

# Summary of the PTV to Tokyo Japan September 2019

## 12.09.19

This is the day that we arrived in Tokyo at the KYMCA hotel. Some of us got to meet each other for the first time, while some of us had already met in a previous meeting in Osaka. This day we got to know each other and share a few stories as well as meeting with the NCCJ and getting to know some of the people there.

## 13.09.19:

This was the first actual full program day and this day we had David Macintosh accompanying us. Our first stop in our journey was at a Korean ethnic middle and high school where we got to see and experience different activities happening in that school. We saw the building and rooms themselves, but the most interesting parts was the pupils that were there that day. We got to experience traditional dancing, art, traditional music and sport practice. The vice-principal of the school gave us the tour and assured us that the school was just as good, if not better than traditional Japanese ones, but still the government in Japan do not give any founding to these kinds of Korean ethnic schools. They use the argument that the schools are cooperating with North-Korea because North-Korea has historically been the only country to support these kinds of schools, which they don't do anymore.

The next stop of our journey was at the Koto ward industry training center with Rev. Matsuo Mizuno. He gave us the story of his life and the experience of being a member of the Buraku community. The group of people called Buraku has historically been the people with professions that has been considered disgusting or dirty, like for example skinning animals and draining their blood. This is a form of discrimination that comes from the idea of a ranking of peoples worth, like in the kast system of India. The jobs done by the buraku people have been and still is necessary and important jobs that ultimately produces products that the burakus are proud of making. Why should they be discriminated on the background of their profession? In a Christian context all humans has the same value, and I can feel what the buraku people are feeling!

Next we went on a solidarity visit for equality to education. This was a visit to a group of people who was fighting for equal right to education on behalf of the Korean ethnic schools. We were there and we prayed for their cause, payed our respects and went on. After this we had some reflection time where we discussed the numerus impressions of the day.

## 14.09.19

This day started out with a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and museum that mainly showed the history of Japan and their side of the WW2 story. We had Mr. Minoru Zushi to guide us trough the shrine and the museum. He explained how Shintoism was practiced and how it had formed society in Japan. The Shinto shrines was not only a place of worship, but also a place of conflict. The shrine had names of people who had not yet died in the records of dead people, and it had the remains of people not wanted to be associated with Shintoism inside the shrine area. There had been court cases on these issues, but none of them was won by the people accusing the Shrine. The museum showed the stories of victory in war and did not show the wrongs that were done during the war. Minorities that

fought on the Japanese side in the war was not given credit for their contribution, like for example the Koreans. These are examples of how the minority is not respected and heeded in the general understanding of Japanese people.

After visiting the shrine, we all went to the office of NCCJ where we met two people: Ms. Motoko Yamagishi who was the director of Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan and Rev. Aika Teira who was with the UCCJ.

Ms. Yamagishi gave a presentation of migration in Japan. We got to see how people from different countries came to Japan and how they were treated. Japan has an acceptance rate of 0,1% of all migrant request with is the lowest in the whole world. I think that Japan wants to give the impression of being one people, and one united nation outwards and that is why they don't accept more. This is discrimination towards the minorities already living in Japan or being accepted as migrants. After WW2 many of the countries under Japanese rule became independent, but some people that had moved to mainland Japan under the war now stayed there and therefor became a minority group. She also told us about the technical intern system. This is a system that was intended to take in people from developing countries to equip them with working skills, for then again to send them back to build their homeland. This system failed and Japanese companies exploit these people as cheap labor and put them through harsh working and living conditions.

Rev. Taira had a presentation on the Okinawans and the LGBTQ community in Japan. He was himself a gay Christian with an Okinawan background, making him a member of three minorities. He told us about the Okinawan history and exploitation of the isle of Okinawa itself. He told us about how Okinawans are treated poorly even today and that many had lost their own language, just as me myself. This story was so moving to me personally because this is like hearing my own people's story. Rev. Taira also told us about being gay in Japan and especially in the church. Christianity has not been the main religion of Japan and that has made the stigma of being gay less present then in other western countries according to himself. This is something that he is grateful for. He was one of the first, if not the first, to be ordained as openly gay person in Japan so he considers the church to be moving in the right direction.

## 15.09.19

This was the Sunday and that meant it was time for church. We split up into three groups of people, each group going to a different church. I myself went to UCCJ Fujimicho church which is a united Presbyterian church. The service had quite strict guidelines, so we were not able to introduce ourselves. The church did not have any cross inside, and everyone was wearing suits. This was really similar to the services in the church of Norway. It was good to see that there were many people attending church even though Christianity is not the main religion of Japan. In the evening we had our reflection time once more where we shared our stories and experiences of this whole trip. We also got to hear about the Aino people from David Macintosh. The Aino is the indigenous people of Japan. Their story really hit me hard because they experienced just the same things as the Sami people of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia did.

## General summary

I think that through the faith in God we will get the strength needed to fight for our culture and history, and if we stand united as Christians, we can come to see our mutual world radiating justice and peace between Christians and non-Christians alike. Minorities in Japan and other countries are struggling to be heard and respected, and in my case I especially have empathy towards the indigenous minorities in different countries.