

The Olympic and Peace

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“Twenty years ago, I was standing just here watching the students departing for the battlefield. I couldn’t have imagined that after twenty years we watch the youth from 94 countries marching in front of us just like that rainy day.”

This is the part of the essay written by SUGIMOTO Sonoko, a writer, to see the opening ceremony of Tokyo Olympics held in 1964.

In 1944, on October 21, at Jingu Stadium, 25000 students were there to be sent to the battlefield. Sugimoto was one of the girl students seeing them off. 75 years passed from that day. And we will have Tokyo Olympics again here in Japan. We will see the athletes from 207 countries.

We can have the Olympic Games because the world is not in war. But can we really say that all the people in the world live in peace? If you look around, there are a lot of refugee people living in danger. There are people living in fear of terrorism. People and children are killed there. There are children who have to work to support their family. They get water and carry it far or work at garbage dump instead of going to school to study.

In Japan we can study at school and enjoy sports. We can eat whatever we want or we can even enjoy art. I wonder why this inequality happen. I think it comes from a selfish patriotism and a lack of respect and sympathy for others. If you say, “That’s not my fault but the leaders’,” that’s wrong because the leaders were chosen by the people.

The Olympics have been prevented from wars three times. I know the ordinary people never want to make war. All of us hope for peace.

The Olympics is said to be a Festival of peace. There is a philosophy of the Olympics; “To affirm, accept and respect each other in spite of idea, race, the color of the skin, sexuality, language, religion, politics and physical disability.” So, if we can realize this philosophy, the real peace will come true on the earth.

I watched the documentary movie of Tokyo Olympics. That was the first Olympic Games held in Asia. I was moved to watch the athletes at the closing ceremony. They walked delightfully laughing hand in hand. Someone was carrying someone from a different country on his shoulder. The announcer reported in a voice shaking with deep emotion; ”Have we ever seen such a closing ceremony like this in the history of the Olympics? Now on this time they cherish each other laughing and shedding tears in farewell as same human beings in spite of race and national borders. What a beautiful sight! Wonderful. Just wonderful. Isn’t this what we call “world peace”? Isn’t it a real peace? This is a moment to touch.” I was moved to tears.

People are made to be able to understand and respect each other. It’s clear when you see these athletes marching together in a perfect peace. I think we can do it. That’s the important role of sports to make peace in the world.

Imagine. If we stop arms race and spend money to help children to go to school. Imagine. If we stop conflicts and help people who are in danger of being killed. More and more athletes will grow and they will be able to take part in the Olympics and Paralympics.

We never want to see young students marching for battlefield. Let us see the marching for friendship and peace.