



The issues of poverty and discrimination that people need to care about

~A message from the youth wanting to create a better future~

Main proposal

There are four things we want to convey to high school students:

- (1) The fact that many issues are facing not only developing countries but also Japan today.
- (2) The issues of poverty and discrimination, which will be dealt with in the proposal, are things that concern everyone
- (3) We, high school students, have many actions that we can take, so we need to be more actively involved in social issues.
- (4) We want you to be actively involved in social issues

We hope that people who are interested but do not know how to take action, or who have not been interested in the past, will be able to start taking action from now on. In this proposal which we dedicate to mainly high school students, we will be focusing on the two issues of poverty and discrimination.

Children in poverty

•Develop an interest in issues such as poverty

Even though many children are suffering from poverty in Japan, the biggest issue is that it is difficult to notice. Participate in lectures that can educate you on these issues and use SNS to voice your opinions or spread awareness.

•Volunteer as much as possible

Investigate the organizations that are engaged in activities that interest you, and actively do volunteer work.

Participate in after-school volunteers and help out free cram schools conducted by NPOs and NGOs.

•Support those in need by donating money or giving mental support

Donate to NPOs, NGOs, etc. that support children suffering from poverty, or donate clothes that you can no longer wear.

•Educate those around you

Communicating what you have learned to those around you will deepen your learning.



Discrimination against foreigners and the LGBTQ+ community

• Think about how you are taking in information

We need to accept the fact that we don't understand everything. There's a lot that can be easily influenced by relations between countries or what is written in our textbooks. The important thing is to make sure that you don't let these things affect your relationship with foreigners and people in general.

• Put yourself in someone else's shoes

No matter where you are when you go somewhere that isn't where you are from originally, you will be treated as a foreigner. With that in mind, we must realize that discrimination doesn't help anyone in any way and can hurt whoever experiences it.

• Understand that there could be as many types of genders as there are people

A person's sexuality isn't something that they can decide on but a part of their identity. There could be just as many genders and sexualities as there are people, and we must remember that their sexuality doesn't affect their personality and who they are on the inside. We can't determine what kind of person someone is based on their sexuality.



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The issues that go unnoticed about children in poverty

~We are all capable of helping the situation~

Poverty in developed countries

Out of 35 developed nations, around 34 million people, which is 15%, are living in poverty.

- The relative poverty rate of children in Japan is 14.9%(10th out of the 35 nations), and out of the approximately 20 million children in Japan, around 3 million are living in poverty.
- The relative poverty rate in the US is 23.1%(2nd)
- The relative poverty rate in the UK is 11.1%(14th)

*The 35 developed nations refer to the following: USA, Ireland, Iceland, Israel, Italy, UK, Estonia, Australia, The Netherlands, Austria, Canada, Korea, Greece, Spain, Slovakia, Switzerland, Sweden, Chili, Czech Republic Denmark Turkey Germany Japan New Zealand Norway Hungary France Finland Belgium Portugal Poland Mexico Luxembourg

(Sources: https://www.unicef.or.jp/kodomo/teacher/pdf/fo/fo_52.pdf
ユニセフ・イノチェンティ研究所『Report Card 10-先進国の子どもの貧困』)
国際協力NGO ワールド・ビジョン・ジャパン <https://resemom.jp/article/2020/07/20/57291.html>)

Poverty in the UK

_____ In the 10 years that began in 1997, the UK has shown much growth with the poverty rates as it had decreased from 26% to 18%. The rate of poverty in single-parent households has also decreased from 49% to 22%.

The UK's countermeasures

The difference between the UK and Japan is that the UK numerically states a goal that the laws regarding poverty must meet. They discuss the situation every 3



years and have made it an obligation to change it if necessary. Though they may reconsider the social security benefits, the budget that is put towards education has not decreased.

Working poor countermeasures

Since Labor Party Prime Minister Tony Blair (then) declared in 1999 that he would "eradicate child poverty by 2020," the government has taken many steps to achieve a "fair society." Attempts continue even after the simultaneous global recession and the change of government. The Blair administration has set three pillars: income security, parental employment support, and child-rearing support.

- **Winter Package**

To support low-income families, the local self-governing body distributed the "Covid Winter Grant Scheme" which will help decrease the rate of poverty all over the nation. For children, families, and everyone else who is in a vulnerable state this winter, they are giving support by offering a total of 170 million pounds.

- **Pupil Premium**

Financial aid is being provided to low-income families or households where the guardians are unable to work. Schools have used this to increase the number of teachers, have after-school tutoring sessions, and serve breakfast at school before class in the "Breakfast Club".

- **Tax Credit**

In the past, they used to have a system where a low-income family that has a child under 16 years of age will receive financial aid in cash. This would be provided to two types of families, the first being a low-income family who pays less than a certain amount in taxes, and the second being low-income families in general and was called "Working tax credit". Today, the name of this system has been changed to "Universal Credit" and adding on to the types of families mentioned above that are eligible to receive the financial aid, another 6 conditions have been added and made into a new system of support for low-income families.

- **Children's center**

To support families in poverty, not only the children but the guardians as well, they have set up Children's centers at 3000 locations all over the nation. Adding on, they have a program that allows children to learn even if their family's financial state doesn't allow it. Their motto is to make sure financial status



doesn't affect a children's potential and capacity to learn. They also offer support to parents who need a job.

(Sources: <https://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/>

エンド・チャイルド・ポバティ

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjDupj7-KTtAhUGfd4KHe1vBgQQFjACegQIAhAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fcfrc.or.jp%2Farchives%2Fcolumn%2F2016%2F06%2F07%2F15849%2F&usg=AOvVaw1252X3WKG5COQNNnvNi9KD> チャンス・フォー・チルドレン

英国の子どもの貧困対策 公正な社会へ試み続く | 関連記事 | 希望って何ですか 貧困の中の子ども | 下野新聞 SOON(スーン) (shimotsuke.co.jp)

Poverty in Japan

There is a difference between absolute poverty and relative poverty. In Japan, we see the issue of relative poverty.

○**Absolute poverty**.....Having no food to eat, no clothes to wear, and no home to live in. A state in which people lack a sense of fulfillment in clothing, food, and housing, and cannot live a minimum life as a human being.

○**Relative poverty**.....It refers to people whose income level is less than 50% of the median annual income of the people and is below the national standard of living and culture.

The relative poverty rate in Japan is said to be higher than in most developed nations.

A report that was published in 2016 stated that Japan's relative poverty rate was 14th in the world at 15.7%. Within developed nations, Japan is 3rd, taking after China and the US, which shows us that it is relatively high.

Additionally, by comparing each household we see that the households with single parents' relative poverty rate are 50.8% and more than half of them are in a situation of poverty.

(Sources:厚生労働省公式サイト)

Issues of child poverty (Educational and health-wise)



In Japan, 1 in 7 children is in a state of poverty.

◎Educational inequality

- Children that come from families that are in a state of poverty are not able to access the same kind of environment as other students, thus leading to difficulty in studies and an unlikelihood of receiving the same opportunities as other people.
- Living in a state of poverty affects the child's education in the sense that they will not have any opportunities to further their studies outside of school either.
- Not being able to receive higher education reduces the chance of them getting a proper job and having a stable income.

Initiatives being taken in Japan

•Kodomo Shokudo(Children's Cafeteria)

Run by volunteers, the "Kodomo Shokudo" is to provide children with nutritious meals when it is difficult for them to receive the same meals at home due to financial state.

They eat these nutritious meals for a very low price and since this service is also for the children's parents, the whole family can enjoy their meals together.

Also, since families from similar backgrounds come together, people have a chance to communicate with those that truly understand them, and that creates a sense of belonging and mental stability.

•Educational Support

After school classes are being held for those students that can't afford any extra classes to further their education.

Volunteers are here to help children get exposure to different things such as sports and culture as well.

This system exists in many places all over Japan and helps support people in several different ways.

•Supporting parents and guardians



To support the guardians in each household, they try to have less strain overall financially, reduce the medical bill and give financial aid to those who require it.

They also individually support people so that they can get jobs that have a higher income and gain stability.

By supporting not only the children but guardians as well, they are getting closer to mental and financial stability.

<Our Proposal>

How we can help

- **Develop an interest in solving these issues**
 - ⇒ Attend seminars
 - ⇒ Use Social Media to share possible solutions and learn more
- **Volunteering**
 - ⇒ Go as a teacher to after school classes
- **Donations**
 - ⇒ Donate to NPOs that work to solve the issue of poverty
 - ⇒ Donate the clothes you don't wear anymore
- **Raise awareness of what we learned**

(Sources: 日本の貧困の現状は？ 貧困率の推移や背景とは

https://gooddo.jp/magazine/poverty/asia_poverty/japan_poverty/4477/)

Things we want the Japanese government, NGOs, NPOs to do

- Give more financial aid to places like “Kodomo Shokudo”
- Understand that relative poverty is an issue in Japan as well
- Increase the amount of financial aid given to low-income families
 - ⇒ Work on making medical bills free for low income families
- Create a community that makes it easier to raise a child (support system)
- Understand that there's a lot about poverty that we can't see and understand
 - ⇒ See if there are ways teachers can support children that come from families that are struggling financially
- Start projects that help people understand the situation of relative poverty in Japan



Discrimination against foreigners and the LGBTQ+ community

~A proposal for how we want to change our future~

1. Introduction
2. From our experiences
3. An objective view based on questionnaire results
4. Our proposal
5. Ways to change things for the better

1.Introduction

Where do we learn this concept of discrimination? Imagine this; a wall between you and the person sitting in front of you. You cannot see their face, nor can you know their gender or personality. You cannot even know what language they speak or how they speak until you start a conversation with them. Would we still discriminate even under these circumstances?

We as humans have a habit of differentiating, or discriminating against the things that we see. If hypothetically we couldn't see those in front of us, if the concept that we are all the same to some extent and that no one deserves to be discriminated existed within each person, the whole concept of discrimination would cease to exist.

Based on our own experiences and the results of the questionnaire we conducted, we would like to share, to future generations, our opinions and view on issues such as discrimination against foreigners in Japan and LGBTQ+ discrimination.

2.From our experiences



When I was in middle school, I had an experience that made me believe in a stereotype about a particular race. Due to the questionable manners that were displayed by some Chinese customers at the department store near me, I started to believe that all Chinese people are the same.

I now strongly believe that in society, we need to be taught that there is more than one personality type, more than one race, culture, or sexuality and that each and every person needs to be respected for who they are.

I go to an international school and am surrounded by people who can speak English. So just because my friends and I speak in English on the train, we begin to get some unpleasant looks. If I go outside of Japan, people use the word “jap” which is a derogatory term, or Japanese people are told “You’re so good at English” sometimes in a condescending way that creates the connotation that Japanese people are expected to be bad at it. In the case of Japanese people, it’s painful to see that they sometimes treat foreigners in a way that they themselves would not want to be treated. The way people tend to view the LGBTQ+ community affects the way I see myself too, as it made me feel that the fact that I had even the slightest bit of interest in someone of the same gender as me, seemed almost wrong. I can’t seem to understand why society can deny someone’s definition of their own identity. I hope people will learn and I hope we all can learn before it’s too late.

As a person who grew up in Japan as a foreigner, a non-white, south Asian foreigner, I had to experience many forms of discrimination. The biggest reason for this being the color of my skin. People believed that there is only one skin color, and because of the ignorance that existed from back then, I, who was only 5 years old at the time, had to experience racism. It made me believe that it was wrong for me to have dark skin and that people telling me it was “disgusting” was almost true. If only people had a different way of thinking that didn’t involve discrimination, perhaps we could have saved a lot of people from getting hurt.

3.An objective view based on questionnaire results

We conducted a questionnaire to see the level of understanding that High School students have on issues such as discrimination against foreigners and LGBTQ+ in Japan. From the results of this, we have concluded that the following things are what we need to work on to achieve a society without discrimination.



- To try to understand
 - i. Approximately half of the people who filled out the questionnaire said that they have never seen a foreigner being discriminated against in Japan. We often don't realize the existence of the problems we don't see, and what these results show us is that even though we may not have seen it without our own eyes, issues like this exist and we need to work on accepting that.
 - ii. 20% of the respondents said that they do not know what LGBTQ+ stands for. We believe the first step to understanding the issues, is to understand the meaning. Then only we can move on solving the issues.
- To not be fooled by what others say
 - i. People may give us false reasons to stay away from foreigners or give us unsolicited advice to not interact with them, but we need to make sure to have our own opinions and not be fooled or affected by what those people say. Perhaps the reason as to which 20% of the respondents said that they have unintentionally discriminated against foreigners could be attributed to the effect of other people's words.
 - ii. When asked respondents if there is anyone around them that believes people of the LGBTQ+ community are destined to be discriminated against, around 20% answered yes. When we are trying to create a world where people are accepted for who they are, the existence of these kinds of people that don't feel fault in discriminating is a problem. We need to help people understand that everyone deserves the same rights.
- To have the courage to stand up for others
 - i. We asked people, on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest, how much would you think you would be able to defend someone that is being discriminated against right before your eyes. 10% answered 5, and 40% answered 3. Though we can see that some people have admirable courage, this number needs to increase to create a society and world that people can feel safe in.



4. Our proposal

There are a lot of things that we as humans don't understand, but it is also our responsibility to accept those things. The education we receive sometimes is based on biased thinking that derives from the relationships between each country at a particular time. We need to learn to not let that affect our views and let ourselves develop relationships with foreigners regardless of the country's relationship with their country.

Discriminating someone because of their race has a contradiction. For example, if a Japanese person discriminates against someone for being a foreigner in Japan, they would still be a foreigner when they go abroad. Keeping this in mind, we need to ask ourselves if it makes sense and if it is really necessary to even discriminate in the first place.

People of the LGBTQ+ community don't choose their sexuality, it's their identity that we need to respect. It's not something that people can decide on, but something that we need to accept, as it is who they are. There could be as many genders as there are people and regardless of their sexuality, who they are inside doesn't change. What we know about a person is only a small fraction of who they are and we need to keep that in mind.

No matter how we perceive people based on their looks, at the end of the day, we are all human beings and our sexuality or race does not affect the kind of person we are. Even at a time when we need to support each other, we end up going against each other. Race, looks, & sexuality are all things that we cannot control and we need to make sure that discrimination does not begin based on that.

5. Ways to change things for the better

Things we can do in our daily lives

- Keep in mind that underneath everything, we are all the same; human beings.
- Think about whether discrimination is even necessary



- Think about how you would feel if someone discriminated against you
- Take action, dare to stop those who are discriminating
- Fact check the things you hear people say
- Don't let political issues between your country and other countries determine your relationship with foreigners

Actions you can take

- Sign petitions (Including but not limited to the Black Lives Matter movement)
 - In America, 1 out of 1000 POC(people of color) are killed by police. The links below are to request the arrest of the killers of two people that were murdered this year. Every signature counts for these petitions so if one is shared with you on social media, check if the source is reliable and sign if it is.

Most of them can be done within a minute or two:

- Breonna Taylor:
<https://www.change.org/p/andy-beshear-justice-for-breonna-taylor>
<https://act.colorofchange.org/sign/justiceforbre-breonna-taylor-officers-fire-d/>
- George Floyd:
<https://www.change.org/p/mayor-jacob-frey-justice-for-george-floyd>
https://act.colorofchange.org/sign/justiceforfloyd_george_floyd_minneapolis/
- Watch videos that can help donate to the BLM movement:
 - If you want to support the BLM movement (sparked by the murder of George Floyd by police. A movement that calls for equality for the POC community) but don't have the money to donate, watch this video that showcases the works of POC artists that has ads throughout it. Watching the video without skipping the ads and playing it as background music when getting ready can help you donate to the BLM movement.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCgLa25fDHM>
- Participate in seminars that help deepen your knowledge of the LGBTQIA+ community:
 - Here is a link to a list of LGBTQIA+ organizations in Japan compiled by the NPO Nijiirō Diversity
 - https://nijiirorodiversity.jp/lgbt_support/



- Increase views for a video promoting same-sex marriage:
 - The Marry For Congress is a congress run by the Marriage For All Japan organization that brings together politicians to talk about Japan's current state in the process of legalizing same-sex marriage. This link is to the live-streamed video of the second Marry For congress held on 2020/11/26. By increasing views on this video, you can promote interest and support in the legalization process which can pressure the Japanese government to go through with the legalization process.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQp5trJVIJM&feature=youtu.be>