

# For the Children

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Does anyone ever notice how Japanese society casually disrespects women on a daily basis? When I was riding on the train on my way back home, I passed a group of boys. These boys immediately started judging me based on my looks, and had the audacity to speak loudly while openly laughing at me. This did not make me feel pleasant, to say the least. This experience really opened up my eyes, and I began to notice how much Japanese culture and society belittles us women and sets us on a lower pedestal than men. I am sure any woman in this room has experienced what I have at least once in her lifetime. We must not let this unjust culture be unseen any longer.

We see examples of this in work environments, schools and public transportation. At schools, I see my fellow female classmates get scolded because “Girls shouldn’t do this.” “Girls shouldn’t act like this.” “Girls who act or think this way will be disapproved by boys.”. We are taught from a young age that “good equals quiet.” That “good equals don’t talk back.” That “good equals we do as we are told.” Girls are, by this age, used to being judged by our appearance. We are used to being nothing more than dolls to be looked at. We are taught since we are little girls what a girl should and should not be, and that never stops as we grow older.

Women constantly get harassed on trains, buses and streets. The overwhelming number of reports about women being molested by men on public transportation is solid proof that Japanese society is in desperate need of change. I know two girls that were sexually harassed on their way to school on the train. Both played it off as if it were no big deal, joking about it with their friends, but I could see that they were deeply distributed, because, who wouldn’t be. Who would not feel violated if they had to experience something like that? This happens to millions of girls on a daily basis. I do not want to feel afraid on trains or buses. I want to walk the streets without having to look behind my shoulder every thirty seconds to

make sure I'm not being followed. I do not want to feel uncomfortable when I'm showing a lot of skin in public. I just want to feel safe. Is that so much to ask for?

The word feminism has become an increasingly unpopular word. People say that feminism will take over the world. It will tip the scale, and women will become more superior than men. But recognizing the fact that the scale is not even, is only proving that there is a need for feminism in today's society. However, movements such as #MeToo has brought light to feminism, and the world has slowly but surely begun to change. We see examples of this on Japanese Twitter, where women share stories of sexism they experience at their workplaces, and speak out against it. We, as a society, are beginning to recognize the problems we face, and are actively working on solutions. We are the next group of leaders and we will no longer keep our mouths shut. I am truly proud to be part of such an innovative generation.

I believe that we must build a better future, where men and women are treated equally, for the sake of the next generation of children. I do not want girls to have to experience and endure what so many girls today must live with. I want them to be taught that they are free to pursue whatever they desire, and I do not want their gender to get in the way. I do not want them to feel uncomfortable in schools, buses and trains, streets, or at work, because they are a female. Let us build a better future, for boys and girls around the world, together.