



## From the Bronx to Japan Students Seek Help for Trip Bronx Collaborative High School

Ms. Eri Yamasaki, a Japanese language teacher at Bronx Collaborative High School, is trying to raise money to take her students to Japan. A total of thirteen students were selected as members of this Japan trip based on their skills and dedication to their studies. This trip will be the first international trip organized by Bronx Collaborative High School. While the school was able to fund the cost of the airline tickets, the money for other costs, including food and transportation within Japan, is currently being raised through a variety of ways. Fundraising activities are being led by both Ms. Yamasaki and Ms. Deborah Katz, teachers of the Japanese Culture elective. At this school, about 85% of students qualify for free lunch, and many students live below the poverty line. Using GoFundMe ([www.gofundme.com/trip-to-japan-from-the-bronx](http://www.gofundme.com/trip-to-japan-from-the-bronx)), they have just raised \$10,000, the original goal. Although the goal was reached the campaign will be open to donations until they leave for Japan in late July. Teachers said, "Many of these donations came right after the Japanese article of Shukan NY Seikatsu was posted last week. Thank you for the generosity of the readers."

The students are very excited to visit Jiyu Gakuen in Tokyo and Minoshima High School in Wakayama. These two schools are

hosting the students and staff, both in terms of providing homestay placements and in allowing students to join in on planned school activities. The students of Bronx Collaborative High School are looking forward to the cultural exchange aspect of this trip and look forward to meeting their Japanese peers.

"My students have been studying



[https://www.yomiuri-info.jp/daily\\_yomiuri/nys/](https://www.yomiuri-info.jp/daily_yomiuri/nys/)

Japanese very hard. They love Japan and its culture. I really wanted to make their dreams come true and decided to plan this trip. We only have about one more month, but we do not have quite enough to complete the trip within Japan. Please help us support our trip to Japan from the Bronx," Ms. Yamasaki said. (Emi Yamasaki/Translated by Deborah Katz)



# THE JAPAN VOICE

## COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints

### Kansai Yamamoto Speaks at David Bowie Is: Brooklyn Museum's Special Event

Fashion designer Kansai Yamamoto reflected on his professional interactions with David Bowie at the "David Bowie Is" exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum on May 17. Below is an excerpt of the talk he gave:

"Dressed in my designs, David Bowie descended from the ceiling of Radio City Music Hall. That is when I saw him for the first time in the winter of 1973. We officially met the next day and started to work together. Both his music and dress were emitting an incredible amount of energy, which made me thrilled with the sense of joint creation. Through each other, I learned about the West and he about the East, and he started to visit Japan frequently, always including a stop in Kyoto.

He was usually a quiet person, but when a switch was turned on, he immediately became, well, David Bowie.

I think both of us learned that expression is to appeal to others with your spirit. While I can spend one week without listening to music, I cannot live a life without colors, which are as essential to me as air. There is a great sound in my head when the sun rises over the horizon, as my eyes serve as my ears.

He never made any demands about design. He always wore what I made, and God knows whether he liked them or not – I suppose he was confident that he would look the greatest in my clothing.

He also challenged traditional notions of men and women. I worked on his dresses as if I were making women's. I was just making what I felt like making, like women's zipper-less costumes, and I don't think I made any impact on a gender revolution. But, everything changed over 50 years. I never imagined that things would be like what they are today.

To be damn serious about your lifetime pursuit – this is what I think he left for us as his message. In other words, keep doing to the best of your ability what you believe in, rain or shine, in your life. I have no doubt that he was doing so." (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kenji Nakano)



Yamamoto talks about Bowie's stage costume that he designed.



### Artists Contribute and Sell Their Artwork for JAA

The 23rd Art Exhibition of Japanese and Japanese American Artists in New York was held from May 3 to 18 at JAA. The artworks of 33 painters and sculptors (52 artworks in total) were exhibited, resulting in proceeds of \$7,000. Half of the proceeds were donated to JAA. At the opening ceremony, Hayato Ishizuka, Consul of the Consulate General of Japan in New York, congratulated the artists. At the opening reception, the venue was crowded with many visitors and guests. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Ai Omae)

THE JAPAN VOICE is the English Edition of SHUKAN NY SEIKATSU  
NEW YORK SEIKATSU PRESS, INC., 71 W 47 St, Suite 307, New York, NY 10036 USA  
Editor in Chief: Ryoichi Miura, Associate Editor: Ashley Matarama, Editor: Kaoru Komi  
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## Confederate Memorial and Comfort Women Memorial

This spring, I visited Atlanta, Georgia for the first time. During my stay, I went to Stone Mountain Park. The park is one of the most popular tourist spots and is famous for the Confederate Memorial Carving on Stone Mountain. It is the largest high relief sculpture in the world and depicts three Confederate figures of the Civil War: Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Jefferson Davis (1808-1889) was the President of the Confederate States from 1861 to 1865. In 1886, 21 years after the defeat of the Civil War in Mississippi, he stated, "the Southerners would not have to get revenge on the Yankees but would never tell their children that the South was wrong in the War Between the States; the South lost the battle, but the cause was right."

At a point where you can have the best look of whole memorial carving, there is a plaque of the quotation by Beverly M. Dubose, the Curator of the memorial hall. It reads, "The vast majority of those who fought and died for the Southern Confederacy had little in worldly goods or comforts. Neither victory nor defeat would have greatly altered their lot. Yet, for four long years they waged one of the bloodiest wars in history. They fought for a principle: The right to live life

in a chosen manner. This dedication to a cause drove them to achieve: A monument of greatness which endures to this day."

I was deeply impressed with these words. Although the Confederates lost the Civil War, they praise the courage and honor of those who fought and died for the confederacy. I thought Japanese should pass down our story just like their words to the next generation.

I went to another park called Blackburn Park in Brookhaven, a city in the northeastern suburbs of Atlanta. In the park, there is a comfort women memorial that was installed last year. The memorial consists of a comfort woman statue, an empty chair, and a plaque. It is a replica of the controversial statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, Korea. And, it is the second comfort women statue in the public space in the U.S. after the one in Glendale, California.

In Blackburn Park, Brookhaven City has the Cherry Blossom Festival every March. The Cherry blossom is the symbol of Japan. On the other hand, the comfort women statue is now known as a symbol of anti-Japan.

I believe it is not acceptable that they have the festival of cherry blossoms, a symbol of Japan, with the comfort women statue, a symbol of anti-

Japan.

It was during the festival when I went to the park to see the comfort women memorial. Local families and young people were there to enjoy weekend. They passed by the memorial and stopped to read the inscription of the plaque.

The plaque reads as follows:

"Comfort Women who were enslaved by the Japanese Imperial Armed Force"; "One of the largest known cases of human trafficking in the 20th century with estimates ranging up to the hundreds of thousands"; "The Comfort Women are from at least thirteen Asian-Pacific countries, principally from Korea"; "Most died or were killed during World War II"; and "GIRL-Represents the average age of 16 when most girls were abducted."

These descriptions are totally wrong and not facts. What a big difference from the Confederate Memorial!

Japan lost the War, but we should honor those who fought and died for our country with the words just like I found at Stone Mountain Park. However, the reality is that memorials of fabricated stories are being erected overseas, and the distorted history of Japan is spreading all over the world.



Comfort Women Memorial at Blackburn Park, Brookhaven, GA

In May, another comfort women memorial was erected at Constitutions Park in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Do we just keep quiet and do nothing, but let them build more comfort women memorials?

We have a responsibility for what to pass on to the next generation. Now it is time to speak out.

In the next chapter, I will introduce a book and the author, a 98-year-old Japanese woman, who tells the truth about what really happened during the days of the Japan's annexation of Korea. Yumiko Yamamoto, president of a grass root civil group, "Nadesiko Action," or "Japanese Women for Justice and Peace."