

Tesimony Sakashita Noriko

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Ms. SAKASHITA Noriko

Hiroshima Survivor (exposed to a-bomb at age 2)

Ms. Sakashita was exposed to the atomic bomb at her house, 1.4 km from the hypocenter. The bomb blast knocked her down, and she was injured including a cut on her forehead when a piece of timber with a protruding nail fell on her. She evacuated with her family, escaping through a sea of fire and was exposed to the “black rain,” heavily contaminated radioactive rain. For a long time she had not actively given her testimony; however since participating in the 2013 Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony as a representative of the families of war victims, Ms. Sakashita began to speak out in order to pass on the memory of the hardships endured by her mother.

I was exposed to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima when I was two years old. I was staying at my mother’s parents’ house in Nakahiro town, which was very close to the hypocenter, with my mom and my older brother.

In the morning of August 6th, my brother and I were standing at a Japanese-style loggia and watching our mother doing laundry in the yard. At 8:15, there was a blinding flash, and I was blown by together with the whole house, and hit hard on the dirt floor. My brother was crushed under a furniture, and I had my forehead cut with a nail of lumber, my face covered completely with blood.

On that day, my mother’s elder sister had gone out, leaving her four children with my mother and grandmother. My cousins were 8, 6, 4, and 2 years old at the time. My grandmother and my mother rescued those little children from under debris, calling their names in a loud voice. Around the house we could hear cries of people trying to escape. Just then, I could see a hand pulling my leg from under debris. It was actually my neighbor, a good friend of ours who always took care of us. She was crushed under the house and a big pole was in the way. She seemed to be in a pain. We were not strong enough, though, to be able to pull her out. Another familiar voice could be heard nearby. The groan came from under debris, and only the face could be seen from between pieces of rubble. It was another person whom we knew well. But there was nothing we could do. All six children including myself were crying hard and clinging to my mother and grandmother. Soon, all around us turned into a sea of flames. “My dear friend, please endure.” My grandmother apologized. Our neighbor looked at my grandmother sadly as if to cling to something. My mother decided to be a demon and decided to leave our neighbor. Urged by my grandmother, my mom held me under her hand. My grandmother also held my cousins and, holding each other’s hands, we all started running towards the river behind our house. Everybody ran crying out loud. My mother left our neighbors under debris. At the time, my mom was 26 years old.

Since then, for as long as 68 years, my mother never told other people about her experience of atomic bombing. She underwent many surgeries that seemed to be the result of being affected by radiation, but she never said that she was suffering. When she had a surgery of her thyroid, a unique symptom found in many hibakusha, I remembered what my grandmother had told me. At the time, your mom was wiping your scars wet with black rain like coal tar, wetting a piece of hand towel with her saliva. She wiped so hard until her tongue festered and turned completely red. I thought that my mother got sick in her thyroid for me and my cousins, and I felt very sorry for her. My mother passed away six months ago at the age of 94.

Since about a year ago, her dementia got worse, and she could no longer recognize her own daughter. It would be a lie if I said that I didn't feel lonely, but I thought from the bottom of my heart, "Mom, you're finally relieved by the atomic bomb. I'm glad for you"

After my mother's death, I started to feel that I must tell others my experience with atomic bombing. Thank you for listening to my mother's story.

わたくしは広島で2歳の時に被爆しました。爆心地からかなり近い中広町にあった母の実家に1歳違いの兄と母と3人で身を寄せていました。

8月6日の朝は、わたくしは兄と縁側に立って庭で洗濯をしている母の姿を眺めてました。8時15分にピカッと閃光が走り、わたくしはもの凄い爆音とともに家ごと吹き飛ばされ、土間にたたきつけられました。兄は家具の下敷きになり、わたくしは材木の釘で額を切り、顔中血だらけだったそうです。

当日は、母の姉である伯母が、8歳を頭に6歳、4歳、2歳の幼い男の子ばかり4人の従兄弟達を、母と祖母に預けてでかけました。祖母と母は大声でその子たちの名前を叫びながら瓦礫の下から助け出していきました。

周辺は逃げまどう人々の悲鳴が飛び交っていました。その時、私の足を引っ張る手が瓦礫の下からのぞいていました。みれば普段優しくしてもらっていた近所のおばさんでした。家の下敷きになり大きな柱が邪魔をして、苦しそうです。女の力では出して上げることもできません。その近くでも聞き慣れた声がします。瓦礫の下で苦しそうなうめき声がして瓦礫の隙間から、顔だけが見えていました。やはり親しい人でした。しかし、なすすべがありません。

子供たち6人は皆、火がついたように大声で泣き母と祖母にしがみついでいました。そうこうしていると、周りは火の海と化していました。「おばちゃん、堪えてつかあさい。こらえてね」両手をあわせて詫びる祖母の姿と、おばさんの縋り付くような悲しい眼が、母を鬼にしていきました。

母は、祖母に促され、私を脇に抱えました。祖母も小さい従兄弟を抱き、手を引いて裏の川に向かって走り出しました。みんな大声で泣きながら走りました。母は近所のおばさんたちを見殺しにしたのです。その時、母は26歳でした。

以来、68年間、母が原爆のことを他人に語ることはありませんでした。放射能が原因と思われる多くの手術をしましたが、一度も苦しいとは言いませんでした。

中でも被爆者特有の甲状腺の手術をした時、祖母が呟いていたのを思い出しました。「あんどき、クールタールのような黒い雨でぬれた、子どもたちの傷口を一生懸命手ぬぐいの端切れに唾(つば)つけて拭いとったけえの。舌が真っ赤にただれるほど拭いとったけえの」。私は母が私たちのために甲状腺を侵されたのだと、申し訳なくて仕方ありませんでした。

その母も半年前に94歳でなくなりました。1年くらい前から、認知症がすすみ、娘のわたくしが分からなくなっていました。淋しくないといったら嘘になりますが、わたくしは、心のそこから「お母さんよかったね、やっと、原爆から解放されたね」と呟きました。母が亡くなって、私自身もやっと他人さまに被爆のことを話さねばと思うようになりました。

本日は母の話を書いていただきありがとうございます。