

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

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In this report, I will present the conclusions reached after participating in the Youth Exchange Program For Peace supported by Mayors for Peace in order to join the “HIROSHIMA and PEACE” summer course held in the Hiroshima City University. First, I will discuss my experience with the fellow colleagues from Mayors for Peace and its impact on my own perspective towards Hiroshima. Secondly, the different lessons and activities held during the course will be introduced together with their impact on the meaning of peace. Finally, the conclusions will be discussed together with the future proposals regarding dissemination of the peace project from Hiroshima.

### **Peace around the world: the work of cities**

The first day I arrived in Hiroshima I had the opportunity to meet with my colleges from other global places. These were namely Manchester (United Kingdom), Volgograd (Russia), Tehran (Iran), Imphal (India), Kyoto (Japan), Kunitachi (Japan) and Santos (Brazil). First of all, it represented an exceptional combination of cultures and perspectives towards peace as each representative came from a completely different background. Despite such variety, I expected all of them to have the same link with Hiroshima as my home city did: the experience of bombings towards civil population. However, as each of us presented the history of our cities, I realized how each city had a completely different relation with Hiroshima. The city of Santos, for example, did not suffer any bombing during the 20th century but still, it delved the city towards the achievement of global peace by promoting historical conferences and meetings with Japanese hibakusha. Also, Imphal shared a common history with the Japanese army for its fight towards independence. On the other side, cities such as Manchester shared with my home city, Granollers, the experience of war and civil suffering. Therefore, in this first day I realized that the work for peace did not only come from past suffering or historical experiences but also from a genuine will of present societies to achieve a world without wars.

### **The HIROSHIMA and PEACE Program: sharing our perspectives**

After having meet my fellow colleagues from Mayors for Peace, we went to the Hiroshima City University to start the “HIROSHIMA and PEACE” course. The first day was an excellent opportunity to understand how to address the broad cultural and narrative differences and so, we started with the Intercultural Communication with Prof. Carson who showed us the complexity of properly transmitting our ideas to the world. Then, we followed with a brief introduction on global contemporary history by Prof. Hallet and Prof. Jacobs. More importantly, we discussed the idea of peace in the session What does peace mean to you? organized by Prof. Azam Arif. There, in groups of four we discussed peace from our personal perspectives and tried to reach a common ground.

From the different lectures, I would like to highlight the impressive and outstanding conference by Ms. Keiko Ogura, an exceptional hibakusha, who explained us her experiences during war and its aftermath. It was the first time I could meet a hibakusha and it was a unique experience to learn the consequences of the A-Bomb and its impact on the civilian population. Also, it was really interesting to have the opportunity to meet the Mayor of Hiroshima, Mr. Matsui, and learn about how did the city became a global advocate for peace a few years after the war experience. Moreover, Mr. Matsui highlighted the role of organizations such as Mayors for Peace in the fight against nuclear weapons and peace promotion. One of the most important things I learned in Hiroshima was the relevance of personal perspectives towards historical events and current global affairs. In that regard, the lecture offered by Mr Inuoue taught us the influence that the media have over the population opinion. Also, Prof. Yuasa focused on a critical approach towards the so-called official or governmental approach and strengthened the importance of questioning the sources of our information. In the same line, Prof. Matsunaga stressed the relevance of revisiting past events and understand that history has many perspectives and can be understood from many viewpoints, in that case, we discussed the Korean-Japanese migration experience during war. Finally, Prof. Nagai analysed the project of peace in Hiroshima from a critical perspective and questioning what does Hiroshima mean today.

The result from being in such lectures ended in our Final Group Presentation answering, once again, what peace meant to us. In our conclusion, we stated that there were four different layers of peace being the first one, the peace with oneself or the inner peace. After that, we can find the social peace which involves those around us such as our family or friends. Thirdly, there is the cultural or ethnic peace which means being in peace within the group that you may belong. Finally, we may consider international peace which implies the lack of conflict in a global setting.

### **Final remarks: the experience beyond the lessons**

Overall, the HIROSHIMA and PEACE Course along with the program with Mayors for Peace has been a truly unique experience from which I have learned different things. First of all, that the individual background and perspectives definitely influence your own view on historical events or how you approach a current issue. Also, that despite the complexity of peace, the work of small-scale institutions such as local governments are key in order to promote peace in our communities and later on, in an international arena. Finally, that the testimony of those who experienced the consequences of war and its aftermath is an exceptional way of understanding from first-hand the importance of eradicating nuclear weapons and also, work towards global peace.

Before sharing my future plans, I would like to thank my home city and specially Mayors for Peace Secretariat for supporting such program and giving us the opportunity to be in Hiroshima. Now, the relevance of such knowledge has to be shared in order to have a greater impact. For such end, I have already participated in different interviews and media reports about my experience in Hiroshima and what I have learnt there. Moreover, I am planning to meet with my city officials, mainly with Mayor J.

Mayoral and the peace project team, in order to explain them the work done in the Hiroshima. Last but not least, I am planning to organize a meeting in local high schools to share my experience with the future generations and learn from their will to change the world in which we live.

Finally, it is relevant to consider which points could be improved in order to have a better approach towards the Nuclear Weapons abolition. First, I consider that the work towards membership expansion made by Mayors for Peace is of utmost importance in order to have a further reach in their campaigns. However, I also believe that social media awareness should be improved and expanded to ensure that younger generations join the campaign. Second, I think it is a key factor to engage national government in the campaign in order to have a truly impact in Japanese society.