

# Ground Zero

October 2020

Volume 25 Issue 4

## Seventy-Five Years After Hiroshima and Nagasaki Activists Gather to Say: *Never Again!*



By Leonard Eiger and Michael "Firefly" Siptroth

Although Ground Zero was faced with the uncertainties around COVID, the group was able to find many ways to honor the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and to demonstrate our commitment to ensuring nuclear weapons are never used again.

A highlight of the weekend's events was a presentation by Ramona Bennett, a longtime and prominent leader from the Puyallup tribe. A pioneering activist on behalf of Indian fishing rights, Ramona co-founded the Survival of American Indians Association in 1964, an organization that helped bring local "fish-ins" to national prominence. Today she directs Rainbow Youth and Family Services, a Tacoma nonprofit.

Ramona spoke to both those gathered on site and

those watching remotely. She weaved together her and her Tribe's resistance to cultural and environmental genocide with the racist treatment of Japanese-Americans and the decision to bomb Japanese civilian populations with the first and second atomic bombs. She concluded by saying that coalition building, mutual support, and unity were key to successful people's movements.

Rev. Senji Kanaeda, Rev. Gilberto Perez, and Peter Roderick led a Buddhist service honoring those who died, were injured, or suffered from the bombings in 1945. After the presentations, a group formed to discern whether to commit civil disobedience. The group collaborated on a statement of purpose:

---

**Seventy-five years... continued on page 2**

“On the 75th anniversary of the genocidal devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and in a time of universal upheaval brought on by racial injustice, climate crisis, and global pandemic, we view the nuclear weapons housed at Naval Base Kitsap as the ultimate existential danger of our time. Nuclear weapons are the knee on the neck of all people of the world, choking the life out of our planet. Any order to launch nuclear weapons would be illegal under international law. We appeal to military personnel to stand down and refuse all such orders. We appeal to all our fellow citizens to demand abolition of all nuclear weapons and to redirect the colossal expenditure of resources to meet human needs.”

On Monday, August 10, 25 people gathered to receive a blessing from Rev. Jessica Starr Rocker of Kitsap Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. The group recited the “Pledge of Nonviolence” and then walked to a vigil at the main gate of Sub-base Kitsap-Bangor. Three of the demonstrators carried a banner stating, “Hiroshima Nagasaki Never Again!” Two demonstrators held a blue painted banner stating, “No More Genocide in My Name.” One demonstrator carried a banner, “Peace Walk Nuclear-Free World, Black Lives Matter.” At the same time, three demonstrators held a large banner on the Clear Creek Road NW overpass near the Main Gate that stated, “Renounce Militarism Defund the Pentagon.”

During the early-morning rush hour, six people crossed the fog line (preceded by the peacekeepers) and stopped traffic for seven minutes, while “taking a knee” for racial justice. Those entering the highway were Bernie Meyer of Olympia, Larry Kerschner of Centralia, Michael “Firefly” Siptroth of Belfair, George Rodkey of Tacoma, Rev. Gilberto Perez of Bainbridge Island, and Mack Johnson of Silverdale. Washington State Patrol officers escorted demonstrators off the roadway. No citations were issued.

Demonstrators were mindful of the pandemic and took social-distancing precautions. The demonstration ended around 7:45 AM when participants walked back to Ground Zero. There the group had a debriefing which highlighted the powerful witness of the weekend, and gave thanks to all who had participated and supported, from near and far. The demonstration was the culmination of a month of outreach for the 75th remembrance of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. Due to the pandemic members focused on alternative forms of outreach, including:

- Weekly bannerings at the NE 45th. St. and I-5 overpass in Seattle
- Four billboards for a month in Seattle starting on

July 13 that stated: *Naval Base Kitsap- Bangor... Base with largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons in the U.S., Remembering the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Accept Responsibility!*

- Four full-page ads in the Kitsap Sun on August 2, 6, 9, and 10 concerning the 75th remembrance of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and a special appeal to Navy personnel at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor: *Refuse illegal orders; Refuse the order to use nuclear weapons.*



**Activists gathered early** to witness for peace at the main gate of the Trident base. Despite being told days in advance that people entering the road would be immediately arrested, activists succeeding in blocking the road for seven minutes. *Photo by Glen Milner.*

Mindful of social distancing precautions, members also continued with smaller annual events such as the Peace Fleet on July 29 in Elliott Bay (see article on page 3) and the Pacific Northwest Peace Walk from August 5 through August 8 (see photo on page 5).

**Michael (Firefly) Siptroth** serves on the Stewardship Council and the planning committee for the Hiroshima/Nagasaki commemoration, and lives on a farm in Belfair. **Leonard Eiger** manages communications on behalf of Ground Zero. He lives on San Juan Island.



# Peace Fleet takes to the water; Navy warships are not missed

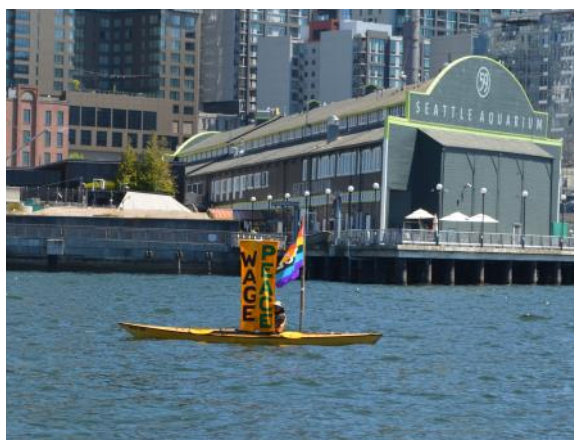
By Glen Milner

Five Peace Fleet sailors entered Elliott Bay on July 29 around 11:45 am in one sailboat and one kayak. It was perfect weather on the water: sunny, about 78 degrees and with a slight breeze. No U.S. Navy warships were present this year; no Blue Angels or other military aircraft; and no Canadian military vessels.



**Intrepid Peace Fleet sailors** prepare to depart for Elliott Bay. *Photo by Glen Milner.*

Due to the pandemic and construction along the shoreline, most of the waterfront was closed. We missed



**Rodney Brunelle** took to Puget Sound in his kayak, with his message of peace loud and clear. *Photo by Glen Milner.*

our Peace Fleet contingent on the shore, but we will be back!

All boats were launched from Bell Harbor Marina near Pier 66. The Port of Seattle was accommodating for yet another year.

Rodney Brunelle was self-propelled in his own hand-crafted kayak, with his rainbow peace flag and "Wage Peace" banner.

Dirk Gleysteen operated his beautiful 24-foot sailboat, the *S/V Silent*, with Mary Gleysteen, Rod Gleysteen, and Glen Milner onboard. Displayed high on the *S/V Silent* was a "Resist" flag, with a large "ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS" sign and other signs on the side from past years.

Everyone was equipped with a special-edition *Peace Fleet! 2020* face mask that was handmade by Karol Milner for the protection of all participants this year.

---

**Glen Milner** leads legal struggles on behalf of Ground Zero. He lives in Lake Forest Park.

---

## Sr. Ardeth Platte, O.P., Presente!



Sr. Ardeth Platte, who dedicated her life to peace and nuclear abolition, passed away on Sept. 30 at age 84. Sr. Platte, Sr. Carol Gilbert, and Sr. Jackie Hudson joined the forces of their considerable passion for resistance to engage in a Plowshares action in 2002. They entered a Minuteman III site in Colorado where they prayed and poured their own blood on a nuclear-armed missile. Sr. Platte was sentenced to 41 months in federal prison, and was released in 2005.

Sr. Platte lived at the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House in Washington, D.C., giving her close access to protests at the White House and Capitol buildings. She and Sr. Gilbert devoted themselves to the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Today, just three countries need to sign on to the Treaty before it can go into effect.

# Declaration of Conscientious Objection to and Non-Compliance With Any and All Post-Incarceration Conditions

## Presentencing Statement by Father Steve Kelly

By Fr. Steve Kelly

While still in chains, I, *pro se* defendant Stephen Michael Kelly, S.J., file this declaration in an attempt to remove any ambiguity and avoid all misunderstanding, come time of sentencing.

I assert the innocence of the Kings Bay Plowshares. But this statement is my own declaration. Both my conscientious objection and my Religious Freedom Restoration Act testimony are attempts to fulfill the mandate of the Nuremberg Accords. This witness has me confronting and engaged with the omniscient policies of the U.S. government. Recourse to appeal is futile, pathetic, and dangerous because all the judiciary's rulings precluded our jury from hearing any defense. The circuit, appeal, the entire judiciary has thwarted redress that would fulfill the purpose and mandate of the signatories of the Nuremberg Accords.

For this reason, I am a political prisoner of conscience for Christ. The judiciary has been unable to see the Isaian vision as a way out of this spiral of violence. The Isaiah 2:4 vision is an imperative to conversion. The judiciary dangerously legitimizes a nuclear holocaust in following previous rulings. The precedents, when followed, have functioned as a gag order. This court would not allow the jury, the triers of fact, to hear what was recognized in our Religious Freedom Restoration Act evidence; we were at

*"The wolf is Trident aimed at millions and the thief is larceny from the poor..."*

the Trident base to preach against the sin that flourishes in weapons of mass destruction.

Given that situation, my participation in any aspect of supervised release is to comply with and accommo-

date the U.S.'s compelling interest of the nuclear weapons agenda. Compelling interest is a euphemism for thousands of Hiroshimas and Nagasakis. And, as in the case of the duty of citizens' obligations to expose the Nazi concentration camps' industrial-scale genocide in Germany and Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, the Nuremberg Accords are both an appraisal and indictment. The nuclear weapons are flying extermination ovens. In con-

science, I can't let any court order or threat restrict me from imitation of the Good Shepherd, Jesus, when he placed himself, laying down his life between the wolf, the thief and the flock. In this case, the wolf is the Trident

aimed at millions and the thief is the larceny from the poor predicted by Eisenhower in his Oval Office departure. I answer to a higher authority in that my faith imperative, as outlined in the tenets of the Catechism, missions me to respond to the needs of the poor, oppressed, disenfranchised, in any locality and without any exclusion to those with felony records. I am indigent and itinerant. I will respond, should I be found worthy, led by the Spirit to witness the prophetic vision offered in Isaiah 2:4 by fulfilling its embodiment.

I am aware that imposition of supervised release is a guideline option, not mandatory for this court. I point out that supervised release was not intended for anti-nuclear activists. Consistent with the above, I will in conscience refuse any fines and restitution. This renders probation's role to oversee collection pointless. In the wake of sentencing, I will be taken in chains to Federal Court, Tacoma,

Washington, to answer for the warrant that stemmed from my stating in open court in September 2016 that I refused supervised release. And I suggested to the federal magistrate presiding to translate any term of supervised release into a period of incarceration. This has been consistent in all my previous Plowshares witnesses.

In closing this declaration, if it is not apparent that our nonviolent witness at the Trident base was to save not a few but a multitude of lives, then let this instrument serve to make that an explicit recapitulation of that intention.



**Political prisoner of conscience for Christ.** Fr. Kelly has spent more than 11 years of his life in jail or prison, and six of those years have been in solitary confinement due to his refusal to cooperate with an unjust, racist system.

**Fr. Steve Kelly** received a sentence of 33 months on October 15 for his prophetic nonviolent action at the Kings Bay Trident nuclear submarine base. In an egregious miscarriage of justice, the court upheld and protected the idolatry of nuclear weapons; it is Trident that should have been on trial. Learn more about, and support, the KBP7 at [www.kingsbayplowshares7.org](http://www.kingsbayplowshares7.org).



## Scenes from the Peace Walk and Peace Pagoda Progress



**The Pacific Northwest Peace Walk for a Nuclear Free World and Racial Justice** started on August 5 in Tacoma and ended at Ground Zero on August 8. Rev. Senji Kanaeda and Rev. Gilberto Perez of the Bainbridge Island Nipponzan Myohoji Temple, and members of Ground Zero, led the walk. Along the way they discussed the parallels between the racism that allowed the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the racism that still exists in American society towards Black and other People of Color. Above, the Peace Walkers gathered in Lake Forest Park. *Photo by Glen Milner.*



**After delays caused by the pandemic**, work on the Peace Pagoda has picked up pace again. Above, the volunteer construction team lowers the rebar cage onto the footing form for the base of the Pagoda. From left to right, Rev. Gilberto Perez, Nancy Lyman, Ben Moore, Jimmy Lyman, and Rev. Senji Kanaeda. *Photo by Mack Johnson.*

## Ground Zero Annual Meeting! November 6

By Glen Milner

The annual membership meeting is when we decide the future of Ground Zero. This year we'll be hosting an online meeting on Friday, November 6, from 11:00am to 2:00pm. Check the website ([www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org)) or email [info@gzcenter.org](mailto:info@gzcenter.org) for the link to the meeting. Please join us and consider serving on a committee or on one of the positions listed below.

All positions on the Stewardship Council, including Secretary, Treasurer, Chairperson and committee positions will be chosen or renewed at the annual meeting for the next year. Committees include house and grounds, communication/outreach, website, leafletting, finance/budget, and media. There is currently one ad hoc committee for the construction of the Peace Pagoda. There are also several "at large" positions on the Council.

The purpose of the Stewardship Council and committee positions is to divide the responsibilities and work of Ground Zero into manageable sections. The Council meets once a month, alternating monthly between meetings in Seattle, Tacoma and at Ground Zero. All meetings are open to all members.

Decisions of the Stewardship Council and committees are made by consensus and in accord with the mission statement, which reads, "Founded in 1977, Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action offers the opportunity to explore the meaning and practice of nonviolence from a perspective of deep spiritual reflection, providing a means for witnessing to and resisting all nuclear weapons, especially Trident. We seek to go to the root of violence and injustice in our world and experience the transforming power of love through nonviolent direct action."

**Glen Milner** has worked with Ground Zero since the days of White Train resistance. He lives in Lake Forest Park with his wife Karol.

# Ground Zero appeals to Navy personnel at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor: Refuse illegal orders; Refuse to launch nuclear missiles

By Glen Milner and Leonard Eiger

On August 2 and August 10, a full-page ad was published in the newspaper of record, the Kitsap Sun, speaking to military personnel at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor. The ad is an appeal to Navy personnel to resist orders to launch nuclear weapons. The appeal with supporting signatures can be viewed at [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org).

The Appeal to Navy Personnel specifically requests that members of the armed forces:

Resist illegal orders.  
Refuse to kill innocent civilians.  
Refuse the order to use nuclear weapons.

Peace activists also paid for full-page ads in the Kitsap Sun for the 75<sup>th</sup> remembrance of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and August 9. The ads regarding Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, state:

*Our proximity to the largest number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons puts us near a dangerous local and international threat. When citizens become aware of their role in the prospect of nuclear war, or the risk of a nuclear accident, the issue is no longer an abstraction. Our proximity to Bangor demands a deeper response. Remembering the atomic bomb victims of Nagasaki [and Hiroshima] is essential to preventing the use of nuclear weapons from happening again.*

Regarding the Appeal to Navy Personnel, peace activists are not requesting that military personnel leave the service, but instead that they serve honorably and in accordance to the [Uniform Code of Military Justice \(UCMJ\)](#) and international law.

Ground Zero member Elizabeth Murray stated, "Peace activists in the Puget Sound region have spoken to our community against nuclear weapons at the base since the 1970s. We have learned that we share a common concern with members of the armed forces—a concern that the use of nuclear weapons would lead to unimaginable destruction to innocent populations and to our planet." International decisions have ruled that the use of nuclear weapons is illegal, including decisions at the [International Court of Justice in 1996](#); the [1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#); the [1949 Geneva](#)

[Convention](#); and the [1977 Geneva Convention protocol](#). The [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) will soon enter into legal force when 50 nations have signed and ratified it.

The [Uniform Code of Military Justice \(UCMJ\)](#) makes it clear that military personnel have an obligation and a duty to only obey lawful orders and indeed have an obligation to [disobey unlawful orders](#), including orders by the president that do not comply with the UCMJ. The moral and legal obligation is to the U.S. Constitution and not to those who might issue unlawful orders, especially if those orders are in direct violation of the Constitution and the UCMJ.

A smaller online version of the ad is also being published with the Kitsap Sun. The online version is guaranteed to receive 40,000 "impressions" and is at <https://adapt.giadc.io/proofs/7822beca-649b-485a-8cdb-b8f4ec9466e1>.

Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor is homeport to the largest concentration of deployed nuclear warheads in the U.S. The nuclear warheads are deployed on Trident [D-5 missiles](#) on [SSBN submarines](#) and are stored in an underground [nuclear weapons storage facility](#) on the base.

There are eight Trident SSBN submarines deployed at [Bangor](#). Six Trident SSBN submarines are deployed on the East Coast at Kings Bay, Georgia. One Trident submarine carries the destructive force of over 1,200 Hiroshima bombs (the Hiroshima bomb was 15 kilotons) or the destructive force of 900 Nagasaki bombs (20 kilotons.)

Each Trident submarine was originally equipped for 24 Trident missiles. In 2015-2017 four missile tubes were deactivated on each submarine as a result of the New START Treaty. Currently, each Trident submarine deploys with 20 D-5 missiles and about 90 nuclear warheads (an average of 4-5 warheads per missile). The warheads are either the W76-1 90-kiloton or W88 455-kiloton warheads.

The Navy in early 2020 started deploying the new [W76-2](#) low-yield warhead (approximately eight kilotons) on select ballistic submarine missiles at Bangor (following initial deployment in the Atlantic in December



**A mother and child** sit in the ruins of Hiroshima. Photo courtesy of Getty Images.

**Ground Zero appeal... continued on page 7**



2019). The warhead was deployed to deter Russian first use of tactical nuclear weapons, dangerously creating a [lower threshold](#) for the use of U.S. strategic nuclear weapons.

Any use of [nuclear weapons](#) against another nuclear weapon state would likely elicit a response with nuclear weapons, causing overwhelming death and destruction. Besides the [direct effects](#) on the adversaries, the associated radioactive fallout would affect people in other nations. The global human and economic impacts would be far beyond imagination, and orders of magnitude beyond the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

[Hans M. Kristensen](#) is the expert source for the statement, “*Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor... with largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons in the U.S.*” (See cited source material [here](#) and [here](#).) Mr. Kristensen is director of the [Nuclear Information Project](#) at the [Federation of American Scientists](#) where he provides the public with analysis and background information about the status of nuclear forces and the role of nuclear weapons.

Our proximity to the largest number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons puts us near a dangerous local and international threat. When citizens become aware of their role in the prospect of nuclear war, or the risk of a nuclear accident, the issue is no longer an abstraction. Our proximity to Bangor demands a deeper response.

Citizens in a democracy also have responsibilities—which includes choosing our leaders and staying informed about what our government is doing. The submarine base at Bangor is 20 miles from downtown Seattle, yet only a small percentage of citizens in our region know that Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor exists.

Citizens of Washington State consistently elect governmental officials who support nuclear weapons in Washington State. In the 1970s, Senator Henry Jackson convinced the Pentagon to locate the Trident submarine base on the Hood Canal, while Senator Warren Magnuson obtained funding for roads and other impacts caused by the Trident base. The only Trident submarine to be named after a person (and our former Washington State Senator) is the [USS Henry M. Jackson](#) (SSBN-730), homeported at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor.

In 2012, Washington State established the [Washington Military Alliance](#) (WMA), strongly pro-

moted by both Governor’s Gregoire and Inslee. The WMA, Department of Defense, and other governmental agencies work to strengthen the role of [Washington State](#) as a “...[Power Projection Platform](#) (*Strategic Ports, Rail, Roads, and Airports*) [with] the complementary air, land, and sea units with which to accomplish the mission.”

Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor and the Trident submarine system have evolved since the first Trident submarine arrived in August 1982. The [base has upgraded](#) to a much larger D-5 missile with a larger W88 (455 kiloton) warhead, with ongoing modernization of missile guidance and control systems. The Navy has recently deployed the smaller [W76-2](#) “low-yield” or tactical nuclear weapon (approximately eight kilotons) on select ballistic submarine missiles at Bangor, dangerously creating a lower threshold for the use of nuclear weapons.

The U.S. is spending more on [nuclear weapons](#) programs than during the height of the Cold War. The government plans to spend an estimated [\\$1.7 trillion](#) over 30 years for rebuilding the nation’s nuclear facilities and modernizing nuclear weapons.

The New York Times reported that the U. S., Russia and [China](#) are aggressively pursuing a new generation of smaller and less destructive nuclear weapons. The buildups threaten to revive a [Cold War-era arms race](#) and unsettle the balance of

power among nations.

The U.S. Navy states that [SSBN](#) submarines on patrol provide the U.S. with its “most survivable and enduring nuclear strike capability.” However, SSBNs in port and nuclear warheads stored at SWFPAC are likely a first target in a nuclear war. Google [imagery](#) from 2018 shows three SSBN submarines on the Hood Canal waterfront.

Due to ongoing modernization and maintenance programs for warheads at Bangor, [nuclear warheads](#) are routinely shipped in unmarked trucks between the Department of Energy Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas and the Bangor base. Unlike the Navy at Bangor, the [DOE](#) actively promotes emergency preparedness.



**Graffiti art** by artist and activist Banksy challenges us to see soldiers as potential allies in the struggle. Photo courtesy of [www.artbanksy.com](#)

**Glen Milner** leads legal struggles on behalf of Ground Zero. He lives in Lake Forest Park. **Leonard Eiger** chairs the communication and outreach committee for Ground Zero, and manages the No to New Trident campaign at [www.notnt.org](#).

# GROUND ZERO

**GROUND ZERO CENTER  
FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION**  
16159 Clear Creek Road NW  
Poulsbo, WA 98370

**Phone: 360-930-8697**  
**Website: [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org)**  
**E-mail: [info@gzcenter.org](mailto:info@gzcenter.org)**

**Address Service Requested**

*“Whatever the judges and  
prosecutors and these  
systems do upon us is nothing  
compared to the suffering the  
government is causing across the  
world.”*

*— Sr. Ardeth Platte*

**Send us your change of  
address before the post  
office does and it saves  
Ground Zero money!**

*If you no longer want to receive our  
newsletter, just let us know and  
we'll take you off our mailing list.*

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. Postage Paid  
SILVERDALE WA  
98383  
Permit # 111

## The Silent Unthinkable

By Al Drinkwine

In our viral silence,  
accompanied by human indifference,  
a far more deadly threat sleeps

It flies, floats and hides in our soil,  
camouflaged as security,  
it is anything but

Fences and armed guards secure  
its secret threatening danger,

Transported nationally  
in camouflaged guarded semis,  
on a web of highways  
hoping to remain invisible

Nested near some population centers,  
some tucked in the woods,  
peppering America  
as never they should

Perhaps it is time,  
before it's too late,  
to ask ourselves  
fully honest and straight

Is our silent unthinkable  
truly useable?

Are our nation's  
6,800 nuclear weapons  
for protection,  
or self-annihilation ~

**Al Drinkwine** spent seven years employed at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor until resigning as a statement of conscience in 1982. Following his resignation Al began working in education and writing poetry. Al and his wife Jerrie have both retired from education and today live in Kirkland.