

Hiroshima Day Peace Walk

Remarks by Sarah Caligiuri, Western Shoshone

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[Noowuh Degwah Introduction]

My name is Sarah Caligiuri. I am Wiumbpah Diccup, of the Buffalo Berry Eaters People, from Noowuh Segobia, the Great Basin of Nevada.

Before anything else, I want to honor the first peoples. I am a guest here in so-called southern Oregon. This land has been cared for since time immemorial by the Takelma, the Latgawa, the Daa-kuu-bee-tv-de, the Shasta, and the Modoc peoples. I thank these relatives for stewarding this beautiful land, and for continuing to cultivate ancient relationships with this ecosystem.

I want to thank Peace House for inviting me to speak. And I want to thank each of you for coming. Eighty-one years ago this morning, an atomic bomb fell on the city of Hiroshima. We are here to remember the people who died. As a Noowuh, I also want to also remember, the animals, the sacred water, and the Mother Earth that were also impacted by the bombing. Thank you for gathering to hold that memory.

I come to you as a Noowuh Western Shoshone woman. I come to you as a downwinder.

To live in Nevada is to live submerged in militarism. We live inside the military-industrial complex, not beside it. The ranges, the convoys, the test site: for most people it fades into the barckground, in their vacation roadtrips, in the water they swim in. My people are not allowed to forget it.

When people hear "Hiroshima," they picture a faraway city and a moment long ago, and the tragedy that occurred there. I am here to tell you that what happened there did not stay there. It came home to my land. It is still there.

Nevada is one of the most bombed places on Earth. Between 1951 and 1992, the United States set off more than nine hundred nuclear weapons on Western Shoshone land. About a hundred of them exploded in the open air. According to the Nevada Journal and Western Shoshone researchers, the bomb that fell on Hiroshima left about thirteen kilotons of fallout. The testing on our homeland left more than six hundred. That is what we live with. That is what we breathe, and drink, and eat.

We never agreed to this. In 1863 our people signed the Treaty of Ruby Valley, a treaty of peace and friendship. We never ceded our land, we never sold it or gave it away. The government built its test site on it anyway. And now they want to bury the country's nuclear waste inside Yucca Mountain, a sacred place, and leave it there to threaten the water and the earth for longer than any mind can hold.

I am a Noowuh woman. To be Noowuh is to carry an ancient responsibility. Our oldest agreements are not with governments. They are with the land, the water, and the animals. My duty is to protect them, and that duty is older than this country.

Please picture something with me. Our people still walk out to gather our food and to find our water, the way we always have. Now picture walking out to gather, and seeing a line of tanks, fifty of them or more, rolling through the emptiest stretch of the desert. You begin to wonder about the food in your hands. You wonder about the water at your feet. Our traditional foods have been touched by this spirit of warfare, and by the fallout that settled onto them. The land carries it now.

But Newe Segobia, Western Shoshone territory, in is our homeland, and we take her as she is. We will always protect her, because we have no other. I cannot gather my food somewhere else and she is our Mother. I cannot find my water somewhere else. Nevada is our home. It is the only home we have. So whatever this government does to the land, however it treats her, it is our people who live with what follows.

That is why this day matters. Hiroshima is not only a memory. It is a warning we are still living. When we say never again, we have to mean the desert too. We have to mean the water, and the food, and to protect the ones not yet born.

Thank you for listening.

Abashai. I will see you later.

Reference: Nevada Law Journal study; 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley Treaty of Peace and Friendship.