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Humanities Honors

Atomic Bombs

Imagine waking up every morning and going to sleep every night in fear. Fear of never seeing another minute of life with those close to you. Fear that all the bomb warnings will finally result in your city being wiped out. No one should ever have to worry about the most powerful weapon being used on them and their community. The Atomic bomb was created in 1945. Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the U.S. began to speed up the process to return the favor to Japan. A similar but equally impactful war was going on. The U.S. needed to master the Atomic bomb before any other countries held the power that the bomb had. J. Robert Oppenheimer believed that Germany was also racing to accomplish the creation of the Atomic bomb. Although the Manhattan Project started later than Germany's project, the U.S. was the only successor in creating the Atomic bomb. Now that the U.S. had built a working Atomic bomb, the U.S. had the most powerful weapon known to man. An Atomic bomb is made up of plutonium and uranium. These alone have no effect quite as large as when put together and create a chain reaction of explosions that can result in the genocide of cities. Was the invention of the atomic bomb a benefit to society? The atomic bomb had, and has, a negative impact on our society because it left lifelong impacts on thousands of lives in Japan, was created and used on political grounds, and has created long-lasting consequences that society faces today. The lives on both U.S. and Japanese soil were largely affected and societies still live in fear in the current century because of this invention. 77 years ago marks the start of this fear. That same fear manifested its way to live on in the survivors.

The creation of the Atomic bomb impacted thousands of lives in Japan and continued on throughout their life. The U.S. can't reverse what was done because of the invention of the Atomic bomb. It's important for U.S. citizens to reflect on what the survivors lived through in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the article titled *Hiroshima*, published in 1946, John Hersey reports and writes on six of the survivors from Hiroshima. From Mrs. Hatsuyo Nakamura's story, Hersey writes, "she got her three children ... out of bed and dressed them and walked with them to the military area known as the East Parade Ground, on the northeast edge of the city. " This is written about the air raid warnings that would go off every morning and night. Mrs. Hatsuyo, like so many other families, would have to walk her children back and forth between cities to keep her family safe. After the bomb had hit, despite her thorough search for her three children, only one had a voice to cry out for help. In one second Mrs. Hatsuyo's life was flipped. She was left with one of her three children. She was left with no place of safety or any resources to take of herself and her child. Another survivor shares their testimony of that day and the effects seen even after the day of the bombing. Yoshiro Yamawaki, interviewed by the Times, states "The radiation continues to affect survivors to this day, who struggle with cancer and other debilitating diseases." Yoshiro himself had to have surgery and undergo treatments for stomach cancer. The amount of radiation left on the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki stayed to remind them of that day. To remind them of all their loved ones who didn't make it to see their city burnt to the ground. To remind them of how they couldn't hide even miles and miles away in a mountain. These are just a few stories of the survivors from the dropping of "Little Boy" and "Fat Man". The U.S. allowed a weapon to not only be used on a whole city that just happened to have a Japanese military base in but allowed a whole city of innocent citizens to be wiped out in seconds. The survivors had to live on with only the memories of their loved ones and the sight of

a burnt-dead city. These stories are just a few of many where it's seen that the creation of the Atomic bomb had a negative impact on society. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki took the lives of innocent families and the radiation left the people of the cities with cancer and other diseases to stick with them until the end. This is all thanks to the decision kept in the hands of political leaders on both sides of the world.

Before Truman gave the okay to bomb the two cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan was given an ultimatum. The three leaders of the U.S., Great Britain, and China worked together to create the Potsdam Declaration. An article from the Truman Library Institute writes how Truman was never optimistic that this document would have much impact on the outcome of the war. Truman had no trust in the document, sent in hopes of ending the war, showing his true intentions of wanting to use his bomb as an accomplishment. When a trusted leader intends to end a war they will do everything in their power to stop the violence. In Japan's case, the president might even provide a plan to help the country rebuild its government rather than hold punishment over their heads while they do it by themselves. This declaration "asked" Japan to change how their government operated and to surrender. In reality, it listed demands to be met by Japan. This declaration also stated that if those demands weren't met the U.S. "promised a vague yet dire scenario for the Japanese "(Truman Library Institute 1). There was an understanding that if Japan didn't surrender there would be consequences for their nation. However, who would have thought that their civilian population would pay for their government's actions? Thousands of innocent lives do not deserve to be remembered as a number simply because they were born under a certain leader. They don't deserve to live on as a number in a museum just because the U.S. had to show the world their new dominating weapon. Truman stated in his speech after Hiroshima was bombed "They have been repaid manyfold. And the end is not yet." Throughout

the rest of his speech, the message is that the U.S. must assert dominance over Japan in such a way that many lives are to be taken. Tens of more cities were planned to be wiped clear of existence. The one thing on these leaders' minds was making Japan surrender no matter the cost. This set an example to the rest of the world forever that innocent lives are expendable. That cities being wiped clear of their citizens is level with two country leaders butting heads. There was no second thought to all the other citizens of Japan living in the cities they planned to bomb. Families never got to see another day together, but at least the war was won. At least the U.S. got the last word. Blinded by the power the bombs held in 1945, the 21st century was forgotten. Truman didn't realize that his words and actions, letting the two bombs be dropped would send a message to the rest of the world. Not only a message of the power the U.S. held but the power every other country could hold. The message was that lives were just numbers in another country. Residents of cities today all over the world sometime or another get to fear being erased out of the Earth just like before. The making of bombs "Fat Man" and "Little Boy" represented a win for Truman and a loss for society. The use of the bombs proved just how much can be lost in just seconds. All the lives lost would be reversed if the U.S. wasn't so stuck on what these actions meant for world politics. Those living in the 21st century get to live with the consequences set by political leaders in 1945.

Not only did the creation of the Atomic bomb have a negative impact on society back in the 1940s, but even in the 21st century we see the negative impact. Nine countries currently have access to nuclear weapons. These nine countries are made up of the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, China, Pakistan, India, Israel, and North Korea. There have been no uses of a nuclear weapon since 1945, but many scares. Back in 2020 when the U.S. and North Korea were going through a rough patch of correspondence, North Korea threatened the use of

their nuclear weapons on the U.S. CBS News in an article on the topic quotes Kim Jong Un saying “Our armed forces are completely prepared to respond to any crisis, and our country's nuclear war deterrent is also ready to mobilize its absolute power dutifully, exactly and swiftly in accordance with its mission," This sent Americans into a frenzy. Terrified out of their minds that they would see their families turn to dust. That the reality that Japanese families experienced all those years ago was going to be the reality of American families in the 21st century. Even in 2022 Kim Jong Un states that North Korea will have the most powerful nuclear force (Smith 1). The power a country and a country's leader have with the possession of nuclear weapons is unmatched. There is little to nothing a country can do if it gets bombed with a nuclear weapon. With the war between Russia and Ukraine starting in 2014, in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine they brought with them fear of nuclear weapons being used. If Ukraine was able to take even a small part of Russia's land, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated that “There simply wouldn't be any other solution,” to use nuclear weapons on Ukraine and that Ukraine, their “enemies should pray to our fighters that they do not allow the world to go up in nuclear flames.” (Pennington, Stambaugh, Lendon, 9). Nuclear weapons have brought war to another level. It has created an even more hostile environment for the world to live in. Ukraine's citizens have to put their lives in the hands of their president and prime minister to not make the wrong move. If they do, who knows what the population of Ukraine citizens left will be? If the Atomic bomb wasn't created all the way back in the 1940's any given country today wouldn't have to worry about its population being halved or wiped out completely in just seconds. The understanding of the weapon was not there, and now in the 21st century, every country tiptoes around each other in fear of their people vanishing into just memories. The negative impact of the Atomic bomb didn't stop in 1945, it continues on into our society today.

The Atomic bomb has done more harm than good for our society. This is seen through the stories shared by survivors of the bombings in Japan like Mrs. Hatsuyo Nakamura. Her children were taken from her life in one second. The harm of the atomic bombings lives on in those who survived in not only psychological ways but also physical ways. Yoshiro Yamawaki and so many other survivors developed cancer and their body chemistry was never the same from the radiation. Thousands of innocent lives were taken or left with nothing without so much as a whisper in the matter. Truman never believed in the Potsdam Declaration and knew Japan wouldn't surrender to what the declaration asked. The bombs were used on political grounds without a second thought to the lives that are now just a number in history books. The creation and use of the bomb have shown other countries it's okay to use nuclear weapons to get what you want mindlessly. That submission out of fear for your country not seeing another day is okay. Countries like North Korea and Russia have already carried on this ideology into the 21st century. There were no restrictions on the Atomic bombs when there should have been, and now in the 21st century society will always stay afraid of nuclear warfare. Countries year to year will face the consequences of the Atomic bomb and fear that their country and people won't see it to the next nuclear war scare. The Atomic bomb should not have been used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, let alone created.

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