

BLHRRRI and Anti-Discrimination Education*

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THE BURAKU LIBERATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE (BLRI) was established in 1968 in cooperation with the Buraku Liberation League with the aim of eliminating all forms of discrimination in Japan including *Buraku* discrimination, and strengthening human rights in society. In July 1998, it changed its name to Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute (BLHRRRI).¹

Buraku Discrimination

The establishment of the BLHRRRI was set against an environment of continuing discrimination against a section of the Japanese population called the *Buraku* people:²

Buraku people are a Japanese social minority group, ethnically and linguistically indistinguishable from other Japanese people. They face discrimination in Japan because of an association with work once considered impure, such as butchering animals or tanning leather. In particular, they often have trouble finding marriage partners or employment.

Present-day Buraku discrimination is primarily based on whether a person lives in a Buraku neighborhood, or whether her or his parents are from such a neighborhood. This means that it is possible for people with no connection to the Tokugawa outcaste status to be labeled as Buraku and face anti-Buraku discrimination. It is even possible for a family to unknowingly move into an historically Buraku neighborhood and, unbeknownst to them, become Buraku. The stigmatized category of Buraku, which is based first and foremost on an individual's family lin-

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eage and occupation, has come also to depend on one's family address.

This discrimination against a section of the Japanese population became known as the Buraku issues (or *Dowa mondai* in Japanese, Dowa issues in English).

With pressure coming from the Buraku Liberation League and other anti-discrimination groups in the 1960s, various measures were adopted by the Japanese government in addressing the Buraku issues. The measures started with the 1965 Cabinet Dowa Policy Council proposals. The Council stated that the³

so-called Buraku issues are the most serious and important social problem, in that certain parts of the Japanese population have been placed in inferior status in economic, social, and cultural terms, because of discrimination on the basis of the hierarchical class structure that was formed in the process of the historical development of Japanese society; that they continue to be subject to extreme violations of fundamental human rights even in today's society; and that, in particular, they cannot enjoy complete protection of civil rights and freedoms, which are to be guaranteed for all as a principle of modern society.

The Council concluded that it is "the responsibility of the State" as well as a "national challenge" to ensure the "urgent solution" of Buraku issues.

This was followed by a series of legal measures starting with the 1969 Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects for the improvement of the conditions of Buraku people's lifestyles and their communities. A five-year Regional Improvement Special Measures Law was enacted in 1982 and was extended several times, with the last extension ending in 2002.

However, "partly due to inadequate efforts for awareness-raising" among the non-Japanese communities these "projects and the services and funds they have provided have resulted in a sense of 'jealousy'" or reverse discrimination.⁴ They also gave a sense that the Buraku discrimination has disappeared.

In 2010s, further calls for action against discrimination in Japan led to the enactment of laws against discrimination⁵ including a law against Buraku discrimination.

The Act on the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination was enacted by the Japanese Diet (Parliament) on 9 December 2016. The law aims “to set out the basic principles for elimination of Buraku discrimination, to clarify the responsibilities of the national government and local governments, and to set out enhancement of a consultation system, thereby to promote the elimination of Buraku discrimination and to realize a society free from Buraku discrimination.” (Article 1)⁶

But this law failed to penalize acts that discriminate against Buraku people.⁷ Also, the United Nations’ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in its 2018 Concluding Observations on the combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports of Japan, recommended to the Japanese government to⁸

1. Adopt a clear definition of Burakumin in consultation with the Buraku people;
2. Identify discrimination against Burakumin as discrimination based on descent.

The Committee was also concerned about the absence of information on resources allocated to implement the law in the report of the Japanese government. (Paragraph 19).

Persistent Discrimination

In 2020, the Japanese government made public its study of the situation of Buraku discrimination based on Article 6 of the Act on the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination. The government report for the first time used the words “Dowa issue” and defined *Burakumin*:⁹

Dowa issue is a human rights problem particular in our country, whereby a particular group of Japanese nationals have been, for a long time, forced to be in a economically and socially inferior position due to the class discrimination system established in the historical process in Japanese society and discriminated against in daily life, e.g. at the time of employment or marriage, because of the fact that they are from Dowa districts, where Buraku people were forced to reside.

This government report concluded that¹⁰

[a]lthough certain progress is made in the promotion of correct understanding among population about Buraku discrimination, prejudice and discriminatory attitude still remain. There is a possibility that these prejudice and attitude are contributing to the discrimination in marriage and relationship. Furthermore, one of the characteristics of the increasing discrimination in the Internet is that certain websites are focusing on the provision of information that assist identification of Buraku people, including location of Buraku districts, as well as [slander and libel] them.

Internet-based discrimination against the Buraku people is illustrated in two cases, as explained below:¹¹

An individual using a blog site named “Tottori Loop” has been violating the right [to] privacy of a number of persons by publishing private information in the internet, in particular targeting Buraku people. In 2016, based on the information found in the records stored in the National Library, the Tottori Loop has tried to publish a book compiling location and the name of all Buraku districts, which was then suspended by Yokohama District Court following complaint filed by the Buraku Liberation League that publication of such information would violate the right of Buraku people to their privacy, whereby making them extremely vulnerable to discrimination. However, Tottori Loop made all the information public by uploading on its blog site. Against the action of the Tottori Loop, and with the lack of anti-discrimination legislation in Japan, Buraku Liberation League has filed a civil court case at Tokyo District Court in 2016 demanding ... the deletion of information from the website and compensation for the damages caused by the violation of the privacy. In 2021, the Tokyo District Court judged it as the violation of privacy and ordered for (partial) compensation for damage. However, till now, the information is still available on the Tottori Loop’s site.

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In 2021, an administrative scrivener opened a website on the Internet and advertised the acquisition of family register information as his business. 55 research companies applied

for the service, and he sold 3,500 cases for over 70 million yen. One of the victims accused the police of violating the Family Registration Law because of the background checks conducted, which triggered an investigation, and the administrative scrivener was arrested and fined (September 2021). There has been no end to the practice of asking lawyers, administrative scriveners, and other professionals with national licenses to obtain family registry information. The lawyers and others have not admitted to violating the Family Registration Law, claiming that it is legitimate business.

Human Rights Education

At the national level, the Japanese government enacted in 2000 the Law on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-Raising (LPHREA).¹² This was followed by the adoption of the National Basic Plan in 2002. In the following year, 2003, the government created the Committee on Human Rights Education.

Regarding Japanese government efforts on human rights education in relation to racial discrimination, the 2020 report of the Japan NGO Network for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ERD Net) states:¹³

The national education curriculum does not have any item on the elimination of racial discrimination.

Currently, nothing is taught at school about minorities in Japan, their history, language or culture, or cases of discrimination against them (CCPR/C/JPN/7, para 29).

The awareness raising campaign of the Ministry of Justice is nothing more than merely conveying a message “Don’t allow hate speech” in general. Civil society organisations have requested the Ministry that such message should be sent out to specific cases, for example, when groundless discriminatory accusations are made after a disaster saying that “Koreans are the perpetrator”. However, the Ministry remains silent, whereby avoiding to specify cases, and therefore the impact of the campaign remains quite minimum (CCPR/C/JPN/7, para 30).

No specific training is carried out for public prosecutors, judges or police officers regarding racial discrimination in Japan including hate speech in general, or training to increase their capacity to identify cases of discrimination. There are still many police officers who are deployed at the site of hate dem-

onstrations but do not know anything about the Hate Speech Elimination Act.

Civil society organisations have been asking the government about what kind of trainings are carried out with regard to hate speech, and what kind of programme, materials and trainers are provided. However, no answer has been given so far (CCPR/C/JPN/7, paras. 31-32).

BLHRRI Support for Human Rights Education: Brief Background

In mid-1990s, BLHRRI promoted human rights education in line with the United Nations (UN) Decade for Human Rights Education (UN Decade) in Japan through various activities.¹⁴

It was the first organization to translate and publish basic documents concerning the UN Decade in Japanese language. It published, along with its associate organizations, “Japanese translations of the ‘World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy,’ the UN General Assembly resolution to declare the start of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, its Plan of Action and Guidelines for National Plans of Action.”¹⁵

BLHRRI also periodically organized series of seminars on the UN Decade. In September 2000, BLHRRI made its own plan of action for the UN Decade.¹⁶

These efforts led to the formation of the “Liaison Committee for the Promotion of the Decade ... through joint efforts among Buraku Liberation League, the Japan Teachers Union, the National Dowa Education Research Council and the National Liaison Council for Rimpokan (community centers in Buraku districts) as a nation-wide non-governmental center to systematically monitor government efforts and raise opinions and proposals to the government.”¹⁷

After the UN Decade ended, the BLHRRI supported the proposal for the adoption of a second UN Decade for human rights education. The UN decided to adopt the World Programme for Human Rights Education in 2005, which the BLHRRI likewise supported.¹⁸

It started researching in 2005 on human rights and Japanese companies. The research named “Analysis of Corporations and Human Rights in CSR Reports” was also done in 2006 and 2009. In 2009, the research found weak mention of human rights in the corporate social responsibility reports of the companies. The research found, among others, that the “use of fair, non-

discriminatory staff recruitment selection process was hardly mentioned,” and the “activities promoting respect for human rights were generally weak and the companies involved were mainly small businesses.”¹⁹

The survey results echoed the discriminatory acts of companies against Buraku people in 1970s. They provided the need for BLHRRRI to further develop its human rights education program for company officers and staff.

BLHRRRI’s advocacy for the enactment of law against Buraku discrimination started in 1985 when the Buraku Liberation League initiated the campaign for the enactment of the Basic Bill for Buraku Liberation and the activities of the movement to enact municipal ordinances and declarations were undertaken nationwide.

BLHRRRI established the Anti-Discrimination Law Study Group in September 2013, the year that it became a general incorporated association. With the aim of enacting anti-discrimination laws in Japan, this study group looked into the implementation of anti-discrimination laws in other countries and sorted out issues for domestic legislation.

Programs and Activities: 2021 Plan

With the COVID-19 pandemic having a great impact on daily life, BLHRRRI launched the Research Institute Review Project in 2021 as proposed at the 2020 Annual General Meeting.

The project specifically studied (1) what the investigation and research department structure should be, (2) how the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights University course and human rights enlightenment Tokyo course should be undertaken, (3) how to hold lectures and meetings, (4) how to disseminate information, and (5) corporate management and systems.

The discussions under the review project resulted in holding various lectures and meetings in 2022 that combined face-to-face and online sessions in light of the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

In 2021, the study groups in each Division researched on a number of issues as reported at the 11th Annual General Meeting in the following year (2022):

1. Investigative Research on Buraku History - 1st Research Division (headed by Akihito Hakka)

- a. Study Group on the Life History of Kawatamura in Osaka has been working on the data conversion and analysis of the contents of the Takeda Family Documents of the Shindo Village, Ishikawa District, Kawachi Province.
 - b. The Korean Hyongpyongsa Movement History Research Group continued to transcribe papers and historical materials related to the Chosun Hyongpyongsa, which was organized by Baekjong, the discriminated people in Korea, with the aim of abolishing discrimination. In addition, a joint study group between Japan and South Korea was held online.
 - c. As a result of the Suiheisha 100 Years Study Group to verify the 100-year history of Suiheisha, *Buraku Problems in Modern and Contemporary Japan* (3 volumes) was published by Kaiho Publishing in March 2022. In addition, two public lectures were held.
2. Survey of Sexual/Gender Discrimination Structures – 2nd Research Division (headed by Mayumi Taniguchi)

The Division organized and analyzed relevant UN resolutions, statements, general opinions, concluding observations, and opinions, and related literature and materials from the viewpoint of the structure of gender discrimination.

The results of the study were published as a special feature in *Buraku Liberation Studies*, No. 216 entitled “Consideration of UN Documents and Possibilities for their Utilization.”

3. Research on Human Rights Education and Enlightenment - 3rd Research Division (headed by Minoru Mori)

The Literacy and Adult Basic Education Study Group organized the documentation of the Osaka Literacy Project (video recording of people involved in literacy classes), which started in 2015. The group considered utilization of the documentation produced.

It held a field survey of a literacy class in Wakayama City and continued the work on the serialization of “Bearers of the Literacy Movement Talk” in BLHRRI monthly magazine *Human Rights* (from January 2021 issue).

In addition, the review of the survey form and participants in the “National Literacy Class Survey” continued after a one-year postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A study session on the topic “From the Sayama New Evidence Analysis - Perceiving the Sayama Case from the Standpoint of Development of Literacy Research” was held both in person and on-line in February 2022.

The Social Work and Education Study Group held four online study sessions to discuss how school education and community education should collaborate.

4. Research on Anti-Discrimination Law - 4th Research Division (headed by Hirofumi Uchida)

This Division aims to examine comprehensive anti-discrimination bills and to follow trends and issues in individual anti-discrimination laws. It regularly held joint research meetings with discriminated people and related parties such as persons with disabilities, Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer (LGBTQ), foreigners, Ainu, suicide survivors, Hansen disease victims, Minamata disease victims, people living with HIV, people with physical appearance problem and Buraku people.

Based on the content of the report, the “Act on the Realization of Nondiscriminatory Equality for All (Draft),” a Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Bill was drafted and publicly disseminated, along with other relevant materials.

To promote the draft bill, members of the Division participated in lectures and meetings organized by groups of people and support-

ers related to Hansen disease, persons with disabilities, bereaved families of persons who committed suicide, and Minamata disease issues.

5. Research on Social Exclusion - 5th Research Division (headed by Hiroyuki Fukuhara)

This Division researched on how an inclusive society should be established based on the revised Social Welfare Law and the Law for Supporting the Self-Reliance of the Poor. It undertook a research that examined the role of the Rimpokan as a place of learning under a Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research project of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. As part of this, a survey targeting Rimpokan and local governments nationwide was held from November to December 2021.

6. Research on Buraku Discrimination - 6th Research Division (headed by Suehiro Kitaguchi).

This Division has several study groups. The Internet and Buraku Discrimination Study Group dwells on the current status and issues of Buraku discrimination on the Internet, and organizes public study groups for the purpose of considering ways of dealing with the issues. The Monitoring Organization Network Meeting is held as a forum for information exchange among organizations conducting monitoring surveys in various regions. In addition, in November 2021, the Division undertook a “survey [of monitoring organizations] on the implementation status of deletion requests regarding any ‘indication of identification information on Dowa districts’ on the Internet.”

The Study Group on Social Security System promotes research and study on the role of Rimpokan in light of trends in social welfare, support for the needy, and other legal systems aimed at “realization of a community-based symbiotic society” promoted by the government. As part of this effort, the Division members participated in the 3rd National Exchange and Research Conference for Rimpokan

Projects and the 8th National Research and Exchange Conference on Self-Support for the Needy, both of which were held online. In conducting this study group, the Division also collaborated with the Buraku Liberation League Central Headquarters and the Rimpokan Liaison Council.

In the Research and Study of Advanced Cases of Local Autonomous Governments for the Specific Implementation of the Law for the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination section, the contents of local ordinances for the elimination of discrimination against persons with disabilities (Shiga Prefecture Ordinance for a Symbiotic Society Without Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and Kumamoto City Ordinance for a Common Life for People With and Without Disabilities) and Buraku ordinances, etc., (Kumamoto Prefecture Ordinance for the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination and Yao City Basic Policy for the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination), the structure of consultation services based on these ordinances, and the trend of comprehensive ordinances for elimination of discrimination (Ordinance to Eliminate Discrimination and Create a Mie City where Human Rights are Respected), were investigated through on-site visits and online interviews.

In addition, the Division commissioned two surveys (Tottori Prefecture Survey on Problems of Buraku Residents and Yuasa Town Survey on Lifestyles Related to Buraku Discrimination [Dowa Issue]) to examine measures to eliminate Buraku discrimination in local governments, etc. For the Tottori survey, the Division analyzed and discussed the survey results together with the Buraku Liberation League Tottori Prefectural Federation.

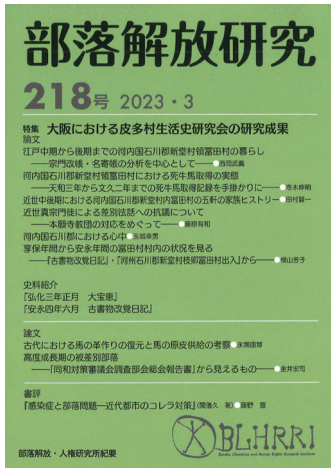
The activities of the Education and Training Division are related to the research programs of the six Divisions which provide lectures and publications.

Research Results Dissemination

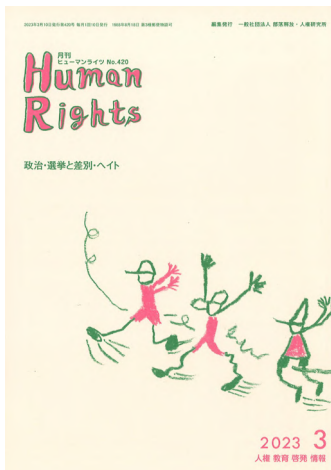
The results of research studies are disseminated as published materials. They are included in BLHRI publications such as *Buraku Liberation Studies*.

For the research studies done in 2021, the *Buraku Liberation Studies* covered the following topics:

1. No. 215 - Special Feature: "Human Rights vs. Neo-Liberalism" Regarding the Literacy Movement, Research Section: Research on Human Rights Education and Awareness;
2. No.216-Special Feature1 "Aiming to Enact a Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law," Research Division 4 "Survey and Research on Anti-Discrimination Law," Special Feature 2 "Consideration of UN Documents and Possibility of Utilization," Research Division 2 "Investigative Research on the Structure of Gender Discrimination."



Buraku Liberation Studies No. 218, March 2023 (Photo taken from BLHRI website)



Human Rights, issue 420, March 2023
(Photo taken from BLHRI website)

The research results occasionally appear also in the monthly magazine called *Human Rights* (ヒューマンライツ). This publication is a human rights information magazine that features initiatives in fighting various forms of discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion, and aims to realize an inclusive society where human rights are respected.

Training Activities

BLHRI has been organizing training activities for different sectors of society since the 1970s after the enactment of the Special Measures Law in 1969.

Main Training Courses

BLHRRI organized the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights University Course (Liberation University) in 1974 with the aim of training people who can help address various human rights issues in companies, governments, and society.

Describing the learning process with the catchphrase “encounter, discovery, impression” (出会い・発見・感動), the Course provides lectures, workshops, fieldwork guided by lecturers and members of active minority groups, and self-development learning on human rights issues using small group format. Participants are also required to submit written assignments and research reports.²⁰

The Liberation University course is a twenty-four-day course spread over seven-to-nine months. In 2021, fifty-seven trainees from companies, local governments, universities, NGOs, etc., especially in Osaka prefecture joined the course.

The training course began to be held online in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the Course started in 1974, more than 5,500 people from about four hundred organizations (local governments, companies, non-profit organizations [NPOs], etc.) have taken the Course.²¹

BLHRRI started the Human Rights Training Tokyo Course in 1989 to develop human rights leaders in companies, governments and society in response to a request for a course in Tokyo similar to the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights University Course. This is a twelve-day basic course on human rights that emphasizes experience and interaction with a diverse team of about twenty instructors who are active in the front lines of their respective fields.

A network of companies headquartered in Tokyo that focuses on human rights issues sends participants to the Course.

2021-2022 Training Courses

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, BLHRRI held the 117th “Buraku Liberation and Human Rights University Course” (twenty four days) and the 34th “Human Rights Training Tokyo Course” (twelve days) jointly online from 30 June to 6 October in 2021 for Tokyo Course and 30 June to 17 February 2022 for University Course. Lectures were recorded and made

available online to the participants.²² Table 1 below lists the content of the joint courses.

Table 1. 117th Buraku Liberation and Human Rights University Course and 34th Human Rights Training Tokyo Course*, Joint Program in 2021.

Day	9:45~11:30	13:00~14:45	15:15~17:00
1	Workshop opening	Human rights and the Constitution	Buraku issue today
2	Businesses and human rights	Social system that eliminates discrimination	
3	Dowa and human rights administration	Privileges of majorities	
4	Buraku discrimination in daily life	Buraku history (pre-modern times)	
5	Discriminatory posthumous names	Buraku history (modern and contemporary)	
6	Dowa and human rights education	Buraku liberation movement	Buraku Issues - my experiences
7	Workplace harassment issues	Media and Human Rights in the age of SNS	
8	Persons with disabilities and work	Youth (sex education issues)	Hate speech and fake news
9	Hansen's disease and human rights	LGBT-friendly workplace	Homeless problem
10	Discrimination against Asians during COVID-19 pandemic	Human rights of children	Photographs tell the world and Japan
11	Couple's surname issue	Sex crimes and sexual violence	Physical appearance problem
12	Foreign residents in Japan including Koreans	HIV/AIDS problem	Human rights enlightenment
13	Gender and human rights	Report from the field (Suiheisha Museum)	Right to work for persons with disabilities
14	Human Rights of Migrant Workers	Report from field (IMADR UN office)	COVID-19 and Human Rights
15	Group seminar		
16	Group seminar		
17	Group seminar		
18	Information and human rights	Report from field (Buraku district)	Basics of human rights training
19	Justice and human rights	Report from field (Kamagasaki district)	Basics of human rights counseling
20	Group seminar		
21	Group seminar		
22	Group seminar		
23	Report presentation (group)	Report presentation (group)	
24	Report presentation (plenary)	Commemorative Lecture	Completion ceremony

* The Human Rights Training Tokyo Course is from Day 1 to Day 12



Workshop during the 118th Buraku Liberation and Human Rights University Course (Photo courtesy of BLHRRI)

Collaboration with Other Groups and Institutions

BLHRRI is also collaborating with other groups and institutions such as the Buraku Liberation League, its local chapters, other human rights organizations and local governments. It has been collaborating with different groups in holding the human rights courses below.

Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Koyasan Summer Course

The Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Koyasan Summer Course started in 1970. This Summer Course is held every August for three days at Mt. Koya, a mountain devoted to Buddhism 1,200 years ago. The training activities are held in the facilities of the Buddhist sect called the Shingon Esoteric Buddhism.²³

The Course offers basic study of human rights and thematic sub-courses on discriminated Buraku, people with disabilities, discrimination against foreigners, sex discrimination, Hansen disease and human rights, and structural discrimination in Okinawa, etc. See Table 2 for an example of course content.

Table 2. Program of the 52nd Koyasan Summer Course (2021)²⁴

Lecture topic	Speaker
Lecture 1 Significance and Issues of the 'National Buraku Survey' Case Trial Struggle	Akiyuki Kataoka (Executive Vice Chairperson, Buraku Liberation League Central; Federation Chairperson, Buraku Liberation League Saitama Prefecture)
Lecture 2 Let's update our knowledge of human rights!	Mayumi Taniguchi (Legal scholar, visiting associate professor, Osaka University of Arts)
Lecture 3 Introduction to Buraku Problems - A Key Point to Understanding Buraku Problems	Hitoshi Okuda (Professor Emeritus, Kinki University)
Lecture 4 Basic Medical Law - Thinking about COVID-19 disaster	Yoji Kobayashi (Lawyer, Secretary General of the Society for Creating Patient Rights Law)
Lecture 5 Aiming for an inclusive society where people with disabilities can live together - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Disability Discrimination Elimination Law, Barrier-Free Law	Satoshi Sato (Secretary General, DPI Japan National Assembly)
Lecture 6 Japan's Foreigner Problem -Thinking from Historical Perspective and Current Situation of Koreans in Japan	Hiroyuki Park (Chairperson, NPO Multiethnic Human Rights Education Center)
Lecture 7 What is the difficulty of men's lives? - Thinking from the Ryukyu Shimpo's gender awareness survey on the International Men's Day	Hana Kuroda (Reporter, Living News Group, Editorial Bureau, Ryukyu Shimposha) Nanase Kodashiro (Reporter, Digital Editing Group, Ryukyu Shimposha)
Lecture 8 The Hansen disease problem is not over yet	Megumi Kato (Coordinator of Hansen's Disease Recovery Person Support Center, Social Welfare Organization Saiseikai Osaka Prefectural Branch)
Eliminating discrimination and prejudice, living normally - my experience	Seikichi Miyara (Chairperson, Plaintiffs' Association of Hansen's Disease Kansai Retirees)
Lecture 9 Thinking about abuse and discrimination against persons with disabilities	Kazuhiro Nozawa (Vice President, Uekusa Gakuen University, Visiting Editor of <i>Mainichi Shimbun</i>)
Lecture 10 Resistance - Athletes Who Fought Discrimination	Koichi Yasuda (non-fiction writer)
Special project - online fieldwork History of Mt. Koya - Focusing on equality and discrimination	Hiroyoshi Kinoshita (Former Chief of the Academic Institution, Koyasan University, Joint Researcher; Historiographical Institute, The University of Tokyo)



Plenary session, 50th Buraku Liberation Human Rights Summer Lecture [Matsushita Auditorium Reimeikan] (Photo courtesy of BLHRRI)

About 1,300 people from various fields such as education, religion and governance, and companies and human rights groups participate in the Koyasan Summer Course every year in recent years. With the online course, there were 1,173 participants in 2021.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 52nd Summer Course was held as an online course from 20 August to 3 September 2021. The 2021 Koyasan Summer Course program focused on Buraku discrimination and other human rights issues in Japanese society relating to women, non-Japanese residents, persons with disabilities, people suffering from sickness (COVID-19, Hansen disease), athletes, as well as gender and medical issues.

Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Summer Course in West Japan

The Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Summer Course in West Japan started in 1976. The first Course was held in Kochi prefecture in the same year. From 1996, the Course not only focused on Buraku issues but on a wide range of human rights issues. It started to be held at different venues every year in each prefecture in western Japan. The Course has a two-day schedule in June or July each year.²⁵

BLHRRI plans the Course program and operates the secretariat of this Course, while various organizations at the venue form an executive commit-

tee for the Course. The participants are mainly government and company officials inside and outside the prefectures where the course is held.



Plenary session, 44th Buraku Liberation and Human Rights West Japan Summer Course (Kagawa) (Photo courtesy of BLHRII)

In 2021, the Course was held online with 1,712 participants.

Human Rights and Dowa Issues Corporate Awareness Course

In 1975, the first *Buraku Chimei Sokan* or Directory of Buraku Districts was found. It contained information on Buraku community locations, number of households, major occupations, etc. throughout the country. It was published by a private detective agency and sold to companies that wanted to inquire into the background of job applicants, and to people who wanted to know the background of their future spouse. Since then, ten different types of Buraku lists were found, published by private detective agencies. In atonement for purchasing the lists, some companies formed industrial federations to commit themselves to solving the Buraku and other human rights issues.

Considering the actual situation of employment discrimination in the 1970s, national organizations, local governments, economic organizations, and human rights-related organizations formed an executive committee to cooperate in holding human rights lectures. This led to the establishment

of an educational course for corporations on the theme of discrimination and human rights issues, including fair employment selection and the Dowa issue in 1980. This was called Human Rights and Dowa Issues Corporate Awareness Course.

This Course focuses on human rights issues involving companies, changes in the legal system and the Dowa issue. It is held twice every year from September to November.

The 41st Human Rights and Dowa Issues Corporate Awareness Course was held in 2020. The 42nd Human Rights and Dowa Issues Corporate Awareness Course was held on 14 October – 12 November 2021 and dealt with a number of issues including online bullying, Buraku parents-children relationship, rights of patients and health care workers, energy use and human rights, single parents and the pandemic, and employment of persons with disabilities. See Table 3 for the content of the 42nd Human Rights and Dowa Issues Corporate Awareness Course.

Table 3. 42nd Human Rights and Dowa Issues Corporate Awareness Course Program²⁶

Lecture topic	Issue	Speaker
Part 1, Lecture 1 Mechanism, data and appropriate preventive measures against online bullying	Rising cases of discrimination against people infected with COVID-19, and online bullying in 2020 exceeded 1,400 cases. Regarding this kind of internet slander, we will consider (1) the reality of who writes and why, (2) how we can prevent and deal with it, and (3) appropriate countermeasures as a society.	Shinichi Yamaguchi (Associate Professor, Global Communication Center, International University)
Part 1, Lecture 2 Mother and daughter query on Buraku discrimination	Prejudice and discriminatory consciousness learned in life may affect loved ones. Separation of people due to the pandemic shows the importance of relationships and connections.	Kaori Sakata (Chairperson, Buraku Liberation League Yonago City Council, Representative of "Taking Jinken Route")
Part 1, Lecture 3 COVID-19 Measures Based on Guarantee of Human Rights of Patients and Healthcare Professionals	The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the lack of human rights guarantee for patients and health workers in the country. There is a need to learn from the lessons of the "Leprosy Prevention Law" that caused various human rights violations for Hansen disease patients and their families, and to think together on COVID-19 measures that should be based on the human rights protection of patients and health workers.	Yukio Okada (Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kumamoto University)

Part 1, Lecture 4 Creating a future where energy use protects human rights	Energy use has a history of trampling on human rights. Exploitation and wars occur in oil-producing countries and regions, and the nuclear accident deprived people of living safely and having safe hometowns. Climate change is causing many disasters in developing countries with low carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions and is robbing the future of the next generations on the planet. It is necessary to change the way energy is used for a future in which human rights are protected.	Mayumi Fujikawa (Chairperson, NPO Ueda Citizen Energy)
Part 2, Lecture 1 I want to eliminate online bullying, while thinking of a gentle world that we have hoped for	When I lost my beloved daughter, Hana, I was in a situation where I lost my heart. Many people have said that they have to deal with online bullying, and the law is about to change little by little. I don't want anyone to become a victim or a perpetrator anymore. I want to do my best to get closer to a gentle world that my daughter, Hana, has hoped for. That is also the reason for my life.	Kyoko Kimura (NPO Remember HANA)
Part 2, Lecture 2 What I want to convey - Buraku issues and the realities	The reality of Buraku discrimination comes to light through daily consultation and support work. In the course of being involved in marriage problems of Buraku youth that are not (or cannot be) revealed, Buraku youth who are made to believe that being a Buraku is equivalent to a negative existence meet "their own important Buraku." I would like to tell you about the process and what I myself have questioned. I hope it can give you an opportunity to think about what the Buraku means to me (and what it means to you).	Norio Takahashi (Secretary General, NPO Human Rights Center Nagano)
Part 2, Lecture 3 Single mothers and their children during COVID-19 pandemic - issues of support and other measures	Single mothers and their children are seriously hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which combined with previous problems of worsening employment, reduced income, and lack of food, clothing, and educational equipment. We will consider the current situation that has emerged from the emergency support efforts, issues related to support and other measures, and the risk of domestic violence and abuse of mothers and children, which is a concern in the legislation for co-parenting and joint custody.	Chieko Akaishi (Chairperson, NPO Single Mothers Forum)
Part 2, Lecture 4 Employment of people with disabilities amidst diverse work styles and human resources	The spread of COVID-19 brought about rapid changes not only in the medical field but also in the way we work, live, and get involved. In an era of diverse lifestyles, we focus on people with disabilities and the means of working with diverse human resources.	Hitoshi Kuroki (Section Chief, Employment Department, Peach Aviation Co., Ltd.)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 42nd Courses in 2021 were held on-line that made them accessible from anywhere in the country.²⁷ A total of eight hundred sixty-five people participated in the two sessions (four hundred thirty-two in the first session and four hundred thirty-three in the second session).

In implementing human rights education projects, BLHRRI collaborates with the Buraku Liberation League prefectural federations along with government and non-governmental institutions.

Human Rights Training and Research Assembly

BLHRRI organized the Human Rights Training and Research Assembly in 1987 with participants from different parts of Japan to exchange human rights training experiences and develop research plans. The Assembly is a forum for learning specific human rights and human rights awareness practices for a wide range of people (officials of the government offices, company officers and employees, officials of religious organizations, NPO workers, labor union officers and members, those from various organizations and discriminated parties, along with educators and citizens) with the themes of discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion.

The Assembly was first held in Osaka in 1987 and was held every year since then in different parts of the country. An average of two to three thousand people attend the Assembly each year.

The Assembly is also a two-day annual research meeting. It has been held in different venues nationwide. The BLHRRI is in charge of program planning and management of the secretariat, while various organizations at the venue of the Assembly form an executive committee for the event. It is held during January to February period each year.



33rd Human Rights Awareness Research Meeting (Niigata) (Photo courtesy of BLHRRI)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 Assembly was held online with 2,016 participants.

Commissioned Projects

BLHRRI has been acting as secretariat of several human rights promotion initiatives such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Osaka Liaison Conference, the Tomohiko Harada Memorial Foundation, and the Citizens Action Committee which calls for the enactment of anti-discrimination laws. As secretariat, BLHRRI organizes the activities of these initiatives and disseminates their information through the social media such as Facebook.

It also organizes the “Mass Media Roundtable” and the “New Year Mass Media Human Rights Conference” and aimed at raising the awareness of human rights issues, including the Buraku issue, of members of the mass media.

Under the Meat Industry/Meat Labor Project, BLHRRI in cooperation with the Osaka City Nanko Market recruited school teachers to take part in meetings on reports about meat industry/meat industry labor and human rights, and in the market tour. The activities were aimed at eliminating discrimination and prejudice against the meat industry and meat laborers through school education.

Reactions of Participants

There is as yet no comprehensive assessment of the different human rights education courses offered by BLHRRI, including the sessions held online since 2020. However, the comments of some participants in different sessions of the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights University Course before the COVID-19 pandemic provide an indication on how the people appreciate the courses:

Before taking the course, I thought that I would rarely have the opportunity to directly encounter human rights issues. But through fieldwork and presentations of instructors, I learned that there were people around me who worried about various human rights issues beyond my imagination. I strongly recognized also that I was blessed with a variety of fellow students and advisors with a wealth of knowledge and experience, and I was able to gain a lot of understanding [of the issues] and spent

meaningful time with them. In addition to the knowledge and ideas gained from the University, I would like to continue to have a high sensitivity to the human rights issues that I have cultivated and will continue cultivating it by bringing it back to the workplace.

—oOo—

Through my studies at Liberation University, I renewed my awareness that human rights issues are not “things that have nothing to do with me” but “things that have something to do with me” in my daily life. In addition, I was able to realize that human rights issues are involved in various situations and that they manifest themselves clearly when I am aware of them. Having friends to exchange frank opinions with was also an irreplaceable source of food [for the mind] in my life. I am grateful for the valuable opportunity that made me feel from the bottom of my heart that I was really glad I took the course.

—oOo—

Many curriculums on human rights issues have given me confidence and knowledge as a human rights officer. Also, by studying in a group of people of different ages and occupations, I realized the diversity in society. In learning through self-reflection, I learned the importance of interacting with people by having time to face myself and talking with the people in the group. I feel that I have completed the course in no time. However, the exchanges continue, and we talk and exchange information heatedly as we [as participants] did back then.

—oOo—

In the course, I learned various knowledge and ideas from a wide range of fields. Every time I noticed something new, I felt that I myself changed little by little. In learning through self-reflection, I had the opportunity to face the past. Through discussions within the group, I think I was able to reconsider myself as a human being. My days at the university were a big turning point for me. I would like to continue to cherish as a fortune what I have learned there.

An evaluation of the online sessions of the BLHRRRI human rights education program can reveal other aspects about the Courses that can help improve content and process of learning human rights.

Future Plans

The 2021 Research Institute Review Project provides the future plans of the BLHRRRI on human rights education. Below are highlights of the project report regarding future plans.

In 2016, laws on the elimination of discrimination against persons with disabilities, hate speech and Buraku discrimination were enacted one after another. In addition, the Basic Law on the Hansen's Disease Issue and the Law for the Promotion of Ainu Policies were also enacted which deal with elimination of discrimination against Hansen's disease sufferers and the Ainu. However, awareness of these laws is still low, and the efforts of local governments on this task (awareness-raising) are highly uneven. The responsibility for the dissemination of information as required by law has been neglected. There are local governments that have no offices on human rights matters, consultation services on discrimination issues, or even policies and plans for human rights education and awareness-raising.

Meanwhile, discrimination against minorities, such as slander and defamation on the Internet, is getting worse with the advancement of information technology. In addition, it has become more difficult than ever to speak out against discrimination, which is met by severe online bashing.

Ten years after the adoption of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Japanese government has compiled an action plan, and in December 2021, the Japan Business Federation revised Chapter 4: Respect for Human Rights of the Charter of Corporate Behavior and produced the *Handbook for Management Respecting Human Rights*.

2022 also marked the 45th anniversary of the corporate in-house human rights training promotion system for Dowa issues and the 25th anniversary of the Fair Recruitment Selection and Human Rights Enlightenment Promotion System which were both established in the wake of the *Buraku Chimei Sokan* (Directory of Buraku Districts) discrimination case.

Since the expiration of the laws on special measures, the work on the education on and realization of human rights has weakened. Some reported the increasing number of administrative staff and teachers who never stud-

ied Dowa issues or Dowa education, and did not know how to promote the administration of Dowa issues (for government officials) and Dowa education. It is feared that the disparity between those who are involved in such efforts and those who are unable or unwilling to undertake them will continue to widen.

From the perspective of valuing the views and voices of the discriminated people and addressing the issues in the anti-discrimination laws, the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, BLHRRI will continue to hold the human rights education activities in cooperation with the discriminated people, organizations working against discrimination, companies, religious organizations, educational institutions, government offices, and citizens working on the Dowa and human rights issues.

Endnotes

- 1 In 2013, BLHRRI became a general incorporated association under the new corporate registration system in Japan.
- 2 International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, www.imadr.org/sayama/buraku.html.
- What is Buraku?, BLHRRI, https://blhrri.org/old/blhrri_e/blhrri/buraku.htm.
- 3 Reality of Buraku Discrimination in Japan, https://blhrri.org/old/blhrri_e/Buraku_Reality/o2o.htm.
- 4 Reality of Buraku Discrimination in Japan, *ibid*.
- 5 One law that applies particularly to Korean residents in Japan is the Act on the Promotion of Efforts to Eliminate Unfair Discriminatory Speech and Behavior against Persons Originating from Outside Japan (Hate Speech Elimination Act) enacted in June 2016.
- 6 The Protection of Human Rights - Building a Century of Human Rights, Ministry of Justice, page 14, www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/HB/activities/pdf/booklet2019.pdf.
- 7 See the unofficial translation of the law into English at International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination (IMADR), <http://imadr.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Act-on-the-Promotion-of-the-Elimination-of-Buraku-Discrimination-2.pdf>.
- 8 The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations on the combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports of Japan, CERD/C/JPN/CO/10-11, 26 September 2018, www.mofa.go.jp/files/000406781.pdf.
- 9 Report prepared by the Buraku Liberation League that is incorporated in the Joint NGO Report for the Human Rights Committee in response to the List of Issues Prior to Reporting CCPR/C/JP/QPR/7, Japan NGO Network for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ERD Net), November 2020, pages 16-17.
- 10 ERD Net, *ibid*.
- 11 Part 3, Joint NGO Report for the Human Rights Committee in response to the List of Issues Prior to Reporting CCPR/C/JP/QPR/7, Japan NGO Network for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ERD Net), September 2022, pages 5-6.

- 12 The unofficial English version of the law, Act on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-Raising, Act No. 147” of 6 December 2000, is available at Japanese Law Translation, www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/en/laws/view/3097.
- 13 ERD Net, op. cit., page 13.
- 14 See Kenzo Tomonaga, “Towards the Creation of a HRs Culture in Every Field of Society. What Should We Do to Promote the ‘UN Decade (1995-2004)’?”, *Buraku Liberation News*, March 2000, No.113, https://blhrri.org/old/blhrri_e/news/new113/new11303.html.
- 15 Kenzo Tomonaga, The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education: Challenge for the Second Decade Reflecting the Evaluations of the First Decade, Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, September 2003, https://blhrri.org/old/blhrri_e/other/o10_e.html.
- 16 Tomonaga, The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education: Challenge for the Second Decade Reflecting the Evaluations of the First Decade, *ibid*.
- 17 Tomonaga, “Towards the Creation of a HRs Culture in Every Field of Society,” op. cit.
- 18 Kenzo Tomonaga, The Conclusion of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education and the Launching of the World Programme: Action in Japan, World Programme for Human Rights Education, 1st Quarterly, 2006 No. 139, https://blhrri.org/old/blhrri_e/news/new139/new139-1.htm.
- 19 Summary of BLHRRI surveys cited in Jefferson R. Plantilla, editor, *Bridging Human Rights Principles and Business Realities in Northeast Asia*, Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center and Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2014, pages 150-151.
- 20 Buraku Liberation and Human Rights University Course, Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, https://blhrri.org/about/keihatsu_daigaku.html.
- 21 Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, https://blhrri.org/about/keihatsu_daigaku.html (in Japanese).
- 22 Text based on 4) 人権人材育成事業、人権啓発事業の推進 (Promotion of human rights human resource development projects and human rights enlightenment projects).
- 23 This Buddhist sect was founded by Kobo Daishi, also known as Kukai, in the 9th century.
- 24 52nd Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Summer Course, Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, https://blhrri.org/lecture_event/lecture_shosai.php?event_no=267 (in Japanese).
- 25 Buraku Liberation West Japan Summer Course, Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, https://blhrri.org/about/keihatsu_nishinihon.html (in Japanese).
- 26 Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, https://blhrri.org/lecture_event/lecture_shosai.php?event_no=271 (in Japanese).
- 27 Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, https://blhrri.org/about/keihatsu_kigyo.html (in Japanese).