

April! The flowers are everywhere now!

I wish peace were everywhere, just like the flowers! Don't you?

Popoki's Hot News!



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.

Piece of Peace

One of Popoki's friends, Matsuda Yasuyuki-nyan, sent the following piece of peace. From conflict to dialogue



The war between Russia and Ukraine has taken the lives of many people. It reminds us of what we have learned from past history. We have to change from conflict to dialogue as soon as possible. I pray for them to have peaceful days

Dr. Johan Galtung, a peace studies researcher, advocates "Positive peace." It means that there is no war and there is no structural violence such as poverty, oppression, and discrimination. I think peace is threatened not only in the war between Russia and Ukraine, but also in our surroundings. I would like to advocate a society in which we can support each other while maintaining positive peace in our daily relationships with people. 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) !

Bikkuribako executive committee

The event, "The future born from here, Bikkuribako - We will never lose, we will never forget 03.11.2011", has been held since 2011 with the aim of keeping the tragedy of the Great East Japan Earthquake from fading away and to continue to support the affected areas. Since 2014, the venue has been moved to Sorio Hall in Takarazuka City, Hyogo Prefecture. Run by a joint executive committee, it is held every March and has become known as "a festival for parents and children to experience performing arts and think about the present and future after the disaster".

The 11th Bikkuribako was held at Takarazuka Sorio Hall. At this event, we had an exhibit about the workshops and exchanges that the Popoki Peace Project has conducted with the children of Ofunato Kita Elementary School (Iwate Prefecture) over the past three years. The members of Bikkuribako who were working on the exhibit said, "These elementary school students are so lucky to have such a wonderful learning experience," and looked intently at the large map where children had indicated places where they could feel safe.

The first encounter between Bikkuribako and Popoki began when we asked Dr. Ronni Alexander to contribute to the "10 Years of Bikkuribako" booklet. We were impressed by the supple and powerful work of the Popoki Peace Project. They went to the children in disaster or conflict areas and talked with them, asking, "When do you feel peace, or when do you feel safe? They are working to be with the children and share their thoughts through talking with them, and being close to their hearts! Their approach resonated with the way we feel about children and we wondered if there was anything we could do together. Fortunately, they kindly agreed to having an exhibition. We were able to do it, and many participants were able to view it at the venue on the day of the event.

Bikkuribako executive committee will start preparations for next March. We are very much looking forward to seeing what kind of projects we can realize with Popoki Peace Project next.

The "10 Years of Bikkuribako : -The future born from here-" includes a special contribution by Dr. Ronni Alexander. We hope you will take a look at it as well.



*If you would like to read this pamphlet, please contact Ronyan. It is in Japanese only.



Above: performances (disaster risk reduction play and ‘wakagoma’ story)
Below: The Popoki Peace Project exhibition



Reflections on Professor Ronni Alexander’s final lecture

Dinyan

When I saw the announcement of Professor Ronni Alexander’s final lecture on the faculty website, it was already too late for the application. I felt sad that I may have missed the opportunity to say a proper thank you to her in person, since she was one of the first people to welcome me and introduced me to Popoki and his friends when I had just enrolled in Kobe University as a research student in 2018. So, I decided to try my luck to see if I contacted Professor Ronni Alexander herself, maybe I could get a chance to attend the event. Luckily, as the welcoming person she always is, she kindly accepted my request.

The final lecture was on 9th of March, and the theme was “Reflecting on the thirty years since *Big Dreams and Small Islands*, and looking toward tomorrow”. Professor

Ronni Alexander talked about her educational background, work experiences, and why she focuses on peace and denuclearization of small island countries. Peace is the main pursuit of her life: peace research, peace education, and peace activism. Popoki accompanies her and a lot of us during this journey. As a cat, a non-human cute little creature, Popoki has a natural gift to be among us and bring us together.

The whole lecture was very informative. Professor Ronni Alexander talked about the importance of talking stories, culture, and identities. Indeed, all of them are important for building peace; We listen to stories since a very young age, and for some, we still find comfort from the messages they convey. Culture is what we observe and absorb growing up, it has a fundamental impact on our preferences in life, like the way we dress, the God we believe in, and even the spices we use in a meal. And identity, this is what gives us a sense of belonging and makes us the people who we think we are. However, it is also a tricky one because of the biological nature of us wants to feel safe from the potential harm by being a part of a group, this nature makes us easier to be manipulated and taken advantage of, especially when being exposed to imperfect information.

The difference between Anzen (安全) and Anshin (安心) was also mentioned in the lecture. It is amazing that even a little change in words that look similar can actually mean different things; the former refers to physical security, and the latter means to feel safe, or the safety of the heart. In addition to all of these, there were also photos of graffiti of rainbow tailed Popoki surrounded by words like “Peace” and “Japan” in East Timor and “No more occupations” in Palestine. This made me feel even more about Popoki’s indispensable role, as a non-human representative, in spreading message of peace, starting dialogues, and building relationships.



At the end of this short reflection, I would like to thank Professor Ronni Alexander for her dedicated work and for bringing Popoki to our life. I wish a happy, healthy, and fulfilling retirement life to her, and I look forward to more books and activities from Popoki and his friends.

* If you missed the lecture, there is a recording at <https://youtu.be/trbxJSP7-CY>

Popoki's Video Gallery

Please have a look at Popoki's videos!

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjT1ZjVUsm8&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>

Popoki's Peace Map

<https://youtu.be/4t4PFV-dRBg>

Ronni Alexander's Final Lecture at Kobe University (not Popoki, but...)

'Reflecting on the thirty years since Big Dreams and Small Islands, and looking toward tomorrow'

<https://youtu.be/trbxJSP7-CY>



Popoki's Interview

Besanyan

*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 Besanyan!

I interviewed Mr. Shunichi Nishida. He is 65 and lives in Ashiya, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan. His occupation is company management.

Q: First, may we have a self-introduction?

A: I liked soccer since I was young, but with junior high, high school, and university, I grew to love it. Even though I'd become a member of society, I played between work on a "grown-ups" team with some of the same guys who were on my high school team.

After that, I became a soccer coach for elementary school students, an officer of the soccer association and while involved in the management of the association eventually became the chairman. I also served as chairman of the Ashiya City Athletic Association, which oversees other sports associations. Currently, we are working to build a local sports culture in Ashiya City through soccer and other sports. In addition, two years ago I joined the Ashiya Rotary Club.

Q: What's the significance of sports?

A: Sports are essentially play, and there is a history that athletes made rules and those respective sports were born through fun and competing and moving their bodies. In other words, the origin of sports is that competitions are born from play, rules are born while each athlete enjoys competing, and that becomes each sport. That is to say, I think the significance is that sports should be something you like, not something you're forced to do. The meaning lies in way the athletes themselves want to win and to work hard be better or faster or stronger than their opponents. In Japan, sports are used in education as physical education, and I do not deny that is important. But Japanese people should learn that even there is much more to sports than just physical education.

I think that the original attraction of sports is to get a sense of fulfillment by achieving a goal through training, with the athlete having fun and striving for it. The great thing about sports is that you can enjoy each sport even if they're different, and from that point, you work hard because you want to be good and strong, and from there you practice and practice working toward your goals. It's thought that even if you can't achieve your goal, you can restart and set your next goal. You can work hard for your goals while enjoying sports and because life can be embodied as a sport, they're connected with human development. I think this is the significance of sports.

Q: What is peace to you?

To put it simply, it's the absence of war. Our parents have experienced war and we grew up hearing about their suffering. Most Japanese people nowadays do not know about war. We should be grateful for how peaceful it is. Peace for me in a narrow sense means that my family and I are healthy and live a good life. In a broad sense, it means there are no wars or disasters.

Q: When do you usually feel peace?

When my family gathers and I can sense my children and grandchildren's growth.

Q: Do you think sports are related to peace? If so, can you explain that relationship? If you don't think so, why is that?

One significance of playing sports is to have fun and to improve competitiveness. Within improving your competitiveness, you improve your skills and in doing better than your opponent, you get better results in competitions. In other words, winning competitions. This is a competition and a battle. The consciousness of trying to win against your rivals is important in any sport. But this is not like a fight or a war, it's a completely different thing. There are manners and rules, in which we compete with each other and do our best. There is respect for colleagues and staff, but there also needs to be respect for the other team. This spirit is not hatred; for example, friendships can be born with the opponents you fought against. I think this is a person-to-person connection, and that connection

transcends national borders. It can lead to athletes developing a will to steer their countries away from war, so sports is one path to maintaining peace that transcends politics and religion.

Q: In difficult times have you ever been saved by sports?

When I was in my 40s, I had a form of cancer known as malignant lymphoma and treatment included chemotherapy and bone marrow transplant. This treatment goes on and on. It is very painful and feels like torture. And it's a battle for life. At that time, I had a strong desire to live and had experienced grueling regular soccer practices and training camps as student. I remembered that in a summer training camp I was trained by a demon-like coach, doing the same practice over and over again. I told myself that this treatment would be tolerable compared to that practice, and so I faced that painful treatment. I think it is thanks to the mental and physical strength that I cultivated through sports that I managed to endure all of the treatments until the very end.

Q: Will you share some words that will encourage people who haven't much done sports? (For example, shy kids or people think "I'm too old to do this sort of thing)."

First of all, DO SPORTS, without thinking of sports as just competition! I want you to start thinking about just moving your body and what you enjoy. Think about whether or not you can enjoy yourself without even thinking about getting better or stronger or what the people around you may think. Think about whether there are like-minded friends. If you start with these two, I think you'll understand that sports are an extension of play. And, things you can do even as you get older

Q: Through sports, how can one contribute to the people around them?

I always think that first and foremost is that you yourself enjoy it. And then whether friends are enjoying it. role of community sports is not to train top athletes, but that residents and the local community get involved. I think that another role of community sports is to contribute to community development by improving citizens' morals with the sportsmanship cultivated by people involved in sports.

Q: Will you please tell us about the other activities you're involved in?

- (1) I have been a deputy committee member for many years in the Relay for Life Ashiya project for cancer awareness. It is also co-sponsored by the Ashiya Athletic Association to which I belong.
- (2) We hold the Ashiya United Relay Marathon and the Ashiya United Golf Tournament as a support project for the Great East Japan Earthquake.
- (3) We actively participate in cleanup operations with Ashiya City.
- (4) The Ashiya City Athletic Association (Chairman Shunichi Nishida) sponsors the Ashiya City Shioashiya Beach Cleanup Operation and holds it with sports friends every year.

POPOKI'S EASY POGA

Lesson 168 This month's theme is stretch!



1. First, as always, sit up straight and look beautiful.
2. Now, stand up straight, and stretch your arms up straight. Now hold your left wrist with your right hand and gently pull your upper body to the right, stretching your left side body! Try it on the other side, too.
3. Next, place both hands on your lower back. Gently lean back into a shallow backbend. Enjoy!
4. Okay! Now fold forward, and then walk your hands to the left, stretching your right side. Come back to center, and then try walking your hands to the right. Feel better?
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: 2022.5.11 @ 19:00 zoom*



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

- 5.10 Reading stories and discussing peace event (Kobe) Part 1
- 5.11(?) Workshop to think about peace with Popoki (with high school students in Moldova)
- 8.3 Popoki Workshop at Seminar for Multicultural Understanding
- 8.5? Reading stories and discussing peace event (Kobe) Part 2
- 8.9 (9) Workshop to think about nuclear issues (zoom)
- 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
- Alexander, Ronni (2021) "The Meaning of Art in Disaster Support: Stories from the Popoki Peace Project" *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, 28(2), 1-22. http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/infolib/meta_pub/detail
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全編日英対照

神戸大学出版会

ポーポキの マスクギャラリー

～コロナ禍でアートを通して
日常の安心を探る～

編著・絵 ロニー・アレキサンダー

Written, edited and illustrated by Ronni Alexander



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- ③ 色たち
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「ふりかえり」の旅

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今度はあなた

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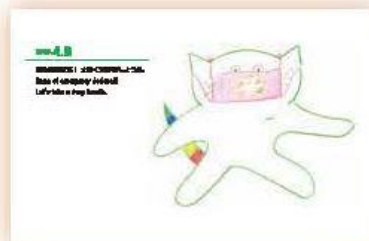
Thoughts on 17 January 2021

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A Journey of Reflection



本文より抜粋



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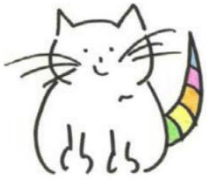
Popoki in Print

* Back issues of Popoki News: http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/archives_e.html
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- “Thinking about Peace with a Cat: Second Peace Book Published.” (SAITO Masashi) *Kobe Shimbun*, 2009.4.21
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- ‘Popoki, What Color is Trash?’ *Kobe YMCA News*, 2009.1.1. No.592. p.2
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- Popoki in Pittsburgh. Check out the Remembering Hiroshima/Imagining Peace URL: <http://www.rememberinghiroshima.org/>



What Popoki Means to Me

Konyan (Kobe University Press)

I've been interested in Professor Alexander and Popoki ever since her first illustrated book was published. When the Kobe University Press was created and I was put in charge, I sometimes fantasized about publishing not only serious academic books but also a Popoki book that is warm and inviting, but also deep in meaning.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world became entirely online. But it seems that there is more demand for paper books than I had thought. Just at that time, Professor Alexander contacted me, passionately saying "I want to make a book of 'Popoki's Mask Gallery'!" I knew Popoki was working hard online, and thought that if we could have him on paper, it would open up endless horizons for imagination. I didn't have any authority to say it, but I told her, "Let's do it!"

We can encounter an endless display of Popoki's mask gallery online, on our smart phones or computer screens. But actually, Popoki is in a file filled with Professor Alexander's drawings using her choice of paper and colored pencils. Making a book involves considerations of cost and thickness, and Professor Alexander tried over and over to choose out of more than 600 Popokis which ones to use. She drew some Popokis especially for this book, and occasionally had to go and fetch his whiskers, because they had been left behind.

I have a granddaughter who just turned two, and her room is filled with stuffed animals and other cute things. If you look carefully, you can see that Miffy's mouth is an 'x'; Hello Kitty doesn't have a mouth at all. Perhaps in a similar way, Popoki's mask is a tool for you to "imagine his expression yourself." Popoki wears a symbolic mask and holds a variety of things in his hands. He hugs with his entire body, sometimes he is pointy and angry, other times sad and blurred. His eyes are hearts, or triangles, sometimes even carp streamers. What is most persuasive about Popoki is something humans do not have - his tail. I hope you will enjoy this Popoki who uses not only his mask, but his

whole body to express peace, friendship, and *anshin*.

When I showed Popoki's Mask Gallery to my granddaughter, she demanded I give her pens and paper, and she started to draw. It seems there is something about this book that inspires people to want to draw.



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 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



Contributions are always welcome!

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