

The Danger of One-Sided Stories

One afternoon, I greeted my friend cheerfully, but she ignored me and walked past. My heart sank and wondered what I had done wrong. Later, I found out she simply had not heard. This taught me how easy it is to misjudge others by seeing only one side of the story. Throughout history, this has happened repeatedly, causing misunderstanding or even wars.

Growing up, I was in a Japanese girls' school where a history course about WWII emphasized the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and less focus on Japanese war crimes. I never questioned the curriculum and felt deep frustration for those who planned such a tragedy.

This mindset started to shift the summer before attending a U.S. boarding school. *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand was my first assigned book for the summer break before freshman year. The story was about an American POW in Japan, ending with the Allied victory. I was shocked by how the same events I studied in Japan were written differently and noticed that perspective is everything to determine one's opinion.

When school began, we had a discussion about the book in a class. Even though the teacher intended it to be an "easy discussion", I could not speak a single word. It wasn't just my lack of speaking skills back then, but the context and the opinion other students had on this history. For most people in my class, it was successful. For me, it was tragic.

The following year, when I learned about WWII in world history, I talked about my internal conflict with my teacher after class. After listening, he asked me to share about this with the class. Though I attempted to write a script, I decided to simply speak from my heart. I told my classmates how I learned the history differently in Japan, how I felt awkward and shocked in the discussion, and how both sides held parts of the truth. All of the classmates listened to me carefully. When I finished, my entire class started to applaud. I was confused until one classmate told me how he felt the same way I felt while listening to my speech. This is what the world needs. I realized. Time and courage to

talk about the other perspective. After this moment, I became much more comfortable talking about such topics.

This experience shaped my vision of a peaceful world. In my world, people take the time to listen to each other fully, even when opinions differ. Conflicts are resolved through understanding, not assumptions or fear. Schools teach history and current events from multiple perspectives, encouraging curiosity and empathy. Social media and news amplify diverse voices rather than just one side. Peace is not simply the absence of conflict. It is the presence of dialogue, respect, and courage to understand others.

To me, peace begins with listening. Only when we hear the whole story can we truly connect, learn, and build a world where understanding replaces judgment.