



FALL 2023

Advocacy as a Spiritual Discipline: Cultivating Social Change

By Christina Cosby



Summer Fellows and Staff attending the Poor People's Campaign Rally in front of the Supreme Court. Pictured left to right: Lucy McDermott, Anthony Harris Jr., Ivy Lopedito, Christina Cosby, Jimmie Hawkins, Kayla Hawkins, and Catherine Gordon.

The word “advocacy” reverberates as a call to action — a call to actively shape our world and enrich our communal existence. But for followers of Jesus, how does advocacy align with our faith, and how does our faith mold our civic responsibilities?

Scripture consistently echoes God’s command to uphold justice. The beginning of Scripture depicts God infusing life into humanity through God’s own breath, signifying Creation’s completion and affirming humans as

God’s reflection. This divine breath, God’s essence within humanity, inspires the pursuit of justice among prophets throughout the Old Testament.

Advocacy complements justice-seeking; it’s rooted in acknowledging the inherent value of each individual, all made in God’s image. As Christ’s disciples, we’re tasked with not only recognizing but also respecting the intrinsic goodness within each person, particularly when choices affecting their lives are made.

God’s call to advocate for the marginalized and stand with society’s outcasts didn’t conclude with the Old Testament prophets. God’s presence with humanity continued as Jesus walked alongside the vulnerable and served the broken, illustrating God’s care for everybody. Similarly, the Holy Spirit — an advocate for the people — manifested at Pentecost inspires communal understanding and sharing.

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Meet 2023 Domestic Issues Fellow

By Ariyah Sadler



Ariyah Sadler

My name is Ariyah Sadler, and I am a rising junior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am majoring in Public Policy with a double minor in Social and Economic Justice as well as Philosophy, Politics and Economics. I am a member of the Phi Alpha Delta pre-law fraternity as well as UNC's Black Student Movement. I'm originally from Charlotte, North Carolina, and have returned home to complete my work with the PC(USA) remotely.

I have always enjoyed public advocacy work, primarily because of my parents. My father got me involved with events with the Poor People's Campaign; the Moral Monday Movement; the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina; and other advocacy organizations from a young age. I volunteered for my mother's nonprofit, The Exodus Foundation, throughout my youth and learned so many things from all of my experiences. Having been exposed to public advocacy throughout my life, I have been ecstatic to be able to take steps toward making my own mark and working for justice.

Presbyterian Church (USA)
Office of Public Witness

THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH AND GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

A conversation on what causes gun violence, how it affects our nation, and what faith communities can do to prevent it.

Rev. Jimmie Hawkins
Moderator
Director of the Office of Public Witness and the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations

Tracie Campbell
Speaker
Senior Health Manager for the Office of Violence Prevention with Mecklenburg County Public Health

Rev. Dr. Rodney S. Sadler Jr.
Speaker
Associate Professor of Bible and Director of the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation at Union Presbyterian Seminary

Rev. Deanna Hollas
Speaker
Gun Violence Prevention Ministry Coordinator with the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

This summer, I worked on domestic policy with the Office of Public Witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Washington, D.C., specifically on the issues of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (commonly referred to as the Farm Bill) and gun violence. I conducted interviews with experts on the fight against hunger in order to better understand the effects of the Farm Bill and produce an article on why it matters to Presbyterians. I also organized a webinar on faith and gun violence to share with the Presbyterian community to further educate constituents on how gun violence exposure affects our neighbors and how we can work to stop it. Along with this, I published action



Photo of webinar panelists gathered on Zoom.

alerts on both subjects to share how we can make an immediate difference.

It is a deep honor to have had the opportunity to work with this office, and I am excited to see where it takes me!



Meet 2023 International Issues Fellow

By Madalyn Sailors

Hello! My name is Madalyn Sailors, and I am 21 years old. I was born near Atlanta, but I grew up around the Indianapolis area and call myself a Hoosier. I am a rising senior at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, majoring in Philosophy, Law and Public Policy and minoring in Hispanic Studies. I am also grateful to be involved in my local congregation, Second Presbyterian Church, which I have attended since 2016. Indiana has been home for a long time, but my family moved to the D.C. area in July. I am excited to see what the next chapter brings!

I found out about the Office of Public Witness (OPW) with the PC(USA) fellowship over a year ago and hoped that God might give me the opportunity to participate in it. When I was offered the position, accepting was a no-brainer! I am thrilled to be able to work in public policy through an organization of the same faith that drives my values. Since then, I have greatly appreciated the experience and everything I have learned along the way.

Within OPW, I am specifically working on international issues. Each week, I attend working group meetings and research causes that are relevant and of personal interest. The highlight of this work was the chance to witness and support the U.S. tour of Snap Mabanta of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. I enjoyed seeing the ways that OPW uplifts key perspectives on critical issues, and this event was an incredible example of that effort. I also wrote action alerts relating to the protection of human rights in Israel-Palestine and Sudan. I am thankful for the chance to contribute to the Church's advocacy on these crucial issues.

Additionally, with a background in Hispanic Studies and 13 years of studying Spanish, I want to further analyze U.S.-Latin American relations. I hope to inform others about the role of the U.S. in Latin American gun violence through its massive production and distribution of arms. Through my fellowship, I had the ability to align with OPW's priorities while also focusing on my personal interests. It was a wonderful professional learning experience.

This summer, I came into the fellowship with the goal of better understanding the Church's role in advocacy, especially related to congressional work. Thus far, I have started to grasp an idea of what that entails. In my remaining time, I



Madalyn Sailors walking down steps inside the US Capitol during a summer tour.

look forward to more writing and research. I am excited to publish action alerts and blog posts that aid OPW's advocacy efforts. Ultimately, I hope to look back on my work in OPW with pride and gratitude for the learning and growth I have found here.

Meet 2023 United Nations Fellow

By Kaela Hawkins



Photograph featuring 2 fellows, and a 2023 OPW YAV. Featured left to right: Kayla Hawkins, Lucy McDermott, and Madalyn Sailors with others in the background. Photo taken at the US Capitol.

Hi, I am Kaela Hawkins, a rising sophomore at Spelman College, where I am pursuing a major in International Studies and I am a scholar of the Ethel Waddell Githii Honors Program. I grew up in Durham, North Carolina, but later moved to Frederick, Maryland, where I completed my high school education. During my first year at Spelman, I achieved academic excellence and made the dean's list in both the fall and spring semesters. I was also inducted into the Alpha Lambda Delta First-Year Honors Society, which recognizes outstanding academic achievements among first-year students. Additionally, I enjoy being actively involved on campus and work as a chapel assistant in Sisters Chapel, contributing to the spiritual and religious life of the college community.

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Cuba and the Right to Not Migrate

By Lucy McDermott



Rev. Jimmie Hawkins leading OPW, PMUN, YAVs, and Summer Fellows on a tour of a Senate Building in Washington DC. In the photo from left to right is Lucy McDermott, Ivy Lopedito, Christina Cosby, Jimmie Hawkins, and Catherine Gordon looking at a 3D replica of the US Capitol and government buildings.

As I look back on my YAV year with the Office of Public Witness, I keep coming back to the connections between the issues that I work on. I started the year working on the environment and immigration portfolios, and I added Cuba in the winter. While I was listening to a webinar a few months ago, I heard a woman named Ingrid Hausinger describe a right not to migrate. The right not to migrate encompasses living a healthy and fulfilling life in one's home community. It relates to most of the issues the Office of Public Witness focuses on: climate change, hunger and violence, which are a few of the many conditions that displace people.

Hausinger's talk focused on Central American women whose homes are destroyed by climate change but for whom migrating poses many risks. Women face heightened threats of violence and crime while migrating. Making migration safer and more

accessible, including for people who cannot obtain entry permits and air transportation to their destinations in advance, is important, but it is unreasonable to expect that someone whose home is destroyed will be happy to leave their community behind and go elsewhere.

I want to explore this idea using the example of Cuba. Cuba is currently facing a humanitarian crisis as a direct result of U.S. policy. At the end of his administration, President Trump re-added Cuba to the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. That decision has led to aggressive sanctions that have been devastating to Cubans. PC(USA) partners in Cuba have told stories about pediatric cancer doctors who have three children they need to treat but who must choose two because they don't have enough drugs. Shipments of syringes take a year to arrive. Food is scarce, and small businesses that had

lasted through previous crises — and that thrived after President Obama lifted restrictions — have been forced to close.

As one might imagine, record numbers of Cubans are fleeing those conditions to seek a better life elsewhere. But the Biden administration appears to be treating the situation in Cuba and migration as separate issues. While making minor changes to Cuba policy that leave the most harmful sanctions in place, the administration has strictly limited the right to seek asylum.

Cubans and other non-Mexicans who arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border are presumed ineligible for asylum and subjected to expedited removal. Under current U.S. policy, Cubans are subjected to preventable shortages of food and medicine, but when they try to flee to the United States, they are met with a restrictive asylum ban that aims to turn them away.

The administration claims that their humanitarian parole program is a solution for Cubans who want to leave the island. This approach is problematic for a couple of reasons. First, many Cubans who do wish to migrate are unable to meet the requirements for humanitarian parole, including passports, sponsors in the United States and funding to buy plane tickets.

Secondly, and more fundamentally, nobody should be expected to leave their home because the conditions are poor. Migration should be an option, not the only option. Suggesting that migration is a solution for Cubans who wish to avoid the current conditions on the island fundamentally disrespects their right to self-determination as

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Meet 2023 United Nations Seminarian

By Anthony Harris Jr.

Who am I? My name is Anthony Harris Jr. I'm originally from Memphis, Tennessee. I graduated from Morehouse College in 2015 with a B.A. in History. In 2020, I graduated from Drake University School of Law with my J.D. While working in the legal field, I specialized in International Human Rights. Human and civil rights have been a lifelong passion for me. This passion and attending law school led me to working in the Ugandan Supreme Court and within its national prison system. There, I served as a judicial clerk for the Ugandan Supreme Court. I assisted judges in editing court opinions. I also did research and wrote law articles on the possibility of incorporating mediation at the Supreme Court level. In the prisons, I represented prisoners in getting reduced sentences as part of a national plea-bargaining system.

My work in Uganda led me to accepting a judicial clerk position for the Iowa State Supreme Court. There, I assisted Supreme Court Justice Edward Mansfield in writing and editing court opinions concerning the state of Iowa. After working in law for a few years, I yearned for a change of pace. In working

in the field of international human rights law, a particular area of interest for me was religious freedom and liberty. After deep personal reflection, steadfast prayer and my unwavering trust in God, I decided to enroll at Princeton Theological Seminary. I recently completed the first year of my Master of Divinity program. God revealed to me that if I can fight passionately for the religious freedoms (among other rights) of others, then there is a requirement for me to dive deeper into my own faith. A firmly rooted religious and spiritual foundation is needed for me to be successful in the work the Lord has called me to do.

Entering seminary and now working for the Presbyterian Mission at the United Nations has allowed me to do just that. I am deeply honored and grateful for the opportunity to work for this office. My work this summer ventured into several areas, with a primary focus on three areas. First, I worked on spreading awareness to the current crisis in South Sudan to the domestic and international community. Second, I collaborated with various human rights and religious organizations

to come up with solutions to resolve the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. Third, I spent time analyzing the emerging topic regarding the use of artificial intelligence in today's world. More specifically, I looked at the potential benefits and hazards the use of artificial intelligence can bring to the global community.



Anthony Harris Jr. accompanying Jimmie Hawkins and Christina Cosby on a drop-in visit to a US Senator's Office.

United Nations Fellow, continued from page 3



Kayla Hawkins and Ariyah Sadler in line waiting to get into the US Capitol for a tour

I am deeply passionate about gender justice and migration and refugee policy. These issues have sparked my interest and commitment to advocate for marginalized communities. In my free time, I enjoy reading and spending time with friends. My favorite author is bell hooks, and my favorite genre is romance.

This summer, I worked with the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations (PMUN). One of my focus projects was the Red Hand Campaign, an initiative to advocate for children forced to participate as soldiers in armed conflicts. My role involved raising awareness about this issue and promoting the campaign's goals. In July, I attended the U.N. High-Level Political Forum, an important gathering of global leaders and policymakers. Another focus area for my work was to contribute to PMUN's Instagram page, @pcusa_un, by sharing advocacy content related to PMUN's work.

Looking ahead to the fall semester, I am enrolled in a course on the U.N. and diplomacy, and I anticipate that my experience working with PMUN over the summer will provide valuable insights and preparation for this course. I look forward to continuing to be enthusiastic about learning how advocacy operates within the highest institutions and hope to further develop my knowledge and skills in international diplomacy.



Meet 2023 Young Adult Advocacy Conference Fellow

By Mazzani Williamsong

I'm Mazzani Williamson from Charlotte, North Carolina. I just obtained my bachelor's in Criminal Justice from a small private Christian Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Denmark, South Carolina, now named Voorhees University. I'm a mother of one to a beautiful and very active 1-year-old boy whom I enjoy spending time playing and laughing with. I am a very outgoing and adaptive person, always eager to learn about new things. Before hearing about this internship, I was not aware the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) did so many different things such as creating awareness of social issues all over the world. This summer, I organized and filled in leaders for the Young Adult Advocacy Conference happening Oct. 20–22 in Louisville. It was exciting to connect with different people as well as see how I can be a big asset to this wonderful conference and organization. I hope by the end of this summer I made a difference in the work happening at the Office of Public Witness of the PC(USA) and to the Presbyterian Mission at the United Nations, even if it's spreading awareness to the great things bound to happen. I am pleased to achieve my responsibilities and goals this summer by completing all tasks given to me in a timely manner along with meeting new people who love to help others as much as I do.



Mazzani Williamson

Meet 2023 Social Media and Photography Fellow

By Paula Tinong



Paula Tinong,

My name is Paula Tinong, and I am a rising junior at Morgan State University. I am majoring in Political Science with a minor in Multimedia Platform Productions. I have lived in Maryland my whole life and grew up in Montgomery County. Both of my parents immigrated to the United States from Cameroon in the early 2000s, and

I am the oldest of five siblings. Despite coming from a family full of people in the medical field, I knew from a young age I wanted to pursue law and politics. During my freshman year of high school, I explored my passion for advocacy by joining the Black Student Union and the Minority Scholars Program, a student-led county-wide organization aimed on closing the achievement gap between minority and white students by closing the opportunity gap. By my senior year of high school, I became the treasurer of the Black Student Union and the president of the Minority Scholars Program. During this time, I took the photography classes that my high school offered and discovered my love for film photography. I proceeded to take them for all four years of high school and continued the art on my own in college. This past January, after meeting Jimmie Hawkins, the director

of Public Witness, at the Montreat College Conference in North Carolina, and discovering what the PC(USA) has to offer young college students, I talked to my pastor and decided to apply to be a fellow at the Office of Public Witness. After successfully applying, I was accepted as one of this year's summer fellows. As a fellow, I worked to showcase how the PC(USA) advocates for justice in our nation's politics through our social media presence. My goal is to develop and improve our connectivity and communication with our audience through the use of photography and graphic design. This summer, I learned more about how the Church is integrated in our political process. Since spirituality and politics are two pillars in the everyday lives of Americans, I've enjoyed learning how they operate together to provide reform in our government.



Cuba, continued from page 4



Summer Fellows gathered at OPW for a time of retreat and discussion of International Issues

people. It assumes that life in the United States is preferable to life in Cuba, regardless of a person's history with either place. Arguing that migration to the United States is a solution to a humanitarian crisis in the Global South assumes that the United States is a superior place to live and should be able to dictate the Cuban way of life.

Under current U.S. policy toward Cuba and toward migration, the United States is the arbiter controlling the lives

of the Cuban people. The U.S. decides who and what can enter Cuba. The U.S. restricts exports to Cuba and financial transactions with Cuba, telling faith and civil society groups what means they are allowed to use to send assistance to Cuba. The U.S. imposes restrictions on non-U.S. citizens who travel to Cuba and Cubans who hold dual

citizenship with countries in the visa waiver program when they come to the United States. The U.S. decides which Cubans are worthy of being allowed to enter the United States, and which Cubans deserve to be sent back. In this way, the United States exerts neo-colonial control over Cubans.

Recognizing a right to not migrate is thus a fundamental part of the Christian call to honor and work to uphold human dignity. It is a statement that people

in the Global South have the right to stay where they are, that their lives are worthy of living and being protected.

There are a couple of ways in which we should seek to promote the right to not migrate in policy. The first is addressing the root causes of migration. Most people who migrate do so because of the conditions in the communities they come from. People of faith should act in solidarity with people whose needs are marginalized by decision-makers. We should lift up the needs of people working to address violence, poverty and injustice in their communities. The faith community should also advocate for the right to migrate and seek asylum. We must work to establish a world where people can migrate safely and with dignity, choosing a place to stay where they feel safe. Assuring a right to migrate and a right to not migrate are both essential elements of a faith that calls us to seek justice for all people, because we are all made in God's image.

Advocacy, continued from front cover

Embodying this call, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) embraces advocacy as a spiritual discipline through its Matthew 25 Vision. This commitment involves dismantling racism, eradicating systemic poverty and building congregational vitality. We stand in solidarity with the marginalized, listening intently to their stories and amplifying their voices. This commitment extends through the work of the Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C., and the Presbyterian Mission to the United Nations in New York City. These ministries collaborate to ensure that the voices of those affected by decisions — both domestically and internationally — are heard and valued.

To further their shared mission, these offices joined under the direction of the Rev. Jimmie Hawkins. Now operating as the Advocacy Offices of

the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), they combine efforts to elevate the voices of the church and its partners to the U.S. government and in the global arena.

God's creative spirit continues to invigorate God's people, urging us to seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Within this spirit, PC(USA) Advocacy Offices dedicate summers to employing young adults as Fellows, embodying Christ's call to advocate for justice. This summer, Fellows explored advocacy as a spiritual discipline by organizing webinars, crafting articles, partnering with others, attending high-level events, and most importantly, voicing their perspectives to the church and government.

From Oct. 20–22, 2023, their voice will extend beyond these pages as the PC(USA) Advocacy Offices host the first annual Jesus and Justice Advocacy Conference for young adults in Louisville. We invite you to encourage young adults in your community to join us in person or online for this groundbreaking event.



Summer Fellows and Staff on a visit to the Senate building in Washington, D.C.



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