

**PANEL #3**

**AN INTERFAITH/YOUTH PERSPECTIVE ON THE MORAL IMPERATIVE TO ACT**  
Toward a Fundamental Change in Nuclear Weapons Policy Conference  
United States Capitol Visitor Center  
April 27, 2017

***Introduction***

by

Lilly Daigle

Network Campaigner, Global Zero

DAIGLE: Hi, everyone, how are you doing? Good. Awesome. My name's Lilly and this is our beautiful panel of folks who are going to be speaking about the youth and interfaith perspective on the fight to transform nuclear weapons policy, ban nuclear weapons and eliminate them once and for all. Happy to say I'm feeling pretty hopeful that this is going to be a very upbeat and exciting panel to tell you that there is hope and that there are young people and folks across faiths organizing and working to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons every single day.

I feel -- obviously, Danny asked me to speak because, you know, you may be surprised, but I do identify as a millennial and I also work for Global Zero and we mainly focus on organizing young people and millennials in the fight to eliminate nuclear weapons. And I've been working really hard to help make sure that our work resonates more with young people, but also helps involve folks across faiths as well as kind of across different political identities and issue areas. So really, really excited to be here.

You know, I feel like a lot of us stand on some pretty high shoulders with the work that's been going on for decades to eliminate nuclear weapons. And I feel a lot of the youth are ready to kind of bring this movement forward and continue to build and make some progress.

So, with that said, very excited to introduce our panel. We have James O'Sullivan, assistant professor of Social Ethics at Saint Joseph's University. We have Bassem Chaaban, who is the director of The Center for Peace. He flew up from Florida today just for this conference, so thank you. We have Jamie DeMarco, who is the program assistant for Nuclear Disarmament and Pentagon Spending, from the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

We have Mike O'Malley, who is the director of Young Men's Programs at SGI-USA. We have Olivia Saito, the director of Young Women's Programs at SGI-USA; and we have Erica Fein, who is the Nuclear Weapons Policy director for Women's Action for New Directions.

So I have asked each of these panelists today to prepare about a ten-minute presentation with the following prompts, which are what role can the young or faithful folks play in reducing nuclear weapons dangers? What is different now that the ban is being negotiated in the U.N. and how does your faith or your identity as a millennial influence your organizing and activism?

And my hope here is that these questions can kind of spur some interesting thoughts and debate afterwards amongst ourselves on how we can continue this conversation and bring it beyond the walls of this room and out into the world and start recruiting more folks to join us.

So, without further ado, I'd like to invite James to speak.

***Catholic Perspective***

by

James O'Sullivan

Assistant Professor of Social Ethics, St. Joseph's University

Toward a Fundamental Change in Nuclear Weapons Policy Conference

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**O'SULLIVAN:** Good afternoon, everyone, very happy to be here. Thank you very much, Lilly and to Danny and all the organizers of the conference. So I was asked to speak, I think, for two reasons, because I can articulate both the Catholic perspective and I too identify as millennial although my students might find that surprising.

So, what I'm going to do is assume that there is at least for most of you not a complete awareness of the way that the Catholic hierarchical articulations, what is known as Catholic social teaching, actually operate within the Catholic church. Because that shapes a lot of the Catholic perspective, and it's from there that I think that there can be both a revitalization of youth involvement from within the Catholic community, but also then the coalition building between faiths and indeed between other member of civil society.

So, Catholic social teaching is a body of teaching that emanates from the magisterium of the Catholic Church that is the hierarchy of bishops, and it happens at different levels. We're familiar with the Papal encyclical which is a statement of the highest level of doctrine from the Pope himself. There's also various regional and universal councils of bishops that will issue statements and I'll be talking about several of those documents.

So basically, magisterial teaching is the social doctrine of the church that articulates issues pertinent and particular to social justice and on questions of war and peace, that help guide both the Catholic community and the engagement by the laity. But also that help guide the larger public policy directions of the nations of the world.

So on the nuclear issue itself, going back to at least the time of 1963 with a Papal encyclical by John XXIII, now St. John XXIII is *Pacem in Terris*, peace on earth. And as is the case often with these encyclicals, this -- the issuance of this encyclical letter addressed to all members of the human race which is a significant thing in itself came just after the conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis. And so there was a vast awareness of the precariousness with which the world was playing with the massive armaments it now had.

And *Pacem in Terris* first on the nuclear question itself, made very clear that from the magisterial perspective, from the perspective of the tradition and from both theological and philosophical reflection, that nuclear weapons were unacceptable. That they were -- if used and when they have been used were just a flagrant violation of so basic human rights that they could never be used again. So the issue of use of nuclear weapons was emphatically, absolutely not -- anathema.

The larger picture though was also put in place by John XXIII at this time and this has been the framing of the question since that time. And the larger frame that he wanted to paint was indeed the full spectrum of human rights and development, economic development, going toward the promotion of those rights. So, if we're going to talk about war and we're going to talk about the issues of nuclear weapons or any other weaponry, then we have to ask the larger question of what are we doing with the resources of the earth, what use are we putting them to?

And the answer to that was an unacceptable militarization, OK? There has been a huge build up during the course of the Second World War and then after the Second World War that did not stop, in fact, it increased.

And John XXIII's point was, we need to put to use these resources not toward making ourselves safer by having more weapons, but rather towards making ourselves safer by having a more just world, by having a world in which the fundamental human rights of all people are actually promoted and protected. So the framing of any issue within war and peace and of the nuclear issue itself has been consistently since that time at every level of magisterial teaching, placed within the larger context of demilitarization and refocusing on human development and human rights.

What also is important here was his insistence on the necessity of global institutions and in particular his insistence upon the value of the United Nations. And since then and the articulations have included more things in the United Nations, but the idea here would be that we are going to be safer the more that we dialogue. We're going to be safer the more that diplomacy is the rule of the day and not an automatic turn to military force.

And, of course, then the larger body of teaching in the just war tradition has this presumption against force and what he was saying about nuclear weapons was there's no such thing as a just use of nuclear weapons, in other words, there can never be an overriding of that presumption against force in the case of nuclear weapons. But at the same time, of course, the tradition extols, that that's the -- the bar is still going to be very high for any use of force. And the resources that are being utilized to prepare ourselves to use force have a lot better uses, right, so this is the larger framing.

So both the popes and various regional conferences of bishops have addressed both the nuclear issue and again placing it in this larger context of the full spectrum of human rights and human development. And in particular in 1983, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement called the Challenge of Peace and there were many significant things about this document.

First of all, it was a product of a wide ranging consultation, wide ranging consultation with experts, with sociologists and political scientists and economists and military figures with members of the laity, with people who had been affected by war. And it went through several drafts and those were released to the public and comments, public comments were welcomed and that happened. So it was a robust discussion of the moral implications of war and peace, of various issues and obviously in the context of the cold war led by the magisterium, but the dialog was one that was to take place with the whole of society, right?

So it was the magisterium, the teaching authorities, attempt to shape public policy in ways that defended human dignity, that promoted human rights. And to have that actually be a real dialogue.

So some of the conclusions were the conclusions that had been consistently affirmed in magisterial teachings since the time of *Pacem in Terris*, that indeed the use of nuclear weapons was unacceptable. But then the question of deterrence came in, and the boiling question was, can you say that -- and this is what they ended up saying, more or less, that there is perhaps a legitimate role for deterrence. But the question is how can there be deterrence, because it's not much a deterrent if you're not going to use the weapons, right? In other words, how can you override the idea that you're going to utilize the weapons if you're saying that the utilization of the weapons is morally abhorrent from the beginning.

And that's something that has -- is a lingering question within the magisterial teaching, what is the role of deterrence? Beyond the question of deterrence, though, there was a clear articulation that there needed to be a radical reduction in the number of nuclear weapons and a radical limiting of the number of countries that had them, right? So it is a -- again, demilitarization wholesale and certainly a demilitarization in the form of nuclear weapons.

And there is every bit of sociological evidence that this dialogue that centered around this, had an impact on both Catholic opinion and wider public opinion. It was a good instance of the church trying to raise its moral voice to defend human dignity and to promote, quite frankly, responsible and moral public policy. Since that time, though, the attentions of the USCCB have tended away from the social justice agenda and questions of war and peace and more towards other issues I think that probably you all can draw to mind when you have heard the bishops speaking out about things in recent times.

What that means though is that among the current population of bishops there isn't a lot of awareness of the questions that center around war and peace and in particular around the nuclear issue. Now, of course, there is still an arm of the bishops -- one of the commissions and congregations within the USCCB is the Commission on Justice and Peace. And they continually lobby Congress, they do so in conjunction with other faith groups and so forth to promote these public policies and in particular I'll talk in just a moment about their specific stance on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in particular and on an eventual nuclear ban, wholesale.

But the point that I'm trying to make is that the overall body of the USCCB is not as engaged and in fact is nowhere near as engaged as it had been in the past or that it could be. And, of course, what that also means is that the general population of Catholics is not as engaged.

Now, there certainly are groups within civil society, groups within Catholic organizations, Pax Christi is well represented here today, right, that are focusing on this. But it is not the spotlight, it is not one of the spotlights that is being targeted, it's not being talked about in the pulpit, the moral dangers, the dangers to the dignity of so many human persons, it's not something that is being highlighted.

Having said that though, there have been efforts by other members of civil society to reengage both the bishops and the Catholic community on this

issue. So, back in 2014, Former Secretary of State George Shultz -- basically the four horsemen that were mentioned earlier, Secretary Shultz, Secretary Perry, Sam Nunn and Henry Kissinger organized a conference at the Hoover Institution at Stanford that invited the congregation, the Commission of Justice and Peace, all of the bishops that sat on that commission, to come out and listen to political scientists from Catholic universities, political scientists and scientists from Stanford to get them up to a level of awareness so that this can be put on the robust agenda of the USCCB. And thereby that it can be in the awareness of lay Catholics, of Catholic universities and so forth.

A lot of encouraging things came out of that and one of the first was that the USCCB held a conference at their headquarters, just up the street by Catholic University of America with the latest scholars in the fields of political science, theology, philosophy, sociology and so forth, to see if there couldn't be a reinvigoration of the Catholic university system itself of the Academy on this issue. And there is -- that has borne fruit. Student groups have been popping up at Georgetown, Boston College, many other universities throughout the country, but it's still at a very nascent stage.

And again, among the member of the USCCB, this is not something that is very much on the agenda. In fact, the meeting in May that's coming up -- the yearly meeting of all of the bishops that -- in Washington -- or in Baltimore, pardon me, doesn't have this on the agenda, right? So there is that are happening, but at the same time, there's a huge amount of potential that is not being met.

So having said all that, the bishops do have a clearly articulated position that they could choose to focus on. They were behind the new START treaty, they were behind the non-proliferation treaty, they lobbied members of Congress on that. They were behind the P5+1 negotiations. They -- so they would be behind if it was ever reintroduced in the Senate, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. And they've even said -- and this is pretty significant -- that they will be behind a full-out nuclear ban, right?

And what they've said is all of these treaties are good steps, but the ultimate goal must be a world without nuclear weapons, right? So that's a very significant thing.

Again, though, how many Catholics are aware that the bishops are saying this? Not very many, right? How many Catholics are even aware of a lot of magisterial teaching on social issues? Not very many.

So the goal would be what type of coalitions, what work can university students, what work can university professors, what work can civil society agencies do to form coalitions both within the church and outside the church that will put this back on the agenda of both the bishops and the Catholic Lady.

And I think that there is a lot of room for hope, I mean, as I said, the student organizations have been popping up, have been significant, but I think that there's also a lot of -- a huge amount of room for growth. And I'm very excited that this panel exist in particular because I think one of the key areas that really can impact public policy is faith communities coming together as one voice and saying very loudly, we cannot afford the dignity of the human persons and our future generations and of the earth cannot afford to continue on with this policy.

So I'm happy to hear my other panelists. Thank you all very much for your time.

***Muslim Perspective***

by

Bassem Chaaban

Director of The Center for Peace

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**CHAABAN:** Well, good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here. I want to thank Daniel for the invitation. I'm glad the weather is the same as Florida, so very nice. First of all, I want to say, before I give my remarks, that I think the bus that took the senators to that briefing in the White House, I think they should have come here and might have learned much more than what they learned there.

So I want to read something to you from a speech and I want you to guess who might have said these words. "So let us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to our common interests and the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least, we can help make the world safe for our diversity. We're in the final analysis, our most common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's futures, and we are all mortal."

Anyone guess who might have said that?

**(UNKNOWN):** JFK.

**CHAABAN:** JFK. Very good. And this was said, I think one of the students was from American Universities, on July -- on June 10, 1963 and five months later, JFK was assassinated.

So the Islamic perspective of nuclear weapons really deals with this verse from the Quran and the Quran for those who are not aware is basically the holy scripture for Muslims. There are many similar aspects to the Gospel as well the Torah and the Psalms. So here it says, "Oh human kind, indeed we created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you near to Allah or God is the most righteous of you. Indeed Allah is all knower and all aware."

So the issue of nuclear weapons from our perspective is a moral issue and as my Catholic colleague mentioned, pretty much all the religions including Islam, contrary to popular belief agree on the notion that nuclear weapons should be completely eliminated from the face of the earth. And the reason for that from an Islamic perspective is what the Prophet said. The Prophet Mohammed said do not kill a decrepit old man or young infant or a woman. Because nuclear weapons, as you've heard very -- articulated today, do not distinguish between innocent or enemy combatant or even tree or plant or animal. They kill everything for a long time.

So this tradition passes on to even the successors of the Prophet who led the Muslim empire for the next few decades, all the way into the 10th century before the decline of the Muslim empire. So this is -- the first successors, his name was Abu Bakr, and in a speech in the year 632 in the Christian era, he said, "Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies, neither kill a child nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire. Slay not any of the enemy's flock of animals except for food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services, leave them alone."

So the aspect of the moral issue is really how -- when we go to the root of the problem, we turn inventions and creations that might have had some positive intention from the scientists and inventors who made them, but the politics changes everything around. And we all know the great story of Alfred Nobel, Nobel who invented dynamite, TNT, and how when World War I began, the politicians used that to -- as a mechanism of mass destruction.

And he spent his whole life trying to eliminate that product that he invented for good purposes, for actually helping the coal miners break down the mountains. But this is what we find ourselves in, this quagmire between our scientific and technological advancements that humanity is so great at, but how it's being abused by certain politicians for mass destruction and immoral, unethical behavior. So the issue of our time is rooted in how we try to answer why people feel that in order to solve their problem they have to take somebody else's life.

As we heard from the great panelists and definitely from one of the survivors of heinous attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, these things are repeating themselves regularly, because of our arrogance, our pride, our insecurities of each other. When we say, oh, there is me and the other, instead of saying there's all of us. Because even when we've created the sense of labeling from race and religion and ethnicity and so on -- even though that might have been with positive, innocent intention, but it has created boxes for us to live in. Instead of saying, there's no different races, there is just one race, the human race.

And as you heard today, we can literally destroy this world, this earth 20 times over. So this is a series problem and the Muslim world is facing this problem. When you have terrorism and foreign wars that have taken place in the last 15, 20 years that have created this vacuum of justice and innocence in the Muslim world that brings out the infestation of terrorism.

Because when we hear that there's a lot of miscategorization from the media and the educational system about the problems of our world, when you call someone an Islamic terrorist, well, for us, that's a fallacy, that's an oxymoron, that's like saying there's a tall midget in the room. Because -- if Islam means peace, how can you have a peaceful terrorist?

Neither can you call someone a Christian terrorist or a Buddhist terrorist or a Jewish terrorist, because all of these religious traditions are based on peace, tranquility, salvation and enlightenment. But it is because of the masses of people who are ignorant of much of the diversity, especially that exists in America, we become part of the problem and not part of the solution.

Now, with the question about what can we do to move forward as young people, especially, because, you know, this is the second time I've been in the presence of a nuclear bomb survivor. The first time we did an interfaith event actually in partnership with SGI-USA in Orlando and you could see that the stories are the same, the horrors of war are the same. But at the same time, I do want to bring attention to the killing machine that we have so well invented, doesn't discriminate whether it kills 20 people in half an hour or you're killing 500,000 people through the civil war as you hear in Syria and the madness of terrorism and so on. Killing of innocents is still happening.

So not only should we focus on the first step of eliminating these weapons of mass destruction but also answer the question, why do we continue to face this question or this so called understanding that the only way to solve our problems is by killing the other person, because all of our religions talk about the Golden Rule, doing onto others as you would want them to do onto you.

So when we establish that sense of compassion and humanity back into our system of society, when we pressure especially as young people and activists, the major institutions from not only the politicians where we lobby them and so on, because they all have their own internal agendas to live by their decisions, but most of the time as was said repeatedly, we have to start from the grassroots.

There's a reason when I -- for example, first read the Constitution as a teenager, in high school here, I always wondered why the founding fathers capitalized those three words in the beginning and left the rest in small caps, where they say, WE THE PEOPLE of the United States of America. This is what we have forgotten. We have forgotten that this country was not built on a person or a man or a political party, it was built on all of us, diverse groups coming from all walks of life and all ethnicities and all views to make this country what it is to this day.

Yes, we face great turmoil, we have a lot of tension, but you have to ask yourself, what's the root of that, what's the root of that tension, what's the root of that hate? It is that -- for me it is because we're not engaging with one another. We're not seeing each other as the same. We are always believing all of this rhetoric and these lies and misconceptions that have really made the entire world a very scary place. And that's what leads someone to either push the button or not.

And I'll give you an example of -- and this is ironic because Robert Oppenheimer, who was the father of the atomic bomb and I'm surprised that nobody mentioned his name today. The point is after he saw the madness of what this weapon was going to do, he and even Albert Einstein worked their entire lives to criticize these weapons - all the while being called many different things by the U.S. Government to undermine their criticism of this weapon. He was an ethical person, he was a moral person. He actually went to school and college at the Ethical Cultural School in New York.

And he was a genius as we all know. If you've read anything about him, he knew six languages and so on. And that's why you find him quoting the famous words of *The Bhagavad Gita* which he studied in college after he sees the destructive power of this weapon, that I have become death, I have become the father of all wars or the starter of all wars.



This is why he started working his entire life after the bomb was dropped in order to say we cannot make this live, we cannot go through with this, because this is going to start an arms race. But the politicians and the politics changes everything. There is no concept where we see serious leadership in this world from all the different sides saying I'm going to make decisions based on my moral stance.

We're not saying you have to follow a religion or believe in a God, but you have to believe in the ethics that when we as human beings come to a point and a pinnacle in our existence, where we have created the most massive weapon of mass destruction, that can play the act of God where you can create at the root of our society.

So I think the second example I want to share is about one of the accidents that I believe Mr. Blair mentioned earlier. It's an accident involving a hero that to this day even the Russian government doesn't recognize as a hero, but a movie was made about him called *The Man Who Saved the World*. And his name was Stanislav Petrov, who was the acting leader, I believe a general or major, who would make the decision to call the military generals in Moscow and say if there is an attack on Moscow happening right now.

And his story is amazing because of his moral, ethical beliefs. He did not believe in the notion that America is necessarily the enemy. He believed in the notion that we're all human beings and we're capable of making mistakes. But as a military man, he had six minutes to make a decision whether he's going to call the leaders and say there is an imminent attack happening right now, there's a missile being launched by the United States or not.

And he did the right thing based on what he believed. And it was the right thing that saved the world because it turned out -- as many of the accidents we've heard today turned out -- to be a glitch in their computer system. So this is not an issue of if these events are going to happen, this is an issue of when.

And my question to you is when are we going to stand up together? Because in my view the educational system is very weak in not only teaching about the horror about Nagasaki and Hiroshima, but about history in general. We bore our kids to death with history, but without teaching them the proper way of understanding history so they do not repeat the same mistakes again.

We have to provide easy tools for local communities to learn how to be activists and not be intimidated by the government process and the democratic system. And we have to be persistent, we cannot give up to intimidation by the powers that be.

So I want to share with you some of the things that we've done in Orlando, Florida with an interfaith event that was held on the 70th anniversary of the dropping of the bomb which was 2015, where we brought Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and experts from homeland security and Muslim Imams to talk about the issue at hand. Because -- and all of us know of the symbolism of the sunflower, so even the kids brought and made their own sunflower cookies and cupcakes to really honor the memory of this issue.

So this is all possible. Many people, if they hear about it and hear what we heard today, of the magnitude of this problem, that it will affect

all of us whether we are politically active or not then maybe things will change, but we have to do this together. If we do not do this together, we're going to continue to live in our silos. And I give the analogy that the silos that we're living in today are the same silos that the nuclear weapons are housed in all over the world. There's a reason why we call them silos because they're far away from the main areas of the cities and so on. Well, that's how we are living as human beings, because we're not engaging with one another.

So when we look at the possibility of changing it, we might see that this is a huge problem. Well, I remind you of the tobacco problem in America. I remind you of the junk food crisis that we used to have in America. Now these paradigms have changed. And the reason they've changed is because young people and the people themselves started waking up and becoming well aware of the issues and then changed their behavior to the best of their ability. Obviously we still have people who smoke, who don't eat healthy, you can't solve the whole problem, but at least with this crisis, we can hopefully get to a zero promise.

And I leave you with these words. "There is no single, simple key to this peace, no grand or magic formula to be adopted by one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts as President Kennedy says in his inauguration. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation for peace is a process and we are solving problems. All this will not be finished in the first 100 days, nor will it be finished in the first 1,000 days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet, but let us begin." Thank you.

***Quaker Perspective***

by

Jamie DeMarco

Program Assistant for Nuclear Disarmament and Pentagon Spending  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

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**DEMARCO:** Thank you very much for having me. I want to first answer the question of what role young people have? And let me say that I strongly believe that the nuclear weapons ban treaty that is currently being negotiated is happening because of young people.

It's happening because when I talk to old disarmament folks in the D.C. community about the nuclear weapons ban that's being negotiated, what I tend to hear is that we have the non-proliferation treaty, we've already got one of those, why would we need another one? And first of all, this ban treaty would do much more than the non-proliferation treaty currently does. But also the non-proliferation treaty from my work lobbying in D.C. seems to be more of a 20th century textbook footnote than a force driving disarmament in conversations in this capital.

We need something new to revitalize, to bring new life and that's what youth can bring. It can bring the ability to punch through old stagnating systems. And I think that the very act of saying we can make a treaty that's going to lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons is an act of faith, not necessary religious faith. But to paraphrase Parker Palmer, who is a contemporary Quaker thinker, he says, "If success is the only metric you pursue and you don't have a belief that supersedes that, then what happens is highly predictable. You begin to work for smaller and smaller goals, because that is the only place you can be assured of success."

And I believe it is an act of faith of deep-held belief to shoot for the stars and seek a ban of total elimination. And from my perspective as a Quaker from the Friends Committee on National Legislation, this ban changes everything. There's no text yet, but it could be the first nuclear weapons ban, to ban not only a number of warheads, ban not only a type of warhead, but ban the threat of nuclear weapons.

We at FCNL, the Friends Committee on National Legislation believe that we are seeking a world free of war and the threat of war that not only the act of war. The threat of war is a violent, inherently immoral action. And this ban treaty may be the first to ban such nuclear threat, because deterrence is not a way to peace, deterrence is a standing threat of war against the world. It's a standing legal ultimatum against everyone who isn't us.

And the military leaders who buy in to the theory of deterrence will not feel comfortable or safe or satisfied until each one of us, picture this, is walking around with a little drone hovering next to our head that is constantly surveying everyone in the world and constantly leveling a gun at their head in case they should ever veer away from U.S. interests. That's the pinnacle of deterrence culture.

And I think we should ask ourselves, is that world and the values behind that world where we all have a personal deterrence drone -- Are those the values that we want to embrace? And is that the world that we want to seek? If you imagine that world where we all have a deterrence drone, even if there was no international armed conflict, could such a world ever be at peace with a constant universal lethal threat? Of course not.

The argument of peace through deterrence, you're talking about oxymorons, it's a complete oxymoron, it's like saying I'm going to seek friendship through blackmail, it cannot be done. It's sincerely disturbing, it's sincerely disturbing like saying that you want to seek love through force. One shudders at the implied implications of the person saying it.

So if deterrence is not going to be a viable path to peace, what values can we embrace? What fundamental principles can we work towards and use to seek a world free of war and the threat of war. There are, of course, an infinitude of answers. But my faith calls me to lift up the value of vulnerability.

Vulnerability, it doesn't sound like something you want. Nobody wants to be vulnerable, it's a bad -- we want to end vulnerability. But there's leading research which shows that vulnerability is central to any functional relationship be it inter-personal or international. To abandon this concept that you need to command and control every action of your neighbor and to embrace the concept that you are building a genuine relationship with your

neighbor, building a vulnerable relationship with your neighbor. And there is an infinitude of successful examples and effective examples of the use of vulnerability.

But my faith calls me in this moment to lift up the example of one particularly well known example, the example of Jesus. And the image we all remember Jesus with, a quintessential image of Jesus is a quintessential image of vulnerability, arms spread wide, life force flowing out at your wrists and not a muscle twitched in retaliation. Jesus, who we hear had the power to command the very storms and calm the very waves of the sea, allowed himself to be crucified by a handful of Roman soldiers.

And on that day, it may have seemed as though Jesus was the loser and that the Roman Empire was winning bigly, but 2000 years later, the Roman Empire has crumbled into dust in history while the message of Jesus is alive and well. Through his physical vulnerability on that day, he made himself and his movement effectively unconquerable. And I think that's what we can do in the world today and follow that example.

To dismantle a culture of deterrence, to embrace a culture of vulnerability, to support the nuclear weapons ban treaty in the U.N., which I think is doing both of those things. And to take the example of many who have come before us who've made a better world through vulnerability. Thank you.

#### ***Buddhist Perspective***

by

Olivia Saito, Director of Young Women's Programs

and

Michael O'Malley, Director of Young Men's Programs

Soka Gakkai International-USA

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April 27, 2017

**SAITO:** All right. So thank you guys so much. Good afternoon. And thank you for allowing us to be part of this panel today and share about the Soka Gakkai International-USA or SGI-USA's efforts towards the abolition of nuclear weapons. I'm Olivia Saito, the director of Young Women's Programs at SGI-USA. Soka Nichiren Buddhism, based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and 13th century Buddhist reformer Nichiren emphasizes the sanctity of life itself.

From the essential level life there is no superior or inferior; everyone is equal regardless of gender, ethnicity, nationality, wealth of status, their lives are equally precious. Nichiren states "one day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the major world systems." The mission of the Soka Gakkai International is to waken all people to this philosophy of respect for the dignity of life.

The Soka Gakkai or value creation society was born from the rubble and ashes of post war Japan. First and second Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda taught that through awakening to the great potential of life within, people could manifest the courage, compassion and wisdom to overcome and transform all of their sufferings. They emphasized that true

and lasting peace is only possible through the deep inner transformation of the individual to overcome the lesser self and defeat the inner darkness that seeks to disregard control and dominate the lives of others.

On a small scale, disregard for other might look like rolling your eyes at someone who upsets you or manipulating others for your own self gain. That same tendency can develop into the justification for war, the use of nuclear weapons and the ultimate destruction of life. Understanding this, Toda began to spread the philosophy and practice of the Lotus Sutra so people could transform these negative tendencies and live lives of value creation, seeking peace and happiness for themselves and others.

Current SGI president Daisaku Ikeda pointed out it was human beings who gave rise to nuclear weapons. It cannot, therefore, be beyond the power of human wisdom to eliminate them. Witnessing the horrors of war and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Toda made a historic declaration in front of 50,000 youth on September 8, 1957 calling for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and condemning them as absolute evil.

He wanted to convey to the youth that the responsibility of religion was to be part of a larger social and human endeavor and entrusted them to lead the movement for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and establish a society in which respect for the dignity of life is the guiding principle. This marks the beginning of the Soka Gakkai's peace movement.

Toda declared, "I want to expose and rip out the cause that lie hidden in the very depths of such weapons. We the citizens of the world have an inviolable right to live. Anyone who jeopardizes that right is a devil incarnate, a fiend, a monster." He was calling for the abolition of the atomic bombs in our hearts, the ways of thinking that justify the use of nuclear weapons. The goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is central in the history of the SGI's effort for peace.

Sixty years have passed since Toda's declaration. Daisaku Ikeda and the SGI have continued efforts for peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons. Since 1983, Ikeda has been writing peace proposals to the U.N. with a focus on nuclear abolition and disarmament.

In the book *For the Sake of Peace*, Ikeda addresses the use of nuclear weapons as deterrence. The evil of nuclear weapons lies not only in their overwhelming power to cause destruction and death, but also in the profound distrust emanating from their possession. This distrust has created the so-called cult of deterrence, the belief that nuclear weapons are necessary for protection against nuclear weapons.

Trust in nuclear arms is a negation of trust in humanity. The more people trust in arms, the less they trust one another. Ceasing to put their trust in arms is the only way to cultivate mutual trust among peoples.

In his 2017 peace proposal, Ikeda quotes the historic Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, known as a master of dialogue, "Look at those who fight ready to kill, fear arises from taking up arms and preparing to strike." Rather than taking up arms as a result of fear of the other, Siddhartha suggests that taking up arms deepens fear. We need the courage to pursue a different course of action, dialogue among individuals and among nations is a way to pursue a world free of nuclear weapons.

As a faith organization with active communities in 192 countries and territories around the world, we strive to build the culture of peace through each individual's inner transformation. We practice our faith to overcome the destructive tendencies of greed, hatred and ignorance that divides us and learn to creatively co-exist for a more peaceful world. This global network of peace and solidarity among the world's citizens is one of the main ways in which we, the SGI members seek to advance towards elimination of nuclear weapons.

So now, I will pass it over to Mike who will share with you the various ways in which we are involved in nuclear abolition efforts.

(APPLAUSE)

**O'MALLEY:** Thank you. Good afternoon, my name is Mike O'Malley and I'm the director of Young Men's Programs at SGI-USA. Since 1957 our activities to promote abolishing nuclear weapons have centered on addressing the attitude within the human heart that underlie them such as anger and arrogance as well as explicitly speaking out against their demonic use. For nearly 60 years, SGI has collected millions of signatures calling for the abolition of these weapons as well as produced a number of exhibitions used to educate and empower ordinary people around the world.

Today, I'd like to share some of our more recent activities here in America. In 2011, SGI-USA's university student group launched an initiative called Our New Clear Future to build consensus among young people for creating a future free or clear of nuclear weapons. Our first effort was to bring several SGI exhibits on abolishing nuclear weapons to college campuses across the country.

Since 2011, over 82 universities, including Harvard, MIT, and UCLA have hosted these exhibits with over 50,000 people attending. Additionally, SGI-USA has created a lecture series called Culture of Peace where we invite scholars, activists and authors to speak on issues of peace at our SGI-USA Buddhist Centers across the country. In recent year, the lecturers featured here have come to our centers to inspire our members and our friends in our local communities.

In the spring of 2015, SGI-USA held youth peace expos in 25 cities across the United States, which attracted over 12,000 people. The focus of the expos was to educate youth on the danger of nuclear weapons and to allow space for dialogue. The expos featured testimonies by atomic bomb survivors, short documentaries, as well as many performances.

We also collected over 8,500 signatures from youth who attended for a pledge to expand the network of young people in support of a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. A month later, we were able to present these signatures to Ms. Virginia Gamba, then director and deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Later in 2015, members of the SGI-USA's university student group created a music video for a song, A Revolution In You. This is the video, you can see right here. The song was originally written for an SGI-USA contest calling for a nuclear abolition anthem. As the title, A Revolution In You suggests, the song is a challenge to imagine the world as your home asking, "Would you drop a new nuclear weapons if your own family was living in the target zone?"

In short, it is an appeal to bring about a revolution in you, to kill, the will to kill inside of our hearts. Since posting the video on YouTube, it has received close to 50,000 views. The video premiered in Hiroshima in August of 2015 at a conference Soka Gakkai International co-sponsored with the U.N. Secretary General's Envoy of Youth and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation called Generation of Change, a Youth Pledge for Nuclear Abolition.

The conference brought together young activists from 25 countries who shared their ideas and deepened their commitment toward ridding the world of these weapons. This year, we are proud to be one of the signatories of the joint statement Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons that was issued on March 28 and read before representatives of the 120 governments taking part in the nuclear ban treaty negotiations.

We also submitted a working paper to the conference, which included a quote from SGI president Ikeda, "The inhumanity of these weapons is found not only in their overwhelming destructive power, it lies in their potential to instantaneously obliterate and render meaningless the painstaking efforts of generations of human beings. They are denial and a rejection of our very humanity."

In addition to taking action as an organization, many SGI members have also been inspired to make efforts on a personal level. This is Yvonne Ng, an SGI-USA youth from Queens New York. In 2015, she was a part of a delegation of SGI youth who observed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Conference.

After the conference, she felt a deep sense of urgency to spread awareness about this issue to youth around the country, so much so that she decided to leave a career as a successful fashion photographer to enter film school so she could create a documentary on atomic bomb survivors. Leading up to filming her documentary, Yvonne struggled with getting funding, with compensating for the little experience she had as a film maker, as well as generally winning over the crippling insecurity she felt each moment on the shoot. But she dug deep and was able to make an outstanding film.

Her struggle reminded me that in order to affect change for peace, we must at the same time affect change in our own life. We must replace our apathy with tenacity, our cowardice with courage, our short-sightedness with wisdom and our self-concern with compassion. Bringing to light this aspect of the fight against nuclear weapons is an important contribution faith groups can make. Last fall, Yvonne's film won the silver medal at the Student Academy Awards.

As we look to the future, the SGI-USA is excited to work together with you to bring this issue to the hearts of many Americans and rid these terrible weapons from planet earth. In the fall of 2018, we are gathering 50,000 youth in three locations across the country to share a message of peace. While this event will not only be about abolishing nuclear weapons, the heart is the same. We want to rally a force of youth that will actively work to uphold the dignity of each person's life, to gather youth who believe we cannot build our fortune on others' misery.

Thank you for allowing Olivia and I to share these with you today. Thank you.

***Jewish Perspective***

by

Erica Fein

Nuclear Weapons Policy Director  
Women's Action for New Directions

Toward a Fundamental Change in Nuclear Weapons Policy Conference  
United States Capitol Visitor Center  
April 27, 2017

**FEIN:** My name is Erica Fein, I'm with Women's Action for New Directions. And I want to thank SGI-USA for having me today and thank you, guys, for your inspirational and very thought-provoking words. I'm the Nuclear Weapons Policy director at WAND and WAND is an organization that advocates for security and peace with justice. And we're also a space for woman who want to end the patriarchy which helps to perpetuate violence and militarism and lead to nuclear weapons.

I'm a bit of an anomaly on this panel, because I don't represent a religious organization. I'm here in my personal capacity, I'm not speaking on behalf of WAND, but I am here to represent my own personal Jewish perspective and also could never claim to speak for other Jewish people or behalf of any Jewish organization. But my upbringing has helped to inform how I live my life today and to shape how I see the world. I was raised as a reformed Jewish person and Reform Judaism teaches *Tikkun Olam*, which is the idea that we must engage in the work of repairing the world and that we must commit to engaging in social justice.

And, you know, like I'm alluding to, no one who knows me could call me the most religious person they've ever met, but anyone who knows me knows that I'm inspired by a call to service and a strong belief that we must and that we can make the world better. And I think that's synonymous with Jewish belief that says that we must not give up hope even in the face of many reasons to do so.

So I had to remind myself a little bit about Jewish tradition, laws and precepts, having to do with weapons and war. And that was actually really interesting to me. I got to learn a little bit about how Judaism is different from Christian teachings in terms of just warfare, just war theory. And I also reminded myself a little bit about what the organized Reform Jewish movement says about these issues.

So the Reform Jewish movement advocates for policies designed to limit the loss of life from armed conflict and the belief that nations must turn swords into ploughshares. And its work around nuclear disarmament has been grounded in, among other thing, the rules of just warfare, which seek to prohibit weapons that cause indiscriminate mass killing. And in my research, I found that Jewish heroes -- Jewish heroes are usually sages and saints and rarely are they warriors. The Torah teaches us that we must seek peace before waging a war and that really speaks to me today as someone who strongly promotes diplomatic solutions to armed conflict and believes that armed conflict must be the last resort.

Interestingly though, in Jewish just war theory, there's actually a little bit of a difference in what I believe, there's not as much of an emphasis on war as a last resort, the question is sort of up in the air about



that. But there is in terms of waging offensive war, there must be some check on the ability of the military or the executive to wage war. And that's reminded me of the policy that we are seeking today which is to limit the president's authority to launch nuclear weapons which he has and it's his sole authority.

I would be really interested in anyone in the audience who has a stronger understanding of what Reform Judaism says explicitly about nuclear weapons, but from what I can gather, there isn't a blanket prohibition on the weapons, but certainly a number of precepts to guide the Jewish Reform movement to seek their eventual elimination.

And in terms of what role Judaism can play in reducing nuclear danger and in what young faithful people or people that are questioning their faiths, people that are involved in organized religion can -- what role they can play. So like some of the people on the panel, I agree that we have to -- when we talk about social justice, we have to talk about militarism, we have to talk about war and peace. We can't just talk about social justice causes domestically.

And I think I would strongly urge the Jewish religious community to incorporate teachings about the production, use, deployment, and testing of nuclear weapons, the ideas around war and peace into their religious education programming. I also believe that as a young person who's aware that there's a real political awakening going on happening across the country in response to Donald Trump.

And having worked with some of my colleagues' organizations on this question, I think we will really see a larger cultural shift when it's not just faithful people who have a moral understanding of right and wrong, but everybody starting to believe that nuclear weapons are immoral and unjust. And I think it's when we can start to convince the masses, you know, when we'll see that tipping point.

Finally, I hope, that the organized Jewish community is supportive of the nuclear ban treaty. I didn't see anything when I was looking into it to -- that there was some sort of resolution or anything, but that would be something that I would strongly encourage younger Jewish people to urge their leadership of those movements to take on. I'm happy to answer any questions.