

Restoring Testimonies:
Rediscovering the Individual & Unfolding Memory in Hibakusha Narratives.

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PREFACE and ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There is a man who has been sketching the city of Hiroshima. This would not be such a surprise if he was drawing a landscape of the present-day place. However, what he passionately portrays is the past: Hiroshima in 1940s, before the atomic bomb was dropped.

Shigeo Moritomi, who is a survivor of the atomic bombing, used to live in the area where the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park is now located. Once, he overheard young students talking in front of the famous Atomic Dome, saying, “It was very fortunate that the explosion happened over the park, so that many people did not have to die around here.”¹ Moritomi was surprised because he knew that was not what happened. So, he started to draw his memory of daily life of the area before the attack.

Indeed, it is very difficult for the younger generations to visualize that there were many people living in the area where we now see nothing but the enormous flat park. The city of Hiroshima has recovered from the atomic bombing; the damage of explosive force was replaced with modern architecture and Hiroshima became a government-designated city.² Today it is the largest in Chugoku-Shikoku region.³

I was born in 1977 and grew up in Hiroshima about three generations after the end of the Pacific War. I remember the city changed rapidly, reconstructing old buildings and

¹ Motoo Nakagawa, “Hiroshima Fieldwork and the Film ‘in This Corner of the World.’,” *History Educationalist Conference of Japan*, August 2018.

² Hiroshima is the 12th most populous prefecture in the country.

³ The Chugoku and Shikoku regions are located in the west of Honshu, and consist of nine prefectures in total: five in the Chugoku region (Okayama, Hiroshima, Tottori, Shimane and Yamaguchi) and four in the Shikoku region (Ehime, Kagawa, Tokushima and Kochi).

renewing the landscape. I enjoyed seeing the city's renewal and growth into a future-oriented international site. As a youth in Hiroshima, I appreciated this bright image of the city as opposed to the dark gloominess left over from the war. As a result of the changes I saw growing up, in time it became very difficult to find visual traces of the atomic bombing; as I also observed, these visual erasures corresponded to silences in the oral testimonies and stories of the people of Hiroshima.

“The field of memory is a battlefield in many ways,” writes Luisa Passerini, an Italian oral historian.⁴ She argues, “Any operation aiming to cancel memory cannot help but produce another set of memories with the intention of violently replacing the previous one.” Although many visitors in the Memorial Park worship the importance of peace, most of them do not even realize they are actually standing in an area once packed with lively crowds. Would peace be meaningful without memories of darkness?

Moritomi still sketches the city of Hiroshima before the atomic bombing, hoping that his drawing can invite people to imagine there was a town where many people spent ordinary lives, and then, all of those were flattened and lost because of the atomic bombing. He teaches us there is always more than what we think we see. Moritomi, as the first generation, uses his experience and a pencil to restore canceled memories.

For many years, I, as the third generation, found myself wondering what I could do and what my role could be in memory work. My time in the Oral History MA program at Columbia University led me to the eureka moment: I do not have my own memory to draw upon, but I do have many around me who were willing to share their memories with me. I do not have a pencil nor memory to sketch, but I do have oral history, which would work as my pencil to restore memories. This thesis became my canvas.

⁴ Luisa Passerini, *Memory and Utopia: The Primacy of Intersubjectivity* (Oakville: Equinox, 2007), 18.

It is a pleasure to thank those who made this thesis possible. First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Mary Marshall Clark, co-founder of Oral History Master of Arts at Columbia University, for always inspiring and encouraging me. Prof. Clark has been always there for me whenever I ran into a troubled spot. She consistently allowed this paper to be my own work, but steered me in the right the direction whenever I needed it. I am gratefully indebted for her valuable comments and support with this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

I have to admit that I did not consider oral history work as something different from other interviews when I started to study oral history at Columbia University in 2017. I had been a TV reporter in Japan for sixteen years and had already conducted many interviews for broadcast by then. I was very confident that I would be a good interviewer, experienced with handling any interviews in any form. I soon realized I was wrong. Oral history methodology changed my interviews dramatically. My pride as a well-trained, experienced interviewer crumbled, and I became a stray sheep and felt completely incomprehensible to myself.

The first three oral history interviews were especially shocking, and quickly I found that I had to relearn my interview practice. I knew I would like to focus on war memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where the US dropped atomic bombs in August 1945. I grew up in Hiroshima and was surrounded by the stories of “Hibakusha,” or survivors of the atomic bombings. I felt responsible to preserve the Hibakusha legacy and securely transmit it to future generations. This was the time when the United Nations was about to pass the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty, the first legally binding international agreement to prohibit nuclear weapons; as a result, luckily many Hibakusha, now aging into their 70s and beyond, were in New York to attend meetings at the UN. With my newly learned—but still not fully absorbed—oral history methodology I conducted my first three oral history interviews with Hibakusha in New York. Given that they were invited to speak at the UN, I knew that they were all very prominent survivors who were accustomed to speaking in public. However, the oral history interview changed them completely. The first narrator began to tremble as the session went on, licking his lips

nervously and faltering in his speech. The second narrator talked about something very different from his regular public discourse; he went so far as to say he was actually “grateful to be Hibakusha.” He actually became, in a way, positive about the fact that he was exposed to nuclear weapons in this interview, in opposition to his public advocacy (“No more Hiroshima, No more Nagasaki”) *against* nuclear weapons.

What had this oral history interview done to these narrators? One explanation was suggested by my third narrator, Tokuko Kimura. She paused after she described the morning of August Ninth, when the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and said, “as far as the day of the atomic bombing concerns, this is all I could say,” as if this was where she would normally stop her story. As she glanced at me and realized I would not stop her, leaving the interview open-ended—which is one of the important aspects of oral history methodology I will discuss later—her remark became highly suggestive: “Seventy-two years after the bombing until now, there is a long history. But I have to tell you I did not see the worst on that day. Should I continue my story after the bombing? That is, if you have time.”

This demonstrates three potential restrictions of her testimony. One is a restriction she places on herself, which is her belief as to what she should say as Hibakusha. Tokuko Kimura indicated she had more stories to tell about her life after the bombing, but she regarded it as something that was unnecessary or out of the picture. What she witnessed on the day of the bombing is what she believes she should talk about as Hibakusha supporting a public narrative, and that outweighs other stories even though they might have had a tremendous impact on her personal life.

The second restriction is the expectation of interviewers. She acknowledges what interviewers expect her to talk about, which is the catastrophe of the day of the bombing, and adjusts her narrative to that external expectation. The fact that she asked if I would

even have the interest and time to hear her story after the bombing illustrates how sensitive she is to what listeners want. I was very intrigued by the way she said, “I did not see the worst on that day.” This is indicative in two ways: first, it shows her belief that she needs to respond to interviewers’ expectations, and so she excuses herself, saying that her testimony is not corresponding to “the worst,” or the horror that the audience expects; second, it demonstrates how she feels compelled to compare her testimony to “the worst,” and plays down the complexity of her long-term personal experience.

And what is “the worst,” anyway? This gets me to the third restriction: the dead. She repeats throughout her interview that she did not see the worst on the day of the atomic bombing. “Abikyokan” is the word she often used in her testimony to describe “the worst,” which means “hell” or “pandemonium in Japanese.” This is word has been frequently used by Hibakusha to describe the devastation by the atomic bombing; it immediately connects to shared cultural images of the mushroom cloud, black corpses, Pika Don,⁵ burn victims seeking water, and other indelible images of the disaster. The fact she emphasizes she did not face Abikyokan, without my even asking about it, and feels compelled to compare her story to Abikyokan constantly illustrates how this trope and concept influences her testimony. And it is, in some sense, an unattainable thing, or at least un-narratable. Because who actually saw Abikyokan? The dead of the atomic bombings.

Kenji Shiga, the director of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, told me he would not be as interested in collecting new testimonies of relatively younger Hibakusha because “the older Hibakusha who already passed away had witnessed so much worse.”⁶ This is due to the fact most of Hibakusha who were old enough on the day of the atomic

⁵ Pika Don means “flash and boom.” It refers to what Hibakusha saw and heard: first a brilliant light, then a massive explosion.

⁶ Conversation with the author. July 2nd, 2018, at Motomachi high school.

bombings to remember what they witnessed, and compare it to life before the bombing, were of older generations that are now mostly gone. Furthermore, many of the Hibakusha who are still with us are relatively less damaged by the atomic bombs, at least physically, in that they have been healthy enough to live for more than seventy years after the bombing without succumbing to radiation-related illnesses. This reality makes surviving Hibakusha passionate about emphasizing Abikyokan, because they testify “on behalf of the victims that were killed inhumanly.” (Megumi Shinohara) Their humble responsibilities to the dead prevent them from talking about their individual experiences and emotions fully. A hierarchy of suffering was set up, with the dead at the top.

Guided by oral history methodology, which I will explore in detail in Chapter Two, I invited Tokuko Kimura, my third narrator, to speak freely of her experience as a survivor outside of Abikyokan, and the tone of her testimony changed suddenly. She had been emotionally controlled when she talked about the day of the bombing, relating the narrative of Abikyokan. However, she lost control over her feelings after I told her that I had more time and would like to hear her story after the bombing. She started to talk freely about her long history after the bombing and became furious about the fact that she had been always regarded as Hibakusha and not as an individual: “I am sorry, but I do not want to be called Hibakusha, I am just an ordinary old woman (Futu no Obasan).” Her testimony as an “ordinary old woman” who happened to have survived the bombing became one of the unforgettable stories that I encountered; I will return to the importance of becoming an individual in a later chapter.

Through these three interviews, I became confident that oral history methodologies could loosen the conventional restrictions of their testimonies and invite them to unfold their own feelings outside of the expectations of the official Hibakusha narrative. I define this process as restoring testimonies, and in this thesis, I aim to restore testimonies of

Hibakusha.

Before I dive into the details of the methodologies I used, I should explain why the testimonies of Hibakusha in particular need restoration. Surely, no testimonies can exist independently of other sociocultural factors and are therefore restricted, in some ways, by outside subjects. Therefore, they are legitimately their own narratives. Regarding Hibakusha narratives in particular, one might ask, what is the point of examining their personal memories when the collective narratives are used for the good and important cause of peace? Furthermore, some might be skeptical given that further exploring the experiential memories of Hibakusha, which are most of the time left incomprehensible, could be painful, forcing them to face their traumas once again. Cathy Caruth, who is a professor of Humane Letters at Cornell University and writes on the languages of trauma, argues, “Forgetting is indeed a necessary part of understanding.”⁷ Indeed, by adopting the collective narrative, Hibakusha have managed to make sense of what they experienced, and found a space where they could escape from their trauma and sufferings. I have asked myself about these questions over and over again, and still concluded that this re-narrating is all the more important both for the wider social/political cause of peace and for individual Hibakusha. It is critical to restore testimonies of Hibakusha for the very reason Hibakusha have repeatedly asked for the world to hear their story; this transmits their legacy to future generations to prevent tragedy from recurring. Restored testimonies could teach us their actual experiences and emotions behind their conventional collective narratives, and facilitate our understandings of what Hibakusha try to convey.

A part of this conclusion is deeply personal. I grew up in Hiroshima, and was

⁷ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 32.

surrounded by the testimonies of Hibakusha. Every time I listened to Hibakusha stories, I nodded seriously. However, their stories came to be of no surprise to me at some point, and gradually lost the impact they used to have; because I had heard the collective narrative of Abikyokan so many times, I felt I knew their stories already. This is the fact I had hesitated to admit for a long time, until I read *Hiroshima no Genfukei wo idaite*, in which Sadako Kurihara, a Japanese poet who survived the atomic bombing on Hiroshima, wrote about a man who complained that the testimonies of Hibakusha have been too similar. I was surprised that Kurihara accepted his claim as honest and pointed out his frustration came from his conviction that the real, complex, multifaceted truth was not provided in Hibakusha stories. As Kurihara relates, “The man read the testimonies to know the unknown, but he was upset because no matter how many testimonies he read, he only found the same repetition.”⁸ This resonated with how I felt, and I was relieved to know that this was reasonable feeling and had precedent. At the same time, however, I found it quite shocking as well since this could indicate the uncomfortable fact that more one seeks to learn about the atomic bombings, the more one might become numb to them.

One of the critical reasons why we come across these similar narratives results from the restrictions I discussed above. Hibakusha mute their own life history experiences and instead settle into a common agreement of how the story of the atomic bombings should be told. As a result, the testimonies lack diversity and could sound similar to an audience who have heard Hibakusha testimonies before. And I worry this is getting worse as the time goes and the collective narrative becomes more set. To me, it has become crucial to think of ways we can open up what it means to be Hibakusha, and open up diverse ways for people to connect to these narratives.

In Hiroshima, peace education is mandatory on August 6th. I visited my niece’s

⁸ Sadako Kurihara, *Hiroshima no Genfukei wo idaite* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1975), 197.

elementary school last summer in 2017 to observe current peace education approaches. Some students, who participated in the peace bus trip that went around historical sites of the atomic bombing and learned Hibakusha stories, presented their reflections on the tour. They read their written scripts and appealed emotionlessly, “It must have been awful to be exposed to the atomic bomb. I feel sorry they had to go through this. I feel peace is important.” Surprisingly, it sounded very detached from the atomic bombing, as if it were just someone else’s problem that happened somewhere outside of them. The important message of “it could happen to you,” which Hibakusha have passionately tried to pass on, was not reflected in the students’ speech. There was no individual-to-individual connection, just students connecting to a familiar story. Instead, it revealed that peace education has become more conventional, almost like a ritual, in which students are provided with instructions about how to listen, what to feel, and what to say, all while being passive without real personal engagement. The lecture only lasted about an hour.

The need for peace is one of the largest collective narratives shared throughout the world. The meaning of the word, however, is very vague. Common understandings and images include “no wars,” love, and doves. In spite of such blurriness, I still remain attached to the ideal and continue to believe in the importance of this message. However, to make peace more meaningful and persuasive, we should seek new significance in the individual narratives themselves: in the case of Hibakusha, the actual immediate and lifelong experiences and consequences of war with realities and emotions. Adjusting individual narratives to conform to larger narratives risks simplifying their vivid experiences. It is critical to understand where the strongest emotions of individual Hibakusha lie in order to understand their actual experience of war, and thus, to truly pursue peace.

One of the things that turns many people off from history is the difficulty of

placing themselves in the historical moment of catastrophe; it's hard to imagine the emotion or brutality. Preserving the fixed narratives of Hibakusha that lack truly individual emotions and individual impacts of the atomic bombings can even become a barrier between the speaker and the audience. It has been over 73 years after the atomic bombings, and what we hear from Hibakusha now seems to be sunken into the fixed narratives.

Anna Green, who teaches public history and oral history at University of Wellington, examines how two forms of memories, individual and collective, are closely intertwined, and claims individual memories do not vanish.⁹ As the most destructive war in history gradually fades from living memory, it becomes more important to take away the remoteness of the past and bring individual memories to renewed life for new generations. Therefore, my mission as an oral historian is to refuse to take a part in facilitating the construction of the fixed memories, and instead to reconstruct individual memories. With oral history methodology, stories of the daily moments before, during, and after the atomic bombings restore that missing clarity and impact of the memories.

In this work I am very much influenced by two Italian oral historians, Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini. I learned the fundamental understandings of oral history from Portelli. He highlights that it is important to “accept the informant, and give priority to what she or he wishes to tell, rather than what the researcher wants to hear.”¹⁰ As an oral historian, therefore, I give enough space for narrators to talk freely, and will accept even what might otherwise be considered problematic. Portelli points out there are no “false” oral sources. In fact, he argues, it is those statements that may depart from known

⁹ Anna Green, *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie, Oxford Handbooks Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105.

¹⁰ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, c1991), 54.

facts that makes oral history all the more interesting because it tells us ‘how’ memories are constructed. Although the statements of narrators might tell us more about memories than events, those memories illustrate the meanings of events for the narrators; what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did. Even “wrong” remarks can be psychologically “true,” and are particularly important to be examined.¹¹ Using these principles of how I face narrators changed my interviews significantly, and I started to hear narratives that I would never have dreamed would be spoken.

Luisa Passerini also taught me the philosophy of how oral historians approach interviews. She argues 1) it is crucial to recognize that many universally accepted frameworks could be the result of manipulations or oversimplifications that veil the complexity of reality and experience, 2) once we recognize the overwhelming narrative, we have to be critical of it, and 3) interviewers could never be outsiders in the interviews.¹² This made me understand how I could practice oral history methodologies better by acknowledging my subjectivity, which could actually hinder my listening.

As Passerini points out, “I” as an interviewer can never be ignored when we discuss oral history interviews.¹³ Therefore, for readers to understand my findings, it is essential to demonstrate in this thesis how I approach interviews with Hibakusha to practice oral history and to restore testimonies. In chapter one, I will illustrate how I identify the frameworks around Hibakusha. In chapter two, I will explain how I became critical of these frameworks and challenged them. I will also illuminate how I recognized

¹¹ Portelli, 45–58.

¹² Passerini, Luisa. “*Interviewing Artists: Intersubjectivity and Visuality.*” Workshop, OHMA Columbia University, New York, NY, September 21, 2017.

¹³ She also explains it as an intersubjectivity, which is her critical finding of oral history methodologies. See Luisa Passerini, *Memory and Utopia : The Primacy of Intersubjectivity* (Oakville: Equinox, 2007).

“I” as an interviewer and wrestled with my own subjectivity to listen in new ways. Finally, in chapter three, I will introduce some results that I reached by this practice of “restoring testimonies.”

I had opportunities to conduct oral history interviews with seven prominent Hibakusha, all of who have been quite outspoken about their experiences. Their pre-existing accounts are searchable online, and you could learn their widely known experiences easily. They are certainly all very powerful as they are, and it is not at all my intention to trivialize their existing accounts. Yet, I was surprised to see their completely different personalities emerge in my oral history interviews, and most importantly, in their narratives. One might find it a bit radical at first; how can we accept the positive narrative of Hibakusha about nuclear weapons? Yet, it will become an enlightening beacon to deepen our understanding about the atomic bombings as we learn the meanings behind it. Allow yourself to be open-minded and let your expectations fly away. It is essential to enter the world you couldn't see before, whether as an interviewer, a narrator, or a reader.

Chapter 1

CONTEXT

Background of the Official Narratives of Hiroshima

A lot of people were flowing in the river seeking help. I dragged them out from the river, but they soon jumped into the river again.

A mother was carrying one child on her back and trying to help another child. I remember the scream of the child, “Help me. Help me.” I remember the mother said, “I’m sorry, I am sorry,” and she ran away with me.

I saw my friend with a hole in the back of the head and brain was coming out.

Black chunks. There were black chunks. One black chunk was on the bicycle. I did not think it was a human being.

Deadly sight. Everyone was walking in agony. It was almost like marching ghosts. I thought it was a horrible way of killing people.

These are the testimonies of Hibakusha when they were asked, “what haunts you most from the aftermath of the atomic bombing?”¹⁴ Tadashi Ishida, a sociologist who researched individual life histories of Hibakusha in Nagasaki, collected oral accounts around 20 years after the atomic bombings. The heaviness of the testimonies is highlighted in his study. The reason why Ishida conducted this survey particularly focusing on individual life histories of Hibakusha was because he was a member of the first national Fact-finding Survey on Atomic Bomb Victims in 1967 and was

¹⁴ Tadashi Ishida, *Genbaku Taiken No Shisōka* (Tōkyō: Miraisha, 1986), 187.

discontented with its findings.¹⁵ The national survey concluded that “Although there were some significant differences between A-bomb survivors and other citizens, there were no statistics to show that there was a remarkable disparity overall.”¹⁶ On the national level, Hibakusha were treated as the same as other victims of the War. There had been few studies conducted to understand the living consequences of Hibakusha experiences. Hibakusha were not counted to shape the official narratives on the atomic bombings.

Lisa Yoneyama, who is known for her research centered on memory politics concerning war and colonialism, argues that there was an attempt by the political and economic elites not to erase but to differently register the memories of the atomic bombing. “Dark and gloomy turns into the ‘bright and cheerful, hardships will be replaced by comforts, disputes by consensus, pain by pleasures, and perhaps even Hiroshima’s anger by conviviality. Fully entertained by the multiple dimensions of Hiroshima-ness, we will then enjoy the pleasures of peace without discomfort about the potential for wars and nuclear terrors.”¹⁷ By endorsing a certain kind of remembering, she concludes, the narrative for peace seldom becomes a reminder of death, pain, and sorrow.

Most Hibakusha say they were too occupied with the daily struggle to live to think in depth about why they had to struggle in the first place. They lost everything. Many say it was even worse than it was in wartime, since they had a huge challenge just to stay

¹⁵ Hideo Hama, Ken Arisue, and Hideki Takemura, *Hibakusha Chosa o Yomu : Hiroshima Nagasaki No Keisho* (Japan: Keio gijuku daigaku shuppankai, 2013), 21.

¹⁶ 「被爆者と他の国民一般との間に有意の差と認められるものがあつたが、全般的に著しい格差があるという資料はいられなかつた」 See “Fact-Finding Survey on Atomic Bomb Victims” (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 1967), 47.

¹⁷ Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces [Electronic Resource] : Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1999), 64–65.

alive. Their health conditions were severely damaged. For many years, however, they had no clue that was due to the radiation from the atomic bombings. They could not think of anything except what was necessary to barely function. It was a live-or-die situation. And living with that kind of despair and hardship, they often did not have time to examine what was happening to them, question its source, and understand what made their experience so much worse than many of their fellow Japanese.

While Hibakusha were facing their daily struggles, the public narrative defining the meanings of the atomic bombings was developed without them. The main three actors in this historical story were America, Japan, and the city of Hiroshima. There were also other social factors that shaped the narratives of Hibakusha. In this chapter, I will explore how the universally accepted framework of Hiroshima has been constructed over time.

Part 1: Commencement of the Official Narrative by America

To begin with, I turn to the narrative developed by America immediately after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. It was important for America to be the first to announce its use of the atomic bomb both to set the tone of this attack in favor of the U.S. and to have the biggest possible geopolitical impact on the world. Indeed, President Truman's statement was released to the members of the Washington press corps in 16 hours after the atomic bombing.¹⁸ These are the first three paragraphs:

Sixteen hours ago, an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, **an important Japanese Army base**. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British "Grand Slam" which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

¹⁸ "Public Papers Harry S. Truman 1945-1953," accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=100&st=&st1=>.

The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many folds. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and **revolutionary increase in destruction** to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present form these bombs are now in production and even more powerful forms are in development.

It is an atomic bomb. It is **a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power** has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.¹⁹

These first paragraphs are especially important to understand the narrative America tried to develop, in which I recognize three critical points. First, the statement contains absolutely no indication of the human consequences of the atomic bombing. Instead, it starts with a false statement, describing Hiroshima as an important Japanese army base. Hiroshima was not a military base but a city of approximately 350,000 people. By claiming the attack was on a military base, the government was exempted from referring to civilian casualties. Hibakusha did not exist in the narrative.

Second, the statement especially emphasizes explosive force as a characteristic of atomic bombs. It avoids referring to the critical impact of radiation, which actually is the distinct quality that differentiates atomic bombs from other destructive weapons.

Thirdly, in describing the atomic bomb as the basic power of the universe and the force the sun draws its power from, it gives the impression that America, which controls atomic bombs, now controls the universe, like God Almighty. And correspondingly, Japan is rightly punished by heaven for its misconduct. There is no room for complaint.

¹⁹ The bolding is my emphasis.

This demonstrates how Hibakusha was excluded from the official narrative starting barely a day after the bombing itself. In many ways, this hasn't changed; as American psychiatrist and author Robert J. Lifton points out, "the terms of the Hiroshima debate have changed so little since August 1945."²⁰ Although Hibakusha had to face massive loss from the atomic bombings and go through severe aftereffects due to radiation, this official narrative precluded them from accusing anyone or anything for their sufferings for a long time.

Soon thereafter, American journalists tried to cover the aftermath of the atomic bombing. There were more than 230 war correspondents who entered Japan with the Allies after the end of the war. Of these, some attempted to go to Hiroshima, even though it was banned by Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. The Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett was the first to enter Hiroshima, and published his story in *The Daily Express*, a British newspaper, on September 5th 1945. The headline was "The Atomic Plague," describing radiation sickness, which was then unknown.

In Hiroshima, 30 days after the first atomic bomb destroyed the city and shook the world, people are still dying, mysteriously and horribly – people who were uninjured by the cataclysm– from an unknown something which I can only describe as atomic plague.²¹

²⁰ Robert Jay Lifton, *Hiroshima in America : Fifty Years of Denial* (New York: Putnam's Sons, c1995), xv.

²¹ Wilfred G. Burchett, *Rebel Journalism : The Writings of Wilfred Burchett* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

After Burchett, there were more than ten American journalists who visited Hiroshima and covered the catastrophic site and the effects on human beings of the atomic bomb.²²

This made Hibakusha visible to the world. US officials, however, were outraged.²³ Such coverage was forced to end on September 7th, when a press conference was held in Tokyo in which the deputy head of the Manhattan Project, Brigadier General Thomas Farrell, explained that the atomic bomb had exploded at a high altitude, which was intended to reduce the risk of radiation. Monica Braw, who is known for her research on censorship under the occupation of the General Headquarters, explains this was to directly refute Burchett's charge that people in Hiroshima were dying from radiation.²⁴ Farrell claimed that it was the bomb's blast and burns that hurt the victims Burchett had seen, not the radiation. When Burchett insisted that fish in the river were also dying, he was told, "I'm afraid you've fallen victim to Japanese propaganda." Here, even though the American government did admit the existence of Hibakusha, they claimed those affected by the atomic bomb were all dead or wounded for reasons outside of radiation.

After this, Allied journalists were denied permission to visit Hiroshima, and human effects of radiation were not covered for some time.²⁵ This made Hibakusha invisible again. To make things worse, even though they suffered from radiation sickness, they were denied recognition of the source of such symptoms.

²² There were journalists of New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, AP, UP, INS, ABC, CBS, MBS, NBC, and Life Magazine. Atsuko Shigesawa, *Genbaku to Ken'etsu : Amerikajin Kishatachi Ga Mita Hiroshima, Nagasaki* (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2010), 20.

²³ Susan Southard, *Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War*, Reprint (Penguin Books, 2016), 111.

²⁴ Monica Braw, *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed : American Censorship in Occupied Japan* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe Inc, c1991), 91.

²⁵ Shigesawa, *Genbaku to Ken'etsu*, 92.

“Hiroshima” by John Hersey was published in the *New Yorker* magazine on August 31, 1946, about a year after the atomic bombing, and is known as the first piece of writing that uncovered its human consequences.²⁶ *Hiroshima*, when republished as a book, became a phenomenon and sold three hundred thousand copies immediately after it was published. According to *New Yorker* essayist Roger Angell, many Americans still originate their ideas from Hersey’s article²⁷ when they talk about Hiroshima.

Yet, Yuko Shibata, Professor of the University of Melbourne enumerates problematic characters of *Hiroshima*, and argues that the book, which seems to provide readers with new perspectives about Hibakusha, actually follows President Truman’s logic.²⁸ First, it simplifies the complex situation of Hibakusha so as to make the unimaginable imaginable, and is thus digestible to readers. Second, it trivializes the human effects of the atomic bombing in order to be acceptable to readers. Thirdly, it emphasizes the explosive force of the atomic bomb rather than the radiation effects. Also, it reinforces the idea of President Truman’s statement that America pours out vials of divine wrath for Japanese sins.

George Bataille, a French philosopher, also argues that *Hiroshima* was written in a way that led people to believe that “the immediate experience of the catastrophe is isolated, are reduced to the dimensions of animal experience,” as opposed to “the human representation of the catastrophes that given by President Truman; it immediately situates

²⁶ The 31,000-word article "Hiroshima" was published in the August 31, 1946, issue of *The New Yorker*. The story dealt with the atomic bomb dropped on that Japanese city on August 6, 1945, and its effects on the six Japanese citizens. The article occupied almost the entire issue of the magazine. John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (New York: Distributed by Random House, 1985), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1946/08/31/hiroshima>.

²⁷ “its story became a part of our ceaseless thinking about world wars and nuclear holocaust.” Roger Angell, “HERESY AND HISTORY | *The New Yorker*,” accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1995/07/31/hersey-and-history>.

²⁸ Yūko Shibata, “*Hiroshima, Nagasaki*” *Hibaku Shinwa o Kaitaisuru : Inpeisarete Kita Nichi-Bei Kyōhan Kankei No Genten* (Tōkyō: Sakuhinsha, 2015), 112.

the bombing of Hiroshima within history.”²⁹ Bataille points out “ the interest of John Hersey’s book has to do with the slowness of a revelation that gradually changes a catastrophe, which strikes in an isolated, animal way, into an intelligible representation.”³⁰

It is, of course, also noteworthy that *Hiroshima* does reveal the sufferings of Hibakusha to some extent, and makes them visible to the world. However, the catastrophe of Hiroshima could not be kept quiet, and it has been argued that this book became a way for America to make “a soft landing”³¹ on this issue. In this framing, it definitely was better to be done by John Hersey, an American journalist, than, for instance, by journalists of the Soviet Union. This argument seems reasonable, given that *Hiroshima* was permitted for publication even under severe censorship of the GHQ. They may have thought that Hersey’s book could be a way to mitigate and minimize impact of acknowledging the effects on Hibakusha of the atomic bombing.

Moreover, about six months after the publication of “Hiroshima” in *The New Yorker* the American government acted to trivialize the human consequences of the atomic bombing. Henry Stimson, Secretary of War under Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, wrote an article in *Harper’s*³² as a counter narrative to “Hiroshima.” It was elaborated with the American officials, and claimed the use of the atomic bombs saved over a million casualties in American forces alone by preventing the need for a land

²⁹ Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 225.

³⁰ Caruth, 226.

³¹ Shibata, “*Hiroshima, Nagasaki*” *Hibaku Shinwa o Kaitaisuru*, 117.

³² Henry Lewis Stimson, “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb,” *Harper’s Magazine*, February 1947, <https://harpers.org/archive/1947/02/the-decision-to-use-the-atomic-bomb/>.

invasion. According to Lifton, the article was perceived as a scientific fact, and its influence endures to this day.³³

As these interventions make clear, American officials shaped the narrative of the atomic bombing meticulously starting right after the bombing; tellingly, this remains the dominant narrative in America. In that narrative, Hibakusha were ignored and their voices left unheard. Within this framework, however, there was one point on which Hibakusha could be heard: the outcry for peace. I will discuss this further in Part 3.

It is important to note that the association of “peace” with the atomic power was included from the beginning. President Truman’s Statement ends “I shall give further consideration and make further recommendations to the Congress as to how atomic power can become a powerful and forceful influence towards **the maintenance of world peace**”³⁴ (my emphasis). The notion of peace was used to support the official narrative, and therefore justify the use of atomic bombs. This came up again and again when issues regarding atomic bombs arose in the following years.

Interestingly enough, the rhetoric of peace was used not only by the American government but also by the Japanese government. Although at first glance the peace narrative seems to work only for preserving American decency, the Japanese government also takes advantage of this, because, under the name of peace, the location of responsibility become unclear. This enables the Japanese government to avoid consequences the sufferings of Hibakusha.

Part 2: Japan’s Official Narrative

³³ Lifton, *Hiroshima in America*, 94.

³⁴ “Public Papers Harry S. Truman 1945-1953.”

After President Truman's statement was released, the Japanese government released an official statement to protest against the atomic bomb, criticizing the American government for violating a fundamental principle of international law in time of war by using such an inhumane weapon to the citizens.³⁵ It was before the Japanese government surrendered, and this was the only time the Japanese government clearly accused America of using the atomic bombs. After the end of the war, the Japanese government followed the narrative developed by the American government. The surrender of Imperial Japan was announced on August 15th, and the occupation of Japan led by the Supreme commander of the Allied Powers began. Japan lost its state sovereignty. The role of the atomic bombings in triggering Japan's unconditional surrender was highlighted in Imperial Rescript on Surrender³⁶:

“The enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is indeed incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. **Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.** Such being the case, how are we to save the millions of our subjects; or to atone ourselves before the hallowed spirits of Our Imperial Ancestors? **This is the reason why we have ordered the acceptance of the provisions** of the Joint Declaration of the Powers.”³⁷

In this statement, Emperor Showa clearly announces that the atomic bombings were the reasons to end the war, and therefore, he would save both Japanese and other

³⁵ “Protest Against Atomic Bomb,” *Asahi Newspaper*, August 11, 1945.

³⁶ “Imperial Rescript on Surrender,” *Mainichi Newspaper*, August 15, 1945, <https://mainichi.jp/articles/20150801/mog/00m/040/004000c>.

³⁷ The bolding is my emphasis.

nationals by surrendering to the Allies. Akiko Naono, who is well known for her research on Hiroshima and peace, points out that this statement functioned to dodge responsibility.³⁸ She claims that the Japanese government employed the American narrative on the atomic bombings, and colluded with the American government to avoid its responsibility for the war. Because surely Emperor Showa, as well as leading officials of Imperial Japan, could have stopped the war before the atomic bombings; by centering the unanticipated dropping of the atomic bombs as the reason for ending the war and framing their statement as decisive resolution for future peace, they could maintain their reputation and disguise their responsibility for the war. To make things worse, considering the influence of Emperor over Japanese citizens at that time, this became the only fact, and people in Japan, including Hibakusha, widely accepted it.

On September 19th, the Press Code was officially issued by the GHQ, which prohibited the publication of almost all reports and studies of the atomic bomb damages, including physical and mental sufferings of Hibakusha. According to Sadako Kurihara, a Hibakusha who tried to express her suffering with poems, describing the continuity of the human effect of the atomic bombs was strictly banned.³⁹ The media refused to reveal the reality of Hibakusha, suppressing popular memory of the event and its aftermath, and Hibakusha struggled with ignorance of the many medical and social consequences for their decimated lives.

The Japanese government was also concerned about what the American government would think. Japanese officials, therefore, hesitated to treat radiation sickness, which was not supposed to exist according to the official narrative of the American

³⁸ Akiko Naono, *Genbaku Taiken to Sengo Nihon : Kioku No Keisei to Keishō* (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2015), 75.

³⁹ Sadako Kurihara, *Kaku Tenno Hibakusha* (Tokyo: San-ichi Publishing Co., Ltd., 1978), 49.

government. Thus, the suffering of Hibakusha was medically as well as popularly neglected, and they had to both financially and medically take care of themselves. Masae Shina, who is a lawyer and works on Hibakusha issues, points out that if the atomic bombs was supposed to have saved Americans during the war, there was still no reason to abandon Hibakusha after the war.⁴⁰ Indeed, if it weren't for the official narrative and the Press Code to sustain it, there must have been many Hibakusha who could have been saved with domestic and international aid.

In 1952,⁴¹ Japan resorted its state sovereignty, and the Press Code was lifted thereafter. However, in Treaty of San Francisco, Japan agreed “to waive all claims of Japan and its nationals against the Allied Powers and their nationals arising out of the war.”⁴² Hibakusha lost their right to legally accuse America for its use of the atomic bombs.

Part 3: Hiroshima as a Symbol of Peace

“It instantly reduced the city to ashes and claimed the precious lives of more than 100,000 of our fellow citizens. Hiroshima turned into a city of death and darkness. **Yet as some slight consolation for this horror, the dropping of the atomic bomb became a factor in ending the war and calling a halt to the fighting.** In this sense, mankind must remember that **August 6 was a day that brought a chance for world peace.**”⁴³

⁴⁰ Shiina Masae, *Genbaku Hanzai -hibakusha ha maze houchi saretaka* (Ootsuki shoten, 1985), 163–65.

⁴¹ Signing on Treaty of San Francisco was in 1951.

⁴² “SAN FRANCISCO PEACE TREATY,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, accessed March 21, 2018, /mofaj/a_o/rp/page22_002285.html.

⁴³ Hamai Shinzo, “The City of Hiroshima - PEACE DECLARATION (1947),” The City of Hiroshima, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1317950405782/index.html>.

– Shinzo Hamai, Mayor of Hiroshima city, “*Peace Declaration*,” 1947

Indeed, Hiroshima was a city of death and darkness. In 1945, approximately 350,000 people were in the city, and about 40% of them, or 140,000, died by the end of the year due to the atomic bombing.⁴⁵ Out of 7,6327 houses in the city, 5,1787 were completely collapsed.⁴⁶

However, the feelings of hatred and anger in response to the attacks were set aside. Hamai, mayor of Hiroshima city, declared that the atomic bomb stopped the war and respected the official narratives of the atomic bombings; world peace was achieved the atomic bomb. Sumiko Ebara, in the faculty of Engineering at Tokyo University and a researcher on process towards the preservation of Atomic Dome, argues that Peace Declaration of 1947 shows that the mayor must have faced barriers to openly expressing his condolences for the dead under the GHQ occupation.⁴⁷ It was only after two years after the atomic bombing, and the mayor already talked along the lines of the official narrative and connected Hiroshima with peace. It brought meaning and purpose to suffering and disaster.

As a matter of fact, Hiroshima had its own reason to adopt the official narrative. Recovery from the atomic bombing was a pressing need, but the Japanese government would not provide Hiroshima with adequate funding; the government claimed, “the national revenue is financially hard-pressed, and there are 120 war damaged cities in

⁴⁴ The bolding is my emphasis.

⁴⁵ “The City of Hiroshima, Victims” Number of victims, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1111638957650/index.html>.

⁴⁶ “The city of Hiroshima-Building Damage,” Building Damage, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1111639233553/index.html>.

⁴⁷ Sumiko Ebara, *Genbaku Dōmu : Bussan Chinretsukan Kara Hiroshima Heiwa Kinenhi E* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2016), 112.

Japan. Even though Hiroshima had a handicap of the atomic bomb, the government cannot subsidize specially to Hiroshima.”⁴⁸ The atomic bomb was undervalued, and therefore, to gain more attention amongst other cities in a time of recovery, Hiroshima needed to come up with something else different to distinguish itself; it became the city for “peace.”

There are mainly three reasons why the theme of “peace” was used by the city of Hiroshima immediately after the end of the war. One was that the city needed to present uplifting messages to its citizens. The city was devastated. Some scientists predicted, “No trees or grass would grow here for 75 years.” The mayor recalled that most of the citizens were in a state of mental and physical lethargy from the atomic bombing. Among limited choices what the city could say to the citizens under severe control of GHQ, “peace” was chosen, which, the city believed, allowed the citizens to make sense of the sufferings; they were not victimized in vain, but for good cause.⁴⁹

Second, the theme of peace matched the national agenda. In 1946, the Japanese constitution was proclaimed, in which Japan renounced war and announced a basic spirit of seeking peace.⁵⁰ Therefore, advocating for peace as a symbol of a collective understanding of Hiroshima satisfied a key national cause. Hamai emphasized that presenting Hiroshima as a symbol of peace would eventually benefit Japan; it would support the war-renouncing spirit of Japan to the world, improve the Japanese image, and invite many tourists which would benefit national revenue. Hamai codified a law to

⁴⁸ Shinso Hamai, *Genbaku Shichō; Hiroshima to Tomoni Nijūnen* (Tōkyō: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1967), 71.

⁴⁹ Hamai, 102–4.

⁵⁰ Article nine of The Japanese constitution forbids Japan from maintaining an army, navy or air force. Article nine was added to the constitution under the GHQ occupation. See “THE CONSTITUTION OF JAPAN,” accessed December 12, 2018, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

request a special budget allocation to Hiroshima; it was called “the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law.”⁵¹

Lastly but not least, peace was ideal message to present to the GHQ. Hamai not only negotiated with the Japanese government; he was also lobbying the GHQ. He knew the authority of the GHQ over the Japanese government was tremendous, and he consulted prominent GHQ officials regarding his ideas for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City.⁵² While this was certainly for the sake of Hiroshima, the narrative was also shaped to conform to the official narrative of the American government. Article 1 of the law says, “It shall be the object of the present law to provide for the construction of the city of Hiroshima as a peace memorial city to symbolize the human ideal of sincere pursuit of genuine and lasting peace.” Hamai explains that Article 1 is especially important since it illustrates the goal the city ought to pursue.⁵³

With the GHQ’s approval, the Japanese government passed the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law in 1949. Hamai describes the law “Uchideno koduchi,” a mallet of luck.⁵⁴ By this, he means that a miracle happens with each shaking; the rehabilitation of Hiroshima became remarkable. While the city, crucially, started to rebuild, issues regarding Hibakusha were set aside and left untouched.

“Kuhaku no Jyunen (the lost decade)”⁵⁵ is how Hibakusha describe their struggles for ten years after the atomic bombings, “Kuhaku” meaning “blank” in Japanese. While

⁵¹ “HIROSHIMA PEACE MEMORIAL CITY CONSTRUCTION LAW,” The City of Hiroshima, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/www/contents/1391050531094/html/common/52eb2301011.htm>.

⁵² Hamai, *Genbaku Shichō; Hiroshima to Tomoni Nijūnen*, 143–47.

⁵³ Hamai, 154.

⁵⁴ Hamai, 152–54.

⁵⁵ Uzaemonnaotsuka Tokai, “New Collection of Writing by A-Bomb Survivors Is Published | Hiroshima Peace Media Center,” *Chugoku Newspaper*, August 6, 2009, <http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/?p=14461>.

the Hibakusha themselves had gone blank, silenced, ignored, the city was changed and reconstructed by the aforementioned decisions. Gradually, as their living conditions marginally improved, and as the Press code was lifted, a still relatively small group of Hibakusha began to stand up and appeal their undeserved sufferings. And then in 1954, an incident occurred which shook throughout Japan and altered the landscape for public discourse about radiation and the bombing.

Part 4: Social Acceptance vs. Expectation

“Japanese fishermen encountered A-bomb [sic] testing at Bikini Atoll,”⁵⁶ *Yomiuri Newspaper* scooped all other newspapers on March 16, 1954. After the Pacific War, the US was engaged with Cold War nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union, and it conducted nuclear tastings around Bikini Atoll. Twenty-three crew members of the Japanese fishing boat, the *Digo fukuryu Maru*, were contaminated by the snow-like irradiated debris and ash. They all soon became ill from radiation and one fisherman died. There was massive news coverage throughout Japan. Both the fisherman and the fish they brought back were polluted with radiation, and the Japanese started to avoid any fish, being afraid of the possible effects.⁵⁷ Because there were vast impacts on people’s daily lives, the large-scale anti-nuclear protests first emerged in Japan. They collected more than 30,000,000 signatures, which was about a half of the Japanese electorate, to protest against nuclear weapons by August 1955.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ “Japanese fishermen encountered A-bomb testing at Bikini Atoll,” *Yomiuri Newspaper*, March 16, 1954, <https://info.yomiuri.co.jp/>.

⁵⁷ “Appeal for a Ban to A- and H-Bomb Testing from Sugunami: 杉並で始まった水爆禁止署名運動,” Official Sugunami HP, Sugunami Gaku Club, accessed July 10, 2018, <https://www.suginamigaku.org/2014/10/h-gensuibaku.html>.

⁵⁸ “Gensuikyo History of the anti A- H-bomb movement (原水爆禁止運動の歴史),” accessed July 10, 2018, <http://www.antiatom.org/profile/history.html>.

It was with this movement that people outside of Hiroshima and Nagasaki started to realize the risk of radiation; in this context, they began to learn about the struggles of Hibakusha in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Terumi Tanaka recalls, “Before Daigo Fukuryu Maru, no one in Tokyo knew about the atomic bombs. People in Nagasaki certainly knew about them, but once you got out of Nagasaki, no one knew. Japanese had been forbidden to talk about the atomic bombings for seven years. The Japanese government did nothing, and there was no education, either.”⁵⁹ While Hibakusha had been abandoned by society, in this time people started to shed light on them to understand and represent the actual horror of nuclear weapons.

This changed the outlook of some Hibakusha. Chieko Watanabe was one of them, who was encouraged by the anti-nuclear advocates and changed her attitude completely. She made a speech in Nagasaki in 1956 after being confined to her bed for eleven years⁶⁰; “We, Hibakusha, were suffering from the disease of being silent. Being shrunk in the corner of a cold and unsympathetic society, we struggled in the hardship of living a day after another without complaining for a decade. But I now realized we have to have a voice and appeal to the world.”⁶¹ Tadashi Ishida argues that by speaking openly about the atomic bomb, and clearly indicating how her life was impacted, her experience as Hibakusha converted to a value that could be used in advocacy. It change how she looked herself from a denial to an acceptance and approval of her situation.⁶² Hibakusha could not openly discuss responsibility for the atomic bombings, but finally the society

⁵⁹ Interview with author. September 21, 2017 in New York.

⁶⁰ Shigeki Ōtsuka, *Madoutekure, Fujii Heiichi Hibakusha to Ikiru* (Tokyo: Shunposha, 2011), 105–18.

⁶¹ Ishida, *Genbaku Taiken No Shisōka*, 34.

⁶² Ishida, 36–37.

provided them with the framework to start to make sense of their sufferings. This is the common framework we still hear today.

August 1955 saw the first meeting of the World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in Hiroshima, and then the second meeting in Nagasaki. Hibakusha traveled around Japan to testify about the realities of the atomic bombings. Heiichi Fujii, one of the advocates who led the peace activities of Hiroshima, says every time they talked about what they went through and appealed the world to abolish nuclear weapons, the bond with the audience became firm.⁶³ Hibakusha, who had been abandoned for so long under the physical and mental pain, found a place in society.

That said, it is important to note that main agenda of this change in society was not primarily to ease the suffering of Hibakusha.; it was to protest against nuclear weapons to secure future public safety. The audience had an expectation what they would like to hear: an appeal to ban nuclear weapons. Heiichi Fujii recalls how the idea of helping Hibakusha was unpopular with other organizers of the World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs. Shigeki Otsuka argues that considering Fujii's remark, it is clear that giving aid and support to Hibakusha was not the central concern of the movement.⁶⁴ Etsuko Obata was one of Hibakusha who was sent to testify her experience as a part of these meetings. She confessed her difficulties in making the audience understand her real struggles. She concluded that people needed to be exposed to atomic bombing to really understand Hibakusha's hardship, "I sometimes wish another atomic bomb would drop again, so that my struggles would vanish, and also, people would understand the agony of Hibakusha."⁶⁵

⁶³ Otsuka, *Madoutekure, Fujii Heiichi Hibakusha to Ikiru*, 100.

⁶⁴ Otsuka, 86.

⁶⁵ Tadashi Ishida, *Hangenbaku : Nagasaki Hibakusha No Seikatsushi* (Tōkyō: Miraisha, 1973), 100.

Also, it was not so easy for most of Hibakusha to accept the changes of the society. Even though the movement was enormous throughout Japan, the majority of Hibakusha, in fact, did not participate in the rise of this movement. According to a survey in the *Asahi Newspaper* conducted in 1967, only 8.6 percent of people polled had attended some sort of peace activity. Furthermore, among those, half of them joined the activities unwillingly, out of a sense of social obligation, even though they did not want to go.⁶⁶ Seventeen and four percent of the people who answered they didn't attend the activities were critical of the peace activities for the reasons such as "people there are taking advantage of Hibakusha," and, "the day of the atomic bombing is for a prayer to the victims of my family. Those who could join noisy events are not aware of the painfulness of the atomic bombings."⁶⁷ There were people who resisted being incorporated into the expectations of the society.

Most of the narrators in my interviews did not participate in the movement in the early days, either. They recall, "Hibakusha did not necessary act harmoniously," because they "had diverse opinions about peace" (Kayoko Mori). "Some saw it embarrassing to come out with all the grudges, when other Hibakusha were trying to live positively in a future-looking manner" (Toshiko Tanaka). These illuminate the framework promoted by the US, Japan, and the city of Hiroshima, followed by growing tendency of the society to abolish nuclear weapons after the nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll: the unified concept of peace and no retaliation against the US. It was up to Hibakusha whether or not to accept those frameworks. Those who spoke at such events had accepted or at least been influenced by these frameworks. For others whose perspectives didn't fit this narrative, there was not the cultural space available to speak their stories.

⁶⁶ Edited by Asahi Newspaper, *Genbaku: 500 nin no shôgen* (Tôkyô: Asahi Shimbun Shuppan, 2008), 210–17.

⁶⁷ Edited by Asahi Newspaper, 215–16.

So why have my narrators started to talk their experiences now? Most of them have only recently begun to talk about their experiences. They pointed out that there were two other reasons for them not to attend such peace events in 1950s: they did not have time to spare, and they were afraid of the consequences.

Shigeaki Mori could not join the protest, he says, because “we could not sustain our livelihood. There was no food. You had to be so determined to do it; otherwise you have to eat to live first.” Sadae Kasaoka recalls how she was occupied with her everyday life; “I wanted to live the way other people did. I was just hoping to grow economically. I had no money.” They explain they had to secure their daily lives before they could think about peace.

There were other factors that hindered them from talking publicly; some were afraid of further discrimination. Sueichi Kido could not forget the advice from his respectful teacher:

I went to a good high school, where there were lots of great teachers. One of the teachers visited me one time. That teacher warned me I should not talk about my experience of the atomic bombing outside of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. In 1955, when Anti-nuclear movement emerged, the teacher talked about the experience of the atomic bombing. Everyone listened seriously. But all the marriage proposals were turned down, even when the marriage was almost settled. Everyone struggled to get married.

Terumi Tanaka decided to help collect signatures for anti-nuclear movements. He, however, did not talk about his experience until recently for the same reason as Kido. “It was a shared idea that we should not reveal we were Hibakusha. Women, however beautiful they may be, would not be able to marry, and men would not be able to work

being Hibakusha.”

In many ways, Japan was able to recover from the trauma of WWII, and managed to become the second largest economic entity of the world by the 1960s; the Ikeda Cabinet formulated the "Income Doubling Plan," and Japan entered an age of rapid growth. Also, in 1956, Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Hidankyo) was launched as the first nationwide association formed by Hibakusha with the goals of pressuring the Japanese government to improve support of the victims and lobbying governments for the abolition of nuclear weapons.⁶⁸ With its efforts, the Atomic Bomb Medical Treatment Law in 1957 and the Hibakusha Special Measures Law in 1968 were enacted.⁶⁹ So while the standard of living improved across Japan, measures were gradually taken to improve the resources available for Hibakusha. Also, Hibakusha aged, they no longer needed to worry in the same way about discrimination since their family members were past the marriageable age and past employment age. Perhaps as a result, statistics shows there were more testimonies written and published as time went by.⁷⁰

Even so, again, most of my narrators waited until recently to talk about their experiences. The narrative space of Hibakusha became narrower than the time of the nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll. Last year, the treaty of prohibition of nuclear weapons was

⁶⁸ “Chronology of HIDANKYO’s International Activities,” accessed July 12, 2018, http://www.ne.jp/asahi/hidankyo/nihon/rn_page/english/history.html.

⁶⁹ Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations claims these laws are far from meeting the need expressed in the call for "state compensation", because no compensation is provided for those who died and suffered most, and there are restrictions based on income as the prerequisite for providing allowances. See more “Atomic Bomb Victims Demand,” Hidankyo official HP, accessed July 12, 2018, http://www.ne.jp/asahi/hidankyo/nihon/rn_page/english/demand.html.

⁷⁰ *Genbaku sanjyunen Hiroshima no Sengoshi [Thirty years since the atomic bombing-Post war history of Hiroshima prefecture]* (Hiroshima: Hiroshima Prefectural Office, 1976).

agreed upon and the ICAN was awarded of the Nobel Peace Prize, and the voices of Hibakusha were centered to argue for a world without nuclear weapons. President Obama went to Hiroshima to pay respects—the first time U.S. president had done so—and Prime Minister Abe visited the Pearl Harbor Memorial in return in 2015. The US and Japan at the state level are more forward looking rather than looking back over the history of the War. Under these conditions, Hibakusha now have even more expectations to be peaceful without anger or hate. Thus, it becomes more meaningful for us to restore their testimonies so that we can reconstruct their human emotions within and outside of the frameworks.

Chapter 2

PROCESS

Oral History Methodologies to Restore Testimonies

“You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing.”

“I saw *everything. Everything.*”

Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1961)

In this chapter, I will explain the oral history methodologies that I used to re-interview Hibakusha and introduce what I aim to achieve by “restoring testimonies.”

In Chapter One, I explored the frameworks imposed on Hibakusha and provided a critical analysis of those frameworks. It was, as I discussed in the introduction, to demonstrate Passerini’s first and second points: 1) it is crucial to recognize that many universally accepted frameworks could be the result of manipulations or oversimplifications that veil the complexity of reality and experience; 2) once we recognize the overwhelming narrative, we have to be critical of it.⁷¹ This recognition and the critical analysis, that is how Hibakusha testimonies have been restricted, and thus, likely to be fixed, provide me with the foundation for actual Hibakusha interviews.

Restoring Hibakusha testimonies, therefore, is to open up their narrative space: rediscovering the individual and unfolding memory in their narrative. In order to achieve this, I cherished Passerini’s third point; 3) interviewers could never be external of the interviews.⁷² This is to highlight that an interviewer can never be an objective observer

⁷¹ Passerini, Luisa. “*Interviewing Artists: Intersubjectivity and Visuality.*” Workshop, OHMA Columbia University, New York, NY, September 21, 2017.

⁷² Passerini, Luisa. “*Interviewing Artists: Intersubjectivity and Visuality.*” Workshop, OHMA Columbia University, New York, NY, September 21, 2017.

of the interview, but always is a committed player inside the interview. Interviews are, thus, joint activities between an interviewer and a narrator, where these two subjectivities interact, which Passerini refers to as *intersubjectivity*. This means *how* I listen will change *what* I hear.

I touched upon the three restrictions that constrain testimonies of Hibakusha in the Introduction: the restrictions of a narrator, an audience, and the dead. Hibakusha do not have much narrative space to describe themselves under these conditions. Would it be possible to expand their space and restore testimony? It is not easy, but, with oral history methodology, there have been remarkable results.

Opening up narrative space is, generally speaking, vital for oral history interviews.⁷³

Those spaces are, as Portelli writes, not only generated by the narrators, but also generated by the presence of the interviewers and by their questions. He discusses that, to open up narrative space, “it is important we enter the interview with a great degree of flexibility, ready not only to accept the narrator’s agenda but also to modify our own.”⁷⁴ Also, Valerie Yow, who is an oral historian and is well known for her research on a practical guide of oral history, defines oral history as “the method that demands the highest level of both self-awareness and sensitivity to others” of interviewers, and emphasize the important role of interviewers during interviews.⁷⁵ For restoring Hibakusha testimonies, which requires to open up very restricted narrative space, it is,

⁷³ Alessandro Portelli, “Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience,” *The Oral History Review* 45, no. 2 (August 1, 2018): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohy030>.

⁷⁴ Alessandro Portelli, “Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience,” *The Oral History Review* 45, no. 2 (January 8, 2018): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohy030>.

⁷⁵ Valerie Yow, “Ethics and Interpersonal Relationships in Oral History Research,” *The Oral History Review* 22, no. 1 (1995): 66.

therefore, “I” as an interviewer who must change with the maximum level of flexibility, self-awareness, and sensitivity to others.

Practically speaking, what do I need to do? The critical mission is to *listen carefully*. Although this might sound too obvious and easy, it actually is not. Recognizing more than 73 years of marginalized experiences of Hibakusha is the first step. However, it is the knowledge only to help the understanding Hibakusha mainly before and after interviews, and never to be used to control and judge the ways in which Hibakusha speak during the interview. How I ask and listen without judgments of my knowledge would invite Hibakusha to speak without judgements of their knowledge of what they ought to speak as Hibakusha. It is the process of allowing Hibakusha become an individual with the least restrictions possible. These are two different approaches in that I must acknowledge the official narratives of Hibakusha, and at the same time, I must not apply that knowledge to a narrator. This becomes an endless challenge during my interviews. I almost have to practice Passerini’s first and second points against my thoughts; my understandings of what I hear could be the result of manipulations or oversimplifications by my judgement that veil the complexity of reality and experience, and I must continue to be critical of my understandings.

Recognizing what I “see” and what I “do not see” became vital whenever I conducted oral history interviews with individual Hibakushas. Portelli describes an interview as an “inter-view,” which is “an exchange between two subjects: literally a mutual sighting.”⁷⁶ A sighting is to see the narrator straight ahead without any fixed ideas of what we would find in their testimony. Certainly, being a journalist for over a decade, I had tried my best to see interviewees during the interviews objectively. I

⁷⁶ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories : Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, c1991), 31.

learned, however, this belief was actually a barrier. As Passerini articulates, one can never be “external,” or in another word, neutral or objective from interviews. My robust subjectivity actually hindered my seeing. I had expectations about the narrators, and those expectations prevented me from seeing anything but those expectations. Yow stresses the importance of listening carefully especially to the area where an interviewer think he/she knows what a narrator is saying. Because this means the interviewer is already appropriating what he/she says to an existing schema, and therefore the interviewer is no longer really listening to the narrator.⁷⁷

Cathy Caruth highlights “the betrayal of sight” by analyzing the French film “*Hiroshima Mon Amour*” for example. This illustrates how difficult it is to listen carefully to Hibakusha narratives. In the film, the woman, who came to Hiroshima from France to film a movie promoting peace, repeats that she “saw” Hiroshima, and the man, who was Japanese and had seen the catastrophe of the atomic bombing, denies her statement that she “saw” Hiroshima.

She: The hospital for instance, I saw it. I am sure I did. How could I help seeing it?

He: You did not see the hospital in Hiroshima. You saw nothing in Hiroshima.⁷⁸

Caruth argues, “the problem with the woman’s sight is not what she does not perceive, but *that* perceives, precisely, a *what*.”⁷⁹ For the woman, Hiroshima is *knowledge* understood as “the end” of the war, being inscribed in the narrative of French

⁷⁷ Valerie Yow, “Interviewing Technique and Strategies,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*, Third edition, Routledge Readers in History (London ; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 158.

⁷⁸ Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (New York: Grove Press, c1961).

⁷⁹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 25–28.

history where she comes from. Therefore, she could say she saw the evidence she could match to her knowledge. For him, it is an *experience*, which is still incomprehensible. Thus, in a sense, he could not see what he witnessed and felt on the day of the atomic bombing. Claire Hackett and Bill Rolston, scholars of memory studies focusing on the potential and limitations of storytelling for victims of violence, discuss “the unspeakability of suffering.”⁸⁰ They point out, by citing Nora Strejilevich, a professor whose main interest is contemporary genocide and is an exiled survivor of a Holocaust concentration camp, that a fundamental problem of victims of catastrophic events is that they struggle for the words to tell the story to themselves; “The violence experienced or witnessed is so far beyond one’s expectations of human decency that it has the potential to be beyond human assimilation.”⁸¹ Traumatic memory is “substantially different from normal, everyday memory, to the point that it cannot fairly be called memory at all.”⁸² Thus, in the movie of “Hiroshima Mon Amour,” what the man and the woman see, if there is anything to see, is very different from each other.

The contrast between the man and the women on the notion of Hiroshima is thought provoking when I think about my interviews with Hibakusha. First, my knowledge of Hiroshima might have hindered me from actually seeing Hiroshima, the individual experiences of Hibakusha. Over 73 years after the end of the War, most of us are too influenced by the current international narrative of the War. I must admit, therefore, that I had some expectations of what I would hear from Hibakusha. For

⁸⁰ Claire Hackett and Bill Rolston, “The Burden of Memory: Victims, Storytelling and Resistance in Northern Ireland,” *Memory Studies* 2, no. 3 (September 2009): 358–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698008337560>.

⁸¹ Nora Strejilevich, “Testimony: Beyond the Language of Truth,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (n.d.): 701–13.

⁸² Claire Hackett and Bill Rolston, “The Burden of Memory: Victims, Storytelling and Resistance in Northern Ireland,” *Memory Studies* 2, no. 3 (September 2009): 359, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698008337560>.

instance, I would ask about the explosive force of the atomic bomb since I believed that it would illustrate the main human consequences of the atomic bombings. This, however, demonstrates how I was not really seeing Hibakusha, because the focus on the explosive force of the atomic bombing resulted from the international narrative of the atomic bombing, which was intentionally dehumanized, and left the real suffering unheard: the human, long-term consequences Hibakusha had to face, such as the struggles from radiation sickness. Narrating the blast can be a part of that more complex story, but only a part.

There is an interesting attempt to provide Hibakusha with both abundant time and authority to control interactions with younger generations, which shows how impossible it is to mutually agree on the understandings of incomprehensibility. Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum provides high school students with opportunities to have a one-on-one conversation with Hibakusha for one year and invite them to draw a scene of what Hibakusha witnessed on the day of the bombings. In 2018, ten students at Motomachi High school, located in the city of Hiroshima, have completed such paintings in a course on creative expression.

I was fortunate to attend the presentation of the paintings. The students worked passionately for one year with Hibakusha to depict one scene that had remained in the memories of the witnesses. These are some of the comments from high school students at the exhibit, illustrating how beneficial these activities had been for them.

Sayaka Sone: I was shocked when I heard the experience of Mr. Lee. I thought the flash of the atomic bomb was white and dazzling like a camera flash until I heard his story. Actually, it was rather yellow. **For my generation who do not experience the War, by listening to Mr. Lee's story, the image of the atomic bomb, which we imagined by ourselves, changes significantly.**

Actually, when I draw a picture, I could not imagine the color of the flash. I had to correct it every time I met Mr. Lee. It was, to be honest, painful to draw this. I was always thinking how to best understand the color of the sky, the color of the flashes. I really wanted to get closer to the sight that Mr. Lee really saw, and that is why I was able to keep this struggle for a year. By drawing this picture, I am determined to devote myself to act to convey the importance of peace. I do not want anyone to see the color of this yellow flash again.

Shinsaku Katuragi: **It was difficult to match what I imagined with what Mr. Lee saw.** Using a model, I fixed the misunderstandings that I had.

Iwamoto: **I thought that I knew about the atomic bomb to some extent through peace educations** that I had at elementary, middle and high school. However, listening to the testimony for a year, **I was surprised that the damage of the atomic bomb I thought I knew was very different from the actual damage of the atomic bomb Mrs. Okada had to face.** If I put it simple, it is very miserable. However, the simple word cannot possibly convey the sufferings of the lives and livelihoods lost due to the atomic bombing. I drew a burned body, I could not tell if a man or a woman, but I can now imagine that he or she also had a family, and I think that he or she had lived a normal life before this.

Nakagawa Hina: It was difficult to imagine Ms. Okada's experiences when I started writing pictures of the atomic bomb. The fierce flame is only imaginable in the movie. I do not know how powerful fire could be. **The story was full of what I did not understand and was full of what I never experienced. Still, there was a feeling I was gradually approaching Mr. Okada's experience by looking for materials, drawing it by myself and showing it to Ms. Okada.** I felt the misery of war. I decided to paint with full power to let many people know about the atomic bomb. I cannot fully understand the atomic bomb

survivors' experiences, however hard I tried to think about the atomic bomb. But, I do believe by thinking as hard as possible, I could pursue peace.⁸³

Creative adaptation of the testimonies is a great way for the younger generations to engage individual experiences of the atomic bombings. Through this production, the students overcame their knowledge of the atomic bombings, and listen carefully to Hibakusha, realizing what they failed to hear before.

Also, this is quite suggestive how we, as interviewers, think we recognize through interviews can simply be wrong. It is thought-provoking in that the students drew what they perceive through the testimonies and Hibakusha learned visually how differently students absorbed their testimonies and remained to misunderstand. The students were kept trapped in incomprehensibility.

Furthermore, Hibakusha themselves struggle with the incomprehensibility all the way along, even after the exhibit. I was fascinated to hear the sighs of Hibakusha when I talked with two of Hibakusha who participated in this production about the finished paintings. One said, "The light in the painting, that is not what I saw. It got closer, but it is not right. I talked to the teacher and asked her to repaint it again." The other Hibakusha said, "She (the student) did what she could, and I think I should accept and appreciate that." Even with a yearlong conversation on one scene of the atomic bombings, Hibakusha cannot fully convey what they witnessed. This illustrates the impossibility of transforming the incomprehensibility of their experiences into something comprehensible.

Even in general interviews without drawing, misunderstandings with their own knowledge must be happening. Because they are not rendered visually, interviewers and

⁸³ The bolding is my emphasis.

narrators hope they share the same understandings unilaterally. For my interviews with Hibakusha, as I attempt to restore testimonies, I aim not to mutually agree on anything with a narrator. As an interviewer, I keep reminding myself that I can never fully acknowledge what a narrator is trying to say during interviews. My knowledge and subjectivity, however, could not be set aside no matter how hard I try, and therefore, I also need to acknowledge that I could always be the reason to restrict and narrow the space to talk for narrators. Listening carefully requires a never-ending effort; I constantly refuse my own subjectivity to reason testimonies with my preexisting knowledge and remind myself of the possibility of rediscovery even in the discovered narrative to maintain the narrative space open.

As I have argued, I value how I listen carefully; this is the foundation of my interviews. There were times, however, that I had to do more to restore testimonies. With some Hibakusha, I failed to open up their narrative space. No matter how I changed myself to listen carefully, they repeated their customary stories. I kept being critical of my own understandings and tried to rediscover new aspects from their testimonies. I actively asked follow-up questions in order to engage more with their narratives and change the flow of their conventional storytelling. But this only puzzled those Hibakusha, and they seemed uncomfortable with digressing from their routine narratives.

In other words, their unchanging narratives are what they feel comfortable with. Mark Klempler, an oral historian who conducts interviews with survivors of trauma and researches on the effects of trauma, points out that the narrators of trauma tend to have “a comfort zone” with memories they live with; the victims have holes in their memories, of which they do not remember or kept untouched are due to the painfulness.⁸⁴ Jill Stauffer,

⁸⁴ Mark Klempler, “Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma,” *The Oral History Review* 27, no. 2 (2000): 73.

who is associate professor of philosophy and director of the concentration in peace, justice, and human rights at Haverford College, also discusses the painfulness to discuss the traumatic memories, and highlights the fact how a narrator starts to tell a painful story, then changed the topic back to a more controlled narrative.⁸⁵ She articulates this tendency by citing psychologist Mary Fabri; “lots of survivors compartmentalize the issue and retrieve the memories in disjointed fashion to protect themselves from being overwhelmed by the whole memory.”⁸⁶

Hibakusha also have their comfort zone. The storytelling mechanism within official narratives⁸⁷ was, to some Hibakusha, necessary to protect themselves. The incomprehensibility of their experiences has been adapted to the knowledge Hibakusha and an interviewer both could agree on. Caruth points out “the perception of Hiroshima itself, from the perspective of international history, turns the very actuality of catastrophe into the anonymous narrative of peace.”⁸⁸ The narrators could adopt that narrative, and they do not need to fully describe their experience. It is important to note that Caruth

⁸⁵ Jill Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 74.

⁸⁶ Mary Fabri, clinical psychologist at the Marjorie Kovler Center for the Treatment of Survivors of Torture, quoted in Jamie O’Connell, “Gambling with the Psyche: Does Prosecuting Human Rights Violators Console Their Victims?” *Harvard International Law Journal* 46, no. 2 (2005):

Stauffer, Jill. *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard*, Columbia University Press, 2015. ProQuest eBook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/columbia/detail.action?docID=2145050>.

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⁸⁷ In addition to interviewers’ understanding preventing them from hearing what Hibakusha were trying to say, their own stories were altered by the intersubjective process. The interaction of interviewers and Hibakusha have produced an evolving but continuous pattern of narratives, where stories are trapped by the presumptions of what is wanted by the interviewers at the time; what the atomic bomb means; what Hibakusha should have therefore experienced; how Hibakusha should talk about their feelings.

⁸⁸ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience : Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 29.

used the word “peace.” Generally speaking, peace could be the answer to many things, and it often is not challenged or complicated. Peace could be used for the easy agreements of an interviewer and Hibakusha to settle their subjectivities, even though they do not share what it could mean.

I obligated myself to respect their comfort zone above all. I did not, however, give up to restore testimonies when I sensed their comfort zone. Mary Marshall Clark, who teaches oral history method at Columbia University and is known for interviewing survivors of September 11th terror attacks, highlights special qualities required for interviewers who work with people suffering from traumatic events; the ability to connect emotionally with a narrator, to maintain some self-control no matter how horrible the remembered trauma is, to convey concern, to listen critically, to suspend the tendency to fit stories into narratives offered by the media and government, to ask questions in a way that encourages explanation and meaning making, to accept contradictory explanations as a narrator reacts to the chaos of the experience.⁸⁹ I cherished her advice and elaborated mainly four points to listen carefully to Hibakusha for restoring testimonies: rapport, life stories, time and photos.

First of all, building rapport is critical to open up their narrative space in any case. In every first interview, it is no surprise for a narrator to feel uncomfortable with me and s/he will observe me if s/he can trust me. I try to look relaxed so as to invite him/her to relax. I talk about myself while preparing the recording equipment. I make it clear that a

⁸⁹ Valerie Yow, “Interviewing Technique and Strategies,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*, Third edition, Routledge Readers in History (London ; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 161–63. See more Mary Marshall Clark, “Case study: field notes on catastrophe- reflection on the September 11, 2001, Oral History Memory and Narrative Project,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*. Edited by Donald A. Ritchie. Oxford Handbooks Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 262.

narrator can say whatever they wish to tell me and it is possible to delete from the record after the interview. It is important for a narrator to know that I am here to collaborate with him/her to discover the right way to tell his/her story.⁹⁰ I keep myself casual and cheerful, and at the same time, observe a narrator if s/he trusts me enough, and is willing to endeavor to explore his/her memories with me without showing it to a narrator. Observing nonverbal signals such as a narrator's expression, tone, gestures, and posture⁹¹ is critical especially during interviews and I should always be ready to back off my questions and change the topics.

Secondly, I take a life story approach, in which I start by asking a narrator's early childhood and proceed chronologically to the present. This method is very effective in many ways. First, I can show my interest in a narrator as an individual and not as collective Hibakusha. Also, a life story approach invites a narrator to lead their story with their own pace. We can, therefore, explore his/her memory safely without risking him/her to step into holes of his/her memory by interviewers asking unwelcomed questions. Lastly but not least, by speaking his/her life story, there are areas a narrator has never been asked to talk before. This changes his/her conventional way of storytelling. His/her life story is likely to be full of unsettled, raw emotions that reflect his/her whole memory. I could observe how holes of his/her memory influence him/her by analyzing his/her life story after interviews without asking directly about the holes.

Certainly, listening to a narrator's life story takes a lot of time. This gets me to the third point, the significance of providing Hibakusha with ample time to talk about their

⁹⁰ Gerry Albarelli, "The Art of the Oral History Interview, Part 1" (Handout received in Literacy Narrative with Professor Gerry Albarelli, New York, New York, Sep. 5, 2017)

⁹¹ Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*, Third edition, Routledge Readers in History (London; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 164.

experiences. Terumi Tanaka travels around the world and speaks about his experiences. He tells me how he must be careful of the limits of time.

The testimony at the United Nations is about three minutes long, and seven minutes is the longest. I have to speak within that time. This is such a tough job. When there was a meeting in Norway, I asked how much I would have to speak. They said two minutes. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that they could not give me more than two minutes. How could I possibly describe the inhumanity of the atomic bomb in two minutes? However, I said I would make a short story. After all, I spent three minutes for my testimony. But I thought that it was well done for three minutes. Every time, I think very hard and write a manuscript to fit the expected time.

Speeches on the international stage can be harsher with time, of course. Yet, as I listened to other Hibakusha, it became apparent that Hibakusha are often restricted with time no matter where they spoke. “Am I talking too much?” Terumi Tanaka told me he would not normally talk about what he shared with me during the interview since he usually did not have time. With me, he spent three hours talking about his experiences, and other complexities and layers of his story emerged. Sueichi Kido also said, “I do not talk about this, because I don’t have time.” And as I introduced in the introduction, Tokuko Kimura asked, “Should I continue my story after the bombing? That is, if you have time.”

To most audiences, time is limited and it is one of the responsibilities of Hibakusha to organize what they want to tell within the given time range. Time, through which the fabrics of memory are unfolded, can be unlimited, at least in theory, for oral history interviews; the duration of time helps me understand what Hibakusha are trying to say. Providing Hibakusha with an ample time to talk—time they are not usually afforded in

public stable—is the critical step and this alone opens up the possibility and potential for change in their narratives. Ample time is also important for an interviewer. An interviewer can be more flexible with a narrator’s testimony and ask unplanned questions without concerning about wasting time. This makes it possible for an interviewer to support and facilitate a narrator to explore his/her unexplored area of his/her memory; an interviewer can ask diverse questions and observe a narrator’s reactions to those questions, and thus, is more likely to grasp the signs of latent holes of his/her memory.

Lastly, photos can provide another safe encouragement to evoke memory with a narrator. I work on a series of oral history interviews with colorized photos, inspired by the research of Hidenori Watanave, a professor at the University of Tokyo.⁹² The old photos are mostly monochrome, which could be a barrier between viewers and subjects. I colorized monochrome photos with an AI technique provided by Waseda University⁹³ and conducted interviews with them. Colorized photos can help a narrator restore vivid memories of the days of the pictures; even with a narrator who tends to speak in rehearsed narratives, the photos trigger him/her to speak more individual stories. It is also beneficial for an interviewer because the colorized photos can take away the remoteness of the past by bringing life to the images, allowing an interviewer to place him/herself in the past. It is also rewarding since an interviewer can realize that a narrator’s memory is not at all monochrome; instead, it was an interviewer’s subjectivity that was monochrome.

⁹² Hidenori Watanave, “Kioku no Kaitou: Rebooting Memory (「記憶の解凍」資料の‘フロー’化とコミュニケーションの創発による記憶の継承),” *Ritsumeikan Kokusai Heiwa Museum The Ristumeikan Journal of peace studies*, no. 19 (March 17, 2018), <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gadymi763DLUJT0FxzVahwnjxnn7GM-gTawi44037ho/edit>.

⁹³ Neural Network based automatic Image Colorization. See <http://hi.cs.waseda.ac.jp:8082/>

The colorized photos become a reminder that an interviewer cannot see everything with only his/her knowledge, and his/her knowledge needs to be metaphorically colorized by multi-sensory, flexible listening to narrators.

In the field of oral history, a part of studying subjectivity is analyzing the process of being and belonging, the quest for a stable identity. Opening up a narrator's narrative space allows his/her narrative to unfold. The process is almost as if I am actually unfolding a beautiful paper crane, which is known as a symbol of peace, gently and carefully to see how the crane is made. The transcripts of such interactions will be full of ambiguity and uncertainty, which should be welcomed as opposed to the simplistic and well-defined testimonies we tend to encounter now. The goal of restoring testimonies is, for a narrator, to explore the incomprehensibility of his/her experience, and for an interviewer, to encourage and support a narrator's journey to and around the incomprehensibility and to preserve his/her individual experiences as they are without reasonings or conclusions. Clark writes "through respecting the ethical and professional requirements of trauma oral history, the risks of destabilization can be minimized for both interviewers and narrators."⁹⁴ I still ask myself if I approached the recorded testimonies in a sufficiently respectful manner for my narrators. I know for sure that I feel peaceful and more connected to my narrators and their memories, and the interviews turned out to be extraordinary.

⁹⁴ Mary Marshall Clark, "Case study: field notes on catastrophe- reflection on the September 11, 2001, Oral History Memory and Narrative Project," in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*. Edited by Donald A. Ritchie. Oxford Handbooks Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 263.

*Chapter 3***OUTCOME****Restoring Testimonies**

In this chapter, I feature long excerpts from the transcripts of my oral history interviews with Hibakusha. This is to invite readers of this thesis to see the past through the eyes of individual Hibakusha. I have created these transcripts in different ways for creative reasons; it is to allow readers to feel the way I felt at the interviews. To fully illuminate their personal voices, I present some of the master narratives offered by the media and government in bold before the excerpts as counter-narratives to the following restored testimonies.

Hibakusha, as mentioned in the Atomic Bomb Survivors Relief Law, refers to a person who falls under one of the three categories below, and who has been issued an Atomic Bomb Survivor's Certificate.

- 1. Persons that were present within a specific radius of the bombed area at the time of bombing (Hiroshima: August 6th, 1945, Nagasaki: August 9th, 1945) and were directly exposed to the bomb's radiation, and babies that were in the womb of such persons at that time.**
- 2. Persons who set foot into a specific radius of Hiroshima City or Nagasaki City within two weeks of the bombing for the purposes of helping rescue activities, offering medical services, finding relatives etc., and babies that were in the womb of such persons at that time.**
- 3. Persons who were exposed to radiation due to activities such as disposing of many corpses, rescuing of survivors etc., and babies that were in the womb of such persons at that time.**

Also, Hibakusha are now regarded as a symbol of the abolition of nuclear weapons. The Nobel Peace Prize 2017 was awarded to International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) "for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons." At the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony held in Oslo City Hall on December 10, 2017, ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn explained that Hibakusha "were at the beginning of the story, and it is our collective challenge to ensure they will also witness the end of it (nuclear weapons)." Setsuko Thurlow, Hibakusha from

Hiroshima, jointly received a medal and diploma of the award on behalf of ICAN.

木戸季一 Sueichi Kido⁹⁵

Yes, of course, there are “legal” definitions... but does that really make us Hibakusha?

I thought a lot about it when I was in college. Mao Zedong once said, “The atom bomb is a paper tiger.” He said that people will never be overthrown by what they have created. People may be slaughtered but will never be overthrown by it. People will someday overcome the atomic bomb. These words were enlightening, and to this day, I became able to think that we will never be overthrown by the atomic bomb.

I wanted to endure it, yet I couldn’t, especially so when I was young. I hardly ever read or watched anything related to the atomic bomb, not even fiction or movies. I turned my back on it. I think I didn’t want to because I would have kept thinking, “No, it wasn’t like that. It was worse.” But I also think I probably wasn’t able to withstand it. So, I was avoiding it... or trying to keep myself away from it... you know, it was like I didn’t want to learn about it. I mean, I didn’t like studying in the first place!

⁹⁵ Sueichi Kido was born in Nagasaki City on January 21, 1940. At age 5, he was exposed to the atomic bomb on a street located two kilometers from the blast center. He was blown more than 20 meters away by a strong blast and lost consciousness. After he studied in its postgraduate course at Doshisha University, he worked at a women’s college, and he is now a professor emeritus. Since 1991, he has contributed to the Hibakusha movement. He is now working as Secretary General of Hidankyo, the Japan Confederation of Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Sufferers Organizations. Therefore, he is, perhaps more so than anyone else, the representative of all Hibakusha in the world.

I'm not even sure if I can say I was keeping myself away from it, because I couldn't keep away. But I kept trying to anyway. The Second World Conference was probably a symbolic moment. It was held in Nagasaki and I went swimming at the beach. But at night, I peeked at [the conference] for the first time and saw the people singing "Genbaku wo yurusumaji (No more atomic bomb)." On the day of the Conference, I would play at the beach making side glances during the day, and then at night I would secretly attend the gathering. I may have had that kind of inconsistency within me.

I think I always dwelled upon it, on that shakiness, on those conflicted feelings—I wanted to keep away, but I couldn't run away. I had to do it—I couldn't triumph over the atomic bomb. In my junior year at college, I finally told my best friend that I was in Nagasaki when it had happened, that I was Hibakusha. He was a really good friend, and I didn't want secrets between us. It wasn't that I felt obligated to talk. Rather I just didn't want to keep it a secret from him. I kept thinking, "I should tell him today. I don't think it's good that I keep this hidden from him." And it takes great strength to first bring up the topic. I had to make up my mind and just do it, you know. So, I said it straight out: "I hadn't mentioned this to you, but I was exposed in Nagasaki." Ono (my best friend) said, "Yeah, I knew. I knew you were exposed." He said that whenever we talked about family or the bomb dropping, I would avert the topic and that made it obvious. His intuition told him that I was definitely exposed. I felt so relieved.

One more thing I gave thought to in college—I didn't think I needed to participate in any movements. I thought I would be pardoned. I thought that it made me free to do anything I like. I didn't have to take part in Hibakusha movements. Not only that, I thought I didn't

need to confront living as Hibakusha. I drank and got into a horrible junior college because I needed to get a job... and well, in a sense, it trained me, if you know what I mean. If all went well, I would have lived a plain life. But life hadn't pardoned me. Somewhere in my head, I knew that I was the last generation that could talk about it with my own words, though I had very little recollection of it. I knew that one day, "that time" would come, and so until it did, I would be pardoned if I kept away from it. And "that time" came in 1990. I had that feeling everything was coming together. The time has come for me to drop everything and live as Hibakusha.

I was asked to become the secretary general of Japan confederation of A- and H-bomb sufferers' organization. If I had turned away from it, that would have meant that I have stopped being Hibakusha. By doing what I am given to do, I, too, become Hibakusha. Speaking with you, Ms. Kubota, allows me to clarify my thoughts. Such opportunities to talk creates me, turns myself into Hibakusha.

I have created myself from secondhand knowledge and narratives. It's difficult to help others visualize it with just my story. We, Hibakusha, don't talk much to each other. Of course, we do talk about where we are going the next day for a meeting, but we don't really talk about our experiences.

Since a few years ago, I started thinking about my origins. What were they? I never thought about it when I was younger. My origin is from the point where I was given life from my parents, and the time I was exposed. I think that the atomic bomb dropping is my origin. It didn't happen by choice, but I don't have any grudge against it. I'm not really sure if I didn't have any bitter feelings in the past, but right now, I hardly have any.

On the contrary, I think it has given me good fortune. Because it has brought me wonderful opportunities. It has given me a purpose for life—how good can it get? If I lived “normally”, I would have had a mediocre life. I probably wouldn’t have had the chance to come to New York. Everyone praises me and pays me their respects. But I’m not that kind of person, so I don’t really know how to respond. People often point to me as Hibakusha. It feels awkward when people tell me how great I am. I’m only living life like any other person. I’m struggling with what life throws at me like any other person. If someone tells me, “It must have been tough”, I want to reply “Mm, not so much.” Like I said, I’m not a hard worker. I hate studying. When I have time on my hands, I get lazy and watch *Mito Komon* (a popular samurai TV drama) while drinking. I live that kind of life. One day, my daughter asked me, “Dad, are you really a university professor? How? I’ve only seen you drinking!” You see, I’m that kind of person. I don’t go around telling people that the atomic bomb brought me good fortune. That would make it sound like everybody should suffer from it. No, it’s not like that— the atomic bomb can never happen.

Hibakusha are indifferent to the idea of retaliation. I think this is a superb philosophy. Simple, yet the best philosophy of the 20th century! The philosophy is based on the horrors of the atomic bomb, on the extremity of nuclear weapons’ inhumaneness. I think Hibakusha don’t see this as a philosophy, but understand this as an intuition. When I was a boy, I often wondered why adults didn’t talk about retaliation. Seeing what it had done, intuition told them that this could never happen again. The concretized form of this intuition is probably the request by the Japan confederation of A- and H-bomb sufferers’ organization to not create any more Hibakusha.

Regardless, I have made many friends. I have connections with people I have never known, from Hokkaido to Okinawa, and with people all over the world. For example, Ms. Setsuko Thurlow, I met her in 2009 or 2010, but I feel like I've known her for decades. It's like that with Hibakusha. You meet them once or twice, and you are more than just acquaintances. Never thought I would be able to build such relationships. Well, I guess that shows how tough life has been on us...

The way of life for myself as Hibakusha—to learn it and to live it saves my own self. By saving my own self, I find happiness. Even now, I am still in the process of becoming Hibakusha. I still cannot say that I truly am Hibakusha. In fact, I do not know when I will become one.

Foreigners, who heard the miserable experiences of Hibakusha, often asked, "have you ever thought about retaliation?" Hibakusha never ask for retaliation. It is absolutely unbearable for Hibakusha to see that kind of hell on Earth reoccur by retaliation.

–Toshiki Fujimori, the Assistant Secretary General of Nihon Hidankyo.

I expressed gratitude and respect for all the people in both Japan and the United States who have committed themselves to reconciliation for the past 70 years. 70 years later, enemies that had fought each other so fiercely have become friends bonded in spirit, and have become allies bound in deep trust and friendship between us. The Japan-U.S. Alliance, which came to the world in this way, has to be an alliance of hope for the world.

–Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe.

笠岡貞江 Sadae Kasaoka⁹⁶

KASAOKA: When I was young, I wasn't able to forgive America. It had killed my parents. I hated the country. I loathed the country. I don't remember when I stopped feeling that way. Americans gave us clothes and that was something to be grateful for. When I learned that they took care of us, I started to understand that we were all the same: humans. The bomb was to be blamed. I didn't see it that way when I was provided with clothes. I was able to see from a different perspective when I became more mature. If only there wasn't an A-bomb... But there was and America had dropped it on us.

HIRAMOTO: So, you don't ever think about retaliation now?⁹⁷

KASAOKA: The world has become a better place, a more peaceful place. So that helps to make me not think about retaliation.

⁹⁶ Sadae Kasaoka experienced the atomic bombing when she was 13 years old. She was at home in Eba, a town, 3.5 kilometers from the hypocenter. The following morning, her father was brought back home on a two-wheel cart. He looked like a completely different person; His face was swollen and his whole body was charred black. She was able to recognize her father only by the sound of his voice. When she touched him, his black skin peeled and the muscle underneath was visible. His body was burned not only on the surface but also inside. He passed away on the evening of August 8. Her mother was found at an aid station, but she had already died and been cremated. Ms. Kasaoka saw only bone fragments from her mother's body. After the end of the War, she got skin eruptions all over her body and suffered from lingering anemia due to radiation.

I was brought up learning that it was right to do war. Yet, Japan had lost horribly. On the 15th, I heard the Imperial Rescript of Surrender on the radio, but I had no clue what they were saying. I was taught that it meant Japan lost the war. The only thoughts were “Why? Why did I have to endure everything? What was that all about?” But I had to live on. I had *kabocha* (squash) and sweet potato planted. I was able to live off that. The war was tough on us. Before the war, my parents were with me. We didn’t have rice, but we made wheat and ate just that. I was able to bear with it because my parents were there, because I was able to think about all the soldiers fighting for our country. But once the war was over, there was nothing left, just the fact that I had to somehow live on. I didn’t even know why I had to live on... Maybe I felt a little lighter because the war was over, but that was it. Just a little lighter, but still depressed. And I became unable to speak. Not that I didn’t want to speak; I wasn’t able to speak. I became a silent child.

HIRAMOTO: What do you mean by “unable to speak” ?

KASAOKA: In general, people talk. Of course, I do now. But as a child, I would stay silent even if I was invited into a conversation.

HIRAMOTO: Do you think that is because of your personality? Or was it because of the war?

KASAOKA: I think war had to do with it.

HIRAMOTO: Do you mean the bomb? Or the war itself?

KASAOKA: I think it had to do more with myself losing my parents. I just kind of couldn't cope with the loss. My neighbor friends and their parents were generous to me. I have never had fruits on the table, but people gave some to me. I don't remember when I started to be able to speak. I graduated in 1951 and started working. I don't remember talking much at work. Just go, work, and then come home. Not much of my salary was left after I bought my commuter train pass. I saved and saved and saved. And then, at the end of the year, I made myself a suit. That was pretty much all of my earnings. My friends were nice to me, but I didn't talk to them. My classmates were also kind to me. Most of them died because of the A-bomb. People were good to me and I thought that I should be good to others in return. I thought that way, but I couldn't be that way.

HIRAMOTO: Why not?

KASAOKA: I'm probably... not nice. I do take care of people, but deep down, I think "I've managed to overcome this, why don't you?" Even if I see them suffering, this thought keeps turning in my head. I don't actually say it to them, but the phrase keeps replaying. My mouth says one thing, but my mind says another. The war took away my heart. It makes you unable to think about others, just leave them be.

The house that I lived in was spacious. They had spent 10,000 yen to build it where they could have done it for 1,000. We even had a storehouse. There was a fire cistern next to it, and there was a corpse there. It was probably the night of the 6th. It was a stiff, burnt corpse. People who died due to the atomic bomb stiffened as they were. In normal times, somebody would have put it away saying, "this poor soul." Yet nobody touched it.

Nobody. It was lying there for a very long time. If my father was there, he probably would have. There were so many people around, but not one person bothered to do anything about it. They weren't able to think about other, just themselves. They thought, "What if I dirtied my hands? The corpse needs to be treated. I can't think about that right now." They were only able to think about themselves. Like my grandmother, after the bomb, many people came to her and begged to lend them a little bit of space at our home. My grandmother said, "My son has not yet returned so I can't take care of you." She said these heartless words to people completely worn out by the atomic bomb. The bomb takes away the human soul. Unless you have a big heart, it takes away everything. If there weren't any victims in the family, maybe people would have said, "Hey, come on in." And as a child, I remember wondering why my grandmother hadn't let those people into the house. But I also thought, my parents had not yet come home, and I forever waited outside for their return.

HIRAMOTO: Did it take a long time for you to regain yourself?

KASAOK: Yes, it did. Things gradually got back to normal, and it wasn't until then that a person could regain themselves. Because first you had to fight to regain your belongings. There was a lot of land, and it was yours if you lived on it. So were the vegetable patches. If you had work or a house, then you could earn money. If you earned money and returned to your normal living, then you could finally regain yourself. I had long thought, "Why am I the only one suffering so much?"

But my older brother... He got married and had a child. Even when living was tough, my older brother looked after me. And he had a child. That new bundle of life was a wake-up

call for me.

HIRAMOTO: A wake-up call?

KASAOKA: Yes, a wake-up call. Because the child would react when I held it or played. This new bundle of life, or well, maybe those adorable reactions, gave me the opportunity to start talking again.

Currently, I talk about the atomic bomb to primary school children. I talk to them in words they can understand. I look at their face and try to think about what they may be feeling to choose my words. So, I always request to keep the room bright enough so that I can see the children's faces. If I see them getting tired, I change the topic. For primary school children, it's tough enough to ride the bus and get to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. It's not rare to see sleepy faces. I always tell them it's okay to sleep. But I remind them, "Just keep your heart focusing this way. Not your ears, your heart."

I get thrown off balance when there are many questions. Truthfully, I want to say, "Ask your teacher about it." One child, after my talk, raised his hand and asked me "Who made the atomic bomb?" to which I replied, "I don't know who made it, but a scientist had invented it."

HIRAMOTO: You didn't tell them it was America?

KASAOKA: I did tell them it was Einstein who developed it and it eventually became the atomic bomb.

HIRAMOTO: But you didn't say anything about America.

KASAOKA: Yes, I don't say anything about America.

We can learn. We can choose. We can tell our children a different story, one that describes a common humanity, one that makes war less likely and cruelty less easily accepted. We see these stories in the Hibakusha. The woman who forgave a pilot who flew the plane that dropped the atomic bomb because she recognized that what she really hated was war itself. The man who sought out families of Americans killed here because he believed their loss was equal to his own.

–President Obama’s speech in Hiroshima, May 25, 2016.⁹⁸

Atomic bomb survivor in Hiroshima, Shigeaki Mori, 80, was invited to attend Obama's speech at Peace Memorial Park on May 27 last year after the U.S. government appreciated his decades-long survey on American soldiers who fell victim to the atomic bombing. Mori, whose hug with Obama following the speech was reported across the globe, has since received about 50 requests for making speeches in Japan and abroad. After more than 30 years of surveys, Mori managed to identify 12 American POWs who were killed by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Reminiscing on the time he was hugged by Obama, Mori said, "It was the greatest moment of my life." About a week after Obama's visit to the bombed city, Mori received a word of appreciation from the U.S. government, which stated that what he did moved America.

–The Mainichi, May 27, 2017.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ “Text of President Obama’s Speech in Hiroshima, Japan.”

⁹⁹ “1 Year after Obama’s Visit, A-Bomb Survivors See No Progress on Abolishing Nukes,” The Mainichi, May 27, 2017, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170527/p2a/00m/0na/018000c>.

森 重 昭 Shigeaki Mori¹⁰⁰

After my English speech at the performance was a great standing ovation. I've never seen such a sight in my life. Not one person left the room. They all came to me for a handshake asking, "Is this the hand that you shook with the President?" Of course, it was...

My and President Obama's speech were aired live the entire time. There were about 100 invited guests, and everyone knew everybody else's name and title, but no one knew who I was. A reporter was covering the story live but couldn't explain who I was. Yet, there I was, sitting all the way in the front. Even NHK (Japan's national public broadcasting organization) didn't know who I was. But they were in the middle of reporting President Obama's visit and they had to do something. I heard that they were frantic about finding out who I was.

¹⁰⁰ Shigeaki Mori was 8 years old, when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. He narrowly escaped death when his elementary school was destroyed by the atomic bomb on August 6, 1945 and all his teachers and fellow students were killed. Mr. Mori had just been transferred to another elementary school, nearer to his home, and he was crossing the city of Hiroshima to that new school when the bomb destroyed almost the entire city in an instant. His research on Allied prisoners-of-war slain by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was not very well known until he was embraced by President Obama after this speech. The photo of him and President Obama became the symbol of this visit and was circulated around the world. In one day, he became a famous Hibakusha. He published a book, and one American director created a film documentary on him called "Paper Lantern."

Of the 100 invited guests, I naturally thought I would be shown to the very last seat. The most important person guided me to my seat. He said, “Please sit here”, pointing to a seat in the 1st row. The other 99 guests followed and sat down. I turned around and saw the prefectural mayor of Hiroshima, the city mayor, the prefectural and city mayors of Nagasaki... and the prefectural assembly chairman sitting diagonally to their right. That’s when I thought, “Does this mean I was the first invited guest?” I couldn’t hold back my excitement! I looked next to me, and there he was: Mr. Sunao Tsuboi! It was announced that President Obama and Prime Minister Abe had taken a tour of the museum as they walked through the peace park, so we had time. I talked with Tsuboi-san. He smiled at me. The reason why he smiled—you would never know what we were talking about even if you were watching the live coverage.

Do you know the book *Kuhaku no jyu-nen* (The Lost Decade) that Tsuboi-san had put together? The survivors suffered from the aftereffects of the A-bomb and they couldn’t make a living. All of the survivors had been exposed so they were all in ill condition. They couldn’t work even if they wanted to. They couldn’t conduct themselves well enough to work. Even if they were hired, they would soon be fired—every single one of them. They had nothing to eat. They were in distress... troubled. They want to go to the hospital, but they had no money. After 10 years, the Act for Atomic Bomb Sufferers’ Medical Care was enacted, and they were finally treated, for free. Even the surgeries were *free*! If the act never came about, they would have *all* died. That is why this is called the ‘Lost Decade.’

At Koi, a lot of people committed suicide. It is said that people at the epicenter died on

the spot. But when you were within 500 meters, they lived after the bombing and ran away far from the epicenter, and their strength failed to take them any farther than Koi. Across from here is the Notre Dame Seishin (school); I always walked pass right below it when I went fishing. I saw about hundred tuna laid down on the railroad tracks. I looked closely. They weren't tuna... they were people split in half. They committed suicide, jumping into tracks. There were tens of people. It was a horrific sight. There was nothing to eat. They were all in a tough situation. Their hearts burned... I know that feeling all too well. They were exposed to radiation, so you can't really tell from the outside. They don't look like they are in a serious condition. You see, our organs... there's something wrong with all of them—either there is a hole or [they're] lumped up like dumplings.

Tsuboi-san also tried to commit suicide. Fortunately, he didn't take enough sleeping pills and couldn't die. So, he turned things around and said to everyone, "Everyone, don't forget this suffering, okay? Write your bitter experiences as a memorandum!" He added, "I know everyone's suffering. I'm going to write mine too." He gathered everyone's memorandum and made it into a book titled *Kuhaku no jyu-nen* (The Lost Decade). Sitting next to Tsuboi-san, I told him that I also read the book. That's why he smiled! I wanted to talk with him more, but just then, President Obama appeared.

Once the President came, the ceremony started with the presenting of flowers. Without pause, he then walked over to the stand and delivered that speech. I was thrilled to hear him speak, right in front of me! In his own words! The moment suddenly came—those words! I immediately knew he was talking about me. There isn't anyone who knows myself better than me. Tears started welling in my eyes. The invitation had touched me enough. Because you see, I first received the call from the Consulate, and then from the

Embassy, and then from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They had told me that the invitation was sent to me, not as an act by an individual, but from the United States of America! What else was there to say? I replied, “with pleasure” in English. I think you get the point—I had great reasons to come here.

The Press Code was imposed... I think on September 17th, 1945. After that, reports on the atomic bomb became prohibited until the end of Treaty of San Francisco in 1951. At the very least, the US government did *not* want to announce that it had killed their own soldiers with their newest weapon. *I* did not want them to know. I thought if the US government somehow found out what I was doing, they might do *something*. It wasn't just me; *Everyone* thought so. Because there were many who saw an American POW at the Aioi Bridge, but they all said to each other, “Don't talk about it. If you do, you'll be killed!” And that thought never went away even after 1951. They all kept quiet and so that story never spread. But I couldn't regard it as somebody else's business, because it could have easily been me who had died there.

I went to all 50 states. I went from left to the right, up and down. I went down all along the East Coast and even to Hawaii to find the families of the American POWs. Fortunately, I was able to find them all. Americans tend to move once every three years. It was extremely difficult to find them.

Besides, I had to do it all in English. In my time, there was the Press Code and before that, English was the enemy language. I could neither talk nor read. I have never studied it. I grew up in that kind of era. But I tried hard. I first wrote to them in English and asked them questions. There was not just a language barrier but also the wall of privacy—“Why

are you investigating us? What is that you want us to do?” To which I replied, “I will send you an application form. I would like you to write down the bereaved family members’ names, fully.” I would correspond with them about seven letters on average. Since I could not speak English, I asked someone who could write the letters for me. Sometimes it was effective, but in most cases it wasn’t. I was told that my broken English is almost like a haiku. My writing was like an array of feelings. The most felt things are arranged in my writings. Only the most important things were written. There were no extra things—hence, a haiku.

I was searching for light in the darkness of history. You would know how hard it was if you tried. It was a difficult journey. It took time. And money, of course. I made the best out of the small amount of money I had. I commuted to work by foot because I could not afford to ride a bus.

Why was I doing all this? Shouldn’t the scholars be the ones to investigate? *Senseis* (scholars) could not do it. And I did it. How did I do it? I thoroughly studied the American newspapers. They were written in English. I read the papers although my English was horrible. Some of the words were not in the dictionary. They were special terms. I was told that I did a very inefficient investigation—no way. Those are words of an onlooker. A man, who did not know anything, looked into the story as hard as possible and read things that nobody has ever read. That was how I gained knowledge. The scholars would investigate, but all they do is find information and enter in the data. That’s it. I did it differently. I was not a scholar, nor was I affiliated with television or the press. I had no sources. I had no money. But I learned that if you thoroughly examine what is available, you could have immense accomplishments.

I found many mistakes in documents at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At first, the curator at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum told everyone not to bother with me. But finally, Hiroshima and Nagasaki gave in. They acknowledged that the documents were not completely true.

I received a message from the director of Paper Lanterns. He wrote, “What a person does for himself is forgotten with his death, but what a person does for others live on forever.” This April 1st, my photo was printed in a total of 7 articles! In high-school text books and source book! Can you believe it? I’M FINALLY PRINTED IN TEXTBOOKS! The MC at an event introduced me like this: “His dream was to become a university professor and he has long pursued his dream. It finally came true. May I present a *real* historian...” It made me tingle, but I did have such an accomplishment. I’m glad I wasn’t a scholar. If I were, the school would have stopped me with great force. But I was only Hibakusha. I was just an individual going around each and every house, investigating and questioning. I was the one who had the facts. I guess the US government thought they should not bully someone like me.

Then, the US and its President, the person with the highest title, invited me. How delighted I was! When the President finished speaking, tears rolled down my cheek. I was told that I could talk with him and also shake hands with him. However, I could not make myself do so because I was crying. The President saw me, and then extended those long arms to draw me in. That was what happened.

Afterwards, I was surrounded by about 40 people from the media. They asked what I had asked, what the President had responded. I told them I forgot everything. Truth be told, I could have said something to them, but the media are always overwhelming, throwing questions after questions. I just kept saying “No comment, no comment.”

EPILOGUE

My goal in this thesis is not to come to a lasting conclusion, but instead to demonstrate my own path to embracing the ambiguity necessary for restoring testimonies. It is the never-ending quest, in that the more sessions I conduct, the more I learn new aspects of the experiences of Hibakusha. Since there are no finished stories, there are no final understandings, and thus, no conclusions.

That said, there are some findings I will highlight to conclude my thesis. One is the barrier of knowledge. I had challenged myself not to be controlled by the limits of my own knowledge and be critical of my preexisting understandings. This changed the whole prospect of learning from the interviews and opened a new arena beyond my conscious knowledge. There were times my knowledge suggested to me that the narrative I was hearing was equivalent to the other narratives that I had heard or had in mind, and that knowledge that I thought I knew distracted me from really listening. I had to keep telling myself to be open, and focus even more on seemingly known narratives instead of trivializing them. In other words, I should be open to being surprised all the time.

Now, let me ask you this question: “What do you know about Hiroshima?” For Americans, Hiroshima has long been connected with “Remember Pearl Harbor.” Many Americans believe that the atomic bombs were used to end a conflict Japan started; it was the consequence of Japan’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. That very knowledge made it difficult for Americans to listen to Hibakusha. In 2017, I attended a presentation of Hibakusha in New York, in which Toshiyuki Mimaki, Hiroshima Hibakusha, testified his experience to American audience primarily. The way he started his testimony was shocking to me. Before he said anything about Hiroshima, he shouted, “I am sorry,” and

bowed deeply, apologizing for the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹⁰¹ He told me after the lecture that he needed to apologize first for Americans to listen to what he said; he had learned this through his experiences speaking in America. By doing so, he said, Americans became open to his story, and it was true in that lecture that I saw some people in the audience break into tears after his presentations. I would like to ask the Americans where that knowledge linking the atomic bombings to Pearl Harbor came from. I would also like to ask Americans, what do you know about Pearl Harbor? Most Americans are too young to have been alive then. The very knowledge that has dominated the American understanding of both Pearl Harbor and the atomic bombings could have been constructed with some intentions. This is one way to be critical of one's understanding.

The same goes for the Japanese; they think they know about Hiroshima. Makoto Oda, a Japanese novelist and peace activist, writes that there was an old Hibakusha who spoke her experience in a halting way at a peace meeting in Hiroshima, and one young man interrupted her testimony and said, "We all know what your experiences were. The question is how much do you realize the fact you were also a part of the perpetrators of the War."¹⁰² Since many Japanese now have some knowledge about Hibakusha, many problematically regard all individual stories as the same as dominant collective narratives, and therefore, they cannot hear any individual narratives of Hibakusha.

The problems of the barriers of knowledge arise around us every day. Visualize your family and ask yourself if you are really listening to your family members. You think you know them. Can you, however, be critical of what you think you know about your parents and engage more with what they say and be ready to be surprised? Even spending one day with that intention could change your understandings about your family.

¹⁰¹ Lecture on June 19, 2017, at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in New York.

¹⁰² Makoto Oda, *Zuiron Nihonjin no Seishin* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2004), 187.

Knowledge, and not just ignorance, is such a barrier in most communication. I have an ambitious hope to apply these oral history methodologies to other academic communications to help us obtain a better understanding of each other in other fields; this will be the subject of some of my future research.

Another finding of this thesis is that listening to feelings and memories of Hibakusha is the ideal method for better understanding the realities of the atomic bombings—even without asking directly about the atomic bombings themselves. Instead of focusing only on the day of the bombings and the immediate aftermath, I have emphasized how Hibakusha feel now. And in order to understand what they feel now, asking them to tell their whole life story was valuable. Portelli discusses how oral history is different from other approaches in that “it tells us less about the events than about their meaning.” Correspondingly, it becomes more telling to ask about personal meanings of the atomic bombings than it is to ask about the bombing itself; it has been more than 73 years since the events took place, and it is time for us to open out our questions. In that sense, as Portelli and Passerini might argue, we are ‘unleashing’ the memory of the Hibakusha, and therefore making it possible for the generation of those who suffered to directly to pass down their emotional, physical and psychological experiences to subsequent generations. This is what Passerini calls letting the ‘power of fragile memory’ move into the public sphere, into public knowledge and popular culture. In letting the memory, and the meanings that it contains, expand, you are freeing the memory. This is what Portelli would call an intervention in oral history.

Also, interviewing experiences are powerful tools to transmit Hibakusha memories to an interviewer. The interviewing experiences changed me very much. They had the ability to close up the distance between the past and the present, to bring the far place

near,¹⁰³ and I now feel very connected to a narrator and his/her memory. As I illustrated in Chapter Two, Motomachi high school students also shared compelling comments about the impact Hibakusha had on them through the interviews. They illuminated how deep listening to Hibakusha was a mind-broadening experience and changed their perspectives. For them, interviewing did not stop with the emotional response of the narrators; the emotional response was transformed into an actual engagement to tackle issues involved such as the abolishment of nuclear weapons.

Oral history methodologies, therefore, provide exciting possibilities that could be applied to peace education for younger generations. Youth can explore the longest life stories of the survivors of the War; the current generation of young people will be the last to directly engage with first hand war memories. In the coming years, it will be significantly important to provide younger generations with effective and appealing ways to absorb war memories to secure the legacy of the victims. With oral history methodologies, we can invite young students to engage, experience, and learn about the War.

It is true that an interview with Hibakusha makes special demands on an interviewer. Thus, Hibakusha testimonies have been mainly collected only by experts such as the media, researchers, and scholars, who tend to have agendas when they interview Hibakusha. This forced Hibakusha testimonies into a narrative that fits those experts' expectations. That said, I am also an expert who has the agenda, restoring testimonies. Being critical of my understandings, however, is the process through which I try to listen as an individual during the interview.

As Portelli has written, I became aware that “the interview is, ultimately, a form of

¹⁰³ Gerry Albarelli teaches us this is the gift of oral history, “The Art of the Oral History Interview, Part 1” (Handout received in Literacy Narrative with Professor Gerry Albarelli, New York, New York, Sep. 5, 2017)

dialogue” between two individuals.¹⁰⁴ Just like I ask Hibakusha to talk as individuals, I should also be an individual, setting aside my agenda as an expert. Portelli also writes “similarity makes the interview possible; difference makes it meaningful.”¹⁰⁵ Certainly, some common ground between a narrator and an interviewer, such as shared agendas, knowledge, and willingness to engage, is necessary to make two individual meet and talk. However, what makes oral history interesting is to realize differences between two individuals. Our goal should never be to find testimonies that fit our knowledge, but to look for individual experiences and emotions that surprise us. What one individual is surprised by will be different from other individuals, and therefore, how an individual interviewer explores the incomprehensibility with an individual Hibakusha will also vary. It will be so valuable to have diverse individuals interviewers to collect diverse Hibakusha testimonies. My next research task will be to examine ways to provide training to a broader number of potential interviewers on how to listen carefully to narrators who have been traumatized.

In the center of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, there is a cenotaph, on which the epitaph reads: “Please rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the mistake.” A list of the dead who were victimized by the atomic bomb is stored underneath it, and Hibakusha are venerated as a symbol of peace. But was that really what they all would hope for? Hibakusha were long ignored by the official narratives of the state and society, and had been voiceless and abandoned for decades after the war. The victims, on the contrary, are highly decorated now, mainly as a result of this strong contemporary narrative. But a few

¹⁰⁴ Alessandro Portelli, “Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience,” *The Oral History Review* 45, no. 2 (January 8, 2018): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohy030>.

¹⁰⁵ Alessandro Portelli, “Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience,” *The Oral History Review* 45, no. 2 (January 8, 2018): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohy030>.

of the simplified narratives could not and should not represent Hibakusha. As I see the ironlike cenotaph, curved with the weightless message, I say to the victims I surely will not repeat the mistake and will do what I can: restoring testimonies.

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