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Buraku Liberation News

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An Interview With Mr. Ishikawa On Parole (1)

Interviewer:

Mr. Taketoshi Nakayama, Secretary-General, Defense Panel of the Case

On December 21, 1994 Mr. Kazuo Ishikawa of the SAYAMA case was paroled for the first time in 31 years and 7 months, and he returned home to SAYAMA city. He was in jail in Chiba Prefecture sentenced to a life term on a false accusation.

Nakayama: You are paroled for the first time in 31 years. How do you feel now?

Ishikawa: For the first time, I was very nervous about "Parole" because the meaning of parole includes, as a precondition, a person who committed a crime and who feels really sorry for what he has done. In other words, I have to admit my guilt. However, as lawyers and BLL members explained that I was paroled for good conduct, I decided to go out and to appeal my retrial as early as possible. I thought it was most important to convey my appeal with my own voice.

Nakayama: After your voice was on the air through a TV news program, a lot of people phoned me directly saying, "Impressed!" "Keep your chin up. I believe you are innocent." Also I got many New Year cards with "I will never forget the day you were out



Mr. Nakayama(left) and Mr. Ishikawa(right)

of jail." written on them.

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Ishikawa: Oh!

Nakayama: I think there is no doubt that people in this country have a warm corner in their heart for you and they feel that you are innocent.

Ishikawa: Yes. However, for me it is a question of what the people's legal grounds for my innocence are.

Nakayama: I agree. I agree.

Ishikawa: As people do not know the details of this case, it is important for me to make an explanation myself in the appeal. The young generation perhaps does not know about this case.

Nakayama: Maybe.

Ishikawa: I did not know I was from Buraku at that time. After a few years, since I insisted on my innocence, I got a book of Buraku history from Mr. Zennosuke Asada, a former BLL chairman. When I was a child I had small stones thrown at me. In those days I didn't know why. However, during my study I found the reason, step by step. At present, I have understood about Buraku to a certain extent, though only a smattering. Why was I involved in this case? As I look back, the reason was that I was ignorant. And at the same time, the place I lived was a Buraku community based on prejudice toward the Buraku. I was arrested on other charges. Therefore, it is the most important point which I will appeal in the future.

Nakayama: I think so. You have to appeal the point with your own voice. This is the real meaning of "Parole".

Ishikawa: I understood.

Why did Ishikawa insist on his confession ?

Nakayama: As you know, a big difference has been claimed between your confession at the



time of the criminal investigation stage and the objective facts.

Ishikawa: Yes.

Nakayama: We, the defense council, submitted scientific documents of appraisal by an expert to the judge. In spite of this, the court judged the difference to be only the expression appearing in the documents, making the excuse that Ishikawa told a lie or did not remember correctly. Even at the time of retrial stage the court only dealt with the facts as they appeared on paper.

Ishikawa: That's right.

Nakayama: One cannot judge everything about a person from written materials. Therefore, you yourself should tell how you were forced to confess. It is the best way to identify the truth.

Ishikawa: Public sessions were held a total of 10 times in the first trial. If the lawyers of those days strongly took up this subject of Buraku as background to this case and gave me adequate advice or strategies, I could have appealed my innocence with a firm attitude. That is why I did not get free for such a long time.

Nakayama: Uh Huh.

Ishikawa: Of course. When I think of it now,



I understand the situation very clearly. Therefore, I was very lucky that you and Mr. Yamagami, the chief lawyer of my defense panel, helped me. Because you and Mr. Yamagami were sympathetic about the Buraku issue. It was too early to be given the death penalty with only 10 sessions during the first trial.

Nakayama: Yeah.

Ishikawa: I confessed to the crime by a leading question put to me by police and I maintained my confession for a while. Why? I would like to repeat, that if the lawyers in those days recognized the Buraku issue, my attitude would have changed. I decided by myself to try the case in the High Courts.

Nakayama: Uh Huh.

Ishikawa: Therefore, I resolved to tell the truth. Even at the time when I received the death penalty, I didn't change my mind because other prisoners in the same cell recommended that I appeal to the High Court. I became to avoid lawyers advice.

Nakayama: Uh Huh. Do you remember Mr. Terao, the chief judge at the time of the 2nd trial? He read more than 10 books about the Buraku issue and related the facts at court?

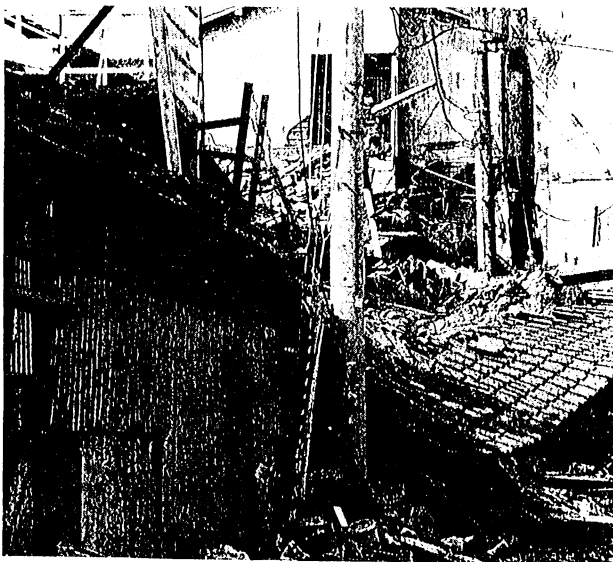
Ishikawa: I remember.

Nakayama: However, he did not state this fact in his judgement, did he?

Ishikawa: No, he didn't.

- To be cont'd. -

Buraku Community After The Great Hanshin Earthquake



The Great Hanshin Earthquake, which occurred at dawn, January 17, killed more than 5,000 people and destroyed 56,000 houses and buildings. The devastation was especially catastrophic in Nagata-ward, Kobe, with fires destroying collapsed houses. The quake reduced the whole area to vast piles of rubble. The discriminated Buraku districts located in Kobe, Nishinomiya and Takarazuka were also seriously damaged by the earthquake. Immediately after the quake, we stepped foot in _____ district, the largest Buraku in _____-ku, Kobe. Here is our report as we saw the scene.



District - The Shattered Undesignated District

On the way to district, we came to the front of station and met quite unfamiliar sights, as if we were total strangers there. Building after building was collapsed or leaving. Wreckage was scattered all over. Roads were elevated or cracked in places. Overhead, helicopters were flying incessantly with a roaring noise. On the ground, ambulances, fire-engines and police cars were coming and going with sirens on. Those unusual scenes made us feel as if we were at a war front. We went on to the west to Hyogo-ward looking over still more fallen houses and leaning buildings. When we came to and which are adjacent to , we realized that the aspects of the damage changed for the worse. On either side of the street, we began to see blocks of shattered houses and here and there smoke after fires.

The first sight we had in district was the devastation of the and areas on the north side of the street. The size of the area is 200 meters from north to south and 800 meters from east to west; wooden houses had been densely built up along the mild slope of the bank of the Minatogawa River. Almost all the houses were completely destroyed. The whole area looked like a slope of rubble which occupied the road across the narrow alley. Even half of the destroyed houses looked too dangerous to enter. A fire broke out somewhere in .

On February 19, four victims were found dead from the wreckage. A fire fighter said it was impossible to tell how many were still buried.

The belfry of the Buraku Temple in the area had completely fallen down and the outer wall



of the temple was also greatly damaged. The main building was barely standing with leaning pillars and walls. The bank of the Minatogawa, which runs along the north side of the district, was partly collapsed inward and the asphalt on the side road was cracked. Homeless residents spent the night in vinyl tents in front of their broken houses or in small parks nearby. Some people kept themselves warm making a fire surrounding their places with cardboard or wood. There seemed to be self-defense groups organized in the district as part of the fire defense system. They set up the liaison centers within those refugee camps.

This district has been neglected, an unreliable estimate of 2,500 to 3,000 households dwelling in antiquated wooden houses. According to Mr. Teruo Hirabayashi of the BLL Kobe Branch Liaison Council, none of the projects had been implemented there, in spite of the fact that it is one of the discriminated Buraku, only because it had not been designated as a 'Dowa' district. The immenseness of the damage there implies that it was caused by human factors. The administrative responsibility of the Kobe city



government should be put into question for the man-made calamity.

Barely Holding on - 'Reformed Housing Complex'

Seen from a distance, the so-called 'reformed housing' looked intact. But lower level buildings, as well as high-rise ones in _____ and _____, were greatly damaged. One building which had stores on the first floor collapsed and stood leaning forward with the second floor on the ground as a result of the first floor being completely buried underground. Reportedly, three people, parents and a child, were killed under it. All the walls were cracked and the buildings were more or less slanting with their underground foundations of concrete coming out or elevated. Fallen walls and banisters occupied the landings and blocked the ways to upstairs.

Some high-rise buildings with severe damage outside were about to collapse (Photo-Municipal dwelling houses of _____).

A resident who introduced himself as a janitor, said, "You can tell how terrible it is from outside, but the inside is more terrible. Water and gas lines are cut down. Not only walls but some verandas have also fallen down. This building was built in the 1950s. It would be impossible for such an old building to hold up under such an earthquake. Even the newer ones are in a miserable state, as you see. I am too scared to live in any buildings now". "Unless all the reformed housings are re-built, the problem won't be solved", he added.

According to the above mentioned Mr. _____, old people have been evacuated to assembly halls in fear of more destruction by after shocks. Many people have to go on

living as evacuees in assembly halls and near-by parks for fear of the collapse of that 'reformed' housing. "We are having a very difficult time without a gas and water supply. But we are helped and provided with food and needed things by our relatives and friends. Besides, relief goods are becoming ample. It is hard to fetch water from the water supply tank, though", a resident told us rather cheerfully. He might have begun feeling at ease three days after the earthquake. On the day before, the BLL _____ Branch worked out relief activities, delivering emergency goods with the help of the BLL Wakayama Pref. Union.

Some wooden houses which had been built among the reformed housing were almost all shattered down. The police reported on Feb. 19th that the number of deaths in this district was eight: all of them were elderly except for an 18-year old boy. It was only in _____ district that residents of reformed houses were killed by the earthquake. In this district, 2,512 reformed houses have so far been built. Among them, 174 were built before 1959, and 289 were before 1968. Deterioration of the buildings had been pointed out and requests to reconstruct them had been made many times. It has also been pointed out by those concerned that the materials used for the reformed housing in Kobe were cheap and inferior in quality. It cannot be denied that the damage by the earthquake was enlarged by irresponsibility and negligence on the part of the municipal administration. The measures such as the reconstruction of undesignated districts, a full-scale check up of the reformed housing and setting up the comprehensive project of Buraku Liberation, including rebuilding that housing, are needed in _____ district.



'Control Regulation' Is Necessary

Clients Request Discriminatory Investigation Of Buraku:

Private Inquiry Agency Reported: Yearly 270 Cases in Fukuoka branch

In Fukuoka Prefecture, 88 municipalities of cities, towns and villages voted for and demanded the enactment of the 'Regulation of Investigation Control on Buraku Discrimination (tentatively named)'. The Inquiry Agency Association reported and appealed to the Governor of Fukuoka Prefecture on the actual situation of inquiry request from their clients. The Prefectural Assembly Members Association also made an appeal to Mr. Yamaguchi, Director General, Management and Coordination Agency.

, President of Service Inc., the biggest inquiry agency in Fukuoka city (headoffice in Osaka) submitted a report to Governor Yasuji Okuda of Fukuoka Pref., revealing the fact that they have received inquiry requests from clients who supposedly have Buraku discrimination in mind.

President of the agency appealed for the necessity of enacting the 'Prefectural Regulation of Controlling Family Background Reference on Buraku Discrimination'. He hopes that the enactment of the regulation, exclusive inquiry of Buraku discrimination, will be most effective in eliminating or decreasing the number of incidents in Buraku Discrimination. According to the report, the agency received 2400 cases of reference request in 1993. Clients want to get information on personal conduct, financial status and missing family members from home. About 400 cases out of those inquiries were references on dates, would-be marriage partners, and spouses, and 270 of them were discriminatory minded. More recently, in July



Appealed to Mr. Okuda, Governor of Fukuoka Prefecture.

1994, 30 inquiries (16.2%) out of 185 were on dates, would-be marriage partners and spouses, and 20 of them were of discriminatory references. The report showed that inquiries with the intention of Buraku discrimination are still in demand.

"In these several years the Fukuoka branch received 400 or so requests a year. The report commented, "We cannot expect the problem of Buraku discrimination to disappear spontaneously in time. A strong appeal and enlightenment of people may be indispensable". Furthermore, it proposes to 'form organizations with a self-imposed control system and to enact the 'Regulation' excluding discriminatory references on Buraku. The report advocates the effectiveness and necessity of the 'Prefectural Regulation Controlling Family Background Reference on Buraku Discrimination'. Combined with the forming of an organization with a self-imposed control system on the part of inquiry agencies, the enactment of the regulation will be the most effective in eliminating or decreasing the number of incidents of Buraku discrimination, the report concludes.



Newspaper Clipping

Shikoku Gakuin Univ. Starting Affirmative Admissions

August 12, 1994

MAINICHI DAILY NEWS Tokyo

ZENTSUJI, Kagawa - Starting next year, Shikoku Gakuin University will have a special admissions quota for minorities such as *burakumin*, ethnic Korean residents, Ainu and residents of Okinawa Prefecture.

Other institutions have debated such a quota system but deferred action, although one university has admitted Ainu by special recommendation.

Shikoku Gakuin University is a Christian institution established in 1950, with faculties of literature and sociology, and its junior college offers English-language studies.

The special admissions system was first suggested two years ago as part of a reform plan for the entrance exam system.

At the time, there were objections that discrimination under a quota system might worsen, and there were also doubts about the reaction of minority groups.

Early this July when students were notified of the new system, one of them asked, "Won't students who get in by receiving special treatment feel a sense of inferiority?"

Takaaki Sueyoshi, an associate professor of black American studies at the university, says: "I don't think it's discrimination to offer special opportunities to people who have not had equal educational opportunities due to circumstances of their birth or upbringing. On the contrary, we should do whatever we can to provide equal opportunity."

Burakumin are people of the former

"untouchable" class of Japan. Racially and culturally the same as other Japanese, their family records can still be traced to reveal their pariah past, and they often come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Within the buraku liberation movement itself, there are conflicting opinions about the new system. Akinobu Tanimoto of the Buraku Liberation League approves of the idea, saying, "Burakumin often don't make it to college because they don't have the money to spend on education. I find it significant that an institution is taking positive action to get these people into college."

But Mineo Okuyama of the Buraku Problem Research Center disagrees, "Unlike ethnic discrimination, the buraku problem will only go away when the economic factors disappear. It's not in our favor to focus on discrimination just when the economic gap is beginning to disappear."

In the early 1970s, Osaka City University considered a special recommendation system by which it would accept medical students who would later work as doctors in areas lacking medical care, such as where the burakumin are segregated. The decision was deferred, however, on the grounds that such problems could not be solved by a single institution.

Okinawa University, on the other hand, already has a system in place for admitting minorities by recommendation. In 1989, a



special application criterion was established between the far north and the south of the country. Two students subsequently enrolled under the system, and some students now openly say they are Ainu. "If burakumin applied, we would accept them according to the same standards as the Ainu," says an official of the university.

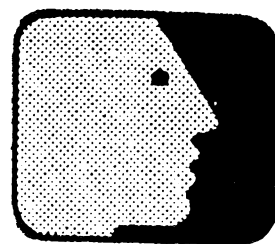
"Not only Ainu, but burakumin too have a

distinctive cultural background. We hope that by accepting students who are proud of their backgrounds, we will have an open campus made up of students who can straightforwardly accept each other's differences," says Associate Professor Sueyoshi of Shikoku Gakuin.



BURAKU PROBLEMS: Q & A (5)

Denunciation



Q

What is Denunciation?

A

When someone discriminates against another person, there are not enough legal means to prevent that person from discriminating again, or to help victims of discrimination. Even among those who are in charge of protecting human rights at the Human Rights bureau of the Ministry of Justice and the Human Rights Defense Committee of the Legal Affairs Bureau, only a few actually understand Buraku problems very well. A majority of them just preach about the issues to satisfy their duties. The offices do not function to prevent people from discriminatory behavior or to make them reflect on their actions, or to investigate the backgrounds which cause discriminatory incidents so that they may not occur again. The Japanese Constitution includes statements about respect for human rights. In reality, however, there is not control over discriminatory behavior by law or institutions. Buraku people would have to put up with discrimination practices against them, if there were no Buraku Liberation Movement.

Denunciation allows Buraku people to accuse persons who discriminate against them. It seeks to have them reflect and apologize. Through this process, both the discriminating person and Buraku people discover the backgrounds in society which produce discrimination. The ultimate aim of denunciation is to educate the person who discriminates and transform into someone who does not tolerate discrimination. In short, denunciation is for the person who discriminates as well as for the one who was discriminated against, to help probe why discrimination still exists and to awaken the



dignity of humanity.

Denunciation meetings are held as an organizational activity. One of the reasons for this is that even though a discriminatory incident may be a very individual matter, it arouses the anger of the whole Buraku community. Various types of discrimination related to marriage and employment occur just because the people involved are from the Buraku.

Secondly, people who do not have power are in the weak position, and cannot protect themselves without a group action.

Thirdly, it is almost impossible in the present social situation to get an individual who discriminates to frankly admit his deed, apologize for it, and change him/her into a person who does not tolerate discrimination, if the victim takes only an individual action. This can be easily understood when one learns the attitude of the persons who discriminated before the Suihei-sha (National Leveller's Association) was established. Protests from victims had no effect on those who discriminated, and in communities where the Liberation Movement had not been well promoted, the victims were compelled to put up with the situation as it was.

Fourthly, prejudice is not an individual consciousness. It exists in a lot of people's minds. In other words, it is a social or group consciousness. For example, some individuals know that discrimination is wrong but worry about how other people think of them when they got involved with Buraku. They also think that it is no use to protest against discrimination by themselves, and so they follow the prejudice of others. Therefore, an individual's effort has to go beyond the individual level and cooperate with organizations which fight against discrimination in order to conquer prejudice in society.

Fifthly, individual protests against discrimination sometimes can get out of control. When people who discriminate do not honestly admit what they have done and do not apologize, the anger on the part of the persons who were discriminated can sometimes lead them to act violently, possibly even commit murder. There are some who want to solve such incidents with money, taking advantage of the implanted image that the Buraku is something to be feared and the lack of understanding of Buraku problems among people at large.

Denunciation should be done orderly and systematically. It can be recognized in society as a means to urge people who discriminate to reflect on their attitude. At the same time, it should encourage people who are discriminated against to become aware of discrimination. The Buraku Liberation League clearly states the basic principle of denunciation in its struggle against discrimination: "Denunciation does not accompany violence threat, or banter. It should be done with a certain modesty depending on the attitude of the person who discriminates. The struggle against the violation of human rights has to hold the position that the human rights of the opponents should not be violated as well. "How the denunciation is performed systematically should be decided on by analyzing the nature of the individual case: who or what kind of group or organization is involved; and whether it was done intentionally or not. Denunciations are not always done by a large group of people.

• The history of the Liberation Movement is also the history of denunciation: the Movement has made a big progress through denunciation. It discouraged deep-rooted discrimination in society, including any carried out in the name of the law. Without denunciation, discrimination could have



become rampant. Various circles including education, mass media, corporations, and religious groups could not have noticed Buraku discrimination. Denunciation has greatly contributed to the improvement, not only of the Buraku community, but also of Japanese society. It reformed the employment exam system for the junior national civil servants, which used to be influenced by the occupations of applicants' parents. It has also brought about other significant results, including the inhibition of free reference on birth certificates.

