



NEWSLETTER

What a Visit !

Prof. Dalia Ofer, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Weeks after my visit to the Holocaust educational Center in the city of Fukuyama, I still hear the beautiful voices of the children singing in Hebrew in the church. The clear and innocent voices of children are most appropriate to express the wishes and goals of the Holocaust Educational Center for peace and remembrance of the one and a half million innocent children who were murdered by the Nazis. This welcoming reception for me and my husband to the Center was a most moving experience and we will always cherish its memory.

Far away from the sites of the killing and murder of the Holocaust, close to another center of destruction of the Second World War, Hiroshima, a community of believers dedicated to peace and love were listening to the story of the unfortunate Jewish children and adults. I dare say that Shirakowiak of Lodz, Raduschewski from Vilna, Tamara from Kovno or Anne Frank from Amsterdam would have agreed that the gathering demonstrated respect, affection and purity, and been greatly moved.

The Holocaust Educational Center in Fukuyama-city is very special, not only for me, a historian of the Holocaust, but to everybody who seeks meaning after the tragedy. Through the knowledge and understanding of the history of the Holocaust, Reverend Makoto Otsuka and Beit Shalom congregation hope to contribute to establish a better society of better human beings. They are lovers of Jerusalem, pray for its peace and are dedicated to the well being of Israel.

Reverend Otsuka, the founder and spiritual leader of the Center, introduced us first to the center of educational activities - the library and study center. It was inspiring to see the rich library filled with books on the history of the Holocaust and Jewish history translated to Japanese. Teachers and center personnel, many of whom volunteer, meet in the library to study and prepare classroom activities. The teachers who study about the Holocaust with Reverend Otsuka go back to their classrooms in the city Fukuyama and throughout the region and engage in the

subject with their students.

After the students learn about the Holocaust in their own classrooms, they come to visit the center with their teachers. Here they are exposed to documentation and learning materials, both oral and pictorial. They are able to read written testimonies and letters of survivors, watch documentaries and visit the exhibition in which many photos of children are displayed. The arrangement of the physical space and the content of the exhibition were created in consideration of the child viewer.



Prof. Dalia and Prof Gur Ofer

An important section of the exhibition is dedicated to Sugihara the Japanese consul in Kovno in 1940, and his efforts and successes to help Jews get out of the Nazi occupied countries. The story of Sugihara stands out in the dark years of the Holocaust and is of particular educational importance for the Japanese youngsters. It demonstrates that despite the physical distance between Europe and Japan, the extension of human assistance crosses borders. Photos of people who received transit visas from Sugihara and lived to have families are displayed and their letters of acknowledgement serve as a vivid example to what one honest individual was able to accomplish against evil. The stories of rescue and the picture of one little girl who grew up to be a great-grandmother are truly manifestations of how the rescue of one life is the rescue of a whole world.

Leaving the Educational Center and the exhibition hall I was left with great warmth and appreciation. I would like to thank the people of Beit Shalom for their achievements and hospitality.

Prof. Dalia Ofer, Max and Rita Haber chair in Contemporary Jewry and Holocaust Studies, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, and Head of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Millennium Peace Declaration of Interdependence

Signed between Children of San Diego and Fukuyama

November 8th, Millennium Peace Declaration of Interdependence was signed between children of San Diego, California, USA and Fukuyama, Japan. The children who took part in the declaration were Trevor Williamson, 17, a member of Millennium Peace Youth Project in San Diego, and Daisuke Fujimoto, 14, Yoshimi Otsuka, 12, Miki Sato, 12, and Nozomi Kambara, 12, who are the members of Small Hands of HEC.

This project was proposed from Ms. Suzanne Marie Williamson, who is the

coordinator of the Millennium Peace Youth Project in San Diego. As the extension of their activity, they planned to establish a bridge between USA and Japan for children who desire peace.

This Declaration will be the start for both groups of children to work together towards peace through various activities, such as exchanging arts and writings.

The signing took place in Miyuki Elementary School in Fukuyama city, in front of 90 5th graders, and the representatives of Japan Society of San Diego and Tijuana and HEC stood as witness of the declaration.

Millennium Peace Declaration of Interdependence

We are the children of the world in this new Millennium, believe it to be our inalienable right to live out our lives in peace and justice, to pursue love and happiness for all of humanity. To achieve this goal, we desire to transcend the barriers of national borders, ethnic diversities and religions faith by joining hands in mutual interdependence to affix our signatures to this declaration.

Signing the Declaration of Interdependence

Trevor Williamson

My name is Trevor Scott Williamson. I am a senior in high school in San Diego California. Over the past year I have produced and edited the video for the Millennium Peace Project. I think that honest education of history is important so that the past does not repeat itself. Educational focus needs to address global consideration. Emphasis should be put on the ability to teach children to work out and understand how other people are thinking and how to work with others with a different mind set. The signing of the declaration of Interdependence was symbolic of what can be achieved on a large scale. I thank the Holocaust Education Center for its friendship and support.



Trevor Williamson and the children signing the Declaration

Together Anything is possible

Suzanne Marie Williamson

As a professional artist I have traveled on many occasions to Japan. As fortune would have it, I was offered an exhibition in Osaka, a town close to Hiroshima. On sharing this with my friend Adam Kahan, Executive Vice President of American Friends of Hebrew University, offices in Israel were contacted to introduce me to the Holocaust Education Center. A trip was arranged to Fukuyama.

I first traveled to Hiroshima to visit the Peace Center,. I learned from a survivor about his life during the tragedy of World War II. I left confused and profoundly sad over what I had seen and learned.

I traveled to Fukuyama wanting nothing more than to just go home. Then I met Reverend Otsuka. Getting out of a car I was welcomed by a smiling face with eyes that sparkled with kindness, A man greeting me in the middle of a farmland in Japan holding a flag of Israel! Like a dream of heaven, voices resonated in the background singing in Hebrew, songs I often heard while in the synagogue at home. Behind the building was a congregation of friends to greet me, to reassure me, that where I was where I was meant to be.

On arriving back to the United States I visited schools and started working with children, teaching the concept of tolerance and respect for diversity. Using the program of Small Hands as a model, the students created teaching materials and guides to share with others. I was able to solicit help of advanced high school students to mentor young elementary level children. All worked together, learning history, embracing its lessons and moving ahead with friendship and hope for the future.

Students at one school, Ashley Falls of Del Mar California, even folded 1000 cranes to send to Hiroshima! Under the auspices of Japan Society of San Diego and Tijuana the children held a Peace day in a local park, and created a book and video documenting their project.

In November JSSDT sent a student representative to Fukuyama to sign a declaration of Interdependence with the children of Japan. This declaration signifies what is possible when there is hope and reverence for what is truly imperative for humanity. Peace. With sincere gratitude and respect, I thank the children of Small Hands and their families for their friendship. With this bond, we are nourished with the knowledge , that together anything is possible.