

Newsletter for May 2015

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Meeting Highlights Nuclear Disarmament

April 28. Keeping the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki alive is a crucially important aspect of promoting peace and international understanding. That was the message when the Universal Esperanto Association hosted YAMAOKA Michiko and OSIOKA Taeko at the United Nations on April 28. At a meeting held in the conference room of the UN Department of Public Information's NGO office, Ms. Yamaoka, designated an official "Memory Keeper" by the City of Hiroshima and herself the daughter of a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing, recounted "The Horrible Truth About Hiroshima" to a group of guests invited by the UEA office.

In her introduction, Ms. Yamaoka remarked: "I am a Memory Keeper. That means that I tell the story of A-bomb victims to the younger generation. I will talk about my mother who is a survivor of the A-bomb. Unfortunately, my mother's sister died in the bombing. At that time, my mother was 20 years old, her sister was 13. Now my mother is in a hospital; she hasn't been able to speak, walk, or eat without a tube for 5 years. She is 90 years old now. The survivors of the A-bomb do not blame Americans directly. They understand Japan's role in the war, and the consequences of that participation. What the survivors truly hate is war itself. Hearing their firsthand experience might lead you to the same conclusion."

The two visitors were in New York as NGO representatives in connection with the opening of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, now in progress at the UN Headquarters in New York. Osioka Taeko is active in Esperanto causes and in issues related to women's rights.

The Universal Esperanto Association supports the idea of a right to peace and regards human rights as the foundation of its work to promote international communication and understanding.

Symposium to be Dedicated to the Memory of Joshua Fishman

April 30. The upcoming Symposium on Language and Exclusion, organized by the Universal Esperanto Association and the Study Group on Language and the United Nations, will be dedicated to the memory of Professor Joshua Fishman, the eminent sociologist of language widely regarded as the preeminent figure in sociolinguistics and language policy, who died on March 1. Born in Philadelphia in 1926, Professor Fishman received an MA from the University of Pennsylvania and a Ph.D. from Columbia University and taught for many years at Yeshiva University. In the course of his long career, he published numerous landmark studies in language and society, among them Yiddish in America (1965), Language Loyalty in the United States (1966), Language Problems of Developing Nations (1968), Sociolinguistics (1970), Language and Nationalism (1973), Reversing Language Shift (1991) and Can Threatened Languages be Saved? (2001). While he did not write on Esperanto, his informal comments on the language were favourable and supportive. He was a member of the editorial board of the journal of the Centre for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems (CED), Language Problems and Language Planning. He founded the highly influential International Journal on the Sociology of Language in 1973, and also edited the massive 250-volume book series Contributions to the Sociology of Language.

In her obituary on Professor Fishman in *Linguist List*, the well-known scholar of bilingualism, Ofelia García, wrote: "While conducting an impressive body of research, and being responsive to the many who asked for advice, Fishman traveled extensively, encouraging the activities of those seeking to preserve endangered languages. He will be remembered by the Māoris of New Zealand, the Catalans and Basques of Spain, the Navajo and other Native Americans, the speakers of Quechua and Aymara in South America, and many other minority language groups for his warmth and encouragement." Professor García will deliver memorial remarks at the Symposium. Keynote speaker for the Symposium will be Fernand de Varennes, Extraordinary Professor at the University of Pretoria and Visiting Professor at the University of Hong Kong. As an international legal expert on human rights and the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, Fernand de Varennes has appeared on a number of occasions before UN committees in Geneva and the European Parliament in Brussels, worked with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, as well as preparing a number of UN (linguistic rights of indigenous peoples and minorities; prevention of ethnic conflicts; political participation of minorities) and UNESCO (rights of migrants) papers; and been involved in a dialogue seminar on minority rights with the judges of the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights. Among the papers to be presented at the symposium are several concerned with UN language policy and several on language and peacekeeping. The eleven presenters are drawn from seven countries: Iceland, the UK, Hungary, France, Kazakhstan, China, and the USA. Professor Esther Schor, of Princeton University, will provide opening remarks.

The symposium will take place on Thursday, May 7, at the Church Center, 777 UN Plaza, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Details can be found at www.languageandtheun.org

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