

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

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Before participating in HIROSHIMA and PEACE, I only knew about the fact that the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, without having any further knowledge of the reason and the background of the incident. Furthermore, since I did not have the chance to study about World War II in depth, I did not really have the self-awareness towards peacekeeping. However, after participating in HIROSHIMA and PEACE, not only did I get to study about the atomic bombing and World War II, I also had the chance to study about the problems regarding peace we currently face, hence, deepening my knowledge of peacekeeping.

Firstly, I had the chance to learn about the negative side effects of not only the usage of nuclear weapons, but also the development and usage of nuclear energy. The atomic bomb did not only affect the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it also spread radiological fallout, creating “invisible” hibakushas. Till now, scientists are unable to study the side effects of radiological fallout because those who were affected by the fallout are “invisible”. Moreover, the usage of nuclear energy as power plants has created an issue on the management of spent nuclear fuel. Most of the countries that have nuclear power plants store their spent nuclear fuel using either one of these two methods: wet storage that involves pools of water or dry storage that uses canisters or casks. These storage systems not only have the risk of radioactive contamination, since the half-life of radioactive wastes is long, we will have to think about the ways to warn people in the future about the dangers of these spent nuclear fuels (nuclear warning markers). Language changes over time so we are not able to use language, so we will have to think about signs and symbols that will make sense even for the people from the future.

Secondly, I also learned about the role of media. By using mass media, the government in a way brainwash their citizens to think in a certain way that will be beneficial to them. For example, the two different narratives from the atomic bombing. In the United States, they teach their citizens that the atomic bomb saved lives but in Japan, the atomic bombing is an atrocity. That is why most citizens will understand a certain incident in their own nationalistic perspective if they never had any contact with media sources from other countries that may affect their understanding. In this way, since media can be easily manipulated, different people will see the same certain fact differently and have different perspectives towards it.

After discussing the things I have learned from HIROSHIMA and PEACE program with my city, we thought out a few suggestions to encourage peacekeeping and the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons. Firstly, the city plans to collaborate with Mayors of Peace to expand the Kunitachi Atomic Bomb and War Legacy Successors Training nationally and internationally. This training is held to train participants to inherit stories of people who experienced atomic bombing or war who are now currently living in Kunitachi. Qualified participants will then share the stories they have learned at elementary schools, libraries and community centers. During my participation in HIROSHIMA and PEACE, we had the chance to listen to the stories told directly by the hibakushas. Even though each story had different backgrounds and experiences, there was a common message in them, which was “Please tell everyone around you about what you have learned today”. Hence, the city and I thought about the expansion of this program in order to have more people know about the atomic bombing and war. At the same time, we also thought of letting the people know about what I have learnt from my participation in HIROSHIMA and PEACE at the training, in hope to increase their awareness of peace.