

The Nagasaki-America Peace Project  
Japan  
Colgate University  
Carolina van der Mensbrugghe, United States, Colgate University  
Alex Sklyar, United States, Colgate University  
[nagasakiamericapeaceproject.blogspot.com]

## Section I

We went to Nagasaki as peace ambassadors on behalf of the Kathryn Davis Projects for Peace, determined to educate American students about the peace efforts of the people of Nagasaki through the development of a documentary film, blog, and website. We hope that the city of Nagasaki and the stories of its citizens will serve as examples of working towards a future of peace, rather than of war.

No other fund-raising efforts contributed to this project, but it would not have been able to achieve such a deep level of success without the help of Japanese individuals and institutions. The Nagasaki municipal government, as well as the Foundation for the Promotion of Peace, both facilitated interviews and access to media content. A testament to the municipal endorsement of our work is that Mayor Tamihasa Taue awarded us the titles of "Peace Correspondents for Nagasaki." This was not only a symbolic gesture of support, but also allowed us to gain access to filming in "press only" sections at official events such as the Peace Ceremony on August 9<sup>th</sup> and U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-moon's visit to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum on August 5<sup>th</sup>. Interaction with the press proved to be another valuable resource in spreading awareness, interest, and support for our project. Articles printed in the Japan Times, the Nishi-Nihon Shinbun, and the Asahi Shinbun promoted our efforts in the public's eye. Notices on Humanities Net Japan, H-Net US-Japan, H-Net Asia, and the Visual Anthropology of Japan online blog have put us in contact with our target audience of professors, researchers, and students.

This summer the production phase for the film was completed alongside the ethnographic fieldwork for the blog and website. During our six-week stay we interacted with *hibakusha* (atomic bombing survivors), peace activists, school principals, college students, peace education teachers, city officials, Catholic nuns, the Archbishop of Nagasaki, and many more. These exchanges took the form of us conducting interviews, taking informally guided tours, attending important peace-related events and ceremonies, and listening to people share their life stories. Our age contributed greatly towards gaining support for the project. This assured the participants whom we interviewed that their stories will be shared with younger generations in America and that their life experiences have not been shared in vain.

Our sensitivity to Japanese cultural norms provided a strong base for all of our interactions. For example, our proper execution of *aisatsu*, an obligatory form of self-presentation, was the initial gateway to obtaining the majority of interviews and event invitations. Our *aisatsu* was then coupled with *omiyage*, the presentation of gifts from our university and home communities. These small, but meaningful, gestures in no small form contributed to the support, respect, and friendship established.

Budgetary constraints and language barriers were present but never caused too many difficulties. Carolina experienced frustrations directing while simultaneously filming, and would have benefited from a larger production team. Alex's proficiency in the Japanese language enabled him to translate questions while simultaneously interpreting participants' responses during all interviews and interactions. Any sections that were initially difficult to understand are captured on camera and tape recorder, which makes it possible to revisit and provide more accurate translations.

Due to the intensive nature of this summer's production process we were unable to edit footage, keep a regular blog, or design a website. These post-production and post-fieldwork write up elements require additional time to complete effectively. Separately, we will thus continue the project. Carolina will edit the footage and conduct additional research in order to synthesize the content into a pilot film. Alex will translate the portions of the interviews selected for this pilot in order to accurately subtitle the dialogue. Within three months, we hope to have this pilot DVD made available free to educational institutions and their faculty throughout the United States. The pilot will illustrate what can be expected of the feature-length film. Colgate Global Citizens for Peace, the peace activism group on the Colgate University campus, will conduct distribution of the DVD on our behalf.

In the long term, Carolina will focus her efforts on research, editing footage, and the creation of the feature-length production. Alex will continue the blog that was started this summer by providing the English translations of entire interviews as he translates them. These translations will also be the basis of the website which Alex will create. By using varied multimedia approaches, we hope to educate the future leaders and citizens of America about what happened to the people of Nagasaki on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945, and in the 65 years since.

## Section II

Peace involves respecting and valuing the humanity of others. Many Nagasaki *hibakusha* state on their business cards and in their testimonials, "The basis of peace is understanding the pain of others." This mentality was developed from their first-hand experiences war's consequences. These experiences reflect physical and psychological destruction such as Mr. Matsuzoe's struggles with militaristic Japanese education, Mr. Tsuchiyama's inability to listen to Chopin due to music censorship, Ms. Nakasato's longing for an education she could not afford, Ms. Shimohira's suffering after the annihilation of her entire family, and Mr. Taniguchi's battle with continuous bouts of cancer and physical scarring. Many *hibakusha* committed suicide, and those who chose life over death experienced a sense of isolation and prejudice resultant of their radiation exposure.

Many participants in our project consider the human mind too limited in its imagination to fully conceive the horrors of war. Yet, an appreciation of peace requires an understanding of how war affects, destroys, and alters life permanently. To this end, these individuals have devoted their lives to collecting photographs, sharing stories, giving tours, and finding ways to engage younger generations.

In the short run, we have provided comfort and encouragement to many such individuals in Nagasaki who desperately strive to provide a hands-on account of atomic atrocity. The Nagasaki-Peace Project has assured them that their stories will be further shared with younger generations in America. We recognize that such a need for compassion is not limited to preventing war, but is also crucial in constructing peace on an individual, a group, and a global level. Many young people in Nagasaki, after hearing survivor's testimonies, have begun sharing these stories with others, treasuring their families more, and fighting less.

In the long term, the documentary will be one of the few-recorded audio-visual accounts of atomic bombing survivors and the history of the city's burgeoning peace movement accessible to English-speaking audiences. The website and blog will bring the messages and stories of the participants directly to English readers across the globe, thanks to the speed of the Internet. The distribution of this information in different formats will make it accessible to many who have never heard these stories before. These resources will play one small part in influencing future generations to work towards a more peaceful world.

The project has been a humbling experience, which has afforded us a deeper appreciation of the relative peace our generation has grown up in. Looking back at the twentieth century, we are now two generations removed from the horrors of the Second World War. It is more important than ever to listen to stories of the struggles and hardships of our ancestors.

This project is valuable because the further experiences of war slip into recorded history, the more necessary it is for us to be diligent in understanding and conveying the truth of the past. Conveying this truth to future generations can and will prevent further violence. A state of peace enables people to live, dream, love, learn, and prosper. Any alternative reduces the human experience to a struggle for survival. (Carolina van der Mensbrugge)

