

2022

Okinawa Memorial Service for All War Dead



The 32nd "Children and Student Messages for Peace" Illustration Category, High School Division, Grand Prize:
Okinawa Prefectural Senior High School, First Year, Sumire Yoshihara "For Peace"

Date : June 23, 2022 (Thursday) 11:50am to 12:40pm

Location : Peace Memorial Park (Mabuni, Itoman)

Okinawa Prefecture

Okinawa Prefectural Assembly

Schedule for the 2022 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
U.S. Ambassador to Japan
(Read on behalf of the Ambassador) |
| 9 | Closing Address | Vice Governor of Okinawa Prefecture |
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| 1 | Master of Ceremonies | NHK Broadcasting Okinawa - Announcer |
| 2 | Sign Language Interpreter | Registered Sign Language Interpreter
Okinawa Prefecture Persons with Disabilities Support Association |

A commemorative address by the Speaker of the Okinawa Assembly
on the 2022 Okinawa Memorial Day

Today, in the presence of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, the Speakers of both Houses of the National Diet, distinguished guests, and the bereaved, I would like to express my deepest condolences to the spirits of all the victims and their families.

At the end of the Pacific War, here in Okinawa, a terrible ground battle broke out involving the general population of Okinawa. The war swallowed everything: the inhabitants were shot by stray bullets and bombs, the people suffered from hunger, injuries and infectious diseases. More than 200,000 precious lives were lost; one in four of the population of the prefecture.

Today, when I stand on Mabuni hill, I notice that there is no place to escape. I feel only the pain in the souls of each person standing on the edge of despair, where there is the intolerable pain that one cannot overcome. I cannot begin to imagine the grief and remorse of the spirits who fell into the war while recalling their loved one's faces in their minds. My heart is crushed by the deep sorrow of the bereaved families and their unhealing memories of their loss.

We must repeatedly ask ourselves and society why such a terrible battle took place, here, in Okinawa. Our asking is the embrace of the spirit that sleeps in the land of Okinawa. Yet, our renewed vow that it is the embrace that will lead to a true memorial service.

On May 15, 4th year of Reiwa, 2022, the Okinawa Prefecture celebrated the 50th anniversary of its reversion to Japan. It was a turning point in history, when the people of Okinawa worked together after a horrific war, to build up hope to return Okinawa to Japan, changing the future of their homeland. Our ancestors have achieved much to survive in this new era, which is the Okinawa that you see spreading in front of you today. At the same time, it must be added that the culture and art inherited from the Ryukyu dynasty, the peaceful exchange with the neighboring countries, that is the spirit of the Bridge of the World, is what Okinawa has cherished, and carried forward so that more can be achieved.

Even now, 77 years after the war, there are still issues caused by the war, such as collecting remains of the war dead, disposing of unexploded ordnance, and returning and utilizing the military bases. At the time of the ground war, the distinction between the battle area and the evacuation area where the inhabitants hid was lost, and it was extremely confusing. Our ancestors who survived in such an extreme situation have achieved the reconstruction of Okinawa today together with the new generation. However, even as they grow older, some

are still left behind due to various injuries they suffered during the ground war. At the same time, there are many layers of issues that Okinawans face, such as child poverty, damage caused by the excessive burden of the bases, development of a more stable medical system on remote islands, and the development of a better transportation network.

On the day of the memorial, which marks the 50th anniversary of the return to the mainland, we need to overcome the challenge and forego war as our mission to live in the present, which will repay all the spirits sleeping in this land of Okinawa. We must revisit what we should do to make this a peaceful world.

On March 2nd, 4th year of Reiwa (2022), The Okinawa Prefectural Assembly unanimously passed a resolution calling for an early ceasefire and withdrawal from the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. We Okinawans recall the pain of Okinawan history and apply it to a necessary role in the new era. The generation that created the past, the generation that will lead the present, and the children who will create the next era will all bring together the Okinawa Prefectural Network around the world. Okinawa will serve as the control center of peace in Asia, and lead support for Ukraine around the world. I am convinced that this is what we can do as Okinawans, and it will be the new hope for not only Japan but also the world.

Today, with feelings of peace for the people who could not attend this ceremony, I, as Speaker of the Okinawa Assembly, pledge to do my utmost to establish a global permanent peace that will not bring similar devastation of the Battle of Okinawa to the world again.

Thank you.

Jun 23rd 4th year of Reiwa (2022)

Speaker of the Okinawa Assembly, Noboru Akamine

Here in Okinawa, in the last World War, the civilian population was dragged into one of the most intense ground wars in history.

The typhoon of steel claimed more than 200,000 precious lives and destroyed invaluable cultural heritages and verdant natural environment.

June 23rd marks the 77th anniversary of the war.

Each and every person of Okinawa, who has experienced firsthand the absurdity and cruelty of war, has stood up against the postwar ruins and confusion with ceaseless efforts and unwavering faith, and together, hand in hand, we have overcome many difficulties.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Okinawa's reversion to mainland Japan.

In 1971, the year before the reversion, the government of the Ryukyu Islands submitted the "Proposal of Steps for the Reversion of Okinawa" to the Japanese government and the National Diet of Japan. This Proposal clearly stated its strong desire for Okinawa to be returned to Japan as "peaceful islands without military bases".

However, Okinawa still accounts for only about 0.6% of Japan's total land area, and yet it is home to about 70.3% of all U.S. military facilities in Japan. The residents of Okinawa continue to bear an excessive base burden from incidents and accidents deriving from U.S. military bases, aircraft noise, water and soil pollution, and other environmental problems.

For this reason, Okinawa Prefecture will strongly demand a solution that will work quickly to the base problem in Okinawa. Solutions that will be sought include requests for different arrangements and the downsizing of U.S. military bases in Okinawa, a fundamental review of the Status of Forces Agreement, reduction of the base burden in regards to incidents and accidents, removal of dangers as soon as possible including the immediate suspension of operations at Futenma Air Station, and abandoning the construction of a new base in Henoko.

It is our responsibility to pass on our precious natural environment and our unique Okinawan culture to our children and grandchildren, who will be responsible for the future, in order to develop a peaceful and truly prosperous Okinawa.

Throughout the world, regional conflicts continue unabated, and there are grave problems such as refugee crises, poverty, hunger, discrimination, and the violation of human dignity.

In Ukraine, Russian aggression continues to claim innocent lives. The successive destruction of beautiful cityscapes and nature, the loss of peaceful daily life as it was taken away, and being forced to live side by side with fear evoke memories of the ground war involving Okinawa residents 77 years ago, and are such a shock that is beyond description.

The people of Okinawa sincerely hope that the solidarity and cooperation of the international community will bring about a ceasefire as soon as possible.

Okinawa Prefecture has been providing support, from the standpoint of humanitarian assistance, such as the acceptance of refugees from Ukraine, and we strongly hope for the earliest possible restoration of peace.

The preamble of the UNESCO Charter states, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

In order to create a peaceful society, I believe that the international community has been called upon to work together in solidarity in order to recognize diversity and differences in values and to pursue peace, not through confrontation and division, but through mutual respect and dialogue.

Okinawa has a history of maintaining peace, through exchange with many countries, with tolerance and the spirit of Bankoku Shinryo which was fostered through its unique history and culture.

Okinawa Prefecture, with such an accumulated history, erected the "Cornerstone of Peace" inscribed with the names of all those who lost their lives in the Battle of Okinawa, regardless of nationality or whether they are military or civilian, with the hope of lasting peace throughout the world.

This year, additional inscriptions have been added, with 241,686 people having been inscribed, and this effort continues to this day.

In the current turbulent world situation, we believe that now it is important to convey to the world, while crossing national borders, the "Okinawan spirit/*chimugukuru*" of cherishing peace and the preciousness of life that is embodied in the Cornerstone of Peace.

77 years have passed since the end of the war and the memories of the tragic Battle of Okinawa are fading. With the reality of war unknown to the majority of the current generation, it is our important mission to correctly convey the reality of the Battle of Okinawa and its teachings to the next generation in order to keep the memories of the abominable war from fading away.

Okinawa Prefecture has created a "New Proposal of Steps Toward the Realization of a Peaceful and Prosperous Okinawa" to continue carrying out the wishes of the people of Okinawa at the time of the reversion to Japan. In addition, in order to resolve issues that still remain 50 years after the reversion, and to realize the ideal vision for Okinawa as envisioned in the Okinawa 21st Century Vision as the people of Okinawa desire.

We will do our utmost to realize "a compassionate society where no one is left behind" while making the most of the various characteristics of Okinawa Prefecture in accordance with the "New Okinawa 21st Century Vision Basic Plan" that began in FY2022. Additionally, while

working towards the future of a "peaceful and prosperous '*churashima*' Okinawa" that the people of Okinawa desire.

We will continue our unceasing efforts for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the renunciation of war, and the establishment of lasting peace, so that the voice of peace can be heard from Okinawa anywhere in the world and Okinawa will never again be turned into a battlefield.

Today, on Memorial Day, I offer my heartfelt condolences to the souls of all the victims, regardless of nationality, and declare my determination to continue to convey the value of peace to the next generation, to contribute to the realization of international peace, and to work with all my strength to realize a peaceful and prosperous Okinawa where all citizens can truly experience happiness.