

April-May
2022

Vol. 57 No. 2



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

Stephen Miles Returns to Speak for LEPOCO Gathering

It's not a dinner; it's a gathering (that means no food); it's not in March, it's in April (April 23, 2022). It will be in a church (Rosemont Lutheran in Bethlehem) and it will be a typical LEPOCO event, both festive and solemn. We will welcome Stephen Miles, the President of Win Without War, for a return engagement. His topic will be "War & Peace: The Biden Era & Beyond."

As President, Stephen Miles focuses on Win Without War's thought leadership and works to support and broaden the larger progressive foreign policy ecosystem. In more than a decade with Win Without War, Stephen has held multiple roles, including serving as Executive Director from 2016-2021. He is a veteran of campaign politics with a strong background in grassroots advocacy, having previously worked for the global campaigning organization Avaaz, as the Executive Director of the American Hellenic Council, and on multiple federal, state, and local electoral campaigns. Stephen holds a Masters in International Relations from the London School of Economics and a BA from Tulane University, with academic expertise in humanitarian interventions and Middle Eastern politics.

Between 6:00 pm and 6:45 pm, that night, you will have an opportunity to visit the LEPOCO Peace Center in its new location in the Rosemont Lutheran Church complex, 1705 West Broad Street, Bethlehem. At 7:00 pm, the program will begin in the sanctuary of the church. Entry to the Peace Center is at the back of the church (look for the sign); entry to the sanctuary is through a door on Broad Street. An accessible door with a ramp is also available, but we encourage use of the Broad Street entrance.

The LEPOCO Peace Singers will bring us their special music - singing together for the first time since the covid shut-down in March 2020. At the end of the evening, you will have an opportunity to sing with them in a familiar call for peace.

We will have our always exciting drawing for the Art Raffle featuring some of our favorite artists as well as at least one new participant. (Use the enclosed Art Raffle sheet to purchase chances in advance.) The evening will also feature the "coming out" of a new LEPOCO button, a new LEPOCO t-shirt (both designed by Amanda Zaniesienko), and the introduction of a new organizational brochure.

The election of members of the LEPOCO Steering Committee will be completed. (See the ballot on page 5 of this newsletter.)

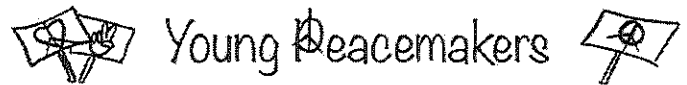
This is one of LEPOCO's important fundraisers. The suggested donation is \$25 - regular adult; \$75 - special supporter; \$10 - limited income. We are grateful to those of you who have already sent your reservation and donation.

Parking is available on the street (some off-the-street parking will be available to event volunteers leaving more street spaces for other attendees).

Our COVID guidelines for the event: We ask all attendees to present proof of vaccinations and to wear a mask.

Use the enclosed flyer to make your reservation or call the LEPOCO office, 610-691-8730, to make a reservation, request more Art Raffle tickets, or if you have questions.

- Janet Ney



Peace Camp 2022!!!

We're Baaaaaack!!!!!!

We are back after two years of Peace Camp at Home! (Fun! But not the same!) Back to First Presbyterian Church in Allentown! Back to the last full week of July - the 25th through the 29th!

We are back to games - drip drip drop, hungry fish, parachute!! Back to our beloved songs - "Gonna Lay Down My Sword & Shield," "If You think You're Too Small to Make a Difference," "Teaching Peace" - and other favorites! Back to Peace Camp crafts - painting, puppets, weaving, rock buddies, and more! Back to fun and meaningful conversations! Back to stories about amazing people doing amazing things for peace and justice! Back to FRIENDS, old and new!!!!

If you are as excited as we are about getting BACK to Peace Camp, see the flyer with the registration form for campers enclosed with this mailing. You can call the LEPOCO office, 610-691-8730, for more information, to request more registration flyers, and to request a volunteer interest form.

- Amanda Zaniesienko

Hunger Crisis in Afghanistan

Sometimes the world's humanitarian needs seem endless. The current emphasis on the Ukrainian refugees threatens to eclipse the needs of people in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Palestine -- and perhaps most urgently, Afghanistan. As Jeff Vitelli noted in last month's LEPOCO Newsletter, in August 2021, when the U.S. military withdrew and the Taliban returned to power, the U.S. and its allies froze Afghan foreign assets and imposed a regimen of sanctions. During the twenty years of U.S. war and occupation, 70% of the Afghan government's budget became dependent on foreign aid, which ended.

Most recently, the Taliban's decision to forbid education for older girls resulted in the World Bank cancelling funding for its projects, and western nations postponing diplomatic recognition of the Taliban government. The result of all these policy decisions is an economic collapse that threatens mass starvation. As Afghanistan descends into acute hunger, the UN estimates that between now and this time next year 23 million people will experience food insecurity at "crisis" or "emergency" levels. UNICEF has warned that half of Afghanistan's children under five will need treatment for severe malnutrition. At least one million of these children are at risk of dying.

The UN recently held a donor conference for the Afghani people that fell far short of its \$4.4 billion target for immediate aid. Russia's war in Ukraine has exacerbated the food shortage in Afghanistan by pushing up prices and causing supply chain issues.

The most important thing LEPOCO members can do to aid the people of Afghanistan is to contact the Biden administration and our elected representatives: urge them to end the sanctions system and unfreeze Afghan assets.

- Mick Baylor

Get the United States Out of Yemen

Even as we, along with most of the world, are sickened by the images of atrocities in Ukraine caused by Russia's invasion, we need to remember that the United States continues to support Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in their interference in a civil war in Yemen. Entering the eighth year of this conflict, the death toll is rising. "The bombing and blockade of Yemen have contributed to the largest humanitarian atrocity on Earth," according to Action Corps.

To date, warfare and the accompanying privations including the malnutrition of children have resulted in the deaths of 337,000 people. A naval and air blockade is preventing access to necessities such as food and fuel.

The United States has been supplying arms, equipment, airplanes, equipment maintenance personnel, and technical staff to the war since the invasion began.

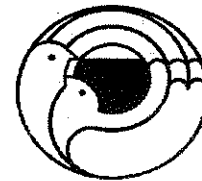
The United States Congress has voted to end the U.S. involvement in Yemen, but they need to push harder on the administration to accomplish the withdrawal of support. Specifically, House Representatives Pramila Jayapal and Peter DeFazio have proposed a War Powers Resolution to unilaterally end U.S. involvement in Yemen. Support for the Resolution should be directed to members of Congress.

- Janet Ney

Check out the LEPOCO website at www.lepoco.org for a Calendar of Events, Newsletter Archive, & More.

Sign up for LEPOCO e-mail weekly updates by calling 610-691-8730, or by writing to lepoco@fast.net.

Follow LEPOCO on Facebook and Twitter. Please "like" and "share," often.



Newsletter of LEPOCO
Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern
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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: Diane Dilendik, Sharlee DiMenichi, Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Nancy Johnston, Mary Lang, Monica McAgbon, Janet Ney, Tom Pietrzak, Susie Ravitz, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), Jeff Vitelli, and Amanda Zaniesienko (ex-officio).

Statement Proposed at
Ad Hoc LEPOCO Meeting
about the War in Ukraine on March 6, 2022,
& Adopted at the LEPOCO Monthly Action
on March 14, 2022

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia must be stopped. The Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern (LEPOCO) envisions a world free from war, violence, and injustice. To that end, we oppose all wars.

We are alarmed about the war in Ukraine – the brazenness of the Russian invasion, the mounting killings of civilians of all ages, the destruction of homes, schools, human infrastructure, the threats about nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

Negotiations leading to a ceasefire must be the priority of the United Nations, our government, and all who oppose the assault on Ukraine.

We urge the federal government to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine, those who are continuing to live in their homeland and those who have been forced to flee the horrors of war.

LEPOCO is committed to nonviolent action; we support the people of Russia who brave severe punishment by their public protest of their government's actions.



A Report from One of the Best Webinars About the War

The Coalition for Peace Action, Princeton, NJ, held a webinar entitled "Ukraine, Russia, NATO, U.S., and the Nuclear Threat" on Sunday, March 27, with physicists and peace activists Stewart Prager and Zia Mian of the Program on Science and Global Security, at Princeton University.

Zia Mian pointed out that the basic script for the nine nuclear powers remains unchanged since the nuclear age began. Leaders of all nuclear countries have spoken this script at one time or another: "If (name of country) does not surrender, there will be a rain of ruin from the air such as the world has never known..."

Following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, Albert Einstein and the Emergency

Committee of Atomic Scientists started the anti-nuclear weapons movement in 1946. Opposition to nuclear weapons has grown, so that today, any nation that threatens to use nuclear weapons incurs powerful global resistance and condemnation. Six treaties around the world established regions called nuclear-free zones; thus, the entire southern hemisphere has no nuclear weapons. Zia Mian cited his faith in nonviolence itself, and held up Jonathan Schell's 2003 book, "The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People."

Zia Mian urged us to build better structures for international cooperation. He said we must strengthen the United Nations and the International Criminal Court. A webinar attendee asked the question: "If NATO would rid itself of nuclear weapons, would Russia pull out of Ukraine?" Prager pointed out that none of the NATO countries have supported the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Moreover, Mian answered that NATO has no nuclear weapons; the nuclear weapons based in European countries are built in the U.S., managed by the U.S. military, and the decision to use them will be by the U.S. There used to be thousands more! Enough nuclear weapons remain that in 2010, NATO declared itself a nuclear-armed alliance. NATO countries have bilateral agreements with the U.S. to host nuclear weapons and could one day ask that those nuclear weapons be removed. Then Central Europe could be declared a nuclear weapons free zone.

According to Zia Mian the problem is war and military alliances buttressed by nuclear weapons. The nuclear lobbyists and war profiteers have gained momentum since the war in Ukraine started. The U.S. was already on the road to a build-up in our nuclear weapons program. The Biden Administration has continued that build-up adding billions of dollars to the U.S. budget for nuclear weapons upgrades of all kinds. This U.S. build-up is influencing nuclear proliferation and countries around the world have been increasing their military budgets. That increase has only been accelerated by the war in Ukraine.

Zia Mian lamented how a nuclear weapons build-up means another generation of people recruited to train as nuclear scientists and weapons designers, engineers, and military agents and workers for war, including cyber warfare.

Violence and force are the problem. War is a crime. We must be solid in our commitment to educate and mobilize the public for peace and elect leaders who represent us.

- Monica McAgon, Susie Ravitz, Jeff Vitelli

Editor's Note: You can find a link to the YouTube Video of the March 27th "Ukraine, Russia, NATO, U.S., and the Nuclear Threat," webinar with Zia Mian and Stewart Prager on the Recent Events page of the Princeton Coalition for Peace Action website (www.peacecoalition.org).

LEPOCO Financial Report 2021

Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Fund Balance	2021
Membership Dues, Fund Appeals, Pledges	\$39,510.87
Boutique & SERRV Sales (net)	\$(478.52)
Roberta Meek Program – March 2021 (net)	\$3,494.70
Copier Donations	\$14.15
Bike-Walkathon (net)	\$3,691.24
Dividends and Interest (PPL, Domini Funds, 1 st Comm.)	\$10,537.92
Miscellaneous	\$516.67
Easton Market leafletting	\$30.00
Network for Good and Carol Baylor bags	\$179.02
Total Revenue	\$57,496.01
Contributions to Others (Boys & Girls Club of Easton)	\$50.00
Salaries, Taxes & Benefits to Employees	\$31,600.26
Rent & Telephone	\$9,229.87
Insurance (Fire, Liability & Worker's Comp)	\$1,523.00
Internet Service Provider	\$600.00
Other Computer Fees (Domain Fees, E-Mail, Virus, Zoom)	\$374.25
PayPal Fees	\$190.76
Printing and Postage (Newsletter, Bulk Mail Fee, etc.)	\$1,900.77
Fund Appeals	\$239.02
Other Program & Events (ICAN Items & Open House)	\$369.24
Supplies (Office, Copier, Printer, Paper)	\$1,440.76
Repairs (Risograph, Copier-Maint. Agreements)	\$1024.64
Misc. Office Expenses (snow removal)	\$15.00
Miscellaneous (Working Groups, etc.)	\$70.48
Purchase of Risograph (remainder)	\$1,572.34
Miscellaneous Fairs & Festivals	\$45.00
Descendental Registration of Charitable Organizations	\$70.00
Hiroshima-Nagasaki Days	\$112.08
Martin Luther King Program	\$68.90
Pride Festival	\$75.00
Tax Day	\$82.68
Sell of Domini Shares	\$8,000.00
Total Expenses	\$58,653.79
Fund Balances at the Beginning of the Year	\$85,029.85
Excess or (Loss) for Year	\$(1,157.88)
Change in Investment Value	\$16,276.17
Fund Balance at the End of the Year	\$100,148.14

2021 Fund Balances	Beginning of Year	End of Year
Cash, Savings and Investments	\$97,870.82	\$112,121.76
Liabilities	\$5,781.23	\$5,863.88
Grupo de Apoyo funds held by LEPOCO	\$7,059.74	\$6,109.74
Net Assets and Fund Balances	\$85,029.85	\$100,148.14

LEPOCO Steering Committee Update, Nominations & Ballot

LEPOCO's Steering Committee plans and provides leadership for the monthly Action Meetings, and thereby for the organization. Action Meetings are held the second Monday of the month and are open to all members and friends. The Committee makes decisions between monthly meetings and handles finances, personnel, and other organizational issues. We are very grateful to these LEPOCO members who convene once a month to "strategize how to nonviolently build a sane and just world." The Steering Committee has been carrying a heavy load as LEPOCO adjusted to a new office, as Covid concerns have had meetings bouncing from zoom to in-person, and most recently, as we face the issue of how can we help stop the war in Ukraine.

The election for the Steering Committee will be completed at the Annual Gathering on April 23rd.

Margot Hillman, Mary Lang, Monica McAghon, Tom Pietrzak, Susie Ravitz, and Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer) will continue serving their two-year Steering Committee terms that began in 2021.

A special thank you goes to Diane Dilendik, Nancy Johnston, and Dan Miller who will not be seeking another term on the Steering Committee. Diane was especially helpful with LEPOCO's transition to a new office. Nancy J. has been instrumental in completing a draft for an updated LEPOCO brochure. Dan has provided leadership and assistance in many roles in LEPOCO. They will all three continue to be active in various capacities.

Finally, because our at-large Steering Committee members can number as low as six and as high as ten, we will be two shy of a full complement with this election. If you would be interested in serving on the Steering Committee or if you know someone that would be a promising new member for the committee, please talk to one of the Steering Committee members or contact the LEPOCO office. And don't forget to support those who take on this responsibility by casting your ballot.

Here are the people nominated to serve on LEPOCO's Steering Committee for the 2022-2024 term.

Sharlee DiMenichi of Allentown, has been active in LEPOCO since the age of 14. She convened the Disarmament Working Group and coordinated the 1992

Hiroshima/Nagasaki observance. She is a Quaker. At graduation she was awarded the Baker Peace Prize by Juniata College. She currently works as an instructional assistant and is a writer - her current book is on Holocaust rescuers. She previously published a book on the Peace Corps. This will be her third term on the Steering Committee as an at-large member, and she also served as treasurer previously.

Janet Ney of Allentown has served as a Steering Committee member for over ten years. She has facilitated the Annual Dinner Planning Committee for many years. She previously served on the National Committee of the War Resisters League. Janet is retired from the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV). She is an active member of the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown and volunteers for the Presbytery of Lehigh.

Tom Stinnett of Riegelsville has served as co-treasurer since 2009, and served a stint as solo treasurer many years ago. A mechanical engineer, he is retired from his work in the biotechnology equipment field, but still does some consulting work. He has served as president of Riegelsville Borough Council for many years and is married to LEPOCO staff-person, Nancy Tate. He has been active in many aspects of LEPOCO's work since the early 1970s.

Jeff Vitelli of Bethlehem has been a LEPOCO member since the Vietnam era. His avocations include being a poet, a musician, and an artist. He is mostly retired from his work as a mental health counselor. His work in LEPOCO has touched many bases - among them: Peace Singers, nonviolence training, and writing "The Struggle Shared" column for the LEPOCO Newsletter. He was one of the Muhlenberg V - remember that historic civil disobedience and First Amendment win. Serving on the Steering Committee provides a balance between self-care and care for the planet.



Election Ballot

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

Sharlee DiMenichi _____
(2-year term)

Janet Ney _____
(2-year term)

Jeff Vitelli _____
(2-year term)

Co-Treasurer (vote for one):

Tom Stinnett _____
(2-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 Gathering, April 23, by 7:00 pm, or by mail to arrive at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem, PA 18018, by Thursday, April 21, 2022.

Bits & Pieces

An article in *The Express-Times*, on March 28 (reprinted from the *Washington Post*), reported on the Times Square billboard, "IMAGINE PEACE, love yoko 2022." The billboard also appeared in London and other cities around the world. The *Post* writer, Sebastian Smee concludes the piece, "If it (the billboard) is an exercise in futility, it's three minutes of stillness in the context of madly flashing Times Square can nonetheless seem very eloquent. Instead of judging Ono's gesture by its 'effectiveness,'...we might think of it instead as her latest 'even score,' an instruction we can try to carry out - or not. Peace, after all, is a kind of reciprocity - of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. War, by contrast, is a failure of reciprocity. Ono is quietly suggesting that we imagine an alternative to that failure."

On April 3rd the Bethlehem Community Advisory Board under the leadership of Esther Lee, the president of the Bethlehem NAACP, held

a March for Peace & Unity: Bethlehem & the Lehigh Valley - "No Home for Hate." Due to an April shower, the march to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Park, on Carlton Ave., was replaced with a march around Payrow Plaza (the gathering site for the event) once the sun came out. Local elected officials, religious leaders, and LEPOCO's Susie Ravitz spoke. The event was a response to the large amount of hateful literature that has been distributed in our area by White supremacist groups. Thank you to Esther Lee and those who work with her to keep the community focused on peace and unity.

As Moscow residents went about their morning in early April, they may have come across an artist laying face-down in front of government buildings and landmarks, recreating widely-seen images of the massacre of civilians in Bucha, Ukraine. Wearing a brown jacket with hands tied with white fabric, the artist appeared on a staircase outside the Kremlin, two streets crowded with pedestrians, and a bridge outside the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, according to images posted by the independent

media outlet *Holod*. With anti-war protests outlawed in Russia, dissenters are staging creative actions. The Feminist Anti-War Resistance has placed crosses at dozens of locations around Russia, memorializing hundreds of people killed in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol. (Source: www.commondreams.org, 4/5/22, "Russian Artist Depicts Bucha Victims in Photos Staged Around Moscow.")

The Rachel Maddow Show (MSNBC, 4/13/22) reported that the same Feminist Anti-War Resistance and others are replacing pricing labels in stores with labels that feature meaningful statements about the reality of the war in Ukraine. People carrying out this action have been arrested and face possible long prison sentences.

At the end of March, The Lehigh Valley Justice Institute held a virtual event, "Close the Valve! School to Prison Pipeline Forum." A wide array of educators and community leaders participated. You can watch a recording of the forum on the LVJI YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1-gcxaZ3hvvZpG103dKhgg>.

World BEYOND War is leading a **Global Mobilization to Stop Lockheed Martin**, the world's biggest weapons dealer. Lockheed Martin brags about arming more than 50 countries. That 50 country list includes oppressive governments and dictatorships. Events will take place around the world April 21-28. You can learn more at worldbeyondwar.org.

"*Ubuntu* is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone, we say they have *Ubuntu*. Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. It is to say, 'My humanity is caught up, is inextricable bound up, in yours.'"

- Desmond Tutu

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

Tuesdays, May 3, & June 7, 2022, 6 pm: First Tuesday LEPOCO Book Group Meetings. Contact LEPOCO for a list of the books being discussed in 2022. Meetings will probably be at the LEPOCO Peace Center (1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem), but contact LEPOCO (610-691-8730) to confirm plans for a given month. The group welcomes new members.

Mondays, May 9, & June 13, 2022, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meetings, LEPOCO Peace Center, 1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem (18018). All members & friends are welcome at this monthly business meeting where the organization's activities are discussed & planned. These meetings are on the second Monday of the month. Call 610-691-8730 for more information.

Thursdays, May 12 & June 9, 2022, 4:30-5:30 pm: Monthly Peace Vigils, on the corners at Third & Wyandotte Sts., south Bethlehem.

Please join in the meetings and work of these groups as you are able. If you want more information about these meetings or the meetings of the Newsletter Planning Group, the Stop the Wars Committee, the Peace Camp Planning Committee, the Annual Gathering Planning Committee or any other committees, please call LEPOCO at 610-691-8730. For a regularly updated calendar of events, see www.lepoco.org or read the Weekly Email Update. Please note: for all meetings at the LEPOCO office, masks are worn and participants are vaccinated, until the pandemic subsides.

The Struggle Shared

*"May all beings be happy.
May all beings be free from pain and suffering.
May all beings live with ease and well-being.
May all beings be free..."*

- Thich Nhat Hanh

TOUCH MOTHER EARTH - On March 20th, Touch Mother Earth convened a World Peace Spring Equinox Water Ceremony & Drumming Circle at Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center. It was attended by about 30 people from the Lehigh Valley, New Jersey, and as far west as Reading.

The multi-cultural ceremony, with rituals representing Native American, Ancient Celtic, Eastern European, and other traditions, included an interlude on Tibetan singing bowls and was a powerfully moving prayer for Peace. Prominent on the altar cloth was a vase of sunflowers and the flag of Ukraine. At the center was a bowl of water.

As the ceremony concluded, participants were invited to pour water from their homes or travels into the bowl. Water came from as far away as Ireland. We then walked, accompanied by African djembes, Native American frame drums, rattles and bells, to the banks of the Bushkill Creek, where the water was ceremoniously added to the gurgling flow.

Touch Mother Earth is a non-profit that organizes events to integrate the virtual community with the physical world. They produce innovative content that informs, teaches, enhances wellness, enriches cultural experience, promotes leadership, encourages spiritual and psychological expression, and, expands physical and emotional awareness.

To connect to their future events, check out their website at www.TouchMotherEarth.com.

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF ROMERO'S ASSASSINATION - March 24th marked the 42nd anniversary of the assassination of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero by death squads that were Trained and funded by the U.S.

Government. Salvadorans and their U.S. solidarity allies commemorated the anniversary with a National Day of Action. Just a month before his death, Romero wrote a letter to then U.S. President Jimmy Carter telling him, "If you truly want to defend human rights...forbid that military aid be given to the Salvadoran Government."

Instead of heeding Romero's plea for peace, the U.S. went on to fund a devastating war against the Salvadoran people that is still felt today, 30 years after a Peace Accord was reached. The war lives on in U.S. policies that continue to arm and train Salvadoran military and police.

Since September 2021, Salvadorans have mobilized massive protests to denounce their government's attacks on the 1992 accords and democracy itself. President Bukele has more than doubled the size of the Salvadoran military to almost what it was during the war, thanks to assistance from the U.S.

At the end of March, in response to a terrifying spike in homicides, the Salvadoran government imposed a State of Exception, which prohibits meetings and gatherings, suspends the need for warrants to intercept communications, and allows for detentions without explanation. Detainees can be held for up to 15 days without charges. Over 2000 people have already been arrested in massive sweeps. Popular movement leaders are fearful that the State of Exception will result in more widespread human rights abuses and will be used to further repress grassroots opposition.

Recently, a U.S. Congressional delegation including Ilhan Omar, Cori Bush, and Jamal Bowman, went on a fact-finding mission to Central America with several U.S.-based solidarity organizations. Upon return they issued a joint statement:

"We traveled to Central America to investigate the root causes of migration from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, and the U.S. role in those causes. What we found is a resilient region where corporate interests, international development institutions, and the U.S. government have played a profoundly destabilizing role".

Let's honor the legacy of Archbishop Romero by urging our representatives to oppose further training and funding of El Salvador's military.

REMEMBERING THICH NHAT HANH - On January 22nd, the venerable founder of engaged Buddhism, Thich Nhat Hanh died peacefully at the age of 95 at the Tu Hieu Temple in Hue, Vietnam. He was one of the most profoundly influential spiritual teachers of our time.

In the early 1960s, he was a guest lecturer at Princeton, and Columbia University and became a close friend and ally of the Martin Luther King, Jr., who nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967.

Nhat Hanh returned to Vietnam in 1963 and worked tirelessly for peace and toward reconciliation between South and North Vietnam. When he travelled to Paris to participate in the Peace Accords, he was banned from returning to his homeland. He lived in exile in France, establishing Plum Village Monastery, which became an internationally acclaimed retreat center, spreading his teachings of mindfulness and peacemaking. He published dozens of books and popularized the practice of mindfulness.

He first returned to Vietnam in 2005, after almost 40 years in exile. Several other visits followed. He suffered a stroke in 2014, which left him unable to speak. In 2018 he returned to Vietnam a final time with the intention of living out his days at the Tu Hieu Temple where he first took his vows at the age of 16. His life came full circle. "Peace is Every Step."

- Jeff Vitelli



LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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Monthly Peace Vigil

(Second Thursdays)

May 12, 2022 &

June 9, 2022

4:30 – 5:30 pm

End the wars.

Help witness for peace.

3rd & Wyandotte Sts.,

(south) Bethlehem

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

End the War In Ukraine!

(see page 3)

Stop Bombing Yemen!

(see page 2)

Provide Aid to Afghanistan!

(see page 2)

LEPOCO Annual Gathering Saturday, April 23

Featured Speaker:

Stephen Miles of Win Without War

(see page 1 & enclosed flyer)

Peace Camp

July 25-29, 2022

(see page 1 & enclosed flyer)