

Minority or Majority

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I've heard people say that Japanese laws should be decided by Japanese people, since it is their country. I agree with that, but if you look more carefully, a simple yet complicated question should come into your mind. "What would I think?" I'm Brazilian, but I've lived more than half of my life in Japan. I was born here, and I speak Japanese fluently, but unlike many of my friends, I'm not given the right to vote. Am I different? Is it my looks, or my attitude, or my manners? Should I sit in the corner and watch as important decisions about the country are being made without me?

Immigrants are treated as minorities in most countries, especially in developed countries such as the USA, UK, Switzerland and even Japan. Recently, we often hear about immigrants who come from developing or war-torn countries seeking better lives. Statistics show that their numbers are increasing. At the same time the birthrate in Japan is decreasing, and there is a shortage of workers. Given this situation, it seems natural that Japan would be willing to accept more immigrants with open arms, but the government has yet to take steps towards positive immigration policies.

Another topic that we cannot leave unspoken when talking about minorities is gender and sexuality. The first experience I ever had was when I went to live in Brazil for two years. There, I met people who belonged to the LGBT community. We engaged in a conversation that made me realize how little I knew about my own sexuality, and how important this topic is. I started to research more about it, and came to know that statistically, a trans person is killed in Brazil every 48 hours because of pure hate against the LGBT community.

When I was in Brazil, I met the sweetest boy you could ever imagine. He had tons of scars all over his arms, and without fully understanding the situation I insensitively asked him about it. That same day, I came to know that this boy was gay; a fact that he hated so much that there was a time

that he used to harm himself to try to make it better. He had no way of understanding what he was going through. He was taught that he was supposed to like girls, which was a mentality taught by society that was really hurting him. But that's the thing, Brazil is a very open country when it comes to diversity. Compared to Japan it is much easier for a homosexual to come out there. So imagine, if it was so hard for that boy to come out in a country like Brazil where there's a chance for him to be accepted, how much harder is it for someone to come out in a country like Japan where we hardly discuss the topic?

In 2015, the first same-sex partnership was recognized in Japan. People called it “a first step”, but it has been almost three years since it happened, and the second, third, and fourth steps have yet to come. The rights given to the couple in Shibuya, such as being allowed to visit their loved one at a hospital, applies only inside Shibuya. Yet elsewhere in the country, many same-sex couples still have no rights and cannot get married legally. Without their own rights, how are such a large number of people going to feel safe and protected?

There are high hopes for Japan with the 2020 Olympics, but we should keep in mind the importance of recognizing and protecting rights for every Japanese citizen before accepting the mass of foreigners that are coming to enjoy the games. Our world is made from diversity, whether it is people like me, who don't have the right to vote in one's home country, or people from the LGBTQ community who are still in a constant struggle to gain their rights as citizens and human beings.