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2008



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Peace Conference Growing

Hundreds expected at LCC gathering

Building peace in a culture that tolerates war is a long process, says Stan Taylor, director of the Lane Peace Center on the LCC campus, but he takes hope in the idea that “both peace and democracy are rooted in social, economic, political, spiritual and racial justice.” Bring all those elements together, and progress is inevitable — or at least possible.

The new Lane Peace Center has been working for months to pull together its inaugural event, a major regional Peace & Democracy Conference Feb. 29 and March 1 at LCC. The list of speakers and workshops is growing, and organizers are expecting hundreds of students, teachers and activists, along with leaders in labor, human rights, religion and politics. Early registration is encouraged on the Peace Center’s website (www.lanec.edu/peacecenter). Some events are free for LCC students while other events have an attendance fee to cover the conference’s expenses.

Taylor says several factors are leading to interest in this timely conference: The Iraq occupation will mark its fifth year next month; the number of U.S. soldiers killed is nearing 4,000; and the election year is mobilizing a national surge for change in the White House and in Congress.

Medea Benjamin, cofounder of Global Exchange and CODEPINK, and Bob Wing, cofounder of United for Peace & Justice (UPJ), are among the keynote speakers. Wing is scheduled to talk at 7 pm Friday, Feb. 29, and Benjamin’s keynote talk is scheduled for 2 pm Saturday, March 1. Both are also expected to participate in smaller sessions.

Session leaders and panelists include Agnes Baker Pilgrim, Leah Coakley and Patrick Edelbacher, Gary Baran, Carol Melia and Vip Short, Mary Wood, Louis Carosio, Carmen Urbina, John Lenssen, Dan Goldrich, Leah Bolger and Noah Mrowczynski, Guadalupe Quinn, Lauren Regan, Katie Heald, Peter Bergel, Mark Harris and Jessica Campbell.

CODEPINK is a women-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement “working to end the war in Iraq, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into health

care, education and other life-affirming activities,” according to the group’s mission statement. Benjamin ran for the U.S. Senate in California in 2000 on the Green Party ticket.

UPJ is a coalition of organizations that coordinates protests and other actions nationwide and locally.



Medea Benjamin

Wing is a longtime activist, writer and editor involved in racial justice issues. He is Chinese-American and noted for his work on building multiracial unity.

The theme of the conference is “Fostering Peace Through Education,” and Taylor says education is the key to peace and justice. He says the new Peace Center on campus is working to build a “fundamental framework for peace work.”

“A key question,” he says, “is how to embrace the diversity in democracy to build peace — to turn our differences into strengths instead of a source of fragmentation and animosity.”

The Lane Peace Center is one of only two such centers on community college campuses across the country, the other being in Richland, Texas. Taylor says he discovered three years ago that he and LCC President Mary Spilde had a similar vision for a Peace Center on campus, and it’s “taken some time to get the ball rolling.” **EW**

Upcoming Demonstrations

A UPJ-sponsored mass nonviolent direct action in Washington, D.C. is planned for March 19, with corresponding demonstrations in cities across the country.

On Sunday, March 16, the Take Back Our America coalition, a Lane County coalition of community groups, will commemorate the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq with a community-wide call to end the war and occupation of Iraq, and to support peace and justice. The theme of the day is “On The Fifth Anniversary of the Invasion of Iraq: Sow Seeds of Peace.” For more information, visit the CALC website (www.calclane.org).

Portland is also planning a major mobilization on Saturday, March 15, with a gathering from 11 am to 6 pm at the South Park Blocks. For more information, visit its website (www.pdxpeace.org).

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