

## **SPECIAL NPT EDITION**

### **Judith Le Blanc Discusses the Role of PANYS in the NPT Review Conference...**

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told the April 30th - May 1st International Conference For a Nuclear Free, Peaceful, Just and Sustainable World, "Sound the alarm, keep up the pressure. Ask your leaders what they are doing - personally - to eliminate the nuclear menace."

PANYS was at the center, from start to finish, organizing the conference which brought together 1,000 activists from 25 countries. The conference included 26 workshops that focused on a vast array of nuclear disarmament, peace, justice, and environmental issues. These provided uniquely important opportunities for education, information exchange, and the planning of future campaigns and initiatives.

Now we must "keep up the pressure" by bringing the conclusions of the international gathering to life in the next few months. The struggle for Senate ratification of the START treaty will be a test of the grassroots support for nuclear disarmament, marking the August 6th and 9th anniversaries of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in new ways to connect the senseless drain of federal spending on nuclear weapons to our slashed communities programs!

We know that a successful campaign for nuclear weapons abolition requires an understanding of the relationship between the costs of weapons, wars and war planning to other issues of peace, justice, economic and environmental sustainability. PANYS is the organization that will keep "sounding the alarm" and "keep up the pressure" to move our electeds "to eliminate the nuclear menace!"

- Judith Le Blanc, PANYS, NPT Coordinator



### **Leslie Kielson Talks About the Rally, March, and Festival**

*Q: How long did it take for you to put together the rally, march, and festival?*

A: We started planning in January, but strategic planning for the entire weekend, including the conference, began a year before. As a result, we were able to bring out over 15,000 people because of this.

*Q: How did you get involved in the planning and what did you think of the outcome?*

A: Through my work with UFPJ, I got involved in January; I was hired as part of the organizing meeting. I felt great about it. It had a great mix of people from the U.S. and around the world. People felt really great about the day. Having the combination of the rally, march, and festival is a great way of creating a successful event.

*Q: What moment stands out the most for you from the rally?*

A: The Hibakusha survivors. There was a woman from Nagasaki there in a wheelchair, she was so warm to everyone. To know what she had been through and for her to be so gracious to everyone was great. The whole 2,000 person Japanese contingent was gracious. They came bearing gifts, especially peace cranes, with such vibrancy. They had such great heart. I got to see most of the march and I could see all the contingents from other countries and all the young people. There was a great mix of people, which was gratifying.



## *Reflections on the NPT Conference, Rally, and March. . .*

“The road to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference & international peace rally, march, and music festival, was indeed a road traveled by the world. My trip began months before with the in-depth organizing info & details from Judith Le Blanc and Cheryl Wertz. Simply put, the planning and organizing by the PANYS office was outstanding.

On day one of the conference, PANYS staff, steering committee members, and international volunteers arrived at Riverside Church ready and full of anticipation for what turned out to be a signature event. From the start, each moment illuminated more and more of the significance of why disarming the world of nuclear weapons is a most necessary act. When you pause to consider that this conference served as the stage for focusing NGOs, international and national peace groups, individual citizens, and governmental leaders at home and abroad, on what was going to be the United Nations’ month long multiple meetings on nuclear weapons proliferation and disarming, you realize that this is an important event for the world.



My participation in the conference provided me a wealth of additional knowledge about the threat of nuclear weapons in the world, it expanded and connected my kinship to the diverse international family of peace activists, advocates and scholars both in and out of government. The work of PANYS staff and steering committee members made me especially proud to be on the NYS team.”

**-Jim Anderson, Board Chair, WNY Peace Center**

“Wow! Almost 1,000 peace advocates attended the International Conference For a Nuclear Free, Peaceful, Just and Sustainable World at the historic Riverside Church in NYC. They came from around the globe; some traveled just a few subway stops while others flew thousands of miles. The Conference took place from April 30th to May 1st, and the weekend wrapped with the Day of Action where 15,000 people filled Times Square for a rally, march, and festival.



As a spring intern at PANYS, I had the rare opportunity to witness the planning effort from the inside and work with many talented, dedicated organizers. The weekend demanded every ounce of my energy, yet I felt exhilarated to have played a small part and to have met so many amazing people in the process. It was an experience that I’ll never forget -- thank you Peace Action!”

**-Grace Pok, Peace Action New York State**

“Attending the NPT peace events and march was like imbibing a dose of validation and a drink of unity. The events of the weekend compounded and increased my knowledge and rebuilt my dedication to the cause of nuclear disarmament and the work of Peace Action. When Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the UN - the person at the heart of the treaty-making - addressed our conference, it felt like the efforts of we, the ordinary folk, did actually matter.

We marched with thousands of others from across the world. Walking through the streets of New York to the UN, we were the physical evidence of people world-wide calling upon the world leaders to take action to abolish nuclear weapons. This felt significant. Rarely, have I felt united with others on so many levels. My family was there. My friends were there. We were connected to the extended organization of Peace Action and met others from many groups from around the world. This unity is a force we can leverage. Most compelling and most earnest were the Japanese, there in huge numbers, with banners, buttons, peace cranes, costumes and an authenticity of message that was undeniable.

The testimony of the Hibakusha about the horrors they experienced from the nuclear bombs should be heard by all living on this earth. The fact that our two nations were once enemies, yet we walked together, made this a breath-taking experience. Five years ago, I marched in the rally before the 2005 conference and made the acquaintance of the first person I had ever known who was a survivor. She told me her story, and we hugged. I tearfully told her I was sorry my country had done such things. Voicing that was monumental for me.”

**-Elaine Klein, Schenectady Neighbors for Peace, Branch of Upper Hudson PA**



"Be bold. Think big. For it yields big results. And that is why, again, we need people like you. People who understand that the world is over-armed and that peace is under-funded."

-Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General at the NPT Review Conference



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