

What do you think when you hear the word feminism? Many people can take it in different ways. But, do you really know the word feminism? If the word is difficult to define, we can describe it as women's rights. I think that it is a way women have fought and lived through years of discrimination and stereotypes. Most developed countries have made changes in support of the movement. They can talk freely and express their feelings about it. But, in Japan, talking about feminism is out of the question. I enjoy discussing social problems around the world. I am simply curious about what is happening in our lives.

I'd like to share an experience that led me here today. I remember last year a girl in my class was saying how aggressive, opinionated, violent and crazy feminist are and how she couldn't believe some people are feminists. I couldn't understand why though. The thought of degrading the people who defend your own rights like she did was astonishing to me. When I asked myself about my feelings at that time, I was not only surprised, but also sad, angry and annoyed. They were a mix of feelings that made my heart hurt. It is so complicated to explain.

But this is the reality we live in now. Japan is such a country where men and even women make fun of women's rights. I don't think it was my classmate's fault though. I think the problem is with Japan itself. Japan is one of the most developed countries with least empowerment for women. In this year's world economic forum gender gap report which indexes the degree of gender equality, Japan ranked 125th out of 146 countries, our lowest rank ever which puts us behind most of the world. Do you know how many women politicians we see in our country? In the diet they're only 68 out of 248. That's only 27 percent! Is the Japanese government really willing to change? Since the Japanese government keeps on ignoring these problems it leads to the things that my classmate said in my classroom. Women live under a glass ceiling so no matter how good, smart and talented you are, if you are a woman, you will feel unable to move beyond the ceiling.

Now that we know where we've been and where we are, do you think we are going in the right direction for women's rights? I don't think so. I believe education is essential in creating a more gender equal society. By learning about the achievements and struggles of women throughout history, we can better understand the importance of feminism. Learning more about feminism has inspired me to become an adult who fights for gender equality. I want to help create a society where everyone's rights are respected, and women can chase their dreams without barriers. I am motivated to work to challenge stereotypes, promote inclusivity and stand against discrimination. We can all help pave the way for a more compassionate and supportive community but only by taking our education seriously and learning about women's struggles, and more importantly, our achievements. As a member of our younger generation, I will use any power whether through conversation or a grand stage such as this to make a positive impact on my generation and the girls who will follow. I want to make a better Japan in a better world with everyone starting with the people around me. Let's work together to build a brighter future for all, where gender, race and social ranking does not limit anyone's potential. Thank you for listening to my thoughts on feminism.

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Feminism