

The Bombs of August : In Remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Written by Reggie
Friday, 05 August 2016 10:04

On Monday, August 6, 1945, after six months of intense firebombing of 67 other Japanese cities, the United States dropped a nuclear weapon nicknamed "Little Boy" on the city of Hiroshima, Japan. This attack was followed on August 9 by the detonation of the "Fat Man" nuclear bomb over the Japanese city of Nagasaki. To date, these are the only attacks with nuclear weapons in the history of warfare.

In Remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

When the bombs were dropped I was very happy. The war would be over now, they said, and I was very happy. The boys would be coming home very soon they said, and I was very happy. We showed 'em, they said, and I was very happy. They told us that the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been destroyed, and I was very happy. But in August of 1945 I was only ten years old, and I was very, very happy.

The crew of the B-29 was so young and heroic, and in the photo they also looked very happy. For some reason, I clearly remember the name of the pilot, Paul Tibbets. Of course I remember the name of the plane, the Enola Gay. And oh yes, I remember the name of the bomb. It was called Little Boy. That made me smile.

I was so proud to be an American that day because we had done something so remarkable. They said we were the first. We were Americans. We were powerful. But they didn't say that Little Boy had killed 66,000 people with its huge fireball that fateful day in August. They didn't say that Hiroshima was not a military target, but a city filled with men and women and children and animals who had no idea they were about to die so horribly. When you're ten, they don't always tell you everything.

I don't think anyone made as big a fuss over the second plane, or its crew. Are they even in the Smithsonian? Second best doesn't count, I suppose, but I remember wondering why they had done it again. Wouldn't the war be over anyway, like they said? Weren't the boys coming home very soon? Hadn't they already showed 'em how strong we were in Hiroshima? So they told me that the second bomb was called Fat Man, and that made me smile.

So I was even prouder to be an American that second day. They said this would be the end for sure, and after all, these people were the enemy and you kill the enemy when you can. But they didn't tell me that Fat Boy had killed 39,000 human beings with another fireball on another day in August. They didn't tell me that Nagasaki was not a military target, but a city filled with...well, you know. They didn't even tell me that there were horses trapped in the flames of Nagasaki, because I loved horses and that would have made me sad.

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But when you're ten, they don't tell you everything.

Today I'm no longer ten, and I am no longer happy when bombs fall. And the names Fat Man and Little Boy no longer make me smile because I now know the devastation and horror of burned bodies and twisted metal that result from mushroom clouds. I am ashamed that on this day Americans don't stop to remember what was done. And today I am horrified that my government has just killed hundreds of thousands of defenseless Iraqi men and women and children and animals who were not the enemy they were made out to be.

And today I am angry and heartsick that my leaders continue to war against people in Afghanistan and Pakistan for no earthly good reason at all - and that, once again, the silence of the people is deafening.

And today I am enraged at the drones that my government fires with impunity at 'suspected militants' in nations with whom we are not at war. I am horrified that there is hardly a blink by the American public as these devastating computerized weapons kill hundreds of innocent people who are so easily dismissed as collateral damage.

And today, I am so very sad that many young people don't even know about the Enola Gay and the mission of its crew. But I am so terribly ashamed that the wars we continue to wage and finance are so coldly divorced from the reality of death and pain.

After all, those who make war know better than to tell us about the thousands of civilians who die at their hands. They know better than to show us the devastation they cause every day.. They withhold the true numbers of our own military who die each day and hide the terrible wounds of those who survive.. War is surgical and sanitized, they tell us, and a very effective way to liberate people. They speak to us as if we all were ten.

Today, I am so painfully saddened by the many Americans continue to cheer the bombs of war. I cannot understand those who still buy into the mythical glory of killing and being killed in the name of democracy. Hiroshima and Nagasaki have all but been forgotten by so many. I know, - it was another war in another time, and it is far more patriotic to remember Pearl Harbor than to imagine the horror of the bombs of August.

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Today, I am very far away from being ten, and trust me - I am not smiling. Today, I mourn new killing fields made bloody in my name. I mourn a nation brought to its knees by corporate greed and polarized by misinformation and political debauchery. I mourn for the millions who cannot rise above low paying jobs and for those whose future is held hostage by student loans. I mourn for the countless families who lost their homes to predatory bankers. And I mourn for a nation that once offered such hope to so many - and now struggles to survive at all.

How sad is that?