

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

Longjam Meena Devi (Imphal, India)

Day 1

July 30, 2019

On July 30 2019, the Mayor for peace program started with introduction of each fellow selected from eight different nations at the Hiroshima International Youth House. We all made a brief presentation on our peace activities back home. Later we also had a Skype meeting with Anna, former fellow of Mayors for Peace program from Barcelona, Spain.

Day one of the Intensive Summer Program at Hiroshima City University

July 31st, 2019

At the HIROSHIMA and PEACE Intensive Summer Program at Hiroshima City University, we were grouped into a round table participants comprising five to six of us. We were tasked to group discussed on the idea of what does peace mean to us and how do we like to put it on the chart. Later we were asked to present it. That day we also had a lovely experience of meeting with our host family sharing some good times over sumptuous Japanese foods and fun games. We also learnt to introduce in Japanese language to our host family.

Day 2

1st August 2019

Our class begins with the intercultural communication lecture by Prof. Luke Carson and the Manhattan Projects and stories of nuclear development by Prof. Robert Jacobs. Post lunch we had lecture by Prof. Brien Hallett on the atomic bomb myth, "saving lives and ending the war?". The day ended with another exciting announcement of visiting the Mayor of Hiroshima. Where I represented our youth exchange program to present a speech on the horror of nuclear warfare and implications and effects of Second World War in own city- Imphal. We also had questions sessions and discussion by Mayor of Hiroshima with a happy group photo to disembark the day.

Day 3

2nd August 2019

Our day 3 class was about to come alive as a living Hibakusha entered to present her testimony to a class of young and vibrant peace activists from across the nations. She was Ms. Ogura Keiko who gave the testaments of atomic bomb horror. She brought pictures and books to inform and engaged with us. We all had take away lunch munching in a bus as we set for experiencing the historic peace memorial museum. The experience of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was not for a faint-hearted people. Every individual passing through the museum had a hard time coping with the disturbing visuals and texts. I was sobbing terribly around the children section, looking at the rusted tricycle, charred tiffin's burnt lunch and burnt school uniform. When I turn my eyes around not just me, many were seen sobbing with a remorse that the tragedy shouldn't have existed. After experiencing two hours in the museum we went to the Hiroshima National Peace Memorial Hall to listen to Korean Hibakushas who survived the bomb aftermath. His testimony was another walk through the past of Atomic bomb horrors.

Aug 3 and 4 the weekend

The two days weekend with my lovely host family -N-san were absolutely fun-filled and amazing. On the first day we visited Miyajima Island and then proceeded to N-san's mother home to try out the experience of kimono wearing. On the way back we went to supermarket, got some fresh ingredients for trying out sushi and also got ingredients for Indian Chai (tea) that I made for my host family. The next day we visited Shukkeien garden in the midst of the city. Beautiful ginkgo and maples trees with carp fishes in the ponds. Everything looks really beautiful and calm at Shukkeien garden. We also visited a huge dam called Nukui dam and also drove to the paddy fields at Akiota town where I saw beautiful naturally leveled paddy stakes growing at its best. While returning N-san's mother was waiting for me to help me write "hei-wa" (peace) in kanji and also wrote my family name in kanji with the special traditional Japanese bamboo paintbrush. We got back home and N-san became the famous okonomiyaki chef by demonstrating his skill. We had sumptuous okonomiyaki and also I made sure that my homestay's family N-san tried our traditional attire and she was looking beautiful.

Day 4

The day started with the most important topic on the role of media in understanding Hiroshima and peace by Prof. Yasuhiro Inouye who briefed about the importance of media objectivity and in sensationalization of news reports. We also had an important insight of lecture on Korean Hibakushas by Prof. Kyoko Matsunaga, who briefed on the importance of views and testimonies of other foreign Hibakushas on the atomic bomb horror. The day was a critical study on the Outlook of Hiroshima when Prof. Mariko Nagai talked about what should we talk when we talk about Hiroshima. She elaborated on how Hiroshima is so apt at being the global messenger of peace and the tourists that's been flooding during the commemoration day. She also spoke about inclusiveness of other foreign Hibakushas.

Day 5

The day 5 marked the most important day as the much awaited commemoration of the bombing day falls on 6th August, 2019. We started early morning to make our ways to our respected seats with Prof. Yuasa Masae leading us through the drizzling light rain. We heard honourable Prime Minister of Japan making its maiden speech at a backdrop of some noises shouting against him for some political reasons. We were also glued to the beautiful chorus sung by children and two young school going kids reading out their peace messages on the Hiroshima day. It was a fun fair night with thousands of floating lights streaking at the Hiroshima river in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome. It was like heaven on Earth with slow musical chorus playing in the backdrop.

Day 6

It started with lecture series picked on different thematic paradigm of nuclear history to nuclear Anthropocene. It truly dissected all about nuclear powers specially focusing on the Fukushima disaster. The end of the day as usual was marked with reflection time after discussing among the groups.

Day 7 and day 8

It marked the most important days as we were allotted into groups for each of our final project presentation.

ACTION PLAN

1. Compile all the video footages, short interviews and pictures taken during the visit to Hiroshima peace program into an impactful documentary.
2. To invite a press conference to disseminate the message of peace building from the mayors of Hiroshima.
3. Handouts of free flyers, brochures and organise signature and petition campaign on the theme of nuclear ban treaty.
4. Organizing peace poster campaign in colleges and various institutions
5. Sensitization in all educational institutions, youth's clubs, cafés and municipalities.
6. To propose and pitch the idea of a peace education at colleges and universities.
7. To sensitize young children hosting painting, essay and debate competition on themes of Peacebuilding and abolishing nuclear weapons.
8. Share my own learning experience at various schools, colleges and universities about the importance of a nuclear free world.
9. The way we talk about nuclear weapons must reflect their real, unacceptable impact on human beings. So listen to the stories of the survivors of nuclear weapons use and testing and share them far and wide.

The people of India and the people of its neighboring countries have been in tension over a nuclear war in recent times on a statement given by one of the Prime Ministers that “their country will not be the first user of the nuclear weapon”. This very statement shows that the country possessed nuclear weapon. This has led to the minds of the people of both the countries what the future will be unless the tension is removed by complete destruction of the nuclear weapons they possess. The need of the hour in the Indian sub continent is to ceaselessly awaken the people of the region against the possible nuclear holocaust. The recent training I had from the Hiroshima City University induced me in taking up the role to be taken up in this line.

Also, Article 1 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) strictly forbids the use and/or development of nuclear weapons or any other nuclear explosives devices. TPNW was passed in the year 2017 at the UN General Assembly in the city of New York. However there is a mandate that 50 countries signature is essential to make TPNW effective and so far only 33 have ratified.

The ban of nuclear weapons movement has been ongoing since several decades. Truly speaking, the world has witnessed the worst Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing, Chernobyl incident including Bhopal gas tragedy. ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons), the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize Winner, stated that two-thirds of the world's countries support TPNW. Therefore, we need to put little more extra efforts to make TPNW effective so that the world can become a promising future without any fear of annihilation.

Since the advent of human civilization, there has been never ending war in different parts of our world. We human being, the Homo Sapiens are the most intellectual species on earth. From our never-ending research we have completely trash our planet-earth. We don't want to be the race of Frankenstein causing our own deaths with our curious inventions.

So, it's time we must act and control nuclear proliferations that will only extinct us in no time.
Let's learn from our past and not repeat what we have done to ourselves. Let's thrive for peace and prosperity. Let's thrive for a nuclear free world and co-exist peacefully!!

Hei-wa!!

Peace