

3rd Essay Contest on a “Nuclear Weapons Free Future” U-20 Grand Prize Winning Work

From Childhood Fears to Global Action: A Letter to World Leaders

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Dear World Leaders,

*What if there were no tomorrow?*

*What if today were the last day I saw my family?*

These questions about the dangers of nuclear weapons kept me up at night, terrified by the thought that your arsenal has the power to obliterate my entire hometown with a single switch.

Hiding under my soft white bed sheets, my nine-year-old self would try to block these nightmarish thoughts so I could live in peace, not fear. But as long as these weapons breathe on the same planet as I do, this fear will never cease.

While these questions no longer keep me up at night, I am left bewildered by your ongoing efforts to develop these weapons today. You have repeatedly reassured us that we must never forget the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, yet your actions betray your promise. You have now built a world where over 12,000 warheads coexist with the 106,825 survivors that still live today.

The same 106,825 survivors watched the blood and tears of countless individuals, who were erased in an instant by the massive mushroom cloud that engulfed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The 106,825 survivors who saw children turn to ashes, leaving no trace of their existence for their grieving families.

The 106,825 survivors are plagued by diseases that cling to them—agonizing pain that haunts them from that fateful day, etching scars deep into their skin and torturing them inside out.

You’ve tried to persuade us, the younger generation, that these weapons are essential for maintaining global stability and preventing world wars, citing that there hasn’t been a world war in the past 80 years. However, just because your country hasn’t been directly involved in conflict doesn’t mean that wars aren’t happening elsewhere. According to the UN, in which you have participated, last year alone saw over 33,000 civilian deaths in conflicts, including those involving nations with nuclear weapons, such as Russia and Israel.

I was blessed—or perhaps cursed—with roots deeply etched into my DNA that revealed to me the unspeakable horrors of nuclear weapons. These terrors seep into my very marrow as if ancient shadows were whispering their darkest secrets from the abyss of a long-forgotten nightmare.

The other two billion children are not so fortunate. I've talked to classmates outside of Japan who didn't even know about Nagasaki. These were the same people who tried to convince me that the world needs nuclear weapons, arguing that the bombings and the killing of innocent Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were justified.

I cannot describe to you how furious I was listening to the words “justified” and “Hiroshima” come out in the same sentence. It tore me apart, like a knife slicing through the fabric of morality and history.

But I cannot blame them for their opinions. After all, they, too, are human like me.

They have been misled into believing that nuclear weapons are a form of peacekeeping. Because of this misinformation, they haven't had the chance to learn the true impact of these weapons. That's why I chose a different approach: creating an opportunity to share my experiences and help others understand reality.

Alongside my history teacher, I created an opportunity for my classmates to reconsider their views on nuclear weapons by teaching them about the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The reactions were profound when I showed them the details of the aftermath. Many were left in shock, realizing for the first time that the weapons you possess today have the potential to cause even greater destruction.

Later, I attended a conference called Hiroshima Junior International Forum, where I had the chance to discuss the world's current situation with high school students. From countries that possess nuclear weapons, like the U.S., to those without, like Germany, we gathered to share our ideas and approaches. It struck me that, despite our different backgrounds and beliefs, we all share a common goal: guiding the world toward peace. The conference gave me hope that a unified understanding is within reach. I wish you could have been there to witness our collaboration and see the bridge of hope we were building for a brighter future.

These two experiences—teaching and discussing the topic of nuclear weapons—showed me that opportunities are not merely given; they are created. That is why Benjamin Franklin's quote resonates with all of us, regardless of our nationality:

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

We need to create opportunities for people, especially children, around the world to learn about and understand the reality of nuclear weapons. It is time for us to confront our fears. As future leaders, we must start discussing the realities of these weapons.

I am addressing this letter to you, world leaders, because you hold influence on a global scale, not just within your nations. My focus is on your role as world leaders, rather than as leaders of individual countries.

Consider the power you possess. The resources that are available to you. Now it is up to you to decide whether you will build a boat of hope or allow the world to sink into an abyss of ignorance and danger.

You are role models for people of all ages, including young children who aspire to become world leaders like you. Imagine their confusion and anger upon discovering that you had the power to eliminate all nuclear weapons but chose to do nothing.

You have the opportunity to provide these future leaders with valuable knowledge and guidance. By fostering an environment where learning about the reality of nuclear weapons is encouraged, you can help shape a brighter and safer future for everyone.

*What if there were no tomorrow?*

*What if today were the last day I saw my family?*

I hope these nine-year-old nightmares end with me.

With hope for a peaceful future,

Fourth Generation Atomic Bomb Survivor