

Ground Zero

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Joyful Flash Mob Caps Weekend of Events Dedicated to Global and Local Peacemaking



By Mary Gleysteen

Ten nuclear weapons abolition activists were removed from the roadway at 7am, Monday, August 7, by the Washington State Patrol after blocking the entrance to Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, site of the world's largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons.

The civil disobedience followed a demonstration at the entrance to the Trident submarine base by Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action which involved approximately 50 nuclear weapons abolitionists ranging in age from 16 to elders in their 80's and featured a flash dance in the roadway to the song, "War: What is it Good For?"

The activists mourned the victims of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and

detonated in the Marshall Islands following World War II. They held banners reading, "Abolish Nuclear Weapons" and "The Use...and Possession of Nuclear Weapons is Immoral -Pope Francis." Sue Ablao (Bremerton), Susan Delaney (Bothell), Deacon Denny Duffell (Seattle), Carolee Flaten (Hansville), Rev. Anne Hall and Dr. David Hall (Lopez Island), Mack Johnson (Silverdale), Sean Makarin (Port Orchard), Michael Siptroth (Belfair) and Caroline Wildflower (Port Townsend), refused to leave the roadway. Demonstrators were apprehended by the Washington State Patrol and issued citations.

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The Monday morning demonstration concluded a three-day gathering “Save the Planet-Abolish Nuclear Weapons” sponsored by Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility and Washington Against Nuclear Weapons Coalition.

Weekend events included:

- * Keynote by Veterans for Peace and Code Pink Activist Ann Wright (Colonel, U.S. Army Retired) linking campaigns for environmental justice, anti militarism and nuclear weapons abolition ;

- *Presentation by educators Rachel Hoffman and Dr. Robin Narruhn and members of the Marshallese Women’s Association detailing the tragic and ongoing effects of detonation of 67 atomic bombs in the Marshall Islands during the years 1946-1958;

- *Arrival of members of the 19th annual Pacific Northwest Peace Walk which originated this year in Salem, Oregon and included walks through Portland, Tacoma and Seattle;



Col. Ann Wright (ret.) spoke eloquently about the need to make peace in North Korea and Ukraine. *Photo taken from video by Ed Mays.*

- *Rally at the entrance to the Bangor base where representatives from a variety of communities called for spending on human needs and environmental care, the abolition of nuclear weapons, and an end to military aggression and expansion.

- *Memorial Service for the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombings featuring a message from Seattle Archbishop Paul Etienne (who was on a pilgrimage to Hiroshima and Nagasaki), and the hanging of paper peace cranes on the fence separating the Ground Zero Center from the Trident nuclear submarine base;

- *Publication of three paid, full page public service announcements in the Kitsap Sun commemorating the use of atomic weapons on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and a plea to members of the military to refuse to launch nuclear weapons.

Mary Gleysteen serves on the Stewardship Council, and was a member of the planning committee for the August 5-7 commemoration of the 78th bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Billboards around Puget Sound raise awareness of the nuclear danger

By Leonard Eiger and Glen Milner

On August 21, and continuing for four weeks, a billboard displayed the following paid advertisement: “Did You Know, We’re only 15 Miles from the Largest Concentration of Deployed Nukes in the USA! Let’s Abolish Nuclear Weapons.”

Included in the advertisement is a map showing the proximity of Gorst, Washington to Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, homeport for 8 of the Navy’s 14 Trident nuclear-powered submarines. The billboard is near the intersection of highways SR 16 and SR 3 in Kitsap County, and serves as a public service announcement—informing the reader that at this exact location, they are 15 miles from the largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons in the U.S.

Pat Moriarity, the award-winning internationally

known artist commissioned by Ground Zero to produce the billboard, stated, “I’ve lived just a few miles from the location of this billboard for 23 years and even I didn’t realize how many nuclear weapons were so close to my home. I’d like to think if my neighbors knew, they would be concerned about getting rid of them. As a species we need to evolve past this mutual assured destruction mentality. It’s like the scariest staring contest you can imagine.”

The cartoon style billboard by Moriarity is planned to be the first of a series of billboards across Washington State that will inform viewers of the distance at each billboard location to Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor.

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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.

Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action also

On August 9, 2023, the 78th anniversary of the atomic bombing Nagasaki, the bishops of four Catholic archdioceses in areas impacted by nuclear weapons, [issued a formal statement](#) declaring that they will begin working together to achieve a “world without nuclear weapons.” The dioceses include Seattle, Washington and Santa Fe, New Mexico in the US, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

In the 1970s and 1980s, thousands demonstrated against nuclear weapons at the Bangor base and hundreds were arrested. Seattle Archbishop Hunthausen had proclaimed the Bangor submarine base the “Auschwitz of Puget Sound” and in 1982 began to withhold half of his federal taxes in protest of “our nation’s continuing involvement in the race for nuclear arms supremacy.”

On May 27, 2016, President Obama spoke in Hiroshima and called for an end to nuclear weapons. He said that the nuclear powers “...must have the courage to escape the logic of fear, and pursue a world without

them.” Obama added, “We must change our mindset about war itself.”

Our proximity to the largest number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons puts us near a dangerous local



Award-winning artist Pat Moriarity designed this billboard to be the first of a series of four, spread across the state, each indicating the distance to the largest concentration of nuclear weapons.

joined with Pax Christi USA to purchase four billboards that ran in Seattle and Tacoma during the same time period. Designed by Pax Christi USA, they state: *THE USE... AND POSSESSION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS IMMORAL. - Pope Francis. Get them out of Puget Sound!*

In 2017 Pope Francis openly denounced the possession of nuclear weapons by the world’s nuclear-armed nations in a departure from the Roman Catholic Church’s prior acceptance of the doctrines of nuclear deterrence and mutually assured destruction.

“International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms... Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family.”

[More recently](#) the Pope called on all nations and people to “work with determination to promote the conditions necessary for a world without nuclear arms,” speaking in support of the United Nations [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#). The best way to do this, added the Pope, is by “contributing to the advancement of peace and multilateral cooperation, which humanity greatly needs.” The Vatican was the first state to sign and ratify the treaty.



Pope Francis journeyed to Hiroshima in 2019 and reiterated his opposition to even the possession of nuclear weapons. Four billboards in Seattle and Tacoma spread his message.

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.

Leonard Eiger maintains the anti-nuclear, pro-peace blog *Subversive Peacemaking* at <https://subversivepeacemaking.blogspot.com>.

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

19th Annual Pacific NW Peace Walk a Great Success

By Rev. Senji Kanaeda

Na mu myo ho ren ge kyo,

I would like to thank all friends who participated in and cooperated with the Pacific Northwest Peace March in 2023. We left Salem, the capital of Oregon on July 28, where 3,000 members of the Marshall Islands community are located, and walked through several cities along the way, including Portland, Tacoma and Seattle.

This 19th peace march was the first time that a person from the Marshall Islands participated and walked most of it. His name is Ricky Alick, and he will be 70 soon. Ricky was one of many Marshall Islanders who had suffered nuclear damage without being informed of anything by 67 nuclear tests in their home islands.



Step by step toward a nuclear-free world. Photo by Rev. Gilberto Perez.

Twenty people gathered and walked to the Japanese American Museum early in the morning in Portland. The history of the Japanese American internment camp was engraved there, which should never happen again. Chisao Hata, a third-generation Japanese American who is the director of our Bainbridge Island Temple, is also currently serving as the director of that museum.

Along the way, we received lodging and meals from many Christians, including three Catholic Workers, one African American church, a Native American Methodist church, and a Congregational church on the Suquamish Indian Reservation.

At the climax of the Hiroshima Day lantern ceremony in Seattle on Aug. 6, Ricky from the Marshall Islands led the crowd of more than a thousand participants and the walkers and drums followed him.

Rev. Senji Kanaeda has led peace walks around the world, and serves on the Ground Zero Stewardship Council.

Why Did I Stand in the Road?

By Sue Ablao

I am 81, mother of seven, grandma of 14 and great grandma of one. I have worked in peace and social justice issues all my adult life and have been with Ground Zero Center for Non-violent Action for more than 30 years. I stood in the road at the Bangor Nuclear Sub-Base in response to two of the greatest existential threats to the future of our kids and grandkids: nuclear weapons and climate change. Indeed, a nuclear war would be the ultimate climate.

Now, climate change: the temperature of the Earth and her oceans are rising rapidly. The climate is changing before our very eyes, heat domes, drought hurricanes and tornadoes all year round, all these are becoming the norm. All of this is brought about in large part by our dependence on fossil fuels for the development and manufacture of nuclear weapons systems. This increases the amount of carbon and other greenhouse gases and, hence, increases the speed and severity of climate change.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, Brookings Institute, War Resisters League and other sources, the US government is prepared to spend \$100,000 a minute at 50 universities over the next ten years for research (almost one-third of our annual federal budget!) to finance a weapon that cannot be used!

Abolishing nuclear weapons funding will not be replaced dollar for dollar with funding for life giving programs. But just think of having even half of that money go to mitigating climate change, homelessness and eliminating poverty. We could provide Medicare, housing and education for all. We could provide humanitarian aid to countries in need instead of weapons of war. We were the first to develop and use them.

We can, systematically over a reasonable amount of time, abolish nuclear weapons. It can be done and for the future of the coming generations, it must be done. That is why I stand in the road, to say NO to nuclear weapons and yes to the future of all peoples. Thank you.

Sue Ablao is on the Stewardship Council, and served as the first Member-in-Residence for Ground Zero with Sr. Jackie Hudson, OP. Sue provided this testimony at her mitigation hearing for the charge of "Pedestrian in Roadway" that she received for civil disobedience during the Ground Zero Mother's Day action. Judge Timothy Drury reduced the fine to \$20 but did not dismiss the charge.

Peace Fleet confronts new, unlawful “no-protest zone”

By Glen Milner

The Peace Fleet event went well this year, but as in past years, brought its own unique challenges.

Instead of trying to limit access on the shore on Pier 62, this year Friends of Waterfront Seattle—the nonprofit agency that runs the Seattle waterfront parks—was obliging to the point of setting up a table, chairs, and a canopy for Peace demonstrators on the pier. Mixing with Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard recruiters and exhibits, peace activists handed out leaflets and displayed signs and banners throughout the pier. Banners and signs on the pier included “Militarism Fuels Climate Crisis—Stop War, Save Climate”, Veterans for Peace flags, “Warships out of Seafair” and “Abolish Nuclear Weapons.”

In Elliott Bay however, the Coast Guard established an unlawful and expanded [no-protest zone](#) that prohibited all vessels within 100 yards in front of Pier 62 and Pier 66. The Coast Guard imaginatively stated that this zone was necessary “to protect personnel, vessels, and the marine environment in the navigable waters within the safety zone associated with the Parade of Ships.”

The no-protest zone is unlike any other Coast Guard “safety” zone in the United States—unique only to Elliott Bay with the sole intention of unlawfully preventing the movement of peace demonstrators on the water.



Beautiful day to end militarism. Peace Fleet kayakers take to Elliott Bay to spread their message. *Photo by Glen Milner.*

The zone was unlawful because the exact same situation occurred last year when the U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, Seafair, Navy League Seattle, Friends of Waterfront Seattle, and the Port of Seattle realized that the no-protest zone at Pier 66 could not be extended to the Parade of Ships ceremony at Pier 62. The Coast Guard had an entire year to revise the rule, with public comments, as it has done in the past. Instead, the Coast Guard announced its unlawful rule on the day before the August 1

event—giving no opportunity for comments or intervention by citizens.

The new larger no-protest zone also blocked the entrance to Bell Harbor Marina where Peace Fleet kayaks and larger boats normally departed at noon. Adding even more restrictions, on the morning of August 1, 2023, the Coast Guard stated it would begin enforcement of the zone at 11:00 am and that vessels would be allowed to pass if conditions were “safe.”

After contacting Representative Pramila Jayapal on July 31, she acted immediately and sent an inquiry to the Coast Guard about the no-protest zone. This likely influenced the lack of enforcement of the expanded no-protest zone.

Before noon on August 1, Peace Fleet vessels left Bell Harbor Marina to enter Elliott Bay and were immediately met by two Coast Guard vessels. At that time, the no-protest zone was not discussed with Coast Guard personnel, and it was not enforced.

A few hours later on August 1, a single U.S. Arleigh Burke destroyer, along with an assortment of Canadian shore vessels and Coast Guard vessels, arrived for the Parade of Ships.

This year Ground Zero Peace Fleet organizers worked with Veterans for Peace, Seattle Anti-War Coalition and a number of peace and environmental organizations including 350 Seattle, who are now planning a continued opposition to the Blue Angels at the Seattle Seafair festival.

New this year—two kayakers paddled from West Seattle to join us on the downtown waterfront. They reported that the trip back to West Seattle went well. Other kayakers carried their kayaks down the ramp to Bell Harbor Marina. Signs and banners on the water included “Renounce Militarism” and various types of Peace flags.

On the shore: Marti Schmidt, Mary Paterson, Mona Lee, Carolee Flaten, Kathryn Railsback, Karol Milner, Alisa McFeron and Hannah, Sigrid Salo, Kristi Nebel, Steve Nebel, Mike Stuart, Dan Gilman, Rodney Brunelle, Michael “Firefly” Siptroth, Mack Johnson, and other Veterans for Peace, 350 Seattle, and WPSR members.

On the water: kayakers from West Seattle, Karen Farnsworth and Liz Spoerri; kayakers Jim Nau, Mark Barabasz, and Craig Jacobson; Dirk Gleysteen and his new 34-foot cruiser, [Merlin](#), along with Sallie Shawl, Mary Gleysteen, Katharine Gleysteen, Connie Wallace, and Glen Milner.

The next Peace Fleet event will likely be on Tuesday, July 30, 2024 or Wednesday, July 31, 2024.

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

Marshallese Struggle for Health Equity

Impacts of dozens of nuclear bombs are still felt today

By Robin Narruhn, Ph.D., MN, RN

Editor's note: Public health researcher, professor, and nurse practitioner Dr. Robin Narruhn presented on the findings of her research on August 5 at Ground Zero. This is a condensed version of the article "I've Never Been to a Doctor": Health Care Access for the Marshallese in Washington State, co-authored with Christine R. Espina, that appeared in the September 2022 edition of Advances in Nursing Science.

The Ri Majel (Marshallese) migrants of Washington State have endured health inequities and unique laws dictating their access to health care once they arrive to the United States. These health inequities can be seen to be a result of historical trauma and militarization of their islands.

People from the RMI—known as the Ri Majel—began to immigrate to the United States in the 1990s to pursue economic opportunity, education, and access to



The start of immense suffering. Marshallese evacuate from their island of Bikini in 1946. *Photo from the National Security Archives.*

healthcare. The Ri Majel are not considered US citizens, nationals, or immigrants, nor do they have the status of lawful permanent residents (or Green Card holders) under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), placing them in a dubious position.

The number of Marshallese immigrants in the United States has increased from 6,700 in 2000 to 22,400 as of the 2010 census. Approximately one-third of the entire population of the RMI has migrated to the United States. Washington State has the third largest population of Ri Majel in the United States after Hawaii and Arkansas.

The Ri Majel history has been virtually erased from

US history, discourse, and public consciousness. This erasure contributes to a lack of basic understanding among healthcare workers about the structural causes of inequities.

COLONIZATION AND NUCLEAR TESTING

Micronesian navigators have populated the RMI since 2000 BC. Known initially as Aelon Kein Ad – “our islands,” this island group has undergone multiple colonizations over the centuries by the Spanish, Germans, Japanese, and, most recently, the Americans. During World War II, the Americans captured the islands from the Japanese and the RMI became part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands created by the United Nations and administered by the United States.

After WWII, the United States maintained administrative control of the RMI from 1947 to 1986 as part of the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Today, the US military remains in the RMI on the main island, Kwajalein, where the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile base is located—a facility the United States considers vital to its national security. From 1946 to 1958, the United States conducted 67 nuclear tests in the RMI.

The United States tested large-scale weapons designed for mass annihilation. If their combined explosive power were parceled evenly over those 12 years, it would equal 1.6 Hiroshima-size explosions per day. Because of miscalculations in dosage, wind direction, and speed, the Ri Majel were exposed to massive amounts of radiation. The Ri Majel living on nearby atolls were not relocated and suffered immediate and long-term injuries and illnesses from exposure to nuclear fallout. The nuclear bombing also led to the long-term contamination of soil and marine ecosystems. This contamination and health effects exist to this day.

ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

The nuclear bombing conducted in the northern Marshall Islands led to fallout spreading over a large area in the RMI, creating devastating effects on the environment and people.

In a 2019 study, researchers found that radiation levels on RMI lands exceed radiation levels at Fukushima and Chernobyl, contributing to disproportionate cancer rates. Food grown on the Marshall Islands remains contaminated with radionuclide levels above international safety standards, and plant food sources have become inedible due to radiation. This contamination affected the social and economic fabric of the Ri Majel, undermining social norms and sustenance activities. Because of this,

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food must be imported, leading to poor diets and resulting health outcomes.

Global climate change and environmental nuclear destruction threaten livability in the RMI. Climate change has disproportionately affected people in the low-lying South Pacific Islands. The RMI lies an average of 3 to 7 ft above sea level, making it remarkably vulnerable to rising sea levels, king tides, and storms that cause increasing salinization of flora, water, and disruption of any remaining food production and tourism. It is clear that the combination of multiple colonizations, climate change, and nuclear bombing has had a profound negative impact on the population health and the mortality of the Ri Majel, forcing them to migrate.

HEALTH IMPACTS OF NUCLEAR TESTING

The United States has narrowed reparative compensation to the Ri Majel by defining “legitimate damage” using temporal and spatial limits. Although the United States conducted multiple nuclear tests through 1958, it does not pay reparations to people exposed to residual nuclear contamination after the Bravo detonation on Bikini atoll in 1954.

The nuclear bombing caused ongoing ecological and health effects among the Ri Majel residing in the RMI and the United States. High disease rates in the RMI include diabetes, hypertension, thyroid tumors, tuberculosis, and Hansen disease/leprosy, as well as higher rates of mental health concerns such as suicide, alcoholism, and depression. The disparate rates of cancer and reproductive anomalies attest to the ongoing damage wrought by the nuclear bombing.

“If [the nuclear tests’] combined explosive power were parceled evenly over those 12 years, it would equal 1.6 Hiroshima-size explosions per day.”

bombings in the 1940s and 1950s. Signed in 1985, COFA provides “for U.S. economic assistance (including eligibility for certain U.S. federal programs), defense of the RMI, and other benefits in exchange for U.S. defense and certain other operating rights in the RMI, denial of access to RMI territory by other nations, and other agreements.” COFA allows citizens of the RMI to immigrate freely to the United States without a health screening and work without a visa in exchange for military access to the RMI and specifically allows for the Ronald Reagan Bal-

THE UNITED STATES TREATY WITH COFA NATIONS

The Compact of Free Association (COFA) is an agreement between the nations of the RMI, the Republic of Palau (RP), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), ratified in 1986, whereby the United States promised compensation for damage caused by nuclear

istic Missile Defense Test Site on the Kwajalein Atoll of the RMI. At the time of the initial agreement in 1985, COFA immigrants were eligible for benefits such as Medicaid and other safety net programs in the United States.

In 1996, Clinton’s welfare reform and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) inexplicably excluded COFA immigrants from these benefits despite the COFA treaty. The Ri Majel lost government-provided healthcare coverage except during life events such as pregnancy. Although Mar-



Medical treatment or medical testing? The military conducted examinations of Marshallese people who were exposed to radioactive fallout from nuclear weapons. *Photo from the US Dept. of Energy.*

shallese residents in the United States pay into the system by taxes and serve at a high per capita enrollment in military service, they do not share in the system’s benefits, nor can they vote—violating “taxation without representation.”

Currently, COFA migrants have limited access to health care benefits in the United States, which further exacerbates existing health inequities. Health care access is decided at a state-by-state level, leaving COFA immigrants at the mercy of the vagaries of the state laws where they reside, leaving many uninsured. For example, COFA migrants’ access to Medicaid has been continuously contested in Hawaii after PRWORA. Starting in February 2015, COFA migrants were eligible to enroll in the Hawaii Health Insurance Exchange.

Between 1996 and 2019, the Ri Majel were eligible for health insurance in three ways in Washington State: (1) employer-based insurance, (2) Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or (3) Maternity Support Services for prenatal and pregnancy care. This meant that the Ri Majel older than 65 years were not eligible for Medicare. The Ri Majel could only get health insurance if they were pregnant, had employer-provided insurance, or were younger than 19 years.

Two U.S. Archbishops Take Part in Japanese Atomic Bomb Commemorations

By Jim Thomas

Author's note: In April, Archbishop Etienne invited me to join the Pilgrimage of Peace, a delegation of nine people to participate in the annual commemorations of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He wanted my help in preparing for the trip and provide advice during the Pilgrimage because of my many years of working for nuclear disarmament. The trip was the culmination of my four decades working for nuclear abolition that began at Ground Zero when I attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the original peace pagoda in the fall of 1981. I am forever grateful for the faithful witness of all those associated with the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action. Your community has given me much inspiration since 1981.

In August, the Catholic Archbishop of Seattle Paul Etienne joined Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe (NM) on a Pilgrimage of Peace to participate in the commemoration of the 78th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The other members of the delegation were Helen McClenahan and me from the Archdiocese of Seattle; Leslie Radigan, Anne Avelone, Jay Coghlan, and Karen Pettit from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe; and Hirokazu Miyazaki, a professor of anthropology at Northwestern University who served as our interpreter.

As religious leaders, both archbishops have come to understand their responsibility to speak out for a world free of nuclear weapons. The Archdiocese of Santa Fe includes two national laboratories dedicated to nuclear weapons research (Los Alamos and Sandia) and the storage of thousands of retired weapons. The Seattle Archdiocese includes the largest concentration of deployed U.S. nuclear weapons.

Archbishop Wester made headlines last year when he issued a pastoral letter, *Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation toward Nuclear Disarmament*, "We cannot sit back and be silent in the face of our ongoing preparations for nuclear war. ... we must take up the cause of worldwide nuclear disarmament with an urgency that befits the seriousness of this cause and the dangerous threat that looms over all of humanity and the planet."

Archbishop Etienne issued his own statement last October to mark the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Mis-

sile Crisis, "Because Puget Sound could be on the front line in a nuclear war, I feel an urgent obligation that we review our Catholic teaching on nuclear weapons and the need to sharply reduce these weapons of mass destruction until we can eliminate them."

On August 4, the nine-member delegation traveled from Tokyo to Hiroshima and toured the Peace Memorial Museum and Peace Park. On August 5, we met with Setsuko Thurlow, a hibakusha (atomic bomb survivor), and representatives of ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons). Ms. Thurlow is inspiring with her passion for peace and her commitment to share her experience of the atomic bombing as a 13-year-old schoolgirl. As Archbishop Wester remarked in a blog post, "At 91 years of age, she is a dynamic speaker who does not pull her punches. She confronts power with truth and demands that our world leaders forge a path toward peace and nuclear arms abolition. At the same time, she is very compassionate, and her smile lights up the room."

Touring the museum and meeting Ms. Thurlow caused Archbishop Etienne to write in his blog post from Hiroshima, "I was so profoundly moved, saddened, even sickened by all that I saw and learned. I am even more convinced and committed to following Setsuko's lead to work for peace and advocate for the elimination of nuclear weapons."



Setsuko Thurlow has campaigned against nuclear weapons for 78 years, since surviving the bombing of Hiroshima as a girl. Photo from www.globalnews.ca.

In the afternoon, at the World Peace Memorial Cathedral, Archbishop Wester presented a lecture and urged that "we can no longer deny or ignore the dangerous predicament we have created for ourselves with a new nuclear arms race. This new arms race is arguably more dangerous than the past Cold War because of multiple nuclear actors and the rise of cyber and hypersonic weapons and artificial intelligence." Archbishop Etienne, in his remarks, asked people to "imagine what

would happen if the nuclear powers launched a peace race instead of an arms race."

On August 6, we arrived at the Peace Park before 6:00 am to participate in the Interfaith Prayer Ceremony which was attended by Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian religious leaders as well as local dignitaries. Then we went to another area of the Peace Park for the Peace Memorial Ceremony, joining thousands of others for the

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commemoration of the 78th anniversary of the atomic bombing. The crowd included official representatives from 110 countries—the most ever.

Among the messages presented during the somber commemoration was one delivered on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in which he warned, “the drums of nuclear war are beating once again ... The nuclear shadow that loomed over the Cold War has re-emerged. ... the global community must ... not sit idly by as nuclear-armed States race to create even more dangerous weapons. ... Disarmament is not some utopian dream. Disarmament is the only pathway to a safer and more secure world for all.”



Leading a service in Hiroshima. Archbishop John Wester, second from left, and Archbishop Paul Etienne, second from right. *Photo from www.ncronline.org.*

Archbishop Etienne, in another blog post from Hiroshima, said, “I will carry that day in my own body, as much as my memory, as listening to and reading the stories of the many lives that perished—so many of them children—had such a visceral impact upon me. ... resort to the threat or use of nuclear weapons ... is simply not morally justifiable. ... Never again the use of nuclear weapons! Never again war!”

Travelling to Nagasaki the next day, we met with Nagasaki Mayor Shiro Suzuki. Due to an approaching typhoon, he rescinded all international invitations to the annual atomic bomb commemoration ceremony so that the event could be moved indoors.

Immediately following our meeting with Mayor Suzuki, the Pilgrimage of Peace delegation participated in the Interfaith Dialogue of Religious Leaders for World Peace. The first part included presentations by the organization’s director and Archbishop Wester. The last half of the meeting was an opportunity for small group discussions over dinner, developing ideas for how to be more effective in fostering peace.

The following evening, August 8, the Santa Fe/

Seattle delegation attended the “Memorial Ceremony for the Atomic Bomb Victims,” which had also been moved indoors. Among the religious leaders offering prayers and remembrances, Archbishop Etienne said, “Together in solidarity, we will strive ever more diligently to abolish all nuclear weapons. In doing so, we must wean ourselves from nuclear deterrence and develop a new concept of global security that also addresses the climate crisis.”

Earlier in the day, as the typhoon’s rain and wind began, we met for several hours with the bishops of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and some of their staff, developing an agreement about how the four dioceses could accelerate the elimination of nuclear weapons.

On August 9, the 78th anniversary of the atomic destruction of Nagasaki, the archbishops of Nagasaki, Santa Fe, and Seattle, and the bishop of Hiroshima issued a declaration of their “Partnership for a World Without Nuclear Weapons.” Their statement renewed the demands they made of the G-7 leaders who met in May 2023 in Hiroshima. For their part, the U.S. and Japanese bishops launched an unprecedented initiative “to build an interfaith partnership that will advocate for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and calls for countries to redirect nuclear weapons budgets to helping vulnerable people and restoring contaminated environments.

To begin implementation of the Partnership, Archbishop Wester will attend the second meeting of the State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in November. The bishops of Hiroshima and Nagasaki want to come to the United States in 2024. This trip will hopefully include a visit to Ground Zero.

One of the most inspiring parts of the August 6 commemoration in Hiroshima came when two sixth graders stood at the podium and presented their Commitment to Peace. In commanding voices, they proclaimed:

“Now is the time to unite our will for peace. ...

We will each take action [for] peace.

We, the children of Hiroshima, will build a peaceful future.”

With that same confidence and dedication, let each of us do something daily for peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Jim Thomas was a member of the Bethlehem Peace Pilgrimage (1982-1983) that started at the gates of the Bangor Trident base on Good Friday, April 9, 1982. Beginning in 1984, he has researched Hanford’s huge radiation releases, advocated for downwinders, and helped end plutonium processing at Hanford. Jim is completing a memoir, *Atomic Pilgrim: How a 6700-mile Walk Helped Me Find Peace and Uncover Long-Held Secrets about Nuclear Weapons Production*. On his website, you can sign up to be notified when his book is published (www.jamespatrickthomas.com/memoir). He will be giving a presentation on his recent trip to Hiroshima and Nagasaki at St. Joseph Church (732 18th Ave E, Seattle, WA 98112) at 7:00 pm on October 26.

After years of legislative efforts by community members, Washington State Senate Bill 5683 was signed on March 22, 2018, by Governor Jay Inslee. For the first time since 1996, this legislation allowed Washington State residents from the RMI to access health care insurance.

ONGOING EFFECTS OF RADIATION

Ri Majel participants attributed the ongoing effects of radiation as the driving factor for their migration to the United States and the high chronic disease and mortality rates among community members.



The lack of healthcare access is “deliberate.” Marshalllese women participate in a health survey in January 2021. *Photo courtesy of Washington State University.*

“There’s a lot of family, relatives, and friends that have passed away because of cancer. Cancer is very high in the Marshalllese community. So is diabetes. And a lot of it is pointing back towards history when the United States came and tested their nuclear bombs in the mid-40s and ’50s in the Marshall Islands. And because they don’t have preventative care.” (Ri Majel participant)

“That radiation is still affecting the island’s people right now.” (Ri Majel participant)

The systematic lack of health care access was related to deliberate legislative and regulatory structural policies—not to biological, individual, or cultural behaviors.

DENIAL OF SERVICES

Ri Majel participants spoke of the experience of being repeatedly denied health care services and benefits, leading to a sense of resignation and fatalism. Lack of health care coverage resulted in inadequate and untimely care, denying the Ri Majel access to preventive care such as adequate diagnostic testing and follow-up. Participants described limited, acute interventions for chronic diseases such as cancer. When asked to elaborate on factors impacting a Marshalllese person’s experiences with barriers in accessing health care, one Marshalllese participant

said, “Yeah, but they are being ignored. Or anytime they go to a [DSHS] office and apply for some benefit they get denied, repeatedly, all these years.” (Ri Majel participant)

Yet, another Marshalllese participant said, “I wouldn’t be surprised if that’s the reason people are not really coming in and seeking medical care because they’re like, ‘Oh, they deny me one time, so I’m not going to go.’”

When one participant was asked about barriers to accessing health care during an emergency they replied, “Sometimes I have a burning, but I’m scared to go to hospital because I don’t have any insurance.” When further probed about what they would do in an emergent health event, they simply replied, “I don’t know, because I’ve never been to a doctor.”

LACK OF INTERPRETATION

The lack of interpretation was a barrier to health care access. Participants spoke of not having and being denied an interpreter and not understanding health information due to language barriers. Most health care institutions employ interpreters from the largest ethnic groups served at their institutions. Since there are fewer Marshalllese than the population of immigrants from much larger nations, it is unusual to have a Marshalllese interpreter on staff. The lack of language access presents another inequitable barrier to the Ri Majel’s access to health care.

“...[A]nother reason is folks don’t speak English as well, I don’t speak English that good, but a lot of people don’t speak English and don’t understand it very well. Even though it is taught in the Marshall Islands, they can listen, some more have picked up pretty good and then that’s in general terms and when you start getting technical in medical terms you lose them. And so, language barriers being another issue that people didn’t get care of and are dying of their cancer.” (Ri Majel participant)

POVERTY

The unrelenting poverty many Marshalllese face in the RMI or the United States was evident in the words of the participants. Several participants described their need to rely on charity to pay for hospital and utility bills. The inability to pay for health care while paying rent and monthly living expenses was a recurring theme. Prioritizing rent and food for large families led to a lower priority for preventive or routine health care.

“Every time I got sick, I always, looked for health through charity at [the local county hospital]... We encounter poverty here... There is no way we can pay for it, ‘cause our wages are, salaries are underpaid... They just don’t make enough to get by you know?” (Ri Majel Participant)

HISTORICAL TRAUMA

Historical trauma is illustrated in the Marshalllese

people's shared experiences of nuclear radiation, the intergenerational health effects of nuclear bombing, colonization, the worsening effects of climate change, and the Marshalllese diaspora fleeing poverty and treacherous environmental conditions. Trauma was acknowledged only by those participants who were more assimilated, as illustrated in this participant's words:

"When you think back of what they did to us during the nuclear era, it's really sad that our island was ... it was given, I think God-given, our beauty island, and they come and destroy, and it affects people like today, you

know. It's really hard to explain, but as I said, it's emotional. It's just sometimes you can think back of your mom and dad and what they went through, because our moms, they got cancer." (Ri Majel participant)

The impact of historical trauma is embodied in the physiological illness and emotional, psychological, and spiritual lives of the Marshalllese.

The systematic lack of health care access was related to deliberate legislative and regulatory structural policies—not to biological, individual, or cultural behaviors.

ILLNESS AND EARLY MORTALITY

Participants shared their experience of seeing Marshalllese friends and families die at a younger age due to the contemporary effects of nuclear radiation. "They would only go to the doctors when they feel like they are very sick. And they would just go there and scan them and give them antibiotics and send them home. But the truth is they were fighting a cancer. There wasn't any way of detecting that because they don't do that full screen in emergency services ... and so, people died unfortunately at a young age... [Just] in the last two years, I can identify a lot of mid-30s and 40s [of fellow Marshalllese people] that have passed of cancer and diabetes." (Ri Majel participant)

"There's a lot of family relatives and friends that have passed away because of cancer. Cancer is very high in the Marshalllese community. It's going around generation to generation... I mean it's all over in the Marshall Islands because there are a lot of patients with cancer. Yeah, all the people are getting sick from the atomic bomb ... from experience, my mom got it from her mom."

PROVIDER LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE RI MAJEL

A theme that arose was that many Americans do not know about the relationship and history of the United States with the Ri Majel and the Marshall Islands. Participants discussed encounters with health care and social services staff who did not know about the COFA agreement and legislation.

"Because they don't know who the people from the Marshall Island are, first of all. They don't know what are the agreements [between the] people in the United States and the Marshalllese..." (Ri Majel participant)

This pervasive lack of knowledge indicates the erasure of the history of the RMI in civic lessons and American consciousness, contributing to the resulting health and poverty implications for the Ri Majel.

FEELINGS OF SADNESS AND DESPAIR

When discussing their denial of healthcare services, several Marshalllese participants described feelings of sadness and despair. "One of the reasons that we are here, especially our folks from the Islands, like the old people, they're here to find better health. That's why they're here in the United States, and I think it is a privilege for us to be here. We are glad that this is like our back home. We miss our home, but we are really glad that we'll be here, and it's really sad if you go to the hospital and they don't accept you to go through because you don't have any insurance ... That's the big emotion for a lot of people. You know, we cry every day." (Ri Majel participant)

Participants voiced sadness and grief about the loss of relatives to cancer and early mortality and despair at the lack of health care access. Even in the expression of sadness, the Ri Majel expressed some apology for bringing up difficult subjects, and the possible sorrow it may bring up for the listener.

SHYNESS AND HUMILITY

Another theme that arose is the Marshalllese take on a disposition of shyness and humility when navigating services within US institutions.

One participant described shyness and humility or "being quiet" as connected to the effects of colonization. "It's just somewhere around this colonialism of the powers coming into the country and influence with currency of U.S. dollars, wealth, and the power as they understand it, that we changed our mindset and think, 'Oh, it's our custom that we have to be quiet.'" (Ri Majel participant)

Consistent with these findings, we wondered whether this humility is related to internalized oppression arising from colonization and historical trauma.

Robin Narruhn is a nurse researcher and professor at Seattle University. She works with the Marshalllese Association of North Puget Sound. She is one of the inaugural co-chairs of the Community Health Board Coalition, which began with nine Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) health boards in 2017, and currently with 16 health boards. Robin additionally works with an Editorial Immersion Program at Advances in Nursing Science, the WA State BIPOC Ecosystem, the Equity and Justice Committee at Seattle University, and as a member of the King County Board of Health. She is the daughter of an immigrant, a Pacific Islander, and mother of one. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and gardening.

GROUND ZERO

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*“An accident [due to]
a possession [of nuclear
weapons], or the madness of
some government leader, the
madness of an individual, could
destroy humanity.”*

— Pope Francis

Annual Meeting on October 14!

By Mary Gleysteen

Please join us at Ground Zero's annual meeting Saturday, October 14, 11:00 to 3:00.

The Ground Zero Stewardship Council invites one and all to join in sharing ideas for a peaceful world and for continuing and strengthening our resistance to the Trident nuclear weapons system.

We will discuss what we want to accomplish in the coming year and how we will go about doing it. With these goals in mind, we will fill Stewardship Council and committee positions so that we can divide the responsibilities and work of Ground Zero into manageable sections. The Council meets monthly at meetings which are open to all. We welcome new members to the Stewardship Council and committees.

The annual meeting was established in November of 2002 and always includes a potluck lunch and social hour and a chance to enjoy the Ground Zero property and

Peace Pagoda progress. Please plan to be a part of Ground Zero's future and join us Saturday, October 14!



The annual membership meeting was established in November 2002 as part of the organizational structure of Ground Zero.

The purpose of the Stewardship Council and committee positions is to divide the responsibilities and work of Ground Zero into manageable sections. We all help one another in the process. The Council meets once a month. All meetings are open to all members.

We invite all to come and share your ideas for a peaceful and larger world community and to help continue our resistance to the Trident nuclear weapons system.

Please join us. For more information, contact Mary Gleysteen at marygleysteen@gmail.com

Mary Gleysteen lives in Kingston where she volunteers serving homeless residents. She has worked for nuclear disarmament for over 40 years.