

“What do you want to do in the future?” When you are asked, how will you answer? Maybe some of you will talk about your future job and others might talk about your future plans such as marriage or hobbies. Now we live in peace and take it for granted, but, is your future really going to work out as planned?

In March, we went on a school trip to Okinawa. We had a study tour. We went to one of the caves in Okinawa. People call them Gama. We walked into a dark narrow cave with a tour guide. I didn't feel good while I was walking into it. I was very scared. It was a very hot day, but in the cave I felt a little chilly. I didn't know why I felt so at that time. After leaving the cave, we listened to a story from a woman. She was 85 years old and she talked about her younger days when she was 14. The woman worked as one of the Shiraume. That was the name of the group of students who were working as nurses during World War II in Okinawa. I was very shocked because without any training a girl who was as old as I took care of the injured and sick in a dark narrow cave. Can you imagine boys and girls that were as old as you or your children coming together to help each other? Or even assembling to die together? Can you imagine watching your family and friends lay dying? This was truly happening 70 years ago. It was my first time to hear the story of the war. The woman's name was Ms. Nakayama. She was one of the storytellers of the war.

After Ms. Nakayama told us about her terrible situation, I reflected on myself. Now I am 14 years old. I can eat as much food as I want. And I don't need to be scared of death. I was shocked to hear what Ms. Nakayama did when she was 14 years old. I had some questions for her. “Why did you decide to tell us about such a terrible situation? Is it hard for you to remember that?” However, she said, “Our generations have a mission to pass the baton to future generations in order to tell the importance of peace. Our future success depends on what you do. That's why I decided to tell you about the tragic experience on the battlefields.”

Through her speech, I had a good opportunity to reconsider my life. Before I met her, I thought, “I don't want to think about our future so deeply because I am only a girl. I don't have a responsibility to make the future.” However, after I met her, I learned what we do now is directly connected to our future. I will be able to be a better bearer of the responsibility for the future. Now I am taking the first step to make our future.

After returning to Fukushima, I decided to do one thing. It was to learn about our past, the problems which we have, and think about those problems as our responsibility. We can learn about the past and the problems which we have. It is the first step to make a better future. There have been many mistakes made in the past but the most important thing is not to blame the previous generation but to look at the past from many angles and learn from these mistakes so we don't repeat them. Our generations have a mission to make peace.

You and I will choose our path. I will learn from the past and make use of it for our future. Who can make a brilliant future? It's you.