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President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Last week, Secretary of State John Kerry said all world leaders should visit Hiroshima to appreciate the horrors and complexities of war. As an American of Japanese descent, I believe he is right. When you travel to Japan next month for the G-7 Summit, I encourage you to become the first American president to visit Hiroshima.

Throughout your presidency you have articulated your vision for a world without nuclear weapons. You recently wrote, "Of all the threats to global security and peace, the most dangerous is the proliferation and potential use of nuclear weapons." Hiroshima is the world's most poignant reminder of the unequalled destruction these weapons cause and the strongest case for advancing the goal of denuclearization.

Despite my ancestral roots, I did not fully grasp the horror of Hiroshima until I first traveled there in 2002. I was visiting my second cousin, a survivor of the atomic blast, and asked her to take me to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial museum. As we drove to the memorial, across the expanse of the Ota River, she told me in her halting English, "They say you could not see the water of the river on the day the bomb exploded because so many dead bodies were floating in it."

In that moment, the atomic bomb in Hiroshima ceased to be a distant, abstract fact of history – I had a concrete and personal connection to it. Every leader who has the capacity to order the use of atomic weapons should have that same experience and feel that same connection.

To be clear, a tour of Hiroshima is not an apology on America's behalf. Instead, it is a signal that the commander in chief of the largest military in the world – and the commander of the world's largest arsenal of nuclear weapons – recognizes the awesomeness of their destructive power. It also sets a precedent for other world leaders to follow in your footsteps and feel the moral imperative to visit the city.

One of America's greatest strengths is the power to lead by example. I hope you use that power to lead the world to Hiroshima, and away from nuclear weapons.

Respectfully,



Mark Takano
MEMBER OF CONGRESS