**Raising our Voices for Peace toward a Sustainable World**

How do we keep this world a comfortable and safe place to live for our future generation?

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Peacebuilding/education, & human dignity

In 2010, when we celebrated our centennial in Kerala, India, we formally launched the Kerala Declaration. The declaration stated that “We pledge to work together to create a global society that respects the human dignity of all people…..

We focused on four areas for thought and action critical to achieving such a society. (1) Support for groups seeking to ensure freedom of religious beliefs and for those suffering persecution for their religion. (2) Education— promoting education equity for boys and girls and programs to redress discrimination by bringing literacy to older women. Education for peace includes not only basic literacy but teaches non-violent conflict resolution and critical thinking. (3) Support for sustainable livelihoods for all (as the basis for prevention of conflict) (4) Interlocked with livelihoods and prevention of violence, it is support for the prevention of environmental degradation.

My focus is on education for peace that includes not only basic literacy but teaching of nonviolent conflict resolution and critical thinking. Betty Reardon, former director of Center for Peace Education at Columbia University in New York, also known as the mother of peace education said that peace education is an education of transformation that aims at profound global cultural change that affects ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviors, relationships, and the structures that make up our public order. This implies great change in the human consciousness and in human society.

The minds of the leaders of the world are still set in thinking that national security is about being equipped with military arms and strength, that violence can be prevented by violence, and that violence can be resolved by violence. But is that so? Does it really work that way? I believe that violence cannot be resolved by violence, as it brings more violence. That is what happened on September 11, 2001. As one of the purposes of the United Nations is ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,’ Japan also promoted a constitution that renounces war. Our neighbors in Northeast Asia, namely China and Korea, believe that this article symbolizes Japan’s repentence of military aggression performed before and during World War II and a secure promise that Japan will never go to war again. This isour Article 9, which states

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the

Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international

disputes.

* （前文）日本国民は、恒久の平和を念願し、人間相互の関係を支配する崇高な理想を深く自覚するのであって、平和を愛する諸国民の公正と信義に信頼してわれらの安全と生存を保持しようと決意した。….平和のうちに生存する権利を有することを確認する。

This Article 9 is based on the Preamble of the Japanese Constitution that says

* We, the Japanese people, …, determined that we shall secure for ourselves and our posterity the fruits of peaceful cooperation with all nations and the blessings of liberty throughout this land, and resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war …
* 日本国民は、正義と秩序を基調とする国際平和を誠実に希求し、国権の発動たる戦争と、武力による威嚇又は武力の行使は、国際紛争を解決する手段としては、永久にこれを放棄する。

And the horrors of war are what I saw in Nanjing, China, where I just got back from a peacebuilding training program. I am not mentioning this to put shame to my country. My intentions are not to blame anyone for this act. I want to share how peace education has helped the peacebuilding participants process this terrible incident and envisioned a positive way forward to propose what they can do to change this cycle of violence and hatred.

I heard the lived story of a Nanjing Massacre Survivor. The Nanjing Massacre was an incident that happened in 1937 in Nanjing, China where the Japanese military has committed genocide of 50,000 to 300,000 victims (according to scholarly research the lowest estimate is 50,000 and the highest estimate is 300,000 given by the Chinese government). The survivor was 8 years old at the time. She and her four year old younger sister were the only survivors of her family. The Japanese soldiers forced in and her father was killed immediately. Her mother was holding her youngest sister, six months old and the Japanese soldier threw the baby to the floor and killed her mother. Her grandfather and grandmother lead her two older sisters, her younger sister and her to the room at the end of the hallway and tried to hide them in a closet. In no time, the Japanese soldiers rushed in the room and shot her grandparents. When the soldiers tried to drag her older sisters out of the closet, the survivor bravely tried to stop them and she was stabbed in three parts of her body. She fainted and woke up to see one of her sisters naked on the table and the other naked on the bed. Both of them were dead. Her younger sister was hid in a box and was safe and she gradually recovered. Both lived a hard life. Her sister was taken to an orphanage. She was brought up by her uncle and aunt. She withstood all hardship and lived to this day to tell the story.

After hearing her story, some of the Japanese participants broke into tears, especially when they heard the survivor say that it is no fault of the young Japanese people who were there in the room. In fact, when she visited Japan, many Japanese people were kind to her. The Chinese participants stayed close to the Japanese participants and comforted them in many ways they could. Some came to me and asked, “what can I do or say for them?” “I don’t know what to do.”

I saw the records of the gruesome history at the Nanjing Massacre Museum. I couldn’t help but prayed and bowed with respect the walls with 300,000 names to commemorate the victims.

I felt sad that such inhumane atrocities have taken place in Nanjing by my country

But the participants of the peacebuilding training, young Chinese, Koreans, Mongolians and Japanese, having taken peace education and peacebuilding courses, all thought deeply and came up with some questions:

One Mongolian participant \explained: “Every horrifying photograph and artifact had an explanation, which said “The Japanese Military did this” or “the Japanese government did that.” Can’t we change the subject of the sentences to “War did this” or “War brought about this horrifying situation! War changed the normal people into beasts and heartless beings?”

One Korean participant said: “No matter what ethnic background we come from, don’t we need to know and predict the possibility that in times of war, we ourselves might build that evil in us and do beastly things that were done in Nanjing?”

One Chinese participant said: “Don’t we have to think, what we can do from here? What can we do to make this world a better and safer place to live? What can we do to learn from history and prevent any inhumane activities from happening again? Never to violate the dignity of others.”

One Japanese participant said. “Such horrifying events still happen to this day. We still hear in the news of one country killing people of another country, of one ethnic group killing another ethnic group or military men raping women of the so called enemy country or ethnic groups.”

The Northeast Asian Participants posed such questions and they all responded in solidarity: What we need to do is to design peace education programs that would enable present and future generations to find nonviolent ways to resolve conflict and change the structure of the world from the culture of war to the culture of peace, just as they have taken the peace building and education sessions, they feel that their attitudes have changed. Some Chinese participants said that they were brought up to hate the Japanese, but through the five-day training they have completely changed their mindset to more cooperative and accepting attitude. They have eased their ill feelings as they worked together with the Japanese and learned about peace building.

Their change of attitude gave me hope, that our young generation can learn how to make decisions and find positive ways to go forward.

As our keynote speaker, Loreta Castro has mentioned, peace education focuses on the learning of values, attitudes and behaviors to learn to live together in a world of diversity and pluralism

In 1899, likeminded people who believed that peace is possible met at the Hague, Netherlands. Hundred years later in 1999, hundreds of peace educators, peace builders, NGO and lawyers working for peace gathered at the Hague and discussed how peace can be achieved and came up with the The Hague Agenda. Among the many action plan stated in the agenda, peace education was one of the topmost priority. Soon afterwards, the Global Campaign for Peace Education was launched. The campaign stated that

A Culture of peace

will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems

have the skills to resolve conflict constructively

know and live by international standards of human rights, gender and racial equality

appreciate cultural diversity (which includes various faith and spiritual foundations)

respect the integrity of the Earth

I would like to call out to everyone gathered here today from various cultural backgrounds and religious traditions, the importance of peace education. We all have a role in this project to educate our future generation and “to save them from the scourges of war.” Peace education begins from the home. Peace education could be taught in schools within any subject, history, language or art. Peace education can be used for citizenship education and adults’ continuing education. . Since we are all from various religious background, I propose that we all call out to the community we live and lead a peace education program based on our religious teachings and values. Would you all join us to work together for peace in the family, in the community, in the country and in the world? As Eleanor Roosevelt once said: It isn’t enough to talk about peace, one must believe in it and it isn’t enough to believe in it, one must work at it.