PEACE CAMP — An Oasis

PEACE Camp, July 23 – 27!! This will be my fourth year as a leader at Peace Camp. As in previous years, I am looking forward to this week, as an opportunity for me to enjoy continuous unique and meaningful experiences.

On the first day we (young people and adults) will come together as individuals who may be new or experienced campers, leaders and staff. By the last day of PEACE Camp we leave, not as individuals, but as members of a group. We have become friends and colleagues.

How does this happen???? It happens through many ways, including:

- People of unique backgrounds and experiences come together being friendly, caring, happy, and smiling;
- Opportunities are provided for us to experience the familiar as well as stretch ourselves into the unfamiliar;

PEACE Camp develops a community of mutual respect among all of us;

Campers arrive with varying degrees of anticipation, apprehension and tentative feeling about a new experience. Campers leave having made new friends, renewed previous friendships, learned about PEACE and experienced PEACE;

- Adults and campers sing, dance, and play together;
- We all learn that PEACE is much more than a word. PEACE includes calmness, quiet, understanding, non-aggression, love, friendliness, happiness, caring, open-mindedness, justice, joy, mutual respect ... and much more!

We learn about and experience being PEACE makers.

So, from July 23 – 27, 2018, a new group of people will convene at First Presbyterian Church, Allentown for PEACE CAMP (Young People Making PEACE), an Oasis in our journey through 2018.

- Bill Thomas

Editor’s Note: There’s still some room for campers and helpers at Peace Camp. Call LEPOCO (610-691-8930) now to be counted in.

Fairs, Festivals & More

Would you like to help staff LEPOCO booths and tables at upcoming fairs and festivals. They are about to begin: VegFest will be July 14 in Bethlehem (on the northside this year); "Pride in the Park" will be August 19 in Allentown; and the Peace Fair will be September 20, in Buckingham. There will also be fairs welcoming students back to local campuses in late August, and the Labor Day Parade on September 2. Contact LEPOCO by phone or email to let us know you would like to volunteer/participate. This is a fun way to witness for peace.

Remembering August 6 & 9

On Sunday, August 5, LEPOCO will hold a commemorative Hiroshima-Nagasaki event. August 5 is the eve of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, 73 years ago. The atomic bombing of Nagasaki followed on August 9. Since those fateful August days much of the world has struggled to protect people and the planet from the existential threat of nuclear weapons. So far we have clearly not succeeded. But we still try, with one of the latest efforts being the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – so far signed by 50 countries and ratified by three countries.

Our gathering on August 5 will be one of hundreds of such meetings around the world – remembering and calling for the banning of the bomb.

Our gathering will look at painful truths – bombings, then and now; nuclear, drone, conventional.

Our gathering will explore hopeful, loving, kind, joyful (even humorous) thoughts and actions from around the world to help us in these troubling times.

Please join the Stop the Wars Committee (planning the event) and other LEPOCO friends at 6 pm, on August 5, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley (424 Center St., Bethlehem). Weather permitting, we will process to the Tondabayashi Garden (next to the Bethlehem Public Library) for part of the program. The program will include poems, readings, music. Watch for more information in LEPOCO emails and mailings.

- Nancy Tate with assistance from Monica McAghon

Also:

We will show a film about an elderly hibakusha for the First Friday film in August. “Rhapsody in August,” directed by Akira Kurosawa, will be shown on August 3rd. (See page 3 for more information).

We will also distribute peace leaflets at Musikfest on August 6 and 9. Let us know if you can help.
Peace-a-thon Extravaganza Remembered

The '2018 Annual LEPOCO Memorial Day Weekend Biking & Walking Outdoor Peace-A-Thon Extravaganza' is now past. If you were not able to participate this year, do not worry, the Peace-A-Thon organizing committee is busy planning for 2019, which promises to be even bigger and better than this year. Mark your calendar now for Saturday, May 25, 2019, when you again will have an opportunity to participate in LEPOCO's annual counterpoint to the usual Memorial Day celebrations. It's not too early to consider which riding or walking partner(s) you would like to invite to join you.

While the weather forecast was very discouraging this year, when the day arrived we were very happy to find out that the rain had stayed away. We started, as usual, with sharing fellowship, enjoying a delicious breakfast spread and doing a period of Tai Chi before starting on our walking or biking. This year we had a total of seventeen participants which is less than the previous year. We were back at the start before noon, feeling like we had not only started the day right, but the entire holiday weekend.

Money raised this year will be divided between LEPOCO and two local groups that support immigrants and refugees: Grupo de Apoyo e Integración Hispanoamericano and the Refugee Community Center at Church of the Mediator.

We hope to see you in 2019!

- David Rose

Editor's Note: Thank you to the businesses and organizations that helped with gifts for participants or in other ways: Aardvark Sports Shop, Bethlehem; Book & Puppet Store, Easton; CAT-Coalition for Appropriate Transportation, Bethlehem; Genesis Bicycles, Easton; Nature's Way Market, Easton; Quadrant Book Mart, Easton; Southside Film Festival, Bethlehem; Tom Ardizzone Tai Chi, Bethlehem; Valley Preferred Cycling Center, Trexlertown.

Thank you to those who rode, walked or volunteered: Terry Briscoe, Ron Brown, Martha Christine, Diane Dilendik, Julie Edgar, Julian & Pat Ivantsch, Mimi Lang, Monica McAghon, Susie Ravitz, David Rose, Judith Ross, Scott Slingerland, Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, George Tessaro, Amanda Zaniesienko, Amy Miller-Cohen, Walt Garvin, Ginny Schimmel, John Zachmann, Kathleen O'Donnell, Renate Brosky!

And, thank you to the 50 people who made the donations so that we raised over $1,300 total.

Art Raffle Winners

The 2018 LEPOCO Art Raffle drawing was finally held on May 17, at the Karla Lara Concert at Godfrey Daniels. We were unable to do the drawing at the Annual Dinner in March.

We are happy to announce the winners as follows: Martin Beatty - the turned wooden salad bowl by Lee Buck; Margot Hillman - the hand-crocheted afghan by Michelle Sheehan; Sue Verbalis - quilt by Ellen Buck & Romaine Laury; Tom Church - wheel-thrown bowl by Sommerville Pottery; Stephanie Rau - four friendship peace pins by Ellen Buck & Amanda Zaniesienko.

We are very grateful to those who created the prizes: Lee Buck for his beautiful wooden bowls; Michelle Sheehan for taking her Mother's (Anna Reczek) spot, making a beautiful afghan; Ellen Buck and her friend Romaine Laury for another beautiful quilt; Monica Sommerville of Sommerville Pottery in the Finger Lakes, for another beautiful bowl; and Ellen Buck for creating the first peace friendship pin and Amanda Zaniesienko for helping Ellen make the four pins for the Art Raffle.

The winners were all very pleased.

First Tuesday Book Group

As this newsletter is being prepared the First Tuesday Book Group will be discussing "Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood," by Trevor Noah, on July 3. The group was blest by the presence of Marge Van Cleef to help with our discussion of "We Kill Because We Can: From Soldiering to Assassination in the Drone Age," by Laurie Calhoun, at the group's June meeting. Marge is a long-time peace activist now living in the Philadelphia area and focusing much of her energy on working against weaponized drones.

After taking an August break, the group will meet on September 4, to discuss "Evicted: Poverty & Profit in the American City," by Matthew Desmond. The group meets at the home of Carmen & Bob Riggs in Bethlehem. Call Mimi Lang (group convener) at 610-866-2407 or LEPOCO (610-691-8730) for more information.
Popcorn & Politics

Friday, August 3rd, 7 pm
“Rhapsody in August”
A Popcorn & Politics Film projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., (south) Bethlehem.
The Japanese film, “Rhapsody in August,” is a tale of three generations in a post-war Japanese family and their responses to the atomic bombing of Japan. The story centers on an elderly hibakusha, who lost her husband in the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki, caring for her four grandchildren over the summer. The film was selected as the Japanese entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 64th Academy Awards. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 98 minutes. 1991.
Please bring a snack or beverage to share.

Friday, September 7th, 7 pm
“Made in Dagenham”
A Popcorn & Politics Film projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., (south) Bethlehem.
Based on a true story, “Made in Dagenham” is a British film that dramatizes the sewing machinists strike of 1968 at the Ford Dagenham plant where female workers walk out in protest against sexual discrimination, demanding equal pay. Gaining international attention the strike was successful and led to the Equal Pay act of 1970.
Directed by Nigel Cole. 113 minutes. 2010.
Please bring a snack or beverage to share.

Karla Lara Sings in Bethlehem

Who could resist attending a concert with the title, “Live Life Singing: The Joyful Resistance from Honduras”? On May 17th LEPOCO people and their friends were treated to an evening of inspiring music by Honduran singer, Karla Lara, and her accompanist, José Antonio Velásquez in the very accommodating surroundings of Godfrey Daniels.

Karla is so much more than a singer of the beautiful songs she writes about the struggles of the people of Honduras. Karla is a feminist and columnist for the Honduran newspaper “El Liberador” and has an extensive musical repertoire that reflects the identity of the Honduran people, their hopes and the political perspective for the future of women. Karla sang songs of love, of liberation from the powers of the church, the government and men.

The bravery and exuberance of Karla captured us all as we sat in the peaceful surroundings of Godfrey’s imagining the resistance necessary to survive in Honduras. Between songs Karla told the story of the indigenous Lenca people and of their cosmo-vision for the Gualcarque River and for all rivers. They believe that rivers are the veins of the earth and that interfering with their flow, as in the use of hydroelectric dams, suffocates the very life of the earth.

Berta Cáceres and two of her fellow activists in founding and leading the organization, the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras (COPINH), have been assassinated along with many others in their efforts to defend their land and to resist the encroachment of transnational companies into their way of life. Carla sings of them and their resistance in her songs but singing is not enough. She tells the story of life in Honduras, a country with one of the world’s highest homicide rates, where impunity reigns. More than 40 people were killed in the violent crackdown on anti-fraud protesters following the November 2017 election.

For moments we felt the need to hang our heads in shame at Karla’s statement, “We are not a violent people. The country has been made violent by US guns. For years the U.S. military has been killing us. There are seven military bases in Honduras, a country slightly larger than the state of Tennessee. By Honduran law, no one can enter a military base so there is little knowledge of the U.S. military activities. The major effort of the bases is to fight against narco-trafficking which has been ineffective.” The U.S. supported the coup that threw out the democratically elected president, Manuel Zelaya in 2009 and we endorsed the fraudulent election in November 2017.

Karla filled our evening with her vibrant voice and boundless passion for her music and her country as she lit up the small stage with her energetic presence, her sensuous singing and her bouncing curls. In a small... (continued on page 10)
Recognizing our Peace History

On May 5, we could have heard Bernie Sanders speak in Allentown or heard Benjamin Britten’s “War Requiem,” performed at Lehigh University, both important opportunities, but we chose instead to drive to Catonsville, Maryland, to attend part of a conference about the Catonsville Nine. For those alive in 1968 and actively questioning or opposing the war in Vietnam, it is hard to overstate the importance of the May 17th action that year where nine religious (Catholic) peace activists burned draft board files with napalm. Their action slowed the war machine a little, but also powerfully conveyed so many of the sins of that war. One phrase in particular from the Catonsville Nine statement has become famous: “Our apologies good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children…”

Only two of the Nine are still alive, Marjorie Melville, who spoke at the conference, and George Mische, who was unable to attend. The other seven, Rev. Daniel Berrigan, SJ, Phil Berrigan, James David Darst, John Hogan, Tom Lewis, Thomas Melville, Mary Moylan, have died.

The speakers at the conference included Frida Berrigan (daughter of one of the Nine, Phil Berrigan, and an impressive peace activist and writer in her own right), Kathy Kelly (recent speaker at LEPBCO’s March dinner), Col. Ann Wright (a leader on many fronts of peace work over the past decade), and Amy Goodman, of Democracy Now! Many peace activists from the DC-Baltimore area also spoke.

For me the most meaningful part of the day was the dedication of the Catonsville Nine Historical Marker on Route 144, the main street through Catonsville, in front of the public library, next door to the Knights of Columbus building, from which the draft board files were removed in 1968. This was community recognition of the importance of a significant act of resistance to war. The community recognition was reflected in the list of sponsors for the conference that included the University of Maryland/Baltimore County, Maryland Humanities, Catonsville Presbyterian Church, Maryland Historical Society. Other sponsors like local chapters of Pax Christi, Veterans for Peace, the Green Party, and local communities like Jonah House and Viva House, show that the seeds of peace work planted in 1968, have persisted.

There were important reminders from the conference. Several speakers pointed to the fact that among the Catonsville 9 were religious workers who were inspired to action not only by Vietnam, but also by what they had witnessed of U.S. policy while working in places like Central America and Africa.

Amy Goodman spoke of the importance of journalists documenting protest (as was done at Catonsville) and sharing the images of war. “Imagine the impact if for just one week we saw the images of war and resistance like the Georgia Plowshares and the babies killed in Afghanistan.”

Ann Wright said the Catonsville 9 and other acts of resistance are a “great halo over our country.”

Frida Berrigan spoke of her sense of importance for “stepping out of her comfort zone in more responsibility.”

Catonsville was not the first draft board action against the war in Vietnam, but a lot of similar actions followed – over 300 in all! - Nancy Tate

Kings Bay Plowshares

Early on the morning of April 5, 2018, seven nuclear abolitionists were arrested inside the Kings Bay Naval Base in St. Mary’s, Georgia. Kings Bay is the Atlantic homeport for six Trident nuclear ballistic missile submarines and also provides critical support services for the fleet of four British Trident nuclear missile submarines.

The seven Catholic activists, calling themselves the Kings Bay Plowshares, chose to act on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They pointed to King’s devotion to addressing the triple evils of militarism, racism, and materialism.

Carrying baby bottles containing their own blood and hammers, the seven attempted to convert weapons of mass destruction. One of their banners read, “The ultimate logic of tridents is omnicide.”

Those who were arrested are: Elizabeth McAlister, Steve Kelly, SJ, Carmen Trotta, Clare Grady, Martha Hennessy, Mark Colville, and Patrick O’Neill. Attorney William P. Quigley, Professor of Law at Loyola University, representing at least one of the Kings Bay Plowshares, said, “These peace activists acted in accordance with the 1996 declaration of the International Court of Justice that any threat or use of nuclear weapons is illegal.”

Four of the seven remain in jail in Brunswick, Georgia. You can find more information at www.kingsbayplowshares.org, including the addresses to write to those in jail, a legal update, and information about support actions and making donations for transportation and legal expenses.

Richard Falk

“Gaza: Grief, Horror, Outrage, Remembering” Foreign Policy Journal, May 17, 2018

He opens the section on Grief, “How can one not feel intense grief for the young Palestinians who out of despair and fury joined the Great March of Return, and so often found death and severe injury awaiting them as they approached the border unarmed??” Under Outrage he writes, “Words are all we have, but they will do. As Thomas Merton taught, some crimes are situated in the domain of the unspeakable.” Falk describes the leaders of conscience who during Vietnam declared NOT IN OUR NAME, and adds: “As Jews, as Americans, as human beings, isn’t it about time to take a similar stand, and at least create symbolic distance between the perpetrators of these crimes and ourselves?”

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Visiting Senator Casey's Office to Talk about Israel & Palestine

This year marks 70 years since the invasion and occupation of Palestine—the continuing "Nakba" (catastrophe), for some 4 million Palestinians, in Gaza, in the West Bank, in Jerusalem, and millions more in refugee camps. Others are dispersed, and exiled, all over the world. Israel's 11-year-old air, land and sea blockade of Gaza, where many refugees from the 1948 "Nakba" fled, continues to this day. Gaza is a miserable, open-air prison for 1.9 million Palestinians, full of rubble and thwarted lives, a majority of them young people's.

Since March 30, when the latest organized and unarmed protests of their caged status began, there have been more than 100 Palestinian Gazans killed, and over 8,000 injured by the Israeli military. On May 14, sixty-one protesters were mowed down, methodically, by Israel's snipers, from afar, using U.S. made Remington rifles. No Israeli soldier has been a casualty.

On May 18, Annette and Todd Carpenid, Addison Bross, Rita Corriel, Mimi Lang, Faramarz Farbod, Nancy Tate and Kathryn Hoffman met with Connor Corpora, staff-person in Senator Casey's Allentown office. We wanted to convey our deep sadness and outrage at the murders by Israel that week in Gaza, and to urge Senator Casey to stand up for human rights (among other requests made by our group).

Here are some excerpts from the letter we left with Connor, for Sen. Casey:

Why does our U.S. Government continue to support a nation, Israel, that occupies land belonging to another people, Palestinians, and continues to oppress and take more land, rights, and hope away from them?

Senator Casey, we request that you join the twelve U.S. senators, your colleagues, who have called for a cessation to the economic and physical blockade of Gaza, by Israel, and for increased U.S. humanitarian aid to Palestine.

We also ask: Why have you not called for a halt to our military aid to Israel, to enforce the Arms Export Control Act, a U.S. law, which conditions arms exports on human rights standards? Surely these latest murders from afar, by Israel's snipers, of unarmed protesters, require that?

We left a book about Palestine and the history of its oppression and resistance, as well as several articles reporting on the current protests, with Connor, for the Senator and his staff. Connor assured us that he would make sure our letter, and the substance of our visit would be conveyed to Senator Casey and his D.C. staff.

Our letter ended: "We join millions around the world who are appalled by this continuing catastrophe visited on the Palestinian people, which keeps two peoples in thrall. There needs to be immediate, open, and honest talks, assisted by experienced and neutral negotiators, concerning land, water and borders. We ask that you act now, as our Senator, to facilitate this outcome."

- Kathryn Hoffman

Memorial Day Reflections

Marcel Proust believed that "the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes." As a society, are we willing to "see with new eyes" a nonviolent vision for our children?

A nonviolent vision means that the way we deal with a situation must be as harm-less as the means by which we act. The end does not justify the means. We do not automatically revert to the most violent method, i.e., war, to achieve a goal.

We recognize war for what it is. Its legacy is destruction, the brutal elimination of all species in a given area and the natural resources vital for ongoing Life. We are poisoning our veterans and their reproductive systems through exposure to depleted uranium... Profit-driven sales of weapons, the U.S.'s number one export, intensifies retaliation. Must our children inherit this vision?

Or can we commit to a nonviolent approach, for which there is historic precedent? On Mothers’ Day 1870, Julia Ward Howe issued a proclamation: "...Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience. We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs." She called for "an earnest day of counsel," first to commemorate the dead, and then to "solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in Peace."

We can learn from Costa Rica’s decision in 1948 to disband its military and redirect money to schools, hospitals, and protection of ecosystems.

We can discuss career choices with our children that promote cooperation and fairness. These include mediators, legal and health professionals, counselors, caregivers, and journalists.

We can take seriously words that were incised upon a pillar behind Weona Park in Pen Argyl decades ago: "May this noble edifice remind those who are instrumental in guiding this nation's destiny of the utter folly and great human sacrifice of armed conflict."

Perhaps the most effective way of honoring the memory and lives of military personnel is to see with new eyes the behavior that perpetuates their plight — to never allow another psyche or body to be damaged by sanctioned and organized cruelty; to achieve Dr. King's nonviolent society as not just the absence of war, but the presence of justice and brotherhood/sisterhood.

Then...we will have embarked on Proust's "real voyage of discovery." With new eyes we will perceive one human family, and spare the next generation the inhumanity of war.

Editor's Note: A local newspaper refused to print this meaningful letter written by Anna Maria Caldara.
Protecting the Elements of Life

"Kwel’ Hoy! Kwel’ Hoy!" rebounded through a forest clearing in Mahwah, New Jersey on April 21st. We had gathered at the Ramapough Lenape Nation Community Center in resistance to the Pilgrim Pipeline. Lummi Indian Nation Representative Fredrick Lane translated the chant he led as, simply, "We draw the line."

The Lummi are among the indigenous in the Pacific Northwest leading the opposition to a glut of fossil fuel proposals. In the last six years, their ancestral homeland has been targeted for seven new coal terminals and the expansion of three others, two oil pipelines, eleven oil-by-rail terminals, and six natural gas pipelines!

Recognizing the same despoiling of Mother Earth in Mahwah as in Washington State, the Lummi transported a 16' totem pole in solidarity. Ramapough Lenape Chief Dwaine Perry informed us that the Pilgrim Pipeline would destroy an aquifer and a watershed — an ecosystem and our children’s future. We were each given tobacco to tuck within cavities on the totem pole, with a prayer for guidance and strength. "It takes unity to save the earth," declared Mr. Perry. "The four human figures on the pole show the four colors of our skins. We must stand together, one and all, as water keepers."

The Lummi have just succeeded in blocking the largest coal port ever conceived in North America, at Cherry Point, Washington. This landmark win underscores their message spoken in New Jersey: "We are protectors, not protestors. We are not here to fight, but to protect the elements of Life — clean air, clean water, clean earth, the sacred fire. We must be the voice for the fish, the four-leggeds, the insects. We are the first generation to recognize global climate change, and the last generation that can do something about it!"

On April 24th, the totem pole was moved from northern New Jersey to the southern part of the state, to The Watershed Institute in Pennington, New Jersey. It will set upright for four months, draped in a voluminous red cloth. The Institute is near where the Penn East Pipeline would pass, impacting 700 waterways if it is imbedded from Wilkes-Barre to Trenton.

As daylight weakened on April 21st in Mahwah, we watched a Lummi man, Mr. Carver, assemble a semi-circle of rocks before the totem pole. He explained that this was an altar. We were invited to each select a small stone to place atop the row, with a wish.

- from a longer article by Anna Maria Caldera, published in the LorretoCommunity.org Summer 2018 Newsletter
Activism Shines In Our Time

Growing Activism

L.A. Kauffman wrote in WagingNonviolence.org, on June 26, about Crowd Counting Consortium research that indicates that there have been 20,000 separate demonstrations over the period from January 2017 through May 2018, involving 11 million to 16 million total participants. While this is quite impressive he points to the fact that it is not just the size of the demonstrations, but that the geographic reach indicates record numbers of locations for such events all across the U.S. He believes that since we heard the recording of the children crying for their parents the relatively mild tone of the protests has changed to one that includes more nonviolent civil disobedience/direct action.

A Morning Call story (May 8, 2018) reported that a Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that one in five U.S. citizens has protested or rallied since the beginning of 2016, and 19% of those people had never joined a march or political gathering before.

Protesting for the Children I

On the evening of June 14th, browsing Facebook to see people’s reactions to the separation of families at our southern border, and looking for clarity, I saw a notice that there would be a demonstration about families at the border in Scranton the following day, giving time and place and little other information.

I immediately posted that I was going and would welcome company. On the beautiful morning of June 15, Penny Kornet and I drove to Scranton with hastily made signs and joined perhaps 250 or so peaceful, angry activists representing religious groups, unions, a peace group, Make the Road PA, an anti-fascist group, and other concerned individuals like Penny and me. The signs were creative and everyone chanted and sang.

We learned upon arrival that the reason for the protest was that Attorney General Jeff Sessions was speaking to a class of police cadets at Lackawanna College across the street from the protest. The Scranton Police were out in full force, but were polite and seemingly relaxed. It was impressive that so many impasioned people were able to assemble in the middle of a weekday on short notice. The issue is that important and will require constant pressure from all of us.

Marcie Lightwood

Protesting for the Children II

In Washington, DC, 1000 women marched to the U.S. capitol on June 28, to protest family detentions and the criminalization of asylum seekers. Arriving at the large atrium of the Hart Senate Office Building, 575 women staged a concentric circle sit-in that could be viewed from the upper floors of the building. Dressed in white, the women surrounded a large circular banner that read, “Families Belong Together in Freedom.” The 575 who were arrested by Capitol police included Rep. Pramilla Jayapal, from the state of Washington.

Protesting for the Children III

People (300-400) gathered in Payrow Plaza, Bethlehem, on June 30, to hear local speakers about the crimes against humanity being committed in our name as children have been separated from parents and both parents and children held in custody/prison/cages. This protest was one of over 700 held across the U.S.

Poor People’s Campaign

The Poor People’s Campaign held demonstrations, most including civil disobedience, in 37 state capitals, every Monday, for six weeks, May-June. Harrisburg was one of the state capitals.

Gary Olson is the one identified Lehigh Valley person who was able to participate in the civil disobedience in Harrisburg on one of the Mondays. He joined the action on the first of the six weeks (May 14). He wrote about his experience and the urgency of the campaign in The Morning Call on May 26, “Ending Poverty a Moral Goal of Poor People’s Campaign.” (There is even a photograph of his arrest with the online version of the article.) He writes, “The Poor People’s Campaign is tantalizingly close to taking...the next logical step for reaching its potential... In addition to its powerful moral message, a need exists to be more explicit about how the class and power structure of capitalism are intricately linked to the Poor People’s Campaign’s ‘Four Evils’ of systemic racism, systemic poverty, ecological devastation and the cost of America’s war economy.”

After their concluding rally in Washington, DC, on June 23, the Poor People’s Campaign wrote to the UN Human Rights Council asking that this Council convene a hearing on the state of poverty in our nation, “since our government is committing policy violence against its citizens and exacerbating poverty instead of alleviating it...”

Afghan Peace Marchers

The New York Times (June 18, 2018) featured a moving story, “Afghan Peace Marchers Arrive in Kabul Exhausted & Tired of War.” It opened: “Hundreds of Afghan peace marchers arrived exhausted in the capital, Kabul, on Monday after spending the fasting month of Ramadan crossing the sun-baked, war-torn country, much of it under Taliban control. The marchers, all men, including teachers, students and war victims on crutches and one in a wheelchair, were welcomed along the way by village women carrying the holy Koran, men singing and dancing or offering bread and yoghurt, some in tears. ‘I saw and learnt things that I had never thought of before,’ said Iqbal Khayber, 27, a medical student from Helmand. ‘We met people in areas controlled by the Taliban and in areas under government control – everyone is really tired of war.’”

The marchers pledged to continue their march to other provinces to gather more support.
**LEPOCO 2017 In Review**

It was a troubling year for those who love peace and justice. The new administration’s action cast a pall over so much that we all care about. But those struggling for justice grew in numbers and those working for peace persisted.

**Annual Dinner:**
March 18th – Michael McPhearson, national executive director for Veterans for Peace spoke. 150 people attended at Wesley United Methodist Church, Bethlehem.

**Potluck and Politics:**

**Popcorn and Politics:**

**Fairs and Festivals:**
April 21st – Lehigh University Earth Day / April 21st – Muhlenberg Earth Day / April 22nd – Bethlehem Food Co-Op Earth Day / August 20th – Pride in the Park / August 24th – NCC “Community Partners Fair” / August 24th – Lehigh University’s “Community/Club Expo” / August 26th – VegFest / September 3rd – Labor Day Parade / September 23rd – Peace Fair at Buckingham Friends

**Events & Programs:**
January 14th – Annual Martin Luther King program – “Choose Courage, Compassion, Community” at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Allentown / January 20th – Multiple women’s marches were held throughout the valley as well as in Washington, DC, and in other large cities. LEPOCO members were at many of these / February 26th – Hoodie Rally to commemorate Tryvon Martin’s death and call for justice, Payrow Plaza, Bethlehem / April 18th – Annual Tax Day Leafleting with War Resisters League flyers at various post offices / June 17th – Ban the Bomb march in NYC, people from LEPOCO participated in a pouring rain / July 17th – 21st – Annual Peace Camp for children, K-Grade 8, 1st Presbyterian Church, Allentown / August 6th & 9th – Hiroshima/Nagasaki program plus leafleting at Musikfest / All Summer – leafleting at farmers markets with “What Could We Do With $54 Billion?” / October – PBS Ken Burns’ Vietnam War series with WLVT display at Penn State LV involving photos from local peace activists and those who fought / December 9th – Annual Nazareth-to-Bethlehem Christmas Peace Pilgrimage.

**Monthly Events & Actions:**
2nd Thursday of the month: Peace Vigil at 3rd & Wyandotte Streets, Bethlehem.
Last Saturday of the month (except January & February): LEPOCO members join demonstration at Horsham Air Base against Drone Command Center.
1st Tuesday of the month (except January and August): Book Club met to discuss books on peace & justice themes. Every week: “Tuesdays with Toomey” vigils held noon-1 pm, every Tuesday (and some other days as well), with LEPOCO members participating as they are able.

**Fundraising Events:**

**Miscellaneous Items:**
In January ten LV women from LEPOCO visited Rep. Dent’s office to discuss multiple issues.
LEPOCO Steering Committee members met in several special meetings to discuss actions we could take in response to Trump’s election. This resulted in a flyer distributed at farmers markets advocating for a cut in military spending and a Yard Sign: “Cut Military Spending: Our Lives Depend on It.”
There were so many marches and demonstrations where LEPOCO members participated that we cannot remember, let alone list them all. Among them was the Climate March, in DC, April 29th.

Thank you to everyone who made phone calls, wrote letters/postcards/emails, vigilled, marched, sat-in, visited congress, participated in forums and discussions, etc. Keep it up. Our activism is so important.

- Tom Stinnett

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Confronting Cruelty In Our Time

Our World

As millions of people across the globe face extreme heat advisories, with temperatures even soaring beyond 90 degrees in Siberia last week, a recent study published in the British journal Nature Geoscience warns long-term global warming – and thus sea level rise – could be twice as bad as climate models project.

- CommonDreams.org, 7/9/18

Puerto Rico

On DemocracyNow.org (June 6, 2018) it was reported that researchers at Harvard University recently revealed the death toll from Hurricane Maria may be 70 times higher than the official count. The official death toll still stands at 64, but the new study estimates a death toll of at least 4,645 ... Naomi Klein said on the program, “It’s not just a natural disaster. It’s not just a tragedy. It’s state-sponsored mass killing.”

Syria

A June 5, 2018, press statement from Amnesty International says civilians living amid the rubble of Raqqa “are asking why US-led Coalition forces destroyed the city, killing hundreds of civilians in the process of ‘liberating’ them from the armed group calling itself ‘Islamic State’ (IS). An Amnesty report, War of Annihilation: Devastating Toll on Civilians, Raqqa – Syria, includes accounts that leave “gaping holes in the Coalitions’ insistence that their forces did enough to minimize civilian harm. The report details four emblematic cases of civilian families who were brutally impacted by the relentless aerial bombardment. Between them, they lost 90 relatives and neighbors – 39 from a single family – almost all of them killed by Coalition air strikes.” The complete release can be read at amnesty.org.

Pennsylvania

On June 20, the Pennsylvania State Senate voted 49-0 to condemn Pennsylvanians, Ohioans, and West Virginians to more fracking, more pipelines, and more infrastructure, and condemn everyone to an increasingly unlivable planet. So opens a press release from the Better Path Coalition announcing the Pennsylvania resolution calling for Congressional support of the development of an ethane storage hub in fracking land (the Shale Crescent). The ethane would be used in the production of single-use plastics. Gov. Wolf has already given a $1.65 billion tax break to Royal Dutch Shell for one “cracker plant” and says we can use four more in Western Pennsylvania. These plants open ethane molecules to extract ethylene for use in making single-use plastics. The complete press release is available at BetterPathCoalition.org.

Trump

David McReynolds recently wrote, What is alarming to me is not that Trump would stage this show (his press conference with people whose family members had been killed by illegal aliens), nor that he tore the children at the borders from their parents – there is, to Trump, no moral center, no trace of any awareness of right or wrong. No, what is alarming is that there is a willing audience for Trump, that the racism in our nation, at times so masked that we even elected Obama as President, can be brought to the surface, cultivated like a lethal virus, turned into a political force...

History may bury Trump. But what will it say of us? ...Rarely has raw evil been so clearly in view.

Contact LEOCO if you would like to see the complete article. It is not easily found online.

The Families at the Border

Jennifer Harbury, a human rights lawyer in Texas, an activist, and the speaker at LEOCO’S Annual Dinner in 2009, facilitated the release of the audio of disappeared children crying for their parents at the border. Jennifer Harbury has been interviewed at least twice in recent days on DemocracyNow.org (June 14 and June 28). These interviews are most informative. Here is a brief quote, “…the United States has everything to do with the creation of the monsters that are driving the refugees up to our border. They’re fleeing the cartels. Who are the heads of the cartels? Well, after the dirty wars ended, that included genocide and daily acts of torture and terror, according to the United Nations, those people changed their uniforms and became the head of the cartel groups. They’re extremely wealthy. They have full military experience... And they have unlimited access to all the weaponry and everything else that they need.”

Yemen

The long-feared attack by Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates forces on the key port city of Hodeidah in Yemen began in mid-June. Shireen Al-Adeimi, a Yemeni scholar and activist, said a few days after the attack started that “8.4 million people are on the verge of starvation, and another 22 million people, 80 percent of the population, are relying on humanitarian aid that is coming in through this port of Hodeidah.” She said that this attack shows that there is not even a pretense of civilian lives being of importance in Yemen. She also notes that in Yemen, “this is seen as a U.S.-Saudi war on their country... The Emiratis and the Saudis are relying on U.S. intelligence... We have been refueling their jets in midair. We are advising their soldiers. We’re providing all sorts of assistance to the Saudi Arabian Army... Without U.S. support and weaponry, they can’t continue to wage this war...”

- DemocracyNow.org, 6/18/18

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LEPOCO events. His presence in the Easton community will be very much missed.

When love is the way – unselfish, sacrificial, redemptive, when love is the way. Then no child would go to bed hungry in this world ever again. When love is the way. We will let justice flow down like a mighty stream and righteousness like an ever flowing brook. When love is the way poverty will become history. When love is the way the earth will become a sanctuary. When love is the way we will lay our swords and shields down by the riverside to study war no more. When love is the way there’s plenty good room... for all of God’s children.

- from the May 19, 2018, Wedding Address by Bishop Michael Curry at the Royal Wedding of Harry and Meghan

LEPOCO now has available copies of Nukewatch Quarterly, the Summer 2018 issue, containing articles about Fukushima, North Korea, floating reactors, and more. The copies can be picked up at the office and we will have them available with our displays at fairs and festivals.

A statement issued by The Nation magazine on July 11 was signed by people like Daniel Ellsberg, Noam Chomsky, Phyllis Bennis, and John Dean. It calls for fortifying “our election system against unlawful intrusions as well as against official policies of voter suppression” and for concrete steps “to ease tensions between the nuclear superpowers.”

Karla Lara Sings in Bethlehem

(continued from page 3)

dinner before the concert, Karla expressed her sense of exhaustion from the intensity of her 30-day tour, but no one in the audience had anything but a sense of her energy and joy in performing for us.

We need to follow Karla’s advice to, “Stay awake”!

A special thank you to Witness for Peace for including Bethlehem in Karla Lara’s tour schedule and for making an evening in May into a memorable event.

Viva Karla!

- Mimi Lang

Check out the LEPOCO website at www.lepoco.org for a Calendar of Events, Newsletter Archive, & More.

Sign up for LEPOCO e-mail weekly updates by calling 610-691-8750, or by writing to lepoco@fastnet.

Follow LEPOCO on Facebook and Twitter. Please “like” and “share,” often.

Support LEPOCO!

Enclosed are my yearly LEPOCO dues of $__________
($35 individual; $45 household; $75 supporter; $10 limited income)

I am also enclosing an extra donation of $__________

I would like to support LEPOCO’s work with a _______monthly / _______quarterly pledge of $__________

I’m interested in the following issues: __________________________.

Name __________________________
Phone # __________________________
e-mail __________________________

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Return to: LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., Bethlehem, PA 18015, or Donate through PayPal by going to the “membership” page at www.lepoco.org
It’s not lost on us that recent months have been a rollercoaster of emotions surrounding U.S.-Korean relations and that we’ve felt as dangerously near nuclear war as we now feel closer to a new, more hopeful future. While pundits and analysts are still making meaning of the historic meeting between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, some can’t separate opposing Trump and supporting demilitarization that would be good for the whole world. One thing we know is we are cautiously optimistic and support steps towards peace, even when they are taken from the most unlikely direction and even if it’s mostly symbolic at the moment.

Another thing that is pretty clear is that the people of Korea, activists and organizers, and the election of Moon Jae-in with the mandate of reunification are the catalyst for these steps and that Trump, ever the opportunist, is trying to ride the bandwagon all the way to the 2020 elections. It’s up to us to support peace even as we resist all the other ways the Trump administration is seriously harming people including the endless war on the people of Yemen and the worsening human rights crisis created by U.S. immigration policy and enforcement.

We are grateful to those activists and organizers who have been working for years and even decades towards reconciliation and demilitarization. We hold you in our hearts as we celebrate the possibilities you’ve opened up.

- Maggie Martin, About Face: Veterans Against the War, 6/14/18

There is a new coalition: Divest from the War Machine. They are demanding that we stop making a killing on killing. CODEPINK and As You Sow have released Weapons Free Funds, a searchable fund database that will help people and organizations cut ties to militarism and gun violence. You can reach the database at www.weaponfreefunds.org, where you can easily see if and how your investments support any of these: major military contractors, cluster munitions, nuclear weapons, civilian firearm manufacturers and retailers.

It is hoped that this resource will be used in efforts to have institutions, municipalities, faith communities and more divest their money from weapons companies, and those who support them.

For a concise cautionary report on the recently passed $716 billion John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, read Matt Taibbi’s article published in Rolling Stone on June 21, “Can You Think of Any Other Ways to Spend $716 Billion?” He writes, “The annual increase ($82 billion) by itself is bigger than the annual defense budget of Russia ($61 billion) and the two-year jump of over $165 billion eclipses the entire defense budget of China ($150 billion).”

He concludes, “Ask experts how much it would cost to make higher education at public colleges and universities free, and you’ll get some big numbers. You will also hear strident opposition in op-ed pages to how ‘unrealistic’ this idea is, even though most free-ed proposals would fit easily into an $80 billion-per-year outlay. Nobody ever calls massive increases in military spending ‘unrealistic.’ Not even when Donald Trump wants them.”

The End Mass Incarceration - Lehigh Valley, an active committee of POWER-NE, meets the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, at 916 West Turner St., Allentown. They have been doing voluminous research on incarceration and the aftermath in the Lehigh Valley.

The Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing will meet next on Tuesday, August 7, at 11 am, at the LEPICO Peace Center. A main point of discussion will be the report recently released by the Pennsylvania Senate Judiciary Committee about the death penalty in Pennsylvania. Possible responses will be discussed.

Fair Districts PA is working valiantly to find a solution for the state’s gerrymandering crisis. You can learn more about their current efforts at www.fairdistrictspa.com.

**MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...ETC.**


Monday, July 30, 5 pm: Stop the Wars Committee meeting at the home of Susie Ravitz, Easton. Final planning meeting for Hiroshima Nagasaki Days.

Thursdays, August 2 & September 6, 12:30 pm: Americas Solidarity Group meetings at the LEPICO Peace Center, Bethlehem.

Tuesday, August 7, 11 am: Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing meeting at the LEPICO Peace Center, Bethlehem.

Mondays, August 13 & September 10, 7 pm: LEPICO Monthly Action Meetings at the LEPICO Peace Center. All members & friends are welcome at this monthly business meeting where the organization’s activities are discussed & planned.

Tuesday, September 4, 6 pm: LEPICO Book Group meets at home of Bob & Carmen Riggs, 1113 Prospect Ave., Bethlehem. See page 2 of this newsletter for more information.

Please join in the meetings and work of these groups as you are able.

If you want more information about these meetings or the meetings of the Newsletter Planning Group, the Peace Camp Planning Committee, the Peaceathon Planning Committee, or any other committees, please call LEPICO at 610-691-8730.

For a regularly updated calendar of events and meetings, see www.lepico.org.
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Monthly Peace Vigil
(Second Thursdays)
August 9 & September 13
4:30-5:30 pm
Our wars & bombings continue.

Stand Up & Speak Out!
(Last Saturdays)
July 28 & August 26
12-2 pm
Protest:
Horsham Drone Command Center
(Rt. 611, Horsham)
Call 610-691-8730 for information about car pooling and other details.

Sunday, August 5
6:00 pm
“Love the World: Ban the Bombs”
Hiroshima-Nagasaki Commemoration
Gather at Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley (424 Center St., Bethlehem)
and process to Tondabayashi Garden (weather permitting)

Also:
Friday, August 3, 7 pm
“Rhapsody in August”
First Friday Film
LEPOCO Peace Center, 315 W. 4th St., south Bethlehem
Leafletting for Peace at Musikfest:
August 6 (Hiroshima Day)
August 9 (Nagasaki Day)
See page 1 for more information.