

The World is Over-armed, and Peace is Under-funded

By Sarah Chang

In 1945 the world witnessed the total nuclear devastation of atomic weapons when the United States unleashed two nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. 90% of the city was immediately wiped out, and within a few months of the attack, estimates report anywhere from 90,000 to 166,000 people had died in Hiroshima, while another 60,000 to 80,000 died in Nagasaki. Thousands were left to cope with the harmful, long term effects of radiation and the loss of their homes and loved ones. Attacks like the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are scars on human history, ones that serve as gruesome, but effective reminders of the horror and destruction caused by warfare and conflict. Yet only 70 years later, the world seems to have forgotten its lessons. Globally military expenditures have risen to \$1.7 trillion dollars, arms dealings are an estimated \$45 to 60 billion dollar international industry, and the threat of nuclear weapons still looms. Today, countries are prioritizing military spending over programs that benefit the well being of citizens, and as a result, efforts to bring about peace have been neglected.

Across the globe, governments spend more on weapons and military expansion than social and economic development, education, and healthcare combined. Fear for the safety of their citizens and homeland motivates governments to spend exorbitant amounts of money on their militaries. When we have more weapons, more armed forces, and a stronger military presence, it is easy to feel powerful and protected. However, peace is harder to observe. The path to peace is extensive and complex, a culmination of social, political, and economic policies that advocate disarmament and education and programs that fight against poverty and oppression. It requires the full commitment and dedication of countries across the world. While it is a difficult task, working toward peace is one of the most worthwhile causes for our generation. The world spends money on arms and weapons to ensure the security of its people, but fighting fire with fire is never the answer. Fighting guns with more guns and responding to the threat of nuclear arms by creating more powerful weapons will only end in destruction and tragedy.

At Sacramento's 2013 International Day of Peace hosted by the United Nations, I had the privilege to speak at the peace ceremony as a representative of Jinan Sacramento Sister Cities Corporation about my eye-opening experience of learning and cultural exchange as a Youth Ambassador for the sister cities program to China. Along with representatives from Sacramento's other sister cities, we pledged to promote peace in different languages. My experience has taught me that although the world is over-armed, if countries are able to cooperate and commit to making significant changes, there is a chance for peace. Through understanding and education, we can attain a future where countries deal in exchanges of culture rather than arms, invest in education rather than military, and promote peace

rather than fear.