



RABBI MICHAEL LERNER SPEAKS AT NJPA DINNER ON PUSHING OBAMA TOWARD PEACE



Rabbi Michael Lerner

At NJPA's 52nd annual dinner, Rabbi Michael Lerner spoke to the hope shared by many people that the new Obama administration will lead the U.S. away from the war, torture and human rights abuses that characterized George W. Bush's eight years in office.

Newark-born Lerner, now of California, who founded *Tikkun* magazine and the Network of Spiritual Progressives, was honored with the Dorothy Eldridge Peacemaker Award. Lerner reminded the more than 200 people assembled in Regency House in North Pompton Plains that

electing Obama, a good man with noble intentions, is not enough if his actions are to live up to his message of change and peace. We must continue to push him in the direction of our hopes and not our fears, in Iraq and Afghanistan and on nuclear disarmament.

Lerner circulated a full-page ad scheduled to run in the *Washington Post* the week after the dinner that was part of his plan for supportive feedback for Obama. He also led us in a sing-along of "Down By the Riverside."

Other highlights were a videotaped greeting from Congressman Dennis Kucinich, a staunch advocate for peace and supporter of Peace Action, the presentation of the Sylvia and Oscar Ackelsberg Peace Award to the Bergen and Essex County chapters of Military Families Speak Out and recognition of young activist Nadia Akbar as Peace Action Person of the Year.

BOARD MEMBER ED LEWINSON ON SERVING TIME

Long-time board member Ed Lewinson served time behind bars as a federal prisoner of conscience in 2008. His crime was trespassing on the grounds of Fort Benning in Georgia to protest a U.S. military run-program that instructs Latin American soldiers in how to abuse human rights with torture techniques. Once known as the School of the Americas, it now goes by the Orwellian moniker of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Ed, a retired Seton Hall history professor, has been stepping over the line and risking arrest for years as a participant in a massive demonstration every November by groups trying to shut down the school. On three prior occasions, the
(cont'd on p.2)

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, November 7, Noon

NJPA's 52nd Annual Soup Lunch

with award-winning journalist **DAHR JAMAIL**

Please note date is one week earlier than usual.

For more information, call 973-259-1126

New Jersey Peace Action and the New Jersey Peace Action Education Fund—founded in 1957—are committed to working through grassroots citizen action to abolish nuclear weapons, end domestic and international weapons trafficking, demilitarize the federal budget and teach non-violent conflict resolution.



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CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE

Though President Barack Obama came to office with a promise to close Guantanamo Prison, the group Witness Against Torture went ahead with its “100 Days Campaign to Close Guantanamo and End Torture.” They launched the campaign on Jan. 11, seven years after the first detainees arrived at Guantanamo, and officially started it on Inauguration Day, Jan. 20. NJPA Board member Karen Long took part in the Jan. 11 day of action, wearing an orange jumpsuit and black hood in solidarity with the detainees. The campaign culminated with a day of action on April 30—rallying, marching, and civil disobedience to call for the immediate closing of Guantanamo, as well as an end to indefinite detention, torture, and rendition by the U.S.

On Feb. 20, the NJPA Peace Education Committee sponsored a screening of *Taxi to the Dark Side*, which graphically depicts the torture practices used at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib in Iraq and Bagram Prison in Afghanistan. The following week, NJPA members Long, Ed Lewinson, Nancy Taiani, Jean Blum, Lorna Henkel, and Anna Nelson traveled to Washington to join the vigil. While in DC, they made lobbying visits to NJ’s two U.S. senators and Rep. Bill Pascrell. Each day, dressed in orange jumpsuits and black hoods, the group held a 1-1/2 hour vigil in front of the White House. They broke silence only when organizer Carmen Trotta handed them a cell phone to speak to a White House operator and plead for release of the Uighurs, 17 Asian Muslims who have been held for seven years, though not convicted of or even charged with any crime.

As the campaign drew to an end in April, the Bush Administration’s sanction of torture was revealed and shortly after the campaign ended, Obama again spoke about closing the prison. Recently, there has been debate about releasing some of the prisoners into U.S. prisons and plans to close Guantanamo met with a setback when the U.S. Senate voted in May against providing the funds necessary to do so.

To make sure Guantanamo is shut down, we must keep up the pressure with actions like the 100 Days Campaign that will let Congress know we will not stand for torture and endless imprisonment without crime or even charges. We must help President Obama stand his ground and call for those who implemented these inhumane policies to be held accountable.

LEWINSON, cont’d



judge would not jail him because he is blind. That was discriminatory, said Ed. So in January 2008, the judge fined him \$500 and sentenced him to 90 days, which he served from April 3 to July 1. Bob Call, who served time for the same deed in 2007, drove Ed to the prison, located in Elkton, Ohio.

Once there, Ed faced more discrimination. Not wanting to deal with a blind man, prison staff put him in the “hole,” where problem prisoners are isolated 23 hours a day, 24 hours on weekends. Pressure from School of the Americas Watch got him put back with the general population. But he developed diarrhea from prison food and was sent back to the hole for the rest of his sentence.

Ed, who passed the hours reading books and magazines in Braille, says he became very depressed at times. But he was back at Fort Benning last November and plans to return this fall in the hope that someday, he and others will no longer need to.

NJ Peace Action's Priorities for 2009

1. Helping President Obama keep his peaceful campaign promises:

Working toward a nuclear weapons free world; Ending the war in and occupation of Iraq; Negotiating with Iran to prevent nuclear proliferation by and military action against Iran; Closing Guantanamo Bay Prison; Ending all U.S.-sanctioned torture and extraordinary rendition; Upholding the U.S. Constitution; as well as breaking his promise to proceed with a troop surge in Afghanistan and expanding the war into Pakistan.

For more on each promise listed above, plus an Open Letter/Petition to President Obama, please visit our website at www.njpeaceaction.org. Please download, duplicate and gather signatures.

2. Strengthening our infrastructure. (Our 2009 Case for Support explains how we intend to get there.)

3. Increasing outreach to newly engaged activists through:

- a) the use of social networking sites like Facebook: New Jersey Peace Action (<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/home.php?ref=home>) and Students for a World Without Nuclear Weapons (<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=74041988450&ref=ts>)
- b) increasing the interactive nature of our website (www.njpeaceaction.org).



Legislative Action Alert



**Please call your U.S. Senators and Congressmen to urge action on these bills.
Toll-free numbers for Congressional switchboard: 800-517-5696**

Afghanistan: We need to continue pushing for **H.R. 2404**, which requires an Afghanistan exit strategy before the end of 2009. It now has up to 90 co-sponsors, including Reps. Donald Payne, Steven Rothman and Rush Holt from New Jersey. We need to persuade others to support it.

Close the School of the Americas: The Latin America Military Training Review Act, H.R. 2567, would suspend operation of the School of the Americas as a first step toward shutting it down for good. Introduced by Rep. James McGovern, D-Mass, on May 21, it has 49 co-sponsors, including Rush Holt and Steven Rothman. One section of the bill calls for an investigation of human rights abuses at the School.

Close Guantanamo: The Lawful Interrogation and Detention Act, S. 147 and H.R. 374, would require closing the prison at Guantanamo within a year of enactment. Those now imprisoned there would have to be charged with a crime and moved to a U.S. prison, transferred to an international tribunal authorized by the United Nations, transferred to their home country consistent with U.S. and international law and the Convention Against Torture, or released. It would also limit use of certain interrogation techniques, prohibit interrogation by private contractors and require notifying the Red Cross when individuals are detained. There are no New Jersey sponsors.

Stop Abuse of Power: Support **H.R. 104**, to establish the **National Commission on Presidential War Powers and Civil Liberties** to investigate extraordinary rendition, domestic warrantless electronic surveillance and other abuses by the Bush administration. Sponsored by Rep John Conyers, D-MI, it has 48 co-sponsors but so far only one from New Jersey, Rush Holt.

Nuclear Weapons: Obama has spoken of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. To help make that a reality, write or call your Senators and Congressman and ask "how are you going to help the President get a world free of nuclear weapons?"

Iran: Support negotiations with Iran and oppose bills and amendments for sanctions. For details, e-mail Madelyn Hoffman at nj_peaceaction@yahoo.com

Yes! I want to be part of NJ Peace Action's work for real change in America! Sign me up!

I will help with a contribution of

\$1,000 Benefactor

\$100 Supporter

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\$52 Dollar-a-Week for Peace

\$250 Supporter

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Count on me as a **SUSTAINER** to help advance work of NJ Peace Action with a pledge of \$_____ for the year

Please bill my credit card: _____ monthly _____ quarterly

Contribute \$100 or more and receive bulletins with legislative alerts, a local calendar of events and (pick one):

earth peace flag DVD of Rabbi Michael Lerner at our Annual Dinner w/special message from Rep. Dennis Kucinich

Name _____

Address _____

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For a tax-deductible contribution, please make your check payable to NJ Peace Action Education Fund (NJPAEF).



**New Jersey Peace Action
Person of the year
NADIA AKBAR**

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Quote for the Season . . .

So, those who say “Don't criticise Obama, because he is such a decent person, so smart, and obviously wants the right things” are missing the point. Obama needs to be pushed by the progressive world in order to be able to be who he wants to be. He needs our support in this way.

Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor, *Tikkun Magazine*
co-founder, Network of Spiritual Progressives
Writing in the *Guardian* of London on June 3, 2009

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- June 25, Thurs. **Torture Accountability Action Day** at John Marshall Park, Washington, D.C. For more info, 9 am-3 pm contact Carol Gay of U.S. Labor Against the War, www.carolgay747@aol.com, 732-785-1503
- June 26, Fri. **Seeking Truth, Seeking Justice.** Interfaith Service of Prayer Commemorating Victims of Torture Public Witness, Union Square Park, NYC followed by procession to 15th St. Friends Meeting House 15 Rutherford Pl. for Interfaith Service. Sponsored by Metro New York Religious Campaign Against Torture. Contact Mark Hallinan, S.J., 212-774-5500 or hallinan@nysj.org.
2:30 pm
- July 4 4th of July parade in Montclair. March with NJPA. Meet at 10 a.m. Call office for details.
- July 16 **Saving Lives Task Force Meeting** to plan for visit of Hibakusha in August.
7:30 pm At the First Memorial Presbyterian Church in Dover
- Aug. 9-11 **Events marking 64th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**, including testimony of Hibakusha (survivors of the bombings). Contact NJPA office at 973-259-1126 for more information or to discuss holding a program with the Hibakusha.
Aug. 9 at 1 pm Morristown Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Aug. 10 at 7 pm Lakeland Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Wayne
Aug. 11 at 7 pm Islamic Center of Morris County, Rockaway, New Jersey
- Aug. 15-16 **Clearwater Festival.** Volunteers needed to table in Asbury Park. Please call NJPA office.
- Aug. 31 **Rutherford Labor Day Street Fair.** Volunteers are needed to distribute NJPA literature.
10 am-5pm Please call or e-mail the NJPA office to volunteer.
- Oct. 7 **8th Anniversary of U.S. bombing of Afghanistan and NJPA Lobby Day**, which will focus on opposing plan to increase troops in Afghanistan and encouraging Obama's peace promises.
- Nov. 7 **NJPA's 52nd Annual Soup Lunch** with Dahr Jamail at Columbia H.S., Maplewood.