



OREPA News

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P O BOX 5743 OAK RIDGE, TN 37831 • www.orepa.org



OREPA board members and supporters gather in Market Square in downtown Knoxville on April 18 for our Tax Day Action. We had a chart and handout that showed people where our taxpayer dollars are going and where they could be allocated instead. From left to right are Laurel Goodrich, Pam Hindle, Bill Myers, and Jim Orr.

UPF Budget Busts Through the Roof!

OREPA's Tax Day Action

With April 18th being Tax Day, OREPA decided to show the community where exactly our taxpayer dollars are going. On April 18th, we gathered in Market Square in downtown Knoxville on a beautiful, sunny day with charts and handouts that explained how our taxpayer dollars are allocated and how they could be spent instead. We ended up having media coverage from two news stations so hopefully our message was relayed to the community!

er—around 5%. This is incredibly disproportionate! Education and healthcare are essential areas that affect a country's level of development. The more advanced a country's education is and the healthier its people are provide benchmarks on the journey toward full development. Access to education and healthcare has the ability to push people from one socioeconomic level to the next, which is incredibly important in East Tennessee and rural Appalachia. So why aren't we doing more to help our citizens?

Facts on Tax Dollars

Taxes are disproportionately allocated between the military and everything else. Nuclear weapons and the military make up more than half of where are taxpayer dollars are going, while areas such as education and healthcare only make up a mere sliv-

UPF Cost Overrun

A large part of our Tax Day action was discussing the UPF cost overrun. Our taxpayer dollars, as showcased by the disproportionation, are going to the Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) being constructed at the Y-12 Weapons Plant in Oak Ridge

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to replace the old, deteriorating buildings there. The original cost estimate for the UPF bomb plant was \$1.5 billion. We were promised by several administrators that the cost of the UPF was not to exceed \$6.5 billion. However, the budget was smashed through the roof and now sits at between \$8 to \$8.5 billion—a \$2 to \$2.5 billion increase! DOE and NNSA blame COVID, supply chain issues, and a labor shortage. Even if this is true, DOE, NNSA, the contractors, and our representatives need to be held accountable for this cost overrun. Over \$2 billion is a huge jump in the budget! According to NNSA, they had “stern talking with the contractors” because of this cost increase—that’s all. We need to increase public awareness on this issue to generate community pressure on the government.

We need to relay to our representatives that these taxpayer dollars could be, and should be, going to serving and bettering the lives of Tennesseans. Tennessee ranks 44th in the country in spending on public school education, just over \$9,900 per student. Our state also ranks 44th in health outcomes. Imagine the improvement in

these numbers if even a fraction of the billions of dollars spent on nuclear weapons were spent on health and education? \$2 billion—the UPF cost overrun—would pay a year’s salary for 54 new teachers in every county in Tennessee or 31 behavioral health case managers in every county in Tennessee!

Affordable housing also presents a big issue that could be tackled if government spending was more evenly allocated. Just over 10,500 individuals were counted as unhoused on one night in Tennessee in January 2022. That’s 45% higher than the same survey in 2020 and ranks as the third-largest percentage increase of any state. The UPF cost overrun could build more than 16,000 Habitat homes in Tennessee. OREPA encourages you to take note of the disproportionate government spending between the military and all other sectors, and put pressure on your local representatives to hold them accountable.

G7 MEETS IN HIROSHIMA

The G7 Summit is an international forum held annually for leaders of the G7 member states of France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada, and the European Union. This year’s G7 Summit took place in Hiroshima, Japan from May 19-21. Leaders of these countries gathered to discuss a number of global challenges to peace. There were high hopes for this year’s meeting in Hiroshima in the sector of nuclear disarmament as the city suffered the catastrophic effects of the first ever atomic bomb dropped on a city.

However, the G7 failed to produce anything significant towards a nuclear weapons free future as demonstrated by their “Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament” statement. Consider these excerpts of the statement:

“We, the Leaders of the G7, met at a historical juncture in Hiroshima, which together with Nagasaki offers a reminder of the unprecedented devastation and immense human suffering the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experienced as a result of the atomic bombings of 1945. In a solemn and reflective moment, we reaffirm, in this first G7 Leaders’ document with a particular focus on nuclear disarmament, our commitment to achieving a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished

“We underscore the importance of the 77-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons. Russia’s irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, undermining of arms control regimes, and stated intent to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus are dangerous and unacceptable. We recall the statement in Bali of all G20 leaders, including Russia.”

“In this context, we reiterate our position that threats by Russia of nuclear weapon use, let alone any use of nuclear weapons by Russia, in the context of its aggression against Ukraine are inadmissible.”

“We recall the Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States issued on January 3, 2022, on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races, and affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”

“We call on Russia to recommit—in words and deeds—to the principles enshrined in that Statement. Our security policies are based on the understanding that nuclear weapons, for as long as they exist, should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression and prevent war and coercion.”

This statement is disappointing as all it does is denounce Russia's threats to use nuclear weapons. There are 3 nuclear weapon states that are part of the G7 (the US, France, and the UK). These states are in violation of international law which, after the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, states that all facets of nuclear weapons are illegal. The G7 did not make any remarks to address this, to move closer to nuclear disarmament, but rather nuclear weapons states and their allies hid under their nuclear umbrella without addressing all the damage they have done.

There was also no mention of the ICAN G7 Youth Summit in Hiroshima, which took place prior to the G7 meeting. In fact, there is no mention of ICAN or the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at all, even though the G7 leaders claim they want to pursue a world free of nuclear weapons.

OREPA had high hopes for this meeting, especially because it occurred in Hiroshima, a city ravaged by the devastating effects of nuclear warfare, but unfortunately the meeting failed to pursue any real path towards nuclear disarmament.

Hiroshima Academy Reflection

Rachel Stewart

During my time in Hiroshima at the 2022 ICAN-Hiroshima Academy, I visited the Atomic Bomb Dome and the peace park every chance I could get. The disquiet quietness of the place cannot be replicated: it awes, inspires, and humbles.

Visiting the peace park on different days, at different times, and under different weather conditions gave me the unique opportunity to reflect on what I was learning at the ICAN-Hiroshima Academy. There was so much to process, and I am still not done nor do I think I will ever be done reflecting on what I gained during my time in the Academy.

Hiroshima Day—
I believe there must be bones
under the paved street

From our first virtual meeting in October, to the first in-person meeting in Hiroshima, the haunting and visceral images of August 6, 1945—captured in the oral histories of hibakusha told by Koko Kondo and Yoshiko Kajimoto, or written in the pages of John Hersey's *Hiroshima*—were at the front of my mind. However, an important takeaway I had was to not just keep the emphasis on the past.

Listening and reading hibakushas' stories, visiting the peace park, and paying respects are of the utmost importance, but as Howard Zinn says in *A People's History of the United States*, "My point is not to grieve for the victims and denounce the executioners. Those tears, that



Rachel Stewart meets with hibakusha Koko Kondo at the Hiroshima Academy

anger, cast into the past, deplete our moral energy for the present." Remembering Hiroshima as just a "museum city" and place of the past strips survivors of their agency and humanity. Hiroshima is our past, present, and future. The actions of Hiroshima prefecture, city, nonprofits and all of the organizations in between is a living testament to what it looks like for a city to be a champion of disarmament.

Further, just as viewing Hiroshima's legacy as one relegated only to the past, viewing hibakusha as "victims" also strips them of their humanity. They are survivors, not just the passive products of events, but active and outspoken advocates for peace. After talking to Ms. Fumiko Araki, a hibakusha who was 6 months old at the time of the bombing, I learned how so many survivors faced discrimination because of their status. Ms. Araki also taught me how grateful we should be to hibakusha for telling us their stories. They do not have to relive the worst day of their lives, and arguably the worst day in human history, but they do so—relentlessly—in hope that it will never be repeated.

Another lesson I learned in Hiroshima is how the lines between oppressed and oppressor, victim and victimizer are not always clear. This point was clear during our tour of the peace park, seeing the monument to Korean victims, and also when we heard from Ms. Chiyo Miyasaki, daughter of Korean hibakusha Lee Jong-keun, about the challenges non-Japanese hibakusha face in getting treatment and retribution.

Swings—
Nowhere are they to be found
in the A-bomb park

The tensions and dialectical relationships between past, present, and future framed a lot of my thinking—especially since the Academy’s theme was nuclear weapons and sustainability. I came to Hiroshima with a lot of preconceived notions about how Americans would be perceived, and I anticipated that there would be a lot of hostility. I could not have been more wrong. While of course, Japanese people are not a monolith, everyone I spoke to was not resentful about the past, but instead focused on the present.

Remembering the past in order to inform the present and future transcends back to my work in the states—specifically in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. My home state and now college town played an integral role in enriching the uranium that went into the atomic bomb that was detonated over Hiroshima. Myself and so many others continue to live and grapple with this legacy, especially as Y-12 continues to produce highly enriched uranium for the US nuclear weapons program.

Through my work with OREPA, I have been challenging Y-12 and their continued proliferation of WMDs—using the TPNW as a new organizing tool. Then, in February 2023, I joined the OREPA Board of Directors. Since then, I have spoken at the weekly Sunday vigil about my experiences in Hiroshima. As we plan for the future of OREPA and strive to get more young people involved, I look to Hiroshima and the youth activists there as inspiration. Learning about Chugoku Shimbun and the role of press and journalism in disarmament has inspired me to connect more with local news outlets and author op-eds. Making new friends who are a part of Ka-kuwaka Hiroshima reinvigorated me to get more of my peers and the younger generation involved in this work.

Currently, OREPA is mostly made up of older, white, religiously-affiliated peace activists. Their insight is invaluable, but I am working tirelessly to bring more diversity to our grassroots movement.

Swallows
coming again and flying
not forgetting Hiroshima
—(Yashiko Shigemoto (2005) My Haiku of Hiroshima II.)

On my last day in Hiroshima, a rainy Sunday, I visited the peace park for the last time, accompanied by Mere and Megumi. And we witnessed a miraculous thing while standing next to the cenotaph: the migration of hundreds of birds in V-shaped formations. These swallows were a symbol to me of all the academy participants and how we soon would fly away from Hiroshima, but will never forget what we learned there.

Because we may have spent a little too long bird-watching, Mere, Megumi, and I were running late to catch our bus to the Hiroshima airport. As we dashed through the streets, luggage in tow, we just barely made it aboard the airport bus, only seconds to spare. Out of breath, I sat down in an open seat, next to a stranger. He kindly turned the air vent towards me—my labored breath and sweat-glistened forehead visible even behind my N-95 mask.

Unbeknownst to me, this stranger was a visiting professor from the US—from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia—just a few hours drive from my home in Tennessee. We talked the entire ride about what brought us both to Hiroshima—for him, a radiation oncology conference, and for me, the ICAN-Hiroshima Global Security Academy. I told him all about the Academy and what I had learned. He was shocked to learn about radioactive legacies of nuclear weapons that persist to this day— from the Runit Dome in the Marshall Islands to the DOE’s Savannah River Site in Augusta, Georgia (where I interned a few summers ago). It is safe to say that this was just the beginning of the many conversations I would go on to have about all that I learned in Hiroshima.

Two strangers’ bus ride,
hundreds of swallows fill the sky
Hiroshima - goodbye.

The Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance is a grassroots nonprofit organization working to educate and organize people about nuclear weapons production in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. We advocate an end to weapons production and we work to create and nurture nonviolent community in East Tennessee.

OREPA’s newsletter is printed four times a year by Ullrich

Printing in Knoxville, Tennessee and is on-line at orepa.org.

Contributions to OREPA’s work may be sent to P O Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831 or may be made securely on-line at OREPA’s web site: www.orepa.org. All gifts to OREPA are tax deductible.

**The Next Generation
Youth Organizing Fund**



MEMBER OF THE
**ALLIANCE FOR NUCLEAR
ACCOUNTABILITY**



DC Days As a Firsttimer

Laurel Goodrich

Every year, member organizations of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (ANA) converge on our nation's capital for "DC Days," to lobby members of congress and hold nuclear weapons makers accountable. Most ANA member-organizations are grassroots groups like OREPA, living in the shadow of the twenty-or-so nuclear weapons facilities scattered over a dozen states in the U.S. Also represented in ANA are groups of scientists and physicians concerned about nuclear weapons. This year, OREPA Coordinator Tanvi Kardile, board president Ann Myers, and I--new board member Laurel Goodrich-- attended, along with about fifty representatives from ANA member organizations from twenty states. We spent an intensive day of training, followed by three days of meetings with senators' and representatives' staff members, delivering this year's ANA talking points.

The four days in late April were long and intense, but deeply rewarding. One meeting was with a staffer of Ohio Democratic Representative Marcy Kaptur. At the meeting, California mother Melissa Bumstead and her 13-year-old daughter Grace described Grace's years-long struggle with a rare form of cancer. The family believes (as do other nearby parents whose children have had cancer) that the child's disease is likely a result of radioactivity and toxic chemicals that continue to migrate from a nearby contaminated former nuclear-reactor and rocket-testing facility. The facility, the Santa Susanna Field Laboratory, located in the suburban area west of Los Angeles, is the site of a 1959 nuclear reactor accident that was kept secret for twenty years. The facility was closed in 2006, but enforcement of cleanup has been inconsistent, and contamination remains on the site to this day. Melissa was concise yet compelling. Her daughter Grace was eloquent and brave. Several of us, including Congresswoman Kaspur's staffer, had a tear in our eye by the end of Grace's narrative. The staffer encouraged Grace and her mom to present their story to Republican members of Congress, and to consider requesting a congressional hearing to

Our exceptionally skilled ANA team leader Don Hancock jumped on this recommendation. Hancock (Nuclear Waste Program Director, Southwest Research and Information Center, New Mexico), arranged a meeting for the very next day with a senior staffer for Tennessee Republican Representative Chuck Fleischmann. Fleischmann does have a say in nuclear cleanup spending, as a member of the House Appropriations Energy and Water Development subcommittee. Hancock and our OREPA contingent joined Melissa and Grace at the meeting with Fleischmann's senior staffer. On behalf of OREPA, Tanvi lobbied for dedicating a higher proportion of DOE proposed funding to cleanup, rather than weapons-related endeavors like Y-12's Uranium Processing Facility (UPF). Melissa and Grace elaborated on the importance of cleanup, telling their story implicating the still-toxic Santa Susanna site and its likely role in the cancers of children in surrounding communities. The staffer was not in a position to make promises of course, and we had no illusion that a Tennessee republican congressman would oppose nuclear weapons. But the staffer did indicate willingness to talk to Congressman Fleischmann about Melissa's request to hold a congressional hearing addressing the cancers in children who live near Santa Susanna.

Being part of a grassroots citizen group making its case to U.S. congressional representatives was instructive and inspiring for me as a first-time DC-Days participant. Again, the likelihood is remote to nonexistent that our efforts would result in concrete congressional action that supports OREPA's

and ANA's mission. But big changes happen in tiny increments. If one staffer hears one story that makes its way to the ears, mind and heart of once congressperson, we in OREPA are doing our part.

A final thought on the value of DC Days: It's not just the issues, it's the people. Fifty of the smartest, most dedicated individuals I've ever met were our fellow participants. For me, DC Days was an opportunity to learn from ANA leaders with

decades of technical and political knowledge, and to commiserate with slightly-overwhelmed first-timers like myself. But regardless of age or years of experience, each and every person's efforts were valued and respected. In opposing nuclear weapons, we're in the fight of our lives. It's a comfort to be in such good company.



CAPTION

OREPA's Ann Myers, Laurel Goodrich, and Tanvi Kardile meet with Tennessee District 3 Representative Chuck Fleischmann's staffer in DC

Join OREPA for August Actions for Abolition

*A time to remember the past and act to create a future free of nuclear weapons.
We need you to help us send a strong message in support of the Ban Treaty!*

WORKERS AT THE SUPER SECRET Y-12 plant in Oak Ridge in the 1940s worked on a round-the-clock schedule operating massive machines that filled entire buildings, sitting at a bank of dials for hours on end monitoring the performance of equipment, receiving sealed containers of materials to be weighed, recorded, and passed on.

Most of them had no idea what their work was—it would be August 1945 before they were informed—when the Little Boy bomb exploded over Hiroshima, Japan, killing tens of thousands of people in an instant, the Oak Ridge secret was revealed.

Y-12 workers had been producing the fuel for the first atomic bomb ever used in war. They were told that their efforts had hastened the war's end. The true story was much darker. It would be almost a year before the devastating effects of the bomb would be told to the public in the United States and people would learn about radiation poisoning that would linger in bodies and cause cancer and leukemias for decades.

August 6 went down in history as the dawn of the nuclear age. Y-12, on the other hand, left history behind as it pushed forward, taking on a new mission—producing the thermonuclear secondaries for the new bomb, the H-bomb, a weapon hundreds of times more powerful than Little Boy.

Y-12 continues to manufacture secondaries—the core of US nuclear weapons—today.

August in Oak Ridge

For more than thirty years, OREPA has marked August 6 in Oak Ridge with events that look back in commemoration and actions that look forward in hope. We have marched, sang, demonstrated, sometimes gotten arrested. Throughout, we have had one common message, echoing the voices of Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors, *hibakusha*, who have joined us in Oak Ridge: Never again!

This year will be no different. We will gather on Saturday, August 5 at Alvin K Bissell Park in Oak Ridge at 11 for a rally for nuclear abolition with music, theater, and a celebration of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. At 12:30 we will begin a march to the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex.

When we arrive at Y-12 (likely around 1:15), we will conduct a brief action in recognition of the Ban Treaty which confirms that, in the eyes of the world, the work at Y-12 is in violation of international law.

We will gather again the next day early in the morning on Sunday, August 6, for the Names and Remembrance Ceremony, a solemn reading of names and accounts of that morning in Hiroshima in 1945 as well as reflections on the effects of the bombing. The ceremony begins at 6:00am and lasts until 9:00am.

Remembering Nagasaki

Three days after Hiroshima was destroyed, the US dropped a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki, killing tens of thousands instantly, and consigning tens of thousands more to intense, relentless suffering from burns and radiation sickness, and to deep psychological scarring from the horrors witnessed on that day.

OREPA will mark Nagasaki Day on Wednesday, August 9, with a Peace Lantern Ceremony at the far west end of Sequoyah Hills Park in Knoxville. The Ceremony will take place in the open field next to the west end parking lot off Cherokee Boulevard, and it will begin at 8:00pm.

We will have a ceremony with drumming and chanting, music, Japanese folk dancing, and Japanese shadow puppets, followed by the launching of peace lanterns into the Tennessee River.

The Peace Lantern ceremony typically concludes shortly after 9:00pm, and it is family friendly.

BUT – peace lanterns don't build themselves! This year we will be hosted by Jen Sauer and Kei Morishita at 8636 Widener Road in Knoxville for a peace lantern building party. All materials will be provided — all you need to bring is a bit of creativity and active fingers!

This year, the lantern building party will be the weekend before our August actions on Saturday, July 29 at 6:00pm. There will be a variety of jobs available – decorating the paper that will wrap around the lanterns, drilling bases, assembling the lanterns—something for everyone!

SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, JULY 29

6:30pm

Peace Lantern Build

Jen Sauer/Kei Morishita
8636 Widener Road
Knoxville

SATURDAY, AUGUST 5

11:00am - 2:00pm

Rally for Abolition

March to Y-12

Alvin K. Bissell Park
Y-12 Weapons Complex,
Oak Ridge

SUNDAY, AUGUST 6

6:00am - 9:00am

Names and Remembrance

Y-12 Weapons Complex,
Oak Ridge

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9

8:00pm

Peace Lantern Ceremony

Sequoyah Hills Park (west)
Knoxville