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Prologue—The Face of a Nation

I am filled with memories of the warm Los Angeles sunshine, of Irene's shiny blond hair, and the warm hug she gave each of us. I also remember the nights we drank margaritas and listened to mariachi and country-western music. I'll never forget the peace and quiet of Spokane, the clean air, and the Spokane River. I enjoyed the activities there in part because Spokane is such a small city but also because Susan and her family were such wonderful hosts, carefully preparing each of our activities. After a homestay and surprise breakfast party, it was difficult for me to leave.

Chicago was totally different from the "gangster" image I once had of the city. I recall the wind blowing in from Lake Michigan; the skyscrapers along the Chicago River; the dynamic night view; the jazz blues clubs; the activity of Chinatown where our host Bernie took us; and the solitude of the Art Institute of Chicago where our host Ronne took us. In New York, "the city that never sleeps," we exchanged ideas with two other leaders from the Dialogue, Ruth and Beth. From these exchanges, I got some ideas about the direction this Dialogue should take in the future. In New York we were reunited with all six of the women leaders from the United States. It was difficult to part that night.

Some of these places I had visited before, while it was my first to visit others. In each of the cities, however, I was left with a strong impression thanks to all the wonderful people I met. Each of our hosts was very resourceful in arranging a wide variety of activities. I am very grateful for that.

The best thing about this trip was getting to talk with such wonderful women active in different fields. Rather than just visiting scenic spots, we were able to converse with real people. This is the true meaning of a "dialogue." My image of the United States took on a human aspect. For this report, I have divided my thoughts and feelings into five sections.

Gender Balance and the Glass Ceiling

Through my work I have friends of many nationalities. My American, Canadian and British friends have often said, "The help-wanted ads in *The Japan Times* are

strange. The ads say 'female secretary wanted' or 'male manager wanted.' In my country, it is against the law to recruit on the basis of sex." These complaints have been around for more than ten years. Yet help-wanted ads in Japan have not changed. This is obviously sexual discrimination. I had believed that working women in the United States were blessed with more favorable conditions and were promoted on the job on an equal basis with their male colleagues. But in talking to working women on this trip to the United States, I discovered that conditions were not that wonderful. I feel that problems are also deeply-rooted in the United States.

I spent several hours in Spokane with Sergeant Judy Carl, a police sergeant in charge of ten police officers. It had been her dream since childhood to become a police officer. But when she graduated from university, the Washington State Police Academy was not open to women. Reluctantly, she returned to university studies and received a master's degree in psychology. She then became the first woman to enter the police academy, which in the interim had finally opened its doors to women. It is rare to find a police sergeant with an M.A. degree. Ms. Carl is remarried and living with her son and her husband's daughter from a previous marriage.

"It's all routine," Judy told me. I told her about Japanese policewomen; that their work is mainly limited to directing traffic in tight baby-blue skirts. "We only have one uniform. There is no male or female in police work. I wouldn't want to be a police officer in such a country," Judy said. Even in the United States with its greater sexual equality, the police force continues to be a male-dominated institution. When I asked whether there was discrimination in promotions, she said that promotions were decided on the basis of written tests and interviews. Judy is respected by her male colleagues. Judy was quite attractive; a gallant figure in her dark blue uniform.

Lisa Brown is a young representative of Spokane in the Washington state legislature. She has a 15-month-old son. Ms. Sheri Barnard, the Mayor of Spokane, introduced her as "the politician who became a national figure overnight." One day, the state legislature continued until late at night and Lisa's baby-sitter, who had to go home, brought Lisa's baby to her in the state chambers. The male representatives shouted at Lisa even though her baby had not been crying and asked her to leave. The newspapers reported widely on this the next day. Why are women forced to bear the burden of childcare? Perhaps things are not so different in the United States after all.

Judith gave me an election campaign card. The election appeared to be an inexpensive one. Voters choose from the policy measures printed on the card and mark their choices. Then they submit the cards to candidates together with contributions to their election campaign fund. Money flows from individual voters to the candidates. The flow funds is in the opposite direction in Ishikawa Prefecture. This way the voters in Japan are sure to vote. We observed a public debate held by the Governor of Washington to directly answer various questions from Spokane citizens. This would be unthinkable in Japan.

I had several interesting conversations with female journalists at a breakfast meeting held at NBC in Chicago. It was only recently that female journalists have begun to be hired in Japan. They complain, "We think men and women are the same, but our bosses are the traditional types. They approach things from an outdated perspective, telling us what we can and can't report from the female perspective. That makes us angry." When I asked American female journalists about their situation I was surprised by their answer. "What's wrong with the female perspective? We became journalists because we wanted to write articles from the woman's point of view. For example, during the invasion of Panama, newspapers reported solely about the soldiers daily. Women would perhaps write about the family members left behind." So instead of being so unyielding, I want Japanese female journalists to take pride openly in writing articles from a female perspective.

The following day *Womanews* was delivered to the hotel in the Sunday edition of *The Chicago Tribune*. There were articles on Japanese women. One story went, "The wedding of the Crown Prince and Miss Masako was conducted in the traditional Japanese style. However, these days young ladies follow Western customs, holding their weddings in Christian churches."

At the Illinois State Government Building in Chicago, I talked with the assistants to the Governor who were in charge of education and Asian-American affairs. They were the eyes and ears of the Governor in determining the wishes and concerns of state residents. I was envious that such an occupation exists and that young women hold these positions. The design of the State Government Building itself symbolizes "open government." One of the objectives of the state government is gender balance. The ratio of men to women is still far from reaching parity. It presents a big challenge for me, coming from Ishikawa Prefecture where there is gender imbalance.

Another surprise were the stringent measures taken to prevent sexual harassment. A new bill was passed by the Governor that punishes companies found guilty of sexual harassment. My eyes were opened to many things such as basic human rights and dignity.

When I asked one of the Governor's assistants if it was still easy to work while married with children, she replied that she was not yet married. Apparently local governments in the United States do not provide daycare facilities. If public facilities are not available, the people create their own daycare centers. Where does this effort for self-help in the United States come from? The difference between Japan, long governed by a centralized authority, and the United States, created by the combined efforts of pioneers, may explain the difference in attitudes toward self-help among groups of citizens. Indeed, when Japanese are inconvenienced they complain, "The government doesn't do this. The government should be doing that."

The women first make an effort themselves without relying on the government. They do not give up their dreams and hopes. They have practiced speaking in

public, and they can state logically what they want to say in a given amount of time. And they were all beautiful people!

In the United States the term "glass ceiling" is used to describe the situation where women are prevented from reaching top positions of authority. In Japan, the situation may perhaps be properly termed the "frosted glass syndrome." Female graduates in Japan of four-year universities are the foremost victims of the tight employment market this year. The Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law seems to be little more than decoration. According to the September issue of *Marco Polo*, a monthly magazine published by Bungei Shunju, women in senior positions are also facing hardships. I hope one day that this frosted glass becomes transparent glass.

In Japan there are sites that are still off-limits to women: tunnel construction sites, the sumo *dohyo* ring, baseball dugouts, Okinoshima Island, the inner court of Nigatsudo Temple, etc. I would like to further pursue the question of why, and what the present situation is.

Japanese Americans and Ethnic Groups

I met Anne Akiko Kusumoto at Project Info in Los Angeles. She was born in 1947, the same year as me. She is a second-generation Japanese American but cannot speak Japanese at all. Usually the second generation is bilingual, using the language of their parents and of the country they immigrated to. Why wasn't she bilingual? She said, "As a Japanese American I have had very interesting experiences that differed as the situation changed in Japan over the past 45 years or so."

Akiko was born right after Japan's defeat in World War II. Her parents wanted to hide the fact that they were Japanese. Since they could not do anything about their Asian appearance, they hoped to be seen as Chinese or Korean. As a result, they spoke only English, even at home. When Akiko was in elementary school, the school used to conduct air raid drills, and the teacher told the students to crawl under the desks. Some students threw crumpled paper at Akiko, saying, "Jap! Here's a bomb for you." In time the teasing became, "toys from your country break so easily." That was when cheap and poor quality Japanese products were being sold in the United States.

Today Akiko is a management consultant. In no time at all, Japan has become the richest country in the world and a country of high technology. This fact again serves as a source of resentment. There are hardships faced by Japanese Americans that cannot be seen in Japan.

There was an international diving contest held in Ishikawa Prefecture this summer. The coach of the Taiwan team greeted everyone in Chinese, English, and Japanese. "You speak such fine Japanese," he was told. "Yes, I was obliged to receive Japanese language education from the second grade through the sixth grade." I

discovered that a person's ability to speak foreign languages is often related to previous wars and invasions.

Little Tokyo in Los Angeles was filled with mostly older people. I wondered if the younger generations had been completely assimilated into American society. In contrast, Chicago's Chinatown was filled with vitality. Young people are continuously immigrating to the United States from Hong Kong, Singapore, and China. Bernie, our host, is the Executive Director of an NPO that provides English language education, vocational training, daycare centers, health management centers, etc. for the Chinese community of Chicago. I was impressed with her ability to collect both in-kind donations and secure financial support. I wondered if cultural differences between the Japanese and Chinese are reflected in their American descendants.

Ethnic diversity varies from region to region in the United States. In Los Angeles, I spoke with the leader of a group that is working to end discrimination against African-American women in the workplace. I wondered how the second and third generations of ethnic groups maintain the culture of their parents and grandparents, and how they deal with discrimination. At a breakfast meeting in Chicago, a female Chinese-American journalist, said, "White people dominate the world of journalism. There are very few minority journalists. I am one of the very fortunate ones."

Problems in the United States and NPOs

Homelessness, hunger related to homelessness, domestic violence (husband-wife, father-children, and/or mother-children), alcoholism, and drugs are all problems that can occur independently or combined with other problems, and have resulted in social upheaval in the United States. These problems are like chains, with links being added by each successive generation. It is said that violent fathers and mothers were either victims or witnesses to violence in their childhood. I had the opportunity to see some NPO activities that help to break this cycle of violent behavior. Irene's Project Info in Los Angeles teach the dangers of alcohol and the importance of communication at home.

In Los Angeles I visited a shelter for alcoholics and substance abusers managed by Lynn Appel. When I heard the word "shelter," I expected a square, concrete, hospital-like building. I was surprised when I entered a comfortable, English-style house. Everything was clean and shiny and well-organized. The living room contained elegant pieces of furniture, cushions, and cupboards. We even had a cup of tea and relaxed there. The address and telephone number of the shelter is kept secret. The same is true of the YWCA Safe Shelter for domestic violence in Spokane. I met with some people and their children staying in these shelters. Both shelters have seen many successful cases of women integrating back into society after their stay. Still, some go back to their previous life with abusive husbands, alcohol, or drugs.

Some women were working as volunteers after leaving the wonderful Los Angeles shelter. Many women are on the waiting list to get into the shelter. Thinking of these women, I decided to study the situation in Japan and plan to continue this research in the future.

Education and Art

A stone with the engraved name of Ronne Hartfield was placed, as if casually, in front of the Art Institute of Chicago. At the museum, I saw volunteers preparing for the "World Art Exhibition for Children." There were displays for each country which you could touch, walk through, and be a part of. Pressing an Egyptian jug spins it around to display an historic explanation on the back. The image of volunteer activities in Japan seems to consist solely of activities like visits to old people's homes. I wondered how to communicate to the Japanese people that there are other ways of helping out.

People from many countries told me that Japan's educational system needs to be changed. After seeing Ronne's activities and after visiting the La Salle Language School, I strongly believe that the Japanese average of 40 students per classroom is not desirable. Even though the number of children has decreased and there are many extra classrooms, the situation still persists. What is the Ministry of Education doing?

Ronne made a suggestion concerning education in Ishikawa prefecture. Her idea was to not limit traditional arts and performances to art classes, but to incorporate them into other classes, so that regional traditions will become part of the overall education of the students. I have thought about what can be done in Kanazawa concerning this:

English	Prepare simple English explanations for Kenrokuen Park, and memorize them.
Math	How many layers of gold leaf can be created from one gold ingot?
Science	A field trip to Tatsumi Canal to see the principle of siphoning.
Social studies	Why are roads winding? Why is the Kanaishi Highway straight?

The Chicago program included a five-minute presentation by each Japanese participant at the Art Institute of Chicago. The audience listened attentively and was quite responsive. I will always remember that the audience was delighted with the red jacket I was wearing, saying that it was the color of the Chicago Bulls. Understanding the difference between Japan and the United States in the way we respond and laugh at things is another subject for education. The time I spent meditating in the Japanese art exhibition room designed by Tadao Ando was most precious.

Donations and Fund-Raising, NGOs and NPOs

It is common practice in the United States for individuals to make charitable donations. Companies often match individual donations and contribute it to charities

like the United Way. These donations are tax-deductible. In Japan, people do not make contributions unless they feel sympathetic for a cause. The trigger for these activities are different, which may be related to the way the countries were formed. The horizontal ties between NGOs and NPOs in the United States are strong. In Susan's office in Spokane, NPOs from different fields share the same space, not competing, but coexisting. Will we be able to learn from what is being practiced in the United States? I hope to not only link NPOs in Ishikawa Prefecture, but also with groups in other regions and with the Japanese leaders on this trip. I would also like to establish greater bonds between US and Japanese organizations.

Epilogue

In Los Angeles, Spokane, Chicago, and New York, I experienced dialogue with a human aspect. We understood each other, experienced goodwill and meaningful exchange—something that goes beyond the trade frictions and economic problems that politicians speak of.

When I close my eyes I can see a particular town, a particular person. They are living, moving images. We communicated each other's breathing, sighs, sparkling eyes; we felt the warmth of each other's hands. These experiences will be a long-lasting memory, one of substance and significance. I believe in the importance of maintaining a bilateral dialogue like this between Japan and the United States. Something precious and lasting was engraved in my heart. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to JCIE and IIE for giving me an opportunity to take such a wonderful trip. Thank you very much.