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VOICES
from the
JAPANESE
WOMEN'S
MOVEMENT



KIYOKO FUJII, 1977 JAPAN

President, Yokohama Women's Association for Communication and Networking

After the International Women's Year in 1975, the Japanese Government became more responsive to elevating the status of women. The Women's Office was established in the Prime Minister's Office to promote and coordinate policies for women. As the first female Eisenhower Fellow from Japan, Fujii chose to explore "women's role in society" in the U.S., during her 1977 fellowship. She was already immersed in a career centered on women's affairs and a firm supporter of the advancement of the Japanese woman's status.



At the time, the strongest issue for women workers in Japan was the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunities Law. In the U.S., women's movements were becoming increasingly active. While on her fellowship, she met with many people in government, women's organizations, trade unions, educational institutions, and private organizations concerning the Equal Rights Amendment. Kiyoko made a point of studying Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion and national origin, as well as taking influential lessons from her meetings at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Labor. One of Kiyoko's biggest discoveries during her program was to learn of the strong community of anti-equal rights groups in the U.S.

When Kiyoko returned home to Japan, she felt she had the knowledge and experiences necessary to prepare and execute laws. She continued her work in achieving equal rights for Japanese women, and over the next decade, played a part in many of the country's advancements on this pressing issue. In 1984, Kiyoko became the Director of Women Workers' Division and her responsibilities were to improve the welfare of women workers, particularly those on maternity and family care leave, and to address the status of part-time and industrial home workers. The following year, the Equal Employment Act was passed in Japan, which Kiyoko attributes for widening equal opportunity for women, and for making the Japanese citizens more aware of the equality divide. In 1988, she became Chief of the Women's Affairs Office in the Prime Minister's Office. She attributes her experiences in the U.S. as influencing her successes in both important roles.

In 1990 Kiyoko began working for the International Labor Organization's Tokyo Branch Office, which allowed her to participate in many international conferences, including those with the United Nations. In 1998, Kiyoko became Deputy Mayor of the City of Yokohama. The most important task in this position was the execution of the "Care Insurance Act." Kiyoko used her visits to nursing homes in the US, which she admired for their organization, to give her the idea to utilize both private and public institutions for the development of the Act. In 2002, Kiyoko became President of the Yokohama Women's Communication. She believes that networking and the knowledge she gained from her program were very useful, especially since domestic violence and female-headed family issues had become big issues in Japan. Kiyoko used the EF network to invite domestic violence specialists to come to Japan to help Yokohama in their efforts by teaching methods to help address and remediate these issues.

When asked to reflect on her life as an EF alumnus, Kiyoko remarks, "I fully appreciate the EF program and would like to extend my deepest thanks to all the people engaged in the organization. I hope this program will continue to help and to contribute to the furtherance of the prosperity and peace of the world."

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