

Peace Declaration: 80 Years after the War

No matter how much time passes, we must never forget the tragic Battle of Okinawa.

Eighty years have now passed since the war.

This beautiful island was once engulfed in fierce battle. The “typhoon of steel” transformed its rich natural environment and landscapes, destroyed invaluable cultural heritage, and claimed over 200,000 irreplaceable lives.

This land is the resting place of countless lives lost in the flames of war, and it bears the eternal memory of those events.

Lives were lost in anguish, longing to see the faces of parents and siblings once more.

Lives were taken while dreaming of a future, yearning to live.

The lives of young children vanished without ever receiving a name.

It was, indeed, a situation described as bringing together “all the hell imaginable.”

The sorrow is deeply etched in the hearts of us Okinawans, and they remain unhealed to this day.

The brutal realities and lessons of the Battle of Okinawa have been passed down to the present through the testimonies of war survivors who shared their experiences despite their wounds and through the relentless efforts of researchers dedicated to the study of the Battle of Okinawa.

This is precisely the origin of our spirit as the people of Okinawa in our pursuit of everlasting peace.

It is our mission, as those living in the present, to preserve and pass on the realities and lessons of the Battle of Okinawa, which involved ordinary civilians, to future generations, with the unceasing efforts of the people of Okinawa.

Looking back on Okinawa’s history, the island has endured the Ryukyu Disposition, the Battle of Okinawa, and the administration of the United States. Even now, 53 years after its reversion to Japan, Okinawa bears the heavy burden of the concentration of U.S. military bases, incidents and accidents involving military personnel, environmental issues arising from these bases, and the ongoing

controversy over the construction of the new base in Henoko.

Globally, the number of wars and conflicts has reached its highest point since the end of World War II. The possibility of nuclear weapons being used by nuclear-armed nations adds to the growing complexity of a secured environment.

Having walked through a history of hardship, Okinawa values life above all else (“Nuchi du Takara”) and earnestly wishes for a peaceful world free from conflict.

From this small Okinawa, I seriously ponder what can be done to break through the absurdities of the present and work toward global everlasting peace. I aim to act in cooperation with the international community, even if my efforts seem small.

Marking 80 years after the war, I now look ahead to the 90th and 100th anniversaries. From a long-term perspective, I hereby declare Okinawa’s role in contributing to global everlasting peace and share this vision with the world.

Firstly, we will improve our research system by advancing initiatives to establish an international peace research body dedicated to historical studies of the Battle of Okinawa and the pursuit of international peacebuilding.

Secondly, we will strongly promote initiatives to preserve and utilize Okinawa’s war ruins. To pass on the memories of the Battle of Okinawa, we will preserve the war ruins, which are the silent witnesses of history, and work toward their recognition as World Heritage sites that will convey the lessons from the tragic Battle of Okinawa.

Thirdly, we will promote initiatives for nuclear disarmament and abolition of nuclear weapons. By collaborating with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we will join the Global Alliance to advocate internationally for nuclear disarmament and the elimination of all nuclear weapons, which threaten humanity’s existence.

This 80th anniversary is but a milestone. Even if we are unable to witness immediate changes, I believe that continuously spreading the message of peace from Okinawa and taking action will ultimately contribute to global peace.

Now is the time to embrace the spirit of “Bankoku Shinryo” inherited from our ancestors and play a role in realizing global everlasting peace in cooperation with the international community.

The reality and lessons of the Battle of Okinawa have been preserved through

the stories of war survivors and validated by numerous studies.

Here lie the roots of the people of Okinawa and our enduring desire for peace.

It is our mission, as those living in the present, to preserve and pass on the reality and lessons as the “Spirit of Okinawa” to future generations.

In the spirit inherited from our predecessors as “Bankoku Shinryo”, to serve as bridge between nations, we will commit to fulfil our role in contributing toward the realization of world everlasting peace.

On this Memorial Day, I offer my sincere condolences to all the souls who lost their lives during the war. At the same time, I hereby declare my resolve to steadily move forward, step by step, toward building an Okinawa that contributes to the realization of everlasting peace.

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Denny Tamaki
Governor of Okinawa Prefecture