

## Annual Dinner Will Be Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>

Planning is well underway for LEPOCO's Annual Dinner to take place on Saturday, March 14, 2009, at the Episcopal Cathedral Church of the Nativity (321 Wyandotte St.) in south Bethlehem. As previously announced, this year's speaker is Jennifer Harbury, an internationally known critic of U. S. foreign policy, who has spoken and written extensively on torture and this country's involvement in suspect practices.



*Jennifer Harbury sits outside a government building in Guatemala City in the 1990s, seeking the files about the disappearance of her husband, Efraín Bámaca Velásquez, better known as Commander Everardo.*

Photo by Joe Marquette.

Ms. Harbury has written, "The problem, of course, lies with the realities concealed from us. This has always been the case. While the American public has slowly grappled with ongoing injustices visible within our own borders, it has long failed to discover and correct our government's abuses abroad. In the end, however, this is our government, and torture is being utilized in our names and supported by our tax dollars. We are responsible."

Ms. Harbury will be the featured speaker in a busy evening that will include Steering Committee elections, drawing the winners for the very popular LEPOCO Art Raffle, performances by the Peace Singers, and a delicious meal prepared, from scratch, by LEPOCO's renowned volunteer cooks. The menu has been developed around vegetables that are native to the Americas. The main course, "Three Sisters Stew," will include squash, corn, beans, and tomatoes, all indigenous crops. Pre-dinner music and appetizers begin at 5 pm, with the dinner at 5:30 pm.

Tickets for the dinner and art raffle are on sale now. For the dinner, complete and return the coupon on this page. For Art Raffle tickets you will find an orange flyer enclosed. (Both can also be printed out at LEPOCO's web site, [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org) if you need additional copies.) Dinner tickets must be purchased in advance; program-only tickets will be available at the door. (Raffle tickets will also be available for purchase at the dinner, but you do not need to be present to win.) The LEPOCO boutique of SERRV craft items, books, postcards, bumper stickers, buttons, and literature will be open for business at the dinner. A limited number of copies of Jennifer Harbury's books, *Searching for Everardo: A Story of Love, War, and the CIA in Guatemala* (1997) and *Truth, Torture and the American Way* (2005), will also be available for sale at the boutique table.

Volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks -- from shopping to chopping and for setting up and tearing down. Call the LEPOCO office, 610-691-8730, to offer as much time as you can manage on the day of the dinner.

The fellowship is great and the effort satisfying and worthwhile. Please come join us.

- Janet Ney

Return Coupon  
**LEPOCO Annual Dinner:**  
**Saturday, March 14, 2009**  
Episcopal Cathedral Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem  
(Pre-dinner music at 5 pm; Dinner at 5:30 pm)

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ tickets for:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Mail tickets to:

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

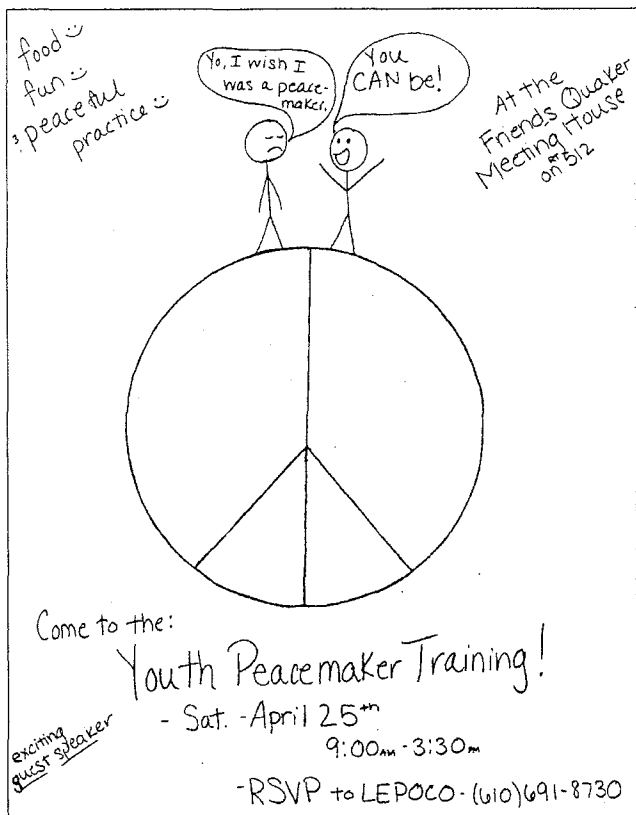
\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Hold tickets at door.

Return to: LEPOCO, 313 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Bethlehem, PA 18015,  
before 5 pm, Tuesday, March 10, 2009.

### Annual Dinner Tickets:

- \$25- Regular Adult;
  - \$50 - Special Supporter;
  - \$10- Limited Income Adult/ Child;
  - \$10 - Program-only, regular
  - \$5 - Program-only, limited income
- Dinner tickets by advance reservation only.  
Program-only tickets available at the door.



## National Conference Held in a Death Penalty Capital of the North

The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty's 2009 Conference, "Training for the Long Run," was held in Harrisburg, January 22-25, and a few of us from the Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing were able to attend. When you are accustomed to a small monthly meeting at the LEPOCO office, usually attended by fewer than ten persons, attending a gathering of over two-hundred activists from around the nation who are engaged in the same struggle, have the same priorities, and in many cases have dedicated their entire professional careers to work for abolishing the death penalty, is to experience encouragement for continuing your efforts that is therapeutic.

David Rose, Maria Weick, and Calvin Smiley attended a number of the workshops that were part of the conference, and we all came back with valuable information. The amount of information that was presented to help activists on this issue was astounding. For example, the choices for workshops during one hour on Friday afternoon were: How To Use Letters to the Editor as an Effective Campaign Tool, Practice With On-Camera Interviews & Tips for Speaking to the Media, Creating a Strategic Plan To End the Death Penalty In Your State, How to Work with Family Members of Those on Death Row, Working with Family Members of Murder Victims, and How to Organize a Speaking Tour of Death Row Exonerates. In addition, there were many other information packed workshops, and speakers at luncheons and the awards dinner who provided inspiring stories of

what they have been able to achieve, either through legal challenges, creative documentary films, organizing in the religious community, or by pushing through legislation to abolish the death penalty.

This conference was a wonderful opportunity to renew the commitment to work toward the ending of the practice, in Pennsylvania, of trying to decide who deserves to live or die, in addition to providing much useful material for anyone engaged in social action. The conference next year will be in Louisville, Kentucky. If possible, I will try and attend, and would love to have someone else along.

- David Rose

## This Space "For Rent"

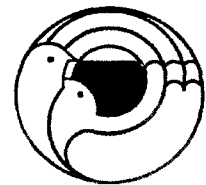
Attendees of the LEPOCO Annual Dinner will notice this year that we have decided to include advertisements in the program from local businesses, individuals, and sister organizations.

The unprecedented challenges that we currently face increase our need for additional sources of income. Modest advertisements in the program seem to be a viable way to raise funds while informing those attending of people and services supportive of the peace and justice ideals that LEPOCO promotes.

If you are interested in helping LEPOCO through an ad in the annual dinner program prices are as follows: \$25 - business card size; \$50 - half page; \$75 - full page. Art work and text must be ready and at LEPOCO by Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. (You can send copy by e-mail, regular mail, or deliver it in person.)

### Newsletter of LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern  
313 West Fourth Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18015  
phone: 610-691-8730  
fax: 610-691-8904  
website: [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org)  
e-mail: [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net)



The *LEPOCO Newsletter* is published 10 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 .....	\$ 5
Household Membership .....	\$45
Supporting Member .....	\$75

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

Newsletter Staff: robert Daniels II, Bob Riggs, Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, Jeff Vitelli.

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

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Addison Bross, Peter Christine, robert Daniels II (ex-officio), Nils Hovik, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Mimi Lang, Michelle Mecham, Janet Ney (co-treasurer), Sue Ravitz, Nancy Tate (ex-officio).

# Popcorn & Politics

Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 7 pm: Mesalla: Activists in Iraq

Popcorn and Politics: A *First Friday Film* projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows presents this film documenting the emerging network of peace activists in Iraq known as "LaOnf."

LaOnf (an Arabic word that roughly translates to "nonviolence") formed in 2006 to join together Iraqi civil society organizations for the creation and support of nonviolent strategies to oppose occupation, terrorism and corruption in Iraq.

Directed by Alberto Arce. 50 minutes. 2008.

*Please bring a snack or beverage to share.*

Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009, 7 pm: Occupation 101

Popcorn and Politics: A *First Friday Film* projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Thought-provoking and powerful documentary on the current and historical root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Presenting a comprehensive analysis of the facts and hidden truths surrounding this decades-old struggle, the film also details life under Israeli military rule, the role of the United States in the conflict, and some of the major obstacles that stand in the way of a

lasting and viable peace. The conflict is explained by leading Middle East scholars, peace activists, journalists, religious leaders and humanitarian workers -- voices not often heard in the U.S. media. Directed by Abdallah and Sufyan Omeish. 90 minutes. 2006.

*Please bring a snack or beverage to share.*



## Tolling Bells & Standing For Peace

The Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition has put together an initiative to mark the day when the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq began. Area houses of worship have been approached with a request that they ring their church bells for six continuous minutes (one minute for every year of the Iraq War) on Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, starting at noon. Members of local congregations and those who have contacts at local churches are asked to encourage participation in this modest remembrance.

There will also be a demonstration for peace on that day, from 11 am to 12:30 pm outside the Federal Building, 5<sup>th</sup> & Hamilton Sts., Allentown. Please join us on March 19<sup>th</sup> in Allentown.

If you can't make it we hope you'll take time, wherever you are, to pause for some brief moments and reflect on the toll of a war that, though no longer on the front pages and threatened to be eclipsed by an escalation in Afghanistan, continues to simmer - ending lives and wasting the precious resources of our country and the world.

## Tax Day: Supporting Peace Not War

Join leafletters at local post offices on Wednesday, April 15, as we distribute the "Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes" pie chart (a flyer produced by the War Resisters League) to those filing their tax returns. With the present economic problems it will be an especially interesting time to talk with people in our community and build support for cutting the military budget. Contact LEPOCO (610-691-8730) if you can help at any time during the day or early evening. We will try to be present at several of the local post offices.

## "Beyond War" on April 4<sup>th</sup>

LEPOCO and the Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition plan to organize for local participation in the United For Peace & Justice ([www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org)) rally in New York City on Saturday, April 4. Please call LEPOCO (610-691-8730) if you are interested in being part of a local contingent.

The national call reads in part: *Our country and our world are confronting grave problems - wars and occupations, poverty and inequality, the climate in crisis, and whole economies collapsing under the weight of war spending and greed... On the April 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. King's prophetic "Beyond Vietnam" speech, delivered at Riverside Church, we will gather in New York City, determined to help lead our nation in a new direction that so many long for.*

*For the first time in too long, we will march filled with hope... On April 4<sup>th</sup>, we will bring our urgent message to the financial center of Wall Street... Our nation must drastically reduce and redirect its military spending to reflect an entirely new foreign policy based on diplomacy and international law instead of military force, on global cooperation instead of domination, on a plan to live as a part of the world community instead of using brute power to stand astride the globe like the colossus of old.*

LEPOCO calls our leadership and active members to a discussion of what the new national realities mean for our local peace work. We will meet on Sunday, March 29, 1-4 pm, at the home of Mimi Lang in Bethlehem. How do we organize in the midst of new crises, economic and international, and in the midst of more hopefulness for change than we have seen in a long time. Please RSVP to LEPOCO (610-691-8730) if you can join this important discussion.

# Steering Committee Nominations

LEPOCO's Steering Committee plans and provides leadership for the Action Meetings, held the second Monday of the month (these meetings are open to all members and friends of the organization). The Committee makes decisions between monthly meetings and handles finances, personnel, and other organizational issues, often bringing recommendations to Action Meetings.

The election for this year's Steering Committee will be completed at the Annual Dinner. (See balloting instructions below.)

We want to thank Nils Hovik for one year of service on the Steering Committee. We regret that the demands of his work as a college professor make him unable to continue this commitment. Janet Ney is unable to continue as co-treasurer, but will return to a regular Steering Committee position. Tom Stinnett has agreed to fill in as co-treasurer.

We are nominating extra people to the at-large Steering Committee positions because there is much to do. We will need to amend the constitution to accommodate this change, but felt the asset of having more people willing to serve would not find opposition among our membership. Peter Christine, Mimi Lang, Addison Bross, and Susie Ravitz will continue serving their Steering Committee terms that began in 2008.

Tom Stinnett of Riegelsville is an engineer by education and experience. He has worked for several companies in the biotechnology equipment field. He's been involved in LEPOCO since 1971 and spent much of 1972 showing "The Automated Air War" slide show to a variety of groups. He served as LEPOCO's treasurer between 1974 and 1983 (BC - before computers), but has been a consultant to subsequent treasurers in computerizing the organization's financial records.

Julius Iwantsch of Bethlehem has been a LEPOCO member since the mid-1970s. He works as a design draftsman, working mainly with municipal clients. His interests include U.S. military involvement, military service alternatives for young people, and bringing this country's reputation up to what it should be -- through change. He enjoys hiking, biking, skiing, and home renovations. He has been co-treasurer for over 10 years.

Janet Ney of Allentown has served as an at-large Steering Committee member for six years and as co-treasurer for two years. She has been facilitating the Annual Dinner for several years, and is a member of the LEPOCO Peace Singers. She previously served on the National Committee of the War Resisters League for ten years. Professionally, Janet is the Associate Executive Director of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley; she celebrated 25 years with her employer in November 2008. She is an active member of the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown and volunteers for the Presbytery of Lehigh.

Michelle Mecham of Allentown initially became an activist in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade when she demonstrated for animal rights. In 2002 she visited LEPOCO to talk about the powerful connection between animal and human rights. She joined and has staffed tables at fairs and festivals, helped to collate newsletters, vigiled and marched against the Iraq War. She is a valuable member of the Fundraising Committee and has served one term on the Steering Committee. Michelle works in medical records at Lehigh Valley Hospital and is pursuing a degree in anthropology.

Ruth Karpinski of Allentown has been a convert to peace activism/nonviolent action and involved with LEPOCO since 2004. Some of her activities have included participating in several protests against the war in Iraq locally, in D.C., and in Toronto, Canada. In Canada, Ruth was a member of a drumming group for peace and was active with Iraqi and Iranian groups for social change and understanding. She has also traveled south for a Civil Rights tour where she gained a greater understanding of our history and the poverty that still exists in the U.S. today. Ruth is a nutritionist by trade. For over 10 years she has been studying North American food choice and trade; and the impact it has on our health and the environment.

Check out the LEPOCO website at [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org) for a Calendar of Events, Newsletter Archive, Videos, & More. Sign up for LEPOCO e-mail updates by calling 610-691-8730 or by sending a message to [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net)

## Election Ballot

At-Large Steering Committee Members (vote for three):

Michelle Mecham \_\_\_\_ Ruth Karpinski \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term) (2-year term)

Janet Ney \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term)

Co-Treasurers (vote for two):

Julius Iwantsch \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term)

Tom Stinnett \_\_\_\_  
(1-year term)

\*Please note here if you or anyone you know would be interested in serving on the Steering Committee:

This ballot can be cast at the Annual Dinner on Saturday, March 14, 2009, by 6:15 pm, or by mail to arrive at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Bethlehem, PA 18015, by Friday, March 13, 2009.

# 2008: The Year In Review

Two thousand eight. Only upon reading through the last years newsletters have I realized just how long 2008 was. Was that vigil less than a year ago? It seems like ages. 2008 was a year of great hope and inspiration, with the Dalai Lama's visit to Lehigh University in the summer, and the election of the first African American president of the United States in the fall. Whatever the results of the Obama presidency may be, and we can already be reasonably sure that he will not be a Peace President, the explosion of grassroots organizing throughout the nation during the campaign holds great promise for the years ahead.

For the LEPOCO staff, 2008 was a year of changes. The beginning of the year was spent searching for a replacement for Peter Bond, who was forced to leave the organization after a too short stint as Youth and Militarism Coordinator. Meanwhile, Mike Lawton, LEPOCO's long-time staff member with the job description of "everything that Nancy Tate doesn't do," resigned. Mike's tireless work in the office has been a tremendous gift to the peace community. Thank You Mike! With two part-time positions unfilled, Robert Daniels II (Steering Committee member, clock repairman and renowned trouble-maker for peace) saved the day by offering to take on both roles as a full-time LEPOCO employee.



For the world, 2008 was a year of continued conflict in the Middle East and beyond. As the Iraq War raged on, the Lehigh Valley peace community was faced with two grisly milestones: March 19<sup>th</sup> was the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war. About 30 protesters gathered in the rain around the National Guard Armory in Allentown for a rally then moved to Muhlenberg for a panel discussion about how do get out of Iraq. Four days later, the official death toll of US soldiers killed in Iraq reached 4,000. The Peace Coalition organized a march from the Bethlehem National Guard Armory, past Rep. Dent's office, to the Peace Pole in the Bethlehem Rose Garden. Veterans For Peace (Lehigh Valley Chapter) renewed t-shirt embedding in a big way, wearing their "End the War" shirts at shopping malls and public gatherings. The persistent witness of weekly peace vigilers continued in Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton, thanks to several stalwarts in each city.

LEPOCO members are often getting into trouble with the law, and this year was no exception. On January 28<sup>th</sup>, Art Landis, of Dent 9 fame, had his trial for crossing the line at the SOA protest in November 2007. Art was sentenced to 30 days of imprisonment for his stand against torture and oppression in Latin America, which he served starting April 10<sup>th</sup>. But that didn't stop him from committing Civil Disobedience again, this time getting arrested with Tim Chadwick and others at the Ghosts of the Iraq War protest in the U.S. Senate chambers.

It was a banner year for programs – Potlucks and Politics, the Annual Dinner and other special gatherings. Topics ranged from cluster bombs, to El Salvador before the 2009 elections, to the death penalty, to understanding the Iran/US stand off. Speakers, invited by LEPOCO and other Lehigh Valley organizations, included: Don MacRae, Joe DeRaymond, Faramarz Farbod, Freddy Caicedo, Camilo Mejía, Janet Chisholm, Bruce Gagnon, John Dear, Juan Melendez, the Rev. Walter Everett, and Raed Jarrar – an impressive list indeed. Throughout this time the Popcorn and Politics monthly film series was going strong. The highlight of the season was a jam packed (I think I was sitting in the doorway to the back room) showing of Michael Moore's *Sicko*. As a special bonus John Graham, one of the people featured in the film, made a surprise visit and answered questions about the movie afterwards.



2008 was a year of performance for peace. We started out with a sing-along of songs from the abolitionist and civil rights movements as part of the program to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King at Godfrey Daniels, featuring the Peace Singers and Grace Adele (the program also featured a reading of King's Riverside Speech by professional actors). In March we had a reunion performance by Bright Morning Star at the Wesley Methodist Church (where the audience could see the stained glass image of Jesus in the sanctuary lit up by a sudden parting of clouds after a song advocating equal marriage rights for gay couples). On May 30<sup>th</sup>, LEPOCO members came to the Third Street Alliance for the premier performance of *Another River Flows*, a play about the African American Experience in the Lehigh Valley, after a delightful theater party at the home of Susie and Art Ravitz in Easton. In November Kathryn and Evan Hoffman welcomed a theatre party in their home before a LEPOCO group attended the "Unveiled Truth," a play about women and war presented at Cedar Crest College. The year finished in song, with the Peace Singers performing at the Unitarian Universalist Church for Bethlehem's First Night.

The staff disruptions created some confusion for the Association of Students Advocating Peace (ASAP). The group had been created by Youth and Militarism Coordinator Stephanie Garman in 2007, and it took some time to adjust to the state of independence created by the lack of a staff person for guidance. Still, ASAP pulled off the spring Youth Peacemaker Training successfully. And, in the young people category, July's Peace Camp, held in Allentown, was a vibrant experience for young and old – in the Camp's 19<sup>th</sup> year.

The Americas Solidarity Group started a campaign for fairness towards illegal immigrants in the Valley by drafting an Immigration Statement. After some debate and several revisions, the official statement was published in May. Members of the Americas Solidarity Group have presented the statement at a Bethlehem City Council meeting, and are still meeting with city officials to advocate for justice for immigrants.

The Nuclear Abolition Sisters vigiled for nuclear disarmament at Musikfest, leafleted to cut the military budget at post offices on Tax Day, and prepared the Nuclear Nugget for this newsletter. LEPOCO sponsored a workshop on war tax resistance and held a small demonstration at the IRS - taxes for peace not war.

Lehigh Valley CASK (Committee Against State Killing) worked with activist students from Lehigh University, visited state legislators and welcomed a death penalty panel at three local venues.

Fundraising went forward with letters and phoning, setting up at fairs and festivals, biking and walking in June for LEPOCO and Iraq refugees, a huge yard sale, and an indoor peace picnic as rain poured outside.



Not bad for a year's work. Let's hope we can make 2009 just as productive, as we work with a new cabinet in the White House, and new activists in the streets. There is much to be done: the wars continue in Iraq and Afghanistan, and violence is ever escalating in Israel/Palestine. At the same time the economic crisis at home presents both the real threat of increased poverty and unemployment, while providing an opportunity to rebuild our country to be more socially just and environmentally sustainable. Let's get to it!

- Peter Christine

## Afghanistan: Saving the U.S. from Quagmire

According to PBS's *Bill Moyers' Journal* of January 30<sup>th</sup>, U.S. missile strikes have killed at least 132 people in Pakistan since August 2008 (and this doesn't include the people killed in the many similar strikes in Afghanistan during the same period). As Moyers says, Pakistan is a country "where allegedly we are not at war."

He goes on to discuss with his guests the first of the drone bombing attacks approved by the Obama White House only days after their January 20<sup>th</sup> inauguration. Marilyn Young, a professor at New York University and one of those guests, described how her heart sank at the reports of that bombing attack, reported to have killed three children. She talks later about how she fears the dreams and grand hopes of the Obama Administration could be lost if the old tactics of military force are chosen over diplomacy in Afghanistan.

Developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan are not getting the attention they might in a less complex time economically, but what we hear is not encouraging. Because these developments are having such an impact on the people of Afghanistan and their neighbors and indeed, on all that needs to be done in this country, we jumped at the opportunity to have Peter Lems from American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) come and report on his December 2008 trip to Afghanistan. He gave a presentation for 75 people at the Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse on Sunday, February 15.

AFSC has a longstanding presence in Afghanistan. They have built 12 schools over the years, mostly for girls. Peter presented a complex picture starting with the fact that different regions in Afghanistan call the war by different names (War on Islam, War on Terror, War on the Taliban) and many people in Kabul say the war doesn't affect them. The present war follows 30 years of

6 LEPOCO Newsletter / February-March 2009

war in that country. Indeed, we, by coincidence, were holding our program on the 20-year anniversary of the date in 1989 when the then-Soviet Union ended their 10-year occupation of Afghanistan.

Among the other complicating factors are the fact that: one-quarter of Afghans are living as refugees; life expectancy is only 45 years; most schools are running three or four shifts each day; the armed opposition is diverse even though they are often simply called Taliban; 40 countries have troops in Afghanistan.

Peter is developing his ideas for alternatives. The foreign troops must go. Just as in the Bill Moyers interview mentioned earlier, Peter Lems concluded that people do not like the helicopter gunships, drones and planes that are dropping bombs from the sky, often killing civilians. Why not spend U.S. dollars to build Afghani institutions? Their entire Ministry of Education could be funded for what we spend on one military brigade. The \$100 million we presently spend on war each day would go a long way toward building their institutions and thereby a future for the country. Diplomacy must be used and it needs to include China, India and Kashmir, Russia, Iran, Pakistan -- all the regional players. Our leaders need to hear from Afghanistan's NGOs, not just the military and the present government.

Letters to the editor, calls and letters to Congress and the White House, and thoughtful conversations with our neighbors are all urgently needed to stop this headlong rush toward a military solution to diplomatic and humanitarian problems.

Some sources for more information: "Afghanistan: Ending a Failed Military Strategy" at [www.peacefultomorrow.org](http://www.peacefultomorrow.org); the December 2008 issue of *PeaceWork* available at [www.peaceworkmagazine.org](http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org); and [www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org).

- Nancy C. Tate

# The Struggle Shared

*"...And one of the great liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change, and yet they fail to develop new attitudes, the new mental responses that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a revolution.*

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, from "Remaining Awake," the program booklet for Lehigh University's celebration of King's legacy.

## NIKKI GIOVANNI AT LEHIGH -

The first time I heard Nikki Giovanni speak was in 1970 at Lafayette College. It was a time of accelerating social change: Kent State had sparked campus strikes, there was a Moratorium on business as usual against the Vietnam War, and Lafayette was initiating a Black Studies Program. Nikki Giovanni had published her first book of poetry, *Black Feeling Black Talk / Black Judgement*, in 1968, and was a rising voice in the African American Community. She was invited to Lafayette to read, and contributed her enthusiasm to the palpable atmosphere of change.

I finally heard her again at Lehigh University on January 21<sup>st</sup>, as part of their annual celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday, this year, a week-long series of events on campus. Especially in the context of the inauguration of Barak Obama as the nation's first Black President, which, in varying degrees, many people were seeing as the culmination of King's Dream, the atmosphere of change was familiarly palpable to me.

With infectious optimism, humor, clarity, and poetic imagery, Nikki read love poems, told personal anecdotes about encounters with Martin, and Rosa Parks, E.D. Nixon and the Pullman Porters, the death of Emmitt Till, and other lesser-known chapters of the civil rights struggles that embellished King's legacy with a unique perspective. She reminded us that Huey Newton also had a dream "...though Huey wouldn't call it that...Huey would say a *ten-point program... Power to the People...* but the people must dream...if they are to use power effectively..." "Huey," she said, "was a great American. Martin was a saint."

In the 39 intervening years since 1970, Nikki Giovanni has published twenty-seven books of poetry, prose and children's books. She is a three-time NAACP Image Award Winner,

first recipient of the Rosa Parks Woman of Courage Award, holds the Langston Hughes Medal for Outstanding Poetry, and was nominated for a Grammy for *The Nikki Giovanni Poetry Collection*. As a University Distinguished Professor of English at Virginia Tech, she was an outspoken and respected voice for healing in response to the campus massacre there in April of 2007. *Bicycles* (because love requires trust and balance) is her most recent collection of love poems.

**REMEMBERING NINA GRAY:** Guy Gray's mother Nina passed away in December, at the age of 94. She had lived with Guy and Greta Browne for several years, until she required more assistance. Since December 2006 she had lived at Westminster Village.

In the 1930's Nina Gray was attracted to the back-to-the-land writings of Ralph Borsordi, questioning the feasibility of a capitalist economy, and found in the philosophy of Dorothy Day an alternative lifestyle, offering voluntary simplicity and faith-based living close to the land. She joined the Catholic Worker Movement, and with her husband Vincent, and several other couples founded the Maryfarm Community, in Williams Township, south of Easton. Although eventually there was a split from the Catholic Worker there were still families living at Maryfarm through the 1970s, adhering to the core values which brought them together for a radical social experiment in the 40s. Throughout her life, Nina Grey continued that experiment, living simply, attempting self-sufficiency, learning organic gardening, walking every day, fasting one day a week.

Nina walked around her closed ward on the day she died, simply and quietly, as she had lived. Following a Memorial Mass for her in January in Kutztown, her ashes were interred at Fountain Hill Cemetery, which is

unique in offering "Green Burials" (interment without embalming chemicals, without concrete vaults, in biodegradable containers). A small box bearing her cremated remains was placed in the earth on a hillside where she had enjoyed walking, as a circle of family and friends sang one of her favorite songs:

*Going home, going home  
I'll be going home.  
See the light, see the sun  
I'm just going home.*

**"QUE SE VAYAN TODOS " (THEY ALL MUST GO) -** While most of us in the U.S. have been watching our government debate how to rescue us from the economic crisis that we've inherited from the past decade or so of disastrous policy mishaps, workers in other parts of the world have had some interesting responses.

In Iceland, where the economy was the first to melt down in October, women besieged parliament, banging on pot lids, in the glow of a huge bonfire, all through the 18-hour nights. Five days after the "Saucepan Revolution," the government collapsed. An interim government of left-Green and Social Democrats has begun the daunting task of stabilization. Their new prime minister, the world's first openly lesbian head of state, declared that her government will "enshrine national ownership of the country's natural resources."

Similarly, in Latvia, whose economy is on the brink of collapse, protests have rocked the capital, and in South Korea opposition politicians used sledgehammers and electric saws to break up a closed door session where the ruling party was attempting to steamroll an unpopular free trade agreement.

At the end of January over a million people demonstrated in France, protesting the government's response to the financial crisis. A 24-hour nationwide strike disrupted transportation, schools and services, especially outside the capital. 300,000 people marched in Paris, demanding higher wages, job security, and greater efforts by the government to keep the economy from tipping into deeper recession. Oddly enough, the chant of the marchers was, in English, "Yes, yes, yes we can." (Source: [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org))

- Jeff Vitelli

# Bits & Pieces

Joe DeRaymond remains in El Salvador working with the Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS) to organize international observers for the second part of the country's important 2009 elections that will occur in March. He has been there since January, also helping with the international delegations that observed the January round of the elections. He has posted some of his commentaries at [www.lv-independent.org](http://www.lv-independent.org). Information CIS can be found at [www.cis-elsalvador.org](http://www.cis-elsalvador.org). Sarah Snider will be joining one of the election observer delegations in March. We look forward to their reports about important developments in El Salvador.

In an important article in *The Morning Call* on Sunday, January 25, reporter Riley Yates pointed out some of the weaknesses in the practices of Northampton County District Attorney John Morganelli that include round-ups of **undocumented workers locally**. The biggest issue may be the lack of effectiveness in these practices and the unpurposeful disruption of people's lives. It is an important article to read.

LEPOCO singled onto a letter to President Obama in early February that was circulated by the Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean calling for a fundamentally new policy on Colombia. The letter concludes: *We believe this nation needs a change in its failed policy toward Colombia. This requires deep re-examination of how funds are spent and what the results have been where it matters most - for the most vulnerable and the victims of violence.*

## Events at Kirkridge

### Retreat & Study Center, near Bangor:

March 5-8 - *Veterans: Creating a Culture of Peace with*

*Thomas Brinson & Tim Pluta*

March 12-15 - *Creating a Culture of Peace with Janet*

*Chisholm*

March 27-29 - *"There Shall Be No Poor Among You" with*

*Kathy Kelly*

April 24-26 - *Gandhi, King, Day and Merton -*

*Peacemaking Ancestors with John Dear*

For more information see [www.kirkridge.org](http://www.kirkridge.org) or call 610-588-1793.

In an encouraging turn of events Parade Magazine printed a short piece on *The End of Nuclear Weapons* on Feb. 1, 2009. Queen Noor of Jordan was interviewed about the Global Zero initiative where she is one of 100 political and civic leaders calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

April 3-5, **Witness for Peace** - Mid-Atlantic will hold their annual retreat at Bear Creek Camp near Wilkes-Barre. The retreat welcomes peace activists working on Latin American issues in NY, PA DC, NJ, MD and DE to gather for presentations, discussion and planning around the theme, "**Change Latin America Can Believe In.**" The fee is \$75 for weekend and that covers food and lodging. LEPOCO has a copy of the registration form or see [www.witnessforpeace.org](http://www.witnessforpeace.org).

Thanks to the good organizing of local labor activists a meeting of the local Chamber of Commerce was not able to simply discuss the **Employee Free Choice Act** as though it will bring the end of democracy. The workers and their allies gathered outside the hotel and talked about how the Act will actually improve democracy and opportunity for the very people who have had little or no representation in their workplaces. WFMZ-TV aired a discussion on the Act on December 8, 2008, that featured Pennsylvania union leaders. It can be viewed at [www.wfmz.com/businessmatters](http://www.wfmz.com/businessmatters).

The economic situation has led to an increase in **homelessness** and the shelters in Bethlehem have been full. Marcie Lightwood and a group from Bethlehem churches put together a rotating shelter system for nights when temperatures are below freezing. Volunteers pitched in to staff the makeshift shelters in churches and other community buildings. Thank you to all who joined this effort.

Touchstone Theatre is presenting the play, *The Mammy Project*, written and performed by Michelle Matlock, March 12-15. The play reports the untold history of Nancy Green, who played "Aunt Jemima" at the 1893 World's Fair. Also woven in is the history of activists like Ida B. Wells, who struggled to have black people represented at the very same World's Fair. For more information contact Touchstone Theatre at 610-867-1689 or [www.touchstone.org](http://www.touchstone.org).

The Gay Straight Alliance is among the Muhlenberg College groups sponsoring the theater piece by S. Bear Bergman titled, **Monday Night in Westerbork**, Thurs., March 12, at 7 pm, in the Miller Forum at the College. The play explores Jewish and Queer understandings of the Holocaust. This is "not the traditional Holocaust narrative, but an educating, interrogating, celebrating piece of theater including everything from a song-and-dance number to a prayer for the dead." It will be free and open to the public.

Join the Latin American Working Group in Washington, DC, for their Ecumenical Advocacy Days, March 13-16, to learn more about "**Winds of Change in Latin America**" around Colombia, Cuba, and the U.S. border. For more information see [www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org).

## SUPPORT LEPOCO!

- Enclosed are my yearly LEPOCO dues of \$\_\_\_\_\_.  
(\$35 individual;  
\$45 household; \$75 supporter;  
\$5 limited income)
- I am also enclosing an extra donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- I would like to support LEPOCO's work with a \_\_\_monthly/ \_\_\_quarterly pledge of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- I'm most interested in working on the following issues:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: LEPOCO Peace Center,  
313 W. 4th St., Bethlehem, PA 18015.



# Bits & Pieces

The planning for the **Young People Making Peace** summer day camp (aka **Peace Camp**) is getting underway. A first meeting was held on February 26 and more will follow. If you would like to help with planning or be a volunteer staffer at Peace Camp this summer, please call the LEPOCO office (610-691-8730) or talk with Donna Hartmann or Diane Dilendik.

**Howard Zinn's Marx In Soho** will be performed by **Bob Weick** at the Southern Lehigh Public Library (3200 Preston Lane, Center Valley) on Wed., **March 25**, at 7 pm. Bob Weick, the celebrated actor and 2003 Barrymore Award nominee has presented over 160 performances of Zinn's play from Maine to California since the 2004 sold-out performance at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. How beautiful is it that a local person, a Lehigh University graduate and a farrier by trade, who began his acting career in 1995, has been presenting an engaging and entertaining play filled with Marxist philosophy and history to college audiences and the general public during the age of Bush? Go Bob! Be sure to take this opportunity to see the play performed locally. It will be free and open to the public. Call 610-282-8825 for more info.

The Peace & Justice Team of **Hope UCC** (1031 Flexer Ave., Allentown), will hold a **Middle East Peace Forum: Understanding Israel and Palestine**, on Sun., **March 8**, 9:30-10:30 am. Dr. **Brian Mellow**, Professor of Political Science at Muhlenberg College, will make a presentation on the history and current realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Lehigh Valley Vegetarians** will hold a potluck dinner meeting on Wed., **March 4**, at 6 pm, at the Lehigh Valley Friends (Quaker) Meetinghouse (Rt. 512, about 1/2 mile north of Rt. 22, in Hanover Township, Bethlehem). The program will feature a discussion of "What's New in Your Vegetarian Life?" For more info. call Len Frenkel at 610-709-8984.

The 2009 Lehigh Valley Green Building Expo will be held Sat. and Sun., **March 21 and 22** (9 am - 8 pm, on

Sat., and 10 am - 5 pm, on Sun.), at Lehigh University's Iacocca Hall, Mountaintop Campus. Admission is \$5. There will be exhibits, seminars and more to help people learn how to live more sustainably. See [www.lvgreenbuilders.org/expo](http://www.lvgreenbuilders.org/expo).

The play, **Execution of Justice**, continues its run at the Civic Theatre 514 (514 N. 19th St., Allentown), through Sun., **March 8** (8 pm, Wed. through Sat., and 2 pm Sun.) It comes as some theatres are still playing the film, *Milk*, that just won several Oscars. The play is a multimedia ensemble piece on the trial of one-time San Francisco supervisor Dan White, who murdered fellow supervisor Harvey Milk, a popular gay-rights crusader, and Mayor George Moscone. White received a reduced sentence for the 1978 killings because of "diminished capacity" due to Twinkie-fueled depression. The play's voice of conscience is Sister Boom Boom, a crusading nun in drag. For more info. call 610-432-8943 or see [www.civictheatre.com](http://www.civictheatre.com).

**Faithful Reform in Healthcare-A** Community Meeting, will be held on Mon., **March 2**, at 7 pm, at Christ Lutheran Church (1245 Hamilton St., Allentown). The meeting is sponsored by the Lehigh County Conference of Churches Justice & Advocacy Committee and Congregations United for Neighborhood Action. Call 610-433-6421 for more info.

The **National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee** will hold their next Gathering & Meeting, **May 1-3**, in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The special topic for this gathering will be perspectives on Peace Tax Fund Legislation and the program will also offer a mix of presentations, open discussion, organizing topics, time for personal war tax resistance questions, basic WTR workshops, and good food and fun. For more info. see [nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org](mailto:nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org) or call 1-800-269-7464.

There will be a **Bread for the World** Workshop, "Hungry at Home: Food for Our Neighbors," on Sat., **March 21**, at 1st Presbyterian Church (Cedar Crest Blvd. & Tilghman St., Allentown), 8:30 am to 3 pm. Call LCCC at 610-433-6421 for more info.

**Kathy Kelly**, of Voices for Creative Nonviolence reported on January 22, from Rafah: "*Traffic on Sea Street, a major thoroughfare alongside Gaza's coastline, includes horses, donkeys pulling carts, cyclists, pedestrians, trucks and cars, mostly older models. Overhead, in stark contrast to the street below, Israel's ultra-modern unmanned surveillance planes criss-cross the skies. F16s and helicopters can also be heard. Remnants of their deliveries, the casings of missiles, bombs and shells used during the past three weeks of Israeli attacks, are scattered on the ground.*" The complete piece can be read at [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org).

## MEETINGS... MEETINGS... MEETINGS... MEETINGS... ETC.

**Mon., March 2, 10 am:** Newsletter Planning Committee meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Mon., March 2, 6 pm:** Nuclear Abolition Sisters meeting at the BridgeWorks Restaurant, 4th & New St., south Bethlehem.

**Tues., March 3, 10 am:** 2009 Bike/Walkathon Planning Committee meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Tues., March 3, 1 pm:** Fundraising Committee meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Sun., March 8, 7 pm:** LEPOCO Peace Singers rehearse at the home of Bob & Carmen Riggs, Bethlehem; and, on Fri., **March 13**, at 7 pm, at the home of Barbara Wurth.

**Mondays, March 9 & April 13, 7 pm:** LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center. All members and friends are welcome at this monthly business meeting where the organization's activities are reviewed.

**Thursdays, March 12 & April 9, 7 pm:** Lehigh Valley Chapter of Veterans for Peace meets at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Wed., March 18, 7 pm:** Americas Solidarity Group meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Tues., April 7, 8:30 am:** Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

*Please join in the meetings and work of these groups as you are able. If you want more information about any of these meetings or want to know the next meeting of the Association of Students Advocating Peace (ASAP), the Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition, the 2009 Peace Camp Planning Committee, or the Youth & Militarism Truth in Recruiting Committee, please call the Peace Center at 610-691-8730. For a regularly updated calendar of events and a schedule of meetings please see [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org).*



# LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

313 W. Fourth St., Bethlehem, PA 18015  
610-691-8730 [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net)  
Fax: 610-691-8904 [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org)

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Bethlehem, PA

## See Inside:

### Page 1

Annual Dinner

### Page 2

Youth Peacemaker

Training

Death Penalty

Conference Report

Program Ads

### Page 3

First Friday Films

Anniversary of the

War in Iraq

April Actions

### Page 4

Steering Committee

Election

### Page 5 & 6

Year in Review

### Page 7

Struggle Shared

### Page 8 & 9

Bits & Pieces

Meetings...



## Foreclose on War!

### *Invest in People!*

Redirect your tax dollars from war to peace.  
For more info. contact: National War Tax  
Resistance Coordinating Committee  
[www.nwtrcc.org](http://www.nwtrcc.org) 800-269-7464  
PO Box 150553, Brooklyn, NY 11215

## Weekly Peace Vigils

*Our wars continue. Can you join the much-needed witnessing for peace?*

**Bethlehem:** 4-5 pm, Second Thursdays

3<sup>rd</sup> & Wyandotte Sts., south Bethlehem

Contact: Vince Stravino 610-216-8103

**Allentown:** Noon-1 pm, Fridays

Federal Courthouse, 5<sup>th</sup> & Hamilton Sts.

Contact: Rev. John Clint Fowler 610-746-5013

4:30-5:30 pm, Fridays

PA National Guard Armory, 15<sup>th</sup> & Allen Sts.

**Easton:** 10-11 am, Saturdays

Centre Square

Contact: Reggie Regrut 908-859-5632

*Please support the faithful individuals who keep these vigils going!*

## LEPOCO Annual Dinner

Saturday, March 14, 2009

Episcopal Cathedral Church of the Nativity  
Bethlehem

**Speaker: Jennifer Harbury**

**"The United States & Torture:**

**From Guatemala to Abu Ghraib"**

(for details see page 1)

## March 19, 2009

6<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the War in Iraq

## Demonstrate for Peace

11 am to 12:30 pm

Outside The Federal Building  
5<sup>th</sup> & Hamilton Streets, Allentown

Sponsored by Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition

(see page 3 for more information)