

Lessons Unlearned from Hiroshima and Nagasaki

by Anne Barron

August 9 - Today marks a terrible day in US "self-defense" when we dropped another atomic bomb on the Japanese people seventy-six years ago, this time on the industrial city of Nagasaki. True - Japan was an aggressively militarized society with a strong industrial base when we dropped "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" bombs from above. This US response to increasing Japanese military power was based on lies told us about the Japanese mindset. We need war to stop war.Â And did it? The US nuclear attack created terrible consequences, a chain and swell of events that now threaten human (and world) existence.

We are repeatedly told that we are an exceptional people - smart, energetic, richer than any other country â€“ best schools, best democracy and best military and more bombs than other countries. Yet our minds have been militarized â€“ through our schools, our police, our sports, our media, even our video games. Are we exceptional enough to demilitarize our minds (and society) before it is too late?

This past August 6, seventy-six years after the first nuclear attack, San Diegans gathered around the Friendship Bell on Shelter Island in a challenge to us all to do better. San Diego WISH (Worldwide Initiative to Safeguard Humanity) convenes these annual gatherings to focus on the terrible cost of nuclear war and its blow-back. These International Peace & Humanity Day events challenge us directly to rethink our foreign policies of complete domination. And to consider the costs to all of us and to our humanity.

Do we have the collective will to step back from endless war, nuclear or not? Japan leadership could not, resulting in generations of blow-back from its attempts to counter military force with force. Nuclear war clearly leaves no winner in the world atomic race for bigger and bigger.Â Nor does endless war (whatever the weapons used). The United Nations recognized this clear contradiction and finally moved in 2017 to ban Atomic Weapons.

Not all agreed. Not surprisingly, countries like the US with nuclear arsenals voted against the ban.

Skipping 5 years ahead, the Biden Administration is on track to push through Congress the biggest Military Budget by far as it considers the next gen of nuclear weapons. Militarized minds make militarized budgets. Peace groups across the country are sounding the alarm, and coming together to push Congress and our country back from the precipice.

And they are clear on the connections between our war on Japan and today's war on the rest of the world. The DOD justifies these wars as "defense of country". Define "defense of country". It is clear that "defense" covers a wide array of US interests, not all related (very little in fact) related to defense against imminent attack. Instead of using our tax dollars to bolster healthcare and housing and transit during pandemic, large secret caches of (military) funding support illegal coups, extrajudicial executions, and unconscionable Schools of the Americas that train torturers. What would the world look like if that money was instead spent for human need? For better access to essential goods, medicines, clean water. The US's recent move to provide vaccines to countries with little access is what our Foreign Policy should look like all the time.

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US Militarized Culture Vs. an Essential Lesson from Hiroshima

by Gary Ghirardi,

On this 76th anniversary of the dropping of US. Atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan I am reminded of my own mindset during the Cuban Missile Crisis when American President John F Kennedy and Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev were threatening a nuclear confrontation. I remember feeling that my life would soon end, clearly embracing a comprehensible existential threat even at seven years of age.

I now understand the weapons of mass destruction deployed against the Japanese in 1945 as the two most horrible "singular event war crimes" ever committed by a state actor.

Coming from and living in the most militarized culture of scale in history I work to promote non-military careers for youth most susceptible to military recruitment offers. I do so with much restraint to not alienate nervous school administrators, fearful teachers, and clueless students and parents which means that essential lessons surrounding cultural militarism are avoided or carefully negotiated in language and tone.

We sell military service to our youth in the name of defending freedom and developing leadership and good citizenship traits, but the reality of our wars, and nearly all wars historically, are that they are fought to gain advantage over natural resources needed to accumulate wealth for the "national interests" be that petroleum or, in contemporary times, the vast list of minerals that construct our industrial and now technological world that support our quality of life standards.

Our state craft manipulates public opinion to justify these endless wars, and to secure the public financing for the enormous matrix of industries, universities, and private organizations that support the global US. military footprint in the name of security.

That security is now at a crossroads with our planet facing human affected ecological decline, our civilian society in economic crisis from a global pandemic, and a flailing democracy that really only represents those corporate interests that determine domestic and foreign policy.

By any practical definition, for the majority of us, we now live in a military, industrial, and technological plantation, where all our collective surplus goes to feed the continuation of that militarized complex, now extending into the space that surrounds the planet and beyond.

The very apparatuses that construct our security, now including another imminent nuclear arms race with competing economies, are the very machinations that threaten the survival of the planet that gives and sustains our lives.

The essential lesson we should be considering to learn from Hiroshima, even seventy five years too late, is that we have become the enemy that we portended to protect ourselves from.

Robert Oppenheimer, who led the Manhattan Project for the development of the Atomic Bomb, understood the monster he helped create.

Peace Culture Generation Strategy. Our minds have been militarized from years of education, sports. We can shift our consciousness from war-making to peace-building.

We propose the following cultural shifts and mind expansions to counter the expansive, deadly military-industrial complex:

1) Include Peace Studies and Ethnic Studies in our School Curricula.

These studies will heal the warps caused by our militarized teachings.Â History is too often a list of wars, winners, and losers, a misleading framing of our human world.Â Now, school districts across the country are embracing indigenous restorative practices to manage conflicts, even going as far as demilitarizing the school police. These healing arts of conflict resolution are currently missing from the curricula - often the result of regressive politics and legal challenges.

The outright war against Ethnic Studies now happening in California is an indication of the culture wars happening between old war ideologues and peace-makers. Support Ethnic Studies in our classrooms.

2) Diversify our economy, using a regenerative economy that safeguards our earth "for seven generations", is based on shared needs and resources, and that provides meaningful work for all humans.

The present military-industrial-fossil fuel economy has been the root of modern warfare and deadly pollution. Create a federal Department of Peace Economy that oversees the equitable distribution of our shared resources. Empower and work with the communities most impacted in wars over extraction-based industry and resource protection. Support local shared economies when possible.

3) Fulfill the original mandate of the League of Nations to "maintain peace".

Empower the UN as a super-inter-government association to oversee and establish peaceful co-existence

4) Challenge our language.

Language is at the fore of our culture, and shapes/reveals our values. Feel free to challenge someone's word choice during a discussion. The Gamaliel organization calls this approach "agitation", a way of uncovering our own biases and interests. We have found this leads to deeper discussions and a common ground of shared values and hopes.

5) Join us during Peace Week San Diego , part of the National Week of Actions initiated by Pace e Bene to realize International Peace Day .

6) Join collective peace and justice organizations to work on demilitarizing our minds and culture. National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee , CodePink , Veterans For Peace , United National Coalition Against War , and Peace Action have also shared their recommendations for changing our military mindset and march to endless war.

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