodgers

Joanne Pohl

Dale Petty & Jeannine Palms

Mary Anne Perrone

Evelyn Neuhaus

Bob & Carol Milstein

Catherine McClary & Mike Merrick

Betsy & Loch McCabe

Martha Kransdorf

Martha Kern-Boprie & David Boprie

Lucia & Bob Heinhold

Edie & David Hurst

Keith Gunter

Stuart Dowty & Janet Goldwasser

Michelle Deatrick

Ed & Ellie Davidson

Jim Crowfoot & Ruth Carey

Judith Cawhorn

Gary Boren

Jeff Alson

Thank you to the tireless organizing crew:

Jeff Alson, Rebecca Kanner,

Mary Anne Perrone,

Martha Kransdorf

Jeanne Mackey

Thank you to our host
Church of the Good Shepherd!

Thank you to **Ann Arbor Friends Meeting** for event promotion!

Thank you to **Big City Small World Bakery** and **the People's Food Co-op** for food donations!

Thank you to **Eric Fithian** for providing sound system support!

Colombian Peace Accords Loose Ends

Written by Maria Perdomo, ICPJ Intern

For centuries the Colombian peasants, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendent communities of the department of Cauca have been fighting underrepresentation and defending their most valuable ancestral symbol: their land. Land distribution, political repression, and a deep-rooted fear of leftist ideology among the most privileged have been, for more than 50 years, the structural causes of the Colombian conflict. This is why the implementation of the 2016 Peace Accords, which ended Latin America's longest-running armed conflict, faces major challenges for ending the cycle of violence.

Almost three years after the peace accords were signed, communities face the same struggles. Social leaders in the most affected areas post-conflict are being persecuted for advocating for the guarantees of the accords: agrarian reform, voluntary eradication of illicit crops, and transitional justice. In fact, since the Peace Accords were signed, more than 431 social activists and leaders have been murdered; and the government has been unable to fulfill its promises.

In this difficult situation, civil society of Cauca has strengthened. Facing truly challenging obstacles such as underrepresentation, lack of security, limited freedom of speech and economic freedom, the Colombian peasants, Afro-descendant and indigenous communities have mobilized their scarce resources to walk toward self-sustainability. Given the government's slow implementation and limited compliance with the Peace Accords, these communities have taken the matter in their own hands. They are seeking economic freedom and justice by gathering in "mingas," a traditional indigenous custom of collective work groups, to strengthen local agricultural practices and trade. The ex-combatants in the process of reintegration to these communities are learning manual skills like manufacturing dolls or clothing to make a living.

Despite the attempts of these rural communities to move forward with their local projects, violence, rural poverty, and an underlying culture of fear are factors that hinder their development. The issue of security is a fundamental concern. The communities of Cauca have been organizing into indigenous, *cimarron* (Afro-Colombian), and peasant collective security organizations. Having as much protection as a cloth vest and a machete can provide, they go on rounds around the villages and monitor the surroundings in search for new threats. This truly courageous task is probably one of the most effective mechanisms that these communities have to remain safe in a context where security only seems to be decreasing. Their collective commitment to rebuilding the bonds of civil society represents the best hope for transforming conflict into a future of positive peace.



Why do They Flee? Report from the Religious Leaders Delegation to Honduras

Written by Mary Anne Perrone, ICPJ Member

Rabbi Josh Winston (Temple Beth Emeth, Ann Arbor) and I had the great privilege of participating in a 75-person delegation to Honduras. Hondurans face danger and violence within their homeland, at the U.S. southern border, and beyond because of the U.S. foreign and immigration policies. We have all heard about the “caravans” of people, especially women and children, leaving Honduras, migrating across Mexico at great peril, to reach the U.S. Why do they leave their homes, families, culture, and all that is familiar to undertake this dangerous journey?

Many are likely to guess that the root causes are poverty and violence – and that would be accurate. But our delegation wanted to look *underneath* and ask *why*. What are the roots of this poverty and violence? What continues to feed these roots and create such desperation?

Our delegation was hosted by Radio Progreso, the Jesuit-run radio station and investigative center, the Honduran Sisters of Notre Dame, and The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Our hosts provided an overview of the current political, economic, social, and human rights situation. The delegation then split into three groups to visit communities and social movement groups across the country. Our group stayed overnight a small, rural village by the river. Village families hosted us in their humble homes and we were able to personally hear the struggles, suffering, and hopes of the people – stories similar to those heard by the other two groups of the delegation.

What we Heard from our Honduran Hosts

- ◆ No one wants to leave their own homes and country.
- ◆ Most families have at least one person who had migrated outside of the country out of desperation – what they consider to be forced migration.
- ◆ People are literally fleeing for their lives. Some are unable to feed themselves and their families and some have had direct threats to their lives, often at the hands of the military and police authorities that are sworn to protect the populace.
- ◆ Land and water -- for growing food, livelihood, and survival -- are threatened by transnational extractive industries (mining, hydro-electric dam projects, mega-tourism “developments”) and agribusiness programs with corporate interests. Many people have lost their land or had it taken from them to make way for these projects. Many communities are struggling against mineral and water “concessions”. These peaceful protesters are routinely threatened, arrested, and jailed -- some have been killed.
- ◆ With the coup in 2009 and the fraudulent elections in 2017, the people feel that they are living in a dictatorship, where rule of law is absent, where the poor are criminalized while the wealthy and the corporations are protected.
- ◆ The military and police “aid” that the United States continues to send is proping up an unjust and undemocratic regime and violates the human and environmental rights of the vast majority of the Honduran people.



ICPJ Earns Environmental Excellence Awards

Written by Jan Wright, ICPJ Member

ICPJ's Climate Change & Earth Care Task Force has been working on food waste, a little-known but significant source of climate-change-producing greenhouse gases.



Last year, together with the Ann Arbor Area Elders Climate Action Chapter, we received a small *Sustaining Ann Arbor Together* grant to increase use of the city's food waste composting program in a pilot area.

With the help of over 30 volunteers, we educated residents about composting food waste and decreased barriers to composting by reducing cart costs and offering delivery,

New cart owners were highly satisfied with the project and more residents increased composting. City data indicated a 10.7% decrease in trash weight compared with the

Congratulations Jan, Joe & CCEC! previous year.

The two co-organizers of the project, Jan Wright and Joe Ohren, are now serving on the Advisory Committee for the development of the City's Five-Year Solid Waste Plan. They are advocating to scale the project and take into account greenhouse gas implications as the city develops its Solid Waste Plan.

Jan and Joe, pictured here, are receiving an award from the County's Environmental Excellence Partnership Program for this work.

Please support ICPJ

I am enclosing a check for \$ _____
to support ICPJ Social Justice Programming.

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*Please make checks payable to "ICPJ". Mail
to: 1414 Hill St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104*

*Or donate online with credit card or bank
transfer at: www.icpj.org/donate*

THANK YOU!



ICPJ member Alsan Kazan shared how they display the yard sign in solidarity with those living in one of the "Northern Triangle" countries (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala).

Join ICPJ or renew your annual membership with a monthly contribution of \$10 or more during June and **we'll deliver a sign** to your home in Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti!

Affordable Housing Organizing Update

Compiled by Desirae Simmons, ICPJ Co-Director

Community Collaborations: Journey of Faith Church hosted two Washtenaw County Affordable Housing Network meetings that were convened by the Huron Valley Democratic Socialists of America. On December 1, 2018 at least 70 people joined together to try and determine the problems, causes, and promising solutions to address the affordable housing shortage in Washtenaw County. Organizational representatives, policy-makers, and community members agreed that housing is a human right and that there are opportunities to focus on public funding for housing, transit improvements, eliminating barriers to housing for formerly incarcerated people, senior housing, and applying pressure to UM-Ann Arbor.

The second meeting was held on March 24, 2019 and focused on the questions we have about affordable housing, what we want to see from

the network, and what we need to do be successful. Ypsilanti Township Trustee Monica Ross-Williams asked during this event, "When will affordable housing mean home ownership?" Since then she designed a workshop focused on financial literacy and breaking down the steps to purchasing a home. The group hopes to see more coordination of efforts and organizing led by those who are housing insecure, as well as pragmatic projects. We need to collaborate across city and county lines and work to end the racial segregation we have allowed to happen.

There was interest in convening another meeting and continuing to build the network. It is possible that this responsibility can rotate among members of the network.

Data Download: The Ypsilanti Subcommittee on Housing Affordability and Accessibility held an Open Forum on May 2 to share an overview of the data they collected and analyzed and to receive feedback. Community members shared concerns about the rental inspection process, provided insight into accessibility features the committee hadn't considered such as self-cleaning ovens and dishwashers, and were intrigued by the idea of community land trusts as a way to create permanent affordability. The next step is for the subcommittee to present to the Planning Commission the recommendations proposed based on the data and feedback. You can find the subcommittee's presentation and survey results on the City of Ypsilanti's website:

<https://cityofypsilanti.com/672/Master-Plan-Housing-Affordability-Access>.

The U-M Sociology students studying inequality participated in ICPJ Poverty Simulations and completed three projects looking at the impacts that UM - Ann Arbor has on housing. One group focused on land use and found that as of 2018 the U-M takes up about 9.4% of

Ann Arbor's land. For comparison, the parks and open spaces take up about 11.6% of the city. They also found that over the last 5 years, there has been an increase of 3,091 students with about 71% of students living off-campus. A second group focused on collecting narratives about how the housing crisis impacts real people. One Muslim Syrian refugee decided to become an RA at the U-M due to the high rental costs. She said, "I don't know if I can call this home, I'm always in-between places," due to campus having to be her workplace and not wanting to burden her parents with such high costs for such poor apartment conditions. The third group created an infographic about the history of the housing crisis in Ann Arbor. You can stop by the ICPJ resource center or email Info@ICPJ.org if you're interested in seeing their work!

Word on the Street:

**"We need to have real tough conversations about affordable housing and transportation and how they intersect with hunger."
-- Congresswoman Debbie Dingell
at Food Gatherers' "State of the Plate" April**

If ICPJ members are interested in supporting this work, we could offer to convene the next network meeting. Contact Info@ICPJ.org



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SAVE the DATE
ICPJ 2019 HARVEST DINNER
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12th

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<https://tinyurl.com/ICPJ-Paperless>

This means that you will only receive emails for items such as newsletters, donation acknowledgment, and event notices.

ICPJ Annual Meeting *June 15th*

Join Us to Shape ICPJ's Future
Saturday, June 15th

2- 4pm (Doors open 1:30 for fellowship and registration)
Riverside Arts Center — 76 N Huron St, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

For parking information, child care reservations, and to RSVP (to help us plan) please visit:
www.ICPJ.org or contact us at Info@ICPJ.org or 734.663.1870