

Court Statement by Gilberto Perez, 2017-4-12

It's was beautiful Mother's Day weekend, May 7th 2016. The blossoms were out and the birds were happily singing. We were at the Center for Non-Violence located a mile from the Bangor Nuclear Submarine Base. Peacemakers, Buddhist monks and laypersons of our Japanese Buddhist order Nipponzan Myohoji Sangha. Every year we honor Mother's Day with our peaceful vigils and non-violent actions in respect for the life given to us, and in prayer that no lives will be taken by nuclear war. Mother's Day for many years reminds me of the the Civil War where perhaps over 620,000 of our brothers died for economic trade reasons, which had little to do with freeing of the slaves.

Julie Ward Howe originated Mother's Day after the Civil War as a protest to the carnage of the war, by women who had lost their sons. In 1872, Julie Howe wrote the "Battle Hymn To The Republic", and proposed an annual day of peace on Mother's Day. Committed to abolishing war, Howe wrote: "We women of one country will be too tender to those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs. From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says Disarm, Disarm! The sword of murder is not the balance of justice." The original meaning has been forgotten history. Today Mother's Day has become chocolates, flowers and a phone call to mother. Remembering as I prayed to the Bangor Gate of my visit to the Battle of Shiloh in the late 1960's that It seems to me that those that kill out of the quicksand of bad history, in a strange heroic act still believe that murder is legitimate. Walking in the morning fog to 'Bloody Brook' my heart pounded and the hairs on my arms were straight and I cried. Buddha said, some twenty-five hundred years ago tears of mothers would fill the oceans. I think that father tears would fill a few oceans too.

At the Center for Non-Violence, and after our discussions of world peace. We spoke of the passing of Fr. Daniel Berrigan S.J., which had occurred a week earlier in New York City. His life of peace is and will be my guide until my last breath. At the start of our vigil, we all read out loud our statement of non-violence, and then the monks lead the way as we walked in prayerful chanting to the Bangor Gate. On this day in remembrance of Fr. Berrigan, I wore a picture of him as I drummed the Buddhist chant Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo for world peace, and the abolishment of nuclear weapons. I am fully aware that only one person on earth can order the launch of America's nuclear weapons...The president of the United States! Our prayer chant is Japanese from the Lotus Sutra of a nation where not one, but two nuclear bombs were dropped on civilians. In a 1963 interview, President Dwight D. Eisenhower emphatically said, "...it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing". Dwight Eisenhower was not alone and many of the top, mostly conservative military leaders after World War II went public and made similar judgements. The President's Chief of Staff, William D. Leahy, a five star admiral who presided over the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declared in his 1950 memoir, "It is my opinion that the use of these barbarous

weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender...my own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we adopted an ethical standard common to barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make wars in the fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children.” The complete elimination of these awful weapons are the only absolute guarantee for all of us to be safe from the threat of nuclear annihilation. I do not want my children, grandchildren and humanity to live under that threat. It pains me deeply to see that President Trump does not share that desire for his children and grandchildren.