

**The Power of Place:
Citizens and Local Elected Officials Uniting to Create
a Nuclear Free World**

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Representing Mayors for Peace and Atomic Mirror
At the Nuclear Precipice: Nuclear Weapons and the Abandonment of
International Law
Panel on Domestic Strategies for Changing US Nuclear Policy
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
Westmont College
February 24, 2006*

Good afternoon. I'm very happy to be here speaking with all of you, seeing the faces of many beloved colleagues and friends, and many new faces. I have the honor of speaking to you today as a concerned citizen on behalf of the Mayors for Peace 2020 Emergency Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, launched by the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. My organization, the Atomic Mirror, has been working in partnership with the Mayors Initiative as part of the Abolition Now citizens' campaign for over two years now. These efforts aim to achieve what 35 years of diplomatic negotiations have failed to achieve: ensure that Nagasaki is the last city on earth to suffer atomic bombardment, and lay nuclear weapons to rest forever. Thank you to Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba and Mayor Iccho Itoh for inviting me to represent them. Thank you to David Krieger and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation for holding this conference.

The Nuclear Emergency Room of our Planet

I begin by focusing on the word, "emergency." My friend, Natalie Gehringer, a pediatrician in Wisconsin, once told me the three questions that doctors ask people when they arrive in the Emergency Room. Since the premise of the Mayors Campaign is that the world is in the Nuclear Emergency Room, I offer these questions to us:

1. Who are you?
2. Where are you?
3. When are you? (Often asked as "Do you know what time it is? What day it is?")

If you can answer all these questions, the doctors in the ER will consider you "Oriented X3--a basic quick evaluation of mental status. Not terribly meaningful as you can answer those questions and be completely looney, but if you can't answer them

¹ I am indebted to my Ventura County colleagues Dr. Gabino Aguirre and Carmen Ramirez, who responded so immediately to the call for US mayors to join the international mayoral delegation to the United Nations. Their partnership (and especially their speeches to the OPANAL conference in Santiago, Chile in November 2005) provides the inspiration for this speech and for our ongoing work.

we know there is a problem!"²

So, who are we? Look around at each other. We are a group of people concerned about the nuclear issue, who have gathered together to reflect on International Law at the Nuclear Precipice—the title of our symposium. We are men and women, many ages, many backgrounds, ordinary human beings with ordinary hopes and fears who can probably each remember the first time we learned about atomic weapons.

Where are we? We are in Santa Barbara on the Central Coast of California. We are on the edge of what our friends in the Pacific call the "liquid continent." We are in the territorial homelands of the Chumash People, which stretches from just below Monterey Bay in the North to Malibu in the South. This resource-rich area includes unique species of Island Foxes on the Channel Islands, the great Condor, grey whales migrating through the channel, and landscapes of low hills, coastal mountains, strawberry fields and vineyards. The *Strawberry Fields Forever* that the Beatles sang about is in Oxnard, just down the Pacific Coast Highway. This territory also includes what the Chumash call the "Western Gate," a sacred portal through which pass the souls of all who die on Turtle Island, or North America. It is Chumash responsibility to act as guardians of this gate, which sits within the boundaries of Vandenberg Air Force Base. Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant lies with Vandenberg Air Force Base to the North. At the base of the Channel Islands sit many shells and missile nose cones of depleted uranium, the leavings of many Vandenberg tests. To the South lies the City of Moorpark, which in 1953 became the first city in the world to totally switch over from conventional electric power to nuclear energy. A few years later, the nearby reactor (in Rocketdyne's Santa Susanna Field Laboratory in Simi Valley) became the site of the first nuclear plant catastrophe through a partial meltdown. Efforts to clean radioactive residue from this site are still ongoing.³ One of our esteemed Chumash leaders, Pilulaw Khus an elder in the Bear Clan of the Coastal Band, when asked about the nuclear sites on her peoples' traditional lands, said "The remedy is so simple. Just stop. Don't add any more to the problem." But more on that later.

The third question is: "When are we? What time is it?" Today is Friday, February 24, 2006 and it is four o'clock in the afternoon. It is springtime here in the northern hemisphere of our planet. As a planet, we've been here for about 4.5 billion years. As human beings, we've been here on the planet for about two million years. About 10,000 years ago we began farming in the Nile delta. This is important because just 60 years ago, we entered the Nuclear Age, which requires us to think as far into

² Natalie Gehringer, M.D. in email exchange, February 23, 2006.

³ Gabino Aguirre, Ph.D., and former Mayor of Santa Paula, California, in speech to bi-annual meeting of OPANAL (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) in Santiago, Chile, November 8, 2005.

the future as we have just looked into humanity's and our planet's past. The radioactive half life of Plutonium-239, for example, is 24,110 years. The radioactive half-life of Uranium-238 is 4.5 billion years. We can honestly say that in the life of our planet, the splitting of the atom has created an emergency: "a sudden, unexpected occurrence demanding immediate action."⁴

From Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the World Court

What the Mayors Campaign has done is to inspire us to stand in the Nuclear Emergency Room in the very streets of our own cities. I first met Mayor Iccho Itoh on the docks of Crane Harbor in his own City of Nagasaki. It was August 8, 1995, the eve of the 50th anniversary of the bombing of the city. Our small group of pilgrims had traveled from New Mexico over the route of the atomic bomb carrying gifts of healing. We had heard that the mayor would be meeting a group of traditional kayakers who had paddled all the way from Okinawa for the events. It was a bright and windy afternoon when we seized the moment, and walked up to him, Mayumi Oda carrying a shell filled with the healing waters of Lake Shasta, and I carrying a pouch of healing earth from Chimayo, New Mexico. Mayor Itoh had the grace to receive us. Three months later, we met him in The Hague where he was the one bearing gifts: testimony from the people of his city and photographs of Yosuke Yamahata, taken August 12, 1945. We were all in The Hague to hear testimony at the International Court of Justice during the Oral Hearings phase of the largest case the Court had ever heard—on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons.⁵ The Honorable Takashi Hiraoka, then Mayor of Hiroshima, joined Mayor Itoh in offering the following compelling testimony of their cities:

*Mayor Hiraoka: "My wife, who was also a first-year student at a girls' school, happened to be sick that day and didn't go to school, so she was saved. Nearly all her classmates were killed. Even today the fact that her life was spared remains a heavy burden of grief deep in her heart. Those who survived will never escape the psychological and physical effects of the bombing... The issue of nuclear weapons should not be a matter of political relationships among nations. We must approach this problem in terms of what nuclear weapons mean for the future of the human race."*⁶

Mayor Itoh appealed to the judges with these concluding remarks: "Nagasaki became a city of death where not even the sounds of insects could be heard. After a while, countless men, women and children began to gather for a drink of water at the banks of nearby Urakami River, their hair and clothing scorched and their

⁴ American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.

⁵ See <http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/icasess/iunan/iunanframe.htm> for all of the documents of the case.

⁶ See CR/95/27 - 07 November 1995, under Oral Pleadings on page <http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/icasess/iunan/iunanframe.htm>

*burnt skin hanging off in sheets like rags. Begging for help they died one after another in the water or in heaps on the banks... The unspeakable atrocity and agony suffered by the citizens of Nagasaki must never be repeated in this world. I can say with confidence that the use of nuclear weapons again will wreak havoc on the global ecosystem and threaten the very survival of the human race. To ensure that a curtain of darkness is not drawn on the development of humanity from time immemorial, I extend my heartfelt request for your decision based on the viewpoint of human love."*⁷

A Renewed Call to Face the Nuclear Emergency

The Mayors of Nagasaki and Hiroshima compel us because of the power of place. They keep faith with where they live and with who lives there with them. The current mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatoshi Akiba, renewed the call for a world free of nuclear weapons in Geneva at the United Nations in April 2003. It was just one month after we all witnessed the shock and awe of the bombing of Baghdad, and barely two months after 11 million people had massed in the cities of our planet appealing to the US not to go to war with Iraq. He invited all citizens, institutions and governments to take action to make real the cry of the *hibakusha* (the aging survivors of the atomic bombings): "Never again!"

"It is incumbent upon the rest of the world, the vast majority of the international community, to stand up now and tell all of our military leaders that we refuse to be threatened or protected by nuclear weapons. We refuse to cooperate in our own annihilation...

"We cannot sit silently watching it happen... The time has come to go beyond words, reason and non-binding treaties. The time has come to impose economic sanctions on any nation that insists on maintaining nuclear weapons. The time has come to use demonstrations, marches, strikes, boycotts, and every nonviolent means at our disposal to oppose the destruction of millions of our brothers and sisters, the destruction of our habitat and the extermination of our species. The time has come to fight, nonviolently, for our lives...

"All of us in this room today, blessed with extremely high levels of prosperity and education, are duty-bound to educate the rest of the population in our countries about the nuclear danger. We must inform them and mobilize them for their own protection. It is our responsibility to launch a massive, grassroots campaign that will make it clear that the people of all nations will accept only leaders who undertake unequivocally to eliminate nuclear weapons...

"Bottom-up change takes time and great sacrifice, but, unfortunately, people of moral and spiritual vision must again

⁷ Ibid.

take up the struggle. The abolition of nuclear weapons is no less important and no less just than the abolition of slavery. We are not just fighting a technology or a weapon. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, we are fighting nuclear weapons in our own minds. We are fighting the very idea that anyone could, for any reason that he feels legitimate, unleash a nuclear holocaust. We are fighting the idea that a small group of powerful men should have the capacity to launch Armageddon. We are fighting the idea that we should spend trillions of dollars on military overkill while billions of us live in dire, life-threatening poverty...

*"Our immediate target is nuclear weapons, but our long-term aim is a new world order. ... We seek a world in which no man, woman or child goes to bed wondering whether he or she will live through the hunger, pestilence, or violence of the next day; a world in which we look around this room and see not murdering, thieving enemies against whom we have to defend ourselves but brothers and sisters on whom our own safety, security, survival and enjoyment depend."*⁸

When Mayor Akiba called for a movement for nuclear abolition in Geneva, and said that Mayors for Peace "will work with anyone and everyone willing to help design, develop, and implement this campaign," he discovered a global network of over 2,000 citizen groups already committed and ready to join hands with him.⁹ One of the immediate joint goals was to bring an international delegation of the world's mayors to the next NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in New York the following year. Like Mayor Itoh and Mayor Akiba who speak with authority from their streets of their cities, we citizens and NGOs knew we had to start from where we lived. We all went home and went to work.

Over the next months, the 2020 Vision Emergency Campaign¹⁰ took shape and was officially launched in Nagasaki in October 2003. It called for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC)¹¹ to be signed by 2010 and implemented by 2020. Everywhere, citizens and mayors working together took root in the local landscapes responsive to the particular conditions of their places. Our aim was to bring 30 international mayors to the 2004 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in New York City.

⁸ See the full text of Mayor Akiba's speech to government and citizen delegates to the Preparatory Committee meeting of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) at <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/NGOpres2003/Abolish2005.htm>

⁹ The Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons, see <http://www.abolition2000.org>

¹⁰ See <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/english/campaign/2020vision.html>

¹¹ A Nuclear Weapons Convention is an international treaty outlining the steps necessary to ban and implement the abolition of nuclear weapons on the planet. A Model Nuclear Weapons Convention was introduced into the UN as a discussion document by Costa Rica as A/C.1/52/7 in 1997. See <http://www.lcnp.org/mnwc/index.htm>

Several months before the delegation was due to arrive in New York, no US mayor had yet agreed to be part of it. Literally two weeks before the meeting, I asked Dr. Gabino Aguirre, Mayor of Santa Paula, in Ventura County, California, and he accepted. He didn't even know until he arrived in New York and joined 29 mayors from all over the world that he was the only US mayor.¹² Speaking as the guardians and protectors of the well being of their local places--the cities of our world--the mayors made their case directly to the diplomats at the UN, finding new allies and partners. Abolition 2000 activists launched the Abolition Now! campaign¹³ as the citizen partner of Mayors for Peace, knowing that the citizens and the elected officials needed to work together on behalf of the inhabitants of our communities. Our mutual goal was to bring hundreds of mayors and citizens back to New York for the 2005 NPT Review Conference the following May.

In Belgium, following a visit to Brussels Mayor Akiba, a diverse group of six Belgian mayors, including the mayor of Brussels and a former prime minister sent a letter to all their 589 colleagues inviting them to join the campaign. Nearly half - 250 - said yes.

In Germany, the local abolition network linked up with the youth-led International Law Campaign, working with Mayors for Peace to run the "nuclear weapon free by 2020" campaign.

In the UK, the deputy mayor of London and the long active Nuclear Free Local Authorities movement based in Manchester led the way.

In the US, Mayor Aguirre and Mayor Akiba brought the campaign to the US Conference of Mayors, resulting in the unanimous passing of Resolution #92, which became a template for local US cities, including Santa Paula, California; Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Olympia, Washington.

In an America where the national leaders had no ears to hear the will of the people, the mayors reminded us that all politics is local and helped us to recapture public interest in nuclear issues at the grassroots level. We in Ventura County turned to our local leaders, who did hear us and took action: 2 of the 5 County Supervisors signed on, as well as 5 of the 10 mayors in our county. We found new local partners, who included a high school principal, a youth organizer who runs a weekly open mike at a local coffee house, a legal aid attorney recently elected to the California State Bar Association Board of Governors, a development officer for the local Boys and Girls Club, plus local physicians and clergy.

¹² The 2004 international Mayors for Peace delegation included mayors and mayoral representatives from Tel Aviv, Israel; Waitakere, New Zealand; Hue, Vietnam; Laakdal, Belgium; Kyiv, Ukraine; Viareggio, Italy; Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; London, England; Negombo, Sri Lanka; Athens, Greece; New York, New York; Honolulu, Hawai'i; and Santa Paula and Oxnard, California.

¹³ See <http://www.abolitionnow.org>

The Power of Place and Particularity

The mayors reminded us of the power of particularity. The use of nuclear weapons destroys particular places, incinerates particular people, burns up particular trees, and boils particular rivers and seas. The creation and production of nuclear weapons poisons particular mesas and aquifers, sickens particular people and animals, corrupts particular democratic processes, and shields decision-makers from the consequences of their decisions.

The people of San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, Hanford, Washington and Oak Ridge, Tennessee know these truths by heart because their lands were carved out by eminent domain to create the Manhattan Project. Shoshone and Paiute peoples in Nevada and Mormons in Utah, and island people of the Marshalls know them because they have seen the mushroom clouds of 1,000 nuclear tests and 67 hydrogen tests rise over their lands. Sixty years into the nuclear age, they are still feeling the downwind effects.

The 2005 NPT Review Conference: Before, During and After

In May 2005, hundreds of mayors and citizens came surging to the NPT Review Conference, from all of our various places and all under the shadow of the Iraq War, hopeful that our organizing and commitment would bear fruit. We all know now that the month ended in a shambles.¹⁴ The obstacles that we face became crystal clear in the subsequent days. In fact, in responding to a foundation's request to name the three largest obstacles we face "in creating the results we desire in our field," I replied:

1) The entrenched nuclearism of the world's nuclear weapons states, and their rampant disregard of international law and the will of the world's peoples.

2) A disengaged and fearful public, created by (1) above, and by an increasingly consolidated media. The overwhelming nature of the issue of nuclear weapons and power marginalizes it and relegates it to exclusive policy/political spheres. There is a lack of dialogue among citizens about the dangers of nuclear weapons and the risky course of US nuclear policy, and a lack of confidence in the ability to influence and change direction.

3) Funding for nuclear disarmament groups in the US has suffered since the end of the Cold War, and particularly since 9/11. As a community, we have lost institutional memory and continuity while the nuclear issue has reentered the public stage with a vengeance.

¹⁴ To read Mayor Akiba's open letter to the NPT Review Conference at the end of the month, see <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/english/campaign/NPTopenletter.html> For links to various NGO analyses of the outcome, see <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/RevCon05/postRevCon.html>

Despite these challenges, I submit to you that a sea change happened in May 2005 in three important ways:

1. The citizens of the world and their local elected officials turned up in force—over 1700 people stood in line the opening day, outside the UN and thousands more marched in Central Park, chanting “No Nukes! No War!”¹⁵
2. The *hibakusha* took center stage in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations, on May 4, and the world listened. Just ten years before, *hibakusha* were given no platform at events surrounding the NPT Review and Extension Conference.
3. Americans asked the world community for help. The last week of the conference, Thomas Graham, Ted Sorensen, and Robert McNamara (a diplomat and former White House officials) appealed to the assembled countries to be brave and stand up to the United States.

Which brings us to this afternoon’s panel topic: *Domestic Strategies for Changing US Nuclear Policy*. I would like to suggest a slightly revised topic: *American Strategies for Creating a Nuclear Free World* (and I refer to all three Americas: North, Central, and South!). Within that changed title lies a potential path for getting us out of the Nuclear Emergency Room, and on the road to a flourishing, sustainable and secure world community.

Nuclear Weapons Free Zones Lead the Way

On February 14, 1967, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean gave the world a valentine in the form of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which created our planet’s first Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ). It was created in direct response to the belligerent and fearful experience of the Cuban Missile Crisis mere years before, and demonstrated that the countries nearest the biggest nuclear power could still take effective and imaginative action. Now, nearly forty years later, most of the Southern Hemisphere is nuclear weapons free by similar treaties, and the number of zones is climbing.¹⁶ Little noted in the run up to the events of May 2005 was the unprecedented meeting in Tlatelolco, Mexico in the previous month of all countries from the Nuclear Weapons Free Zones of our planet, over 110 of them.¹⁷

Mayor Akiba addressed the opening of that meeting, inviting the support of the assembled countries. Mayor Aguirre, representing the only American city to send an elected official to the meeting, co-chaired the Civil Society Forum of the conference.

¹⁵ The poster for the May 1 march was hanging on the wall of the meeting. See it at

http://www.abolitionnow.org/site/c.lmK0JcNSJrF/b.1315057/k.E676/May_1_2005.htm

¹⁶ See *Nuclear Weapons Free Zones: The Untold Success Story of Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation* at

<http://www.atomicmirror.org/nfz/briefing/index.htm>

¹⁷ See <http://www.atomicmirror.org/nfz/mexico/index.htm>

NGOs were invited to sit down with governments, and offer statements in the regular sessions. The conference agreed to meet every five years, just prior to the NPT Review Conferences, the next gathering to be hosted by the states parties to the Treaty of Rarotonga in the South Pacific. The conference established a new and powerful forum for the delegitimization and abolition of nuclear weapons, and offers a structure for the parallel process we all seek to negotiate a Nuclear Weapons Convention.¹⁸

Regional NWFZs are a significant and powerful strategy for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. At a time when people and governments of nearly every persuasion look for better ways to be safe and create the conditions for their children and societies to flourish, the citizens and governments of the world's NWFZs have much to teach us. We should endeavor to link these zones for the express purpose of isolating the nuclear weapons states (NWS) into a planetary corner where the only option will be to abdicate before the collective voices of the other superpower--our organized communities--and make a commitment to total and unequivocal disarmament. Regional NWFZs form the heart of the untold success story of the road to a nuclear-weapons free world; they are one of our best hopes for bringing it into being. In a post 9/11 world, it is more important than ever to create regional zones of safety and security that foster cooperation and trust among neighboring states. With these three major initiatives, uniting the efforts of citizens (Abolition Now), local elected officials (Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Emergency Campaign), and the countries of our planet's Nuclear Weapons Free Zones, we can achieve nuclear abolition and the fulfillment of the NPT promises.

What Next? Accept the Invitation

Every two years, since 1967, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean gather to assess the state of their Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Every two years, the administrative body of the treaty, the Organization for the Prohibition of Nuclear Arms in Latin America (OPANAL), invites NGOs and observer states and organizations to sit down as equals at the table with them. In November 2005, Mayors for Peace and the Atomic Mirror accepted the invitation, and sent a three-person delegation from Ventura County to Santiago, Chile. Of the nine NGOs represented there, only two came from beyond South America. Imagine doubling that number, and bringing 18 delegations of mayors and citizen diplomats from all over the United States to the next meeting in November 2007. Imagine doubling the number again in November 2009. Imagine bringing the signing of the Nuclear Weapons Convention to this forum--after all, it was a country from this region--Costa Rica--that introduced the NWC to the United Nations in the first place. As Mayor Aguirre said in Santiago, Chile: "The work of this OPANAL

¹⁸ You can download the final declaration of the Conferencia de Zonas Libres de Armas Nucleares at <http://www.opanal.org/index-i.html>

organization is a very important parallel effort in this popular struggle for freedom from nuclear annihilation." The meetings of OPANAL can be the parallel pathway to nuclear disarmament that we have all been seeking, culminating in the NWFZ conference in the Pacific in 2010 just prior to the NPT Review Conference. The majority of the world's countries can use this pathway to sign onto the NWC and bring it to the NPT Review Conference as an invitation to the Nuclear Weapons States to fulfill their disarmament promises to the world. The last point of that visionary founding document of Abolition 2000¹⁹ calls for the creation of mechanisms to ensure the participation of citizens and NGOs in planning and monitoring the process of nuclear weapons abolition. OPANAL has invited us to do just that for years. Let's accept the invitation!

The countries of the Americas are the natural allies of nuclear abolitionists in the United States. Our neighbors to the South recognized early on that we are all on the nuclear precipice, and they took steps to use international law to protect their communities and their region. In doing so, they inspired others across the globe to do the same. (Just this week, Malaysia proposed the creation of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in Northwest Asia at the International Islamic Conference in Qatar as part of the menu of solutions for Iran.) We know we are in the majority as nuclear abolitionists. The majority of nations have renounced nuclear arms and want them eliminated. Sixty-six percent of the American public believe the best way to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons is to outlaw possession by any country.²⁰ We represent a powerful majority of our society. Our task is to develop models for democratic action to assert our voice as the "other superpower," our organized communities.

Mayors for Peace have ignited and encouraged abolitionists worldwide to find new partners and allies where they live. We live in the Western Hemisphere, with three Americas. Let's unite them in a Nuclear Free America that extends from Barrow, Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. In doing so, we can renew the energies of the hundreds of cities and towns that have declared themselves nuclear free zones. Even though they don't have legal international status, these tiny zones help create a political sensitivity that promotes nuclear disarmament and the further expansion of such areas. Even though the NPT Review Conference of May 2005 did not result in concrete recommendations, we should not forget that NWFZs create regional security, and provide a practical and proven model that promotes the principles of both non-proliferation and disarmament.

¹⁹ For links to the Abolition 2000 Statement in seven languages, please see http://www.abolition2000.org/site/c.cdJIKKNpFqG/b.1316387/k.8918/The_Abolition_2000_Founding_Statement.htm

²⁰ "Atomic Bombs Still Stir Worries," *Ventura County Star*, March 31, 2005, page 3.

Awakening and Nurturing Local Awareness and Action for Genuine Security

How do we plant this message and nurture it at the local level? It is at the local level where we find the purest aspirations for a better world with liberty, justice and for life itself. It is the local level that feels the greatest impacts of negative top-down decisions and policies. Therefore, the involvement of our local communities is indispensable. I can only offer you some of our current initiatives in Ventura County, which we are organizing under the three themes of dialogue, democracy, and diplomacy:

1. **Dialogue: educate and express ourselves.** All politicians, religious professionals, academics, writers, journalists, teachers, artists, athletes have a role to play in establishing the climate and conditions that create genuine security without the threat or fear of use of nuclear weapons. Remember that we live in a nuclear world: awareness of nuclear weapons largely faded from the public's mind and heart at the end of the Cold War. Today, the Bush administration's policies of possible pre-emptive nuclear first strike, the targeting of the so-called "axis of evil", and development of mini-nukes and "nuclear bunker busters" brings the issue center stage and threatens the well being of our world. Local leaders and citizens have the right and responsibility to encourage the creation of new national and local security policies that are in harmony with our founding ideals as a nation, policies that secure a living wage, health care, education, affordable housing, and meet basic needs for all citizens. We need to talk about it, and raise awareness through education and dialogue with local partners. To this end, we are hosting events in partnership with California State University, Channel Islands in March, bringing Hibakusha and Marshall Islanders to speak with students and the community.
2. **Practice democracy.** Because nuclear weapons are so closely bound to the power of the governments which hold them, promoting open public debate regarding nuclear weapons policies helps to reclaim the public space necessary for democracy to thrive, and can lead to its expansion and reinvigoration.²¹ We know now, after Iraq, that democracy and freedom go hand in hand with ridding a country of weapons of mass destruction. Our government has told us so. Let us begin at home.
3. **Be a citizen diplomat.** In our interconnected world, we are all ambassadors when we leave our homes. Our Ventura County coalition of local organizations (which opposes military

²¹₂₁ For the draft *U.S. Abolitionist Statement on Democracy, Power, and Nuclear Weapons*, see <http://www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?id=2953>

violence, the War in Iraq, the government's interventionism, and other struggles for justice) is sending delegations to conferences and meetings that address nuclear disarmament and related issues. These efforts focus on promoting a global citizen identity (in contrast to a consumer identity) with an awareness of a global perspective and understanding. Through these efforts we are developing a curriculum for citizen diplomacy. Based on leadership trainings on dialogue with government representatives, citizen teams are being organized to visit consulates in Los Angeles, California (which has the third largest concentration of country outposts in the USA, after New York City and Washington, D.C.). We will also send local delegations to the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada in June 2006, the National Citizen Diplomacy Summit in Washington, D.C. in July 2006, the OPANAL meetings in 2007, 2009, and the NWFZ meeting in the Pacific in 2010.

Inspiring Local-Global Organizing

Last November, Terry Tempest Williams, a Mormon woman downwinder from Utah, visited our local California State University, Channel Islands to address these themes, and to participate in the Campus Reading Celebration, which featured her book: ***The Open Space of Democracy***. She concluded by sharing *Guidelines for Community Organizing* offered by a friend of hers, Lily Yeh, a Community Artist and Organizer in North Philadelphia.

Sense a need
Have a vision
Anchor with a local leader
Present vision to more leaders
Involve more leaders
Create beauty and share it
Create a structure from the ground up
Identify the storytellers and set them loose
Train leaders
Involve elders
Engage the children
Be willing to change everyday
Await magic
Anticipate transformation
Remember to check our egos at the door of the community

We dare to dream of a world free of nuclear arms! Can we do it?
As our leader of the farm workers in California, and a local Oxnard homeboy, Cesar Chavez said: Yes, it can be done! Come; let's get to work! Si se Puede!

Pamela Meidell is a writer, and the founder/director of the Atomic Mirror, a UN-affiliated non-profit program dedicated to reflecting the truths of our nuclear era and transforming them through creativity and the arts. She served as the first international coordinator of

Abolition 2000, of which the Atomic Mirror is a founder, and now sits on its Global Council. In 1995, she reported daily from The Hague on the Oral Hearings phase of the International Court of Justice case on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. As convenor (with Dr. Gabino Aguirre, Mayor of Santa Paula) of the Abolition Now-Ventura County initiative, she works with local organizations to engage Ventura County's mayors and cities in creating ways to help local democracy flourish, and keep our communities safe and awake to nuclear issues. She has created and produced four performance pieces on nuclear themes that have been presented around the world. See www.atomicmirror.org