



Statement from PEAC Institute and New Detroit, A Racial Justice Organization, to the States Parties of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Honorable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honored and grateful to represent PEAC Institute and New Detroit, A Racial Justice Organization, along with the 25-listed cosponsors.

As I sit here on the unceded territory of the Lenape People, I cannot help but think about why we are here today. In 1944, the United States blasted tons of uranium out of Navajo land. That uranium was used in the bomb, which was dropped on Hiroshima 77 years ago today.

As far back as 1444, the lie of racism has been documented. Zurara, a European writer commissioned by the slave-trading leaders of his country, wrote, "This Black race of people was lost, living 'like beasts, without any custom of reasonable beings.'" This lie, the first record of race and racism, is the seed used to justify one atrocity and genocide after another. Power! Wealth and power grew through exploitation and slavery, then reinforced through systemic and institutional racism, and are maintained today by the threat of nuclear war, all for economic gain!

Imagine colonialism as a tree. This lie, this seed, took root in other lies and grew into the tree of colonialism. Its many branches are all our systems of oppression, and racism, slavery, pillaging of indigenous land, and nuclear war are just a few of its deadly branches. This Tree of Death casts its shadow across the whole world. Cutting off one branch of a tree does not mean it is gone. We cannot deal with one of these oppressive forces without dealing with them all. We cannot eliminate the bomb without understanding the global context that has allowed it to thrive, the oppression of black, brown, and indigenous people.

Kiluanji Kia Henda (Kim-o-Juan-Gi | Kia | hen-Da), Angola's most successful contemporary artist, remarked, "The modern world would not exist if it were not for enslavement. The modernity seen here was built on the backs of Black people." This modernity enabled the creation of nuclear weapons, and colonialism and racism allowed them to persist.

Langston Hughes named racism a factor in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.[\[1\]](#)

We uncover the truth when we look at and understand colonialism's legacy and history. It is not a coincidence but by design that all the colonial powers are also the nuclear-armed states or nuclear umbrella states.

Even so, you may ask how racial equity and this weapon are connected. How is all of this related to you and your country? The short answer is that economic power requires continuous domination and exploitation. Human lives are valued only as fuel for economic growth, whether producers, consumers, or labor. As free or cheap labor, and because the concept of race has become so embedded in our systems, low-income people of color are viewed as inferior and expendable. The construct of race, created to justify this treatment, has become so embedded in every aspect of our society that it allows us to accept, in fact, requires us to commit incredible atrocities in the name of economic growth and prosperity. From where fissile material is mined to where nuclear weapons are made and where they are tested and ultimately deployed, these weapons ALWAYS impact the most vulnerable communities, which are poor and non-white by design.

So why am I speaking these words today? I submit to you that the words of our Treaty, "good faith" and "effective measures," require fairness and equity. "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." [\[2\]](#)

We cannot operate in good faith or design effective measures without including the voices of those most impacted by our decisions. To achieve anything which has been discussed at this conference, the effective and meaningful participation of all those who have been marginalized, which must include survivors of nuclear weapons use, testing, and production; non-Western, non-white, and non-cisgender or heteronormative people; people at a socioeconomic disadvantage; with disabilities, and our future, the youth, must be implemented!

The creation of the UN was based on the "equal rights and self-determination of peoples"; we must not forget why we are all here. A tree can live without a branch, but a branch cannot live without the tree- nuclear weapons are a branch of the tree of colonialism. To make any meaningful achievement in the elimination of nuclear weapons and a global society that is equitable, more fair, peaceful, and ecologically sustainable, we must uproot the tree of colonialism!

^[1] Matthew Bolton, MSc, PhD, LHD (hc) “[From Manhattan Project to Nuclear Free New York City’s Policy and Practice on Nuclear Weapons](#)” December 2019

^[2] Full text of Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Written by Rebecca Irby, [PEAC Institute](#) & [New Detroit](#). Edited by Amanda Faison, [Transformative Education Network](#) at Montclair State University & Jodee Raines, [New Detroit](#) | July 2022

Statement Endorsements

Organizations:

Theresa El-Amin, Board Chair, Southern Anti-Racism Network
Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Hayley Ramsay-Jones, Soka Gakkai International
Akmal Ali, President and Founder UNA Fiji
International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)
Flame of Hope US Ambassador
Mr. Faisal Ilyas, Peace Hope Pakistan, Executive Director & Peace Activist, Researcher & Scholar
K K Chand Kolavennu, RAGfP member nuclear weapon education
Scott Nagatani, Sansay Music
Steve Leeper, Board Chairman, PCV
Co-chair DISARM/End Wars Committee, WILPF US
Jacqueline Cabasso, National Co-convenor, United for Peace and Justice, Kasha
Sequoia Slavner, Filmmaker, 1.5 Degrees of Peace
Izumi Harris, IUPUI, Our Peace Tree Project
Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation Reverse
The Trend: Save Our People, Save Our Planet
Designshed

Individuals:

Ashok Patel, Rotarian (D5960)
Liberato Bautista, Main Representative to the United Nations
Cedar Moss
Reginald Andrew Murphy
Richard Mirocco
Susan E Irby