

An open letter
Dear Mr. President Obama,
Let us forgive each other, but never forget

October 28, 2009

Dear Mr. President Obama,

I would like to express my sincere congratulations to you for receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2009. A few months ago in April 2009, YOU pledged to seek peace and security in a world free of nuclear weapons, with not just the reduction but the complete elimination of those weapons. The citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki welcomed YOUR words with hopeful hearts. As one of the Hiroshima atomic bomb survivors, I have a strong desire to express my ideas about the atomic bomb, especially in regards to the relationship between the United States and Japan. For that purpose, I have written a 10,000-word article in English called "Testimony of an Atomic Bomb Survivor after 65 Years of Silence, Based on Three Viewpoints." It will give me great pleasure and honor if this open letter, which is the summary of my article, reaches your eyes or ears. As a side note, in order to be able to give my unique testimony free of interference by certain survivor sects, I have even moved my residence from Japan to the Philippines.

August 6th and 9th in 2010 would be the most significant anniversary days for both countries. Fortunately, the anniversary falls on a set of favorable numbers: 65 years in 2010. The span of 65 years should have been a sufficient amount of time for both countries and peoples to decide what the day should mean for all of us. I would like to appeal to YOU as the voice of the voiceless majority of the atomic bomb survivors. My testimony might lead both countries to arrive at a political settlement for this very delicate matter concerning the 65 year history of the atomic bomb. My humble wish is that this open letter makes strides toward paving a path on which YOU find good reason to visit our country. I sincerely wish, Mr. President of the United States, that YOU consider the following three viewpoints, which no atomic bomb survivor has ever spoken of before:

First, we admit that Japan was trying to develop the atomic bomb during World War II, and we would have been ready to use it had we ever succeeded. We were, therefore, as sinful and evil as the dropper considering the nuclear weapon is inhumane no matter where it is developed. We have no authority, therefore, to blame the dropper while pretending we have clean hands and a clean heart. I do not hesitate to state openly that the atomic bomb did quicken the end of the war, saving hundreds of thousands of Japanese and Americans lives. This idea has long been a taboo in Japan while one third of Americans admit it.

Second, we, Hiroshima and Nagasaki citizens, were prosperous military material manufacturing cities, as well as suppliers of soldiers from the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1931 and on. We citizens were as sinful and evil as those who fought in the battles. Dr. Takashi Nagai, author of "Nagasaki's Bell Rings," who died from leukemia, regretted his life as a soldier by writing that the "a-bomb is the human scapegoat for redemption of its sins."

Third, we are ready to accept the tragedy of the atomic bomb since we were destined to suffer as the sacrifice for all human beings, who are more or less sinful by nature. We believe destiny is given by something Great in the Universe, and these two cities were appropriately selected as providers of the sacrifice since Hiroshima is the home of the Aki-sect of Buddhism while Nagasaki is the home of Catholicism. If thus interpreted, the spirit of the deceased victims and their families would be redeemed in our hearts, not as the meaningless dead but as the sacrifice for all human beings.

I was deeply impressed by the Voices of America TV program "The Pearl Harbor Survivors", in which one American ex-soldier said, "If Japan apologizes for the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, we will apologize for the atomic bomb." One of the pilots of the B29 bomber to Hiroshima and Nagasaki repeated this sentiment. I find American people to be very logical and fair in their thinking and behavior. I regret that we Japanese are inclined to shut our mouths when things go wrong and accuse others when we are defensive; I find a lack of fairness among the Japanese, to a certain extent.

I appeal to YOU, Mr. President of the United States, by presenting YOU with a paragraph written in the epitaph of the stone coffin in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, in which are notes with the names of some 200,000 deceased victims. It reads, "**Let all the souls rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil.**" The author, Professor Tadayoshi Saiga (1894-1961) of Hiroshima University, added the subject "we" to the original Japanese, which had no subject, in response to the question, "Who will not repeat the evil to whom?" The "we," needless to say, represents all human beings. Saiga lived through the Japanese military age and knew what the Japanese did to the world, both beneficial and harmful, more than anybody else.

In the Pentagon on the eighth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, YOU consoled family members of the deceased with the words, "**Let us renew the true spirit of that day. Not the human capacity for evil but the human capacity for good - not the desire to destroy but the impulse to save and to serve and to build.**" These words also represent the spirit of atomic bomb victims and survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Mr. President Obama, this letter was written by a humble, polio-stricken, 78 year old man who barely escaped death by the atomic bomb, and who wishes to devote the rest of his life to writing and giving testimonies as an atomic bomb survivor. My youngest brother died a couple of weeks after the bomb drop without a single injury in his body. His last words to his mother were, "I will revenge America with the help of Buddha!" His soul and hundreds of thousands of other souls will be redeemed if YOU come to Hiroshima and join us for "No More Hiroshima's Misery" on the 65th anniversary in the year 2010.

Finally, Mr. President Obama, please let the survivors of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima and Nagasaki say together, hand in hand, "Let us forgive each other but never forget!"

Thank you from the depths of my heart and very sincerely yours,



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