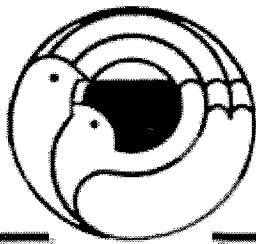


December
2008

Vol. 43 No. 7



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

National Anti-Death Penalty Conference in Harrisburg —

Activists from all over the United States who are working to end the abomination of capital punishment will be coming to Pennsylvania. The Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing (LV-CASK) is an affiliate of Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (PADP), the organization that will be hosting the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP) Annual Conference in Harrisburg from January 22 to January 25, 2009.

This is a wonderful opportunity to meet others who are committed to ending the practice of capital punishment and attend workshops on topics such as building organizations, educating the public, dealing with media, and many others. In addition, there will be film premieres and dinner speakers such as Sister Helen Prejean and Benjamin Jealous, the NAACP President.

Information about this empowering experience is posted on the web at www.NCADP.org. Registration can be done online. If you are planning to attend, please notify LEPOCO for car pooling. There are reduced room rates for conference attendees at the Holiday Inn Harrisburg East and cost can be further reduced through sharing rooms.

The conference is being held in Pennsylvania to highlight the fact that Pennsylvania has the fourth largest death row in the nation (and the largest in the Northeast) and to support the organizations in Pennsylvania that are working to abolish the death penalty by helping us realize that we are not alone in the struggle.

- David Rose

Support Peace Singers —

LEPOCO Peace Singers will perform for First Night, Bethlehem. That night, Wednesday, December 31st, at 8:30 pm, they will sing many of their favorites and some new pieces that call out for peace and justice, in the sanctuary of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley, 424 Center St., Bethlehem. First Night is now a project of ArtsQuest, and features a wide array of entertainment throughout the day and evening of New Years Eve. The Unitarian Church is one of many performance venues in the city. Friends and supporters of the LEPOCO Singers are invited/urged to attend and heartily join in all the sing-along opportunities. First Night admission buttons can be purchased on-line at www.christmascity.org, at the Banana Factory in south Bethlehem, or at the performance venues on First Night.

100 Days to Close Guantánamo —

Witness Against Torture and others have initiated a campaign to close Guantánamo and end torture. The campaign will start January 11th (the 7th anniversary of the first prisoners being taken to Guantánamo) with a nine-day public fast in Washington, DC, and continue there for the first 100 days of the Obama Administration with a daily presence outside the White House and an extensive schedule of lobbying, teach-ins, vigiling and direct action. The call is to close all U.S. detention centers worldwide that do not comply with international human rights. For more information see www.witness torture.org/100days. Contact LEPOCO (610-691-8730 or lepoco@fast.net) if you are interested in going to D.C. or in planning local activities.

Save the Date!!!

LEPOCO Annual Dinner

Saturday, March 14, 2009

Speaker: *Jennifer Harburg*

Human Rights Activist, Lawyer, and Author
of *Truth, Torture, and the American Way* (2005) and
*Searching for Everardo: A Story of Love, War,
and the CIA in Guatemala* (1997)

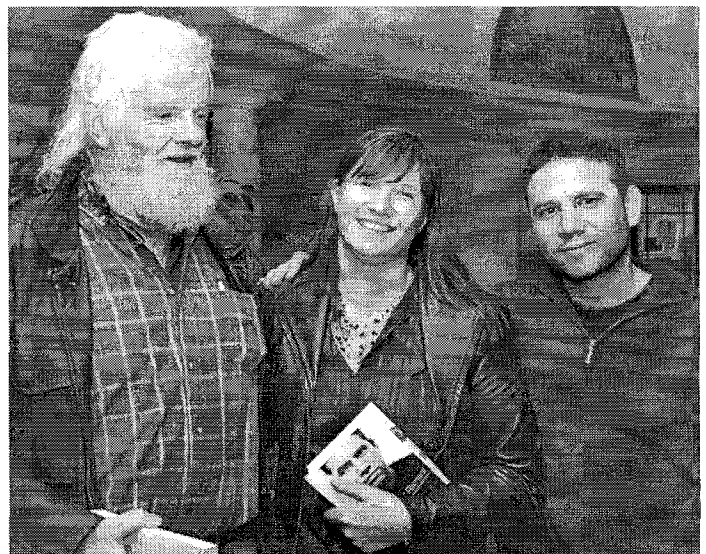


Photo by Judy Woodruff

Paul Fichter, Jenny Pacanowski, and Camilo Mejía share a special moment after Camilo's Bethlehem talk on November 10th. (See story on page 2.)

The War Comes Home With You

Monday night, November 10th, the Lehigh Valley Chapter 152 of Veterans For Peace and LEPOCO co-sponsored a talk by Camilo Mejía at the Wesley United Methodist Church in Bethlehem.

Mr. Mejía was born in Nicaragua and moved with his mother to Miami early in his life. Experiencing financial hardship he was susceptible to the military's inducements of a regular income and opportunity to attend college. He joined the Army, serving nine years and rising to the rank of Staff Sergeant. In 2003 his unit was deployed to Iraq. Due to events witnessed while in Iraq, Mr. Mejía began to sense uncertainty regarding the military mission there. Upon returning home he came to believe that the U.S. involvement in Iraq was of an immoral nature. While on leave in Florida he went AWOL, turning himself in five months later to face court martial and becoming the first known Iraq veteran to refuse re-deployment. Mr. Mejía was reduced in rank and sentenced to twelve months confinement. He is currently Board Chairperson of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and engaged in a speaking tour relating to his recently published book *Road from ar Ramadi*, copies of which he signed following the program.

Mr. Mejía was introduced by Louise Legun, coordinator of the local Veterans For Peace Chapter. Ms. Legun also spoke of the uncertainty of the course to be taken in Iraq by the incoming administration; hence the need to continue anti-war efforts including reaching out to various other groups.

Further introductory remarks were offered by Michael Hoffman, a Marine Corps Iraq veteran and a co-founder of IVAW. Mr. Hoffman spoke of the origins of IVAW and subsequent growth as the war has continued, represented in part by the existence of over fifty chapters globally.

Mr. Mejía opened his talk by speaking of his considerations regarding going to Iraq. Among those were the connections, if any, between Iraq and al Qaeda as well as the lack of a United Nations Security Council resolution sanctioning military intervention.

He then spoke of his mission once in Iraq at a prisoner of war (detainee) camp. Present at the camp were "spooks" or "ghost agents" -- individuals operating under U.S. authority within the facility who wore no identification and whose origins could not be determined. Iraqi detainees at the camp were at times treated like animals, including subjugation to sleep deprivation and mock executions.

Mr. Mejía next assumed infantry duties in the area of the Sunni city of Ramadi. He felt that his unit's primary mission was to seek out combat situations so their superiors could receive military decorations. In these pursuits there was often a lack of discrimination made between combatants and civilians, sometimes the latter

being detained and treated with brutality and cruelty. There further developed a disregard for the lives of non-combatants. Due to the dynamic nature and danger of this mission he found little time to evaluate the morality of what he was encountering during this period.

It was upon his return to the United States that Mr. Mejía began to reflect on his experience in Iraq. He made the determination that the war was in part oil driven as well as being of questionable morality. He determined that he would not go back to further service in Iraq. He went AWOL and was adopted by Amnesty International prior to his court martial which lasted three days, resulting in conviction. He noted that there is a 98% conviction rate in such cases.

In response to questions following his talk Mr. Mejía offered several observations among which were the similarities between his early years in Nicaragua and his time spent in Iraq. Also, he said there is in essence a socio-economic conscription preying on the financially disadvantaged. Military personnel with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are being redeployed to Iraq. Troops are now more likely to be questioning the purpose of the war. Further, it is difficult for people to relate to a war in which they have little stake. He perceives that there is an anti-war movement as opposed to an anti-military movement. And that a primary focus of IVAW is that of working with military personnel.

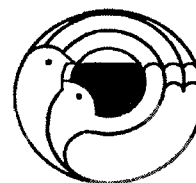
During his remarks Mr. Mejía noted that "you leave Iraq, but you bring the war home with you."

- Paul Fichter

Editor's Note: Videos of Camilo Mejía's talk can be viewed at www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom.

Newsletter of LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern
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The *LEPOCO Newsletter* is published 10 times a year by the Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern, a nonviolent, non-profit organization dedicated to peace in all forms.

Annual dues are:

Regular Member \$35
Limited Income Member \$ 5
Household Membership \$45
Supporting Member \$75

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

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

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

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

Popcorn & Politics

Friday, December 5th, 7 pm: *Body of War*

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

Set against the backdrop of the U.S. government's handling of the invasion of Iraq this acclaimed documentary tells the very personal story of Tomas Young, an injured Army veteran returning home from the war. Written and co-directed by Phil Donahue and Ellen Spiro, with original music by Eddie Vedder. 87 minutes. 2007.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.

Friday, January 2nd, 2009, 7 pm: *Encounter Point*

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

Documentary film that follows a former Israeli settler, a Palestinian ex-prisoner, a mourning Israeli mother, and a bereaved Palestinian brother who risk their lives and public standing in grassroots efforts to promote a nonviolent end to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Their journeys lead them to the unlikeliest places confronting hatred within their communities in an effort to overcome anger and grief.

Directed by Ronit Avni. 85 minutes. 2006.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.

Friday, February 6th, 2009, 7 pm: *Standard Operating Procedure*

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

Director Errol Morris (*The Thin Blue Line, The Fog of War*) poses the question, "Is it possible for a photograph to change the world?"

by focusing his lens on the incidents of abuse and torture of suspected terrorists at the hands of U.S. forces at the Abu Ghraib prison. 116 minutes. 2008.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.



49th Annual Christmas Peace Pilgrimage: Saturday, December 13

This annual peace walk began in 1960. All persons of any age are welcome to join the Pilgrimage, symbolic of the journey of Mary and Joseph. In the 10-mile trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and in the rally, the organizers seek to reflect the nonviolent life of Jesus Christ. While the walk does have a clear Christian foundation, participants always include people with a range of Christian perspectives, the non-religious, and a few people from other religions.

Walk with your family and friends and make new friends with others who seek a more peaceful world. Pilgrimage participants meet at the parking lot at 520 E. Broad Street, Bethlehem, before 10:45 am, for bus transport to Nazareth Moravian Church (on the Center Square) where the Pilgrimage begins. The walk follows Route 191 to Bethlehem.

Walkers join at any point along the way and support vehicles assist those not able to walk the entire way. Dress appropriately as the walk proceeds in sun, wind, rain or snow. Walkers will arrive at Christ United Church of Christ (Market &

Center Sts., Bethlehem) around 5:30 pm, for a light meal and to hear Janet Chisholm, Peace, Justice and Training Coordinator at Kirkridge Retreat and Study Center, speak on "Walking Away From Fear." For more information call Fran Dreisbach at 610-258-7313.

Holiday Open House:

Sunday, December 7, 1 - 4 pm —

LEPOCO will hold its annual open house on December 7th with items available during regular office hours for the couple of weeks following that. Items for sale include fair trade crafts and food from around the world through SERRV, a large collection of buttons, bumper stickers and other peace and justice items, holiday cards with meaningful messages, and 2009 peace calendars from the War Resisters League (a book calendar) with the theme, "The Path of Most Resistance: A U.S. Radical History Tour," and from the Syracuse Cultural Workers (a beautiful wall calendar). Be sure to stop by on December 7th or sometime before the holidays.

A Close Look at Free Trade with Colombia

Quietly, while the potluck dinner was being arranged, Freddy Caicedo placed black and white pictures around the Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse. They were a small part of the La Galería de Memoria Padre Tiberio Fernández Mafla, a memory gallery, which Peter Bearder from the Colombia Journal describes here:

"The Gallery is a space for the historical memory of crimes against humanity in southwest Colombia and is sustained by victims and human rights groups. Using artistic expression, testimonies, and photos, it aims to fight against impunity and for social justice."

It certainly isn't easy to look at the result of U.S. policy toward Colombia, and it was with a heavy heart that I stared down at my plate and finished eating. Witnessing the testimony, whether through pictures or speech, isn't easy. I thought it would get harder as the evening went on, as I became more informed, but I was wrong. As Freddy started his presentation, he began by saying, through a translator, that he is full of hope. His bright eyes and his smile made it easy to believe, and the weight on my heart began to lift as he went on.

Rather than try to paraphrase, or somehow capture the intricacies of his case against free trade, I point you towards the witness for peace website (www.witnessforpeace.org) where you can watch Freddy's message in its entirety by clicking on "WFP in Your Area: Mid-Atlantic." You will also find several media interviews done over the course of his tour.

After informing yourself, I hope that you come to the same conclusion I do. Trade agreements are not written in stone, they are not a foregone conclusion. The only reason they are in place is because we allow it. Exploit your privilege as a U.S. citizen and change your country's policy towards Colombia.

- Chris Spohn

Big Brother Is Watching Bethlehem?

Local cities are installing video surveillance cameras – but these are very different from the familiar fixed security cameras at ATMs and other high-risk locations. We don't know much about the systems here, so the Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC) sent letters to city councils calling for a public review process.

Systems installed in other cities sound like George Orwell's 1984. The system itself can 'decide' that your behavior is 'suspicious' and then automatically track you. Operators can zoom in on a person and watch him or her for no reason; read the letter you just opened or the label on your package; observe people entering and leaving a psychologist's or attorney's office – or the LEPOCO Peace Center (already covered by at least one camera); record participants in a protest; disable the blocking software and peer into windows or other private areas; use archived video for 'fishing expeditions' or release footage to other agencies, without a warrant. In

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addition, most studies show that these systems have little or no effect on crime; fixed-camera systems are generally less expensive and more effective.

Before allowing any – new or continuing – video surveillance of public areas, cities need to engage in a thorough process to educate the public about these systems and accept public comment and testimony. Contact the BORDC at rights@sustainlv.org, for more details or to help protect our civil liberties.

- Peter Crownfield

LEPOCO Phonathon In Progress

In late October all regular readers of this newsletter should have received the informative letter written by Nils Hovik seeking your financial support for LEPOCO. Some of you have already responded with generosity. Thank you! We hope many more will be able to respond with a pledge or a one-time donation.

In follow-up to the letter, volunteers began calling people on LEPOCO's mailing list on November 11. Calls will continue on selected evenings through December, with a few calling times to be scheduled in January. If you can help with calling, please contact LEPOCO at 610-691-8730. Your response to the fund appeal will save us a phone call.

United For Peace & Justice Assembly

United for Peace & Justice is holding its 4th National Assembly, December 12-14, near Chicago. Due to the Peace Pilgrimage and other commitments that weekend, we do not yet have a local representative able to attend. If you are interested in attending, please contact LEPOCO. More information about the Assembly can be found at www.unitedforpeace.org.

New Orleans Activists To Be Honored

On Friday, December 12th, at 7 pm, the War Resisters League will present their 43rd Peace Award to The Grassroots Movement to Save New Orleans at a gala in Brooklyn, New York. Musical guests will include Steve Earle, Stephanie McKay and Jan Bell & the Cheap Dates. Tickets are on a sliding scale \$25-\$50. For more information see www.warresisters.org.

Check out the
LEPOCO website
at www.lepoco.org

for a regularly updated Calendar of Events,
Newsletter Archive, Videos, and More.

and

Sign up for regular LEPOCO e-mail updates

by calling 610-691-8730 or

by sending a message to lepoco@fast.net

The Struggle Shared

You (members of the "reality based community") believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality. That's not the way the world works anymore. We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality - judiciously, as you will - we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's the way things will sort out. We're history's actors and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.

- Anonymous Bush aide to reporter Ron Suskind as quoted by Eric Alterman, "Reality Bites," *The Nation*, October 20, 2008

HEALTHCARE FOR PENNA. -

We in Pennsylvania are at an especially exciting threshold as we work to help shape the changes promised by the election of a new president, and the clear repudiation of current administration's version of reality.

Specifically, there is proposed legislation in Harrisburg which would provide Single Payer Universal Health Care for Pennsylvanians. The Family and Business Healthcare Security Act (Senate Bill 300 and House Bill 1660) is modeled on, and in response to, the Federal Medicare Improvement Act proposed by U.S. Congressional Rep. John Conyers (HR-676). It is designed to replace the grossly inefficient and insensitive "medical-industrial complex" system which currently insures only that 1.4 million Pennsylvanians are without health insurance. The federal bill offers funds for health care to states that come up with plans to cover their residents. Pennsylvania's initiative, being the first, could be a model for the rest of the country.

Pennsylvania's proposal would use existing state and federal funds, a 3% earnings tax (the premium) and a 10% business payroll tax to provide comprehensive coverage for all Pennsylvanians, regardless of age, income, or pre-existing conditions. It was introduced in the Senate by Senator Ferlo, and by Rep. Mandarino in the State House, and has gained bipartisan support from 50 sponsors. It has a coalition including the Lehigh Valley Council of Churches, the League of Women Voters, nursing organizations, unions, and the American

Medical Students Association actively lobbying for its passage.

Currently the legislation is in committee and sponsors are seeking an economic impact study as the next step. Your letters and phone calls to legislators in support of Senate Bill 300, and House Bill 1660, are what is needed to move Pennsylvania closer to Universal Healthcare. Informative brochures about the plan are at the LEPOCO Office. For more information, contact Ruth Livesay at 610-435-4261 or see www.healthcare4allpa.org.

Also, there will be a Healthcare for All Convention in Harrisburg on Saturday, December 6, 10 am to 3 pm, at the Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, 1280 Clover Lane. Norman Solomon, nationally-known media critic and leader in the movement for a single payer solution will be the keynote speaker. For more information or to register see the web site listed above.

LOCAL MAYORS TAKE ACTION AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE -

Almost a year ago, Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski, and Bethlehem's Mayor John Callahan joined Gov. Ed Rendell and other community leaders in the state for a day-long rally in Harrisburg to lobby for legislation to stop the flow of illegal handguns on city streets. The proposed legislation would have, among other things, required the reporting of lost and stolen handguns.

While Governor Rendell signed a bill into law in October which will stiffen penalties for certain weapons offenses, the reporting measure never made it out

House and Senate Judiciary Committees. The lack of support from Harrisburg prompted local mayors, including Pawlowski and Callahan, to propose identical legislation at the municipal level. In early October Allentown City Council approved an ordinance requiring residents to report lost or stolen guns or face fines of up to \$500, and/or 90 days in jail.

Pawlowski was one of seven Pennsylvania mayors who introduced identical legislation, citing their frustrations with inaction by Harrisburg. Lehigh County District Attorney, James Martin, urged Pawlowski to withdraw the bill, saying it was unenforceable, and violated the State Constitution. He went on record as saying that if the bill were passed by council, he would instruct city police to ignore it. Even Governor Rendell, one of the strongest advocates in the state for stronger gun laws, said, "I'm sorry to say that it's probably going to fail. I empathize with the mayors, but current legislation clearly preempts them from doing something on their own."

Supporters argue that the requirement to report stolen handguns is an important measure to target straw purchasers -- people who buy guns for felons who are prohibited from buying weapons themselves.

The deadlock in the state legislature illustrates the influence of the National Rifle Association, which records show, has spent over \$40,000 lobbying in Pennsylvania since 2002. "The reason we have not been successful is because lawmakers are afraid of the NRA, but it's a false fear," said Rendell. "I won two statewide elections without the support of the NRA." Support local initiatives to stop gun violence. Follow developments in your community, attend public council meetings, write letters to the editors, and show support for those who stand up to the NRA.

Source: *The Morning Call*.

- Jeff Vitelli

Bits & Pieces

The following message was received from Louise Legun, coordinator of Lehigh Valley VFP: **Lehigh Valley Veterans For Peace** send our sincere gratitude to all those who attended the talk given by Camilo Mejia on November 10th at Wesley United Methodist Church. As always the Veterans For Peace are grateful to LEPOCO whose support helped make the event possible as well as successful.

Next month's newsletter will include a report on the inspiring talk by **Fr. John Dear** at Lafayette College on November 17th. In the meantime you can view a video of the talk on LEPOCO's YouTube site, found at www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom.

In an open letter to "Brother Obama" the author **Alice Walker** wrote, ... *I would further advise you not to take on other people's enemies. Most damage that others do to us is out of fear, humiliation and pain. Those feelings occur in all of us, not just in those of us who profess a certain religious or racial devotion. We must learn actually not to have enemies, but only confused adversaries who are ourselves in disguise. It is understood by all that you are commander in chief of the United States and are sworn to protect our beloved country; this we understand, completely. However, as my mother used to say, quoting a Bible with which I often fought, "hate the sin, but love the sinner." There must be no more crushing of whole communities, no more torture, no more dehumanizing as a means of ruling a people's spirit. This has already happened to people of color, poor people, women, children. We see where this leads, where it has led...* Her letter was published in *The Nation* issue of 11/13/08 and also is available at www.commondreams.org.

The jury trial of **Tim Chadwick, Art Landis** and eight others who participated in the "Ghosts of the Iraq War" action in the U.S. Senate on March 12 was decided in late October. Charged with disrupting Congress, five, including Mr. Chadwick were found guilty, while Art and four others were acquitted. The case is under appeal due to alleged prosecutorial misconduct. For updates please see www.iraqpledge.org.

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Robert Dreyfuss writes in the December 1st issues of *The Nation*: **Make no mistake: Iraq will be a difficult problem for Obama.** *Bush has handed him a country still perched on the brink of civil war, and it could flare up again at any moment. If violence grows, Obama may pay a political price, but get out he must. Doing so will require boldness, decisive action and skillful regional and international diplomacy. Obama's cautious instincts may lead him to take the advice of those who urge him instead, to go slow on Iraq. Continue popular mobilization against the war is needed to counter that pressure. Much is made of the 10 million e-mail addresses the Obama campaign put together over the past two years, and how President Obama can use that list to mobilize support for his policies. But e-mail works in both directions, and those 10 million Obama backers ought to start composing e-mails right now to deluge the White House over Iraq. The same goes for the organized peace and justice movement...*

The **Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities** and the Coalition on Human Needs prepared a report, published in Noember, "Towards Shared Recovery: Congress Must Do More to Reverse the Recession." November. It says: *According to the Economic Policy Institute, the period since the 2001 recession is the first economic cycle on record with a decline in the employment rate. Astonishingly, it is also the only so-called recovery on record in which median income for families actually declined - from \$61,000 in 2000 to \$60,600 in 2007, adjusted for inflation. Instead of providing help to counter these losses, federal policies have worsened inequality through massive tax cuts for the rich and shrinking services for everyone else.* The report presents specific suggestions for government action on nutrition, jobs, child support and housing, all with the purpose of producing a "shared" recovery. You can find the report on-line..

Those who **support civil rights for members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community** gathered promptly after the passage of Proposition 8 in California. Proposition 8 had denied that community the legal right to marriage that had been granted earlier by the courts. Locally 200 people gathered in Allentown on November 16th to protest the Proposition 8 vote and call for an end to the misinformation that made its passage possible. The local gathering was organized by the Pennsylvania Diversity Network and the Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley.

Harvey Wasserman recently wrote at www.freepress.org : ... *GM has certainly proved itself unable to make cars that can compete while healing a global-warmed planet. So let's convert the company's infrastructure to churn out trolley cars, monorails, passenger trains, truly green buses. FDR forced Detroit to manufacture the tanks, planes and guns that won World War 2 (try buying a 1944 Chevrolet!). Now let a reinvented GM make the "weapons" to win the climate war and energy independence...*

Jeremy Scahill, author of *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, wrote a piece detailing the militaristic inclinations of many of the **Obama Administration's potential appointees**. The piece was posted at www.AlterNet.org on November 20th. Part of his conclusions follow: *Barak Obama campaigned on a pledge to bring change to Washington. "I don't want to just end the war," he said early this year. "I want to end the mindset that got us into war." ... Obama does have a chance to change the mindset that got us into war. More significantly, he has a popular mandate to forcefully challenge the militaristic, hawkish tradition of modern U.S. foreign policy. But that work would begin by bringing on board people who would challenge this tradition, not those who have been complicit in creating it and are bound to continue advancing it.*

SUPPORT LEPOCO!

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

NAME

PHONE # e-mail

ADDRESS

CITY ZIP

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

Bits & Pieces

On election night a little girl in Hardwick, New Jersey, made a "Victory" banner and with the help of her parents, Gary and Alina Grewal, placed it on display in their front yard. The next night it was stolen. The following evening the banner returned, except it was wrapped around a cross and on fire.

In response to this act of intolerance and intimidation the community came together over 300 strong for a **Unity March** from the township building to the Grewal residence on November 15th. A rally was held with speakers including local officials, representatives from the NAACP, and singer-songwriter Andy Rajeckas, whose song "Heal the World With Me" was performed by Gwynne Michaels.

The story made national news and was covered by LEPOCO in a video on our YouTube site found at www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom.

On November 18th Mimi Lang, Addison Bross, and Tim Chadwick, all Bethlehem residents, spoke at the City Council meeting about the LEPOCO Statement on the **Protection of the Rights of Immigrants** and the Links to U.S. Economic and Military Policy. Specifically, they called on Bethlehem to protect all its citizens by not inquiring about immigration status before providing resident services by police and other agencies. The next steps in this effort will be discussed at the Americas Solidarity Group meeting on December 2nd (see meetings schedule on this page). The LEPOCO Statement was included in the June-July issue of this newsletter and can be read on-line at www.lepoco.org on the media page.

For those who missed Raed Jarrar's enlightening talk at the Lehigh Valley campus of Penn State back on October 21st there's hope. You can check it out courtesy of the LEPOCO video team at www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom. The talk, in three parts, is titled "Why the Iraqis Want the U.S. Out of Iraq."

Anyone interested in helping to plan the meal and the program for the LEPOCO Annual Dinner in March can contact Janet Ney or the

LEPOCO Office. Help is welcomed. A meeting will be set for early January to begin the planning process.

Would you like to help get **LEPOCO Newsletters** distributed at your favorite coffee shop, library, or other public location? We need help getting the newsletter out. Please call 610-691-8730 if you can help with this effort.

The last issue of this newsletter included a request for **donations to help hurricane victims in Haiti and Cuba**, both countries having suffered unusually serious damage from storms this past summer. Seven people responded, donating a total of \$650, which was forwarded to Pastors for Peace and Haiti Reborn. If you missed the opportunity to be part of this collective donation, but you would still like to make a contribution, the addresses for these groups were on page 2 of the last newsletter or you can contact LEPOCO for the addresses.

On the day following the recent election **Brandywine Peace Community** sent the following statement:

*From hope springs possibilities, though not without the work of love and justice, not without struggle and care!
The first African-American is just two and half months from becoming president*

of the United States. What will come of the historic moment? What possibilities?

If this can happen, what about justice where people truly come first, and are the ones 'bailed-out,' housed, receiving full and decent health care, jobs and promises fulfilled?

If this can happen, what about the abolition of nuclear weapons – still numbering in the thousands, primarily in the hands of the U.S. military and remaining the cornerstone of the earth-threatening use of military power?

If this can happen, what about dislodging the predominant place of the institution of war in American (sic) life and the conversion of the economy of war as real steps toward challenging the U.S. assumption of imperial power in the world?

If this can happen, what about love of nature and care for the environment, reversing climate change, saying 'No!' to nuclear power, and 'yes!' to renewable energy sources?

"Yes, we can!" says the president-elect. But will we? Will the corporations and war profiteers, the CEOs and oil marketeers, let go so we truly can?

There's the struggle and now the possibilities.

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

Tues., December 2, 7 pm: Americas Solidarity Group meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Thurs., December 4, 6 pm: Nuclear Abolition Sisters meeting at the Olive Branch Restaurant, south Bethlehem.

Fri., December 5, 6 pm: Peace Singers rehearse at WDIY studios (across from LEPOCO in flatiron building). Also, Friday, December 12, and Sunday, December 21, at 7 pm, at home of Bob & Carmen Riggs, 1113 Prospect Ave., Bethlehem.

Mondays, December 8 & January 12, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center. All members and friends welcome at this monthly business meeting where the activities of all committees and working groups are reviewed.

Tues., December 9, 3 pm: Fundraising Committee meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Thursdays, December 11 & January 8, 7 pm: Lehigh Valley Veterans for Peace meetings at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Mon., December 15, 7 pm: Y&M Truth In Recruiting Committee meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

Tues., December 16, 8:30 am: Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

Thurs., December 18, 7 pm: Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

Please join in the meetings and work of these groups as you are able. If you want more information about any of these meetings or want to know the next meeting of the Association of Students Advocating Peace (ASAP) or the Newsletter Planning Committee, please call the Peace Center at 610-691-8730. For a regularly updated calendar of events and meetings schedule please see www.lepoco.org.



LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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Bits & Pieces
Meetings...

Weekly Peace Vigils

*There is a new administration starting in January in
Washington, DC, but the wars continue so
the witnessing for peace must continue.
Will you be there?*

Bethlehem: 4-5 pm, Thursdays
3rd & Wyandotte Sts., south Bethlehem
Contact: Vince Stravino 610-216-8103

Allentown: Noon-1 pm, Fridays
Federal Courthouse, 5th & Hamilton Sts.
Contact: Rev. John Clint Fowler 610-746-5013

4-6 pm, Fridays
PA National Guard Armory, 15th & Allen Sts.
Contact: Allentown Armory Activists

Easton: 10-11 am, Saturdays
Centre Square

Contact: Reggie Regrut 908-859-5632

Please attend as often as you are able!

LEPOCO Peace Singers

Wednesday, December 31, 8:30 pm

First Night Bethlehem
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley
(Sanctuary)
(see page 1)

Holiday Open House

Sunday, December 7

1 - 4 pm

LEPOCO Peace Center
(see page 3)

Nazareth to Bethlehem

Peace Pilgrimage

Saturday, December 13

(see page 3 for logistics)

Featured Speaker:

Janet Chisholm