American Friends Service Committee – South Region (formerly SERO)

AFSC has been looking into re-organizing the structure of the U.S. Regions for quite some time. It has now become a reality. Previously there were nine U.S. Regions, now there are four. The South Region contains the 8 states that formerly made up the Southeast region but now it includes Texas, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and Washington D.C. The Southeast Region states were Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana. The process for determining make up of the South Executive Committee has not been completed but it appears that in the future the Yearly Meetings will have only one representative rather than two. Atlanta will remain the regional office. There are no AFSC programs in Texas or Oklahoma. In the South Region there are offices in Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Greensboro, N.C., Miami, and New Orleans

The four Strategic Areas that are the focus of AFSC work are Peace, Human Migration and Mobility, Economic Justice, and Healing Justice.

The AFSC South regional office is located at 60 Walton Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30303. This office is also home of the Georgia Peace Center.

North Carolina:

NC Peace & Economic Justice Program: Quakers value life as sacred and seek to avoid all violence. We try to find peaceful solutions to conflicts and differences and to address root causes of violence. We sponsor exhibits and films highlighting issues of peace and economic justice. We host peace tables and workshops in local schools and communities that promote non-violence & conflict resolution. We educate and engage the community around local and national budget priorities. We advocate for investing our tax dollars in sustainable, just and peaceful communities. In Spring 2011, we brought the national travelling mural exhibit, *Windows & Mirrors* to North Carolina to promote reflection on the human cost of war in Afghanistan. *NC Immigrant Rights Program:* Guided by the Quaker belief in the infinite worth of all people, AFSC supports the rights and dignity of all people, regardless of their legal status. We educate the general public about immigration issues and build solidarity between immigrants and non-immigrant allies to change hostile attitudes toward immigrants and work together towards welcoming communities. We train, empower and prepare undocumented immigrant communities in case of raids and deportation. We advocate for just and humane immigration policies locally, statewide, and federally and fight policies that criminalize immigrants. We strive to connect the struggles that US immigrants face with the roots of migration. Through all our work, we utilize popular education techniques and 21st Century techniques, like digital storytelling, to empower the community and convey our messages.

Miami:

American Friends Immigrant Services (AFIS) has been evolving throughout the years and currently has found a balance its work in two ways: 1) to create and support public advocacy and education to have human laws, regulations, and policies; and 2) to legally represent people before the complex immigration systems. AFIS is part of coalitions and collaborates with organizations in support of immigrant's and refugee's human rights as well as accompany them to navigate the immigration system in South Florida.
AFIS mandate is to help meet some of the needs of immigrants and refugees and to serve as an avenue to educate society on causes of migration and contributions to their new environment by bringing

stories into light. Florida's political environment is a challenge in that from the highest office to lower offices are advocating for anti-immigrant bills. To counter these efforts, AFIS collaborates with a variety of organizations and coalitions like the Florida Immigrant Coalition and the Haitian Grass-root Coalition to oppose such way nativist thinking. Also, AFIS uses media, public forums, and give presentations to inform the public and repudiate anti-immigrant sentiment.

New Orleans: *Peace and Conflict Transformation Project:* The Gulf Coast Program was organized in 2005 in response to Hurricane Katrina. The initial program had offices in Gulfport, MS and New Orleans, LA. Today, the focus of the program is on New Orleans where the project is one of only a few on-going projects left that were organized by national non-profits in the year following Katrina.

In Fiscal Year 2012, the youth component of our work helps young people find alternative ways to deal with the violence on multiple levels: personal, group, and community. Our work includes peace training in dialogue with young children using art in a variety of community settings and partnerships; our Peace by Piece peer trainers provide conflict reduction workshops to other youth in schools and through community centers; our annual giant Peace Puppet Parade is a community wide celebration of the International Day of Peace ; in addition we organize a variety of creative engagements with youth and adults to articulate a message of peace and concern for others through the arts.

Atlanta: Through the work of the *AFSC Georgia Peace Center* we seek to build a movement based on shared concerns and our shared identity as workers; listening and learning from others as we share our concerns and find mutual connections that will lead to authentic collaborations.

The Peace Center is a space where diverse groups can gather to share information, learn from each other, present programs, perform research and network.
AFSC Georgia Peace Center is located in downtown Atlanta and is accessible by numerous forms of public transportation. The space is welcoming to all peoples and is handicapped accessible. We currently partner with and provide meeting and program space for a long list of partner organizations that includes: Homeless Veterans Program, Atlanta International Action Center, The Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Alternate ROOTS, Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition-Atlanta, Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament , WonderRoot, Emory Muslim Students Association (MSA) , Atlanta Friends Meeting, Friends School of Atlanta, Georgia WAND, The Atlanta Grandmothers for Peace, Women Watch Afrika, Inc. ,Arab Spring Committee, Democratic Socialist of America, Nuclear Watch South, and UUCA Peace Network.
Our program partners include the groups above in addition to Amnesty International USA- Southern Region, Metro Atlanta Task force for the Homeless, Emory University Center for Ethics, Human Rights Atlanta, WRFG 89.3FM, and the ACLU.

Baltimore, Maryland:

Friend of a Friend Program: Physical altercations can be common in correctional institutions. To provide new strategies for dealing with such conflict, AFSC established the Friend of a Friend mentoring project which now operates in five sites in Maryland. The goal is to reduce institutional violence by providing tools that build healthy relationships, create support structures, and develop effective communication skills.

Conflict resolution training is the primary activity for each mentoring group. Weekly meetings focus on anger management as well as conflict, communication and coping skills. New participants work with a mentor to identify their own values, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses. They analyze problems and

potentially frustrating situations, determine alternative solutions, and decide upon a healthy course of action. Role playing makes the sessions more realistic.
Youth Empowerment Through Conflict Resolution: The Youth Empowerment through Conflict Resolution program works with young people in Baltimore to find peaceful resolutions to conflict in their lives. Participants learn to use tools from the Help Increase the Peace Program as well as other community building skills. Working in under-resourced schools, the program helps young people deal with violent and impoverished neighborhoods, learn about conflict resolution and human rights, and get the support they need to become educated and engaged citizens. Through education, we hope to instill a sense of confidence in Baltimore youths – confidence that they can make a better tomorrow for themselves and their communities.

Washington DC

The DC Peace and Economic Justice Program has had two different projects in recent years: a Human Rights Learning project in the DC public schools, and a worker's rights project. In both the basic approach has involved using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the framework for examining and addressing peace and economic justice concerns in the DC area.

West Virginia

The *Appalachian Center for Equality* is dedicated to creating opportunities for young people in the southern coalfields of West Virginia to pursue their goals and a productive future by working and learning together. We accomplish this through interpersonal skill-building, college trips, and community engagement projects with the belief that together we can make our communities in southern West Virginia stronger and more vibrant for everyone.
The *West Virginia Economic Justice Program* works statewide on issues affecting low income and working families. The project helps people get the best possible deal from the current system, engages in campaigns to gain or defend economic rights for workers and low income families, and helps build effective coalition support of economic justice for all people in the state.

Where possible, AFSC has worked with the Occupy movement to enhance the work of both.

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Although the AFSC web site has not yet caught up with the regional re-organization much can be gleaned from it about the work of AFSC and there are many videos on several different pages. I suggest spending some time reviewing this site. (http://www.afsc.org/)

Respectfully submitted:
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