



**ENERGY ISSUES**

# Fukushima Commemoration at Indian Point



By **ABBY LUBY**

BUCHANAN, NY -- Last week hundreds of people gathered in front of the gates of the Indian Point nuclear power plant to commemorate the one year anniversary of the nuclear catastrophe at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi plants, one of the worst nuclear accidents since Chernobyl in 1986. Events marking the Fukushima disaster took place across the globe to honor those whose lives were lost and to reaffirm the dangers of nuclear power.

The ceremony at Indian Point opened with a moment of silence at exactly 3:36 pm, the time when the Japanese plants and thousands of residents living near the plant succumbed to a level 9.0 earthquake, followed by a towering tsunami that tore through the Fukushima reactors, eventually causing meltdowns and widespread radioactive contamination.

In a disturbing testimonial by Noriyuki Kitajima, a Japanese Laborer and Union Organizer who helped workers clean up the contaminated Fukushima plants, people had the rare opportunity to hear first hand exactly what it was like trying to survive. Kitajima, speaking through translator Professor Akiva Murakami of Akito University, told a stunned crowd that when he started working at Fukushima Dai-ichi last September, he measured radioactivity from workers returning from highly contaminated areas and he helped



*Fukushima Commemorators at Indian Point*



*Fukushima Commemorators at Indian Point*

them take off their contaminated clothing at the end of their shift.

"The highest level I found were 2 mSV after working two hours. This is very high. The maximum for the year is 20 mSV. The government has raised the maximum to 100 because of the emergency. Once workers have reached this level



*Redwing Blackbird Theater performing in English and Japanese at the Fukushima Commemoration at Indian Point*

of exposure, they can no longer work at the plant for the next four years. What happens to these people? They are disposable. They are cast out without any benefits without any thought to their welfare. No medical care, no job, no future. The government overlooks them. I am not. I am working for benefits for them after they leave the plant. It is only fair. I want to change this inhuman condition for my colleagues."

Mark Jacobs, one of the founding members of the Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition (IPSEC), the key group who organized the event, addressed the crowd. "Today we join with people in New York City and people around the world who mourn thousands of lives lost in a radiological catastrophe that goes on to this day."

Veteran anti nuke protester Connie Hog-



*Peacewalkers at the Fukushima Commemoration at Indian Point*

arth of the Connie Hogarth Center for Social Action recalled how she started the anti Indian Point movement in 1972. "Back then we had a shopping list of problems with Indian Point. Then Three Mile Island happened." Hogarth told of demonstrations called "Die-Ins" held at the former gates of Indian Point to represent those killed at TMI. "That [anti Indian Point] energy has sustained for 40 years," she said.

Jacobs thanked his colleagues Marilyn Elie and Gary Shaw also of the IPSEC who were key in organizing "Fukushima Week," a week long series of events leading up to the commemoration. IPSEC and other anti nuclear organizations brought together Japanese experts and Fukushima residents with First Responders at Manhattanville College and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Shaw said "Indian Point is not necessary, even when its running in the so-called 'safe mode.'" The three counties surrounding Indian Point have some of the highest rates of thyroid cancer."

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**Children of singer songwriter Dar Williams: Steve Robinson, 7, and Taya 3, held hand made paper cranes to be sent air borne at the rally. Williams is part of a group called Nuclear Safety Now.**



**Redwing Blackbird Theater performing in English and Japanese at the Fukushima Commemorations at Indian Point**

Radio host Gary Null warned of mainstream media outlets who were perpetrating wrong information about nuclear power.

"Official media represents the ideology of the networks – if the NRC (Nuclear Regulatory Commission) says nuclear power is safe, then the media says it's safe. It's a well-known fact that the 50,000 infant deaths caused by Three Mile Island was covered up. The truth will never come out."

Other speakers included Manna Jo Greene of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater and Phillip Musegaas of Riverkeeper. "Fukushima Week" was able to bring from Japan experts and people from Fukushima and connect them with first responders at a special conference. The week also saw the Japanese guests holding several press conferences, one with the Physicians for Social Responsibility. Testimonies throughout the week



**Connie Hogarth at the Fukushima Commemoration at Indian Point**

were as alarming as Kitajima's; the public was told of a spike in suicides among residents living in the Fukushima area, for a week after the earthquake and tsunami, Tokyo didn't sell food or water for a week. Many animals were abandoned animals and many ancient landmarks were wiped out. Thousands are still not allowed to go back to their homes and the refugee center set up cardboard walls to separate some 2500 people living there.

Fukushima Week also included a Silent Vigil – one that has been ongoing for the past year in Yorktown on Route 202 across from BJ's. Before last week's commemoration, a group of Peace Walkers started out at Zucotti Park near Wall Street and walked to the George Washington Bridge and before the March 11 commemoration, "No More Fukushima's Peace Walkers" were led by Bhuddist Nun Jun-san Yasuda from Croton-on-Hudson. Jun-san is from the Grafton Peace Pavilion and is well known for her walks for peace around the world. A post commemoration event was a Pot Luck that features music, poetry,



**Noriyuki Kitajima from Fukushima at the Fukushima Commemoration at Indian Point**

and speakers, including singer songwriter Dar Williams, Dan Einbender, and the Rivertown Kids, James Durst, Hope Machine, Lydia Adams Davis, Sarah Underhill, Roland Moussa, Taeko Fukao, and Raging Grannies.

To date, all but two of Japan's 54 commercial reactors have gone offline since the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The two remaining reactors are expected to be taken offline in the next few months. Kitajima said the country might use more gas or fossil fuel.

"In the long run we will use renewables and have a clean and green grid and sustain our living standards," he said. "If we can do it in Japan, you can do it here. Say good bye to nuclear power and close Indian Point!"

*Abby Luby is a Westchester based, freelance journalist who writes local news, about environmental issues, art, entertainment and food. Her debut novel, "Nuclear Romance" was recently published. Visit the book's website, <http://nuclearromance.word-press.com/>.*

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Elie urged residents to speak out locally against Indian Point. "Closing down Indian point means speaking out locally and getting a resolution in your town and to let governor Cuomo know about the wide based sentiment to close Indian Point."

## ENERGY MATTERS

### Japan's "Throwaway People" And the Fallout from Fukushima

By ROGER WITHERSPOON



Japan hasn't had a captive black population to use and abuse. So the Burakumin were created to fill that economic and social vacuum.

If the job is dirty, or dangerous, or carries a social stigma, hire the Burakumin. They will take the job. They have few options and, like everyone else in Japanese society, need money to live – even in their ghettos. Besides, that's what a permanent "untouchable" class is for. It was that way centuries ago when the Samurai class created the Burakumin to take care of society's dirty work. And it is that way now, when the wreckage of four nuclear reactors at Fukushima Daiichi needs to be cleaned up, and the utility does not want to waste trained employees on jobs that will contaminate them and make them ineligible for further work in the nuclear field.

"They are the Throwaway People," said Yuki Tanaka, Research Professor of History at the Hiroshima Peace Institute in Japan's Hiroshima City University. "They are the Untouchables."

The subject of racial discrimination in Japan

and how it is playing out in a radioactive environment emerged during a dinner conversation in a restaurant under the elevated subway tracks at 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway in Harlem as the A-train periodically rumbled by. Tanaka and his colleagues – Kyoko Kitajima, a Tokyo-based union organizer now working at the power plant; and Fuminori Tanba, Associate Professor of Public Policy at Fukushima University and Senior Researcher at the University's Institute for Disaster Recovery – were taking a break between a week-long series of seminars and discussions on the aftermath of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power plants, owned by the Tokyo Electric Power Company, or TEPCO.

They have been meeting with first responders and residents from the New York – New Jersey area concerned about the reality of responding to and cleaning up after a nuclear catastrophe. They had been brought from Japan by four environmental groups – Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition, Riverkeeper, Clearwater, and the Sierra Club – seeking to close the two Indian Point nuclear power plants just 25 miles north of Harlem.

There are actually three types of people discriminated against in Japan's permanent under-

class: the Ainu, the Burakumin, and Koreans.

The Ainu were the indigenous people of the island of Hokkaido who were dominated for centuries by the Japanese, and officially declared no longer indigenous in 1899 and their land subsumed into greater Japan. Many have assimilated, but thousands remain in ghettos on the outskirts of Hokkaido's cities.

Before and during World War II "more than one million Koreans were brought to Japan as laborers," said Tanaka, author of *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*. "They were forced to work in coal mines and arsenals and became kind of slaves after the war because they couldn't go home again. It is the Koreans and Burakumin who have the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs.

The largest, oldest, and most prevalent ethnic group, however, are the Burakumin. "It is a distinction which began in Buddhist tradition," explained Tanaka. "During feudal times there was a need for jobs that were regarded as physically contaminated. They needed populations to do the dirty work such as raising and slaughtering animals to make leather, or cremating bodies and taking care of sewage.

"So they created this class and ghettos were

built close to the edge of major cities so these people could serve the people in the towns and cities. The ghettos were spread all over Japan in medieval times. Even after they were given full citizenship under the new post World War II constitution it continued. People have prejudice against these people from the ghettos."

Discrimination against the Burakumin and Koreans in jobs is widespread. "There are similarities between what is happening in Japan and what happened with blacks in your country," said Tanaka. "The problem in Japan is we don't have colored people. We are all the same. There is no way to tell Burakumin just by looking at them."

"But," added Kitajima, "you can tell the Burakumin or Koreans by looking at their records and seeing where they were born, or where they live. If the record shows their home was in the ghetto then you know their ancestry, and they are turned down for jobs or housing. It is difficult to leave the ghetto because you can't get good jobs because you are from the ghetto."

Education is not an easy way out in a country where college slots are reserved solely for those with the highest scores on extremely competitive national exams. "The people in the ghettos can't really compete to go to a university or college," said Tanaka, "because their local schools are not designed for sending kids to higher

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