



Black Rain

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I am now 70 years old, and I was four when I was caught in the radioactive black rain. I lived in a western area of Hiroshima, 8 kilometres from the hypocentre of the nuclear explosion.

That day was very clear. My mother was drying the washing and I was reading a picture book in a room. There was a vivid flash of light. Then sliding paper doors and glass windows fell down on me with a great crash. I hastily went out, crying, to the porch. 'Look at that!' My mother pointed to the sky over the city. We saw yellow light changing into orange, red and light green. It was like an illumination show. In a while, burnt paper, cloth, pieces of wood and ash began to fall. Suddenly, the area around here became dark, and large drops of black rain began to fall. White shirts became black and wet. The water of the river was black and many small fish were floating on their backs with their stomachs turned upwards. This was black rain. It was much later that we discovered the black rain contained radiation.

Because of my poor health, I didn't like going to school in my early elementary school days. Boils formed on my hands and feet. And the lymph glands in my groin and armpits swelled. But I am in good health now.

In Saeki Ward, Hiroshima City, where I live, we formed the Association of Black Rain, with 300 members, eight years ago. At the first meeting survivors talked about how the black rain fell, and the acute disorders they had; high fever, diarrhoea, bloody stools, hair loss. Others talked about the disorders they had later. Many members

died and now there are less than 250.

Kazuhiro Teramoto, who lives in my neighborhood, was in the third year of elementary school at that time. That morning he saw a strong flash and felt the schoolhouse shake while listening to the teacher. When he came home, in the toilet he wiped his buttocks with the burnt paper that came flying. He ran around a sweet potato field in the rain. The black rain made his shirt very dirty, and he was scolded by his mother because the dirt was difficult to wash out.

Kazuhiro Teramoto felt tired and couldn't wake up in the morning. He was often late for school. He kept coughing, and he couldn't attend gym class in his high school days. Even the doctors of Hiroshima University Hospital couldn't identify the cause of his disease. He was asked, 'Weren't you in Hiroshima City when the A-bomb was dropped? Didn't you go into Hiroshima City soon after the bombing?' He found employment with a major company. But he always felt tired and was labelled a lazy person; he could not help leaving the company. He found work with another company. But the same thing happened to him. His white blood corpuscle count is very high. He suffers from more than ten diseases such as diabetes and liver complaints. He has dialysis treatment daily.

Beneath the mushroom cloud, there was a lot of black rain, radioactive fall-out and minute particles. These were taken into the body through the mouth, respiratory organs, and skin. Low doses of radiation stayed in some parts of the body and were always emitting radiation and damaging the chromosomes. It is called 'internal exposure'. Leukaemia and many other cancers are caused by damaged chromosomes, even decades later.

In 1947, two years after the war ended, the American government established the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was set up purely for scientific research and study; not to provide medical care. They studied many victims who were within 3.5 km from the hypocentre. Based on the research and studies done by the ABCC, the Japanese government said that no after-effects could be found among survivors who were more than 3.5 km from the hypocentre.

A very powerful typhoon hit Hiroshima 42 days after the bombing and washed away surface dirt. Because of this, we insisted that it was impossible to prove that black rain had fallen where we lived. Hiroshima City would not listen to us, and ignored the fact. However, our tenacious movement compelled Hiroshima City to send out questionnaires and interview the survivors. At last, they made a new map with an area six times as large as the original one, and requested that the Japanese government acknowledge the new map. The councils of three cities and

four towns where black rain fell did the same thing. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare launched a study group consisting of experts, which has held four meetings.

Kazuhiro Teramoto says,

‘When the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident happened, people who live within 30 km from the plant were told to evacuate. But we were not told about the danger of A-bomb radiation. We ate vegetables and drank the water from wells without a lid. Even now I am not recognized as an A-bomb survivor, and I am going to end my hard life. I want my body to be used to study internal exposure, if possible.’

I would like the Japanese government to expand the black rain areas for the survivors in distress, and promote study while survivors are still alive. This is our earnest wish.

The Japanese government should not ignore internal exposure. It will be one of the best ways to promote the research and study of internal exposure, not only for sufferers in Fukushima, but also for Japanese and people all over the world. It will also be a way to abolish nuclear weapons.



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