

# Global Thinking through Youth Activism

同志社女子高等学校 2年 建野 花

I am 17years old. Every day, I go to school, study, talk with my friends, and during lunch break I have a delicious lunch box my mother made. When I go back home, I see my father, mother, and brothers. I live happily and safely with my family. Walking on the street, I see that most people have smartphones. Our daily lives in Japan today are comfortable, convenient, and safe. However, only 75 years ago, our daily lives were completely different.

1945, 75 years ago, was the year World War II ended. Do you know “the special attack corps”? In Japanese, it is called “tokkotai”. At the end of World War II, the Japanese troops continued to lose. The Japanese mainland and later Okinawa were frequently hit by air raids. Therefore, a special attack strategy was planned in order to protect the mainland from ground combat. This attack was that each soldier in the special attack corps was put on a fighter plane equipped with a bomb weighing 250kg. They were trained to fly into enemy ships. It was a suicide attack. How old do you think they were? Cruelly, many of them were only 17 to 19 years old. When I heard that for the first time, I could not sleep well. I could not believe the boys of my age had died such a cruel death. I saw one picture. There were five boy soldiers playing with a puppy the day before they made an attack. They had natural innocent smiles as though they did not know they would die tomorrow. If you knew you would die tomorrow, could you smile like that? I don't think I could.

Some would say that the soldiers who fought in the war were so brave that they were not afraid of death, but I don't think this is true. Not everyone could smile in the face of death. Before the attack, some soldiers in the barracks cried in the middle of night, wrapped in their blanket and shaking their shoulders. One soldier wrote in his farewell note to a loved one, “More than anything, I want to see you and talk to you.” Just like us, the boys had hopes and dreams, but they sacrificed their lives. They didn't do this because

they were brave, they did this because they believed it was necessary for peace. If I could meet them, I would convey my sincere gratitude for their determination despite the horror and cruelty of war.

Why did many young boys have to sacrifice their lives? I think it was due to Japanese Nationalism. With a commitment to victory in Japan and to protect our traditional values, Japan forced young people to sacrifice their lives for this cause. However, this way of thinking does not exist only in the past. There are many countries in the world now that are adopting nationalist ways of thinking. They only seek to further their own interests, and act with hostility towards other countries. Rather than seeking the interests of your own country, you have to expand your horizons to the world. Greta Thunberg, 17-year-old, is working with people around the world to control global warming to make the global environment better. Nakamura Tetsu went to dangerous Afghanistan and built canal drain for communities in need at the expense of his life. We should take action like them to create a better world.

Now that we have smartphones, we can do many things with them, and when we get sick, there are medicines to cure us. What would you do with them, knowing that there are still many people who do not have these things, and like soldiers in special attack corps, many young people sacrifice their lives because of war? Are you really satisfied with your life if only you are satisfied? I believe that there are many things we can do because we live in Japan, a developed country. In order for countries to help each other and create a wonderful world, each of us have to act while thinking about the world we live in. We must learn about the current state of the world through TV and newspapers, and be conscious of supporting other countries. Let's create a world where all people can smile.