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Newsletter of **LEPOCO**

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

We Must Continue

As we anticipate moving out of the dystopia of the past four years, most of us are hopeful that the opportunities to work for peace and justice will certainly increase. We know the Trump cult will not fade away. Indeed the "transition" has so far been hampered with Trump team lies, conspiracy tweets, confusion, disruption...

But, just as election workers and vote counters of all stripes proceeded with calm and diligence to complete their work we must move forward in support of the changes so needed by our world. We can build on the progress achieved and the insights gained even during the recent difficult period.

As Monica McAghon writes in this newsletter there is much to celebrate about 50 nations ratifying the United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We have new energy pushing us on in the work to reduce (end?) the threat of nuclear weapons.

We have learned so much about the disparities in our country as the pandemic tragically kills and injures thousands...millions. We must address the economic divides between pandemic profiteers and everyone struggling for resources to survive; the racial divides; the disparities in who the pandemic affects and in who receives adequate care once affected; the disparities in education and health care; the age divides that leave the elders more vulnerable... This all makes the wastefulness of military spending seem even more obscene. We can work to end these disparities even as we point to the urgent need to cut military spending to free up resources for this very purpose.

As Mick Baylor writes in this newsletter we so welcome the amazing accomplishments of those who marched and stood for Black Lives Matter this summer. We can support that effort as it continues in the streets and moves to city councils and state houses.

We know there may be no way to prevent some of the damage from the smash and burn environmental policy in effect since 2017. But, youth-led efforts to end climate change give us hope even as fires, hurricanes, and melting glaciers anger and frighten us.

A border wall destroying wilderness and communities while "protecting" us from caged children and their families, and U.S. participation in the war in Yemen (see Janet Ney's articles in this newsletter) are just two examples of the urgent need to change U.S. foreign policy. Protecting lives and human rights should be our top priorities.

We must continue.

"Small acts when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world." - Howard Zinn

We must continue.

- Nancy Tate



Yes! 50 Countries Ratify United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons!

Fifty nations recently ratified the United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Zia Mian, physicist and co-director of Princeton University's Program on Science and Global Security, said, "It will become part of international law, which they [activists] can take to the nine countries that still have nuclear weapons and say, international law says you can't." The pressure on the nine nuclear states US, North Korea, China, Russia, Israel, UK, France, Pakistan and India, to take the Treaty seriously will take hard work in the coming years.

As Mick Baylor wrote in the September LEPOCO newsletter, the nuclear danger is still with us, from the bombings of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Marshall Islands, to a new nuclear arms race. There are many broken treaties, and so far, the US and Russia have failed to even extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), beyond its February 2021 expiration date.

We need strategies to start conversations and actions. We can talk to officials of banks and financial institutions, make them aware of the TPNW, pressure them to divest from companies receiving billion dollar contracts to develop and build nuclear weapons: Bechtel, Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, IBM, Alliant, Siemens, and General Dynamics, to name a few.

Roughly, the U.S. has 5800 nuclear weapons, has conducted 1030 nuclear tests. The U.S. spent \$35.4 billion on nuclear weapons in 2019 alone. We need jobs, but not jobs making bombs. We need jobs dismantling nuclear bombs and dealing with nuclear waste. Melting glaciers and rising seas threaten the domes over the Marshall Island nuclear sites. In a related issue, Japan is planning to dump radioactive waste-water from Fukushima into the ocean. How can we ignore the likelihood of nuclear disasters?

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This Year's Christmas Peace Walk

The 61st Annual Christmas Peace Pilgrimage was scheduled for Saturday, December 12, 2020. In mid-November the Pilgrimage Planning Committee issued the following statement about altered plans for this year:

Because of the COVID pandemic, this year, in lieu of our traditional 10-mile, large group walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem, we invite pilgrims to go for a walk, individually or in small safe groups, in their own neighborhoods (or another place of their choosing) between 12 and 3 pm on Saturday, Dec. 12.

Then, we invite you to join an online gathering at 4 pm that day. Participants will congregare virtually to share their thoughts, reflections, and experiences of peace. (If you choose to take your personal peace pilgrimage on another day or time, you are still welcome to join the group via Zoom at 4 pm.)

While you walk, we suggest that you might reflect on:

- Who you want/need to make peace with...
- How you plan to make this peace...
- One of the many global conflicts and the people who are working to resolve those conflicts peacefully.

During our time together at 4 pm, we could share, for example a message of peace; a short reading or poem; a personal symbol of peace; a personal story of reconciliation; a favorite peacemaker and the work they are doing or have done.

Bring your own Cocoa! Bring your own Sign!

Please use the website peacewalk.org to REGISTER YOUR EMAIL to receive the Zoom link and help us plan how many participants to expect.

Our heartfelt thanks to everyone for your understanding and for helping us continue this tradition in a safe way during this challenging time.



LEPOCO Art Raffle 2020

This year's Art Raffle drawing certainly had a different look and feel from previous years. Typically held during LEPOCO's Annual Dinner in March, 2020's Art Raffle drawing was held online via ZOOM - on October 10th. Special thanks go out to Janet Ney for MC-ing the event, Scott Slingerland for drawing the names, Ishaan Lal for helping as a tech host, Rick Dow for operating the camera for the drawing, Margot Hillman for her tech assistance, Marcie Lightwood and Rick Weaver for recording two lovely songs for the zoom program, Nancy Tate for helping to keep the raffle moving along smoothly, and Tom Stinnett for helping attendees enter the ZOOM.

As in previous years, we received donations from artists, a local organization, and this year a member

donated an item from his personal collection. We are grateful to the donors for providing such wonderful items, year after year.

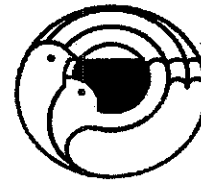
Congratulations to all who won! The winners are listed below:

- Turned Wooden Bowl by Lee Buck:
Joan Moran of Allentown
- Hand-Crocheted Afghan by Michelle Sheehan:
Erica Nastasi of Albany, NY
- Quilt by Ellen Buck & Romaine Laury:
Mary O'Donnell-Miller of Bath
- Large Pasta Bowl with 4 Individual Serving Bowls by Sommerville Pottery:
Joseph Marth of Coopersburg
- Silk Tie Braided Mat by Ronnie Arena:
Sandy Edmiston of Allentown
- Godfrey Daniels "Swag":
George Harmanos of Bethlehem
- Framed Print of Bob Marley donated by Phil Reiss, from his personal collection:
Rita & Ted Collier of Bethlehem

All of the items have been received by their happy new owners by pick-up, delivery, or mail.

LEPOCO's Annual Dinner plans for 2021 will begin soon. While we hope to be able to gather in person safely, we understand that still may not be possible by March. Watch for updates in upcoming newsletters.

- Amanda Zaniesienko



Newsletter of LEPOCO
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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: Carol Baylor, Mick Baylor, Diane Dilendik, Sharlee DiMenichi, Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Nancy Johnston, Christine Loch, Dan Miller, Janet Ney, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), Jeff Vitelli, and Amanda Zaniesienko (ex-officio).

Black Lives Matter Protests & LEPOCO

This year has seen more than its share of catastrophes and disappointments, but there has also been one reason for great hope, even rejoicing. Over the past summer the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement exploded across the country – indeed across the world – in many huge, powerful, generally peaceful demonstrations against systemic racism. Confederate monuments came down, even in the deep South. In city after city (and small towns), blacks and whites marched together against racism in policing. The celebration of Juneteenth threatened to overshadow the Fourth of July.

The summer's BLM demonstrations were directed specifically against racism in law enforcement. The police killing of George Floyd dramatized for everybody what being black all too often feels like. It produced an amazingly rapid expansion and transformation of the BLM movement, which began six years ago, in the summer of 2014, in protests in Ferguson, Missouri, following the police killing of Michael Brown. In the intervening years something noteworthy happened.

The Ferguson protests were largely those of black citizens. The marches and demonstrations this past summer were remarkable for the way in which they

brought together people of all races. The summer's actions, dominated by young people, demonstrated the emergence of a new racial harmony. Blacks and whites, members of all minority communities and every gender preference united in a wonderful campaign demanding an end to systemic racism. The demonstrations are a clear example of Rep. John Lewis' "good trouble" and it is cause for great hope.

The Rev. William Barber, President of Repairers of the Breach, co-leader of the Poor People's Campaign, calls America's current attempt to come to terms with its racist past "the birth pangs of a third Reconstruction." After Reconstruction came reaction in the form of segregation and voter denial. Following the civil rights and voting rights movements of the 1960s came reaction, still going on, in the areas of vote suppression, law enforcement, and many other realms, that continues to deny black and minority people equal treatment. It has become clear that racism is not just in the South but everywhere, and in no other area is this inequality clearer than in law enforcement itself. The BLM movement has become the most important expression of this "third Reconstruction."

From its origin in the civil rights and anti-war movement of the 1960s, LEPOCO has been committed
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John Zachmann: ¡Presente!

John Zachmann of Easton, a most faithful supporter and member of LEPOCO since 1990, died November 16. He was 90 years old. John helped LEPOCO in many ways – collating newsletters, staffing LEPOCO booths at fairs and festivals, setting up for Annual Dinners and Peace Camp luncheons, collecting pledges for our riding and walking event in May, joining the Labor Day Parade peace contingent, attending theater parties, handing out Tax Day flyers at the post office, attending P&P programs, joining trips to peace demonstrations in New York, D.C., Philadelphia.

He traveled to Close the SOA demonstrations in Washington, DC, and Ft. Benning. In 2005, John traveled to Venezuela with a Global Exchange delegation and reported about it at a Potluck & Politics program. He traveled to Cuba with Global Exchange in 1993, with Pastors For Peace in 1994, and on his own in 1998, visiting a family he met on an earlier trip. He wrote about his 1993 trip, "When I visited Cuba I got a strong impression from our conversations with Cuban officials that they show more concern for the welfare of the Cuban people than many in the U.S. Congress show for the people of the U.S."

In 2012, John joined the 24 Hours in Tioga County tour where our delegation learned about some of the impacts of natural gas fracking in Pennsylvania. He wrote a letter to the editor of The Express Times about a farm that the group visited where a Shell Oil Co. fracking pad had been built near the family's house and barn resulting in 100 trucks a day "upsetting the tranquility" of the farm. He concluded, "This is a good example of callous capitalism in which corporations have no consideration for people's lives." John wrote many thoughtful letters to the editor on wide-ranging peace and justice topics – the message was always clear and direct.

Some of us remember John's light-heartedness when we recall the afternoon he joined the Nuclear Abolition Sisters as we donned angel halos and wings for an Angels Against Star Wars leafletting presence in the early 2000s.

John's activism went much beyond his work with LEPOCO. He helped build houses with Habitat for Humanity, and with his good friend, Joe Judge, collected water samples to test the water quality in the Bushkill Creek. He was active in the local Green Party, helping Greta Browne in her campaign for Congress. He walked with the Nazareth-to-Bethlehem Peace Pilgrimage many Decembers. He faithfully joined the local chapter of Veterans for Peace in their meetings, vigils honoring those killed in recent wars, and on trips to VFP demonstrations.

John's wife, Theresa Pasukones, died in 2005. He worked hard caring for her in the years before her death. He is survived by his daughter, Maryann, who cared for him as his health declined. After graduating from Wilkes College he worked as a chemist. He had served in the Air Force and Army.

We are grateful that John chose to join with those of us in LEPOCO (and with sister local groups) to demonstrate his caring for the welfare of others and his commitment to building a better world. We will very much miss his quiet, supportive presence in LEPOCO.

- Nancy Tate

Incarceration Rarely Brings Justice: Here's Why.

The following is excerpted from testimony presented by Maureen Simonetta to the Lehigh County Board of Commissioners during their October budget hearings. Maureen works for the Center for Humanistic Change and participates in the local group, End Mass Incarceration.

For too many years now, Lehigh Valley's tax paying citizens have been pouring money into law and order, without seeing any verifiable benefit to the communities in which they reside! In order for budgets to be productive, proactive, efficient, and orderly, they must take into account the new evidence that supports prevention, education, and reentry programs as viable measures to combat crime more effectively; while simultaneously looking at the more than thirty years of evidence that proves mass incarceration has done virtually nothing to help individuals to become better citizens, communities to become safer, or to justify the huge and ever increasing cost to the tax payers. We need to change the conversation from, "What is wrong with you?" to "What has happened to you?"

I had the unfortunate experience of being incarcerated, and I can state unequivocally that incarceration is not responsible for my prolonged recovery, and it still continues to traumatize me all these years later, by not affording me safe and clean living environments, and the unending re-traumatization that comes along with every new job search. I cannot pile up enough good deeds to erase the stigma that comes with my Scarlet Letter. Consider this if you would:

"The first time I heard Robert Anda present the results of the ACE Study (Adverse Childhood Experiences) he could not hold back his tears. In his career at the CDC he had previously worked in several major risk areas, including tobacco research and cardiovascular health. But when the ACE Study data started to appear on his computer screen, he realized they had stumbled upon the gravest and most costly public health issue in the United States: CHILD ABUSE. He had calculated that its overall costs exceeded those of cancer or heart disease and that eradicating child abuse in America would reduce the overall rate of depression by more than half, alcoholism by two-thirds, and suicide, IV drug use, and domestic violence by three quarters. It would also have a dramatic effect on workplace performance and vastly decrease the need for incarceration." (from "The Body Keeps the Score," by Bessel van der Kolk M.D.)

Nobody is immune to trauma, as the groundbreaking ACE Study, conducted in 1990s, indicated; but the more a person, families, and communities lack provisions, opportunities, and treatment programs, the greater their chances are to succumbing to trauma and the devastating effects of that trauma. More often than not, minorities, people of color black, brown, women, and people of low economic means have been victimized by trauma, and as a result they have also become

the "low hanging fruit" that fuels the insatiable appetite of the criminal justice system; compounding that trauma.

Yes, incarceration is sometimes necessary, but it should not be the go-to solution. Far too many people have and are reaching out for help only to be placed on a merry-go-round on which no help is obtained. Incarceration should only be considered after all other options have been tried and exhausted! The traumatized and or the addicted brain, is a hijacked brain that is not functioning properly. It's simply not a matter of being a bad or good person, or some sort of moral failure. These people need treatment and they deserve treatment; to ignore this outcry from the people is a failure of the system, not the people themselves.

Bob Walden
Editor's Note: End Mass Incarceration (EMI), a working group of POWER-Lehigh Valley, is one of the local groups working to address some of the concerns raised by Maureen Simonetta's testimony. EMI works for constructive change in our criminal justice system. This group, convened by Bob Walden, meets regularly (presently on Zoom). You can learn more about EMI at justice.pjpr.org or simply search for End Mass Incarceration Lehigh Valley.

Black Lives Matter Protests & LEPOCO

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to racial equality. This commitment should not be weakened by the violence in a few demos or by BLM's radical slogans. The violence found occasionally at night on the fringe of some BLM demonstrations has been almost entirely against property, not people. It is not known how large the role of provocateurs has been in triggering this violence. The radical slogan "no justice, no peace" might sound threatening to traditional advocates of nonviolent protest. But "no peace" seems largely to mean no complacent civil placidity, no "business as usual," in the face of racial injustice. The real violence this summer has come from the panoply of law enforcement agencies, local and federal, deployed to disrupt and suppress the amazing BLM movement.

- Mick Baylor

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 610-691-8730,
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Please "like" and "share," often.

Stop the War in Yemen _____

Action Corps, advocates for justice and solidarity in places affected by climate change and violence, has announced a day of action for Yemen with a protest in towns and cities around the country (and the world), on Monday, January 25, 2021.

In October, Action Corps offered an insightful, impassioned webinar calling attention to the devastating effects of war and violence on the people of Yemen. The people of Yemen are suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Half the population, 14.3 million people, is on the brink of famine. Twenty million people have almost nothing to eat. The numbers of displaced people exceeds 3.5 million. Nearly half of Yemeni children are suffering from malnutrition and show evidence of stunted growth.

One million people have died as a result of a cholera epidemic and Yemen has the worst record for COVID with the deaths of 25% of those who have been infected. Other diseases including Dengue Fever, diphtheria, polio, measles, and SARS, exacerbate the already dire predicament of the suffering people.

The desperate situation in Yemen is not a natural disaster; it is entirely attributable to human action. It's a complex history that starts with a rebellion in Yemen and the subsequent invasion of the country by Saudi Arabia. Yemen's Saudi-backed government is complicit in the continuing violence. Houthi rebels have been accused by Human Rights Watch of standing in the way of getting aid to the country. The United States and the United Kingdom are involved especially as they sell arms to Saudi Arabia. According to Kathy Kelly who participated in the recent webinar, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, and Raytheon are reaping profits in the area.

Unfortunately, humanitarian aid for Yemen has been reduced. Finding a solution to Yemen's difficulties has frustrated the potential providers of assistance.

Action items recommended by Action Corps:

1) Demand that Congress act to end the Saudi naval blockade and work to reopen Yemen's airports and sea routes; 2) Urge Congress to pressure USAID to restore and expand aid into Yemen; 3) Stop selling arms to the Saudi-led Coalition.

One of the people speaking on the webinar emphasized the beauty of her country and said that visitors are often surprised by the wonders of Yemen. And yet, the question heard most often is, "Where is Yemen?" It appears that the people of the United States have limited knowledge of this country and the terrors of the war there. Action Corps urges everyone to educate themselves and act. Support the day of action on January 25, 2021.

Information for this article came from the Action Corps, actioncorps.org and a New York Times article by Rick Gladstone, on September 24, 2020.

- Janet Ney

Yes! 50 Countries Ratify United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons! _____

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We are not alone: whistleblowers are supported by millions who protest nuclear weapons, the *hibakusha*—survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombs have been speaking out for decades, the workers of ICAN (the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017, Plowshares activists risk prison in disarmament actions, and LEPOCO's Nuclear Abolition Siblings (now often referred to as the Stop the Wars Committee) regularly call for the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Plowshares activist Sr. Ardeth Platte, O.P., 84, died September 29, while in bed listening to the first Biden-Trump debate. Ardeth Platte, born in Michigan, was a Dominican teacher, principal, and Saginaw, Michigan, city councilwoman, 1973-85. Platte coordinated the Saginaw Home for Peace & Justice for more than a decade, and with others, including Sr. Carol Gilbert, O.P., stopped Michigan from harboring all nuclear weapons. Ardeth Platte and Carol Gilbert moved to Jonah House, in Baltimore, joining that resistance community in Plowshares actions.

Following up on Jeff Vitelli's Kings Bay Plowshares 7 Update in the last issue of the newsletter, five more of the seven defendants have been sentenced for their April 2018 symbolic disarmament action at the Trident submarine base in Georgia. On October 15th, Fr. Steve Kelly was sentenced to 33 months in prison. Fr. Kelly will get credit for the 30 months he has already served in prison, but may have further time added to his sentence because he is refusing to pay all fines and restitution. Also on October 15, Patrick O'Neill got a sentence of 14 months, possibly in Butler Federal Correction Institution, where dozens have died of COVID, and hundreds have contracted the viral disease.

On November 12th, Carmen Trotta and Clare Grady were sentenced virtually - Carmen to 14 months in prison and Clare to one year and one day in prison. On November 14th, Martha Hennessy was sentenced to 10 months in prison, three years supervised probation and restitution.

Elizabeth McAlister was sentenced in July and the final one of the seven, Mark Colville is scheduled to be sentenced on December 18th. For more information see kingsbayplowshares7.org. You can read the inspiring statements by the defendants and watch webinars and a virtual Festival of Hope supporting the Seven.

- Monica McAghon

For more on advocacy for world disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation, see the *Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy*, (lcnp.org), the *International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (icanw.org) and *Friends Committee on National Legislation Nuclear Calendar* (fcnl.org).

Bits & Pieces

☪ Copies of the Fall issue of "Nuke Watch Quarterly" containing news and information about nuclear weapons, nuclear power, nuclear waste, and nonviolent resistance, are available at LEPOCO. Contact us and we will mail you a copy.

☪ Copies of the Syracuse Cultural Workers calendars for 2021 are available for sale at LEPOCO. You can order your copy by calling LEPOCO (610-691-8730) to set an appointment to visit the office or to make arrangements to order by mail. The 2021 Peace Wall Calendar includes beautiful art for each month including the themes of the Green New Deal in January and Reaching Across Borders for June. The wall calendar is \$15.95. The Women Artists 2021 Datebook features works by over 30 women artists and poets. The datebook is \$17.95.

☪ We will not be able to hold our holiday open house this December due to the pandemic. If you know a particular sticker, card, button, or book that you would like to order please call us to set an appointment to visit or to make arrangements to order by mail.

Much of what we usually have available at the open house comes from SERRV. You can find information about the current items available from SERRV at serrv.org. You can request a catalog or order online.

☪ *This is what brings me before this court today for sentencing, it is the consequence of my choice to join friends to undertake an action of sacramental, nonviolent, symbolic disarmament because the Trident (nuclear submarine) at Kings Bay, is killing and harming IN MY NAME.*

To be clear, these weapons are not private property, they belong to the people of the United States, they belong to me, to you, to us. These weapons kill and cause harm in our name, and with our money.

This omniscidal weapon doesn't just kill IF it is launched, it kills

every day. Indigenous people are, and, continue to be some of the first victims of nuclear weapons, the mining, refining, testing, and dumping of radioactive material for nuclear weapons all happens on Native Land. The trillions of dollars spent on nuclear weapons are resources STOLEN from the planet and her people.

- From the sentencing statement of Clare Grady on November 12, 2020. The sentencing was for her participation in the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 action which took place on April 4, 2018. For more information on the Kings Bay Plowshares see page 5 of this newsletter or kingsbayplowshares7.org.

☪ In September we received a copy of a revised national anthem by LEPOCO supporter, the Rev. Dr. Will Harstine, retired Moravian clergy-person who served as Chaplain of Moravian College and later taught at Moravian Theological Seminary until the early 2000s. An experienced writer of hymn texts, he has submitted this text to the Moravian Music Foundation. He writes, "Having been disturbed by the militarism and flag adoration of our well-known national anthem, I decided to attempt one that expresses our gratitude for all the wonders and blessings of our natural and developed country. I have retained the familiar first line and the familiar tune to make it readily singable.

*O say can you see by the dawn's
early light
grand mountains, broad plains, trees
and valleys glorious sight!
Oceans gracing our shores; lakes and
streams flowing free.
Schools and cities abound,
commerce, arts and factories.
We are blessed we are strong. Let
the world come to know
that we who are brave seek a peace
that will grow.
We here join all together, our hearts
overflow with love
for this land we call our own -
wondrous gift from above.*

Text: Francis Scott Key, 1st line; Willard R. Harstine, lines 2-8 (2018).

Tune: To Anacreon in Heaven (adopted by Congress as the national anthem, 1931).

MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...ETC.

Thursday, December 3, 3 pm: Annual Dinner Planning Committee Meeting, by zoom. Call 610-691-8730 or email lepoco@fast.net to get the link to participate. The discussion will be around what to do about the dinner in 2021 given the state of the pandemic.

Wednesday, December 9, 11 am: Stop the Wars Committee Meeting, by conference call or zoom. Call 610-691-8730 or email lepoco@fast.net to get the number or link to participate.

Thursdays, December 10 & January 14, 4-5 pm: Monthly Peace Vigils, on the corners at Third & Wyandotte Sts., south Bethlehem.

Mondays, December 14, & January 11, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting, by conference call or zoom. Call 610-691-8730 or email lepoco@fast.net to get the number or link to participate. 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.

Tuesdays, February 2, & March 2, 6 pm: First Tuesday LEPOCO Book Group. Call 610-691-8730 or email lepoco@fast.net to get the zoom link or directions to the meeting. The group does not meet in January. The list of books for 2021 will be published soon. If you are not on the Book Group contact list, but would like to see the list for 2021, please contact LEPOCO. The group welcomes new members.

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 Americas Solidarity Group, Newsletter Planning Group, the Peace Camp Planning Committee, or any other committees, please call LEPOCO at 610-691-8730. For a regularly updated calendar of events, see www.lepoco.org.

The Struggle Shared

As you move through these changing times, be easy on yourself and be easy on one another. You are at the beginning of something new. You are learning a new way of being... You will stop working so hard at getting from point A to point B, the way you have in the past, but instead, will spend more time experiencing yourself in the whole, and your place in it...

Your mother's grandmother knew how to do this. Your ancestors from long ago knew how to do this. They knew the power of the feminine principle, and because you carry their DNA in your body, this wisdom, and this way of being is within you. Call on it. Call it up. Invite your ancestors in. As the... decaying institutions on our planet begin to crumble, look up. A breeze is stirring. Feel the sun on your wings.

- Message from the Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers

REFUGEES ON LESBOS SEEK

ASYLUM: In ancient times, the Greek Island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea, was a matriarchal culture, known for its art, music, lyric poetry, and the finest wine. In modern times it has been a popular stop for tourists cruising the Mediterranean. Today, the island's beauty is overshadowed by a much more tragic profile.

Over the past decade, refugees from the wars in Afghanistan, Syria, and beyond, have landed on Lesbos, and the Greek Government established the Moria camp, which became home to 13,000 refugees, making it the largest such camp in Europe. On September 9th, there was a fire which burned the camp to the ground, again displacing the refugees. While Germany has relocated 1553 people, most European countries have been slow to respond, and up to 7500 people have been living in a temporary field of tents on Lesbos, set up on a former shooting range where children frequently stumble on live ammunition. While living conditions at Moria were dire, especially in the middle of a pandemic, with poor access to water and sanitation, and shortages of food, the new "Moria 2.0" is far worse, according to residents. This comes at a time when the Greek Government has set new regulations that seek to restrict relief organizations from helping asylum seekers.

Carmen Dupont from Lesbos Solidarity, a charity working on the Island, said, "There seems to be a

very clear agenda...of containment - keeping people trapped and locked in inhumane camps in hellish conditions and at the same time, erasing and closing the dignified shelters that exist."

The UN's Global Goal 11 calls for the creation of sustainable cities and communities - including for the most vulnerable people to have adequate, safe housing - and that means ensuring that refugees are protected. Thousands of refugees are trapped in overcrowded camps around Europe. Such places were never supposed to be permanent. As long as they're still standing, another catastrophe - like the fire that destroyed Moria - could put more lives in danger. We can help support those working for governments and others to act right away with humanity and to urgently relocate refugees from the Greek islands. The groups doing this work include UNICEF and Global Citizens Campaign.

CALIFORNIA NURSES STRIKE

FOR PATIENT CARE: Around the country, as the Covid-19 pandemic rages, and hospitals are stretched beyond their resources to meet the overwhelming demands, it is the nurses and other medical personnel who are most at risk, too often faced with shortages of critical equipment, staff, and support for the essential service that they are providing for their patients and communities.

In early October, nurses in San Joaquin and Alameda Counties in California, organized under the

California Nurses Association, took their patient advocacy "from the bedside to the outside" in a five-day strike. The association, representing nurses in the hospital, public health clinics, and the county jail, released a statement saying that after nearly two years of negotiations, San Joaquin County Health Administration "has demonstrated an overwhelming disrespect for nurses, at and away from the bargaining table." On October 7, 800 nurses demonstrated near the front entrance of the San Joaquin General hospital. The county hired 189 licensed nurses to maintain care in essential departments of the hospital for the duration of the strike.

On October 20, the Alameda County Supervisors voted to support the nurse's demands by dismissing the County Health Department's Board. Negotiations will proceed.

APOLOGIES EXPECTED? In anticipation of the 500th Anniversary of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador addressed a letter to Pope Francis in October, requesting that the Vatican apologize for the Catholic Church's role in the oppression of indigenous people. López Obrador's letter said the Spanish crown, Spain's government and the Vatican should apologize to native people for the "most reprehensible atrocities" committed after Spanish conquistadors arrived in Mexico in 1521. "They deserve not just that generous attitude on our part but also a sincere commitment that never again will disrespectful acts be committed against their beliefs and cultures." The letter also requested the return of several ancient indigenous manuscripts held in the Vatican Library. The release of Lopez Obrador's letter coincided with a decision by Mexico City authorities to remove a statue of Christopher Columbus in anticipation of a planned protest to knock it down on Columbus Day. A series of events commemorating this 500th anniversary is planned for next year.

- Jeff Vitelli



LEPOCO

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Monthly Peace Vigil

(Second Thursdays)

December 10, 2020
& January 14, 2021

4-5 pm

*Our wars & bombings continue.
Help witness for peace.*

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



Saturday
Dec. 12, 2020

Individual
& Online events



See page 2 for
more information.

Important Dates in January 2021

January 15 - birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
(the holiday will be observed on Monday, January 18)

Friday, January 22 - United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
goes into effect.

Monday, January 25 - International Day of Action - The World Says No
to War on Yemen