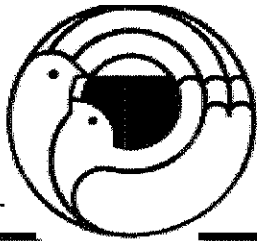


June
2025

Vol. 60 No. 3



Newsletter of **LEPOCO**

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

Muhlenberg College Fires Tenured Professor

Allentown's Muhlenberg College has reaffirmed its place as one of higher education's premier deniers of basic civil rights and academic freedom. Long-time LEPOCO members will recall the case of the Muhlenberg Five in 1976, when police arrested five LEPOCO members for protesting the campus appearance of the FBI director. This case went all the way to Pennsylvania's Supreme Court, which decided that although Muhlenberg is a private college, it violated the protesters' right to freedom of speech.

More recently, Muhlenberg College fired a tenured professor, Dr. Maura Finkelstein, for criticizing Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip, one of the most brutal military campaigns in modern history. In April 2025, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) released a report, based on an extensive investigation of the case, that determined Muhlenberg's action violated Prof. Finkelstein's academic freedom (see: [aaup.org/report/academic-freedom-and-tenure-muhlenberg-college-pennsylvania](https://www.aaup.org/report/academic-freedom-and-tenure-muhlenberg-college-pennsylvania)). Academic freedom is designed to ensure that researchers and teachers have the right to express opinions relevant to their discipline (she is an anthropologist) no matter how unpopular. Academic tenure has been established precisely to protect this right.

The basis of Muhlenberg's decision to fire Prof. Finkelstein was ostensibly a January 2024 re-posting to her private Instagram account of an anti-Zionist statement by Remi Kanzai. Muhlenberg's administration inferred, after the fact, that according to Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Zionism falls within the category of a "protected class," and she had discriminated against Jews and Israelis. Therefore, she could be fired for professional unfitness.

The AAUP report concludes that Muhlenberg's decision itself discriminates against Jews, such as Finkelstein, who do not identify with Israel and Zionism; that it falsely equates being anti-Zionist with being antisemitic; and that this understanding of antisemitism wrongly removes the protections of academic freedom from criticism of Israel and Zionism.

The report points out that the narrow "protected class" charge against Prof. Finkelstein had a broader context. The college charged that she "harmed" Jewish students who felt "unsafe" or "uncomfortable" in her classes or as a result of her long history of campus activism against what she saw as Israel's violations of Palestinian rights. The administration's decision, which seems to have violated Muhlenberg's own

disciplinary procedures, may have had an additional source — a widespread campaign of letters and emails threatening to deny donations to the college unless it fired her.

The Finkelstein case takes place in an extremely dark environment for higher education. The federal government has launched a bipartisan effort to suppress support for Palestinian rights and criticism of Israel. It has done so by violently repressing peaceful student encampments, by revoking visas, arresting and seeking to deport international students who speak out, and by "weaponizing" the charge of antisemitism such that it is equated with any criticism of Israel.

On May 2, a pro-Palestinian rights rally on the Lehigh University campus revealed something of the current atmosphere's darkness. A bevy of administrators and police monitored the sparsely attended rally, at which several LEPOCO members contributed their support. The students who came said many others stayed away out of fear. They also expressed their dismay that their classes were not touching on the Gaza genocide and their worry about the consequences for them of speaking out. If the advocates of Project Esther — from the Heritage Foundation, which also authored Project 2025 — win the day, soon anyone who advocates for the rights of Palestinians may be charged with "providing material support for terrorism." Defenders of freedom of speech and academic freedom should turn outrage to action.

~ Mick Baylor



Peace Camp Is Coming in July

Peace Camp planning is going on right now, and there are many happy results so far. As of early April, we are fully staffed with group leaders, although more helpers are always welcome and needed. We have in place all of the special offerings: non-competitive games, drumming, music and nature exploring.

Margot Hillman and Lauren Romo will be convening camp, which will be at First Presbyterian Church of Allentown, July 21st - 25th, 2025, from 9:00 am to 12 noon. Nancy Johnston will be our health advisor/first aid helper. Roberta Meek will coordinate music, Cathy Campanaro will lead campers in drumming, and Dan Hunter and Yona will lead nature activities. Donna Hartmann and Lynn Donnelly will prepare snacks, and they would welcome help with deliveries to classrooms.

(continued on page 2)

Peace Camp Is Coming in July

(continued from page 1)

What can LEPOCO members who are not involved in Peace Camp directly do to help? Please take some flyers and leave them where parents or even grandparents are likely to see them. Talk to your neighbors (always a good thing to do) and ask if they know of children who might enjoy a week of peaceful activities at a very low cost. Please see the flyer in this newsletter for more information. Help us think about how to reach more children.

There is always a need for people to drive Peace Campers to and from camp. Child Abuse clearances are required. Please call the office at 610-691-8730 for more information.

It is important to note that many of the group and activity leaders have been involved with Peace Camp for 10, 20 or even 30+ years. Many of us plan our summers around the last week of July because participating in teaching peace to the very young is fun, rewarding and even uplifting (although yes, also exhausting!). Please volunteer and see for yourself.

- Marcie Lightwood

Lehigh Valley Rapid Response

The Lehigh Valley is home to a large and thriving community of immigrants from across the world. From the storied history of immigrant labor in the steel industry to contemporary resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers, our region has long been home to significant Central European, Latin American, Middle Eastern, African, and South Asian diasporas. Shortly after Donald Trump's second inauguration and the ensuing escalation of detention and deportation of immigrants, a group of faith leaders, immigrant advocates, and community organizers met to strategize responses to local needs and concerns around immigration. The group, Lehigh Valley Rapid Response Network, initially focused on coordination of legal rights trainings as well as advocacy for local Welcoming City legislation, including the passage of Allentown's Welcoming City Ordinance passed in February 5th, 2025.

While continuing to organize and educate about policy needs for immigrants, the group is also building a rapid response network to address reports of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity in the area and to connect immigrant communities to mutual aid networks in the region. A rapid response network is an organized group of volunteers that are trained, available, and willing to react quickly to incidents or emergencies in a community or region. The Network has been recruiting volunteers and it held two trainings so far to build skills and processes to protect and advocate for immigrants. The full response protocol should be up and running soon.

The Lehigh Valley Rapid Respond Network is an example of true grassroots, coalition organizing; neighbors and strangers coming together to build power and reduce harm. There are still opportunities to get involved. There are roles for many different skillsets, readiness levels, and abilities within the network. Stay tuned for announcements about upcoming trainings.

- Jon Irons



Newsletter of LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

53 E. Lehigh Street, 1-LL

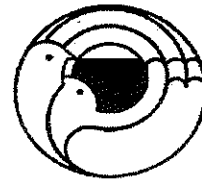
Bethlehem, PA 18018

phone: 610-691-8730

fax: 610-691-8904

website: www.lepoco.org

e-mail: lepoco@fast.net



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: Kellyn Slingerland, Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Monica McAghon, Martricia McLaughlin, Janet Ney, Susie Ravitz, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), and Amanda Zaniesienko.

Poetry, Action & Solidarity

Poetry to engage, enrage, inspire, and reflect on was presented by W.D. Ehrhart at the LEPOCO Annual Gathering held April 26, 2025, at the United Steelworkers Hall in Bethlehem (upstairs from the present LEPOCO Office). More than 70 attendees came out to hear Ehrhart's poetry and to help commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in Viet Nam and the beginning of LEPOCO's 60th year of working for peace.

Many of Ehrhart's poems vividly described the horrors of war and violence. His readings and commentary inspired us to recommit to acting for peace in the world. LEPOCO facilitated that by providing postcards addressed to Representative Ryan Mackenzie, Senator Dave McCormick, and Senator John Fetterman. They were urged to work for an end to the administration's deportations, without due process, of people living in the United States; and they were urged to work for the return of people who had been living in the U.S., who have been deported without due process. They should be brought home now. We also signed a petition to Mackenzie, McCormick, and Fetterman, calling for an end of the war in Gaza including demands to end bombing, release all hostages, and increase humanitarian aid. Copies of the petition were sent to them right after the Gathering.

The gathering began with time for mingling, meeting and catching up with old friends, browsing through items at the LEPOCO information table, and admiring the beautiful items donated to the Art Raffle. Our friends from the local chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America staffed an information table and poet Ehrhart was on hand to sign copies of his published poems. (Ehrhart first spoke at LEPOCO's Annual Dinner in 1989.)

Elizabeth Griner shepherded us through the afternoon with grace and wit. Founding member, Susie Ravitz, gave an excellent summary of the work of LEPOCO over the past 60 years, and displayed a slide show of 50 years of her photos of LEPOCO. Sarah Tyler from Jewish Voices for Peace, shared an overview of the current situation in the Middle East and informed us of the local chapter's activities.

The Steering committee was announced: Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch, Monica McAghon, Martricia McLaughlin, Susie Ravitz, Amanda Zaniensienko, were all on the ballot and will all be returning. Janet Ney, Kellyn Stefancin, and Tom Stinnett will complete their current term in 2026.

The LEPOCO singers presented several timely songs, appropriately ending our time together with singing *Dona Nobis Pacem, Give Us Peace.*

- Martha Christine

Fairs & Festivals – Can You Help?

LEPOCO will have information tables at fairs and festivals this summer and we need your assistance. We

schedule two people for each two-hour shift to staff the tables. It is a chance to talk with people about current issues of peace and justice. We will have petitions and postcards addressed to elected officials on pressing issues to be signed. In June we will be at RoseFest in Bethlehem's Rose Garden Park on Saturday, June 21st, 11 am to 2 pm. On Saturday June 28th, we will be at the PA Shakespeare Festival Community Day with information about Peace Camp. The Community Day is at DeSales University in Center Valley and will last from 10 am to 2 pm. Please contact LEPOCO if you can help.

Art Raffle Drawing

The LEPOCO Art Raffle drawing took place at the LEPOCO Annual Gathering on April 26th in the main hall of the United Steelworkers Union building. The drawing yielded the following results:

Julius Iwantsch of Bethlehem won the beautiful hand-turned maple bowl created by Lee Buck.

Mary Schoenberger of Northampton won the hand-crocheted afghan made from a lovely self-striping yarn called "sun and sea" by Michelle Sheehan, yarn supplied by her sister Sue Verbalis, all in honor of their mother, Anna Reczek (1926-2023), who made an afghan for the art raffle each year for decades.

Nancy Dunbar of Bethlehem won the wheel-thrown stoneware coffee jar with lid and two matching mugs, glazed in purple and cream created by Monica Sommerville in her studio in the Finger Lakes region of New York State.

Karen Berry won the Christmas-themed quilt, donated to the Raffle by Ellen Buck and hand-quilted by the quilting group at the Lower Saucon UCC, in Hellertown.

Amy Frey of Hellertown won the silk tie braided mat, hand braided and stitched by Ronnie Arena.

Kathleen Stehly of Bethlehem won the \$25 gift certificate to Jumbars Cafe.

- Amanda Zaniensienko

Join the "Beating Heart" of LEPOCO

What is a LEPOCO Action Meeting? To begin, it's a meeting on the second Monday of every month – reliable as clockwork. The Steering Committee, members of LEPOCO, and friends of LEPOCO from the general public are invited to attend the meetings. It's an evening of thoughtful discussion mixed with humor and friendship. From the state of the world and the never-ending struggle against violence and repression to the planning of the year's events to the treasurers' report on the finances of the organization, the meeting is the beating heart of LEPOCO. Don't you want to join the Steering Committee? We have a place for you.

Contact the LEPOCO Office if you are interested.

- Janet Ney

Bits & Pieces

☪ David Swanson, of World Beyond War, calls Pres. Trump's Golden Dome a comb-over. This proposed "layered defense shield" is expected to cost well over the estimated cost of \$500 billion. (This year's budget may include \$25 billion toward the Golden Dome.) Swanson says the Golden Dome is guaranteed to "waste vast resources desperately needed by people" and to do "tremendous environmental damage." He believes it will "kick start a crazed race to weaponize space." You can read more at worldbeyondwar.org/trump-golden-dome-is-a-combover.

☪ Karen Feridun, a long-time environmental activist, is asking us to sign a petition to stop the data center boom. Data centers use massive amounts of energy. The largest natural gas plant in the country is being planned to serve the proposed Homer City data center in Pennsylvania. Microsoft wants to revive the Three Mile Island nuclear facility to power its data center. Data centers also consume massive amounts of water -- sometimes sourced from potable water. You can sign the petition at sign.moveon.org/petitions/resist-the-data-center-frenzy.

☪ On May 22nd Veterans For Peace & Allies began their 40-day Fast for Gaza outside the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Besides those gathering at the U.S. Mission every day, others are joining the fast where they live. 740 people have registered to fast. Friends of Sabeel, North America, is main-taining the list of fasters. The fasters are demanding full humani-tarian aid to Gaza under U.N. authority and no more U.S. wea-pons to Israel. You can find more information at www.fosna.org/2025_gazafast.

☪ On March 23, Pres. Trump signed five executive orders that threaten to roll back US nuclear energy policy at least 50 years. Collectively, they would reduce and undermine the safety oversight authority of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission; fast-track unproven new reactor projects without regard for safety, health or the environment; restart closed reactors and complete unfinished projects; impede public intervention; and reopen the pathway between the civil and military sectors, all while putting nuclear power expansion on a dangerous and unrealistic accelerated timeline. *You can read more by searching for "A Superhighway to Hell" by Beyond Nuclear.*

☪ Nick Turse, writing for "The Intercept," reminds us of the real danger in deploying the National Guard to Los Angeles. In 1970, Pres. Nixon expanded the Vietnam War by invading Cambodia. In Kent, Ohio, protests in response led to vandalism and prompted Gov. James Rhodes to deploy the Ohio National Guard. On May 4, Guardsmen opened fire on anti-war protesters at Kent State University, firing 67 rounds in just 13 seconds, killing four students and wounding nine others.

"A national student strike involving more than 1 million students at 450 colleges and universities followed. Close to 90 percent of campuses saw protests in the month after the Kent State killings..." This included at Jackson State College, in Mississippi, where city and state police opened fire on student protesters and passersby on May 15, wounding 12 and killing a law student and a high school student. You can read more at *Trump's Dangerous Decision to Suppress Anti-ICE Protests With Troops*, by Nick Turse.

☪ Lehigh Valley Democratic Socialists of America have prepared a "Know Your Rights" flyer to help people who have contact with ICE or the police.

☪ You can support the Block the Bombs Act (H.R. 3565), proposed in the U.S. House of Representatives. If passed it would halt the transfer of offensive U.S. military weapons to Israel. There are 20+ sponsors and co-sponsors. Urge your representative to support this bill.

☪ On May 30th, Michelle Goldberg wrote in "The New York Times," "There is one place... where Musk... achieved his goals. He did, shred U.S.A.I.D. ...the administration says it has terminated more than 80 percent of U.S.A.I.D. grants. Brook Nichols, an associate professor of global health at Boston University, has estimated that these cuts have already resulted in about 300,000 deaths, most of them of children, and will most likely lead to significantly more by the end of the year."

☪ If you are not getting word about the many vigils, rallies, and demonstrations taking place locally to oppose the wrecking ball of the Trump crew, contact LEPOCO, and we'll share what we know.

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

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

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

The Struggle Shared

"To make our way, we must have firm resolve, persistence, tenacity. We must gear ourselves to work hard all the way. We can never let up."
- Ralph Bunche

REMEMBERING VIETNAM - "Fifty years ago..., on April 30, 1975, Vietnam defeated the United States of America. That is why we need to make this day, April 30th, a national holiday." Michael Moore issued the call for a national holiday to reflect on this nation's involvement in Vietnam this year.

"I think we need to do this for our children's sake, for our grandchildren, for the sake of our future if there still is one for us. We should take just one day every year and participate in a national day of reckoning, recollection, reflection, and truth-telling, where together we actively seek forgiveness, make reparations and further our understanding of just how it happened and how easy it is for the wealthy and the political elites and the media to back such horror, and then to get the majority of the country to go along with it... at least at first. And, how quickly after it's over we decide that we never have to talk about it again. That we can learn nothing from it and change nothing after it."

THE BOMBING OF YEMEN - Some of Yemen's toughest days may be over. On May 6, the White House halted the bombing that has allowed over 1,000 unauthorized airstrikes on this besieged nation - 1,000 United States airstrikes which were begun without Congressional approval. The air warfare could begin again at any time if the Administration chooses to do so. While the Israeli government subjects the people of Gaza to unrelenting attacks, the government of northern Yemen will fight against Israel; retaliatory strikes from the United States could resume.

The president launched this operation on March 15 without any vote in Congress. Peace Corps Vermont has issued a Call to Action

asking us to urge our Senators and Representatives to publicly speak out against unauthorized airstrikes in Yemen and reaffirm that no President has the authority to wage war without congressional approval." (Source: ActionCorps.org)

PROTECTING REFUGEES - Afrikaners in South Africa, that is, white citizens who are in the minority, are alleged by some to be the victims of racial discrimination. The Trump administration has made special arrangements to receive a group of these "refugees" in the United States even as people fleeing other countries are barred from emigrating here.

In an unprecedented move, the Episcopal Church responded by announcing that it will refuse a new contract for federal funds for resettlement when its current contract ends in September. Announcing its refusal to resettle white Afrikaners, the Most Rev. Sean W. Rowe, the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, said, "In light of our church's steadfast commitment to racial justice and reconciliation and our historic ties with the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, we are not able to take this step."

Both South African government sources and church leaders, as well as international church-affiliate immigrant resettlement programs, have denied that there is widespread discrimination with violence being suffered by the Afrikaners.

Meanwhile, Church World Service, while suing the administration over immigration issues, is resettling the Afrikaners with an urgent request that our government show that other beleaguered refugees can be settled in the United States with dispatch and efficiency. (Source: religionnews.com - Religion News Service)

TRYING TO AID GAZA - The Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) sailed from Tunisia on its way to Gaza with humanitarian aid aboard the *Conscience*, a passenger ship registered under a Palau flag. On May 2nd the ship was attacked by drones in international waters off the coast of Malta on. No one aboard was hurt in the attack. Israel has been accused by the FFC and others of mounting the attack in furtherance of its siege of Gaza. Photos showed damage to the ship and it was reported that the generator was knocked out but the extent of damage had not been determined.

Retired U.S. Army Colonel Ann Wright (a LEPOCO dinner speaker in 2016) and Swedish environmentalist, Greta Thunberg, were scheduled to come aboard. Ann Wright was quoted in *The Quint*, published in India: "Anyone could have been on board... The ship was anchored, clearly civilian, and preparing for a humanitarian voyage."

The Freedom Flotilla will not be deterred in its mission, hoping to deliver aid to Gaza aboard the *Madleen*. The *Madleen* set off from Sicily on June 1st hoping to break the 40-year Israeli blockade of Gaza. People from six countries were on board. As this Newsletter is prepared the *Madleen* has been captured and those on board were taken into custody by Israel. (Source: www.freedomflotilla.org)

STOP DEPORTATION FLIGHTS - Demonstrations have been taking place at airports around the U.S. Avelo Airlines, a budget airline, has signed to use their planes to transport people being deported by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in mass groups. Starting in April people have protested these flights in Sonoma County, California; Wilmington, Delaware; Detroit, Michigan, and other locations. The protests have included large mobilizations at large airports and small rallies at Avelo's local offices.

- Janet Ney



Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

53 E. Lehigh St., 1-LL Bethlehem, PA 18018
610-691-8730 lepoco@fast.net
Fax: 610-691-8904 www.lepoco.org

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 617
Lehigh Valley, PA

See Inside:

Page 1

- Muhlenberg College
Fires Tenured
Professor
- Peace Camp

Page 2

- Lehigh Valley Rapid
Response
- Peace Pilgrimage
Cookout
- Peace Camp

Page 3

- Poetry, Action &
Solidarity
- Fairs & Festivals
- Art Raffle Drawing
- Join "Beating Heart"

Page 4

- The Struggle Shared

Page 5

- Bits & Pieces

Inserts

- Peace Camp Form



Weekly Peace Vigils

(Thursdays)

June 12, 19 & 26 & July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

4:00 – 5:00 pm

3rd & Wyandotte Sts., (south) Bethlehem

Ceasefire Israel-Gaza war. End the wars.

Witness for peace.

Call LEPOCO 610-691-8730 for more information.

Sat., July 26, 4-6 pm

Peace Cookout for
Peace Pilgrimage

(see page 2)

Sat., August 9, 3 pm

Hiroshima-Nagasaki
Observance

Rose Garden, Bethlehem

Young People Making Peace Summer

Day Camp: July 21-25, 2025

9 am to Noon Daily

Campers can still register and volunteers are still needed.

See page 1 Peace Camp flyer insert for information.