

2021
Okinawa Memorial Service for All War
Dead



31st "Children and Student Messages for Peace" Illustration Category, Junior High School Division, Grand Prize: Nakagusuku Junior Highschool Second Year, Hana Nakaema

Date: June 23rd 2021 (Tuesday) 11:50 am to 12:40 pm

Place: Peace Memorial Park (Mabuni, Itoman)

Okinawa Prefectural Government

Okinawa Prefectural Assembly

Schedule for the 2021 Okinawa Memorial Service for All War Dead

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| 1. Opening Address | Vice Governor of Okinawa Prefecture |
| 2. Address | Speaker of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly |
| 3. Moment of Silence | |
| 4. Message of Condolences | President of Okinawa Prefecture Bereaved Family Association |
| 5. Presentation of Flowers | |
| 6. Declaration of Peace | Governor of Okinawa Prefecture |
| 7. Recitation of the “Poem of Peace” | |
| 8. Messages | Prime Minister of Japan, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President of the House of Councillors |
| 9. Closing Address | Vice Governor of Okinawa Prefecture |
| 1. Master of Ceremonies | NHK Broadcasting Okinawa – Announcer |
| 2. Sign Language Interpretation | Okinawa Prefecture Disable Persons Support Association – Registered Sign Language Interpreter |

Memorial Address

We gather on this day for the “2021 Okinawa Memorial Service for All War Dead” in order to give our sincerest condolences to the souls of all those who lost their lives in the Battle of Okinawa, and to express our heartfelt regret to the bereaved families.

Called the "Typhoon of Steel", in Okinawa civilians were caught up in a fierce ground war leading to the death of more than 200,000 precious lives, with 1 in 4 residents of the prefecture losing their lives as a result of the fighting. Now here at Mabuni Hill, the site of much death, we offer our many prayers for peace.

After the war, Okinawa was placed under U.S. military administration, and even now, 49 years after its return to Japan, it still bears a heavy burden from military bases. The existence of Futenma Air Station, said to be the most dangerous in the world due to it being surrounded by a densely populated residential area, the successive incidents and accidents involving U.S. military personnel and civilian employees, the low-altitude flight training of U.S. military aircraft in various parts of the prefecture this year, the U.S. military helicopter forced landing accident earlier this month, and since Okinawa's return the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly has raised 479 opinions and resolutions on the issue of U.S. military bases. I strongly urge both governments to work on the reduction of U.S. military bases and the fundamental revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement.

Prayers for peace are also held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which suffered the historic devastation caused by the atomic bombings. Those of us who want a peaceful world without nuclear weapons hope, that our country, as the only country to have suffered atomic bombings during the war, will support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and play a leading role in guiding the world toward denuclearization.

We deeply hope that those who have witnessed the tragedy of the war and experienced the misery it brings will be united around the world, across generations, and regions in the belief that, "war must never happen again."

In the 76 years since the end of World War II, under our Constitution of Peace, Japan has built a peaceful nation where none of its people's lives have been lost to war. Precisely because Japan does not wage war, we must demonstrate our power as a guiding force for world peace.

I feel a deep sense of gratitude and respect for our forbearers who, when the scars of conflict had not yet healed and goods were scarce in war ravaged Okinawa, developed the prefecture, promoted and built up its industry. The prosperity that exists today is a testament to the peace that has been built upon the efforts of our predecessors who experienced the war.

Born in an era of peace, living our daily lives, I feared that the sadness caused by the war will be thought of as the past and forgotten. Today, as opportunities to learn from our grandmothers and grandfathers are being lost, the difficulty of passing down the experiences of the Battle of Okinawa and the lessons learned from them is being tested. In order to pass on this in-substitutable experience, it is necessary for all of us to study again about the wars of the past and to reconsider the peace that exists today. On top of that, I think it is our role as adults to share the same perspective and think together with the children who will be the bearers of the future.

In March of this year, an ordinance was established to designate November 1st as Ryukyu History and Culture Day. Okinawa has a lot of history and culture that we can be proud of. Okinawa karate is called the "martial art of peace" with the spirit of Shuri demonstrating respect for propriety, and it has 130 million fans around the world. I believe that developing an Uchina culture that captures people's hearts and sharing it with the world is one way to foster this spirit of peace.

Today, I would like to express my heartfelt commitment to the peace along with that of those who were unable to attend this ceremony due to the effects of Covid 19 and my utmost effort to establish a lasting global peace that will stop the horrors of the Battle of Okinawa to ever happening again.

In closing, I would like to offer my heartfelt prayers of condolence to the souls of the deceased and for the good health and happiness of the bereaved families and the people of the prefecture.

June 23, 2021

Noboru Akamine

Speaker of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly

Declaration of Peace

June 23rd marks 76 years since the final fierce ground campaign of the war in the Pacific. The raging battle took more than 200,000 precious lives, injured many people, and destroyed many irreplaceable cultural heritages and the natural environment.

We have not forgotten the unimaginable tragedy of the Battle of Okinawa, we remember the sadness and suffering of those who lost their lives, we pass down the regret-filled testimonies of those who experienced the war to future generations and bearing in mind the universal human lesson of the preciousness of peace and while strongly demanding the realization of lasting peace we have worked hard on the path of reconstruction and development.

However, the remains of many victims and unexploded bombs are still buried all across the prefecture, including here in Mabuni, and the wounds from the war have not yet healed.

I would like for the national government to follow the wishes of the people of the prefecture and take responsibility to collect the remains and dispose of unexploded bombs as soon as possible.

In addition, as approximately 70.3% of the facilities for the exclusive use of the U.S. forces in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa Prefecture, which only accounts for 0.6% of Japan's total land area, there is no end to the noise, environmental problems, and incidents and accidents involving the U.S. military.

25 years have passed since the SACO agreement was reached, and in that time the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region has changed drastically, and the U.S. military is moving forward with the decentralization of its forces.

In these circumstances, Okinawa Prefecture will mark the large milestone of the 50 year anniversary of its reversion to the mainland next year. I would like for the government of Japan and the government of the United States to actively cooperate with the prefectural government and create a forum to discuss and to create a "Roadmap for the Realignment and Reduction of U.S. Forces in Okinawa" and to resolve the heavy burden of U.S. bases in Okinawa in a visible manner, without being preoccupied with the idea that the construction of the new Henoko base is the only solution.

Okinawa has a very rich natural environment such as the region home to many rare flora and fauna known as the "Miracle Forest of Yanbaru," which is currently on its way to be registered as World Natural Heritage Site, as well as the nature rich unique outer island region.

It is our responsibility to entrust the children and young people who will bear the

future with Okinawa, which is rich in nature, Okinawa, where unique culture lives on, it is our responsibility to entrust Okinawa to a peaceful and truly prosperous world.

On the other hand, when we look at the world, regional conflicts continue unabated and there are many problems such as poverty, hunger, discrimination and human rights violations.

There is a saying, "The opposite of love is not hate but indifference." It is now necessary for people all over the world to work together, to recognize their differences and diversity in values, and work together and overcome their conflicts and divisions.

At this very moment, in the face of the threat of COVID-19, the world must work together to support each other's lives and livelihoods.

To create a peaceful society in today's globalized world, mutual understanding with neighboring countries is essential. We can weave and share our thoughts of peace and well-being that transcend time and place. Now more than ever in this time of hardship we must gather our wisdom and work together to realize a society in which no one is left behind.

In the past, throughout their long history, the people of Okinawa have nurtured a spirit of respect for their ancestors, respect for nature, and the Chimugukuru which understands the pain of others. Together with this, they have also established friendly relations through trade with neighboring countries, and have built a unique culture and peaceful society.

We must continue the "Bankoku Shinryo" spirit of our ancestors, who were active as "bridges" that connected the countries of the world, and we must share with the world the "Okinawan Heart • Chimugukuru," cultivated through Okinawa's history and climate that values peace above all else.

In order to honor the wishes of all those who have experienced war and never repeat such tragedy again, it is our important mission to properly pass on the experiences and lessons of war to the next generation.

Through the Okinawa Peace Prize, which with the wishes of the people of Okinawa, aims to contribute to the creation of lasting world peace, and the Chura Uchina Grassroots Peace Contribution Award, which shines light on local contributions to society which connect to peace; the baton of peace, through various activities, will be passed from hand to hand and entrusted to the future.

In addition, by having young people from Asian countries with tragic war experiences similar to those in Okinawa and young people from Okinawa learn together, they can connect with each other across nationality and culture, and share the desire for peace that they have cultivated, and built a network that can be a "bridge to peace" even if they are far away from each other.

With the aim of connecting the circle of peace from Okinawa to the world, we will continue to make efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, renounce war, and establish lasting peace.

”Let us free this planet from all battles and wars
By connecting the hearts of all those who wish for peace
Let us always live together with smiles
By sharing food, fostering hope and trust among nations
It is time to show our “Bankoku Shinryo” spirit to the
International communities and to pass the baton of
“Chimugukuru” to our children, and future generations!”

On today, Okinawa Memorial Day, while expressing my heartfelt condolences to all the souls of those who lost their lives, I hereby declare my determination to work with all my heart and soul to, with the hope of peace and prosperity for human society, continue to pass on the realities and lessons of the Battle of Okinawa to the next generation, and toward the realization of "an island where people can feel safe, secure, and happy" that can contribute to the realization of international peace.

June 23 2021

Denny Tamaki
Governor of Okinawa Prefecture