

# Speech by Junior Writers of Chugoku Shimbun Newspaper

2015 Mayors for Peace Youth Forum

(April 30 in the UN Headquarters)

Mayors for Peace hosted a Youth Forum on April 30 2015, alongside the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), taking place at United Nations headquarters in New York.

**(N)** Good morning, everyone. My name is Shiori Niitani.

**(M)** And I'm Nozomi Mizoue.

We are junior writers at the Chugoku Shimbun, a newspaper in Hiroshima. The Chugoku Shimbun is a daily newspaper that was founded in 1892. Today it has a circulation of about 630,000.

When the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, 114 workers at the newspaper were killed. At the time, that was one-third of the work force. Since then, covering the atomic bomb, nuclear weapons, and peace has been a mission of the newspaper. Articles by the junior writers are published every Monday, and twice a month we produce a full-page feature article.

The first group of junior writers began their activities in January 2007, so this is the ninth year. Right now there are 49 junior writers, ages 11 to 18. We listen directly to the atomic bomb survivors about what happened in Hiroshima, and learn about the horrors of nuclear weapons and war. We write articles on nuclear abolition and the importance of peace from a teenagers' point of view. These articles convey our wish for peace because we hope that teens and adults will become more interested in peace and nuclear weapons. English translations of the Japanese articles are also posted on the Internet so people around the world can read them.

There are two main aspects to our activities. One, we gather news. And two, we send out messages. Let us explain each part of our work.

We gather news and write articles for these regular features: “Survivors’ stories,” “Peace Seeds,” and “Junior Writers Reporting.”

For “Survivors’ Stories,” two or three junior writers interview an A-bomb survivor and listen to the person’s experience of the atomic bombing and war.

This is what an 85-year-old survivor told us, in tears. He was 15 at the time of the atomic bombing. He saw many junior high school students lying on the ground after the blast. They were dying. One of them was calling for help. But fire was spreading toward them. This man thought, “If I try to help him, I’ll die, too.” And so he fled. He added in a low voice, like he was praying: “It was a living hell. Such a terrible thing must never happen again.”

A 74-year-old woman was only 5 when she experienced the atomic bombing. She said that she had nightmares almost every night until she was 10. She was afraid to go to sleep because, in her dreams, she saw people whose bodies and arms were badly burned, the skin peeling off. When she told us about her terrible experience, she looked so sad. She said to us, “Help create a world without nuclear weapons.”

In addition to their injuries from the atomic bombing, the survivors faced discrimination when it came to getting married and finding work. They are still suffering from poor health because of the effects of the bomb’s radiation, and they worry about falling ill.

After these interviews, we write the articles, as well as our personal impressions, which also appear in the newspaper. **Let me offer an example of an interview with a survivor. IS A VIDEO CLIP SHOWN HERE?** In this way, we come to understand the strong wish of the survivors to abolish nuclear weapons and war.

For “Peace Seeds,” we form groups, choose themes, decide what to cover, gather information, and write the articles. This is an example. The junior writers take their own photos, too. “Peace Seeds” appears in the newspaper twice a month.

For “Junior Writers Reporting,” we cover such events as international conferences on nuclear weapons held in Hiroshima, screenings of films about

the atomic bombing, and workshops for peace education.

For the second aspect of our work, sending out messages, our articles and their English translations are posted on the website of the Hiroshima Peace Media Center, a wing of the Chugoku Shimbun. At this website you can read our articles, and many other articles, that are published in the newspaper. On the right side of the homepage, you will find banners for our feature articles, "Survivors' Stories" and "Peace Seeds." At our Facebook page, you can also see photos that show us preparing for the interviews. Such information doesn't appear in the newspaper.

In addition, A-bomb survivors' accounts, junior writers' comments, and basic information about the atomic bombing have been compiled into a 24-page newspaper titled "Let's Learn about Hiroshima." Copies of this newspaper are given each year to all junior high and high school students in Hiroshima.

And we sometimes teach elementary school students about Hiroshima.

Anyone in the Hiroshima area, between the ages of 11 and 18, can apply to become a junior writer. Applications are accepted twice a year.

Working as a junior writer has changed me for the better. One time, an A-bomb survivor who taught us the importance of peace, in tears, died a few days after the interview. Or I met someone at a gathering who had experienced the war, and that person gave me words of encouragement. As I gain more and more of these experiences, I have come to feel a stronger wish for peace and a deeper interest in the problems of nuclear weapons and the state of the world.

Above all, among the junior writers of different ages, we can discuss what we learn as we gather news and we can share what we think. This is very important and very stimulating. In this way, we ponder what we can do for peace in the world and the abolition of nuclear weapons. We do this work so we can make a difference.

We invite you to visit Hiroshima, experience our city, and learn from it. We will cover your activities and write an article about you!

Thank you.