

GET REAL!
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I recently attended the Makiguchi Lecture at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. I was shocked and appalled after watching “Unit 731: Nightmare in Manchuria,” a film on the barbaric practices that took place during World War II in Manchuria by the Japanese military. I knew about the horrible activities of the Nazi military during World War II, but I never knew about the atrocities committed by the Japanese military. This particular unit conducted similar experiments on prisoners of war that were horrific.

As I was sitting there, I thought of all the terrible things that occur in the name of war. Why is it when people are at war they don't see humans as humans? Unit 731 called all of the people who came to the site “logs.” The most terrible thing was that after the war, the American government made a deal with the general, Shiro Ishii, who had created this camp, to grant amnesty to him and all the medical researchers who had committed these acts if they turned over all the data from the human experiments. At that time the United States was developing biological weapons to use against the USSR during the Cold War. So today these people are considered war heroes by the Japanese government, and our government still won't disclose information regarding the transaction.

Afterward I had a discussion with one of the Soka University students about what we can do as common people regarding something that took place more than 50 years ago. We can't change the past, but each of us can do something to prevent this from ever happening again. I believe that each of us must become examples, people of outstanding character who stand up against injustice and work toward developing trust and peace between people. President Ikeda states in *Discussions on Youth*:

Most people have a spark of warmth or human kindness in their hearts. I don't think anyone is born completely coldhearted. But if, as time passes, people bury their warmth deep in their hearts for fear of being hurt, they will become cold and hard. Similarly, those who are self-centered and think everyone is against them gird themselves with the armor of authority, fame, status, callousness or conceit. Such behavior is devoid of humanity; a sign of Animality. (vol. 1, pp. 217–18)

We may wonder what we can do as just one person, but all great people in history were individuals as well. I think of Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. or Rosa Parks. They took action on their own and inspired millions in the process.