

From Nagasaki to Now

By Louise Diamond, CEO, The Peace Company

Sixty-one years ago the U.S. launched the age of nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since that time we have seen the exponential growth of the war industry and of wars around the world, with suffering and devastation too horrible to contemplate for millions upon millions of our brothers and sisters.

I had an experience recently that spoke poignantly to the situation we face today. A high school physics teacher had his students build catapults, which were then arrayed on the playing field for a mock war (the ammunition was jello), the spoils of which were to be pizza and coke for the winning 'country' that most effectively destroyed the armies and weapons of others. When the teacher announced, before the 'war' began, that indeed the 'countries' need not fight because there was enough pizza and coke for all, a young man on the U.S. team (i.e., the one with the biggest, strongest weapon) turned to his buddies and said, "Is he kidding? After all the time and effort I put into building this thing, you'd better believe I'm going to use it!" [click here to read more...]

My friends, I think this young man spoke the truth of our times. Sooner or later, someone will likely use a nuclear weapon, or some other weapon of mass destruction, simply because they can. And although the history of modern society can be traced parallel to the development of ever-more effective weapons, we must remember that even small and conventional arms – AK-47's, grenades, improvised explosives, car bombs, sniper rifles, and machetes – have slaughtered millions. These are obscenely easy to come by, and unspeakably deadly.

I encourage us all to take this time of remembrance for the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to contemplate the madness of humans warring against each other, and the suffering beyond measure we have created. In my own prayers this day I will also mention those who died, were wounded or displaced in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bosnia, Cyprus, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Israel, Palestine, Darfur, El Salvador, Mozambique, Angola, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Sudan, Kashmir, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Ethiopia, the Congo (did you know that 4 million people have died from the war in the Congo during the last decade? No? Most people don't...), and all the other places where the human family has chosen to fight and die since that infamous August of 1945.

I repeat this sad litany in the hopes that seeing our recent human history in print will awaken a sense of moral urgency to change – radically change – how we can manage our differences and share this one planet we all call home. I do believe that, as current events in the Middle East are demonstrating, we must act quickly and decisively to **choose peace over war, nonviolence over violence, reconciliation over revenge, trust over fear, tolerance over intolerance, allies over enemies, and partnership over domination.**

I have been working for peace in various ways since I was a teenager in the 1950's in what was then the Ban the Bomb movement, and I'm sure many of you reading this can also point to the many efforts you have made for peace over the years. As the conflagrations in Israel, Lebanon, Gaza, and Iraq threaten to spread, many of us find ourselves discouraged and disheartened – feeling helpless and even hopeless – that despite our best efforts the madness of war continues its rampage through the human landscape.

I believe there are two antidotes to this helplessness: personal action and prayer. Although our actions may not seem to make a difference in the larger scheme of things, we must act anyway. We must change our own lives so that we are not feeding in any subtle way the mind-stream that makes violence the acceptable, even desirable, method for settling our differences. And we must hold our leaders accountable for taking us on the peace path, not the war path. Any and every way we can think, speak, and act for peace is called for in these times. No action is too small; quantity counts. Every step we take for peace today both changes today and plants seeds for a better tomorrow.

Likewise we must activate the power of prayer for peace, for we know that power is real. We know that our spiritual power, when focused on the well-being of all creatures and creation, can work miracles. And we know that, in whatever faith tradition we believe, peace is the paramount value and goal that it is our spiritual duty as righteous human beings to pursue.

At the time of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, my grandparents were approximately the age I am today. I am committed to using my life force energy to creating a world in which my grandchildren will think of wars and the weapons we've built to fight them as a sad and sorry relic of the past. I hope you will join me in this endeavor, because I know it will take millions of us saying 'Yes!' to peace to bring us over the tipping point. And, dear friends of peace, there is nowhere else to go.