

2019 World Conference against A & H Bombs
Nagasaki Rally

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Thank you all for coming to Nagasaki, the second atomic-bombed city after Hiroshima, from across Japan and around the world, in quest of a world free of nuclear weapons. My name is Yokoyama Teruko. I was exposed to the atomic bomb radiation soon after I turned 4 years old.

In late July 1945, Nagasaki was under intensifying air raids, and my grandparents took me and my two elder sisters to the countryside. My parents and a 16-month-old sister remained at home in Nagasaki when the atomic bomb was dropped on the city.

When the bomb fell my father was at Fuchi Elementary School, 1.2 kilometers from the blast center. He was blown off from the school building and landed at the bottom of a cliff on the other side of the schoolyard.

My mother heard that B29 bombers coming when she was at home 4 kilometers from the hypocenter. My little sister was playing alone in the garden and my mother was about to help her put on a shirt. The moment she called her daughter, "Ricchan!" she saw a dazzling flash. She immediately placed herself over her little one. It suddenly became dark all over and something like gold dust began to fall. In the house, she saw all the drawers popped out of the cabinet. Tatami mats on the floor were raised. The windowpanes were shattered into pieces, sticking into the walls.

My mother went out to look for my father. But she was unable to reach his place of work because the roads were blocked by burning utility posts.

She was reunited with him four days later in an air-raid shelter. He had a swollen face covered with blood with eyes turning purple. The whole of his body was swollen with burns. His clothes were also covered with blood. He did not look like a person of this world.

My mother and little sister stayed in the air-raid shelter with him through August 15, the day when the war ended. Drops were falling from the ceiling of the shelter. There were only thin straw mats on the floor. Filth and maggots from wounded persons surfaced from under the straw mats. She found it difficult to let her daughter lie down

there.

My father barely survived. He lost sight in his right eye after something pierced it when he was blown away by the blast. Later on he managed to go back to work, but it was often the case that he had difficulty leaving home for work in the morning. He was suffering from fatigue called the A-bomb bura-bura disease. He continued to suffer from after-effects of a broken hipbone. He also had liver trouble and a swollen thyroid, which made it difficult for him to move around. He was hospitalized on and off.

My little sister developed swollen lymphatic glands in September 1945, which were incised. But her voice gradually became hoarse. When she turned five, she underwent surgery on her throat at Nagasaki University Hospital. My mother often said, "Last night I dreamed that Ricchan had recovered her voice." And we sisters would ask her what kind of voice she heard.

Ritsuko, my younger sister, loved reading, calligraphy, and handicraft. She used to complain that she needed more time to study. If it had not been war, if it had not been atomic bombing, she would have been promised a great life. I cannot remember her without feeling regretful or getting angry about war and the atomic bombing.

Nine days after the atomic bombing, I returned to Nagasaki with my grandmother to find the whole of the city destroyed by fire. I was horrified by the scene. I felt as if I had been in a town of death. I vividly remember firmly grabbing my grandmother's pants and asking her "Where are we?" stopping every few steps.

My youngest sister was born 3 years after the atomic bombing. When she was about to start elementary school, she suffered from a disease called purpura. Immediately after the bombing, there were many people who died after developing purple speckles all over the body. Now the horrible purple speckles appeared on her little body. Fortunately her life was saved, but the scars of radiation from the atomic bomb did not spare my sister, even though she was born after the war.

In my family, there was always someone who was in hospital. My mother used to take care of any family member who fell ill. But in 1972, at the age of 64, she died of stomach cancer. Three years later, my father died of lung cancer.

My eldest sister, who was the first to return to Nagasaki from her evacuation home after the war, is now suffering from leukemia. She is still in the grip of the disease.

Her daughter, who is taking care of her, had a second operation for cancer just recently. My second elder sister developed skin cancer, followed by various cancers in other parts of the body. She died of bile duct cancer five years ago.

If it had not been for the atomic bombing, my family would have had a pleasant and happy life with good health. We have been forced to endure the fear of falling ill linked to the exposure to atomic bomb radiation.

The atomic bomb has afflicted people all these years since the day the atomic bomb was dropped. Hibakusha are, and will continue to be in torment.

It was at the World Conference against A & H Bombs in 1971 that I spoke publicly for the first time about my atomic bomb experience. I initially hesitated to talk about the experience of myself and my family members. I asked my mother, whose life was limited due to stomach cancer, to tell her story. Through the whole night she shared her experiences with me and was very happy that I spoke at the World Conference on her behalf.

If I had not heard my mother's story then, I would not have known what had happened to my father and sisters, who experienced a hell on earth, as I was only 4 years old at the time, and I would not have understood what my mother was thinking.

My mother used to say that the atomic bomb was to blame. Before she died she asked me to look after my father and my little sister, Ricchan. There is no knowing how mortified my mother was as she died.

Soon after I spoke at the World Conference, I began to participate in the Hibakusha movement. I worked on giving counsel to Hibakusha. I learned about the mental and physical problems many hibakusha had, shedding tears together with them.

There was a man with microcephaly caused by the atomic bombing. He was exposed to atomic bomb radiation in his mother's womb when she was three months pregnant. Due to his mental retardation, in his childhood he was often bullied and ridiculed. He was ill-treated by his stepfather as he grew up. After finishing junior high school, he was kicked out of the family and had a live-in job. But he became a job hopper. When he was 26 years old, he became unable to move his body. I helped him apply for the special allowance for microcephaly caused by atomic bomb radiation. I once took him to a World Conference and spoke about our atomic bomb experiences. He received a lot of encouragement with applause from participants. I

cannot forget how excited and pleased he was. He had had to blame his mother for his disease. But now he found a purpose in life and was supported by the Hibakusha movement and the Movement against A & H Bombs until he died at the age of 47.

Many Hibakusha have left us, wishing for no more Hibakusha and for nuclear weapons to be eliminated in their lifetime.

It is two years since the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We must advance the International Hibakusha Appeal signature campaign hand in hand with people in civil society around the world so that the treaty will come into force as early as possible.

Next year marks the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On the eve of the NPT Review Conference at the U.N., the World Conference against A and H Bombs in New York and other civil society actions will be held around the world. We the Hibakusha will work together with you, using all the strength left in us to bring success to these events.

Nagasaki should forever remain the last place of atomic bombing.
Let us continue to fight for a world without nuclear weapons.