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# Survival in Nagasaki

KOMINE Hidetaka

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Anthony Brown

## **The speaker's profile**

Hidetaka Komine was born into a fruit farm family in Nishigo-Karimata, Nagasaki, on November 29, 1940. On August 9, 1945, he was exposed to the A-bomb at 1.5 kilometers from the hypocenter – when he was climbing a loquat tree and capturing cicadas. He was four years and eight months old then. He suffered serious burns to arms, feet, and stomach. The right foot was deformed by the heat wave blast. He enrolled in elementary school in 1947. Because of the keloid, he was bullied by classmates and teachers.

After graduating from junior high school in March 1956, he passed the national exam for barbers. Afterwards, he got a girl friend, but her father put an end to their relationship. He despaired of the future and attempted suicide. He began a new life in Osaka, and she followed him there. Finally they got married in March 1966. In 1968 he opened his own shop, Barber Komine, in Otonashi, Nagasaki. They were blessed with their children, but they divorced in April 1977. He combined working with raising three children. He started telling about his experience in 1991. He conveys the horrors of A-bomb, his life after the war, the radiation disease due to depleted uranium shells, and 3.11 Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. Now he is active on the world stage.

## **KOMINE's lecture**

Good morning. I standing in the front of you seem like a

normal old man. But, if I take my clothes off, you would turn your face away from me. It's not so bad in the arms, but I have ugly keloid on my chest, stomach, and both legs. Really ugly.

I was born in 1940, and I am just 70 now. I was four years and eight months old when the A-bomb was dropped. Being small, I didn't know about the war or the A-bomb. Then what will I talk about? I will talk about the way of life as a Hibakusha. "Your speech is the story of your life." It's very written-about in reports. That's right. This is the truth called a tale. It's neither fabrication nor embellishment. I was born in Nishigo-Karimata in Nagasaki, 1.5 kilometers to the north of the hypocenter. There were eight or nine families in the village. My house was in the most remote part of the village, and I lived deep in the mountains with no electricity and no gas. In only our village, 15 people were killed by A-bomb. Most of them were outside. People staying inside survived. There were eight people in my family, my parents, grandfather, brothers, and sisters. My eldest brother had gone to war. My family ran a fruit farm. When I was climbing a loquat tree and capturing cicadas, there was probably a blinding flash. I don't remember clearly. And the very second after the blast was unbelievable, and, I was hurled. Not "tossed". I was "hurled". I fainted in shock. After a while I came to and looked up tentatively. In site of the most beautiful season, especially the mountains were beautiful with green, - the mountains turned gray. I still remember the sight. Meanwhile, the sky was getting gradually darker. Looking up at the sky, tons of dust was floating in the air. I was really scared and rushed home. My house had collapsed. The whole family rushed to our air-raid shelter. It was at that time that I noticed my burn injury. The stomach of a little boy was about this size. I remember having gotten many blisters about the size of ping pong balls on my stomach. My mother later told me, "At that time we had been holding

you in turn in the dugout. You wriggled in our arms.” I asked, “Why didn’t you lay me down?” She said, “We thought you might die if we did so.” The next day my family built a shanty beneath a tree to make us rest in the breezy shade. It was a simple building with no walls. My grandfather and I lay down there.

To add the burden of burns, so many maggots went at me mercilessly. They cut deep into my flesh. My mother later told me, “You kept on saying ‘kill me, kill me.’ It was so very un-child-like.” It was extremely painful. And once, I could find some relief from pain, my hair fell out, and I had bleeding from the nose, gums, and anus. Then, there appeared purple spots, a little smaller than trains of rice, throughout the body. This was not true only in my case, but also among other victims. Meanwhile quite a few victims had died. Finally, five days after the bombing, an ambulance party came to our village. My father held onto me and took me to them. But the doctor said, “He is going to die as his body is half-burned. Let him die in your home.” They applied something like paint, and I was sent home. I thought I was going to die, but I didn’t know the sense of death. I had been thinking, “Why should people die?”, “When will I die?” However I survived. It really is a miracle that I, who was neglected by doctors, am still hanging in here. While we lay down there, someone in my family was always on hand to cheer us up. “Hidetaka, you should live on and never die.” I was saved by their support. I had very dry skin and cracked lips. I was dying of thirst and wanted some water. I survived, but I have ugly keloid on my body. Curiously, a like of normal dermis, one centimeter long, was on my stomach. A healthy dermis line. After thinking, I realized the part was a trace of rubber pants. Still, a healthy dermis line is on my stomach.

Time heals the unsightly scars a little on my body, but both feet will never be healed. I have a big keloid on the dorsum of

my feet. Do you know keloid? Keloid is like a welt but is some ten times bigger. I have a keloid, three centimeters by two centimeters, on the dorsum of my foot. With the expansion of the keloid, four toes except for the big toe were lifted and turned outwards. It developed abruptly. Eight months after the bomb, I was finally able to walk.

Waraji are traditional straw sandals. At that time, we didn't have shoes, not even at any store. Everybody wore Waraji or wooden clogs. My father made me Waraji, but they did not fit as my toes turned out. So I tied Waraji to my feet with string. At the moment of taking the first step, it put pressure on the swollen keloid, and the keloid split open at a stretch. Of course, it started bleeding. It was very painful. But there were no medicines, no bandages, nothing. Due to poor nutrition, it was long in healing. It required half year to heal. Being a child, I had completely forgotten that I had had a bitter experience, and I had another. Even I could learn a lesson from past experience. Then, I walked along dragging my feet slowly without bending the ankle.

In 1947, I entered elementary school. There were about 900 people in the school. It took about 40-45 minutes from my house to school on foot for healthy people. – but it took me about two hours in summer, and two hours and forty minutes in winter. Even in the pleasant climate of Nagasaki, we sometimes had snow. 20-30 centimeters of snow fell in the mountains, even if it fell lightly on flat land. Since the A-bomb destroyed our fruit farm, we had no income. Since we were not able even to buy underwear, I only wore a school uniform. My parents managed somehow to buy me a uniform, but we couldn't buy a belt. So I wore a self-made belt made of straw. I wore only my school uniform and Waraji. Walking through snow in Waraji was not just painful because it was practically barefoot walking. On the way to school, I often slipped and fell

on the snow. And it was getting warm even though I wore only a school uniform. As I took a breath and looked back at the streets I had walked along, there were bloody footprints on the sherbet snow.

I hated school. When I was in the first grade, my homeroom teacher was Ms. Ohkubo. She was very nice. As soon as I arrived at school, she took me to a heated night duty room, and said “come on in where it’s warm”. However, I was bullied unmercifully by a group of five pupils. The bullying continued on a daily basis. They called me “Rotten foot” and “Bird-foot”. “Rotten foot” is what you see, but I didn’t get the meaning of “Bird-foot”. To this day I still don’t know. They abused me verbally, took my clothes off, and I was the object of everyone’s ridicule. It was tough on me emotionally. Every morning, especially snow days, I was awakened by mother. “Hurry up, come on.” She hustled me. “I hate to go” I acted like a baby. Once or twice she kicked me in my bottom saying “You idiot. Go to school right now.” She never compromised. I used to say “Mom is a devil.” in tears. But now, I know there isn’t parent anywhere who could hate their kids. I wonder how she felt about kicking her own son and sending a crying son to school.

We were living in poor conditions, but she wanted to relieve my burns somehow. During the summer holidays in my second grade, my mother borrowed money from acquaintances to arrange for me an operation. Yet, it was not enough. I had an aunt in Saga prefecture. An uncle was a vice-chief of the Saga prefectural police department, and they could afford it. They lent us money with good grace. “I will not be bullied anymore”, “I can take part in the sports festival.” – I thought. I had three operations, This is a picture of my feet of after the second operation. This scooped part is keloid. Even now keloid and muscles pull toward each other. The keloid couldn’t be removed completely by a single operation. I asked a doctor to scrape the

keloid out deeply to the point of having the bone bare before the second operation. As a result, it gouged a deep crater. This picture was taken just before the third operation.

I had complained about these things at school to my mother to relieve stress until I was the third grade. I always said horrible things. “Mom, today, they ridiculed me and punched me. I hope he is killed by car.” “Mom, today, I saw American soldiers. I wanted to throw stones at them.” – I used to say such things. When I was in fourth grade, she called me. She said, “I’m sorry, but your keloid is a permanent scar. Just maybe the bullying may continue for the whole of your life. Do you go on with your life hating people around you? There’s nothing more miserable than such a life. You say that America is extremely obnoxious, but think it over. What you really need to detest are A-bomb and war.” She gave me a scolding. From that time on I couldn’t complain to her. I was constantly stressed out, and I did what we must absolutely not do to burn off stress. What did I do? I caught a number of different small animals and committed acts of wanton cruelty on them. I clubbed them to death until I was bespattered with blood. On the other hand, I pretended to be a good boy at home because I afraid of being disliked by my family.

Since the A-bomb destroyed the trees in our farm, we plowed the remaining roots. It took up to two years to complete that. We struggled to establish soil and grew rice and vegetables. Yet, growing vegetables was difficult for amateurs. When I was in fifth grade, father went out to buy cattle. Cattle are five or ten times as strong as humans. I totally thought he would buy work-ready-big cattle, but he bought a calf about this big. Because we didn’t have much money. Father told me to take care of the calf. At that time, we supplemented protein with fish, such as sardines, horse mackerel, and mackerel. These were cheap then. We had a big feast during the first three days

of the New Year. The main dish was chicken. To have a chicken before the New Year, he always bought a chick. To take care of the chick was also my job. We built a cow shed. I put a small bow in the corner of the shed. I got two rabbits from someone and kept them in the box. One day, a baby rabbit was born. A fluffy baby rabbit. She was not only a baby rabbit but also my best friend. I played with her everyday to avoid contact with other people. I gave a girl's name to her. As she grew about this big, she pushed her parents out of the way to wait for me in front of the door – when she caught sight of me or I called her name. When I left her out of cage, followed me. She was irresistible. One day, I came home from school, went to the cow shed, and called her name as always. But she didn't show up. With a sense of foreboding, I looked into the bow. It was smeared with blood. I was really surprised. What! She had been bitten to death. I, who tortured small animals to death, cried bitterly with grief and buried her in the ground. I didn't know why she was killed by her parents. As I asked my father, - "Because you touches the baby rabbit too much, she stank of human, and her parents mistook her for an enemy." – he explained. At that time, he also said "Don't kill small animals anymore." He said so twice.

The New Year was coming up. My chicken also came to me for some feed when I went to the chicken shed. As I caught my chicken, father was engaged in the operation for killing a chicken. "Bring it here. Keep a tight hold of it." – he said to me a lot of times. Sensing its own final moments, the chicken kicked and pokes me as best it could – on the way to the execution chamber, only a few meters. It looked crazed with fear. The time had come. I bore down on the struggling chicken. "Keep it pinioned", father said. I held on it with my face averted. I shut my eyes to what was happening. The instant at which he cut off its head, its body twitched, and I knew it was

cut off now. The headless chicken became increasingly weak pumping out blood to the rhythm of heart. Seeing that, I flopped down in a sweat and vomited. I didn't vomit because the chicken was dirty. The chicken had been killed to be eaten. I couldn't help it. However, I could help hundreds of small animals which I had killed. The death of the rabbit and the death of the chicken. I could realize there must be a meaning to every life when I saw these two die. How cruel I am. I felt hatred for myself such as I had never known before, and I vomited. I had never experienced that before, and I couldn't eat chicken after that shocking day.

I decided to kill myself only once when I was in the fifth grade, but it wasn't just a thought. I decided to give the bully a blow before I died. But when I actually stood in front of him, my heart beat wildly and I could say nothing. During the season of wheat filling, I challenged him to a fight despite my pounding heart. They were group of five, and two of them opposed the fight. They probably felt pity for me. The fight started. I got beaten up in a wheat field. How could I beat him? He spent those days fighting, and he had a large body. When a man is hyper, there is little pain. I had no pain at all. To avoid his punch, I slid my arm around his back and held him above with all the strength I had. His feet were up in the air. Nevertheless, I squeezed tightly. It interfered with his punching and his power was cut in half. I pushed him down. The bully's feet got tangled in a vine and he fell over. Wheat field soil is soft. Collapsing onto the field you can be half-buried in wheat. I sat astride him and, braced so that he couldn't sit up, and I took a punch at him. At that time, I felt no pain in my foot. I, who had never fought before, was hyper. I couldn't strike him square in the face, but luckily, it hit his front tooth. Unluckily for him. His two teeth were chipped, and he said, "Komine, please stop." I stopped right away. I won. For

better or worse, I won. I went home wiping the nosebleed with my hand, so the blood was dried and looked like a mustache. No wonder people passing laughed at me. When I got home, mother said in surprise, "What happened to you?" "I had a fight against a bully, and I won." I told her twice. The second time I told her, she said "Good for you." She knew I had been bullied as I had complained until the third grade. And she was aware that it had been continuing. I guess she wanted me to get over it by myself. I appeared strange at a time she least expected it, and the instant she heard about my winning, she told the truth in spite of herself. No one would be happy that their own son is covered with blood and mud.

I wrote "I have the highest respect for my mother" in my book. My feelings for her haven't changed. Unfortunately, she died of old age on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at reach 103. People say she lived long enough to age 103. But I wanted her to live way beyond 150 or 200. Why is she the only one for me? It's simple. Because she always waited for me to come home for six years until I graduated from elementary school. That's the only reason. During the cold winter months, I came home paralyzed. She was waiting outside the front door and she complimented me on coming back home in the cold. A log fire roared in the open hearth, and she helped keep me warm. During the typhoon season, mother had never come for me. I was almost blown away getting home. In hot weather, I was covered in sweat walking with a limp. It was a really tough to walk on unpaved stony road. On rainy days, I walked over a puddle. She was always there. "You really did great in this hot weather." There were some unsold vegetables in a backyard well. She told me, "You can eat any vegetables you like." Then she got back to farm work. That's it. When I was the first grade, I used to go to school saying "Mom is a devil" in tears. In a hell named school, I fled from bullying, got a beating, and was

ridiculed. She was the only salvation for me. “Mom is waiting. Mom is waiting for me.” She was an angel for me. She was a genuine angel.

I found work after finishing junior high school. At first, I intended to be a sushi chef. I brought my resume to a sushi restaurant in front of a station. The owner looked at me, and “Are you a Hibakusha?” – he asked casually. “Yes, I am.” I answered frankly too. He thought for a while and said, “I’m sorry, ours is the food business, so we can’t hire Hibakusha.” I could hear him saying it that time. That was the problem. Why was there social discrimination against Hibakusha? In 1957, a new law was enacted called Act for Atomic Bomb Sufferers’ Medical care. This was not a law established by aggressive politicians to save Hibakusha. Hibakusha worked their way to Tokyo, and worked on the Ministry of Health and Welfare and other organizations day after day. Finally it was enacted. For 12 years until the law was enacted the government had turned their back on us. They didn’t supply us even a rice grain. But nevertheless, we endured. There are endless risks from radiation exposure, such as dying after losing hair and getting nosebleed. And the most terrible disease is leukemia. People who died a few days after exposure to the bomb were leukemia. The second most terrible disease is cancer. I’m prepared to die of cancer. Most Hibakusha get cancer. Besides, the origin of the cancer isn’t in a specific site. There are multiple cancers. Cancer develop in several places around the body, and they died. Hibakusha fear these diseases. And, it was difficult for Hibakusha to get married because we don’t know we’re going to die. Especially, women had concerns about their baby’s death. Moreover, Hibakusha were labeled plague victims. We couldn’t work every day with the body having received so much radiation. This kind of condition continued for 30 years.

Therefore, we were considered lazy by people. We say “bura-bura” which in Nagasaki dialect means lazy. People were deluded into thinking that Hibakusha were lazy and called us “Bura-bura Patients”. Since we couldn’t work every day, we got poor. The body subjected to so much radiation became weaker. Prejudice, discrimination, bullying, diseases, poverty. For 12 years until the law was enacted quite a few Hibakusha killed themselves. At this late date, all of a sudden, they confess to attempting suicide while drinking. Most Hibakusha have gone through it. In our village, two women succeeded in committing suicide. There was a beautiful intelligent girl with long hair in my neighborhood. One day, when she was walking with her friend, an inconsiderate man said, - “You are Hibakusha, aren’t you? You are ugly.” Keloid turns black, and it turns purple in winter. In summer, blood circulation improves and it turns red. It is really ugly. “You are Hibakusha, aren’t you? You are ugly.” – When she heard this, she bent her head. “She is not a Hibakusha. She just got burned.” Her friend said strictly. However she killed herself the next day. Many, many Hibakusha killed themselves.

I am a barber. It was not easy to become a barber. The barbershop where I worked was feudalistic. The contract of employment was five years, and I had to work for another year to return the courtesy. So, I worked there for six years in total. An underling had to stand by at all times other than bathroom and meal time. We had to have our meal in haste. An underling was not any different cattle or horse. I kept my weight on the left, didn’t put the weight on the scalded right. Putting my weight on it, my left foot swelled from fatigue. When my foot was had really swollen, they let me go back home. My mother cried after she saw me coming home dragging my feet. She applied a cold compress to my feet all night long, and I went to work the next morning.

After I reached twenty, I was getting to that age. When I was 24, I met a 19-year-old hairdresser. She was a repatriate from Manchuria, now the northeastern part of China. I took the plunge and confessed my love to her. "I am Hibakusha, but could you please go out with me?" She who knew nothing, said "Sure." It was the most pleasant thing in my life better than winning the fight in the fifth grade or passing the national exam of hairdressers. "I've got a girl friend." However, it ended after only three months. I got a phone call from her father telling me stay away from his daughter. The never-falling response to me was always "You are Hibakusha." A 24-year-old man is his prime, and it is at that age where he gives thought to future plans in his life. I was absolutely devastated. So far I had cleared several hurdles in my life, but I couldn't cross the hurdle of heartbreak. I began skipping my work. And I vomited everything I had eaten. I felt hungry, but I couldn't hold food down. I spent sleepless nights. I didn't feel sleepy all day. Staying awake three days straight made me crazy. The idea from my fuzzy-head was death. I decided to kill myself. In June, I took an overdose of sleeping pills. I forced them down with water. Yet, I couldn't swallow them all down. At a time when I was stupefied with pills, I was desperate for any help. "If I could be born again, I never want to be a Hibakusha." Two days later I awoke at the hospital. I was given some drugs which trigger vomiting. "I failed to die." I thought.

I don't like talking about my father because I feel a constriction in the chest. I was exposed to the A-bomb, and I was pronounced dead by a doctor. The frying oil had a beneficial effect on my burn. My father went to near the hypocenter to seek frying oil for his son who could die at any moment. He died of cancer in 1973 at age 64. The night before he passed away, my whole family stayed at the hospital.

“Hidetaka, dad is calling you.” My sister called me. As I got close to him, I heard his heavy breathing. He enured the fear of death. “Take my hand” , he said. His hand was cold and swollen. He stared at me and said “My biggest concern is you” in a loud whisper. “It’s no joke. What a bad son I am.” – I cried bitterly in the mountains. Early in the day, he passed away. He was the quiet type. I do love him. He represented emotions by using a pipe. When I attempted suicide, he gently tapped my head with it in tears. When he got really angry, he hit me hard enough to get a bump on my head three times. It was his habit.

But my mother was different. She looked at me who had attempted suicide and said – What I am about to tell you is what I have never told anymore else because it may be rude.- She said “Listen, Hidetaka, there are many different types of people who have been born without hands or legs. But they are living courageously. Right? You just received burns. You have no physical defect. If you really want to die, you must live on tenaciously.” She argued so with me.

I didn’t want to live in Nagasaki anymore, so I went to Osaka without getting over lost love. I got a phone call within the first week of my arrival in Osaka. It was a call from my ex-girlfriend. She had run away to Osaka. I met her at Osaka station. It was strange to see her in an unfamiliar surrounding. She was waiting in tears, carrying a small bag. I left her in my hair salon and put in a call to her parents. Then, they accepted our marriage. We held the wedding ceremony when I was 26. You are old enough to know it – I got married. I drank a little as the wedding night approached. She saw my keloid. She looked really surprised and cried with her back to me. I couldn’t find any words for her. I decided to let her return without saying anything if she wanted to go back home. But she didn’t. Maybe she couldn’t. She might have been told by

her father that “You will get married to Hibakusha. Don’t come back home making a fuss over a little thing.” She had no choice but to stay with me. The only person she could depend on was I. Then, she gave birth to a baby girl. She was in labor for three days. During that time, I bathed her. Our child was finally born. Just like other parents, I checked for her fingers and toes whether she had been born able-bodied. She had no physical defect. I am Hibakusha. I shed happy tears.

Around that time, my parents sold their land and became rich. My father said “I will provide funds for you to open your own salon if you come back.” – I went back to Nagasaki at once. I opened a small salon. By that time, we had three children, and they grew up healthy. When our three kids were nine, six and two and half, my wife asked for a divorce. All I could say was “Okay.” I am Hibakusha with an ugly body and a distorted mind due to discrimination. That was enough. She left me. The only thing left to me were three kids. A motherless family was hell for three kids, although it was not for me. They trusted she wouldn’t abandon them. Most people tend to think so. As time went on, they became aware of being abandoned. They were so young. I was so busy working, preparing meals, and doing laundry that I had almost no time for rest. I tended to rely on my nine-year-old daughter. “Wash dishes as you are the oldest child.” “Clean up the house as you are the oldest child.” “You are the oldest, you are...” I didn’t realize that even the oldest child was still small. I didn’t realize how much she had been hurt. Why had I not hugged her once or twice a day? I truly find it regrettable. When in second grade of junior high school, she started sniffing paint thinner to rebel against me. It was a living hell. As my mother once said, I lived on tenaciously especially in those days.

A parent is stupid. I was waiting for her thinking, “Today for sure I’m going to preach to her.” But once it was starting snow,

I prepared a bath for her. She came home with a pale face and the smell of thinner. I could say nothing to her. The only thing I could say was “Stupid girl, take a bath and go to bed now.” Another day, she came home with the smell of thinner. I thought about committing suicide with her. I forgot my other two kids at that time. In the dark, I led my thinner-addicted daughter by the hand and went to the railway track. There was a police box next to my house. We bumped into a police sergeant. He realized there was something strange about us. We were taken to the police box and got lectured. He said, “I have seen many thinner addicts. Stop suffering alone. Rely on the government.” I didn’t understand what “rely on the government” meant at first, but I soon did. I reported my daughter to the police four times. She went on trial on the fourth notice, and she was ordered to go to a juvenile training school. I was summoned by a judge before the case went to court. As soon as I entered the room the judge said, “You are a great father. Parents usually try to hide the truth about such things.” He confirmed with me that they would take my daughter under their care. At the sentencing, the following was pronounced. “You can’t beat addiction by yourself. I order you to a juvenile training school.” She could finally see the stupidity of her behavior. She knew a life behind bars and what might happen there. She turned around and said many times, “Dad, I’ll never do it again. Please help.” It was really hard at that time. I got home, and I couldn’t stop crying when I thought of her. I blamed myself for all her troubles. When she came home three weeks later, I was sure that she would never sniff thinner. I was right. Now she is married with four children. It is fun to watch them. She says the same things to her kids as I said to her before. Working hard she and her husband built a house and made a room with a view of the rising sun for me. Still, it is not always perfect. We quarrel

every now and then. But generally, I am living a happy life now.

Meanwhile, a huge disaster has struck North eastern Japan. The myth of absolutely safe nuclear power stations has been shattered. Once shattered, it reveals the weakness of mankind. This is the threat of radiation. In 2009, I gave a web lecture to doctors, nurses, and students of Gomel State Medical University. There was a woman who seemed around 30 years old with her head bandaged to cover baldness. I asked, "Is it a radiation disease?" and she answered "Yes." – I was lost for words. Some people were crying, and everybody was serious because their experiences were almost the same as what I described to them. The news says a lot about the Fukushima nuclear reactor. Children must never be exposed to radiation. There is a possibility of getting cancer still after 20, 30, or even 60 years. Such is the danger of radiation. I strongly feel the need to overcome the problems at Fukushima nuclear reactor at the earliest possible date.

In 2004, I visited New Jersey for a week. I stayed with several families. My first impression of the US was of various races from various countries living together. One Japanese college student named Azusa went along with me as an interpreter. After I stayed at Kid's house, he gave me a ride to the next family. During the ride there, he pulled over suddenly and said "Hide, Azusa, get out of the car and give a speech here." We got out of the car puzzled. There was a sheet of white paper displayed in front of a four-meter high fence on the side of the road. Written on it were names. The names of war dead in the Vietnam War and the Iraq War. About 100 family members of the victims had gathered in front of the paper. A black woman saw us and came up. I saw the name of Jimmy aged 18 on the list. "He is my son. I don't have a husband.

Sometimes I can't even buy bread. He was the eldest son. He joined the Marines saying, 'Mom, you don't have to worry about money because I have joined the Marines.' I cried hysterically. I always told him never to be a soldier, but he became one and died.", she sobbed. In tears she compressed her lips tightly. I could catch a glimpse of her sadness, anger, and her grudge against war. Then I understood for the first time what my mother said to me before about not hating people, but hating war. Azusa tapped my shoulder. She had eyes full of tears. It seems that she would be able to hold back her tears if she spoke. I stood by the road holding a sign. Vehicles driving past us slowed down, and they whistled and waved to us. When I saw the sight, I thought "People in US also are ambivalent about war. They are not necessarily positive to war." I went to New York last year. I visited three schools in a week. I also visited the UN. A photo exhibition was held at there, and a picture of my foot was displayed. People from many different countries were there to see. I met two boys, about ten and five years old. They came from Europe with their mother. They started at my photo. I asked their mother through an interpreter, "Shall I explain it?" But her answer was "No." Then the ten-years-old boy convinced her that he wanted me to. There must have been something in it that interested him, so his mother agreed. I explained to him. The interpreter suddenly said, "Why don't you ask for his feedback." I told him, "there will be no questions. I'm sure the boy will say 'it's ugly' or 'I never want to see it.' But he asked. What do you think he said? I was amazed to hear it. A ten-years-old boy said, "The photo scared me, and it made me sad, and I am filled with resentment." I voluntarily hugged him. I thought, "I have come all the way from a distant country to meet him." I strongly urged him, "These pictures are frightful. Please explain about them to a lot of people around you, when

you get back to your country. I believe this is the fastest way to peace.” He answered, “Yes” in a resounding tone.

Actually, I don't like to speak in public. So why is an introvert like me talking in front of people? First, it's due to my mother and family. Second, it's due to a speech of Mr. Senji Yamaguchi who is also an A-bomb survivor. I broke down in tears when I listened to his speech. He was revealing himself. He told me, “We have been treated in a dehumanizing way so far. Do you want to subject your children and grandchildren to the same thing? Absolutely not. Then, try to reveal yourself and speak.” In the beginning, I was unable to make speeches. A number of A-bomb survivors made me who I am today. What I want to communicate to you is an understanding of peace, the way of thinking about peace. Our time has passed. There is controversy over Article 9, but I am proud of Article 9 of the Constitution because it is the only peace Constitution. There is the possibility of revising the Constitution's Article 9 in the future. So please do not sow the seeds of war. This is a message from A-bomb survivors who are soon to die.

Thank ou for your kind attention.

## **Q&A**

—The accident at nuclear power plants caused by the disaster in Eastern Japan has now become a serious issue. Do you support or oppose its use?

**KOMINE:** I oppose it, I think it has come about, as a result of the pursuit of greater convenience. I wonder whether furthering civilization is really a good thing or not. I don't mean we should return to a primitive life, but the way we think of electricity is changing. But I have mixed feelings. For example there are about 170 companies related to the nuclear

power plant in Shimane prefecture. One third of people in Shimane are linked in some way to it. I view it with mixed emotions as people's living is supported by the nuclear power plant, but basically I oppose it. Thank you.