Masami Nishimoto Aug 18, 2025, 3:25 AM

to Yusuke, Miki, Fumi, NAJC

Dear All,

Thank you for your hospitality at the recent roundtable discussion. This is Masami Nishimoto from Hiroshima.
I would be grateful if you could review my remarks at your convenience via the web or email, as the draft has already been sent.
I would like to take this opportunity to share my experiences and thoughts regarding the question from a participant form Vancouver that I was unable to fully address during the session.
Please feel free to forward this if appropriate.

I recognize that conveying the issues surrounding nuclear weapons to people in Asia, particularly those in Korea and China, based on the horrors of the atomic bombings, is a challenging endeavor.
This is because, even in cases where Japanese citizen groups aim for “reconciliation,” the historical reality remains that Japan, as a nation, has not fulfilled its “war responsibility” concerning its colonial rule and invasions.
Moreover, unlike those residing in Japan, overseas atomic bomb survivors, including the largest overseas group of survivors in Korea, were long excluded from the Atomic Bomb Survivors Relief Law.
From the teachings and court cases of Mr. Kwaku Kwi-Hun, I also believe the Japanese government has neglected its “postwar responsibilities.”

Kwaku Kwi-Hun (1924–2023) was among the first cohort of young men from the Korean Peninsula conscripted under the 1944 draft system. He was sent to a completely unfamiliar place just before graduating from Jeonju Normal School and was exposed to the atomic bomb.
https://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=127748&query
As noted in this “Memorial,” Mr. Kwaku forced open the door to support for overseas atomic bomb survivors through his lawsuit against the Japanese government.
This landmark victory in a lawsuit that also questioned Japan's “war and postwar responsibilities” was reported only briefly in a Rengo Tsushin article from Tokyo and received almost no coverage in Korea.
In Korea, the prevailing view is that the atomic bomb brought liberation from Japan (August 15th is Liberation Day), leading to extremely limited interest even in the suffering of fellow Koreans exposed to radiation.

Simultaneously, the Japanese government, which proclaims Japan as the “only nation to suffer atomic bombings in war,” and many Japanese citizens themselves lack the perspective to consider why Koreans were exposed to radiation in Japan.

By chance, I was born and raised in Hiroshima. Through my work, I covered Korean atomic bomb survivors in Korea for a considerable length of time and gained a deep understanding of their experiences. I also personally supported the lawsuit, having earned Mr. Kwaku's friendship.
Local atomic bomb survivor group leaders expressed surprise at my involvement, remarking, “You really go out of your way, don't you?”
Regrettably, it can also be said that many atomic bomb survivors and witnesses who frequently appear in the media, overly fixated on viewing their own experiences as absolute, show little interest in the experiences of others.
I was once startled when I accepted an invitation, out of obligation, to speak at a New Year's general meeting of a county atomic bomb survivors' organization. The representative from the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Hidankyo) delivered his account in a tone as if addressing schoolchildren on a field trip. And yet, the audience was entirely composed of elderly people who had lost parents, children, or spouses ....

In 2004, I traveled to China with acquaintances who were atomic bomb survivors, survivors of the Kure air raid, a Tokyo University student from Hiroshima, and a graduate student from Hiroshima University originally from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China who also served as our interpreter. The purpose of the trip was to explore how much empathy a dialogue from Hiroshima, the site of the bombing, could elicit.
When I requested cooperation from the embassy in Tokyo to show them atomic bomb materials, they refused to issue visas, citing “propaganda about Japan's war damages” and “no precedent.” However, with the help of an acquaintance who had returned from being the Asahi Shimbun's Beijing correspondent, connections were made through the Communist Party's International Liaison Department, and the “Chinese People's Association for Disarmament” agreed to host us. It was also a visa-free reporting trip.
First, I engaged in dialogue with over a dozen faculty members and graduate students from the History Department at the University of Beijing, as designated.

A man who lost his parents, grandparents, and younger sister in the fire ruins near his family's inn—now the Peace Memorial Park—where he was caught in the flash at his student mobilization site during the summer of his 13th year, held a sake bottle found among the ashes and recounted what happened on “August 6th.”

A professor specializing in the War of Resistance Against Japan pointed to the Japanese military's indiscriminate bombing of Chongqing, asking, “Do you think you can explain the truth of the War of Resistance with exhibits like those at Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Museum?”
A graduate student pressed the 72-year-old survivor with sharp words: “The atomic bomb stopped Japan's war of aggression.”
Visiting the major newspaper Beijing Youth Daily, I obtained their August 6, 2002 special feature on the Hiroshima bombing. The article concluded, “Nuclear weapons are the supreme treasure that prevents such tragedies and safeguards national independence and security.” Reactions in Harbin, Nanjing, and Shanghai were nearly identical.

A woman who experienced the air raid on Kure, who also continued her Christian-based opposition to Yasukuni Shrine and support for Korean atomic bomb survivors, showed frustration, asking, “Is accepting what the Chinese government says the correct historical understanding?”
After returning home, I reported in a series on the visit from the bombed city where dialogue broke down, highlighting the depth of the mutual “divide.” I recall receiving no reader response except for one. It was the response from a Hiroshima University professor specializing in modern Sino-Japanese relations; “That's because those who haven't reflected enough are the ones going.”
The panel photograph of the atomic bomb mushroom cloud displayed in the final section of the “War of Resistance Against Japan Memorial Hall,” which the professor had visited multiple times, was labeled “Hiroshima,” but it was actually Nagasaki.

If I must record any “achievements” from this journey where the “final destination” remained entirely invisible, it was locating the whereabouts of one man and one woman, both survivors of the bombing at Hiroshima University's predecessor, Hiroshima University of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Higher Normal School, respectively. With the support of a newspaper owner's wife, we invited the man (then 78 years old), who was in Nanjing, to Hiroshima accompanied by his son.
Following the appeal trial of Kwaku Kwi-Hun, who argued “A hibakusha is a hibakusha wherever they are,” the Japanese government abandoned its appeal. Subsequently, starting in 2003, it began providing health management allowances to hibakusha living overseas. The old man applied for and was granted this allowance.

This experience led me to pursue research after retirement, free from deadlines.
I discovered that twelve Chinese students (sent from Manchukuo and the Wang Jingwei regime) were killed or injured by the bomb at Hiroshima University of Liberal Arts and

Sciences and the Higher Normal School. With the cooperation of Chinese researchers living in Japan, I obtained each person's name and details of their study abroad experience.
After consulting an acquaintance at Hiroshima University, the University applied on behalf of the bereaved families in 2023, and their names were added to Hiroshima City's Atomic Bomb Victims' Memorial List.
You may have seen it on television; their names are normally enshrined in the stone sarcophagus of the Atomic Bomb Memorial Monument within the Peace Memorial Park.
https://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=134947&query

As I also note in this manuscript (my humble writing), regarding the horrors of the atomic bomb and the existence of nuclear weapons, the first step is to think as a human being, not from the perspective of the states.
I believe recognition and action that transcend ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds begin there.
Finally, if I may add a personal aside, I can't shake a sense of déjà vu when it comes to those who loudly advocate “anti-nuclear” positions or respond to the media's formulaic coverage. Though I live in Hiroshima, I deliberately keep my distance.
However, my participation in the JNIC roundtable, my writing this, and my respect for participants, all stem from a desire to convey, however slightly, what I have contemplated as a human being—and to connect.
My apologies for the length.

Sincerely,

Masami Nishimoto

August 17, 2025 (Sunday) 22:53 Yusuke Tanaka <yusuketanaka446@gmail.com>:

Masami Nishimoto