

Report for the 6th International Conference of Museums for Peace

In October 6-10, 2008 the 6th International Conference of Museums for Peace was held in Japan. The exact title of the conference was Peace Museums as Spaces for Creating Peace: Building “Peace Literacy” for Global Problem-Solving. The conference took place in 4 main venues: the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, the Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, the Kyoto University of Arts and Design, and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. The organizing committee was consisted by the following: Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto University of Arts and Design, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Tohoku University of Arts and Design, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University. The conference was sponsored by the Association of Japanese Museums for Peace and supported by the Commemorative Association for the Japan World Exposition.



Eleni Kotziamani, an instructor of the Doves Olympic Movement participated in the above conference by being funded in the framework of the program “Multicultural Youth Camp Trainings in Cyprus”, which is supported by the United Nations Development Program- Action

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The aforementioned conference takes place every 3 years in different countries of the world. It is held since 1992, and this year hosted 160 participants, which represented their organizations and museums existing throughout the world.

The main points that were spread out during the conference were the following:

- Peace literacy has to be developed. Peace literacy is the knowledge, skills and attitudes for participating in activities which form a peaceful state and society.
- 67 Peace Museums exist worldwide since 1901 and 497 other peace monuments (all monuments and museums can be identified at <http://peace.maripo.com>). A Museum of World Peace has yet to be developed
- Disarmament education is a key of the peace education
- Japan has the largest number of Museums for Peace. A study was held between the students of Japan and United Kingdom related to their opinions about war and peace. The comparative results showed that Japanese students had more positive attitudes in using peaceful ways of resolving conflicts. Those differences in the opinions were attributed mostly to the existence of so many peace museums in Japan, and the Peace Education that takes place throughout those museums.
- Peace Museums, and more specifically the Museum of Hiroshima, should be built in countries that possess nuclear weapons. In such a way, the people of those cities/countries will have the opportunity to visit the museums and feel the effects of using nuclear weapons and pose their voices towards disarmament and a free of nuclear weapons world
- Schools and in general, through formal education, students do not learn the history of their countries. They only know what the others did to their country, but have no information on what their country did to others. Museums for Peace offer the opportunity to the students and in general to the public, to learn about the real facts of the history and experience it through the photos and memories of survivors (in case there are any)
- The role of Peace Museums is:
 - To create a peoples' philosophy based on their experiences

- To extend the notion of not having more peace museums in the future
- To pass the message i.e. nuclear weapon abolition
- To learn lessons from history
- Peace Museums awaken the reflection of not repeating the war, lead to pacifism, and memorialize the war dead. On the other hand, war museums foster national defense, honor the dead, and foster a military culture. For those reasons, the war museums that exist in many countries should be transformed into peace museums.
- The challenge nowadays is not on having Peace Museums but how we approach more students and more public to have an interest in peace education
- The hibakusha (the survivors of the a-bomb explosion) show us the path of reconciliation

At the conference the study “Olympism for Peace and Development: A case study analysis of an inter-ethnic community based initiative” was presented. Through the presentation the foundations of Olympism and social change were explained, and the positive and negative outcomes of the sports activities were mentioned. After that, the Cyprus problem was briefly introduced to the participants by focusing on the psychological and social barriers that currently exist in Cyprus. Then, the practical dimension of the Doves Olympic Movement initiative was given and the presentation ended by showing the scientific evaluation of the program.



During the conference 3 sessions were extremely shocking and gave valuable teachable moments to everyone in the conference. Those 3 sessions are described below.

The first one was a presentation given by a member of the HITACHI company. The specific person participated himself in mine explosion in Cambodia and Afghanistan. During his presentation he gave a brief description of the mines, and the land mines, the reasons why so many people are killed nowadays in the land mines, and how they proceeded in the identification and their deactivation. Poor people who have nowhere to go, live in the landmines and their children cross the landmines daily to go to school. Those children are not aware of what the mines are and their parents are not able to inform them since they lack the education that would enable them to do so. So many injuries and killings happen daily because of that. What was amazing though was not the fact that the Hitachi people helped in the deactivation of the mines. What was impressing was that the equipment they developed cultivated the land after the deactivation of the mines and made it fruitful for the people. In such a way, they improved their living conditions and became able to make their living out of the land.

The visit to the Hiroshima Museum for Peace was probably one of the most shocking experiences I ever had. The information gained from the museum is briefly given below: at the August 6, 1945, 350 000 people lived in Hiroshima. 70 000 died the same day, while the number increased to 140 000 by the end of that year. Until 2008, 250 000 people have been killed either by the heat, blast or radiation. Victims are considered those who were directly exposed to the a-bomb, those who came to the city to provide their support and help, those who provided health care to the injured, and the unborn babies. During the day of the a-bomb explosion, only 3 people survived who were within 1km far from the hypocenter: one person who happened to be in the basement of a building, one teacher and one student. During that day, a journalist who was further away and came into the city to take pictures, was wondering around for 3 hours being unable to take any picture of people. He took only 3 pictures while facing the back of the wounded people, unable to face the pain and horror in the peoples' faces. Since there were no pictures of people describing what happened that day, the survivors drew pictures, but only when many years passed and when approaching to the end of their lives. The a-bomb exploded 600m above the earth and Hiroshima was chosen as the city to be bombed since its landscape was flat, and there were no war prisoners.

The Mayor of the Hiroshima city gave a speech mentioning that the Museum of Hiroshima has the following aims:

- To present the realities of what hibakusha suffered (the past)
- To give space for reflection (from past to present)
- To arrange exhibits such that a hibakusha story unfolds naturally (the past)

He also mentioned that they started the program Mayors for Peace, which is an international organization. In 1982 only 2 cities participated, in 2002 the number of cities increased to 556, while in 2008 there was a tremendous increase and the number of cities participating arose to 2422 due to an emergency campaign to ban nuclear weapons, which took place in 2003. Through this organization the cities exchange messages, books, & other information, while hosting different exhibitions as well. But the most important role is that being more closed to the citizens they try to enforce the nuclear weapons abolition by 2020.

Another remarkable speech was the one given by a hibakusha, an a-bomb survivor. He was 1km away from the hypocenter the day of the explosion and he was 14 years old that day. Through pictures he gave his experiences of that day. His speech touched everyone in the room and made everyone realize the pain and horror that existed that day. The hibakusha also mentioned his struggle of overcoming his feelings of hatred, while at the same day he showed his superhumanity by feeling no hatred for those responsible for so many killings. Among others he mentioned that during that day 6400 students were killed, while 300 doctors were in the city and from those the 70% were killed. With such circumstances medical care was not able to be provided to those injured and suffering.

Good quotes that were shared throughout the conference:

- "I am teaching peace in a society full of wars and violence" (expressed by a USA professor who teaches peace studies)
- "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (George Santayana)
- "No one should suffer ever as we did (no one includes the enemies as well)" (expressed by a hibakusha, a survivor of the a-bomb thrown in Hiroshima)
- "Treat the future as if it were the past" (Yukawa)
- "No Peace Museums after the WWII" (expressed by the Mayor of Hiroshima City)

- “When people lead, leaders do follow” (expressed by a presenter of the conference)
- “The richness of the mind is more important than the knowledge of the mind” (expressed by the Hitachi person during his presentation)
- “Peace is the appearance of cheerful faces” (expressed by a Vietnamese presenter)
- “Peace is the building of mutual understanding between former enemies” (expressed by a Vietnamese presenter)
- “Hatred never destroyed hatred” (expressed by a hibakusha)

Lessons learned from the conference:

- People should learn the real facts of history from the very early ages
- A Peace Museum should focus on the positive role models. The devastation should be used for reflection on what humanity can do better in order to avoid similar actions in the future
- People, normal people, can make a difference and press the governments to make a change in their lives
- Humanity does not learn from the past
- Reconciliation is the only way to move on and have a quality life