

PANEL #4

TOWARD A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS POLICY

Introduction

by

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SULLIVAN: Thank you, everyone. We've gotten to the end of our day. What an extraordinary day of learning. I work with a woman out in California called Joanna Macy and she works around this idea of The Spiral of the Work that Reconnects. And we've kind of gone around that spiral starting with gratitude. I'd really like to say, thank you to SGI-USA for drawing all of us together today.

And I would like to also thank every single person in this room, because you all have come here, because you care about abolishing nuclear weapons and about the world that we live in. And you know, it's a small group, but a mighty group. And it's truly been an honor to be with you all.

And when you go from gratitude on the spiral, the next point is feeling the pain for our world. And I think that the first two panels -- we really were able to look at the reality of the nuclear problem and to also hear from Setsuko. It's such an honor to be able to work with atomic bomb survivors.

There was a question presented to her which was, you know, "what had a student said to you in the past?" "How have students interacted with you?" I've been very privilege to work with atomic bomb survivors, as Danny just mentioned, through Hibakusha Stories, the project that I work with. In the last nearly 10 years, we have brought the first-hand witness of atomic bomb survivors to more than 32,000 high school students primarily in the New York City area.

And if it's OK with Setsuko, I would just like to share very briefly a story of one student who heard your story, who was paralyzed with his own personal pain of having lived through his mother being murdered. And he was unable to experience his pain or articulate his pain until he heard Setsuko's story. He identified with the depth of her pain.

So, I think, yes, we bring Hibakusha into the classroom to share their personal testimony to engage young people and the real current reality and the real reality of nuclear war on the ground in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But they also experienced the humanity of the atomic bomb survivors who risk their personal comfort to share their testimony.

So, I think that we all are witnessing the reality of nuclear dangers and it is an exceptional time in which we are living. And I was one of those generations of kids that saw "The Day After" and watching that with my parents when I was 13 years old touched something inside of me and it started off a life of activism and scholarship and research and advocacy.

So, I think it is really important to look at how art and media can affect our lives. And also, how gratitude and recognizing who and what we love in the world can motivate us in our work for nuclear disarmament.

So, it's especially gratifying to be coming after the youth panel and also the spiritual perspectives panel. And with that in mind, before we get into the solutions panel, I would like to invite us to just do a very brief meditation together, is that OK?

OK, so I'd like to just invite you to just clear your lap of whatever you're working on and just put your feet on the ground and close your eyes. And what we're going to do is just give ourselves a couple of minutes to allow in our mind's eye to appear those people and places that we love in our life, that we love in this world. So, just relax into a few moments of silence and I'll ring the bell to begin and I'll ring the bell to end. But allow to appear in your mind those people and places that you most cherish in your life.

Thank you. I think given everything that we've heard thus far and all of the excellent presentations in today's conference. One of the most important things that we as activist and as academics, as researchers, as policymakers, one of the important things that we can impart to others, I believe, is to go from an abstraction of nuclear weapons to making this issue personal to us. Because as those of us in this room know all too well, everything and everyone that we love is threatened at this moment by nuclear weapons.

By those nuclear weapons that are on here trigger alert that Bruce spoke about earlier, by the potential for nuclear winter in whatever size that Alan and Ira spoke about. By the reality that Setsuko called forth from her memories as a 13-year-old child. We are currently in this very moment threatened by nuclear weapons that are guarded by human beings and machines that make mistakes.

So, let us go forth from this room emboldened by our love for those people, places and things in our lives as a way of working for nuclear abolition instead of being present to fear for what is the current reality at least in this country.

So, please recall those people, places and things, as you listen to this august panel of solutions people. I am very excited to hear what Barry, Daryl, and Ray all have to say.

So, like the other moderators, I'm going to refer you to the biographies that are in your program. But just to briefly set out this panel, we have Barry Blechman, who is the co-Founder of the Stimson Center. He will be speaking about nuclear deterrence -- is it a sustainable policy?

Then we will move to Daryl Kimball, who is the Director of the Arms Control Association. He will be speaking about immediate steps to reduce nuclear dangers. And lastly, we will be hearing from Ray Acheson, the Director of Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and she will be talking about The Ban Treaty and Beyond; The Road to Nuclear Abolition.

So, please join me in welcoming all three of our panelists.