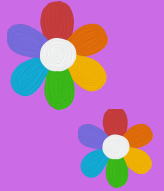




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My Journey as a Student Staff Member —Ririko Noguchi

Have you ever watched the Disney movie Zootopia?

I finally saw it for the first time the other day—way later than I should have!—and honestly, I couldn't believe I'd waited so long. It's such a fun movie that people of all ages can enjoy. But what really surprised me was how it cleverly deals with issues of diversity through its animal characters. It shows how being a “predator” or a “prey,” or even being a certain kind of animal like a fox or a rabbit, can shape the way others see you—just like how we humans sometimes carry unconscious biases about gender or nationality.

Oh, right—let me introduce myself properly!

I'm Ririko Noguchi, a student staff member of the Gender Support Team. I've been working with the team for about two years, but soon I'll be leaving to study abroad (sadly!). So I wanted to take this chance to look back on my time with the team.

When I first joined two years ago, the team was still very new, and we were figuring out what kind of activities we wanted to do. One of the first big projects we started was creating a safe and comfortable space for everyone on campus—Safer Space KiteKite. The KiteKite room (Humanities Building A, Room 110) is now cozy and colorful, but back then it looked super plain—almost like an interrogation room! (laughs)

We also wanted more people to know about us, so we joined the Sohosai Festival and Tokyo Rainbow Pride (now Tokyo Pride). We planned fun and educational booths together, hoping people could learn about gender while having a good time. Slowly, more and more people began to join our events, and it felt amazing to see the team's efforts reaching others. By my second year, I really felt that all our hard work was starting to pay off.

On a personal note—I'm actually a baseball girl! I started playing baseball in junior high school, and this year marks my ninth year. Baseball is usually seen as a “boys' sport,” and, to be honest, I've felt that many times. But I don't mean to say “let girls play more baseball” or “we need girls-only teams.” What I really want to say is: if there's something you want to do, just go for it.

That's why Zootopia really hit home for me. The rabbit, Judy, dreams of becoming a police officer, but everyone tells her, “A rabbit can't be a cop.” Still, she doesn't give up—and she makes it happen. Watching her reminded me of my younger self when I first started baseball, and it made me grateful for the courage I had back then to take that first step.

I've played baseball with boys on the same field. Of course, there are physical differences—it's not always easy. There were times I struggled. But that never meant I couldn't play. Thanks to my family, teammates, and friends, I always had people who supported me. Through baseball, I even found a new dream: to become a sports announcer and commentate baseball games! It's still rare for women to do baseball commentary, but I believe what my past self taught me—nothing is impossible.

Gender barriers can feel high sometimes, and lower at other times—and often, people around us help make them lower. I've been lucky to have supportive people in my life, but I know not everyone has that. That's why our Gender Support Team has been working to be a place of encouragement and support for anyone who needs it.

Even though I'll be leaving the team for now, my passion for this work won't fade. If I can be someone's hope by continuing to take on new challenges, then I'll keep doing my best.

It's been a long story—but to everyone who's supported me over these two years, thank you so much. I truly wish the Gender Support Team all the best in the future.



NEWS !

UK Supreme Court Rules: “Transgender People Not Legally Defined as Female”

On April 16, 2025, the UK Supreme Court delivered a ruling in a case that questioned whether transgender women should be legally recognized as female. The court concluded that the legal definition of “female” is based on biological sex.

In 2018, the devolved government of Scotland in northern UK had stipulated that transgender individuals—those born male but who identify as female—could be protected as women under the Equality Act if they obtained a medical certificate based on a doctor’s diagnosis. In response, women’s rights groups filed a lawsuit, arguing that allowing transgender people into women-only spaces infringes on the rights of women.

Following the ruling, women’s rights groups welcomed the decision, saying it brought a sense of relief, while the international human rights organization Amnesty International expressed “deep disappointment.”

Reference:

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20250417/k10014781531000.html>

What is “Outing” ?

“Outing” refers to disclosing someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity to others without that person’s consent (Matsuoka, 2021). An individual’s sexual orientation and gender identity are deeply personal information that must not be assumed by others, nor shared without the person’s knowledge or approval. In the Hitotsubashi University outing case, a male law school student’s sexual orientation as gay was disclosed without his consent to classmates in a LINE group. He subsequently suffered severe mental and physical distress and fell to his death from a campus building in August 2015. Through the lawsuit filed by his bereaved family, it was established that outing constitutes an unlawful act. When it comes to someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity, communication should involve asking the person what they wish to share, how much they want to say, to whom, and in what way.

Reference:

Matsuoka, S. (2021). “Aitsu gay datte”: Autingu wa naze mondai nanoka? [“He’s gay”: Why outing is a problem?]. Kashiwashobo.

Recommended Reading: Fiction

Li Kotomi (2021). The Island Where Red Spider Lilies Bloom. Bungeishunju.

The story takes place on a small island.

It begins when a young girl is washed ashore on a beach where red spider lilies bloom in profusion. There, she meets another girl named Yuna. The girl, later given the name Umi by Yuna, starts to discover the island’s many wonders—the gentle islanders, the warm subtropical air, and a culture unlike any she has known before.

On this island, there is no marriage system. Families come in many different forms. There are stories of a mythical land called Niraikanai, wise women leaders known as noro, and a mysterious language spoken only by women, called onnagotooba—“the women’s language.” At its heart, *The Island Where Red Spider Lilies Bloom* is a story about language.

At the beginning, both Umi and the reader are puzzled by the difference between the words the two girls use. Yuna speaks “Nihongo,” while Umi speaks “Yamatokotoba,” and neither is the same as the “women’s language.”

As the two girls begin to learn onnagotooba together, they draw closer to understanding why this language has been passed down only among women. Written in Li Kotomi’s beautifully delicate Japanese prose, this novel gently invites us to reflect on language, history, otherness, and the future.

On this island where red spider lilies bloom, we follow Umi and Yuna as they grow, learn, and find their own way of facing the world.



HANASO!

Do you have any questions or concerns about gender and sexuality? Or anything you'd like to ask the gender support team? Scan the QR code next to this passage and help us collect questions and concerns from readers about various aspects of gender and sexuality and the Gender Support Team, and we answer them responsibly. So, please feel free to ask us anything you might not feel comfortable asking others!

* The questions and concerns you submit will be published in IMAZINE.



Information

The BHE Gender Support Team is involved in planning and organizing events such as International Women's Day in March, Tokyo Rainbow Pride in April, and Pride Month in June, as well as organizing and operating the SaferSpace KiteKite. We also participate in booth exhibitions at the Souhou Festival. Please feel free to join us!

* If you are interested in BHE Gender Support Team, please use the QR code on the right. This is the Official website! Please take a look !

