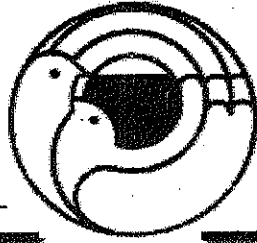


April - May

2023

Vol. 58 No. 2



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

Singer & Activist Reggie Harris Inspires LEPOCO Gathering

Singer and activist Reggie Harris, appearing at the LEPOCO Annual Gathering in Bethlehem on Saturday, March 11, praised the organization for its 57-year history of struggle for peace and social justice, urged listeners to "step up and stand up" and continue the work, and inspired the audience of about 80 with his music.

Addressing "the role of community, culture and relationship in making social change," Harris said that our stories are important; they "are the foundation on which we connect with community and the world."

Song has been a part of Harris's life for a long time, "connecting body and spirit." One of the songs he performed was *This Little Light of Mine*, which he was told by his mother was the first song he learned, at about age 3. But he said it was also a favorite of late folk giant, Pete Seeger, whom he considers one of "elders."

His family was part of the "Great Migration" of blacks fleeing the South in the first half of the 20th century. He grew up mostly in Philadelphia, where he credits the vocal programs in the public schools with fostering his love of singing. Later he picked up the guitar after a young woman told him that if he "didn't have time" to learn the instrument then maybe she would not have time to go out on another date with him.

Harris did not get sent to Vietnam, thanks to a very favorable draft lottery number. That made him the first male in his family in generations not to serve in the military. He explained to his overwhelmingly white audience that African Americans have long viewed military service as a way "to prove that they belong" in the U.S. He said this may be why advocating for peace in the black community can be difficult.

He was brought into the peace movement through the Peoples' Music Network and meeting Sonny Ochs, who introduced him to the music of her brother, the late Phil Ochs. He has since participated in the Phil Ochs Song Nights that Sonny Ochs organizes.

Harris said the pandemic, while cancelling a lot of scheduled gigs, provided him a "san kofa moment," a term from the Ghanaian tradition that means to go back again to what has been forgotten. For him, this included finishing a book of memoirs, which will be published later this year.

Among other thoughts shared with his audience:

- "Love is what justice looks like in public."
- Citing Rev. C.T. Vivian, "work for what you love, not against what you hate"; the latter course can end up making you resemble what you are against.
- He is grateful that for him, "music has been a transformative vehicle to work for peace and social justice."
- Citing Cornell West, African Americans have to "try to teach the rest of America about community."

Harris is known for many roles: singer and songwriter who is a frequent performer at folk festivals and coffee houses (including Godfrey Daniels in South Bethlehem); storyteller and educator, visiting schools and colleges throughout the country; and activist for peace, social justice and the environment. He is considered an expert on the music of the Underground Railroad and the modern Civil Rights Movement. Through the Living Legacy Project, he leads Civil Rights pilgrimages throughout the South.

At the gathering, held at First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem, the LEPOCO Peace Singers also performed, and Mimi Lang of Bethlehem read her "Mouse Poem." The gathering included carrot cake and brownies from Tomblor's Bakery in Easton along with hot beverages.

- Steven W. Kraft

This article originally appeared in the March 22, 2023, edition of "The Bethlehem Press." For more news from the Annual Gathering see page 2 of this Newsletter.

Taxes for Peace Not for War!

Saturday, April 15

10 am - Noon

**Bannering and Leafletting to
support Rep. Barbara Lee's proposal to
cut military spending by \$100 billion**

Easton

**300 block of Northampton St.
(next to Easton Winter Farmers' Market
& outside the Easton Public Market)**

Call LEPOCO 610-691-8730

Planned by: Stop the Wars Committee of LEPOCO

LEPOCO "Stepped Up" at Gathering

You could feel the loyalty, patience, love, and persistence of building community that Reggie Harris talked about as we gathered at First Presbyterian Church, Bethlehem, on March 11. The hall rang with laughter, good conversation, singing and storytelling during the evening.

An enthusiastic audience of over 80 people enjoyed greeting friends and renewing acquaintances during the social hour which was highlighted by the musical excellence of Adrian Zaniesienko playing jazz guitar. The hall was festive with displays and colorful origami peace cranes by the dozens that had been folded by Amanda Zaniesienko and Margot Hillman.

Elizabeth Griner, the facilitator for the evening, charmed the audience with wit and grace.

The Gathering, our annual meeting, included the election of members of our Steering Committee. Tom Pietrzak announced the results of the balloting and explained the function of the Steering Committee.

Margot Hillman and Amanda Zaniesienko, Susie Ravitz, Monica McAghon and Martricia McLaughlin were elected to two-year terms on the Committee. Julius Iwantsch was re-elected co-treasurer. The continuing members of the Steering Committee: Pam Brubaker, Stefan Rogers, Janet Ney, and co-treasurer Tom Stinnett were introduced; and words of thanks were expressed to members ending their terms: Tom Pietrzak and Mary Lang. Jeff Vitelli's long service on the Steering Committee was noted with appreciation.

Margot Hillman encouraged the members of the audience to get involved with the many issues and efforts that are part of LEPOCO. Mimi Lang offered "A Mouse Reward," an original poem written in her distinctive, lighthearted style.

LEPOCO Peace Singers encouraged the audience to sing along on "Siyahamba" and "Singing for Our Lives." Presenting the call to change the world of "Yes We Can," with words written by Donna Hartmann and Jeff Vitelli and music by Bob Riggs and Joey Hartmann Dow, the Singers dedicated their performance to honor Jeff Vitelli and in memory of Bob Riggs.

Margot Hillman and Amanda Zaniesienko led the drawing of tickets for art raffle prizes. We are grateful to the generous donors of those prizes: Lee Buck, a hand-turned wooden bowl, won by Bill Buskirk; Michelle Sheehan, a hand-crocheted afghan, won by Katrina Kraft; Ellen Buck, a quilt made by Romaine Laurry, won by Renate Brosky; Monica Sommerville, a large pasta bowl with four matching individual bowls, won by Marcie Lightwood; and, the Anatolian Kitchen, a \$20 gift certificate, won by Froy Thompson.

An opportunity to step up and show up was presented in the form of a postcard addressed to the White House and signed by the people in attendance. The communication called for President Joe Biden to lead the way toward negotiations to end the war in Ukraine.

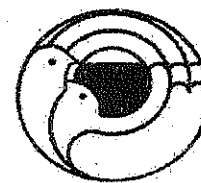
- Janet Ney

Playing, Singing, Drumming & more at Peace Camp 2023

Young People Making Peace Summer Day Camp (Peace Camp) is in its fourth decade offering whole-child fun and activities centered around the topic of peace. Playing and running under a full-sized, rainbow-colored parachute in a cooperative manner, singing songs in Zulu, Spanish and Yiddish, writing letters to legislators seeking support for the earth, drumming, creating crafts artistically from recycled items, and team building to avoid a make-believe "swamp," are just a few of the exciting activities led by talented community volunteers. Wouldn't you want to send your child(ren) or grandchild to such a wonderful program? Or, can you share a registration flyer with a neighbor or children in your community?

Peace Camp was founded in 1990 and now more than 1000 young people have been peace campers making up three generations from different racial, ethnic, and neighborhood backgrounds. Peace Camp alumni provide leadership in the Lehigh Valley and beyond. Peace Camp makes a difference in our world.

The enclosed flyers can be used 1) to register campers and 2) to sign up as a volunteer. Contact LEPOCO to request more copies of either form. Please do what you can to build the participation of peace campers and the number of teen and adult volunteers for this summer, July 24-28.



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.

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

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Pam Brubaker, Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Mohammed Khaku (ex-officio), Monica McAghon, Martricia McLaughlin, Janet Ney, Susie Ravitz, Stefan Rogers, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), and Amanda Zaniesienko.

The War in Ukraine & China

The appalling war in Ukraine is now well into its second year. A deadlocked war of position drags on with enormous troop losses on both sides, civilian deaths, and destruction to Ukraine's infrastructure. Negotiation is the way the war must end, yet -- except for minor agreements on grain shipments and prisoner exchanges, mainly brokered by Turkey -- Russia and Ukraine refuse negotiations.

Previous attempts to resolve differences between the two sides have collapsed. In 1994, the Budapest Memorandum provided for the de-nuclearization of Ukraine, which at the time had the world's third largest nuclear weapons arsenal. Ukraine sent its nukes to Russia for decommissioning, and in exchange Russia guaranteed Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and existing borders. The U.S. and Great Britain signed on -- but only as informal guarantors. Russia violated the terms of the Budapest accord, first in 2014 by annexing Crimea and supporting pro-Russian groups in the Donbas, then again in 2022 when it launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The complex Minsk Agreements (2014, 2015), which sought to end the conflict in the Donbas, are as dead as the Budapest Memorandum.

The U.S., on whom Ukraine is dependent for a continuing and, to us, profitable flow of armaments, does not favor pushing for negotiations. The State Department's position is that we cannot dictate what Ukraine must accept as peace conditions, and that since Putin started the war, he should end it with a unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal.

The world's other superpower, China, which the U.S. now regards as our leading global antagonist, has recently entered the picture with a new peace proposal. On February 24, 2023, the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion, China presented a 12-point position on "the political settlement of the Ukraine Crisis." At first glance, the points seem to be vague, anodyne truisms -- calling for, to name a few, solving the humanitarian crisis, keeping nuclear power plants safe, and protecting civilians and prisoners of war. But some go further. The U.S. reaction to China's proposals has been dismissive, seeing it as a public relations ploy to conceal China's covert support for Russia and objecting, specifically, to Chinese calls to abandon the cold war mentality and to end the sanctions we have imposed on Russia. On the other hand, the proposal's first point supports Ukraine by calling for strictly upholding international law and the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries.

Perhaps the U.S. and NATO need to take the Chinese proposal more seriously. China recently

stepped into the vacuum created by the U.S. withdrawal from the Middle East and successfully brokered an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to resume diplomatic relations. This agreement between the rival centers of Shi'a and Sunni power in the Islamic world has the potential to help resolve conflicts elsewhere, from Yemen to Syria and Lebanon. For Ukraine, China has at least presented a comprehensive framework for ending a horrifying war. Putin has welcomed China's proposal, and Zelensky, more cautiously, has expressed interest. All parties to the Ukraine war should see if its generalities can be transformed into specific terms to end the conflict.

- Mick Baylor

Underground Reels & Spiels

Friday, April 21, 7:00 pm

Screening of

"Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet"

On Friday, April 21st, LEPOCO will screen the film, *Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet* (2021), at the Peace Center, on the campus of Rosemont Lutheran Church, 1705 West Broad St., Bethlehem (18018). Narrated by David Attenborough, the august British naturalist and explainer of all things wild, the film is only 75 minutes long, and covers climate heating, the urgency of issues like biodiversity, land use and potable water resources. Humans and their governments can change the trajectory of these crises; but will we, in time?

A lively discussion will follow. Our film discussion leader will be Karen Tuerk, who teaches Environmental Science at Muhlenberg College. She has previewed the film, and states that it covers in a short time what one of her semester classes does, so be prepared to attend to its pace, and varied climate interrelated topics.

A found Howard Zinn quote:

*War is the certain use of
horrible means for
uncertain ends.*

Citizen Action: Call Congress!

Ralph Nader says citizens have a civic responsibility to voice their concerns to 535 Congressional Senators and Representatives who have the power to build a Left and Right Alliance and get it done. We need citizen action on the following issues, and continue working on your passionate issues:

Repeal the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, S. 316 and H.R. 932, which started the Iraq War under the Bush Administration. (The Senate passed the repeal, now it is up to the House to follow suit.) While you're at it, tell them to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and H.R. 669—Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons 2023. Please stop the endless wars. Invest our tax dollars in our communities, not weapons and war.

Take Cuba and Iran off the terrorist list. Sanctions on Cuba began in 1982 by Pres. Reagan. Pres. Obama removed Cuba from the Terrorism List in 2015. The Trump Administration ignored Obama's *Memorandum of Understanding* with Cuba and put Cuba back on the Terrorism List. This devastated the Cuban economy once again. Call upon Senators and Representatives and the Biden Administration to reverse the Trump decision. While you're at it, urge sanctions to be lifted from Iran. The UN Commissioner of Human Rights says the US efforts to use coercive sanctions to expand jurisdiction abroad is a violation of human rights. International opinion is opposed to sanctions on Cuba and Iran.

Spank the banks! Prosecute those responsible for bank collapse. Urge our elected officials in Congress to reinstate Dodd-Frank bank regulations. Tax the rich. Corporations are not individuals and do not have freedom of speech. No corporate welfare for the pharmaceutical and health insurance industries. Stop corporate tax evasion. Corporations and the rich must pay their fair share of taxes or get arrested. Our Constitution starts with We the People, not We the Corporations!

Climate Catastrophe. Disasters from corporate pollution. End reliance on fossil fuels. Act locally, think globally. Expand your actions to help the environment in your home to your neighborhoods, towns, and cities. Join like-minded local groups to push for more environmental regulations at the state and federal levels. Do not be discouraged. Nothing has changed without a few committed people who inspire others, who in turn inspire others. We are the 99%. All power to the people. Democracy works.

- Monica McAgthon

Roots of LEPOCO

The 20th anniversary of the United States' invasion of Iraq was noted on March 20, 2023. Let's take a look back at what was going on at LEPOCO as reported in

the April-May 2003 newsletter. Unlike most other newsletters that LEPOCO publishes, this one ran to 16 pages.

On March 21, 2003, concerned citizens protested the invasion with a demonstration outside the Federal Building in Allentown. About 50 people marched to the office of then-Congressman-Pat Toomey; eleven of them went into the office and refused to leave. Late in the day, after hours of sitting-in, the eleven were arrested and taken to the Lehigh County prison for booking. The eleven were Sarah Andrew, Greta Browne, Anna Maria Caldara, Cynthia Crowner, Robert Daniels II, Fran Dreisbach, Guy Gray, Art Landis, Mimi Lang, Barbara Schultz, and Nancy Tate.

On April 6, 2003, more than 100 people of all ages met at the Bethlehem Peace Pole (in rose Garden Park) to participate in Circles of Hope and Grief in opposition to the then very young U.S. war on Iraq. The Circles gathering was sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition.

Mimi Lang wrote about a Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition event at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley. "Hope was alive that rainy night at the Unitarian Church." This gathering was the local emergency response to the attack on Iraq that began earlier that day. The event started when 200 stood with signs in the rain on the Hill-to-Hill Bridge in Bethlehem. The war that started on March 20, 2003, lasted until 2011 and, on paper, is still going on. The Senate has voted to end the Authorization for Military Force (AUMF) after 21 years; the House has yet to vote.

A student peace coalition convened for the first time that spring. Pat Humphries and Sandy Opatow, performed at the LEPOCO Annual Dinner. (They are now known as Emma's Revolution.) Pat spoke about her story of becoming an activist that evening. On March 15th while several LEPOCO members were preparing that Annual Dinner, 30 others vigiled for peace in Easton's Center Square, organized by Susie Ravitz.

A busload of peace activists had joined an anti-war march and national demonstration in Washington, DC, on April 12th.

So much was happening in those days - too much to be reported in one article. We will share more in the next issue of the newsletter.

- Janet Ney

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

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.

So Many Are Present _____

For all the saints for peace we say "presente." We say "Hallelujah" a la Reggie Harris, for their lives and we remember them because they remain present (Presente!), as Carmen Riggs explained so beautifully at the memorial service for Bob Riggs in late March.

Urbane Byler died December 9, 2022. He was 83 years old. He and Janet had been living in Indiana for several years. They were involved in LEPOCO from the 1980s until their move to Indiana. He was active in the Americas Solidarity Group, helped with Peace Camp, attended Annual Dinners and many other programs, and much more. He and Janet reported to LEPOCO about their years volunteering with the Mennonite Central Committee in Honduras and Mexico.

The Byler Farm near Slatington was known for a fall pumpkin festival offering children hands-on experiences with cows, chickens and pumpkins. The farm was a temporary home for refugees from Central America, Rwanda, Croatia, and Burma. Urbane and Janet were community leaders founding a children's center, and Urbane served on boards for the local community college and school district.

Urbane is survived by Janet, four children and their families. Urbane Byler: Presente!

Bob Riggs died January 13, 2023, while recovering from Covid. He was 94 years old. Bob and Carmen had been involved in LEPOCO since they worked at the Kirkridge Retreat Center in the 1990s. After living in Flicksville for a short time, their home was in Bethlehem until they moved to Kirkland Village in 2019.

Many the Peace Singers rehearsal, many the LEPOCO Book Group discussion, and many the Americas Solidarity meeting that took place in Bob and Carmen's living room, in the embrace of their generous hospitality. Bob was ever delighted at the activism of others. He created beautiful choral arrangements for the Peace Singers – a favorite is his arrangement of the Malvina Reynolds song, "What Have They Done to the Rain." He brought his delight to the Book Group, finding an important truth in most, if not all, books that the group read. He was a regular at monthly peace vigils, joined LEPOCO meetings with elected officials, and frequently wrote letters to the editor about peace.

In his younger years Bob was a minister in the Church of Christ for 16 years and he taught elementary school music for many years. He was a biker, a hiker, and an accomplished choral music participant, well into his 80s.

He is survived by Carmen, three daughters, a son, two siblings, and numerous grandchildren.

Bob Riggs: Presente!

Anna Reczek died February 25th. She was 96 years old. Anna was an active member of the community. She worked as the front desk clerk at the Hotel Bethlehem and as Judge of elections in south

Bethlehem. Her fame in LEPOCO came from the many beautiful afghans that she crocheted for the LEPOCO Art Raffle starting in the 1990s. She was supported in this effort by her daughter Sue Verbalis, a long-time member of LEPOCO. After Anna could no longer make the afghans, another daughter, Michelle Sheehan continued the tradition of making beautiful afghans for LEPOCO's Art Raffle.

Anna Reczek is survived by four daughters, two sons and their families. Anna Reczek: Presente!

Ardis Chapman died on March 27th. She was 90 years old. Clarke died in 2021. Ardis' obituary in the newspaper featured a lovely smiling photo that captured well her upbeat spirit.

Ardis and Clarke welcomed many War Tax Resistance Life Fund meetings at their home. She was a strong supporter of Clarke's more visible peace witness. She was an administrator for the Young People's Philharmonic and also worked as a home economics teacher and a seamstress.

An active member of Wesley United Methodist Church she helped facilitate LEPOCO using their church's facilities for our 10th anniversary dinner in the 1970s at the 424 Center St. location, other gatherings at that location, and later events after the church moved further north on Center St. Ardis made a very special contribution to LEPOCO when she donated a collection of cloth babies she had made. The babies have been held at many peace vigils during ongoing U.S. wars – appropriately the babies have a range of skin tones.

Ardis is survived by her three daughters and their families. Ardis Chapman: Presente!

Judith Woodruff died January 20th. She was 80 years old. Judy and her spouse, Louise Legun, were the heart and soul of the active local chapter of Veterans for Peace for many years. They maintained and led the VFP displays recognizing the Pennsylvanians killed in Afghanistan and Iraq and calling for an end to the wars. Judy documented many peace vigils, marches and demonstrations opposing the wars with her excellent photography. She participated in dozens of Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition meetings and all the work that made Coalition events possible.

She is survived by Louise, three sons and other family members. Judith Woodruff: Presente!

Rev. Donald Knapp died February 14th. He was 94 years old. He was a longtime rector at Grace Episcopal Church in Allentown, and a passionate advocate for social justice, peace, and helping the poor. His work at Grace Episcopal attracted many like-minded souls who sought refuge in the congregation under his leadership. He founded the Grace Church Food Bank that continues today and co-founded the Lehigh County Prison Society in 1972 to advocate for inmates' rights and to end abuses. He is survived by his wife and three children and their families. Rev. Don Knapp: Presente!



LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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Monthly Peace Vigil

(Second Thursdays)

April 13 & May 11

4:30-5:30 pm

End the wars.

Witness for peace.

3rd & Wyandotte Sts.,
(south) Bethlehem

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

Underground Reels & Spiels

Friday, April 21, 7:00 pm

Screening of

**"Breaking Boundaries:
The Science of Our Planet"**

Narrated by David Attenborough.

Join us for the screening & discussion.

LEPOCO Peace Center
1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem

(See page 3 for more info.)

Taxes for Peace Not War

Saturday, April 15

10 am- Noon

Easton

(See page 1 for more details.)

Peace Camp 2023

July 24-28

(see page 2 & inserts.)