

Comments on “mirareru” in Japan

What US Students Say 2012



ガイジンだから
「見られてしまう」？
このキャンパスで
日本人と一緒に学んだアメリカ人
学生の声を聞いてください

気にしないタイプ



Zach

A big part of my difference that sticks out is undoubtedly my white skin, but I don't feel as if I'm seen as white, but more seen as American.

I am still am discovering who I am as a person, so it is hard for me to be racially aware of myself even in a foreign country. I could definitely feel the difference both physically and behaviorally between myself and Japanese people I met, but I could also find many similarities as well.

So even when I feel that Japanese people are staring at me, I don't see any racial factors in that.....

僕は、自分と日本人との間の身体的・行動的の違いを明確に感じることはできましたけど、同じようにたくさんの似ているところを見つけることができました。だからたとえ、日本人が自分を見つめていると感じた時でも、それは人種が違うから見られているという風には感じません。

ヒスパニック系 アメリカ人の気持ち



Oscar

In my case, I have always been aware of my “racial identity.”

In Japan, or the United States, I have always been the ethnic minority because I am neither white or black or Japanese. When I first moved to the United States, I was always looked at or stood out because of the difference in language (Spanish being my first language) and my skin color.

Those particular things stood out even in the United States, especially because I live in the south.

There is still much discrimination in the southern states and so at the beginning of my life in the United States I was almost always uncomfortable because I did not look like anyone and I did not feel like I was similar to anyone. Before coming to Japan, I had come to the conclusion that staring is only natural. I had already grown oblivious to stares or prejudices in the United States.

But studying in Japan as an adult is completely different from my experience in the United States.

I feel even more aware of my ethnicity. While Japanese people do stare at me, I feel that their stares are more due to curiosity and surprise, not prejudice itself.

But the occasional “hello” makes me aware of my “racial identity” here in Japan because

Japanese people would not say those things to their fellow native Japanese people. In Japan my tanned skin color and big eyes definitely do not blend in with the Japanese people. Because I am different from other (white) American students in the ISEP program, I feel I am different from EVERYONE ELSE! I would most definitely be interested to hear what other Latin American people would have to say about their stay in Japan.

僕の家族がアメリカに移住した当時、僕はスペイン語を話していたし、肌の色が違ったために、僕はいつも見られていたし、とにかく目立っていました。

特に僕が住んでいるアメリカ南部では、(言葉の違いとか肌の色とか) そういう特別なものが目立ってしまうんです。

だから僕は日本に来る前に、人が他人を見つめることはごく自然なことという結論を出していました。僕は成長するにつれて、アメリカ社会でいつも見られていたこと、偏見があったという事実、わざと鈍感になっていったのでしょうか。

日本にやって来て、日本人も自分を見つめていることに気がつきました。ただ、日本人の凝視はアメリカで感じたような偏見ではなく、好奇心と驚きによるものだ、とわかりました。だって日本人は、僕も他の白人系のアメリカ人もみんな同じアメリカ人だと見てるわけですからね。



Julianne

I don't think I have ever been so aware of race being such an important issue until I arrived in Japan. With the understanding that God made so many different ethnicities, I have explored my quad-ethnic identity (my grandmother was half-Apache Native American, half-Mexican, and my grandfather is Mexican mixed with Spaniard and Jewish heritage) and tried to better understand my upbringing and the struggles I have had and will continue to have in a world dominated by monoracial thinking people.

Being in Japan not only made me more aware of my racial identity but it also highlighted the differences between the other (white) exchange students and me in ways I have never experienced before. In Southern California, where I am from, I have never been so aware of my skin color because there are many people who look like me, or at least have dark skin tones. Ever since I arrived at this campus in Mishima, it has been a bit of a shock always being around so many White Americans from the East Coast!

I am not white. I like to know how the lives of multi-racial people would be in. I would be really intrigued in hearing how their ethnic identity is either shaped, enhanced, or broken down by living in Japan and just how their experiences of living here in Japan has allowed them to learn more about themselves. I think I could relate to a lot of their experiences.

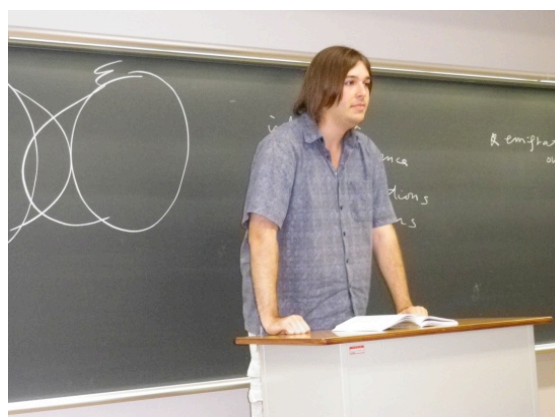
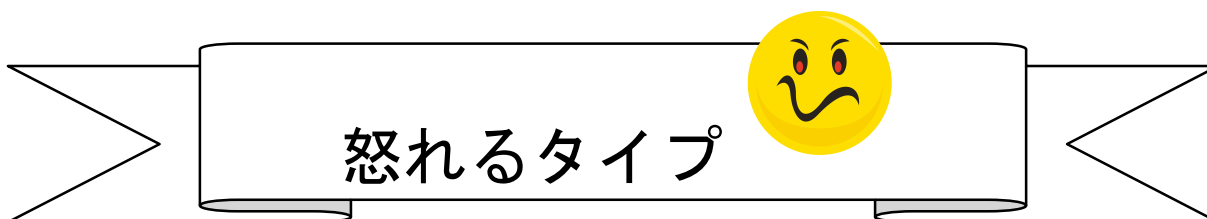
私は、日本に来るまでは「人種の違い」が重要なことだと意識したことはなかったです。私のおばあちゃんには、アパッチ部族のネイティブ・アメリカンとメキシコ人の血が流れていて、おじいちゃんはメキシコ系とスペイン系とユダヤ系の血が流れています。

私はたった1つの人種的アイデンティティーをもつ方が普通と考える人たちが作る世界に抵抗を感じています。

日本で生活していると、今まで経験したことがないくらい人種的アイデンティティーを意識するようになっただけでなく、ほかの白人留学生と自分の違いも意識するようになりました。

私の出身地南カルフォルニアで、そんなに自分の肌の色を意識したことはなかったです。私のように、いろいろな血を受け継いだ人はたくさんいたし、もっとダーク・トーンの肌の人も多くいたから。

だから三島に来て、東海岸出身の白人（ヨーロッパ）系の学生たちと一緒に行動するようになったことが、私にとっては実はちょっとしたカルチャー・ショックでした。



Cameron

I think the Japanese hospitality that is shown is very nice, but at the same time very misleading. I feel as though I've been tricked, and that leaves a very sour taste in my mouth when thinking about those who made so many promises to hang out. When it came time for them to fulfill their promises, they were simply "busy" all the time.

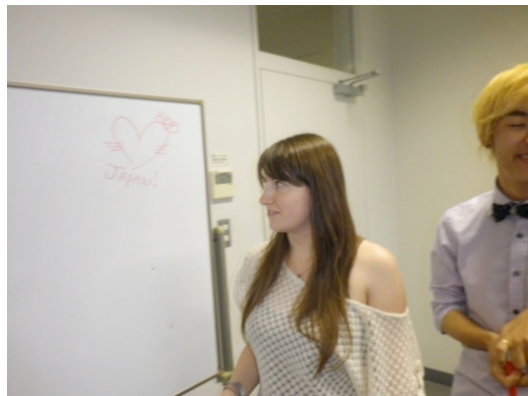
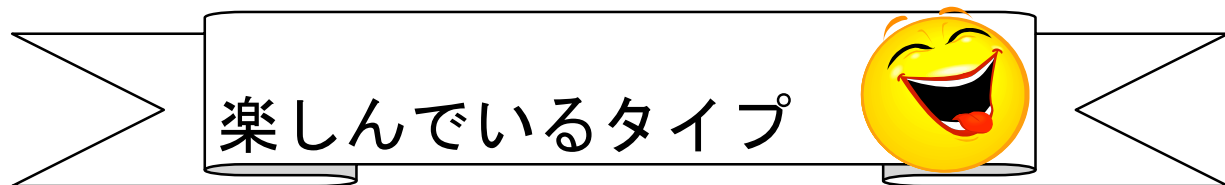
Second, I have been discriminated against in Japan due to my race. Mostly, the discrimination is as minor as a Japanese employee attempting to speak English, pantomime their thoughts, or speak very slow, simple, broken Japanese to me. (Because I am white, they must think all whites do not understand Japanese). I have been told to "Kaere" in a very harsh manner twice since I've been here, but it has never been to my face. Sometimes I didn't understand a group of Japanese people standing next to me and talking about me. I actually learned what they said about me only when I was with Japanese friends and they told me afterwards.

I have been given gifts or discounts simply because I am a foreigner. This may still be a discriminatory experience.

日本人は自分によくしてくれるけれど、ときどき「本心からなのかな」と何ともいえない気分になります。最初は自分に興味をもって、一緒に遊ぼうと言ってくれるのだけど、後になると「忙しいから」「他の用事ができたから」といって約束を破ることが結構ありました。自分が日本のことを何も知らないだろうと親切にしてくれるのはいいですが、ヘンなブローケンな日本語をゆっくり話すようなことをされると、差別されているなと感じます。

「帰れ」と言われたこともあります。ただしこれは面と向かってでなく、僕が日本人の友人たちと一緒にいたとき、そのそばにいた日本人が言ったことだと友達が後で教えてくれました。

僕は日本では、外国人だからということで、おまけをもらったり、手加減されたり、おだてられたりされた。これは日本で受けた差別的な経験、として記憶することになるかもしれないです。



Jessica

After living in Japan for a year, I have definitely become aware of my own “racial identity.” For instance, one of the most reoccurring situations I find myself in would be sitting on a train full of Japanese people, and noticing that they are either staring at me or completely avoiding eye contact. In America, being stared at on a train or not making eye contact is not something normal. Being in Japan and noticing it though makes you very aware that you are in fact foreign and no matter how long you live in Japan you will still be an America white female.

I don't look at the Japanese people's “observation” as being a bad thing -- it is just something that is the way it is. I think Japanese people are possibly curious or just wondering where I came

from and what I am doing in their country, so I don't think of it as their racism. But I also feel that sometimes Japanese attitudes towards white Americans are extremes. For example, Japanese students ask me why all Americans don't dress or act like American movie stars or celebrities.

There was an interesting episode about my “racial identity” when I had my hair cut in Mishima.

The man who was cutting my hair had called over two other workers to look at my hair texture and color, and he later explained to me that most Japanese girls try and attain the color of my hair but usually wind up dyeing it orange. He also said that the light brown color I had, which is natural, was something that Japanese girls could never really have unless they were mixed. I didn't know how to feel about this at the time. For a brief moment I felt how foreign I was in a country where I am the minority. But looking back on it now I am pretty sure he was trying to compliment me on my hair and color.

日本人はひょっとしたらとても好奇心が強いのか、私がどこの出身で日本で何をしているのか不思議がっているのだと思う。だから私はそれを人種的偏見として考えません。しかしまた、白人アメリカ人向けの日本人の態度は極端(過激)とも時々思います。例えば、日本の学生は私に、なぜ全てのアメリカ人が映画のスターやセレブのような服を着たり、行動したりしないのか、と尋ねますね。

三島のヘアサロンでの面白いエピソード

ヘアサロンに行った時、私の髪を切っていたスタイリストが、私の髪の質感と色を見せようと2人のスタッフを呼んだんです。

そして日本人の女の子の多くは 私の髪の色にしたがるけれど、たいいていオレンジ色に失敗してしまうんですよ、と彼は私に説明しました。

彼はまた、私が持っているナチュラルなライトブラウンの色は、ハーフでないと持てない色合いだと言っていました。

私はその時、これについてどう感じたか覚えていません。

一瞬の間、自分がマイノリティである国では、自分は本当に異質の存在なんだな、と感じたと思います。



Dennis

My nationality is a Korean American. I am not Japanese and I am not of Caucasian race, either. Wherever I go in Japan or the United States, I will always be different from the majority of natives and therefore always be considered as a racial minority.

As a Korean and due to my Asian physical features, Japanese people do not notice the immediate difference between me and them. Therefore I would never get stared strangely in public places and people won't avoid me because I look very similar to a Japanese person. Japanese people do find it rather easy to become friends with me due to common Asian social mentality.

However the Japanese people seem to take it for granted that Asian Americans should speak better Japanese than white Americans. When I do not understand what Japanese people say while speaking, that is when I get the strange glare from Japanese people.

I also feel Japanese people do not approach me as much as the other (non-Asian) exchange students. The other exchange students with physical features other than Asian features get approached more often by Japanese people. Because I do not look like a foreigner, I may seem dull in comparison to other non-Asian foreigners. A strange episode is that there were people who thought I was pompous because I can speak the English language very fluently though I have an Asian face...!

Asian Americans are able to assimilate into Japanese society much easier than foreigners of different racial physical features. However they are not receiving so-called “proper” foreigner (gaijin) treatment from the Japanese people. I think the Japanese people view Asian Americans as special due to the fact that they still have the same face as Japanese people yet they are able to master the English language which most native Japanese people dream of mastering.

僕は韓国系アメリカ人なので、アジア人な身体的特徴を持っている。だから日本人は、僕と彼らの間の違いには気づかないです。

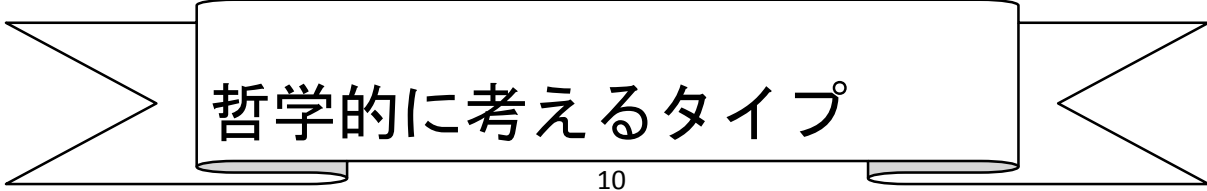
僕は日本人ととても似ているから、僕は公共の場でジロジロと見られたことはないし、僕のことをガイジンといって避けるようなことはないです。

僕と日本人の間には共通のアジアのメンタリティーがあるから、僕と友達になるほうが非アジア系アメリカ人と友達になるより簡単だと思ってるでしょう。

だけど、アジア系アメリカ人は白人系アメリカ人より上手な日本語を話すのが当然と、日本人は思っているようですね。僕が日本人と話すとき、彼らの言うことが理解できないと、日本人から変な目つきで見られてしまいます。

だけど僕が日本人と同じアジア人の顔をしているのに、とても流暢に英語を話すことがわかると、彼らの中には僕のことを、尊大だ、威張ってる、気取っている、と考える人もいるみたい。

これはおかしい話でしょう！



哲学的に考えるタイプ



Miles

I think that my racial identity in Japan has indeed been a roller coaster, like some of the people in the film had mentioned. I thought and knew that racial problems would happen here before I got here (or I should say instead that I was ready for and expected them to occur), but actually experiencing things like that is much different when it happens for real.

That awareness moment for me occurred when I had first lived in Mishima for a while and noticed the differences in how I was treated from somewhere outside Japan or even somewhere more metropolitan like Tokyo or Osaka.

I always noticed that people were talking about me and for the first bit of time I was actually amused with it. However, once you have been in Japan for a while, it begins to become old and

tiresome. I didn't want to be seen as different. I wanted to fit in. It always seemed like there was a barrier in the way I was treated when compared with the other Japanese friends my friends had.

Then I got used to it. I learned to ignore looks. I learned to ignore feeling like people were laughing at me, and when my Japanese got good enough to understand when they were, I got good at ignoring that too. I got thicker skin in some ways and I also learned that human curiosity doesn't necessarily imply cruelty. In ways, I am happy I learned like this and I am happy I feel more in tune with racial awareness and what it is like to be seen as different, even if the intentions of the ostracizers are not cruel at all.

はじめて日本に来た頃、僕は周囲の日本人がいつも自分について話していることに気づいてました。だけど僕は異なったものとして見られなくなかった。僕は日本社会にうまく溶け合いたかった。

他の日本の友達同士の振る舞いかたと比較すると、日本人が僕を扱うときにはいつも壁があるように感じました。

だけど僕はやがて、その壁に慣れてしまったし、日本人がいつも僕のことを見ることにも慣れてしまったし、みんなが自分を見て笑っているようだ、という不安な気持ちにも慣れてしまいました。いつか僕の日本語がうまくなって、彼らが本当は何を言っているのかわかるようになれば、そういうことも無視できるようになる、と思ったんです。

そうやって僕はちょっとは神経が太くなっていきました。そして人間の好奇心というのは必ずしも悪意とか残酷を意味しないんだと考えるようになりました。

僕をにらむことでよそ者扱いしようとする連中が、実はそれほど残酷でもないとしても、まあ人種が違うということのために、特別な風に見られてしまうというのはこういうことなのかと判るようになって良かったかなと思います。



Alicia

When I moved to Japan I was under the impression that there was a good deal of foreigners living there. I didn't realize that these foreigners would centralize around big cities like Tokyo and Yokohama. It seemed to me that almost no one in Mishima had ever even seen a white person, with the way they stared and whispered when seeing me. It made me extremely aware of my race, but it made me even more aware of what it feels like to be a racial minority. I met with a great deal of curiosity at times, fear and hesitation at others, and even still complete nonchalance at others. There was also a time where all of my Japanese friends' awe of me began to wear off. Yes, I was American and they found that to be very "cool", but the novelty began to wear off. It was this point that we were truly able to become friends who mutually respected each other. That's when international friendships and relationships blossom.

三島に住むようになって、人びとが私を見つめてささやくのを見たとき、彼らは今まで一度も白人を見たことがないのかしらと思いました。そういう体験のため、私は人種（肌の違い）ということをとて意識するようになりました。アメリカ人であることは、日本ではとても「かっこいい」と思われていることがわかりました。ところが、「白人である私」に対する目新しさが徐々になくなり始めて、私の存在がいちいち見るに値しない、驚きでもなくなった頃、私たちは互いを尊重しあう本当の友達になれたように思います。



Jake

The earliest I became aware of my racial identity in Japan was the morning after I arrived in Mishima when I went to the store, only to find everyone inside staring at me. I never once thought it malicious or even bad in any way -- it was just something that I had to get accustomed to. I imagine it would be no different than a small town somewhere in America suddenly getting a new race of which there were previously none. The best way to describe it would be as if in a world where everyone wore the color white, I was wearing the color black. I just feel like everyone in Mishima knew I was different, and were thus intrigued as to how different I really was.

The greatest conflict would be the amount of attention I receive. All I would want would be to fully blend in with the culture but I stand out in the daily situations. When I attempt to speak Japanese, many people try to help me out or don't fully understand what I say because my ability to speak Japanese startles them into not fully understanding what I say at first. I can't go anywhere without feeling like I've stopped time every time I walk into a place and whispers fly across the room and glances constantly find their way in my direction. I never faced racism nor did I ever really encounter any form of racial stereotyping. I just stood out.

The only theme that I would like to tackle is that we can never become a raceless society. Race is always something that will make us different, but that doesn't mean it has to hold a negative meaning. As we continue to globalize the nations of our world with various different populations and racial backgrounds, one day race might not be as big of an issue as it has been in during my stay in Japan.

私が三島の店に入ったとき、店にいる全ての人々が僕を見つめました。それは悪意でも何でもないことはだんだんわかってきましたが、それに慣れるのは相当時間がかかりました。自分が三島で目立っている理由を考えると、つまり全ての人が白い洋服を着ているなかで僕だけが真っ黒の服を着ているといった感じ、そういうことなんだなと考えるようになりました。

だけど最も大きな葛藤は、僕が受ける注目の量です。僕が望むことは完全に文化に溶け込むことで

すが、僕はとにかく日々の状況で目立ってしまう。日本語を話そうとしてもあまりうまくないので、それでやっぱり目立ってしまう。日本人は僕を手伝ってくれようとするけれど、それで一層目立ってしまう。

僕はどこにいても邪魔になって時間をとめてしまってるんじゃないかと 落ち込みました。差別されてるのでも何でもないとわかるんですが、とにかく目立ってしまった。

僕が今後取り組みたい課題、それは「私たちは人種のない社会にはなれないのではないか」ということです。「人種」という考え方がある限り、僕らは常に互いに異なった存在になってしまいます。 だけど、それに否定的な意味を持たせなければいいでしょう。

僕たちは様々な異なる人種的背景をもつ人たちと共にグローバル化を進めているわけですが、いつか「人種の違い」は日本の滞在中に僕が感じていることほどに大きな問題ではなくなって、「違う・・・それが何か？」という程度のもになってしまうのではないかと思うんです。