

For Mike Newfield 2

Suggestions For the Enola Gay/Hiroshima Display

(From the September 20, 1994 meeting with peace movement representatives)

1. In general, we would like to propose that the exhibit be revised. We believe that it should take the tone of the Holocaust museum: that we need to look at what our country did; how it developed the atomic bomb; tested it; dropped it on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with devastating, horrific consequences; and most importantly, that we need to dedicate ourselves to making sure that it never happens again.

The basic tone, we would argue, should be that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a grave mistake and that the only way to ensure that it never happens again is to dismantle every nuclear weapon and every weapon of mass destruction that we possess and learn nonviolent ways to resolve international conflict.

2. The display should begin with the Manhattan Project, the Los Alamos test and the US determination to make the bomb. Right now, the revised script begins with a detailed expose of the aggression of the Japanese people, and later on, the bomb appears out of nowhere, as if we intended all along to use it against Japan and we were justified in using it to stop Japanese aggression. We believe "The War in the Pacific" photo exhibit should not be shown. It is deceptive to portray the war in the Pacific as the cause and the reason for the development of the bomb and the bombing as a direct response to initial Japanese aggression. We do not condone the violence of the Japanese but the current script sends a very strong message justifying the use of atomic weapons. If this display is about the Enola Gay and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it should not focus on Japanese violence but, from the beginning, our own intent to use the bomb to end the war with the US in complete military superiority. In particular, the display should place more emphasis on Japan's intent to surrender, following the research of Gar Alperovitz, who would be glad to be of assistance.

3. The display needs to show more about the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as human beings. It should show the human face of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and let their remnants, their relics, their possessions speak for themselves. As it stands now, the human element is just a shadow in the exhibit. We should remove the stigma of these victims and try to portray them as human beings, as the Holocaust museum has attempted to do. The revised script does very little to show the human dimension. Instead, the Japanese are portrayed, by and large, as the hated enemy, not as people who lived, suffered and died under the US bombs.

4. The current script concludes: "For the foreseeable future, the human race will have to learn to live with the knowledge of how to build these weapons. The dilemma is not about to go away." We believe the exhibit should conclude with a much stronger stand, urging our country to learn from the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to make sure nuclear weapons are never again used, to dismantle our nuclear weapons and commit ourselves to nonviolent conflict resolution.

5. The display should have a more detailed history of fifty years under the bomb, including how the US arsenal has swelled to well over 20,000 nuclear weapons, and how the world has come to the brink of nuclear war some thirty times since 1945. Also, it should point out the

effects of radiation on people around the world, including US citizens because of US nuclear weapons testing, and how it is destroying the atmosphere and the environment. It should note that Native American homelands have been violated and destroyed in the process.

6. The display should tell the story of the anti-nuclear movement, including the protests against air raid drills in New York City in the late 50s; the 1980 New York march of one million people; and the Plowshares movement (begin in 1980, when Daniel and Philip Berrigan and the Plowshares Eight hammered on nuclear nosecones at the General Electric Plant in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania).
7. Though the exhibit concludes that real nuclear disarmament has begun, we believe it needs to explain that it has only just barely begun. The display needs to state that the US still has 20,000 nuclear weapons, that it still intends to use its nuclear weapons if necessary and that it now has developed a policy of "discriminate deterrence" aimed at third world enemies. Though the Cold War is over, the US needs to make still a more serious commitment to total nuclear disarmament.
8. The exhibit could end with quotes from those who have pursued disarmament and promoted nonviolence, including Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. and other peace figures. In particular, the story of Rev. George Zabelka, the chaplain of the bombing crew, should be told--how he came to regret his support of the bombings and spent the remainder of his life teaching and promoting nonviolence. Also, it should be noted that most of the bomber crew is now against the atomic bombings. (See the Washington Post article, Style section, 9/3/94.)
9. The display should state the violence is not a solution to violence, and that we need to learn to pursue nonviolent alternatives. The choices were not limited to invade Japan or drop the atomic bomb: there is always another more creative, third alternative, another nonviolent option.
10. The exhibit should show the cost of the Manhattan project, the bombs themselves, the fifty years of the nuclear arms race and the US nuclear arsenal, and how those billions of dollars could have been spent instead of food for the hungry, homes for the homeless, jobs, education, healthcare and cleaning up the environment.

-- Submitted by John Dear (of Pax Christi)
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