

High school category

Second Prize

Kensuke Fukushima

“Freeing the Abductees”

I am now ashamed of my previous self who did not show any interest in the North Korean abductions issue.

After watching the animation “Megumi,” I became overwhelmed by the intensity of terror and sadness Megumi Yokota must have felt after being kidnapped and realizing that she would never see her family again. I also felt the pains and desperation of Megumi’s parents, Shigeru and Sakie Yokota, who continue to campaign for their daughter’s rescue today, some 40 years after the abduction. Until I watched the anime, news reports on the abductions issue and families’ appeal for bringing the victims home, only made me think that North Korea did something bad. I did not try to dig a little deeper to learn about the abductions issue and imagine the families’ sorrow. I am ashamed that I did not empathize with the Yokotas, who lost their daughter and continue to work on bringing her back. At the same time, I have come to realize that, as Japanese citizens living in Japan, we must explore what we can do to resolve the situation.

I investigated online and found that people from countries other than Japan are also affected. These countries include Thailand, Romania and Lebanon, making it an issue of the entire international society. We must not let the abduction cases spread to greater communities. My idea as a solution is to initiate an awareness campaign to boost people’s concern. However, the problem with this approach is that many people are currently apathetic toward this case, just like I was before watching the anime. I have explored effective ways of making more people interested in this issue. The journalist Yoshiko Sakurai used the phrase “International Coordination” when referring to this issue. She urged spreading information about the abductions issue to people in other countries so as to initiate an international solution. I believe this is a very effective option. Appealing to people of many other countries should increase international awareness about the tragedy the abductions issue.

As a member of the school’s debate club, I am strongly determined to use the form of “debate” to spread information about the issue. I will start with a familiar means to spark the interest of people around me about the abductions issue. Amidst the recent tide

of globalization, Japan should use its international connections to establish “International Coordination” for the issue. The North Korean abductions are important concerning the human rights of Japanese nationals. There are Japanese families who abruptly lost their family members to abduction. As Japanese citizens, we must become more actively interested in this issue, and put ourselves in the shoes of the Yokotas in examining what we can do. We must support affected families in their desire to be reunited with their loved ones again, and build a greater sense of imagination in perceiving the issue as our own problem.