

# Popoki



Newsletter No.199 2022.3.25

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[http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/index\\_e.html](http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/index_e.html)

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March! The flowers are blooming, but it is hard to enjoy the spring knowing that people are being massacred in Ukraine. Stop the war now! Stops wars and violence everywhere now!

## Popoki's Hot News!



Popoki's Mask Gallery – Living the Covid-19 Pandemic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiT1ZjVUsm8&t=3s>

Popoki's House

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8OCzg64oH8>

Let's make a Peace Pakupaku with the cat, Popoki

<https://youtu.be/FoT4pCWWRnQ>

New book!

Ronni Alexander (2022.2.22). *Popoki's Mask Gallery: Searching for Everyday Anshin through Art during the Covid 19 Pandemic*. Kobe University Press.

New!

### Piece of Peace

One of Popoki's friends, Yuuka-nyan, sent the following piece of peace.



"Taking a new step forward with your smile!"

What sort of 'peace' did you encounter today? Please let us know by sending a message to Popoki's e-mail: [ronniandpopoki \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:ronniandpopoki@gmail.com) !

## Popoki appeared on Pink Shirt Day

At the Tokyo YMCA Toyoko Community Center, "Popoki, What color is friendship?" written by Ronni Alexander, was a part of our "Pink Shirt Day" (last Wednesday of February), which expresses the feelings of thinking about bullying and solidarity with people who are being bullied. We asked the children what color is friendship and why did you choose that color? And a nice colorful Popoki was completed by adding a message to the color that everyone chose.

The reasons for choosing that color are "because my heart is pink and warm", "I chose a warm color because it warms my heart when I'm with my friends", and "I chose a powerful color because it makes me feel better when I'm with my friends". There was a variety of answers. But by choosing a different color and making it a wonderful Popoki, we could have fun even if we're all different!

At the same time, in the lobby, a picture book of "Popoki's Story" was played as a story-telling video. Many children liked it. In the lobby, we heard the cute voices of the children saying "Popoki". "We can have fun even if we're all different!" A picture book that is perfect for conveying your thoughts. Thank you very much, Ronni!

Rie Oki

Tokyo YMCA Toyoko Community Center



## A Piece of Peace from Belgium

Marie-nyan

I didn't realize that it's been 10 years since I studied in Ronni sensei's seminar! Many things have happened since then. Of course, one of the things is the COVID-19 pandemic. I do Skype calls with my dear grandparents and parents every week. My grandmother always says 'So many things can happen when you live that long!'

I'd like to share a little bit about my life in Belgium today.

The first question that you may think of is, "Why Belgium?" I live in Belgium now because my partner is from Antwerp. The next question that I usually get is, "Where did you meet your partner?" We met each other in Palestine. But, I digress...



It says 'Straat zonder racisme' (Street without Racism). A street in Antwerp

Anyways, since Russia invaded Ukraine, we have had some impact/changes. One of them is that the government decided to distribute iodine tablets in case Russia attacks the nuclear reactors in Belgium and people are exposed to radiation. Remember, we have the EU and NATO headquarters in Brussels. On our east side, we have Germany and then Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine. We are dependent on



nuclear power and fossil fuels for our electricity. For a side note, Russia supplies about 40 percent of the EU's the fossil fuel.

So, the other day I saw the news that we need to pick up the tablets at the pharmacy. It's free and we just need to show our ID. This is the box that I picked up (in the picture). When the nuclear reactors get bombed, then we have to take them immediately. I believe that it's equivalent to the Japanese stable iodine pills for the nuclear emergency.



Nuclear reactors

We have nuclear reactors in the city called Doel only 30 km away from our city, Antwerp. This is a so-called ghost town where people were forcibly evicted because the government wanted to expand the port of Antwerp to this area. Many people took “voluntary payout” and moved out even though the people there successfully fought it off.



The empty houses with metal shutter

There was something that just didn't feel right, and that was there is always more discrimination in helping or in emergencies. Some African and South Asian citizens in Ukraine said they saw the discriminatory treatment of non-white and non-Ukrainians trying to leave the country, as the UN's highest refugee agencies confirmed. And I normally help Kurdish people who fled to Europe from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey as a First Aid assistant. It's very clear that people pay more attention to Ukrainian refugees than Kurdish people or Afghan refugees. For example, Japan also decided to make the refugee process faster for Ukrainian people. I think it's fantastic to do so! But what about other refugees? Did we already forget Afghan refugees?

Refugees stay in tents. It gets extremely cold at night in winter.





I actively get involved with issues of refugees in Belgium so sometimes I can feel the texture and trend of the voluntarism changes. For the Ukrainian people, my colleague and I did fund raising at our company just the other day. The donation was sent to the Embassy of Ukraine in Brussels. I continue doing what I can do from my side to different issues in the society as I get motivated looking at Sakura or Almond trees in our neighborhood. Isn't it beautiful?

I hope you enjoyed a little story from Belgium! Marie



Just my rabbit.

Please help

On 16 March, a strong earthquake hit northeastern Japan. The earthquake damaged the Ohanashi Salon (storytelling room) belong to Popoki's friend, Ohanashi Kororin. The shaking turned on the faucet on the second floor, and the water was running all night. The book shelves, books and *kamishibai* on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor all got wet. Now, they are repairing the ceiling and wall. We are barely making ends meet on our activities. and are asking for contributions for the repairs and running our organization. Thank you for your support.

Please send donations to the following accounts:

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## \*Popoki's Interview\*

Gaby-nyan

\*We have started a new series of interviews with Popoki's friends in different places. We are asking about their experiences during the COVID-

19 pandemic. This time we have a report by Gabynyan!

.....  
Hello! My name is Gaby. I interviewed my little sister who is studying at the National University of El Salvador, she started online classes in March 2020 during her 3rd year in university (bachelor's degrees' studies usually last for 5 years in El Salvador). I asked her opinion about online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Q// Could you please introduce yourself?

A// Hello, my name is Tatiana Ardón, I'm 22 years old and I'm studying for a bachelor's degree in Biology at the University of El Salvador.

2. Q// Before the pandemic started and before the state of emergency was declared, what was your life like in El Salvador?

A// Well, I used to go to college every day and I could hang out with my friends after classes. We also had laboratories and field trips as part of our studies. I had a lot of expectations about my major, and I felt happy and excited about what I could do in my job in the future.

3. Q// What was the government response when the pandemic started and how is it now, 2 years later?

A// In the beginning, the president decreed a mandatory quarantine for 21 days, which was lengthened as the number of COVID cases increased, lasting almost 5 months. In addition, strict measures were taken, for example, no one could leave their homes unless it was to go to the supermarket or to buy medicines, otherwise, you would be arrested and taken to a detention center. After the quarantine was lifted, not many efforts were made to stop the spread of the disease, the government stopped requiring people to wear masks, crowds are no longer discouraged, and all tourist attractions have reopened.

4. Q// How has your life changed because of the pandemic?

A//I think the main thing has been the biosecurity measures, having to wear a mask every time we go out, and the constant use of alcohol to disinfect our hands. Also, the indefinite suspension of face-to-face classes and not seeing some of my classmates for more than 2 years, as well as not being able to go out to public places so often anymore because of the crowds. I also think that I have developed an anxiety that I have never experienced before, perhaps as a result of the quarantine.



5. Q// How did the pandemic change your student life?

A// It has had a terribly negative impact because in addition to suspending face-to-face classes indefinitely, the university suspended laboratories and field trips, which are of the utmost importance for our major. Online classes are deficient, and some teachers do not try their best to help students, this combination has made me feel that I have not learned enough, and I no longer feel satisfied with my major and career. This makes me think that I will not be able to get a job after I graduate and I will have to study something else.

6. Q// How do you feel about online classes?

A// In my case, I study Biology, online classes are not enough since our career is very practical, we must experiment a lot and that is where the need for field trips and laboratories comes from, in addition, some teachers do not do their best at teaching and force the students to learn by themselves.

7. Q// What do you miss the most about life before the pandemic?

A// I miss the freedom that I had, I could go to the university every day and sometimes I would go out with my friends to eat, or we would stay at university and talk for a while after classes. I could also go freely to the malls to eat or just window shop.

8. Q// What are you afraid of during these current times?

A// The thought that we will never return to normality, my career is almost over, and I will no longer receive classes or see my classmates anymore. The thought that a family member could get sick or that I could get COVID again.

9. Q// What would you like to do when the pandemic is over?

A// I think the main thing would be to have all the labs we couldn't have and go to all the field trips that we have missed. To go out with my friends and on my own.

10. Q// What would you like to say to other students whose studies have been affected by the pandemic?

A// Even though online classes are discouraging, try to find ways to make self-study more fun or interesting for you. And in the future when things are back to normal, you could always go back to study more or try other fields too, it's never too late to learn.

11. Q// What is your hope for the future?

A// To go back to normal, without the fear of getting infected with the virus or of infecting someone else with it, to study another major and get a job that makes me happy.



Cr.: digital newspaper 'El Faro' 22/03/20. After the first quarantine was declared in El Salvador in March, the military and national police were in charge of ensuring it.



Cr.: digital newspaper 'El Faro' 17/01/2021. When the quarantine was declared, bus owners and drivers made sure that clients kept distance when traveling but less than one year after, the measures were ignored and people were commuting in crowded buses.



Cr.: digital newspaper 'Diario El Salvador' 9/12/2020. After the quarantine was declared, street markets continued to open even when some vendors and clients didn't follow through with the biosecurity measures.

# POPOKI'S EASY POGA

Lesson 167 This month's theme is strengthening your abs!



1. First, as always, sit up straight and look beautiful.
2. Now, lie on your back. Raise your left leg so it pointing straight up, and then raise your head and torso, touching your left leg with your right hand. Repeat 10 times and then try the other side!
3. Next, raise both your arms and legs straight up. Try raising your head and shoulders, and then lower your head and shoulders and raise your rear. Try 10 times each.
4. Okay! Now raise your legs a little bit off the ground. Can you raise both at once? Or try raising and lowering one leg, keeping the other straight and just about the floor. Try 10 times and switch legs.
5. Did it? Even if you didn't succeed, you tried! It is time for the 'success pose.'  
Congratulations! Do you feel refreshed? Please remember to relax, breathe, laugh and practice for 3 minutes every day.

## Please join us!

Next Po-kai: 2022.3.28@ 19:00 zoom\* 1

Everyone is welcome. We always use the same link, so send an email if you need it.

The following Po-kai: to be decided soon

- May? Reading stories event
- August Hiroshima Day discussion
- October? Peace and Health Workshop

Reading Suggestions from Popoki's Friends

Otsuchi-cho (July, 2019). "Ikiru Akashi – Iwateken Otsuchi-cho Higashi nihon daishinsai kirokushi" (*Testimony of Living: A Record of the Great East Japan Earthquake in Otsuchi-cho, Iwate Prefecture*). Editorial Supervision: Otsuchi-cho Board of Education, others.

- アレキサンダー ロニー&桂木聡子 (2020)「被災体験後「今」を表現する：絵から読み取れる被災ナラティブ」『国際協力論集』27(2)、17－32（2020年1月発行）[http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/infolib/meta\\_pub/detail](http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/infolib/meta_pub/detail)
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Written, edited and illustrated by Ronni Alexander

## 【本書の内容】

前書き

第一部：ことばの旅

「ことばの旅」への誘い

第二部：「お絵描き」の旅

- ① 物語を描くということ
- ② くちゃくちゃ
- ③ 色たち
- ④ いかなぎゃ(桂木暎子)
- ⑤ 2021.1.17 に想う
- ⑥ 乱れ
- ⑦ プール

第三部：「ふりかえり」の旅

「ふりかえり」の旅

- ① ポーポキのマスクギャラリー — 基盤となる日本人の伝統的思考法を考える— (高田哲)  
Popoki's Mask Gallery — A consideration based on traditional Japanese ways of thinking (Takada Satoshi)
- ② 対談：アナ・アガサングロウとロニー・アレキサンダー (世界国際関係学会年次研究大会2021年)  
Conversation: Anna Agathangelou and Ronni Alexander (International Studies Association Annual Conference 2021)
- ③ ポーポキの旅: ポーポキのマスクギャラリーができるまでの道のり (ロニー・アレキサンダー)  
Popoki's Journey: How Popoki's mask gallery came to be (Ronni Alexander)

後書き：新たな旅

今度はあなた

Prologue

Part I: A Word Journey

An Invitation to take a Word Journey

Part II: A Drawing Journey

The Meaning of Drawing Stories

All Messed Up

Colors

I've Gotta Go (Katsuragi Satoko)

Thoughts on 17 January 2021

Confusion

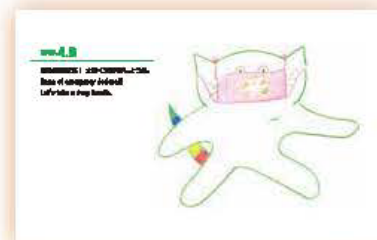
Pool

Part III: A Journey of Reflection

A Journey of Reflection

Epilogue: A New Journey

Now it is Your Turn



本文より抜粋



発行：神戸大学出版会 <https://www.org.kobe-u.ac.jp/kupress/>  
神戸市灘区六甲台町2-1 神戸大学社会科学系図書館内 Tel. 078-803-7315 Fax. 078-361-7320

発売：神戸新聞総合出版センター  
神戸市中央区東川崎町1丁目5-7 神戸情報文化ビル9F Tel. 078-362-7138 Fax. 078-361-7552

## Popoki in Print

\* Back issues of Popoki News: [http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/archives\\_e.html](http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/archives_e.html)  
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- Popoki in Pittsburgh. Check out the Remembering Hiroshima/Imagining Peace URL: <http://www.rememberinghiroshima.org/>



## What Popoki Means to Me

Lauren Peng

It has been a few years since I have known Popoki. Because of how cute and lovely he looks, I initially thought he was a character from a fairy tale. As I got to know him, I realized that his appearance was not all he had to offer. Whenever there was a difficult time, Popoki was always there to comfort everyone in his way. Over the last two years, I couldn't leave the house and had to stay home owing to the pandemic. The phrase means I have a new understanding of myself. I can be extremely strong and yet fragile at the same time. There were so many worries in daily life, and if you puked all day and had a fever, you would need to pull yourself together to go to the doctor. You should also make the simplest food possible to take the pill after you get home. Despite all your efforts to motivate yourself, you can never feel energetic. Nevertheless, sometimes crying helps because I have to take care of myself. While I was depressed and felt as if the world was going to end, I read and drew a lot. Throughout the day, Popoki was there, and not just Popoki. His friends, too, were also there. Their stories gave me gentle companionship and comfort, and nobody forced me to say anything or fix things, which was all I needed. Having known Popoki and all his friends was the best.



## PLEASE HELP SUPPORT THE POPOKI PEACE PROJECT!

The Popoki Peace Project is a voluntary project which uses Popoki's peace book and DVD to promote peace through various activities such as peace camps, peace workshops, seminars and other activities. Since the March 2011 earthquake, we have also worked in the disaster area and in 2012 published a book about that work: *Popoki's Friendship Story - Our Peace Journey Born Out of the Great Northeastern Japan Earthquake. Popoki, What Color is Peace?* has been translated into Thai, Chinese, Korean, Khmer, Indonesian, Tetun and Bengali, Vietnamese, Arabic and Hebrew. Spanish, Farsi, Lao, Swahili, translations are underway. If you would like to translate Popoki, or have a way to have the book sold at your local bookstore, please let us know.

**How to purchase Popoki's books:** *Popoki, What Color is Peace? Popoki's Peace Book 1, Popoki, What Color is Friendship? Popoki's Peace Book 2, Popoki, What Color is Genki? Popoki's Peace Book 3 and Popoki's Friendship Story*

### From outside of Japan

1. Go to your local Japanese bookstore: Kinokuniya, Maruzen, etc. (or their website)
2. Write to us at [ronniandpopoki@gmail.com](mailto:ronniandpopoki@gmail.com) and we'll figure it out!

### From Inside Japan

From the publisher, Epic: TEL: 078-241-7561 · FAX: 078-241-1918

From Amazon.co.jp or your local bookseller

From the Popoki Peace Project [ronniandpopoki@gmail.com](mailto:ronniandpopoki@gmail.com)



*Contributions are always welcome!*

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