

<Column 3> What the Next Generation Can Do to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

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This is the 70th year since the atomic bombings, and the average age of the Hibakusha (atomic bombing survivors) is nearing 80.

During these seven decades the Hibakusha have taken the lead in the movement to abolish nuclear weapons. In judicial and political venues they have spoken for those who died, they have related their own bitter experiences, and they have pleaded that we should never repeat that tragedy.

But in international society, the necessity of nuclear weapons alone is emphasized from the perspective of national security, and the appeal of the Hibakusha has not always been considered important.

After many years attention is now focused on an approach that advocates the “inhumanity of nuclear weapons,” and Hibakusha testimony is in the spotlight.

Nuclear weapons cannot be permitted owing to their indiscriminateness, cruelty, and the persistence of their damage. And the best grounds for showing their impermissibility is the testimony of the victims, the Hibakusha.

Now that Hibakusha testimony is becoming a concrete force in the drive toward abolishing nuclear weapons, we must not stop this initiative. Because aging of the Hibakusha jeopardizes the memories of their suffering, we must keep their experiences from being forgotten. What we younger generations can do is listen carefully and seriously to the Hibakusha, and pass their testimony on to future generations.

There’s no need for the ability to give difficult explanations. On Instagram, you can connect instantly to the world just by posting photographs for peace with tags such as #Hiroshima, #Nagasaki, or #peace. On Facebook, even if you can’t explain something well in your own words, you can tell your friends what you’re thinking by “liking” peace-related articles, or by pressing the share button for them. If you can add a thought of even a few words, such as “Let’s get rid of nuclear weapons,” to a post by translating it into a foreign language, you may be able to find like-minded people who share your feelings throughout the world. We younger generations are good at making skillful and ready use of foreign languages, and technologies like social networking, smartphones, and computers. With just a few keystrokes, we can tell the world about all the thoughts and feelings in Hibakusha hearts.

When younger generations get involved in the movement to abolish nuclear weapons, that alone gives hope to the Hibakusha. It is very painful for them to recall the tragic experiences of 70 years ago and express them verbally. To cherish their words as a valuable asset for future generations would give the Hibakusha the courage to describe once again the reality of the atomic bombings.

The younger generations could play a role that is not at all insignificant. We should continue to join the Hibakusha in calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

I should think that the world can succeed in abolishing nuclear weapons when the appeal of the Hibakusha has transcended generations and international borders.