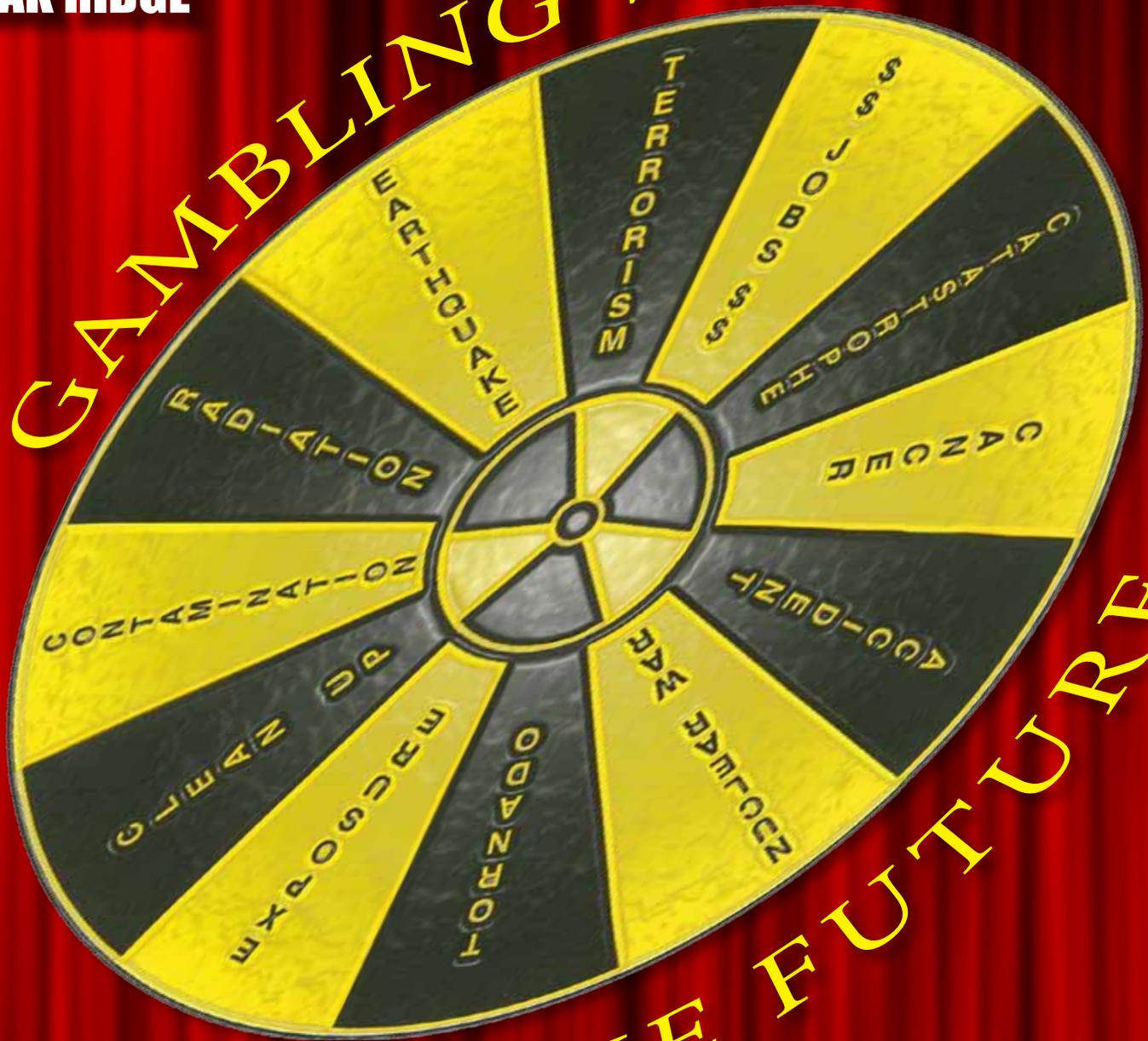


**AUGUST  
EVENTS IN  
OAK RIDGE**

# GAMBLING WITH



# THE FUTURE

**A TRILLION  
DOLLARS FOR  
NUCLEAR  
WEAPONS?**

**UPF  
BOMB PLANT  
GETS THE  
GREENLIGHT**

# UPF Bomb Plant gets the green light

**E**VERYONE KNOWS WHAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS DID TO HIROSHIMA AND Nagasaki. Fewer people know the devastation wrought by our bombs and warheads on the people and communities that manufacture them. The government's policy has always been to withhold information, then to deny charges, then to begrudgingly take steps to redress grievances, usually only when there is a lawsuit pointed at them. That may be changing—a new document released in Oak Ridge declares for the first time, before the fact, that it is placing workers and the public in significant danger as it manufactures thermonuclear cores for warheads at the Y-12 nuclear weapons complex there.

There has always been a deep irony at the heart of the nuclear weapons programs of the United States government. On the one hand, the weapons are sold to the public as guarantors of “security;” their purpose is to keep us safe. On the other hand, the work of producing and testing the weapons—tens of thousands of them over the decades—has caused untold suffering, sickened workers, subjected innocent people to surreptitious and intentional testing, using them as human guinea pigs, and contaminated soil and water with radioactive and other toxic materials that will endure and threaten wildlife and humans alike for millions and even billions of years.

For the first forty years of the nuclear age, the government flat-out denied the negative effects of nuclear weapons production. But by the middle of the 1980's reports of massive environmental contamination were beginning to filter out of the bomb plants; by the late 1990's the government was establishing a medical compensation program for workers sickened by their work at bombs plants or in uranium mines—it has paid out billions—and just last year, the victims of US nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands brought legal action against the US and other nuclear armed nations in federal court in California and at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands.

## SAFETY SCHMAFETY

“With regard to seismic hazards, it would be prohibitively expensive to upgrade 50+ year-old facilities to current seismic standards. As such, the plan is not to bring the long-range Y-12 Enriched Uranium facilities to current seismic standards, but to improve worker safety and reduce mission risk.”

The remarkable admission comes in the Supplement Analysis for the Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Y-12 National Security

Complex, buried on page 30, where the document discusses plans to press deteriorating facilities into bomb-building service for a few more decades.

The message to workers is two-fold. First: You aren't worth the money it would take to make your workplace safe. Second: Put on your hard hat and get to work.

To the rest of us, especially people living, working and sending their kids to school in Oak Ridge, who will be catastrophically affected if a design-basis earthquake strikes Bear Creek Valley and enriched uranium is dispersed in the atmosphere during the collapse of buildings, the message is also straight-forward: Don't say we didn't warn you!

## A LONG TIME COMING

The confession that Y-12 will continue to operate in unsafe buildings is not exactly voluntary, nor was it part of the long-term plan when Y-12 conducted its Site-Wide EIS in 2011. At that time, the plan was to shut down aging production facilities, including Building 9212, Building 9202-2E, and Building 9215. These would be replaced by a new, state-of-the-art bomb production facility, the Uranium Processing Facility, designed to current seismic standards.

But when the cost of the UPF soared to more than 19 billion dollars (from an original estimate of \$1.5 billion) and the construction schedule disappeared into infinity, and the initial design effort collapsed after wasting half a billion dollars, the UPF plan was scrapped, and with it the plan to make Y-12 as safe as it could be.

The new plan is a radical change. The UPF is now five buildings, only one of which is being built to maximum seismic standards. And instead of putting all enriched uranium operations in the new buildings, two of the deteriorating old buildings, 9202-2E and 9215, will be pressed into service for at least twenty more years, probably longer.



**If we are to challenge this decision, we will need the power of “crowd-source” funding—everyone chipping in a little or a lot, above and beyond our usual giving, to raise the required funds.**

The change in plans required the government to review its Site-Wide EIS to determine whether it still fit the new plan. OREPA filed a Freedom of Information Act request for that review, called a Supplement Analysis, in March of 2015. It was finally made public in April 2016.

### GREEN LIGHT FOR THE BOMB PLANT

We were disappointed but not surprised at the findings of the Supplement Analysis. NNSA declares, despite the fact that its plan will now be using unsafe buildings, that nothing significant has changed from the old plan, so they do not have to prepare a new Site-Wide EIS. They are green-lighting the UPF bomb plant.

It's not just that they don't want to spend the money to make the old buildings safe, it's that they can not do it at any cost—the foundations of the building do not meet current seismic standards and, according to the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, can not be brought up to code.

The admission that the old facilities will not meet seismic standards is only the tip of the iceberg. The analysis also downplays other earthquake data that has come to light since 2011, declaring the 2011 data "remains valid and relevant and is not repeated in this SA." NNSA says new information does not change site-specific data at Y-12—but it is wrong.

Both significant new pieces of information—the US Geological Survey issued new maps in their 2014 report that found the increase in the seismic risk in the East Tennessee Seismic Zone (which includes Y-12) to be the second highest in the country, and researchers at the University of Tennessee found the area has experienced higher than previously believed earthquakes, in excess of 6.0 magnitude—should result in more stringent requirements for radiological facilities or, at the very least, require a detailed assessment of the impact of larger, more likely earthquakes than were contemplated in 2011.

### IT'S ALL MODERNIZATION

The original UPF plan was ambitious; it set out a path to modernize the entire Y-12 complex by consolidating all operations in one big facility. But the cost and schedule proved to be too much for the Department of Energy to defend, so the plan changed, and changed again, and finally resulted in the new plan.

And now it's not just about the UPF, though that remains the cornerstone of the modernization plan. What happens to the rest of the Y-12 complex is also different than envisioned in 2011—significantly different, according to Congressman Chuck Fleischmann, who said the UPF "is on a completely different approach than the original strategy."

It is that difference that requires NNSA to prepare, at the least, a Supplemental Site-Wide EIS. OREPA believes, in fact, that an entirely new Site-Wide EIS is called for.

## NOW WHAT?

The NNSA's report stands unless it is challenged in court.

The weaknesses in the report are obvious. NNSA is simply hoping we cannot afford to sue them to compel them to prepare a full Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement.

A challenge will be expensive, costing at least \$25,000, money which we do not currently have in our bare-bones budget. Most years, OREPA works hard to raise the funds to break even. If we are to challenge this decision, we will need the power of "crowd-source" funding—everyone chipping in a little or a lot, above and beyond our usual giving, to raise the required funds.

We do not have a firm timeline for filing papers, but the clock is ticking. At some point, the courts will consider the NNSA finding a done deal and reject a challenge, so there is some urgency. We are working with a legal team now to develop the motions required, but we can't move forward without funding.

You can send contributions to OREPA at P O Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831 or donate through our website at [www.orepa.org](http://www.orepa.org) (We use paypal, but you don't have to have a paypal account, any credit card should work.).



# OREPA joins colleagues in Washington

**T**HE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO SPEND FOUR MILLION DOLLARS AN HOUR, every hour for the next thirty years, to build new bomb plants, upgrade and modify nuclear warheads, and build missiles, submarines and jets to deliver them around the globe was the subject of the week when six OREPA members joined more than fifty other activists from around the country in Washington, DC in April as part of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability's DC Days.

ANA produced an important report, *Trillion Dollar Trainwreck*, that details the impact of "modernization" on this year's budget. The report featured plans for a new nuclear warhead for a new "Long-Range Stand Off" cruise missile as well as the Uranium Processing Facility bomb plant planned for Oak Ridge. (You can find the report online at [bit.ly/trilliondollartrainwreck](http://bit.ly/trilliondollartrainwreck).) *Trainwreck* also addresses the nuclear waste and cleanup challenges communities face across the country and the need for closer accountability for the Department of Energy and the National Nuclear Security Administration.

OREPA members met with the staff of Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander in search of information about the \$575 million for the UPF in the Senate's proposed budget. Alexander's staff refused to provide any details at all, asserting, against all evidence to the contrary, that the UPF would be built by 2025 for \$6.5 billion. More than \$3 billion will have been spent on the design of the UPF by the end of the 2017 fiscal year.

We had slightly better luck getting information from other offices. We learned from one staff person that no budget or schedule for the UPF exist—this despite Senator Alexander's assurances in writing in December that the UPF was "on time and on budget."

We also learned NNSA's plans for modernization in Oak Ridge will undergo additional scrutiny from the Government Accountability Office. The GAO had suspended

its oversight of the UPF when the NNSA abandoned its last plan without adopting a new one.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board also confirmed ongoing concerns with modernization plans at Y-12, especially the plan to continue using aging, deteriorating buildings that no longer meet seismic standards.

In one of ANA's earliest DC Days efforts, more than twenty-five years ago, the theme was "Clean Up, Don't Build Up," and activists highlighted the

competition for limited funding between weapons programs and environmental restoration plans. Sadly, little has changed in the intervening years. The competition was placed in stark relief with the release of a DOE Inspector General's report on "excess high-risk facilities."

The report identifies 374 facilities across the weapons complex and compiled a Top Ten List for the worst. The top three on the list are at Y-12 in Oak Ridge; four others are at Lawrence Livermore Lab in California.

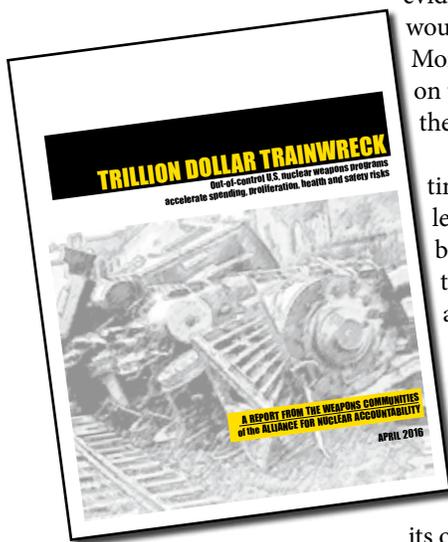
While we were in DC, Tennessee Representative Chuck Fleischmann, whose district includes Oak Ridge, held a special meeting of the "Cleanup Caucus," and OREPA Coordinator Ralph Hutchison attended the meeting. While efforts are made to keep environmental issues hushed in Oak Ridge ("We don't want to discourage business from locating here"), the talk in DC was more frank, maybe because money is on the table.

The most remarkable thing about the IG's report was its openness about the extent of the risks posed by these abandoned, contaminated facilities. Usually, the DOE is reluctant to admit even a minor level of risk, but the IG report says the crumbling facilities are "high risk" facilities that expose "workers and the public to ever-increasing levels of risk."

The problem is cleanup programs across the weapons complex are already underfunded. Taking money from them to address the hazards at the abandoned facilities only shifts risks.

And here is where everything old becomes new again. Money for production of nuclear weapons and for new bomb plants (the \$15 billion UPF, for example) is readily available. Money to protect workers and the community—not so much.

ANA recommends establishing a separate line item in the budget to fund the cleanup of these messy facilities. OREPA asked Rep. Fleischmann to hold a meeting of the Cleanup caucus in Oak Ridge to press for funding to cleanup the old buildings at Y-12, a process inhibited by the security requirements of the production facilities as well as the lack of funding.





order to raise awareness of the catastrophic threat of nuclear weapons and to evoke a commitment to abolish them.

The afternoon concert and rally will be part of a global “chain reaction” for nuclear abolition. Chain Reaction 2016 is a series of events taking place over three months, beginning on July 8, the twentieth anniversary of the World Court’s advisory opinion on nuclear weapons and extending to October 2, the International Day of Nonviolence celebrating Gandhi’s birthday.

OREPA’s August 6 rally—Gambling With the Future—will highlight the question that nuclear weapons pose today: Will our nuclear weapons protect and preserve us? Or will they lead to our utter and complete destruction? This is the high stakes gamble. The investment of trillions of dollars in modernizing US nuclear weapons, including the UPF bomb plant in Oak Ridge, is an existential wager.

## PEACE LANTERNS

As we have for more than twenty-five years, OREPA will also commemorate the destruction of Nagasaki on August 9 with a Peace Lantern ceremony, complete with traditional Japanese dancing, at Sequoyah Hills Park. Over the years, the Peace Lantern ceremony has come to be a family favorite—children will have a chance to decorate their own peace lantern, and everyone can launch a lantern, and prayers for peace, into the river.

The Peace Lantern ceremony begins at 8:00pm in the field off the parking lot at the far west end of Cherokee Boulevard. (Sequoyah Hills park stretches along the Tennessee River for more than a mile, with several parking areas along Cherokee Drive; the last lot, at the far west end, comes just before the median ends and Cherokee Drive narrows.)

The ceremony, which includes music and a litany, concludes with the launching of biodegradable Peace Lanterns at dusk.

## Chain Reaction: Breaking free from nuclear weapons

**JULY 8 - OCTOBER 2, 2016**

*A series of events and non-violent actions at nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament related sites and locations around the world.*

**SUNDAY, JULY 10 • 1:00 - 4:00PM**

**PUBLIC READING • TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**World Court Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons**

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SCHOOL OF LAW

*front lawn • corner of Cumberland and James Agee, Knoxville*

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 6 • 6:00 - 9:00AM**

**NAMES AND REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY**

**EAST BEAR CREEK ENTRANCE TO Y12 NUCLEAR WEAPONS COMPLEX**

*Intersection Scarboro and Bear Creek Roads, Oak Ridge, TN*

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 6 • 12:30 - 3:30PM**

**GAMBLING WITH THE FUTURE**

**Concert for Peace :: Rally for Disarmament :: March for Abolition**

**BEGIN AT ALVIN K. BISSELL PARK**

*corner Oak Ridge Turnpike and Tulane Avenue, Oak Ridge, TN*

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 9 • 8:00PM**

**PEACE LANTERN CEREMONY**

**Music, Chanting, Traditional Japanese Dance, Peace Lanterns**

**SEQUOYAH HILLS PARK**

*parking area at far west end of Cherokee Boulevard, Knoxville*

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 • TBA**

**1,000 CRANES • Knoxville**

# Dan Zak tells the Transform Now Plowshares story

**W**ASHINGTON POST REPORTER DAN ZAK'S ASSIGNMENT to cover the July 2012 Transform Now Plowshares incursion into the Y12 nuclear weapons complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, could have ended with a terse account of the events of that night, a just-the-facts, ma'am article that appeared briefly on the *Post* web site and in an article or two in the print version of the paper. A lot of reporters did just that—they picked up the story, made some phone calls, and wrote their pieces.

Instead, the assignment became an unprecedented seven-page spread opening the Style section of the *Post* in April 2013, complete with photographs and commissioned artwork that told the story of the Plowshares action, the ensuing trial, the effect on people involved in the story, and the community in which it took place.

And then it became a journey that spanned several years, took Zak across the Pacific to the Marshall Islands, brought him to Oak Ridge more than half-a-dozen times, and ended in *Almighty: Courage, Resistance, and Existential Peril in the Nuclear Age*, to be published in July by Blue Rider Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

"After my long feature ran in the *Post*, a literary agent contacted me and said, 'This should be a book.' I agreed. There was so much material, all of it fascinating," said Zak.

The material available only grew as Zak began to dig into the story. He took a sabbatical from the *Post* and began to dig into the history of the bomb, of Oak Ridge, of Megan Rice, Greg Boertje-Obed and Michael Walli, and of US nuclear policy. At the same time, he immersed himself in current nuclear policy and activities and the unfolding drama around Michael, Greg and Megan as they waited for their trial, were tried and convicted of sabotage, and eventually were sentenced to prison terms ranging from nearly three to five years. Along the way he explored the Catholic Worker movement and the Plowshares movement, traveled to Nevada, to New York City, Washington, DC, and more. It's all in the book—or most of the best parts, anyway.

Asked what surprises he encountered in his research and writing Zak said, "I was not aware of the cost of producing and maintaining nuclear weapons, dollar-wise and human-wise. Ten tril-

lion dollars and 700,000 'atomic veterans'? I had no idea."

Zak also said he was struck by the fact that the most devastating weapons on Earth are entrusted to a complex, clumsy bureaucracy. "The action at Y-12 revealed the tangled thicket of actors and priorities in the nuclear enterprise: for-profit private contractors, a hierarchy of career and appointed officials, multiple federal departments and agencies, and the various committees in Congress that squabble over authorization, appropriation and oversight."

Also, Zak says, "I went through twelve years of Catholic schooling and I don't recall ever hearing the name 'Dorothy Day.' I'll give you time to pick your jaw up off the floor."

*Almighty* takes the reader on Zak's journey, and he proves to be as good a travel writer as he is a journalist, weaving back and forth across time and space to tell a story that is rich in context and deep in understanding. He takes the time necessary to get behind the headlines without losing us in the weeds of policy minutiae. We are not just introduced to Greg, Megan and Michael, we learn who they are and what brought them to the nuclear weapons plant on July 28, 2012, and compelled them to risk their lives to demand an end to nuclear weapons production there. We also get to know Kirk Garland, the guard who interrupted their early morning action, who correctly assessed the threat he encountered, refused to draw his weapon on nonviolent peace demonstrators, and was made the scapegoat for the massive embarrassment suffered by the government and contractors.

The epigraph for *Almighty*, plucked from Thomas Wolfe, begins "The seed of our destruction will blossom in the desert..." Those opening words introduce the central character of the book, whose foreboding presence looms over everything else that happens: the Bomb. Traveling with Zak, we learn not only its cruel history, but the present threat—the government's plan to build a second generation of weapons production facilities, starting with the flagship Uranium Processing Facility bomb plant in Oak Ridge, and to spend a trillion dollars over the



MEET THE AUTHOR

**DAN ZAK**

**Thursday, August 4  
7:00pm**

**EAST TENNESSEE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
601 S GAY ST  
KNOXVILLE, TN**

sponsored by  
Union Avenue Books  
&  
Friends of the Library



next thirty years “modernizing” not only Y-12 but the entire US nuclear stockpile, the warheads and bombs, along with the missiles, submarines and jets that would deliver them.

It was the UPF that brought the Transform Now Plowshares three to Y-12; it is the ongoing commitment to invest billions of dollars every year—four million dollars an hour, every hour, for the next thirty years—that makes their action and their ongoing activism so compelling and so necessary. The public may have grown complacent about or inured to the nuclear threat, but it is real and growing. Hard-line conservative hawks like Henry Kissinger and William Perry know the risk and have called for the US to aggressively pursue nuclear disarmament; they know the fruits of that seed of destruction planted in the desert threatens catastrophe not only for our enemies, but just as surely for us, and they speak and write with a sense of urgency that arises from what they know from the inside.

*Almighty*’s strength—aside from Zak’s estimable writing gift—is in the connections he makes between past and present, between those who pursue nonviolent resistance and those who maintain faith in nuclear weapons, between the stated policy and the actual behaviors of the US government. On the one hand, nuclear weapons represent technology and power so incredible they seem to render citizens helpless to resist the catastrophe they promise. On the other hand, every bit of the

story is human—from the humans who created the weapons to those who defend them, from those who were subjected to fallout from nuclear tests to those who are sentenced to prison for nonviolent protests, from those who decide to spend trillions on bombs even as they promise “a world free of nuclear weapons” to those who would redirect spending to provide housing, education, health care, and life-affirming jobs.

Finally, whether intended or not, *Almighty* is a testament to the power of nonviolence. Gandhi once said, “Nonviolence, once it becomes active, travels with extraordinary velocity, and then it becomes a miracle.”

No one could have foreseen, in July of 2012, that the action of three courageous, faith-filled plowshares activists would still be reverberating four years later—that a prosecutor’s decision to file the most serious charge, sabotage, would up the ante and draw more attention to the story than the actual event itself, that the story would sweep around the world, that it would draw in a Washington Post reporter who was educated in a Catholic school and send him on a journey into the daunting world of nuclear weapons to write a book.

At the conclusion of *Almighty*, Zak thanks Megan, Michael and Greg and says, “I do recognize that I myself became part of their plan.” The book invites us, too, to step into that plan, into the unfolding miracle of nonviolence.

The OREPA Newsletter is published at least four times a year by the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

The newsletter is also available (in color!) online at [www.orepa.org](http://www.orepa.org).

OREPA is a member of The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability Community Shares of Tennessee The Center for Nonprofit Management

OREPA  
P O Box 5743  
Oak Ridge, TN 37831  
[orep@earthlink.net](mailto:orep@earthlink.net)

**Dan Zak will be in Knoxville on Thursday, August 4, 7:00p.m. at the East Tennessee Historical Society to read from *Almighty*, meet the public and sign books. The event, sponsored by Knoxville’s independent bookseller, Union Avenue Books, in conjunction with the Friends of the Library, is free and open to the public. *Almighty* will be released on July 12 and will be available at Union Avenue Books.**

## Twenty Years On: The World Court and Nuclear Weapons

**ON JULY 8, 1996**, the International Court of Justice at the Hague, handed down a historic advisory opinion on the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

“It follows...that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law,” said the ruling, after the chief judge cast a tie-breaking vote.

The final finding of the court was unanimous, with all fifteen judges in agreement: “There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.”

Twenty years later, the nuclear weapons states maintain stockpiles of thousands of thermonuclear warheads and bombs, many on hair-trigger alert, balancing the entire planet on the brink of catastrophe.

OREPA will mark the twentieth anniversary of the court’s opinion with a public reading of the entire opinion on Sunday,

July 10, on the front lawn of the University of Tennessee Law School, beginning at 1:00pm. The public is invited to join us for the reading, and to take part.

OREPA first staged a public reading of the court’s opinion ten years ago. Coordinator Ralph Hutchison recalls, “We thought it was important to recognize the court’s finding, even if it meant three hours of reading a dry, legal document. To our surprise, we discovered the opinion of the court was compelling and powerful; it unfolded, step by step, the logic that led to its final conclusion, dispelling counter-arguments along the way.”

Following the court’s finding, the United Nations passed a resolution in December 1996 calling upon states to begin multilateral negotiations that would lead to a nuclear weapons convention and, ultimately, lay out a path to disarmament. Those negotiations have yet to commence.

Nuclear weapons are back in the courtroom in 2016, thanks to a lawsuit brought by the Marshall Islands in the International Court of Justice; hearings were held in March. You can follow the lawsuit, or sign a petition of support at [nuclearzero.org](http://nuclearzero.org).