

It Starts with Showing an Interest

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The scenes of North Korea's Chairman and South Korea's President shaking hands and hugging were broadcast prominently on the television news. Additionally, the summit meeting between the US and North Korea was featured on the news every day. At such times, we often saw comments and articles on television and online saying that there are "hopes for the resolution of the abductions issue".

I had heard about the "abduction issue", but I thought this was something from a long time ago so when I heard that people were calling for it to be "solved", I wondered what kind of issue this was and wanted to know more about the matter. When I tried to survey the abductions issue online, I found the animation film Megumi.

Megumi Yokota, who was a first-year junior high school student, was suddenly abducted by North Korea in 1977. When she was the same age as I am now, she suddenly lost her happy life, and has now for more than 40 years been living a life that no one should have. Anyway you look at this, it should not be allowed to happen. In the animation, it shows just how hard life has been for Megumi's family after she was taken away from them. It really shows their pain. More than 40 years have passed since Megumi disappeared from Japan, but when I heard that her parents have continually been calling out for her to be brought home, I realized that in Megumi's parents' mind she is still a first-year junior high school student who never came home.

In the animation, there is one scene where Megumi's parents hand out pamphlets on the street. However, the people who walk past are not interested, with some of them refusing to take the pamphlet and others throwing the pamphlet away as soon as they receive it. I think that in order to solve human rights issues, we need to start by showing an interest in the issues. When I was in elementary school I read a book written by Dr. King in the US. Dr. King fought against racial discrimination not with violence but by taking a stand through protest, showing many people that discrimination is unacceptable. Among Dr. King's various quotes, I remember especially well that he said "in the end, we will not remember the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends". Taking this phrase, which means that the silence of those who stand by doing nothing is more cruel than the harsh words of people who discriminate, and applying it to the abductions issue, you can see that if you think the issue is nothing to do with yourself or something that cannot be helped since it is a problem between two countries, then such thought will cause further suffering to the victims and their families, making a solution more distant.

To resolve the abductions issue, I need to not simply know about the issue, but to imagine how Megumi and her parents, as well as the other victims and their' families, have lived down the years, and then make a wish for a solution as rapidly as possible.