

Welcome
2006 International Law Symposium Public Forum
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Good evening and welcome to the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's 2006 International Law Symposium.

I'd like to thank the UCSB Division of Social Sciences for their co-sponsorship of this evening's program, and Westmont College for hosting us for the next two days.

The goals of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation are to abolish nuclear weapons, strengthen international law, and empower a new generation of peace leaders. We invite you to join us in waging peace. Information is available at the table in the lobby, and at our www.wagingpeace.org website.

The theme of our symposium is "At the Nuclear Precipice: Nuclear Weapons and the Abandonment of International Law." We have come together to examine how we can join our efforts to make the nuclear disarmament movement more successful and save our beautiful planet.

A precipice is defined as a high, vertical or very steep rock face, or a very dangerous state. Looking down from this precipice, there is a deep chasm, a situation of unending awfulness, a situation in which much of life on earth could be destroyed. We are confronted today by the two-tier structure of nuclear "haves" and "have-nots," by the possibilities of accidents and miscalculations, and by the dangers of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of extremist groups – as though those who now possess these weapons are not extreme enough.

Yet, despite current nuclear dangers, most of humanity remains both ignorant and apathetic. In our symposium we seek to confront ignorance not only with information but hopefully with wisdom, and to confront apathy with a clarion call for engagement.

When General Lee Butler received the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Distinguished Peace Leadership Award in 1999, he said: "We cannot at once keep sacred the miracle of existence and hold sacrosanct the capacity to destroy it. It is time to reassert the primacy of individual conscience, the voice of reason and the rightful interests of humanity." This is what brings us together and motivates our individual and collective work.

In opening our symposium, I'd like to share with you greetings from the Mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatashi Akiba, a tireless campaigner for the elimination of nuclear weapons.