

2018 Mayors for Peace Youth Exchange for Peace: Support Program for "HIROSHIMA and PEACE"

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What have I learned in Hiroshima?

Those days in Hiroshima had been my first contact with Japanese culture, before I had only the stereotyped idea of Japan that prevail in my country (besides that some things that I had read from my own): manga, high technology and sushi. So it has been a great experience getting to know the cultural wealth of Japan, as well as its people. It was a challenge for me come to interact with them without speaking its language, but fortunately here in Hiroshima I could learn some words in Japanese (even if not enough to communicate) and I discovered my interest for it.

Secondly, thanks to the program Hiroshima and Peace at the Hiroshima City University, I learned more deeply about the political decisions and negotiations that brought the USA to drop the atomic bomb, as well as its strategies for taking control of the international context. However, I also found out the imperialist politics employed by Japanese Government before and during the World War 2, as the discrimination of Korean people.

Visiting the Museum of the Memorial made me realize the pain that the Atomic Bomb left in Hiroshima. Lives that changed for ever, families that were completely destroyed, innocent victims of a political conflict, of an unfair war -as all the wars are-, but also the illnesses caused by the radiation and the indirect deaths, and even the fear of living ignoring if this day could be the last one.

Those days I heard hibakusha people talking about fear and culpability. I couldn't imagined how something -that should normally be positive-, as being a survivor of a bombing, could become a hell so easily because of the social condemnation. I could understand the feeling of culpability that Keiko Ogura described: "Why me? Why have I survived while others don't?" And specially: "How am I supposed to rebuild my life now?". Now I comprehend the silence of the hibakusha and their wish to forget everything; but more than ever I think that now it's important to let next generations know what humanity is capable to do and what they will have to strive for.

I also learned different systems and action plans that we can implement to fight war and injustice from many diverse perspectives. From an institutional approach, for example, how we can aim for political pressure through a formal organized movement or a city network; with local politics concerning education for peace at schools, creating spaces for dialogue in our communities, and even using the power of the civil society and NGO's.

At the same time, exchanging experiences with people from other countries is always an enriching and an exciting exercise, even more while sharing interests and goals. Therefore, participating to the program Hiroshima and Peace has been a great learning. It helped me to be more comprehensive, more open-minded, and to realize that there are a lot of different ways to interpret the world. And also that, to make a point together, we have to understand each other backgrounds and be conscious that each culture has its prejudices. Working with them showed me different ways of handle successfully and diverse communicative styles.

2. What I'm going to do based on my learning?

I think this learning is too much precious to be wasted, so I would like it to have an impact in my community. That's why some weeks ago, after coming back from Hiroshima, I took advantage of my columnist post in a regional newspaper to write an article about my experience in Hiroshima, where I talked about my impressions of the city as well as some interesting reflections that came up during the discussions throughout the program. I also did an interview at the local radio, as well as at the municipal bulletin.

Also, the 12th September I had a meeting with the city council, where we could count on the presence of the mayor Josep Mayoral. I exposed some ideas that I had seen on the other participants presentations and I made some suggestions about what we had debate in class and it emerged the idea of doing a video between all the Mayors for Peace program participants to spread the pacific message around the world. With the Granollers City Council we are trying to channel a project that will involve, not only Can Jonch, Centre de Cultura per la Pau (Center of Peace Culture), but also the youth department of the city, to make young people be more conscious about ecology, democracy and peace problems.

Moreover, I would like to share this rewarding experience to my academic community, that is to say, my university by doing a little conference or discussion at the campus.

3. Concrete suggestions to make to Mayors for Peace

I have really appreciated the organization of the program of Mayors for Peace. The workshops, the visits and the interaction with hibakusha testimonies were really interesting. But I would like to point some suggestions that, in my opinion, could make their work even better.

First, I think that Nuclear Weapons are just the top of the iceberg of a biggest problem: a world based on a violent and warlike culture. That's why to abolish nuclear weapons, it is also necessary to eradicate this culture. Therefore, in my opinion, Mayors for Peace should insist not only about abolition of nuclear weapons, but also about real disarmament of any kind of weapons in his workshops and activities.

If I had to suggest something more, I would say that it could be interesting to visit also Nagasaki the commemoration day to see how people lives through it in a smaller city. And more, it could be really enriching to spend more time with host families because it's a good way for participants to find out profoundly Japanese culture.