

Efforts at Eliminating Buraku Discrimination in the Religious Community in Osaka

Daishūren

IN 1979, at the Third Assembly of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP III), Rev. Soyuu Machida (President of Sotoshu Shumucho and Board Chairperson of the Japan Buddhist Federation) repeatedly made discriminatory remarks such as “there is no Buraku issue in Japan” and succeeded in having references to the Buraku issue removed from the WCRP III report (The Princeton Declaration of the Third World Assembly).¹

The discriminatory remarks incident prompted five confirmation meetings and denunciation meetings² targeting the religious community. These meetings highlighted the existence of “discriminatory Buddhist posthumous names”³ and “discriminatory publications,” as well as the fact that religious organizations had participated in discriminatory “background check.” This incident exposed the discriminatory tendencies inherent within the religious community and its vulnerability regarding historical and social awareness.

This became the catalyst for the formation in June 1981 of the nationwide “Dōshūren” or Federation of Religions on Dowa Issue, composed of religious organizations addressing Dowa issue (Buraku discrimination issue).

The following year, 1982, saw the establishment of the first prefectural federation, “Daishūren” or Osaka Federation of Religions on Dowa Issue. At its founding, the membership comprised twenty-four religious organizations and three groups, representing approximately 80 percent of Osaka’s religious organizations.

Following is the text of the founding statement presented during the inaugural general meeting held on 30 April 1982:

Founding Statement for the Inaugural General Meeting of Daishūren

The reality of discrimination against Buraku communities within the religious sphere has been starkly exposed amidst frequent discriminatory incidents. This fact serves as proof that discrimination against Buraku communities, rooted in the Edo period (17th to 19th century), has persisted as a structural problem within Japan's religious sphere, becoming institutionalized and perpetuated to this day. It cannot be denied that the majority of religious figures have not merely remained indifferent bystanders regarding the Buraku issue, but have rather been perpetrators who have no sense of guilt towards discrimination.

As stated in the regulations of the Dōshūren, "We recognize that without tackling Dowa issue, grounded in profound reflection and returning to the roots of religious teachings, we can no longer be considered religious figures in Japan." Through the universal human principles of freedom and equality, we must earnestly embrace the ultimate challenge of eliminating discrimination. Each religion must reflect upon its own nature from the very foundation of its faith (heart).

Fortunately, "Dōshūren" was formed, with nearly the entire Japanese religious community joining. It now encompasses fifty seven religious organizations and three federations.

Regardless of denomination, the urgent task is to advance the practice of elimination of Buraku discrimination, by reviewing organizational structures and examining doctrines.

Osaka, in particular, has consistently played a pioneering role in the Buraku liberation movement. Consequently, the religious community based in Osaka bears an exceptionally significant responsibility.

In response to the establishment of Dōshūren, "Daishūren" is hereby established. This federation aims to forge cross-cutting solidarity, transcending denominational boundaries, with the Dowa issue as its focal point.

The Regulations of Daishūren set forth the following provisions in Article 2 "Purpose" and Article 3 "Activities":

(Purpose) Article 2: "Daishūren" aims for religious organizations based in Osaka to return to the roots of their respective teachings and eliminate all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against Buraku people.

(Activities) Article 3: To achieve the purpose stated in the preceding article, "Daishūren" shall undertake the following activities:

- (1) Promoting the framework for member religious organizations' commitment to Dowa issue;
- (2) Conducting study meetings for mutual study and exchanging materials;
- (3) Undertaking other activities deemed necessary for achieving the purpose.

Since then, based on its founding principles, the purpose and activities outlined in its Regulations, Daishūren continued its activities for over forty years up to the present day.

Executive Structure of Daishūren

Regarding the executive structure, the “Chairing by Denomination” system was adopted at the time of establishment of Daishūren, with the chairing denomination assuming the roles of Chair and Secretariat. However, to reduce the burden on any denomination, the Chairing by Denomination system was abolished in 2019, transitioning to a structure separating the roles of Chair and Secretariat.

Concerning activities, the Planning and Training Department of Daishūren formulates the policies, while the Public Relations Department is responsible for editing Daishūren's official journal (*Daishūren*).

As of 2025, the affiliated members comprise of nineteen denominations and 1 organization: Izumo Taisha kyō, Ōmoto kyo, Kōyasan Shingon-shū, Konkōkyō, Jōdo-shū, Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, Shingon-shū Omuro-ha, Jinja Honchō, Shinshū Otani-ha, Shinshū Kōshō-ha, Shinshū Bukkōji-ha, Nishiyama Jōdo-shū, Sōtōshū, Tenrikyo, United Church of Christ in Japan, Nippon Sei-Ko-Kai (Anglican Episcopal Church in Japan), Nenpōshinkyo Kyōdan, Yūzū Nenbutsu Shū, Wa Shū, and the Shin Shū Ren Dōwa Suishin Renraku Kyōgikai.

Cooperation with Other Organizations

Daishūren shares information with affiliated religious organizations, and receives regular reports on their activities.

It maintains a cooperative framework with the Osaka Prefectural Federation of the Buraku Liberation League through information exchange and personnel communication, aimed at abolishing discrimination against

Buraku people. Its representatives attend meetings of various human rights organizations.

A representative of Daishūren serves as Chairperson of the Osaka Executive Committee for Resolving Dowa Issue and Establishing Human Rights Policies. At its central assembly, the committee assists efforts towards establishing human rights legislation, such as petitioning Diet members for the enactment of comprehensive human rights legislation.

In addition, Daishūren actively encourages its member-organizations to participate in the annual “Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Summer Seminar” held at Mount Kōya by the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, utilizing it as a broad platform for learning about human rights.

Activities of Daishūren

Since establishment, Daishūren positioned “field work,” “Buraku Liberation Study Assembly,” and “Basic Course” as pillars of its activities on anti-discrimination and human rights.

Furthermore, Daishūren implemented projects needed by society, including screenings of human rights-related films, panel exhibitions, campaigns such as the “Movement to Refuse Background Check,” and disaster relief support.

Its approach to awareness-raising is guided by the principles that “while upholding universal ideals that must be passed on, both the movement and its expression must evolve with societal change” and that “training required for religious practitioners involves creating spaces for confessing one’s own discrimination and building communities where such confessions can be heard.”

In recent years, while maintaining focus on returning to the founding principles of Daishūren and addressing the unresolved issue of Buraku discrimination, it also tackled various human rights challenges. This stems from the desire to cultivate a human rights consciousness that does not overlook latent forms of discrimination, extending beyond the issue of Buraku discrimination.

Below is a list of the central initiatives, the “Buraku Liberation Study Assembly” and fieldwork, followed by excerpts introducing their content drawn from all past activities. The titles or designations of lecturers in the

list were those held at the time the lectures were delivered in the study assembly.

Buraku Liberation Study Assemblies

The Buraku Liberation Study Assemblies focus primarily on Buraku discrimination while broadly addressing human rights issues, providing learning opportunities to cultivate human rights awareness. Fieldwork sessions involve guidance and lectures from local researchers and stakeholders, aiming to enable participants to tangibly experience the history of discrimination within the specific locality.

Table 1. Content of assemblies and fieldwork held from 2005 onward

2005

39th activity

Lecture - Motohiko Izawa, Writer, 'Why Discrimination Arises'

40th activity

Fieldwork - Site associated with the Shibuzome Uprising⁴, Okayama Prefecture

2006

41st activity

Lecture - Satoshi Kamata, Reportage Writer, "From Suicide Great Nation to Humanity Small Nation"

42nd activity

Lecture and Video showing - Satoshi Yasuda, "The Sayama Case"⁵

2007

43rd activity

Lecture - Kazuo Ishikawa, Sachiko Ishikawa, "The Truth of the Sayama Case"

44th activity

Fieldwork: Sayama City, Saitama Prefecture: Visiting the Site of the "Sayama Case"

2008

46th activity

Fieldwork - National Sanatorium Tamazenshoen, Tokyo, one of the National Hansen's Disease Sanatoriums, and Asakusa area

2009

47th activity

Lecture - Hitoshi Okuda (Professor, Kindai University Human Rights Research Institute), 'Discrimination Perceived: Why Avoid Buraku?'

48th activity

Fieldwork - Nagano Prefecture: Learning about Discriminatory Buddhist Posthumous Names

2010

49th activity

Lecture - Tamiō Yamanaka (Chairperson, Normalization Association) "Normalization and Buraku Liberation: Aiming for a Society Where We Live Together"

50th activity

Fieldwork - Shiraoi and Noboribetsu, Hokkaido: Learning about the History and Current Situation of the Ainu Indigenous People

2011

51st activity

Lecture - Kenji Nakao (Professor, Osaka Kyoiku University) "Hidden-in Chōri Documents: The People Called "Chōri" (discriminated against people in Edo period)"

52nd activity

Fieldwork - Saika and Negoro regions, Wakayama Prefecture: Learning about the history of the Saika and Negoro regions

2012

53rd activity

Reconstruction support for the "Great East Japan Earthquake": Screening of the documentary video "Antokino Inochi," and Panel Exhibition

54th activity

Fieldwork - Shingū City and Tanabe City, Wakayama Prefecture: Learning about the "Great Treason Incident" (The government accused a group of socialists and anarchists of treason in 1910–1911)

55th activity

30th Anniversary Commemorative Project for the Formation of Daishūren

Lecture - Kenzo Tomonaga (Board of Directors, Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute), "Learning from the 90-Year Journey of the Declaration of Suiheisha⁶ and Buraku Liberation Movement"

2013

56th activity

Fieldwork - Takahama Town and Obama City, Fukuji Prefecture: Nuclear Power Plants and Human Rights

2014

57th activity

Screening of the Documentary video "SAYAMA: Until the Invisible Handcuffs Are Removed"

58th activity

Fieldwork - Chiran Town, Kagoshima Prefecture: Chiran Peace Museum

59th activity

Screening of Documentary video "The Story of a Butcher's Shop,"

Talk - Shinji Kitade, Owner of Kitade Butcher's Shop

2015

60th activity

Fieldwork - Iiyama City, Nagano Prefecture: Discriminatory Buddhist Posthumous Names

2016

61st activity

Fieldwork - Tsuyama City, Okayama Prefecture: Learning from the 1874 (Meiji 6) Mimasaka Disturbance (In 1871 (Meiji 4), peasants who opposed the Emancipation Edict, which abolished the class system, attacked settlements of the discriminated people.)

2017

62nd activity

Fieldwork - Sujin District, Kyoto City

63rd activity

Participation in the "51st National Assembly for Buraku Liberation Study"

64th activity

Fieldwork - Henoko, Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture: US military bases issue

2018

65th activity

Fieldwork - Okunoshima, Takehara City, Hiroshima Prefecture: Peace Education

2019

66th activity

Fieldwork - Hagi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture: History of the Discriminated against People

2020

67th activity

Fieldwork - Iwahashi District, Wakayama City, Wakayama Prefecture, Kinokawa City: 50 years after Mankichi Saiko, a central figure in the establishment of the Suiheisha, passed away.

2021

68th activity

Ajima Fureai Hall, Tamba-Sasayama City, Hyogo Prefecture: Initiative of the Local Government against the Dissemination of Videos on Buraku Discrimination

2022

69th activity

Fieldwork - Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture; Gunkan-jima

2023

70th activity

Fieldwork - Tottori City and Kurayoshi City, Tottori Prefecture: Learning from Activities and Observing the Current Situation regarding Buraku Liberation Efforts in Tottori

2024

71st activity

Marugame City, Kagawa Prefecture; Kagawa Human Rights Institute: Screening of video "The Fukuda Village Incident," and Lecture



General Meeting of Daishūren, 20 June 2008.



Worship at the Columbarium, National Sanatorium Tamazenshoen, Tokyo, 11 December 2008.



Learning about Discriminatory Buddhist Posthumous Names in Nagano Prefecture, 18 November 2009.



Worship at Kakazu Tower near Futenma US military base in Okinawa Prefecture, 20 November 2017.



[Basic Human Rights Course] Visit to the Sakai City Human Rights Exchange Center Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum, 14 September 2018.



Group discussion after viewing the video “The Fukuda Village Incident” at the Kagawa Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Awareness Center, 7 November 2024.



[Basic Human Rights Course] Namba and Sennichimae Fieldwork, 18 March 2025.



Program of the 30th Anniversary General Meeting, 2013.

Reflection on the Past Activities

From the activities held till the present, the following are selected initiatives that have particularly close connection to religious objects. Below are reports on the initiatives.

1st Session: On-site Meeting

Date: 18–19 September 1989

Location: Maruko Town, Ogata District, Nagano Prefecture

Lecturer: Yuzuru Kizu

Content: Regarding Discriminatory Buddhist

Posthumous Names

We arrived at the park cemetery, already darkened by rain, after 5:00 PM. Using candlelight, we offered the chrysanthemums we had brought, placed incense before the graves, and touched the discriminatory posthumous names carved into the cemetery.

Among the four hundred thirty-one graves in Maruko Town Park Cemetery, one hundred forty-three bear discriminatory Buddhist posthumous names. We faced the spirits of the gravestones and, through these monuments that had withstood wind and snow, were able to directly grasp the gravity of discriminatory practices against Buraku people with profound sorrow. Various discriminatory characters amounted to as many as two hundred and one characters.

These characters denote the status of “eta” (filth) regardless of sect. They reveal the reality of temples and priests who adhered to the feudal system’s hierarchy and policies for controlling the populace.

The 27th Buraku Liberation Study Assembly

Date: 17–18 November 1998

Location: Kumano Region, Wakayama Prefecture

Lecturer: Yuzuru Kizu

Content: Boundary Stones Found in the Kumano Region

On the first day, we confirmed the boundary stone “Prohibition of Killing Living Beings and Impurity” erected in 1656 (Meireki 2, Edo period) at the “Cockfighting Shrine” in Kii-Tanabe City. Then, we visited Hosshinmon Oji Shrine in Hongu Town along the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route, where we also observed a similar *Kekkai-seki* (boundary stone used to create a spiritual boundary). We arrived at Fujiya in Kawayu Onsen shortly before 4:00 pm. Upon arrival, Kizu gave a talk entitled “Boundary Stones Found in the Kumano Region.” He explained that while boundary stones inscribed with “Prohibition on Killing Living Beings” are common, particularly around the Kumano Sanzan, if the sole purpose were to prohibit killing within the precincts, a stone inscribed only with “Prohibition on Killing Living Beings” would suffice. He discussed why “filth” or “impurity” is added in boundary stones, addressing the issue of filth or impurity.

On the second day, we visited Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine. There were also boundary stones.

The 33rd Buraku Liberation Research Meeting

Date: 2 October 2001

Venue: National Sanatorium Nagashima Aiseien, Okayama Prefecture

Lecturer: Kenjiro Ikeuchi

Content: Tour of Nagashima Aiseien, among other activities

With the aim of reviewing the state’s approach to Hansen’s disease and considering the responsibilities incumbent upon us religious practitioners for the restoration of human rights and social reintegration of former patients, we toured the National Sanatorium Nagashima Aiseien in Okayama Prefecture. Ikeuchi spoke, drawing on his own experiences, about the reality

of human rights violations against Hansen's disease patients and their history. We heard these sanatoriums were sanatoriums in name only, functioning as detention centers in reality.

Following the lecture, we observed some materials at the Onshi Memorial Hall evoking life at that time. After strolling through the site, we visited the columbarium and offered a silent prayer of remembrance for the departed Hansen's disease patients.

Recent Activities

Since its establishment, Daishūren has prioritized activities aimed at learning firsthand about the history of discrimination through fieldwork, thereby enhancing human rights awareness. It conducts fieldwork while reflecting on its past, hoping it will provide an opportunity to pause and consider what can be achieved as individual religious practitioners in moving forward. Each year, it holds overnight gatherings to foster interpersonal exchange across denominations and sects, striving for mutual learning and development.

Furthermore, from 2023 onwards, driven by a desire to reaffirm the present by gaining a deeper understanding of local history, fieldwork exploring historically marginalized areas of Osaka has been held. Tomohiro Yoshimura, Visiting Researcher at Osaka Metropolitan University, was invited as a lecturer to deliver the "Basic Course" outlined below. This course is scheduled to continue in future years.

2023

Area: Shinsekai and Tobita district

Participants: Twenty-six

During the classroom session, the study focused on the connection between popular performing arts and "Tennōji Village" as well as the flow from the modern public prostitution system to the abolitionist movement. In the fieldwork, the participants contemplated on the joys and sorrows of those who lived in Sannō and Tobita, learning about the history of discrimination hidden within familiar landscapes.

2024

Area: Dōtonbori and Sennichimae

Participants: Twenty-eight

If Dōtonbori was a space of “celebration” (*Hare*), Sennichimae, with its execution grounds, crematorium, graveyards, and ash mountains, may have been a space of “ritual” (*Ke*), governing the afterlife. Through redevelopment and changing landscapes, amidst a history often overshadowed by glittering reflections, we learned how many people formed communities based on their roles and engagement in work, and how they carried out those activities.

We are also deepening our understanding of recent discriminatory incidents occurring via the internet. This was held as a “Buraku Liberation and Research Meeting.”

2021

Theme: Initiative of the local government against the Dissemination of Videos on Buraku discrimination

Participants: Twenty-one

We studied the case where Tamba Sasayama City sought an injunction before the court against the posting of videos depicting discriminated-against Buraku communities on an internet site, ultimately obtaining a court order to cease the activity. We explored how religious practitioners should respond to the current reality of widespread discrimination on social media platforms.

2023

Theme: Learning from Activities and Observing the Current Situation Regarding Buraku Liberation in Tottori Prefecture

Participants: Seventeen

Following the fieldwork to Ogamo district in Kurayoshi City guided by Shinji Shimoyoshi, Director of the Kurayoshi City Human Rights and Culture Center, we were briefed about “Tottori Loop.”⁷

Shimoyoshi pointed out that “the malicious nature of the discriminatory acts by Tottori Loop group lies not only in the reprinting of the

‘Buraku List,’⁸ but also in publishing ‘Buraku Exploration’ online.” “Buraku Exploration” involved infiltrating Buraku communities in many parts of Japan to take photographs and videos, exposing images of residences, shops, and community centers.

Following the lecture, participants called for action as religious figures towards enacting legislation such as an anti-discrimination law and a human rights remedies law.

Looking Back on the Past

The first issue of *Daishūren* (Daishūren’s journal) featured a contribution by Yuzuru Kizu (then Counsellor, Osaka Prefectural Council for the Promotion of Dowa Projects), entitled “What We Hope for from Daishūren and Religious Leaders.”

Kizu wrote at the onset, “I believe religion exists not for Gods or Buddhas, but for human beings.” Then he wrote as follows:

What should religious figures focus upon? It is humanity. Yet, until now, most religious figures in Japan have largely refused to turn their gaze towards the people. Rather, they have turned their backs, boasting of the prestige of temples and churches, unwilling to observe the lives of the common folk. Not only that, they have prioritized the religious ceremonies and customs of their own sects, existing in a separate world from the people, persistently adopting an attitude that leveraged their privileged status.

In the past, the founders of each religion entered the midst of the people, shared their troubles, suffered and grieved alongside them, sacrificed themselves, and devoted their very lives to the salvation of the people. Yet, at some point, religious figures distanced themselves from the people and lost the ability to see them. Indeed, they ceased to wish to see the people. The crucial question here is how religious figures can cultivate an attitude of engaging with the people and shedding their sense of religious privilege. Unless religious figures change their stance, I believe they cannot truly be called religious figures, nor will they develop the necessary attitude to address the Buraku issue.

Over forty years have passed since this earnest advice was made. The time has changed dramatically. As seen in movements like #MeToo and the

exposure of sexual abuses by Johnny Kitagawa,⁹ human rights awareness appears to have deepened considerably, both globally and domestically.

Daishūren has worked across denominations and sects, engaging in various activities from the perspective of “religious practitioners.”

The outcomes include learning about other religions’ human rights initiatives to enhance its own efforts, and fostering an attitude of mutual learning between organizations. It has fostered a pioneering spirit of embracing good practices. Furthermore, through personal exchanges between denominations, individuals’ perspectives have likely broadened and deepened. It has come to see landscapes that were previously invisible through interaction solely within own denomination, which shares the same doctrine.

However, many challenges remain.

Firstly, while Daishūren began with twenty-four denominations and three groups, membership has now decreased to nineteen denominations and one group. This reflects the broader decline in Japan’s religious sector, but it is also likely a consequence of failing to actively promote Daishūren’s value and the importance of human rights initiatives. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that Daishūren has struggled to overcome doctrinal differences between denominations and sects, preventing it from achieving true unity. How can it strengthen solidarity under the banner of the universal value of “human rights” is a significant, weighty challenge requiring considerable time.

Secondly, the activities have become monotonous. With each passing year, there is a growing sense that events have become mere rituals. The faces of participants have also become largely unchanged. While this may be an inevitable fate for any organization, it is imperative that it continuously revisits what constitutes the “original purpose” – as Daishūren’s founding principle stated in its annual policy guidelines.

Furthermore, by tackling diverse human rights issues, the focus of its efforts may be blurring, potentially diluting Daishūren’s *raison d’être*. While broadening its perspective is essential for cultivating human rights awareness, it is desirable to advance its activities through the lens of “religion,” maintaining a firm perspective grounded in the question: Why must we, as religious practitioners, engage with this issue?

Taking Kizu’s earlier advice to heart, it remains a pertinent and pressing critique today. Can each individual religious practitioner see the human being, rather than merely the organization – the religious group, temple,

shrine or church? As religious practitioners, how do we confront “discrimination”? There must be continued questioning on how do we, as individual religious practitioners, stand before the world. It is the hope of Daishūren that it can advance its activities from this point forward.

Endnotes

1 See full text of The Princeton Declaration of the Third World Assembly, 1979, Religions for Peace - Japan, www.wcrp.or.jp/en/wcrp3_1979.html.

2 The Buraku Liberation League’s “Confirmation Meeting” and “Denunciation Meeting” are unique initiatives undertaken in response to the acts of Buraku discrimination.

The Confirmation Meeting is a session where, when discriminatory words, actions, or behavior are alleged, members of the Buraku Liberation League and the parties involved discuss the facts, identify issues, and confirm mutual understanding.

The Denunciation Meeting is a session where the Buraku Liberation League strongly condemns and pursues individuals or organizations alleged to have committed discriminatory acts or made discriminatory remarks, clarifies where responsibility lies, and demands apologies and measures to prevent recurrence.

3 Discriminatory Buddhist posthumous names

Kaimyo, given by a Buddhist priest to the dead, is recorded in a post-memorial register and carved on tombstone. It was discovered that discriminatory names were given to the dead who were of Buraku origins. The names include the character for beast, tumble, ignoble, servant, many kinds of derogatory expressions. While the majority of the names seem to have been given a long time ago, there are some names given in 1940s.

4 The Shibuzome Uprising was a peasant revolt that took place in Okayama Prefecture at late Edo to early Meiji period. Farmers from the Buraku community protested against heavy taxes and government corruption, gathering in large numbers and wearing brown-dyed clothes (called shibuzome), which gave the uprising its name. The revolt was eventually suppressed by government forces.

5 This is also known as the Sayama Incident that took place in 1963 in Sayama city, Saitama prefecture. A high school girl was kidnapped and later found murdered. The police arrested Kazuo Ishikawa, a young man from a Buraku community, and charged him with the crime.

Ishikawa was interrogated for many hours without a lawyer and eventually signed a confession, which he later repudiated for being coerced by police through threats and pressure. Despite the lack of objective evidence and many inconsistencies in the prosecution’s “evidence,” including questionable forensic results, he was convicted and sentenced to death by the Urawa District Court, which was commuted to life imprisonment by the Tokyo High Court (and later affirmed by the Supreme Court).

Over the decades, the Buraku Liberation League, human rights activists, and lawyers have argued that Ishikawa was a victim of Buraku discrimination and unfair trial. He was imprisoned for more than thirty years and released on parole in 1994.

He sought a retrial to prove his innocence; filing three retrial petitions. Ishikawa passed away in March 2025 at the age of 86 due to illness. His death led to the termination of the petition proceedings. His wife, Sachiko, filed a fourth retrial petition with the Tokyo High Court.

6 See the full text of the Suiheisha Declaration in this link: Declaration of Human Rights in Japan, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/other_documents/section1/1922/04/declaration-of-human-rights-in-japan.html.

7 Tottori Loop is the common name for a group that has published and disseminated online information concerning discrimination against Buraku communities. They have collected lists of “Dowa districts” (discriminated against Buraku communities) and published the location lists and information on related parties on their website.

In response to the announcement in 2016 by the Kawasaki-based publisher Jigen-sha, known as Tottori Loop, that it would publish a book listing the names of 5,367 districts nationwide and subsequently posting the place names on its website, the Buraku Liberation League and two hundred thirty-four individuals from discriminated-against communities, filed a lawsuit seeking an injunction and other remedies.

In June 2023, the Tokyo High Court ruled that “every person possesses the personal interest of not being subjected to unjust discrimination,” citing Article 13 (right to pursue happiness) and Article 14, Paragraph 1 (equality under the law) of the Constitution. It ordered the publisher to cease publication of information concerning thirty-one prefectures and pay a total of 5.5 million yen in damages. In December 2024, the Supreme Court upheld the Tokyo High Court’s ruling.

8 This is one of the directories of the Buraku communities collectively referred to as Buraku Chimei Soukan (部落地名総鑑) that were uncovered in 1975. These directories or lists provided the locations and names of places of discriminated Buraku people across the country. They were purchased by more than two hundred twenty groups, mainly companies, nationwide. Companies purchased them to help them avoid hiring residents of the Dowa district (discriminated Buraku residents).

9 Johnny Kitagawa was the founder of Johnny & Associates, a powerful talent agency in Japan, famous for producing male idol groups. He has been accused of sexually abusing boys, many of them underage, over many decades—starting as early as the 1950s, continuing through to the 2010s.