

February-March  
2013

Vol. 48 No. 2



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



## The "Notorious" M. Benjamin to Speak at Annual Dinner

*Convivial: relating to, occupied with, or fond of...feasting, and good company < a convivial gathering >.*

We'll have one, if you reserve your place for our LEPOCO Annual Dinner, on Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup>. Where our speaker will be -- yes -- the now-notorious Medea Benjamin, Co-founder of Code Pink, challenger of war-makers, torturers, murder by drone, and the NRA.

Life brings us changes, and this time we gather for the Dinner at a new place: First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem, at 2344 Center Street. Gather at 5:00 pm, for appetizers and music, then dinner at 5:30 pm, and the program to follow.

Following in our tradition of Dinner speakers who are courageous, eloquent, funny, ironic and wanted (to shut up) by the authorities, we get to hear the incomparable Medea Benjamin. Her organization of 'pink' co-conspirators speaks to injustice, finding ways to grab precious theatrical seconds of media time from the reigning powers, for the 99%. Did you see Code Pink's banner, thrust in front of the recent NRA press conference, reading "NRA Killing Our Children"? Or the pictures of pink-shirted Code members surrounded by Afghan villagers who lost precious children to drones, listening, bringing friendship and some small solace to that beleaguered place? I could go on, but you'll hear all about it from Medea, on March 16<sup>th</sup>.

Menu: Our crew of creative LEPOCO cooks (we still need volunteers for set-up and in the kitchen for part of that Saturday) will be making the perennial vegetarian feast, this time featuring Pasta Rafael, two lovely salads, a veggie side and garlic bread. And, of course, dessert and tea/coffee.

Generous local artists and art organizations have donated prizes for our Art Raffle (see enclosed

tickets). As usual, there are several levels of dinner tickets, so those of varying means can attend. (See registration form below.)

**Remember: this is our annual major fund-raiser.** Reserve now, and bring a friend to widen our circle. Our Dinner experience promises to bring us light amidst some dark times. It could even renew our yearning -- and action -- for justice and healing. Come.

- Kathryn Hoffman

### Annual Dinner Tickets:

\$30 - Regular Adult; \$75 - Special Supporter;  
\$10 - Limited Income Adult / Child;  
\$10 - Program-only, regular;  
\$5 - Program-only, limited income

*Dinner tickets by advance reservation only.  
Program-only tickets available at the door.*

### Return Coupon

**LEPOCO Annual Dinner:  
Saturday, March 16, 2013**

**First Presbyterian Church  
2344 Center St., Bethlehem**

*(park in South Parking Lot & enter by south "Office" door)  
(Pre-dinner music at 5 pm; Dinner at 5:30 pm)*

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_. Please reserve \_\_\_\_ tickets for:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Mail tickets to:

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Hold tickets at door.

**Return to: LEPOCO, 313 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Bethlehem, PA 18015,  
before 5 pm, Wednesday, March 13, 2013.**

# The Struggle Shared

*It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more who is poor.*

- Seneca

**A POOR MAN'S PRESIDENT** - The typical picture of world leaders includes lush palaces, private jets and yachts, armies of staff, exclusive banquets. By contrast, Jose Mujica, President of Uruguay since 2010, has made a point of embracing austerity. He lives in the modest home he has shared with his wife on the outskirts of Montevideo, for years, where they grew chrysanthemums for sale in local markets. He donates 90% of his monthly salary to a program for the poor. His entire staff consists of his security detail: two plain-clothes officers parked on the dirt road near his house.

In the 1970s Mujica was a leader of the Tupamaros, the urban guerilla group memorialized in the Costa-Gavras film, "State of Siege." When the Tupamaros were subdued in 1972, Mujica was captured, and he spent the next 14 years in prison. Upon his release he decided to start again by entering politics. Elected to Parliament allied with the Broad Front coalition of leftist parties and centrist social democrats, he was named minister of Livestock, Agriculture, and Fisheries in 2004. He won the presidential office by a wide margin in 2009. "For democracy to function properly," he argues, "elected leaders should be taken down a notch...we have done everything possible to make the presidency less venerated." He embraces a long tradition of leaders in Uruguay, citing Jose Batle y Ordonez, president in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who said, "There should be no distance between the president and any neighbor."

Under Mujica's administration Uruguay has emerged as a contender for Latin America's most liberal nation, with sweeping abortion rights legislation, sharp increases in the use of renewable energy, and proposals to legalize same-sex marriage and marijuana. Although

Uruguay's economy continues to grow at an annual 3.6%, Mujica laments that such growth is a problem for our civilization because of the demands on the planet's resources.

Not everyone in Uruguay agrees with his policies. As his popularity in the polls has declined, one of his own neighbors says he should go back to growing flowers.

Source: *New York Times*, January 6, 2013.

## **HURRICANE VICTIMS RISE UP**

Now, more than three months after beach communities in New York and New Jersey were inundated by the rising tides of Sandy, the people still face health and safety concerns of epidemic proportions. In one instance, hundreds of elderly and disabled residents of a nursing facility in Rockaway, NY, were evacuated to a Rehab Center in Brooklyn where they were still sleeping on cots in cramped, oppressive conditions two months later. The Rockaways has a concentration of marginalized people: poor people living with AIDS, former prison inmates, and a lack of healthcare services. Of the Rockaway's 10,000 residents, many were still lacking heat and electricity months after Sandy, and are faced with another festering crisis: mold lurching up the walls, crawling across ceilings, covering mattresses in fuzzy green slime. Although New York's Mayor Bloomberg had announced a Rapid Repair Program, residents were increasingly frustrated by its glacial pace.

Organized by veterans of Occupy Wall Street, some 16,000 Occupy Sandy volunteers have stepped in to set up health clinics, deliver food, advise residents on navigating bureaucratic avenues for assistance, and pick up hammers and help rebuild. It hasn't been enough. As 2012 came to a close, and winter set in, the network moved from relief to

resistance. One Saturday in December, about a hundred storm displaced residents met in a shopping mall, and began walking through the battered streets of Rockaway to draw media attention to their demand that their neighborhoods be made livable by the end of December. On December 15<sup>th</sup>, 400 people responded to Occupy Sandy's call to action, converging on Mayor Bloomberg's Upper East Side mansion to remind the city of their plight and deliver the December 31<sup>st</sup> ultimatum. Some people have charged Mayor Bloomberg with outsourcing the Sandy Reconstruction to the rag-tag band of revolutionaries that he evicted from Zucotti Park. For their part, Occupy Sandy activists keep pushing for a recovery that meets not only the daily needs of residents, but looks down the road to sustainability and climate adaptation in the event that one of Sandy's sisters blows through. Check out Occupy Sandy at [www.interoccupy.net/occupy\\_sandy](http://www.interoccupy.net/occupy_sandy).

- Jeff Vitelli

## Newsletter of LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

313 West Fourth Street

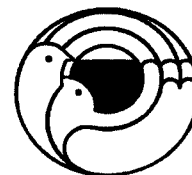
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The LEPOCO Newsletter is published eight times a year by the Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern, a nonviolent, non-profit organization dedicated to peace in all forms.

### Annual dues are:

Regular Member .....	\$35
Limited Income Member .....	\$ 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, Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, Jeff Vitelli.

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

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Sarah Andrew, Terry Briscoe, Addison Bross, Sheila Clever, robert Daniels II (ex-officio), Janet Goloub, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Janet Ney, Kelly Quain, Susie Ravitz, Stefan Rogers, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio).

# Popcorn & Politics

Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, 7 pm

## "Into the Abyss"

A **Popcorn & Politics** Film projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center. Conversations with death row inmate Michael Perry and those affected by his crime serve as an enlightening examination of why people – and the state – kill. Directed by Werner Herzog whose previous films include "Cave of Forgotten Dreams," "Grizzly Man," and "Aguirre: The Wrath of God." This film is being presented on International Death Penalty Abolition Day which marks the occasion in 1847 when the U.S. state of Michigan became the first English-speaking territory in the world to abolish capital punishment.

106 minutes. 2011.

*Please bring a snack or beverage to share.*

Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, 7 pm

## "Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land"

A **Popcorn & Politics** Film projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center. This documentary provides a comparison of U.S. and international media coverage of the crisis in the Middle East, zeroing in on how structural distortions in U.S. coverage have reinforced false perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The film exposes how the foreign policy interests of U.S. political elites – oil, and a need to have a secure military base in the region, among others – work in combination with Israeli public relations strategies to exercise a powerful influence over how news from the region is reported.

Directed by Sut Jhally and Bathsheba Ratzkoff. 80 minutes. 2004.

*Please bring a snack or beverage to share.*



## Local Peace Week Coming in April

This spring LEPOCO is organizing "Peace Week," as an alternative approach to the youth counter-militarization tactics employed in previous years. Peace Week aims to expose high school students to various peace-oriented careers, academic study programs, and post-graduation options besides enlisting in the military. Specifically, Peace Week planners are looking into academic institutions with Peace Studies or Conflict Resolution programs and national/international volunteer programs such as the Peace Corps. In participating high schools, LEPOCO will facilitate presentations by representatives of these various organizations and programs in social studies classrooms or in panel-like discussions. Thus far, LEPOCO, through the work of Sarah Andrew, Brittany Hendricks, and Holly Fuhrman, has been in contact with several area high schools, universities with peace studies programs, and other service or peace-oriented organizations that are extremely receptive to participating in Peace Week events. We hope that Peace Week will provide a successful and non-alienating forum where counter-militarism options and education can be discussed and dispersed in future years.

- Brittany Hendricks

## The New Book Club

The First Tuesday Book Club will meet on March 5<sup>th</sup>, at their new location: Wegman's (off Route 512, north of Rt. 22, in the Bethlehem area). The meeting will start at 6 pm, so grab a bite to eat or a drink and join them in the upstairs dining room.

The book for March is *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death & Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*, by Katherine Boo. In this book a bewildering age of global change and inequality is made human.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> the group will discuss *The Race for What's Left: The Global Scramble for the World's Last Resources*, by Michael Klare. Klare describes how corporate empires have decided to rip apart the planet in one last burst of profiteering.

All are welcome, LEPOCO members and not! One doesn't need to attend every month. Join again if you haven't attended in awhile or join in for the first time.

To learn more about the Book Club call Mimi Lang at 610-866-2407.

# Steering Committee Nominations

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LEPOCO's Steering Committee plans and provides leadership for the Action Meetings, held the second Monday of the month (these meetings are open to all members and friends of the organization). The Committee makes decisions between monthly meetings and handles finances, personnel, and other organizational issues. The election for this year's Steering Committee will be completed at the Annual Dinner. (See balloting instructions below.)

Sarah Andrew, Terry Briscoe, Sheila Clever, Janet Goloub, Stefan Rogers, and Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer) will continue serving their two-year Steering Committee terms that began in 2012.

We are grateful to all these LEPOCO members (new to and returning to the Steering Committee) who, as Sheila Clever put it in the December issue of this Newsletter, are the "best people on the planet" convening at 313 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St. "once a month to strategize how to nonviolently build a sane and just world." Here are the nominees for 2013. (Please note the line on the ballot below where you can note your interest or suggest others to serve in this capacity.)

Martha Christine of Bethlehem has been a member of LEPOCO for over 20 years, participating in many activities including being a faithful member of the Peace Singers. An elementary school teacher she is also an active member of the Lehigh Valley Quaker Meeting, Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife, and community gardening in Bethlehem. She led the effort for Bethlehem to be certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat.

Julius Iwantsch of Bethlehem has been a LEPOCO member since the mid-1970s. He works as a design drafts-person, working mainly with municipal clients. His interests include U.S. military involvement, military service alternatives for young people, and bringing this country's reputation up to what it should be -- through change. He enjoys hiking, biking, skiing, and home renovations. He has been co-treasurer for over 12 years.

Monica McAgnon of Easton has been active with LEPOCO since 1998, first with the MidEast Peace Committee and later with the Nuclear Abolition Sisters (NAS). Her focus is on reducing nuclear weapons and mini-nukes, and ending the use of drones. With the NAS, she also enjoys planning the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

commemorative event. She has participated in actions to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, actions to end the death penalty in PA, the annual Bike/Walk-a-thon, the annual dinner, among others. For over 15 years she has been an adjunct professor of critical reading at area community colleges, and more recently, a part-time language and intercultural communication consultant for Global Arena.

Dan Miller of Coopersburg has been a member of LEPOCO for over 20 years. Dan and his family have been mainstays of Peace Camp since the 1990s -- Dan and Ronnie Arena (his wife) as leaders and helpers, and their three young adult daughters were first campers and now are also leaders and helpers. In 1977, Dan co-founded the Perkiomen Valley Academy, a private day treatment program servicing Montgomery County young people and their families. He worked at this alternative school for disadvantaged and emotionally disturbed teenagers for 35 years. Dan is a beekeeper and coached youth sports in Lehigh County for over 20 years.

Janet Ney of Allentown has served as an at-large Steering Committee member for ten years. She has been facilitating the Annual Dinner for several years, and is a member of the LEPOCO Peace Singers. She previously served on the National Committee of the War Resisters League for ten years. Janet is employed by the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, having worked for the organization for 29 years. She is an active member of the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown and volunteers for the Presbytery of Lehigh.

Susie Ravitz of Easton was a founding member of LEPOCO and has been a faithful member of the Steering Committee for six terms. She is a mainstay of the Nuclear Abolition Sisters. Her recent peace work has included participation in an Interfaith Peace Builders delegation to Israel/Palestine. Retired from her work at Valley Youth House and Art's Toy Manufacturing Company, she is on the Board of the Easton Area Neighborhood Center and travels a lot to visit her children and grandchildren from California to Israel - the youngest being twin granddaughters in Brooklyn.

## Election Ballot

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At-Large Steering Committee Members (vote for five):

Martha Christine \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term)

Monica McAgnon \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term)

Co-Treasurer (vote for one):

Julius Iwantsch \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term)

Dan Miller \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term)

Janet Ney \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term)

Susie Ravitz \_\_\_\_  
(2-year term)

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

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This ballot can be cast at the Annual Dinner on Saturday, March 16, 2013, by 6:15 pm, or by mail to arrive at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Bethlehem, PA 18015, by Thursday, March 14, 2013.

# Bits & Pieces

☪ **Tax Day is April 15<sup>th</sup>**, a Monday this year. The Nuclear Abolition Sisters will be organizing leafleting at local post offices on Tax Day using the War Resisters League flyer to talk about how so much of the federal budget goes to Pentagon spending. If you can help, please contact LEPOCO (610-691-8730).

For anyone who would like a short primer on the issues before they meet the public outside a post office (or anyone who would like to join a discussion on the issue), there will be a **preparatory meeting on Wednesday, April 10**, at 6:30 pm, at the home of Mimi Lang, 1526 Oakland St., Bethlehem

☪ **Tommy Sands**, the famous musician from Northern Ireland, will give a lecture on "Arising from the Troubles," at Lehigh University on Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, at 2 pm, and perform at Godfrey Daniels on Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, at 8 pm. His visit is sponsored by the Celtic Cultural Alliance, Godfrey Daniels and Lehigh University. For more information contact Silagh White at 610-758-5774.

☪ Weekly informal gatherings practicing **Tai Chi and Qigong** are held at Trinity Episcopal Church (44 E. Market St.) Bethlehem, (2<sup>nd</sup> floor chapel), Saturdays, at 10 am. This peaceful hour spent in contemplative movement can help reduce stress and anxiety and increase flexibility and balance. Sessions are free and open to the public. Donations go to the church's soup kitchen. For more info. contact: Tom Ardizzone at [lvtaichi@gmail.com](mailto:lvtaichi@gmail.com). For the last two years Tom has led short Tai Chi sessions before the LEPOCO Bike/Walkathon.

☪ You can sign a letter calling on the government of Colombia to apologize to the **peace community of San José de Apartadó** for the attacks, both verbal and physical, on that community. The Constitutional Court of Colombia recently ordered the Colombian government to make a formal retraction of

all stigmatizing comments made against the peace community in the aftermath of the 2005 massacre that was apparently planned and carried out by army/paramilitary actors. Eight community members were killed – children and peasants. You can read more and sign the statement at [www.forusa.org](http://www.forusa.org).

☪ LEPOCO has signed a statement circulated by Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space calling on the U.S. and South Korean governments "**to stop the costly and provocative war games and take pro-active steps to deescalate the current tensions on the Korean peninsula.**" The statement urges the U.S. to "turn to diplomacy for common and human security rather than militarization..."

☪ We can urge our elected representatives to co-sponsor **H.R. 198, a bill introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee** to repeal the Authorization for use of Military Force (AUMF), the congressional resolution that launched the "war on terror." Rep. Lee cast the only vote against the AUMF in 2001. H.R. 198 would repeal the AUMF because Congress is constitutionally bound to decide matters of war and cannot

legally hand off that responsibility to its executive, and because Congresswoman Lee's somber predictions, when she stood alone against the ensuing madness, have proved to be right: the Authorization has been used and abused to an ever greater extent as an aggrandizement of executive power and a justification for the erosion of our civil liberties.

(Source: [www.rootsaction.org](http://www.rootsaction.org).)

☪ **The Network for Stopping Drone Spying and Warfare** is planning April Days of Action. The actions will focus on drone manufacturers, drone research and training sites, and drones bases. There is finally some coverage of the terrible toll drone attacks are taking around the world, including a story on the U.S. drone base in Djibouti, Africa, (*The Morning Call*, 1/27/13) and a follow-up op-ed by Nancy Tate, "Consider Moral Implications of U.S. Drone Attacks," (*The Morning Call*, 2/11/13).

☪ **The next issue of the LEPOCO Newsletter** will be filled with many reports including those on the Annual Dinner, and those on recent speakers at local colleges: Noam Chomsky, Sister Simone Campbell and Gershon Baskin.

## MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...ETC.

- Sunday, February 24, 7 pm: Peace Singers** rehearse at home of Nancy Johnston, Easton. Also: Sundays, March 3, at Bob Riggs'; and March 10, at Marcie Lightwood & Rick Weaver's; and Thursday, March 14 (time and place TBA).
- Wednesdays, February 27 & March 27, 7 pm: Peace Camp 2013 Planning Committee** meetings at LEPOCO Peace Center.
- Friday, March 1, 1 pm: Newsletter Planning Meeting** at the Peace Center.
- Mondays, March 11 & April 8, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting** at the Peace Center. All members & friends are welcome at this business meeting where the organization's activities are reviewed.
- Thursdays, March 14 & April 11, 6 pm: Lehigh Valley Chapter of Veterans for Peace** meeting with pizza at LEPOCO Peace Center.
- Tuesday, March 19, 3:30 pm: Nuclear Abolition Sisters** meeting at Panera Bread Café (Rt. 33 & Freemansburg Ave.).
- Monday, March 25, 12:15 pm: Americas Solidarity Group** meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.
- Tuesday, March 26, 3:30 pm: Bike-Walkathon Planning Committee** meeting at Peace Center.
- Tuesday, April 9, 3:30 pm: Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing** meeting at 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, please call LEPOCO at 610-691-8730. For a regularly updated calendar of events and meetings please see [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org).*



# LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

313 W. Fourth St., Bethlehem, PA 18015  
610-691-8730 [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net)  
Fax: 610-691-8904 [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org)

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Rita Corbin

## LEPOCO Annual Dinner

### Saturday, March 16

Featured Speaker:

## Medea Benjamin

(See page 1 for more info. & reservation form.)

### Monthly Peace Vigil

*Our wars continue. Please help witness for peace.*

4:30-5:30 pm

Second Thursdays: March 14 & April 11

3<sup>rd</sup> & Wyandotte Sts., Bethlehem

Contact: Vince Stravino 610-216-8103 / Tom Ulrich 610-882-1136

Cut the War Profiteers  
& Oil Oligarchs!

Protect Programs for the People  
(Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid,  
Education, Unemployment, Clean Energy,  
Health Care)!

Tax the Richest, the Plutocrats,  
the Wall St. Gamblers,  
the Monopoly Corporations!

**1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday Book Club: 6 pm, March 5**

**Discussing: *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*  
by Katherine Boo**

(See page 3 for more info.)

Popcorn & Politics at LEPOCO

**"Into the Abyss"**

**1<sup>st</sup> Friday Film: March 1, 7 pm**

(See page 3 for more info.)