

Voice of A Survivor

Kimiko Murai
Ritsumeikan University

I still remember that night. “It was at 10:08p.m. I’m sorry.....” The doctor said calmly. I thought it was a bad joke, not a bit funny. When I entered the operating room, my brother was lying on a bed. His eyes were totally shut. The white face had many cuts and cotton was stuffed into his mouth. Still, I didn’t know how to accept the fact. I was just looking at the sight that my parents were clinging to my brother’s body and crying bitterly. Why did this happen? Why my brother? Nobody could tell me the answer. It was June 10, 1997. My brother was killed in a “traffic accident”.

Ladies and gentlemen, today, I’m standing here as a survivor of a traffic accident, and I’d like you to hear and to take my voice which calls on you to think about traffic accidents seriously and to have responsibility for your own behavior.

In my brother’s case, the cause of the accident was that the driver ignored a red signal. There was a witness and the driver also admitted his fault. One year later, however, an unbelievable fact shocked my family. The driver was not prosecuted. The only punishment that he was given was the suspension of his license for two months. Besides, these facts were not revealed until my father tried to find them out himself. Since my parents refused to give up, the driver was prosecuted in the end, but my family got furious at such a social system which made light of my brother’s death.

Through my experience, I thought the Japanese law in these cases was totally insufficient and people’s consciousness had to be changed. First, I think a basic law for victims should be made. In fact, some stronger laws have been made since my brother died, so the present situation has improved a little. However, still, victims can receive only limited care, because the present laws still cannot cover up all needs of victims. Therefore, they need a law which guarantees comprehensive support. For example, victims need the rights to get information, to participate a trial, to give their opinions, to receive physical, mental and financial support for recovery. Actually, an outline of this law has been released by Japan Federation of Bar Associations, and The Democratic Party has also introduced a concrete bill in the Diet. Therefore, each party should discuss it more and pass the bill acceptable.

Another important thing is that we need to change our consciousness toward traffic accidents not to make them happen. I know many people give up and say like this, “Traffic accidents are everyday incidents.” or, “It just

happens, we cannot help because we still need cars anyway.” These people never realized that kinds of consciousness spoil offenders and guarantee that the number of tragedies will never diminish. It is true that accidents happen everyday and we need cars. However, it doesn't mean we can be tolerant toward accidents. It is no longer possible for us to give up cars; therefore, we must know that driving a car carries a big responsibility. We need to be more conscious of the danger of traffic accidents.

6 years have already passed since my brother died, but I still miss my brother. I still want to see him even if I know my wish will never come true. I know depth of sadness and anger with which victims must cope, so I don't want anyone to have the same experience. What each of us can do to prevent any further increase in the number of victims is to keep from becoming a person, who causes accidents, isn't it? Why don't we think about traffic accidents more seriously? Why don't we reexamine our own manners? Why don't we stop saying, “There's nothing we can do...”? This is a voice of a survivor. Whether you accept it or not is totally up to you, but it is my hope that you will accept it and you will act on it.

Thank you very much for listening.