

For a Peaceful World

(Original in Japanese)

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Although the chocolate we eat is sweet, in reality it is bitter. I learned this in my social studies class. In Ghana, Africa, children as young as ten years old work on cacao farms from morning to evening. Instead of going to school, they climb up the cacao trees, some as high as ten meters, to harvest the cacao fruit. It is very dangerous work, because they climb out on branches too thin to support adults, and if they fall they could lose their life. The children harvesting the cacao said that they had never eaten chocolate. I wonder how many people know that there are lots of children risking their lives for the delicious chocolate we eat.

In recent years, the fair trade movement has grown up in response to this situation. The idea is that we should consider not only our own interests, but also the lives of people in other countries. In other words, it is a way of looking at things from two different perspectives—our own side and the other side. In addition, the Table for Two initiative is working to eliminate hunger. The way it works is that, when people eat at certain restaurants and company cafeterias, money is automatically donated to developing countries. These initiatives are not just looking at the problems, but are working toward solutions.

The Sustainable Development Goals, including “No Poverty,” “Quality Education,” and “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions,” have not yet been achieved. However, I believe that the world can change if everyone takes a broader perspective, rather than looking only at their immediate surroundings. To do this, I think the first step is knowledge.

Recently, I saw a play at school called “Grandpa’s Sky.” It was a story about a kamikaze pilot. The mother said in a trembling voice to her son, who had become a kamikaze pilot, “Please come back safely,” even though she knew he would not come back. How painful it

must have been for the young men who died as suicide pilots. There was one scene where a kamikaze pilot fled home, and was beaten by a superior officer. I shook in fear to think that even in Japan, which I thought was a peaceful country, there had been such cruel times. After the play, a member of the theatre troupe told us that they visit schools and perform this play in order to convey the brutality of war.

Actually, I have visited the Yokaren Peace Memorial Museum. There were real letters and photos on display that had been left behind, and seeing them, I had a vivid sense of the reality of war. I was pained by the sad history of the war, which I had not known before. For the sake of national interests and the wishes of adults, people who had been born into this world died without having the chance to let their lives shine. I felt that war should never be allowed to happen. I think it's essential that we make the world a place where wars are not started.

A peaceful world is one where everyone can feel happiness, cherish life, and laugh with each other. To create a peaceful world, what we need is knowledge. We need to know about children who cannot go to school, about children who are hungry but do not have food, about children who are not permitted to receive an education, about conflicts taking place around the world, about the wars that have taken place in our own country, about the global environment, and about the war between Ukraine and Russia. There are realities that make us want to turn away. There are still many important things that we need to know.

I think the first step I can take is to learn about each of these things, and think about them earnestly without looking away. The next thing I can do is to understand things from other people's points of view, and take action to achieve solutions.

Just as the world started fair trade for the children of Ghana, in the same way, I would like to continue learning and thinking, so that chocolate can become truly sweet, and our world can truly merge together.