



April! Popoki's world is alive with flowers! The colors and scents help him to relax and forget the tough situation around him for a little while. We hope you can find moments to relax, too!

## Popoki's Hot News!



"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>

### Piece of Peace

One of Popoki's friends, Nagisanyan, sent the following piece of peace.



"I've been teleworking for a long time, but just walking outside for a few minutes and breathing fresh air makes me feel happy. The world has been under a difficult situation, but I hope everyone feel happiness and relief in their daily lives."

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) !

## Fundraising for an Orphanage in Nepal

Kinonyan

2021.4.20

COVID-19 has a long-term impact on our daily lives. It has forced us to make many changes, and we are constantly looking for new ways to somehow survive the pandemic. As an advocate of international cooperation and cultural exchange, it would be delightful if this report will convince you to use a cloud funding service like the one that made my project for an orphanage in Nepal a reality.



The project started to provide necessary supplies to children in an orphanage from October 2020 to February 2021. In Nepal, the government declared the four-month lockdown from March 2020, and borders with India and Nepal, where many people come and go, were as the infection spread. One of my friends living in Nepal told me that the prolonged lockdown had completely cut off income resources for workers, and orphans went around asking local shops for their leftover food to survive the Covid crisis.



Empty streets under lockdown,  
Kathmandu (October 2020)



Due to the severe lockdown and rapid increase of people being laid off, Nepal Women & Children Service Society, the orphanage, lost the financial support from non-profit organizations and international organizations that they had received before the pandemic broke out. Though local governments supplied food to those who were in need, the supply was conducted irregularly. The

orphanage was established with the purpose of supporting the independence of women and children through skills development and education. They accept children from all over Nepal, but they are having difficulty giving even basic needs like food, school fees, clothing, and other minimum living items.

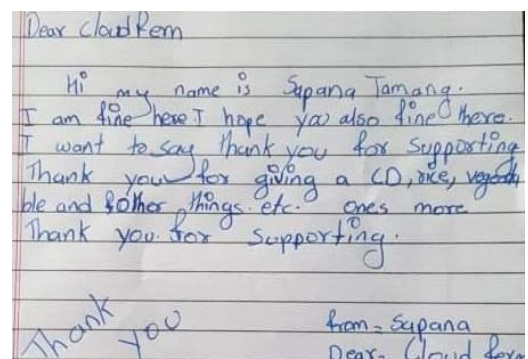


View of the orphanage (February 2021)

Fortunately, many supporters helped to raise enough funds. As the leader who was responsible to carry out the mission, however, making the staff understand what I wanted to achieve was very difficult since I could not be involved in all activities in Nepal. I tried many things to make everything clear about what supporters want to know and what explanations or pictures should be used.



The project started with my hope that it would be an opportunity for both the orphanage and supporters to gain mutual understanding. So, I tried to share what children have been through every day and shared letters and videos from children in return for support.



A letter from children

Let me share a short interview with the representative of the facility, Ms. Shanti, here.

**Has anything changed regarding the Covid situation in Nepal?**

**Shanti:** Yes, almost every situation has changed compared to before. Now we are free to be involved in our daily activities with preventative measures, and the rate of infection has decreased.



**Do you feel that children in your orphanage got interested in Japan after we started this project?**

**Shanti:** We are very glad to get your love and support. Your support has fulfilled the basic needs more than before. So, we would like to thank you from our open heart to crowdfund supporters for your love and support. We hope that you will support us even in the upcoming days.

**Although this project was carried out to help provide food, do the children learn or get anything new through this?**

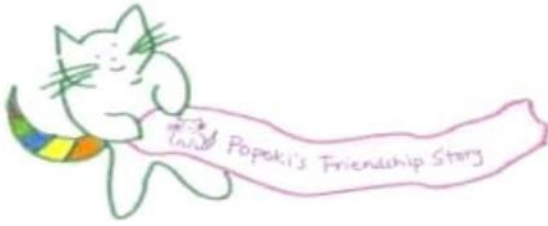
**Shanti:** Even though this project started to provide basic necessities, eventually we have learned to develop the feelings of love, caring, and mutual understanding which are very necessary to socialize and share happiness among people.

After the project was completed, some supporters messaged me that “The project made it possible to know what the orphanage was going through and to interact with people I have not even met”, “I also want to continue supporting personally even after the project has finished”. Although the project itself was conducted for a short term, we will keep giving support and doing what we can through education and cultural exchanges.



Check out the URL below if you are interested in what has been done in this project in detail.

[【緊急!】ネパールの孤児院を支援するプロジェクト \(齊藤規乃 2020/10/23 公開\) - クラウドファンディング READYFOR \(レディーフォー\) https://readyfor.jp/projects/48868](https://readyfor.jp/projects/48868)



## \*Popoki's Interview\*



\* 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 about life in China during pregnancy and life for people seeking refugee status in Japan.

### **Experience in Lock-downed City (Wuhan, China) during Covid-19**

Interview: Li-san

Interviewer: Jean

Brief introduction of the interviewee: Li-san is a 38-year-old school administrator living in Wuhan, China. She experienced the whole lock-downed period (76 days) during her pregnancy.

**Q: How much did you know about Covid-19 at the beginning (December 2019 - January 2020) of the epidemic?**

A: In the beginning, I heard from many of my colleagues that there was flu at that time. I found out I was pregnant on December 5, 2019. I was hesitant to have a baby because I was a high-risk pregnant woman. So, I went to Hubei Maternal and Child Health Hospital for many examinations. Then the news came out that there was an infected case at the hospital, and I was worried if I had been infected.

No one knew about the epidemic outbreak in the Hankou area until the government officially announced it. On January 14, a variety show was even organized in Wuchang by our school.

**Q: During Covid-19, are there any hospitals or institutions in Wuhan that accept pregnant women?**

A: Many hospitals were commandeered to treat infected people, so my options were limited. Hospitals for pregnant women were divided into two categories: infected and non-infected. There were only two hospitals for non-infected pregnant women at that time, one was the Hubei Maternal and Child Health Hospital, the other was the Wuhan Children's Hospital. Unless the infection was discovered during diagnosis, these two hospitals would not accept any infected pregnant women.

**Q: Do you have any difficulties with the antenatal examination during the lockdown?**

A: During the first trimester (<12 weeks), no hospital could provide Nuchal Translucency (NT)

examination. Through my social circles, I found a private hospital that was willing to do NT for pregnant women. It was a rainy day, and I was wearing a raincoat, a double-layer mask, and my hair and shoes were tightly wrapped. My husband, who drove me to the hospital, didn't get out because he wasn't permitted to accompany me. In fact, many pregnant women in urban Wuhan did not get these important examinations, let alone those in rural areas. It was common at the time because of the high risk of getting infected in or on the way to hospitals. The hospital said it would provide an Anomaly Scan at 16 weeks for those pregnant women who missed NT. But I was a high-risk pregnant woman so I could not miss any important maternity examinations.

Because the city was closed at that time, I had to apply for an electronic pass from the community administrator in advance before I went out. In addition, some checks were provided free of charge before, but due to the epidemic, I had to find other channels such as private hospitals to complete them at my own expense. Routine examinations like blood sugar and blood pressure that are not very important are observed at home by myself with devices.

**Q: What was your impression of the hospital during the examinations, the delivery, and the recovery?**

A: For antenatal examination, everyone was dressed in a weird way (all kinds of protective measures). Everyone could only choose general outpatient clinics because all the specialists had gone to fight against the virus, which meant that the reception impression was very ordinary. In addition, the whole inspection process was very fast, like an assembly line. Not only pregnant women but also medical workers were scared and under pressure.

By the time I gave birth to my baby (August 3, 2020), the epidemic was basically under control in Wuhan. And because it was my second Caesarean section, the timing of the delivery could be adjusted. The delivery was successful. However, there were still some differences like requiring to do nucleic acid amplification testing in advance, limiting the number of people admitted to the delivery room, and forbidding visits from relatives outside the hospital.

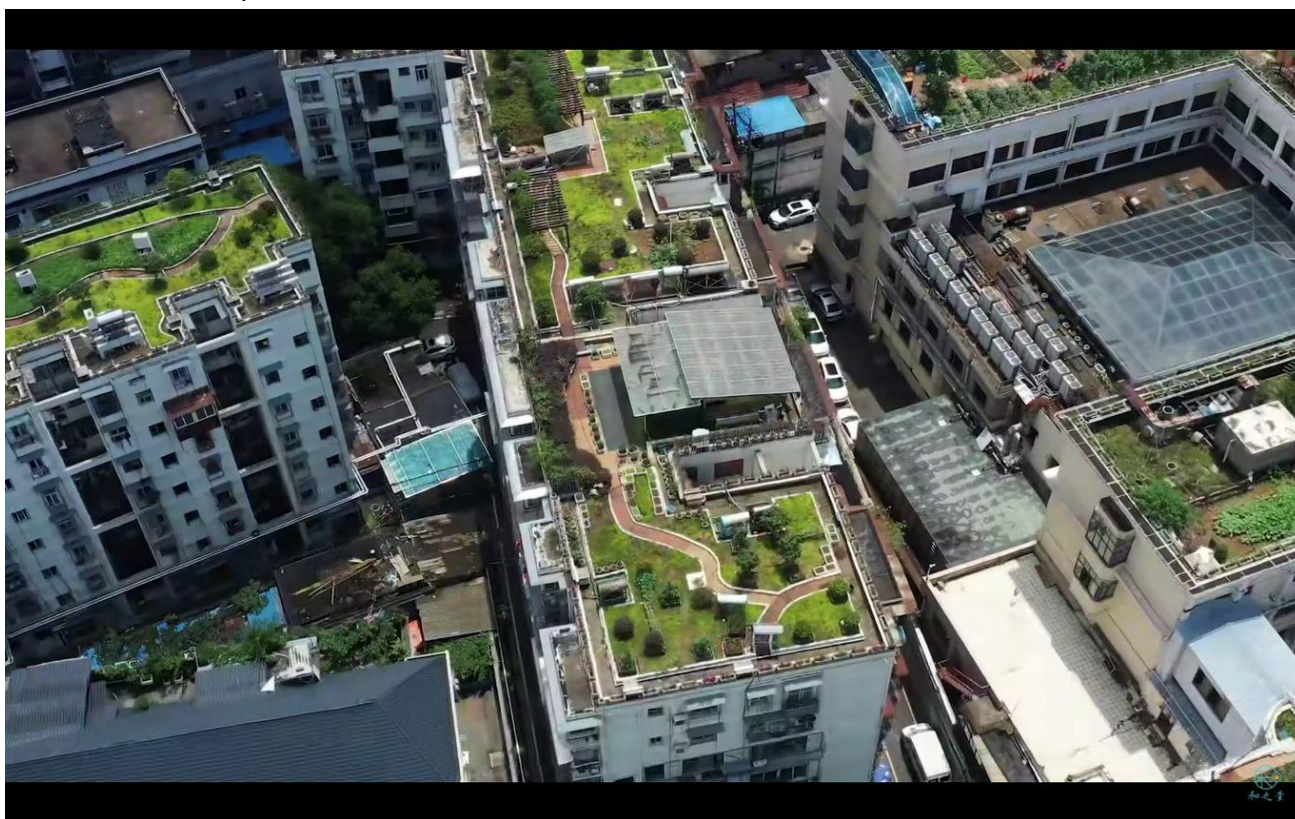
**Q: Did lockdown affect your work?**

A: The lockdown made my job more convenient rather than difficult because my work became online. Also, my employer took great care of me when I was still pregnant, and I got extra breastfeeding leave when I went back to work.

**Q: Do you think there is room for improvement in the way society treats pregnant women?**

In general, hospitals responded very quickly to pregnant women during the worst of the epidemic. However, from other aspects, social attention to pregnant women was relatively little.

I think our society needs to pay more attention to the mental health of pregnant women. For example, when I was going for a maternity check-up, the doctor told me to find a place to sit. There were two chairs, and I picked one at random to sit on. Then one of the nurses suddenly rushed over and shouted, "You can't sit on this chair, it's dangerous!". I was scared, and at the same time, I felt a little sad and wronged. In fact, what a health care provider says or does is for the patient's interest, but they do not express it in a gentle and patient way that is easy to be accepted. It would be heartwarming if it could be done differently.



Gardens constructed by citizens during lockdown

Refugees under the COVID-19 pandemic

Yakonyan

RAFIQ (Creating a community we can share with refugees) is a citizen's organisation that has supported refugees and asylum seekers since 2002. I conducted an interview with the joint representative, Ms. Keiko Tanaka, about the situation of refugees and asylum seekers and about refugee support. The original interview was conducted in Japanese.

**Q: How does the COVID-19 pandemic affect refugees and asylum seekers around the world?**

A: Many refugees and asylum seekers face difficult situations. According to the report of UNHCR last December, the number of asylum seekers and internally displaced persons globally is estimated to have reached more than 80 million people, the highest on record. However, many countries stopped accepting refugees because of border closures and immigration restrictions. Since many asylum seekers cannot escape from their countries, their lives have been put in danger. Besides, in cases where refugees and asylum seekers are placed in vulnerable positions, they get into more and more serious situations due to unemployment, travel restrictions, and shortages of food and goods. Then, moving from dangerous places and staying in refugee camps increases

the risk of the coronavirus infection of refugees and asylum seekers, as it is difficult to avoid closed spaces or crowded places. Moreover, some people target refugees to vent their stress under the COVID-19 pandemic and there are frequent heart-breaking incidents where refugees are attacked violently at their evacuation sites.

**Q: How is the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Japan under the COVID-19 pandemic?**

A: Although the 2020 statistics have not been released yet, 10,375 asylum seekers applied for refugee status and 44 asylum seekers were certified as refugees by the Japanese government in 2019. The refugee recognition rate was only 0.4 per cent during the year. The numbers of applications and recognitions were almost the same as that in 2018. While some asylum seekers have visas, including working visas, others do not have passports or valid visas and they are treated as illegal immigrants and are forced to stay in the immigration detention centres. Although there were 1,246 detainees in the immigration detention centres in Japan, 577 of them were asylum seekers in 2018. If the detainees get a guarantor and residence, pay their guarantee money and gain permission for provisional release, they can be released temporarily from the detention centre. Asylum seekers on provisional release must visit the immigration bureau once a month to renew the permission for provisional release. They cannot work, move without the permission of the immigration bureau or take out national health insurance. To avoid the close spaces and crowded places, the immigration bureaus adopted a policy of granting provisional release for the detainees. However, most of them are poor, afraid of the spread of coronavirus infections and need help. The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic also reduces the amount of work open to refugees and asylum seekers and has made them lose their jobs.

\*NOTE: The latest number of refugee acceptance was released by the Immigration Service Agency of Japan on 31 March 2021. According to it, 3,936 asylum seekers applied for refugee status and 47 asylum seekers were certified as refugees in 2020. (Yakonyan)

**Q: What support does RAFIQ provide for refugees and asylum seekers under the COVID-19 pandemic?**

A: We continue to provide social support, legal support, educational activities, policy recommendations and so on for refugees and asylum seekers mainly living in the Kansai Region. Firstly, we applied for the provisional release of the asylum seekers we support. We asked that the people be allowed to live in a shelter to prevent the coronavirus infection in the immigration detention centre, and to be given professional support for their daily life and legal issues, including the trial. As the asylum seekers we support have also been struggling with financial difficulties because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have called for donations and send food such as rice and pasta and daily necessities such as masks and sanitizer to around 30 asylum seekers every month. As for life support, we provide both in-person and online Japanese study support classes and help them to look for places to live and jobs. In terms of legal support, we work in cooperation with the lawyers collect materials and translate them for refugee status applications. Moreover, with a few members wearing masks to prevent the spread of coronavirus infection, we visit Osaka Regional Immigration Bureau every month to see asylum seekers in response to their requests.

**Q: Is there anything that changed a lot under the COVID-19 pandemic?**

A: In order to prevent coronavirus infection, we started to hold our lectures, workshops and events such as educational activities online. We used to hold a big event in collaboration with other support organisations on World Refugee Day, 20<sup>th</sup> of June, every year. We held 'World Refugee Day in KANSAI 2020' online last year. We continuously uploaded videos to offer information about refugees and refugee support that exists close to us. After the event, we kept this website active because we hope it will be helpful for refugee support.

**Q: What concerns do you have about refugees and asylum seekers now?**

A: One is the revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in Japan. The Japanese cabinet approved the revision on 19 February 2021, and we are concerned about the human rights violation against refugees and asylum seekers it causes. For example, the revised act set limits of two times at most to apply the repatriation suspension during the procedures to seek for refugee status. This is against the principle of non-refoulement of the United Nations Convention on Refugees which says that asylum seekers must not be deported as long as their applications are being processed. The other is the Myanmar coup that happened on



the 1<sup>st</sup> of February. Since the establishment of RAFIQ in 2002, we have supported many Burmese asylum seekers (people from Myanmar) living in Japan who were oppressed by the military regime. Nevertheless, the Japanese government has not given refugee status to any Burmese since 2012 on the ground that the government had begun to transit from military rule to civilian rule. We are worried about an increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar.

Shouldn't we people take action to stop generating refugees as well as to support refugees and asylum seekers in Japan? From this viewpoint, RAFIQ has supported refugees and asylum seekers from around 30 countries for 18 years and written letters for request and expressed policy recommendations on refugees and asylum seekers in order to create a community we can share with refugees.

Thank you very much for the valuable story, Ms. Tanaka!



Relief Supplies (June 2020)



RAFIQ Office



'World Refugee Day in KANSAI' website



Online Japanese Study Support

# POPOKI'S EASY POGA

Lesson 157 This month's theme is stretching our upper bodies and balance!



1. First, as always, sit up straight and look beautiful.
2. Now, stand up straight. Bend your elbows and put one inside the other, joining your hands. Now, slowly raise your arms, keeping your hands together. If it feels good, try stretching in a small back bend. Come back slowly and then try again, switching the position of your arms.
3. Next, keeping your arms together, try twisting to the left and to the right! Remember to keep the rest of your body steady. Too easy? Add a challenge by standing on one leg! Then change legs and switch the position of your arms for the other side!
4. Okay! Now stretch your arms way up over your head. Then stand on one leg and hold for 30 seconds! Easy? Try closing your eyes! When you are finished, switch sides!
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: 2020.5.12 @ zoom\* 19:00

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



### 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.

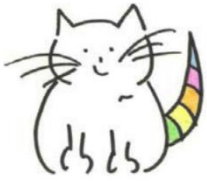
- ・アレキサンダー ロニー&桂木聡子 (2020)「被災体験後「今」を表現する：絵から読み取れる被災ナラティブ」『国際協力論集』27(2)、17-32 (2020年1月発行) [http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/infolib/meta\\_pub/detail](http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/infolib/meta_pub/detail)
- ・Alexander, Ronni (2021) "The Meaning of Art in Disaster Support: Stories from the Popoki Peace Project" *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, 28(2), 1-22. [http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/infolib/meta\\_pub/detail](http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/infolib/meta_pub/detail)

## Popoki in Print

\* Back issues of Popoki News: [http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/archives\\_e.html](http://popoki.cruisejapan.com/archives_e.html)

- Alexander & Katsuragi. "Expressing 'Now' after Experiencing Disaster: Reading Disaster Narratives from Drawings." *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, 27(2), 2020.2.
- "Popoki Mini Peace Film Festival," *Kobe YMCA News* No.652, July/August 2017, p.3
- ESD Digital Archives, Kansai Council of Organizations for International Exchange <http://www.interpeople.or.jp>
- "Peace Picture Book Published – linked to disaster support in East Japan" *Kobe Shimbun* (2014.3.25) KIHARA Kana
- "Awards given to 37 groups Daiwa Securities Foundation" *Kobe Shimbun* (2013.8.23 p.8)
- "Reproducing 'human shadows' and asserting no nukes" *Kobe Shimbun* (2013.8.7 p.22)
- 'Draw inner thoughts about disaster' *Yomiuri Shimbun* 2013.2.16:4 (evening edition; Japanese)
- "'Safe' and 'Secure' Society is from the bottom-up", *Mainichi Shimbun Interview with Ronni Alexander*, 2012.10.29, p.1 (evening edition; Japanese)
- R. Alexander. "Remembering Hiroshima: Bio-Politics, Popoki and Sensual Expressions of War." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Vol.14:2:202-222, June 2012
- "Article 9 is at the base of Peace with Popoki" *Kodomo to Mamoru 9 jono kai News*, No.66, 2012.5.12
- "Hope on 60 meters of cloth" Etsuko Akuzawa. (In Japanese) *Asahi Shimbun* 2012.1.21
- "Voice for Peace made into a book" Masashi Saito. (in Japanese) *Kobe Shimbun*, 2012.1.19
- K. Wada. "Conversations with Ronni Alexander: The Popoki Peace Project; Popoki, What Color is Peace? Popoki, What Color is Friendship?" *International Feminist Journal of Politics* Vol.13, No.2, 2011, 257-263
- S. McLaren. "The Art of Healing" (Popoki Friendship Story Project) *Kansai Scene*. Issue 133, June 2011, p.10. [kansaiscene.com](http://kansaiscene.com)
- R. Alexander. (2010) "The Popoki Peace Project: Creating New Spaces for Peace in Demenchonok, E., ed. *Philosophy after Hiroshima*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp.399-418
- 省窓 : Column in *Kobe YMCA News*, No.606, 2011.1, p.1 (*In Japanese*)
- "If we all participate, something will change! Reflecting on Palestine" *THE YMCA* No.607 June 2010, p.1 (YMCA Japan Monthly Newspaper)
- Hiroshima and the World: What Color is Hiroshima? Chugoku Shimbun Peace Media Center, [http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/mediacenter/article.php?story=20100312140608602\\_en](http://www.hiroshimapeacemedia.jp/mediacenter/article.php?story=20100312140608602_en) 2010.3.15
- FM COCOLO 76.5 'Heart Lines' 2010.1.9 Japanese Interview: Ronni on Popoki in Palestine
- "Human Rights, Popoki and Bare Life." *In Factis Pax Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice* Vol.3, No.1, 2009, pp.46-63 (<http://www.infactispax.org/journal/>)
- Nishide, Ikuyo. "Popoki, What Color is Peace? Lecture by Ronni Alexander." "PPSEAWA" (Pan-Pacific and south-East Asia Women's Association of Japan), No.63, 2009.12, p.5
- 'Friendship' No.2 2009.11 Itami City International/Peace Exchange Commission, Annual Events, p.1-2.
- 'Not for But With...' No.79, 2010.1 Notice of the Popoki Peace Challenge event. P.12
- 'Nada' notice of the Popoki Peace Challenge event, 2009.12, p.2
- 'Yujotte...Kangaeru Ehon.' *Asahi Shimbun* 2009.7.2 AKUZAWA Etsuko
- 'Yujo wo kangaete – Ningen to, Neko to, soshite Jibun to,' *RST/ALN*, No.259 2009.6.28, p.11
- 'New Books: Popoki, What Color is Friendship? Popoki's Peace Book 2' (Rebecca Jennison) "Cutting-Edge," Vol.35 2009.6, p.3
- "Thinking about Peace with a Cat: Second Peace Book Published." (SAITO Masashi) *Kobe Shimbun*, 2009.4.21
- 'Popoki, What Color is Peace?' *Kobe YMCA News*, 2009.3.1. No.593. p.2
- 'Popoki, What Color is Trash?' *Kobe YMCA News*, 2009.1.1. No.592. p.2
- 'Tomodachi ni Natte Kuremasenkai,' *RST/ALN*, 2009.2.22
- Popoki on the radio. <http://www.kizzna.fm/> Click on 6CH to hear the program and reading of Popoki in Japanese (No longer available)
- *Yasashii kara hito nann desu* Exhibition Organizing Committee 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights.' Hyogo Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Institute. 2008.10. ¥500. For information contact: [blrhyg@osk3.3web.jp](mailto:blrhyg@osk3.3web.jp)
- "KFAW College Seminar: What Color is Peace for Women? Thinking about Peace, Violence and Gender with Popoki." *Asian Breeze* No.54 October 2008, p.8 (Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women)
- *Kobe Shimbun* "Human Rights Declaration Exhibition Panels: 6 Local Hyogo Artists Illustrate all 30 Articles" 2008.10.8. p.10
- "An Interview with Dr. Ronni Alexander." *The Newpeople*, Pittsburgh's Peace and Justice Newspaper, Vol.38 No.9, October 2008, p.5
- Human Security – Dr. Ronni Alexander speaks about Hiroshima and Nagasaki." *The Newpeople*, Pittsburgh's Peace and Justice Newspaper, Vol.38 No.9, Oct. 2008, p.4
- Popoki in Pittsburgh. Check out the Remembering Hiroshima/Imagining Peace URL: <http://www.rememberinghiroshima.org/>





## What Popoki Means to Me

Yogik-nyan

This is Yogik-nyan from Indonesia.

I am so glad to be able to share with you what Popoki means to me.

I am so grateful to know Popoki because I can learn the meaning of peace and love.

Peace is a home where there is laughter and quiet moments.

Peace is freedom and joy.

Peace is being able to accept ourselves.

Peace is as calming as the colour blue.

Peace is love universally.

Popoki is a friend like no other.



**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!***

**Popoki Peace Project [popokipeace-at-gmail.com](mailto:popokipeace-at-gmail.com)**

**<http://popoki.cruisejapan.com>**



**From within Japan, please use our Postal account or Postal bank account:**

**Account Name** ポーポキ・ピース・プロジェクト神戸

**Postal Account number:** 00920-4-28035

**Postal Bank (Yuucho Ginko) account number: Branch No.:099; Branch name: 009 店、special account(当座) 0280350**



**THANK YOU FROM POPOKI!**