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The Bomb Decides over Death and Future Life

Interview with Mrs. Kiyomi Iguro and Mr. Toyochi Ihara, Nagasaki City Council member, survivors of the Atomic bomb.



Harbor of
Nagasaki. Painting from 1636. Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture, *Photo: Ursula Gelis, August 2012.*

The Japanese city Nagasaki has a vivid history. Before today's welcoming urban environment came eras of greedy colonialism, persecution of its Christian minority, and many 'Namban' ('Southern Barbarians'). But the biggest and least welcome invader was the 'Pika-don', the 'flash-bang' of a nuclear explosion, experienced by many on the 8th/9th of August 1945.

I am not Kenzaburo Oe (author of the Hiroshima Notes), Nobel prize winner and activist, but I share one of his concerns - the responsibility of NOT using the people who survived a nuclear attack as only 'data'. If the eyewitnesses of the human

tragedy in Japan are willing to share their memories of the 'day of annihilation' with the reader, then we thank them deep appreciation.

Mrs. Kiyomi Iguro: I moved to Nagasaki in 1936, when I was ten years old. Before then we lived about 6 miles away. Everything in our lives changed in August 1945. I was working in a temporary established clinical facility in Nagasaki city on August 9th. It was called 'Number 5 relief place'. When the bomb exploded, a baby was heavily injured in the two story building. I called someone to help me save the baby.



A hospital in Nagasaki 1945.

Mr. Toyochi Ihara: I was nine years old, and was in my home village gathering wood for the fire place together with my mother and aunt. We were in the mountains, 6.5 kilometer away from the explosion's epicenter. We heard airplanes above us. Then a blast, and we saw a white flash. I was up in the tree, cutting wood, and fainted.

Paper was flying around – maybe from a factory nearby. None of us was injured because we were protected by the mountain.

Mrs. Kiyomi Iguro: Being exposed to the atomic bomb had consequences for my personal life. My mother-in-law wanted me not to mention the fact that I was an A-bomb survivor. I had a miscarriage and she made the connection to the bombing and its consequences. Actually, I felt no discrimination. I simply thought my mother-in-law did not want to have disabled grandchildren. I have no children. Shortly after the miscarriage I got divorced.



Mrs. Kiyomi Iguro and Mr. Toyochi Ihara. Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki, 11th of August 2012.

Mr. Toyochi Ihara: My mother and brother got treatment after the bombing but they died in 1952. I started thinking that maybe the Atomic bomb caused their early death.

I started high school in 1951 in the Nagasaki Urakami district and everything still looked the same: a lot of destruction. We had no detailed information about the effects of radiation. But we could see people suffering. Symptoms were visible, for instance hair losses and burns. We survivors faced discrimination in getting jobs and daily life was difficult.

Today we are acting as special messengers for a world free of nuclear weapons and are sharing our experiences with younger people. We have been to Nepal and Spain... cultural exchange and informing about the effects of nuclear weapons is our common task.