



as objects, or half a man. Discussed above is how this system produces domestic violence. It is a big obstacle in attempting to achieve gender equality while neglecting the actual situation in which women's bodies and sexuality become commodities involved in financial transactions.

Considering that all of these issues - domestic violence, prostitution, and widespread pornography - are the result of unequal societal treatment of women, it is the time for women themselves to recognize the

underlying facts and reconstruct comprehensive strategies to eradicate sex discrimination. It is time for us to reevaluate the concept of "gender equality" and reconsider where we are heading.

Yukiko Tsunoda (Lawyer)

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Recitation Play

"Sunflower - Overcoming Domestic Violence"

Reiko Aoki

From today, I will begin the walk of my life on my feet, for myself
Even if a thunderstorm suddenly hits, even if the cold autumn winds wither it up
When summer rolls around again, it grows again rapidly, and blooms huge flowers
Like such a sunflower, I want to live.

(“Overcoming domestic violence - reading recitation play, ‘sunflower’”
Yokohama Women's Association for Communication and Networking, 2004)

A recitation play, based on the experiences of women who have suffered from domestic violence (DV) from their husbands or partners, are being performed in twelve women's centers in Japan by a women's theatrical company called “Only One.”

This recitation play was planned by the Yokohama Women's Association for Communication and Networking, an

organization that has long been involved with self-support services such as counseling on DV and self-help groups. It was composed and directed by Ms. Ai Serikawa, a member of Theatre Aoitōri. “Only One” – named thus because oneself is the one and only precious being – is a women's group consisting of 25 women who had participated in a recitation workshop, with diverse age and theatre



backgrounds. The kind of women were those who had vaguely felt that they “could not go on living” and wanted to “face themselves, get over the current situation, live better, and affirm themselves.” This included women who had suffered from DV.

In the workshop, which was held at the height of the hot summer, they practiced elocution techniques, movements on stage, repetition, and read-ins. The director and performers shared the process of producing the stage for four months. The play is composed of three monologues of various women’s experiences, such as a woman who had taken refuge in a shelter and a woman who had overcome the violence of her a lover. Despite the stage being made up only of music and story-telling by performers donning black outfits, the performances have elicited praise and numerous remarks such as: “my tears overflowed, remembering various things, but it made me think that I should try my best to go on living” and “the words, ‘one must live for oneself’ resonated with me.”

The works were born out of the stories of members of self-help groups. Through the performances, the stories were given voice,

and transformed from individual stories to group stories.

In a context where women’s centers are undertaking measures for DV consultation and back-up for self-support, country-wide performances are meaningful in that they provide a common challenge for society to grapple with, which are also incorporated into corporate social service programs.

Ms. Kozono, in charge of the recitation play, says that “by being re-told by another woman in a different context, ‘our’ stories – which have been handed down in a good system namely the self-help groups – spread a circle of full-length identification, not some high-handed advertisement. This in turn enables the soil of society to become warm and fertile. It is there that I feel the light of hope.”

For information on performances, contact Yokohama Women’s Association for Communication and Networking, +81-45-862-5052.

Reiko Aoki (Director, Koshigaya Women’s Centre)



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