

A Call to Action: Renewing the Call for Public Health Advocacy Against Nuclear Weapons

Scott Alan Baker, Terrence Clark, Bert Crain, Mary Olson, Lewis Patrie, Leslie Poplawski, Dot Sulock

To the Editor—As health care professionals struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic and witness the call for social and racial justice in our democracy, we should also remember that there is a much greater danger and potential for human suffering: the reality of a few people in nine nations holding hostage hundreds of millions of people with the threat of use of genocidal nuclear weapons. There could be no greater social injustice than if these weapons were ever accidentally or intentionally used.

President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's splendid accomplishments with their summits in the 1980s ended the Cold War and reduced nuclear weapons from over 70,000 to less than 14,000 [1]. In the last two decades, multiple factors have contributed to deteriorating international cooperation, and the science and security board of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has moved its universally recognized Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds to midnight, the closest it has ever been, even during the height of the Cold War.

The United States must lead the way on the path to nuclear abolition. The grace of public pressure by "we the people" can force our government to adopt less insane nuclear policy that will convince the authoritarian states that it is in their best interest to follow. The Trump administration increased the danger by withdrawing from one arms control treaty after another. The nuclear weapon states have tried to jeopardize the process of international democracy by pressuring nations not to ratify the United Nations 2017 TPNW-Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, which has become international law. Like chemical and biological weapons, the TPNW has stigmatized these satanic nuclear weapons.

Our civilization has once again arrived at a juncture where the struggle is no longer of ideologies or national destinies, but rather to prevent catastrophe. Nuclear weapons must be eliminated in the fullness of time by multigenerational trust-building. It is critical right now to reduce risk and stop the new arms race. There is a grassroots movement, Back from the Brink, created by Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) that is being endorsed by hundreds of organizations as well as municipal governments and state assemblies.

Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War

We call on the United States to lead a global effort to prevent nuclear war by:

1. Renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first
2. Ending the sole unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack
3. Taking US nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert
4. Cancelling the plan to replace the entire arsenal of the United States with enhanced weapons
5. Actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals

The time is now. Please join us. **NCMJ**

Scott Alan Baker, DMin retired pastor, United Methodist Church.

Terrence Clark, MD retired psychiatrist and chairman, Western North Carolina Physicians for Social Responsibility, Asheville, North Carolina.

Bert Crain, MD, FACEP retired emergency physician, Hickory, North Carolina.

Mary Olson, MA founder and director, Gender + Radiation Impact Project, Asheville, North Carolina.

Lew Patrie, MD retired psychiatrist, Asheville, North Carolina.

Leslie Poplawski freelance artist and poet, Asheville, North Carolina.

Dot Sulock, MS retired professor of mathematics, University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville, North Carolina.

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Address correspondence to Bert Crain, 5104 NC Hwy 10W, Hickory, NC 28602 (bertcrain@yahoo.com).

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