

Students' Peace Declaration from Hiroshima

After experiencing one of the darkest moments in human history on August 6, 1945, the atomic bomb survivors, known as Hibakusha, have created and sustained a truly inspiring movement toward a nuclear-free world. Due to lasting physical, psychological, and socio-economic impact, the Hibakusha have called for recognition of their suffering and for abolition of nuclear weapons. Today, we honor their resilience. We pay our respects to those who walked the streets of Hiroshima on that day at 8:15 a.m., skin burned, clothes torn. Many lost their lives, while those who barely survived continue to live with the painful reminder of those hellish scenes. We express our deepest gratitude to the Survivors for their continued display of human spirit and their courage to fight for basic human rights. As the average age of the Hibakusha now exceeds 83 years old, we, the students of Hiroshima University, take on the responsibility of passing on their memories and honoring their strength.

The spread of the novel Coronavirus has had disastrous effects on human life and economies worldwide. The pandemic has most severely affected the lives of people with precarious employment, as well as frontline workers. This virus has given us new clarity; clarity of structural discrimination in our societies, disregard for humanity, and a lack of solidarity within state relations. Today, we are witnessing the people of the world confront “structural violence,” which is the root cause of perpetual social inequality. Before our eyes, the shroud of perfection behind which various countries have hid themselves is beginning to unravel. No country, including Japan, is disconnected from the evils of discrimination.

The currents of self-centered nationalism have exacerbated international tensions. Amid mutual distrust, state leaders insist on nuclear deterrence while avoiding inter-state dialogue that could ban nuclear weapons. As of August 1, 2020, the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty has 82 signatories and 40 ratifications. However, none of the nuclear-armed states have ratified the treaty, and as of January 2020, up to 13,400 nuclear warheads remain on the planet. We have seen the power of nuclear weapons in the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With the destructive potential of the currently existing nuclear weapons, nuclear states could annihilate humanity and our planet several times over. The doomsday clock is set at 100 seconds to midnight, and nuclear reality is closer than ever. As Japan is the only country that has ever experienced the tragedy of being victims of nuclear weapons, the Government of Japan should take a clear stance against these weapons by signing and ratifying the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.

Our appeal for a nuclear-free world goes hand in hand with our call to end discrimination. We abhor direct, structural, and cultural discrimination. We see and hear the calls of the Black Lives Matter movement. We seek justice for people living in conflict. We feel the pain of women and LGBTQIA+ people who face discrimination based on their gender or orientation. We ask society to take a moment to think. Why do we subject some people to indignity and injustice? How can we end this discrimination? We imagine a world without discrimination in all its forms; discrimination committed directly against others, discrimination ingrained in our systems, and the discrimination that promotes our culture while denigrating others.

Through peace education, we can teach about the devastating effects of nuclear weapons while promoting empathy, respect, and human dignity. This starts with us: we must reject false information and learn from past mistakes. Respect must be our guiding principle to lead our actions. This is our world. It's time to take a stand for a better and more accountable society. We want to live in a world where future generations, regardless of identity, are treated with respect and offered equal opportunities. We want to live in a world absent of violence in all forms. This is the vision that lies in the hearts of our youth. We are committed to achieving this society.

Our strength and our imagination can be utilized to enact change. We are capable. We encourage young generations to acknowledge the global issues and believe in their power to stand in solidarity against all forms of discrimination and the use of illegitimate force. As the Hibakusha have shown us, unifying for change is neither daunting nor impossible. Universal peace cannot be materialized in the absence of human dignity and equality.