

## **My Experience of the Nuclear Bomb and for a World Without Nuclear Bombs, War and Nuclear Power Plants.**

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I am Yano Miyako. I was born in 1931 in the southern Hiroshima town of Ujina. That year Japan engineered the Manchurian incident as an excuse to invade northeastern China. That was the start of Japan's 15-year war of aggression in China.

I entered Hiroshima City Daiichi Girls' High School in 1944 when the Japanese military expanded the war front from the continent of China to all around Asia. Around this time, the Japanese armies had already been defeated on various fronts and, in the name of honorable death, chose suicide attacks rather than surrender. Due to the shortage of labor, senior students were sent to munitions factories from June and after the summer break some parts of the school were turned into a military uniform factory, which was closed at the end of March 1945. From April 1945 onward, third and fourth-year students were assigned to munitions factories. All classes were canceled for a year as a general rule for first- and second-year students, who were mobilized to engage in various public works from day to day.

I was among them and all my classmates were ordered to help the demolition of houses, which started at 7 am from August 5 at an area which is now the Peace Park. When the bomb was dropped on August 6, I was at home. I survived because I took leave of absence due to a stomachache. My family and I were in the same room of our wooden house, which was located 4 kilometers from the hypocenter.

After a sudden flash, everyone rushed to an air raid shelter outside, but I failed to escape and was blown up in the air by the blast along with tatami mats. After some time, I regained consciousness and found myself standing on the ground near the front door. As we were trained to extinguish bomb fires before escaping, I hurried outside and looked for the place where the bomb must have landed. Strangely, there were no trace of the bombing, though my house was heavily damaged. When I looked up in the sky to the north, I saw a big mushroom cloud growing upward in the sky. Though our area was as far as 4

kilometers from ground zero, many houses had fallen to the ground and people were trying to help their neighbors trapped underneath the rubble. No one had any idea what actually had happened.

I am not certain how much time had passed, but we were ordered by the military to carry the injured people who had escaped to our community on two-wheeled carts or on doorplates to Ujina port, where they would be sent to Ninoshima Island for treatment. The line of injured people coming into our community was never ending. All of them kept their injured arms stretched forward above the height of their heart. It made them look like a procession of ghosts. There were about 50 people staying in the premises of the shrine which my family ran, and my family members slept outside. Next morning, we were surprised to find some of them already dead, although they looked unhurt the day before when they carried other severely injured people to our place.

Not only my family members but the people in the entire community were engaged in the relief activities of the dead and injured. We dug big holes in the yard of a kindergarten next to our house and cremated the bodies. I was tasked with keeping watch over the fire for cremation every day from August 7. At that time no one had any knowledge about the effects of radiation. It was much later we learned that people exposed to strong radiation would in turn emit radiation from their bodies. Military planes continued to fly over us and I was afraid they would attack us again.

On August 15, my older sister and I left home to evacuate to our relatives' home in a rural area and passed through the center of the city for the first time. The streets were mostly cleared, but among the rubble of destroyed houses were many rotten bodies left untouched and the city was filled with the smell of corpses. When we reached Hesaka Village, we were told to join our relatives and neighbors and listen to an important broadcast to be aired at noon. After the broadcast, my uncle said, "It seems Japan has lost the war." It made us realize there was no need to stay there if the war was over. As we had walked all the way to reach the village, our relatives suggested we should stay overnight there. But we really missed our family and decided to head back home right away the same day. When we finally got home, I found many neighbors gathered at our house and all the adults looked quite depressed.

My school reopened on September 1. In the second-year class, there were only two students besides me. It was then that I learned for the first time that none of the students and teachers who went to work on August 6 had survived. I felt ashamed of having survived. I asked myself why I had so easily succumbed to a health condition and skipped work that day. Every day, I thought about the meaning of my survival. Perhaps it was because we had been taught in the militarism-led education and had been made to believe that the greatest honor was to die for the sake of the state (Emperor).

We surviving students felt it our duty to search and collect the remains and belongings of our fellow classmates in the area where they were engaged in the house demolition work. On October 30, a memorial service was held in my school. The mother of a good friend of mine, who had come to my house that morning to go to school with me, said to me, "Honest students were killed and loafers survived. I hate to see your face." Her words made me think that I should not continue to live. I tried to die by throwing myself into a river several times, but I did not have the courage to do so after all.

During the occupation period, my school life was miserable and I was scared to be called by the ABCC (Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission). But the music festival for the reconstruction and the school bazaar were fun. I was really happy when we had the new Constitution of Japan, which declared the renunciation of war forever. A peace memorial was built in our school yard. Later, my school was closed due to the reform of the school system of Japan.

I spent my final school year in a senior high school which was established based on the new education system. I became sick and went to a local clinic where they took my blood and sent it to the ABCC. The doctor said nothing abnormal was detected in me, although some symptoms of anemia were recognized. When purple spots appeared on some soft parts of my skin whenever I got tired, I asked the doctor whether it was due to the effects of the atomic bomb radiation. But he said that only those who were within 2 kilometers from the hypocenter and got burned or injured were regarded as affected by the atomic bomb. He said there was no problem with me because I was 4 kilometers away and was inside the house. However, I witnessed many bodies

bearing purple spots on their skin when I helped their cremation, and some of the survivors, while they stayed at my house said, "If purple spots appear, I am doomed to die." So I could not stop thinking that my conditions then may be related to the atomic bombing.

During the year following graduation from high school, I was in low spirits and had no energy to do anything. I was in bed all the time in a dark room. Much later I realized that I suffered from the so-called "A-bomb bura-bura disease" (vague symptoms among the A-bomb survivors such as fatigue, headache, etc.) In the period when my condition got better, I started working, got married and gave birth to children. But when I got tired, I had abnormal conditions on my body. Starting from my late twenties, my upper teeth began to break off one by one and had to be pulled out by the dentist. But because I was too anemic, I was not able to find any dentist in the devastated city of Hiroshima who was able to treat my teeth. For several years I withdrew into myself at home.

My life changed in 1964. One day a woman in the neighborhood invited me to come to a meeting. Actually, I was really reluctant, but I followed her and sat in a women's meeting. I had no idea what they were talking about, but around the end of the meeting, they discussed how to disseminate a booklet entitled, "Burnt Like Fallen Leaves". It contained essays and testimonies written by women survivors of the atomic bombing. I took several copies of the booklet home and read it. There I found a testimony of a Hibakusha woman who never knew even after 19 years where and how her younger sister died on that day. I noticed that her sister was one of the first-year students of my school.

Until that day, I had never imagined what would have happened if the atomic bomb had been dropped one day earlier on August 5. I would have been killed in the same way as her sister. Timidly, I asked to meet the woman who wrote the testimony. She was so kind to say to me, "I am so glad that you have survived these years." After that, together with her, I started interviewing fellow Hibakusha and later joined the editing team of the "Burnt Like Fallen Leaves" booklet. It completely changed my life.

Why am I telling my A-bomb experience even now? It is because I believe we should not repeat the tragedy of so many school children of Hiroshima, not only

of my own middle school. The only life that those students who perished in the atomic bombing were allowed to experience was life during the 15-year war started by the Japanese military. government. I believe that those of us who experienced the atomic bombing first-hand must continue to tell to the world that humans cannot coexist with nuclear weapons.

I was very happy when the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted at the United Nations on July 7, 2017. And the treaty entered into force on January 22 this year. However, it is regrettable that Japan, despite having suffered the damage from nuclear weapons during wartime, has not signed nor ratified the TPNW. For the sake of the people who have worked for the abolition of nuclear weapons but could not survive to witness the adoption of the treaty, the long-time desire of the Hibakusha, I ardently hope that Japan will join the TPNW in my lifetime.