

April  
2021

Vol. 56 No. 2



Newsletter of **LEPOCO**  
Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

## A Governance Nerd Speaks Out

I am a governance nerd. I have become one over the past five years. I don't need to explain why because you already know why. One of my passions has become voting and all that it entails. It's not just as simple as going to the polls on Election Day anymore. This no longer guarantees that a fair election has occurred. (Not that it ever has.)

We need to do the WORK now to ensure that during the election period, every U.S. citizen has had an opportunity to cast their vote and know that they chose their judges, legislators and local officials, instead of these elected officials choosing who votes for them.

Two incredibly important voting bills have been presented to the U.S. Congress and the state legislature. The For the People Act (H.R.1/S.949) is the legislation currently in the U.S. Senate (having already passed the U.S. House of Representatives). On the state level, LACRA (H.R.22 and S. 222), or the Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act, is currently in the Government Committee of our Pennsylvania General Assembly. These two bills are briefly discussed here.

The For the People Act does these things:

- ◆ expands access to the ballot box, creates automatic voter registration systems, expands early voting, restores voting rights to those felons who have completed their sentences, and simplifies absentee voting and vote-by-mail.

- ◆ restores the Voting Rights Act, guarantees residents of the District of Columbia congressional voting and self-government, prohibits inappropriate voter purges, ends gerrymandering.

- ◆ ensures that U.S. elections are decided by voters without government interference.

For more information go to: [www.declarationforamericandemocracy.org](http://www.declarationforamericandemocracy.org).

LACRA is an amazing piece of legislation that really addresses transparency and equity in the way that, after a census, redistricting is conducted. Redistricting is the process of changing district lines using the census results. The current procedure is conducted in secrecy, by the party in control. This legislation requires:

### Map Construction

- ◆ public input to drawing fair maps; a website where maps can be submitted.

- ◆ a legislative committee must review all maps submitted.
- ◆ multiple statewide hearings for sharing maps.
- ◆ a written report stating decisions about maps chosen and rationale of the process.
- ◆ measurable criteria.

### Map Considerations

- ◆ protects racial and same language minorities against discrimination.
- ◆ bans dividing voting precincts.
- ◆ mandates compact and contiguous districts.
- ◆ keeps communities of interest together
- ◆ considers natural boundaries when drawing district lines

For more information see:

[www.fairdistrictspa.com](http://www.fairdistrictspa.com).

In conclusion, this sounds like a lot to do and it is. But here is the good news, due to the Covid pandemic, data from the census will be delayed until September! Now is the time to do our work. This means we must contact our state and federal legislators and urge them to support these bills by co-sponsoring them. This is not enough however. We need to demand that they support these bills by doing the WORK. This means we want them to go to committee leaders and ask them to help push these bills out of committees. They must be willing to do the WORK or lose our votes.

- Ronnie Arena

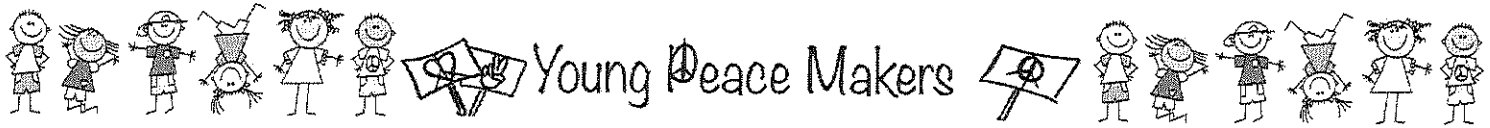
## We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest

If you have been concerned with matters of Peace and Justice, Community Building, Women's Concerns, Black Civil Rights and African American History, or music and theater, you probably know or have heard of Roberta Meek. LEPOCO members appreciate her years of involvement leading music and justice education for young people at Peace Camp.

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, Roberta led a virtual fundraiser for LEPOCO, in lieu of our annual dinner. We heard how she learned about "song story" performance and teaching from Bernice Johnson Reagon as she dropped in favorite anthems of peace and justice throughout her speech.

We could see folks singing along with Roberta on, *Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom*, on the Zoom program, attended by more than 80

(continued on page 2)



Do you remember a time when you felt at peace? What does peace mean to you?  
 Have you ever been frustrated or anxious and tried to calm yourself and feel at peace?

Peace begins with each one of us, so we all must find ways to bring some peace to ourselves. A way to begin is to imagine "feeling at peace." We can help ourselves do this by using our senses to think of positive things that bring peace to us.

For example, for me there is a SOUND that is calming so I would say the following:

*"Peace SOUNDS like a kitten purring because the gentle sound always makes me smile."*

There are five sentences below for you to complete. Each sentence is about one of the five senses.

Describe peace for yourself by completing the following sentences.

Have family members and friends do this and compare responses.

What are some unique ways people think of "feeling at peace?"

- Peace SOUNDS like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_
- Peace LOOKS like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_
- Peace FEELS like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_
- Peace TASTES like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_
- Peace SMELLS like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_



Peace to each of us,  
 Bill Thomas



## We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest

(continued from page 1)

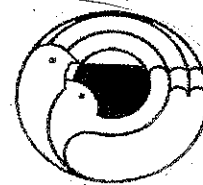
people. She told stories about her lifelong activism, beginning with meeting the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when she was just a child, and continuing through her role at Muhlenberg College, teaching history in the Africana Studies Program.

"Ella's Song," about Ella Baker, provided a way to introduce us to the work of Ella Baker and other women who led the Civil Rights campaigns of the 50s and 60s. I always think of Roberta Meek when I hear or sing, *We who believe in freedom cannot rest... until it comes... Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers' sons, Is as important as the killing of White men, White mothers' sons.*

It was good to see the many faces of dedicated peace activism on the screen, although we wish we could have been in each other's physical company. The event ended with us singing, "We shall overcome..." We shall, with continuing perseverance and gratitude for what we each bring to the struggle.

- Marcie Lightwood

**Editor's Note:** A recording of the March 13<sup>th</sup>, "song talk," by Roberta Meek, "From Sojourner Truth to Stacey Abrams: The Unfinished Battle for Voting Rights," is available for viewing or sharing at [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org).



Newsletter of LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

1705 West Broad Street

Bethlehem, PA 18018

Phone: 610-691-8730

Fax: 610-691-8904

Website: [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org)

Email: [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net)

The LEPOCO Newsletter is published eight times a year by the Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern, a nonviolent, non-profit organization dedicated to peace in all forms.

**Annual Dues are:**

- Regular Member .....\$35
- Limited Income Member .....\$10
- Household Membership .....\$45
- Supporting Member .....\$75

Articles/news should be submitted to one of the addresses above for consideration for the next issue of the newsletter.

**Newsletter Staff:** Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, Amanda Zaniesienko, Carol Baylor, Janet Ney, Rick Dow, Jeff Vitelli.

**Thanks** to all the people who collate and prepare the newsletter for mailing each month.

**LEPOCO Steering Committee:** Diane Dilendik, Sharlee DiMenichi, Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Nancy Johnston, Mary Lang, Monica McAgdon, Dan Miller, Janet Ney, Tom Pietrzak, Susie Ravitz, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), Jeff Vitelli, Amanda Zaniesienko (ex-officio).

## To Change or Not to Change, That is the Question

---

Since the inauguration of President Biden in January, the foreign policy of the United States toward Iran has been odd indeed. In Iraq, there is evidence of continuity with Trump's bellicose policies - the United States and Iranian-backed Shiite militias exchange occasional military strikes, always prone to dangerous escalation. The United States launches air attacks against militia groups it claims on uncertain evidence to be under Iranian control and in retaliation for militia rocket attacks on bases with US service personnel or US military contractors. But Biden has also indicated he wants a policy toward Iran very different from Trump's. He has revoked United States support for the Saudi and UAE war against the Houthi rebels in Yemen, reversed Trump's designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organization, and sought to end the blockade of humanitarian aid to that devastated country. The brutal civil war in Yemen, however, grinds on, and the United States remains complicit in the carnage.

Equally significant, Biden has indicated that he would like to re-establish a nuclear weapons treaty with Iran. In 2018, then-President Trump directed the United States unilaterally to withdraw from its nuclear agreement with Iran and to reimpose severe economic sanctions. This treaty, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), negotiated over two years and agreed to by Iran, the United States, six other nations, and the European Union, limited the development of Iran's nuclear program and ensured that it would not develop nuclear weapons. Trump's decision - to reject the treaty and to impose "maximum pressure" sanctions - was a shock.

Anthony Blinken, Biden's Secretary of State, has indicated that the new administration will end sanctions if Iran will first agree to limit its nuclear program. Iran has indicated that prior to any discussions, the United States must lift the sanctions. In the hesitant, conditional diplomatic signals of recent weeks, neither side is willing to make the decisive first move. Since the United States was first to pull out of the treaty, the obligation would seem to be on Biden to begin reviving it by removing sanctions. Recently, with both sides speaking to one another through intermediaries, encouraging talks have begun in Vienna. The future of these negotiations remains unclear - the United States opposes any "unilateral gestures" on its part, Iran has presidential elections in June and, on the sidelines, Israel adamantly rejects any return to the treaty.

- Mick Baylor

## Gun Violence Prevention

---

On March 23, CeaseFire PA led a virtual advocacy day of gun violence prevention (GVP) with supporters from around the state. The purpose was to introduce the three-policy Common Agenda of the CeaseFire-led

Pennsylvanians for GVP coalition: 1) background checks for ALL firearm sales; 2) require the reporting of lost and stolen firearms to law enforcement (an effective means to reduce illegal trafficking of firearms to criminals); and, 3) enact extreme risk protection order legislation to allow family and law enforcement to petition the courts to remove firearms from persons posing an imminent threat to themselves or others. (This policy has been shown to be an effective means to reduce the gun suicides that account for about two-thirds of firearm deaths and has already been adopted by numerous states throughout the U.S.)

The main event of the day was a virtual rally featuring Governor Tom Wolf, Attorney General Josh Shapiro, prominent religious leaders, gun violence survivors, doctors who treat gun violence victims, legislators from both parties leading the effort to enact commonsense solutions, and more. There were also three educational forums. Health-care professionals described a public health approach to gun violence. GVP professionals described approaches to community violence prevention programs. Finally, there was expert advice on how to engage gun owners in our efforts to reduce gun violence.

But perhaps most important of all, there were over 65 virtual advocacy meetings with legislators. These were meetings where folks like us told our elected officials how gun violence has impacted our lives and our communities, and asked them to get on board and support the life-saving elements of the Common Agenda. The advocacy meetings included many advocates from here in the Lehigh Valley speaking to our local elected representatives from both sides of the aisle.

- Fritz Walker

## Advocacy works!

---

A state that had the second highest rate of death penalty executions, a state that had executed 1300 people in its history from colonial days - that state, Virginia, just abolished the death penalty. It is the 23<sup>rd</sup> state to do away with state killing. Next up, Ohio and Wyoming may follow Virginia's lead. Public pressure to end the death penalty makes a difference.

The death penalty was supported by former Attorney General William Barr and former President Donald Trump; in the administration's last days, 13 people were executed.

In March, Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) introduced the Federal Death Penalty Act of 2021. At the same time, advocates are hoping that President Biden will fulfill his campaign promise to end the death penalty. Eight members of the House of Representatives, Ayanna Pressley, Cori Bush, Rashida Tlaib, Pramila Jayapal, Ro Khanna, Mondaire Jones, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Jamaal Bowman, have asked President Biden "to commute all death sentences for Americans currently on death row, halt Federal executions, and fight to abolish the Federal death penalty."

- Janet Ney

# LEPOCO Financial Report 2020

Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Fund Balance	2020
Membership Dues, Fund Appeals, Pledges	\$34,971.95
Boutique & SERRV Sales (net)	\$658.88
Annual Dinner (net)-Dinner not held but this is paid in advance money	\$1,477.86
Art Raffle (net)	\$531.80
Bike-Walkathon (net)	(\$55.65)
Dividends and Interest (PPL, Domini Funds, 1 <sup>st</sup> Comm.)	\$2,397.55
Miscellaneous	\$297.38
Sell of Domini Shares	\$19,000.00
P&P's (Potluck & Politics) & (Popcorn & Politics)	\$17.50
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$59,297.27</b>
<b>Contributions to Others</b> (Peace Pilgrimage, UFPJ, FOR Peace Presence, Voices for Creative Nonviolence, St. Luke's Church, Free Conference Calls, etc)	<b>\$450.00</b>
Salaries, Taxes & Benefits to Employees	\$32,197.30
Rent, Electric, Telephone	\$8,652.68
Insurance (Fire, Liability & Worker's Comp)	\$1,497.00
Internet Service Provider	\$600.00
Other Computer Fees (Domain Fees, E-Mail, Virus, Zoom)	\$210.46
Paypal Fees	\$142.74
Printing and Postage (Newsletter, Bulk Mail Fee, etc.)	\$2,218.50
Move Expenses	\$1,434.97
Fund Appeals	\$283.74
Other Program & Events (ML King & Voting Stickers)	\$273.80
Supplies (Office, Copier, Printer, Paper)	\$1,265.87
Repairs (Risograph, Copier-Maint. Agreement)	\$740.08
Misc. Office Expenses (Mowing Grass, mailbox, outside light, )	\$133.36
Miscellaneous (Working Groups, etc.)	\$4.80
Miscellaneous Fees	\$58.39
Copier Lease (includes buyout of lease)	\$1,200.63
NAACP Ad in Dinner Program	\$50.00
Business Mercantile Tax & Fire Inspection	\$55.00
Purchase of Risograph plus Maint. Agreement ( ½ total)	\$1,490.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$52,959.32</b>
<b>Fund Balances at the Beginning of the Year</b>	<b>\$78,641.90</b>
<b>Excess or (Loss) for Year</b>	<b>\$3,766.80</b>
<b>Change in Investment Value</b>	<b>\$2,571.15</b>
<b>Fund Balance at the End of the Year</b>	<b>\$84,979.85</b>

2020 Fund Balances	Beginning of Year	End of Year
Cash, Savings and Investments	\$92,406.33	\$97,820.82
Liabilities	\$6,075.14	\$5,781.23
Grupo de Apoyo funds held by LEPOCO	\$7,689.29	\$7,059.74
Net Assets and Fund Balances	\$78,641.90	\$84,979.85

# 2020: The Year We Learned the Value of Continuance

January to mid-March was already a time of upheaval for LEPOCO as we prepared to move our Peace Center from its home of over thirty years in south Bethlehem. The sale of our building was announced in August 2019. There was more upheaval to come.

We protested January 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Wyandotte, and joined others in protesting on January 25<sup>th</sup> at Center Square, Allentown, after the U.S. killed an Iranian general in a drone attack. We feared further escalation or even war.

We held a program honoring the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at Godfrey Daniels, on January 20, with Melba Tolliver speaking and the Peace Singers leading rousing songs.

We held a Peace Camp Winter Party on January 25<sup>th</sup>, at First Presbyterian Church in Allentown.

We held Popcorn & Politics/First Friday Film presentations in January, February, and March – Michael Moore’s “Fahrenheit 11/9,” “I Am Not Your Negro,” about James Baldwin, and “Holly Near: Singing For Our Lives,” respectively. We held our last Potluck & Politics program at the old office on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, with the Rev. Beth Reed speaking about the Poor People’s Campaign.

Planning was underway for the May 23<sup>rd</sup> Biking & Walking for Peace event using our new office as a starting point and for the March Annual Dinner – the dinner having been held in late February.

All of this came to a screeching halt (as did most everyone’s world) on March 12<sup>th</sup>, when the Annual Dinner Planning Committee met to address the pandemic crisis quickly becoming apparent, and decided to cancel the Dinner scheduled for the next week. We hope Reggie Harris, the scheduled speaker/singer, can join us at a future date.

A personal note about pandemic world: on March 19, I walked on the closed Lehigh University campus on a misty morning. The quiet was striking and the statue of a young man reading Albert Camus’s “The Plague,” had been given a mask.

Mid-March to December some things continued. Monthly Action Meetings with the Steering Committee were held, first by conference call and then on zoom. The Move Planning Committee met on conference calls and held many Sort & Purge with Carol (Baylor) sessions from March 2 through to the completion of the move in late June. It was a heavy lift emotionally and physically for everyone. Our collective gratitude goes to all those who helped. The Weekly Update continued on Fridays – a little longer. The newsletter skipped a few months due to the move.

The First Tuesdays LEPOCO Book Group has not skipped a beat, meeting on zoom since April 2020, with one in-person meeting on a porch, masked, and socially distanced. Some new folks have joined the discussions. A favorite last year for me, among the many good books, was “Freedom & Despair: Notes from the South Hebron Hills,” by David Dean Shulman.

The Peace Camp Planning Committee made a most heroic effort, presenting a Peace Camp at Home program on zoom the last week of July with an accompanying, complementary packet of activities for all ages of campers.

On May 25, George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man was killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We all remember the thousands of people, especially young people, who marched and vigiled locally, and the millions who did so around the country and the world. There were significant demonstrations in places like Riegelsville and Penn Argyl, not just in the cities, showing the depth and breadth of anger and concern.

The Stop the Wars Committee has been active throughout the year, meeting a few times in-person with appropriate precautions for a small group. Another pandemic story: at the February meeting of this committee at a local café I was so struck by one of the workers there already preparing for the pandemic, wearing her mask.

August 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>, we vigiled to remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki, at the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. statue in Allentown and at Farmers’ Markets in Easton and Emmaus. Later in August we joined a demonstration at the south Bethlehem post office saying “put the machines back” and stop destroying this important, basic public service.

On September 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, we held “Vote for Peace” vigils to observe the UN’s International Day for Peace and the UN Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Later in the fall we wrote chalk messages on sidewalks urging people to vote, giving important dates, like when to register. In mid-October we sent a letter to our mailing list giving all manner of practical voter participation advice along with our own Amanda Zaniesienko-designed sticker saying, “I Voted for Peace & Justice,” expressing the intent guiding our voting choices.

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, we held our first zoom program with the drawing for the 2020 LEPOCO Art Raffle prizes. The drawing would normally have been held at the Annual Dinner in March.

On December 12, many of us joined the pandemic version of the annual Peace Pilgrimage. We could not walk the ten miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem together, so the planners invited us to walk in our town/neighborhood and join in a zoom meeting after our walk.

In December, the Stop the Wars Committee was preparing for events in January to mark the effective date for the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to join the world-wide Day of Action to Stop the War in Yemen.

We have lost so much this year – especially beloved peace and justice activist friends. Will we find a way to gather to remember them as a community once the pandemic passes?

- Nancy Tate

# Bits & Pieces

Copies of the Spring 2021 issue of Nukewatch Quarterly containing news and information about nuclear weapons, nuclear power, nuclear waste, and nonviolent resistance, are available at LEPOCO. This issue has a focus on the nuclear weapons ban treaty and Fukushima. Contact us and we will mail you a copy.

The Morning Call Guild is seeking community support for their effort to prevent a takeover of the local newspaper by a New York hedge fund, Alden Global Capital. The Guild has sponsored webinars about this threat and there have been articles in local newspapers. You can learn more and sign a petition at: [www.saveourmorningcall.org](http://www.saveourmorningcall.org). Local news coverage already suffers from staffing cutbacks. This effort is very important.

On March 29, "The Express Times" carried an inspiring story about the work of Nancy Shukaitis that saved the Delaware River in the 1960s and 1970s, from the destruction of the Tocks Island Dam Project. The dam was stopped and the area is now a national park. Nancy Shukaitis died on March 6<sup>th</sup>, one day after her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. The story is available on [www.lehighvalleylive.com](http://www.lehighvalleylive.com).

The Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective has announced a schedule for delegations to Cuba, Honduras, and Colombia, starting in August 2021. All delegates must be vaccinated prior to departure and the safety of the communities visited and the delegates will be monitored closely in the pandemic. The delegations to Honduras focus on the "U.S. Role in Migration." Delegations to Colombia focus on issues like land control and those to Cuba look at healthcare, education, housing and the U.S. blockade. For more information see [www.solidaritycollective.org](http://www.solidaritycollective.org).

On April 14<sup>th</sup>, Veterans For Peace delivered a letter to Special Climate

Envoy John Kerry, asking Kerry to recognize that militarism is a key part of the climate crisis and the need to promote redirection of military expenditures to address the climate crisis and provide for human needs. LEPOCO joined the hundreds of organizations and individuals who signed the Open Letter to Kerry. One can learn more and sign the letter at [www.veteransforpeace.org](http://www.veteransforpeace.org).

Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative in Alabama and author of "Just Mercy," was interviewed by Krista Tippet on "On Being," on December 3, 2020. Mid-interview he speaks about the dispiriting actions and words by police officers and others. He concludes, *But I do think it's important that we stay hopeful about our capacity to overcome that bigotry. And I am persuaded that hopelessness is the enemy of justice; that if we allow ourselves to become hopeless, we become part of the problem. I think you're either hopeful, or you're the problem. There's no neutral place. Injustice prevails where hopelessness persists. And if I've inherited anything from the generation who came before me, I have inherited their wisdom about the necessity of hope.*

In late March Daniel Hale pleaded guilty for the crime of letting the people of the U.S. know the truth about drone warfare. Daniel Hall started speaking out in 2013 against drone warfare, an all-too-easy way of murdering people who are often innocent civilians. He will be sentenced on July 13<sup>th</sup>, and faces up to a decade in prison. CODEPINK is urging people to write letters to the judge in support of Daniel Hale. You can learn more and find clear instructions on how to write such a letter at [www.codepink.org/danielhaleletters](http://www.codepink.org/danielhaleletters).

Addison Brass wrote a lovely thank you note for the last issue of the LEPOCO Newsletter saying that it was "a wonderful reminder that right here where I live -- even amid these times when our society's darker impulses have taken on a particularly frightening mode -- people are, with great courage and zest, nonviolently working for a humane social order, for PEACE. It makes me proud to be dwelling here." - Nancy Tate

## End War & Blockade in Yemen

A sad anniversary was noted on March 25<sup>th</sup>. On that day in 2015, the first Saudi air strikes fell on Yemen starting a costly war and causing the greatest humanitarian crisis in the world today. Earlier this year, and during his election campaign, President Joe Biden indicated his desire to end the war in Yemen. Advocates need to push the Biden administration to remove all support for the Saudi-led coalition. In addition to selling arms to the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates, the United States trains Saudi-coalition troops and assists with the maintenance of ships and arsenal.

The Saudi-led coalition has been merciless in its bombing, especially targeting schools, hospitals, and water and sewage facilities. The Saudi government has announced its desire to end the conflict; since that announcement, coalition forces have conducted nine air raids. A Saudi naval blockade is preventing the entry of food, medical supplies, and fuel. The blockade has caused relief trucks trying to deliver supplies to sit idle for lack of fuel.

Sana'a, the capital and largest city, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. A picture of the city reveals buildings of grace and beauty. Yemen was among the poorest countries in the Arab peninsula before the war; its citizens survived on two dollars per day. Bombing, ground fighting, and the blockade have devastated the country.

According to CNN, 47,000 people are likely to experience famine. An additional 16 million people will struggle with food and fuel shortages. Hospitals are hard pressed to deal with the malnutrition of babies and children. David Beasley, of the United Nations World Food Programme, has estimated that a Yemeni child dies every 75 seconds.

Pressure needs to be put on the Biden Administration to stop selling arms and providing other military assistance to this war, and to end the naval blockade, and increase humanitarian aid.

- Janet Ney

# The Struggle Shared

---

*Bright morning star arisin', Bright morning star arisin',  
Bright morning star arisin', Day is a-breaking in my soul*

- Lyrics from an Appalachian hymn adapted by the lively folk group, Bright Morning Star founded in 1978.

---

**DRBC BANS FRACKING:** February 14<sup>th</sup>, was a historic day for environmental action in Pennsylvania. After years of advocacy by a coalition of citizens groups, the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), which is responsible for managing the source of drinking water for 13 million people, voted to permanently ban hydraulic fracturing of natural gas wells along the Delaware River.

While the DRBC had imposed a moratorium on fracking in 2010, legal challenges from landowners, and PA lawmakers alleged that the moratorium usurped their authority to govern natural resources. In Pennsylvania, hydraulic fracturing is conducted across a broad swath of the state underlain by Marcellus and Utica shale formations and has transformed the state into the nation's second-largest gas producer.

Gov. Tom Wolf is one of the four governors whose representatives are members of the Commission. He voted for the ban, and said that he cast the state's vote in favor of the ban "after careful analysis and consideration of the unique geographic, geologic and hydrologic characteristics" of the river basin, and noted that the ban fulfilled his 2014 campaign pledge. The fifth commission member, a federal government representative from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, abstained.

So, we can chalk up another win for the power of the people united, but there is work yet to be done. We must ensure that the DRBC also blocks the PennEast Pipeline, planned to pump fracked natural gas from Marcellus Shale drilling sites through our sensitive ecosystems, and stop development of the Gibbstown LNG export terminal which would allow liquefied natural gas to be shipped throughout our region.

See [delawareriverkeeper.org](http://delawareriverkeeper.org) or [pennfuture.org](http://pennfuture.org) to learn more.

**SHUT DOWN BERKS DETENTION CENTER:** In late February, families held at the Berks County Family Detention Center in Leesport, learned that they were leaving and leaving fast. They had to scramble to contact family and arrange transportation to new homes. The Center is empty of immigrant families for the first time in two decades.

The Detention Center has incarcerated children as young as two weeks old, and families have been held for more than a year at a time. It is one of three places where the federal government confines migrant children and their families together, and the only publicly-owned family detention center in the country, under contract with ICE.

The Shut Down Berks Coalition has been fighting for years to close the facility. While the Berks Detention Center is currently empty, activists are concerned that it may be reopened at any time. The Coalition is working with the national Detention Watch Network to close all facilities that have imprisoned immigrants, putting pressure on Gov. Wolf and the Biden Administration. Lives are at risk in immigration detention. It's imperative that all people get released, and detention centers get closed for good. To learn more contact the Shut Down Berks Coalition on Facebook

**"¡PRESENTE!" JORIS ROSSE:** A truly iconic legend of the Lehigh Valley environmental movement is no longer among us. Joris Rosse passed away on February 26<sup>th</sup>, just weeks after his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. He was admitted to the hospital in mid-February, had surgery and failed to recover. Joris had suffered a stroke in 2012, and broke his hip in 2018, but despite the impairments, his spirit and creative energy seemed boundless to the end.

Joris became a prominent leader in the early '90s as the coordinator of local Earth Day celebrations. He and Joanne Jones, his partner at the time, founded the Morning Star Center for Human Development and Spiritual Awakening. They taught Yoga and T'ai Chi. Joris was always on top of paradigm shifts and what he called, "cultural creatives." He convened "Councils of All Beings," was a founding member of the Alliance for Sustainable Communities, and facilitator for the local Institute of Noetic Sciences. He generously hosted weddings, birthday parties, and other gatherings at Morning Star.

Joris Rosse was born in New City, New York. In 1933, his father was hired to teach at The University of Delft, and the family moved to Holland. They were there during the Nazi Occupation, unable to return to the U.S. until 1946. Joris graduated from the University of Idaho, worked at Columbia University, and was eventually hired as Director of Planning, at Lehigh University. It was through Lehigh that Joris acquired an old barn. Retiring from Lehigh, he opened a potter's studio, and began converting the barn into his home, the architectural wonder, the beautiful sacred space that we know as Morning Star Center.

Joris met his wife, Suzie Hall Rosse at meetings of the Alliance. They were married in 2016, and Suzie has been a devoted partner, helping Joris maintain his creative drive, even as his aging body failed him. He is also survived by three adult children.

Joris' ashes were buried under one of his favorite trees on the property, in a quiet ceremony. Friends are invited to visit and honor his life and spirit. The property will likely be sold. The question arises of how to keep Joris' spirit alive, shining like a Morning Star in our local movement for a sustainable future. If you would like to participate in the discussion, contact Suzie at [suziehall21@gmail.com](mailto:suziehall21@gmail.com). You can also go to her Facebook page and see a wonderful collection of photos spanning Joris' life and work.

- Jeff Vitelli



Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem, PA 18018  
610-691-8730 [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net)  
Fax: 610-691-8904 [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org)

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Permit No. 617  
Lehigh Valley, PA

### See Inside:

#### Page 1

- ◇ A Governance Nerd Speaks
- ◇ We Who Believe in Freedom

#### Page 2

- ◇ Young Peacemakers

#### Page 3

- ◇ To Change or Not
- ◇ Prevent Gun Violence
- ◇ Advocacy Works!

#### Page 4

- ◇ 2020 Financials

#### Page 5

- ◇ Year in Review

#### Page 6

- ◇ Bits & Pieces

#### Page 7

- ◇ The Struggle Shared

Extra: "Where Your  
Income Tax Money  
Really Goes"



### Monthly Peace Vigil

(Second Thursdays)

May 13 & June 10

4:30-5:30 pm

*The wars & preparations for war  
continue. Help witness for peace.*

3<sup>rd</sup> & Wyandotte Sts., Bethlehem  
LEPOCO. 610-691-8730. for more info.

### Peace Camp At Home Returns!



July 26-30, 2021

Information about registration soon!

In the meantime:

Contact LEPOCO 610-691-8730 to volunteer.

### MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...

Wednesday, April 21, 3:30 pm: Peace Camp 2021 Planning Committee Meeting, by zoom.  
Call 610-691-8730 or email [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net) to get the link to participate.

Thursday, April 22, 2 pm: Stop the Wars Committee Meeting, at LEPOCO (for those who  
have been vaccinated & are wearing a mask).

Tuesdays, May 4 & June 1, 6 pm: First Tuesday LEPOCO Book Group will meet on zoom.  
Call 610-691-8730 or email [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net) to get the zoom link or directions if in person.

Mondays, May 10 & June 14, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting on zoom. Call 610-  
691-8730 or email [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net) to get the zoom link or any plans to meet in person. All  
members & friends are welcome at this monthly business meeting where the  
organization's activities are discussed & planned. These meetings are on the second  
Monday of the month.