

## Morningside Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business

June 1, 2014

### Report from Peace & Social Concerns

Peace & Social Concerns gathered on May 11, 2014. Attending were Naomi Paz-Greenberg, Pam Wood, Amala Lane, Sally Campbell, Dave Britton, John Slater, Corona Machermer (clerk)

1. Amala reports on her involvement in the movement to support Cicely McMillan, who was convicted at trial on May 5 of assaulting the police officer who arrested her following an Occupy Wall Street rally in Zuccotti Park in March 2012; she had refused a plea bargain and gone to trial because, she said, she had reacted instinctively when the officer grabbed her breast and had done nothing wrong. Following the trial, she was remanded to Rikers until sentencing on May 19. Amala invites us to sign an online petition supporting her, to attend a press conference scheduled for May 12 and a rally to be held in Union Square on May 18 or 19, which Amala is organizing, and to attend the sentencing. [Mcmillan was sentenced to 3 months at Rikers and 5 years probation.]
2. Because of the fact that FCNL holds its Annual Meeting in November, and therefore its staff is not readily available for events outside Washington in the weeks before, we decide to hold our FCNL event in February 2015 instead of October 2014.
3. Pam Wood reports on lobbying in Albany for the reform of solitary confinement, in particular in support of the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act. She makes two points in particular: a) Governor Cuomo is the power in Albany and b) pressure from religious organizations is helpful in swaying opinion.
4. The Committee agrees to propose a minute, framed by a statement of Quaker beliefs and urging Governor Cuomo to support the HALT bills, for consideration at business meeting on June 1. If approved, the minute would then be forwarded to NYQM and ultimately to NYYM. Pam agrees to draft the minute and circulate it by email for discernment by the committee.

Respectfully submitted

Corona Machermer , co-clerk

## **Draft Minute on Solitary Confinement**

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has a strong belief in the possibility of positive transformation within each person and a strong belief in non-violence. The way we treat people affects their ability to connect with that of God within. The current use of solitary confinement is very frequently for non-violent offenses and has nothing to do with the original crime. It makes incarcerated men, women and youth less able to make positive changes. They are more likely to suffer psychological damage and to become more of a risk to themselves, to Corrections Officers, and when released, to the public. Research on the effects of solitary confirms this. We have come to understand as Friends that violence may also be psychological and emotional, not just physical. We feel that solitary confinement as it is currently employed in NY State is a form of torture and must be stopped.

(The Religious Society of Friends has) Quakers have a history of involvement with the correctional facilities in New York State. In the 1970's, Friends developed the Alternatives to Violence Project at the request of men from the Greenhaven Correctional Facility. Many members of the NY Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends continue to volunteer with this program, which is active in 16 correctional facilities in New York. In addition, we maintain Quaker Worship Groups in 11 correctional facilities. Our involvement confirms our belief that positive interactions and programming support constructive change. The training and programs proposed in the HALT Bill have the potential, we believe, to be far more effective ways to change behavior and make prisons safer for both the incarcerated and members of staff than our current use of solitary confinement.

Acknowledging these circumstances, Friends are led to approve the following minute:

Morningside Monthly Meeting (New York Quarterly Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting) of the Religious Society of Friends call on Governor Cuomo to support the reform of the practice of solitary confinement as developed in the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, Bill #A8588/S6466 in both NY State correctional facilities and jails.

We ask that Governor Cuomo support the changes in the use of solitary confinement as proposed in the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, which would make New York a leader in stopping human right abuses in the United States.

Local Meetings and individual Friends are encouraged to write to and call Governor Cuomo's office urging him to support this reform, and to send press releases and letters to the editor publicizing the issue.