#22, 1482 Beacon Street
Brookline MA 02146
April 1, 1989

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Kochiyama,

I am sure you do not remember me, since we met only very briefly, at the August 6, 1988 street fair in San Francisco. I was in California to meet a number of people I had been corresponding with, including Barbara Reynolds and Kanji Kuramoto; I was at the memorial service on August 6, and had a chance meeting with Kim McKenna. When I told her of my interest in Hiroshima she mentioned you, and a short while later she returned to tell me you were in San Francisco.

One of the things that happened during that trip was, in conversation with Barbara Reynolds, she asked if I would be interested in working on a book about the World Friendship Center. During the remaining months of 1988, through letters and telephone calls, our thinking about such a book changed. Currently, I am beginning to work on a book about the process of reconciliation between hibakusha and Americans. I've developed a proposal (which is still only a working copy, but will, I hope, explain what I hope to accomplish), which I'm sending along for your information. As much as possible, I'd like to examine how American efforts were perceived by hibakusha. From what Kim told me about you, I know I would learn a great deal from hearing your perceptions of that process.

The reason I am writing now is because I am going to be in New York the weekend of May 12-14; I'll be giving a talk at the Catholic Worker on Friday night May 12, and on Sunday, May 14, will be going to a wedding on Long Island. I was wondering if there might be a chance for me to meet with you for a while on that Saturday. I'm still at the early stages of research, and am eager for suggestions you have about the themes I'm interested in writing about, as well as your reflections.

There are a group of six hibakusha who are in Massachusetts for two weeks; between them, they will speak to over 30 groups. I'm one of the day hosts, offering sightseeing services--their kindness and encouragement about my very child-like Japanese makes all the hours of work seem worthwhile. Next week I am going to Wilmington, to spend a week at the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Collection; Barbara will be in Wilmington visiting friends for most of April, so I'm looking forward to the opportunity to go over material with her.

Studying for 2½ years and I still sound like a 2nd grade student!

I know this is asking a lot, and I apologize for taking your time, but I hope I might have an opportunity to talk with you. I'm also enclosing a copy of the article about American hibakusha that resulted from that August trip.

Sincerely,

Rachelle Linner

Rachelle Linner

American Hibakusha: Isolated Then and Now

By RACHELLE LINNER

There is a group of Americans for whom the Second World War did not end on August 15, 1945 – the American survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (the Japanese word for the survivors, "explosion-affected persons," is *hibakusha*.) Their numbers are small: 751 identified, but some estimate they number 1,000 or more. Forty percent of them are women who came to the United States as war brides of American soldiers stationed in Japan during the Occupation; another 20% immigrated in the post-war years.

The remainder lived one of those hidden chapters of the war's history, a parable of the dislocations war foists on ordinary citizens. In 1941 approximately 30,000 Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans) lived in Japan; some had gone to visit relatives or to receive part of their education in Japan, and some to enter into marriages with Japanese nationals. Trapped in Japan when the war began, they were unable to return to their homes and families (most of whom would have been in relocation camps). Some were accused by the Japanese of spying for the United States; by Americans that they were working for a Japanese victory. Caught in the maelstrom of war they suffered a double isolation, and they remain alone in the years of peace, dismissed by a government that says "too bad, you were in the wrong place at the wrong time," largely unsupported by the Japanese-American community, and ignored or manipulated by political groups.

Kanji Kuramoto was four years old when his parents took him from their Hawaii home to visit his ailing relatives in Japan; subsequent illnesses delayed their return, until the war began. "Because I made that one trip," he often says, "the course of my life changed." The Kuramoto family lived in Hiroshima, but Kanji, an engineering student, was two hundred miles away. It took him two days to return to Hiroshima after the bombing. The city he found was flat, "nothing. The second day and it was still burning." "I saw countless victims dying – young, old, men, women, children, babies. I can still hear their voices crying out for help."

He found his mother and brother, injured but alive, amid the ruins of what had been their home, but his father was missing. For two weeks Kanji Kuramoto walked through a city of corpses ("they looked like dark rotten peaches") searching for his father. He assisted at a makeshift hospital. He joined cremation crews; the odor of burning flesh clung to him so that "my hand continued to smell for twenty, almost thirty years."

He never found his father but in those weeks of searching Kanji Kuramoto became a hibakusha, a person exposed to lethal doses of the radiation that transformed the new bomb into a weapon that kills through time.

Since 1947 the United States government has spent millions of dollars studying the delayed effects of radiation exposure, identifying a numbing litany of associated diseases and conditions, ranging from leukemia and other blood disorders to cataracts, multiple myeloma, solid tumors of the thyroid, breast, lung and stomach, diabetes and early aging. Yet perhaps the most frightening of this constellation of diseases is the mental and physical retardation of the youngest hibakusha, those who were exposed *in utero*. The incidence of pathology has become more ominous in light of recent studies which recalculated, to a lower exposure rate, the radiation dosages hibakusha received, revealing radiation even more dangerous than previously suspected.

Despite decades of ill health, hibakusha's greatest fears are for their children. Many hibakusha have become eloquent witnesses of atomic terror, tireless in their peace work, but the deadliness of radiation is repudiated with equal grace by the courage of ordinary, anonymous men and women who, despite fear, chose to have children.

In 1957 the Japanese government enacted a law giving hibakusha free medical and social services (and some financial benefits), a complicated assistance program that was initially extended only to a Japanese hibakusha. In 1978, responding to a suit by a Korean hibakusha, the medical benefits were extended to all hibakusha, regardless of nationality. Unfortunately, distance and cost have made it almost impossible for American hibakusha to avail themselves of this care.

They face difficulties obtaining health insurance, since commercial policies will not cover illnesses caused by war or atomic explosion. Cultural constraints and language difficulties can lead to discomfort when hibakusha raise their concerns and fears with American physicians, many of whom are not trained in how to take a radiation history.

Their isolation began to be lessened in November, 1971, when the Committee of Atomic Bomb Survivors in the United States (CABS) was organized in Los Angeles; Kanji Kuramoto has been its president since 1974.

A major focus of CABS has been legislative efforts to obtain assistance for medical costs. Congressional action is necessary because the United States is exempt from claims arising from "the lawful conduct of military activities in wartime." A 1978 Congressional study estimated such a program would cost $500,000, a modest figure in light of the amount spent on studying hibakusha's health in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Under the sponsorship of the Hiroshima Medical Association and the Japanese government, every two years since 1977 a group of physicians, specialists in radiation-related diseases, has provided free medical examinations of hibakusha in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle and Honolulu. 109 people were seen in 1977; numbers have grown consistently, and in 1987, 379 were examined. A more recent project was initiated by members of the Hiroshima A-Bomb Teachers' Association, which has raised funds to pay for American hibakusha to travel to Japan for medical care; to date, fourteen people have benefited from this effort.

Kanji Kuramoto "would like to put the whole experience behind me, but I feel that I must continue trying to lessen the suffering of hibakusha and to warn people about nuclear weapons . . . I still love American idealism . . . this is what encourages me to continue." Under his leadership CABS has formed links with other victims of radiation; he serves on the board of the National Association of Radiation Survivors. A support group, Friends of Hibakusha, was formed in 1983 to assist in education efforts. Two of its board members are the novelist Dorothy Stroup (**In the Autumn Wind**) and Steven Okazaki. (His most recent commercial movie is **Living On Tokyo Time.** He has won acclaim for his documentaries, including **Survivors** (1982) about American hibakusha, and **Unfinished Business**, a portrait of three Japanese-Americans who refused to go to the relocation camps. It received a 1987 Academy Award nomination.)

On August 6, 1988, as they do each year, American hibakusha gathered in a solemn memorial service. Led by Buddhist, Shinto and Christian clergy they offered prayers for the spirits and souls of those who died forty-three years ago. The stark simplicity, the restraint and dignity of the service seemed to render more painful the memories and grief of that distant summer day. Two floors below, thousands of people crowded the streets of San Francisco's Japantown for the annual end-of-summer street fair. The incongruous echo of laughter and music filtering into the meeting room was a violent intrusion, harsh and abrasive, but somehow fitting, a visual and aural confirmation that American hibakusha, isolated in war, are isolated still in peace. Despite that, they persevere.

(For more information, or to make contributions, contact the Committee of Atomic Bomb Survivors in the United States, 1109 Shell Gate Place, Alameda, California 94501.– Eds. note.)

December, 1988

THE CATHOLIC WORKER

SUMMARY

This is a request for a grant for research leading to a book length study about reconciliation in post-war Hiroshima.

Reconciliation is a critically important concept in the promotion of world peace. More than the cessation of conflict -- which can carry the seeds of the next war because of unresolved bitterness -- reconciliation is an active movement away from the emnity of nations at war to individuals who are able to affirm their common humanity with those who were once called "enemy". This process, at once painful and full of promise, is all the more necessary in the nuclear age, for it is the shared threat of destruction that compels us to move beyond the nation-state to an actualization of world community.

This study will look at the experience of hibakusha, the Japanese word for the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and those Americans who have worked with them, as a model for how that change of heart and mind can occur. The early relationship (1945 to 1965) will focus on American projects to provide direct assistance and hibakusha's self-help and anti-nuclear work. The premise of this study is that such efforts were necessary developments but that reconciliation has been achieved through the medium of shared work against nuclear weapons. One locus where that shared work has taken place is the World Friendship Center (founded in 1965). Its history and organizational structure will be studied to understand what has allowed those mutual efforts to take place, and from that analysis those elements that can serve as a model will be highlighted. This aspect of Hiroshima's story is one that deserves detailed study; moreover, it is a study that needs to be undertaken with some urgency because many of its key players are elderly.

I have been actively involved in Hiroshima studies since a 1984 research trip, and have been assured of co-operation and assistance for the archival research and interviews that will be necessary to complete this project, both in Hiroshima and in the United States.

PLAN OF ACTION

Research will be conducted both in Japan and in the United States.

To understand the chronological/historical development of the World Friendship Center I will make use of archival material maintained at the Peace Resource Center at Wilmington College, Wilmington, Ohio. Within that historical context I will specifically focus on:

* the challenges posed by its commitment to being bi-cultural
* the interaction between hibakusha and members of the Friendship Center
* the impact of the Hiroshima experience on the subsequent peace efforts of American resident directors
* the organizational structure of the Friendship Center, and the models it draws from
* the role it has played in Hiroshima, in relationship to city government and media

From this material I will extract those elements of the Friendship Center's history that can serve as models for other efforts for reconciliation.

In addition to the archival research, I will conduct interviews (by correspondence, telephone, or in-person, as necessary) with Americans who have been resident in Hiroshima and have worked with the Friendship Center. Archival research will take place prior to those conversations, so as to be able to understand the historical context they speak from.

While conducting this research, I will be corresponding with people in Hiroshima to pre-arrange interviews. The proposed six weeks of research in Japan will address:

* the effect of the Occupation-imposed Press Code on hibakusha activities
* the impact of the city's reconstruction on hibakusha; what steps were taken to develop Hiroshima's role as an "International City of Peace and Culture"
* identifying the key individuals who were instrumental in developing the "spirit of Hiroshima" and the forms of expression (cultural and educational) that took
* how American efforts were received by hibakusha: early charitable efforts as well as the activities of the Friendship Center

Interviews with people in Hiroshima will be used to critique conclusions reached about the model the Friendship Center presents.

It is anticipated that a book-length manuscript will result from this research. Historically it has been difficult to find commercial publishers for material about Hiroshima; the upcoming 45th and 50th anniversaries of the bombings will see an increase in media attention, similar to what occurred in 1985, the 40th anniversary. Having a commercial publisher would help achieve a wider distribution of the written material resulting from this research, but publishing in journals and magazines while the work is in progress remains an option, as does self-publication. Presentation of material at conferences, symposiums, and other public and educational forums will be a focus of my energy after completing the research and writing.

ISSUE

As used in this proposal, reconciliation is the movement away from emnity to an affirmation of common humanity with one who was once the "enemy". It is a process that is both personal and communal; a process that requires lucidity after the feverish emotions engendered by wartime propaganda; a process that acknowledges powerful and painful motives -- rage, despair, guilt, desire for revenge, grief, protest, and fear. Because reconciliation is a process it cannot be plotted on a graph, but just as a nation and its citizens can prepare for war, so can they prepare for peace.

Through a study of the relationship between hibakusha and those Americans who worked with them or on their behalf (frequently philosophical or religious pacifists) I will identify key elements in the process of reconciliation and suggest a model that can apply to other situations.

A study of the post-war relationships between hibakusha and Americans must begin with the impact of the Occupation-imposed Press Code, censorship that was applied most harshly against any writings related to the atomic bombings. That artificial barrier made early American-initiated efforts to assist hibakusha all the more important; besides the genuine help they provided, these projects let Americans see the human face of Hiroshima. Among the better known efforts are the Moral Adoption Movement and the Hiroshima Maidens Project. Less well known in this country but important to the Japanese were the Hiroshima Houses built by Floyd Schmoe, a professor of dendrology who, in spite of the obstacles imposed by the Occupation, raised funds and went to Hiroshima where he built a total of 19 homes with the assistance of students and hibakusha. These efforts, which might be called "traditional charity", will be evaluated, as much as possible, from the perspective of the Japanese.

Even during the Occupation hibakusha began to witness to what they had experienced. Under the leadership of its first post-war mayor, Shizuo Hamai, Hiroshima's hibakusha pledged to be (in Mayor Hamai's words) "exhibits for peace, so that everyone in the world may know what happened here, and why and how it happened, so that it may never happen again anywhere." Many cultural, educational and research efforts were undertaken to that end. Some hibakusha became involved with organized peace groups (extremely political in Japan), many gravitated to smaller, grassroots projects that sought medical and financial assistance for hibakusha as well as provided an opportunity for anti-nuclear and disarmament activities.

These two developments -- hibakusha's self-help and anti-nuclear work and American projects to provide assistance -- were necessary to the process of reconciliation. This is not to ignore the difficulties encounters between hibakusha and Americans were fraught with; the legacies of war were compounded by mutual cultural ignorance.

It is my contention that reconciliation in Hiroshima was achieved through the medium of shared work against nuclear weapons. The World Friendship Center, founded by Barbara Reynolds in 1965, is one locus where that shared work has taken place. The Center's history, which is well documented, will be studied to determine what principles allowed such opportunities to occur. Special attention will be paid to its organizational structure, which is bi-cultural, committed to honest cultural dialogue, and a continuing and genuine partnership with hibakusha.

The Center's work has drawn on models of earlier, direct service projects, but most of its efforts (including a Teacher Exchange Program, peace pilgrimages, translation and editing of educational material, a hostel for international visitors, and projects that support hibakusha's educational and cultural activities) are an expression of co-operation with hibakusha.

The Friendship Center's structure has included American resident directors and bi-lingual Japanese hosts, most of whom have served one to two years in their roles. Many of them have continued to be active in peace and social justice concerns, and this study will attempt to discern if the Hiroshima model has affected their future work.

Those elements in this history of hibakusha and American relationships that suggest themselves as models that can be duplicated in other situations of historical conflict will be highlighted.

APPLICANT DESCRIPTION

Since 1984 I have been a student of the many facets of Hiroshima's story, from the history leading to the development and use of the atom bomb to its medical, social, and physical consequences. These studies have been both intellectual and personal, as any prolonged endeavor usually is. When I think about this involvement I am aware of the prominence of reconciliation, as a hope and a reality.

Reconciliation is part of my first memory about Hiroshima. I assume I had learned about it in high school, but the name Hiroshima became real to me in 1972 when I saw a set of graphic, violent slides, shown by Father Richard McSorley, a Jesuit priest, a professor of theology at Georgetown University. It was learning about his war time history, as a prisoner of war of the Japanese, captured while a seminary student in the Philipines, that entwined Hiroshima and reconciliation. Despite his suffering (of which he spoke only sparingly) he condemned unreservedly the atomic bombings. The memory of his outrage over the carnage caused by the bomb surfaces often when, each August, media attention on Hiroshima and Nagasaki elicits letters and articles arguing that what happened there was just revenge for Pearl Harbor.

In 1973, when I first heard hibakusha speak, I heard not only their words "it is war we hate, not Americans", but felt "the spirit of Hiroshima" conveyed by the sheer fact of their presence in the United States.

Reconciliation -- a desire to heal the suffering engendered by the dislocations of war -- has been the theme of countless conversations, many entered into casually, while talking to people about my writing and interest in Hiroshima.

One of the main motivations for my activist involvement in peace and social justice concerns has been trying to understand, and contribute to a process that seeks to resolve emnity. This process has special import in the nuclear age, when it is an imperative that the constraints of nationalism be rejected. On a different, more immediate level, I have been able to bring this interest to bear in my job as a mediator and housing specialist in an eviction prevention program. (I intend to take an unpaid leave of absence to conduct this research and writing.)

In 1984 I was able to spend a month in Hiroshima (a self-financed trip) and interviewed more than forty people, including hibakusha, physicians, writers, historians and students. The results of that trip were a number of essays and reviews, samples of which are included with this proposal. In addition to my writing, I have assisted in a number of educational projects. I have edited material translated from Japanese; have handled the publicity and distribution of The Meaning of Survival (a pictoral history published by Hiroshima's newspaper); have worked with people in Japan to find a publisher for an English translation of A Voice From Heaven (the first collection of hibakusha testimony to be published in Japan, through the Hiroshima YMCA in 1946); and have given assistance to a number of Japanese reporters in research projects.

In the fall of 1986 I began studying Japanese at the Harvard Extension School, less for the attainment of fluency than in an effort to develop cultural sensitivity. This has allowed me to maintain a correspondence with people I had met in Hiroshima. I have had the opportunity to meet with hibakusha when they are in the United States for conferences and speaking engagements. Such personal contacts sustain my more academic studies about

Hiroshima.

Time has abraded the arrogance that informed my earliest writing, a pretension that I "understood" Hiroshima. I have learned much, in part because of good teachers, both in Japan and in the United States, men and women who have a deep commitment to hibakusha.

One teacher has been Barbara Reynolds, the founder of the World Friendship Center, with whom I have corresponded since 1984. When we met in August, 1988 she suggested I work on this research project/book, and her involvement and guidance has been invaluable. In addition to providing anecdotal and analytical material, she has provided me with introductions to key people in the Friendship Center's history, both in Japan and in the United States.

In Hiroshima, I will be able to again receive assistance from volunteer interpreters.

It is ironic that most writing about Hiroshima focuses entirely on the destruction unleashed on August 6, 1945, and very little about the process of reconciliation and peace activity that has mirrored the physical reconstruction of the city. The steps leading to war can be isolated and understood, but equally important are steps that lead to peace. Enough time has passed that the process can be studied in Hiroshima, and its lessons, of restoration and moral courage, can be made available to people. I have found in this history a partial antidote to the despair and powerlessness of the nuclear age, and I have committed myself to sharing that antidote with others. My personal and professional skills mesh in this work and I believe that, with financial assistance, I will be able to make a contribution to the dialogue about war and peace.