

2019 Mayors for Peace Youth Exchange for Peace: Support Program for "HIROSHIMA and PEACE"

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Throughout these programs, Mayors for Peace and HIROSHIMA and PEACE, I have been in thought roughly two things. One is about the importance of grassroots activities. In the sphere of International Relations, nation is regarded as the main actor and is supposed to have self-defense mechanism and NGO and corporations are less focused. Given the current situation of nuclear disarmament, it appears to be limited to work while security issue comes to be vulnerable to the advent of an increasing terrorism and other potential threats, it truly seemed understandable to me to be prepared for those concerns.

However, learning the work by ICAN and Mayors for Peace, my notion has come to slightly change. Especially, I was so much impressed with the remark by the mayor of Hiroshima. He noted “When we face obstacles which aren’t solved by nations or diplomacy, we should bring the problem to a lower level. If we succeed in strengthening the connection between cities and creating the situation where we all have negative attitude towards nuclear weapon, governments can not dismiss us. Then, we might be able to take a first step forward to peace-building.” His words were persuasive enough for me to understand the importance of grassroots activities. Meanwhile, I also reckoned that this idea can be applied to other situations. Nowadays, I am feeling diplomatic concerns are affecting civilian’s level. I planned to participate in another peace program about Korean history. Nevertheless, under the tense political climate, it was called off and I experienced the influence of political issues. Still, I still hold somewhat hope, if we make strong bond among student level or else, I can also make a step forward.

On the other hand, I also felt people who live in Hiroshima embraced ‘Peace’ too easy to somewhat extent. Obviously, Hiroshima suffered the experience of victim among entire human beings, and I don’t intend to deny in that respect. However, their attitude towards peace seemed something emotional – peace has to be understood logically and critically. I talked to some students and local’s in Hiroshima about “What is peace like?” and “Why you cherish peace so essentially?” Their answers were so simple and straight, “Because peace is important”. In my opinion, peace is not something passed down to by previous generation but something we seize and build. Justice has been changed according to the situation. If we keep being passive, accepting the inherited notion, we may become unable to cope with new crisis. I got several opportunities to listen to hibakusha’s while participating in the programs. As long as I observe, we the young consider hibakusha’s testimony as an absolute answer. They seemingly embrace every single testimony given by hibakushas, having no doubts towards them. The number of hibakusha’s testimonies has been decreasing as time goes by, gaining much more importance year by year. For those who have scarce knowledge of A-bomb and Hiroshima, we have somewhat responsibilities to pass down the information or story to next generation to build peace. Therefore, we are not supposed to have passive but positive attitude while holding our own straight opinions in facing hibakushas. When it comes to peace building in the creation of absence of A-bomb, we Japanese means a lot.

As to the future prospect of Mayors for Peace, I’d like to suggest the interactions among victims from several countries or more testimonies by a couple of counties and cities. In understanding peace, we are supposed to talk from various perspectives. We had an access to testimonies by Japanese or Koreans living in Japan but not from other countries. If we have more open and straight testimonies by other countries, we would be able to think critically and comprehend peace even more. Furthermore, I also

want to suggest the more exchange programs among Mayors for Peace member cities. Not to mention, people living in Hiroshima deeply know about A-bomb and the tragedy of war, but supposedly it is merely the perspective from Hiroshima. In order to deepen their understanding, the knowledge of other countries' histories will be recommended. Hiroshima, as the city which is going to take a strong leadership to push forward for peace, may be required to educate next generation. I think it will go a long way.

When it comes to my coming action, for a while, I'd like to share the things I learned in Hiroshima in my university. To put it concrete words, I am going to participate in debriefing session in my faculty and talk about the work of Mayors for Peace, ICAN, and so on. In addition to it, I will talk about Hiroshima in teaching high school students. I haven't determined the concrete provision for my career, but I'd like to engage in peace activities and make the most of the knowledge gained in Hiroshima as much as I can. Thank you for having this opportunity and I'm hoping HIROSHIMA and PEACE will last.