

The New Jersey PEACE Maker

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Founded 1957—55 Years of Citizen Action

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“OCCUPY WALL STREET” COMES TO PEACE ACTION SOUP LUNCH

NJPA MARKS MLK DAY



Jesse LaGreca

Occupy Wall Street came to New Jersey on Nov. 12 to take part in our annual soup lunch and join forces with us in our common concerns about the costs of militarism—in human lives and squandered resources that could be better spent on healthcare, education, housing and other human needs.

Occupy member Jesse LaGreca introduced us to the Human Microphone—in which the audience repeats and thus amplifies the speaker’s words—to convey a message that he summed up as “End the War. Tax the Rich. That’s How We’ll End our Deficits!” He hailed the attendees as “occupying 54 years before I started” and said that the

people now telling lies about the Occupy movement were the same ones “who lied us into Iraq.”

Main speaker Phyllis Bennis, a fellow with the Institute for Policy Studies, thanked the Occupy movement for “shaking up politics” and “shaking out the despair” that can result from assuming there is nothing we can do. She called the recently announced plans for U.S. troop withdrawals from Afghanistan a victory for peace activists because we helped shift public opinion.

Bennis spoke of how our presence has harmed Afghan civilians—they die from bombs along roadways meant for our troops—without improving conditions for women, often cited as justification for staying there. And it also hurts us. The \$122 billion spent on the war last year could have bought 2.5 million green jobs or a year’s health care for 62 million poor children, she noted.

Another speaker National Peace Action Field Director Judith LeBlanc, discussed the possibility for change at “this magic movement moment that we’re in.”

Spook Handy played peace and justice songs. We enjoyed delicious soups, breads and desserts and we literally helped feed the revolution by giving our leftovers to our Occupy friends and allies.

Peace Action members Judith Arnold and Terry Moore observed Jan. 16’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with elementary school students in the after-school program at Milton Ave. School in Chatham.

Terry started the program off with his own song – “P-E-A-C-E” – sung to the tune of BINGO. Judith followed by reading aloud *MARTIN’S BIG WORDS: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, by Doreen Rappaport. That was followed by an activity in which the children looked at different types of apples and observed the differences among them: color, shape, size and flaws in the skin, as well as the similarities. The apples were then cut in half and the children observed that they were all essentially the same inside. We carried this comparison over to people: though we don’t look the same on the outside, we’re all the same on the inside.

Terry closed with “Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream” and “Kumbaya,” as well as several original songs, which the children sang with gusto.

NJ Peace Action also participated in two other MLK events. Executive Director Madelyn Hoffman made a presentation at the Purnell School for Girls in Pottersville and Board Member Peggy Monges organized an event in Teaneck featuring civil rights activist, Theodora Lacey (who personally knew Dr. King), and her son, Clinton Lacey.

SAVE THE DATE!
 Our 55th ANNUAL DINNER
 Sunday, April 29
Captain James Yee

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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IN THE GARB OF A PRISONER



Wearing orange jumpsuits, our heads covered with black cloth hoods, we walked slowly, silently in procession through the drizzling rain through the puddle-filled streets of our nation's capital. It was Wednesday, Jan. 11, the tenth anniversary of the U.S. detainment in Guantanamo Prison, of men and boys captured or turned-in during the "War on Terror."

We went to Washington to highlight the anniversary because 171 men remain in Guantanamo, despite President Obama's promise to close the prison as soon as he took office. They, as well as those held in Bagram Prison, have been denied the rights we all hold precious. This is not what we believe our country stands for.

Over 50 people from Witness Against Torture were already in D.C., on a liquid-only fast that they began on

Jan. 2. They held a vigil each day and marched through the streets in prisoner's garb.

The action on the 11th began at noon in Lafayette Park, across from the White House where many hundreds of us heard speakers from Amnesty International, the Center for Constitutional Rights and Witness Against Torture. Then more than 80 people dressed in orange jumpsuits and black hoods lined up to proceed across the White House plaza in single file and in silence. We walked for an uncomfortable hour—each barely able to see through soggy hoods—to the Supreme Court building. My thoughts ping-ponged from wishing the walk was over, knowing I would then be able to remove my hood and go home, to realizing how terrible it must be for those held in prison—required to go where others order them, never knowing if they will be charged, let alone put on trial or released.

In front of the Supreme Court we were joined by many more vigilers and heard more speakers—a veteran of the conflict in Iraq, a lawyer for Guantanamo Prisoners, Frida Berrigan of Witness Against Torture, and others—demand justice for the prisoners. A poignant poem, written by a Guantanamo prisoner, was read.

Each year since 2007, Witness Against Torture has protested the Guantanamo injustice and torture in Washington on the January anniversary—sometimes resulting in arrests. And some people from NJ Peace Action have joined them. We have stood and have walked in rain and wind, snow and cold. I sincerely hope those in Guantanamo Prison are shown justice this year. I really don't want to have to spend next Jan. 11 on Washington's streets. But given the current atmosphere in our country, next January will likely find me back in D.C.

By NJPA member Nancy Taiani

NJ Peace Action is proud to support efforts of such organizations as Witness Against Torture, Amnesty International and other human rights organizations in their actions to close the prison at Guantanamo.

James Yee to Speak at Dinner

Former U.S. Army Captain James "Yusuf" Yee will speak at our 55th annual dinner on April 29 on the protection of civil liberties and on his own experiences as the Muslim chaplain at Guantanamo Bay Prison.

Yee, a Chinese-American West Point graduate who converted from Lutheranism to Islam while serving as a Patriot Missile Fire Control Officer after the first Gulf War in 1993, was sent to Guantanamo in November 2002 to minister to Muslim detainees. He was officially commended for his work but in 2003, he was arrested and charged with sedition and spying, placed in solitary confinement and subjected to sensory deprivation. The charges were later dropped and he left the military with an honorable discharge.

His book, *God and Country: Faith and Patriotism Under Fire*, describes his experience and struggle for justice. He is a past executive director of the New Jersey chapter of the Council on American-Islamic relations, or NJ-CAIR and currently lectures on Guantanamo, his ordeal, Islam, Asian-American and religious diversity issues and the challenges of protecting both national security and civil liberties.



Legislative Action Alert



TOLL-FREE numbers for Congress: 800-517-5696 * 866-220-0044 * 888-784-0527

STOP WAR WITH IRAN—

The House has already voted 410-11 for H.R. 1905, which prohibits contact between U.S. officials and certain Iranian ones. Before the Senate votes on the bill, call Senators Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez to oppose such a provision. Urge them to pursue diplomacy, not war.

Also, please sign Peace Action's online petition: at http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/161/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=9208

EXPEDITED WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN—

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced all combat troops will be withdrawn from Afghanistan by mid-2013. Let's hold him and other elected officials accountable and ask them to withdraw as soon as possible!

MILITARY SPENDING—

Panetta recently announced plans to slow the rate of growth of Pentagon spending by nearly \$500 billion over the next 10 years. Congress already agreed to cuts through the debt reduction plan triggered last fall, which requires slicing nearly \$1 trillion over 10 years. Even so, **the Pentagon budget will still be larger than today.** The U.S. will spend more on defense than the next 10 nations combined, about 40% of the world's total. Sen. John McCain, R-AZ, wants to suspend next year's cut and make the point that military spending cannot be touched and place the burden of deficit reduction on federal workers. Call your U.S. Senators and Rep. to insist on the planned cuts.

MILITARY COUNTER-RECRUITMENT—

The Rutgers Constitutional Litigation Clinic has released a report about aggressive military recruiting practices and the impact of military service. Visit our website www.njpeaceaction.org/drupal/node/173 to read the report, called "Should You Enlist? What Everyone Should Know About Military Recruiting, Military Life and Veteran Affairs Before Enlisting."

Yes, I want my voice for peace and justice heard! I will renew my membership today.

\$35__ \$52 (\$1 a week)__ \$100__ \$250__ \$500__ \$1000 **other** \$____

Become a sustainer. This is an excellent way to help support NJ Peace Action throughout the year. Consider that \$10 a month for peace adds up to \$120 for the year, \$20 a month adds up to \$240 for the year, \$50 a quarter adds up to \$200 for the year, and \$250 a quarter adds up to \$1,000 for the year!

Sign me up! I am enclosing \$_____ as my first month's/quarter's (*circle one*) installment!

I will contribute an extra \$10 to support national Peace Action's important work for peace.

Name _____ E-mail _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Credit Card: Visa MasterCard American Express

Credit Card No. _____ Expiration Date _____

Contribute \$100 or more and receive monthly bulletins, as well as a DVD from NJPA's November 12, 2011 Soup Lunch program.



CLOSE GUANTANAMO PRISON!
NJPA at White House on Jan. 11

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Quote for the Season . . .

“[T]his was never a good war. This was never a war for justice. This was a war for vengeance and to set the stage for the illegal war in Iraq.”

—Phyllis Bennis, Fellow at Institute for Policy Studies
speaking about Afghanistan at 2011 Soup Lunch

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Visit www.njpeaceaction.org for more information on these and other events and activities.

- April 11-17 **School of the Americas Watch: Days of Action.** In Washington, D.C. to organize protests to close the School of the Americas. Widely known as the “School of Assassins,” it has been renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation or WHINSEC.
- April 17 **Tax Day.** A call for actions to Move the Money from War to Peace. Two days after actual tax day because April 15 is a Sunday and April 16 is a holiday in Washington, D.C.
- April 20
6-9 pm **Healing After War Through the Arts.** Workshops, exhibition and prose and poetry presentations by Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. At Puffin Cultural Forum in Teaneck. NJPA is co-sponsor.
- April 29
Noon-4 pm **New Jersey Peace Action’s 55th Annual Dinner** featuring Capt. James Yee, the former Muslim chaplain at Guantanamo Prison, will speak on National Security versus Civil Liberties. At Regency House in Pompton Plains. Make reservations online at www.njpeaceaction.org
- June 24 **Partnership for the Elimination of Poverty Conference.** To be held at the Islamic Center of Morris County, 1 Mannino Drive, Rockaway. Exact times and program to be announced.
- Ongoing **Montclair Peace Vigil**—Corner of Bloomfield Ave. and South Fullerton. First Saturday of every month, from 10:30 a.m. to noon.
Occupy Montclair—Same corner as Peace Vigil. Third Saturday of every month, from 10 to 11:30.

~LEAVE A LEGACY~

Help perpetuate your commitment to peace and justice by remembering New Jersey Peace Action in your will. Bequests and life insurance to the New Jersey Peace Action Education Fund are tax-deductible. For more information on planned giving options, please contact us at 973-259-1126.