

“Edelweiss, edelweiss, every morning you greet me...”

Beautiful melody and words from the song I first heard in the American musical drama film *The Sound of Music*. The flower edelweiss is used as a symbol of love and peace in this song. Whenever I hear “Edelweiss”, I think of peace and what I can do for the sake of peace.

These thoughts about peace were influenced by my paternal grandparents who are Polish Germans. They experienced war in Poland where my grandmother lost her hearing because of a big explosion. They say with conviction that wars cause physical and mental wounds. I think they are right because I know that there are seven World War II veterans who are still in a mental hospital in Japan. Among them is a 98-year-old man who has been there for more than 70 years! During the war, physical disability was seen as an honor, but mental disability was regarded as a disgrace. They were discriminated against and totally neglected by society. For them, the war has not ended yet and perhaps will never really end.

Wartime experiences of our grandparents’ generation should not be forgotten. We have to pass on those stories to the next generation in hopes that war will never happen again. We also have to visit places that show what war feels like. In Bremen where I was born, there is a shop where some parts of the walls are pieces of wreckage from World War II. Christmas trees stand against those walls all year round and the shop has become a famous place visited by people from all over the world. Because it is located opposite my kindergarten, I often visited the place with my parents. That was their way of teaching me the importance of learning history. I would stare at those walls for a long time and it was the only way I could get a feel of what war is like.

My parents taught me not only about war, but also about peace. My Polish German father and my Japanese mother have successfully overcome their differences in language, culture, customs, and ways of thinking. I learned what peace is like from them. They love their family and they love music, and I grew up surrounded by a lot of love and beautiful music. They exemplify what Mother Teresa said about peace: “If we truly want peace in the world, let us begin by loving one another in our own families.”

Music and peace - these are two words that are always on my mind. I want to be a professional singer like my mother, and I want to sing songs which can console or cheer up people, not war songs or nationalistic songs. I will use music to develop relationships with different people from different countries and help unite fellow musicians who believe in using music to promote peace. We will use music to understand one another because as Henry David Thoreau said, “In our world of peace and love, music will be the universal language.” Although we are from different countries, our group will not be bound by our country’s borders as we work to realize a world without war. People might say we have different homelands, but we will say, “We all have one homeland – the earth.” It is our one and only precious homeland, and we will work for peace on earth as we sing in one voice, “Edelweiss, edelweiss, bless my homeland forever.”

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Music and Peace : Sing Together in One Voice