

## Activist Setsuko Thurlow accepts Nobel Peace Prize 2017

By Theresa Wolfwood

When the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, it was a wonderful surprise that it was given to a grass-roots organization working for peace among nations. It was even more wonderful that the group chose Setsuko Thurlow as one of two accepters of the award. Setsuko was never stopped working for nuclear disarmament and peace throughout her adult life. Buried in the rubble of her school in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, when she was thirteen, she believes she survived in order to prevent such a horror ever happening again.

I have known Setsuko for many years, meeting her first at a Women's peace meetings. I have followed her commitment with admiration ever since. In 2015, she came to Victoria to speak at a conference of Japanese Canadians. The banner I made many years ago with a cloth bearing the inscription on the Hiroshima memorial, a gift from Setsuko was displayed on the stage.

Setsuko was a valued advisor to the UN committee that negotiated the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the first multilateral legally-binding instrument for nuclear disarmament to have been negotiated in 20 years. She has given hundreds of speeches around the world, urging people and governments to abolish nuclear weapons.

In her closing words of her Nobel speech, Setsuko, remembering the words of the people who dug her out of the rubble of her school, who encouraged her to keep moving towards the light, said: **When I was a 13-year-old girl, trapped in the smouldering rubble, I kept pushing. I kept moving toward the light. And I survived. Our light now is the ban treaty. To all in this hall and all listening around the world, I repeat those words that I heard called to me in the ruins of Hiroshima: "Don't give up! Keep pushing! See the light? Crawl towards it."**

**Tonight, as we march through the streets of Oslo with torches aflame, let us follow each other out of the dark night of nuclear terror. No matter what obstacles we face, we will keep moving and keep pushing and keep sharing this light with others. This is our passion and commitment for our one precious world to survive.**

To free ourselves from a fear-based culture of war and violence, we can heed Setsuko's words, follow her example and commit ourselves with constant passion to human survival and just peace. She will always be a hero for me.



*Photos: At the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony with the award, giving her speech, in Victoria in 2015*

The acceptance speeches by Beatrice Fihn and Setsuko may be found at:

[https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2017/ican-lecture\\_en.html](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2017/ican-lecture_en.html)

An excellent article about Setsuko and her life can be read at:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/hiroshima/article35881700/>