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\$1,000 Scholarship Winner

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*The Dark Cloud*

As a global society, we often think of nuclear weapons as a symbol of power, a mere object that gives one country an advantage over the other. But, with the push of a button, this symbol becomes a reality, and a single nuclear weapon has the ability to kill thousands of lives. When Beatrice Fihn addressed nuclear weapons in her statement, she gave light to the reality: in the fight for power, we are ruled by these nuclear weapons.

Do we want this reality?

Nuclear weapons have been used twice in history, in the Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which is estimated to have killed over 200,000 people. Reiko Hada, a nine-year-old child at the time of the bombing, witnessed catastrophic injuries from the bomb and stated, "Many fled over Mount Konpira to our community. People with their eyes popped out, their hair disheveled, almost all naked, badly burned with their skin hanging down." No person should have to experience or witness this pain.

I ask again: do we want this reality?

Fihn has played an active role in creating peace her whole life. As a young woman, she interned at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, where she demonstrated great engagement in disarmament diplomacy and civil society. This system that she fights against runs deep through each country, a system that she knows can and will prove to hurt humanity if it is not abolished. She is now an executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and has shown dedication to mobilizing civil society through the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Global leaders have downplayed the potential effects and amount of nuclear weapons that are active today. There are approximately 13,500 nuclear weapons possessed by the world's nuclear arms states today. Learning to live with these nuclear weapons is a mistake. Even a fraction of the world's nuclear weapons has the ability to darken and dry the Earth's surface for more than a decade.

She highlights the immense power nuclear weapons hold, and their role in society: provoking fear. Fear of nuclear weapons is rational, and the threat we as global citizens face is real.

When Beatrice Fihn gave her Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, she urged a call to action. The need to abolish weapons and reach world peace that resides in Fihn rests in all advocates. There is no time for denial or acceptance of living with Nuclear weapons. Instead, it is time for leaders and advocates to respond to Fihn's message, to abolish nuclear weapons. It is time that we take control of our reality and recognize that we will only reach peace once the world's nuclear weapons are quiet. It is time for global leaders to recognize the scars, battle wounds, lost lives, and decimation of cities by signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.