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ATOMIC ANNIVERSARIES: MEDIATED MEMORIES OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI IN A POST-HIBAKUSHA WORLD

Katharine Starr

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Abstract

The role of the atomic bomb survivor (known as hibakusha in Japanese) has shaped journalistic coverage of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, lending emotional resonance and a sense of personal connection to commemorative reporting over the decades. Survivor testimonies have transcended the national sphere and influenced collective memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki both in and outside Japan. It is unlikely Hiroshima and Nagasaki will ever be truly "forgotten", but as the events transition from living memory to recalled history, it is worthwhile examining how the media can contribute to what Alison Landsberg terms prosthetic memory - "a personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which [a viewer] did not live".[1] Specifically in the context of the atomic bombings, this is ripe, uncharted territory for discovery. Little research has focused on how collective memory of the event, and the way it is depicted by and filtered through media, will change in what I am calling the "post-hibakusha world". In this near-future, what will happen to their stories? How will Japanese and American journalists approach the pressing challenge of commemorative journalism without survivors? And how will our collective memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki adapt and evolve? This paper seeks to demonstrate the vital role hibakusha have played in mediated memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and looks ahead to how media can build a framework for future coverage in the post-hibakusha world with sensitivity and foresight. It takes its main theoretical inspiration from collective memory studies, building on the work of scholars such as Carolyn Kitch, Jill Edy, and Barbie Zelizer and weaving in the methodology of entangled histories that Ran Zwigenberg draws on, acknowledging the global cross-influences on commemoration and memory which have traditionally been focused more on the nation than the global. It aims to contribute to

[1] Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory : the Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. Columbia University Press, 2004.

Japanese studies on war memory, emerging literature on victim and survivor-witness discourse, and collective, transnational memory scholarship.

Keywords

Collective memory, commemorative journalism, survivor-witness, transnational memory

Note on names

I have followed the Japanese naming style for Japanese individuals mentioned in this paper, that is, last name first, followed by first name. For example, NHK World's Shimazaki Hiroshi—Shimazaki is the surname, Hiroshi the given name. I have adopted the Western model of first name, surname in cases in which the individual goes by or is widely known by that model.

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and thoughtful meditations. Finally, to Ogura Keiko and Kajiyama Toshiko, my endless respect, admiration and gratitude for all that you have suffered and shared. *Dōmo arigatō gozaimasu*.

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NHK	Nippon Hoso Kyokai
JNTO	Japan National Tourism Organization
HPMM	Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

Introduction

The morning of the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima began like so many of the August mornings marking the first time nuclear weapons were used against humans, in a western Japanese city in the waning days of World War Two.

Oppressive heat; shrilling cicadas; bright yellow chrysanthemums, shimmering blotches of color against the cool tones of marble slab—all familiar touchstones to the attendees and viewers who have participated in the ceremony over the years. But there were key differences in 2020. The global coronavirus pandemic caused memorial events to be drastically scaled back, with attendance slashed to less than one-tenth of the usual size and chairs for guests carefully spaced six feet apart. The traditional evening ceremony involving paper lanterns floating gently on the Motoyasugawa River became a virtual one. But perhaps the most jarring change was the reduced presence of the hibakusha, the atomic bomb survivors. With an average age of over 83, many stayed away due to the health risks amplified by the coronavirus. Their absence, exacerbated by the pandemic, was an uncomfortable, tangible reminder: time is running out.

The pandemic brought a sharper urgency to a question that has been repeatedly raised—but never fully explored nor answered—by journalists covering the commemorations over the decades. What will happen when there are no longer any living survivors to attend these ceremonies, to lend their faces and voices to the solemnity of the occasion? What will be remembered? What will be forgotten? Suddenly, newsrooms in Japan and the United States had to figure out how to approach covering anniversaries that didn't follow the usual pattern. In the newsroom of the Tokyo-based, English-language international service (hereafter referred to as NHK World-Japan) of Japan's public broadcaster Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), then-editor-in-chief Shimazaki Hiroshi recalled feeling unprepared for the journalistic challenge of covering the

ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki remotely, with very few survivors in attendance or able to give in-person interviews (Shimazaki). Shimazaki, who had been involved in extensive coverage of the Nagasaki anniversary events during the 50th commemoration in 1995, said in a personal interview that the 75th anniversary in 2020 was seen as very important as it is likely the last major one in which survivors would be present. "The coronavirus pandemic muted our ability to make the broadcast as powerful as we wished," he said, adding that he is "not so confident" about the strength of NHK's programming and its appeal to viewers without the survivors. "We need their voices."

The heavily ritualized ceremonies that take place each year in Hiroshima on August 6 and in Nagasaki three days later follow a well-grooved rhythm, from the prime minister's speech to the schoolchildren's song to the address by a hibakusha, speaking on behalf of fellow survivors—arguably the apotheosis of the ceremony. U.S. and Japanese journalistic coverage of the two ceremonies tends to rely heavily on the hibakusha. Many outlets center their entire coverage on survivor testimony, whether it's through an eye-grabbing headline—"He was an American child in Hiroshima on the day the atomic bomb dropped"; using a gripping and graphic quote—"He remembered searching for food and water in the ensuing days but finding piles of charred bodies instead. 'Their mouths were open, because people had tried to identify them by their tooth fillings,' he said," in a New York Times story on President Obama's 2016 visit; or starting a TV report with video footage of Michiko Kodama, an elderly survivor gently holding a painting of Hiroshima's horrors, ready to reopen the painful wounds of the past (Gup 2020, Soble 2016, Givetash and Nishiyama 2020). In Japan, NHK World ran a series called "Letters from Hibakusha," in which three of the more than two thousand testimonies received were turned into short anime films broadcasted and shared online. The *Asahi Shimbun*

newspaper, one of the largest and oldest newspapers in the country, took a slightly different angle for the 2021 anniversary with an article about the daughter of a since-deceased hibakusha visiting the island he escaped to after the Hiroshima bombing (Okada 2021). Yet we still see here the same journalistic reliance on the hibakusha to act as our vehicle to memory.

It is a memory, as John Dower argued on the occasion of the 50th anniversary, that is constantly being renegotiated and reconstructed (1996). How we remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki depends on several filters—nationality, geography, personal family history, and contemporary political events are some of the main ones, but increasingly as time goes on, it is exposure to media portrayals of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that have the most significant impact on shaping our collective memory. Hibakusha testimonies fulfill a crucial role in that collective, mediated memory. Because of the singular, traumatic nature of the event, the victims "came to possess important symbolic power" that "bequeathed Hiroshima's victims with a global mission and importance" as Zwigenberg notes (2014). It is a discourse he and others have recognized in Holocaust scholarship as well (to a much greater degree, in the case of Holocaust studies). What we have seen is an elevation of the survivor-witness as the "ultimate bearer of moral authority" (Zwigenberg). As living testimonials, the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki act as the moral conscience for two nations impacted by the consequences of the atomic bomb, and remind people in a visceral way of the horrors of total war. Even the term "hibakusha" is an unparalleled, unique one, as no other country needs a word to describe a survivor of an atomic bomb attack.

Many of the hibakusha have become powerful advocates against nuclear weapons, speaking at the United Nations, at schools, and at protests.[3] They've adopted a collective identity

[3] Setsuko Thurlow, who was a 13-year-old in Hiroshima when the bomb was dropped, is one example of a hibakusha with a global platform. The Japanese-Canadian is a leading figure in the International Campaign to

as a symbol of peace and a living link to the past. Their broader message to the global community has been, almost singularly, focused on "not retaliation, but reconciliation" (Ryerson qtd. in Miyamoto 13). Because of the myriad public-facing roles they have played in the decades following the attacks, their output of testimonies, art and writings grappling with what happened to them, and media coverage within and outside Japan, the hibakusha have become the face of an historic event whose repercussions continue to reverberate.[4] Yet the evolution to a world without their voices—the "post-hibakusha world", as I am calling it—is already happening. Tom Le points out that a hibakusha who is 84 years old in 2020 would have been just nine at the time of the attacks, "which is likely as young as an individual can be and still remember the event with clarity" (171).

Indeed, Kajiyama Toshiko was just four years old when her hometown of Hiroshima was bombed. In a personal interview, she said she doesn't remember anything about that day, or about losing her parents, but she can clearly remember flooding that hit the city a month later, in September 1945. "A typhoon hit and flooded the area where I lived," recalled Kajiyama, who still lives in Hiroshima where she has operated an *okonomiyaki* restaurant for decades. "Our house had burned down by the bomb and we were living in barracks. I remember the water came up quite high. But I don't really know why I don't have a memory of the bombing at all." She knows some of the details of August 6, but only because she was told. She was staying at her grandparents' house, 1.2 kilometers from the hypocenter (the point on the ground directly below

Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which won the Nobel Prize in 2017. She was instrumental in the creation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

[4] For an example of how the hibakusha continue to shape discourse on atomic issues and topics related to the bombings, see the recent landmark court ruling on "black rain survivors" in Japan, which recognized 84 people in Hiroshima prefecture as eligible for government health care benefits after being exposed to radioactive "black" rain after the attack. Another timely example is the TPNW, which came into force in January 2021 and includes in the preamble a direct link between the motivation behind the treaty's existence and the hibakusha. It also emphasizes the hibakushas' role as a social factor in the push for disarmament.

the nuclear detonation). “I was living in my mother’s parents’ house with my mom and my three-year-old brother, since my dad died during the war,” she remembered. “My mom was working as a clerk. On that day, she left home to help with the building evacuation. Where she was believed to be working was close to the hypocenter, so she and others must have been killed. She never came back.”

This paper has a goal of amplifying voices like Kajiyama’s while bridging the theoretical and the practical aspects of memory work and journalism. It seeks to build on the work by Carolyn Kitch, Barbie Zelizer and Jill Edy on placing journalism within the interdisciplinary field of memory studies, and on Astrid Erll’s assertion of a “third phase” in memory studies focusing on the movement of memory across nation and cultures. As Thomas Olesen demonstrates, there is significant scholarship on Hiroshima’s place in collective memory *within* Japan (Buruma, Dower, Hashimoto, Orr, Saito, Tachibana among others), yet little focus on the *global* meaning of Hiroshima (Oleson 82).

Memory, as Oleson and Erll both attest to, is just as much about what we forget as what we remember. There is a real dearth of scholarship on Nagasaki, the second city to be atom bombed and as of the writing of this paper, the last. Attention, both by scholars, members of the media, politicians, and the general public, tends to narrow in on Hiroshima—sometimes exclusively—for a few key reasons. One, there is simply more information, resources, hibakusha testimonials, and writing related to Hiroshima. As Susan Southard argues both in her book, *Nagasaki: Life after Nuclear War*, and in an op-ed for the *New York Times*, the second city was “overshadowed by Hiroshima from the very start…while [Hiroshima] gained headlines, the Nagasaki bombing shared the day’s news with the Soviet advance” (Southard 2015). But a simple matter of being the first cannot explain Hiroshima’s dominance over the decades in both

literature and collective memory.[5] There are more complicated aspects at play that must factor in the cities' pre- and post-war trajectories as well as the politics of reconstruction narratives.

Nagasaki has a unique history that stands apart from Hiroshima, making it difficult for scholars to draw easy links between the two cities.[6] Just as an American would not assume the cultural, historical, geographic, and social identities of Boston and San Francisco are alike, Nagasaki and Hiroshima are equally diverse, twinned in the record of history solely through their status as the only cities to be destroyed by nuclear weapons. Nagasaki's rich tradition of the "hidden Christians" and its active contemporary Catholic community, as well as its history as a port city open to foreign trade, ideas and cultural exchange (including a limited openness during the *sakoku* period), have shaped Nagasaki's post-atomic narrative(s) in ways that are very different from Hiroshima's. While analyzing the ways in which the cities' narratives exist in opposition to and in dialogue with the other is beyond the scope of this paper, it is useful to keep in mind that in Nagasaki, "the story of the atomic bombing appeared as part of the city's long history, not as its primary characteristic", and that it has often been neglected in both history and memory, causing an elevation of the Hiroshima narrative and a limitation of Nagasaki's place in collective memory of the atomic bombs (Diehl 2, 6, 11). For the purposes of this paper, Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be treated as equals as much as the literature allows; in many cases

[5] For an excellent and in-depth analysis of Nagasaki's post-bomb identity and its relationship to Hiroshima, memory and the politics of narrative formation, see Chad R. Diehl's Reconstructing Nagasaki: Reconstruction and the formation of Atomic Narratives (Cornell University Press, 2018).

[6] Zwigenberg points out that the "narratives of remembrance" developed in Nagasaki, while sharing some similarities with those in Hiroshima, "also differ on many levels, most notably in the presence of an active Catholic community." Zwigenberg ultimately decides that "giving Nagasaki its due attention would have required me to write a much different manuscript" and that the "nature and scope" of his sources "left little room for a further look into Nagasaki" (3-4). Zwigenberg's editorial decision choice is not unique in the literature.

when "Hiroshima" appears alone, it may be understood to refer to Nagasaki as well unless otherwise noted.[7]

Both Zwigenberg's 2014 study and John Dower's work on Hiroshima's international dimension are highlighted by Olesen as "seminal," but ultimately don't "go far enough in theorizing the connections between Hiroshima and events, situations, and experiences beyond Japan."[8] Like Oleson, this paper also argues for an expanded look at Hiroshima (and Nagasaki) and its place in collective memory—as part of a "global memory complex" in which "Hiroshima" transcends mere historical event and becomes contested, debated memory (82). Who owns Hiroshima's memory? Who owns its meaning? Inspired by Oleson's focus on the concept of a "Hiroshima memory complex," built around a political sociological form in which memory work provides an entry into understanding the "restlessness of the past," this paper looks to examine how American and Japanese journalists' works on memory provide an entry for audiences into not just understanding that restless past, but the complicated present and uncertain future, too (Oleson 82). As the transnational memory of Hiroshima transitions from "lived semantic memory" to "distant semantic memory," as communicated by institutions like the media, it is crucial to ask these questions *now*, while we exist in this delicate memory balance (Erll 93).[9]

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[7] All efforts have been made by the author to conduct interviews with people in Nagasaki and to seek out Nagasaki-specific literature. Research trips for this paper were made to both Hiroshima (March 2020, August 2021) and Nagasaki (September 2020), while the author was working in Japan throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

[8] In particular, Oleson commends Zwigenberg's examination of efforts in the 1960s to link the Hiroshima and Auschwitz experiences, as well as Robert Lifton's work on survivor trauma in the same decade, as two "entry points" into the global sphere for Hiroshima. Oleson, p. 82.

[9] Erll cites the "cognitive taxonomy of collective memories" by social psychologists David Manier and William Hirst in 2008; specifically, their work on collective semantic memory which is the memory of historical events not personally experienced (similar to Landsberg's "prosthetic memory" which informs this paper).

A significant portion of this paper will examine through case studies how different groups outside of the media are preparing for the post-hibakusha world, before turning a lens to the media's preparations such as they are. The latter section argues for a journalistic framework on anniversary coverage going forward for the post-survivor worlds of the future. But first, an overview of how the role of the hibakusha in mediated memory—and the ways in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are remembered—have changed over the decades provides a necessary grounding in the literature.[10]

Tracing the path of the hibakusha through history

The hibakusha may have evolved to become potent symbols of peace, but in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the survivors were shunned, silenced, stigmatized, and (self-) censored.

U.S. occupation authorities censored reports and banned images coming out of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the initial weeks and months following the bombings, under what was called the "Press Code." The censorship was due in part to the U.S. policy of keeping any information about this new weapon as secret as possible, as well as fitting into the broader agenda of control over the media that was the general occupation policy in defeated Japan, Dower writes (117). While coverage was actually quite widespread and intensive in the beginning, it was rigorously managed. Through the media, Americans saw approved "images of the awesome mushroom cloud," as Paul Boyer describes the famous photograph of the bomb known as "Little Boy"

[10] An excellent resource is the book of essays commissioned for the 50th anniversary, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, edited by Michael J. Hogan. Several of the essays examine the tension between history and memory and how both the United States and Japan sought to control the narratives coming out of the attacks, constructing specific national identities and political ideologies. This book has been invaluable to the author over the course of writing this paper.

exploding over Hiroshima, but it was a limited, disengaged, purely scientific image, one that meant to shock and awe but did not hint at all to the human cost that occurred below that cloud (299). Japanese journalists were also heavily censored, forbidden to report on Hiroshima or Nagasaki by U.S. occupation authorities. Foreign media who were able to get into Japan, hoping to report on the atomic cities, were threatened, harassed and accused of spreading Japanese propaganda by U.S. officials (Blume 9).

Back in America, the horrors of the atomic bomb were minimized for domestic audiences in a carefully executed public relations campaign. Lieutenant General Lesley R. Groves, head of the Manhattan Project, famously testified before a Senate Committee in November that bomb-induced radiation poisoning could be a "very pleasant way to die" (US Cong. Sen. Special Comm. on Atomic Energy 37). By this point, medical and press reports were emerging from Japan of delayed radiation effects, and Groves' "panicked reaction" demonstrates the official response of downplay and deflection to counteract any "disturbing moral questions" raised by the use of the atomic bomb (Malloy 519).

But it was impossible to ignore or suppress those disturbing questions of morality a year later with the summer 1946 publication of journalist John Hersey's "Hiroshima" in *The New Yorker*. It is here where we see a much more complicated and nuanced depiction of the bombs for the public in the United States (and, indeed, internationally, as "Hiroshima" was a global success) to grapple with, made possible through survivors beginning to speak out to the media. Quoting the *New York Times*' Aug. 7, 1945 article—written just one day after the attack—Blume argued in a personal interview that the "impenetrable cloud" the *Times* described as engulfing the city that day did not fully dissipate for American audiences until "Hiroshima" was published. A straightforward, crisply reported narrative weaving together six individual survivors' stories, it

cut through the propaganda and "brought to a keen edge" the political-cultural role of Hiroshima memories, as Boyer writes (303).

The journalistic value of "Hiroshima" at the time of publication is undeniable, according to Blume. "He created a rift between the press and the American government for the first time since World War Two had begun, because there was quite the partnership between the two entities when it came to wartime coverage," she points out. "He really helped return the American press to watchdog status."

But the power of "Hiroshima" stretched beyond contemporary American readership, Blume says. "He managed to harness not just our country's, but the world's, attention on an issue that everybody had every incentive to look the other way on. Nobody really wanted to hear more atrocity stories. There were still feelings of vengeance about Pearl Harbor, and it was mixed up in a feeling of willful ignorance and aversion to the topic, and Hersey still, in that 31,000-word, tremendously long article, made it unputdownable and the topic completely unavoidable. And that's stunning stuff." Journalistically, the legacy of his article continues. "People use his template—looking at things from the average man's view—all the time in journalism and in storytelling in different genres," says Blume.

Hersey was cognizant of the limited journalistic potential that photographs of the decimated atomic cities represented. For an audience already numb to images of post-bombed cities like Dresden or London (what Blume terms "atrocity exhaustion"), he saw ruins as "spectacular; but...impersonal, as rubble so often is" (Blume 9-10). Instead, he focused on the relatable, recounting "in minute, painful detail" how Aug. 6 had unfolded for each of the six survivors he profiled. In those survivors—Toshiko Sasaki, Masakazu Fujii, Hatsuyo Nakamura,

Terufumi Sasaki, Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Wilhelm Kleinsorge—readers saw their neighbors, their doctors, their priests, themselves.

But while "Hiroshima" held up a mirror to readers with no connection to the horrors of August 6, many of the people who had survived that day were not yet ready to look at their own reflected memories. Deep guilt over surviving when thousands had perished haunted many of the hibakusha, coupled with the shame of rejection by a society that "emphasizes group cohesion and belonging," as Zwigenberg describes (68). Social anxiety in Japan over the lingering impacts of radiation, potential genetic mutations and a belief that survivors were somehow tainted and unmarriageable led to many of the hibakusha hiding their status, even to family members. Kathleen Burkinshaw, whose mother Toshiko Ishikawa Hilliker survived Hiroshima, didn't learn about her mother's past until she was 11 years old, and it wasn't until Burkinshaw herself was hospitalized with a neurological chronic pain disease at age 30 that her mother shared what she had gone through as a child. "A lot of the hibakusha felt they shouldn't talk about it for the longest time," Burkinshaw said in a personal interview. "I think they felt they just weren't allowed to talk about, that people wouldn't and didn't want to understand."

Due to a confluence of factors including imposed censorship and societal stigmatization, the psychological trauma of surviving the bomb was not allowed to be "addressed in open media forums" until much later, Dower writes (127). Media censorship in occupied Japan officially ended in mid-1949, but as Dower argues, that meant the Japanese were not able to "really visualize the human consequences...in concrete, vivid ways" until about four years later. We see the rise of the genre known as "A-bomb literature" in this period, when hibakusha such as Toshi and Iri Maruki and Takashi Nagai published essays, drawings and paintings, poems and recollections (Dower 128-29). Yet it was still some time before the concept of the "survivor-

witness" became a movement, intimately tied to what Zwigenberg terms the "transformation narrative" that encompassed both the survivors and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki themselves.[11] As the atomic cities rebranded themselves as "Peace Cities," the survivors underwent a transformation too, discovering "the emotional means and language with which they could rebuild their lives and find meaning" (Zwigenberg 66). This transformation narrative strongly shaped the commemorative culture developing around how Hiroshima and Nagasaki were being remembered. The place of the hibakusha in public discourse became both more prominent and more politicized with the rise of the anti-nuclear age, beginning in the mid-1950s and happening in tandem with the growing understanding of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as global memory sites. The Lucky Dragon Five incident on March 1, 1954, was a galvanizing moment. A small Japanese fishing vessel, called the Lucky Dragon Five, was exposed to nuclear fallout from a U.S. hydrogen bomb test on the Bikini Atoll. The crew on the boat were contaminated with radioactive ash, precipitating a public outcry against nuclear testing, the government's subsequent handling of the incident, concerns over the crew's health, and fears of tuna contamination.

The anti-nuclear movement that developed in the wake of the Lucky Dragon Five incident gained international momentum, and with that came a global role for the hibakusha. Zwigenberg positions the 1955 World Congress against Hydrogen and Atomic Bombs (known in its Japanese abbreviation as *Gensuikyo*) as a turning point in which the power of the hibakusha

[11] Zwigenberg elucidates on the transformation narrative, writing that it provided both the city of Hiroshima and its survivors with meaning, introducing "symbolic order into a life shattered by the bomb and taught survivors how to feel." Learning how to feel—after an event that had never been experienced by any other humans in history—was a unique challenge for survivors who struggled in articulating the complex range of emotions they felt. Zwigenberg cites the *Hiroshima Diary* of doctor Hachiya Michihiko, who wrote of a "people who walked in the realm of dreams...what words can we now use, and to what ends? Even: what are words?" (67).

was harnessed as they were encouraged to share their testimonies (79). “The hibakusha as witness and her testimony emerged as powerful tools of emotional mobilization for the peace movement,” he writes (80).

Over the ensuing decades, Dower asserts that collective memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experienced cycles of renewal, or “rehumanization, in which individuals or grassroots movements reacted against the ritualization and gross politicization of remembrance” (137). Throughout this, the hibakusha and the media were closely intertwined, each group using the other to help fulfill various purposes, from the extensive coverage of the “A-bomb Maidens” that produced a “sentimental storm” in the 1950s U.S. press to anti-nuclear weapon campaigns involving hibakusha that arguably culminated in the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) winning the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize (Dower 82, 85, The Nobel Prize). Through tracing how the hibakusha have been portrayed historiographically, we see here how journalists, through their reporting and working with hibakusha, have always been at the forefront of shaping collective memory around Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Anniversary anxiety

By the 50th anniversary in 1995, the hibakushas’ central role in any coverage of Hiroshima or Nagasaki was undisputed. In Japanese newsrooms, conversations began to shift towards the future. “That was the turning point, the 1995 anniversary, when we started to talk about the danger of the future, losing the hibakusha and needing to pass the memories to the next generation,” Shimazaki, the NHK World editor-in-chief, said.

But in 1995, that post-hibakusha future could still feel far off. Since then, an over-reliance on the survivor testimony in anniversary coverage has only become more of a crutch in

both U.S. and Japanese media, in which the survivor serves as the audience stand-in, the entry into the topic, and the emotional touchstone. Sharing survivors' stories is an important way society remembers a tragedy, but media over-reliance leads to the inevitable challenge of navigating coverage in the post-hibakusha world. Without survivors to shape coverage around, what is left? Rote descriptions of the annual ceremony? A pivot to the political, focusing on contemporary nuclear issues and activism? A transition to the children and grandchildren of hibakusha, and an exploration of generational trauma? All of these are possibilities that we may see in the near future, and will be explored further in this paper, but for now, it is worthwhile to consider current attitudes, both in the newsroom and the classroom, towards anniversary journalism.

American approaches to anniversaries: New York Times, CBS News case studies

New York Times journalist and Australia bureau chief Damien Cave calls anniversaries a "tool in the tool box" for media, but not an integral one. "I don't really think anniversaries are necessary. In some ways they're an artificial device that maybe allows us to do some exploration. I also wonder if it makes us a little lazy. If the anniversary is your news hook or that's your headline, maybe you're not doing enough to really get people interested and explain to them why the topic is relevant, not just on the day of the anniversary, but for weeks and months and years."

Cave, who co-wrote an extensive interactive report for the *New York Times* on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, said in a personal interview that the goal was to move beyond a recapping of a moment frozen in time—a marker of more traditional

anniversary journalism. Rather than featuring survivor recollections, his report turned the focus to the future, asking students in various countries how they are taught about the historic event.

> One of the things that made us excited about this project was that it was not just looking back through the lens of what people had already experienced, but rather looking at how the narrative of [9/11] plays out in the lives of people who were not alive at the time. I think we were driven pretty early on in our work on this, which started about five or six weeks out from publication, by the idea of how 9/11 would be understood not just now, but in the future.

Cave said the media outlet's approach to anniversaries was influenced by Bill Keller, who served as executive editor from 2003-2011. "For a long time, anniversaries were not something we really aimed to cover. Bill Keller was notorious for really feeling that an anniversary was not a good enough reason to tell a story. You should tell a good story when it's time to tell that story, that was sort of his philosophy. But once in a while, with big anniversaries, and this one did feel like a big anniversary, the *Times* tries to look at it in a deep way from as many angles as possible."

The *Times*' Tokyo bureau chief Motoko Rich reinforced Cave's description of how the outlet conceives its commemorative coverage. "There needs to be some sort of extra peg, and generally speaking, our news judgment is that anniversaries per se aren't necessarily things that need to be covered in and of themselves. We don't cover everything every year, but for important, special milestones," she said in a personal interview.

Rich's first experience covering the Hiroshima anniversary was on one of those specific milestones—then-President Barack Obama's visit to the city in May 2016. Not yet the Tokyo bureau chief, Rich flew to Japan to cover the trip. "That was obviously a big event because the sitting President of the United States, the very first, was making a visit to Hiroshima and was making a very important speech."

The second time Rich covered the anniversary for the *Times* was the 75th in 2020. "I used that as a peg to write about Setsuko Thurlow, who had been part of the Nobel Prize winning team. But I had to pitch that story. It wasn't like [the news desk] was like, okay, let's come up with this huge plan for covering the 75th anniversary, the end of the war."

We see here in Rich and Cave's recollections a clear prioritization by *the New York Times* on the *specific* and the *special* when it comes to anniversaries. Specific anniversaries—the 20th, 50th, 75th, and so on—demand a look back, and oftentimes, a look ahead. Special events related to anniversaries—Obama's visit was in May 2016, two and a half months before the anniversaries and in an "off year," the 71st—also prompt journalistic coverage.

There is also, to varying degrees, an onus on the reporter to pitch the topic rather than a top-down order from the editorial desk. Stories with a direct connection to the United States and an interest to American audiences may be more likely to be greenlit by editors. Yousur al-Hlou, who co-wrote the 9/11 anniversary story with Cave, said anniversaries of major events will "always" be important for the *New York Times*, but "to the extent that they have an effect on U.S. policy or economics or culture, I think there's more of a chance it will be commemorated in a video, article or product we put out." If an individual journalist is able to tie a story idea to an anniversary coming up, the likelihood of getting that story approved also increases, according to al-Hlou. "I'm always thinking of anniversaries in the sense of a news peg. If I have a story I'm interested in, is there a date coming up in memoriam of this incident that I can tie something I'm naturally curious to? In a newsroom, you can sometimes work on passion projects of things that are evergreen, but the more they are tied to a date, the better chance you have of a pitch getting approved. Anniversaries do ground my work, and are important."

Al-Hlou, Cave and Rich offer a primarily print media perspective (although the *Times* has been increasing its digital, podcast and video footprints). John Dickerson, the senior political analyst at *CBS News*, offers a more traditional television-focused take on the role of anniversaries in journalism. For the 80th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 2021, Dickerson traveled to Honolulu to file several television pieces for the network.

"Newsrooms are reluctant to run anything that doesn't sort of immediately present itself," he said in a personal interview. "I was actually surprised that *CBS* put as many resources behind it as possible, and that's in part because our average age of our audience is in the mid-60s. So you have viewers who are part of the baby boom generation. They would have had parents who were formed by the America that was created after the attack on Pearl Harbor." Audience expectations, then, are another driver in anniversary coverage, although not as powerful as in Japan as will be explored in the next case study.

The medium of television presents new challenges to anniversary coverage, as it requires visual and audio components that print can get away without incorporating—a fact Dickerson nodded to in an interview for this paper. "Television is kind of a pain in that they prefer live people talking, than, say, reading a diary entry. But I tend to not worry about that. I'd rather hear something that is powerful in whatever form it comes."

For Dickerson's Pearl Harbor stories, that meant mining the archives for assistance in looking at the anniversary not as a singular event but as part of a larger whole of collective remembrance. "One of the pieces I did looked at the different ways in which the various anniversaries had been commemorated and thought about over the last 80 years, as a way to not just tell the story about being attacked but also to add some context to the ways viewers consume these anniversaries." To tell those stories, Dickerson mostly used archival footage, interviews

with survivors that had previously aired in earlier years, newsreels, diary entries, newspaper articles, and snippets of historical speeches in order to "get a much richer survey of opinion and sense of complexity." One reason why Dickerson featured interviews with survivors from past years highlights a sensitive challenge for journalists and particularly those working in television. As survivors age and experience memory lapses or difficulty in speaking, their recollections may not result in the sort of "ideal" television quality networks desire. While this does not matter so much in print, where pauses or weakened voices can be edited or polished, there is pressure on TV journalists to come up with "good TV" or the "golden nugget" —a pitch-perfect soundbite that captures emotion and pulls the viewer in. It can sound callous, but concerns over forcing elderly survivors to relive trauma is a consideration that oftentimes goes hand in hand with worries over broadcast quality.

"When I was working on my pieces, I was anxious to go back to the archives and get people who had spoken earlier in their lives—when they were a little sharper, when the memories were a little more keenly felt, and where it didn't have that kind of abusive quality to it where you're taking people who are physically infirm and kind of pressing them one more time," Dickerson said.

With journalistic experience covering national and international politics stretching back decades, Dickerson called anniversary journalism "a potentially mixed bag," in which being assigned to an anniversary story can "feel a little dutiful…merely marking a period based on a totemic period of time can seem arbitrary." But he said he likes being assigned to anniversary coverage because of what it allows journalists—and society—to do. "They force us to pay attention and rethink things we thought we knew and understood," he said. "I tend to enjoy it because we spend so much time in the modern news environment studying what happened in the

last ten seconds that we don't look back at history and look both at the lessons, but also the emerging picture. A lot of our snap judgments about the moment are revealed to be snap judgments later. Anniversary journalism is an opportunity to remind people of that."

Japanese media and anniversaries: NHK case study

Anniversaries occupy a much larger and more entrenched space in the journalism field in Japan. Indeed, anniversary journalism in Japan may be connected to broader cultural norms and social expectations around rituals. "Anniversary journalism is very important in terms of setting and reinforcing value systems and work routines," Kunieda Tomoki, a journalism professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, said in an interview with the author. "Seasonal events are very important in Japan. We like to make things predictable. Media is also following suit." Sawa Yasuomi, a journalism professor at Senshu University, former deputy editor of *Kyodo News*' New York bureau, and the author of Oxford University's Reuters Institute 2021 Digital News Report's country page on Japan, agreed. "Anniversaries are regularly built into the editorial calendar of journalists' work every year," he said.

Anniversary journalism in Japan covers a wide range of events, including natural disasters (the 1995 Great Hanshin earthquake, the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake, the 2020 Kyushu floods), memorable crimes (the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attack, the 2019 Kyoto animation studio arson attack), wartime commemorations (the 1945 Battle of Okinawa), and more positive associations such as pop culture-inspired "nostalgia pieces" or sports anniversaries.

One factor in perpetuating anniversary journalism is audience demand, according to Kunieda. "Viewers expect to see anniversaries covered. Television viewers and newspaper

readers in Japan tend to be older nowadays, with young people not accessing traditional media, and these older generations who watch television or read newspapers tend to like to see old things come up. They like to read things they know a lot about, so they welcome anniversary-related coverage."

Whereas in the United States we see the aforementioned emphasis on the *specific* and the *special* driving anniversary coverage, in Japan a very different model exists, in which all anniversaries—particularly ones to do with disasters or World War II—are expected to be covered by journalists. "Traditional anniversaries, they appear definitely every single year, not just every five or ten years," said Kunieda. In particular, a concept known as *hachigatsu* (August) journalism negates the need for the "news hook" mentioned by the American journalists; hachigatsu *is* the news hook. "During the August season, obviously there's a lot of discussion about the war experience in Japan, the nuclear bomb experience in Japan, because of all the anniversaries that occurred in August of 1945," said Kunieda. "We call it the August journalism, or *hachigatsu journalism*, where during the month media outlets will refer to the wartime experience many times in a variety of stories.

"It makes it a package that you can refer to during this August season. But these stories don't get reported before or after August. It's not a topic we talk about during September, or July. War experience and nuclear bomb experiences are exclusively discussed during the August season, especially around the 6th, 9th, and 15th (the day marking Japan's surrender)."

One reason why anniversaries make up such a prominent part of the editorial calendar is evoked by a word that kept surfacing in interviews with Japanese individuals for this paper—responsibility.

"It's a very Japanese thing. There's a shared responsibility among people to deliver common memories, share our identity-related memories," Kunieda said. "Memories that somehow people think should be reported every single year, that people think should be discussed every year."

Kunieda added that celebratory anniversaries may not appear as often compared to ones marking disasters, under which the dates of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fall. "If it's a disaster, it's usually related to the media's responsibility to remind people [of the need] to prevent similar things from happening again." That idea of responsibility is most felt by the nation's public broadcaster, NHK. "They consider themselves the tool for society to remember those disasters through, and prevent [them] from happening again," said Kunieda. NHK, with 54 broadcasting stations across the country, has the staff, resources, and funding (thanks to a receiving fee system as stipulated under the Broadcast Law enacted in 1950, in which all households and businesses in Japan with a television pay a fee) to cover a wide variety of anniversary programming, including extensive annual commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (NHK). "NHK has a special position in the Japanese media," Kunieda said. "Private media do try to imitate NHK, but then NHK has the most resources to deliver new information."

Yamamoto Miki is the executive anchor at *NHK World Japan*, the broadcaster's English-language, international service. She referred to a "sense of mission" felt by NHK journalists to cover the atomic bomb anniversaries in depth. "I think many of us feel this sense of responsibility and also a passion to keep [hibakusha] stories alive because so many people look to us as the national broadcaster. If we don't continue to keep telling their stories, this history will die out. And there's a fear amongst us that there could be another nuclear tragedy somewhere if these stories are forgotten." This sense of mission is not unique to journalists

working for either NHK or other outlets, and can be felt by ordinary Japanese citizens—its roots lay in the complex pacifist national identity forged in the post-war years that attempts to include both atomic victimhood and acknowledgment of Japanese aggressions, to varying results over the decades.[12]

The impact of anniversary coverage is a communal one, making society feel more connected through shared commemoration, according to Kunieda. "It just brings people together," he said. "People talk about the same thing and people value the same thing." But he noted the uniqueness of this attitude, and its journalistic drawbacks. "The diversity in this country is very limited compared to other countries. And the diversity in media reports is extremely limited. I think there's a common attitude here that resists change, and people want to remind themselves of the similarities, not the differences, and they just want to commemorate the past in a simple, repetitive way. They don't want to change that way or introduce new ideas that change the reporting style or how we commemorate things." Crucially, Kunieda noted, "people always talk about how to keep the memories fresh, rather than moving on."

Kunieda introduced the idea of a schema, an "unwritten frame" or code under which journalists in Japan operate. "Japan tries to put things in a very small frame. Hiroshima and Nagasaki are engraved in that small frame where they talk about the same thing every single year, and they don't digress. The frame is set, and while there are new attempts within the frame, no one will go outside it."[13] Referring to the *New York Times* 9/11 package written by Cave and

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[12] As James Orr demonstrates in The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan (2001: University of Hawai'i Press), "victim consciousness", or *higaisha ishiki,* plays an essential role in Japan's national identity as a pacifist country. He also notes that victim mythology and the "privilege" of war victimhood is not limited to Japan but is evident in the United States too, in particular illustrated by the controversy over the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum's Enola Gay exhibit, which will be discussed in more detail in this paper (179).

[13] Kunieda's frame has its roots in the concept of schemata, popularized by British psychologist Sir Frederic C. Bartlett as cited in Erll's Memory in Culture (82-3). Describing it as Bartlett's most significant contribution to collective memory studies, Erll defines schemata as "patterns and structures of knowledge [that]...reduce complexity

Al-Hlou, Kunieda said a similar report would likely not be made by a Japanese outlet. "There were a lot of people around the world involved in [that] discussion, who may have different, conflicting views about the 9/11 events," he said. "Some may be pro-U.S., some may be anti-U.S., but in Japanese anniversary [coverage], it usually doesn't include views from overseas, or conflicting views on the topic that make it more controversial, especially historical events; it gets very political and a lot of people try to make the discussion within a specific frame."

While Kunieda sees journalists in Japan experimenting with new technology or using fresh research to push forward anniversary stories, he said those new attempts still operate "within a very specific frame, which makes it very nationalistic and very narrow to some people. But then, I think if you're brought up in Japan, it doesn't feel so strange. It feels natural."

In an interview, former *Kyodo News* editor Sawa made his own, unprompted, reference to a concept similar to the "narrow frame" described by Kunieda. "Japanese media is not very good at innovating or getting out of the box," he said. "We like very organized and well-shaped things, and there's a kind of beauty and also not very beautiful thing about that. I don't want to put the blame on the culture but we should be more keen to get out of the box, to stop repeating the patterns, to get a newer way of thinking."

Bolstering this idea of a narrow frame or box is Tom Le's writing on Japan's "instruction rules," specifically those created by Japanese peace culture, or *heiwa bunka* (192). Instruction rules "tell society what actions to take to arrive at the desired outcome and, in doing so, generate commitment rules that guide behavior" (192). Journalists' adherence to annual anniversary coverage illustrates the ways in which media behavior in Japan is shaped by these instruction rules and operate within the "narrow" frame Kunieda and Sawa see.

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and guide perception and remembering…acquired through socialization and are thus not universal, but culture-specific" (83).

Anniversaries from the perspective of journalism and memory scholars

Both journalism scholars and collective memory scholars are interested in, and critical of, the ways in which journalists memorialize our shared pasts. As Erll asserts, cultural memory research "is often simultaneously media research" and the two fields overlap and inform one another (114). For Kitch, any study of collective memory requires an understanding that journalism "works within, not apart from, other cultural memory forms…[it] is inside memory; it is at its heart. This is why journalism is worth taking seriously" in the realm of media studies (318). As we saw in the example of John Dickerson's *CBS News* reports on the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, news outlets regularly recycle the "journalism of previous eras to contextualize present-day events"—whether it's through archival footage to trace the evolution of remembrance or through retrospectives engineered to prompt nostalgic reflections, journalism may be about "what's new," but it is also constantly living in the past (Kitch 312). It's become a truism to say that journalism is the "first draft of history," but as Kitch argues, journalism is "also the first draft of memory, a statement about what should be considered, in the future, as having mattered today" (312). Whether it's the homepage of the *New York Times*, a video shared by *CBS News* on Twitter, or any of the other evolving places journalism is finding itself today, it remains a gathering place, the watering hole for what Kitch terms the "public anticipation of memory" (312).

But it is important to note that both media and memory are not neutral mirrors reflecting the past. Rather, they "offer constructions of the past…what they appear to encode—versions of past events and persons, cultural values and norms, concepts of collective identity—they are, in fact, first creating" (Erll 114). After creation comes repetition and reinforcement, so that our

perception of an historical event is already pre-formed, and then constantly regenerated and reshaped.

So what does annual commemorative media coverage accomplish, in the eyes of media and memory scholars? It creates, reinforces and reminds people of a shared common past. "Repeated representation, over decades and centuries, in different media, is exactly what creates a powerful site of memory," Erll writes (141). Anniversary journalism, then, is a form of both mediation and *re*mediation, defined by Bolter and Grusin as the "formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms" (273). Remediation "tends to solidify cultural memory, creating and stabilizing certain narratives and icons of the past" (Erll 141). While Erll uses the repurposed and remediated photo of the burning Twin Towers as an example of how 9/11 became a global site of memory, the image of the mushroom cloud—frequently cited or shown in journalistic coverage of the Hiroshima anniversary—can be said to fulfill the same role in helping establish Hiroshima as a global memory site.[14] The mushroom cloud, as Peggy Rosenthal asserts, is a complex symbol but not a subtle one (89). The same can be said about anniversary journalism, the "artificial device" Damien Cave referenced that allows journalists to explore a past event and its current repercussions. Anniversaries are not subtle reminders of the passage of time, but very direct, obvious ones, and the corresponding journalism around anniversaries is also far from subtle. Yet the symbolization behind this journalism is full of complexities, revealing clues into what we collectively choose to remember (and forget), what that says about us, and how rituals like anniversaries impart moral meanings.

[14] For more on the iconography of the mushroom cloud image in America, see Peggy Rosenthal's 1991 work in which she describes the photograph as "a uniquely privileged image - unchallenged around the world in its status as symbol of the nuclear age" (p. 63). The Nuclear Mushroom Cloud as Cultural Image. *American Literary History*, *3*(1), 63–92. https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/3.1.63.

Scholars are also considering the evolving impact of the survivor-witness—a key figure in anniversary journalism—on collective memory. As Erll demonstrates, memory has become a "transnational phenomenon" in part because of the steady loss to society of survivors (4). Most of the scholarship on this phenomenon tends to focus on Holocaust survivors, but the same argument applies to the contemporaries of the Holocaust survivors—the hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "For the cultural memory of the Shoah…the loss of the generations that had first-hand experience of the Holocaust…represents a significant turning point, since death puts an end to the oral passing on of lived experience," Erll writes, citing the framework of 'communicative memory' as outlined by Jan and Aleida Assmann (4). Erll goes on to assert that when societies lose eyewitnesses to historical events, dependence then shifts to "media-supported forms of remembrance," marking the transition to what the Assmanns call 'cultural memory' (4).

Collective memory of both the Holocaust and the atomic-bombed cities hasn't yet shifted completely away from the communicative memory phase—and, in fact, the same event can exist both in cultural memory and communicative memory, according to the Assmanns' framework as explored by Erll (31). But as survivors continue to age, more media-supported forms of remembrance are emerging and outpacing the direct testimonials. We will consider two of those forms—museums and creative works like documentaries and novels—in upcoming case studies before returning to anniversary journalism, but first, an examination of how the media has linked morality to the process of remembering.

The role of memory and morality at anniversaries

The morality of memory appears to be most discussed at times of anniversary (that "news hook" journalists Cave, Rich and Al-Hlou refer to), a moment of routine remembering occurring on culturally agreed upon years—the 10th, the 20th, the 50th, the 100th. As Zehfuss asserts,

there's a "moral imperative" imposed on these dates that links the past to the future—urging audiences not only to fulfill a responsibility to remember the victims but also demanding we take actions to prevent such horrors from reoccurring (57-58).

"People may be more receptive to hearing something on an anniversary, because there's something about an anniversary that requires you to take a moment of solemnity that you might not have under other circumstances," Blume said.

The journalist and author of "Fallout" referenced a "bandwidth of attention" in the moment of anniversary, particularly one commemorating a "very grave" event or a significant milestone year. "But then because anniversaries are like holidays, they come and go and the instant that anniversary is over, the attention flips someplace else. And whether that's the function of it being pegged to an anniversary specifically, or if that's just human nature and human attention, is still up for debate."

Blume said she had "mixed feelings" on the journalistic concept of the anniversary peg or news hook, sharing she had firsthand experience of how much institutions rely on it. "On the one hand, there's so little air time and page space, even in the online realm. There are space limits, and so much competition for getting stories placed that an anniversary often is a way to get your foot in the door with difficult stories—even if it's the easiest, most obvious peg. It's still a peg."

Blume said her book was purposely timed to the 75th anniversary of Hiroshima. "There would have been no way any attention would be paid to Fallout if it hadn't been [the anniversary]," she said. "Especially in the middle of a pandemic. We were peak pandemic when my book came out." Despite the publishing challenges posed by the pandemic and no shortage of other news stories taking up oxygen in the media, "Fallout", a *New York Times* Notable Book of

2020, was widely and positively reviewed by a number of large media market sites and critics (Hafner, Kosner, Langewiesche, McClelland, Whittington, Wittner).

But it was the fiftieth anniversary that is best illustrative of the unique and at times fierce moral reckoning the mediated memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki can unleash in the public space. Leading up to the anniversary, the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum in Washington planned an exhibit to open in May of 1995, featuring the Enola Gay, the B-29 airplane that dropped the bomb over Hiroshima. The plan immediately provoked controversy and contestation as groups debated whether the artifact represented "atomic carnage" or stood as a "lifesaver, a peacemaker" (Hogan 201). As Hogan demonstrates, the museum curators "understood better than most that historical commemorations are socially constructed and often contested events" and thus, in the words of the principal curator Michael J. Neufeld, planned to "present all the differing views" (203).

That meant addressing Japanese concerns that the exhibit would glorify the bombing or provoke anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States. Including developments in scholarship over the decades that challenged the initial justifications of the bombs was also important for curators.[15]

Veterans' groups, their supporters, and conservative politicians and journalists reacted with outrage, voicing worries that such an exhibit would obscure the sacrifices veterans had made in what they considered a just war and portray the Japanese as victims. In a complaint that may sound familiar to contemporary readers well-versed in "cancel culture" discourse, the pilot

[15] Hogan, through analysis of early scripts of the exhibit, shows that initial plans included looking at how the desire to "intimidate the Soviet Union with American military power" and the rhetoric of racism and revenge were factors in the decision to drop the bomb. The scripts also questioned the government line that the attacks had prevented the deaths of hundreds of thousands of American and Japanese lives had a land invasion of Japan happened instead (p. 203). He summarizes by stating that the Smithsonian curators wanted to go beyond displaying historical artifacts - "it would be an exercise in historical thinking" (204).

who flew the Enola Gay on August 6, Brigadier General Paul Tibbets, said of the curators: "They're trying to evaluate everything in the context of today's beliefs…it's a damn big insult" (Hogan 205). Through examining the first and last scripts for the exhibit, Hogan compellingly traces how the initial vision for the exhibit became a watered down, neutered version of the original idea, and how the exhibit as a whole became a flashpoint for a wider battle over history (represented by the museum curators and backed by professional historians and groups) and memory (represented by veterans and those who had lived through the war).[16]

The key controversy illuminated by the Enola Gay debate was the now widely-debunked premise that Hiroshima and Nagasaki prevented more deaths from occurring in a bloody land invasion, as claimed by President Truman and Secretary of War Stimson. The "revenge rhetoric" —that Hiroshima and Nagasaki "repaid" the Japanese "manyfold" for Pearl Harbor, in the words of Truman when announcing the bombing of Hiroshima—was also a critical justification device. Fifty years on, and continuing to this day, these two twinned ideas still resonate within the United States and symbolize the uneasy way morality comes up against weaponized memory in the American anniversarization of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[17] For Hogan, the Enola Gay controversy "proved again that history is contested terrain, particularly when public presentations of the past collide with living memory" (231). But as we transition into a world where living memory of the bombs no longer exists, how will our public presentations of that contested past change? The following four case studies will examine different public presentations beyond

[16] See also Oleson (2020) and Neiman (2015).

[17] An example of how this idea resurfaced in more recent times can be found in the debate over U.S. President Barack Obama's 2016 visit to Hiroshima. As Olesen shows, the visit provoked not only a "tweet attack" by then-presidential candidate Donald Trump, it also spurred John Bolton, former ambassador to the United Nations (who would later serve as National Security Advisor to Trump from 2018-2019) to "blast" the trip, in the words of John Hayward for Breitbart News. "What we were doing was defending our country, which had been attacked in a completely unprovoked fashion," Bolton told Breitbart News, in a callback to Truman and Stimson. "We were doing it, dropping the atomic bomb in particular, to save American lives. That was Truman's decision." Quoted in Olesen (88).

journalism, from museums to artistic interpretations by the children of hibakusha, to the denshosha concept and, finally, activist-NPO work.

Case Study # 1 - Museum approaches to preserving history in post-survivor worlds

As we saw in the example of the Smithsonian's Enola Gay exhibit, museums can play a powerful role in how and what is remembered. Martin Harwit, the then-director of the National Air and Space Museum who proposed the initial idea for the exhibit, later argued for the role of the museum as both narrator and educator. "Museums cannot help but tell stories. Curators and exhibition designers are storytellers. Histories are particular types of stories museums tell" (Harwit 52).

Peace museums are a particular subset of museums, and embody a specific sort of cultural power and influence due to their authority and "privileged position" in public education (Le 178). As Le writes, peace museums provide "instruction rules and commitment rules for visitors who passively observe exhibitions and scholars who actively use museum resources to disseminate peace discourses." Le concludes that because of the significant financial and political capital such museums require, they are symbols and spaces of what society considers important and necessary (179).

Museums and journalists, at their most idealistic, share a similar sense of mission, and a similar commitment to certain values such as accuracy and balance. But in practice, both museums and the media can get it wrong—and do. Although museums and media position themselves as storytellers, as institutions of knowledge they are also gatekeepers. Storytellers get to decide how to shape their stories, and in the case of museums, even the smallest details like lighting decisions or which artifacts to highlight can have enormous implications on how visitors "read" that story. "Exhibitions…are not just a jumble of arbitrarily selected items each with its

own identifying label," the Smithsonian's Harwit explained in his book on the Enola Gay exhibit. "The choice of objects to display or not to display begins to set a direction…the ordering or patterns in which they are arrayed evoke particular insights. The selection of lighting levels establishes a mood. The emphases of words or film footage introducing the exhibition or describing objects further influence the visitor. Each of these choices, whether deliberate or unconscious, shades the visitors' perceptions, the story they will bring away" (52).

Dohi Yukimi, a curator at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, knows all too well the decisions that go into informing an exhibition. In 2019, the museum underwent a massive redesign. "The contents of the exhibition were getting older, so we needed to renew," Dohi said in a personal interview. The museum took the renovations as an opportunity to change the way they told the story of Hiroshima, with a greater focus on highlighting and preserving survivor testimonies.

"It used to be not about people, but about the nuclear bomb," said Dohi. "The nuclear bomb, the blast and heat rays and radiation. More scientific. Maybe the scientific facts are easier to understand. Before, we just had a little bit about survivors, but now we display more about the survivors, parents who lost children, children who lost parents, their struggles to get a job, to get married. Being a hibakusha never ends, that's what we want to tell people."

"The former director said, 'let's change the perspective' [of the exhibits]," she added. "It used to be from above the nuclear cloud, but we changed it to under the mushroom cloud. Not from the sky, but from below." It was a literal shift in storytelling perspective, from an aerial, clinical and detached view of Hiroshima to one centered on what daily life looked like from the streets, parks and neighborhoods of a city, both before and after it was demolished. "Our theme is, 'tell individual lives', and it's not just about that day, August 6, but about how life kept on,"

Dohi said. “Our main purpose is to make people think, this could happen again, to you. It could happen tomorrow. This is not the past. Usually the past is told through numbers, like ‘this many people died’, but I want people to know, each individual had a life.”

Dohi said the main way of illustrating that sentiment to visitors is through artifacts, and that the primary method the museum is employing to keep the experiences of the hibakusha alive heading into the post-hibakusha world is a combination of artifacts and testimonies. “We preserve the artifacts with the stories that go alongside them in detail,” she said. “The clothes they wore, pictures of victims, things they kept in their houses. Something important to the victims. Ordinary objects. These things tell lessons,” she said. “When you see these artifacts next to the testimonies, it allows [visitors] to relate to what happened to that person, this woman, this child.” Once a year, the displays are changed and artifacts are rotated for preservation and storage.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum is the largest of approximately 76 peace museums in Japan, the most of any country in the world (Le 178).[18] The commitment to peace education is part of the larger peace culture discourse in Japan, a “fundamental component of the antimilitarism ecosystem” of post-war Japan (161). It is important to note that this discourse has its critics, including Le who highlights its roots in deflecting attention from the atrocities committed by the Japanese government and military in the Second World War as well as avoiding any kind of examination of Japan’s colonial policies and their repercussions (143). The result, for Le, is an antinuclear (yet absent of overt politicization) institution centered on a generic message of peace, allowing “visitors to contemplate the meaning of peace in a nonthreatening and nonpartisan space” (144). The selectivity of Japanese wartime memory, in

[18] As Le points out, the distance between a peace museum - there is at least one in 32 of Japan’s 47 prefectures— and any point in Japan is no more than a two hour train ride (179).

which the suffering of Japanese people comes at the deemphasization or outright erasure of other groups' experiences, such as Korean women forced into sex slavery or foreign nationals engaged in forced labor in Japan, must also be considered in a conversation about peace museums in the country.

Following the museum's renewal in 2019, 1.7 million people visited the museum, a record number (Dohi). Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, annual attendance had never dipped below one million since 1979 according to visitor data compiled by Le. Starting in 2015 (the 70th anniversary of the bombing), museum visits began rising before peaking in 2019. And while Japanese visitors have remained at consistent numbers since the mid-1990s (the 50th anniversary), international visitors to Hiroshima's museum increased by 240 percent in the last two decades, making up 29.7 percent of all visitors in 2019 (Le 184). While the rise mirrors the general increase of foreign tourists to Japan (which also peaked in 2019 at 31.9 million), it may also reflect a growing awareness of the passage of time regarding the atomic bombings and a desire on the part of visitors to see the museum and the city of Hiroshima before the last generation of survivors passes (JNTO).

Dohi, the curator at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, said staff don't have specific plans for the post-hibakusha future. "We focus on preserving as much as possible right now," she said. "Especially the voices of survivors. You can't have only the object or artifact in the museum. You need to have the stories behind them. Our mission is to gather things because that's what we can do right now."

The museum structures its displays around an operating principle that most people will only visit the museum once. "It's difficult for international guests to keep coming back," she said. "We're focused on this being someone's only visit in their lifetime, so making it very

impressive and memorable." Of course, the global coronavirus pandemic upended the museum's plans, creating new challenges the museum is still confronting. Closures and reopenings, as well as limitations on cross-prefectural travel within Japan and a near-blanket ban on foreign visitors to Japan, have meant attendance at the museum dropped sharply in 2020 and 2021. Dohi said museum staff worked to share content online, but while "we can make videos, it's not as powerful as actually coming here and seeing things." The museum has been putting more video testimonials of hibakusha online, and while Dohi said "more people are watching" those videos than expected, the viewers are mainly Japanese rather than international despite translations being available. In February 2022, the museum launched its Peace Database after a renewal period—a positive step towards growing the museum's digital footprint in a world where international travel is still restricted (HPMM). The database provides online users access to the museum's collection, including artifacts and survivor testimonials with English subtitles. It is a helpful complement to the museum's mission of peace education, but is both late-coming to the online space and does not do enough to appeal to people not already invested in the topic.

As Roy Tamashiro and Ellen Furnari argue in their 2015 article on peace museums, such institutions must adapt and reimagine themselves as spaces for people to develop critical analysis skills centered around multiperspectivity. The old style—static artifacts and photos, "briefly captioned interpretations and narratives", a lack of multiple or diverse voices—has resulted in "silencing other voices and suppressing other interpretations or histories," Tamashiro and Furnari write (231). They look at how modern museums are reinventing themselves alongside the evolving consensus of how to define and portray peace, writing that museums today are more likely to be "an interactive, virtual, or real-world experience that challenges visitors to critically review the messages and meanings the museum presents; to reflect on their own life experiences

and beliefs; and to engage in dialogue with others about their museum experiences" (231). The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum has taken steps towards reimagining its role in the broader peace education movement, but the pandemic presents both challenge and chance - the opportunity to seize an online space and grow their audience. With a renewed international focus on nuclear weapons following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the need for a museum that critically examines the human, political and environmental toll of nuclear weapons has perhaps never been stronger since the end of the Cold War. Will the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum be that museum?

Case Study # 2 – *Nisei* generation turns to art to carry on legacy

The children of the hibakusha, known as the *nisei* generation, have contributed to the creative discourse around preserving their parents' memories. This case study will examine two individuals, Akiko Mikamo and Kathleen Burkinshaw, and analyze the ways in which they have adapted their parents' recollections to fit new forms of memory, building upon and reinterpreting established dialogues of remembrance as created by the hibakusha generation.

Akiko Mikamo – filmmaker keeping father's memories alive

Mikamo is the writer and executive producer of the documentary and book 8:15. A San Diego-based clinical psychologist, she is the daughter of Mikamo Shinji, a hibakusha from Hiroshima who passed away at age 94 in 2020. Shinji was 19 years old on Aug. 6, 1945 and working on his father's roof 1.2 kilometers from the bomb's hypocenter when it was dropped. His father Fukuichi pulled him from the rubble he was buried under and put out the flames ravaging his body. In an interview with the *BBC*, Shinji recalled that his "skin hung off [my] body in pieces like ragged clothes", thinking that the yellow color of his flesh underneath looked

like “the surface of a sweet cake his mother used to make” (Venema). After three agonizing months being treated in a hospital, Shinji returned to the ruins of his family’s house to search for his father. Instead of finding Fukuichi, he found his father’s pocket watch and knew in that moment his father was dead. “The glass had been blown off, as had the watch hands. The metal was rusted and burned. The unimaginable intense heat that reached several thousand degrees Fahrenheit from the blast had fused the shadows of the hands into the face of the timepiece…it was enough to clearly see the exact moment the watch stopped” (Venema). Despite its hands being blown off, the heat of the blast had burned an image of them on the face, recording – and freezing – the exact minute the bomb detonated at 8:15 a.m. The watch was Shinji’s only physical reminder of his family, yet he donated it to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in 1949. In 1985, he allowed the museum to loan the watch to the United Nations, as part of a permanent exhibit on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the UN headquarters. On a visit in 1989 to see the watch, Mikamo said she was devastated to learn it had been stolen from the display. “My father, though, saw the positive in the theft,” she said in a personal interview. “He realized with all the news coverage about the watch that it led to more people learning about Hiroshima.”

Mikamo had listened to her father’s stories growing up, but it wasn’t until she gave a class presentation about him while attending business school that she decided it was time to write about his experience, spending three years interviewing him, writing and editing. The book was published in English in 2013, in Japanese in 2014, and was eventually made into the 2020 documentary film *8:15*, which she wrote and executive produced. Weaving together audio and video recordings, interviews, archival footage and re-enactments by actors, the documentary was selected by several film festivals and screened at events in Japan, the U.S., and South Africa.

"My dream was to turn the book into a movie by the time of the 75th anniversary," she said. "I felt very strongly that my father's story had to be told in a visual format. Nowadays, especially younger generations, we don't really read through the whole book because we're busy and we're used to having media come in and out very quickly. I felt that telling his story through film would be more impactful, more vivid, and could reach wider audiences."

Audience reach was an important consideration for both daughter and father. Shinji instructed Mikamo before she wrote the book that he wanted it to be written in English, so that more people could read it. "It was very important to him. He wanted me to learn English growing up, he was so happy when I moved to the U.S. to study psychology. He wanted me to be a bridge between cultures."

She said *nisei* like herself can continue to play a role as a bridge, not only between cultures but between generations, between perspectives, and between the era of lived memory and the era of recalled history the post-WWII society is currently transitioning into. "I don't think every member of the *nisei* generation has to learn English, and everybody has to go out and create art based on their parents," she said. "But whatever they can do, I think it's very important to spread and pass on the message of our parents."

Mikamo said she takes a "perspective of optimism" regarding the post-hibakusha future and the question of how the hibakushas' experiences will be remembered. "I choose to look at not what will be lost when they are all gone, but what can be gained. That was the exact message of my father. When you lose something, you gain something else. That's what he told me when his watch was stolen.

"Yes, it's unfortunate that we can't hear my father talk about [Hiroshima] directly anymore, but we can take his and others stories, videos and recordings and spread them in more innovative ways, to send the message in a wider way. We can reach more audiences, I think."

Mikamo believes *nisei* feel a greater sense of freedom and creativity when it comes to telling their parents' stories. "The direct opportunities to hear from the hibakusha themselves in real time are less and less, and will eventually be completely lost," she said. "But there will also be lots of opportunities to spread their message in more creative ways. I don't think hibakusha voices were heard enough to begin with over the past 76 years. The survivors have done admirable and significant work. But when I talk to people around the world, many have never heard about Hiroshima or Nagasaki. We can change that."

Mikamo's point about the second generation having the opportunity to share their parents' stories in a more "innovative" manner alludes to a common challenge in accounts of trauma where a dominant narrative colors, shapes or distorts the ways in which survivors not only remember, but pass down the experience. Le points out that younger hibakusha, who wouldn't have known the temperature generated by the bomb or its strategic significance, "tend to recall the atomic bombing in a detailed, scientific and contextualized manner, which suggests their testimonials have been influenced by data that was acquired after the event" (171). Zwigenberg also devotes attention to how the rise of peace discourse in Japan following the war led to the "emotional mobilization" of survivors, in which the dominant means of expression was through bearing witness in testimonials (66). Although memories of the bombings were varied, Zwigenberg writes that survivors "learned a certain narrative, a certain emotional style, which emphasized dignity and restraint and discouraged anger." It is no surprise that this style resulted in important consequences for the commemorative culture of both cities, as well as global war

memory (66). *NHK World-Japan* reporter Yoshida Mayu, who spent two years working in Nagasaki, said in a personal interview that,

> [M]any people point out that the hibakusha stories we share can actually sound cliched, and that we have to find new points. When I say cliche, well, you know that in Japan we always do these stories in August [*hachigatsu* journalism], but it's been repeated for more than 70 years now. I believe those stories are very important, but people are losing attachment because they've been told the same stories for more than seven decades now. Only people who are really interested in those issues will listen, but people who are not interested, like younger generations or those outside Hiroshima or Nagasaki, will not actively listen.

Mikamo's point offers a fresh perspective on how that seven-decade old narrative can potentially evolve as the *nisei*—and subsequent generations— take on the hibakushas' stories and fashion them in new ways that are perhaps not as beholden to expectations of what a story about Hiroshima or Nagasaki "should" look like. "I definitely feel my father's blessing, and also that his mission and message are living in me," Mikamo said. "As a psychologist, I understand how his experience impacted my life. It's not just somebody else's story. My life is part of his story."

Kathleen Burkinshaw, author, The Last Cherry Blossom

Kathleen Burkinshaw's young adult book, *The Last Cherry Blossom*, is based on her mother Toshiko Ishikawa Hilliker's experience as a 12-year-old surviving the atomic bombing in Hiroshima. The book fictionalizes Toshiko's life, allowing readers to imagine the city before the bombing, and then witness the devastation and horror in the aftermath. Burkinshaw, who is Japanese-American and based in North Carolina, said it was a conscious choice to write about the atomic bomb from the perspective of a child. "I realized I had to write it through the lens of a child in Japan, so that I wouldn't be putting a white lens on it, an American lens on it," she told

NHK. “I would simply show what life was like” (Burns). She said her goal was to honor her mother and relatives and, like the curator Dohi at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, take people beneath the iconic mushroom cloud to explore the human experiences of that day. “The first step toward nuclear disarmament is remembering that the people under those famous mushroom clouds were someone’s mother, father, sister, brother, or child,” she said (Burkinshaw, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists).

Like the filmmaker Mikamo, Burkinshaw also had the blessing of her hibakusha parent to tell the story in a new, creative way. “I had presented her experience to middle schools in North Carolina for six years, because I wanted students to understand there’s more to August 6th and 9th than the textbook picture of the mushroom cloud,” she said in a personal interview. “I was inspired to write a book after teachers asked if I had one they could add to their class reading list for further context. My mother was able to read a draft of the manuscript before she passed away in January 2015, and she knew it would be published. It was a very bittersweet moment but I hope that by telling her story to a new generation of future voters, I’m honoring her wish and making her proud.”

The 2016 novel has had a far-reaching impact. It was chosen as a resource for Nuclear Disarmament by the United Nations and was nominated for several awards in both the U.S. and Japan.[19] Burkinshaw’s identity as both Japanese and American has shaped the way she approaches sharing her mother’s legacy. “My mom always said to me, war was hell on both sides. We can’t forget the survivors, because then the whole meaning of why we’re such strong

[19] The Last Cherry Blossom was nominated for 2019 NC School Library Media Association YA Book Awards, 2019-2020 Volunteer State Book Award, Finalist 2018 Sakura Medal, Japan, Finalist 2017 Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Fiction, 2017 SCBWI Crystal Kite Award Finalist (southeast region), Honorary Mention New England Book Festival YA Book Award, and a 2016 and 2018 Scholastic WNDB Reading Club Selection. https://kathleenburkinshaw.com/#about

allies today is lost," she said. "Look, I'm half-Japanese, half-American. You'd think I'd feel torn, like I don't belong to either culture. But I actually feel like I represent the beauty of the relationship between the two countries. And my mom's experience as a survivor—and her story and others being validated and heard—is a big part of that."

Advocacy plays a significant role in both Burkinshaw and Mikamo's creative outputs. One of the main messages of the hibakusha over the decades—the need to abolish nuclear weapons—is being picked up by the *nisei* generation at a time when nuclear weapons are now once again front and center in news discourse covering Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But for Burkinshaw, nuclear weapons aren't the only topic she believes *nisei* like herself can contribute to. She said she wants journalists to know that *nisei* are willing to play a valuable role in media coverage of a variety of issues pertaining to the bombs, and that they have their own legitimacy as survivors, too, in their own way, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki due to their inherited trauma. "I feel that the children of the survivors, we experienced the attack too, in some way, shape or form. Whether it's PTSD, intergenerational trauma, or physical illness. And then our children experience it too, in a different way. It's this cycle that repeats itself. Hiroshima becomes a part of you, it doesn't leave."

The *nisei* generation's willingness to take on their parents' mission is welcomed by Japanese journalists, according to Nouchi Haruka, whose beat involved nuclear issues and the hibakusha for *NHK World Japan*. She said journalists are increasingly turning to the *nisei* for interviews and to provide that link to the past, but she questions whether the emotional resonance for the audience will still be felt. "I believe they are preparing to step up and take over for their parents, and they will work very hard, but I don't think it will be as powerful," she said in a

personal interview. “When we do stories about nuclear treaties like the TPNW, if we don’t have real-time interviews with actual survivors, I’m not sure the audience will feel as invested.”

Case Study # 3 - Denshosha program trains memory keepers

One unique solution to the challenge posed by the passing of time lies in the concept of the *denshosha*, a designated storyteller or “A-bomb legacy successor” in official Japanese parlance and is rooted in the oral storytelling tradition. The A-bomb legacy successor program was started by the Hiroshima municipal government in 2012 to directly address the looming specter of the post-hibakusha world (Nagasaki also has a similar program). As of 2020, there were 150 practicing *denshosha* in Hiroshima, with another 197 in training, according to *The Economist*. Nagasaki’s program has 83 volunteers. In addition to preserving and passing down the memories of survivors, the project also aims to spread a global disarmament message, particularly advocating for the abolishment of nuclear weapons.

Volunteers train for three years learning the stories of survivors—usually a stranger—in depth. The three-year process is intense, and requires serious commitment by the aspiring *denshosha*. In the first year, they attend lectures by hibakusha and are coached in public speaking. The second year sees them paired with mentor survivors, to learn their stories, shadow them at speaking events and work together on scripts detailing the survivor’s experience. The third year focuses on practical experience and finetuning their presentations and storytelling skills. In order to be officially certified as A-bomb legacy successors, the volunteer must be approved by the hibakusha they studied under (Masuda). Once they’ve completed training, they’re recognized as official A-bomb successors by the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation and can begin giving presentations at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, at local schools,

and—increasingly during the pandemic—online. Presentations are typically in Japanese, but a limited number of volunteers are certified to convey the memories of their survivor in English.

One of those English-speaking denshosha is Okimoto Naoko. She conveys the memories of Segoshi Mutsuhiko, who was 10 years old on Aug. 6, 1945. He only began sharing his story himself when he was 80. Okimoto also keeps the memory of Katsufumi Shintaku, who was 19 years old the day of Hiroshima's bombing. Some *denshosha*, like Okimoto, already had a personal connection to the atomic bombings before undergoing training, while others were inspired after a visit to Hiroshima (Rosner 40).

"There were several factors for me in deciding to become a denshosha," Okimoto said in a personal interview. "My parents-in-law were hibakusha, and the fact that they were exposed to the atomic bomb influenced me a lot. When I was thinking about joining the A-bomb legacy successor program, my son was two years old—the same age my mother-in-law was in 1945. During that year, I was so conscious that a two-year-old child, like my own, had been exposed to the bomb."

The program is not without its critics. "Some people feel it's still too early to have successors sharing the stories of hibakusha," Nakagawa Haruaki, director of Hiroshima's International Peace Promotion Department, told Nippon.com in 2017 (Masuda). "[But] we can't wait until the last atomic bomb survivor passes on. It's crucial to start the process of training the successors while hibakusha are still physically and mentally able to directly hand down their experiences." Some survivors have questioned whether someone who didn't experience the bomb firsthand can accurately convey the reality of it, or even avoid putting their own interpretation on the experience (Rosner 41). "Even while carefully deferring to first hand witnesses…all too soon, the second and third generations will be alone at the table. Like the

ventriloquism of the denshosha, we may be determined to speak in the words of the dead, but I both fear and accept that we will unavoidably be blending those words with our own," Rosner muses in *Survivor Café* (207). Ayami Shibata, the city official in charge of the *denshosha* program in 2015, told the *Washington Post* that the biggest challenge for the volunteers is learning how to tell a story about someone else's experience in someone else's words (Fifeld). "Many find it difficult to decide whether to speak first-person and which parts of their mentor's life to focus and to inherit."

Okimoto admits the role of memory transmitter is complicated. "The survivor is always our master. We convey their story," Okimoto said. "We always have kind of complex feelings, because it's not our own experience. They suffered. It's not my suffering. In this sense, I would never, ever say that denshosha can do better than survivors. It's not something comparable. It's their story, it's their experience. What A-bomb legacy successors can do is think about how best we can convey their stories." For Okimoto, that means using her own original illustrations based on Segoshi's testimony to supplement her presentations and offer a visual, visceral image for her audiences.

Another difficult consideration Okimoto must make is how to tailor her presentations to her audiences, which have included people in Costa Rica, the Philippines, the U.S., and Japan. Based in Manila until recently, Okimoto gave presentations to Filipino audiences, but was torn over whether to address the legacy of Japanese colonialism, occupation, and war in that country. "In Costa Rica, there are no negative relations with Japan, so I felt nothing heavy," she said. "But in the Philippines, I cannot stop questioning myself, is it okay to say that Hiroshima people suffered? What about Filipino people and all that they suffered?" When Okimoto speaks to American audiences, she said the focus is more on emphasizing Segoshi's message of

reconciliation. The weight of responsibility she feels she bears to accurately convey Segoshi's memories—while honoring the lived experiences and different national sentiments her audiences bring with them to her presentation—is evident, and speaks to the intricacies of what a truly transnational memory complex looks like.

Case Study # 4 - Anti-nuclear activists utilize tech to preserve powerful recollections

Mary Popeo's first awareness of the devastation of nuclear weapons came on a visit to Nagasaki as a Boston college student. The co-founder of Hiroshima-based non-profit Peace Culture Village (PCV) recalls a "turning point" seeing the artifacts displayed at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. "They were such every-day items. It seemed very personal to me, in that moment," she said in a personal interview. After working in the activism space for four years, Popeo partnered with Steven Leeper, the former chairman (and first and only American in that role) of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, the organization which runs the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, to found PCV. The non-profit employs a small team of American and Japanese peace workers and offers peace culture education programs and field trips primarily to young people and students.

"We have three missions," Popeo said. "To raise human consciousness to a peace culture, to cultivate Hiroshima's next generation of peace culture leaders, and to create jobs that make peace culture." She defines peace culture as "something for all of us, it's about lifestyle. Every day, based on how we live, we're either creating peace culture or war culture. 'Peace' itself is such a big concept. How do we create peace, and when is world peace actually realized? Nobody knows. Whereas with peace culture, we can realize it step by step, every day." Popeo said PCV

saw a gap in Hiroshima, where “there are actually few opportunities to think about what peace culture is. There’s a lot of opportunities to think about the horrors of war.”

Hibakusha voices are central to PCV’s work, with the non-profit working with three specific survivors. “If we didn’t have the hibakusha support, it would be really tough for us to work in this city,” Popeo said. Collaborating with three survivors was a deliberate choice, and allowed PCV to tailor their educational programs to students in a way that challenges the traditional format of hibakusha school visits. “What usually happens is the hibakusha will tell their testimony uninterrupted for maybe an hour,” Popeo said. “As I heard from my colleagues—80 percent of whom are second or third generation bomb survivors, that is not effective. The kids fall asleep, it’s scary. So we are cooperating with these three survivors who work with us to create more of a program, more of an interview style where we go back and forth and ask them questions, to really connect with the students.

“They are also willing to be flexible. There’s a lot of survivors, I think in part because it’s so traumatic, who say this one thing and they say it every time and they don’t differentiate from their message because it’s so incredibly difficult to relive or feel those emotions. The three survivors we work with are flexible in regards to the needs of the school, what the students want to ask, and that’s not common.”

Popeo said the organization is aware that it will not always be able to collaborate with survivors. “That is something everyone is thinking about here, and it’s a big question mark. So what we’re doing is using technology to help preserve their legacies now. I’d say that’s the number one thing we’re doing to prepare for that future.” Working with Tanaka Toshiko, who was a six-year-old walking to her elementary school in Hiroshima on Aug. 6, PCV created an augmented reality app for remote tours and a virtual reality tour for on-location tours in

Hiroshima, built around Tanaka's story. "We're the first ones to do this in Hiroshima. Our young members facilitate these tours once a day in English and in Japanese," Popeo said. "They guide you around Peace Park and at certain points, you put on a VR headset and you're able to look 360 degrees all around. You'll see Hiroshima before the atomic bombing, during the atomic bombing and then finally after. You can choose if you don't want to see any people, because that can be very traumatic, and that is why the guide is there too, to help people process what they're seeing. The virtual reality really helps people personalize the issue."

For those who can't visit Hiroshima in person, the augmented reality app, Xplore Hiroshima, is an alternative way to explore hibakusha stories like Tanaka's. With a grant from the City of Hiroshima and working with the story-building platform TimeLooper, PCV added hibakusha holograms in 2021. "Through this AR app, anyone from anywhere in the world can guide themselves through Peace Park," said Popeo. "We took Toshiko to a green screen and recorded her. And then, little mini Toshiko, as big as my coffee cup, can come along and talk about the things you see on the tour." The app, available in English and Japanese, also includes survivor testimonies, accompanied with drawings by survivors, archival footage of different Hiroshima districts in the pre-war era, and a 3-D model that allows users to go inside the Atomic Bomb Dome—something visitors to Hiroshima can't do.

The work PCV is doing has highlighted some generational divisions and disagreements over how best to conduct peace work in the city, according to Popeo. "There's definitely a dynamic here where there's a tension between how the young people want to carry this message into the future, and how the hibakusha feel about those ideas," she said. "For PCV doing the work we do for pay, we get complaints about that from people who have been doing it

voluntarily for so long. We also get complaints about the fact that we're using technology. That's a bit of a generational conflict, but for the most part it's been really positive."

PCV's long-term plan is to create holograms of more survivors to establish an archive. "Eventually there will be the ability to have a hologram appear in front of everyone in a classroom," Popeo said. "Even after the survivors are gone, if we capture enough of these types of holograms, then the survivor can still almost appear before students and give their testimony." That ability isn't there yet, however, and Popeo estimates it could be another decade until hologram technology is both mainstream and more affordable for non-profits that depend on grants for funding.

Similar to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, the pandemic was a major disruptor to PCV's work, forcing them to recalibrate their approach to anti-nuclear advocacy and hibakusha story preservation. But unlike the museum, which has been slower to engage remote, global audiences, PCV pivoted quickly and embraced technology. "The pandemic has completely transformed the way we've worked," Popeo said. "Before, we didn't do any of this online stuff. I'd say over half of our programs are now online. We've reached almost 8,000 people in 44 different countries in the past year through our programs and over half were through online."

But Popeo, despite the emphasis PCV is giving virtual and augmented reality, doesn't think the future of peace work lies solely in VR and AR. "I think the future of peace work is really in engaging young people. If we do that, then the technology will follow. But as far as preserving survivors' testimonies, which is foundational to peace work, whether that be Hiroshima or the Holocaust or the Rwandan genocide, technology will be a big part of that." Hiroshima is a city that has reinvented itself before, from a castle town on the Ota River delta, an

industrial hub following the Meiji Restoration, a strategic center for military activities in the Imperial era, a devastated city of ashes to a globally-recognized City of Peace. As the post-war period transitions to the post-survivor period, Hiroshima (and Nagasaki) will reinvent and reimagine once more. What will an "international peace city" look like without survivors of the bomb that came before that peace? Popeo's vision for Hiroshima in the post-survivor world is an "innovation hub" where "there are lots of young people doing creative projects, supporting one another, really creating that peace culture. I hope that even as the faces of survivors are disappearing, there will be new faces, there will be third or fourth generation survivors like the people I work with, spreading peace in their own way through art, sport, activism, whatever they're doing."

Conclusions: A roadmap for journalists

The four case studies demonstrate the engagement, work and thought various groups beyond the media are putting into the central challenge asked by this paper—what will happen when we lose the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? How will their memories evolve and be shared in our collective spaces? These case studies also represent four different approaches going forward in the post-hibakusha world, both institutional (museums, non-profits) and individual (*nisei*, creatives, volunteers like the *denshosha*). The role the Hiroshima and Nagasaki city governments will continue to play is also important in helping shape this new world. Grants and financial support for organizations like Peace Culture Village are critical as they transition more into an online space reliant on expensive technology. But the cities' abilities to advocate on the global stage and keep international attention on them will be crucial in determining how our collective memory of the atomic bombs evolves.

"I believe that the reality of the atomic bomb is not well communicated or understood around the world," said Nagasaki Mayor Taue Tomihisa in a personal interview conducted one day after he spoke at the 76th anniversary of his city's bombing. To better spread that message, Taue has been vocal about his desire for U.S. President Joe Biden to visit Nagasaki, telling this author in August 2021 that he was working on having Biden come to the city. "The reason is that the U.S. President has influential power, and if the President communicates to the world from Nagasaki regarding nuclear weapons, that will have an impact," Taue said. At a press conference in March 2022, Taue repeated his call for Biden to visit as nuclear tensions concerning Russia are rising, in addition to recent missile testing by North Korea (Lee). "We have been consistently saying Nagasaki should be the last atomic-bombed city and I want the president of a nuclear power to appeal [to the world] by saying, 'Let's make this place the last'," he said, following earlier comments by U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel that Biden would be eager to visit either Hiroshima or Nagasaki (Mainichi).

In the personal interview, Taue made clear he has other, perhaps overly ambitious, hopes for his city, including hosting an international conference by the 100th anniversary in 2045 "where leaders of nuclear weapon countries could participate and discuss how to eliminate nuclear weapons, and communicate a message from the atomic bombed city." He said that the shape of peace education for Nagasaki students is also undergoing a reimagining:

> The central role of peace education in Nagasaki is to listen to the testimony of the hibakusha. With the number of the hibakusha decreasing, I think it's important not just for children to listen to the hibakushas' testimony but to foster coexistence with other countries. Therefore, the city's peace education is changing, little by little. From not just listening to the testimonies, but thinking about what central role they can play in creating peace with other countries.

Taue said the city government considers the next 25 years a crucial transitional period, but offered no details on what that transition will involve. “In the past 75 years, the hibakusha have been taking the lead. However, when we mark the 100th anniversary of the atomic bombing, the roles of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will look very different. How they will look is up to us. We need to be well-prepared.”

One recent change that illustrates the transition is happening, albeit slowly, is a new policy by the municipality removing the requirement that the hibakusha who delivers the annual pledge for peace at the anniversary ceremony must have experience sharing their story publicly. “For a long time, the criteria was to have experience telling their testimony in public,” said *NHK World-Japan* reporter Yoshida Mayu who worked at *NHK*’s Nagasaki station. “But Nagasaki changed the policy from 2021 because they want to welcome more hibakusha to be involved in the ceremony, more people who haven’t spoken about their experiences publicly before. Because of the survivors’ aging, this may also allow younger generations to be more represented in the ceremony.”

While Taue is looking at the next 25 years as the transitional period between lived memory and recalled history, the time remaining before the post-hibakusha future arrives is actually much shorter, according to Yoshida Fumihiko, director of the Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition (RECNA) at Nagasaki University and a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “It’s going to come very rapidly, it’s not even a decade away. In a few years, I can’t imagine many hibakusha coming out onto a stage and speaking out.” Yoshida, the former deputy director of the Editorial Board of the *Asahi Shimbun*, where he also served as a Washington correspondent and bureau chief in Brussels, said in a

personal interview that this will have ramifications for the work journalists are able to do when it comes to covering the atomic anniversaries, but he also highlighted another challenge:

> There are two different factors journalists must think about. Of course, one is the decline of the voices of hibakusha, the other is the decline in the power of local news media—newspapers especially, but also local TV stations. Local media in Hiroshima and Nagasaki play a big role in covering the hibakusha, but we're in the process of change in the media business. In a decade or so, we'll see a very different style of media. In the Kyushu region [where Nagasaki is located], Hakata is the key station. So Hakata will become the headquarters and they will send reporters to cover local news in Nagasaki. What happens will be fewer local Nagasaki reporters covering Nagasaki news, fewer human connections in local media, and fewer stories about local people—including hibakusha—reported from Nagasaki. The relationships reporters have built with hibakusha and their families will disappear.

The conversation around media deserts, the death of local news, and the collapse of the traditional journalistic business model is a familiar one in the United States, too, where the triple punch of the digital shift, the 2008 recession and the coronavirus pandemic has dealt a heavy blow to the industry (Sullivan). But Yoshida highlights how this larger global trend will have a specific, targeted impact on how collective memory of the atomic attacks will be affected within Japan, for Japanese consumers of media. For *NHK* reporter Yoshida Mayu, her time working in Nagasaki was a "really precious experience" where she was able to build relationships—access that is crucial for reporting—with hibakusha and their families. "I didn't really have a chance to interact directly with hibakusha before I moved to Nagasaki. But there are hibakusha there everywhere, literally." Yoshida Fumihiko underscores the point. "If you stop someone on the street in Nagasaki and ask if they have a connection to a survivor, they will say yes. This is a city of survivors. So we won't forget, for decades. We really remember. But the question is, how will those memories be translated into social memory, into national memory?"

For Yoshida, local media is the tool for broader national (and transnational) translation. He'd also like to see reporters in both the U.S. and Japan assigned to cover nuclear issues, which was his own beat for 30 years for *Asahi Shimbun*. But he admits such a beat-specific position is only likely in larger newsrooms with hefty budgets and resources (ergo, not local newsrooms), and in an evolving media world where the reporter's beat—which emerged in modern journalism as a way to encourage specialization on a topic as the industry itself underwent institutionalization—is either being increased to several at once or pushed aside altogether as newsrooms seek generalists who can wear many hats, a nuclear-issues journalist in every newsroom appears improbable as well.[20]

So how should journalists think about the approaching post-hibakusha future? Can newsrooms do anything to prepare, or is it all bleak? In interviews with U.S. and Japanese journalists, the overwhelming sentiments were concern and a lack of confidence in navigating that future. "There is no manual," RECNA's Yoshida said.

While Japanese journalists—particularly the team behind Hiroshima's newspaper *Chugoku Shimbun*'s Hiroshima Peace Media Center and *NHK*—are taking steps now to preserve testimonies and archival footage online and available for free, there is understandably less interest, motivation, and awareness in the United States. "The American press is undergoing incredible stress and strain right now, and traditional obligations to things like anniversaries have been steadily falling apart," said *CBS News*' Dickerson. "I wish we had that sense of

[20] Muck Rack's 2022 State of Journalism Survey, which surveys more than 2,500 journalists in partnership with Online News Association (ONA), Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), Foreign Press Association (FPA), International Journalists Network (IJNET), Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) and more, found that the average journalist now covers four beats, up three from 2021. 74 percent of journalists surveyed are producing additional content in a secondary medium monthly, including newsletters and podcasts. https://muckrack.com/blog/2022/03/15/state-of-journalism-2022.

responsibility [towards Hiroshima and Nagasaki], but I don't think we do. Yet it's crucial to cover them, to remind ourselves of our history and hold onto it."

In Astrid Erll's *Memory in Culture*, the scholar writes that media revolutions can change the forms of collective memory (for example, how the invention of writing transformed the oral history tradition) but it can also work the other way. Specific challenges to memory culture—in this case, no longer having survivors—can "also lead to the emergence, acceptance, and dissemination of new media technologies" (120). In that sense, journalists may end up creating, out of necessity, a new method of using media to share survivor stories. Collectively, we may learn to accept new forms of remembrance and memory. Those new forms may be shaped by members of the *nisei* generation, by artists, writers and creatives, by museum curators, or by anti-nuclear activists, and will likely be spread remotely and through technological advances such as holograms and VR tours. The future of remembering the past is going to look different, but rather than waiting for that future to arrive, journalists can and should start imagining it now. Practically speaking, a singular roadmap for journalists can't be proposed at this point. Every newsroom is distinct, and as evidenced in this paper, Japanese and American journalists and audiences have very different constraints, expectations and agendas. But a rallying cry *can* be issued, for journalists in both countries to think seriously about how they will cover the post-survivor future, to begin having the conversations this paper hopes to elicit.

In 1946, Kimura Kazuo, a college student who survived the attack on Hiroshima, wrote in his diary: "As Hiroshima recovers, the memory of the devastation is fading from people's minds" (HPMM). The fear of being forgotten has always existed for the hibakusha, even just one year after the atomic attacks. During then-President Obama's landmark visit to Hiroshima in 2016, the president spoke movingly of why the memory of that hot August morning in 1945

must not fade. “That memory allows us to fight complacency. It fuels our moral imagination. It allows us to change” (Obama White House Archives). Journalists have often prided themselves on fulfilling those very things through reporting. That will be tested in the post-hibakusha future. Will journalists meet the challenge?

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