Let’s try the quiz!

Sexual minority persons are often referred to as LGBT. It is said that the ratio of persons who identify as LGBT is almost equal to the ratio of left-handed persons in the Japanese population. Which of the following descriptions of LGBT is wrong? Select one.

L (Lesbian)----------Female homosexual
G (Gay)------------Male homosexual
B (Bisexual)------Male and female heterosexuals
T (Transgender)---Person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with his or her birth sex, including a person with gender identity disorder

Answer to the human rights quiz  B

B (Bisexual) refers to a person who is sexually attracted to both men and women. There is much prejudice against LGBT persons in society, and many are forced to live difficult lives. We should develop a better understanding of LGBT persons and create a society where all people are respected as equal human beings.

The Constitution of Japan defines fundamental human rights as “eternal and inviolate rights” in Article 11, calls for respect of the “right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” in Article 13, and declares that “all of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin” in Article 14.

In January 2017, an event was held in Sakai City in which citizens were invited to post messages on a bulletin board and among the messages, there was one that used discriminatory language to defame residents in Dowa communities and foreign residents.

We must be firmly determined not to engage in any form of discrimination ourselves, and not to allow such contemptible behavior from others. Let each of us have the correct knowledge and understanding of human rights and take action so that the human rights of all people are respected.

If you witness someone engaging in any act of discrimination, do not look the other way. Instead, face up to what is actually happening as if it were your own problem and tell the person that their behavior is wrong. By doing so, you can contribute to creating a society free of discrimination.

Let a culture of human rights bloom from Sakai City!
I am hearing impaired. Am I a special person?

I was a member of the soccer club when I was an elementary school student, so I joined the soccer club when entering junior high school to improve my skills. Soon after I joined the soccer club, a classmate from a different elementary school said with certainty, “You cannot play soccer because you cannot hear.” This remark shocked me greatly as I felt I was being ridiculed for my impairment.

But I didn’t allow myself to be discouraged and I practiced soccer with the club members day after day.

One day, when I was playing in a practice match, the captain directed me to mark a player of the opposing team but I didn’t notice the direction and eventually allowed the opposing team to score the goal. The captain was angry at me and said, “What did you do? I told you to mark him!” Until then I didn’t know I had been given the direction and I was deeply ashamed of myself. But I didn’t want to waste this experience and I endeavored to pay attention to what is going on around me as much as possible while playing. Still, I often failed to notice directions given to me and I was at a loss what to do. One day a teammate asked me, “How do you sign the letter ‘z’ in sign language?” At first I didn’t know what he meant but a moment later I was overwhelmed with pleasure.

Assisted by my teammates who acted as my ears, I practiced soccer every day, harder than anyone else, covered in dirt, whether it rained or snowed, never tiring of chasing balls along with them. I just wanted to demonstrate that even with a hearing impairment I could play soccer and meet the expectations of my teammates. As a result, I was selected as a member of the team A by the coach. I was so happy that I cried, “I did it!”

Thus, I demonstrated that anyone, even those with a hearing impairment, can play soccer if they choose to make efforts. Though my goal was a small one – becoming a regular member of the team – I felt great pleasure when I achieved my goal. I am not special and I am just an ordinary person striving persistently toward my goals.

I am now a high school student and I still play soccer as a member of the school’s soccer club. I will continue playing soccer to demonstrate to children that even with a hearing impairment, anyone can be a soccer player. I want to become an adult who can encourage and support children who are in trouble by sharing my experience.

I think barrier-free environments are becoming widespread in society. For example, main railway stations are equipped with elevators and large shops provide parking spaces for wheelchair users near the entrances. Some public facilities and sightseeing spots admit holders of a disability certificate at discount fees. Today, people with disabilities have more freedom to go out.

Why did I choose “barrier-free” as the topic of my essay? Before writing this essay, I looked up the word “barrier-free” in a dictionary and found that “barrier-free” means removing obstacles that hinder elderly persons and persons with disabilities from living a civil life, and today, such obstacles include insufficient social systems, poor accessibility to information, and lack of awareness among the general public.

Born with cerebral palsy, my arms and legs are paralyzed and I go to school every day riding an electric wheelchair. I can study at the school in the district of my choice thanks to the assistance of the teachers in charge of the special-needs students and my friends. In this essay, I will discuss the true meaning of “barrier-free” from the viewpoint of a person with disability.

From my viewpoint, barrier-free environments are not sufficiently created in some places. To be specific, I can take the shortest way to the school by crossing a railroad, but the railroad is narrow and crowded with people and cars during rush hour. To avoid danger, I have to take a detour through an underground path. In the road leading to the station, there is a difference in the level between the sidewalk and the street and in some places, the difference is very large. At some stations, the gap between the train and the platform is dangerously wide. Also, when I have visited certain facilities or tourist destinations, I often found that, despite having a good external appearance, roads were so uneven that wheelchair users and elderly persons had difficulty moving around.

Many persons with disabilities like me and elderly people need more barrier-free environments.

Generally, physical barrier-free environments are becoming widespread, as I wrote earlier.

Now, I would like to emphasize the necessity of developing a barrier-free mindset. For example, when I am doing something in a wheelchair, people around me often look at me curiously and I feel awkward being the center of attention and watch like that. In addition, there are things that can be naturally done by most people but that require much more effort for me to do, such as talking with someone face-to-face and communicating with others smoothly. The harder I try to get things right, the more difficult it becomes. Therefore, I hope people will not only see my external appearance, but also notice and understand how I feel inside and what I am not good at because this is a part of my personality. I believe many other people with disabilities feel the same way.

By “barrier-free mindset,” I mean having an open-minded attitude that respects each individual personality warmly.

I hope barrier-free environments will continue to be created in the future. Of course, as a woman, I want to be directly involved in the growth of my children, and I am also aware that mothers cannot easily ask for the cooperation of their husbands in household work in a male-centered society where working long hours is taken for granted. By improving such situations, I think we can deepen the relationships between wife and husband and parent and child.

Today, mixed name lists are adopted in elementary schools and both male and female students learn how to cook miso soup and use a sewing machine in homemaking courses. On increasing occasions, female students are elected as representatives of their year groups, and the distinction between the roles of male students and those of female students is now being removed at schools.

In Japan, female-specific words were previously used to represent “nurse” and “nursery teacher,” but now they are replaced with gender-neutral words. As this case indicates, potential gender discrimination at workplace is being eliminated.

I hope that gender-equality education will prevail and change society, so that when our children, both male and female, become adults, they can live fulfilling lives together, take the jobs they like, and play active roles in society. I hope future society will be a society where all people are respected for their individuality and recognized as valued members of society without having unjust restrictions imposed simply for being a man, woman or mother. Gender-equality awareness should be developed in the family in the first place. At my home, my daughter and son are equally assigned household responsibilities and they accept their respective responsibilities quite naturally.
The enactment of this Act will encourage the State and local governments to conduct surveys on the current availability of child abuse consultation services in Japan and factors that lead to child abuse, as well as causes of child abuse and contexts in which child abuse can occur. In conclusion, she emphasized the importance of creating a community and social environment where families with children are not left isolated.

Parents who abuse children are often socially isolated people. Child abuse results from a combination of various factors including less time shared with children, economic difficulty and stress, and the number of families in need of support is increasing. Children are defined as those under 18 in the Child Welfare Act. Child abuse is classified as physical abuse, including beating and kicking; neglect or failure to provide the necessities of comfortable life for a child; psychological abuse by verbal aggression; and sexual abuse, in the Child Abuse Prevention Act enacted in 2000. Abuse has an adverse influence on a child's physical and psychological development.

Abused children can develop a sense of distrust toward people and become rebellious. An overwhelming majority of abusers are mothers, which indicates that mothers are under much stress compared to fathers. Against this backdrop, there is growing recognition of the necessity of reforming the way men and women coexist so that childcare responsibilities will be shared between mothers and fathers in a manner that reduces mothers' stress. The more parents enjoy bringing up children, the less child abuse is likely to occur. This lecture is expected to accelerate efforts to build communities where no one is isolated and to help people develop more extensive human relationships.

We Will Never Allow Hate Speech

Recently, discriminatory remarks against certain ethnic and national groups, referred to as "hate speech," are garnering greater social attention. Such remarks can incite fear and hatred among the general public, and also violate human dignity and nurture a sense of discrimination. Hate speech, which has been receiving wider coverage in the mass media and on the Internet, has become a serious social problem.

Against this backdrop, the Act on Promotion of Efforts to Eliminate Unfair Discriminatory Speech and Behavior against Persons Originating from Outside Japan was enacted on June 3, 2016. This Act stipulates that the State and local governments to enhance advisory mechanisms and conduct educational and awareness-raising activities for this purpose.

The Act also stipulates that the State shall conduct surveys on the actual situation of Buraku discrimination in collaboration with local governments. The enactment of this Act will encourage the State and local governments to take more positive measures towards the elimination of Buraku discrimination.

The Sakai City Ordinance on Promotion of Sign Language and Other Means of Communication for Persons with Disabilities will be enforced on April 1, 2017.

This Ordinance is designed to deepen public understanding of sign language and encourage its dissemination by defining it as a communication tool, and aims to facilitate the use of a wide range of ways for persons with disabilities to communicate and interact with others, such as through sign language, voice translation, captioning, Braille, tactile sign language, finger Braille and simple expression.

In the second part of the workshop, five sectional meetings were held, discussing (1) the Dowra issue; (2) the human rights of women; (3) the human rights of persons with disabilities; (4) the human rights of foreign residents; and (5) the human rights of children.

Heated discussions took place in these meetings, which dealt with, respectively, "The realities of the Dowra issue in Sakai City," "About Sakai Safe City Program," "Eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities: reasonable sensitivity needed," "The current situation of foreign nationals in our community: promoting mutual assistance among neighbors" and "What constitutes child abuse?"
Mongolia – A Country That Is Not as Familiar as We Think

On December 10, 2016, the Citizens’ Forum for Human Rights Protection was held, in which the participants of the IYS Study Tour to Mongolia reported what they had seen and learned in the country.

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General information about Mongolia

Mongolia has a land area about four times as large as Japan, while its population is about one-third of Osaka Prefecture’s. The capital is Ulan Bator.

For many Japanese, Mongolia is associated with vast grasslands, nomads living with cattle, and ger (portable yurts). Nearly thirty years have passed since Mongolia renounced socialism, however, very little is known to us about the current realities of this country.

Mongolia today

Upon arrival in Ulan Bator, we were impressed at the sight of rows of high-rise buildings, European-style houses and modern condominiums. While traveling in the country, we frequently saw cars stuck in traffic jams, high-rise buildings under construction, and dense smog, all of which are symbols of rapid urban development.

Currently, around 50% of Mongolia’s population of about 3 million lives in Ulan Bator. We learned that rapid urban development has given rise to serious social problems, such as delays in infrastructure development, accelerated environmental destruction, and a widening economic disparity among citizens. Only a short distance away from the urban area, we met people with hard lives, who had abandoned their nomadic lifestyles and moved to suburban areas to seek jobs.

When travelling in the countryside, however, we saw vast expanses of grassland and people living traditional nomadic lifestyles – the traditional image of Mongolia. We were deeply impressed by the vitality of nomadic families who work together to survive in a harsh natural environment while preserving their traditional culture. However, the lives of these people are also affected by modernization and the introduction of capitalism.

Nomadic people we met (1)

We visited an elementary school for children of local and nomadic families in a village in a rural area of Sergelen. As we played with the children, we found many pieces of rubbish left around the school premises. People living with nature, including Mongolians, respect the earth and know they are protected by nature. Traditionally, these people have depended on the blessings of nature in all aspects of their lives, including clothing, foods and housing, and any waste from resources they needed was returned to nature, which in turn helped to fertilize the earth. Against the backdrop of lifestyle modernization, however, waste is no longer regarded as something useful, and can even cause environmental destruction. It is true that capitalism has brought material affluence and convenience, but people have not been educated sufficiently on the risks that can accompany a capitalist lifestyle.

We taught children the danger of leaving rubbish uncollected by means of a picture-card show and then picked up the rubbish together with them. The children enjoyed collecting the rubbish, which soon filled many bags. We hope they will make it a routine to collect rubbish and keep the school premises clean.

Nomadic people we met (2)

We visited a ger, a portable home used by nomadic people. To welcome us, the nomad people butchered their sheep very quickly to minimize its suffering without spilling a drop of blood on the earth for which they have much respect. This sight taught us the important lesson that we must respect and live in harmony with nature, which in turn helps to fertilize the earth. Against the backdrop of lifestyle modernization, however, waste is no longer regarded as something useful, and can even cause environmental destruction. It is true that capitalism has brought material affluence and convenience, but people have not been educated sufficiently on the risks that can accompany a capitalist lifestyle.

Goal of the International Youth Sakai

International Youth Sakai will promote international exchange and contribution activities to provide opportunities and experiences for learning, thereby fostering mutual understanding to better cater to the needs of an ever-globalizing modern society. We will share lessons learned overseas with our community members to contribute to building a society where peace and human rights are respected.

Restoration of the natural environment and environmental protection activities

In the past, indigenous wild horses called takhi roamed Mongolia, but they became extinct in the country due to changes to the environment and their habitat due to reclamation and other artificial interventions. In Hustai, home to takhi horses, a project was launched to restore the natural environment and reintroduce takhi, which had been lent to foreign countries, by releasing them into the wild. The project was completed successfully. Here, efforts are continuing to protect the natural habitat of takhi horses.

Report from Citizens’ Forum for Human Rights Protection

Report

August 10 (Wed.) to 20 (Sat.), 2016

International Youth Sakai
Sakai City Education Association
Sakai City Women’s Group for Social Rehabilitation
Sakai City Association for Sound Growth of Children
Sakai City Support Group for Foreign Residents’ Education
Federation of Sakai City Residents’ Association
Sakai City Social Education Committee
Sakai City Women’s Association
Sakai City Federation of Private Kindergartens
NPO Sakai Federation of Disabled People’s Organizations
Sakai City Liaison Council of Instructors for Youth
Sakai City Human Rights Education and Research Society
Sakai City Agricultural Cooperative
Sakai City PTA Federation
Sakai City Association of Childcare Organizations
Sakai City Welfare Association for Single Mother Families and Widows
NPO Sakai Federation of Private Educational and Childcare Institutions
Sakai City Federation of Child Welfare Commissioners
Sakai Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Sakai City Association of Principals of Municipal Schools
Sakai City Federation of Senior Residents’ Clubs
District Committee of the Sakai City Human Rights Commissioners’ Association
Sakai City Liaison Council of Probation Officers
Sakai City Council of Social Welfare
Osaka Prefectural Association of Vocational Schools
Sakai Branch, Osaka Prefectural Headquarters of Liberal Dowa Association
Principal’s Association of Osaka Prefectural Schools in 8 zones of the 4th School District
Semboku Suma Center, West Japan Branch, UR Community Inc.
Sakai Branch, Osaka Prefectural Federation of the Buraku Liberation League
Business Members Committee, Sakai City Human Rights Education Promotion Council
Religious Groups Committee, Sakai City Human Rights Education Promotion