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Focus on Japan 2007 Photo Messages Now Posted!

<http://www.tjf.or.jp/focusonjapan/en/work/index.html>

In August, TJF held Focus on Japan 2007, an exchange program for high school students from around the world focusing on photographs and interviews. Eight high school students from Australia, China, Korea, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States were invited, selected from applicants worldwide. Along with eight Japanese high school students, they were divided into four teams. The teams of four spent five days in different locations around Japan: Miyagi prefecture, Tokyo, Osaka, and Hiroshima. Guided by photography club advisers and members of local high schools, they photographed people and images

of daily life in the places they visited. Each team selected about 25 photographs and wrote a message about them to complete a photo essay as the summation of their experience.

Through this project, the students met and talked to people of different generations in the respective locales they visited. They deepened their understanding of each other through collaboration in the work of the project. Please have a look at the results of their handiwork, now available at the Focus on Japan site, a glimpse of which is shown below. And look forward to the Focus on Japan feature in the next issue of *Takarabako!*

Precious Encounters

Our visit to Miyagi showed us how good it is to meet all kinds of different people. People love to be around other people, and without the connections we have with others, we wouldn't survive. The islands were like one big family. Everyone was kind to people from outside including us, and it really made us feel happy.



Miyagi Team (from left)
Bo Ram (Seoul, Korea),
Sao (Hiroshima, Japan),
Kyung Ju (Seoul, Korea),
Alice (Tokyo, Japan)



- 1 This girl, born and raised in Shiogama, practices *kagura* (Shinto dance and music).
- 2 We had shaved ice with green tea sauce and sweet red bean jam after a photo shoot by the ocean.
- 3 To us, this man was like the mascot of his island. He seemed as if he'd been sitting there his whole life to welcome people to the island. Isn't he cute?

Osaka is Hot, Hot, Hot! "Mottainai" Not to Know Its Wonders

What struck us the most in Osaka was the energy and approachability of the people. Everyone kindly welcomed us photographers, telling Paul and Polly about things Japanese and wishing us luck on our Focus on Japan 2007 project.



Osaka Team (from left)
Polly (Winslow, UK),
Shinji (Gifu, Japan),
Paul (NE, USA),
Hiromi (Tokyo, Japan)



- 1 In an old part of the city, we ran into these junior high students on their way home. We were amazed when they saw our cameras and just started posing.
- 2 A little girl chowing down on hot *takoyaki* in the heat.
- 3 People go home from work on foot, by car, and train. In Osaka they often walk or take the train. Where I live, we drive everywhere. (Paul)

Living in Tokyo: Big City, Small Tales

Tokyo is a huge city, but everyone has their own lives, with both troubles and happy times. Each person may seem tiny in the context of this big city, but we wanted to focus on these everyday people and convey their lively stories.



Tokyo Team (from left)
Xiajun (Shanghai, China),
Midoring (Osaka, Japan),
Xiaoyuan (Inner Mongolia, China),
Yabi-chan (Okinawa, Japan)



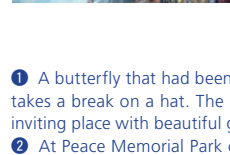
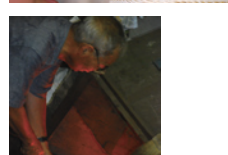
- 1 A "red girl" visiting from Yamagata. The Harajuku district attracts youth with idiosyncratic tastes in fashion.
- 2 This woman was a young girl during World War II. Today, she has a happy life running a sweets shop.
- 3 A teenager looking disillusioned and left out amid the bustle of time-conscious businessmen.

Finding the Richness

Hiroshima is a place of many faces. It is, of course, a place where the atomic bomb was dropped, but there is more to it than that. Through people, nature, and tradition, we feel that we were able to learn the meaning of true riches.



Hiroshima Team (from left)
Kosuke (Osaka, Japan),
Emily (QLD, Australia),
Sawako (Tokyo, Japan),
Daniel C. (Upper Hutt, NZ)



- 1 A butterfly that had been flying to and from everyone's hands takes a break on a hat. The Bihoku National Hillside Park was an inviting place with beautiful greenery that we'd love to visit again.
- 2 At Peace Memorial Park on August 6, *hibakusha* (survivors of the bombing) and families of A-bomb victims pray in front of a memorial.
- 3 A blacksmith in Shobara made a hoe in front of our very eyes. His detailed explanation was like an interesting chemistry lesson.

The Way We Are: Real-life Images of Japanese High School Students Available Online!

<http://www.tjf.or.jp/thewayweare/>

The photo essays were selected from the submissions received for TJF Lives of Japanese High School Students: Photo and Message Contest 1997-2006. Each photo essay features five photographs with captions, a profile of the subject, and an English translation of the text messages by the photographer and the subject.