

Testimony of an Atomic Bomb Survivor after 65 Years of Silence

~Based on Three Viewpoints~

By Yuuki Yoshida, age 78

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<http://www.a-bombsurvivor.com/contents/2009.10.28.testimony.3views.jpn.pdf>

At 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, the atomic bomb blasted over the city of Hiroshima. I was thirteen years old then, a junior high school boy. I was not in the school classroom, but rather in my company's office. In those days, because of man shortages during World War II, we Japanese schoolchildren were forced to work, putting our studies aside. The location of the company was about a mile from ground zero. If the atomic bomb had been as big as the bombs are in nuclear tests nowadays, which are said to be ten or more times bigger than what was used on Hiroshima, I would have been scattered into a million pieces. Instead, I was buried in the dark rubble of the destroyed building. Situated under heavy debris and broken wooden pillars and walls, I could not move at all.

Crippled by polio, which struck me ten months after birth, I was unable to make a quick escape from the collapsed building and almost gave up trying to leave the spot. I even folded my hands together to pray, preparing for my death. However, thanks to the narrow gap above my head, I tried and succeeded in getting out; I was a boy who narrowly escaped death by the atomic bomb. I still remember when I crawled out of that I was on the top of a high, collapsed building looking down at the people coming and going far below. After the dust started to clear, I noticed that blood was flowing out of my face. "Mommy, blood is coming out!" was my cry, I remember. I was very confused and overwhelmed. Someone was yelling, "Go to the Red Cross Hospital!"

The hospital was just between our house and the building I worked in. My bicycle was my only means of transportation in those days, so I searched for it because I could not walk without holding something for support. Upon realizing how terrible the situation was, I picked up a wooden bar-like object and began to walk with it as a walking cane.

In those days, people and students were used to having a towel hanging on their belts. I wiped off the blood on my body with my towel. Each time I wiped the blood, I had to stop walking. I will never forget that feeling of wringing out the blood-soaked towel! The slippery and greasy touch is unforgettable.

When I arrived at the hospital, there were lines of injured and burned people waiting for medical care. (As a side note, the head of the Red Cross Hospital was my relative, Dr. Shigeto.) Many of the people waiting were terribly burned with their skin peeling off, looking like ghosts, almost hopeless. A soldier nurse came toward me, dragged me out of line, and took me to the doctor. He must have thought that a young boy with only blood on his face, and no burn, could be saved. The three deep cuts on my face were not stitched, only bandaged.

While I was sitting on the floor an injured soldier officer, trying to draw his sword, yelled, "Let me kill myself!" The nurses were trying to stop him from succeeding. It was a horrible scene. In the mean time, I found myself sitting with my back resting on the gate of the hospital, watching the houses and buildings burn across the street. I was in a spiritless mood and yet still thought my house was in fine condition. A soldier came with a bucket full of pickled food. The taste was something I still have not forgotten. It was past five or six in the afternoon when I began to move toward my house with the wooden bar as my walking cane.

It was then that I happened to meet my second elder sister. At the sight of her running to me calling, "Yuuki!," I planted myself down on the ground, threw my cane away, and cried out, "Sis!" For a crippled boy like me, a position near the ground was the most stable. This coincidental meeting saved my life, as we were able to get out of the radioactively-contaminated city together with our father.

Through the part of the city that was identified as ground zero days later, we began to move to our aunt's home, some twenty miles north. Our walk through the city was terrible, like hell itself. (Since my intent is not to tell how terrible the scene was, I will continue without a full description.) Our father pushed his bicycle with me seated on the back and my sister walking beside it. When my father had to carry the bicycle on his shoulders, my sister carried me on her back. It was dark when we reached my aunt's home.

Thus I began my life as a survivor of the atomic bomb. Until recently, I have struggled for 64 years thinking about that one day. I have many things that I would have liked to share about the survivors and that which lies deep in their minds and souls, and more than anything else about the nuclear weapon itself.

I have kept my silence as a survivor, however, even though I have been given chances to speak my mind. One of the reasons that I have not spoken is that I have been too busy with my work up until now, at the age of 77. Another reason is that my own views are different from those of others, and I thought that not enough time

had passed to comfortably share my own. Finally, I believe it is the right time to give my testimony.

Before continuing, I would like to share one important fact about my elder sister and younger brother; although from the same family, their attitudes toward the atomic bomb were entirely different. One disapproved strongly while the other held a more moderate view.

Both my elder sister and younger brother were in our house at the moment of the blast. Our home was located in front of the city hall, just in between ground zero and the building where I was working. Our house was a three-story, wooden building. One of my three elder sisters, Hiroko, now 81 years old, is still alive after a dozen operations for cancers caused by the radiation. She was one of the survivors often spotlighted by the mass media because of her miraculous experience. A clump of her hair, which fell out due to the radioactivity, is still displayed in Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Memorial Hall.

She and the above-mentioned youngest brother, Yuusaku, then seven years old, were the only ones who were at home at the time of the blast. She was in the back of the house while my youngest brother was in the front. The house toppled sideways and then burned down. When the house collapsed, my sister was completely buried under the rubble and could not move an inch. She later said that she folded her hands together to pray to God, as if she would soon die. I had done the same thing. Nevertheless, in an instant she remembered her brother in the house, and only thinking of his rescue, crawled through the debris with a cut so deep the bones in her foot and leg were exposed.

Finally, they found each other. Years later she used to say that he, Yuusaku, was standing on the floor with nothing over his head, with not a single injury in his body, as if he were surprised to be standing. The two began to wonder hand in hand from place to place in the middle of the ruined city. They stayed in the city for a week until they were rescued.

A week after the bomb blast they were finally found by neighbors and saved. Although Yuusaku had not had a single injury in his body, he died after a week, only two weeks after the blast. The most impressive thing about his last moments alive was that he grasped his mother's chest with his remaining strength and said, "Mommy, I'm going to die, but I'm not lonesome. When I go to Buddha (the Buddhist savior), I will ask him to help me get revenge on America for the bomb." These were the last words of a boy of seven. He died with hatred in his heart. Please

remember this. This is an example of one extreme attitude of an atomic bomb victim. On the other side, my sister Hiroko, who has lived up to the old age of 81, often says to me, "Yuuki, I have no hatred against America and its people. It was war. War makes human beings mad and crazy. We Japanese might have done the same evil thing, you know."

Well, ladies and gentlemen, these two entirely different attitudes concerning the atomic bomb, dropped by America, came from nobody but my own nearest brother and sister. These two extremes are now my focus, especially since we are so near to the 64th anniversary of the atomic bomb drop in Hiroshima. The stories about my younger brother and elder sister could be replaced with stories about any person who has harsh feelings toward America due to the bomb, and on the other hand, any person with a moderate attitude ready to forgive a past enemy.

Now with the stories about the attitudes of my brother and sister behind, I would like to express what remains in my heart and soul as one of the survivors. I would like to tell in my own words about the atomic bomb, as its sufferer who barely escaped from death. I would like to speak as a survivor. I believe I am well qualified to say something about the atomic bomb and its dropper, America and its people. I would like to explain my feelings toward America as the user of the atomic bomb. The following "dream" that I have long held in my heart, up until this day, will begin my explanation.

In 1999, ten years ago, I wrote a one-page message entitled "My Dream!" I showed it to my two American friends, and they appreciated it very much. Ever since then I have disclosed it to various people. In March 2001, I posted the message on my website. "My Dream!" depicts my desire to travel throughout the United States and speak to the American people about four basic themes. The themes are as follows:

First: to thank the Americans and their country for the economic aid they gave me and all Japanese after World War II. Without their help, Japan would not be the prosperous country that we are able to enjoy today. The span of more than half a century is encouraging to the two brother nations to learn from the past and move forward.

Second: to thank my American friends and colleagues for the opportunities and support they have given me. This is the success story of a Japanese man who has a reasonable command of the English language, without which he hardly could have succeeded in his life thus far.

Third: to discuss with Americans how to live an enjoyable, meaningful life in this aging society. We Japanese, with the longest life span in the world, are in a position to speak of the ways and means of long life as our "culture." I would also like to discuss how a handicapped person like me could make himself "handicapable" in all walks of life. (The word "handicapable" is my own original compound word of "handicapped" and "capable.")

And last (and most important): to tell the Americans something about the atomic bomb, not as a victim, but as a survivor. I want to ask for world peace with the single idea of "No more Hiroshima's Misery"

Focusing on this fourth point, at the very beginning of 1999 I tried to add a very important sentence to the Dream. What I wanted to add is the message I want to stress most, being one of the survivors of the atomic bomb. I tried to add something that, even now, no Japanese politician or survivor wants to say with their own tongue, even though they think it is true! That is, "It is a historical truth that Japan was actually working for the development of the atomic bomb during the war. If Japan had ever developed the atomic bomb ahead of the United States, she would have definitely used it." Once again, Japan would have definitely used the atomic bomb if she had developed it ahead of the United States.

I consulted with my university professor friend about whether I should insert these shocking words or not at this early stage. He replied, "I think you are right in saying that. I myself believe it is true, but better not say it because it might cause too much of an impact, or maybe even cause a sort of oppression against the advocator, who is nobody but you!" He even went so far as to say that he himself thinks the Japanese military government would have used the atomic bomb if they had developed it ahead of the United States.

Some readers or listeners of my testimony might be surprised at or even strongly oppose my choice of words for this hypothetical statement. Well, history never explains the theoretical side of the situation at all.

Before I go any further, there is one more important piece to "My Dream!" In 2007, I finally inserted the controversial statement into the fourth theme; however, I never posted it on my website because I was still acting as a business consultant. It was in the middle of 2009 when I decided to shift my occupation to an atomic bomb survivor testimony writer that I made up my mind to post it on the website.

I could say that the above mentioned conversation between the professor and me was one reason why I have kept silent about this very important matter up until now. With the 65th anniversary of Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Memorial Day next year, however, I decided to break my silence. I have firmly come to believe this controversial statement at the age of 78, which is an age that coincides with the average age of the atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima.

In order to allow for a better understanding of my intention with this testimony, let me tell a brief story about my life, which I divide into four stages. It was right after the end of World War II when my first stage of life began. My uncle and aunt, Japanese Americans in Hawaii, used to send our family a big amount of food and clothes, without which we would have struggled. With my childhood behind me, this first stage of my life began. I had a career as an independent craftsman for 14 years. During that period, I succeeded in importing some new techniques from the United States that we had never had in Japan. I was able to do this with my command of the English language, which I used to communicate with Americans in my profession. Because of this beneficiary, together with my own inventions, I traveled throughout Japan at a very young age as a lecturer and sales promotion technician with extra income from patented devices.

Later, I got involved with the trucking industry, which shifted my life into an entirely different world. This became the second stage of my life, which continued for 32 years. During that period, I succeeded in building up seven subsidiary group companies. Our companies got the business license of a vehicle body rust-proofing system called Zeibart. I was invited to the company's 25th anniversary in 1986 in Troy, Michigan and today the company still goes by the name Zeibart International. I was very thankful for this positive association with Americans again, in my second stage of life.

Again, things happened and shifted my lifestyle completely. I was a business consultant during the third stage of my life, which lasted for 15 years up until the end of last year. During this third stage, I tried to export to Japan what we call the "Owner-Operator System," which is the main stream of the trucking industry in the United States and many European countries. The system is the ultimate deregulation of the trucking industry. To investigate the system, I traveled across the United States alone for a month in 1993. Now, leaving all those careers aside, I am trying to perform the present fourth stage of life as an atomic bomb survivor as a speaker-writer of an atomic bomb survivor testimony. I have even shifted my residence from Japan to the Philippines for a reason that will be understood later.

Now, I would like to return to the starting point to share my own theory on the atomic bomb drops on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. What I would like to say from here on comes from my many years of thought, and also from my experiences at various meetings and symposiums. As the subtitle of this document suggests, I would like to make my own philosophy and belief based on three viewpoints. This is nothing but my own personal view. Therefore, some people, survivors or not, might object to my theory. Also, my idea is something quite new, which in turn might cause a large discussion. In order for my theory to be exposed to the American people ahead of the Japanese, I have decided to send this document to the American mass media first.

The first viewpoint is as follows:

Hiroshima and Nagasaki both have histories of being flourished on military cities. Therefore, we, the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, need to stop and think that we, too, took part in the war either directly or indirectly, by manufacturing weapons or sending soldiers abroad from the cities. When we consider those factors, we need to be modest about thinking of the sins of war itself, especially what type of weapon is sinful or not. When we consider this historical background, would it be too harsh or cruel to say that we might have been destined to accept a sort of "atonement for one's sins"?

I am sure this statement of mine can and will produce a sort of arguments, but let me continue. In March 2007, I had a special opportunity to attend a meeting called The Second Hiroshima Youth Symposium. The theme was, "What is meant by Peace-City Hiroshima? Now is the time to think from the youth's viewpoint." As the name implies, the attendants were limited only to young university students. As a man of 76 then, I asked the sponsor for special permission and was given a chance to attend on the condition that I would not say or ask anything. My interest was only to see what young people think about the atomic bomb and nuclear weapons. This interest of mine came from my long-term feelings toward the attitude of Hibakushas (meaning atomic bomb sufferers in Japanese). Almost all of the Hibakushas discuss only how miserably and painfully we suffered, or even how terrible it was for the United States to drop that atomic bomb, and so on. In my opinion, however, everything has been staged only on the side of the victims or sufferers. My strong interest was to see what sort of thoughts the young people have toward the atomic bomb or the Hibakushas.

In the symposium's keynote speech, the speaker stated that Hibakushas have become old and their peace appeals are not reaching very many people anymore. The era of sharing their atomic bomb experiences seems to be ending. Nevertheless,

the speaker noted, there is a need for them to try to make their voices heard and appear as representatives of the culture and history of Hiroshima. There is a need for them to try not only to keep the message alive in Hiroshima, but also to carry their message of peace to the far reaches of the globe. When I heard these words, I said to myself, "Yes! That's just it!"

During the symposium, I watched a video in which a young American man approached an aged Japanese Hibakusha woman asking, "We Americans are ashamed that we dropped the atomic bomb. Would you please forgive us?" I as a survivor have long thought about this question and a possible response, so I was very much interested in how the woman would respond. At that moment, she seemed to be very hesitant about what to say, or even, she seemed to be at a loss of words. The woman did not respond with either "yes" or "no." I will never forget her calm attitude or the look on her face, a somewhat puzzled expression, while she was trying to decide how to answer that young gentleman. The scene ended while I was thinking. I told myself that if I had been in her place, I would have said something without hesitation. If I had been there and said something, the two would have left each other with a warm and definite understanding, shaking hands with good friendship. I will comment on this later.

The most shocking message from all the lectures at this symposium was that Hiroshima has made lots of progress as a military city, dating back to the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). The port of Hiroshima made it easier for the transportation of military materials and soldiers abroad that it eventually brought the death of hundreds of thousands of people. Hiroshima acted as a military logistic base. Even the Imperial Headquarters was stationed in the middle of the city. Mitsubishi Ship Building Dock was in the city and the famous battleship Yamato was built in Kure city, which is the neighboring city of Hiroshima. Thus, the city of Hiroshima became very prosperous in the wars leading up to World War II. These historical facts force me to say that we stood as indirect murderers and supporters of the war. This is the reason why I believe that we, the citizens of Hiroshima, are in a situation where we must recognize that we need to have a "redemption."

It was in June 2007 that I first visited Nagasaki. My purpose was to pay a visit to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. A museum volunteer, seeing me crippled, was kind enough to push my wheel chair for more than three hours, giving me a thorough explanation in each section of the museum. Like Hiroshima, although in reality more so than Hiroshima, the whole city of Nagasaki was full of military factories and their subordinates. The biggest factory was Nagasaki Ship Building Dock where the torpedoes used by the Japanese fighters at Pearl Harbor were built.

These factors make us believe that Nagasaki and Hiroshima are the same in that they both welcomed prosperity from military needs. Moreover, the two cities should accept the fact that their citizens acted for the benefit of war and therefore, are in a place where they should become more modest when calling themselves victims and sufferers.

The second viewpoint is as follows:

Self-awareness is necessary when considering the following conditional statement: "If Japan had ever developed the atomic bomb ahead of the United States, she would have used it." It is a fact that the Japanese government was preparing the atomic bomb, regardless of whether we now think it inhumane or not. Japan too had an evil heart and was trying to develop the condemned atomic bomb. This historical factor should not be ignored.

In regards to this second point, I am aware that objections are expected from fellow Hibakushas and leftist sectors, but I also know that there is historical evidence that Japan tried to develop the atomic bomb during World War II. NHK (Nippon Broadcasting Corporation) once reported that such a document existed in its archives. Up until the end of the war, groups of Japanese scientists, including the later Nobel Prize winner Dr. Hideki Yukawa, were working steadily on the development of the atomic bomb. It was well-known that Japan was ahead of the United States as far as the theoretical research was concerned, but this research was utterly destroyed by the Tokyo Air Raid of the B29s in March 1945.

My statement, "If Japan had ever developed the atomic bomb..." comes from this historical occurrence. The meson theory developed by Dr. Yukawa was nothing more than the starting point of the atomic bomb. Some people might say that, even if Japan had succeeded in the theoretical development of the atomic bomb, she never would have obtained the uranium resource to build the bomb, or never would have had a way of bringing it to America. We have to admit, however, that Japan was working on the project without a doubt. Therefore, we have to say, "Japan did have the possibility of committing the sin of using the atomic bomb." In other words, we are not pure, clean or innocent as far as an attempt of possessing or using the atomic bomb is concerned.

There is much evidence supporting these shocking facts, and plenty can be found by simply browsing through the internet. One piece of evidence is a testimony by Yukihiro Torikai, which states that the German submarine U-boat that was carrying the uranium-234 headed for Japan was attacked and sunk by the American army on May 14, 1945. Because of this, Japan was obliged to postpone the atomic

bomb development in May until July of the same year. The excuse for the cancellation of the atomic bomb research was that it was too difficult, and even the Allied forces had come to find the development of the bomb impossible. The Japanese authority figures tried to cover any mishaps by saying so.

The point I would like to make with this hypothetical statement concerning Japan's possession and use of the atomic bomb is that it is not a matter of whether it was right or wrong to use the atomic bomb, and it is not a matter of whether we are the sufferers or the victims; the important thing for all humankind to be aware of is that we had evil intentions, regardless of them being exercised or not. Unfortunately, people try to say that "for accomplishing an objective, there is no means fair or foul," or even that "the end justifies the means." The most important thing is to accept the tragedy as it was, and to interpret the tragedy for the future. I believe this reflection leads both sides determined to never repeat the tragedy again.

The third viewpoint is as follows:

For the victims, it is necessary to accept the fact that the atomic bomb drop did end the war, and that it did save the lives of both Americans and Japanese. It is important for the Hibakushas to try to have tolerance for this manner of thinking. Also, the deceased Hibakushas played a role in saving the lives of both peoples by acting as a "sacrifice for human beings," like Jesus Christ on the Cross. The spirit of the dead, therefore, should not be kept as a victim in agony or one with a negative attitude. If this interpretation could be accepted by the people concerned and sent out to the world, everyone would be aware that we are alive because of their sacrifice. If we ever were to understand and respect this interpretation, wouldn't it be possible for us to realize that it is our job to keep peace among nations and never use the atomic bomb again?!

The historical interpretation that the atomic bomb did hasten the end of the war, however, is a very delicate topic. In fact, our ex-Defense Minister Mr. Kyuma was obliged to step down from his position because of his statement that the atomic bomb did, in fact, quicken the end of the war. The conservative party, the Liberal Democratic Party, supports this statement, but they cannot ignore the repellency from the opposition. I agree that the atomic bomb quickened the end of the war, but my statement is based on my own previously-discussed philosophy. As opposed to Mr. Kyuma's statement from his political position, my view is entirely personal and comes only from being a survivor of the atomic bomb, and that is all! Also, let us remember that a man in Tokyo tried to demonstrate through a panel presentation that the atomic bomb brought the war to a close. He finally surrendered to the leftist organizations by withdrawing materials and writing a note of apology! This is one

reason why I moved my residence to the Republic of the Philippines; I am far out of reach of judgment coming from Japan.

The above-mentioned way of thinking might continue forever, never arriving at a concrete conclusion. For instance, the conversation between the ex-pilot of the atomic bomber Enola Gay, Mr. Van Kirk, and Mrs. Keiko Sasamori, one of the so-called "atomic bomb maidens" sent to the States for surgery by courtesy of American Quakers, ended in parallel thought. The former said the atomic bomb did indeed end the war and save lives. The latter insisted that the Japanese had nothing to eat and nothing to wear and so Japan would have surrendered, even if not hit by the atomic bomb. They never reached a mutual understanding in the conversation. All of us Japanese knew the war would end soon. Dropping the atomic bomb over the innocent people was not the solution for ending the war. Even a victim like Mrs. Sasamori, who was well cared for by the American volunteers, came so far as to give such criticism.

Ms. Michiko Yamaoka, another victim who was well cared for by Americans, said, "I thought the country that had dropped the atomic bomb was in a position to cure the victims. I used to have deep hatred for Americans, but some Americans apologized, which convinced me not to hate the people but hate the war. And I am going to tell people this story," she said.

Many Hibakushas and critics say that, even if the atomic bomb had not been used, Japan still would have surrendered. Their intention is to reject the validity of the use of the atomic bomb. I believe, however, that the atomic bomb was the only solution for Japan's surrender. On January 19, 1945, the law of "The General Principles of the Military Operations for the Imperial Army and Navy" was enacted. This law stated that the Japanese army and navy would try to let the enemy's fighting power weaken in the frontline bases in the northern island of Kurishima, the southern island of Ogasawara, Okinawa and the far southern islands and Taiwan, and later challenge for a decisive final battle on the main land of Honshu with all national power gathered. What reckless and foolish military leaders!

This was the attitude of the Japanese army and navy, which was nothing but foolishly bold with zero considerations for the people. The people of Japan, unfortunately, allowed them the "go for broke" policy. Right after, on March 10, 1945, the B29s formed the Tokyo Air Raid. Following the raid, the number of deceased claimed by families was 20,000, while the number of deceased left unidentified was 88,000; more than 100,000 people were killed! And yet, Japan did not surrender. Recently, the families of the victims of the Tokyo Air Raid filed a suit against the

government for compensation. They claimed that the delay of the government decision to stop the war brought the American air raids. Still, the government has ignored the compensation up to this day. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not the only victims they said, and I think they are right.

The government and the military, in spite of such miseries, continued operations according to the law of the before-mentioned General Principle. A few months later, on June 23 in Okinawa, the commanding general Ushijima performed hara-kiri, killing himself, thus bringing an end to the Okinawa strategy. There is a need for us Japanese to ask who is responsible for the misery of Okinawa.

After considering all of these factors, I believe that if Japan had surrendered directly after the air raid of Tokyo, there would have been no Okinawa. If we had given up after the destruction of Okinawa had occurred, there would have been no Hiroshima, and if we had surrendered right after Hiroshima, there would have been no Nagasaki. Continuing hypothetically, if Japan had never given up after Nagasaki, there would have been another atomic bomb drop in Kokura, Kyushu or Niigata, in the Sea of Japan or elsewhere.

Upon reading these hypothetical statements, the readers or listeners might think that I support the dropping of the atomic bomb. Never! I still believe that the United States of America, who used the most horrible, massive, homicidal weapon ever created, was wrong and that there is no excuse as far as the humanitarian sense of the word is concerned. The same criticism and judgment are to be placed on those countries that are in possession of and are preparing any kind of nuclear weapon. With these thoughts in my heart, however, I must mention that Japan did have the intention of developing the atomic bomb and therefore, Japan was on the brink of using it.

Let us stop for a moment to consider one more hypothetical situation. (This is Yoshida`s spite humor.) Let`s suppose that the United States had warned Japan, saying, "It would be miserable for the both of us to have more casualties. In order to save the lives of soldiers and citizens and quicken the end of the war, we are ready to use the atomic bomb even though it is inhumane and unforgivable. However, if you, Japan, ignore this warning and continue to fight, we will take no responsibility for the damage and loss of people to be expected hereafter by a bomb that human beings have never before experienced. Japan should be blamed for that." Again, if Japan had ignored the warning and another atomic bomb had exploded in another city in Japan, there would have never been such a criticism and misunderstanding between the two nations as we have been facing for the past 65 years!

At any rate, the Japanese military authority was in a position to be blamed for the misery, and on the other side, we the people of Japan were too ignorant to open our mouths to say, "No more war!" Both of these factors were invitations for the atomic bomb attack. There should be no taboo on this problem within the political, historical and physical facts. Some people might say, "Don't try to go so far as to say that the atomic bomb quickened the war, although, in fact, it actually did bring the end of the war." But I, as one of the Hibakushas, dare to say that exactly, boldly and bravely. If someone who is not a Hibakushas says the same thing he or she might face criticism, not having lived through the bombing. My words, however, are the voice of the voiceless majority of the Hibakushas.

Well, 65 years after the atomic bomb drop, supposing that Hibakushas still hate Americans, but also supposing there are strong Japanese-American relations in the fields of economy and politics with hugely prosperous opportunities, what should remain between us? I believe that such an attitude on the part of the Japanese should be criticized as hypocritical. I thus believe that now is the time for us Hibakushas and Japanese to forget about saying only that we are the victims of the atomic bomb. It is now time for us to stop and think, and then step forward with positive thinking. "Positive thinking" means that, as mentioned before, the Hibakushas should be tolerant and considerate to those factors and to the idea that the people killed by the bomb are the "sacrifice for human being," so the same mistake is never made in the future.

When we consider these factors, we could say that the people killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki helped to lower the possible loss of human lives; that is, they acted as the "human sacrifice." My theory with the third viewpoint is this "human sacrifice" idea.

Coincidentally, this theory of mine has something in common with the following words by Dr. Souhou Machida, Hiroshima University Professor of Relative Religion and well-known scholar both in Japan and abroad. He asks in his book, "Would it be possible for human beings to defeat religion?" and then interprets his idea of "the end of Monotheism" with the following:

★While praying at the Atomic Bomb Memorial Statue, the thought that Hiroshima is Christ came into my mind. The souls of the 200,000 victims of Hiroshima were sublimated and atoned for the people's sins.

★When I visit asylums of the Nazis and Pol Pot I feel as if I am seized with a shivering fit, but Hiroshima Peace Park makes me feel as if I am in a comforting, sacred

area.

- ★The time to think of the people of Hiroshima as victims is over. Japan in the 21st century is in the stage where she should accomplish new missions in the civilized sense; these should not be done with narrow-minded patriotic sentiments, but rather with the restoration of a larger-scaled pride.
- ★If we are to discuss the culture of love, something must be done first. We must look straight ahead, but always remember the dark side of human history. If we don't consider the past, the discussion will be superficial.
- ★Hiroshima, which has suffered hell by the atomic bomb, is the Mecca for Buddhists, and Nagasaki is the Mecca for Roman Catholics. Both are very rare religious cities in Japan; the former is the home of the Aki sect of Buddhism, the latter of Roman Catholic.
- ★The Tears people shed due to the atomic bomb were the tears of the Earth. In this way, the Earth that was sullied by the inhumane deeds has been cleansed by their tears.
- ★The tears of the sufferers are the World tears.
- ★The antagonism between the two political parties (Anti Nuclear Bomb Japan Confederation and Anti Nuclear Bomb Japan National Confederation) that is caused by the difference in political views is exactly what the survivors should never accept. When we think of the pains of the victims and understand the Crucifixion, it is wrong for the survivors to support this sacrilegious antagonism.
- ★The Three Non-Nuclear Principles are losing truth and support. Losing these principles is almost equivalent to betraying the Hibakushas, who died as a sacrifice for others.
- ★When we come to think of Japan as the only country ever to suffer under the atomic bomb, we could take it for granted that nowadays, Japan holds the opportunity to stand up as the "first Axis power of Love." Here lies the possibility of respecting the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as those who made a heroic death on the Cross.

Therefore, I have come to think with the following mindset, and I hope the readers and listeners would agree. Instead of living with hatred as a victim, why not try to live with such a holy missionary spirit? This type of attitude would not only be good healing for the Hibakushas, but also for the families of the deceased, or even the second generations. It would be respectful and optimistic to pray for the victims by saying, "Your sacrificial death by the atomic bomb saved the lives of many other people. We will accept your death just as others have accepted Jesus Christ's death on the Cross as a vicarious sacrifice. Please sleep in peace. We the survivors give our deepest thanks and gratitude to you, and we will never let your death be meaningless!"

Thinking in this manner, we should say to those countries that are developing nuclear weapons, "This is blasphemy against God as well as the dead." I believe this statement is a new view never before seen by the Hibakushas or others. The tragedy of the atomic bomb enables the people of the world to make anti-nuclear activities stronger while expanding the prayer of peace to stand on a global scale.

To summarize my three viewpoints concerning the atomic bomb, I would say that the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are seeking atonement for the historical benefit, and that they furthered the war by providing military personnel. However, if Japan had developed the atomic bomb ahead of the United States, she would have used it and is therefore, an "imaginary murderer" as a potential atomic bomb dropper. Thus, we accept that the victims of the atomic bomb became the human sacrifice for those sins, with a fervent wish to have no more atomic bomb casualties. With this interpretation of the deceased Hibakushas and their will, we the survivors should show the world how horrible the atomic bomb was, and how foolish and meaningless it is to kill each other by war.

It may sound too good-natured when I offer such a positive interpretation of the atomic bomb, but I firmly believe that this interpretation would pave a way for mutual understanding and consensus between the assailant and the victims. Let us consider the fact that 65 years, far more than half a century, have passed since that day. The most important things for the two nations are too deeply reflected upon the historical incidents, realize a true fear of the nuclear weapon, and never repeat the sin again. The basic point of reconciliation is derived from mutual understanding. I feel strongly that the attitude of the Hibakushas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is the very factor affecting America's attitude.

On a similar note, different people have a different means for accepting what happens to us. Mine, for instance, developed when I was stricken with polio shortly after my birth. If I had felt the agony for being crippled, I never would have become who I am today. I have lived with the belief that this disease has been given to me by the will of God, who expected me to have a better and more significant life through my physical adversity. From boyhood up until this year, I have been telling myself what Miss Helen Keller wrote in her book *My Life*. She wrote, "The physical adversity is the greatest opportunity for spiritual advancement for which we should be truly grateful." I believe that somebody great produces something great in the future, ahead on the horizon. I believe that through human sacrifice lies God's will. The United States and Japan, once strong enemies, have been good friends ever since the end of the war and have been cooperative in every field, including the economy

and politics. Today, they are like husband and wife. I, as one of the Japanese Hibakushas, would like to tell others, "We Japanese have something to reflect upon. Let us make reflections of each other and understand each other for the good of tomorrow!"

In the last part of this testimony, I would like to introduce very symbolic words which every Hiroshima citizen, dead or alive, has used to express their feelings toward the atomic bomb. These words are written in an epitaph on the stone coffin of the Hiroshima City Peace Memorial Hall. This is the holy place where the annual Atomic Bomb Memorial Anniversary is held on the 6th of August.

In the coffin are the notes in which are written the names of some 200,000 people killed by the bomb. In front of the coffin, there is a written message that clearly expresses the thoughts and emotions of the Hiroshima citizens, both deceased and living. These would be the best words for a conclusion regarding which action to take for the future.

The mayor of Hiroshima, Mr. Shinzou Hamamoto, seven years after the war, asked Tadayoshi Saiga (1894-1961), then professor of English literature at Hiroshima University, to compose the words of inscription for those killed by the atomic bomb. Dr. Saiga composed his own original Japanese sentence. If I were to translate the words literally into English, it would sound something like this: "Rest in peace, because no error no repeat." This translation is not coherent because the sentence has no grammatical subject. We Japanese often leave out the grammatical subjects like "you," "I" and "we." Since the original Japanese epitaph has no subject, the readers have to wonder, "Who is speaking with whom?"

This was the beginning of the controversy between the Japanese citizens and the international community. Also, discussion arose over the appropriateness of the words. Professor Saiga then translated the statement into English, since this is his professional field of work: "Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evils." He chose "we" as the grammatical subject in the message. According to his concept, the "we" symbolizes all human beings.

The subject of the statement in the epitaph has long been the point of disagreement from the citizens of Hiroshima in regard to the deep meaning of the message. Professor Saiga lived through the Sino-Japanese War, the Manchurian Incident and World War II. He was aware of everything that happened during those times and had a much better historical view than us living in this era. He lived in the midst of the age of militarism, so to speak. He knew everything that our government

did to the world, beneficial or harmful, and that is all the more reason why he chose such words!

Directly after the unveiling ceremony of the epitaph in November of 1952, the Indian representative of The World Federation Asia Conference, Dr. Lada Bynote Pall (ex-counsel of the International Military Tribunal), raised his question about the epitaph, saying, "It is not Japan that dropped the atomic bomb. The hands of Americans are not cleansed yet. The seeds of war were sown by Western countries to invade Asia." Dr. Saiga, the writer of the epitaph, objected to Dr. Pall's statement. He wrote in response, "We as Hiroshima citizens and as world citizens as well, promise to never repeat the error again. From this come the emotions of Hiroshima citizens, carried from the past to the future, with the deep desire for the human errors never to be repeated. The words, 'Hiroshima citizens are not responsible for the atomic bomb drop' are words that are never accepted by the rest of the world. Nobody should be holding such a narrow-minded view in which it would be impossible for human beings to avoid the error, and also, nobody is qualified to speak to the soul of the dead." These words were the beginning of the debates on the correctness of the epitaph. Again, "we" in the epitaph represents not only Japanese and Americans but all human beings.

Almost 20 years after the release of the epitaph in August 1970, the then mayor, Setsuo Yamada, in the midst of controversy, said, "We will never change the epitaph. The subject is aimed at the world's people, and set up to warn and instruct people all over the globe." In November 1983, Hiroshima City set up the monument beside the stone coffin which says, both in Japanese and English, the following.

**MEMORIAL MONUMENT FOR HIROSHIMA, CITY OF PEACE
(CENOTAPH FOR THE ATOMIC BOMB VICTIMS)**

This monument was erected in the hope that Hiroshima, devastated by the world's first atomic bomb on 6 August 1945, would be rebuilt as a city of peace.

It summons people everywhere to pray for the repose of the souls of the deceased atomic bomb victims and to join the pledge never to repeat the evil of war. It thus expresses the "Heart of Hiroshima" which, enduring past grief and overcoming hatred, yearns for the realization of true world peace with the coexistence and prosperity of all humankind.

This monument is also called the Atomic Bomb Cenotaph, for the stone chest in the center contains the register of the deceased atomic bomb victims.

In 1995 the Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said, "In World War II, we made a national mistake. We gave many pains and losses to the people of Asia.

We express our sincere reflection and hearty apology." The prime minister was from the Socialist Party, but his comments have been the base of the Japanese government under the liberal-democratic administration up to this day.

Another thing that should not be forgotten is what was said by Mr. Youhei Kouno, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. He made an official statement at the Peace Memorial Ceremony on August 6, 2005 during which he asked, "What is meant by 'evils' written in the cenotaph?" Mr. Kouno answered himself by explaining that, "The first evil is that Japan, since the Meiji Revolution and until the atomic bomb drop, had been trying to walk the imperial way of war. In spite of the fact that Japan had the option of coordinating the independence and democracy of Asians, Japan chose the path of war. The atomic bomb drop was the end of this path. Another evil is that humans used a nuclear weapon on other humans. We Japanese are responsible for telling the world that human beings and nuclear weapons can never coexist."

In 2007, I attended what they called the International People's Tribunal on the Dropping of Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the final statements were made, one of the American judges shouted, "What is written in the epitaph is wrong!" At that moment, I nearly stood up and responded, "Calling the writings of the epitaph wrong is really what is wrong! Are you going to neglect the truth and make the minds and souls of the Hiroshima citizens dirty!? Never! You have no right to say that!" I'm glad I held my tongue, since I would have caused a commotion. The court was apparently "staged" by nobody other than the leftist sects of both the United States and Japan, backed by lots of money from those leftists.

In 2008, I attended a symposium where discussion was made among the people concerned in the presence of the world G7. An American Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, Mr. Steven Lloyd Leeper, gave his final message by saying, "Forgive, but never forget!" At that very moment I thought to myself, "Yes! That is exactly what I have been wanting to say!"

Incidentally, I happened to watch the Voice of America TV program "The Pearl Harbor Survivors" in which one of the American ex-soldiers said, "If the Japanese apologize for the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, we will apologize for the atomic bomb." This encouraged me to write a public open letter to Mr. President Obama, asking to "Let us forgive each other but never forget." The open letter is a one-page condensed version of this testimony.

One more thing that I should like to add is about the JASC (Japan American

Students Conference). I attended their symposium in 2008. To my surprise, this organization was established in 1935 at the time of the Japan-Russia War. I was only four years old then! The reason for establishing this organization was nothing more than the fear that the relationship between the United States and Japan would worsen due to Japan's attitude about the invasion of Russia. The students of both countries believed that world peace could never be expected to exist without the peace between US and Japan across the Pacific Ocean! What deep insight from both sets of students! Politicians should listen to the current students, scholars, and businesspersons!

I would like to end this testimony by saying that the deceased Hibakushas became Hitobashira (human pillars in Japanese), meaning "human sacrifices" in English. I am ready to be brave enough to say to the world, "For the sake of those who died as a human sacrifice for all mankind, please never allow their deaths to be meaningless! Let all of their souls rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evils."

If we neglect the true meaning of the atomic bomb victims, it might lead people all over the world through turmoil by allowing another dropping of the atomic bomb, thus destroying the whole world in an instant and ruining the beauty of the Earth. Let us fully understand what the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki really meant before it is too late!

Ladies and gentlemen, the great wall of the United Nations building is covered with words from the Bible: "Beat your swords into plowshares and spears into pruning shears."

I would like to end my testimony speech by presenting words spoken by Mr. Barack Obama, the President of the United States of America and the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize recipient. In the Pentagon on the eighth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, he addressed the families of the victims by saying, "Let us renew the true spirit of that day. Not the human capacity for the evil but for the human capacity for good – not the desire to destroy but the impulse to save and to serve and to build."

Ladies and gentlemen, these words of the president represent the spirit of atomic bomb victims and survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who are no longer seen as victims but rather human sacrifices for me, for you, and for all human beings in the world.

Let this become a reality with the revision of the concept of the atomic bomb,

and what it means to us humans regardless of who used it or who suffered its consequences.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Yuuki Yoshida

The following message is additional information:

I would like to convey a few personal notes. First, please remember what I spoke of at the beginning of this testimony; my younger brother died with agony on his mother's chest saying, "I will revenge America with the help of Buddha." On the other hand, my elder sister said, "Yuuki, I never hated America. It was war! We would have used the atomic bomb if we had developed it, as you say!" Such a large difference of attitudes of atomic bomb victims occurred even within my own family!

On another note, my younger brother, who died after a couple of weeks with not a single injury in his body, has sent me something in spirit after sixty years. Some miracle-like happening occurred between me and a newly born baby (who was the child of my ex-cohabitant's daughter and her husband.) When the baby was born, his father was on his way from Tokyo to Hiroshima but did not arrive at the hospital in time to hold the baby. I stood in his place. The nurse brought the just-born baby to my hands.

Well, what happened then!? The newborn baby rested in my hands in silence, and then suddenly opened his eyes wide and looked directly into my eyes for a few moments, as if he recognized me as his brother. Then he began to cry aloud! Aha! I felt as if he said to me, "Niichan (meaning, elder brother)! I am back in this world!" For a moment my heart swelled, and I thought to myself, "My brother Yuusaku has returned! Reborn to this world! He has come back into my hands!" Believe it or not, I think this is the miracle story of the rebirth of my brother who was killed by the atomic bomb. Since this "rebirth," I no longer feel the agony of losing my younger brother.

As for my elder sister Hiroko, she married years after the bombing. She became pregnant but the doctor asked her not to give birth to the baby because of her weak physical condition. Nevertheless, she dared to bear the child while risking her own life, as if she had been given a mission by God! The baby was born and given the name Kazufumi Yamashita and has grown up to become a symphony orchestra conductor. Kazufumi was the last student of the genius and world famous Herbert Von Karajan. When Karajan suddenly became sick, Kazufumi was ordered by his great teacher to play in his place, and his performance exceeded expectations. The baby whom my sister, Hiroko, was challenged to bear while placing her own life on

the line has indeed grown up to be a great young man. A mission concept of some sort might be developed between us two, as fellow Hibakushas.

Thank you very much for your long attention.



Yuuki Yoshida

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(Attached)

**(Open letter) "Dear Mr. President Obama,
let us forgive each other but never forget."**

This one-page open letter will be made public on October 28, 2009, the author's 78th birthday. The letter will be posted on the website (below) and sent via email to family and friends.

(Note)

This document is based on the author's true-life story. No person is allowed to use it or any part of it without permission from the author. For further information concerning the author, please visit his website "Profile in English" at <http://www.a-bombsurvivor.com>.

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