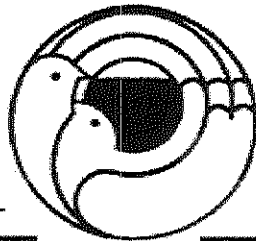


February
2021

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

"From Sojourner Truth to Stacey Abrams" with Our Special Guest, Roberta Meek: Singing, Educating, Leading for Justice & Peace

Singer and storyteller Roberta Meek will headline a virtual LEPOCO fundraising event, via zoom, on Saturday, March 13, at 7 pm. Roberta Meek will "song talk" (a term borrowed from Bernice Johnson Reagon) about the unfinished battle for voting rights from the depth of her life and teaching experience. Roberta has sung with local choruses (including ACCO), performed as a jazz singer, and at community events, including at LEPOCO programs, for decades. She has frequently been the music leader at Peace Camp and her singing is beloved by peace campers and volunteers alike. In addition to singing, she puts the songs in context, teaching everyone about Civil Rights and activism. Roberta's two children and two oldest grandchildren have been campers and volunteers at Peace Camp.

Born into an activist family in Philadelphia, Roberta Meek grew up knowing that freedom is not free and justice is not a guarantee. As a young girl, she had the unusual opportunity to meet Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., because her father, Bill Meek, Sr., was one of the key organizers of King's visits to the city. So it is not surprising that Roberta's life path weaved its way through the labor, civil rights and social justice battles in Allentown, for many decades. Her work has ranged from serving as a Chief Steward and later Executive Vice President of CWA Local 13500 to independent consulting work facilitating a myriad of programs that address racial justice, cultural pluralism and nonviolent problem solving. Most recently Roberta has taught and served as the Director of the Africana Studies Program at Muhlenberg College. All of her work has been shaped by the lessons taught by Dr. King, lessons her family embraced and instilled in all their children.

As an historian specializing in African American history, Roberta collaborated with Touchstone Theatre to produce and present Another River Flows: The African American Experience in the Lehigh Valley, in 2008. This project allowed her to blend her three passions: history, community building and music. She was Abuela Claudia in the Lin-Manuel Miranda musical, "In the Heights," at Muhlenberg College in 2016.

Registrations for this program, along with your suggested donation of \$25 per family, are now being accepted; call the LEPOCO office at 610-691-8730.

Once again, LEPOCO has had to make the difficult decision to cancel our annual dinner which would usually have occurred in March. We are excited to present this virtual program in the month during which we have gathered in-person for many years. The dinner has been a major fundraiser in past years; please consider a generous donation, as you are able, with your registration for this virtual event.

- Janet Ney

Witnessing in January

January 2021 was an eventful month. The Stop the Wars Committee (STWC) of LEPOCO tried to bring some local attention to two international issues that were not part of intense news coverage -- the going into effect of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), on January 22, and the Global Day of Action for Yemen, on January 25.

Two members of the STWC wrote op-eds that appeared in local newspapers. Mimi Lang wrote about the TPNW, "On January 22 Take a Stand Against Nuclear Weapons," published in The Express Times on January 14 and later in The Morning Call online. Janet Ney wrote about Yemen, "Why Yemen Is the World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis," published in The Morning Call on January 25, and later in The Express Times. (Both op-eds are probably available at their respective websites. If you are not able to read them there, contact LEPOCO for a copy.)

The Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a huge development for the world. As we have written many times in this newsletter, it was in July 2017 that the majority of the world's nations adopted the TPNW. Since September 2017, eighty-two countries have become signatories. Last October the number of countries that have also become state parties met the threshold of fifty, so the Treaty went into effect on January 22. The number of state parties is now 52 and other countries are moving toward this. While none of the nuclear weapons powers have joined, the TPNW will have significant impacts on international law and the state parties are prohibited from assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone to engage in the development, testing, procuring, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening to use nuclear

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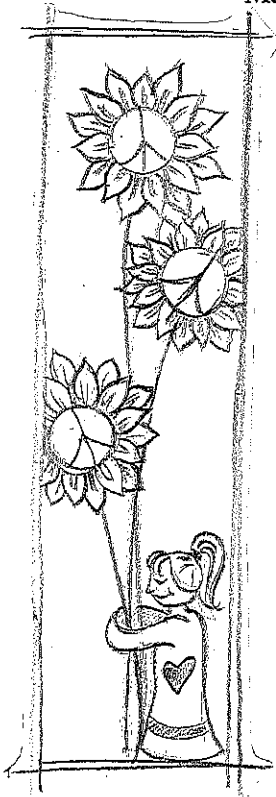
Young Peacemakers

The planners of Peace Camp have chosen to create a space where we will speak to various ways we all, at every age - but especially young people, can work toward becoming the best peacemakers we can be. We will write about peace within ourselves, peace with others and ways to support peacemaking efforts in the world.

We will explore ways to express ourselves concerning peacemaking, including music, activities, stories, and news about peace. We will talk about how each of us can become a peacemaker in our daily lives.

We intend this space to be a place where we share lessons of peace in unexpected and fun ways. Our first share is in the poem below, written by long-time Peace Camp volunteer/organizer/leader, Donna Hartmann.

- Marcie Lightwood & Bill Thomas



1.
*If I live in Peace,
 And you live in Peace,
 Then Love will increase,
 And wars will all cease —
 So give me a break!
 That's all it will take
 For us to create —
 A World of Peace.*

2.
*With Love in my heart
 That's how I can start.
 True Peace is an art,
 And I'll do my part —
 For it can be done!
 And even be fun
 To find we're all One
 in a World of Peace.*

- Donna Hartmann

Witnessing in January

(continued from page 1)

weapons, or allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed on their territory. The Treaty requires assistance to the victims of the use and testing of nuclear weapons and remediation of contaminated environments.

This Treaty offers new and real avenues to work against these weapons locally, nationally, and internationally. So while we celebrate the new Biden Administration's steps to get the START Treaty back on track, we can point to the TPNW as a goal for the future. (You can read many details about the TPNW at icanw.org, the website for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.)

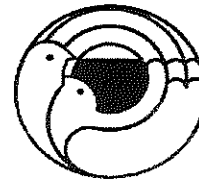
On January 22, LEPOCO held a virtual program marking the date for and celebrating the TPNW going into effect, with the reading of the Martin Luther King speech, "A Time to Break Silence," during the season of Dr. King birthday observances. It was a meaningful program for the 35 participants, 15 of them participating in the reading of the always inspiring speech, while others joined the discussion.

Four large yard signs saying "Nuclear Weapons Banned, January 22, 2021," are in locations around the valley and will be visible again once the snow melts. We will be looking for new locations for these signs in the coming weeks and months. Call LEPOCO to offer your visible location suggestion.

We hope to seek endorsements of the TPNW from local governing bodies. Supportive resolutions have been adopted by many cities in the U.S. You may have seen letters to the editors of local newspapers indicating support for the TPNW by the L.V. Friends Meeting.

On January 25, as people acted in many countries around the world, nine people participated in vigils to "Stop the War, Stop the Famine, U.S. Out of Yemen" - at noon in Allentown and at 4 pm, in Easton. We received sympathetic honks and waves. There have been encouraging signs in the days since January 25 as our new president paused some weapons sales to the countries attacking Yemen and has taken other actions that will lessen the crisis there. While we can thank the Biden Administration for these important steps we can urge them to permanently end the arms sales, address the famine, and make reparations to this poor country.

- Nancy Tate



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

Annual dues are:

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

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

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

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

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

Black Lives Matter Lehigh Valley

BLACK LIVES MATTER! Haven't they always? Absolutely. But to whom is really the question here. Do they matter to America? Do they matter to the police unions? Do they matter to our allies? I'm pretty sure depending on who you ask this question to, or the setting, place and time, your answer is sure to vary. We will make this super easy. Black Lives Matter (a complete sentence). Say the sentence out loud. Then take a pause. In this pause, enjoy the silence that comes after the phrase Black Lives Matter. This movement and the sentence itself usually is braced for a reply of All Lives Matter or a rebuttal. But right now, I want you to enjoy the beauty and simplicity (for lack of better words) of the complete sentence.

I founded Black Lives Matter Lehigh Valley this past summer in the wake of the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor deaths. But to be very clear, this fight started long before me, or those who came before me (and will still be fought by those who come after me). People in the Lehigh Valley were upset. They were stuck in quarantine, forced to witness a lot of the ugliness in this world through the news. Never have we seen a time like this where our allies were just as angry as us black and brown folks. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that it took for our white friends and allies to be upset about black and brown people being murdered for the nation to take notice. We have never been able to fight this fight alone which is why it took every person, no matter their race, ethnicity, gender, job or class status, etc., to raise a call to action.

What a summer it was! The Lehigh Valley saw a record setting number of protests and rallies being formed that spanned from June until the recent election. We marched down sidewalks. We marched down city streets. We marched to (but didn't attempt to overthrow) government buildings -- all in an attempt and effort to bring to local, state, and national attention our national emergency. You heard from grassroots leaders such as myself, Darian Colbert from Cohesion Network, Ashleigh Strange from Lehigh Valley Stands Up, Yamelisa Taveras from the Unidos Foundation, Rodney Be from Talk My Talk, and Arthur Benson along with Alex Colon and Kevin Jefferson.

You saw clergy leadership such as Pastor Greg Edwards and Pastor Benjamin T. Hailey bringing together spiritual leadership from all walks of life to atone for the ugly history between America and its black and brown citizens.

We endured long hours, never-ending insults and name calling, and fear mongering, all in an attempt to quiet our movement. We were told to get a job, get out of our parents basements, and to stop using phrases such as systemic racism and white supremacy. There were times where I stayed up all night, tears of frustration, simply because a lot of people didn't "get it." They didn't understand why this fight was a matter of life or death for a lot of us based on the color of our skin.

We were triumphant in a lot of ways though. We brought people together from all walks of life that normally wouldn't have interacted. We were instrumental in the Allentown Police Department releasing their Use of Force Policy for the first time in the department's history. We provided testimony to the Democratic Policy Committee along with the Black Caucus on Police Reform. We've inspired new and older generations to get back out there and fight as our work is not done yet.

We came a long way, and still have a very long way to go. The fight is not nearly over. The activism might even just be beginning for some of you. Whatever walk of life you come from, you must understand that we are all God's children. He created us equally, even though we live in a world where this is still being questioned.

There are many ways to fight this fight, that do not include violence and that are free from war. Activate that inner voice telling you to get out (or online) and make a difference in this world. Black Lives Matter (pause).

Thank you.

- Justan Parker Fields



Revive L.V.-CASK?

Have you been concerned about the string of federal executions during the last administration? Ten people were executed in 2020; six executions in 2021 before the inauguration included the death of a mentally ill woman. Prior to these executions the federal government had not carried out an execution in 17 years. Our new President, Joe Biden, has indicated that he wants to eliminate the death penalty as a weapon of federal prosecution.

Pennsylvania is one of only a handful of states that have not abolished the death penalty; Colorado became the 34th state to take the step to end the practice of killing people convicted of crimes. A recent Morning Call "Your View" column written by Julia Stribula, an intern with Pennsylvania for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, called for Pennsylvania to follow the lead of other states and the will of most people in the country by abolishing the death penalty.

In 2019, David Rose, longtime convener of the Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing (LV-CASK) wrote, in LEPOCO's newsletter, that CASK would suspend holding meetings and planning events for the foreseeable future. Is it time to end the suspension and reconvene CASK? Public opinion is on the side of ending state killing. If you are interested in working to abolish the death penalty in Pennsylvania, please email Janet Ney, jiney@rcn.com.

- Janet Ney

LEPOCO's First Tuesday Book Group 2021 Reading List

- February 2: **Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent**
6 pm *by Isabel Wilkerson* (Diane Dilendik)
- March 2: **Hate Inc.: Why Today's Media Makes Us Despise One Another**
6 pm *by Matt Taibbi* (Tom Pietrzak)
- April 6: **Dorothy Day: Dissenting Voice of the American Century**
6 pm *by John Loughery & Blythe Randolph* (Martricia McLaughlin)
- May 4: **Thinking Fast & Slow**
6 pm *by Daniel Kahneman* (Richard Schaffer)
- June 1: **Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, & Revolution in the Americas**
6 pm *by Roberto Lovato* (Nancy Tate)
- July 6: **Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth**
6 pm *by David C. Korten* (Gwen Pease)
- September 7: **The Invention of Nature: Alexander Von Humbolt's New World**
6 pm *by Andrea Wulf* (Bill Thomas)
- October 5: **Revolt Among the Sharecroppers**
6 pm *by Howard Kester* (Addison Bross)
- November 2: **Humankind: A Hopeful History**
6 pm *by Rutger Bregman* (Alwyn Eades)
- December 7: **Know My Name: A Memoir**
6 pm *by Chanel Miller* (Janice Kay)

You are invited to read one, some, all of these books
& join this lively discussion group.

Members of the group facilitate the discussion.

The group does not meet in January and August.

Since April 2020 the group has been meeting on zoom (mostly).

For more information & to learn the group meeting location or link, contact:

LEPOCO Peace Center, 1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem, PA 18018

610-691-8730 / lepoco@fast.net / www.lepoco.org

A Time of Transition

Pundits have compared the violent, chaotic events of January 6, 2021, at the Capitol to the 1933 burning of the German Reichstag or the 1938 Night of Broken Glass. Perhaps a more apt comparison is to the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch, when a far-right coalition, led by Hitler and the Nazis, attempted to overthrow the democratic Weimar Republic. The attempt failed and Hitler was briefly imprisoned. One difference is that, unlike Trump, Hitler kept his promise to march with the insurgents. Another is that the police in Munich met the attempt to overthrow the government with force.

Trump's presidency ended, as it began, with lies and chaos. Since losing the November election, he lied so often about a rigged election that millions believed him. He offered no evidence as he incited his followers to violence. His efforts to overturn the election, became so desperate and threatening that all ten living former secretaries of defense, including two of Trump's, warned against any attempt to involve the military.

Trump's amateurism and incompetence proved, finally, to be a blessing in disguise. The danger is that the next time an authoritarian demagogue with great popular appeal emerges, he will be both cunning and capable. The citizenry of this country, at least that part of it still committed to democracy and the rule of law, needs to be alert and wary.

We should not assume that "Trumpism" will end with his presidency. He holds enormous influence in the Republican Party. Despite important defections, many GOP office-holders are terrified of showing disloyalty to him. The basic problem runs deeper. Their ultimate fear is of their constituents. The country remains deeply polarized. Huge numbers of those who voted for Trump remain convinced he really won the election. The prospect of further violence lingers in the political atmosphere. The die-hards at the center of his personality cult have threatened those who accept the reality of Trump's defeat, even members of their own party.

The failure of Trump's coup d'état should be juxtaposed to other recent positive events. Defying expectations, Georgia elected two Democratic senators, and for the first time since the 2008 elections, Democrats will control the Congress and the White House. But the Biden administration will confront -- to use the hackneyed but accurate term -- an "unprecedented" series of challenges. Trump's influence on the Republican Party means that a large part of the electorate and many office-holders will regard Biden as illegitimate and do all they can to sabotage his administration. In four years, Trump has inflicted much damage on the country, and the Democrats will have their hands full attempting to repair institutions, restore standards of good governance, and reverse many malevolent policies.

At the same time, Biden must try to deal with the terrible Covid-19 pandemic, which fully revealed Trump's incompetence; cope with the threat of a major

economic recession that has accompanied the pandemic; eliminate systemic racism in the justice system; develop the "green new deal" policies that will offer good jobs and mitigate the climate collapse that threatens us all, to mention only the most pressing issues. Talk about a full plate!

The greatest mistake Biden could make is to offer only a return to the policies of Obama. The issue of peace shows the complexity of the situation. Trump campaigned as the ultimate "outsider" in foreign policy, urging friendship with Russia and an end to the unending Middle East wars of both Bush and Obama. Of course, Trump didn't deliver on his promises -- and his bad decisions laid the grounds for future conflicts -- but he didn't go to war. The incoming Biden administration will have only days to negotiate an extension of the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) on nuclear weapons with Russia, set to expire on February 5, 2021. It is the last treaty limiting nuclear arsenals. Moreover, if the Biden administration patches up old alliances in Europe and Asia but resumes the strategic and military policies of Bush and Obama in the Middle East, the result may be another catastrophe along the lines of those in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, etc.

To no small extent, the past failures of the Democrats, in both economic and foreign policy, led many desperate people to cast their lot with Trump and the Republicans. The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci wrote, "The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters." In our world of polarization and transition, there seem to be plenty of monsters -- but, when carefully examined, also plenty of opportunities to change course in a more peaceful, just and sustainable direction.

- Mick Baylor

Repairing the Breaches

... This moment in our nation is not about left, right, or centrist... Even what we saw happen at the Capitol two weeks ago is the result of a long history -- a politics of division that was cynically named "positive polarization" by those who thought they could use it for their own political advantage. This strategy of feeding and seeding intentional racial and class divisions into the body politics spilled over into the inevitable violence that ideas of supremacy always produce.

If we want to come out of this jam and move forward together, we cannot accept the racial disparities, violence, and breaches that impact Black, brown, Native and Asian Americans while offering collateral damage to our poor white brothers and sisters and ultimately our entire democracy.

We can't accept the poverty and low wealth of 140 million Americans before COVID-19 and many more millions since. We must address the five interlocking injustices of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation/denial of health care, the war economy, and the false moral narrative of religious nationalism. These are breaches that must be addressed...

- The Rev. William J. Barber II speaking at the inaugural prayer service at the Washington National Cathedral on January 21.

N.J. Liquefied Natural Gas Export Terminal Approved by DRBC —

In 2019 The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) approved the construction of a deep water pier at the abandoned Dupont Repauno Works on the Delaware River Estuary near Gibbstown, New Jersey. On June 12, 2019, when the development plan was approved, the developer, Delaware River Partners, LLC, the DRBC, and the State of New Jersey failed to disclose that they intended to ship liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the second and larger pier they wished to build. This approval followed a 2017 approval of the first and smaller pier at the site. At the time of the 2019 approval the Delaware Riverkeeper Network filed suit and had the DRBC decision put on hold pending review of the newly revealed secret.

The review ended on December 9, 2020, when the DRBC gave its final approval for the construction of the second pier that is designed to load and ship liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the shale fields of Northern and Western Pennsylvania to the world. The DRBC's decision to allow the pier to be built came after a narrowly focused review on the impacts of dredging and wharf construction on the Delaware Estuary. "The Commission does not review or approve the cargo that moves through a marine terminal," the DRBC staff said in a statement after the 2019 vote.

DRBC's approval to construct the liquefied natural gas shipping facility came despite a petition signed by nearly 100,000 nearby residents stating their opposition to the plan. Numerous elected officials and more than 10 municipal governments voiced their disapproval to no avail. Among the reasons for their opposition are the release of toxic chemicals during dredging and construction, transportation of highly flammable LNG by truck and train through densely populated areas, and the eventual impact on climate of burning more and more natural gas. Despite the fact that the LNG will be shipped from Wyalusing, Pennsylvania, over either a 255-mile rail route or a 174-mile highway route, both almost entirely in Pennsylvania, the PA representative on the DRBC seconded the motion that brought the question to a vote, and then he voted to approve it. Our governor and his administration remain wedded to the natural gas industry's pollution and industrialization of Penn's Woods.

In the days before December 9, 2020, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) filed a request to the DRBC to delay the vote, claiming that the entire project was in violation of agreements made to limit the discharge, into the Delaware River, of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that remain on the site. Since the NRDC request failed to postpone the vote and complete a review of the PCB discharges, the NRDC will likely file an appeal. In the final tally the vote was 4-0-1 to approve the construction of a LNG terminal. The one abstention was the New York State representative,

Kenneth Kosinski. Kosinski said that the dock construction's impacts on water quality and climate change required more study. We should join the National Resources Defense Council, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, and Mr. Kosinski in calling for a complete review and eventual denial of the Delaware River Basin Commission's approval of this ill-conceived project.

- James Orben

A Small Environmental Roundup —

New Zealand declared a climate emergency on December 2nd, receiving words of praise and caution from environmentalists. In the latter category one said, "Less of the declarations and pledges, more of the measurable action." (commondreams.org, 12/2/20)

Grant Township, Pennsylvania (pop. 700) is being sued again. Pennsylvania General Energy Company (PGE) wants to put a fracking waste injection well in their community. Grant Township enacted a Rights of Nature law in 2015. In March 2020 the PA Department of Environmental Protection cited the law as they rescinded PGE's waste injection permit from the last suit. Contact the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund in Mercersburg, PA, for more information.

A number of environmental groups joined to issue "A Presidential Plastics Action Plan" in December, addressed to the new Biden-Harris Administration. The first of their eight priority plastics actions: "Use the purchasing power of the federal government to eliminate single-use plastic items and replace them with reusable products." You can read the report published by the Natural Resources Defense Council at nrdc.org.

There are many reports reminding us of our climate crisis. An AP story of 12/26/20, "Climate Calamities Were Nonstop" (The Morning Call), included a note that an "international database in Belgium calculated that from 1980 to 1999, the world had 4,212 disasters affecting 3.25 billion people and costing \$1.63 trillion, adjusted for inflation. From 2000 to 2019, those figures jumped to 7,348 disasters, 4.03 billion people affected and \$2.97 trillion in damage."

Regional environmental leaders are calling "good news" a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission action on January 19, postponing consideration of an amended proposal on the PennEast Pipeline. The Pipeline, if built, would cut through forests and streams in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. ("Feds Table Amended Plan for Pipeline," 1/20/21, The Express Times)

On January 13, the Pennsylvania DEP held a virtual forum on permits that if granted would give approval for the PennEast to go forward with its pipeline project. The majority of the 70 speakers were opposed to the project for a range of environmental concerns from climate disruption to loss of parks, plants and wildlife. LEPOCO endorsed a Clean Air Council letter to Pennsylvania's governor and the DEP opposing the permits.

Steering Committee Nominations & Ballot

Here are the people nominated to serve on LEPOCO's Steering Committee for the 2021-2023 term.

Margot Hillman of Bethlehem, has been involved with LEPOCO since she moved to the Lehigh Valley in 1982. She has worn many hats in the organization – printer, treasurer, representative to the Mobilization for Survival – and has been a dedicated leader at Peace Camp since the beginning. She previously served multiple terms on the Steering Committee. She retired from her job in Information Technology near the end of 2017. Margot is married to Steve Kraft; they have an adult son, Ben Kraft, who was a Peace Camper and Helper.

Julius Iwantsch of Bethlehem, has been a LEPOCO member since the mid-1970s. He works as a design drafts-person, working mainly with municipal clients. His interests include questioning U.S. military involvement around the world, 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 a decade.

Mary Lang of Emmaus, joined LEPOCO and the Peace Singers just before the 2016 election, as she was looking for a way to use her musical gifts to make the world a better place. Mary is a board certified music therapist who works with mental health and developmentally disabled populations. Her musical talents include singing, playing guitar, piano, violin/fiddle, viola, and percussion, and she holds music degrees from Moravian College and Immaculata University. She is a millennial, and is hoping to bring with her ideas that will attract a more diverse membership to the organization and keep it operating for decades to come.

Monica McAgnon of Easton, is a member of the Stop the Wars Committee, formerly Nuclear Abolition Sisters. She earned her living for 18 years teaching critical reading to community college students. Most recently, she taught developmental literacy for K-8th grade students in the after-school program at Easton Area Community Center.

Dan Miller of Coopersburg, has been a member of LEPOCO for over 20 years. Dan and his family have been mainstays of Peace Camp since the 1990s – Dan and

Ronnie Arena (his wife) as leaders and helpers, and their three young adult daughters were first campers and now are also leaders and helpers. In 1977, Dan co-founded the Perkiomen Valley Academy, a private day treatment program servicing Montgomery County young people and their families. He worked at this alternative school for disadvantaged and emotionally disturbed teenagers for 35 years. Dan is a beekeeper and has coached youth sports for over 20 years. (Dan will serve as a stand-by until we get through the pandemic. He cannot do zoom meetings.)

Tom Pietrzak is originally from the Lehigh Valley and a graduate of Bethlehem Catholic H.S. After completing his college degree at the University of Scranton, he did a year of service work with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, then lived in Boston for 12 years, where he developed an interest in urban education and eventually went on to work as a licensed therapist in the city's public schools. Upon returning to the Lehigh Valley in 2014, Tom joined the LEPOCO Book Group and became part of the Peace Pilgrimage's Planning Committee. He currently lives in Bethlehem and works for a small custom cabinetry business in Fountain Hill.

Susie Ravitz of Easton was a founding member of LEPOCO and has been a faithful member of the Steering Committee for many terms. She is a mainstay of the Stop the Wars Committee (previously Nuclear Abolition Sisters). Her peace work has included participation in an Interfaith Peace Builders delegation to Israel/Palestine, as well as a delegation to Puerto Rico. She was active in working to get the Navy to stop bombing Vieques. Retired from her work at Valley Youth House and Art's Toy Manufacturing Company, she travels a lot to visit her children and grandchildren from California to Israel. Currently, in addition to LEPOCO, she works with the Hunger Coalition in Easton.

Diane Dilendik, Sharlee DiMenichi, Nancy Johnston, Janet Ney, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), and Jeff Vitelli, will each continue serving their two-year Steering Committee term that began in 2020.

Many thanks to Mick & Carol Baylor and to Christine Loch for their years on the Steering Committee. They will not be seeking another term.

Election Ballot

At-Large Steering Committee Members (vote for six people/positions):

Margot Hillman ____
(2-year term)

Mary Lang ____
(2-year term)

Monica McAgnon ____
(2-year term)

Co-Treasurer (vote for one):

Julius Iwantsch ____
(2-year term)

Dan Miller ____
(2-year term)

Tom Pietrzak ____
(2-year term)

Susie Ravitz ____
(2-year term)

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

This ballot must be cast by mail before March 13, 2021, at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem, PA 18018, since there will be no in-person Annual Dinner this year.

G. Clarke Chapman: ¡Presente!

As we were finishing this newsletter we received word that one of LEPOCO's dearest and most faithful members, Clarke Chapman, had died on February 11. Clarke served for several years as chair of LEPOCO starting in 1975. As we searched newsletters for details on his many contributions to this organization we found a letter by Clarke published in the February 1975 issue, introducing himself to LEPOCO members. Here are some excerpts from the letter that so well represent the thoughtful and purposeful life that Clarke led.

"I'm Clarke Chapman, one who teaches (and hopes to continue to learn) in the field of religion at Moravian College. So it's not surprising that I tend to view militarism and the dilemmas of peacemaking as at heart a religious crisis, a matter of resisting idolatries and opening space for love to grow. I see our efforts as an attempt to live in a humane way in the time of the Fall, and in struggle against principalities and powers, as we await a future New Age. Of course, the members of LEPOCO represent a great many personal viewpoints. The grand thing is that we have together a coalition, drawing upon all humankind of goodwill. Together we can do far more than separately, in working toward our common goal: peace, on all levels, international, national, local and personal..."

He listed resolutions for people to consider. *"Resolve to study carefully the problems threatening peace... How great it would be if certain members made themselves knowledgeable in various areas and could assist the rest of us on specific topics.*

"Resolve to write at least one letter a month to someone with public responsibility..."

"Resolve to live a simpler lifestyle... We have yet to realize how fully we all have been victimized by an aggressively consumption-oriented society that only knows how to survive by constant expansion and encroachment. Militarism is simply the natural and most spectacular result of this momentum. We must learn to say, 'No.'"

"Resolve to work for peace, with a combination of courage, persistence and humility..."

Clarke always worked to assure that peace work was supported financially. He was a founding member of the Lehigh Valley War Tax Resistance Life Fund in the early 1970s and was a war tax resister for many years. Also in the early 1970s he was part of the local chapter of Clergy & Laity Concerned about Vietnam. He was a founding force in the Interfaith Peace Center, based in Bethlehem in the 1980s.

During his tenure at Moravian College he taught and led many peace studies classes and efforts including a short course on, "The Arms Race & Disarmament" in the early 1980s. In 1986 the excellent book by Clarke, "Facing the Nuclear Heresy: A Call to Reformation," was published.

The formal obituary for Clarke says that Clarke and Ardis were married for 64 years. He is also sur-
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vived by his three daughters, Martha, Gretchen, and Susannah, and their families. It says Clarke was enthusiastic about gardening, classical music, puns, and good wine and coffee.

We are deeply grateful for all of Clarke's efforts for peace in this world and for his regular support and work for LEPOCO over many decades.

- Nancy Tate & Tom Stinnett

Will Biden Honor the Nonviolent Heroes Surrounding Him in the Oval Office? —

Amid the flurry of tidbits that cascaded across the Internet in the hours after Joe Biden's inauguration was this short post from John King at CNN: "President Joe Biden already began updating the decor that will surround him in the Oval Office. A bust of Mexican-American farm labor leader César Chávez is now behind the Resolute desk. Busts of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. have also been added to the office."

Brief as it was, this tweet-length newflash was intriguing and, perhaps, portentous. What does it mean to put front and center, at the seat of U.S. power, three of the great, paradigmatic figures of social change? Was this a grateful nod to the allies who swung their critical support behind him? Was it a play for a new kind of gravitas, maybe making a not-so-subtle comment on the previous occupant? Or was it something more — a mysterious, perhaps unconscious, acknowledgment that the power which these giants of our history deployed to change this society is qualitatively different from the standard power of violence and injustice?

Chávez, Parks and King worked tirelessly for justice. After four years of an administration that systematically excluded, diminished and dehumanized many people and communities, it is invigorating to see these towering American champions of racial and economic justice given their due in this particular way, at this particular time.

But maybe it means even more.

It was refreshing to hear Biden at least hint that the way forward to grappling with our monumental challenges is not through violence.

These three figures struggled for justice, but they did so by mobilizing the principles and power of creative nonviolence. Maybe, just maybe, these busts found their way into the Oval Office because they symbolize a growing, felt need at this crucial moment for a shift from our nation's deeply-ingrained script of violence to a new operating system — the nonviolent life that Chávez, Parks and King envisioned for this society.

The nonviolence this troika bet their lives on had nothing to do with the stereotypes endlessly heaped upon it. Their experience taught them that nonviolence is active, courageous, persistent — and effective. Each of these activists is remembered because their nonviolent wager succeeded. They changed the course of our nation without hatred, fear or violence.

Isn't this what is needed today?...

You can read the complete article by Ken Butigan, published by Campaign Nonviolence on January 21, at wagingnonviolence.org.

The Struggle Shared

Today, humanity, as never before, is split into two apparently irreconcilable halves. The psychological rule says that when an inner situation is not made conscious it happens outside as fate. That is to say, when an individual remains undivided, and does not become conscious of his inner opposite, the world must perform act out the conflict, and be torn into opposing halves."

- A note for our times from Carl Jung

POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN: The original Poor People's Campaign was a vision of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that he proposed to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in November 1967. After King was assassinated in April 1968, SCLC, under the leadership of the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, decided to go forward with the plan. On Mother's Day, May 12, 1968, the first wave of demonstrators, a delegation of 1000 women led by Coretta Scott King, descended on Washington, DC. The following day, a settlement of tents and temporary shacks, blossomed on the National Mall. Over the next month residents of "Resurrection City" made daily visits to various federal agencies to protest and make demands for economic justice.

In early 2018, 50 years after that dramatic nonviolent occupation of the nation's capital, the Poor People's Campaign was reincarnated. Later that year several people from the Lehigh Valley participated in six weeks of actions in Harrisburg as similar actions were taking place at other state capitals. LEPOCO had a well-attended Potluck & Politics discussion in February 2020 with Rev. Beth Reed, a faith leader for the Pennsylvania Poor People's Campaign. Rev. William Barber, the co-chair of the Campaign, has been a frequent visitor to news programs, especially in the context of discussions of racial and economic justice. While many of the events planned for 2020 went to virtual formats, the Poor People's Campaign has broken organizing ground around the country.

In December 2020, the Poor People's Campaign issued their "14 Policy Priorities to Heal the Nation: A Moral & Economic Agenda for the

First 100 Days" of the Biden-Harris administration. The policy proposals include: 1) Enact comprehensive and just COVID-19 relief; 2) Guarantee quality health care for all; 3) Raise the minimum wage to \$15/hour; 4) Update the measures of poverty; 5) Guarantee quality housing for all; 6) Enact a federal jobs program to build investments, infrastructure, public institutions, climate resilience, energy efficiency and socially beneficial industries and jobs in poor and low-income communities; 7) Protect and expand voting rights and civil rights; 8) Guarantee safe, quality and equitable public education; 9) Enact comprehensive and just immigration reform; 10) Ensure rights of indigenous peoples; 11) Enact fair taxes and targeted tax credits; 12) Use the power of executive orders; 13) Redirect the bloated Pentagon budget towards these priorities; 14) Work with the Poor People's Campaign to establish a Presidential Council to advocate for this bold agenda. You can learn more at www.poorpeoplescampaign.org.

ENDING GERRYMANDERING IN PENNSYLVANIA: The unequal distribution of power in the Pennsylvania Legislature is evidence of a ruefully broken system, largely due to years of gerrymandering by majority party politicians. This practice of carving up legislative districts by the majority party, leaves minority party voters, particularly low income neighborhoods, and communities of color, systematically disenfranchised. With the completion of the 2020 census, the importance of redistricting current districts has become urgently apparent.

Fair Districts PA, working with supportive legislators, has proposed

redistricting reforms that would end gerrymandering, gaining support from over 100,000 citizens of our state, 24 counties, over 380 municipalities, dozens of organizations, and dozens of local newspapers.

Now the Pennsylvania legislature's majority wants to allow judicial gerrymandering. A proposed constitutional amendment, (HB-38) would empower our state legislature to create judicial districts for the state's higher courts. Candidates for the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and other appeals courts would be elected by voters in newly created districts rather than running statewide. No other state gives legislators this kind of power.

Fair Districts PA is urging action now to try to stop this expansion of gerrymandering in our state. We are asked to contact our representatives in the Pennsylvania House and Senate. You can learn more at www.fairdistrictspa.com.

CELEBRATE JUNETEENTH: In response to the intense public clamor for racial justice, especially following the death of George Floyd, Lehigh County has joined a growing number of governmental bodies acknowledging that Black Lives do Matter.

In their meeting on December 9th, the Lehigh County Commissioners voted 5-3 to amend the county Personnel and Procedures Manual to include Juneteenth as a paid holiday for county employees. Although Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, slaves in Galveston Texas didn't hear about it until June 19, 1865. The anniversary has become a date to celebrate the end of slavery. Commissioner Zakiya Small said, "This holiday serves as a huge symbol, and it's extremely important."

Pennsylvania's bill establishing the holiday -- signed into law in June 2019 -- does not provide for a paid holiday. Gov. Tom Wolf used his executive powers to give 73,400 state employees "a special paid holiday" this past June 19.

- Jeff Vitelli



Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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Monthly Peace Vigil

(Second Thursdays)

March 11 & April 8

4-5 pm

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

3rd & Wyandotte Sts., Bethlehem

LEPOCO, 610-691-8730, for more info.

Meetings...Meetings...Meetings...Meetings

LEPOCO Monthly Action Meetings: (2nd Mondays), March 8 & April 12, 7 pm, (on zoom), all members & friends are welcome at monthly business meeting to discuss and plan the organization's activities.

Annual Dinner Planning Committee: (this year planning the March 13 zoom program), Thurs., March 18, 3 pm, by zoom.

First Tuesday LEPOCO Book Group: March 2 & April 6, 6 pm, on zoom, see page 4 for 2021 reading list.

Other committees meeting periodically during the pandemic: Peace Camp Planning Committee, Stop the Wars Committee, Newsletter Planning Group.
(For zoom instructions/links contact LEPOCO 610-691-8730.)

"From Sojourner Truth to Stacey Abrams: The Unfinished Battle for Voting Rights"

A "Song Talk" by Our Special Guest: **Roberta Meek**

Saturday, March 13, 7 pm

A fundraiser for LEPOCO on zoom.

(See page 1 for more information.)