

Seventy-four Years After Hiroshima

PLANTING A TREE ON AUG. 6 WILL CELEBRATE PEACE AND HOPE

When the world's first atomic bomb was dropped in the center of the city of Hiroshima in 1945, killing 140,000 people, survivors thought nothing would grow there for 75 years. Recovery seemed impossible.

To their amazement, blackened trunks of trees put out new shoots in spring 1946, and survivors of the bombing described a feeling of hope. The trees were the first to encourage them.

When California's deadliest wildfire raged through the town of Paradise in November, killing 85 people, destroying nearly 19,000 homes and businesses and scorching 150,000 acres, recovery also seemed impossible. But come spring, green sprouts poked up in the blackened landscape of Paradise, and people described the feeling of hope that rose up within them.

Why mention these two events together? Aside

from the common theme of lost hope renewed, why compare the two? One was a deliberate act of destruction in war; the other, an act of negligence in an increasingly fire-prone world with warmer temperatures and lack of rain.

Actually, the Pentagon played a role in both scenarios. The United States military is the largest institutional emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. It also gobbles up more than half of our discretionary federal budget, consuming billions of dollars that could address this crisis.

The Pentagon has seen climate change as a security threat for years, but has made it clear that they are not in the environmental protection business; they are in the war business. With that mindset, they view climate change as a war to win rather than a crisis to diminish and avoid.

This mindset has to change.

A recent study from the Swiss Federal Institute of

Technology found that planting a trillion trees could cut carbon in the atmosphere by nearly 25 percent. These researchers also found that the planet has nearly 3.5 million square miles open for tree planting. Russia, the United States, Canada, Australia, Brazil and China have the most space available. How about forming a new alliance among these countries to save the world?

This brings us back to that feeling of hope that arose after devastation in Hiroshima, Japan, and Paradise, California. On Tuesday, Aug. 6, Eugene will plant a symbol of hope at Alton Baker Park. A small sapling that has grown from the seed of a persimmon tree that survived the bombing in Hiroshima will take up residence near the Nobel Peace Park. It will absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and use it for photosynthesis to grow. It will also stand as a silent ambassador for peace and nuclear disarmament.

The Hiroshima Peace Tree will be planted at a ceremony at 7 pm Aug. 6, on the 74th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. The public is welcome. ■

Susan Cundiff is chair of Oregon Women's Action for New Directions and a member of the Planet vs. Pentagon Working Group. The Hiroshima/Nagasaki Commemoration on Aug. 6 is sponsored by Wand, Community Alliance of Lane County, Japanese American Association and Beyond War. For more information about the trees: YouTube.com/watch?reload=9&v=6d-40_GDSzs.



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