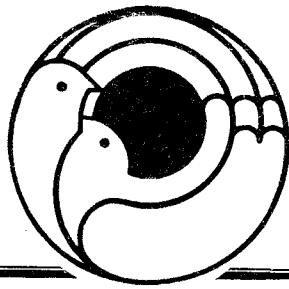


February
2006

vol.41 no.2



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

Peace Activism in a Time of Imperial Ambition

Of Noam Chomsky, the New York Times wrote, "He is a global phenomenon, perhaps the most widely read voice on foreign policy on the planet."

On March 18th, Dr. Chomsky will be LEPOCO's Annual Dinner speaker at Wesley United Methodist Church in Bethlehem. Joining us in honor of our 40th anniversary celebration, Chomsky will assess the struggle for peace and justice in our troubled world. Because we face so many uncertainties and a multitude of struggles, the activist and peacemaker is often left asking whether there is hope for peace and justice. Just having Professor Chomsky with us to share his insights will bring a measure of the hope we need to continue our work. Please don't miss this opportunity.

As many of you know, Noam Chomsky, Professor of Linguistics, Linguistic Theory, Syntax, Semantics, and Philosophy of Language at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a prolific writer on human rights, war and politics. We will have some of his books available for sale at the dinner and program.

Because this is such a special evening we will begin at the early hour of 5:00 p.m., with pre-dinner music and appetizers. Following dinner, the art raffle drawing, and a brief business meeting, diners will move to the sanctuary of the church for Professor Chomsky's presentation. The move to the sanctuary will accommodate additional numbers of people who want to hear this challenging speaker. During the program in the sanctuary, the LEPOCO Singers will provide their usual musical excellence and a historical video will be sampled.

LEPOCO is commemorating 40 years in the struggle for peace and justice; one aspect of that remembrance has been the production of a video offering glimpses of LEPOCO through the years using through interviews with those who have been actively engaged in the work. A sample of that video will be shown, for the first time, at this program. Full copies of the video will be available for sale at a later time.

Considering the need to accommodate volunteers and others participating in the program the dinner is full. But there are lots of tickets available for the program part of the evening. Those wanting to attend the program and hear the speaker without dinner will pay \$15. Those on limited income may request admission

at \$5. In order to facilitate the seating of a large group of people, admission to any part of the evening should be paid in advance. Reservations can be made at the LEPOCO office.

Just one Noam Chomsky quote to give us a taste of his important insight: "One can discern two trajectories in current history: one aiming toward hegemony, acting rationally within a lunatic doctrinal framework as it threatens survival; the other dedicated to the belief that 'another world is possible,' ... Which trajectory will dominate, no one can foretell. The pattern is familiar throughout history; a crucial difference today is that the stakes are far higher." (from Hegemony or Survival; America's Quest for Global Dominance, 2003)

- Janet Ney

Ray Krone to Speak Locally

Death Penalty News

If exonerate Ray Krone could be sentenced to death it can happen to any of us. His experience with our criminal justice system is a harrowing tale you need to hear. Ray will visit the Lehigh Valley February 22 and 23 to speak out against the death penalty and tell his personal story of exoneration after 10 years of wrongful imprisonment. Ray has spoken throughout the US and Europe and he has testified on the death penalty before numerous government bodies. He will speak at Muhlenburg College on February 22nd, at 7:00 pm, in Egner Memorial Chapel; at Lehigh University on February 23rd, at 4 pm, in Maginnes Hall, Room 102; and at Moravian College the evening of February 23rd, at 7:30 pm, in the UBC Room of Hauptert Union Bldg.

Legislative Action Alert: NOW is the time to call/write/ visit your state senator and representatives and urge them to vote for Senate Bill 631 and House Bill 1410 (Reps. Freeman and Mann are co-sponsors). These bills require pre-trial determination of mental retardation by a judge in capital cases. They are supported by advocates for the mentally retarded, faith communities and civil libertarians. Pre-trial determination will put Pennsylvania in compliance with the US Supreme Court ruling in *Atkins v. Virginia*, and pre-trial determination will save the Commonwealth the costs of an unneces-

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Death Penalty News

(continued from page 1)

sary capital trial if the defendant is mentally retarded and therefore ineligible for the death penalty.

Second legislative action: Ask your state reps to co-sponsor HB-1473 which would provide compensation for those wrongly convicted, and HB-2366 which would provide for expungement of record for those wrongly convicted. Presently, when we wrongly convict and incarcerate someone, no matter for how long, that person is given nothing, but a set of clothes upon being released. HB-1473 would provide for monetary compensation.

When a wrongly convicted person is found innocent, believe it or not, his or her record is not automatically cleared. Most oftentimes a person has to hire an attorney, at his own expense, to have his record expunged. HB-2366 would provide for the automatic expungement of record for those wrongly convicted.



Congratulations to New Jersey activists! Last month New Jersey enacted a moratorium on the death penalty. What will it take to put the brakes on the death penalty in Pennsylvania? Pennsylvania's death row is more than twenty times the size of New Jersey's. Pennsylvania has the second-highest minority death-row rate in the country, and nine out of ten death row prisoners in Pennsylvania cannot afford to hire an attorney.

A Pennsylvania Supreme Court committee has said our system is "overwhelmingly" flawed. Three years ago that committee recommended to Gov. Rendell and the Legislature that they enact a moratorium and a Racial Justice Act. To date Pennsylvania politicians have done nothing. Thus far, seven people condemned to death in PA have been exonerated. How many other innocents remain? Pennsylvania needs a moratorium as the first step towards abolishing a system of punishment that has no place in a civil society.

In memoriam: William Nieves died October 10, 2005, from complications due to health problems that were untreated during his six years of wrongful imprisonment on Pennsylvania's death row. William, 2 LEPOCO Newsletter / February 2006

who was acquitted and released in 2000, had been convicted and sentenced to death despite a lack of evidence and the fact that his physical appearance did not match the description given by three eyewitnesses. In addition, after being granted a new trial, William learned that key exculpatory evidence had been withheld from the defense during his initial trial. William's story is one more tragedy among too many, proving that the death penalty is barbaric, broken and needs to be abolished to preserve not only justice, but also our humanity.

Upon his release, William Nieves refused to succumb to bitterness. He spent his six years of freedom actively working to end the death penalty, including speaking in the Lehigh Valley on two occasions.

Act Now: We ask you to help observe Death Penalty Abolition Day on March 1st by writing letters on that day as suggested in this article. A more detailed "Take Action" sheet will be available at Ray Krone's talks.

The next Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing meeting will be February 28th, at 8:30 am, at the LEPOCO Peace Center, south Bethlehem.

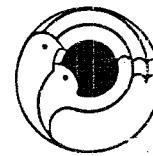
- Maria Weick

HELP WANTED!

Hard-working peacemaking volunteers are needed for the Annual Dinner. No experience necessary. Immediate openings in the kitchen and dining room: cooks, kitchen workers, servers, "go-fers," and many other positions. To apply call Nancy Tate at 610-691-8730.

Newsletter of LEPOCO

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The LEPOCO Newsletter is published 10 times a year by the Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern, a non-violent, non-profit organization dedicated to peace in all forms.

Annual dues are:

Regular Member	\$25
Limited Income Member	\$ 5
Household Membership	\$30
Supporting Member	\$50

Articles/news should be submitted by the third Wednesday of the month for use in the following month's newsletter.

Newsletter Staff: Ellen Buck, Peter Crownfield, Fran Dreisbach, Arlene Grow, Mike Lawton, Tom Lloyd, Bob Riggs, Tom Stinnett, Joan Stolz, Joan Stone, Nancy Tate, Marion Thorne, Jeff Vitelli, Hans Wuerth and Ursula Wuerth.

Thanks to all the people who staple, fold and label the newsletter each month.

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Dan Acker (co-treas.), Ellen Buck, Peter Crownfield (ex-officio), Robert Daniels, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Holly Kent, Sigourney LaBarre, Mike Lawton (ex-officio), Janet Ney, Sue Ravitz, and Nancy Tate (ex-officio).

LEPOCO Art Raffle 2006

Thanks to Ray and Monica Sommerville for organizing the wonderful array of prizes for this year's LEPOCO Art Raffle. If you can use tickets beyond those enclosed with this newsletter, to sell or buy, just visit the Peace Center or call 610-691-8730. The drawing will be held at the Annual Dinner on March 18.

Two Passes to Godfrey Daniels. The winner of this prize will enjoy an upcoming performance at Godfrey Daniels, our local café and listening club. Located at 7 East 4th Street in Bethlehem, Godfreys is one of the oldest folk music venues in the country.

Wheel-Thrown Pottery Platter by Monica & Ray Sommerville (aka Sommerville Pottery). Monica and Ray's work is available at "Out Of Our Hands" in Emmaus, where Ray also helps staff the store. Monica directs Congregations United for Neighborhood Action (CUNA), an important community organization in Allentown. Both Ray & Monica have been long-time LEPOCO members.

Handpainted Bag from India donated by robert Daniels II. When robert Daniels traveled to India a year ago he spent time learning about initiatives to teach poor women marketable skills. He brought back an example of the work being done by some women artists in India - a wonderful, handmade, hand-printed bag - and has donated it to the LEPOCO raffle. Robert has been a member of LEPOCO for three years and serves on our Steering Committee. He will be traveling to South Africa on another Gandhi tour this month.

Handmade Raggy Flannel Quilt by Maria Weick. Maria Weick has been quilting for more than 10 years. She has donated a hand-made flannel quilt that measures 5x6 feet. A resident of Kintnersville, Maria anchors the weekly peace vigil in Bethlehem and serves as a member of L.V.-CASK, the Committee Against State Killing, at LEPOCO. She is also the Amnesty International State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinator for Pennsylvania.

Raku Pottery by Tomás Wolff. This is a hand-coiled vessel that is about nine inches tall. Longtime LEPOCO member, Tomás Wolfe is an accomplished and respected potter who works out of his Easton studio. He has been a contributor to and organizer of the LEPOCO Art Raffle for many years.

Abstract Figure In a Box Sculpture by Frank Sabatino, Jr. This piece is a wood mixed-media construction displayed in a shadow box. A Bethlehem resident and artist Frank Sabatino is a long-time supporter of LEPOCO and has made several donations to our Art Raffles. He is a Lehigh University graduate and works for Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley. His wood mixed-media sculptures have been exhibited at the Hunteerton Museum of Art in Clinton, NJ, and at the Banana Factory.

Framed Watercolor by Gene Mater. Most people know Gene Mater for his popular caricatures; however, Gene is also a very talented watercolor artist. He has donated a beautiful watercolor painting featuring a scene from Bethlehem, where he resides. Gene's activism for peace goes back at least to his college days at Lehigh University.

Hand-Turned Wooden Salad Bowl by Lee Buck. Area artist Lee Buck has donated a handsome wooden salad bowl made from English walnut. The bowl is approximately ten inches in diameter. Lee is another long-time LEPOCO member. This is the second year he has donated to the Art Raffle.

- Ray & Monica Sommerville

Potluck & Politics

Popcorn & Politics

at the LEPOCO Peace Center

Sunday, Feb. 26, 6:30 pm

Potluck & Politics

Suzanne Marshall

Chemical Plants:

A Real Security Issue

Suzanne Marshall teaches Environmental History and U.S. History at Moravian College. She is a long-time activist and leader in the Sierra Club and is a member of the Chemical Weapons Working Group. She wrote "We're Just Trying to Save Your Water, Lord," a book about environmental activists in southern Appalachia. Previously she taught at Jacksonville State University in Alabama.

Please bring some food to share for dinner at 6:30 pm. The presentation should begin around 7 pm.

Friday, March 3, 7 pm

Popcorn & Politics

1st Friday Film

"The Empty Chair:

Death Penalty -Yes or No"

This film intimately reveals a hidden view of murder's aftermath: families left behind, their lives torn apart by the random loss of a loved one. "The Empty Chair" documents four compelling stories of family members as they relive the brutal details of the murders; express their rage at the justice system that renders them invisible; demand or denounce punishment by death; struggle to forgive and to heal.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.



I May Not Get There With You

On January 22nd, LEPOCO observed the 77th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr. The ceremony, held at the Log Cabin in the Bethlehem's Rose Garden Park, was organized by the Nuclear Abolition Sisters of LEPOCO. About 60 people attended.

The LEPOCO Peace Singers sang, and 17 members or the LEPOCO community read the *Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam*, the speech Dr. King gave at the Riverside Church in New York City on April 4th, 1967.

In this speech, King stated his unequivocal opposition to the Vietnam War. His own church had urged him not to speak out against "LBJ's War," because the President had been a great friend to the Civil Rights movement, and they didn't want him embarrassed. But by this time King had climbed the mountain and connected the dots, and the truth was all he could speak. He railed against the evils of materialism, racism, and militarism, and how these malignancies were bringing about America's spiritual death.

The Reverend Al Sharpton spoke two nights later at the Zoellner Arts Center at Lehigh University to an overflow crowd of about one thousand. Those who've heard him speak know his moral indignation coupled with a scathing sense of humor, make a very powerful combination.

Sharpton opened by saying that he did not like the distortion that was happening to the memory and legacy of Dr. King, but it seemed to be what happened to all national holidays. How, he asked, did Santa Claus get in the middle of Christmas? What's a jolly fat man with a white beard have to do with the birth of Christ? And how'd the Easter Bunny get mixed up in the Resurrection? Far too much emphasis is given to the "I Have a Dream" King, while very little attention is paid to the searing, prophetic voice so manifest in the Riverside Church speech.

If King were alive today, Sharpton said, he thinks he'd first and foremost be concerned with the war in Iraq. The very same lies were used to build both wars, right up to the current one: "We're there to build democracy."

Taylor Branch has just published the final volume of his biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. What Branch originally envisioned as a one-volume, three-year project turned into a trilogy that took nearly 24 years to complete. In a wonderful review of the book in the February *Harpers*, John Leonard concludes with this paragraph:

"Although the first two hundred pages of the concluding volume are devoted to Selma, its real centerpiece is King's turn against the war in Vietnam. The biographer is no less committed to nonviolence than his stubborn subject, pointing in an epilogue to South

Korea in 1987, Berlin in 1989, and South Africa in 1990 as occasions of bloodless triumph. Not least for this he deserves to be cherished. Everywhere else it is written, in bullet holes, shell shock, mushroom clouds, and "extraordinary rendition," that political science is a clenched fist, power flows from the mouth of a gun, bloodlust and servitude are coded in our genome, and obedience or death is the trajectory of narrative. But there is another way to read our atrocious times: Dr. King's way, the view from Gandhi's spinning wheel. Against tyranny, exploitation, occupation and oppression, popular movements withhold consent. They refuse, secede, mobilize, disrupt and disobey. And their principled disobedience creates the very withdrawal of a civil society."

- Mike Lawton

Gandhian Legacy Tour: One Year Later

It's been a full year since I first set foot in Gandhi's India and walked the path of the "father of the nation." Much has happened to me in that time. I have found a certain voice with the pen and behind the podium, furthered my commitment to peace and justice locally as well as globally, and found a vision of "the world that can be" toward which I will dedicate the rest of my life. I have participated in a number of nonviolent protests, been arrested a few times for civil disobedience, and have sought to serve the greater good with passion and (I hope) truth.

This has not come without a price. The pull to serve the "world family" has found me neglectful of the family-at-home. I don't mean to be too bold or brash, but perhaps I am beginning to understand what Dietrich Bonhoeffer meant when he spoke of "the cost of discipleship." I have found my faith strengthened, shaken, and strengthened again.

As you may well know I STILL deliver clocks "for a living." Recently, I encountered another couple of customers who made me want to talk about India...

Jack and Sherry Herd are excited owners of a new grandfather clock. There's a problem though, the face has a minor dent that distresses them greatly. "The dial has a ding."

I've been doing this clock job for over five years and I can honestly say that I haven't seen a "perfect" clock come out of a box yet.

I try to explain this to Jack and Sherry and further advise that while it's certainly within their rights to request a replacement, what is sent is likely to be just as bad, if not worse. This doesn't go over well and against my wishes they insist on proceeding down this rabbit hole. Feeling that I had nothing to lose (except my job) I opened my mouth: "Mr. and Mrs. Herd, if I may, before I leave, I'd like to say one thing about my experience

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In Tribute:

Joe DeRaymond _____

I want to talk about my friend, Joe DeRaymond, peacemaker.

Last November Joe and I were part of a group of LEPOCO members who joined some 19,000 patriots protesting the un-American activities of the SOA/WHISC* at Fort Benning, Georgia. This was not our first time to be there; we have flown the LEPOCO banner at several previous vigils at the entrance to the U.S. military base. However, this time was different. This time Joe arrived resolved to perform civil disobedience by breaching the barbed wire fence and entering the grounds which house the SOA/WHISC. He did so fully prepared to face the known consequences: arrest, trial in a federal courtroom, a hefty fine, and months of imprisonment.

Each year that I have made the trip and joined the protest I have hesitated to act on the courage of my convictions; again this year I applauded those who crossed the line but I did not accompany them. Joe was one of 37 who climbed over or crawled under the fence and were immediately arrested. Their trials were held at the federal courthouse in Columbus, GA, during the week beginning January 30. Joe was sentenced to pay a \$500 fine and spend three months in prison. He has not yet

*The former School of the Americas (SOA) is now The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC)

been informed where and when he will begin serving his term. LEPOCO will keep you informed.

Joe's action at the SOA/WHISC is but the latest chapter in the ongoing story of his efforts as a peacemaker.

For several years Joe has made repeated trips to Central and South America. While learning to speak Spanish he has joined with other groups of peacemakers, using nonviolent methods in resisting and countering the militarism, much of it a direct result of the SOA/WHISC, which pervades so much of Latin America.

Most recently Joe spent six months as part of the FOR (Fellowship of Reconciliation) program in Colombia. There he lived in the peace community at San José de Apartadó, one of some 50 villages whose members declare themselves neutral and refuse to be drawn into the warfare carried on by government and paramilitary forces. (LEPOCO member Janet Goloub also visited this community with an FOR delegation.) Like similar programs throughout the world (such as Peace Brigades, Witness for Peace, and Christian Peacemakers), the FOR recruits people who act as observers in the hope that their presence will deter incursions and attacks upon the villagers. Unfortunately, there have been several attacks in recent months, and residents of San José de Apartadó, friends of Joe, have been killed.

Of the billions the U.S. government has poured into "Plan Colombia," 80 percent has gone to fund the

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We Shall Not Be Moved.

Convinced that the war in Iraq is "a flawed policy wrapped in illusion" as Congressman John Murtha of Pennsylvania stated on November 17th and that the time to bring our troops home is NOW, nine LEPOCO members staged a sit-in at Congressman Charles Dent's office on Tuesday, January 17th. All of us were arrested, taken into custody, and charged with Defiant Trespass and released. The action was taken in the spirit of Martin Luther King's nonviolent resistance to war and violence and was part of the National Campaign of Nonviolent Resistance to End the War in Iraq calling on Congress to withdraw US troops.

Frustrated by a lack of response by Congressman Dent to our attempt to arrange a meeting with him as well as no indication on his part that our numerous phone calls, letters and petitions have garnered any movement away from the Bush administration's pointless war rhetoric, we felt a need and responsibility to "up the ante" and commit civil disobedience. Our sincere hope was that our action would motivate Dent to consider and act on our Petition to End the War as well as to sign on to at least one of the many bills pending in congress, most particularly HJR 73 sponsored by Murtha terminating the deployment of US forces in Iraq "at the earliest practicable date." We also hope

that our simple action will give courage and support to others so that they will also speak out and take action to end the war.

As the nine of us sat in Dent's office we quietly read some of the names of American's killed in Iraq as well as some of the names of Iraqis who have been killed. At the same time, outside the office a dozen people carried signs of support and spoke to reporters. When the office closed at 5:00 pm we refused to leave as none of our requests had been addressed and Dent's staff indicated that the congressman had no intentions of doing so.

Those arrested in addition to myself were Sarah Snider, Joe DeRaymond, Bernie Berg, Anna Maria Caldera, Maria Weick, Art Landis, Tim Chadwick and Robert Daniels. Our hearing is scheduled for March 7, 2006, at 10 AM before District Magistrate Wayne Maura. His courtroom is located at 565 West Lehigh St, Bethlehem. There is a strong possibility that the hearing will be moved to a later date, however, because several arrestees will not be in the area at that time. We encourage everyone to come and give us -- and the cause of peace in Iraq -- support. Please contact LEPOCO, however, to confirm the date and time of the hearing.

- Susie Ravitz

On the day following the inspiring LEPOCO Dinner & Program

Sunday, March 19

Third Anniversary of the Start of the War in Iraq

3:00 to 4:00 PM

Peace Vigils in Towns & Communities Across the Lehigh Valley

Mourn the Dead; Heal the Wounded; Stop the War.

Please call 610-691-8730 if you want to lead or join a vigil.

LEPOCO Steering Committee Nominations

The Annual Dinner is the occasion for finalizing our Steering Committee members for the next year. Four people complete their two-year term on the Committee this year, but thankfully three of them have agreed to continue. We thank Sigourney LaBarre for her time of service on the committee. She is not able to run again due to other pressing commitments. She completed the term of Annie Hasz who left the area to attend college in North Carolina last Fall.

The Steering Committee meets on the first Monday of the month to plan for the Action Meeting that is held on the second Monday of the month. It is the decision-making body for LEPOCO between those monthly meetings. The Committee often brings recommendations about finance, personnel, and other organizational issues to the Action Meeting.

The election of the Steering Committee will be completed at the Annual Dinner on March 18. Members can either bring their ballot to the dinner or mail it in before that. Write-in candidates are welcomed. Even if someone cannot serve at this time, the suggestion may help fill a vacancy on the committee in the future.

We are grateful to the three people listed below for being willing to serve. Steering Committee members who still have a year to serve in their present term are: Ellen Buck, Robert Daniels II; Dan Acker (co-treasurer) and Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer).

There is still one open seat on the committee for which we do not have a nomination as this newsletter is being prepared. This is a seat that has been held by college and high school students in recent years and we would like to continue that tradition. We welcome any suggestions for the seat, but especially welcome suggestions of young people. You can list your suggestions on the ballot below or contact LEPOCO at 610-691-8730.

The candidates for this year are:

Holly Kent, who became involved in LEPOCO in 2003. She is a graduate student at Lehigh University working on her PHD in Women's History. She is a member of Amnesty International and participates in weekly vigils against the war in Iraq. She has volunteered for LEPOCO at fairs and festivals, is on the Bike/Walkathon Planning Committee and is a faithful caller for the Phonathon each year.

Janet Ney became a peace activist at the huge anti-nuclear rally in Central Park, NYC, in 1982. She has always been active with social justice issues through the Presbyterian women's group at her church. She remains active at church on various committees. Janet previously served on the National Committee of the War Resisters League for ten years. She spends most of her day embroiled in local justice issues as associate executive director of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley. Janet has been on LEPOCO's Steering Committee for five years.

Susan Ravitz was a founding member of LEPOCO. She has been involved in many recent efforts including the L.V. Peace Coalition and the Americas Solidarity Group. From 1998 until 2004 she was active in the effort to free the island of Vieques from bombing by the U.S. Navy and was arrested two times doing nonviolent civil disobedience for that cause. She was one of the "Dent Nine" arrested at a sit-in protesting the war in Iraq on January 17th of this year. Susie has been active with the Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean. She currently works at Artistic Toys in Easton, but previously spent 22 years as the director of the Valley Youth House Shelter. Susie has served three terms on the Steering Committee.

- Robert Daniels and Ellen Buck

Election Ballot

At-Large Steering Committee Members (vote for three and write-ins invited for the fourth position)

Holly Kent

Susan Ravitz

Janet Ney

The ballot can be cast at the Annual Dinner on Saturday, March 18, 2006, by 5:30 pm, or by mail to arrive at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., Bethlehem, PA 18015, by Friday, March 17, 2006.

The Struggle Shared

Alvar Nunez, who for eight years walked naked across Texas and New Mexico, came out transformed into a person of the New World... He gained a compassionate heart, a taste for self-sufficiency and simplicity, and a knack for healing... Ishi, the Yahi, walked into civilization with as much desperation as Nunez walked out of it. Nunez was the first European to encounter North America in its native myth-mind. Ishi was the last Native American to fully know that mind. What lies between those brackets is not dead and gone. It is perennially within us, dormant as a hard-shelled seed, awaiting the fire or flood that awakens it again.

- Gary Snyder
"The Etiquette of Freedom" from *The Practice of the Wild*

SOUTH AMERICA MOVING TOWARD INDIGENOUS INDEPENDENCE?

- While North American progressives may be dismayed by news of the consolidation of the ultra-conservative power blocks of late (vis-à-vis, elections in Canada and Germany, the confirmation of Samuel Alito, etc.), we can take heart at some developments to our south.

Between January 24th and 29th, the leftist government of Hugo Chavez hosted the Fourth Annual World Social Forum (WSF) in Caracas, Venezuela. The WSF has a solid reputation as a pluralistic alternative global event that serves as a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum held annually in Switzerland by the "Bushite Power Elite." Themes of the gathering in Venezuela included "power, politics and the fight for social emancipation," "alternatives to the predatory model of civilization," and "labor, exploitation, and reproduction of life." The WSF came to Venezuela "in solidarity with its...opposition to FTAA" (the U.S.-sponsored Free Trade Agreement of the Americas).

The WSF forum opened only two days after Evo Morales, Bolivia's first-ever indigenous president, took office. His election is just another expression of the rising tide of social and political movements which have shifted power in the region toward the native peoples.

With Morales' election, Bolivia joins Venezuela, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, all nations in the region that have seen a resurgence of a socialist agenda that is challenging the purveyors of free trade.

Even closer to home, Mexico may be next to join the swelling tide. On the 12th anniversary of the New Year's Day uprising that launched the Zapatista Revolution, and marking the 38th anniversary of the assassination of Che Guevara, Subcommandante Marcos, renamed delegate Zero, rode a black motorcycle out of the Zapatista jungle hideout into San Cristobal de las Casas for a rally of 15,000 supporters. Thus was launched a six-month tour of all of Mexico in the newest non-violent phase of the movement's struggle. Although not running for office, the purpose of the tour, dubbed "The Other Campaign," is to listen to the people and "to build a national program of anti-capitalist and left-wing struggle." Marcos is traveling unarmed, and is accompanied by unarmed civilian bodyguards, despite threats against him. "We don't fear to die struggling," he says. "The good word has already been planted in fertile soil. This fertile soil is in the heart of all of you, and it is there that Zapatista dignity flourishes."

Source: "Common Dreams," 1/2/06

LEONARD PELTIER INCARCERATED IN PA

- Since August 15, 2005, Pennsylvania has the dubious distinction of hosting two of the most well-known political prisoners in the United States within its prisons. Mumia Abu Jamal has sat on death row here for years, and now Leonard Peltier is at Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary.

On February 6th, the 30th anniversary of Leonard's extradition from Canada, and the beginning of his

uninterrupted incarceration, his defense attorneys will once again be in court. New arguments will be presented to challenge the legality of the original arrest on the grounds that the U.S. authorities had no jurisdiction on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee is working to establish an operational office in Lewisburg to coordinate the ongoing effort to sustain his legal and publicity campaigns. Funds are needed in this regard. Contact the LPDC at their web site www.leonardpeltier.org, or call 915-533-6655.

You can also write to Leonard Peltier, #89637-132, U.S.P. Lewisburg, PO Box 1000, Lewisburg, PA 17837.

STATE LEGISLATURE TO CONSIDER GLOBAL WARMING

- Estimates are that a full 1% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions rise out of Pennsylvania, while we are .18% of the world's population, living in an area that is a fraction of a percent of our planet's total area. Credit the proliferation of coal-burning plants, and our tangled web of highways linking a dozen metropolitan areas.

State representative Greg Vitali has proposed a global warming bill - HB-500 - which would do an emission inventory, determine the effect of global warming on Pennsylvania, create a multi-stakeholder advisory committee to make recommendations for state-level action, and finally develop a plan for Pennsylvania to mitigate sources of global warming in the state.

Please call or visit your State Representative. Ask them to co-sponsor HB-500, and work to get the bill a hearing in the House Energy and Environmental Resources Committee.

- Jeff Vitelli

Gandhian Legacy Tour: One Year Later

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and where I am coming from..." I had their attention. This was going to be good. Bring on the biblical flood!

"One year ago, a few days after a tsunami devastated south east Asia, I traveled to India and witnessed poverty the likes of which one never sees in the United States. A country of a billion people, I must have seen tens of thousands of homeless people in the two weeks I was there. The cumulative effect of witnessing all this left me shaken, heartbroken, and forever changed. I came back to the U.S. and this job and have delivered many grandfather clocks over the last year. All of them have had imperfections of varying degrees. Most customers never notice, or at least, if they do they never say anything. Some like yourselves, take issue, press the matter, and demand satisfaction. It pains my soul and hurts my heart each time something like this happens.

"And I want to be clear Mr. and Mrs. Herd, it's not because I feel your pain, but instead I remember the pain of the shoeless beggar girl I was confronted with on my first day in India. She tugged at my sleeve, motioned to her stomach, motioned to her bare feet, held out her upturned palm, unrelentingly pursued me, wordlessly asked for my help. What could I do? I'd made eye contact and found myself bound to this suffering child. My heart went out to her, but I could do no more. I was pushed along by the momentum of the group, forced onto the bus, and was soon gone. Every step and kilometer that was put between she and I felt like a great tragic divide; a brutal wall that denies humanity and universally condemns all life to death.

"The experience changed me. That little girl has been with me ever since. So now when I meet a couple of privileged 'haves' who might not fully appreciate the advantages they have over the 'have-nots,' I am compelled to speak. I betrayed that little girl once. I cannot do it again. Pardon my fracture of polite conversation, but my conscience won't allow me to stay silent for the sake of a couple of spoiled conspicuous consumers. Tens of thousands of human beings die every day due to starvation and hunger-related disease. This knowledge plagues my thoughts and finds me with little sympathy for the problems of the well-fed."

I paused. Deep breaths -- adrenalin was flowing. My eyes were closed. Had they been open I would have soaked their carpet with tears. I figured the end was near. I don't know what I was expecting... A call to my boss? A call to the police? A bullet to the brain?

While considering all the possibilities the tense silence was broken by an invitation. An invitation?!? Yes, and it was to sit down, no less. For the next two hours (yes, two hours!) the Herd family got to know more of my story and I got a glimpse of theirs.

Jack's mother recently passed on. She'd been misdiagnosed, maltreated by doctors, and died as a result.

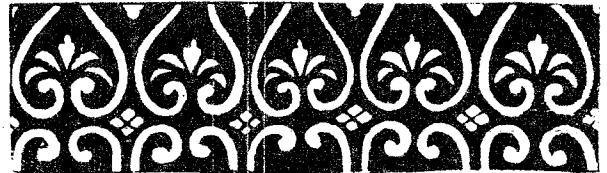
They apologized for their extreme pickiness and explained that picayune concerns such as dings on clock faces served as a distraction from the painful loss they'd both recently suffered. I could certainly understand where they were coming from. Hadn't i distracted myself from the serious problems within my own home by my deep involvement in issues outside of it? Humbled by their story and slightly ashamed of my rant (albeit a sincere rant) I found myself apologizing to the Herd's, adding blessings of peace and warm wishes to boot. We found that we had much in common, many shared passions, and that my concerns for the poor of the world were theirs as well.

Reconciliation achieved, the ding declared insignificant, my job secure, and I found myself with two new friends.

"Speak truth to power", they say. Through our dialogue, active listening, and mutual respect we were able to find our common ground. A seed of peace planted a year ago produced glorious fruit today. The unfolding of my India experience further reveals itself with each new day... "When we do harm it is because of a mistaken belief that we are separate from everyone else."

Lesson learned.

- robert Daniels II



In Tribute:

Joe DeRaymond

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police and military. To date, U.S. officials have shown little inclination to demand an accounting by the Colombian government regarding the murders and attacks carried out upon the members of the peace communities. In the past eight years 154 persons, 10 percent of their members, have been killed.

While awaiting the beginning of his prison term, Joe is actively involved with FOR's efforts to continue and expand its program in Colombia. Additional funding is urgently needed.

On January 21 Joe hosted an open house at his home in Freemansburg at which he and Janet Goloub reported on their experience as part of the FOR program in Colombia. Donations were collected to be used both for the FOR and for Joe's expenses. Contact the LEPOCO office to contribute to either or both funds.

The Americas Solidarity Group (ASG) is the LEPOCO committee that concerns itself with Latin American affairs -- consider becoming involved. The next ASG meeting will be at noon on Tuesday, February 21 at the LEPOCO office.

- Bob Riggs

Bits & Pieces

Ⓔ As this newsletter is being prepared we learned that the Easton Area School District is considering setting up a JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps) program at Easton Area High School. The School Board may vote on this as soon as Thurs., Feb. 16. Will school board members know the many questions about such a program: diversion of resources, unqualified teachers, questionable curriculum, further militarization of our society, false and unproven claims about the benefits, and violence being set up as solution in a city where there is a serious problem with violence?

If you can help in any way please contact Peter Crownfield at LEPOCO 610-691-8730.

Ⓔ Robert Daniels II will join a delegation to South Africa later this month to further his education in nonviolence. The group will be led by one of Gandhi's granddaughters, Ela Gandhi. The tour will cover Mohandas Gandhi's years in S. Africa and the anti-apartheid struggle. For those who have the means and inclination, help with the financial expense of this venture would be appreciated. You can contact LEPOCO directly or Robert at 610-781-5612 or rhubarbdoom@hotmail.com.

Ⓔ "I don't agree with nationalism. It's not that I'm against the soldiers. I'm against the war. And even if the war was over tomorrow, I wouldn't pledge allegiance to a country. I'll pledge allegiance to mankind. We're all part of the international community." This is one of the quotes that have appeared in local newspapers from Sam Smith, the freshman at Nazareth Area High School who refuses to stand for the daily Pledge of Allegiance. After intervention by the ACLU the school officials apologized for questioning his actions. His

eloquent statements and the coverage in local newspapers have touched off a public debate with letters to the editor criticizing him, but also many supporting his wisdom. Thank you to Sam and all those who have supported him.

Ⓔ Being legal doesn't make bombings moral, was the title of a most moving op-ed in *The Express Times* on Jan. 23, about the U.S. bombing of a village in Pakistan in mid-January. Raymond Schroth of St. Peter's College, NJ, wrote: "Fundamental ethics say we may not commit a moral act that we would not accept as a universal moral norm. Just as our torturing enemies invites our enemies to torture us, our killing an enemy leader or bombing their neighborhood invites their assassins and bombers into our communities. The world is not the Wild West. We cannot try to lead it by the moral code of the OK Corral."

Ⓔ On Sat., Feb. 18, from 2-4 pm, there will be a World Peace Flag Ceremony at the Banana Factory, Bethlehem. The ceremony is honoring the United Nations' 60th anniversary and will feature the flags of 191 nations along with the U.N. flag and the World Flag. Singer/songwriter Jackie Tice will perform. The event is free and open to the public.

Ⓔ A broad range of faith-based, Latin America solidarity, labor and human rights groups is organizing a Venezuela Solidarity Conference in Washington, DC, for March 4-6. Registration and other info. is available at www.lasolidarity.org.

Ⓔ The Lehigh Valley Chapter of Amnesty International began "100 Days for Darfur" on Jan. 26, with a program at Muhlenberg College. One part of this project is supporting the "Million Voices for Darfur" campaign to collect postcards and letters to elected officials. For more info. contact Karen Berry at 610-866-2655.

Ⓔ Bob Bauer has prepared a helpful information sheet for those who want to write letters to the Gaming Control Board about the gambling casino proposed for Bethlehem.

Peter Crownfield has prepared an action sheet for those who would like to testify at the public hearing about the casino set for late April. Registration to testify is due by March 6. Contact LEPOCO for a copy of either piece.

Ⓔ The Lehigh Valley Healthcare Reform February Meetup will be Sun., Feb. 26, at 11 am, at Wegman's, Rt. 248, Easton.

Ⓔ Drug companies are expected to gain \$139 billion in profits from Part D (the new Medicare program). Medicare has already begun to pay insurance company subsidies totaling at least \$46 billion over 10 years. (Source: *Labor Party News*, 1/06)

MEETINGS...MEETINGS...

Wed., Feb. 15, 6 pm: Nuclear Abolition Sisters Meeting at Olive Branch Restaurant, south Bethlehem.

Sun., Feb. 19, 7 pm: Peace Singers rehearse at Barb Wurth's home in Bethlehem.

Mon., Feb. 20, 7 pm: Peace Camp 2006 Planning Meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

Tues., Feb. 21, Noon: Americas Solidarity Working Group Meeting at LEPOCO.

Tues., Feb. 21, 7 pm: L.V. Peace Coalition Meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

Tues., Feb. 28, 8:30 am: Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing Meeting at Peace Center.

Sun., Mar. 5, 7 pm: Peace Singers rehearse at home of Martha Christine in Bethlehem.

Mon., Mar. 6, 7 pm: LEPOCO Steering Committee Meeting at Peace Center.

Tues., Mar. 7, 6:15 pm: Bike/Walkathon Planning Meeting at Peace Center.

Thurs., Mar. 9, 7 pm: Annual Dinner & Program Final Planning Meeting at LEPOCO.

Sun., Mar. 12, 7 pm: Peace Singers rehearse at home of Bob Riggs in Bethlehem.

Mon., Mar. 13, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting at the Peace Center.



LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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Bits & Pieces



Over 60 people joined a "Bush Step Down" demonstration at Ott & Hamilton Streets in Allentown on Saturday, February 4, four days after the State of the Union address. The "Honk to Impeach Bush" banner got a noisy response - some said as many as 50% of the passing drivers honked. The last 20 minutes of the demonstration brought a steady, cold rain. Thanks to Lynne Hanna for another of her energetic organizing efforts and to all who braved the difficult weather to make a hopeful statement for truth and transparency.

In the photo above we can identify (left to right) Evan Hoffman ("Worst President Ever" sign), Phyllis Hoffman, Kurt Day, Michael Lawton. Unfortunately, we do not know the names of those holding the "Honk..." signs.