**Staying With The Question**

01: Atomic Memory

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<https://www.ou.edu/cas/history/people/faculty/elyssa-faison>

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**Transcript**

Edited by Anna Reser

**Jennifer Hayden**

Okay, so how do you want to start, want to start right now? And just start walking around, recording? What would you like do do?

**Anna Reser**

Yeah, if I could just get a level really quick to make sure we got like a good audio quality.

**Kim Marshall**

That's our producer Anna, on a tour of the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**Anna Reser**

Just say your name and your title.

**Jennifer Hayden**

So Jennifer Hayden, Deputy Director for the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History.

**Kim Marshall**

Museums like this educate the public about the development of nuclear science, the atomic bomb, and nuclear energy. But in their narratives about this history, what stories do museums like this one tell? And what did they leave out?

The world's first atomic bomb was tested in White Sands, New Mexico in 1945. And we have a replica of the Trinity tower in our Outdoor Heritage Park, which is the nine acre outdoor exhibit area. And with that, we have it in here a partial replica here just to show as the gadget was being lifted up to be tested, and we can talk a little bit more about that. We do have trinitite on display. And we actually do sell that in the museum gift store as well. But Trinity was what was created when the world's first atomic blast happened in White Sands, New Mexico, the blast, the heat of the blast was so hot on the white sands of New Mexico that it created a layer of green glass, and they ended up calling that trinitite right. So we have some of that actually on display over here. Our Hiroshima and Nagasaki exhibit is something that is beautiful. It tells about really what happened as far as the Fat Man and Little Boy ending World War Two.

**Kim Marshall**

This is Staying With The Question, a podcast that spotlights critical inquiry as part of research and creative activity in the humanities and the arts. I'm Kim Marshall, director of the Arts and Humanities Forum at the University of Oklahoma. In each episode will give you an exclusive window into questions that scholars and creators at the University of Oklahoma are asking about the ideas that shape our world. In today's episode, we're asking scholars in the nuclear humanities at the University of Oklahoma, about our memory of the Atomic Age, and how it shapes the world we still live in. What is atomic memory? In staying with this question, I spoke to Dr. Alison fields, associate professor of art history and Carver Professor of Art of the American West at the University of Oklahoma.

**Alison Fields**

Well, thank you so much, Kim for featuring my book and Andrew for helping me get set up.

**Kim Marshall**

Alison is an expert in the emerging area of nuclear humanities, which she describes as an interdisciplinary field that focuses on reimagining nuclear legacies and thinking deeply about the problems of nuclear harm. Alison has been interested in atomic memory and the inherent contradictions of representing something so simultaneously wonderous and horrifying for a long time.

**Alison Fields**

This actually started with a course that I took in graduate school, it was called The Atomic Bomb: Los Alamos to Hiroshima. And it was taught by Gerald Wizner and I was actually coming from an American Studies background. So maybe that explains some of the diversity of forms that I that I looked at, but he suggested that I write a research paper about the Hiroshima Maidens, which are a group of young women injured by the bombing who traveled from Hiroshima to New York City for reconstructive plastic surgery in 1955. And just thought that this was this was so interesting that there's an American effort to provide plastic surgery to young women who are injured by American technology in the first place in order to showcase American benevolence and return the women to quote unquote, normal, and that this just overlooked the kind of permanent scarring and internal transformation that the women had gone through as a result of the bombing. And just working on that project really prompted me to think about these public attempts for healing and closure after after trauma, and how they don't often reflect the ongoing realities of individuals.

**Kim Marshall**

This interest led her to a lot of different projects as a scholar. Most recently, she's published a book called Discordant Memories: Atomic Age Narratives and Visual Culture. In this book, she spends a lot of time thinking about the ways we memorialize the Atomic Age, the problems within that memorialization and the ways we could remember better.

**Alison Fields**

In my book, I argue that the history of developing and deploying the atomic bombs in the United States and Japan has been marked by what I call efforts to visually contain the trauma of the bombings. And I suggest that experiences of atomic trauma are ongoing, and that the memories that they evoke can never be truly settled or contained. And I recognize that nuclear legacies are are global in scope, but Discordant Memories focuses on sites in the American Southwest and in Japan, where the bombs were first created and used and are centrally positioned in atomic memory. I look at how national narratives in these two countries have determined how the bombs are remembered. And just to speak really broadly, American memories of the bombing emphasized victory and war and scientific achievement, while Japanese remembrance is consolidated around understandings of global peace. And I highlight a number of case studies that I think show the complexity of atomic memory. They include the atomic bomb-scarred bodies of the Hiroshima maidens, the Bradbury Science Museum in Los Alamos, New Mexico, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Japan, that works of filmmakers Shinpei Takeda and Linda Hoaglund, atomic photographers, Patrick Nakatani, and Carolel Gallagher, and artists Will Wilson and Nanobah Becker and taken together I think these sites indicate how public memories of the atomic bomb take shape on human forms and physical spaces and across time.

**Kim Marshall**

Atomic technology was developed during the Second World War when American scientists based in the US southwest working on the secret Manhattan Project were able to use technological innovation to weaponize atomic fission. On August 6 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped by US forces on the industrial city of Hiroshima, Japan. On August 9, the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The bombings killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people, most of whom were civilians. On August 15, the Emperor of Japan surrendered bringing an end to the Second World War. Because of this history, according to Alison, one of the first discordant problems in the ways that the Atomic Age is remembered, is that what those bombs mean today is different depending on who you are, and where you're from.

**Alison Fields**

I think that the museums in New Mexico and Japan are probably the starkest contrast, and these kind of fix linear narratives about the bombings, one really here in the US really highlighting, you know, the scientific achievement of creating these weapons. And in Japan, really focusing on the on the ground impacts, the human impacts, which you really don't see don't see in the museums in New Mexico.

**Kim Marshall**

Alison emphasizes that the main difference we see between museums in the US and museums in Japan is that the ones in the US tend to tell a pretty celebratory narrative of technological progress, whereas those in Japan try to tell a more human story.

**Alison Fields**

So I do I mean, I do look at the National Museum and Albuquerque as well. But I felt like the strongest kind of sharpest contrast was really between the Bradbury Museum and the Hiroshima Museum. And the museums and Nagasaki and Albuquerque, I felt like played played similar roles in supporting those narratives, but maybe weren't quite as quite as sharp, I guess in the in the contrast. So the Bradbury Science Museum is the the public arm of Los Alamos National Laboratory. And it's a smaller museum, about 100,000 people a year would would go to that museum versus right, a much, much larger audience in Hiroshima. And the Bradbury Museum is organized into history gallery, a research gallery, and a defense gallery. And there's a really clear narrative in the Bradbury Science Museum supporting the goals of the of the laboratory, and really stressing the importance of maintaining a reliable nuclear weapons that could serve as a deterrent from from attack. Whereas in Hiroshima, there, there actually was a newer wing added in the 90s. Because people critique that there was not enough kind of context around around the narrative that was presented. But kind of the central narrative, I would say, starts with the moment of the bombing and traces individual, individual stories, especially if you're listening to the to the audio guide. And then you're seeing artifacts like the carbonized lunchbox, the tricycle that was buried in a yard, these kind of famous artifacts, and then listening to the stories about, you know, what it would have been like to, for a child, how far they were, like kind of tracing the experience of individual survivors how far they were from the hypocenter, how people would be recovered, and it might be because they had their name inside of a tag on a hat or something, or something like that. So just immediately kind of starting with the human impact on the ground. Now, there's additional information that kind of sets up this was what was happening in wartime that these were the decisions that play and in dropping the bombs and leads you up more to that experience of that kind of on the on the ground moment.

**Kim Marshall**

But that's not where the discordant nature of atomic memory ends for Alison. As she points out, throughout her book, museums have trouble containing the power of atomic narratives no matter where they are. In her book, Alison writes, "Although monuments are constructed to provide a resolution of the past in physical form, they often have the effect of freezing memories in time and reinforcing official narratives of healing and closure. Often, this form of remembrance does not acknowledge the ongoing nature of trauma, and the complicated and sometimes suppressed testimonies of individual survivors." So as a visual historian, Alison studies alternative ways in which visual artists have memorialized the Atomic Age.

Yeah, there's a I just wrote, had an article published in the journal Religions, which is a little outside but but I highlight the work of artists, Eric Berger, and Mary Quito. And they've imagined this system for nuclear storage as a shared personal responsibility. And they have, they've proposed the system called, that's part of Open Care project they did in 2016. And envision nuclear waste being encased in these steel pellets mounted on a bronze disc, and a series of artifacts and instructions that assist with helping determine continued toxicity. And the idea was that there's this kind of this disc with these waste pellets and those instructions would be passed down over generations. And they try to envision the steep nuclear future that requires continued personal management and care. So this is not like them creating an actual blueprint, although they say there's like elements that are workable, but that it's like a way to visualize this shared social responsibility. You know, they especially talk about visualizing the debt that we place on the future. And just to make a problem that is like that's of immense size and timescale be something that we can see and understand.

**Kim Marshall**

One artist she features is Shinpei Takeda, who helps us think about the ways in which hearing traumatic stories has an emotional impact on the listener, an impact that only decays slowly over time, much like atomic half life.

**Alison Fields**

Okay, yeah, to talk about. I mean, I do feel like one of the best examples of what I'm trying to convey in my work is, is can be seen in the work of Shinpei Takeda, and he's a Japanese filmmaker, an artist that's based in Mexico and Germany. And he had this 2010 documentary, Hiroshima Nagasaki Download, where he travels with a friend from Canada to Mexico, and he interviews 18 atomic bomb survivors who lived on the west coast of North, I'm sorry, of North America. And so this documentary is part of a much bigger database that he has created doing interviews with bombing survivors in the Americas. And the project is something that documents voices that are usually usually I would say, peripheral or not included in discussions of the bombings. And so kind of in some ways, he is trying to get these voices on the margins, that maybe wouldn't be featured as much in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the museums there. And then the other thing that he's really doing is thinking about the impact of being a listener to this trauma and like, what do you do when you're just like hearing these terrible stories over and over and over? And how does that impact you? And he sort of becomes a witness right to these narratives? And how do you carry that, especially when you haven't experienced that? So what he does that I think is so interesting, in 2015, he had an exhibit called Anti-Monument at the Nagasaki Art Museum that addressed what he called the residue of listening to so many difficult testimonies. And he had works from his Alpha Decay series, which he would take the voiceprints of survivors, so actually, like the literal voice prints of these interviews that he did, and hang them on large panels, and you'd hear all of the testimony is playing at once just commenting on how difficult it is to make sense and just how, like, impactful it is to hear all of these stories. And he also showed work from his Beta Decay series, which features these, this huge string sculpture. And so, as you asked about an alternative, the structure has these soft, flexible materials that counter the the more solid materials that you would see the concrete and metal of the Peace Parks. There's a multitude of string representing a multitude of individual experiences of the bombing. And just to think about Anti-Monument, really not as a rejection of monuments. It's not saying that these spaces of memory are bad, but just to try to think about, like, how can you talk in a way that's more comprehend serve to think about the challenges of witnessing. And again, just how do you think about these these memories now and what way were they carried forward?

Traumatic narratives are leaky. But atomic memory has other kinds of leakage as well, especially when it comes to the dangers posed to the communities surrounding nuclear testing, and the ways that those dangers were downplayed or covered up for decades. So in the book, Alison also features the work of the Atomic Photographers Guild, a group of artists who have spent decades documenting the impact of nuclear testing, especially in the US southwest.

**Alison Fields**

I mean, I think a broad theme to consider is censorship, and just how, how so many things are kept from being visible. And so thinking about the Atomic Photographers Guild, for instance, is one of the one of the topics that I look at, it's kind of a group of international photographers who are trying to make these histories and these legacies visible in ways that have often been suppressed.

**Kim Marshall**

But Alison shows that artists don't just think about atomic memory as a project of the past or of the present. Some are thinking through the implications of nuclear proliferation as a way to imagine alternative futures as well.

**Alison Fields**

I think the other work that I would highlight would be the work of Navajo photographer Will Wilson, his series of artworks Auto Immune Response, which he started back in 2005, and is ongoing. And his series references the toxic consequences of uranium mining on the Navajo Nation, prompted by the arms race, post World War Two, and just constructs this post apocalyptic future. And so I feel like he is looking at kind of this really difficult legacy, but is ultimately posing a vision of of growth and revitalization. And so he works with these large format digitally altered photographs. And he kind of features himself photographs himself in a gas mask navigating these beautiful but contaminated surroundings. And he pairs that in his exhibitions with installations of a hogan greenhouse with weavings and videos. And just the thing that although it's an apocalyptic narrative, his work again, is really stressing the continuation of indigenous foodways. He's focused on food that's it found in particular areas where he does these different exhibitions, and just the the tools that are needed for cultural survival, going to the boundaries of the Navajo Nation, engaging in cultural practices. And that just even in the midst of environmental disaster, there's this opportunity for kind of growth and continuation.

**Kim Marshall**

In Alison's work. She highlights that for many people, atomic memory is traumatic memory, because atomic technology was experienced by everyday people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as trauma. And so art and literature play a part in bearing witness to that trauma.

Yeah, yeah. So, I mean, I would think, again, it's, if you have right an expectation of safety and security, it's the kind of think of traumas, the moments when that's just really, really ruptured or interrupted, think of trauma is something that can, it occurs on human bodies. As a result of physical injury, it can be understood as a psychological occurrence, an emotional injury after something that was extremely stressful or life threatening, and then to also think a lot about collective trauma. When you're experiencing those types of severe injuries on a group or even national scale, and that collective trauma--there's many theorists have written about this--often has the effect of redefining or reinforcing group identities and opening up new courses for political or cultural action. And so the bombings in Japan I think, created, as you've described as a really unprecedented collective trauma. It just an experience that's so overwhelming, that couldn't really be understood in the moment it happened, and meaning is only assigned later. And that idea of serving as a witness is something that I really just focus on quite a bit through my book. That firsthand, witnesses find themselves in this really unique position where they can speak of their experience. But for a lot of reasons might be reluctant to do that. And for many, those stories feel unspeakable. They're just too horrific to put into language. And in the case of the atomic bombings, with no comparable event on record, that survivors really struggled with the limits of language with cliches with appropriate figures of speech just tried to describe the ordeal.

**Kim Marshall**

Normalcy was disrupted in a major way for survivors of the atomic bombings. But the trauma inherent in survivor narratives can also conflict with how atomic memories are curated by official institutions.

**Alison Fields**

And then alternatively, when you have public speakers or public figures that are speaking about trauma, a lot of times there's this reliance on like terms like healing and reconciliation and unity and closure. And that, you know, those can all have positive effects, but it can fall short and addressing the act of grief that is more realistic after mass trauma. And just, I think one of the major tensions is kind of between these public efforts to manage and contain incidents of trauma, just not always lining up with individual memories of the same events. So the work that I'm analyzing in my book project tries to demonstrate those divisions in memory as well as just thinking about like, what are the limits and possibilities of sort of serving as a witness after after trauma.

**Kim Marshall**

And she asks us to keep in mind that what we learn about the Atomic Age at museums and other curated spaces necessarily oversimplifies the experience of nuclear trauma. But artists, they give us a way to appreciate that complexity.

**Alison Fields**

I mean, I think there's a whole range of ways that public rhetoric, media, film, museum exhibitions all have the capacity to solidify certain narratives about nuclear weapons. Censorship certainly plays a role in keeping counter narratives from emerging. So I, I'm just really interested in the contributions of artists in thinking about what are the what are the ways to kind of provide provide alternatives that to help us think about just the malleability of memory and its continuation. And so in an interview I did with Will Wilson a few years back, I remember him saying that artists can really help us visualize complex problems in ways that others cannot, and just can be really critical in finding creative solutions to difficult problems.

**Kim Marshall**

One of the most important lessons from Alison's work is that official memorialization practices are not always well suited to capture ongoing experiences of memory, grief and trauma. museums and memorials render the past as just that something that happened and isn't happening anymore. The way artists challenge this closing off of the narrative offers us new ways to think about how the past, present and even the future are all intertwined. We remember in other ways too. Smaller, more intimate ways. An exchange in the classroom, a half-recalled book from childhood, a slogan, an icon, a symbol, a training film. We wanted to get a sense of these, let's call them memory materials. And so we talked to Dr. Elyssa Faison. Dr. Faison is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Oklahoma and currently chair of the history department. She is an historian of modern Japan, and her first book focused on Japanese women's labor in the cotton and silk mills of the early 20th century, which was an important industry for fueling Japan's rise as a capitalist power. Her current interest in atomic memory in Japan grew out of teaching that she does at American military institutions around the world in partnership with the OU. In one of her courses on memories of the atomic bomb. She became interested in how her students reacted to a set of films that she shows.

**Archive Audio**

From the incident up at first blast until Hiroshima vanished from the list of living cities closely guarded plants in New Mexico, Tennessee and the state of Washington continued their work to shorten the war.

**Kim Marshall**

Both of the films are based upon footage taken by Japanese filmmaker Akira Iwasaki in the wake of the bombings, but seized by American forces during the American occupation of Japan after the war.

**Archive Audio**

21 days after the New Mexico dress rehearsal a lone B-29 was over Hiroshima, carrying an atomic bomb.

**Elyssa Faison**

I'm really fascinated by those two films because one of the films you've showed which is produced by the Department of Defense in 1946, right after the war, right after the bombs had been dropped, she said we're still showing that as training film. And I was amazed. So if you don't mind, I'm going to describe to you these two films, because it's quite fascinating. I juxtapose them very intentionally. And even though the two films were not related in terms of who produced them, or or certainly not the reasons for which they were produced. They follow of a parallel structure each of them is 15 minutes long in black and white, because that's when that's the kind of footage that was taken of Hiroshima and Nagasaki right after the events for the most part. Each of them is split into two halves, the Hiroshima half and the Nagasaki half. Each of them starts each of those two sections Hiroshima and Nagasaki with an image, a moving image of an explosion and a mushroom cloud.

**Archive Audio**

Etched in stone Baisha what was the Russell Japanese war memorial are telltale lime atomic handwriting for all to read.

**Kim Marshall**

The second film was produced by the American military for the American military, and it's listed as a training film

**Elyssa Faison**

It actually shows some of the exact same footage of landscape and buildings, right, because they're, you know, they're using, they're using the footage that Iwasaki and his crew had, but then they're interspersing it with American military personnel. Sometimes you'll see a guy standing and kind of pointing towards certain shadows that have been cast on concrete or in other cases, there is a school where you can see that the windows have been blown in on one end and out on the other side and the other end, so you will see some human beings, they're mostly there to demonstrate A) that roads are still passable, which is a hugely important thing for militaries to know if you're sending a bunch of young soldiers in they want to know that they'll be able to do their job and get around move around.

**Archive Audio**

Roads in the area fared better than buildings or bridges. Shortly after the fires died down and traffic was resumed. Today these highways through the ruins are again in use. Beside our military traffic trudge the survivors of vanished Hiroshima, the first city in history to be atom-bombed into oblivion.

**Elyssa Faison**

There is some very intentional discussion in that American training film, that there have been some reports of, of radiation and other harmful effects. But really, we don't think any of that is is to worry about. Yeah, and it's got very light hearted music.

**Kim Marshall**

However, when Alyssa shows that film to her students, she pairs it with another film, a documentary from the 1970s that uses the same raw archival footage, but in a very different way.

**Elyssa Faison**

Anti nuclear movement that that had been growing since the mid 1950s. So these Columbia scholars and filmmakers were part of that group. And the the parts of the original Japanese footage of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that they were most interested in were those sections that showed the actual human toll, especially the medical effects. What did people and bodies look like in the immediate aftermath? What did it look like for people not only to ... to have been exposed to a bomb blast, but then to have been exposed to such large doses of radiation. And that was what the filmmakers at Columbia were interested in. So they produce this film that that shows a bit of both, but certainly shows the devastation of landscape and buildings, most of which didn't exist anymore, there were just a couple of skeleton frames of things here and there. And even those that remain tended to be larger concrete structures. But they also had a lot of very difficult to view footage of, of humans that were suffering and had had really horrible effects of both radiation and bomb blast and burns. Neither one is more true than the other. They just have different audiences and different effects.

**Kim Marshall**

In this way, we see that memory of the nuclear bombs is curated for American audiences, in the reassuring film of the military training video as well as in the disturbing human imagery of the anti-nucular peace movement. And as she says, neither is more true than the other. They just have different audiences and different effects. Although she did add that one important detail in the military training video, the one still shown to Air Force personnel, is incorrect. That film assures us troops even today that the bombs were detonated in the air above Hiroshima and Nagasaki so that any residual nuclear radiation would dissipate in the air.

**Elyssa Faison**

The radiation all got done dissipated up into the air so you don't have to worry about it being on the ground hurting? Um, well, first of all, not really, because that was utterly not true. No, the reason they were detonated where they were up at that height was because it would compound the the percussive effects on the ground and, and actually create more more damage on the ground, it had nothing to do with any calculation about radiation dissipation, that was not a concern. But it might be nice to believe that if you're an American soldier going into that zone.

**Kim Marshall**

Seeing a film in class seems like a pretty straightforward way to learn about the history of the atomic bomb. But what about the little material memory that you carry around with you? Elyssa told me about some remarkable objects that prompted her to start asking even deeper questions about the narratives we construct to remember the atomic age.

**Elyssa Faison**

It was an Air Force lieutenant in the nuclear division, gave me a challenge coin, which I have in my hand here. And for those who are not aware challenge coins, people who are in the military or military-adjacent will know this, but they are special coins that are made, either for individuals or units within the military. If it's an individual, it might be say, for example, a general who will have a certain kind of challenge coin made, it might say his name and rank and have some sort of a slogan or image on it. And it can be given away to, at his discretion to friends or to a subordinate, who's done a good job, and he wants to reward and say "here have a coin." Sometimes they are also made, as in this case, for a unit. So people in that unit will carry them around and trade them with people and other units. Apparently there are drinking games involved in all sorts of things like that.

**Kim Marshall**

Elyssa shows me the coin. It's a heavy golden coin, about the size of a silver dollar. On one side, it has an abstract design of an atom with the words "USA Nuclear Weapons, Established 1945."

**Elyssa Faison**

The flip side of this is what really fascinated me. It shows a mushroom cloud on a blue background. And this was what really got me on the top, I just read it. Yeah, on the top, it says "Made in America." And on the bottom, it says "Tested in Japan." And I just thought I hope you're not showing this to people in Japan when and if you visit there. It is so clearly a vision of nuclear weapons that could could only be held by the folks who are are not on the receiving end of them.

**Kim Marshall**

Elyssa's work is about the ways that memory, memorialization, activism and perspectives about nuclear technology are really dependent on context. Whether you're a young Air Force lieutenant, starting a career in the nuclear field, or descendent of the victims and survivors of the bombing, it matters who you are, where you are, when you build your memories. And it matters what tools you use to build them.

**Elyssa Faison**

The other critical thing about that is that all of this is happening, both the development of different sets of memories about the atomic bombs, but also even in, as you've just referenced, collaborations between American and Japanese anti-nuclear activists, and there were quite a large number of collaborations, there continue to be. But even then, there are these underlying tensions that all stem from the Cold War and post cold war relationship between the United States and Japan. To me one of the most fascinating and jarring ways we see this is in the story of Sasaki Sadako, who was a very young girl at the time of the explosions in 1945. And she survived. She was a Hiroshima resident. She survived the bombs, but like many children and adults who were close to ground zero and who survived, she ended up with leukemia and died from radiation-induced leukemia.

**Kim Marshall**

Sadako was 12 at the time, and she was one of 62,000 here Shima residents who died of radiation poisoning and radiation induced cancer caused by the nuclear bomb.

**Elyssa Faison**

but Sasaki Sadako became famous for a couple of reasons. One is that there were some local anti nuclear and peace activists in Japan who decided to celebrate her. Her classmates had come out in support of her while she was dying of leukemia in the hospital. Everyone was kind of cheering her on to try to push through and and survive this horrible disease. And while she was in the hospital, she folded little miniature paper cranes, which is a symbol, they are those paper cranes, the crane in general is a symbol of long life and so it was undoubtedly a way for her to pass the time in the hospital, but it was also a kind of hopeful symbol of I'm going to get through this. And her goal was to fold 1000 of them. She didn't quite make it that far. But her classmates ended up folding the remainder. I think she got to 644 or something like that. And her classmates folded the rest for her. And there was such a big outpouring on her behalf in her local community at her school, and then by an anti nuclear activist in the community. A Japanese a Japanese man named Kawamoto Ichiro and he spearheaded this movement to create a statue that was built in Sadako's image and in her memory, but was meant to stand for all of the children who had been victims of the atomic bombs and that statue currently stands and is regularly visited in Hiroshima Peace Park.

**Kim Marshall**

The paper crane has become a generalized symbol for peace, hope, unity, in ways that really depart from Sadako's story. Elyssa found paper cranes and Sadako and unlikely places, like the Oklahoma City bombing Memorial.

**Elyssa Faison**

The very last thing that you used to see before you exited the museum exhibits was a small display case with an even smaller folded paper crane in it. And text that I'm going to have to paraphrase because I don't have it right in front of me that described the story of Sasaki Sadako. But here's how it described her-- Sasaki Sadako was a young Japanese girl who was dying of leukemia. She engaged in this activity of folding paper cranes. And this was essentially an expression of hope, which is what we should all have. There was no mention anywhere, anywhere, that Sadako's leukemia was caused by the atomic bombs. And of course, how could you really in a museum dedicated to remembering the lives lost in Oklahoma City to a horrific bombing? How could you then really turn around and talk about an American instance of dropping a bomb on a civilian population and killing hundreds of 1000s? That would be a little difficult. So then why is it there in the first place? Yeah, no good question. And the reason is that right after the bombing, in 1995, as they were clearing the debris from the Murrah building there was a chain link fence that went around the area which is a portion of which has been preserved it's still there today. And as you will know, people bring they did at the time and they still do bring mementos remembrances, teddy bears, flowers, and paper cranes. And what started happening was school teachers from across the country and across the world, influenced by their, their and their students reading of that book by Eleanor Coerr on Sasaki Sadako, started having their classes make strings of paper cranes and sending them into Oklahoma City. So that paper crane kind of became a symbol of like a wish for peace. A hope and hope really, it's about peace. It's about hope is I'd say actually, it's less about peace. Yeah, I'd say it's more about hope and resilience, and coming together in the face of pain and tragedy. But that wasn't what it was original [crosstalk] local context when that becomes a universal license symbol. Exactly. Yeah, exactly. Exactly right.

**Kim Marshall**

In exploring these questions of memories, and tracing the objects that shaped them, Elyssa's work prompts us to ask questions about the nature of history itself, and the sources that we use to tell stories about the past. Just like museum exhibits, everyday objects, like the coin, and the crane can tell us a lot about the personal and intimate relationships that people have with memory, grief, trauma, and memorialization. And they encourage us to follow questions about who tells the stories, where and how. And for what reason.

**Jennifer Hayden**

Our Hiroshima and Nagasaki exhibit is something that is beautiful. It tells about really what happened as far as the Fat Man and Little Boy ending World War Two. We work collaboratively with a lot of groups in Albuquerque and we have the 1000 origami cranes that were created by elementary and middle school students of Albuquerque Public School District last year. So they all came together and they folded 1000 cranes to recreate the story of the young woman who was very, very ill after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and she was told if she folded 1000 cranes successfully then she would be granted one wish. And she did pass away before she created those but this was something we were hoping to bring in ... art into the museum and working with the APS kiddos. It was just lovely to do. I think that's one of the prettiest parts of the museum. It's beautiful.

**Kim Marshall**

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