

Hello to everyone!

My name is Alona, two years ago I was evacuated to Japan from Ukraine, and I will share with you my war experience story.

I also study Japanese kanji and I like to make a funny stories for memories them, like wind and storm. The kanji of storm on the top have radical mountain and it looks like a crown. So it seems like the storm is a King of the wind. While I am study I like to eat some snack like kappa ebisen.

When I was 9 years old I first Time watch a Sailor moon on TV and that's how I met Anime culture first time. I wanted to be like a Sailor moon, the school girl fighting with evil for peace in the world.

Since that anime in 9 years old I start asking myself: "Who am I? What I am living for?". At that time I wanted someone told me I am a special, I wanted to hear some permission about I am a special and I can start my own fight way for peace.

On the moment when russia start full invasion to Ukraine at February 2022, I was 32 years old, art project manager working at the contemporary art center. It was a deep night and I was at home in Kyiv.

Around 3 am I was woke up from my friends call from Vinnytsia. He was worried how am I, because russia start attacking. After that phone call I was hearing how above my apartment flying something big and massive. The sound becoming closer and loader.

We have a rule of two walls wich can save your life during attack. But with this sound I understand nothing will save me. I heard two big explosions, our air defends trying to destroy the rocket and parts of the rocket was falling down on building near my house.

I took my emergency bag and running to the basement. About details of rocket near my house I was read in the sns channel news around 20 min later.

Almost one week I was sleeping in the basement of my house with neighbors. With stress starts uncontrollable coughing and I can't sleep all night. I also was afraid falling asleep around a lot of unknown people.

I decided to evacuate to Poland and everything what I took with me it was a small bag with documents and food. The train schedule becoming unusual and all needed information I found in the SNS channel of rail company.

Since big massive attack our SNS chat groups becoming on different level. Was chat groups of each building and street area. So I know who need water or food because

they can't walk. Or chat groups who save animals, many people evacuate very quickly and they left their animals in apartment. So some group of volunteers saved them.

In the train station was a lot of people in panic, it was days when Russian troops come very close to Kyiv. Usually Ukrainians' trains are all night trains so we have rooms for four people, but with this emergency situation inside that room was 12 people. And the corridor was full of women, kids and animals.

To save a space people throw away big suitcases from windows or just let them on train platform. Somebody left their pets on the platform. At the moment when train was ready to go, I heard a big explosion. Ukrainian air defense destroyed rocket above the train station.

My way was from Kyiv to Lviv. And change the train from Lviv to Poland. The Warsaw was my destination but I found out that the train will just pass the border and come back to Ukraine for quick evacuee next people. So from border I have to find a way how to get to Warsaw by myself.

From Kyiv to Lviv it takes around 12 hours after that I stayed in the line to evacuate train to Poland. People was a lot so I was wait until morning of next day. I was trying to sleep little bit in the line and line all night little bit moving. I was afraid fall asleep and be trampled by a crowd if they in panic start running to the train.

The train from Lviv to the Poland border usually takes 4-6 hours but in this case it was almost another 12 hours. I get on the train in the morning and arrive at night. On the Poland border station was a lot volunteers with food and water and things for kids and animals. Was a lot of cars, people wanted to help and drive for free. I was lucky to find a car to Warsaw and with another evacuees I rich to Warsaw around 1 AM.

In the Poland I was stay three months and try to recovery and find out what can I do. I was keep coughing when I read news and wake up in the middle of the night from explosions sound. Even sound of washing machine was remind me war sounds. I didn't have my clothes, cosmetics and I didn't take a laptop. Little by little volunteers give me some basic clothes, basic cosmetics like shampoo and toothpaste.

In Ukraine I was working in the art center and I wanted to keep continued working in the art fields. Organizing exhibitions, festivals, workshops. That is my way of not lost myself and feel I do something valuable for my country. Because Russia is not only occupying the territory it is also occupying the culture.

Returning to Sailor moon story, with this experience I realized that only I can decide I am special or not. Only I decide who I am and where I am going. Exactly that way faraway from my family and motherland, I find my way in Japan.

Two years ago I found out that Japan start an evacuee program. Many years ago I was planned to move to Japan for art manager experience and this time I though it is a sign and I have to try. Without friends, connections, money but with dream I was evacuate by government protection program.

I lived three months in Chiba. Government officers prepare all documents for living in Japan, asking what I want to do and where I want to live. I chose the countryside of Okayama prefecture. After living all my life in the big city I wanted to stay in the peaceful place.

One year I worked in the Soja`s city hall as a culture coordinator. City hall organized a tour for culture presentation about Ukraine. In the same time I met people from art community and they helped me organize a lot of charity workshops.

Once, Okayama prefectural university invited me to give a lecture. I was interesting what students know about Ukraine and what they want to hear from me. So I did an online questionnaire and find out that mostly all students know about Ukraine it`s a war. So my dream find a direction of my dream.

I was dreaming about find a vacant house, renovate it and open an art center and share Ukrainian culture, traditions, contemporary art, movies...everything that is unknown in Japan about Ukraine. Around six months I've looking for houses. My searchings finished in Mima city.

Near Miraizu building I find five floor Yoneda building, it was a barbershop. I want to dedicate each floor to a separate topic. It will be mix of institution and art center where you can study and discover about Ukraine, it will be calls Ukrainian culture garden.

Culture is like a garden - it needs protection, caring, minerals. I am very far from my country and having a space for Ukrainian culture here, it is my way to support Ukraine and show what we protect and fighting for. For future living in the peace, where people respect each culture and borders. Because the peace it is an action.

With this two years with hard work, with so many people supporting and believing, my dream becoming true. I am very thankful to my husband, my friends and Mima`s citizens. Thank you for Fujita san inviting for sharing war experience. Thank you!