

Letter From NEW YORKERS

Happy New Year, New York!

Kia Cheleen

Happy New Year, Shukan NY Seikatsu Readers! When we think about the new year, we often reflect on the past year - what we achieved, what we wished we had achieved but didn't quite make it, what we failed at miserably and some of the hurdles we overcame. Then we may go on to think of New Year's resolutions for the coming year - a new diet, a new exercise routine, a savings plan, giving up a bad habit, etc. I think it is important to set realistic, achievable and sustainable goals. Otherwise, we might feel discouraged and defeated.



This year, I want to encourage everyone to unplug and reconnect. Yes, I said it: UNPLUG. Reconnect with your mind - try and solve problems without using Google or Wikipedia! Reconnect with nature - go for a walk in a new park or visit one of the beautiful gardens in New York City. Reconnect with people - be it your co-workers, family or friends. Instead of pinging your co-workers on instant messenger, why not talk to them face-to-face? Call someone to have a dialogue rather than an endless text messaging chain. Reconnect with your body - have some quiet time when you are not glued to a TV, tablet or phone screen to reenergize. Reconnect with your surroundings - rather than blasting music in your ears, listen to the sounds of New York. Walk a different way to the subway and find a new restaurant, coffee house, live music venue or pub.

Here's to 2019 starting off on the right foot and reconnecting on all fronts! Cheers! (Kia Cheleen is an inter-cultural consultant and a Japanese/English writer, translator and interpreter. Visit her at www.gillespieglobal.net or e-mail kcheleen@gmail.com)

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Saxophone on a Cold Night Yasuyuki "YAZ" Takagi Decides to go Back to Japan

On a cold night until the Staten Island ferry gates open, many riders listen to a man playing R&B hits on a saxophone. He is Brooklyn resident Yasuyuki "YAZ" Takagi (65). Since forming a band in 2002, he periodically played as an official member of Music Under New York (MUNY). He plays at subway stations and clubs in New York City or in the suburbs, as well as over New York FM radio programs. He also appears on cable TV programs and performs outdoor concerts at the Lincoln Center, Minton's Playhouse or at the Apollo Theater in Harlem.

However, Takagi will be going back to Japan. In February 2019, he will stay to Sapporo, Hokkaido to help his wife recover from her illness at his in-laws' house. Just imagine his concerns: how he will perform in Japan, whether he can make a living as a musician or where he will play. It makes him feel uncertain, so he wants forget about those worries.

At the Education Department of

Kochi University, he joined its brass band and touched a saxophone for the first time. Then, he joined a light music club and mastered the saxophone with the help of a senior member who was in a jazz band.

After graduating from college, he continued playing while working for a social welfare facility back in Osaka. In April 1992, he came to New York with a vague expectation that he might learn something once here. In 2002, he passed the MUNY audition sponsored by the MTA and obtained a license to play at subway stations. He plays at subway stations periodically with YAZBAND, his own band that he had formed after the MUNY audition.

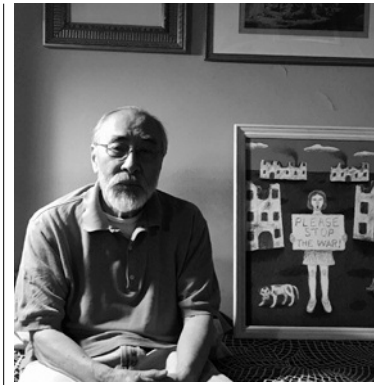
Valued for his activities, he served as the first Japanese judge in the 2005 MUNY audition and continued to judge every other year since then. "New York allowed me try anything. I wish there could be a Japanese version of YAZBAND," said Takagi as he switched on the music speaker.

(Article and Photograph by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kunio Shimura)

The Japanese Artist Association of New York: Works of New York's Veteran Artists to be Presented at the Tenri Cultural Institute

From January 8 to 13 of next year, the Japanese Artist Association of New York (JAANY) will host an exhibit entitled "What An Artful Life" at the Tenri Cultural Institute (43A West 13th Street). This exhibit will present both early and recent works of New York's artists whose careers have spanned over 25 years.

The artists whose works will be presented are as follows: Kunio Iizuka, Jirou Ai, Aiko Aoyagi, Alison Armstrong, Masako Onoda, Keiko Koshimitsu, Fumiko Kashiwagi, Junko Nishigawa, Toshiko Nishikawa, Tokoha



Kunio Iizuka

Matsuda, Steven Walker, Ikuko Ross, Richard Ross, Hitomi Nagakura, Sachie Hayashi, Akemi Takeda, Atsuko Yuma, Hiro Takeshita, Yukako, Fumika Furukawa, Kim Minjung and Max Horbund.

Admission will be free. The exhibit will be open from Monday to Thursday from noon to 6 p.m. and on Saturday from noon to 3 p.m. The opening reception will be on January 10 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For any inquiries, call 917-561-1889 or e-mail ayakohfurukawa@gmail.com. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Yudai Kaneda)

20 Years of Graffiti: "SHIRO" Exhibition in the Bronx through January 16

Female Japanese graffiti artist SHIRO's solo exhibition "It's Okay" is on view at the WALL WORKS NY gallery (39 Bruckner Blvd. Bronx) through 16. She created a new work measuring 3x3 meters on the wall of that gallery, together with about 20 pieces.

SHIRO started her career as a graffiti artist in 1998 and it's now her 20th anniversary. She kept coming back and forth between New York and Japan since 2002 and decided to stay in New York in 2014. Since then she has been traveling all over the world and focusing on making mural art in 18 countries. Her works are a mixture of Japanese characters and New York

uptown taste which have a good reputation.

The reception was held on December 15 with a DJ performance and Japanese sake was served. 200 limited edition 20th anniversary coloring books is released by traditional printing company Fitch Group. (Kaoru Komi/Photo by Danielle DeJesus/Translated by Chikako Iwasaki)



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Focusing on historical issues from the overseas point of view in 24 chapters

Let's Move on to the New Era!

In New York's Manhattan district, an event called "the Korean Parade" hosted by the Korean American group was held in October. The students from Fort Lee High School in New Jersey led the "comfort woman statue" float as a symbol of peace. They are a group of students who initiated the installation of a "comfort women memorial" in Fort Lee.

Every Wednesday in Seoul, Korea, the activist groups have a demonstration demanding Japan for an apology and compensation at the comfort women statue in front of the Japanese Embassy. They have been organizing this demonstration more than 1300 times since 1992. From news photos, I notice many participants are teenagers, middle school or high school students.

These young people sincerely believe "the comfort women were sex slaves who were coerced and tortured by the Japanese military" and join in the activities with deep sympathy for the ex-comfort women.

In Korea, the students learn about the comfort women at schools. The high school textbook depicts "under very poor conditions, many comfort women died of illness and violence and committed suicide" and "after the defeat of the war, they were mass murdered by Japanese military deserters."

In Vancouver and Toronto, Canada, with a

large population of Chinese immigrants, Chinese civil groups demand the city and state councils to adopt "the Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day" bills. They have Nanjing Massacre education programs and teach students "the Japanese military indiscriminately murdered 200,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians in Nanjing." These political campaigns and education of "comfort women as sex slaves" and "the Nanjing massacre" damage the image of Japan. Children may unconsciously believe that "Japanese are atrocious people." I feel worried about the influence over future generations.

On the other hand, we have more and more Chinese and Korean people in Japan in recent years. We see many Chinese and Korean tourists in Tokyo towns like Ueno, Shibuya, Shinjuku and Ikebukuro and at every tourist site all over Japan from Hokkaido to Okinawa. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Justice, at the end of 2017, the largest number of foreign national residents by nationality is China at 730,000 (28.5%), and the second largest is the Republic of Korea at 450,000(17.6%). According to the statistics of the Japan National Tourism Organization, the largest number of foreign tourists by nationality is China, at 7,360,000(25.6%), and the second largest is the Republic of Korea at 7,140,000 (24.9%).

If they really believe the Japanese are so brutal as to enslave 200,000 comfort women and massacre 200,000 people in Nanjing, why do they come to Japan? It seems they in fact do not care about comfort women and Nanjing and they like Japan.

This is one of my favorite quotes by Edmund Burke (1729-1797), political theorist and philosopher:

"Society is a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."

Next year the Heisei era will end, and Japan will start a new era. Tokyo will host the 2020 Olympics, and Osaka will host the 2025 Expo. When time is moving, it is not our wish to pass on the fabricated history, propaganda and feeling of resentment, misunderstanding and hatred to the next generation.

Nadeshiko Action's goal is "to pass on the right history to the next generation and end a fab-



ricated 'comfort women = sex slaves' story." I believe we, those who are living, all have responsibility for those who are to be born to speak out the truth now.

Thank you so much for reading this column and your understanding for "Nadeshiko Action" and the comfort women issue.

I wish a new year and a new era will bring all of us, regardless of race or nationality, hope, happiness and harmony!

(Yumiko Yamamoto, president of the grassroots civil group "Nadeshiko Action," also known as "Japanese Women for Justice and Peace.")