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Title: Geri Handa Interview
Narrator: Geri Handa
Interviewer: Naoko Wake
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NW: So, tell me a little bit about what it means to you to work on survivors with Japanese background, so I, I understand, based on what you already told me so far. So you are very engaged with, working with people, with group of people and are you particularly, you are very much a specialist working with senior people, and I see how those things can be brought together in your work for Friends of Hibakusha. But, you know, like you said, CABS had a really, in a way, unsuccessful effort to obtain, federal government's, um, compensations for American *hibakushas*, and you could say it's a very difficult time. And I have a feeling that people were really disappointed with that. Do you think of this as a sort of a unique project, because, you know, it's in a way unique, because there aren't many American survivors and the American government doesn't want to really pay for them. How do you see that sort of aspect of that engagement, I guess that's what I'm asking.

GH: Well, you know, one of the things that I know is that although the American government doesn't want to take or assume any responsibility, the Japanese government has, you know, at least the Hiroshima Professional Medical Association first. And then, and then, they took on that challenge and that commitment to serve the overseas, you know, *hibakusha*. And then eventually, the government, the Japanese government, began to play a more defined role. But, and I think their commitment is as long as there is *hibakusha* in the world, they'll continue, you know, to serve them. And so with that in mind, I always feel very appreciative, you know, because of what's going on now within Japan, I mean, to continue that commitment is, you know, is pretty remarkable.

NW: Right, right, absolutely.

GH: But, at the same time, because of what's happening with Fukushima, and, you know, I think there's a lot we can learn, from what's happened, and of course, what happened with Chernobyl, you know. I understand that they had asked the Japanese radiation and research foundation to kind of help, and, and kind of share, you know, what's going on with the possibility of radiation exposure over a period of time. And, and I think that's probably going to be ongoing. And, you know, I think there's going to be a lot to learn about, you know, in terms of alternative energy use and conservation out of this experience, coming out of, coming out from Japan. In fact, that's going on now. And, so there's a lot we can learn from this whole thing, too. I really feel that that's what it is. It's more of an exchange of ideas, and, and learning from the experience. And hopefully, it might mean, you know, others, in terms of for the future.

NW: Yeah, I certainly agree with you, but I guess what I'm kind of trying to ask you about is how you see the lack of American government support for the kind of work that you do despite the fact that you're American working for people who are American citizens and living in America, and one can, an outsider may look at it and say, wow, this is really challenging place to be. I just wonder if you think about it at all, or if it's not a conflict, it's not a problem. But I just wonder how you, yourself, see that.

GH: Well, you know, the one thing that's historical and the whole world knows, is that the United States was the first one to drop the atomic bomb. History does not change that. And, and the fact that once everyone, I mean, the United States has also, thanks to Obama, has also come to acknowledge that, and the role that they played in, in actually opening the Pandora's box to other countries actually beginning to use the atomic, you know, weapons.

NW: Absolutely, yeah.

GH: Well, I think, since then and because of maybe the experience, there has not been another bomb that has been dropped on other civilians.

NW: Civilians, right.

GH: And I think that's something, that maybe, hopefully, will continue to, to, to be. Because right now, I mean, what we have in the arsenal is so much more powerful than the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

NW: Exactly. Right.

GH: We could destroy the world.

NW: Right. More than one time.

GH: So . . . yes, yes. And so, I think with that kind of legacy, hopefully, you know, people will still continue to think about it before they do something like that. I know that Japan is very nervous about North Korea and, you know, of course there's Iran, and, you know, but, at the same time, I think people are much more aware that this is something that can destroy all of us, not just one country. And at the same time, I feel that the younger generation too, hopefully will look at the fact we don't always have to enter a war in order to exchange ideas, or you know, political differences. We can actually, maybe, hopefully, do it in a different way, yeah. But, at the same time, it is frustrating that the *hibakusha*, well, you know, actually, there's over one million of all *hibakusha*, and that includes those service, those military people, personnel, who were exposed in terms of the testing, the uranium ore miners, the, you know, the people who were exposed, like in the Marshall Islands, things like that.

NW: Absolutely.