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P.O. BOX 250, LEWISBURG, PA

CARE NEWSLETTER

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Recent Events in the Valley

The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later ... An Epilogue

On October 12, 2009, the Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble performed a directed reading of "The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later ... An Epilogue". At the very same time, the Laramie Project was performed at the Lincoln Center in NYC and 150 theatres worldwide. Here in central PA, we could participate with others around the world by watching the live introduction from the Lincoln Center before the reading, and then a Q & A session with the Tectonic Theater cast at the Lincoln Center, after the reading.

The Tectonic Theater Project visited Laramie, Wyoming soon after the murder of Matthew Shephard, which occurred in October 1998. They interviewed many townspeople, as a way of assessing the impact of this crime & subsequent publicity on the Laramie community. They later used their interview material to produce a play, "The Laramie Project", which presented the town's experience in the residents' own words.

On the tenth anniversary of Matthew Shephard's murder, the Theater Project revisited Laramie to gauge how the town had, or had not, changed in the past 10 years. They interviewed local townspeople; professors; local media; police; students; a priest; and the two convicted killers. They had interviewed many of the same people in 1998, one month after the murder.

As with any community, there was a wide range of reactions. The attitude of the local police had changed dramatically after investigating this crime. They clearly struggled with their homophobia and understood that this was a heinous hate crime. The two arresting officers have traveled to Washington several times since 1998 to advocate for the hate crime legislation working its way through the U.S. Congress.

Then there are the people who now deny that it was a hate crime. They have selectively reviewed the evidence, and ignored certain facts, to frame the crime as a robbery or drug deal gone bad. These people include the largest newspaper in Laramie, which acknowledged the tenth anniversary by publishing an editorial saying "this was only a robbery/drug deal It's time to move on".

This point of view was fueled by the national TV show, "20/20", which came to Laramie to "investigate" the murder and then presented their "findings" on national TV. They concluded that this was a crime motivated by robbery and drugs, not hate. The 20/20 crew left behind evidence that showed they had already reached their conclusion before they came to Laramie, and had been less than honest when interviewing key people. The police and others involved were very bitter about this distortion of the evidence by the national media. However, many townspeople latched on to this new "take" by a "legitimate" national news organization, and it became part of the town's rumor mill and local belief system.

For the local gay community, ten years of advocacy has produced mixed results. On one hand, domestic partner benefits were finally approved by the University of Wyoming trustees after years of debate, only to be delayed



indefinitely due to funding. On the other hand, an openly-gay university professor was elected to the Wyoming state legislature, and relates the amazing story of how a Defense of Marriage bill was defeated in a legislature dominated by conservative Republicans.

Has Laramie changed? Is it a better and safer place to live now, ten years later? Depends on who you talk to

Matthew Shepard's parents, Judy and Dennis, have been working since 1998 to get hate crime legislation passed at the federal level. Despite the outrage expressed at the time of the murder, a federal hate crime law has never been passed. Judy Shepard talked about the failures of the Clinton administration and the frustrations of the Bush administration. The current hate crimes bill has now passed the House, and is under review in the Senate -- farther along than it has ever been. The evening ends with a call to action -- let's finally make hate crimes illegal in this country!!!!

New Bookstore and Meeting Place

Mondragón Co-op Used Bookstore and Meeting Place

On June 20th, the Mondragón bookstore opened in Lewisburg. It is a co-op bookstore run democratically by its twenty members, and it is dedicated to supporting the progressive ideals and practice of democracy, and the democratic rights of all people -- at work, at school, at home, and at play.

The bookstore features:

- Moderately priced used books and LPs of all kinds that we believe tell the story of the struggle to bring democratic values to life, and that help sustain and enhance that vision.
- A lending library for children and their parents that encourages sharing and diversity.
- A meeting room available to progressive groups in the area. There, they can gather to talk, imagine, and plan about how to make a world where freedom is not a rare commodity for the few but the inalienable right of everyone.

We believe that the members of CARE likely share the values that led us to establish this bookstore, and we urge you all to come by and check out our wares.

We are located at 111 Market Street in Lewisburg, next to the Brasserie, and we are open M-F, 10-5 and Saturday 11-5. 570 523-0471

Nobel Peace Prize

Father Roy Bourgeois and SOA Watch Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize

PHILADELPHIA - November 22 - Father Roy Bourgeois, MM, and School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch) have been nominated for one of the most prestigious awards in the world - the Nobel Peace Prize - for their sustained faithful nonviolent witness against the disappearances, torture, and murder of hundreds of thousands of civilians (peasants, community and union organizers, clerics, missionaries, educators, and health workers) by foreign military personnel trained by the U.S. military at U.S. taxpayer expense at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia.



www.commondreams.org/newswire/2009/1/22

Health Care issue addressed by CARE Steering Committee Member, November 2009

The candidacy of Father Roy and SOA Watch for the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize has been officially submitted to the Nobel Committee in Oslo, Norway by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. The official announcement was made by AFSC representative John Meyer on Sunday, November 22 at 9am at the gates of Fort Benning (home of the School of the Americas) during the annual November vigil to close the SOA.

"We are deeply honored, and deeply humbled, to be nominated for this prize for peace," commented Bourgeois, a Vietnam veteran, Purple Heart recipient and a Catholic priest, who helped found SOA Watch. "This nomination is in recognition of the work of the thousands struggling against militarism across the Americas."

SOA Watch is a nonviolent grassroots movement that works through creative protest and resistance, legislative and grassroots media work to stand in solidarity with the people of Latin America, to close the School of the Americas (renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) and to change oppressive U.S. foreign policy that institutions like the SOA/ WHINSEC represent.

This weekend, SOA Watch is gathering by the thousands at the gates of Ft. Benning to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the killings of 14-year-old Celia Ramos, her mother Elba Ramos, and the six Jesuit priests she worked with at the Central American University in San Salvador in November 1989. Human rights defenders from Colombia and Bertha Oliva, founder of human rights organization COFADEH, Committee of Family Members of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras, which has been actively resisting the SOA graduate-led coup as part of the resistance front.

Daily Item, Letter to the Editor

My experiences run completely counter to those of the writer of "Dollar signs," a letter on medical care. Based on 15 years of experience here in the Valley, every time I go to see my primary care doctor, I see her within 15 to 30 minutes, not a nurse or a physician's assistant. I can always get an appointment the same day I call.

Because I enjoy the benefits of two government health care systems – the VA (the most socialized health care system in the world) and Medicare (so named by the founder of the Canadian health care system) – my costs are very modest for visits to the doctor and for drugs. I do agree that the insurance companies increase the costs with their primary focus being on profits and denial of claims. The U.S. government has far lower administrative costs for health care (3% versus 20%) than for-profit health insurance companies.

There is *no* Obama health care plan. There is a House plan and a nascent Senate plan, which will have to go to conference committee and be submitted to Obama for signature before there can be anything remotely called an Obama plan.

I am very happy with my government health care plans. I choose any doctor and hospital I wish. The VA has been great for drugs and preventive care. I would hope we can build on current best practices of U.S. government plans and look to other countries for best practices for a universal health care system. We need to decide the moral question – Should the U.S. provide basic health care for all of her citizens? – and proceed from there.

David Ambrose, Lewisburg