

IMPACT OF EXTERNAL FORCES

I. Hiroshima

On August 6, 1945, at 8:15AM Japanese time, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima by the Americans. Tsutomu Yamaguchi was one of the few who survived the bombing of Hiroshima. On his way to work, he saw a bomber fly overhead. Automatically, he assumed the 'air-raid' position, covering his eyes and ears. As he sat up slowly he was bewildered by the inexplicable scene around him. He was suddenly conscious of the extreme heat. He felt a sharp pain on the left side of his face and in his left arm. Looking down he discovered that his flesh was exposed; reaching up to his face, he noticed that his flesh there was also exposed; the side exposed to the explosion was severely burned. He calculated that he was about one and a fifth miles from the center of the blast. Granite on building surfaces had melted from the heat emanating from the fireball at half of this distance. He began to feel faint, he acquired a terrible thirst, and he seemed likely to suffer from a heavy dose of radiation.

He later encountered five boys. Never had he seen such a horrifying sight. Blood was pouring in streams from deep cuts all over their bodies. Their skin was burned deep red, like the color of cooked lobster. Blades of green grass were 'driven' into their flesh by the force of the blast.

He then came upon a woman whose skin was covered with severe burns all over. Her skin too had that deep-red lobster color as the boys. He looked at her, baked all over, and knew that her condition was helpless. Looking at his own left arm, he saw that it was black and swollen, and touching his face he could tell that it was highly inflamed; "... it seemed as if it was about to peel off," he said. Later he remembered a young man anointing his burnt skin. "It felt soothing, like palm oil" he said. He never learnt his name, but he always felt grateful to him.

Kenshi Hirata was another who survived. As he moved slowly through the smoking waste toward home, he encountered some ghastly figures. The first was a little boy, completely naked, his skin was all peeled off as if it was flayed, and his nails were falling from the ends of his fingers. His flesh was deep red, "...I wasn't sure that I was looking at a human being" he recalled. The other bodies he saw had the same eerie quality as they laid twisted among the rubble, looking neither dead nor alive.

Shigeyoshi Morimoto was considered the best kite maker in Japan and was sent to Hiroshima on a special project. He escaped uninjured as he was protected from the blast by a fallen roof. As he worked his way out of the debris he encountered numberless injured people. Many looked like ghosts as their skin peeled off of their faces and hung down over their shoulders like thin skin pennants, he described. Those who were facing the direction of the blast had their exposed skin torn off in a thick layer which had blown back. The sight left him numb with horror. "I don't think there would be any appropriate words in any language that would accurately describe the dreadful, pitiful sight of these injured persons."

Children called to him to help them pull their mother out from under a fallen house, but their appeals made no impression on him. "I don't know why, but I had no intention of extending my help," he said. Instead he wandered aimlessly, half-oblivious to the dead and dying around him. He remembers it as a bad dream, as if it never really happened and he could not explain his actions.

As he saw more of the city - the people, the more he realized that it was a miracle that he hadn't been burnt to death. "Even the trees had burst into flames, so it was no wonder that the human flesh was baked through in an instant," he reflected. "I wish that some of the people of America could have seen that sight of the ruin of Hiroshima! Perhaps the scientist who invented that bomb could not have known its' terrible effect on human beings as we know it...." "I don't want to see such a sight again...! The horrible memory comes back to me like a recurring nightmare." It was a sense of horror piled upon horror for these people.

These were only a few examples of the effect of the bomb. Reports showed that those who did not die of 'radiation sickness' within a few weeks, eventually recovered but many with physical disabilities. Facial disfiguration, leukemia, scars, deformities; extended to the mass of the

1 population. Young women who now had no hope of marriage because of their shocking appearance,
2 found a place in religious life. Others remained in seclusion rather than take the risk of social
3 contact. Others whose faces were unmarred had lost all or partial use of limbs, with arms or legs
4 permanently twisted.

5 The city burned for three more days, and the embers went on smoldering for over a week, and
6 humans suffering for years. One bomb had left Hiroshima a charred wasteland. Yet life went on.
(Word count: 881)

II. Love and Death

“... and every time I kiss thy hand to bid adieu, and every absence which follows it, are preludes
to that eternal separation which we are shortly to make.”

Laurence Sterne

1 I don't know what made me decide to kiss him good-bye that day. I'd known him all my life, but
2 I'd never kissed him before. Two years before the very idea of even thinking of kissing him would
3 have sent me into a laughing fit. I mean, he was my cousin, and he was a GUY for God's sakes!
4 But, sitting at the light waiting to make the turn into Chesterton Avenue that evening, it suddenly
5 came into my mind to kiss him.

6 Kiss him? Yeah, to say thank you for dinner, thank you for offering to teach me to drive, thank you—for
7 being the closest thing I ever had to that big brother I've always wanted. Yeah, I was going to do it. So what
8 if he looked at me funny? So what if he thought I was crazy? I think he did anyway. Besides, something
9 just told me to do it. So, when we pulled to a stop in front of my house, I took a deep breath, suppressed a
10 giggle, and I leaned over and kissed him—not once, but twice. “That,” I said after the first one, “is for dinner.
11 And that,” I said, surprising myself by kissing him again, “is just for being you.” He looked at me that way
12 I knew he would, that funny, sidelong glance, and I think he blushed, but I wasn't sure, because I was so
13 embarrassed that I ran out of the car and into the house.

14 I didn't think much about it until a week alter, when we got the call. “Craig was in an accident.” They
15 told me to hang up the phone, but I didn't. They didn't know I was still on the line. They didn't know I
16 heard them say, “He has less than a 50-50 chance.” They didn't see me a few minutes alter sitting on the
17 edge of the pool, my feet (with socks) dangling in, crying in the rain. And all I could think of, each time my
18 mother refused to let me see him, each time I feared that he would die, and then later when they told me that
19 he did, was “At least I got to say good-bye. Thank God I told him I loved him. At least he knew, in a way,
20 what he meant to me.”

21 It's been six years since my 16th birthday, when I stood at his grave and watched my aunt faint and my
22 family cry, six years since I felt sorry for myself for having the worst Sweet 16 ever, six years since I cried
23 so hard my eyes swelled shut. But there hasn't been a single day in all that time that I haven't wondered at
24 the fact that something told me to kiss him good-bye. It still hurts, I guess it always will, but I am eternally
25 grateful that I have a balm of knowing that he knew I loved him. I have the memory of those two all
26 important kisses, so far the most important good-bye of my life.

27 He taught me a lot of things when he was around, but I think that he, along with that intuition, taught me
28 the most important lesson a human being can learn—nothing is forever, and you never know about tomorrow,
29 so, carpe diem. While I can't say I always follow this, I know I always think twice when I say good-bye to
30 someone. Because of him there is a part of me that always wonders whether this kiss will be the last. Now
31 I don't hesitate that long between discovering that I love someone and telling them. Sure, there's always that
32 self-protective fear, “I'm not going to be the first one,” not the first one to say it, or to admit that I was
33 wrong, to make the move or the call, but every time I hear that voice, I feel the shock—one day he was stealing
34 me a mug from the A&W parking lot, the next he was in a hospital bed, the next he was gone forever. I'm
35 not willing to ever chance feeling that shock again, not without the comfort of having let them know I care.
36 And you know what? It's always been worth it. I've had people tell me they loved me back, and I've had
37 people thank me for my love, and as they say, love is the only thing that, the more you give away, the more
38 you have. It's not always roses thought—once my words were met with silence, but that I survived. And at
39 least I'll never have to say, “What if?”

40 My grandmother is 75, and my dog is 14 (that's 98 to you and me), and it may sound crass, but sometimes
41 I look from one to the other and I wonder, who is going to go first? I can never leave the presence of either
42 one without at least a hug and kiss, and each time I do, I can't help but wonder, will this be the final one?

1 And, if so, will they have known that I loved them? The preludes of this world are short, and the separations
2 eternal, and the smallest words are often the hardest ones to say. (Word count: 871)

3 **III. Religion**

4 A wise man once said, “Religion is not a jailor, but a guide.” Until last year I would have totally
5 disagreed. I was a vehement atheist. Throughout my life I never believed in God or the existence of a higher
6 being. To me religion represented a tyrannical, overbearing regime. God seemed to be, through a traditional
7 parochial education, a judgmental dictator. Through fear the nuns expected respect and obedience; all I had
8 within me was hatred and contempt. I could not understand why, if there was a God, the innocent suffered
9 immeasurable pain, while the shamelessly guilty enjoyed freedom and success. Another important reason
10 for my disbelief was, I had never experienced anything divine or holy. I did not feel God touching me or my
11 life in any way. However, once I entered college my outlook began to change.

12 Having grown weary of high school., I found college to be a breath of fresh air. College was a lot more
13 relaxed than high school. There were no security guards telling you to hurry to class and no annoying hall
14 monitors. But everything wasn’t perfect; during my first semester I became aware of a void in my life. This
15 feeling caused me to re-examine my life. I had a relatively happy and stable home life, I was in perfect
16 health, I was intelligent and I was surrounded by people who loved me. Then, through observation, I realized
17 how blessed I really was. I listened to my friends and their misery. They complained of neglectful parents,
18 disobedient children, large debt and basic unhappiness, none of which I identified with. My one complaint
19 was that I was lonely; however, I knew that it, the state of being lonely, was meant to be. I also felt I needed
20 my solitude. During this time I started having a recurring dream. I was at a party, which was outdoors,
21 perhaps in someone’s back yard. It was very warm outside, almost tropical. I knew that I was not in America
22 but perhaps in the Islands or Africa. I walked through the crowd of laughing and dancing people; the music
23 was enticing. As I walked through the crowd I saw an African man, dressed very casually, surrounded by
24 a small crowd of people, talking. When he saw me, he stopped talking, they all did, and he smiled. He
25 waved me over. I had a great desire to go to hm but I could not; then I woke up. I told a good friend about
26 the dream; his response was “the Creator beckons you.” I knew he was right.

27 I started to read the Bible, and was fascinated by what was revealed to me. I read about the Garden of
28 Eden being in the region of the Middle East and Africa. Life, in that region, according to the Bible was much
29 different; life then, compared to the present day, seemed simple, almost bearable. This and many other
30 aspects of the Bible interested me, and I started discussing various topics concerning religion with friends
31 and family. I wanted to know how they felt about the way women were treated, or how simple life was in
32 Christ’s time, but in particular I wanted to know their feelings on the theory that Christ was a man of color.
33 This line of questioning sparked a particular interest in African religions such as Rastafari and Islam. I was
34 taken by the idea that God himself ass an African, that mankind itself sprouted out of Africa and the idea that
35 everyone was African. In theory if mankind sprouted out of African, then everyone, black, white, red, or
36 yellow, was African. This idea was very appealing to me. A fact that backs the theory that the first humans,
37 Adam and Eve, came from the Middle East and Africa is stated plainly in Genesis, the first book of the Bible;
38 there is reference to a river that runs out of Eden. The river splits in four and travels through the lands of
39 Havilah, Ethiopia, Hiddekel, and Assyria, which are in Africa and the Middle East. The people that live in
40 this part of the world are not traditionally blond and blue eyed. I felt so much closer to God knowing his first
41 children were dark. I knew that if my faith was strong God’s color should not matter, but his being colored
42 really helped ;my faith along. I, in my younger years, had nothing in common with Him (God); in all of
43 society’s images, God is white and male. Now at least I knew he could look like my brother, father, or son.
44 All my research led me to the question: Realistically, what must one conclude if man is an image of God,
45 and the first man was a man of color?

46 Through further exploration and research, I not only discovered my “guide,” referring to the quote at the
47 beginning of this essay, but also found a new sense of myself; this dignity is often called “Black Pride.” But
48 this pride goes further than the fact that I am Black; it has become pride in myself as a woman and as an
49 African. I take joy in discovering new and different aspects of my people. I celebrate African culture,
50 customs, religion, and traditions. I also delve into Indian, Latino and Asian culture. This new outlook on
51 life is merited to the Creator’s call into His house. I no longer think of only myself when thinking of the
52 future. I no longer hold dear the capitalist, bourgeois misconception that status and wealth equal happiness.
53 Rather, I think of how I can be a benefit to my people; how I can help those who are in need; how I can make
54 a contribution to this world, and how I can help make a difference in the lives of people of color. This need
55 has led me to study sociology, political science, and urban studies along with many other related subjects that
56 will ultimately qualify me to work on internationally based political reform. I owe my new found happiness,
57 direction, and drive, to study, do well, and help my community, to the Creator and His enlightenment.

1 An external force that had a strong impact on me was my entrance into college. I now realize that the wise
2 man was indeed wise: religion is merely a guide. It is merely a way of lie passed on from generation to
3 generation, much like tradition. I now see my faith in the Creator as a way of life. He no longer is a
4 tyrannical, judgmental dictator. The Creator is a compassionate, understanding being who defines that very
5 meaning of forgiveness. I respect and honor the Creator, and I have within me love and admiration. (Word
count: 1120)

IV. Environment Effect

1 People always say that the quality of a person is formed under the effects of the environment in which he
2 grows up, the education he receives, and the family he has. People always have a sense of belong to his
3 motherland. It is true to a boy who grows up in many different environments, who always wonders where
4 he belongs to, and who always try to adapt to t he new environment.

5 My years in China was full of fears.

6 I was born in a revolutionary period. It was a time that misconceptions dominated the entire China. All
7 social and ethical standards were distorted. The primary goal of a society was class struggle; there was no
8 class in schools and universities, and there was no production in factories. The society was in the control
9 of the Red Guards, who assumed the duties of the police, the duties of teachers, and the duties of factory
10 management. They invaded people's lives and controlled their behaviors.

11 People tried to protect themselves from the Red Guard by showing their loyalty to the country.
12 Sometimes they had to betray their friends and relatives in order to gain the Red Guard's trust. Everyone
13 had to attend different meetings to criticize someone. Many people were being accused because of saying
14 something wrong. Growing up in such a society, the first thing I learned was to protect myself. I was taught
15 to keep my mouth shut, to beware of my words, and to constrain my behavior, because nay minor mistake
16 would be recorded in my personal file that would dominate my entire life. Any minor mistake could run
17 one's life as it would always be there and be considered in all events, such as promotion or admission to any
18 place.

19 Fear as always around my family since we had some direct foreign relationship. We were in fear that one
20 day those Red Guards would break into our room at their desires, fear that one day either one or both of my
21 parents being banished from home to rural exile, imprisoned or assigned cast-like categories of class
22 identities. It was during that time, I was taught what a competition is, what a struggle is, and the most
23 important, what a friend is.

24 My years in Hong Kong were full of frustration.

25 My family left the dreadful country in 1979. We entered a world where some other pain were awaiting
26 us. It was a completely different world. It had different people, different dialect, different written language,
27 etc. People looked at us like seeing E.T. We were thought as outdated, lazy, and stupid. We were being
28 discriminated. In working place, my parents were asked to do the direst and hardest work but paid at the
29 lowest rate. In school, we were called mainlander. Classmates might beat you for no reason, throw your
30 book out of the classroom suddenly, and exclude you from activities. However, the only thing that was
31 improved was that we need not fear any midnight break-in. The problem was how to adapt to the new world.

32 It was a feeling of staying in a sinking ship without a life boat and you had to learn swimming in a
33 second. Tolerance was the first thing I learned. Tolerate all kinds of insult and discrimination was the only
34 way to get into that society. Totally accepting it, keeping my mouth shut, and quietly showing my talent and
35 strength was my way to win recognition and acceptance of the new world. After ten years, we immersed into
36 the society and became totally accepted by its people.

37 My years in America were challenging.

38 After twenty years of training, I knew it was the time to take another challenge for myself. With the
39 previous experience, I could handle the situation more skillfully even though the situation was much more
40 difficult and complicated.

41 I started my independent study in America. Without anybody's help, I se up my home, found myself jobs,
42 and studied hard. This time, I had to make decisions alone, solve problems alone, and take care of myself.
43 Thinking independently, carefully and thoroughly was the most important thing. Even though I made
44 mistakes, was attacked by gangsters, was fired from jobs, and suffered form poorness, I learned from my
45 mistake and became more mature.

46 When I looked back at my years in China, Hong Kong, and America, I found that my journey was full of
47 happiness and tears. But it is worthwhile. (Word count: 742)