

Suggestions and Resources for Faculty Assigning Student Viewings of the Documentary, “The Nuns, The Priests, and The Bombs”

This document offers suggestions on classroom discussions and activities for faculty who encourage or assign students to view “The Nuns, The Priests, and The Bombs” documentary.

The documentary may be especially relevant for courses in anthropology, conflict resolution and peace studies, environmental science, global studies, history, media studies, philosophy (morality and ethics), political science, psychology, public health, religious studies, sociology, and/or spirituality.

The documentary may also be of interest to campus student organizations providing programs or activities concerned with these fields of studies, or having social justice or humanitarian missions.

Primer or ice-breaker for student discussion:

Students watch a provocative 2-minute video available on an International Red Cross website: “*Will you survive a nuclear attack? Live or die, what would you choose?*” at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/nuclear-ban-treaty-no-to-nukes>.

Students voluntarily share their immediate reactions to the video, including answering the video’s question for themselves, and explaining the reasons(s) for their choice.

Format for class or group processing of “The Nuns, The Priests, and The Bombs” documentary:

We suggest using and adapting Peace Circles (or Talking Circles) to organize discussion about the documentary. These circles have an indigenous origin. They aim to maximize student participation in discussion through active listening and compassionate, communal presence and learning. Students and faculty are seated in a circle facing each other. An item, such as a “talking stick” or stone is passed from person to person around the circle. The person receiving the item can choose to speak or pass it on to the next person in the circle.

Only the holder of the talking item speaks, sharing their response to a question/discussion prompt. The other members of the circle do not respond to the speaker, but try to listen intently and nonjudgmentally, to grasp what is being said.

Here is an excellent article by Alaina Winters at Heartland Community College, with background on, and detailed instructions for “Talking Circles,” that can be readily adapted for guiding a heartfelt discussion about “The Nuns, The Priests, and The Bombs”:

<https://www.heartland.edu/documents/idc/talkingcircleclassroom.pdf>

Here is a summary article on “Peace Circles” from the School Tools Program of the Western Justice Center, found on the Oakland Unified School District webpage:

<https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib07/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/97/PeacemakingCircles.pdf>

Question prompts for student discussion and/or writing responses (loosely grouped by topics):

- What things did you learn from watching the documentary?
- What especially surprised you in the documentary?
- What especially moved you in the documentary?
- What cinematography techniques were especially effective in the documentary?

- Do younger Americans, like college students, generally find the possibility of nuclear war a pressing concern? Why or why not?
- How likely do you believe a nuclear war is? Explain.
- What are reasons we continue to have an abundance of nuclear weapons in the world?
- Should a single person have the authority to launch a nuclear attack, like the U.S. president does in our country? Why or why not?
- Should the populace directly decide whether its country should possess nuclear weapons?

- What are potential negative impacts on a society from its possession of nuclear weapons?
- What are the different kinds of impact a society will suffer from a nuclear war?
- What will a nuclear war do to a regional or global environment?
- How does the production of nuclear weapons impact a regional or global environment?

- How can nonviolence be powerful?
- How can civil disobedience be powerful?
- What kind of traits/qualities are needed for a person to participate in a Plowshares action?
- Is there value in actions like those committed by Plowshares activists, when such actions seem to make no difference for the disarmament of nuclear weapons? Explain.

- How can we rid the world of nuclear weapons?
- What are ways you can personally work to prevent nuclear war and bring about disarmament of nuclear weaponry?

Ways for students to get involved in preventing nuclear war and promoting nuclear disarmament:

Plowshares and peace activist, Sister Carol Gilbert, OP, offers the following suggestions for students to get involved in the movement to disarm our world of nuclear weaponry and protect our planet:

Join the movement - Sign up with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) www.icanw.org, Treaty Compliance Campaign www.nuclearban.us and Back From the Brink www.preventnuclearwar.org to receive updates and ways to take action.

Listen to the stories of survivors of nuclear-weapons, testing and watch the video clips that are available on the web sites of the organizations listed. Watch films like:

- *The Beginning of the End of Nuclear Weapons* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzWyYuYLxIM>
- *Nuclear Savage: The Islands of Secret Project 4.1* www.nuclearsavages.com
- *Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives: The Environmental Footprint of War* <http://www.scarredlandsfilm.com/>
- *What would you choose in a nuclear attack? To live or die? and What if We Nuke a City? International Red Cross/Red Crescent* notonukes.org.

Pressure your elected officials to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

- The U.S. House of Representatives has a potential Congressional Resolution, H. Res. 1185, calling on the President “to embrace the goals and provisions of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.” The resolution was introduced by Rep. James McGovern of MA, and is sitting in the House Committees on Foreign Affairs and Armed Services. (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/1185>). Encourage other members of the House to support this resolution and ask members of the Senate to propose and sponsor a similar resolution.
- Encourage others to sign the ICAN “All Cities Pledge.” Get your U.S. Senators and Representatives to sign on. Get your state, city, churches, schools, colleges, universities to sign. Ask all Presidential candidates to sign the pledge.
- The California State Legislature has passed Resolution 33, which calls on the federal government to embrace the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (<https://www.wagingpeace.org/california-assembly-joint-resolution-33-full-text/>). Call upon state legislators in other states to also adopt such a resolution.

Participate in Don’t Bank on the Bomb Campaign /www.dontbankonthebomb.com - started in Europe and gaining traction in the U.S. Stop investments in nuclear weapons. Call your financial institution. Boycott and divest from the 26 U.S companies doing business in the nuclear weapons industry

Peace Crane Project (<https://peacecraneproject.org/>) was started by ICAN youth in Hiroshima with a goal to send 1000 cranes to every UN member state which they did in 2017. Why paper cranes? Read the story of Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fABpssKWCoE>) Make 1,000 cranes and give them to your U.S. Senator.

SPEAK UP! Start a local nuclear disarmament movement on your campus!

Additional Resources:

Information on “The Nuns, The Priests, and The Bombs” documentary:

Documentary website: <https://nunspriestsbombsthefilm.com/>

Documentary length: 87 minutes

Documentary trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoiVdOIHtDs>

Contact for Helen Young, the documentary writer, director, and producer: hyoungnyc@gmail.com

Information on the prevalence of nuclear weapons:

The Federation of American Scientists website on the number of nuclear weapons around the world: (<https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>)

U.S. Department of Defense website content section describing the number of nuclear weapons, their delivery systems and planned future development, “America’s Nuclear Triad”: <https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Experience/Americas-Nuclear-Triad/>

U.S. Department of Defense report on the size of the American nuclear arsenal, its planned future development, and our military’s policy on the use of its nuclear weapons, “2022 Nuclear Posture Review,” <https://s3.amazonaws.com/uploads.fas.org/2022/10/27113658/2022-Nuclear-Posture-Review.pdf>

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists estimation of the size U.S. nuclear arsenal, “United States nuclear weapons,” 2021” <https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2020.1859865>)

U.S. Congressional Budget Office estimate on the costs of the planned modernization of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and delivery systems: <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53211>

Information on the human, societal and environmental impacts of nuclear war:

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) website, “Catastrophic Harm,” (https://www.icanw.org/catastrophic_harm)

Popular Mechanics, “Atomic Bombs vs. Nuclear Bombs: What’s the Difference?” (March 2, 2022): <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/a23306/nuclear-bombs-powerful-today>

Scientific America, “South Asian Threat? Local Nuclear War = Global Suffering” (January 1, 2010) <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/local-nuclear-war/>

Information on nuclear weapons agreements and treaties:

Arms Control Association website, “Treaties and Agreements”: <https://www.armscontrol.org/treaties>

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs website, “Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” (1968): <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text>

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs website, “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” (2017): <https://treaties.unoda.org/t/tpnw>

(This faculty-student resource guide was prepared by Scott Fina, Ph.D., a member of the Catholic Peace Fellowship in Philadelphia, PA.)