

FOUNDATION OF THE HIMEYURI PEACE MUSEUM

Late at night on March 23, 1945, 222 students and 18 teachers from the Female Division of the Okinawa Normal School and the Okinawa First Girls' High School were inducted into units at the Okinawa Army Field Hospital in the village of Haebaru about 3 miles southeast of Naha. The U.S. Army invaded the Kerama Islands on March 26 and made a landing on the west coast of the central part of Okinawa Island by April 1. The number of dead and injured increased sharply on the Japanese side as the U.S. forces pushed the battlefront southward. Worsening war conditions subjected the mobilized students to hideous working conditions. They took care of the constantly arriving injured, secured water and carried food in for the patients and hospital staff, and buried the dead. These round-the-clock duties didn't allow them even time for a nap.

In late May, as U.S. forces approached, the students and Japanese soldiers left the Army Field Hospital and started on their way southward. After a series of bombings, however, on June 18 they were suddenly dismissed. The students had nowhere to go under the U.S. siege. Some were killed in the battle raging around them, while others killed themselves with shells or hand grenades. Of 240 students and teachers, 136 who joined the Army Hospital and 91 who joined other corps perished.

The U.S. Army regarded the Battle of Okinawa as a pivotal operation to secure a site for the invasion of mainland Japan and invested their entire military resources. On the other hand, the Japanese forces in caves waged a "war of attrition": trying to drag the battle out for even one day longer and to force the U.S. Army to delay its assault

on the mainland. Japanese forces in Okinawa, therefore, decided to enlist the tactic of an all-out mobilization of the Okinawan people including students, who were organized into student corps. The war of attrition and the all-out mobilization claimed the lives of more than 120,000 Okinawans.

About 40 years have passed since the Battle of Okinawa, and yet the indescribable tragedy we experienced and witnessed on the battlefield still haunts our memory. We will never forget the horror of the pre-World War II militaristic education, which drove us to the battlefield with no skepticism but rather with a willingness to serve.

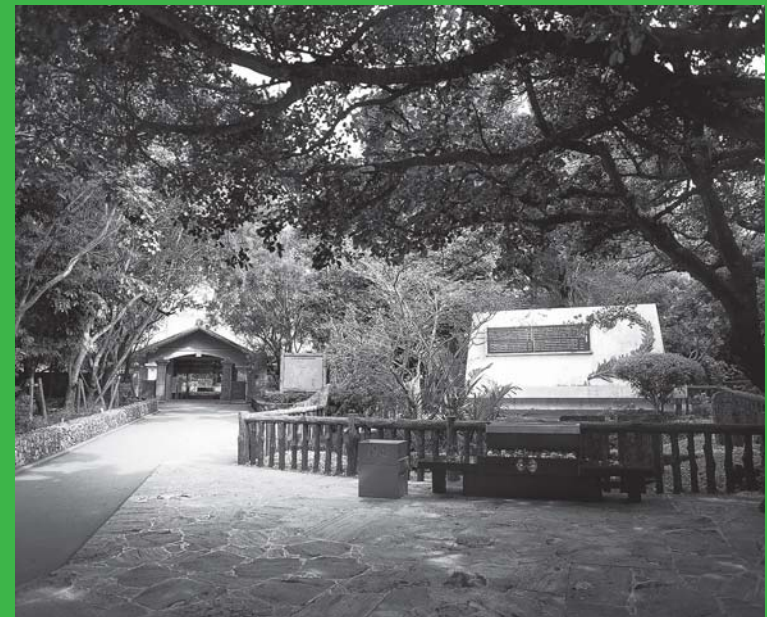
We strongly feel that we must continue to tell our stories of a war filled with insanity and brutality now that the post-war generations, who have no idea what war is, have formed the majority of our population and that the peace-threatening signs in both domestic and international politics cannot be ignored.

Believing an appeal for world peace will be the way to repose the souls of those who perished, we, the Himeyuri Alumnae, founded the Himeyuri Peace Museum on this site. We are most grateful for the sincere encouragement and support that we received from many individuals and organizations in and outside the prefecture in the process of its foundation.

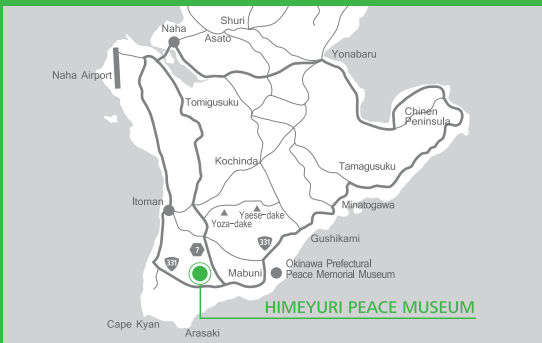
●Himeyuri Alumnae Incorporated Foundation
June 23, 1989

The museum renovated the entire exhibition in April 2004 so that we can better communicate our message to the younger generations. A new plaza, the "Passage to Peace," reflects our longing for peace and its continuation in the future.

ひめゆり
平和資料館
資料館
平和祈念館



Himeyuri Peace Museum



HIMEYURI PEACE MUSEUM

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- TEL +81-098-997-2100 / FAX +81-098-997-2102
- URL <http://www.himeyuri.or.jp/>
- Open every day 9:00-17:00
- Admission fee
Adults ¥310 / High school students ¥210
Elementary and Junior high school students ¥110
Groups of 20 or more people -
Adults ¥280 / High school students ¥190
Elementary and Junior high school students ¥100



The 240 mobilized students were assigned to work as nurse assistants in the Okinawa Army Hospital in Haebaru. The facility was a cave connected by tunnels to many other smaller caves just like an ants' nest, and the miserable wards had shabby bunk beds lined up along the exposed mud walls. The life-size diorama of a clinic cave and survivors' testimonies on the screen will evidence the activities that Himeyuri students were forced to perform in the battle and the actual conditions of the wounded soldiers as another reality of the war. The medical instruments, which were buried underground for 40 years, and the belongings that students took along to the battlefield will tell visitors the story of the students' horrifying experience.

Exhibition Chamber 2 ● ひめゆりの戦場 HIMEYURI STUDENTS AT THE FRONT



Exhibition Chamber 1 ● ひめゆりの青春 YOUTH OF HIMEYURI

Himeyuri is the nickname for the Okinawa Women's Normal School and the First Women's Prefectural High School. Their students were full of hopes and aspirations, but the war situation that dragged on throughout the 1930s had gradually militarized these schools and finally led to their induction into the Battle of Okinawa. On March 23, 1945, as soon as the U.S. military started their long-awaited landing operation on Okinawa, the 240 students from Himeyuri were mobilized for the battle. This chamber displays how the "War and Education" systems painted these female students' innocent and hopeful youth with a wartime hue and eventually deprived them of it.

Exhibition Chamber 3 ● 解散命令と死の彷徨 DEACTIVATION ORDER AND ROAMING TOWARD DEATH

On the night of June 18, 1945, as soon as the deactivation order had been issued, students were thrown out of the caves into the war front surrounded by the approaching U.S. military. More than 100 Himeyuri students were killed within a few days of that order. The archive films and the survivors' testimonies on the large-screen display will recount the tragic results of this unreasonable military order.

Exhibition Chamber 4 ● 鎮魂 REQUIEM

This room is dedicated to the students and teachers who died in the war. The 200 portraits on the wall memorialize their lives and existence. Visitors are able to read the survivors' accounts and to take a look at the full-scale, reconstructed model of the Ihara Third Clinic Cave, where concentrated tear gas took a heavy toll of lives.

Exhibition Chamber 5 ● 回想 MEMORIAL

In this chamber, with a memorable view of a colorfully blooming flower garden from season to season, visitors will have a chance to write their impressions of the museum exhibitions they saw before coming to this chamber.

Exhibition Chamber 6 ● 平和への広場 THE PASSAGE TO PEACE

This annex was built in April 2004 in order to provide a space for the people of future generations to hold various activities promoting peace. We truly hope that this space will become a passage bridging the present and the future and play a central role in connecting people from different generations from all over the world with the common thread of "longing for peace."