Migration and Memory: Revisiting the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants

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ABSTRACT. *The end of the Second World War pushed individuals from Japan to migrate to other countries driven by their traumatic experiences of the war and its aftermath. Among them are the hibakusha—victim-survivors of the atomic bomb—who fled Hiroshima and Nagasaki after 1945. These post-war hibakusha immigrants sought a new life in Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and the United States, while some also became return migrants to their homeland in Korea. Migration posed new challenges for the post-war hibakusha immigrants due to both their status as migrants and their history as victims of nuclear warfare. As they continued to share narratives of their war experience, they also confronted their identity as migrants in a country which might bear a bitter history with Japan. This research looks into the narratives by post-war hibakusha immigrants as they appear in online collections like* Hibakusha Stories *and the archives of Asahi Shimbun dedicated to hibakusha narratives:* So Tell Me About Hiroshima *and Notes from Nagasaki. It analyzes how the hibakusha's personal history as victim-survivors intersect with their identity as immigrants and thus shape their narratives of the war and their view of Japan and their country of migration. It argues that efforts of hibakusha activism promote new opportunities and directions for dialogue about the war and its global impact.*

KEYWORDS: hibakusha, hibakusha activism, hibakusha immigrants, post-war migration, post-war Japan

1. Introduction

Since its modernization in the Meiji era (1868-1912), Japanese identity and nationalism was based upon the illusion of homogeneity (Siddle 2011). This was achieved through the careful curation of overlapping myths and histories on the origin of Japanese society, propagated by Meiji leaders in its aim to establish Japan as a powerful and modern state built on its strong identity and the unity of its people (Hendry 2003; Sugimoto 2010). Yet, there is also a wealth of literature by Japanese Studies and Japanese History scholars who have dispelled this illusion of homogeneity to reveal the reality of a multi-ethnic and multicultural Japan (Befu 2009; Sugimoto 2010; Weiner 2009). This diversity may be found not only among Japan's ethnic groups residing in its Northern and Southern fringes, but also within its center, among the many mixed-race Japanese—the result of Japanese migration and Japan's history as a country of migration (Sellek 1997).

Leading Japan's population of foreign immigrants are Koreans, known in Japanese society as the *Zainichi*. The history of Koreans in Japan date back to 1910 when Korea became a Japanese colony. As colonial subjects, Koreans were granted Japanese citizenship and enjoyed relatively equal rights including political rights despite being considered inferior to the "pure" Japanese. They also provided labor for Japan and were recruited into the Japanese military during the war (Ryang 2000). After the war in 1945, Korea was officially declared independent from Japanese occupation. Provisions were made for Koreans to return to their homeland, though some rejected the option as they were disallowed from bringing their money and properties back to a poverty-stricken Korea making repatriation economically impractical (Choi 2021). Still others chose to return to Korea as the Zainichi became increasingly marginalized within Japanese society in the post-war (Ryang 2012).

Japan's history of migration also include narratives of Japanese immigration to North and South America. Migration to these regions began as early as the Meiji Era in 1868 driven largely by the encouragement of the Japanese government who predicted a population boom as Japan began its path to modernization (Sellek 1997). From 1868 to 1941, Japanese individuals and families—later known as the *Nikkeijin*—emigrated to Brazil, Hawaii, Canada, and the U.S. West Coast, with hopes of better economic opportunities on the other side of the Pacific. In Brazil, the entry of the Nikkeijin was a

welcome development as it coincided with their process of populating their inner regions. Many Japanese immigrants, then, labored as contract workers in Brazilian sugar and coffee plantations where they would eventually become landed farmers themselves (Sellek 1997). In North America, however, the Nikkeijin encountered more difficulty in their integration to the region as many faced racial discrimination in searching for employment (Linehan 1993). Still, the Nikkeijin in North America struggled to carve their space in their new home and eventually earned small but steady gains in various American industries (Aoki 2019; Linehan 1993). The Japanese—and the Asian-Americans—thus became known as "model minorities", that is, migrants who embodied the American value of compliance, hard work, and perseverance to earn their keep in American society (Wake 2022).

With Japanese modernization, too, came Japan's tendencies towards imperialism. As Japan sought to establish its role as the leading figure to Asia's path to modernity (Gordon 2003), it also became increasingly involved in global politics. This turn of events brought significant challenges to the Nikkeijin's integration in their new home in the Americas as they experienced widespread discrimination and social exclusion (Sellek 1997; Sims 2023). With the United States's declaration of war with Japan following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and Brazil's declaration in August 1942, many of the Nikkeijin experienced even more hostile treatment in various concentration camps (Haines 2023; Karolin and Aden 2021; Sims 2023). Some young and able-bodied males—mostly *Nisei* (second generation Nikkeijin), were conscripted to the army and sent to Italy, Southeast Asia, Okinawa, and Micronesia to fight the alongside American soldiers (Wake 2022). Still others found themselves in Japan at the time, visiting their families, and suddenly unable to return to the other side of the Pacific for the duration of the war (Wake 2022). Among this third group of Nikkeijin are those who were tragically in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the war. This subgroup became part of the thousands of hibakusha—victim-survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Chappell 2020; Naono 2019).

Literature on the Nikkeijin's experience of the Second World War revolve mainly on the difficulties they encountered in concentration camps in both the United States and Brazil (Sims 2023; Haines 2023; Ehara 2019). A more recent work by Naoko Wake (2022) looked into the experience of the Japanese-American hibakusha and the

unique hardships they encountered in contrast to their Japanese and Korean counterparts. In his work, Wake (2022) explored the intersections of race and gender in the hibakusha's experience of repression and activism following the war. Experiences of radiation-related illnesses, government censorship, social exclusion, and depression from loss in the years following the war are common to the hibakusha of different ethnicities. It is in their journeys advocating for themselves that significant differences were noted. For the Japanese hibakusha, their sustained effort in publishing their stories in the *Asahi Shimbun* and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* paved the way for the building of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in 1954 and the Nagasaki Peace Park the year after, giving the hibakusha some form of historical justice and a place in Japan's war memory (Diehl 2018; Fishel 2015; Shipilova 2014). These efforts also pushed for the recognition of the hibakusha as a special classification of victims, compelling the Japanese government to give more attention to their medical needs (Naono 2019). These gains have been achieved within a little over a decade after 1945.

Activism by the Korean hibakusha, on the other hand, took longer in achieving the same recognition and medical attention as they were doubly oppressed due to their ethnicity and their condition. Their status as hibakusha subjected them to the same kind of social discrimination as their Japanese counterparts from Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Furthermore, they have likewise been excluded from receiving proper medical attention due to limitations brought about by their foreign ethnicity. While the law did not explicitly discriminate against victims of other ethnicities, the requirement to provide accurate information on their whereabouts during the bombing proved problematic for Koreans who could not properly identify or name their location. Many were also unable to claim reparations as they were known only by their Japanese names, but have lost their identification cards during the bombing (Weiner and Chapman 2009). It was primarily through the work of Korean labor leaders that Korean hibakusha found themselves taking part in activism. They have also received much support from the Japanese hibakusha who helped them claim medical support from the Japanese government (Weiner and Chapman 2009).

The struggle of the Japanese-American hibakusha proved to be the longest in terms of gaining recognition and proper medical attention (Wake 2022). For one, many of them were wives of American soldiers whose facility of the English language is

limited. As such, articulating their experience comes with the added obstacle of a language barrier and limited platforms that cater to their voices. Still more difficult to hurdle was their position as immigrants shaped primarily by the model minority narrative of Asian-Americans. The necessity to preserve such image in the post-war remained critical to their survival and access to opportunities in their new country (Wake 2022). Many, then, could not replicate the activism of Korean hibakusha led by its labor leaders. For the Japanese-Americans, their silence meant survival. Thus, while the United States directed public and private efforts at the reconstruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—including reconstructive surgery of Hiroshima hibakusha females (Jacobs 2010)—the Japanese-American hibakusha continued to repress their suffering for two more decades before they took stronger action. And even when they began to advocate for themselves, they did so individually rather than as an organized group, with little anger and aggression, and through their own lobbying efforts—still very much attuned with the image of a model minority (Wake 2022).

Still another group of immigrants to the Americas—Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and the United States—entered the country with the intention to immigrate only after the war. Their narratives, as articulated in personal accounts found in *Hibakusha Stories* and the archives of Asahi Shimbun, show that it was the trauma from the bombing and the poverty and discrimination they experienced in the war's aftermath that pushed them to migrate to the other side of the Pacific. Many, too, have made such move with their families in mind as they sought to provide a more hopeful future for their sons and daughters far from their traumatic past. This current research seeks to explore the interplay of migration, memory, and identity through an analysis of the war narratives by post-war hibakusha immigrants. It looks at how the hibakusha's personal history as victim-survivors intersect with their identity as post-war immigrants and thus shape their narratives of the war and their view of Japan and their new country. It argues that efforts of hibakusha activism promote new opportunities and directions for dialogue about the war and its global impact. Through an analysis of these narratives and advocacy efforts, this research presents how hibakusha activism continues to be relevant to this day as it incites intergenerational and intercultural dialogues for peace.

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants frame their (or their families') experience of the Second World War?
2. How are the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants reflective of their Japanese identity? Of their identity as migrants?
3. How do the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants influence present discourse on peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons?

1.1 Framework of Analysis

This research borrows from Anthony Smith's study on the intersection between nation-formation and identity-formation, in which he articulates the concept of ethno-symbolism as a crucial element in the understanding of nation, identity, and belongingness. This theory underscores two important premises in the process of nation-formation. The first is a shared historical narrative, memory, and value system that binds a community together. The second is a concept of ethnicity (or *ethnies*) and belongingness within an ethnic group. Attachment to a shared historical narrative and to an ethnie provides the basis of nationhood and identity (Smith 2002).

Yet, modern nation-states are by no means homogenous. Thus, another crucial element to Smith's theory of nationalism is the necessity for exclusion and coercion. As nation-states form their identity, it becomes consequential for minority groups to experience either being excluded from the nation-state or being coerced to accept an identity that does not truly align with their historical narrative or ethnic belongingness.

The experience of the hibakusha immigrants is thus a peculiar one as theirs reflect elements of both exclusion and coercion. This is especially true for the case of hibakusha immigrants to the Americas who find themselves in a condition where they are at once excluded from the ownership of a fully American, Brazilian, Canadian or Mexican identity—being treated as outsiders—but also bear the memories and the value-system of their country of migration. Their experience has been defined by a coercion to conform to the Asian-American model minority myth which meant a repression of their traumatic experience as victims of the atomic bomb.

These concepts and ideas of shared historical narrative, ethnies, and coercion and exclusion serve as a basis for interpreting and analyzing the narratives of the post-

war hibakusha immigrants collected from periodicals and online platforms. It looks into how conceptions of identity—particularly that of immigrants—influence their articulation of memory especially for difficult histories where both their country of origin and their new country are involved.

2. Methodology

This research employed the methodologies of content analysis and thematic analysis in answering its research questions. It collected, organized, and analyzed the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants found in online repositories like *Hibakusha Stories* and the archives of the Asahi Shimbun, particularly in the sub-sections *So Tell Me About Hiroshima* and *Notes from Nagasaki*. First, narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants were selected from among the many narratives found in these collections and organized according to country of migration. Second, it gathered information on the hibakusha's narration of their first-hand experience of the bombing, their reason for migration, their continued challenges as nuclear war victim-survivors and as immigrants, their sentiments towards Japan, the United States, and their country of migration, and their current advocacy efforts. Third, it identified and described themes and patterns that appeared in narratives of immigrants from the same country of migration. Finally, it analyzed how the narratives in general reflect the Japanese identity and the immigrant identity of its storytellers.

2.1 About the collections

Hibakusha Stories has its roots in the *Peace Boat Hibakusha Project* and was thus intended for a global audience since its conception in 2008. The project gathers, transcribes, and translates the stories of its hibakusha participants in the peace boat project. Presently, the collection holds twenty-one stories from hibakusha with experiences in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The site also includes video testimonies of the hibakusha and other artistic representations of the narratives, though these were not included in the scope of the research as they did not deal with narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants.

The Asahi Shimbun holds a much larger collection on their webpage dedicated to hibakusha stories. For this research, the narratives were gathered from two sub-

sections in the collection: *So Tell Me About Hiroshima* and *Notes from Nagasaki*. While the effort to translate the stories into English and make them publicly available began only in September 2011, these stories have been collected as early as the first decade since the end of the war. Another round of collections came in 2005 when the newspaper conducted a survey with the Japan Confederation of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations and Hiroshima and Nagasaki Universities to assess the extent of damage on atomic bomb survivors decades after the actual event. There are 47 stories from the Hiroshima collection and 41 stories from the Nagasaki collection.

2.2 About the narratives

From these three collections, *Hibakusha Stories, So Tell Me About Hiroshima* and *Notes on Nagasaki*, there were fourteen narratives from post-war hibakusha immigrants. Six of these narratives come from hibakusha who migrated to the United States; four to Brazil; and one each to Canada and Mexico. Two narratives were from Korean hibakusha who migrated to Japan prior to the Second World War and have returned to Korea in the post-war. While they are not considered as Japanese in ethnicity, their narratives were included in the research as they present how personal identities and histories interact with the larger histories of states that have been in conflict with each other. Table 1 shows a summary of the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants collected for the research:

TABLE 1. Summary of narratives from post-war hibakusha immigrants taken from *Hibakusha Stories* and *So Tell Me About Hiroshima* and *Notes on Nagasaki* from the Asahi Shimbun

Title and author	Hibakusha (Name, age[1])	City originated from	Country migrated to	Source
1.) Meet Kunihiko Bonkohara	Kunhiko Bonkohara, 69	Hiroshima	Brazil	Hibakusha Stories
2.) Meet Takashi Morita	Takashi Morita, 84	Hiroshima	Brazil	Hibakusha Stories and

[1] Data as of 2009

Title and author	Hibakusha (Name, age[1])	City originated from	Country migrated to	Source
				Hiroshima Peace Media
3.) From Brazil to Japan (Ogawa, Yusuke)	Yoshitaka Sameshima, 81	Nagasaki*	Brazil	Asahi Shimbun
4.) Meet Junko Watanabe	Junko Watanabe, 66	Hiroshima	Brazil	Hibakusha Stories
5.) Conveying the Experience of Hiroshima in a Foreign Country (Goto, Taira)	Sachi Rummel, 75	Hiroshima	Canada	Asahi Shimbun
6.) A-bomb Victims in South Korea (Sei Ito)	Jeong Tae-Hong, born 1931	Nagasaki	Korea	Asahi Shimbun
7.) Even at Home, Remaining Silent was the Only Option (Hajimu Takeda)	Yu Yeong-Su, 75	Hiroshima	South Kyongsang Province, South Korea	Asahi Shimbun
8.) Meet Yasuaki Yamashita	Yasuaki Yamashita, 70	Nagasaki	Mexico	Hibakusha Stories
9.) Two Ground Zeroes in Hiroshima and N.Y., Where My Older Brother and Son, Respectively, Were Killed (Kado, Yasufumi)	Tsugio Ito, 74	Hiroshima	Son migrated to New York, U.S.A.	Asahi Shimbun
10.) Moving to the U.S. after Being A-Bombed, 'I Never Told My Husband of My Experience.' (Okada, Shohei)	Yuriko Kelley, 76	Nagasaki	California, U.S.A.	Asahi Shimbun
11.) Life in the Country That Dropped the Atomic Bomb (Takeda, Hamiju)	Kazu Sueishi, 81	Hiroshima	U.S.A.	Asahi Shimbun

Title and author	Hibakusha (Name, age[1])	City originated from	Country migrated to	Source
12.) Meet Miyako Taguchi	Miyako Taguchi (no information)	Nagasaki	New York, U.S.A.	Hibakusha Stories
13.) Meet Mitchie Takeuchi	Mitchie Takeuchi (no information)	Hiroshima	New York, U.S.A.	Hibakusha Stories
14.) Determined to Keep Telling Her Life Story (Ohkuma, Takashi)	Setsuko Thurlow, 83	Hiroshima	U.S.A. and Canada	Asahi Shimbun

3. Findings and Analysis

The war narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants share some common themes and trends across different countries of migration. In general, the content of these narratives include the hibakusha's experience of the bombing, their reason for leaving Japan, and their continued challenges as hibakusha and as immigrants. For some accounts, particularly the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants to Brazil and the United States, they also discussed extensively their sentiments towards Japan, the United States, and Brazil. These sentiments are much less explored in the narratives of the hibakusha immigrants to Canada, Korea, and Mexico. These patterns in the narratives of the hibakusha immigrants are analyzed in the succeeding sections.

3.1 How do the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants frame their (or their families') experience of the Second World War?

Hibakusha immigrants use vivid and powerful language in their narrative of their experiences of the atomic bombing. They clearly identify their location, the activities they were engaged in, and for some, even the exact moment they observed "an intense light like 1,000 simultaneous flashes of lightening" (Yamashita 2009), "a mushroom cloud rising into the sky" (Ogawa 2009), or encountered sensations like "a strong wind, a terrible wind, and… burnt papers falling in front of our home" (Watanabe 2009). This manner of vivid retelling may serve two purposes: firstly, a

functional purpose as, the Japanese government required that they provide their exact location to be able to receive medical and financial support (Ogawa 2009); secondly, it also served to illustrate the horrors of atomic warfare and stress the urgency of its abolition.

This pattern in the retelling of hibakusha narratives of the atomic bombing are not distinct to post-war hibakusha immigrants, but to the hibakusha in general. Thus, the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants have the tendency to bear the same limitation, in that it discusses the bombing seemingly as a natural disaster, rather than a form of violence instigated by the United States against Japan. Typical retelling of the event would often narrate “when the atomic bomb was dropped” (Bonkohara 2009) or “when the A-Bomb fell on Nagasaki” (Yamashita 2009). Such passive retelling steers away from identifying a clear instigator of the atomic bombing and rather emphasizes on the victimization of the hibakusha.

This, however, does not mean that the role of the United States or even of Japan in the war have been entirely ignored. Two accounts in particular expressed anger over the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Setsuko Thurlow, a Hiroshima native who migrated to New York and then to Canada, expressed her anger in no uncertain terms when she referred to the dropping of the atomic bomb as “inhumane” (Ohkuma 2009) in a local interview in the United States. This statement was not received well by her American audience who criticized her for speaking against the U.S. while she was living and studying in the country through a scholarship grant. Despite this, she pursued her advocacy for the abolition of nuclear weapons and urged Japan to do more than to “remain silent” (Ohkuma 2009) in the discourse.

The second account which openly expressed anger towards the United States was that of Junko Watanabe, a hibakusha from Hiroshima who was only two years old at the time the atomic bomb was dropped. After the war, her family was evacuated out of the city and her parents have kept from her the reality of their experience. It was only in her adult life, when she was already living in Brazil, that she learned of her family’s history and her own status as hibakusha. It was also there that she met other Japanese hibakusha and learned of their experiences through written accounts and documentaries, claiming that it made her “[feel] strong resentment and sadness” (Watanabe 2009) directed towards the United States.

Thurlow and Watanabe's account, however, are unique in their explicit expression of anger. Rather, it is more common for the narratives of the post-war hibakusha immigrants to bear positive or neutral sentiments towards the United States, especially for the hibakusha who have migrated there. In her account, Kazu Seuishi, a hibakusha from Hiroshima whose family migrated to the United States, relayed that while she was shocked to learn that her medical insurance does not cover her condition, she has "no special feeling against the country that had dropped the atomic bomb" (Takeda 2009b). She continues to pass on this attitude to her grandchildren:

> Kazu, believing hatred cannot bring about peace, has never exhibited hatred. On the contrary, what she has taught her grandchildren is that peace comes only where there is love. People often ask her why she doesn't harbor hatred toward the United States. In reply, Kazu, who has two grandchildren, says, 'My parents never brought me up to hate others, and if I always spoke of hatred no one would listen to me, and I'd be just a lonely old woman' (Takeda 2009b).

Miyako Taguchi, a second-generation hibakusha who was exposed to the atomic bomb in her mother's womb, expressed a similar sentiment at a speaking engagement in New York, where she talked about how her parents "never criticized America, [even while] they spoke out against war" (Taguchi 2009). These narratives of Seuishi and Taguchi highlight the seeming lack of negative sentiment towards the United States, but also how such attitude is passed on from generation to generation, further affirming the model minority image of Asian-Americans as proposed by Wake. What is likewise interesting to note about these narratives is that they are able to be critical of the war without being critical of the United States, even when there is an acknowledgement that it was the U.S. that dropped the atomic bomb in Japan.

For the two return migrants to Korea, they also did not express any negative sentiments towards Japan, despite the conflict between the two countries during and after the Second World War. Both Yu Yeong-Su and Jeong Tae-Hong also lost family due to radiation-related illnesses as a result of the atomic bomb, yet they imparted how they considered Japan to be their "second homeland" (Ito 2009) and how they would still be living in Japan if it were not for the atomic bomb (Takeda 2009a).

Overall, the war narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants conform with the narratives of hibakusha in general, in that they vividly highlight the horrors of nuclear

warfare without specifically discussing the role of the United States or even of Japan in instigating these horrors. What is distinct to these narratives is that, for those telling their stories from the United States, they are targeted specifically to an American audience. These narratives are also reflective of the hibakusha's experiences as immigrants, some of whom have personal stakes in how they are perceived in the United States. Yet, to conclude that the benefits they gain as immigrants determine their attitude would be inaccurate. Thurlow's experience shows how she can be critical of the United States despite being granted a scholarship, while Seuishi is less critical even when her medical insurance failed to provide for her special needs. Thus, it is the intersection between the hibakusha immigrant's identity as Japanese and as migrants that frame their narrative of the Second World War.

3.2 How are the narratives of post-war hibakusha reflective of their Japanese identity? Of their identity as migrants?

The narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants also include their stories of why they left Japan. Generally, the hibakusha's reasons for migration allude to the economic difficulties experienced in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the post-war. Such was the case for the four migrants to Brazil and the two return migrants to Korea who left Japan to search for employment outside the country. In an interview for the Hiroshima Peace Media, Takashi Morita narrated how the economic situation coupled with his radiation-related health condition pushed his decision to move to Brazil:

> I was still struggling in Hiroshima 10 years after the end of the war, and my family had one bad break after another. If I was out in the sun in August my white blood cell count would become abnormally high, and I'd get chills. A friend who had come back from Brazil suggested I immigrate there. He said living on a plateau like the one where Sao Paolo is would be good for my health. It was a painful decision that I made in the days when there was no aid for the A-bomb survivors (Namba 2009).

For the two return migrants to Korea, their reason was not only driven by economic circumstances, but also by the emotional impact of the war on their family. In his account, Yu Yeong-Su recounted how he lost his mother to radiation poisoning, the toll of which motivated his father's decision to move the family back to Korea. He

further stated that this decision was also partly driven by post-war rumors that Koreans in Japan will be killed. For Jeong Tae-Hong, it was also his father who decided that the family move back to Korea after the war. For both Yu and Jeong, their return migration was also met with economic challenges as they struggled with limited food and no employment opportunities for their parents. Jeong himself could not find a job due to his language skills (Ito 2009). Yu narrated how the Korean War broke out just when their family was recovering economically from the Second World War and their return migration to Korea (Takeda 2009a).

For the five post-war hibakusha immigrants to the United States and the one immigrant to Canada, five were women who migrated for marriage. Setsuko Thurlow and Kazu Seuishi both went to the United States initially for their education and it was there that they eventually met their future husbands. Thurlow married an American and settled in the United States while Seuishi married a second-generation Japanese-American who lived in Los Angeles.

Yuriko Kelley, a Nagasaki native who migrated to California after marrying an American G.I., suggest the same theme of economic hardship in her narrative. Kelley recounted her difficulty in providing for her family as she moved from one navy town to the next in search of work. It was there that she met her future husband, Bill. While she did not state that her decision to marry her husband and migrate to the United States was driven as well by economic circumstances, she relayed that “she had no qualms about going to a foreign country” (Okada 2009) and that her father was likewise supportive of the marriage. Okada’s account of Kelley’s narrative further explains that the term “war bride” was then commonly used to refer to women who married American soldiers.

The narratives also provide insight on how the post-war hibakusha immigrants feel about their new home country. For the immigrants who moved to North America the feeling is generally positive. For Sachi Rummel, who moved from Hiroshima to Canada, she comments on how the ocean breeze “reminds [her] of Japan's Inland Sea and [she felt] at home [there]” (Goto 2009). Yuriko Kelley also compares life in Japan and in the United States, stressing on the value of freedom. In her narrative, she shares how,

> she found life in the States to be completely different from Japan, especially with the meaning of the word "freedom." She said, ‘I gradually learned that people can say whatever they want.’ When she was growing up in Japan, people had to bow even to the train if the Emperor was on board. But in the States, if the President was passing by, people would run up to ask him questions. It took her a long time to become accustomed to such freedom. She described the oppressive wartime culture of Japan as like ‘living in a cocoon’ (Okada 2009).

The narratives also reveal the challenges encountered by their storytellers due to their identity as hibakusha and as immigrants. For the migrants to South America, the challenges they encountered were generally related to the accessibility of medical care. Yoshitaka Sameshima, who was exposed to the radiation when he entered Nagasaki the day after the bombing, recounted how it was only in his early sixties that he discovered his complications and eventually made the connection between his illness and the radiation exposure. To receive medical care, he was required to accomplish the necessary paper work and find a witness to attest his presence in Nagasaki at the time of bombing. This meant having to conduct regular trips from Brazil to Nagasaki in his old age. He hurdled this difficulties and then proceeded to take active part in the lobbying efforts of the hibakusha in Brazil for their medical treatment (Ogawa 2009).

Takashi Morita, also an immigrant to Brazil, shares the same sentiments, expressing how the hibakusha’s old age are increasingly becoming a problem for their accomplishment of the necessary paperwork in order to be registered as survivors and to receive the treatment they need for themselves and for their children and grandchildren (Namba 2009). Morita fought for the rights of hibakusha immigrants to proper medical treatment and filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government for hibakusha relief. This took a toll on his health, but also resulted to some significant gains for the hibakusha immigrants to Brazil. These efforts are also replicated in Mexico by Yasuaki Yamashita who also considers the hibakusha’s old age as their greatest and most urgent challenge in achieving historical justice and continued government support for their families who are still affected by radiation-related illnesses (Yamashita 2009).

Beyond their physical needs for medical care, the hibakusha immigrants also struggled with talking about their experience even after they have left Japan. For Kazu Seuishi, she shared how her father taught her to keep her past as a victim-survivor private, as it may affect her chances of getting a husband for fear of passing on

radiation-related illnesses to future offspring. Junko Watanabe also revealed how her parents kept her history a secret even from her for the same reason of securing her a marriage partner. Both women eventually married in their countries of migration.

For Yuriko Kelley, she kept her story from her American G.I. husband, “not out of shame or of any deliberate attempt to hide her past, but rather it was because ‘I didn't want him to feel sorry for me.’” (Okada 2009). For Sameshima, this difficulty was manifested in his difficulty to return to Nagasaki even when his medical needs necessitated him to do so. He recounted how “though he had visited his family's home in Japan again after the war he never ventured anywhere near Nagasaki, not wanting to remember what he had experienced there” (Ogawa 2009).

For the return migrants to Korea, they struggled with both the physical and emotional challenges of being hibakusha immigrants. In their narratives, both Yu Yeong-Su and Jeong Tae-Hong shared how they learned of the medical treatment for hibakusha from the Japanese government only in the 1990s—about half a century since the end of the war. Yu Yeong-Su further revealed how he only got financial support when he returned to Hiroshima in 1997, but stopped receiving the money when he left Japan again in 2003. Their silence, too, upon their return migration had greater stakes. Yu Yeong-Su, who was later conscripted to the South Korean army after his return migration recalls the trauma and repression that followed him even after he left Japan:

> He was sent to the front to work as a member of the military police force. When a fellow soldier said that the US was planning to use an atomic bomb to bring about a quick end to the war, he had a flashback to his own experience with the atomic bomb, and he shook with rage. But he kept his mouth shut because in Korea there was a tendency to see the atomic bombing in connection with the liberation of the homeland. Many Koreans believed that the use of atom bombs to defeat Japan had brought about an end to Japan's colonial rule. There was also discrimination against atomic bombing survivors. He decided never to reveal what he had been through (Takeda 2009a).

This intersection between the hibakusha’s identities as victim-survivors and as immigrants show how they are firmly bound by their personal history in Japan even as they sought a future in another country. Many also struggled with the tension between keeping their past hidden and recalling their experiences both for the sake of claiming reparations and continuing their pursuit of historical justice. In all of these cases,

regardless of where the hibakusha migrated to, the impact of finding and building communities of people with similar traumatic experiences proved critical in the hibakusha's lives as victim-survivors and as immigrants. For this reason, many of the hibakusha who continued to narrate their stories took an active role in advocating for hibakusha welfare, historical justice, and the abolition of nuclear weapons.

3.3 How do the narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants influence present discourse on peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons?

Post-war hibakusha immigrants continue to share their narratives as part of larger advocacy efforts to protect the welfare of victim-survivors of nuclear warfare, campaign for historical justice, and call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. These efforts are organized by various groups and communities across countries. In South America and Korea, hibakusha activities focused first and foremost on the protection of hibakusha welfare. In Brazil, Takashi Morita served as President and Junko Watanabe as Chair for the *Association Hibakusha-Brasil Pela Paz* (Association of Hibakusha-Brazil for Peace) (Morita 2009; Watanabe 2009). In Mexico, Yasuaki Yamashita worked with the Mexican senate in advocating for hibakusha protection (Yamashita 2009). In Korea, there is the *Hapchon Welfare Center for Atomic Bomb Survivors*, a community known as "Korean Hiroshima" as they have been home to many hibakusha including Yu Yeong-Su (Takeda 2009a). There is also the *Korea Atomic Bomb Victim Association* in which Jeong Tae-Hong was a member and through which he was able to acquire his Atomic Bomb Survivor Certificate which granted him medical and financial support (Ito 2009).

In North America, advocacies are geared more towards the continued retelling of hibakusha narratives. The *Hibakusha Association*, in which Kazu Sueishi served as officer, is a group in the west coast which shares hibakusha testimonies to elementary and high school children (Takeda 2009b). A similar initiative may be found in the east coast where the *Peace Boat Association* works in partnership with New York public schools in annually bringing *Hibakusha Stories* to a young American audience (Taguchi 2009; Takeuchi 2009). In Canada, Sachi Rummel likewise continued to tell narratives of her experience to Canadian children. She admitted that while she was unsure of its impact in a "peaceful and rich country like Canada" she considers it "[her] duty to speak

about [her] experiences with conviction." She further claims, "I don't want Hiroshima ever to be forgotten" (Goto 2009). Also in Canada, Setsuko Thurlow led the commemoration of Hiroshima day in Canada in 1975 and the building of the Peace Garden in front of Toronto City Hall in 1984. In 2007, she was awarded membership in the Order of Canada, the highest honor awarded to citizens of Canada by their government for her work in the peace movement (Ohkuma 2009).

The determination to continue sharing their experiences during the war also serves a more personal purpose for the hibakusha. For Miyako Taguchi, she believes that this is part of her duty to her parents as a second-generation survivor, "to speak out for peace and nuclear abolition" (Taguchi 2009) so that mass destruction, war, and the killing of innocent people will not be repeated. This same belief drives Junko Watanabe's advocacy efforts. She shares how learning of Sadako Sasaki's story—the young girl who battled and lost to leukemia due to radiation—compelled her to actively take part in hibakusha initiatives to tell their story:

> We are now in the same situation of Sadako Sasaki. We were hit by the black rain at the early age of two. She is dead and I still survive. Therefore, I feel this great responsibility of explaining what the atomic bomb is and who the survivors are. Survivors have to live with many physical problems and mental preoccupations until they die, and we had to tell this to other generations (Watanabe 2009).

While these efforts bear a personal angle, it is also important to note how the hibakusha's narratives and their storytelling are not solely confined to their personal experience of the bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but that they also seek to build connections with other survivors of nuclear warfare. In their accounts, both Morita and Watanabe mention how their experience parallels that of the victims of Agent Orange in Vietnam (Morita 2009; Watanabe 2009). Miyako Taguchi also relates the experience to victims in Iraq, stressing the dangers of nuclear warfare:

> The citizens of Nagasaki and Hiroshima are not the only victims of the use of nuclear weapons. In Iraq they have used depleted uranium bombs causing many local people to die from leukemia and cancers. The nine countries with nuclear weapons contaminate our earth and kill people on account of nuclear testing and accidents every year (Taguchi 2009).

In highlighting connection with others in their personal narratives, post-war hibakusha immigrants are able to gain allies in their advocacy to abolish nuclear warfare. This effort spanned for decades of building communities, first within their countries of migration and with other victim-survivors from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and then later seeking larger global connections. Through this building of connections, the retelling of hibakusha narratives continue to make a significant contribution to international cooperation towards peace building.

4. Conclusion

The narratives of post-war hibakusha immigrants convey stories of anger, and sorrow, through vivid and powerful language, but still close with themes of hope and healing. This generally holds true for the hibakusha narratives regardless of their storyteller's country of migration and its history with Japan. This may partly be due to the new relationships post-war hibakusha immigrants have formed with their new country, that brings about a more positive outlook of their future. More likely, it could also be attributed to their goal in sharing their narratives as part of efforts like that of the *Asahi Shimbun* or of *Hibakusha Stories*. The narratives thus serve a purpose beyond catharsis for the hibakusha immigrants.

Through their narratives, too, the hibakusha immigrants are able to link their experience of the war with their story of leaving Japan and settling in their new life. Their stories include a desire to repress or forget their painful past, but also hope and healing in their country of migration. To this end, the post-war hibakusha dealt with the tension between recalling a traumatic experience for practical and sentimental purposes versus repressing their past to protect the possibility of a more peaceful future.

But beyond personal healing, what the post-war hibakusha immigrants sought in the retelling of their narratives is to build connections with a larger population of people terrorized by nuclear warfare. Doing so has enabled them to grow their community of advocates and push for the continued discourse on the abolition of nuclear weapons, which still remains to be a present global threat.

The activism of hibakusha immigrants opens a lot of potential for future research. One relevant point of interest could be future directions that it can take in

reaching out beyond Japan and the Pacific west coast. Apart from Korea, less is told about the hibakusha efforts in parts of Asia who also experienced victimization during the Second World War. In the Philippines, in particular, feelings of hostility towards Japan's wartime actions—and to some degree of the United States' actions as well—are still apparent, although they are also tempered by more positive feelings brought about by Japan's (and the U.S.') current relations with the country. Exploring opportunities for the retelling of hibakusha narratives in the Philippines and in other parts of Southeast Asia who have fallen victim to Japan's wartime aggression, may also prove significant for future directions of peacebuilding and reconciliation among nations with difficult histories.

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