

Coming Together to Completely Resolve the Abductions Issue!

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As a 13-year-old, I am now enjoying a fulfilling life at junior high school. Today, after finishing my after-school club activities, I leave the school gate. On the right-hand side of the school is the beautiful blue Sea of Japan. However, when I stand at school gate there is something else I always see. I can see the corner, entering a residential area, where 40 years ago Megumi Yokota was abducted by North Korea. There is still a sign standing nearby asking people to provide information. Megumi, who was abducted in front of my school on the way home and taken by boat from the shore near the school to North Korea, was, like me, a 13-year-old student in the fall. Her school life, her time with her family, her happiness in daily life was suddenly taken away. What kind of life is she living now? It is impossible for us to imagine the fear and desperation she had lived in such an extreme difficult situation. Every day, when I think of Megumi, I feel my chest tighten.

One day, after watching the animation Megumi, I felt a shock again at seeing the activities of the abductee families who continue to fight on the abductions issue. For the families, the pain is still real today. What can I do? I didn't know what to do with myself and so I decided to buy and read the book by Megumi's mother Sakie Yokota. In the book, she describes the family's remarkable lives, including their struggles during the first 20 years as they looked desperately for Megumi not knowing why she had disappeared, and then how the family sacrificed everything to resolve the abductions issue once they found out that Megumi had been abducted. Due to the vigorous action of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea, public interest in the issue has grown. The current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe from the start understood the issue and set up the Headquarters for the Abduction Issue. It seemed that, little by little, a solution was becoming more likely. In 2002, North Korea, admitted abducting Japanese citizens, apologized, and promised to prevent it from ever happening again. Five of the abductees returned to Japan. However, still today, not all the abductees have returned. The worried families, who are now elderly, must have reached their limit. Given the situation, I felt that communicating this issue is important. Actually, once the abductions issue was featured in the media, an increasing number of volunteers took action including handing out pamphlets and doing petition drives. They tried as hard as they could to reach the hearts of those around them. If more people take action, change can be achieved. Taking advantage of the moment, without letting it pass, and expanding the scope, those activities leads to even greater power.

As I move on in my life, I will remain sensitive to the word "abduction". I want to actively participate in events such as symposia, and speak to people I know with the clear objective of finding a solution. I will speak not only to my friends, but will try and raise awareness of the abductions issue among a broad age range of people, so that more people have an awareness of the issue. My aim will be to talk to people, encourage them to have even just a little interest, and increase the number of people taking action. If people with different individual characteristics come together then the actions they take to solve the issue will be more diverse. Even when facing problems that cannot be solved by a single individual, we can have more influence if we increase the number of like-minded people. The power of the group is immense. I want to get people to cooperate and use the power of citizens to influence the government.

The victims and their families can never get back again the times they have lost. However, if they can be reunited, their efforts so far will have at least some reward. I hope to see the moment that they are reunited and can smile saying "well done for keeping on going". By continuing to tell people I know about the abductions issue, I want to be someone who can gather like-minded people and work towards a solution.