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I was born on June 13, 1943, in Nishikuken-cho of Hiroshima City, located 0.7 kilometers from what would become Ground Zero. My parents ran a groceries wholesale business. I was their 4th and youngest child. My immediate elder sister was 16 years older than me and my cousin who lived with us was 7 years older, so I was loved and cared for by everyone in my family. However, the A-bomb dropped on August 6, 1945 ripped apart the family in an instant.

My cousin had moved to the rural Miyoshi area in the evacuation program for school children so she escaped the damage from the A-bombing. Thus 6 of my family members suffered the bombing -- my parents, my elder brother who was in military service and entered Hiroshima City on the third day of the bombing, my two elder sisters and myself. On that day, my eldest sister and I were evacuated to my mother's parents' house, 2.3 kilometers away from the blast center. At the time I was inside the house, but, according to my sister, the blast from the A-bomb blew me about 1 meter and the fragments of glass window stuck into my face and head. The scars from the injuries took about a year to heal.

My 18-year-old sister was working at Mitsubishi Shipbuilding factory, located 4 kilometers from the blast center. She was unable to get home that day, but the next day she arrived accompanied by her co-worker and joined us in Mitaki.

This was the beginning of my tragedy.

On that day, my father had gone to the Hiroshima Prefectural Office building, and my mother to Koami Town near our house, both to engage in work pulling down buildings. There they were hit by the bombing. As semi-army civilian workers, they could not refuse to follow the orders of the military. Both of them were outside, and my mother had severe burns all over her body. Suffering from high fever and diarrhea, she died on August 23, leaving me, a baby who had just turned 2 years old. Until the last moment, while hovering between life and death, she was very worried about me. Before she breathed her last, she told my sisters to give me the milk she had saved at her parents' home.

My father's remains were not found. Though my sisters and brother looked around the Prefectural Office building and other parts of the city, he is still missing. They saw numerous people who were too severely burned to be identified, or those who were

drowned to death in rivers. I feel so sorry for my father, who perished without meeting his family members.

As our house in Nishikuken-cho had burned down, after the war ended we rented a house near our mother's old home, where the 5 children -- my brother, two sisters, cousin and myself -- lived together. But my brother soon left the house to work and my second sister got married the next year. My eldest sister and I lived together for only 3 or 4 years.

My eldest sister contracted serious tuberculosis and almost lost a part of her lung. She stayed in hospital for a long time until I turned 10 years old. We lived on a small income earned by my cousin from her part-time job and received some vegetables from my mother's family in return for our help in harvesting them. Also, every several months my brother brought us some money from his work. But such a life supported by the children could not last long and eventually I and my cousin were taken in separately by our relatives.

I was passed around from one relative to another at intervals of 1 or 2 years. Sometimes I stayed with them for a week at the shortest or for a month. Child as I was, I was always worried about which family I would go to next. Feeling that I was the cause of trouble to my aunts or uncles, I did not want to leave school after the classes were over. More than once I thought about committing suicide. During the period from when I was 6 to 15 years old, I never felt at ease or had peace of mind.

It is reported that more than 2500 children in Hiroshima became A-bomb orphans, but their real situation has not been fully investigated, nor was there any compensation or help provided to them by the government.

It wasn't until 12 years after the atomic bombing that the government at last turned to the situation of the Hibakusha and decided to give medical subsidies to those who were in close proximity of the A-bomb and were recognized as suffering from A-bomb induced illnesses. By then many Hibakusha had died from conditions assumed to have been caused by the A-bombing without being able to receive any official relief. In 1960, the government started providing medical security measures to outpatient and inpatient Hibakusha. So far no compensation has been given to those who lost their families to the atomic bombing.

The victims of the war, including those in the battle of Okinawa and the Great Tokyo Air Raid, shared the same situation. Although as many as 800,000 people were killed

by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Tokyo air raid and in the battle of Okinawa, the government of Japan has refused to provide compensation for their sacrifice. To the contrary, the current government is intent on changing our precious Constitution, Article 9 of which says, "The Japanese people forever renounce war ... and the threat or use of force.... Land, sea, and air forces...will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized."

For us Hibakusha, the suffering from the atomic bombing did not end with the damage caused on August 6 and 9, 1945. Even now, we are not free from the constant fear of developing illness induced by exposure to the atomic bombing 75 years ago. We are also concerned about possible effects on our children and grandchildren. This lifelong fear of the possible radiation damage is the very horror of nuclear weapons. Currently, the entire world is faced with the threat of nuclear weapons.

Three years ago, the United Nations adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The treaty will go into effect with the ratification of 50 countries, and now the number has reached 40. We are only one step away. We are determined to carry out actions together with our friends around the world to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to join with you today.