

## Faezeh Mahichi

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**Faezeh Mahichi** is Associate Professor at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU), Japan since 2013. Her journey from Nano-world to Macro-reality started from her master and PhD studies in the field of nanotechnology in Tokyo Institute of Technology (Tokyo Tech), Japan to the recent years working as a researcher and educator in environmental studies and circular economy at APU, a university hosting students from more than 90 nationalities. Dr. Mahichi's teaching and research interests are in the importance of research and education of the holistic environmental systems to achieve sustainability. Currently, she is studying the impacts of different practices, technological implementations and developments on natural environment. Her interests also lie in the study of traditional knowledge and practices, circular economy, sustainable development and the how-to of decreasing humanity's ecological footprint, pollution and depletion of natural resources through environmental education and cultivated awareness. Now, she is enjoying teaching, researching, gardening, in the coastal city of Beppu, Japan.



How did you first get started in teaching environmental issues and advocating peace education in the context of sustainability?

Raised on a 10-hectare aquaculture farm, I was blessed to have had the opportunity to interact and live closely with nature from an early age back in my home country, Iran. After coming to Japan, my master's and PhD studies and research were also related to the environment, in the fields of nanotechnology and bioengineering. After joining the faculty of APU in April 2010, alongside my research I started teaching environmental studies and promoting sustainable practices to decrease humanity's ecological footprint.

Experiencing firsthand the devastation of eight years of Iran-Iraq war during my childhood and losing my 18-year-old uncle along with the happiness and energies that vanished from my family due to this loss, encouraged me to take part in promoting peace in any possible way.

How did the GLH partnership start at Ritsumeikan APU? What does the presence of the saplings at APU mean?

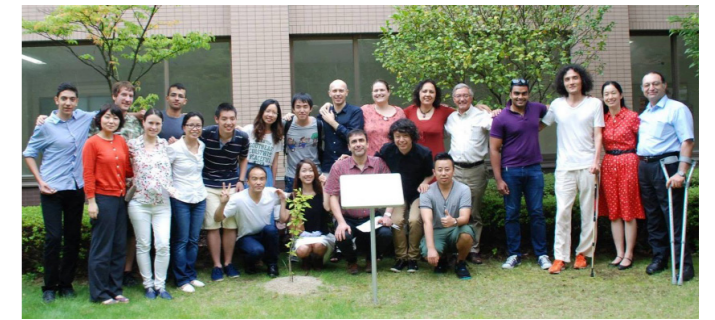
In August 2012 as a representative of APU, I attended the Master Students Summer School for Environmental Science of the International Network of Universities (INU), an international university consortium hosted by Hiroshima University. On August 6th, after attending the Peace Memorial Ceremony, we visited some of the 170 Hiroshima atomic bomb survivor trees (hibaku jumoku) during a walking trip organized by Green Legacy Hiroshima and delivered by Dr. Nassrine Azimi, co-founder of GLH. During the tour, we learnt that despite beliefs of "nothing will grow in Hiroshima for at least 75 years," within a few months after the tragic event, the first green sprouts of the badly burned tree trunks brought back hope to the hibakusha, the atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima. During a brief chat with Dr. Azimi, I introduced myself and shared my wish to plant a descendant of a hibaku tree at APU, a university hosting students from more than 90 nationalities.



Planting on 2013 UN Day, President Shun Korenaga and Dr. Azimi After returning to APU, I shared the story of GLH with two colleagues Prof. Ed Porter and Prof. Ken Arii, and we proposed to plant a Hiroshima tree. It was a unique opportunity for APU's internationally diverse students – highlighting APU's motto, "Shape Your World" and "Shape Your Peaceful World." APU welcomed the proposal and the Hiroshima-APU Sakura tree was planted on campus, on the UN day, October 24th, 2013 by Dr. Azimi and APU President, Professor Shun Korenaga. The tree represents a place that APU students from around the world can gather under the idea of "Freedom, Peace and Humanity". This is what we often do with my students, sharing our support for promoting peace. There is a Facebook page dedicated to the tree where the photos and messages are uploaded.

When was your first visit to Hiroshima? What were your impressions and what stands out most about that visit in your memory?

I visited Hiroshima in January 2009 with my family for the first time. We visited the Peace Memorial Park and Museum. I cried the whole time of our visit which was strange for my children. Looking at the items in the museum brought back to me all the sorrowful childhood



APU faculty, staff, and students with the hibaku sakura. August 2014 memories of the Iran-Iraq war. I prayed that no child would ever experience the same traumas and I wished I could somehow promote peace in the world.

What does the partnership with GLH and the connection with Hiroshima mean for you personally and professionally? What is your vision for these saplings on campus in the future?

Six years since planting the Hiroshima-APU Sakura, on April 2nd, 2019, APU relocated the tree to a new place in the garden. It has been thriving — as has our determination to promote peace. As a nature lover, I have decided to research, teach and promote environmental studies as my profession. After visiting Hiroshima and recognizing the story of Hiroshima's survival trees, I realized that no matter how long and how hard the nature has worked through evolution to best fit into the changing environment, all can be gone within a fraction of second without peace. Environmental studies are closely related to peace studies. As the findings of a recent study indicate climate change correlates with a rise in assaults, murders, group conflicts and war<sup>1</sup>.

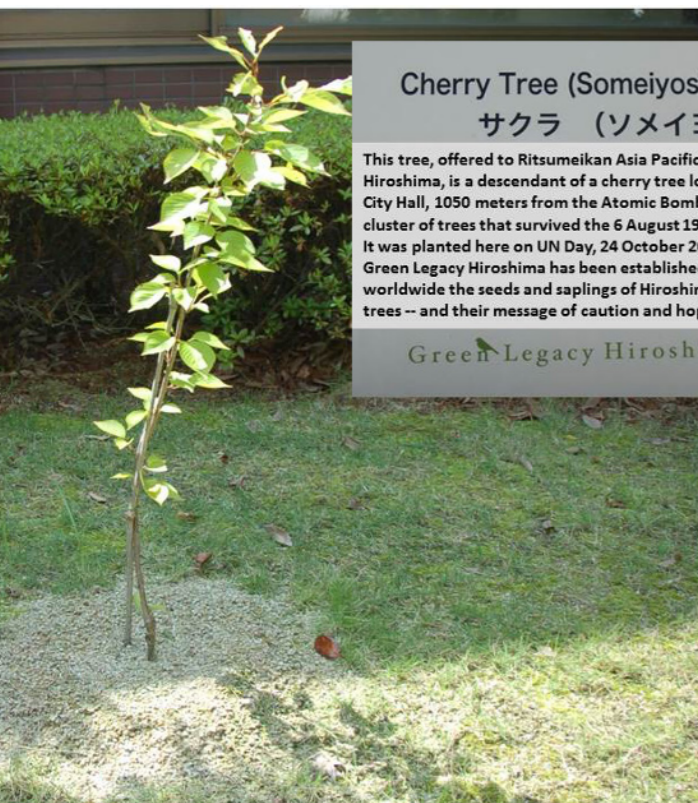
Besides GLH's current activities, do you think there is anything else that can be done for the message of the hibaku-jumoku, in Hiroshima and around the world?

GLH has been actively sharing the message of peace of Hiroshima through planting the trees all over the world. As stated by former President of APU, Professor Shun Korenaga, "Cherry Blossoms are Dream, Wings are freedom, Knowledge is Power". So is GLH sharing with the world Hiroshima's historical knowledge, which is essential for peace promotion. GLH is paving the path and providing the platform for people promoting peace to get connected. Being connected over the shared value of peace will sustain GLH initiatives.



APU students with the hibaku sakura in the middle, July 21 2016

<sup>1</sup><https://science.sciencemag.org/content/341/6151/1235367>



Hibaku Sakura on APU campus before its relocation

Cherry Tree (Someiyoshino Sakura)  
サクラ (ソメイヨシノ)

This tree, offered to Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University by Green Legacy Hiroshima, is a descendant of a cherry tree located in front of Hiroshima City Hall, 1050 meters from the Atomic Bomb hypocenter, among a small cluster of trees that survived the 6 August 1945 calamity. It was planted here on UN Day, 24 October 2013. Green Legacy Hiroshima has been established to safeguard and to spread worldwide the seeds and saplings of Hiroshima's Atomic Bomb survivor trees – and their message of caution and hope, for a nuclear-free world.

Green Legacy Hiroshima APU  
Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

\*More photos can be found on the Facebook page of Hiroshima-APU Sakura Tree, "Lets Spread Love, Peace and Humanity"  
<https://www.facebook.com/letsspreadlovepeacehumanity/>