

Letter From NEW YORKERS

Cherry Trees in NYC by Masuo Ichida

The most beautiful time of the year arguably begins in late March, when once lifeless and barren trees dotted along New York City's sidewalks and parks begin their awesome annual blooms. In particular, New York's cherry trees' amazing display of pinks and reds is a testament to the incredible temporal beauty of nature.



In addition to Prospect Park, Central Park and the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, there are numerous lesser known public streets and parks where cherry blossoms can be spotted. In Manhattan, Riverside Park's cherry trees, which were originally a gift from Japan in 1912, are named Cherry Walk, and run from 100 Street to 125 Street. Don't skip Sakura Park on 122 Street, and Columbia University's College Walk on 116 Street and Broadway. There's also Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem, St. Paul Chapel of Trinity Church downtown and Madison Square Park near the Flatiron Building.

If you are in Brooklyn, visit the Brooklyn Promenade in Brooklyn Heights, Cadman Plaza Park, Greenwood Cemetery or Borough Hall. Roosevelt Island and Randall's Island also have beautiful cherry trees, as does Flushing Meadow in Queens.

In addition, there are many cherry trees scattered all along sidewalks and smaller parks everywhere in New York. It is a delight to see one in full bloom with NYC as the backdrop. The cherry trees fully bloom in a few weeks, so be ready!

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Yuma (left) with Gallery owner Mr. Wickiser

Reincarnation in Woman's Life; Atsuko Yuma Exhibits Paintings at Elite gallery

Artist Atsuko Yuma, residing in NYC, had her private exhibition "FRUITION" at the Walter Wickiser Gallery in NYC from January 4 through 31. She has continued to paint life, death and love with unique color usage. Together with her world views, her paintings attract viewers using Asian mysterious subtlety that goes beyond her Japanese background. As if

he were hearing a mother sing sweet songs to her child in her womb, Mr. Wickiser, owner of the prestigious gallery, was passionately impressed the first time he saw her paintings. Yuma has now stepped into the major art world after struggling hard as a painter. (Written and photographed by Ryoichi Miura / Translated by Kunio Shimura)

Smile Again with a Scarf Relief for Hair-Lost Ladies

Ms. Masumi Tsunoda, who lives in Isesaki, Gunma Prefecture, is a female entrepreneur. Three years ago, she designed a head scarf for ladies who lost their hair for various reasons, for which she received the Gunma Innovation Award in the General Business Plan Division in 2015. To market it in the following year, she raised 2,500,000 yen, 180% of the targeted goal amount, by crowd funding, and received the crowd funding Ready for Lady Award for it. She established the company Armonia, and started creating Linolea head scarfs made of Gunma silk. The product received the Good Design Gunma Concept Special Award last year.

Now, she was selected as one of the members to be sent to New York in the first-stage program of the Female Entrepreneur Support Business APT Women (Female Venture Promotion Business),



Masumi Tsunoda

sponsored by Tokyo Prefecture. Hair-lost ladies gathered last year to form a hair-lost women's group named Alopecia Style Project.

At the age of 36, Ms. Tsunoda suddenly lost her hair after being diagnosed with multiple alopecia, and began to feel that she could not go out



side without hiding her head. However, one day when she went out with a scarf, people complimented her and said "How cute!" or "Stylish!" She was happy to hear that, and her previous smile returned to her. She wondered whether her positive experience could help ladies who suffer from the same disease, and such aspiration encouraged her entrepreneurship.

(Written by Ryoichi Miura / Translated by Kunio Shimura)

JAPAN DAY ANNUAL PROJECT IS A HIT Horace Mann School Performance Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Horace Mann School's Japan Day was held in the Bronx on January 26. 80 students who are studying Japanese showcased various performances in the annual project.

This year was the 25th anniversary of Japan Day, which is part of the school's Japanese program. Students put on six performances, including "Twelve Animals", "Little One Inch", "Six Statues", "Mr. Paper", "Iron Chef", and "Sixth Teacher". Students with various Japanese language skills performed in Japanese with English translation, and received great applause.

After, students did a taiko drum performance, and moved on to the festival area, which was made with the cooperation of parents and Japanese volunteers. They enjoyed Japanese games and culture activities such as calligraphy, origami, tea ceremony, yoyo-fishing, food stands like mochi and yakisoba, and more. Japanese New Year cards were also on a display, which students made with unique illustrations.

Ms. Mami Fujisaki, Japanese teacher and organizer of the event, said, "I'm glad if students could expand their perspective by studying Japanese, and come to be interested in various things."

(Written & Photographed by Kaoru Komi / Translated by Munenori Tanitsuji)



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Focusing historical issue from the overseas point of view chapter 4

A comfort women memorial to be erected in Fort Lee

Fort Lee, a town of 37,000 in Bergen County, NJ sits on the Hudson River and offers a magnificent view of Manhattan. It has 2,100 Japanese residents, the largest concentration of Japanese in New Jersey. Its easy access to Manhattan is convenient for many Japanese commuters. While Japanese population declined slightly, the population of Korean-Americans has risen to roughly 30% of Fort Lee residents. Many of them work as retailers, medical doctors, police officers, municipal workers and car dealers. The Korean population of the town adjoining Fort Lee, Palisade's Park, is almost 65%. Many official notices and letters from public schools, medical offices are written in both English and Korean. As the number of Koreans has increased in these boroughs, Korean political influence has also grown. Today, 2 of the 6 Fort Lee councilmen are Korean-Americans. In 2013, the "comfort women" issue entered local politics for the first time. Since then, there have been three proposals to build a "comfort women" monument in Fort Lee, but all failed because some Koreans feared ethnic divisiveness.

In June 2016, YCFL (The Youth Council of Fort Lee) a group of high school activists pro-

posed erecting a "comfort women" memorial. Local newspapers explained that YCFL was organized after students saw the film, "Spirits' Homecoming." The group held a contest for the design of the monument and poem to be inscribed on it. The final design of the memorial shows a poem by a Korean high school girl. Although she makes no mention of the Japanese military, she describes a young Korean girl's suffering sexual assaults during the War. The poem clearly points its finger at Japan.

When I attended the September 7th, 2017 hearing of the Fort Lee Borough council, YCFL insisted that it was not criticizing Japan, but only commemorating "comfort women" survivors. However, in an interview by "Record China", the same youngsters stated that "Japanese students are studying incorrect history at school. Therefore, we need to teach them the truth about history by building 'comfort women' memorials."

Because Himawari Japan believes that the proposed memorial will create irreparable division between the Korean and Japanese communities, we protested the proposal to Mayor Sokolich and the Borough council. We presented a petition from 5,922 people opposing the

monument, pointed out that the monument will encourage bullying of Japanese students in the schools, and we distributed pamphlets in English containing all our objections.

One of our biggest obstacles has been the Japanese government's vacillation over the past twenty years. Despite the fact that Japan had paid South Korea \$800,000,000, the equivalent of 3 years of Korea's national budget, under a 1965 treaty covering all losses suffered by Korea during the War, Korea never stopped demanding more apologies and money. Under the Treaty, all Koreans including "comfort women" should have been compensated from the money already paid to South Korea. However, the Japanese government's indecisive response may seem somewhat incomprehensible to foreigners. It reflects the Japanese desire for harmony by ending disputes even if the alleged wrongs have been paid. Fort Lee Mayor Sokolich explained, "I think the blame lies upon Japan because the Japanese government paid compensation to South Korea. Why do you pay if you don't admit you were wrong?" Despite our explanations, on December 14th, 2017, the Borough council voted unanimously in favor of the memorial.

This is just the beginning of our fight against anti-Japanese propaganda. Despite the odds against us, we are determined to fight to recover the pride and honor of our country. Modern Japan, unlike our neighbors, is the sole constitutional democracy in East Asia. It has, in its constitution, surrendered the right to wage war. Instead, Japan is dedicated to world peace and helping other countries. Japan is the world's fourth largest donor of foreign aid. As of 2012, eighty-eight nations all over the world received Japanese help, including the People's Republic of China. For decades, Japan has helped South Korea in economic and social development and assists developing countries in Asia, Africa, Central and South America and the Middle East.

The face of modern Japan, over 70 years after the War, is that of a peaceful, productive, and helpful neighbor. This is the truth that South Korea chooses to ignore. In reality, the "comfort women" issue has nothing to do with "healing" war victims. Its true aim is to damage the image of Japan and hurt Japanese people wherever they may reside.

Yoko Nagato President Himawari JAPAN