

01 To be honest, I wasn't interested in the issue of nuclear weaponry. I was a normal high schooler with few interests besides maybe video games and exams. But, through my experience in the campaign of collecting signatures to abolish nuclear weapons, I really became emotionally involved in this issue. However, few people can get this chance, and it is a huge problem that the majority of young people will remain disconnected and ignorant like my old self.

02 I am actually a third generation Hibakusha or the survivor of the nuclear attack. I've heard many stories from my grandmother, and at school, we did many activities on peace. Unlike him, I have deep ties with the issue of nuclear abolishment, and I have always wanted to do something about it. But perhaps I will be the last generation to have these direct experiences from the survivors of the nuclear attack, and again, since so many others in our generation are indifferent to this issue, we will soon face a difficult challenge.

03 My grandmother was nine years old when the atomic bomb was dropped. At the time, children around her community gathered in houses in groups of 6-9 and studied there, instead of going to school. She and her classmates were already there studying when they heard a large bang!, and everyone hugged their heads and hit the ground. Fortunately, since they were relatively far from the hypocenter, the community wasn't damaged too badly, and they had only minor injuries. However, when she returned home, she found the door of her house torn into pieces, and walls had collapsed. Her mother and her little sister were okay, but the tips of their hairs burned as they walked around the town. Everyone was trying to get back to their home, but many were wounded.

04 In Hiroshima, almost every elementary, junior, and senior high school do some kind of peace activity. My elementary school was not an exception, and since it is located very close to the hypocenter of the atomic bomb, studying about peace was almost like studying math or grammar. It was one of the few schools built of reinforced concrete at that time, so after the nuclear attack, part of the school remained standing, and was used as a temporary hospital. It still stands now as a peace memorial museum. Of the 400 students going there at that time, only two students survived. To pass down the memories of this tragedy, we did many things when I was there. Throughout the year, we had a subject of peace learning, and once a year, we did a play on the tragic day. We also salvaged chunks of the atomic bomb dome which were scattered across the Motoyasu River.

05 We do peace activity in our high school too. Our school is 2km south of the hypocenter, so almost all the school buildings were badly damaged. Most of the students were out on duty, and 8th graders then were on duty of building evacuation near the Hiroshima city hall. 180 students were there on August 6 1945, and most of them died in the following few weeks. Every year on August 6, all the students in the 8th grade will gather at the working site, and at 8:15 am, everyone will stand in silence as a tribute to the dead. Then, we will hear a story from Mr. Yukio Shimomura. He is one of the students who was lucky enough to be in the shade of the city hall, and survived.

06 But even in Hiroshima, even though we do these things and hear the live stories of Hibakushas throughout our school life, consciousness towards war and nuclear weaponry is fading among younger generations. Why is this happening among young people? Especially in Japan, we have been far away from war for 70 years. This is a good thing, but there was a drawback to this. We started to feel as if the affairs of the world were none of our business. Everyday life is so busy and peaceful, that we started to forget about the threats, despite the possibility that one misunderstanding, or one simple malfunction, could wipe out these days of peace.

07 I can't bear this current trend among youth. In the past, it was the survivors who mainly thought about the issues on nuclear weapons, and tried to abolish them. But the last of the survivors will eventually die, and we won't be able to hear their voices forever. Also, we the youth will become the future leaders in our world. We have to be aware of this issue. We the youth have to consider this issue seriously and lead the world on the path of abolishment.

08 From here, I'd like to talk about how my attitudes toward the issue on nuclear weaponry have changed. I first became aware of the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons when I became a member of our school's student council. It was a kind of a tradition in our school, or rather in our student council to cooperate with Jogakuin high school to collect signatures. As I said in the beginning, I wasn't really interested in this issue of nuclear abolishment, but after I started to take part in collecting signatures, I felt a change in my feeling toward this matter.

09 While collecting signatures, we received a lot of encouragement. I then felt motivated to meet their expectations. Several times, we were told that our efforts are useless, and that it is impossible to abolish nuclear weapons. I then felt that we should act more so that it would really become possible. These experiences changed my attitude towards the problem of nuclear weaponry. Now I strongly feel that we don't need nuclear weapons in our world, and I don't want them to ruin our lives and the lives of future generations. Not everyone can have the experience that I had, but people must realize the dangers of the current situation on nuclear weaponry, and think about this as our own problem.

10 It is crucial to continue to do activity such as ours, and to spread it around the world. Big changes on issues such as this won't start from the top. They start from the bottom. Very slowly, it climbs its way up, and finally, it will move the leaders of the world. The fact that high schoolers are doing this is also important. The young generation can casually hang out with us and get interested in the concern of nuclear disarmament. We have to keep inspiring the younger generations. Otherwise, we will make the same mistakes again.

11 In 1986, there were more than 70 thousand nuclear forces in the world. Now, there are about 22% as much. However it is still too early to rejoice just yet. We still have over 15 thousand nuclear forces in our world, which are much more advanced and much more destructive than the ones dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By taking small, but steady steps towards abolition, we hope that one day, we will have a world free of nuclear weapons. There's a famous quote in the cenotaph for the victims of the atomic bomb, located in the Peace Park. "Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil." We need everyone to consider this issue seriously, and take action towards the abolition in order to accomplish this. If our efforts are of any help in doing so, we will continue to pass down this tradition.

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