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On April 10, 2014, I was able to travel to Hiroshima, Japan. It was my first time to travel there so everything looked amazing to me. The Youth Exchange Program for a World without Nuclear Weapons, which lasted for two days (April 11-12), consisted of symposiums, tours and dialogues.

The story of the bombing of Hiroshima wasn't new to me. I've been learning about it since I was in grade school, but as I grew older the story grew longer and clearer. But no matter how long the story is discussed, I think one important point remains: nuclear weapons are never a good idea. Words are not enough to describe the devastation that the bombing brought. Photos and documentaries on the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were enough evidence of the destructive capacities of nuclear weapons. Add to these the siphoning of important resources toward their production when these resources could be used for basic human needs.

The Youth Exchange Program gave me an opportunity to get to know Hiroshima, and a little bit about other countries through their youth participants. Visiting Hiroshima, and hearing the realities of the people who were affected by the bombing, made me even more passionate about fighting for nuclear disarmament. The symposiums were informative even if the same messages were driven. Ministers, government officials, and other representatives all believed that nuclear weapons should be prevented from spreading, but only a few sought for its total abolition now. I find this really strange given the numerous evidence that show the inhumane effects of using such weapons. You would think that seeing and hearing the testimonial of a *hibakusha* would easily change their minds. But even then, I am still hopeful that governments change their minds about the continued production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. As one of the speakers said during the symposium, we all have a shared responsibility to ensure that what happened in Hiroshima is not repeated.

Being able to interact with other students from around the world was scary and exciting at the same time. I was very nervous in meeting the other participants, and was a bit intimidated because of the language barrier (for I was one of the few who did not speak Japanese). But it truly felt amazing when I realized that although we came from different cultures, we seemed to have the same goal: ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Despite the differences in language, we were all able to communicate with one another. We were all eager to do something about this issue, to see to it that the abolition of nuclear weapons happens soon and definitely within our lifetime.

Hearing the story of an actual survivor who is still hopeful of seeing a world free of nuclear weapons in his lifetime was very touching. His hopeful words inspired me to do something that would help achieve this vision. With this and all of the things I have seen and learned in Hiroshima, I plan on sharing my experience with the people here in the Philippines. I firmly believe that education is key, and this can be achieved by raising awareness especially among the youth. Our generation grew up in a time of technological advancement, and because of this technology has been part of our daily lives. With the popularization of social networks, the way in which people communicate grew and changed. I think that the development of such instruments should not be wasted on insignificant things such as celebrity gossip. Social media can be a powerful tool in raising awareness, especially among the youth. And with this, I plan on sharing my experience in Hiroshima through my photos and posts to catch the interest of my peers in issues such as nuclear disarmament. Putting up the right information online can be a step in educating the people of the gravity of this issue. With the help of the Center for Peace Education (CPE) in Miriam College, our peace club will continue in putting up exhibits in August to commemorate the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And I also plan on continuing our advocacy work in appealing for a global ban on nuclear weapons. The peace club and the CPE will continue lobbying for signatures of our government representatives, to urge and appeal for the global ban of nuclear weapons. It is my hope that these activities would help in gaining more supporters, so that society can take a more active role in influencing the government to make the right decisions.

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