

Passing The Baton

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What would you do if your child suddenly disappeared and never returned? In 1977, this tragedy actually happened when 13-year-old Megumi Yokota was abducted by North Korean agents. The story of the Yokota family is a symbol of the abduction issue perpetrated by North Korea and represents the painful reality Japan continues to face. Despite ongoing efforts, this severe violation of human rights remains unresolved. As future leaders, we young people have a responsibility to understand this issue in depth and raise awareness globally. We must take the baton in this struggle for justice and continue to run forward.

I first learned about the North Korean abductions when I was in elementary school. At the time, I was completely unaware of the abduction issue and only truly understood the facts after recently watching the anime “MEGUMI” in my civics class. Upon watching the movie, I was deeply moved to learn that, although many decades passed, Megumi’s family never lost hope to be reunited with her and still pursue the issue in search of the truth. Inspired by their tireless efforts, I too want to bring greater attention to the abduction issue.

According to the Cabinet Office’s 2023 survey, 73.6% of respondents were concerned about the abduction issue, down more than 10% from 86.4% in 2013. However, what shocked me most was that among respondents aged 18-29 only 64.1% were concerned. As the families of those abducted grow older, it becomes even more critical that we don’t forget the feelings of the abductees. At my school’s culture festival in November, I’m planning to create original flyers to raise awareness of the abductions and distribute them to students, teachers, parents and my wider community. By creating opportunities for everyone to gain awareness, we can achieve the earliest possible return of all abductees.

In addition, it’s vital to remember this is a global issue that requires international cooperation to resolve. Abductions by North Korea have been made not only in Japan, but also in many other countries including China, Thailand, and France. Therefore, I must take advantage of my English ability to actively participate in many intercultural events and volunteer activities where I can interact with foreigners and exchange opinions on this issue. By listening to international perspectives, we can collectively deepen our understanding of the issue.

In conclusion, I strongly believe the abduction issue must be resolved from the perspective that it’s not simply someone else’s story, but a universal issue every citizen should be concerned with. By again watching the animation MEGUMI, I was able to feel even closer to the feelings of the abductees and renew my interest in the issue with even greater strength. Moving forward, I will take the baton in this struggle for justice by creating opportunities for people, regardless of nationality, to become interested in the issue. By taking positive action myself, I hope to become a bridge to the future that will fulfill the lifelong wishes of the abductees and their families.