

Women's Worlds 2005

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Panel on“ < Young Forum : The Rise of "Young" Feminists' Power in Asia>
Being Feminists, Doing Feminism(s): How can we make continuous
and various trials possible as feminists?”

Japanese feminism and movement from Korean feminist perspective

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Good Afternoon, I really appreciate to have a speech opportunity in young feminist session at Women's Worlds 2005. My name is Ryowhoa LEE, a Korean graduate student in Ochanomizu University from Japan. Today I am going to talk about the difference between Korean and Japanese Feminism in real World as a person who experienced Korean young feminist movement as one of ppp member, giving you examples in detail.

What I would like to say most about Japanese Feminism is inactiveness. Apparently it seems quite active to study feminism and gender as academic interests. However it does not as a movement. I think you can see this tendency from Japanese feminism as well as social and civil movement.

However, definitely there is feminism movement in Japan. But it dose not arise lively as a feminism movement. Here, If I define the word “ movement” as visible, political and public movement, I do not think that the Japanese feminism movement is visible, public. In other word, a feminist advocate individually. But it dose not seem as a group.

Well, Why is Japanese feminism not so live? Why dose it not grow into feminism movement. I can explain the fact with three reasons as follow.

First, I would like to raise a question about limitations of 1970's Women Liberation movement: hereinafter Women Liberation movement will be called as woman lib. Women Lib means The second wave Feminism movement in Japan.

I would like to question how the feminism was understood by leading feminist of those days of women lib. If we look at interviews with those women and materials and data from those days, the feminism in those days was only a tool to liberate and seek women themselves from patriarchy. In other words, it did not reach the statute of political movement which can reform the society. This caused conflicts and rupture among same

generation feminists. In this sentence same generation feminist means state feminists and radical feminists. And an extreme image of radical feminists of those days was only focused by medias, causing bad image, incompatibility, disapproval about feminists. Radical movement of those elder feminists have brought a generation gap and the sense of distance.

Additionally, the fact that the lib did not attain a political power produced the absence of next leading feminists as well as absence of where the feminist Chick should be raised. In this sentence feminists chick means unripe feminists who just step into the field.

Second, the feedback between the academic and the actual field nearly absent and not smooth. There is not much mutual relationship between those academic and actual field. A mutual relationship means supporting each other and interchanging with each other. The ppp members who try to activate the present young feminist movement are a researchers as well as performers and activists. We expect that the performance of ppp will prosper every environment of Japanese feminism movement and gender study.

Third, Women's issue is not so desperate and urgent to these days of women as that in the past. This was caused from that Japanese has society structure in which the individuals are not able to see realities around them. In other words, people do not realize things needed more. Because they are comfortable and satisfied with upgraded life quality and economical state. They do not concern themselves with the gender. No desperation and no urgent means that things related with gender are not an important point to Japanese women which dose affect major differences in their lives. Those facts are shown as that the studies about women and gender in abroad are main current in Japanese academic feminism.

From now, I would like to give you an example to supplement the above explanation so far. Currently in Japan, there are back rush and revision trend on "article 24" of the Constitution.

But Japanese government said that Article 24 brought about a tendency toward the extreme individualism and that the bill of revised constitution should have a provision to value families and communities. The reaction of Japanese feminist on the back rush and revision is only using email to awaken to seriousness or only studying academically.

Moreover, each study group does not reveal their positions and even does not joint and work together. Actually, they do not have any way to deliver their appeals like internet board of government homepages. In detail, they share and deliver information by email and make a joint statement through books published by groups for maintaining "Article 24". ppp also bring out proposals to maintain Article 24 by selling "Article 24" series products. However, they do not seem to have a network.

This picture and activity can describe as a guerilla tactic in terms of strategies.

Considering these present conditions, the most necessary thing to activate Japanese feminism movement is the empowerment among women's movements. This means that each group should have political power itself and network.

To do so, existing groups, young and elder feminists should try to communicate with each other. From this point of view, ppp's Activities and efforts to prosper Japanese feminism are meaningful and significant. In addition, in the situation of Japanese feminism movements' becoming extinct after "women Lib", ppp's coming activities will be worth of being watched.