

# Ground Zero

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## A Call to Action



By Denny Duffell

This New Year marks the beginning of the next quarter century, and whether humanity will survive to mark New Year's Eve 2026, let alone to the end of this century, is a huge question mark. Why? Violent conflicts are occurring all over the world, and two of them could lead to nuclear war, a war that would be the shortest in history and would result in the end of civilization as we know it.

Of all the conflicts currently being waged, two in particular could quickly go nuclear. The war in Ukraine involves one nation (Russia) bristling with nuclear weapons.

And many of the countries involved in supporting one side or the other – the U.S., Great Britain, France, China, and North Korea – also possess nuclear weapons. In the Mideast, Israel – also a member of the nuclear weapons club – is lavishly supported with money and weapons by the United States, enabling it to pursue a genocide against the Palestinian people. First Gaza and the West Bank, then Lebanon, Yemen, and now Syria, with Iran stuck in the middle. The Mideast is a nuclear powder keg just waiting for the proverbial match to be lit.

There is no shortage of guns, bombs, planes, mis-

siles, or even nuclear weapons, whether possessed by the actual warring parties or through surrogates. Enemies in a world at war with itself.

The Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action was established as a community working for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Strategy and tactics have evolved over the years since the early days of physically blocking the White Trains that once transported rocket motors and thermonuclear warheads for the Trident missiles that are carried on board OHIO Class "Trident" submarines based at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor.

Today the nonviolent direct actions at the Bangor base are largely symbolic – activists enter the roadway with banners and signs, temporarily blocking traffic entering the base. Law enforcement officers, after giving protesters a verbal warning to disperse, remove them from the roadway, give them traffic citations (for blocking the roadway), and release them. Some who are cited choose to appear in court to "mitigate" their citations, which allows them to make a statement on the record as to their reasons for breaking the law. Judges often reduce

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**A Call to Action... continued on page 2**

the monetary fine, which is then paid, and that's the end of it.

Some are now questioning the efficacy of our current protest methods. People are no longer risking arrest and jail time that was more prevalent in earlier days. Rarely has anyone in recent years crossed the "blue line", a literal blue line painted across the roadway defining the boundary of the Federal property containing the submarine base. "Trespassing" onto the Federal property can result in prosecution, with resulting jail time and significant monetary fines.

The corporate news media has rarely covered our actions at Bangor in recent years. We are essentially out of sight, out of mind. Have we stagnated in our methods of civil resistance? Are we losing our relevance? How do we revitalize a movement that once drew over a thousand people to protest Trident and get the public focused on the greatest threat facing humanity?

At Ground Zero's December Stewardship Council meeting I proposed revitalizing our nonviolent direct action methods, and that I would be willing to establish an ad-hoc committee to plan an action for Ground Zero's 2025 Mother's Day day of action. I plan to work with allied organizations who would like to come together for an action where hopefully large numbers of people will be moved to cross the blue line in an effort to make a dramatic show of solidarity in opposition to the madness of nuclear weapons and to the need to abolish these horrific weapons of humanity's potential demise. People attending the Mother's Day vigil would still have the choice of many of the support roles that make our vigils and actions successful.

It would be no small matter for people to choose to

risk arrest and face the resulting trials and possible fines and prison time. Yet, it would also be an opportunity to bring greater attention to a topic that the public has been avoiding for far too long.

And for those of us at Ground Zero, it presents another avenue to speak in opposition to the Trident nuclear weapons system that we have resisted for decades.

The night before the December meeting at Ground Zero I had a dream.

My dream was about looking for a place...the word "spy-man" was in my mind... a high enough place to look for something, for someplace, some event. I was looking for the future. I was looking for a place where I could see the future, to know how to get there. I know now what that dream was about. I think we all share that dream. When I woke up, a song by Arlo Guthrie came unbidden into my head: "Good morning America, how are ya? Don't you know me, I'm your native son. I'm the train they call the city of New Orleans. I'll be gone 500 miles 'til the day is done."

We've got a longer way to go than that, but 500 miles isn't bad for a day. Let's all get on that train.

*"How do we revitalize a movement that once drew over a thousand people to protest Trident and get the public focused on the greatest threat facing humanity?"*

*Denny Duffell serves as a Deacon at the Archdiocese of Seattle, and as Regional Coordinator for Pax Christi in the Pacific Northwest. The photo on the cover is from a 2020 demonstration at which George Rodkey, Gary Cavalier, Sue Ablao, and Julia Ochiogrosso risked arrest.*

## Witnessing for peace at the local library

By Michael "Firefly" Siptroth



For the month of October, 2024, Michael "Firefly" Siptroth set up a display in the lobby of the North Mason Timberland Library in Belfair, WA. The display included posters describing the horrors of nuclear weapons and what people can do about them. The display featured the new *Ground Zero Comics*, plus *Warheads to Windmills: Preventing Climate Catastrophe and Nuclear War*.

According to library staff, there were several patrons who read the materials and some comments, none hostile. You may want to get your local library to allow you to put up a similar display.

*Michael "Firefly" Siptroth serves on the Ground Zero Stewardship Council. A retired teacher, he lives on an organic farm in Belfair. Photo courtesy of Firefly.*

# Hibakusha Organization Receives Nobel Peace Prize

## Hisako Kimura Survived Nuclear Horror

By Kana Nemoto

“I feel so frustrated that my family and my life have been so messed up. I don’t want anyone else to have to go through what I did.” The atomic bombing by the U.S. military 79 years ago marked the first time human beings experienced the devastation of nuclear weapons. Hisako Kimura, who was eight years old at the time, has been consistently denouncing the crimes of war and the atomic bombing, driven by the indignation of having her family and livelihood taken away from her.

Ms. Kimura, now 87, president of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo) and chairperson of the Miyagi Prefecture Association of Atomic Bomb Victims, attended the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony for the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations in Oslo, Norway, on December 10.

Since its formation in 1956, the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo) has been involved in activities to provide support for A-bomb survivors and realize the abolition of nuclear weapons, and has been involved in testifying about the A-bomb experiences in Japan and abroad.

When Ms. Kimura first learned of the award, she was not able to rejoice. She felt that it was too late to receive the award after her predecessors, who had worked so hard, had passed away. She was filled with mixed feelings.

However, as the award ceremony approached, her desire to go to Oslo with the souls of her predecessors in her arms grew stronger. Thinking of her father and grandfather, whose lives were taken by the atomic bomb, and of her friends who died without seeing “a world without nuclear weapons,” she honestly began to feel happy to be able to witness the moment of receiving the award.

### A-bombed at age 8

On August 6, 1945, when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Ms Kimura, who was eight years old, was exposed to the bomb at her grandfather’s cottage in the town of Osuga (now part of Minami Ward, Hiroshima), about 1.6 km from the hypocenter. During breakfast, she said she felt a flash of light, and when she came to, she was pulled out of her crushed house and survived.

When she looked to the side, “there was a man who looked like a red devil with a messed-up face. At first she did not know who it was, but it was her grandfather, who

had been in the garden and had been exposed to heat rays and suffered severe burns all over his body.

The young Kimura nursed her grandfather until he passed away six days after the bombing. She used tweezers to remove maggots from his body, which had turned red. She even felt that her grandfather, who was moaning and emitting a strong odor, “wanted to die quickly.”

### Father also died three days after the bombing

Her father, a general practitioner, was exposed to the atomic bombing while making a house call. He passed away three days later, telling her mother that he was “deeply sorry” and “take care of my children.”

After the war, her life, which had been so affluent that she had a chauffeur, took a dark turn. When she moved to a new school, she had to walk to school over the mountains and was severely scolded by her family if she was late getting home after taking a break along the way. Whenever she felt it was too hard, she would visit her father’s grave and weep. “I felt as if I was being encouraged to do my best,” she said.

Ms. Kimura has lived in Sendai

for more than 45 years. Even in a place so far from Hiroshima, she has shared her A-bomb experience at schools and other venues, conveying the tragedy of war.

“I don’t want nuclear weapons to be used again,” she said. “I want to make the world more peaceful. I have been campaigning for a long time, believing that A-bomb survivors, who knew what it was like at the time, should take the lead in appealing for peace,” she said.

When she shares her experiences, the scenes of 79 years ago come back to life before her eyes, and she sometimes bursts into tears. “My father and grandfather



**A high school student in Hiroshima** drew “My Grandfather Who Became a Ghost” after hearing Ms. Kimura’s experience. *Photo courtesy of Ms. Kimura.*



**Ms. Kimura** holds a commemorative gift from a citizens’ group celebrating the decision of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations to award the Nobel Peace Prize to her. *Photo courtesy of Ms. Kimura.*

**Hisako Kimura.... continued on page 9**

# One is (More Than) Enough

By Mike McCormick

I'll admit, I take some comfort in not knowing how many near miss nuclear accidents have occurred at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor in Silverdale, Washington. One is enough. Bangor is the garage and headquarters for a fleet of 8 OHIO Class "Trident" Nuclear Submarines. 20 missiles carrying a total of 90 warheads adorn each sub. Bangor's 7,000 acres on Hood Canal (not including the open water in the blast zones) are located 20 miles from Seattle. This is the largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons in the world (1,094 nuclear warheads).

But back to accidents. When subs return after a tour, they have their tires rotated. Except in this case it's missiles. Two missiles get gently lifted up and serviced after every trip. This happens about four to six times a month (two missiles, two to three times per month).

Missile handling is the most dangerous operation they perform at Bangor. It's the reason they have blast zones and reinforced buildings. (Note: Base personnel are moved back during missile handling operations; however no alerts are ever made to the public who are traveling on the waterway or nearby beaches within the blast zones.)

On Monday November 3, 2003, during a routine service, a ladder was left in the missile sleeve while being unloaded. When the missile was lifted it hit the ladder, which tore through the nose cone, stopping inches from striking the nuclear warheads and third stage rocket motor.

*"Had the ladder struck the rocket motor, there was a reasonable chance of an explosion that would have damaged and scattered the warheads..."*

Now I know what you're thinking; *Thank god it didn't hit the nuclear warheads!*, right? Turns out it's the third stage rocket motor we should be most concerned about. The rocket motors are highly explosive and the basis for the distances used in determining the size of the blast zones at Bangor. Had the ladder struck the rocket motor, there was a reasonable chance of an explosion that would have damaged and scattered the five to six plutonium warheads, essentially turning each nuclear warhead into a dirty bomb. There was also a reasonable chance of a cascading effect detonating the other 22 to 23 missiles on the

sub. (Note: the Navy's refusal to show proof that the cascading effect would not occur when seeking accreditation for the 2nd Explosive Handling Wharf at Bangor was the reason the facility is not currently certified by the Department of Defense Explosives Safety Board (DDESBS)). So it was a big deal.



**The blast zone** from an explosion of a rocket motor—even barring a nuclear explosion—would destroy a large surrounding area and inflict serious damage beyond the radius. *Image courtesy of Glen Milner.*

But it didn't happen.

At least as far as the public was concerned, it didn't happen. That night on the news there was no mention of the accident at the site of the most powerful weapons system on the planet. There was no mention to law enforcement, local civilian emergency personnel, elected officials, no one. The U.S. premiere nuclear weapons facility came within two to three inches of a full-blown disaster and the plan was that per U.S. nuclear weapons policy, it was never going to be reported to the public.

A big part of public acceptance of nuclear weapons is built on the perception that nuclear weapons accidents are extremely rare and if they were to occur, the U.S. military has done everything in its power to mitigate the damage. Unfortunately, that's not the case. The military views safety as a trade-off with other factors like costs and mission importance. Many (if not all) military bases in the U.S. have exceeded their initial footprints in terms of what they (not us) consider safe operating distances. From their viewpoint it's simply too expensive to purchase the necessary property surrounding the bases to

**Once is (More Than) Enough... on page 5**

make them safe by today's standards. They frame it as the public encroaching on their bases. And there's a case to be made that the Bangor Base may very well be the poster child for the worst example of this (in the U.S. if not the world).

Fast forward from November 3 to December 19, six and a half weeks later. Commanding Officer Capt. Keith Lyles, who was in charge of Bangor on November 3, is relieved of his command for "lack of confidence."

It would be another week before Mike Barber at the Seattle-PI would write about Captain Lyles' dismissal (Christmas Eve, December 24) but there was no mention of the near-miss nuclear missile mishap. The Navy almost never mentions details of its "lack (or loss) of confi-

dence" dismissals. That was all we were ever going to know. The plan was to never tell us.

On March 11, 2004, over four months after the accident, news broke with details of the mishap, following a blog post by former Navy officer Walter Francis Fitzpatrick, III (Jaghunter). Had Walter not stepped up as the whistleblower, as well as those who shared their stories with him, it's very likely we would have never heard about the worst accident at Bangor "that never happened."

*Mike McCormick is a radio producer based in Seattle. He is a member of Veterans for Peace and a longtime supporter of Ground Zero.*

## Building Bridges

By Leonard Eiger

Many years ago United Methodist Reverend Joe Hale posed the question, "Is it ever possible to make peace by destroying bridges?" He was speaking in reference to Israel's indiscriminate destruction of Lebanon, but he could have been speaking of any number of foreign policy decisions made by our own government since September 11, 2001.

The events of that fateful day in 2001 sewed the seeds of fear, anger and hatred, and fueled decisions in the highest levels of government that have, over 23 years later, made our nation and the world a far more dangerous place. However, things could have taken a much different course, and we may still have the opportunity to save ourselves before it is too late.

The remedy is to start building bridges rather than destroying them. To do so will require that our nation stop threatening other nations with regime change, sign on and fulfill our obligations under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), and stop holding the threat of use of nuclear weapons over other countries, and start using true diplomacy rather than military action as a tool of foreign policy. It will also require major shifts in our patterns of energy consumption that have created such a huge reliance on fossil fuels. Our priorities must change drastically. As impossible as all that may seem in light of our nation's current political direction, it is literally essential to our survival.

None of this can happen without changing ourselves and how we define and address the evils in our world.

Not long after 9/11 and before completing the failed mission in Afghanistan, President Bush laid out the next stage in his war on terror and announced his plans to confront the infamous "axis of evil" - rogue states that threaten the world with weapons of mass destruction. Many years before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of a completely different axis of evil, one of racism, poverty/materialism, and war that mire people in misery, divide people against one another, and threaten the world with extinction.

Every President since Bush Jr. (and nearly all of the Congress that has aided and abetted the endless wars) has held a belief in ridding the world of (what they call) evil primarily through military action, and foreign aid/poverty assistance linked to what we determine to be "good" government and "good" economic practices. Dr. King believed in addressing racial and cultural tensions, committing unconditionally to free the world of the scourge of poverty, and utilizing nonviolent intervention in international conflicts.

What ultimately set the two strategies apart are their motivations. The current political one is based steeped in fear, hatred, racism, and greed; the other based on faith and compassion and the quest for justice. And beyond the motivations, we have seen the horrific consequences of coercion and violence. We are called to seek a different approach, where we call upon the examples handed down to us from leaders like Jesus,



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# Continuing *Ground Zero Comics*

By Leonard Rifas

*Editor's Note: Leonard Rifas is the writer, co-editor, co-publisher, and contributing artist responsible for Ground Zero Comics. The illustrations included in this article are from the first issue.*

I thank Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action for commissioning *Ground Zero Comics*, and Ground Zero member Glen Milner, my co-editor, for making the process of creating it a joy. I'm glad that the comic has already exceeded Ground Zero's expectations in both responses and sales. So far, 2,000 copies have been distributed to anti-nuclear weapons activists and comic book stores. Matt Korda, of the Federation of American Scientists, recently wrote "...just wanted to say how much our team really appreciated receiving your comic book—it's absolutely fantastic and currently occupies a place of honor on our office bookshelf! It's one of the most creative uses of our research that I've ever seen..."

I have been involved with "atomic comics" since the 1970s, when I created *All-Atomic Comics* about the hazards and problems of the then-current generation of nuclear power plants. In the early 1980s, my republications of Keiji Nakazawa's comics about his experiences as a survivor of the first atomic bomb were the first manga translated into American comic book format. My edition of Nakazawa's *I SAW IT* eventually caught the attention of Glen Milner and the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action and that was what led to our collaboration on *Ground Zero Comics*.

Thank you, Ground Zero, for giving me and the other contributing cartoonists – Pat Moriarity, David Lasky, Max Clotfelter and Kelly Froh - this opportunity. Thanks also to co-publisher Gary Groth of Fantagraphics (publisher of the world's greatest comics) and Fantagraphics production assistant Paul Baresh for the crucial help that they provided to this project.

## A second issue: nuclear weapons and climate change

In addition to promoting the comic book, we have begun planning a second issue, which, if supported and approved by Ground Zero, will show connections between the twin crises of nuclear weapons and climate change as they pertain to people in Washington state. *Ground Zero Comics #2* will explore how preventing a nuclear winter and preventing catastrophic climate change both involve finding the courage to speak out and organize to defend lives on earth. This effort requires acknowledging that, again, we face planet-level risks, against heavy odds, under

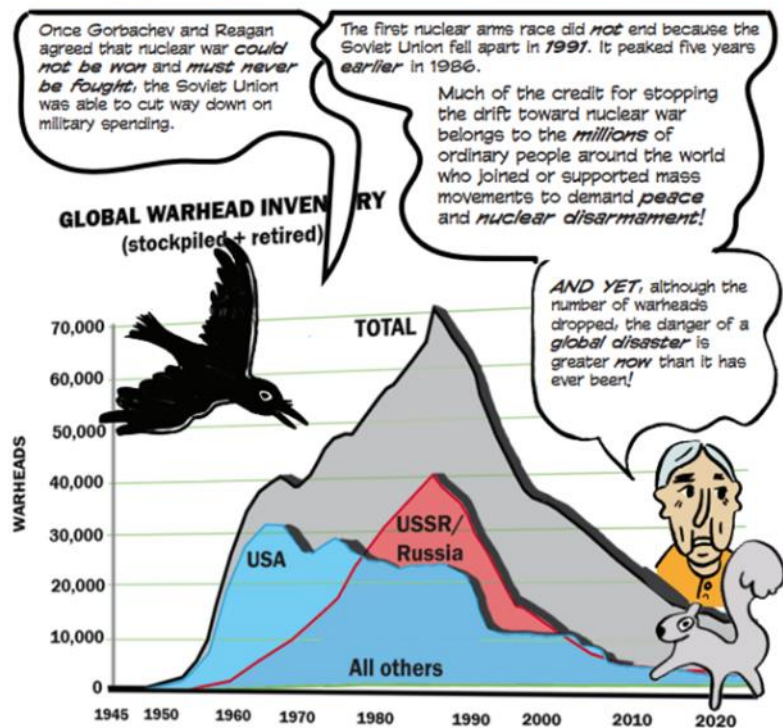
conditions of great uncertainty. More specifically, the comic will include (among other topics) a critical consideration of proposals for using nuclear energy as a supposedly carbon-free way to power Washington state data centers.

## Here and now

When I used manga and anime by Hiroshima bomb survivor Keiji Nakazawa in my classes for Seattle Central College and UW-Bothell students, the first thing I told them was not to think of nuclear war issues as "far away" or "long ago." Similarly, when writing *Ground Zero Comics*, we made the focus both local and contemporary. We designed the comic as an introduction for young people in Washington state but with new ways of telling the story that we hope will interest and surprise long-time activists.

## The possibility of success

*Ground Zero Comics* encourages people to think about, talk about, and do something about the urgent task of abolishing nuclear weapons. It does this partly by showing how simple actions like signing petitions; attending demonstrations, rallies, and marches; engaging in nonviolent direct action; and passing resolutions on the



Adapted from the Federation of American Scientists, "Estimated Global Nuclear Warhead Stockpiles, 1945-2024": <https://fas.org/initiatives/status-world-nuclear-forces/>

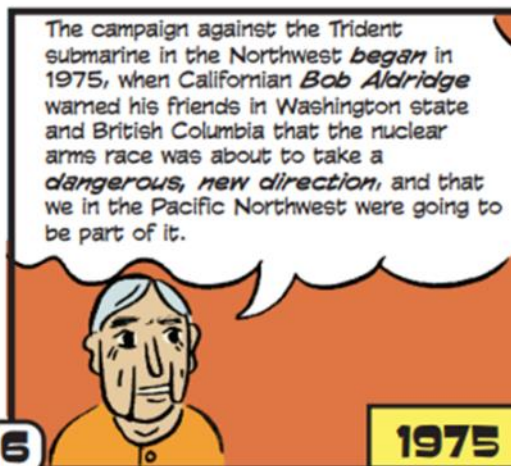
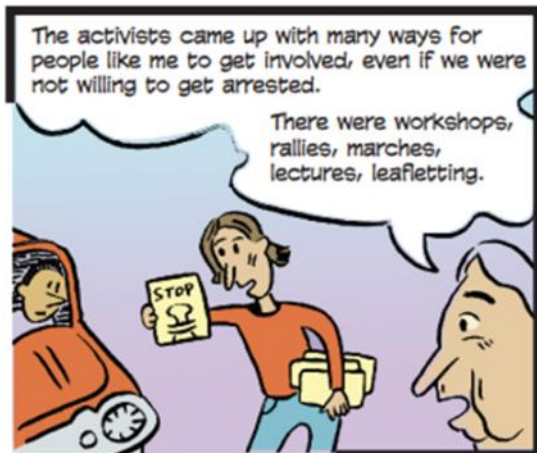
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Ground Zero Comics... continued on page 7

local level have sometimes helped prevent nuclear weapons from being used in the wars that have been fought since 1945. In fact, much of the credit for ending the first nuclear arms race and the drift toward nuclear war in the 1980s, belongs to what the comic book calls “the millions of ordinary people around the world who joined or supported mass movements to demand peace and nuclear disarmament.”

In addition, the comic encourages activism by telling the stories of Daniel Ellsberg (1931-2023) and Robert

the nuclear missile submarines based at Bangor were planned to last for thirty years, and all but two of them have passed their original retirement dates. Lobbyists successfully warned that the U.S. faced a choice between replacing old nuclear weapons with new ones or entering a world without American nuclear weapons as the existing ones “rust to zero.” That choice was not clearly presented to the public. Nuclear weapons will continue to exist only as long as people continue to make a huge and expensive effort to keep these intolerably dangerous things around.



Another example of *Ground Zero Comics* presenting things in a fresh way comes in its explanation of how far we are from the Trident Submarine Base at Bangor. The comic recommends two websites that allow people to quickly calculate the distance from Bangor to their own home, school or workplace, or a landmark. From the Seattle Space Needle, if you look in the direction of Climate Pledge Arena, the Bangor base is about halfway to the Olympic mountains (19.72 miles to where the submarines dock at the Delta pier.)

### From activities to activism

To encourage readers to respond actively and even become “activists” the comic includes four “activities.” These can be done in classrooms or other places where groups gather, or by oneself. In addition to the activity for calculating the distance to

Aldridge (1926-2022). While celebrating these heroes of the nuclear abolition movement, the comic also insists on recognizing the valuable contributions of those who have fought against nuclear weapons as a “part-time hobby.”

### Rusting to zero

One example of how *Ground Zero Comics* takes an approach that differs from others appears on the inside front cover. Rather than simply warning about the (seemingly timeless) government plans to spend unimaginable sums on nuclear weapons, the comic explains the logic behind the current “modernization” program and the encouraging message we can draw from it.

Nuclear weapons do not last forever. For example,

Bangor, two activities help the reader examine and share their own thoughts and feelings about nuclear weapons.

The fourth activity (for adult readers) shows how to calculate how much of your taxes go to supporting nuclear weapons. For reasons spelled out on that page, the number comes out very close to the arithmetically convenient number of 1% of your taxes. Unlike the familiar comparisons of what that money could do if the government spent it differently, the comic makes the amounts meaningful by showing what new appliances a family could buy for that much money.



winter” over the following two years. Wikipedia suggests that the nuclear winter “hypothesis” amounts to “speculation” based on imperfect computer models. In the Notes and Sources that support this comic, posted at <https://www.gzcenter.org/comic-book-sources>, I compare what Wikipedia says about “nuclear winter” to the more disquieting picture that emerges from reading the sources that they

## ACTIVITY #2: HOW DO YOU PICTURE THE POWER OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS?

1. Draw a picture, image, cartoon, illustration or graphic that represents “nuclear weapons.”
2. Turn the page over and write a paragraph describing what you drew.
3. If you have not already done so, show where you are in that picture.

Examples on this page were drawn by Seattle Central College students in 2016 and 2023. Shared with permission.



“I drew some rubble and destroyed buildings of the place subjected to the attack.”



“For me, who is born and raised in the country that is still in the war, but doesn't have a nuclear weapons, however the enemy has, I have a fear that in sometime, [North Korea] might use nuclear weapon in the war. [...] It makes me terrified.”



“A person curled into a ball, visibly anxious. ...”

MUTUALLY ASSURED

cited.

### An invitation

The first printing of 2,000 copies of *Ground Zero Comics* came out last August and was immediately followed by a slightly revised edition of another 2,000 copies. For comparison, approximately 750 people receive this newsletter. I hope that you 750 subscribers will read the messages in *Ground Zero Comics* as expressions of our gratitude for your continuing interest and support, but also as a reminder of the urgency of our unfinished business, as a tool to help you start conversations that break the silence about the depth of our current crisis, and as a fresh, information-packed update on nuclear weapons in Washington state.

I hope to interest those of you who have not read *Ground Zero Comics* to support this project by ordering a copy. I hope that those of you who think that it came out well will order ten or more copies at a bulk discount to give away, resell, or place on consignment at your local comics shop or bookstore. If you read it, and have criticisms, advice, encouragement, or endorsements to send, we welcome your comments c/o [gzcomics@gzcenter.org](mailto:gzcomics@gzcenter.org).

Ground Zero Comics are available for \$8.00 a copy, plus tax, postage and handling

from co-publisher Fantagraphics at <https://www.fantagraphics.com/products/ground-zero-comics-move-beyond-nuclear-weapons>.

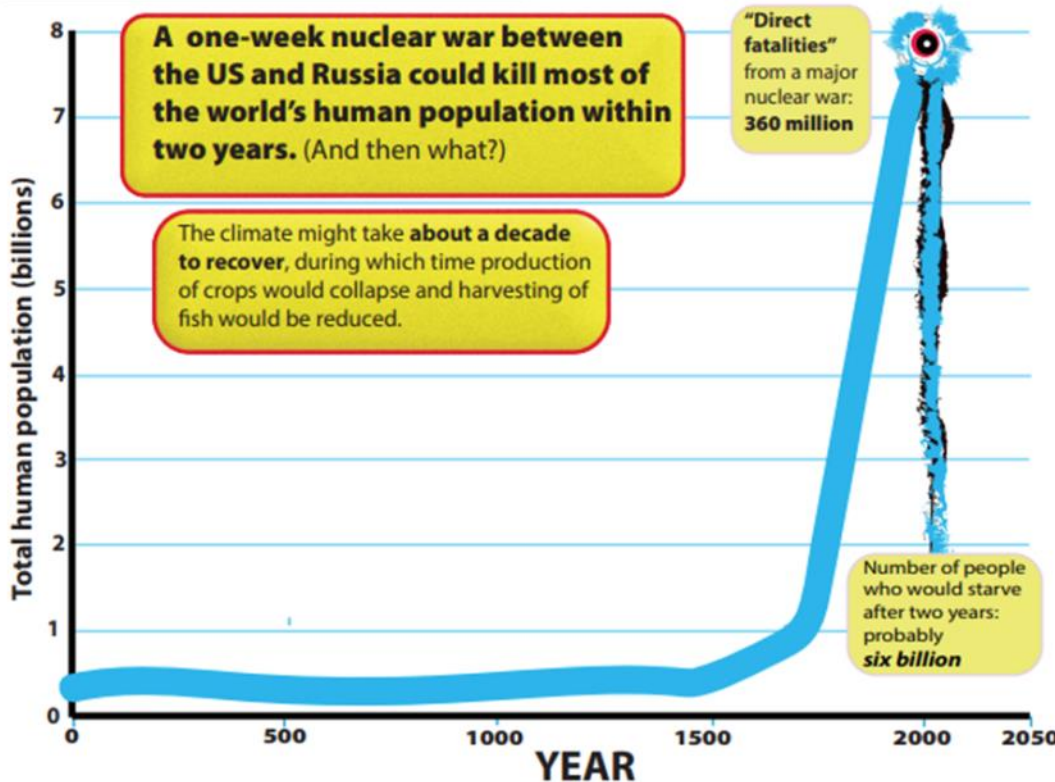
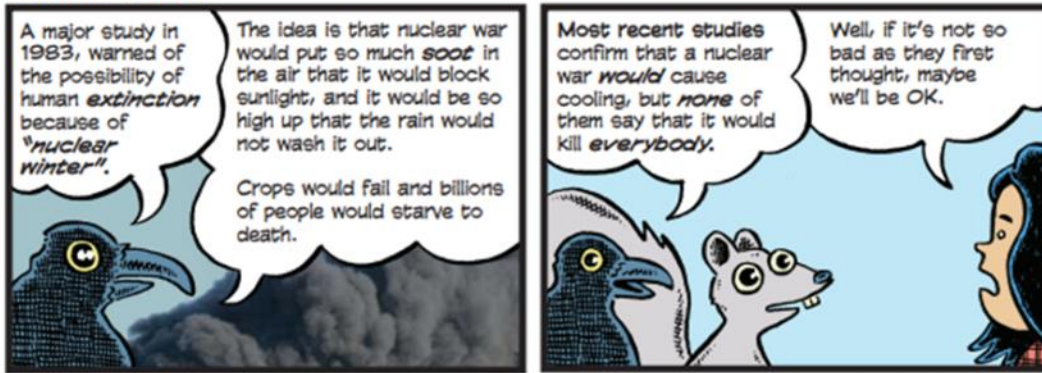
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### Nuclear winter

Although many people imagine that they would be “vaporized” if a nuclear war happens, the overwhelming majority of the billions of human beings that could die in such a conflict would slowly starve during a “nuclear



Nuclear Winter



Ground Zero Comics may also be ordered directly from Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action for one to nine copies (full retail), \$8.00 each; 10 to 49 copies, \$6.00 each; 50 to 99, \$5.00 each; over 100, \$4.00 each; plus tax, postage, and handling. Please know that Ground Zero does not have an e-commerce account at this time, and can only accept payment by check.

To place an order (and have us calculate the cost of tax, postage and handling), please write to Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action at [gzcomics@gzcenter.org](mailto:gzcomics@gzcenter.org).

*Leonard Rifas is a cartoonist, critic, editor, and publisher who has long lent his talents to the anti-nuclear movement.*

Hisako Kimura... continued from page 3

are painful, but I have to talk about them. That is the core of my activities."

Even if it means dredging up the emotional scars of the atomic bombing, she has been able to speak out in order to prevent the birth of any more A-bomb survivors.

From 2005 to 2015, Ms. Kimura visited New York City three times to attend the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, which is held every five years at U.N. headquarters. At a peace rally near Times Square in the heart of the city in 2010, she showed a photo of her father and said, "I still miss him, and I want my father back."

The hatred toward the U.S. that deprived her of her family is deeply engraved in her. But, when she sees the

tears in the eyes of local young people, "I realized that feelings can be conveyed. I also held the thought, 'If you keep hating, you will never get an answer.'"

Before the award ceremony, Ms. Kimura's thoughts returned to her father, who lost his future as a doctor to the atomic bombing, and to her friends, who left her shortly before their deaths, saying, "Please. I hope that people will learn about the hardships I have endured."

The day when Ms. Kimura can truly rejoice is when the world is rid of nuclear weapons. She will visit the award ceremony in the hope that it will be the beginning of that day.

*Kana Nemoto is a reporter at the Hiroshima branch of the Mainichi Shimbun, one of Japan's three major national newspapers.*

# Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda: coming into form

By Rev. Senji Kanaeda and Glen Milner

A nuclear submarine base on one side, and an active gun range just down Clear Creek Road, the Peace Pagoda has become its own sense of place—a place of tranquility amongst our violence. And as the sum of its parts come from around the U.S. and Japan, the vision and the meaning of the Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda come into being.

The [Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda](#) is a Buddhist stupa that seeks to unite all sentient beings, regardless of race, creed or nationality, in the universal aspiration for genuine world peace. The peace pagoda is inspired by traditional stupa designs, reflecting the original Indian style of a dome-shaped building topped by a spire. It will be approximately 44 feet in diameter at the base and about 40 feet tall. As with many stupas built since the time of Buddha Shakyamuni, this peace pagoda will entomb his relics.

Rev. Senji Kanaeda, a Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist monk and much-beloved peace activist living on Bainbridge Island, and Rev. Gilberto Perez, also a monk, are leading in the construction of the peace pagoda. Reverend Kanaeda has organized numerous peace walks each year, and provides much support to local and international peace activists and peace programs. Both monks live at the beautiful [Nipponzan Myohoji Bainbridge Island Temple](#), located west of Seattle across Puget Sound.

When completed the Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda will stand about 110 feet from the property line of [Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor](#), the location of eight Trident nuclear missile submarines and the largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons in the world. It will be the only Nipponzan Myohoji Peace Pagoda on the U.S. West Coast and the only Peace Pagoda that we know of—built on land owned by a peace organization, Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, formed in 1977 in opposition to nuclear weapons at the base. The Peace Pagoda and the adjacent Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor are approximately 20 miles west of Seattle near Hood Canal.

The history of the Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda is one of patience and persistence. In November 1980, founder monk of the Nipponzon Myohoji, Ven. Nichidatsu Fujii, stated that a pagoda should be built at Ground Zero to commemorate and support people being jailed for peace. Construction began in 1981, only to have permits revoked by Kitsap County in 1982. Permits for construction were finally granted by the County in 2019.

A different issue has now delayed the Pagoda, since September, because of a dispute with the company forming the concrete on the dome. After ten days on the job, it became clear that the contractor was not equipped for the difficult task. The monks have since found a new con-

tractor and work on the concrete dome is scheduled to restart in February 2025.

Rev. Kanaeda recently said of the concrete dome work, “Once we pass over this mountain, we can do much of the work ourselves. The most difficult part will be done.”



The sorin being unpacked in late September. *Photo by Sally Noedel.*

As of November, fabrication of the foundation, walls, and much of the dome have been completed. The Peace Pagoda is expected to be dedicated in 2025.

The Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda is simple in form and adorned with several special artisan-created elements that make the pagoda truly unique. Artists are creating relief panels depicting the life of the Buddha, a limestone statue of the Buddha’s first sermon, and a sōrin --an ornate brass top spire crafted in Japan and sent by ship to Seattle. The central Buddha statue was recently

**Peace Pagoda... continued on page 11**

completed by Massachusetts Buddhist sculptor Thomas Matsuda, while the three reliefs were created by local artist and Quaker Craig Jacobson.

The final stages of the project will include installation of the spire and decorative box on the top, installation of the statue and [reliefs depicting four scenes from the life of the Buddha](#), and the decoration of the exterior walls incorporating Art Deco.

Other than concrete pouring, construction has relied entirely on volunteers, including the project manager, and the service of local U.S. residents. Material and spiritual support have also come from Japan. The Nipponzan Myohoji monks have no words other than gratitude and look forward to further support from many people.

### The Significance of Pagodas and Ancient Indian King Ashoka

Stupas (pagodas) began as mounds of earth. They were built up in layers of bricks, clay, stone, and in Japan, wood. A stupa would be built over the enshrined remains of Buddha and saints, sometimes far from where they lived or died, so that people could worship them even from a distance.

After the Buddha's nirvana, lay believers cremated his body, divided his remains (relics) into eight pieces, and built memorial towers (stupas) to house the remains.

According to legend, King Ashoka used brutal tactics in war with neighboring countries to achieve the unification of India in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. Ashoka later renounced violence and became a Buddhist. Ashoka excavated the relics of the first eight Buddhist pagodas, built 84,000 pagodas throughout India, and distributed and enshrined the relics across the land.

King Ashoka was the greatest contributor to the spread of Buddhism. Ashoka Pillars, monolithic columns which were built alongside pagodas all over India, have his decrees inscribed in the oldest Prakrit script. The inscriptions are: (1) Do not kill any living thing, including animals; (2) Respect parents and elders and be polite; (3) Be considerate of the poor and always considerate of oth-

ers; (4) Be tolerant of different beliefs and ideas; (5) Strive to live in peace and harmony.

By practicing these moral virtues, King Ashoka essentially advocated an ethical code of conduct that applies to everyone, regardless of religion.

The relics for the Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda were given by [Ven. Gyangkaji Shakya, a monk from Kathmandu, Nepal](#), to Rev. Senji Kanaeda in 2012. Three grains are currently kept in the altar of the Nipponzan Myohoji temple in Bainbridge Island, waiting for the day when they will be enshrined next to Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor.

Rev. Kanaeda recently stated, "The world is facing uncontrollable global warming and the risk of plunging into all-out war, including nuclear war, and there is no shortage of reasons and things to be pessimistic about the future. It is precisely at this time that Buddhism is practiced, and I sincerely hope that this pagoda will be a catalyst for awakening everyone to their Buddha nature, one of the three thousand realms of human nature that symbolically has been passed down through humanity. There have been quite a few difficulties in the construction, but I feel that it must be accomplished at all costs."

In *The Time Has Come* (1982), the Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii stated:

Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo

It is false to talk of peace  
while possessing weapons  
destined to take life.  
When we talk of peace,  
we must lay down all  
murderous tools.

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**Rev. Senji Kanaeda** is an ordained Japanese monk since 1995 and lives at the Nipponzan Myohoji Bainbridge Island Temple. **Glen Milner** lives in Lake Forest Park and is a member of the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action. He identifies with the Society of Friends.

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### Building Bridges..... continued from page 5

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Gandhi and King, building bridges instead of destroying them.

This is the time for all of us who envision a better world for all of humanity (and future generations) to come together to end the wars that ravage the Earth and those who dwell on it, and to shift our focus to repairing the damage already done and build that better world.

As Dr. King once so eloquently stated, "Love is the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or to

bow before the altar of retaliation. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals who pursued this self-defeating path of hate" (from *Where Do We Go From Here. Chaos or Community?* published in 1968). Dr. King's prophetic voice calls us to follow a different path, building bridges along the way, and connecting with all of humanity to build the Beloved Community.

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**Leonard Eiger** serves on the Ground Zero Stewardship Council.

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# GROUND ZERO

## GROUND ZERO COMMUNITY

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*“We hibakusha who saw  
the hell... within a  
decade won't be around to tell  
the reality of the atomic  
bombing.”*

— Michiko Kodama, Japanese  
hibakusha and activist

## Upcoming events in January

By Carolee Flaten and Glen Milner

Here are some events to promote peace in 2025. Please join us!

**On Saturday January 18**, at 1:30 PM, Ground Zero members and allies will meet and vigil at the Main Gate of Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Everyone interested in honoring Dr. King's prophecy and legacy is invited to attend.

**On Monday, January 20**, Ground Zero members will join with other peace and justice activists in the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day march in Seattle—meeting at the grassy hill in front of Garfield High School around 11:00 AM, at 400 23rd Ave. Seattle. Please contact [in-fo@gzcenter.org](mailto:info@gzcenter.org) for more information on the two events.

**And on January 22**, we will celebrate the fourth anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). More information to come on this.



**Carolee Flaten** is a retired nurse and activist with Ground Zero. She lives in Hansville. **Glen Milner** lives in Lake Forest Park and leads legal efforts on behalf of Ground Zero. Photo courtesy of KUOW and Megan Farmer.