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Helping Okinawa's Homeless

When two homeless people were denied entry to an evacuation center in Kanto during Typhoon 19, there was an outcry in the media. However, such harsh treatment of the homeless is nothing new, according to Okada Yusuke, a Protestant Minister from Kobe now living in Okinawa. He says a similar thing happened during the Hanshin earthquake of 1995. At that time, homeless people were allowed into an evacuation shelter but when other people taking refuge there complained, the council decided not to

give the homeless people any bento boxes. They were made to feel so uncomfortable, that some of them left and went outside even though it was mid-winter. In fact, some of them later died from the extreme cold. After that, local Christian churches in Kobe, including the Rev. Okada's, started to regularly provide food for the homeless.

Rev. Okada in Okinawa

When he moved to Okinawa, the Rev. Okada continued his work with people living on the street. He estimates there are



Okada Sensei and Kiritan students distributing food to the homeless in Naha.

around 150 homeless here. Along with a small group of volunteers, every week he brings rice balls, cup ramen and hot water, and tomato and vegetable juice to the homeless. "But just as importantly, we talk to these

people," he says. "Some of them haven't eaten for three days but on the other hand some of them haven't spoken to anyone for a week."

Heartbreaking stories

Over the years, the Rev Okada has witnessed many heartbreaking scenes. He has seen homeless people hesitate to get into ambulances even though they had been seriously hurt because they didn't want to be a burden on other people – since they do not pay tax they felt they weren't entitled to an ambulance. In one case, a homeless man who was seriously ill with cancer eventually did agree to get into an ambulance but he died soon after in hospital, and then nobody came to collect his body. The Rev Okada says one of the saddest things is

that most homeless people die alone.

He lived in a park

He recalls one story of a man who as a child was supposed to board the Tsushima Maru ship to escape the Battle of Okinawa. However he could not get on because there were too many people already on board. So he boarded another vessel, the Nazimaru, instead. While the Tsushima Maru was attacked by the American navy and sank to the bottom of the sea, the Nazimaru arrived safely in port. However, the boy was always deeply troubled by what he had seen and when he grew up he became homeless. He stayed near the Tsushima Maru memorial park in Naha for the rest of his life. He said he could always

hear the voices of the children who had died.

What we can do?

The Rev Okada says we have to interact with homeless people positively because they cannot communicate easily. Although many of them are kind and serious, they have had bad experiences. As well as talking with homeless people, and bringing them food, we can also give them used drink cans. Many homeless people collect cans. They can get 100 yen for every kilogram they collect. One kilogram equals about 60 cans. So for 3 kilos they can get 300 yen, enough to buy a bento box.

Noma Sensei teaches Christianity in Kiritan/Kirigaku and is one of the volunteers who works with the Rev Okada.

What kind of activities are you doing?

I am mainly giving food but I also ask about the health and any problems the homeless people have. I was also volunteering to help the homeless people in Niigata. But, Niigata is very cold. So, I was giving blankets as well. If we had not given blankets, they might have died. When I came here in the Spring, I met Mr. Okada and then I realized that there are homeless people in Okinawa too.



Students make onigiri for the homeless

So I started this activity with his team.
How many homeless people do you visit in Naha?

We visit about 20 ~ 30 homeless people depending on the weather. The youngest is about 30 years old, but most people are about 60 years old. This is because as people get older it becomes more difficult to get a job. So, there are a lot more elderly homeless people.

How is the gender ratio?

Most homeless people are men. They make up about 90%, while women make up 10%. So, if there are homeless women, we have to pay more attention to them than to the homeless men because they are at more risk of sexual assault.

Does this activity cost you money?

No, most donations are from people who are coming to our church. They give us money, noodles, rice and so on. Therefore, it costs us only a little bit of money.

When do you do this activity?

Every Thursday. We gather together at 5 p.m. and make some rice balls and prepare for the volunteer work. We go to the harbor, city hall and Kokusai street, looking for homeless people.

How many volunteers do you work with?

Mr. Okada, his wife, some volunteers from the church, me and some students from Okinawa Christian University. I think it's about 10 people in total.

How did you feel about homelessness at first?

At first I was honestly scared but after I volunteered, I realized the homeless people are full of kindness and they are informed. I feel warm when I talk to them.

What caused homeless people to end up living on the streets?

Each has various problems. For example, people who quarreled with their families and who lost their jobs. But not all homeless people lost their homes. To solve this issue, we need assistance from Okinawa Prefecture as well as help from volunteers.

What can we do for the homeless people to help them in the future?

Not only distributing food, but also expanding our understanding of the problems facing the homeless and caring for them every time we come across them.

College Speech Contest - Winners Share Their Thoughts



Miyuko Shinjo - winner of the first prize.

Miyuko Shinjo came first in the speech contest.

I had two reasons for the joining speech contest. First, when I chose a college, my parents helped me a lot so I wanted to show them that I'm trying do my best at this school. Second, when I was in middle school and high school, there were many chances to get a prize and I could show them to my family but in College, up to now, there was nothing to show them but my grades. The reasons that I chose this topic was that in Christianity class I learned about war and the importance of life. Also when I was in the Philippines, people were nice to me and welcomed me, so I thought people should get along with each other. Another thing was that recently I saw a newborn baby for the first time in my neighborhood and I was wondering "This baby is so small but

alive!" then I wished that the baby's life would be happy and peaceful.

Right before the announcement of the Speech Contest result, I was so nervous that I thought my heart was going to explode. I didn't expect the first place but my family came to see me so I really wanted to get it. When my name was called, I felt released and thought I could return the favor to my family as a student. But when I watched my own speech which my father recorded, I thought I need to study English more.

Through this speech contest, I could have more interest in English. Also I found out that I'm okay with standing in front of many people. I still don't have confidence about my English but I could gain a little confidence.

Duwel Erina Sasaki got second place.

The reason why I chose my topic is because I wanted everyone to understand that all races are the same. We are humans and it doesn't matter where we come from, we shouldn't get treated any differently. I feel like some people don't understand that yet and that's why I wanted to say something about it.

I was happy I got second place! There were so many tough competitors that I didn't think I had a chance of getting a place at all! I'm grateful for this.



Through this speech contest, I had some people come up to me, telling me about how my speech touched them and that made me so happy. I guess I gained some confidence in telling my story. I wasn't confident in telling this story because it's embarrassing but it's something that everyone should know - to not discriminate because we're all the same "race". But I am happy people actually listened to what I had to say and I'm thankful that I had this opportunity to speak about my experience.

Sakura Ishado got third place and the Audience Award

First, I had three options to talk about. The first one was social media and the second one was environmental problems and the last one was my personal story. I thought many people would choose a personal story and I had already written about social media for Dan Sensei's class, so I could not use it again. That left only one option and that was the environmental problems.

Tomoka Kobayashi got the prize for best first year speech.

When I went to the airport, I was surprised by the way the ground staff are conducting their work so I did some research about it. After the speech contest, I cannot believe that I got this prize and I am exhausted.

Exploitative part-time jobs

Even though they were part-time employees with insufficient training, they were expected to do important jobs in the cafe where they worked. They could not take enough breaks or days off - one day, they worked 13 hours straight with only 15 minutes break-time. Their job was exhausting. These were just some of the shocking revelations made by two students from Okinawa Christian University at a recent press conference in the College.

Reality of the Cafe

The pair worked at a cafe which has since gone out of business. They cannot receive their pay because the company president filed for bankruptcy. However, they haven't given up on that, yet. The cafe had many problems including absurd working conditions and poor hygiene.

One day, there was an explosive increase in the number of cockroaches, so the part-time employees

asked a permanent employee to deal with them, but the permanent employee didn't comply with their request. Another problem was that the cafe sometimes used one week old food which had become stale.

Why could they not quit?

Despite their difficult job, the part-time employees got on great together and supported each other, and that's why they could not quit. They were worried that if one of them quit, it would make the others' jobs harder. So, they were cooperating with each other and doing their best. And now, they are still cooperating and trying to help

each other.

Message from the students

The two brave students have a message for other OCJC students. They say that many students have a problem in their part-time jobs but don't realize that anything is wrong because they think that it is normal. But, probably it is not normal, it is unusual and students have to realize this and need to talk to someone close to them about it. So everyone, let's be careful not to get exploited in our part-time jobs



These O.C.U. students were having problems in their P.T.J.

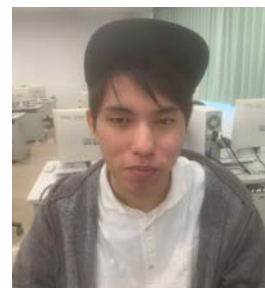
ME TOO!

Members of the Newspaper Class talk about their experiences of Black part-time jobs...



Reiji: I was working at a gas station. I wanted to quit the job and told the boss that I would quit. But the boss didn't let me quit. Also, when I decided the days that I wanted work, he did not listen my requests. Moreover, I didn't get half a month's salary.

Taisei: I was working at a car rental shop. I had many busy days, especially Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. I often worked 12 hours from opening time to closing time. After the store closed I had overtime for another hour and a half. The break was only one hour.



Taiga: I was working at a sushi restaurant. One day, I got influenza and called my boss to get a day off. But my boss didn't accept my request and so I had to work even though I had the flu. When my friend was a high school student, he worked part time until 10pm, but he didn't get paid.

Kokoro: I was working at a convenience store. One day I finished working and was eating food in the office. That day, there was a new staff and the staff was a cashier. About 10 customers were lined up in front of his till. Then the new staff demanded in an angry voice that I help him so, I worked in my ordinary clothes even though I was supposed to have gone home.



Mei: I was working at a cosmetics store. One day, I planned to go on a trip with my friends and I had bought the ticket for the trip. So I asked my boss if I could take a holiday for the trip, but my boss didn't approve the break. In the end, actually I couldn't go on the trip and I gave my ticket to a friend.

My grandfather's wound.

by Reiji Konami

When did you get that wound and who were you shot by?

When I was 3 years old, I got that wound during the Second World War in 1945. That attack was called the "ju-ju air raid" because it happened on October 10. The Japanese word for ten is *ju* and the attack happened on the tenth day of October, the tenth month, so that is why it was called *ju-ju*. I was shot by an American soldier when I was escaping with my family.

Where were you at that time?

I lived in Naha with my family. And then I escaped with my family and one soldier when the battle started. We escaped from Naha to the South and we arrived at the southern edge of Okinawa.



Reiji's grandfather

How were you attacked by the American soldier?

There was no place to escape when we arrived at the edge, and we were attacked by their guns. A bullet shot by an American soldier hit my grandmother's neck and penetrated her body. And then the same bullet grazed my neck and stopped in my shoulder.

What happened after that?

My grandmother died in an instant. My mother and I survived. After that we were protected by an American soldier and we walked over many dead people. The bullet which was lodged in my shoulder was later removed by a doctor at the American base.



Reiji's Grandfather's shoulder bullet wound

Unsung Hero

Makiato! Kirigaku's own cafe manager talks about coffee, cars, and college.

What are you doing at this college?

I`m running a coffee shop in this college

Why are you doing that?

I have 3 reasons. First, because I love coffee. Second, when I was a student at this college there was already a coffee shop, and I was drinking coffee there three times a day. Then when I graduated from this college the coffee shops owner said "Would you take over the coffee shop? Because of that, I`m running the coffee shop today. Finally, I



Maki is one of the most familiar faces on campus

want to give back something to this college. Because, I was taken care of by this college.

When did you start the coffee shop?



Maki at work, preparing coffee for his many customers

I started in 2012.

What else are you doing?

I`m fixing college students' cars. For example, if the car engine won't start or the car's battery is dead, I'll try to sort it.

Are you married?

No, I`m not. But I`m looking for a partner.

What's the most popular coffee that you sell?

Recently, our popular coffee is German Chocolate.

Please give a message to students.

Please come to the coffee shop at any time regardless of whether you want to drink or not.

USED CLOTHES HELP PEOPLE

I got to know about Yui Willam's volunteer activity through a newspaper. Born in mainland Japan and now married to an American and living in Okinawa, she raises money for a children's home here.

How she helps people

At first she used to sell her old stuff, and things she received from other military families, at a flea market. She donated that money to support young people who grew up in a local children's home but have now turned 18 and live by themselves. She felt they needed financial support at the start of their independent lives.

Before she started giving donations, she used her money to go to the United States. However, one day when she was in her bed and looking at her bank passbook, she realized that she had made a lot of money through the flea markets but she didn't have anything worthwhile to spend it on. So she decided to use her money for something important. She googled "Okinawa children donation (support)" and found the name of a local children's home. She called them the next day and donated her money. Since then she has been donating money on a regular basis.

After a few months, she started thinking about



Mrs. Yui Williams

opening her own shop. She wanted to trade every day, "So I thought opening the shop would be great for both the customers and me." When I asked her if it was a struggle to open the shop, she answered "No! My husband did the interior work. And while he was doing that, I was doing the sorting work with volunteers." Since she opened the shop she has been able to make a lot of money for charity because she can trade every day. Also, customers can come at whatever time they want, as do the people who donate clothes and stuff. She said that so far, there are no demerits to having the shop and the volunteers help her a lot.

My life has become more meaningful

Through this activity, her life has become more meaningful. She really wants to work every day even if she doesn't get paid. And she said, "I think this is my thing." Yui has a message for us students, "Earning money is very important, but I think it is more important to think about how you spend that money afterwards."



The outside of the shop

SAKURA BLOSSOMS IN COLLEGE FESTIVAL



In Portland

Sakura studied abroad in Portland last year. She learned about digital music and she used electric devices. Sakura said that it was hard for her because she had never learned about digital music before but she was happy to learn about it because she got a new way to make music.

The Kashouou

Sakura performed at Kasyouou which is a TV program in Japan. In this program, many people sing in front of a studio audience and four judges try to find out who is the best singer in Japan. Sakura took part in 2015 and she came second. Over 24 000 people applied to appear on that program.

Who is Sakura?

She is a professional singer song writer and a student in this college.

She started singing at the age of three as a member of the choir in her church. When she was in 6th grade, she recorded her first song and released it a year later. Sakura is not only a great singer but also a great drummer.

Sakura's acting career

She has acted in the movie, Rokunajinsei. directed by Gori. In the movie, she was playing the drums. This movie was screened at an international movie festival in Okinawa.

She has sung the theme song of Under night in-birth exe:late which is a game of Ps4, Ps3 and Ps Vita.

In the future

She said that she wants to continue making music and she wants to sing at the Apollo Theater in New York city. Above all, she hopes for success in her music career.



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