

Right now, somewhere, someone is losing their life in a war.

The reason I'm alive now is because my grandmother passed a "baton of life" to my mother and me. My grandmother's first birthday was on the day when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6th, 1945. On that day, her mother was planning to take her to a photo studio in central Hiroshima. However, she became ill so they couldn't go. If they had gone there, I wouldn't exist now. When I heard this story, my awareness of life and peace began to grow. Peace for me is the happiness and smiles that come from spending time with family and friends.

Here's my question to you. Even now, 78 years after the end of World War II, wars and disputes are still occurring somewhere in the world, including Ukraine and the Gaza Strip. How do we rectify this situation? We all have the right to live happily in our normal daily lives. Imagine if we didn't. It's too late to start thinking of answers after war begins. Instead of showing off weapons, we need a heart that sympathizes with the pain of others and the strength to continue dialogue without giving up. We young people should build trusting relationships leading to dialogue, and act with strong beliefs.

I realized this from two experiences. First, I participated in the Children's World Peace Summit by presenting an idea to realize world peace. At the summit, I was encouraged to find there are colleagues of the same generation at home and abroad who have a strong desire for peace like me. With my friends I met there, I am planning an online international exchange to realize world peace. This exchange will be the first step in building a deeper relationship of trust.

Second, I participated in the Hawaiian Peace Forum. I exchanged opinions about peace with Hawaiian students who have different backgrounds and wrote messages on paper flowers to make a lei. Leis have the meaning of friendship, bonds, and "cultural respect and etiquette" which means respecting different cultures for their differences. The moment the lei was completed, I felt a sense of unity beyond the differences of how we each perceived peace.

On the other hand, I was shocked when a participant said that dropping the atomic bombs was the only choice. The fact that the bombs took many lives does not change, but their power has deterred the world from using them again. I wondered why he insisted so even though he knew the importance of peace and life. He told me the sacrifice of those days saved lives then, and still saves lives today via nuclear deterrence. However, if peace is made up of sacrifice, the negative chain of sacrifice will be repeated, causing difficulty in maintaining peace. When I think of the lives lost in the atomic bombing, my heart still weeps. Every life, now and then, is still special regardless of race or creed. Through our dialogues, I saw that everyone has the desire for peace, but we each have different interpretations. This allowed me to see peace from multiple angles.

In order to actualize peace and honor life, it is necessary to meet people with diverse ways of thinking and perspectives, and have repeated dialogue with them. If we build trusting international relationships, each country's citizens will influence their leaders to work for the lives of all people on earth. Let's join hands with people from all over the world and form a bond of trust until the day there is no conflict.

In Miyamoto Musashi's book, "Go Rin No Sho" there is a saying "Banri-ikku." It means "continue to work hard toward one's goal." Now, there is a desperate need for world peace. Just as all of humanity looks up toward the same faraway sky, we must all work unrelentingly toward our goal, world peace.

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Banri-ikku: Exist Under the Sky with One Goal