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St. George Utah Downwinder

It is with a grateful and humble heart that I stand before you today. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this conference for peace and justice.

I come to you from Southern Utah, downwind from the Nevada Test Site, where the U.S. government has tested over 1000 Nuclear devices.

I grew up believing I lived a charmed existence. The U.S. government took great steps to assure us that everything was safe and no harm would come to us. When life is good it's hard to believe that awful things could possibly happen. But they do, something the people living downwind from the test site found out soon after the testing began. We watched loved ones suffer and die at an alarming rate, while the U.S. government continued to deny any wrong doing.

My husband's father was a uranium miner and died at a young age of lung cancer as a result of working in improperly vented mines. We now know from declassified documents that the U.S. government made a conscious decision not to tell the miners of the illness that would occur from exposure to radon gas, because it needed the uranium to build the bombs.

My father died six months after a brain tumor the size of a lemon was removed. At this time our family doctor suggested that the tumor was the result of the fallout that rained over our homes from the nuclear testing.

As hard as my father's death was, it was nothing compared to the heartache that would follow. At the age of three, our youngest daughter Bethany was diagnosed with a deadly form of cancer neuroblastoma. We watched this wonderfully lively inquisitive child fight so many struggles to live. After three years of chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery she lost her fight. We held Bethany while she died, knowing the horror that we could do nothing but pray that her suffering would end.

Just one month before Bethany died, Cathy my only sister passed away at the age of 36 from skin cancer. She left behind six small children and a husband. The pain of watching loved ones die is so profound that I too wished for death to end the sadness within me. The nuclear age not only physically killed thousands, but also caused a great many of us the loss of our innocence.

Some of us may not be physically strong any longer, but the legacy of the losses we have endured bring to us great strength and understanding of why peace is so important.

I have never had the horror of looking through refugee camps for my children like the mothers and fathers of Kosovo. I have never had to look through the blackened and charred streets for the bodies of my children as the mothers and fathers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The U.S. government did the same kind of thing to its own citizens in a secret and sterile way, through lies, coverups, and deceit.

How as a global community do we watch friends, neighbors, and loved ones suffer and die. How do we justify the horror of what we see on the T.V. every day? Those who choose to ignore and turn away from others' suffering become no better than those inflicting such heartache.

We all have an opportunity to change the policy of our governments by no longer being silent. Silence gives those in positions of power more opportunities to create evil. So for whatever reason you are here today it is important that you all know, we can change the future, we are all victims of the nuclear age. Let us all decide to survive.