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General Information

Atomic Mom is a documentary film about two women, both mothers, who have very different experiences of the atom bomb. One is my mother, Pauline Silvia, who was a biologist in the Navy in the early 1950's and was sent to the Nevada Test Site where she participated in five detonations. At 23 years old, she was one of the few women scientists on an elite team of researchers. After decades of silence, Pauline is in a crisis of conscience about the work she did, work that involved animal testing. She reveals some of the grim and dark secrets of the U.S. atomic testing program. The other woman, Emiko Okada, is a Hiroshima survivor who was eight years old when the bomb was dropped. Her twelve-year-old sister was never found. After many years of silence, Ms. Okada gives testimony of her atomic bomb experience and her commitment to education and disarmament. Knowing the work that my mother did, Ms. Okada folded origami peace cranes for me to give to my mother as a gift. This exchange is more than an olive branch with a beautifully potent message of peace.

Atomic Mom also provides a global perspective on our Atomic legacy. Through revealing interviews with Japanese survivors, doctors, and historians, Atomic Mom reveals the truth regarding the post-war press code in Japan and the censorship of images and information related to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The film also questions what is lost when the drive for scientific innovation runs over basic moral and ethical principles. In Japan, Ms. Okada and her daughter reveal their personal story with an allegiance to peace and reconciliation, fostering an interesting parallel between my mother and me.

Atomic Mom invites viewers to confront American Nuclear History in a way that it has never happened before. This story, of an American Scientist and a Hiroshima Survivor finding peace decades after the bombing, empowers individuals and communities to work toward global unity. It inspires dialogue about family/global secrets and it endorses universal human rights in the age of nuclear genocide.