Education for peace and human sustainability - The abolition of nuclear weapons*

Educação para a paz e sustentabilidade humana - A abolição das armas nucleares

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ABSTRACT
The author, a former director of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation and director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, denounces the extreme danger of atomic weapons, having as his context the city of Hiroshima, the story of the bomb dropped there and his personal role as an activist for peace and for the abolition of nuclear weapons. He demonstrates that any conflict in which they are used can exterminate life on Earth. Such an event would be devastating both directly by its destructive power as well as because of its capacity of generating the so-called nuclear darkness that may limit the penetration of the sunlight and prevent the cultivation of food causing widespread hunger. Nuclear weapons are born out of fear and hatred, and their political, social and economic influence needs to be urgently reduced. The war culture must be replaced by a peace culture. Therefore education and action for peace need to be taken seriously for human survival itself. The most urgent of all measures is the abolition of nuclear weapons worldwide.

Keywords: nuclear weapons; nuclear winter; peace education and culture.

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RESUMO
O autor, ex-diretor da Fundação de Cultura pela paz de Hiroshima e diretor do Museu Memorial da Paz de Hiroshima, denuncia a extrema periculosidade das armas atômicas, tendo como contexto a cidade de Hiroshima, a história da bomba ali lançada e sua atuação pessoal como ativista pela paz e pela abolição do arsenal nuclear. Ele demonstra que qualquer conflito em que elas sejam usadas pode exterminar a vida sobre a Terra. Tal evento seria devastador tanto diretamente, por seu poder destruidor, como pela possível geração da chamada escuridão nuclear, capaz de limitar a penetração da luz solar e impedir o cultivo de alimentos, provocando a fome generalizada. As armas atômicas nascem do medo e do ódio e sua influência política, social e econômica precisa ser urgentemente reduzida. A cultura da guerra precisa ser substituída pela cultura da paz e por isso a educação e a ação para a paz precisam ser levadas a sério para a própria sobrevivência humana. A mais urgente de todas as providências é a abolição das armas nucleares em todo o mundo. 

Palavras-chave: armas nucleares; inverno nuclear; educação e cultura da paz.

I know you’re expecting me to talk about peace education in Hiroshima, but to be honest, I am quite disappointed with peace education here. Later today, you will go through the museum. There, you will encounter Hiroshima’s message. There are four parts to this message. 1) The atomic bombing was terrible. 2) Nuclear weapons are terrible and should be abolished. 3) War is terrible, and 4) peace is good. Please do not get me wrong. This is an important message, and the testimony of the hibakusha or survivors is extremely powerful and beneficial. Hiroshima and the hibakusha have done and continue to do great work.
appealing for peace. The reason I am dissatisfied is because they do not take the next step.

If nuclear weapons are evil and should be abolished, exactly how should we go about doing that? Hiroshima is strong on desire but weak on strategy. More importantly, if peace is better than war, then how do human beings have to change? What changes do we have to make in our hearts, in our minds, in our social, economic, and political systems to avoid war and preserve peace? The reason the city and prefecture of Hiroshima and the schools of Hiroshima and even most hibakusha do not take this next step is because they all avoid becoming political. Around here, it is not political to say we want peace, but as soon as you start talking about what you want to change, that becomes political.

Today, with great trepidation, I am going to get political. I am doing this because I desperately want you to get political. I am hoping that even if you do not like my politics, you will at least see the necessity of becoming political in some way for peace.

When you go through the museum, you will come to appreciate at a more profound emotional level something you already know. Nuclear weapons are extremely dangerous. To that I will add the political message that nuclear weapons are cruel, they are inhumane. They do not and cannot distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, and cannot be limited to the battlefield in either time or space. Therefore, nuclear weapons are illegal. They were illegal when they were invented. International humanitarian law already on the books should have prevented their invention, and yet, they were invented and used. Their use was a war crime. Now they should be stigmatized, outlawed, and banned. But peace education in Hiroshima does not say this.

Recently, Alan Robock and his team of researchers have used sophisticated climate modeling techniques to show that Carl Sagan was correct back in the 1980s when he said that massive use of nuclear weapons would cause nuclear winter. In fact, Carl Sagan was far too conservative. We now know that 0.5% of today’s global nuclear arsenal, the equivalent of 100 Hiroshima bombs, would be enough to send 5 million tons of dark particles into the stratosphere. At that height, those particles would be heated so they would stay up there. They would go around and around the Earth for ten years, blocking 10% of the sun’s light. Ten percent of sunlight blocked is what Robock calls nuclear darkness. This is not nuclear winter, just darkness, but even 10% of sunlight blocked would mean drastic crop failures in northern and temperate climates. Killing frosts would occur in July and August in many of the areas that grow most of the food today, like the American Midwest, northern China, nearly all of Europe and Russia. Canada would be out of the question. We would see an unprecedented famine. Billions of people would starve, and the rest of us would be fighting to see who
can live in Brazil or Thailand or Nigeria or anyplace with a growing season. Human civilization would be reduced to a harsh, dog-eat-dog struggle for physical survival.

Robock refers to 100 Hiroshima bombs because he knows roughly how much dust and smoke was generated by the Hiroshima bomb. The largest bomb in the active US arsenal today is 1.21 megatons, which is almost exactly 100 times the destructive power of the Hiroshima bomb. The Hiroshima bomb created a fireball 300 meters in diameter and completely crushed and burned an area about four kilometers in diameter. If a 1-megaton bomb exploded where the Hiroshima bomb exploded, it would create a fireball about three thousand meters across. There would be nothing left of downtown Hiroshima but a big hole in the ground, and the whole city would become a giant firestorm. Everything that had been Hiroshima would be turned into tiny particles of debris and much of it would go into the stratosphere as particles. Ten or fifteen bombs like that exploding over ten or fifteen large cities would not just destroy those cities. They would destroy human civilization.

Today, about 25 years after the end of the Cold War, the US and Russia still have about 2000 warheads deployed on hair trigger alert, that is, they are ready to launch on warning. If even a few hundred of these were to actually be used, we would plunge into a nuclear winter so deep and so long that the human race probably would not survive. Mikhail Gorbachev thinks we would not survive. In 1992 he came to Hiroshima and gave an amazing speech. What he said was that human beings have to give up war. Of course, here in Hiroshima we had been saying that for decades, but his reason was different. He said we have to give up war because we have too many nuclear power plants. This was six years after Chernobyl. He saw what happened from the explosion of one reactor. He pointed out that we have 440 nuclear power reactors in the world, mostly in the northern hemisphere. In any kind of major war, even without nuclear weapons, those power plants will immediately become targets. In a nuclear war, many plants would be hit or the surrounding community would be too devastated to maintain the plant properly. The reactors would be time bombs ready to explode as soon as the cooling stops for whatever reason. Then, in addition to being too cold for crops, the Earth would be too radioactive to be compatible with human life.

This new information about the catastrophic impact of nuclear weapons upon humanity is why Switzerland, Norway, Mexico, Austria and more than a hundred other countries, inspired by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, have launched a new movement that I fervently hope will lead to a new international treaty banning the possession, development, and use of nuclear weapons. This treaty can and should be created with or without the participation of the nuclear-weapon states.
At this point, the human family in its wisdom has banned a number of weapons we consider too terrible to use. We have banned biological weapons, chemical weapons, anti-personnel landmines, and cluster munitions. We have even banned hollow-point or dum-dum bullets. And yet, we refuse to ban the most dangerous weapons of all, the only weapons that have the power to literally cause the extinction of our species. Why is this?

At this point, for some audiences, I talk about the power of the nuclear industry. For you, I want to go a bit deeper than that. Nuclear weapons are a physical embodiment and the ultimate expression of fear and hatred derived from violent, cutthroat competition. They emerged from the fear and hatred of World War II, and World War II was the tragic result of violent, cutthroat competition for colonies and resources. Nuclear weapons have not been banned because fear, hatred and cutthroat competition are still the dominant forces in human society. So the real question we face is, how do we reduce the social, economic, and political influence of fear, hatred and cutthroat competition?

This audience should already know the answer to this question. If you are Christian, you know that over two thousand years ago Jesus of Nazareth came to Earth to teach us how to conquer evil and death, and the lessons he taught us were love and faith. Through his birth in a manger and his utter rejection of material wealth and political power, he taught us that we do not have to compete. The important thing is not the size of our house or empire or bank account. It is our relationship to God, and God loves all of us. Do we really believe this?

Through his death, Jesus taught us that peace and love are more important than justice. Jesus was unfairly tried, tortured, humiliated, and killed in the most gruesome and painful way, and yet he prayed for his killers. More surprisingly, his Father, the omnipotent God who could have instantly terminated the lives of everyone on Mount Calvary or every Pharisee or every Jew or even everyone in the Roman Empire—that loving Father punished no one for their terrible mistreatment of his only begotten Son. If God’s priority were justice, shouldn’t he have punished those evildoers?

The great Catholic theologian, John L. McKenzie said, “If Jesus can be trusted to have said anything at all, he renounced violence.” On another occasion he said, “If we cannot say that Jesus rejected all violence, we can say nothing of his person or message. It was the clearest of his teachings.”

Jesus’ loving pacifism was equally obvious to the early Christians. We know this because for nearly three hundred years after his death, no Christian was allowed to join the Roman army. No Christian was allowed to use violence for any reason. Christians died proudly as mar-
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tyrs rather than resist violently, and no Christian ever wrote anything defending violence in any way.

This pacifism evaporated in the late third century when Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and decided to make it a fighting religion. Not long after that, all Roman soldiers had to be Christian, and Christians were fighting Muslims and burning heretics at the stake. Augustine came up with a just war theory that has nothing to do with anything in the New Testament, and Christians go back to fighting evil and death through violence. How is that working out for us? What happened to peace and love?

Mahatma Gandhi is revered as the father of India. Many Pakistanis revere him as the father of Pakistan as well. Certainly the most famous and probably the most effective practitioner of nonviolent struggle, Gandhi freed India from the British without ever touching a gun. I am aware of those who claim that it was actually Hitler who freed India, but avoiding that argument for the moment, I am sure that everyone who has ever studied Gandhi has come away enormously impressed by his ability to fight evil through love, virtue, and his own suffering.

During his campaign, when Indians started killing each other, he calmed them down by starving himself. And yet, the partition of India and Pakistan was one of the bloodiest chapters in human history. India and Pakistan have been fighting skirmishes ever since. They have both developed the atomic bomb, a weapon Gandhi denounced as utterly evil, and just this month the Indians elected a prime minister from the BJP, the political party most closely related to the RSS, the radical Hindu organization that assassinated Gandhi. What happened to Gandhi’s nonviolence?

When I am not in Hiroshima, I live in Atlanta, Georgia, the US. Atlanta was the home of Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King led a completely nonviolent civil rights movement that put an end to public lynching of Blacks in the South, changed the segregationist laws of the South, won voting rights for Blacks, and dramatically changed the minds and hearts of White people throughout the United States. Without King, there could have been no Obama.

King’s birthday, January 15, is now a US national holiday, and every year the corporate media join in celebrating the man called Martin Luther King, Jr., but of the tens of thousands of people in Atlanta who love and revere Dr. King, I am quite sure that less than ten percent actually believe in nonviolence. The King Center no longer even teaches their famous courses on the Philosophy of Nonviolent Social Change. Why not? Lack of interest. Atlanta is surrounded by five military bases, and an enormous number of Black families in Atlanta, maybe even a majority, are supported to some extent by a family member who is either in
the military or working in some way for a military base. What happened to King’s nonviolence and his beloved community?

After the atomic bombing, a Hiroshima University philosophy professor named Ichiro Moritaki lay in bed for five months recovering from his injuries and thinking deeply about the meaning of this new weapon that had just flattened his entire city in ten seconds. Moritaki lost his right eye but came up with two blinding insights. First, he realized that the deep meaning of the atomic bomb is that human beings can no longer resolve conflict through contests of destructive power. In other words, if we want to survive, we will have to give up war. Gorbachev realized this about 40 years later.

His second insight was that we currently live in what he called a civilization of power, but because of nuclear weapons, we have to graduate from this civilization to a civilization of love or we will not survive. Moritaki was the most important leader of Hiroshima’s A-bomb survivors until he died in January 1994 at the age of 92. His teachings were a powerful influence in Hiroshima’s shift from hating Americans to hating the bomb and militarism and war itself, but as far as I can tell, I’m the only one in this city who ever talks about him anymore, especially his strain of nonviolence. What happened to Moritaki?

The reason Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Moritaki, among many others, have failed to persuade the human family to graduate from the civilization of power to the civilization of love is because that change is so extremely deep and difficult. Despite the obvious, overwhelming merits of peace and sustainability, we are still killing each other and destroying our life-support system because we fail to comprehend the magnitude of the intellectual, social, political, and economic changes peace and sustainability will require. In a world thoroughly devoted to the pursuit of power, to suggest that pursuing power is wrong is “…like telling cannibals not to eat people,” as the Catholic theologian Emanuel Charles McCarthy loves to say. We human beings, as a species, including our political and intellectual leaders and even our peace and environmental activists, have yet to understand the extent to which a peaceful world necessarily differs from the world we live in today.

To defend this proposition, let me point to some of the most fundamental differences between the civilization of power and the civilization of love. First, it is important to understand that the civilization of power or the culture of war is a way of life we inherited from our animal ancestors. Human war culture principles are exactly the same as the principles that structure and organize bands of chimpanzees, packs of wolves, and even flocks of chickens. If you look at a band of chimpanzees, you can immediately see who is the alpha male, the boss, the king of the band. He is the one the others defer to. They get
out of his way. He eats first. He eats the best food. He has the most females, and he sires the most offspring. This is why everyone wants to be number one.

We humans also live in hierarchies, and we all want to climb as high as we can in whatever position is most salient in that hierarchy. If I’m a boxer, I want to be world champion. If I work for a company, I want to be promoted every year. In fact, I’d really like to be the president. If I have a million dollars, I want ten million. If I’m the second richest person in the world, I want to be the richest. I want to be number one, and the closer I get to the top, the more intense the competition gets. Whether you are the top dog, the top chimpanzee, or a CEO, you have to spend a tremendous amount of your time and energy defending yourself against your rivals. As soon as you get injured or old or run into some sort of trouble, you are out because there is a plenty of rivals ready to take your place. It is this competition for dominance that, more than anything else, characterizes the war culture, and we have been competing this way since before we were human.

In a war culture, every conflict is perceived primarily as a chance to win or lose, to go up or down in the hierarchy. Warriors think a tie is like kissing their sister. They are not interested in resolving a conflict. They want to win. In the peace culture, a conflict is a problem that needs to be solved, and it is not solved when someone wins. It is only solved when all parties are satisfied and agree that it is solved.

In the war culture, you can compete for yourself, your family, your team, your company, your tribe, your political party or even your nation, but it is impossible to compete to make everyone on this planet happy and healthy. The competitive principle requires a rival, an enemy, and most of the political troubles we face today arise from an obsolete and dangerous emotional and economic need for enemies.

In the peace culture, there are no enemies. We are all crewmembers of Spaceship Earth, and we are in a desperate struggle to keep our spaceship habitable. Today, 50% of the people on this planet have no toilet in their home. They are trying to live on two dollars or less a day. Half of them are living on a dollar or less. Half of them, more than a billion people, are seriously malnourished. Every day over 20,000 children die of malnutrition or easily curable diseases. Why is this? Is it because we do not have enough food?

No, we have plenty of food, more than enough to feed every person on the planet quite well. The children die because of a lack of love. They die because those of us with too much would rather get fat or throw food away or let it rot in storage bins than feed the hungry. And why is that? Because we worship competition. We are taught that free and fair competition will solve all our problems through the invisible hand of the market. We are taught that giving the poor and the weak enough
to live on is communism or coddling or bad for their character. The truth is, competition does not take care of the weak. It does not take care of the environment. It does not take care of the future, and it does not control deadly weapons. Only cooperation can do these things, and even the desire to do these things is a hallmark of peace culture.

But the most difficult of all the differences between the war culture and the peace culture has to do with violence. In the war culture, violence is an acceptable method of conflict resolution. Everyone wants to avoid violence, of course, but unfortunately, sometimes you just have to kill someone to get your way. When you join the military, the first thing you are taught is to obey your superiors, that is, to subject yourself completely and unquestioningly to the dominance hierarchy. The next thing you are taught is to kill the enemy before he kills you.

In the peace culture, as taught by Jesus, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, it is better to die than to kill. This is an enormous transformation of consciousness. This is a denial of the survival instinct as well as the instinct to pursue dominance. It is no wonder we are still working on it after 2,000 years. Will we ever get there? I do not know, but I am very sure that if we do not, our species will be extinct before the end of this century.

Peace-loving people in Hiroshima often pray publicly that the peace they are enjoying now will continue forever. Like peace-loving people elsewhere, they tend to assume that peace will look pretty much like today’s Japan, except the whole world will live in similar affluence and no one will be fighting any wars. One of my goals today is to warn you that peace, if we get there, will be profoundly, fundamentally, and radically different from the way we are living now.

Peace will not involve gasoline engines. It probably won’t involve skyscrapers or even cities as we know them. It will not involve large ships using diesel fuel to transport goods around the world. It will not involve large airplanes acting like an international bus service. It will probably not involve multinational for-profit corporations. It might not even involve money. It will probably involve police, but no military. It will definitely involve living with far less energy. It might involve getting up and going to bed with the sun. It will be far more egalitarian and will probably involve almost everyone in gardening and other forms of manual labor. It will absolutely involve an intensive, urgent effort to restore the air, water, soil and natural relationships that make life on Earth sustainable. But most importantly, it will subordinate competition for dominance to cooperation for survival.

Why do I say this? Because the human family is trying to do something that is impossible. Gandhi told us about a hundred years ago that for all human beings to live like Americans, we would need four Earths. The New Economics Foundation analyzed this more recently and found
that actually, for all human beings to live like Americans, we would need 5.3 Earths. Even if all human beings live like Japanese, we will still need 2.4 Earths. And yet, the Indians, the Chinese and everyone else are doing their best to live like Americans. Meanwhile, Americans are 4% of the population using 25% of the world’s oil and emitting over 30% of the world’s CO2 emissions. This is not acceptable. It is not sustainable, but Americans are doing everything in their power to sustain it.

Expert opinion varies as to when the great unraveling will begin, but it will happen and we all know it. Most governments are already preparing. Are they preparing by figuring out how to feed the poor, care for the sick, live with less energy, emit less toxic waste and avoid violent conflict? No, they are preparing by buying weapons and developing plans to protect the rich from the poor. This is suicidal. Planning to survive by killing others is planning our collective demise. Any attempt to solve our shared global problems through violence will warm, cool, irradiate or deoxygenate the planet beyond survivability.

The human family has been slowly evolving toward a peace culture for at least 2,000 years. We have made enormous strides. In Jesus’ time, we fed people to lions for fun. Men were constantly going off to war, and a huge percentage of the population was in slavery. So we have made progress, but now, because of nuclear weapons and environmental degradation, we no longer have a choice between violence and nonviolence. As Martin Luther King said decades ago, our choice is nonviolence or nonexistence.

So what do we do? We graduate to a peace culture, and we start by getting rid of nuclear weapons. How do we do that? I’ll get to the how a bit later, but first I think I have to persuade you that we should start with nuclear weapons. I know that you are all socially responsible people working on a vast array of serious social, economic, and political problems. As educators, you are likely to believe that education is the place to start, or maybe the problem of access to education, the gap between the rich and the poor.
and will not have nuclear weapons. What this means is that in the next few years, all countries will be deciding for themselves whether or not to go nuclear. And, as long as some countries have nuclear weapons, others will want them.

A few years ago the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the UK came very close to making the UK the first nuclear-weapon state to abandon nuclear weapons. But in the end, Tony Blair was willing to go from 200 warheads down to 160, but no further. He said that to do so would jeopardize British national security. If that is true, then every country in the world should have at least 160 nuclear warheads. It is utterly preposterous to argue that the UK needs 160 warheads but Iran does not.

But the real crisis is the fact that Israel has nuclear weapons, and there is a rapidly approaching limit to how long the Arab countries in the Middle East can allow the Jews to be the only people in the region with nuclear weapons. That is why most of the international community has been pushing harder and harder since 1995 to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. During the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference preparatory committee meeting that just took place April 28 to May 9 at the UN headquarters in New York, the demand for a conference on nuclear weapons in the Middle East reached a fever pitch. If nothing is done, the nuclear nonproliferation treaty could collapse. If that happens, and if the Arab states decide they have to have nuclear weapons, no one will be able to stop them. And if it goes in that direction, the UN says there are over 40 nations that could have nuclear weapons in a few months to a few years.

So the human family is standing right now at an extremely perilous crossroads. Do we abolish nuclear weapons, all of them, including those belonging to the US and Russia, or do we let everyone have one? If we let everyone have one, it is only a matter of time until they are used, so the choice we are making now is actually, will we abolish nuclear weapons or use them? If we use them, it is probably game over for human beings on this planet.

But there is another reason to begin our graduation to peace culture with nuclear weapons abolition. When I was much younger I studied a Japanese martial art called shorinji kempo. One of the principles we learned was this. If you are fighting an opponent who is much bigger and stronger than you are, you have to go for pressure points, vulnerable places, the eyes, the throat, the knees, and certain unmentionable places that will cause debilitating pain.

All of the problems that we are trying to solve are due to the fact that our war culture leaders would rather win than solve problems.
ms. They represent an enormous and extremely powerful opponent. Some people call it the military-industrial-congressional-penal-media complex. I call it the war culture. In any case, nuclear weapons represent the most vulnerable point on the military-industrial or war culture political body because nobody really likes or needs nuclear weapons.

Overtly, we already have a 100% consensus that we should be striving toward a nuclear-weapon-free world. Every government and every government leader says this. Of course, we have our differences over timing. I believe we need to do it now, and the US government thinks sometime next century would be good. But even so, we all agree that the goal is a nuclear-weapon-free world. Furthermore, even the most hardcore Neanderthal war culture would prefer not to kill all of his descendants. His desire for dominance is genetically linked to his desire to leave lots of offspring for the future. No one really wants to use nuclear weapons. No one really wants to cause a nuclear winter, and that is why nuclear weapons abolition is the place to start.

The third reason to start with nuclear weapons is that the real problem is not the weapons. It is the state of human consciousness they represent and create. Today, the world of international relations is a world of gangsters and chimpanzees. For the most part, we are ruled by naked power. What our leaders say publicly to the press has nothing to do with what they say to each other in back rooms where the arm-twisting happens. The consciousness of international relations with nuclear weapons is as follows: “I am strong. Do not attack me. If you attack me, I will kill you. In fact, even if I kill myself and all other human beings in the process, I will still kill you, so do not provoke me.” This is no different from a chimpanzee beating his breast and shaking small trees, and yet, this is the ethical level at which we are trying to build a sustainable society. It will not work this way.

If we decide to abolish nuclear weapons, we will be saying, “OK, for our collective survival, let’s all carefully put down these extremely dangerous weapons.” If we could get to that level of consciousness, cooperation for collective survival in many other arenas becomes possible. The fact is, of all the global problems we face, nuclear weapons are the easiest to solve. If we could achieve the right state of consciousness, nine nations could solve this problem in a week or two. On the other hand, if we fail to solve even this most simple of all our problems, we will probably not get a chance to solve the others.

So nuclear weapons are on the table now, they are a crisis needing attention. They are the weakest, most vulnerable pressure point on the body of the military industrial complex. And the abolition of nuclear weapons would both require and actually be a heightening of human consciousness to the point where other steps toward collective survival
could be taken. Clearly, we need to get rid of nuclear weapons. So how do we do that?

First, we pray. Here in Hiroshima I am a member of a group that prays from 7:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. on the sixth of every month. It would be great if you would all go home and start similar groups praying at the same time. But even if you do not, at least you can pray individually and encourage your students and parishioners to pray for the abolition of nuclear weapons. We are definitely going to need divine intervention.

Next, we can begin campaigning to make nuclear weapons public enemy number one. This will be much easier if we have a ban treaty to promote. I very much hope that Switzerland will give us such a treaty before the end of 2015. If they do, 151 countries have already declared their willingness to sign on. But even if we have no treaty, we can win this fight if peace people are willing to get serious about it. And this is where I put you in a tight spot.

You are people with enormous resources at your disposal. You have money. You have students or are students. You have alumnae. You have influence in your communities. You have influence in your church, and through your church, you, as a group or as the Methodist church, have the potential to mobilize millions of people. The question is, to what extent will you devote your resources to attacking nuclear weapons with the openly stated goal of driving them off the face of the planet? Is this too political? If you were to take on nuclear weapons, would you lose your biggest donors? Will you lose government contracts? Will you be fired? Will you be blamed for the demise of your school?

In Hilo, Hawaii, there is a small museum that tells its visitors about the many people who tried to prevent World War II. Lots of people saw it coming and tried to do something. They organized doll exchanges, flower exchanges, people exchanges, and all sorts of activities trying to help Americans and Japanese get to know each other and avoid a war. At this point we can politely say nice try, but overall, the people in both the US and Japan who wanted peace did not do enough. Nowhere near enough. They were overwhelmed by the militarists, 50 to 60 million people died, and we wound up with nuclear weapons.

Many Japanese, especially here in Hiroshima, think we are still living in a time they call sengo, which means post-war, by which they mean post-World War II. I do not believe that. I believe we are living in a time that would more accurately be called senzen, which means pre-war, by which I mean pre-World War III. The tide of militarism is rising. The Japanese government recently passed a secrecy law just as they did in 1937. Now they are trying to get rid of the peace constitution that Dr. Grubel values so highly. In 2020, Tokyo is supposed to hold the Olympics. Tokyo was also supposed to hold the 1940 Olympics, which were cancelled because of the war.
Globally, the competition for resources is intensifying. Nations and peoples are freeing themselves from neo-colonialism, but corporations are fighting back with NAFTA, TPP and other so-called trade treaties. Right now, the US Congress is about to triple US spending on nuclear weapons, from 100 billion to 300 billion dollars over the next ten years. This is not about the weapons. It is about the money. However, the people who remember the horrors of World War II are dying. We are being led by highly aggressive, competitive, ignorant hotheads who think anger, toughness and violence are the answer, whatever the question. If those of us who want to prevent war and preserve peace continue to do what we are doing, the cause of peace is lost. If we stay within our comfort zone, we are doomed. If we hope to establish a peace culture, some of us will have to lose our jobs. Some of us will have to sacrifice something valuable, like a government contract or a big donor or even a university. Some of us will have to die.

I have quit my job. I have sacrificed a good income to devote myself entirely to anti-nuclear activism. I did that partly because I am ashamed that I am not yet in jail. I am looking for a useful way to be arrested, which is not compatible with having a job. If I can find a meaningful way to die, I may do that, too. I am not saying this to win your support or criticism. I am saying this because I want you to know that I am both desperate and hopeful, which makes me determined. I have been watching nuclear weapons very carefully since 1998, and I believe this issue is coming to a head in the next two or three years. We will either take some major, convincing steps toward universal disarmament, or we will see nuclear weapons spin out of control. If we lose control of nuclear weapons, we will lose control of militarism, and our hopes for a more just and peaceful world will go up in radioactive smoke.

Next month, on June 20, I hope to welcome into this world my first grandson. I want more than anything for him to live in a peaceful, sustainable, clean and healthy nuclear-weapon-free world. But if he dies because of war, either killed directly or starved in a nuclear famine, I want to be able to meet him in the spirit world and tell him honestly that I did everything I could to keep that war from happening.

I have no idea what you are doing or what you should do to prevent war and preserve peace, but I am asking you urgently to think again about what more you could be doing. The time has come. We have no more time to wait or waste. The forces of competition, war and violence are building momentum rapidly, and Mother Nature has a knife at our collective throat. If you have been waiting for the right moment to do something spectacular, if you are ever going to rebel like Jesus did against the forces of evil and death, we need you to do it now. May God be with you and with us all. Thank you.