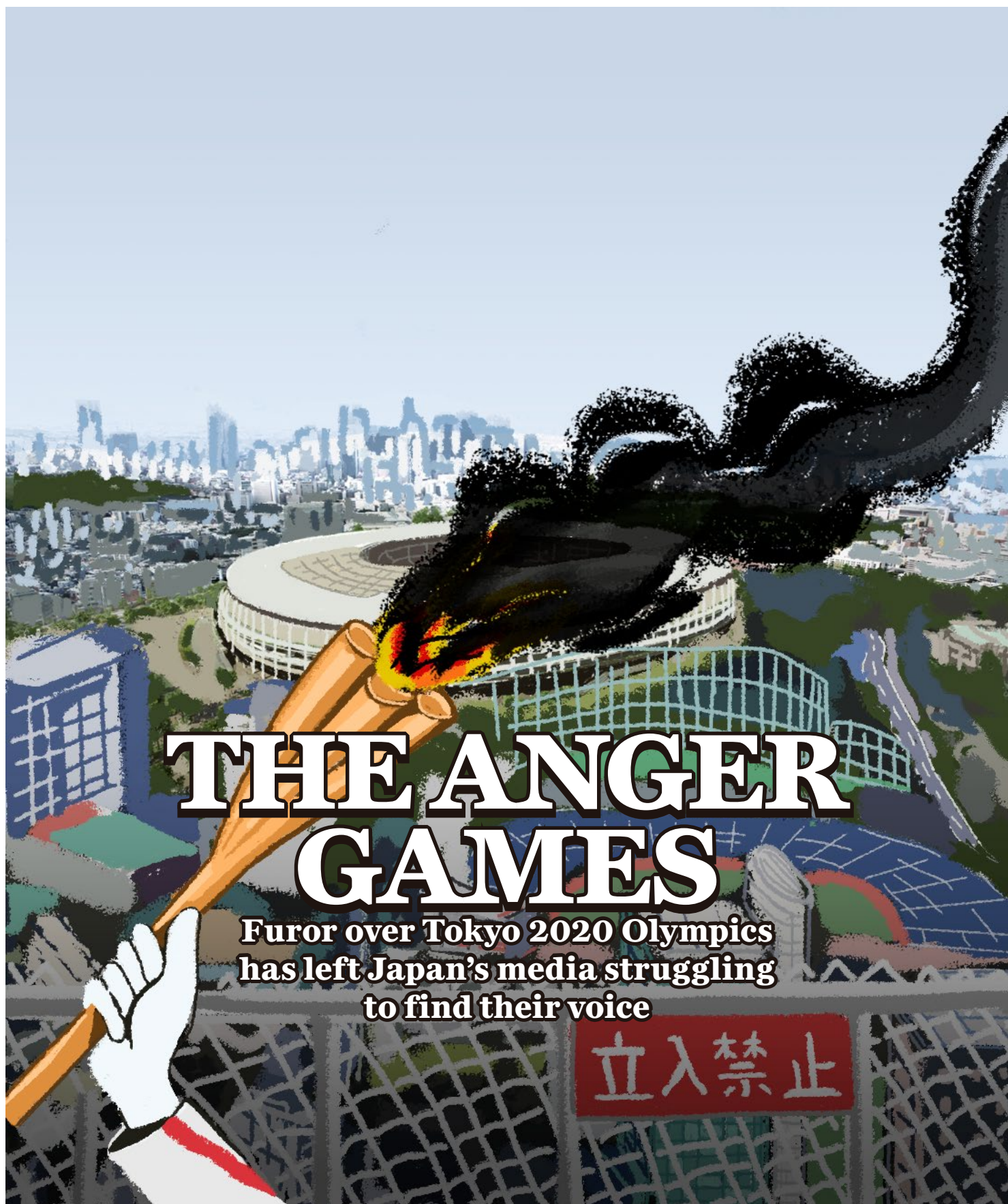


# NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

June 2021 · Volume 53 · No. 6





# Takanori Hashimoto, Joseph Wu, Ken Ishii, Jon Mitchell – and Tadaaki Shimizu



Your June PAC kicks off with celebrated Shoji player Takanori Hashimoto, with Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu and vaccine specialist Ken Ishii to follow. The June 16<sup>th</sup> Book Break features Jon Mitchell on Pacific pollution. All with fine dining, courtesy of your Iron Chef, Tadaaki Shimizu.

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## In this issue

## JUSTIN MCCURRY

The first few months of this year have been dominated by the Tokyo Olympics and Japan's struggle to get its Covid-19 vaccine rollout underway. Have Japanese newspapers and broadcasters fairly reflected public sentiment on those two key issues, or is their coverage influenced by other, more opaque factors? As the *Number 1 Shimbun* went to press, the *Asahi Shimbun* was alone among the daily broadsheets in calling for the Games to be cancelled, while criticism of the achingly slow pace of coronavirus inoculations is mainly to be found in the international media. Kosuke Takahashi explains why mainstream news organizations have found it so hard to break rank on the Olympics, while Riko Muranaka exposes the legal and political roots of the media's vaccine hesitancy. David McNeill talks to Manabu Shintani, executive director of *Shukan Bunshun*, about what lies behind the magazine's insatiable appetite for confrontation, and Eric Johnston looks at how the FCCJ can improve its ties with Kansai-based journalists. Elsewhere, Fred Varcoe continues his series on Japan's YouTube sensations, Suvendrini Kakuchi uses a recent Deep Dive session to examine the pandemic's impact on mental health, and Charles Pomeroy revisits the incredible life and career of Ichiro Urushibara, who died last month.

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## THE FRONT PAGE

**From the President**

Dear members,

**D**on't leave the FCCJ in limbo! That's my slogan for June, and for the next few weeks I will be repeating it until I go blue in the face. Our election for the Board is coming up and it's vital that it goes smoothly so that a new Board can be appointed immediately to steer the Club through the most difficult time it's ever faced. That means we need people to run as Directors and Kanji, and we also need everyone eligible to vote. What we must avoid at all costs is an inconclusive election like the one we held a year ago, which forced us to repeat the ballot twice and resulted in a caretaker Board that for two months was unable to take any concrete steps to improve the situation.

You may think voting's a hassle, but it's easier than ever now that we have the ElectionBuddy system, introduced by my very capable colleague, Reed Stevenson. Not everyone used it when we voted on the budget in the spring, probably because it was unfamiliar. Starting on June 9, please keep an eye out for an email from [electionbuddy.com](http://electionbuddy.com). This will be your ballot, including a unique access key that will eliminate the process of hand-counting, thus reducing the risk of errors. Online voting helps us save on costs, which is particularly important at this point, as the Club continues to be pummeled by the pandemic. Please set aside a few minutes to do this in June, help ensure the future of the FCCJ, and avoid being pestered to take part in a repeat election. While we will be offering other methods of voting for those who cannot take part online, please make sure you don't vote twice.

I'm aware that many members haven't visited the Club in recent months, due to understandable health concerns. That may mean that you don't personally know the people on the ballot. Please don't let that stop you voting for them. I would urge you to read their statements, ask around, and pick a full quota of Board members based on the information available to you. In addition, we will be presenting to you again a series of proposed amendments to our Articles and Bylaws. We'll be re-sending information on these in the near future.



©FCCJ / JULIO SHIKI

More and more Club members tell me they've been vaccinated, or at least have appointments in hand, so the recovery from the pandemic is finally starting to seem less like a hallucination. As I mentioned in a previous message, the Board decided some months ago to take part in the Japan Market Expansion Competition, in which a group of young businesspeople was assigned to conduct research for the FCCJ and plan all sorts of improvements, including financial ones. As the inoculation drive accelerates, and our members are once again able to gather, I'm hopeful the new Board will be able to put the JMEC plan into action, and prove that our 76-year-old organization has a vital role to play in the 2020s.

---

● Isabel Reynolds has been reporting for Bloomberg in Tokyo since 2012. She has lived in Japan for more than 20 years and been a regular member of the FCCJ for most of that time.

## COVER STORY

# WATCHDOG OR CHEERLEADER?



**Calls for Tokyo Olympics  
to be cancelled a litmus  
test for Japanese media  
independence**

KOSUKE TAKAHASHI

“The *Yomiuri Shimbun* is supporting the Tokyo 2020 Games.” So reads the message, in Japanese, printed on a huge drop curtain hanging near the main entrance to the newspaper’s headquarters in Tokyo. For good measure, the paper’s name is highlighted in between the Olympic and Paralympic logos.

The *Yomiuri* is not alone in shouting its support for Tokyo 2020 from the rooftops. Japan’s other big three daily papers – *The Asahi Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun* and *Nikkei Shimbun* – prominently display similar messages, large and small, in support of the Games at their entrances to their buildings.

There is a simple explanation for their enthu-



## WATCHDOG OR CHEERLEADER?



PHOTOS BY KOSUKE TAKAHASHI

**The “big four” dailies became official Tokyo 2020 partners, each stumping up a whopping ¥6 billion (US\$55 million) to the Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games for the privilege.**

siasm. In January 2016, the “big four” dailies became official Tokyo 2020 partners, each stumping up a whopping ¥6 billion (US\$55 million) to the Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games for the privilege. Two years later, *The Sankei Shimbun* and *The Hokkaido Shimbun* became official supporters – a rank below official partner status – with each paying about ¥1.5 billion.

The Japanese broadsheets weren’t the first newspapers to become Olympic sponsors. In March 1997, Australia’s two biggest newspaper publishers, News Corp. and John Fairfax Holdings Ltd., became domestic sponsors of the 2000 Sydney Games. They were the first media organizations to associate themselves with the Olympics in this way in the event’s history.

There were concerns at the time that the two newspapers involved – News Corp’s *Daily Telegraph* and Fairfax’s *Sydney Morning Herald* – would weaken their commitment to fair reporting by being too close to the Olympic machine. More than two decades later, many are voicing the same fears about the Japanese media, as calls grow for Tokyo 2020 to be cancelled amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Japanese newspapers have been granted unlimited use of the Olympic and Paralympic logos and emblems since 2016. Staff writers at the four major newspapers even have the logos printed on their business cards, which state that their newspaper is an official Games partner.

By becoming official partners and supporters, the newspapers hope to gain access to timely, comprehensive information on the Games from the Tokyo 2020 organizers and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

In addition, each newspaper has certain exclusive marketing rights – an arrangement that should boost their circulation, pageviews and advertising revenues as public enthusiasm for the Games reaches fever pitch.

The coronavirus pandemic, however, has turned these plans upside down. Instead of riding the Olympic wave, newspapers are struggling to confront the new, brutal reality of Tokyo 2020.

Despite polls showing that the vast majority of the Japanese public opposes holding the Games this summer, the *Asahi* did not come out against Tokyo 2020 until late May.

As the *Number 1 Shimbun* went to print, the other dailies sponsoring the Olympics were keeping their counsel. They include the *Yomiuri* – traditionally a friend of the Liberal Democratic Party – which conducted a poll in early May in which 60% of respondents said the Games should be called off.

Some accused the *Asahi* of hypocrisy, pointing out that it had decided to stay on as an Olympic sponsor even after running an editorial that said holding the Games was “beyond reason”.

In response, *Asahi* officials insisted the news-

## WATCHDOG OR CHEERLEADER?

**A former political reporter who is now a senior manager at the Asahi told me: “There is almost no enthusiasm for bigging up the Games. Instead, everyone is sitting on the fence while they wait for the final word on whether they will be held or not.”**

paper would draw a line between its roles as an official Olympic partner and a media organization with a duty to inform its readership. Speculation is now building over whether other liberal newspapers – namely the *Mainichi* and *The Hokkaido Shimbun* – will follow the *Asahi*’s lead.

The *Asahi* and other newspapers continue to cover the daily ins and outs of the Olympic saga. Any negativity is largely confined to references to foreign media reports and editorials, as well as letters from Japanese readers calling for Tokyo 2020 to be scrapped or postponed a second time.

As far as this writer can tell, *Shimbun Akahata*, the newspaper of the Japanese Communist Party, and the regional dailies *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun* and *Nishinippon Shimbun* – none of which is an Olympic sponsor – are the only other newspapers to have run editorials calling for cancellation.

Japanese broadcasters have acted with even more caution – none has called for cancellation. One explanation is that broadcasters are inextricably linked to newspapers in a *keiretsu*-type structure that includes personnel exchanges. Nippon Television, for example, is affiliated with the *Yomiuri*, and Fuji Television with the *Sankei*.

In addition, broadcasters have invested huge sums in the Games, based on the expectation that Tokyo 2020 would continue the Olympic tradition of attracting large audiences and profits. The Japan Consortium, a joint venture set up by NHK and the Japan Commercial Broadcasters Association, paid a staggering ¥66 billion to the IOC for broadcasting rights to Pyeongchang 2018 and Tokyo 2020 – nearly double the cost of the two previous winter and summer Games.

Against that commercial backdrop, Japanese broadcasters are focusing their pre-Games coverage on promising athletes, tugging at viewers’ heart strings with stories of individual triumphs over adversity rather than air criticism of the IOC or Olympic organizers. They are mindful, too, of the role Dentsu – a key Tokyo 2020 player – has in securing them lucrative advertisements from Olympic sponsors.

*News Post Seven*, an online news magazine published by Shogakukan, recently approached six major Japanese newspapers and asked them if they were for or against the Tokyo Games.

The *Asahi*, *Nikkei*, *Sankei* and *Hokkaido* newspapers declined to answer, according to *News Post Seven*, while the *Yomiuri* said its editorials had repeatedly stressed the need to host a “safe and secure” Games.

The *Mainichi* responded: “We think the safety of athletes, staff and spectators must be secured, and that the Games shouldn’t negatively affect the medical system, which we already mentioned in our May 1 editorial.”

*News Post Seven* was not impressed, dismissing the answers as “nothing special” and unworthy of being labelled as “editorial” stances.

What is the atmosphere like in newsrooms now that the Tokyo Olympics are generating endless controversy and speculation?

A former political reporter who is now a senior manager at the *Asahi* told me: “There is almost no enthusiasm for bigging up the Games. Instead, everyone is sitting on the fence while they wait for the final word on whether they will be held or not.”

A *Yomiuri* staff writer told me she was frustrated by the newspaper’s weasel-worded and evasive stance. “It looks like the Olympics will go ahead, so people are holding in a lot of unfocused anger,” she said.

In contrast to sectors of the so-called traditional media, online operations such as *News Post Seven* and *HuffPost Japan* are far more fearless and frequently carry articles critical of the Olympics. It is fair to say that, on the whole, “new” media are doing a good job, as are fellow non-sponsors *The Tokyo Shimbun* and the *Shukan Bunshun* weekly magazine.

With less than two months to go until the opening ceremony, it remains to be seen if Japan’s traditional media – with a few exceptions – continue to avoid showing their hand on the wisdom of holding the world’s biggest sporting event in the middle of a global pandemic.

But failure to take a stand would not only call into question their editorial independence – it would also leave a lasting stain on Japanese journalism.

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● Takahashi Kosuke is Tokyo correspondent for *Janes Defence Weekly*. He is former editor-in-chief of *HuffPost Japan* and a former staff writer at *The Asahi Shimbun*.

## FEATURE

# A DOSE OF DOCILITY

**Japan's media must take some of the blame for the country's achingly slow Covid-19 vaccine rollout**

RIKO MURANAKA



Riko Muranaka

On December 21 last year, NHK news ran the following report about a press conference given by Dr. Hideki Hasegawa, the head of the Influenza Virus Research Center at the National Institute of Infectious Diseases. Hasegawa was discussing the European Union's approval the same day of a coronavirus vaccine. "Corona vaccines may possibly be effective for short period," the report said. It noted that adverse reactions could be reported weeks or months after vaccination. "We must carefully observe both safety and effectiveness," the NHK story added, citing Hasegawa.

I wasn't sure if Hasegawa had failed to mention the benefits of vaccines, or if NHK had not quoted him fully. While the overseas media exploded with excitement and joy about the incredibly speedy development of a highly effective vaccine, government experts and media outlets in Japan reacted with caution, and continue to do so.

According to surveys by Imperial College London's Institute of Global Health Innovation (IGHI) in November 2020 and February 2021, Japan is one of the world's least enthusiastic countries when it comes to coronavirus vaccines.

However, the Japanese people are not fundamentally anti-vaxxers. For example, the take-up rate for the measles vaccine is 96%, and over 98% for BCG (used against tubercu-

losis). The rate for DPT=IPV - which prevents diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus and polio - is nearly 100%. That is one of the highest rates in the world, and higher than most European countries.

While Japan generally embraces vaccines, it is cautious about the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. The main reason why many Japanese appear skeptical about coronavirus vaccines is that they are unable to clearly identify if the benefits outweigh the risks, particularly as Japan has managed to avoid an explosive Covid-19 outbreak through non-pharmaceutical measures.

In addition, the government and media are, unfortunately, vaccine hesitant. The World Health Organization - which named vaccine hesitancy as one of the top global threats to health in 2019 - defines the phenomenon as a reluctance or refusal to be given vaccines despite their availability.

It isn't unusual to encounter this reluctance among individuals, but the Japanese government's approach to Covid-19 vaccinations is unacceptable, particularly with the Tokyo 2020 Olympics scheduled to take place this summer.

It was obvious right from the start of the pandemic that the only way to ensure the Games could be held safely would be to achieve herd immunity and thereby make new outbreaks of the virus much less likely.

Why, then, did the government take so long

**The main reason why many Japanese appear skeptical about coronavirus vaccines is that they are unable to clearly identify if the benefits outweigh the risks**



## A DOSE OF DOCILITY

**The country's media, meanwhile, continue to celebrate their role in "protecting" ordinary people during the historical lawsuits against the government. There is no criticism of the government or government experts over their failure to properly promote Covid-19 vaccines.**

to begin the vaccine rollout? And why did Japan's media fail to properly scrutinize the government's vaccine hesitancy and use their influence to push for a quick, comprehensive vaccination campaign?

The answer can be found in Japan's historical, political and legal relationship with vaccination.

Its post-war vaccination policies were set out in the 1948 Immunization Act, enacted during the US Occupation. The act made vaccination obligatory, and was backed up by tough penalties for anyone who skipped the 12 mandatory vaccinations. The law stated that inoculations should be carried out at large venues, such as school gymnasiums, and small clinics were banned from administering vaccine doses. Those stipulations contrasted dramatically with the arrangements in place for the coronavirus vaccine rollout.

The law was amended after successful lawsuits by people claiming to have suffered vaccination side effects began in the 1970s, helped by a media campaign led by major newspapers such as *The Asahi Shimbun* and *The Mainichi Shimbun*. A 1992 supreme court ruling in support of a lawsuit concerning the smallpox vaccination – originally filed with the Otaru district court in 1970 – was a turning point. One of the lawyers representing the plaintiffs in the Tokyo portion of the lawsuit described the decision as "epoch-making" as it recognised that the government, as the body responsible for vaccinations, should be liable to pay damages. The ruling meant it would be theoretically possible for anyone to claim they had suffered side effects from a state-sponsored vaccine and win damages, irrespective of whether causality between the vaccine and the symptoms was ever established.

In 1992, the number of plaintiffs involved in class-action lawsuits in Tokyo rose from 26 to 62. In echoes of the Otaru case, in all 62 cases, high courts reversed earlier district court decisions that had favored the government. The government decided not to appeal. Over time, causality was established in just 15 of the 62 cases.

The Immunization Act was revised in 1994 as a result of the lawsuits. It stated that the purpose of vaccinations was no longer to protect the country from epidemics, but to safeguard the health of the individual. In addition, the government no longer mandated vaccinations,

but simply recommended them, and could only become the target of legal action over injuries caused by vaccines it had recommended. The change in wording is at the heart of the government's attitude towards the coronavirus vaccine: rather than encouraging people to protect themselves against the virus before the Olympics, it is guided more by a fear of being sued over adverse reactions to the vaccine.

On December 22, 2020, the day after Hasegawa's press conference, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in the US and chief medical adviser to the president, received his coronavirus vaccine live on TV. "I feel extremely confident in the safety and the efficacy of this vaccine, and I want to encourage everyone who has the opportunity to get vaccinated," he said. His words were in stark contrast to Hasegawa's message, which focused only on the tiny risks.

The fact that not a single vaccine expert sits on the government's advisory committee for the Covid-19 response is testimony to the vaccine hesitancy that permeates Japanese officialdom.

The country's media, meanwhile, continue to celebrate their role in "protecting" ordinary people during the historical lawsuits against the government. There is no criticism of the government or government experts over their failure to properly promote Covid-19 vaccines, since that approach is the legacy of the lawsuits that the media had once so enthusiastically championed.

Ironically, some sections of the media have belatedly started criticizing the government's determination to hold the Olympics, despite strong opposition from a public that has also come to appreciate the value of Covid-19 vaccines.

While newspapers and broadcasters will never go as far as actively promoting vaccination, we should give a cautious welcome to signs that the Japanese people do not appear to need the media's encouragement to protect themselves against a deadly virus, however late in the day.

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● **Riko Muranaka is a writer and physician, and former member of the pandemic preparedness and response team at the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office. She is a lecturer at Kyoto University's Graduate School of Medicine.**

FEATURE

# SCOOP MACHINE



## Manabu Shintani, executive director of *Shukan Bunshun*, on the weekly magazine's potent brand of guerilla journalism

DAVID McNEILL

Among the more mortifying tidbits to emerge from a rich banquet of Tokyo 2020 Olympic scandals this year was the proposal that a plus-sized Japanese actress descend from the sky during the opening ceremony dressed as a pig. Hiroshi Sasaki, the then creative director of the ceremony, thought this would be a gas, dubbing his idea “Olympig”.

It's unlikely that story from March - with its jaw-dropping blend of tin-eared sexism and creative constipation - would have seen the light of day were it not for *Shukan Bunshun*. The weekly magazine culled its scoop from hundreds of leaked Olympic documents, then coolly shrugged off a legal demand that it pulp the published story and delete all online versions.

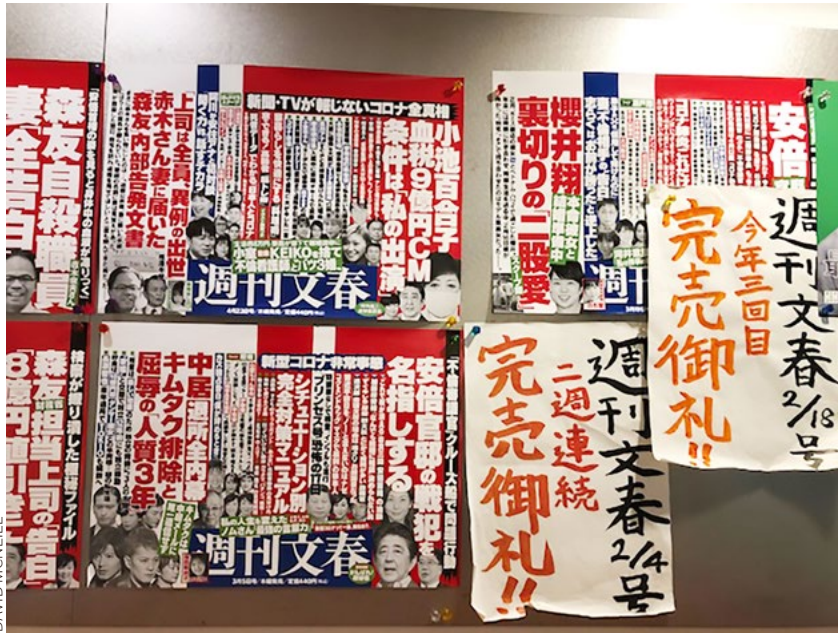
Under executive director Manabu Shintani, *Bunshun* is the closest Japan has to the scrappy, confrontational tabloid reporting that mercilessly hounds British politicians and celebrities. The magazine's journalistic firsts have made it a must-read every Wednesday, when it fires the latest online salvo from what has become known as the 文春砲 - the *Bunshun* howitzer.

In February, the cannon was trained on Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. *Bunshun* revealed that his son, Seigo, who works for a broadcasting business, had wined and dined communications ministry officials - the latest cronyism claim to tar the government. *Bunshun* spent “months” chasing the story, recalls Shintani, the magazine's former chief editor. “This work is expensive, and risky.”

PHOTOS BY DAVID McNEILL



## SCOOP MACHINE



“That’s a good reporter, from my point of view...he played mahjong for about five hours with Kurokawa. The problem is not publishing an article afterwards. If it was my reporter, of course I will allow him to go – but the following week *Bunshun* would carry the story: ‘Exclusive confession of Attorney General Kurokawa over five hours of mahjong.’

“I would have asked him questions such as ‘Do you really want to be prosecutor general?’ ‘Isn’t it impossible to extend your retirement age?’ (Kurokawa was politically connected and was widely seen as the government’s choice for Japan’s top prosecutor; he had been in the news for months since January when he was controversially allowed to remain in his post despite exceeding mandatory retirement age). That’s how you do it.”

### The Inconvenient truths

Of course, Shintani says, Kurokawa may never speak to the reporter again. “But our job is not to maintain relationships, it’s to tell the facts to as many people as possible. It is important for everyone to be prepared to reveal what they have to, even if means wrecking human relationships ... you can’t stop because you’re on good terms (with a politician). You can eat sushi with Prime Minister Abe, or eat pancakes with Prime Minister Suga. If you get along well, listen, and find out the truth even if it is inconvenient, and write it mercilessly.”

That killer instinct drives *Bunshun*’s successes – and points to structural differences between Japan’s elite media and the mass-circulation weekly press, which have no access (except via tips) to the press clubs that dominate dissemination of the news. While the clubs are regular targets of criticism, the weeklies and online media “have challenged the daily papers’ dominance of political news in recent years”, noted Freedom House, a watchdog, in 2017.

During the Fukushima crisis in 2011, for example, while the big media endured taunts of *happyo hodo* (press release journalism) because of its perceived collusion with the nuclear village, *Shukan Shincho* angrily dubbed the management of Tepco *senpan* (war criminals). *Shukan Gendai* outed the most culpable of Japan’s elite pro-nuclear scientists, calling them *goyo gakusha*, (government lackeys).

**“We are not in the press clubs but we have access to all kinds of information gathered from our *Bunshun Leaks* source.”**

That makes *Bunshun*’s hit-rate all the more striking. Though a relative publishing minnow, with a weekly print-run of 500,000 copies (of which about 300,000 typically sell), and a staff of just 30-40 journalists (*The Asahi Shimbun* has over 2,000 journalists and a daily circulation of over six million), it has become something of a giant killer.

The engine beneath the hood of this scoop machine is *Bunshun Leaks*, a service that brings in dozens of story tips a day from the public. As the magazine’s reputation has grown, many people opt to tip off its editors rather than the mainstream media, politicians or even the police, out of fear that they will suppress the story.

*Bunshun*’s political scalps last year included Hiromu Kurokawa, the head of the Tokyo High Public Prosecutors Office. The magazine revealed that Kurokawa had played mahjong for cash with two reporters from *The Sankei Shimbun* and an ‘ex-reporter’ from *The Asahi Shimbun* – while the rest of the city’s population was enduring emergency Covid-19 measures. The revelation ended Kurokawa’s career.

It also shed uncomfortable light on the access journalism practiced by *Bunshun*’s bigger rivals: the *Asahi* reporter had once been in charge of covering the prosecutor’s beat. Neither the *Asahi* nor the *Sankei*, from opposite ends of Japan’s political spectrum, saw fit to tell their readers. Shintani says the result is declining trust in the media, pointing out that the *Asahi* was quick to disown its journalist.

## SCOOP MACHINE

“I’ve been sued countless times. I’ve been subpoenaed to testify four or five times. It doesn’t make me happy but if you do this work it cannot be helped. We’re not being sued for telling lies.”

In 2017, *Shukan Shincho* published rape allegations against Shinzo Abe’s biographer, Noriyuki Yamaguchi, by the journalist Shiori Ito. The story included the eleventh-hour suspension of Yamaguchi’s arrest warrant at Narita International Airport allegedly by Itaru Nakamura, a former political secretary to Suga.

But *Bunshun* leads the weekly pack. In January 2016, it speared economy minister Akira Amari over bribery claims, forcing him to quit. Shintani says his source went first to *The Yomiuri Shimbun* – Japan’s largest newspaper. “He told the story to a reporter from the paper’s social affairs division but the reporter didn’t seem interested and left without paying for his coffee. I don’t know how long it took but he finally came to us.”

Shintani says *Bunshun*’s “guerrilla journalism” has clear advantages in such cases. “We’re small but people trust us and feed us stories,” he says. *Bunshun* has far fewer organizational hurdles to clear than NHK or the *Yomiuri*, where editors can spike a potentially risky story at any point up the chain of command. “We are not in the press clubs but we have access to all kinds of information gathered from our *Bunshun Leaks* source.”

“Reporters for the big media are salarymen,” he continues. “If they knew it was a scoop they’d go after it but they don’t get it. It’s like having muscles you don’t use – when they atrophy, they’re useless. I’m asked all the time why we get scoops. The simplest reason to answer that is that we seriously go looking for them. We have to.”

### Moritomo Gakuen eruption

Last year, *Bunshun* disinterred one of the most notorious scandals of Abe’s tenure when it published a suicide letter by an official who had been ordered to falsify finance ministry documents, apparently to protect Abe and his wife, Akie Abe. The Moritomo scandal erupted in 2017 when the firm that ran Moritomo Gakuen, an ultra-nationalist kindergarten, bought a plot of public land in Osaka city for about 14% of its value and began building a primary school to propagate rightwing ideas.

The school invoked the name of Abe when soliciting donations. Akie Abe gave a speech at the kindergarten and was named honorary head teacher. Shinzo Abe denied any involvement in the land sale and pledged to quit if anyone could prove otherwise. Among the

questions that linger was whether the decision by the Kinki regional bureau to remove descriptions in documents referring to Akie Abe were made by an official there, or whether he received instructions from the prime minister’s office.

Liberal commentators praised Shintani for keeping the story alive and taking the fight to the Abe and Suga administrations. But he says that misses the point. “If you’re really serious about journalism right now, and if you’re thinking about keeping it alive, you’re saying, ‘How can you can make money’, because investigative journalism is extremely expensive. It’s not sustainable unless the article makes money.”

The US media made a similar mistake during the Trump era, he says, of putting ideology before journalism. “If you report accurately and well, and people support and trust you they’ll buy your stories.” This point has become all the more relevant, he adds, as the circulation of the print media collapses. The number of daily newspapers sold every day in Japan has fallen by more than 16 million since peaking at nearly 54 million in 1997. Circulation of the mass weeklies is down to a quarter of its peak in 1995.

*Bunshun* has helped monetize the Internet by releasing its scoops on Wednesday, the day before the print edition goes on sale. Its biggest stories sell up to 40,000 copies at ¥300 each – plus income from advertising. “Getting money on the Internet means producing something you can only read there,” says Shintani. “It has got to be your own investigative journalism and your own scoop. Grasping that is the most important thing right now.”

As for the risks, that’s part of the job too. “I’ve been sued countless times. I’ve been subpoenaed to testify four or five times. It doesn’t make me happy but if you do this work it cannot be helped. We’re not being sued for telling lies.” In many cases, he says, politicians, their supporters or political colleagues, will scream that a story is fake, threaten to sue, then quietly drop it. “Then we all go back to work.”

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● David McNeill is professor of communications and English at University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, and co-chair of the FCCJ’s Professional Activities Committee. He was previously a correspondent for *The Independent*, *The Economist* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.



FEATURE

# THREE MEN IN A PUB



The Trash Taste trio of (from left): Joey "The Anime Man" Bizinger, Garnt "Gikkuk" Maneetapho and Connor "CDawgVA" Colquhoun

## Trash Taste podcast turns anime fans into Japan commentators

FRED VARCOE

Trash Taste, a wild and often profane weekly YouTube podcast by three young Japan-based foreigners, averages around a million views each week. On top of that, the three hosts have their own channels with a combined subscriber base of around 8 million. Between them, their videos have been viewed over a billion times.

It's a reminder that people outside Japan can get their information from non-established (or recently established) media.

"We're scared of being called journalists because that requires responsibility and we don't want the responsibility of fact checking and all that process," says Welshman Con-

nor "CDawgVA" Colquhoun, who at 24, is the "junior" member of the trio. "We always try to remind people we are just three guys talking as if we're down the pub and just chatting away, but we try not to talk about things that we have no knowledge about."

Garnt "Gikkuk" Maneetapho, the elder statesman at 31, says that they are more pundits than journalists: "I wouldn't call us journalists because our main goal isn't to report information. It's more just our experience and our thoughts and opinions." But like the tabloids or the quality broadsheets, YouTubers have to tread a careful line between sensationalism and the truth.

## THREE MEN IN A PUB



▲  
From top: The Anime Man,  
Gikkuk and CDawgVA

“One thing we can never get back if we lose it is the trust from our viewers,” says Colquhoun, who speaks Welsh and studied mechanical engineering at university. “The viewers are the most important thing and the bottom line for us is that, as long as we don’t go burning our bridges and we have the viewership on our side, we’re fine.”

Their viewers are primarily in the United States, the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries, so even when they do verge on insulting their hosts, it’s less likely to create problems.

“I feel if our audience was more Japanese then we’d definitely be more worried about stepping on anyone’s toes and offending anyone,” says Japanese-Australian Joey “The Anime Man” Bizinger. “Because we are an English program, we don’t really have to worry about offending the Japanese audience,” the 26-year-old says. “I would compare it like if Trash Taste is a radio show, then our videos are almost like reality TV. I guess we have to be a little over the top for the sake of entertainment, but I feel our audience definitely appreciates our honesty.”

The three have not only seen Japanese youth culture expand into the great beyond, they have been part of that movement. Maneetapho has been a YouTuber since 2006. All three recall getting bullied at school for their love of anime, but the Internet gave them refuge from the haters.

“I think we’ve helped enable it because we wouldn’t have gotten as popular if there wasn’t an increase in the audience and we, in turn, have helped popularize it to a newer generation,” says 31-year-old Maneetapho, an Englishman with Thai parents. “Now people are not getting bullied for watching anime; they are getting bullied for not watching anime.”

The Internet proved to be their salvation, Bizinger says: “I think people from our generation who did get bullied watching anime and liking this kind of stuff went on to the Internet and realized, ‘I won’t be bullied here. I can be more open about my love for it.’ I feel that this perpetuated the idea that it’s OK to like anime and to talk about anime, and there are a lot of people who enjoy it. Having that exist on the internet has notified the newer generation the idea that anime is not a thing that losers watch. It’s more of an open hobby and I think that openness online has been reflected in real life and now kids don’t get bullied anymore.”

Joey easily gravitated to Japan as his mother is Japanese, but that wasn’t the reason he ended up here. The Trash Taste trio are represented by GeexPlus, a Tokyo-based influencer management agency set up in 2019. GeexPlus is a subsidiary of Bookwalker, which is in turn a subsidiary of major publisher Kadokawa.



## THREE MEN IN A PUB



▲  
Cycling Across Japan

But while they have a major Japanese company behind them, they are not going to go out of their way to glamorize Japan.

“We don’t really want to sugar-coat anything in Japan,” Colquhoun says. “I think a lot of YouTubers before were painting Japan through rose-tinted glasses and we just want to talk about it as it is. Before I came to Japan, I watched many YouTubers, but I can’t remember anyone actually talking about the frustrations of living in Japan. I never heard anyone say nobody will sit next to you on the train if you’re a foreigner.”

Maneetapho, who used to work for the BBC, agrees: “It’s 2021 and no matter where you are, you’re going to offend someone, somewhere. The question is: one, how big of an audience is it that you’re offending; and, two, is it someone who was going to watch your program anyway. Most of the time our audience just wants a no-bullshit view of living in Japan.”

So far, they have managed to steer clear of major controversies, but viewers are quick to point out any factual errors. Having critics goes with the territory, Maneetapho says: “But I would say the most negative backlash I’ve ever got for anything I’ve said on Trash Taste was to do with pizza crusts and not any important social issue. I think that reflects the real draw of us as personalities and what Trash Taste is. People don’t watch

us for important social issues or to tackle big pressing topics.”

Although the three were acquainted before Maneetapho and Colquhoun landed in Japan two years ago, Trash Taste has enabled them to look beyond videos about anime and manga to producing YouTube specials on all things Japan.

“Top Gear has been a big influence on the specials,” Maneetapho says. “We don’t want to stop the three-mates-down-the-pub feel, but we also want to have bigger more ambitious projects as well and up our production values more like TV production.” So far, they’ve produced three specials: *Cycling Across Japan*, *Tokyo Drifting* and a *Chess Tournament*. The first two specials have attracted nearly 2 million views each.

“I really think Trash Taste has helped us to individually brand ourselves,” says Maneetapho. “We’re still quite big creators individually, but Trash Taste has put a lot more eyes on us as a group.”

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● Fred Varcoe is a British freelance journalist. He was formerly sports editor of *The Japan Times* and *Metropolis* magazine, and has written on sports, music, cars and other topics for *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail*, *Billboard*, *Automobile Year*, *Reuters*, the Japan Football Association, the International Volleyball Association and various websites.

## OPINION

# TIME TO RETHINK THE FCCJ'S STRUCTURE

“Foreign Correspondents In Japan,” the FCCJ’s history of its first half century, is a rich resource filled with fascinating tales, memorable news conferences and enjoyable portraits of the colorful characters who have served the club over the years. It is also useful as a way of reflecting on how our club has always faced myriad problems, from fluctuating membership, contested relocations and financial crises, to feuds between correspondents and gripes about the facilities or food.

While the book ends in 1995 – and times have irreversibly changed, for better or worse – many of the issues that previous Boards have faced have parallels today. Now in our 76th year, it is time to reflect on our *raison d’être* and how we can continue serving the correspondents who perform the vital role of covering Japan and beyond from Tokyo.

The pandemic has also given us all more time to reflect on our lives, careers and families. Telecommuting has become the norm and is likely to stay that way as people reassess the need to face the daily scrum of train rides into the center of the city. In many ways, the pandemic has made things more convenient for reporters as it is now easy to tune into a news conference or a webinar from the comfort of home. Conversely, it has – at least in my experience – greatly increased the number of online meetings, as well as messages from editors via email or a multitude of apps.

Our location in the heart of Marunouchi is superb and we should be able to attract more business people as associate members once we are through the current health crisis. But it is fanciful to think that we can greatly increase the number of correspondents in our ranks. Even if we somehow manage to get more influential speakers, we have to ask what we really offer to reporters. To this end, the Club needs to double down as a bastion for press freedom for both foreign and Japanese media and again become a home for free speech. Journalists don’t join the Club for the nice food or decor, they join to gain access to newsmakers, make contacts and converse with other members of our profession.

To this end, I believe that future Boards need to seriously consider downsizing our premises, perhaps in a cheaper location, and to look at a more sustainable model. Very few journalists are here on the fat expat packages of years gone by. Just look at the fees: A regular member pays around ¥13,000 a month (before any food or beverage purchases, and the additional ¥1,500 recovery levy). That stacks up to at least ¥156,000 a year.

Time is also a huge factor for any working journalist considering joining the Board. In addition to monthly meetings that tend to go on for three hours or more, there are committee meetings to attend, dozens of email messages that need actioning every

day, plus phone calls and text messages. This is on top of busy day jobs – a reporter can never switch off from the news – and family commitments. I have been overstretched as vice president, but I shudder to think of the extra burden placed on presidents.

Without a full-time, proactive (and ideally bilingual and bicultural) general manager to carry out the Board’s wishes and effectively delegate staff, future Board members – both regular and associate – will face similar strains. I understand this comes with a price tag, but such a person working tirelessly for the club is a must. Otherwise, we risk losing our identity as a haven for working journalists and will

struggle to get competent Board members to steer our Club in a sensible direction as it moves toward its century.

If I’m still working as a journalist here in Tokyo in 2045, I’d be proud to have been part of a Club that has contributed to the greater good of journalism and society for 100 years. But for now, I cannot consider running for the Board again until there has been a fundamental rethink of the way the Club is structured.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I’m sure people have various ideas on how the Club should be run, and these are just the views of a humble, soon-to-be former Board member. It has been an honor to serve the FCCJ, and I hope to keep doing so in some capacity.

**If I’m still working  
as a journalist here  
in Tokyo in 2045,  
I’d be proud to have  
been part of a Club  
that has contributed  
to the greater good  
of journalism and  
society for 100 years.**

● Andy Sharp is Deputy Politics and Economics Editor at the *Nikkei Asian Review*



## OBITUARY

# ICHIRO ‘KEN’ URUSHIBARA

CHARLES POMEROY

Long-time member of the FCCJ, Ichiro “Ken” Urushibara was hospitalized on April 20, 2021, with liver cancer and died on the 27th at the age of 90.

He was born in London on October 20, 1930, the son of woodblock print artist Yoshiji Urushibara and his Japanese wife, who had settled in the U.K. after participating in the Japan-British Exhibition of 1910 and created a successful career there.

The onset of World War II forced the repatriation of the family to Japan in 1940. In 1950, when he was 20 and faced with a nationality choice, Ichiro opted for British citizenship, making him a member of the Occupation during its waning years.

Ichiro – or “Ken” as he was also known, taken from pseudonym Ken Tajima he used in radio and TV assignments – joined the FCCJ in 1964. A man of many talents, he contributed to the Club as an unpaid interpreter at professional luncheons even prior to joining as an associate, as noted on page 98 of our history book, *Correspondents in Japan*.

His name also appears on the front page of the first issue of the *Number 1 Shim bun*, published in September 1968, in the lead paragraph of an article about our inaugural ball: “... had Don Shannon as master of ceremonies, assisted by Ichiro Urushibara”. In recognition of his contributions to the FCCJ, he was made a life member on July 1, 2011.

Based on his fluency in Japanese and English, Ichiro’s career began as a translator during the Occupation with the Civil Censorship Detachment. His activities eventually diversified into interpretation in all its forms, radio DJ’ing as Ken Tajima, emceeing at events, and announcing for such companies as Nippon Shortwave Broadcasting Co. and Radio Nippon. His interest in cars



also led to translation and editorial work for the English-language *Motor Magazine*, interpreting at press conferences for Toyota and serving as an announcer at Fuji Speedway for international motorcar and motorcycle races.

Another highlight was Ichiro’s entry into the diplomatic arena in 1968, when he served as the master of ceremonies at British Week. This was a joint initiative of the British Chamber of Commerce in Japan and the British Embassy in Tokyo to present the UK’s history, technology, culture, sport, music, and fashion to the Japanese public.

In 1969, he provided live simultaneous interpretation of the Apollo 11 space mission for Tokyo Broadcasting System, covering man’s first steps on the moon, and following missions until Apollo 17 ended the moon landings in 1972. This was followed by his noted role as interpreter for Antonio Inoki when the Japanese boxer took on Muhammad Ali at Nippon Budokan in Tokyo in 1976.

**“A man of many talents, he contributed to the Club as an unpaid interpreter at professional luncheons even prior to joining as an associate”**

## ICHIRO 'KEN' URUSHIBARA



PHOTOS COURTESY OF YUKO URUSHIBARA



From 1979 to 1997, Ichiro served as a simultaneous interpreter for the Japanese delegation at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IU). This took him to 51 countries, and during those trips he met such famous people as Fidel Castro and Pope John Paul II. He also served as interpreter during the IU's 100th anniversary celebration in London, in 1989, attended by Margaret Thatcher and Queen Elizabeth II. These assignments were perhaps his most challenging.

In his later years, prior to his full retirement, Ichiro worked part-time at Aoba-Japan International School, putting together their monthly bilingual newsletter as well as interpreting and translating until 2010. This is described in an article in *The Japan Times* that includes many details of his long career.

Ichiro's diverse bilingual roles took him to various government offices, such as Japan's National Diet and the U.S. Embassy. It was on an assignment to the latter that he met the woman who became his wife, Yuko. Their marriage produced two beautiful daughters, Saeko and Setsuko, and a grandson, Shun-ichi.

A man with many interesting stories to tell and insightful comments to offer, Ichiro was one person many of us looked forward to meeting at the Club.

Rest in peace, Ichiro.

● Charles Pomeroy became a member of the FCCJ in 1965, and has been a regular member since 1967. His edited history of the Club, *Foreign Correspondents in Japan* (1998) provides definitive detail on the Club's founding years and telling insights on the Club's fortunes during the Korean and Vietnam wars, and all the years running up to publication.

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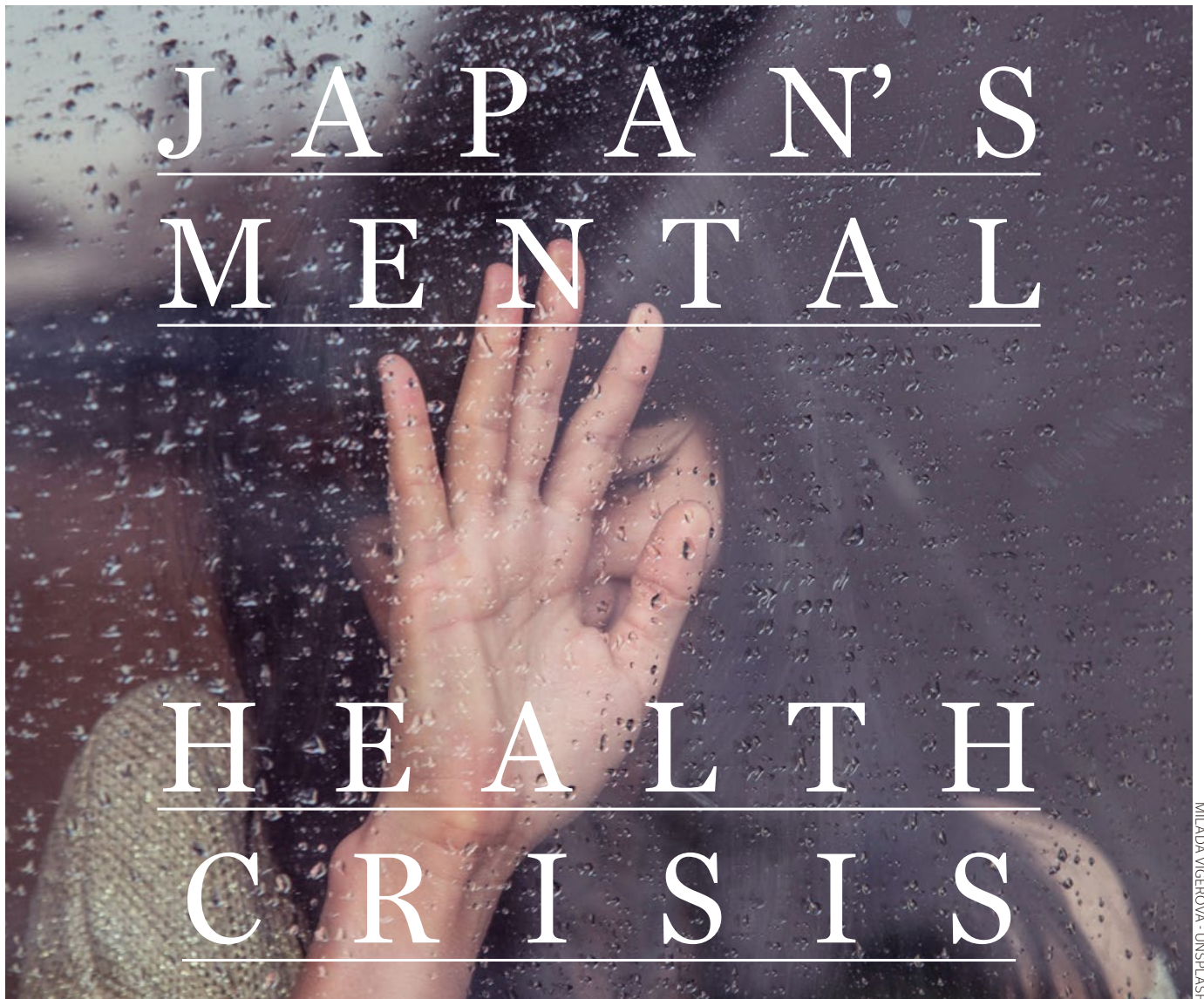
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1. Ichiro Urushibara with Muhammad Ali
2. Urushibara with Pope John Paul II
3. Urushibara with Fidel Castro
4. Urushibara at the FCCJ

4



CLUB NEWS



MILADA VIGEROVA - UNSPLASH

## The FCCJ's Deep Dive series looks at the psychological toll the pandemic is taking on women and young people

SUVENDRINI KIKUCHI

Naoko, who has been married for 20 years, says the corona virus pandemic has made life unbearable. "My husband is teleworking and our children are stuck in our tiny home. The situation is causing arguments and stress for everyone. And it's taking a toll on my mental health," Naoko, 47, told me. Takashi Sato, who lost his job as an assistant chef last September, tells a similar story. "When the restaurant closed due to the state of emergency I lost hope," Sato, 26, said. "There are times when I'm so overwhelmed that I think about killing myself."

These stories typify the mental health crisis gripping Japan more than a year into the pandemic. Experts say the cycle of soft lockdowns and resulting economic losses has triggered a surge in cases of depression and suicide. Statistics show that women and young people are taking their own lives in increasing numbers, with the pandemic magnifying deep-seated problems such as the gender gap, community breakdown and loneliness.

The May session of the FCCJ's Deep Dive series devoted two sessions to the complicated, timely subject of mental health in the age of

## JAPAN'S MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

**“Nobody is free from this trauma, which can impact up to 20% of the population during a disaster.”**

Covid-19. Fulfilling its mandate to look behind and beyond the news, the first session featured three experts who talked about the mental health risks facing Japan.

They presented medical data showing that while a significant proportion of people who recover from Covid-19 continue to suffer from neurological symptoms such as headaches and “brain fog,” people who have not fallen ill with the virus have been struck by a range of mental health problems.

“Nobody is free from this trauma, which can impact up to 20% of the population during a disaster,” said Vickie Skorji, director of the Tokyo English Lifeline counseling service.

The National Police Agency reported 21,081 suicides in Japan last year, the first rise for a decade. The figures showed a marked increase in suicides among women in their 20s and 40s.

Professor Haruka Sakamoto, a researcher in the department of Health Policy and Management at Keio University, pointed out that suicides among young people were at their highest since 1978. “Being stuck at home with no campus life places a huge strain on young people whose purpose in going to college is to make friends and enjoy life while they are studying,” she said.

Japan has long grappled with high suicide rates, and while the numbers dipped slightly in recent years, the pandemic has caused a spike that some link to job losses.

While men continue to comprise the largest single group of people who commit suicide, the sharp rise among women is alarming, Sakamoto said.

In 2020, about 740,000 women became unemployed. Many worked in sectors of the economy that have been hit hard by pandemic restrictions. “Industries such as travel, catering and other services affected by Covid-19 employ female part-time workers who were laid off,” Sakamoto said. “Unemployment, com-

bined with the rise in teleworking, means more women are stuck at home dealing with the loss of income, the burden of family care, and a greater risk of domestic violence.”

Citing a recent poll conducted by a Tokyo-based women’s group, Skorji said 90% of about 4,500 female respondents said they envied men because they led more financially secure lives. Disturbingly, just 5% of those polled said they would seek help for their mental distress.

Sachi Nakajima, head of Resilience Safer, a nonprofit providing trauma training to public and private organizations, said the crisis in Japan had been exacerbated by social stigma felt by people suffering from mental health issues, and the lack of community support.

“Japanese society does not accept mental health problems as illnesses that require treatment, but regards it as something to be ignored,” she said. “This has only made the consequences of Covid-19 worse.”

Nakajima said gender disparities in Japan force women to take more responsibility for housekeeping, childcare and looking after elderly relatives. “Women frequently face abuse and trauma, and the pandemic has made them feel as if they are in a dark tunnel,” she said.

Skorji sounded an optimistic note towards the end of the session, noting that technology had enabled many people to stay connected with one another during the pandemic. The same technology had helped young people study remotely and stay in touch with friends. “It has certainly helped during the pandemic,” she said.

Sakamoto, however, said some had exploited this connectivity to abuse people online. “Without proper support, this can leave people feeling even more anxious and isolated,” she said.

● Suvendrini Kakuchi is Tokyo correspondent for *University World News* in the UK.



## CLUB NEWS



PAUL CUOCO - UNPLASH

## FCCJ reaches out to the Kansai region

ERIC JOHNSTON

There's no doubt the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan is a Tokyo-centric club and always will be. That's entirely natural and should never change. FCCJ started off as the "Tokyo Foreign Correspondents Club" and is still called that by some members and guests.

But as working remotely is expected to become, if not the new normal, then at least more normal once the pandemic ends, more people may decide they don't need to be in Tokyo to do their jobs. Some might see this as bad news for attracting new members to a Tokyo-based club. But it's also an opportunity.

Outside Tokyo, the area with the largest number of FCCJ members is the Kansai region. Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, and Nara are

home to four regular members, seven professional associate members and 24 associate members. You may not see them in the main bar that often (if ever). But they are members in good standing.

To their credit, some past FCCJ presidents understand the importance of Kansai and traveled to Osaka and Kyoto to give individual lectures and presentations, Dan Sloan, Khaldon Azhari, Catherine Makino and Lucy Birmingham among them. And on April 2, via Zoom, President Isabel Reynolds, Second Vice-President Walter Sim, and Secretary Ilgin Yorulmaz took part in the first-ever panel discussion of FCCJ board members for 60 members and guests based in Kansai. I was honored to serve as moderator.

## GO WEST

**“For Kansai, it’s very important to have a unique selling point to get international media attention. Going forward, it’s necessary to look at how trends in Japanese business and society can be explored from the Kansai region.”**

Participants included local freelance journalists, entrepreneurs, academics, diplomats, business leaders, artists and students. Reynolds, Sim and Yorulmaz spoke about FCCJ and how many foreign journalists like themselves see the region. Reynolds noted there were two reasons why Kansai could be more important to Tokyo-based foreign journalists once the pandemic is over and they can travel more easily.

“We’ve heard a lot from the Japanese government about how the Olympics is going to be the symbol of the human race overcoming the coronavirus,” Reynolds said. “That’s turned out to be ridiculously overoptimistic. But perhaps the 2025 Expo will take place at a time and place where people are able to gather in person. So maybe that could be when we’re able to celebrate.

“The second reason has to do with 2016, Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. Many media organizations based in the capital cities or major urban areas were shocked at the Brexit vote and then Trump’s victory. They began to realize they were focused on the capital cities and didn’t necessarily understand the rest of the country as well as they should.

“Since then, there has been more of a focus in many media organizations in different countries on areas outside the capital city.”

How to attract more foreign media attention to the region has long been an issue of concern for Kansai’s politicians, business leaders, and others. One-time events like the 2019 G20 summit in Osaka or the 2025 World Expo are fine. But to attract Tokyo-based correspondents on a regular basis, there needs to be a more basic change in the local mindset.

Reynolds said: “Japan is a huge country, and each region is culturally diverse. But there’s also a sense of sameness of trends, like the elderly, declining population, that are common to many regions. There’s a sense this kind of news can be covered from Tokyo. For Kansai, it’s very important to have a unique selling point to get international media attention. Going forward, it’s necessary to look at how trends in Japanese business and society can be explored from the Kansai region.”

Unique aspects that can be turned into stories are the key to making a local story of interest to international editors and producers.

Yorulmaz gave examples of Kansai-related stories BBC Turkish World Service editors liked.

“I was able to go to Osaka to do a story on ‘Osaka First’ —the first things that Osaka invented, such as Cup Noodles. Those unique aspects that we can turn into stories, as well as the cultural aspects of society, are things I’m very interested in,” she said.

Asked by participants what kinds of stories would attract their attention and what kind of press releases from Kansai would actually be read by busy Tokyo foreign journalists, Sim suggested that a news peg connected to a major issue like climate change could attract media attention.

Yorulmaz added that those writing press releases needed to think like journalists, read news stories and use press releases to tell a story, rather than communicate basic information.

Participants also offered advice on what the FCCJ could do to attract new members.

“The FCCJ could set up a new ‘Travel Associate Member’ category that aims to attract travel associations in prefectures, cities, towns and villages,” said FCCJ associate member Sonoko Suzuki, who is based in Kyoto.

Kyoto-based freelance journalist Felicity Tillack encouraged the FCCJ to organize more online events. “Online networking events and webinars would be very valuable, and perhaps FCCJ could consider a mentor program. Learning resources, like blogs and videos, and posting job opportunities would also be useful,” she said.

There was support, too, for live events, including gatherings of Kansai-based FCCJ members when it is safe to do so, and there are discussions about a possible trip to Kansai later this year to attend such a gathering by members of the FCCJ board.

None of this is to say the incoming board’s focus post-pandemic should be on signing up more members from outside Tokyo. But more events like the April Zoom seminar will enable the Club to reach out beyond Tokyo at a time when remote working and online seminars are expected to be far more prevalent. That would also be a relatively low-cost way of building a nationwide list of contacts for current members, and perhaps gaining new ones we would not have reached otherwise.

● Eric Johnston is the senior national correspondent for *The Japan Times* and a Kansai-based FCCJ member since 2000.

The views above reflect his own, not those of *The Japan Times*.



## CLUB NEWS

## New members

**ASSOCIATE MEMBER**

**ATSUhide KATO** joined Katoukichibee Shoten, a sake brewery, in Fukui Prefecture in 1976 and was appointed senior managing director three years later. In 2006, he was made representative director of the company, a position he holds to this day.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBER**

**TOSHIRO UEYANAGI** is a practicing attorney, admitted in Japan in 1983 and New York in 1992, and a partner at Tokyo Surugadai Law Offices. He serves as an executive committee member of LAWASIA and is vice chair of the Kanto Federation of Bar Associations. He is also a member of the doping panel of the International Swimming Federation. Ueyanagi graduated from the University of Tokyo (LLB, LL.M) and the University of Washington (LL.M). He was born in Kyoto.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBER**

**TAKAHIRO YOSHIMOTO** is president and chairperson of the board of trustees at Nihon Bunka Gakuen Educational Foundation. He became chief accountant of Bunka Girl's High School in 1995; secretary general of the same school in 2006 and took up his current post in 2013.

**REGULAR MEMBER**

**LISA DU** is a reporter at Bloomberg News in Tokyo, where she writes about corporate Japan with a focus on the consumer and healthcare sectors. She's also reported extensively on Japan's legal system in the wake of Carlos Ghosn's arrest and the country's public health response to Covid-19. Born in China, Lisa grew up in the U.S. and spent most of her time in North Carolina and New York City before moving to Tokyo. She became interested in Japan when she was a child, and studied the language and country in school before transferring to Tokyo for work. Lisa previously worked as a reporter at Business Insider and Newsday in New York. In her spare time, she enjoys food (eating and cooking), running, a good podcast, and reading labels of various consumer products. Lisa is a graduate of Duke University and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

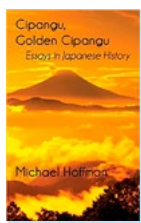
## New in the library

1



**Tokyo Junkie: 60 Years of Bright Lights and Back Alleys ... and Baseball**  
*Robert Whiting*  
 Stone Bridge Press  
 Gift from Robert Whiting

2



**Cipangu, Golden Cipangu: Essays in Japanese History**  
*Michael Hoffman*  
 Virtualbookworm.com  
 Publishing

3



**Finding the Heart Sutra: Guided by a Magician, and Art Collector, and Buddhist Sages from Tibet to Japan**  
*Alex Kerr*  
 Allen Lane

## CLUB NEWS

## Join the Film Committee

On Monday, June 28 at 5:30 pm for a sneak preview screening of Yuya Ishii's first Japan-Korea coproduction, *The Asian Angel*. Filmed entirely in South Korea, with a Japanese and Korean cast, the film follows Takeshi (Sosuke Ikematsu), a widowed writer who journeys to Seoul with his young son in the hopes of reconnecting with his estranged older brother, Toru (Joe Odagiri). But Toru's business goes south, Takeshi falls under the spell of a budding songstress (Korean star Moon Choi), fate intervenes and soon, the three find themselves on the road with three Korean siblings who are also undergoing personal crises. A delightful blend of the sentimental and the comical, with a touch of the magical, *The Asian Angel* single-handedly creates its own genre – the Asian Family Road Trip? – surmounting political, cultural and actual borders with aplomb. Ishii, returning to the FCCJ for the third time since *Our Family* and *The Vancouver Asahi*, both in 2014, and Ikematsu will join us for the Q&A session. (*The Asian Angel*, Japan/Korea, 2021, 128 minutes, in Korean, Japanese and English with Japanese subtitles).



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● Karen Severns

## REGULAR at "the hustings"

by eggs





EXHIBITION

# OYAKO PHOTO MATSURI

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**JUNE 5 - JULY 2, 2021**

The theme of the June exhibition is parents and children. A bond touches everyone, transcending borders, cultures, and religions. Images in this show are seen through the eyes of 26 photographers who took photos in Argentina, Brunei, Cuba, Cambodia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Myanmar, Scotland, Syria, Tibet, and United States

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## Photographers

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Ada Trillo (USA)

Bruce Osborn (USA)

Caro Ramirez (USA)

Constanza Portnoy (Argentina)

Elahe Abdollahabadi (Iran)

Emi Nakamura (Japan)

Eriko Koga (Japan)

Etsuko Enami (Japan)

Hiko Miyao (Japan)

Hiroshi Nirei (Japan)

Ira Block (USA)

Kathya Maria Landeros (USA)

Lenka Klicperova (Czech Republic)

Mark Higashino (Japan)

Masafumi Iha (Japan)

Michael Yamashita (USA)

Renato Grome (Italy)

Ross Ericsson (USA)

Ryan Treitel (USA)

Samphos Sut (Cambodia)

Shingo Wakagi (Japan)

Steve Attardo (USA)

Stirling Elmendorf (USA)

Thadar Soe (Myanmar)

Wusha Wuli (China)

Laetitia Vancon (France)

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In addition to the photographers, I would like to express my gratitude for the grant from the Chiyoda Ward Cultural Support Project along with support from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, The Month of Photography and the PSJ (Photographic Society of Japan), Sandra Saito and IWPA (International Women in Photo Association), Yoshiko Inoue and OYAKO Day Planning Committee

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● Bruce Osborn / FCCJ Exhibition Chair

## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021

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01

### **Life Force: What Love Can Save**

**CONSTANZA PORTNOY** (Argentina)

Buenos Aires, Argentina / March 4, 2017



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02

### **At the End of the Day**

**LAETITIA VANCON** (France)

Benbucula island, Scotland / July 2016



## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



03

### **Tear Gassed**

**ADA TRILLO (USA)**

Frontera Hidalgo, Mexico / 2020



04

### **ISIS Wives - Queens of the Caliphate**

**LENKA KLICPEROVA (Czech Republic)**

Ain Issa, Syria / 2018

## EXHIBITION

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Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021

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05

### Practice Session

IRA BLOCK (USA)

Pinar del Río, Cuba / 2014



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06

### Temple Bell

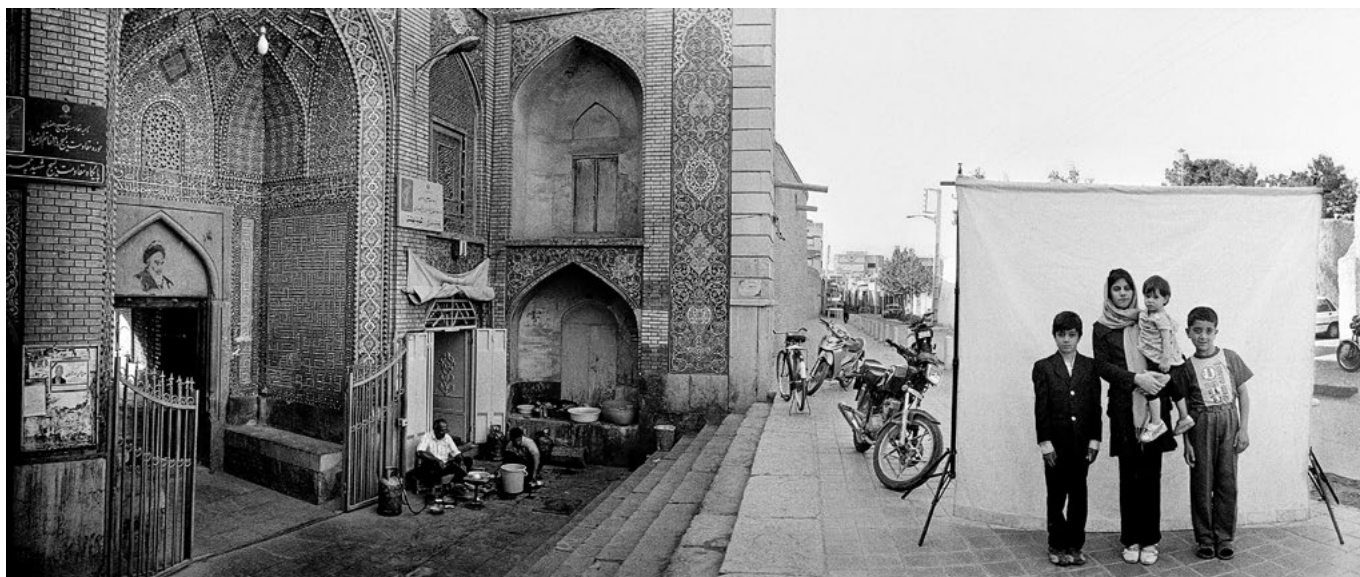
ERIKO KOGA (Japan)

Kyoto, Japan / 2019



## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



07

### An instant of Time and Place

ELAHEH ABDOLAHABADI (Iran)

Isfahan, Iran / 2010



08

### Prayers from Brunei

MICHAEL YAMASHITA (USA)

Banda Seri Begawan, Brunei / 1993

## EXHIBITION

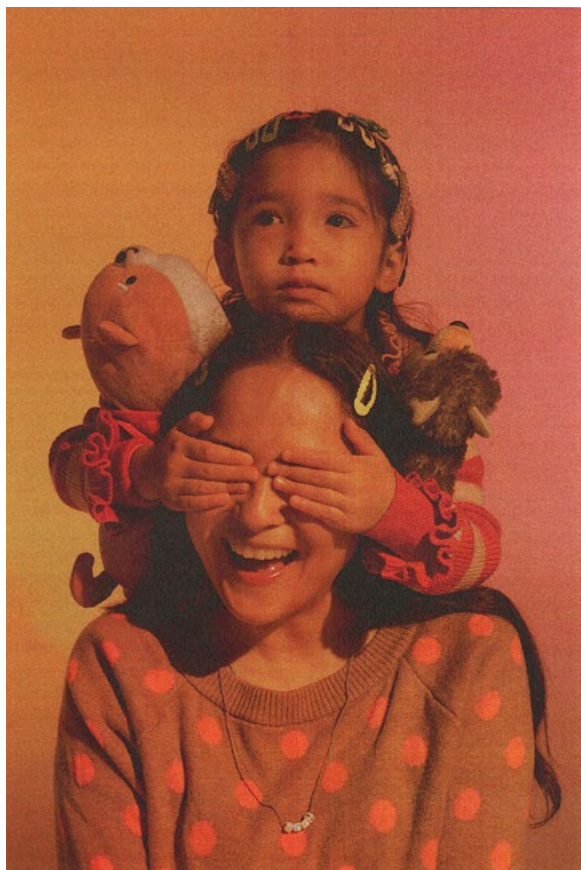
Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021

09

### Caring of Mother with Dementia

**KATHYA MARIA LANDEROS (USA)**

Sacramento, CA, USA / 2015



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### Look to the children for inspiration

**CARO RAMIREZ (USA)**

Philadelphia, PA, USA / April 25, 2021



## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



11

### **The Treitel Family**

**RYAN TREITEL** (USA)

Wyndmoor, PA, USA / March 13, 2021



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### **Father is the purveyor and the son cooks the food**

**MARK HIGASHINO** (Japan)

New York, NY, USA / May 2021



## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



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### COWBOYS

STIRLING ELMENDORF (USA)

Placerville, CA, USA / May 12, 2019



14

### Parent and Child Sports Day

ETSUKO ENAMI (Japan)

Nagasaki, Japan / 1994



## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



15

### **Mother and her Twin Sons** (photo collage)

**ROSS ERICSSON** (USA)

Philadelphia, PA, USA / April 23, 2021



16

### **Our little boy, safe in his mom's hands**

**STEVE ATTARDO** (USA)

New York, NY, USA

## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



17

### The New Tokyoites

HIKO MIYAO (Japan)  
Tokyo, Japan / 1987



18

### Child helping parents to harvest yak food

WUSHA WULI (China)  
Tibet Autonomous Region / September 19, 2016



## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021

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19

### Warmth

**EMI NAKAMURA** (Japan)

Jigokudani, Nagano Prefecture / January 2021



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20

### Family Outing

**SAMPHOS SUT** (Cambodia)

Mekong Island, Cambodia / 2015

## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



21

### Haircut

**SHINGO WAKAGI** (Japan)

Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan / 2003



22

### Roman Ruins

**EYE TOTO** (Italy)

Rome, Italy / 2019



## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



23

### Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami

BRUCE OSBORN (USA)

Soma, Fukushima / Japan June 9, 2011



24

### Bedtime Story

HIROSHI NIREI (Japan)

Hayama, Kanagawa, Japan / 2001



## EXHIBITION

Oyako photo matsuri: June 5 - July 2, 2021



25

### Save Myanmar

THANDER SOE (Myanmar)

North Okklapa Township, Yangon, Myanmar / 2010



26

### Stay safe with dreams for the future

MASAFUMI IHA (Japan)

Tokai City, Aichi Prefecture, Japan / Jan. 4, 2021



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