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This month marks the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And every year the historical records become clearer that dropping the A-bomb was unnecessary, heinous and most likely a war crime. The bombing probably killed more than 200,000 Japanese civilians and maimed countless casualties. This destruction of life causes me grief and indignation. This is all the more true given that there is an alternative: the U.S. could have dropped an A-bomb in or near Tokyo Bay. Such a warning shot could persuade the Japanese to put an end to the war, and its humane nature would increase the moral authority of the United States. Atomic bombing is often referred to as the only alternative to a ground invasion of Japan that will not surrender under any but most difficult circumstances. The possible necessity of invasion loomed throughout 1945, and the Americans, of course, feared many U.S. losses. Much of the fanatical Japanese soldier - and perhaps many citizens - can fight to the last inch. An early study estimated that 40,000 American soldiers had died, but President Harry Truman and others soon spoke of half a million. But the advent of the A-bomb automatically changed that, allowing the U.S. to wield the threat of a nuclear attack. With the first device tested and proven in July 1945, and many others trained in early August, America could use its power as a new dimension of the threat, rather than crudely dropping bombs as mass murderers. Properly used as a threat to ensure rapid surrender, A-bombs could prevent virtually every further death in Japan - Americans, Japanese and any other, from invasion, incendiary bombs, bombing and ground warfare. This, of course, is exactly what the A-bomb achieved. But the U.S. hastily destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the first place. Tokyo Bay would be an ideal place to demonstrate the power of bombs. A large open area, the bay is close to Tokyo and all the leaders of Japan, including the emperor. She suggested a wide range of places - on vacant land or on water - to drop an A-bomb, for a complete stunning effect. A mushroom-cloud explosion may be near or not so close to Tokyo, and more or less dangerous for Japan's emperor, leaders, citizens and the city capital. Thus, the United States could carefully maximize the scale of the threat while minimizing the damage to Tokyo itself. And if the Japanese were insanely intransigent, we could have just dropped another bomb, closer to Tokyo or in an area with a low population. Even another, if necessary. But American leaders have become a habit of bombing cities by attacking Berlin, Hamburg and even the cultural gem of Dresden. U.S. Air Force leaders, such as Jimmy Doolittle, were instantly notified by the bombing of Japan. As a result, the bombing of Tokyo in March 1945 killed some 250,000 civilians and maimed large numbers of people. With the Japanese Japanese key player was Leslie Groves, who created and directed the Manhattan project over the years. He currently chairs the committee that directs Truman's actions, and he is closely managed - daily and riding - planning, loading, and crew work to fly bombs for the fall. Grove was determined to deploy them quickly. Separately, the alleged threat of the Soviet Union's invasion of Japan was cited as the reason for the rush. Such an excuse to rush to bomb may be chalked, at least in part, for the self-interest of the United States. And the planning of Truman's advisers, including Groves, Doolittle and Curtis Lemay, was full of mistakes. Hiroshima became a candidate after she escaped an attack so far in the conflict. It was almost entirely civilian, and soon the attention to its several military targets disappeared. Hiroshima was far from Tokyo, and the explosion destroyed all communications, so the Japanese leadership in Tokyo did not fully see the destruction. When Hiroshima's level predictably gave Tokyo little awareness, Nagasaki was added. But that choice was even less logical, and it doubled the number of dead and suffocating a stain on America's moral character. The United States has already exceeded rational and civilized borders with our mass bombing in Europe and Japan. Our job was to wage war with a minimum of mega-deaths. Using the Tokyo Bay method to demonstrate the strength of the A-bomb, America would demonstrate its compassion and humanity. But Truman and his people failed, and the harm was widespread and long-lasting. In addition to the Japanese deaths and losses, the actual dropping of the A-bomb probably raised the stakes for the onset of the Cold War. Had the U.S. not dropped the A-bombs, the nuclear arms race could have gone slower and less wasteful, perhaps without hydrogen bombs. The United States and the Soviet Union may even have cultivated cooperation and prosperity instead of mutual fears and military-industrial excesses. This 70th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a sad reminder: the latest spasm of murder has engulfed these two poor cities. If the U.S. had fired a warning shot instead, dropping an A-bomb in Tokyo Bay, it is unlikely that the soul would have died. Yet the leaders of that era decided to kill hundreds of thousands, not. Getty Images On Friday, President Obama became the first American president to visit Hiroshima. He embraced survivors of the American atomic bombing of the city in 1945 and called for a world without nuclear weapons. However, he did not apologize for the explosion. A few days before the President's visit, I had the opportunity to speak with several Japanese-American women. I was interested to hear their voices as President Obama prepared to visit Hiroshima. I was joined by Kristen Tsukuko Sasaki, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies Francisco State University; Tracy Kato-Kiryama, writer, performer and community organizer based in Los Angeles; and Marie Matusta, activist, critical race theorist and law professor at the University of Hawaii. Melissa Harris-Perry: Were you happy to know that President Obama will visit Hiroshima? Kristen: As a fourth-generation Japanese-American woman whose ancestors came from Hiroshima and died in a nuclear attack, I have high hopes for this inaugural visit. While President Obama laid out a plan in 2009 to create a nuclear free world, the United States continues to spend upwards of \$1 trillion dollars to modernize our nuclear arsenal. Like many others, I hope that this visit will strengthen the resolve to create a world free of nuclear weapons. I also hope that this visit raises questions about the continued U.S. military presence and build-up in locations across Asia and the Pacific. Tracy: Japanese Americans have been involved in anti-war movements in this country for decades. In my young life, I was raised by a community of activists, many of whom were organizers around Redress (a movement calling for restitution for Japanese-Americans living in the U.S. who were forcibly interned during World War II). These people were inspired, influenced, and educated, as young adult Black Panthers and the Black Power Movement; The Asian-American movement is a clear and direct result of their work. Our work unites at these intersections. MHP: There are so many parts of our intersecting history we are unable to teach, and once they are lost, a certain basis for solidarity and organization also feels lost. Kristen: I think there is a reluctance to talk about mass incarceration in the older generation, but I also see a lot of interest and curiosity on the part of students. While mass incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans may not occur anymore, there are still communities of color that are being profiled and targeted. I hope that by embracing this difficult chapter of history, and discussing what can happen when paranoia and racial profiling flourishes, this new generation will be more responsible for the actions of our country. MHP: There is such value even in this particular development! The definition of internment as mass incarceration suddenly makes it resonate with the existing Black Lives Matter movement in a way that is hidden when we don't use that language. Tracy: When I think of the president in Hiroshima, I think of grandmothers who are former comfort women (Asian women who have been turned into sex slaves for the Japanese military); I think about the legacy of war in all our communities and the tremendous responsibility we as a Japanese-American woman; Solutions to both our country of citizenship and our country of origin; and I'm thinking about my disconnection with long-lost/remote relatives and if they too feel resentment and pain with our separation. As a Japanese-American woman, I often feel a deep resentment towards the Japanese government every time they speak or act in clearly racist/sexist/xenophobic ways, and it increases with each year that passes without acknowledging their past grievances. It is such indignation that I sometimes feel harsh, dismissive towards Japan as a whole, which is a terrible feeling applicable to many beautiful people and aspects of Japan. Somewhere along the way in elementary school, I learned that it was helpful to explain how American I was, communicating how little contact I had with my family in Japan. MHP: Tracy, can you say more about that? Tracy: The best word to use is separation. When I think of Japan and being Japanese-American, I think of the word separation. Somewhere along the way in elementary school, I learned that it was helpful to explain how American I was, communicating how little contact I had with my family in Japan. What was so much distance, my young mind thought it was a good way to make similarities to my white classmates. In the same way, it reflects earlier actions and thinking with Nisei (second-generation children born to Japanese parents), many of whom deliberately distanced themselves from their ancestral roots and heritage. When many in our community witnessed their fathers and community leaders leave their homes after December 7, 1941, and be imprisoned in American concentration camps, many almost instantly became Uber-American. Many literally threw away the language, insisting that their children speak exclusively English. Many in our community have abandoned their religion by taking on Christianity in a ferocious and severing ties with Buddhist or Shinto practices and learning. However, very few Americans know anything at all about this period in American history and how it has affected our communities. Even less is known about the struggle for reparations. Maybe that's one part of what a president's visit can do. Perhaps no previous American president visited, because we wanted to let Americans stay as close as possible to human stories about the consequences of war. But now we can talk about what happened in Japan and here in America. He can make a statement by opening up the general public to what happened to real people. I believe that someday we will fully confront what we have done in Hiroshima, probably on the same day we fully reckon with the middle passage and genocide of indigenous peoples. Marie: Possibly. But, the inability to apologize, repair, and prevent the repetition of the past wrong is a marker of the empire, and that violence and separation will continue to curse us. I believe that one day we will fully bear with what we have done in Hiroshima, probably on the same day as the middle passage and genocide of indigenous peoples. At the same time, we can at least continue to ask questions. Here's mine: What role did the beginning of the Cold War play in the decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Why are the disproportionate civilian casualties there, both in the Battle of Okinawa and in the Korean War? Does race have anything to do with it? And the racism of the United States and Japan, which turned Koreans and Okinawans into others and fueled the colonial processes that fed militarism and imperialism? How do these cold war stories and empires intertwine, that the division of Korea and the Korean War continues, and the militarization of Okinawa against the wishes of the people of Okinawa continues? What does this have to do with the TPP and the Asian core that occur without the free and informed consent of the affected peoples? As an American in Okinawa, I am making a special appeal to the President to listen to the people of Okinawa who are trying to stop the construction of a new base on the reef in Henoko. And finally, as a cross-feminist, I note that rape, involuntary prostitution, including child prostitution, is found wherever there are American military facilities in Asia. The transformation of women's bodies into commodities was part of an imperial project and continued during the Cold War era. Why can't we apologize for Hiroshima? Because we don't want to do any of this. MHP: I hope that we will start asking these questions. Thank you all for not having time to share your thoughts with me. This content is created and supported by a third party and is imported to this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content on piano.io piano.io

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