Xiye Bastida

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Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for making this space for me to be here today. I thank all of you for listening to this very important topic.

My name is Xiye Bastida, and I’m an 18-year-old climate justice activist. I have been working in the climate justice space for about one year now at the level of national and international organizing. I organized the September 20th Climate Strike in New York City, which brought over 300,000 people to the streets. And I’m now working on turning all the campaigns digital.

Something about me is that I was born in Mexico, and I was raised as part of the Otomi-Toltec indigenous philosophy and indigenous peoples. My parents told me when I was growing up that “You know, indigenous philosophy is important because it says we take care of the earth because the earth takes care of us. We have to be reciprocal; we have to give what we take.” And that thinking is what has guided me through all of my climate justice activism.

For me, what that means in terms of nuclear weapons is this: I think that the reason for humans to feel that they need to have this type of power, because nuclear weapons translate to the power that you can have. It’s a type of unhealthy power. For me, what healthy power means is the interconnectedness that nature shows us. So, if you look at the planet all the ecosystems are balanced. And that is the power of nature. We humans have desensitized ourselves from the power that we could have with nature, that positive type of power. Instead we have resorted to threatening and destroying ourselves, which is not only going to affect our environment if we keep on the route of fossil fuels but also the civilizations if we keep on the route of using of nuclear weapons.

In terms of the environmental effects of nuclear weapons, as I assume a lot you can imagine - it would be too devastating. As for welfare , what are the prices of contamination not only radioactivity, but also pathogenic bacterial viruses? What this time shows us, the time of corona virus pandemic, is that we cannot afford to have a system that doesn’t treat people who are sick right away to avoid a pandemic. And in a scenario of nuclear deterrence, these would be exacerbated as we have heard before. Sewage treatment and waste disposal facilities will have almost completely disappeared. We will lose a lot of the stability of our society.

A lot of my work is in climate activism - most of it centers around justice. Justice for communities that are the most affected by the climate crisis. From my communities, such as indigenous communities, Black and Brown communities, in spaces like New York City, where I am right now, in which 17% of those with asthma are in Bronx, which is 10% higher than the national average.

For me, what that means is that climate justice means social justice in a lot of senses. Not only in the ways that you can most actively know what race a group people is, depending on whether or not they are close to a fossil fuel industrial plant or something like that. I think that when we get into such a complex like nuclear complex, obviously the most affected people are going to be from our communities. It’s going to exacerbate the social gap, the social instability in our systems.

If I am trying to prevent the climate crisis to do those kinds of things on our society, I also have to pay attention to the other problems that could cause instability in our society; This is why I have decided to come here and talk to you from the perspectives of youth, who are worried about the instability that may arise from a crisis like this.

And there are lot of statistics as we have heard today, such as that the ozone layer will be depleted by 40% in most of the world and up to 70% in the poles. This would cause dramatic environmental effects as well as dramatic social effects. The same as always: those with money and power will be the ones who may be able to run away from this crisis for a short time.

Just going back on the topic of why I interconnect this with climate justice, it’s because the reason why we are in a climate catastrophe is because of the greed, and because of the insensitivity that a lot of us humans have put into the system, corruption. And that ties in with why we are also wanting to have weapons of mass destruction to show the power that a lot of people want to have.

So, my message for this panel of people from all around the world who are watching us, is that the youth obviously want to see a better future for ourselves and for all of us and our planet, not only in the sense of climate justice but also in the sense of security from the anxiety that comes from the possibility of a nuclear war. Because we are trying to fight so hard for climate justice, because of the things that might happen to the world, and because of everything that is going on, we also need to be part of this conversation to protect the world. We want to protect the future. We want to protect you. And we want you to protect us. This has to be an intergenerational conversation, now more than ever. I think that it also shows that our conversations have to be intergenerational, because we are at a tipping point, in which my generation is going to be the most affected by the actions that adults take.

With that, I want to thank all the panelists who have already spoken and all the ones who are going to come on, because I’m learning a lot, and I know I still have more to learn. But I wanted to bring my perspective from the climate justice perspective. Thank you.