

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S AND GENDER ACTIVISM
AND SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: JAPAN

**Transcript of Chizuko Ueno
Interviewer: Hitomi Tonomura**

Location: Tokyo, Japan

Date: May 31, 2022

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Hitomi Tonomura, University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. A historian by training, her research and teaching focus on the comparative history of gender, especially in Japan and East Asia, and intersectional meanings of violence, race, and masculinities in past and present war systems. Currently interested in the military culture of the US bases in Japan and Korea and its impact on the mainland's racial climate, her past publications include the examination of village communities in medieval Japan, concepts of purity and pollution, status and sex, laws and violence in premodern warrior society, and gendered representations in contemporary museum exhibitions.

Keywords: Education and Art/Writing as Activism

Hitomi Tonomura: With that, I will get started.

Chizuko Ueno: Okay.

HT: So I have about six types of questions for you, and within each of those I have questions that are a bit more specific, but I don't mind at all if you'd like to take things in a different direction as you go about answering. Okay.

So, this is my first question, but given the path you've taken. You have been recognized as a pioneer of feminism for the past half-century, being called a "feminist standard-bearer, enduring the headwinds and running at the forefront of things," etc. What sort of life paths do you think you have led such that you have become who you are now? Have you felt discrimination, sex discrimination, and the like since you were a child?

CU: Yes, that's it exactly. When I think about what made me a feminist, I think there are two reasons. The first is that the household in which I grew up was one in which there was a terribly domineering, typical Japanese patriarchal father, and a mother who was a housewife, and the reason that was the perfect environment for raising a feminist was that my parents did not get along. And you see, my parents got married out of love. My mother couldn't blame anybody else for (what she thought was) a mistake she had made in choosing her husband. But as I was looking intently at my mother, my young mind suddenly came to a realization one day - Mother, even if you switch out your husband for another, your unhappiness won't go away. This isn't a problem of personality, it's a structural problem. Realizing that was the moment I decided that I "would not lead a life like my mother's"-that I would make her not a role model, but a counter model. And so, as a result I have never gotten involved with the institution of marriage, and have made it to this day on my own. That is the biggest reason, you see.

The second reason, indeed, was that my experience of the student movement was extremely important for me. I think this was an very common experience globally among my generation, the student power generation... Afterall, what the men we thought were our comrades did to me that day, that time, that place, you know, and I hold resentment about that. So in that sense, I think those experiences also made me a feminist.

HT: That sort of experience is something that U.S. feminists often talk about too. Present day women's studies and all kinds of other things grew out of that, wouldn't you say?

CU: Across the world, in particular when I visited Europe, I learned that women who were part of the New Left¹ student power generation had similar experiences indeed. So, I came to understand that across the world there was a simultaneousness with which those women became the very first drivers of women's liberation and women's emancipation movements.

¹ New Left refers to a political movement in the 60s and 70s that in the U.S. was associated with left-wing issues including opposition to the war in Vietnam and a critique of capitalism, and advocated for civil rights. ("New Left." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Left. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

HT: Yes, that's true isn't it. So, people of your generation, Ueno-san, accumulated those types of experiences, but young people nowadays have not experienced things like those student movements in the 70s. So given that, when you think about how you yourself were made into who you are, young people now are, I guess one might say, quite lacking in various experiences. Then, how is it that young people today can become feminists? I suppose this might be a separate question, but considering your own experience, Ueno-san, when you think about your life up to now, would you say that young people today have those sorts of opportunities?

CU: The situation in Japan today is showing such vitality that one could call it a "feminism reboot." Young people have stopped feeling a sense of danger toward feminism, and are taking action very/quite actively. I think indeed the biggest reason for that is the generational shift and the decline in the birth rate. In our time, if there was both a son and a daughter, it was the son who would receive more investment in his education, resulting in daughters having a lesser academic record than sons. This type of discrimination was quite common in the household. In contrast, now daughters tend to be either only children or only have sisters, and are being brought up with great care in such family environment. While in school, which is (generally) co-ed, and is (supposed to be) based on gender equality, they don't feel much discrimination. Their educational levels have also increased considerably. So given that, when they head out into society and face idiotic things [discrimination], the young generation of women nowadays have no tolerance - they feel no reason to tolerate this kind of unfair discrimination. In other words, I think we are seeing that the daughters who refuse to tolerate have grown up. The people who raised those daughters who refuse to tolerate are the women of the generation prior, and the women of the generation prior hold resentment as a result of having tolerated for so long, right? The way I see it, this is probably the result of the parent generation's resentment being reflected in the children's generation. And on that point, I actually spoke with a journalist about this once, and when I said that the tolerance limit of women in Japan had decreased, he ended up sending me an article later on. This was a male journalist, but this is what was written in the article: that women now have insufficient tolerance. Well, that's exactly right, I suppose. I really felt then that the daughters who refuse to tolerate have come of age.

HT: So does that mean that going forward this will become a society in which men have to tolerate?

CU: No - I don't know whether or not the boys will tolerate this. But ultimately, so long as men do not change, there will be more women who refuse to tolerate those men who do not change, which means that "mismatch in marriages" will increase, meaning the likelihood of marriage in Japan will decrease, and the birth rate will decrease even more.

HT: I see, that's an interesting story. You've been speaking about the present day, but I'd like to ask you a bit about your research, Ueno-san. Up to now you've written so many books and articles, tens, hundreds even, but for me as a reader - of course there are academic books among that number, but aside from those you have books

which are extremely easy to read, all of them have very enjoyable, and interesting, and novel subject matter, and anyhow are quite fun to read. In terms of subject matter, from the 80s up to now, there has been a steady change, and what I noticed in the beginning is that, in short, back then things like the sexual revolution were happening, so I think you had many books about sexuality in general, for example, a book entitled *Underskirt Theater*,² or *Sexy Gals*.³ And it seemed from my end that you were addressing capitalism⁴ and socialism.⁵ Now that has changed a bit – for example, there are your books about “*o-hitori-sama*” - living alone. How did you go about choosing the theme for those works you wrote? I think that has changed depending on the period of time.

CU: Yes, when I encountered women’s studies, I had an eye-opening experience, like scales falling from my eyes⁶. Which is to say, I realized that it was okay to make myself the subject of my research. In the academia, the subjective is not considered academic. The notion that one must be objective and neutral – I think this is a myth, but the idea is in circulation even now – so if a woman studies women, it was labeled as “subjective.” But our elder colleague, Teruko Inoue,⁷ who introduced women’s studies to Japan, clearly defined it as being of, by, and for women. Later on, in Japan from the 2000’s onward, *tōjisha kenkyū*⁸ by minority folks became greatly widespread. How would one translate *tōjisha kenkyū* into English? Maybe one could say “Studies on our own”? It is research about people who are conducting research themselves. When I saw that, I had a feeling of *deja vu*. Which is to say: oh, if that’s what this is, then we’ve been doing it for even longer. Thinking about it now, women’s studies was a pioneer in *tōjisha kenkyū*. So given that, when I thought about making myself the subject of my research, sexuality was an extremely pressing issue for me when I was in my 20’s and 30’s. Sexuality, childbirth, and family, that sort of thing. Whether or not to give birth, including the question of whether or not to form a family, was a very pressing issue. But I steadily have steadily gotten older, and now I am a senior citizen. And as a result,

² *The Theatre Under the Skirt* is a book written by Chizuko Ueno that was published in 1992. It is one of Ueno’s more well-known publications. (“Major Publications.” Chizuko Ueno.

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/t/o/tob/503/ueno.html>. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

³ *The Study of the ‘Sexy Girl’* by Chizuko Ueno was published in 1982. This book addressed the Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1960s and is known as one of the ‘Flagbearers of 1980’s Feminism’ (“Chizuko Ueno.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chizuko_Ueno. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

⁴ Capitalism is an economic system in which the prices or distribution of goods to society is controlled by private investors or individuals rather than the government. (“Capitalism Definition & Meaning.” Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/capitalism>. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

⁵ Socialism is defined as a society in which there is no private property and the prices and distribution of goods are determined by the state or government. (“Socialism Definition & Meaning.” Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/socialism>. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

⁶ “Scales falling from my eyes” is an idiom that reflects a sudden understanding of the truth. (“The scales fall from someone’s eyes.” Cambridge Dictionary.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/scales-fall-from-eyes>. Accessed 12 January 2024.)

⁷ Teruko Inoue was a Japanese sociologist. She was born in 1942 and passed away in 2021. Inoue studied at the University of Tokyo and worked at Wako University. (“Teruko Inoue.” Wikidata.

<https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q62085490>. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

⁸ *Tojisha-Kenkyu* is also known as self-support research. Individuals who experience similar hardships all work together to create and investigate hypotheses. (“Why UTokyo?”. The University of Tokyo.

https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/whyutokyo/indpt_tojisha_018.html. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

aging did indeed become prominent before my eyes. This experience was indeed a compelling experience for me. In addition, things aligned such that Japanese society as a whole was also aging. And so I feel as though I've been blessed by the good fortune of my own personal issue just happening to align with a societal issue. That said – I mean, if I say it this way I might invite misunderstanding, but I often say that I am doing scholarship out of my own self-interest. “For self interest,” I suppose you could say. I am grateful that things just happen to have worked out such that pursuing an interest compelling to myself has also been of service to other people.

HT: And so you use very interesting types of Japanese words, which come up all the time in the titles of your books, such as *o-hitori-sama*⁹; of course the actual content is interesting as well. You just brought up the question of how to translate this kind of Japanese word [*tōjisha kenkyū*] into English, right? Now, “*o-hitori-sama*” – that word is rather untranslatable into English, isn't it. The word *o-hitori-sama* – for example, when you come into a restaurant they call you *o-hitori-sama*, so *o-hitori-sama* is a word that makes sense in the Japanese societal contest, but if you put it as “one person,” or “alone,” or “lone” in English, it doesn't make sense. And so, you have this succession of so many Japanese words that are difficult to translate into English and are also fun, which you, Ueno-san, so perceptively find and bring to us from somewhere out there. And it makes me wonder how that all came to be. I'm asking because I'm a bit envious.

CU: Tonomura-san, I'm happy you asked me that. I almost never get asked this kind of question, you see. The reason why I do indeed feel the impact force and destructive force of words is that, when I was young, I did short-form poetry. I did haikus.¹⁰ I was a haiku poet. That involved stuffing words into just 17 characters arrayed in lines of 5, 7, and 5, and in doing so think about how to change up one's reading of the world. Insofar as that gave me practice in bringing an impact force to bear on the world, there might just be a connection there. And so that's why there are a number of phrases I've coined and sent into the world of academia. They aren't words in the dictionary, you see. They include, for example, the phrase *tōjisha shuken*¹¹, and *sentaku-en*¹², and *o-hitori-sama* is also one of them. Now, I'm

⁹ O-hitori-sama is the honorific form of “one person” or “alone”. (“ohitorisama.” Nihingo Master. <https://www.nihongomaster.com/japanese/dictionary/word/104280/ohitorisama-%E3%81%8A%E4%B8%80%E4%BA%BA%E6%A7%98-%E3%81%8A%E3%81%B2%E3%81%A8%E3%82%8A%E3%81%95%E3%81%BE>.)

¹⁰ A haiku is a type of Japanese poem that consists of 3 lines with the 1st and 3rd line having 5 syllables and the 2nd line having 7 syllables. (“Haiku Definition & Meaning.” Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/haiku>. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

¹¹ Tōjisha shuken directly translates to sovereignty of the parties concerned in English. (“と自社主権.” Word Hippo. <https://www.wordhippo.com/what-is/dynamic-translation/3dfed75f6b853230d5298f33de5ed8c1696da229.html>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

¹² Literally “relationships of choice”

trying to popularize the phrase *zaitaku hitori-shi*¹³, which I created because I don't want it to be said that I died a *kodoku-shi*¹⁴

HT: On one level, you create a new phrase as a sociologist,¹⁵ and by doing that, you also get people to think about various theoretical issue, right?

CU: That's right. Because making a new concept entails the emergence of a new reality which is unexplainable except by that [new] concept.

HT: That's wonderful. Next, I'd like to ask about the relationship between feminist studies and activism. in Japan, women's studies – I do history, so I should say the field of women's history in particular – emerged in the 80's, and as you said before, you said something like “the scales fell from your eyes,” and at the time many books were published. Is there necessarily a relationship between academic work and the development of feminism? I think it could be said that there isn't, right? In a way. I mean, I recall hearing a person who does women's history once say “the activists these days are truly annoying people,” or something like that. And so, from your point of view, Ueno-san, how did you feel back then?

CU: That's a very sharp observation as expected of women's history scholar. In Japan, the history of women's research groups is incredibly old and dense. When women try to trace their roots, they indeed first turn to history. And so even before the birth of women's lib, in Japan, there were local women's journals and local newspapers throughout the country, there was that great accumulation of local women's journals. These were amateur women's historians. Civilian women's history scholars, you see. However, the dominant historical theory of the historical societies of Japan at the time was, well, that of historical materialism, which if anything was a Marxist¹⁶ and theory of class [conflict] history. The majority of those people were under that influence, so they were disconnected from the women's lib generation. Women's lib emerged not from that kind of place, but rather from the activist women of the New Left that I mentioned before, which, on the contrary, criticized the Old Left¹⁷ – the Old Left which championed historical materialism.¹⁸ So, there

¹³ literally “dying alone at home”

¹⁴ Kodoku-shi directly translates to a lonely death. It usually refers to older individuals who live alone and die unattended. (“Kodokushi.” Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kodokushi>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

¹⁵ A sociologist is an individual who studies the interactions of people in societies or groups, as well as social strata that organize individuals like occupations, gender, ethnicity, etc. (“sociologist. Vocabulary.com. <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/sociologist>. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

¹⁶ Marxist refers to Marxism which is the idea that the wealth inequality in society is because of the impact of the owners of production over those who actually are paid to labor for those people (the working class). (“What is ‘Marxism’.” The Economic Times. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/marxism>. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

¹⁷ The Old Left in the U.S. was a political movement before the 60s. It was associated with economic issues like the unequal distribution of wealth in society. The Old Left was not as concerned with social justice concerns like civil rights. (“Old Left.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Left. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

¹⁸ Historical materialism is the idea that history is a result of the differences and struggles between the various socioeconomic classes. This idea was developed by Karl Marx, who is also associated with Marxism. (“Historical materialism.” Wikipedia.

was a discontinuity in both human and academic genealogies. When women's lib was born, in Japan women's lib was born in 1970 as well, there was a period when those forerunners and elder sisters who had amassed so many movements in the past were criticized as *petit-bourgeois*¹⁹ radicalism –now isn't that a nostalgic phrase? Subsequently, women's studies made great progress but relations between women's history scholars and women's studies scholars remained not so amicable for a long time. It is the case that in most other countries women's history developed thanks to the influence of feminism, but the peculiar thing about Japan is that before the birth of second wave feminism there existed an extremely dense accumulation of women's history scholarship. One might be able to say that that may have, conversely, obstructed connections with new movements.

HT: That is such a very fascinating perspective. I suppose it would be around 1910, male historians also wrote many papers on women's history, but of course those people didn't have the word feminism. I think another thing to think about is whether or not their work even connects to the study of women's history as it is now. But, speaking of male scholars now, for example, in women's history – or, even if it's not in women's history or history, but maybe in sociology...is there a large number of them writing something contains elements of feminism?

CU: It's difficult to speak to numbers, but later, women's history, with the influence of Joan Scott,²⁰ developed into gender history. With that, in a way, we escaped the ghetto of women only studying women, and most all historical societies came to have committees on gender, and associations dedicated to gender history also emerged. So in that way, regardless of whether the scholar is a man or a woman, there emerged a trend where it has become seen as a matter of course among historians to include gender as a variable of analysis. I think this is definitely a major change.

HT: That is such a great thing, isn't it. On that point, before, I actually wrote a paper on this, about how the word *jendaa* (gender) [in Japanese]– I don't know about now, but for example ten or fifteen years ago, my impression was that the word wasn't very well understood, but what do you think?

CU: Yes, of course that's how it was. Because it's an unfamiliar foreign word, and like you said Tonomura-san, it's an imported word. But because we have continued using it for so long, as of late, it has become widely established and even comes up in people's everyday conversations. However, I mean, I think this every time I hear it, the word "gender" is

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_materialism#:~:text=Historical%20materialism%20posits%20that%20history,in%20the%20underlying%20economic%20base. Accessed 3 March 2023.

¹⁹ *Petit bourgeoisie* refers to a social class of "semi-autonomous peasants and small-scale merchants" whose ideology reflects that of the upper class rather than the interests of the workers. The term dates back to the French Revolution and addresses themes of materialism. In this context it is a critique of feminism as not Marxist and therefore not radical enough. ("Petite bourgeoisie." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petite_bourgeoisie. Accessed 12 January 2024.)

²⁰ Joan Scott is currently a professor emerita at Princeton. Scott is known for her work on gender and feminist theory and history, specifically in France. Joan Scott has many publications and is also known for providing a foundation for the gender history field. ("Joan Wallach Scott." Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Wallach_Scott. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

originally derived from the French word “genre,” so even for people in the English-speaking world, it is an imported word, right? Latin languages have masculine and feminine words, but English does not, so originally, it is a genderless language. I would like to share with people who are listening to this an extremely unforgettable episode. It happened when a French feminist scholar and the American Joan Scott were participating in a symposium, and the French scholar told Scott that the word “gender” is of no concern to you English-speaking scholars to begin with. What concern could you scholars possibly have with a word that you have no connection with? It was such a mean-spirited question. [Gayatri Chakravorty] Spivak²¹ was also present. I was the coordinator of the symposium. And I thought what Spivak said was wonderful. She said, no matter where a concept is born, if it’s useful then anyone should be allowed to use it.

HT: Those are such great words.

CU: It’s an analytical concept that’s worth using, and I think that’s exactly why it has spread so much.

HT: I think that’s very good. And you as well, Ueno-san, I imagine you were doing this since “gender” arrived in Japan, and of course even before that perhaps. Are you using the concept of gender in your writing now? If anything, in women’s studies...

CU: Yes. I have. I’ve written several books with “gender” in the title.

HT: And so, as you were saying earlier, as you yourself is changing, the way of thinking changes as well, is that so?

CU: In short, one’s way of seeing things changes. And so, the word “woman” appears to refer to a particular condition, but gender is about how difference between the sexes is created, and so, well, the thing that gender studies can do, unlike women’s studies, is in places where there are women it can study women, but also in places where there aren’t women, you can study why women aren’t there, and how the men there were constructed, so, of course, you can even do gender studies of the military. And so in that sense, there is no field in which one can’t do gender studies. I think a time has come when one could even say that there’s no field that gender studies can’t take up.

HT: That’s right isn’t it. And so, what we call masculinity studies over here is becoming quite active. How is it in Japan? Masculinity studies, I mean.

CU: Lately, there has been quite a bit of men’s studies work coming out. Moreover, books in which young people are very frank and honest in talking about themselves are coming out one after another. I think this is an extremely good trend.

²¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is a current professor at Columbia University, literary theorist, and feminist critic. Spivak was one of the original members who founded Columbia’s Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. She is also the recipient of the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy in 2012. (“Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gayatri_Chakravorty_Spivak. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

HT: That's interesting.

CU: And also, in Korea²² as well, work in men's studies has been coming out, and lately, the results of women's studies and men's studies in Korea have been getting translated into Japanese, which has been very stimulating.

HT: That's wonderful, isn't it. Right, so, shifting course a bit here, I'd like to ask about your current work at WAN. Can you explain a bit about when WAN got started, and what kind of intention it was created with?

CU: Sure. It was formed in 2009, so this year is our 13th year. WAN has sad origins. Which is to say, it was born amidst a backlash. WAN was born in the Kansai area.²³ Not in Tokyo.²⁴ A big reason it was born in Kansai is because in Osaka Prefecture,²⁵ the biggest city [in Japan] after Tokyo, an extremely right-wing²⁶ politician named Toru Hashimoto²⁷ was elected governor, and as a result gender policies were severely constricted. We felt a sense of danger, and not only that, at the time in Japan²⁸ there was a storm of backlash raging against feminism. We had our lectures canceled at the last minute, and received threatening letters, so we were having a really difficult time. That's what kind of time the 2000s were. At the time, the first bookstore specializing in women's issues in Japan, was on the verge of being put out of business, and so we were thinking about how we could protect it, and in the end decided to make it an online bookstore. But on the internet, online right-wingers had a big presence. Indeed, at first Japan was relatively slow on the uptake compared to other countries, but from the 2000s onward the internet began to proliferate; but amidst that, it was the right-wing that had a way bigger presence. And so we figured, there was no longer any way for us to survive other than by heading out into the world of

²² Korea is a country located in eastern Asia. It is divided into North and South Korea. Korea is surrounded by water on three sides and borders China and Russia. ("Korea." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korea>. Accessed 3 March 2023.)

²³ The Kansai area is located on the south of Honshu, which is the main island in Japan. This area encompasses many prefectures, including Kyoto which is one of the more highly populated regions of Japan. ("Kansai region." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansai_region. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

²⁴ Tokyo is one of the most highly populated cities in Japan. It is also the capital of Japan and is often referred to as the economic center of the country. ("Tokyo." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokyo>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

²⁵ Osaka prefecture is located in Japan, specifically in the Kansai region. Osaka prefecture encompasses many major cities of Japan. ("Osaka Prefecture." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osaka_Prefecture. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

²⁶ Right-wing refers to a political ideology that is often associated with private ownership and more traditional and conservative ideas. ("Right-wing politics." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right-wing_politics. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

²⁷ Toru Hashimoto is a Japanese politician and lawyer. Hashimoto is known for being one of the major right-wing politicians in Japan. He was previously the mayor of Osaka City, which is the capital of Osaka Prefecture. ("Tōru Hashimoto." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C5%8Dru_Hashimoto. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

²⁸ Japan is a country located in eastern Asia. It is surrounded by water on all sides. Japan is known for being one of the most highly populated countries in the world. ("Japan." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

the internet. WAN's sad origins really lie in being forced into a corner, and defending ourselves with our backs up against the wall. It was our pivot into a counterattack.

HT: I hear that neto-uyo (an abbreviation of Netto-uyoku [online right-wingers]) really are gaining a lot of traction. Is that the kind of thing one finds on Twitter²⁹ and places like that? I'm not on Twitter so I have no idea.

CU: Oh, is that so? I used to struggle with obtaining information online, but at long last I've gradually adapted to the online world. At the time we got started in the 2000s, when you typed feminism into the search box on Google³⁰ search, the first word to come up was feminazi.³¹

HT: Wow, that's crazy.

CU: That's how bad the situation was. Indeed, this was a situation we couldn't overlook, that's what we said. And another thing is that looking at young people, they don't read print media anymore.

HT: That's right.

CU: If something doesn't come up on Google search, it's as though it doesn't exist.

HT: Right.

CU: We gradually came to understand that, and so what we resolved to do was make a last ditch effort to build up our presence in the online world.

HT: But being on Twitter, don't you end up spending 24 hours all day just staring at it?

CU: Well, there are people like that, but I started Twitter late. In 2011 when Japan had the Awaji-Hanshin...excuse me, I mean the Great East Japan disaster,³² which involved massive tsunami and earthquake, at that time, I felt keenly that I couldn't trust the mass media, and started Twitter for the first time. And so, I was quite late to it.

²⁹ Twitter is a website used for social networking where users can post images, videos, or text known as tweets. ("Twitter." WhatIs.com. <https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/Twitter>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

³⁰ Google is a type of search engine on the internet. It helps provide the most relevant information related to the word or phrase that is searched. ("Google." Techopedia. <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/5359/google>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

³¹ Feminazi refers to feminists' presumed authoritarianism in the opinion of some non-feminist observers. It was meant to be derogative and was made popular by Rush Limbaugh, who is a conservative talk show host. ("Feminazi." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminazi>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

³² The Great East Japan Disaster refers to the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan in 2011. This was one of the most powerful earthquakes in the world, and the most powerful one in Japan. ("2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_T%C5%8Dhoku_earthquake_and_tsunami. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

HT: But that means you've been doing it for over 10 years.

CU: I was late to it, but there are many people who've tried to pick fight. So long as you don't reply to others, if you just think of it just as a tool for posting information, it isn't particularly difficult. Our generation, you know, we can shut down any and all responses that we don't like. But, when I look at the young people, it really seems as though part of their egos lives in the online world. I hear that there are even some people who can't help egosurfing/Googling³³ themselves. So with the internet I think it's a question of how you use it.

HT: That's right. I think that after I'm retired, I might have a little more time to look at it. But people do so really all day long; many students are doing nothing but that even when they're sitting in class. Nowadays, I mean.

CU: Also, in addition to that, what we were aiming for, indeed, was the creation of a portal site of information for women. I've asked various kinds of people whether there is something like this, something like WAN in other countries. Is there in the U.S.A.?³⁴

HT: There are many kinds of things, but as for whether or not there's something equivalent to WAN, I wonder. Maybe not?

CU: I don't often hear that there is. Which is to say, in our line of work, there are various feminist activist organizations, organized around specific issues. Each of them has made their own websites. However, those focus on their own [issues]. We connect them horizontally. You see, there are indeed almost no sites that visualize what else is out there, and in what ways they are connected. WAN transcends those genres. It arose out of a desire to make that kind of alternative media for women.

HT: In Japan, how did you go about letting everyone know that it exists?

CU: Feminist networks have existed since a relatively long time ago. In Japan there's no gigantic national organization like NOW³⁵ in the U.S.A., but fairly small organizations are connected horizontally, and a structure has developed that activates such horizontal connections when something happens. There are mailing lists too. And so, by way of that connectivity, well, various organizations can take a certain action – for example, when there are elections.

³³ Egosurfing is defined as an individual searching their own name on the internet to view the results. ("Egosurfing." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egosurfing>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

³⁴ U.S.A stands for the United States of America, which is a country in North America. ("United States." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

³⁵ NOW stands for the National Organization for Women. NOW is dedicated to promoting women's rights and has many locations across the United States. ("About." National Organization for Women. <https://now.org/about/>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

HT: There's various things I'd like to ask you with regard to elections, but let's save that for a bit later. What kind of hopes do you have for the future of WAN now?

CU: Well, um, first before that, having been someone who struggled with using the internet, the big thing I learned by starting an online enterprise was, indeed –

HT: Sure, please tell us.

CU: The power of the internet and video is amazing. And so, we are doing two centerpiece projects that we think will be our legacy; the first is that we are making a digital archive of various publications of local women, which are going extinct. As our elder sisters age, various local women's journals including those of women's history research associations are pausing or ceasing publication. When they are no longer with us [the journals] will lose their values, so before they're scattered and lost we're looking to digitize and archive them. When we do that, our elder sisters aren't familiar with IT, to the point that they ask us what a PDF is. And so we explain, and we ask them to clear up copyright issues. Lately we are seeing developments for which we are extremely grateful. As came up with regard to your earlier question Tonomura-san, there was a disconnection between the new women's movement after 1970, after women's lib, and the various women's history groups that were around before. However, women's history folks from across the country have been approaching us to say that they want us to save their records, and it now happens that they are bringing those [records] to our digital archive. We are truly grateful for this; I mean, these are the precious legacies of the prior generation, and it'll be first-class historical material for future women's studies scholars. Public institutions won't do this sort of thing. Nobody but us will do it. If this is going on a little too long you're welcome to edit it out, but there are three local journals I petitioned for inclusion. They were the oldest of the oldest local journals. One of them was Kazue Morisaki-san's *Dispatches from the Nameless*.³⁶ Are you familiar with it?

HT: I've heard of it, but never read it.

CU: It's in the archive. You can download it so I'd love for you to take a look. What was written in the hand-printed mimeograph³⁷ that was their first issue? Why did they call themselves nameless? "We have been called all kinds of names—wife, mother, housewife, daughter. We want to relinquish those names and returning to being a nameless woman." – this is what they wrote to describe the meaning of *Dispatches from the Nameless*. Such moving words. We received them with permission from the people who wrote them. And

³⁶ Kazue Morisaki was a Japanese poet. Morisaki published a journal called *Mumei Tsushin*, which roughly translates to *Dispatches from the Nameless*. This journal was for women. Many of Morisaki's works were for women and addressed the struggles of working class women. ("Kazue Morisaki." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazue_Morisaki. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

³⁷ A mimeograph is a printed product (such as a handout or a flyer) of a machine that makes many copies by pressing ink through stencils. ("Mimeograph Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mimeograph>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

also, the second one is Tomoko Yamazaki.³⁸ The person who wrote *The Eighth House of Japanese Prostitutes in the South Sea Islands – her History of Exchange Between Asian Women*. We received every volume of that.

HT: That's amazing.

CU: And another one is the *Itsue Takamure Journal*,³⁹ which Michiko Ishimure⁴⁰ was involved with. Now, the person who put this out was Takamure-san's husband⁴¹, but he had already passed away, so we obtained agreement from the surviving family to receive every issue. The work of steadily accumulating these materials is something nobody else would do, so we have always done it with the mindset that we are the only ones who will do it. That is one of our legacies.

The second centerpiece project involves our own generation – you know, the first generation of gender studies scholars, the pioneering generation, many of whom are retiring. I don't know about the U.S.A., but at Japanese universities there is mandatory retirement, and retiring teachers give what is called a final lecture. Those final lectures are extremely moving. It's their research history, personal history, and social history, all three of those mixed together, in a once-in-a-lifetime event. Back in the day these were recorded on tape, transcribed, and printed and distributed on university bulletins, which nobody reads– so the idea came to me suddenly. Why don't we leave a raw video of it? So, we are now making an archive of video recording of final lectures. We've accumulated quite a lot of files. They're very powerful. Every single one is moving.

HT: Can anyone listen to them, or watch them?

CU: Of course. We're providing them completely free to access, free of charge. We've done this diligently, this work, but we really have done it only with membership fees and donations; all of us, working behind the scene, including myself as the chief director and everyone down the line, works as an unpaid volunteer. We haven't a single dedicated staff person.

HT: You mean, you haven't received any funding from some foundation out there?

CU: No, none at all, none at all.

³⁸ Tomoko Yamazaki is a Japanese historian whose work focuses on the "lives of unknown women." ("Yamazaki, Tomoko (1931–)." Encyclopedia.com. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/yamazaki-tomoko-1931>. Accessed 12 January 2024.)

³⁹ Takamure Itsue was a Japanese activist, writer, and feminist. She helped to create the Japanese feminist literary magazine, "Bluestocking." ("Takamure Itsue." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takamure_Itsue. Accessed 12 January 2024.)

⁴⁰ Michiko Ishimure was a Japanese writer. She was known for her publications on Minamata disease, which was debated at that time. Ishimure received the Ramon Magsaysay award for one of her publications on this disease in 1973, which is a highly respected award. ("Michiko Ishimure." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michiko_Ishimure. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

⁴¹ Hashimoto Kenzō. ("Takamure Itsue." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takamure_Itsue. Accessed 12 January 2024.)

HT: Is that intentional?

CU: No, no, we've tried to get funding. From corporations. They give money for children, social welfare, and environmental causes, but almost nothing for gender-related things.

HT: That's an really big problem, isn't it? What about overseas organizations? Would they provide funding? Overseas organizations I mean.

CU: Overseas organizations? I wonder. We haven't gone so far as to apply to organizations overseas, but people at organizations overseas tend to think that organizations in Japan are rich, we figure.

HT: What about the Japan Foundation,⁴² places like that?

CU: Absolutely impossible. Those sorts of...political groups don't provide funding [for work like this].

HT: Oh! Is that so? That's a societal issue, isn't it? That issue.

CU: And so, with regard to what we hope for in the future, one reason we are doing this is that we want to connect the various types of activism women are doing horizontally, but at the same time we want to connect them vertically as well. By which I mean, we want to connect generations. We have a strong sense of wanting to hand off to the next generation, as a legacy, records of the activities of those women who are in the course of becoming history. Of course, if they don't accept them from us, if we get told that they don't want that kind of stuff, then that's the end right there. However, indeed, we feel very strongly that we want to leave behind a record such that no one looks around one day and realizes that these are gone already. And so, indeed, this is a project we'd like to keep going over the long term, so we're thinking about sustainability. When we take on the local journal materials from our elder sisters, we say that we will take them semi-permanently, but you know, when I say that, I start to worry about just how long "semi-permanently" will be. That said, thankfully, we learned something really great. Our website is being archived by the National Diet Library⁴³ and the library at Stanford University.⁴⁴

HT: Is that so? That's great.

⁴² The Japan Foundation is dedicated to fostering connections between Japan and other countries around the world. The foundation creates opportunities for individuals across the world to promote the sharing of Japanese and other cultures. ("About us." Japan Foundation. <https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/about/>. Accessed 4 March 2023.)

⁴³ The National Diet Library is a law library in Japan that gathers books to help members of the National Diet conduct their research. ("About Us." National Diet Library. <https://www.ndl.go.jp/en/aboutus/index.html>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁴⁴ Stanford University is a private college located in California. It is one of the largest universities in the United States and is known its many successful alumni. ("Stanford University." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_University. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

CU: Yes, it really is. We have a backup so it's a great relief.

HT: That really is so good to hear. We of course think of digital things like that as savable on a semi-permanently basis, but sometimes I wonder if that's really the case. Aren't all kinds of programs changing all the time? And at times like that, we have to adaptively update the things we have right away. That might be something that comes up, in the future.

CU: It's just as you say. The development of technology is so fast that when we make a website now we're told its lifespan is five years. In the past twelve years we've done two site renewals, including a small-scale one. Right now, the current site has entered about its fifth year, so it's about time that we have to think about doing another renewal. The running of it, everyone is running about on a volunteer basis, so it doesn't cost that much, but the planning and implementation of the renewal costs a huge sum of money. So now we're in a situation of saving up and campaigning [for funds]. That said, the National Diet Library and such, whenever the software for digitized stuff changes, they handle reloading it, so we're terribly grateful that we have them backing things up, but even so we've been thinking about properly saving things on our end by transferring the data.

HT: Do you have staff who do that for you?

CU: We outsource the technology-related parts. To an IT company. But at the rate they give NPOs.⁴⁵ There is no way we can handle that degree of tech support.

HT: I see. That's difficult isn't it.

CU: That requires paid workers.

HT: In WAN's activities does the word feminism come up? In what ways are you thinking about the concept of feminism?

CU: When we first got started, such that anybody could access the work, we tried as much as possible to lower the hurdles, we would say it was "Hidden Feminism"⁴⁶– if we said "feminism," people would get cold feet, so our intention was to go about things in a Hidden Feminism kind of way. But from someone told us that they could see the armor beneath our clothes, that we were transparently full-on feminists, so we quit doing that. Even if we were going to be told that we were our site is difficult to visit, we shifted how we did things

⁴⁵ NPO stands for a nonprofit organization. A nonprofit organization is an organization that does not prioritize profit and most of the individuals who work in these organizations are volunteers. ("nonprofit organization (NPO)." techtarget. [https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/non-profit-organization-NPO#:~:text=A%20nonprofit%20organization%20\(NPO\)%20is,have%20to%20pay%20income%20tax](https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/non-profit-organization-NPO#:~:text=A%20nonprofit%20organization%20(NPO)%20is,have%20to%20pay%20income%20tax). Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁴⁶ Hidden feminism is defined as an individual who upholds many feminist ideas but does not identify themselves explicitly as a feminist. ("3 Signs You're A 'Hidden Feminist'." Bustle. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/135926-what-is-a-hidden-feminist-3-signs-you-might-be-one-according-to-the-fawcett-societys>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

such that we were, indeed, as out-and-out feminists, sharing out trustworthy information within [the world of] feminism.

HT: So, related to that point, this may be the case in the U.S. too with regard to the word, feminism, but it hasn't been thought of all that well, right? In Japan, I mean. Are there many people who don't want to call themselves feminists, even now?

CU: You know, I think the generation has indeed changed over. Our generation was the pioneer generation, and got bashed in various ways and met with horrible things, and so the next generation saw us and learned that if you call yourself a feminist you're bound to meet with horrible things, so it is the case that there are a great many of them who have managed to get by by avoiding that. But the next generation after that, in a sense, are ignorant of even the fact that feminism has been bashed before. That's how little they know of it. These boys and girls say feminism and call themselves feminists without hesitation. When one asks them where they learned to do that, one receives a very unfortunate answer. Emma Watson.⁴⁷ It's Emma Watson's speech at the U.N.⁴⁸ Or Korean feminism.⁴⁹

HT: Meaning they didn't learn it from Japan.

CU: It makes me feel like, wait a second, you know, Japan also has had its own feminism you know, and I've been playing a role in expanding that. Yes.

HT: Well, we're now coming up on the hour, but let's see, with regard to the connections between women's movements in Japan, or connections between the international movement, the gender movement, the feminist movement, and research, from your point of view, how are you thinking about those things nowadays? What is the most meaningful thing people can be doing?

CU: In terms of Japan, I didn't properly answer your question from before, but I think that women's and gender studies is a theoretical weapon for the movement known as feminism. I mean, I don't believe there's any point to a theory that isn't of use to the movement, because theory and practice are two wheels on the same car. That's why I think gender studies and feminism are also two wheels on the same car. That said, amidst that the thing that worries me somewhat is that, in our generation, there were many scholars with very deep ties to activism, but the following generation, in a way, when women's studies became institutionalized and entered the cycle of academic knowledge reproduction, the next generation of women scholars began to come out of the elite class, so to speak. And so, I am a little worried about the possibility that there may be a bit of a distance forming between

⁴⁷ Emma Watson is an actress and an activist. Watson has been awarded for her roles in movies and is known for her activism regarding women's rights. ("Emma Watson." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Watson. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁴⁸ The UN stands for the United Nations, which is an organization consisting of governments from around the world whose main goals are to retain peaceful relationships with other countries around the world. ("United Nation." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁴⁹ Korean feminism is identified as feminism that occurs in South Korea. ("Feminism in South Korea." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism_in_South_Korea. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

activism and research, but even so, nowadays we're seeing a ramping up of activism; the Me Too movement⁵⁰ has flourished quite a bit even in Japan, and now, even in Japan, the tolerance for sexual violence has fallen dramatically. And so, since we're seeing trends like that, our intention is that our portal site WAN serves the role of connecting various types of activism in Japan horizontally. And also, the really great thing about it being an online project is – it came out of Kansai, you see.

HT: Right.

CU: Not Tokyo. Indeed Tokyo people have a tendency to think that Tokyo is all of Japan. But Japan is a big place, so it's about locally-based information sharing. That we can broadcast from anywhere, that the center isn't all of Japan – our work up to now has been informed by that consciousness. When things are online they can be accessed from anywhere in the country, or anywhere in the world, so for us it has had great merit. And also, one other thing is that, internationally speaking, at the beginning WAN worked hard to include a webpage in English. The reason is that, indeed, if you google something in English and it doesn't come up, then globally speaking it's as if it doesn't exist. And so, we decided to make an English page...but, this would have to be completely done by volunteers as well, and I couldn't well order somebody to convert all the site content into English, so we went the route of asking volunteers only to translate something if they judged it to be worth translating. And so now, the site is rapidly becoming multilingual. It involves a variety of languages. The team that spearheads this is named Worldwide WAN. I was present when this team formed. At the time the people on this team had heated debates with one another: "We won't label this team 'English WAN.' "Because English may well have become the *lingua franca*⁵¹, but we aren't directing our messaging at people in the English-speaking world. We're trying to reach the world using English as a tool. So, we won't be calling our project English WAN. We'll call it Worldwide WAN. As such, the articles we have translated into English won't be checked by native speakers." It was just such a wonderfully radical debate they were all having, and that was the start to the team we have. This team has rapidly become multilingual, so I'm really glad that we called it Worldwide WAN, and not English WAN. And indeed my ambition, or hope, is to at least make sure we have the three languages on there with Chinese and Hangul.⁵² There are a great many commonalities between the situations of women in East Asia. There are differences as well, but my ambition as of now is to create a kind of system in which we can learn about one another's differences and commonalities.

HT: That's wonderful. Well then, to wrap up, let's discuss how Japan is today. Japan's, what to call it—you know, I'm not sure what to call it in Japanese, but how it's ranked 122nd. 122nd out of 150 countries.

⁵⁰ The Me Too movement is a social movement that draws attention to the large problem of sexual abuse, sexual violence, and rape culture in today's society. ("MeToo movement." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MeToo_movement. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁵¹ Lingua franca is defined as the language people who do speak different languages have in common. ("Lingua franca." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lingua_franca. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁵² Hangul is defined as the written Korean alphabet. ("Hangul Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hangul>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

CU: The Gender Gap Index Global Rankings⁵³?

HT: Yes, yes, those numbers, when I look at those, of course I come away thinking that this is a country with a lot of problems—but on the other hand, I think the standing of women in Japan, if you don't think about it through the methodology they're using, is high in various ways, isn't it? For example, safety, public safety. Compared to the U.S.A., of course, there are fewer guns. And of course, there are all kinds of sexual crimes [in Japan], but I think there are many situations in which women aren't treated that horribly, if you look at it sector by sector. What are your thoughts in that regard, Ueno-san?

CU: No, I can't really say that's the case. For instance, compared to half a century ago, the situation in Japan has certainly improved. And that's why when I explain why Japan is 120th out of 156 countries in the Gender Gap Index, I say that it doesn't mean Japan is getting worse and worse. The way I explain it, Japan is gradually getting better, but the speed of change is too slow, so it keeps getting surpassed by other countries. One can say that the actual situation has gotten a little bit better, but the actual situation is not as good as you say it is, Tonomura-san. Although I understand why you might want to say so, given that you are abroad.

HT: Especially being in the U.S.

CU: I understand. I understand. That said, when it comes to sexual violence and domestic violence, especially when one considers unreported cases that aren't out in the open, one certainly can't say that there aren't many in Japan, not to mention that more and more reports of domestic child sexual abuse are coming out into the open. And also, another thing is that the wage gap isn't closing, and women's working conditions aren't improving, and also, as of late, when so much is being said about reproductive rights, the contraceptive methods available to women are, compared to the rest of the world, extremely abnormal – they are outdated, old, and dangerous. Restrictions on the morning-after-pill have yet to be lifted. Or also, abortion – indeed abortion access is relatively easy in Japan; but that being said, I've heard that the U.S.A. is about to ban abortion?!

HT: Right now, it's crazy right now. That's right. We're going back to the Middle Ages.⁵⁴

CU: The U.S. really is a surprising society, isn't it.

HT: Yes, that's what made me say what I said just now.

⁵³ The Gender Global Gap Index Rankings provides statistics on each country regarding the gender gap in many aspects such as education or the economy. ("The global gender gap index 2022." statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index/>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁵⁴ The Middle Ages refers to the time period of European society from the fall of Rome to the Renaissance. ("Middle Ages." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Middle-Ages>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

CU: But you know, for example, in Japan, while it's true that abortion access is relatively easy, for example, looked at alongside the rest of the world, the extremely old and barbaric curettage method is proliferating, whereas the more simple and safe methods of oral contraception, medication, or vacuum aspiration are not proliferating. So by way of comparison [with other countries], that fact that the Japanese methods are really outdated and abnormal is becoming more and more obvious. So, there are mountains of things to improve.

HT: That is indeed true, but living in the U.S.A., there are many ways in which Japan looks more and more like heaven.

CU: That a woman can walk by herself at night, on the street at night, in that sense it really is heaven, isn't it?

HT: Right? And so with that, that has to do with one's human rights, and in the U.S., it's often referred to as constitutional rights freedom, but I feel as though people don't grasp just how constrained they are on account of various dangers. I mean people Japan. ...Oh here comes my cat.

CU: When you go overseas, we realize just how exceptional and special it is for Japanese to take water and safety for granted. And also, speaking of safety, Japan is indeed a society in which a woman can walk alone on the streets at night, but not in Okinawa.⁵⁵

HT: Yes that's right. But that's because of the U.S. military, right?

CU: Yes, that's exactly it.

HT: I think that is yet another thing we must think about. And so we are just about out of time. Please leave us with some final words. Is there something you'd like people around the world to know about Japan's women's movement or feminism?

CU: This is a document for the purpose of leaving a record, isn't it?

HT: Yes, that's right.

CU: So I too am going to become history?

HT: One panel in history.

CU: But even in that sense, I, indeed, being at this age, I'm already a senior citizen, so I feel as though my role now is, as a living witness, to hand off to the next generation all the things we have inherited from the elder sisters and aunties of the previous generation. The

⁵⁵ Okinawa is an island in Japan. It is one of the smallest islands in Japan and has been occupied by the United States Armed Forces since the end of World War 2. ("Okinawa Island." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okinawa_Island. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

women of Japan do indeed have these achievements that are the result of having waged that long, long struggle over such a long time, and I think I want to carry that on, to go on doing so. Every society has a legacy, and I think that legacy is specific to the society that gave birth to it. Linking those things horizontally in a collective effort, that's all well and good, but we mustn't lose their uniqueness. For example, may I speak a bit about Ukraine? I'm convinced that a big thing that makes feminism in Japan distinct is, indeed, its pacifism. And so, something that I heard about the expansion of NATO,⁵⁶ or the requirements for NATO expansion, is that orders can come from NATO to increase the percentage of women in the military. That being the case, the question of whether or not to accept the participation of women in the military becomes a test of faith for feminists in countries that seek to join NATO. So, shall women gain their freedom only to go about killing people, or not? And then, in such times, in a country like Ukraine,⁵⁷ the question of whether it is right for women to take up guns and fight, this is what we are being made to see before our very eyes. But indeed we, rather than having women take part in the military, and though it may be deemed idealism, we want to create a society without militaries. Nowadays, in these ways, there is imminent danger all over the world, so all kinds of countries are saying "raise military spending." Japan is saying it. The U.S.A. is saying it. In such times, I think indeed the compulsion to want to say "not so fast" is very strong in Japanese feminists. I think that's the legacy of citizens of a defeated country who sacrificed.

HT: I think that's the opposite of the general thinking in the U.S.A., the exact opposite. By which I mean, for women to join, that's equality-joining the military means equality, so excluding them is bad. All kinds of statistics are coming out, such as the proportion of women in the past several years, you know. but I think it's thought of as being better in terms of feminism for it to be increasing.

CU: Yes, it's just as you say. Even in Japan that brought about a big debate among feminists. The majority are pacifists⁵⁸ in Japan, fortunately.

HT: Is that so? What kind of book are you writing now?

CU: Now? Right now, my issue is whether one can manage to die at home alone, even with dementia⁵⁹-that's my issue. Because it's really right before my eyes, something pressing and personal.

⁵⁶ NATO stands for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which is an agreement between the militaries of many countries surrounding the North Atlantic Ocean. The agreement states that the countries will help defend each other when attacked by another country. ("NATO." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁵⁷ Ukraine is a country located in the east of Europe. Ukraine was one of the most populated countries in Europe until Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. This invasion is still happening. ("Ukraine." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁵⁸ A pacifist is an individual who is against any form of violence when settling a disagreement. ("Pacifist Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pacifist>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁵⁹ Dementia is defined as a condition that makes it difficult for an individual to think or make decisions and as a result impacts daily activities. ("About Dementia." CDC.

HT: I feel the same. I really feel the same.

CU: Because honestly, even amazing intellectuals suffer from dementia. Do you know of Haruko Wakita⁶⁰?

HT: Yes, she passed away, didn't she?

CU: Even a person with an intellect and abilities as wonderful as hers, with a curiosity as strong as hers, suffered from dementia. There is absolutely no predicting who will suffer from dementia. Tomorrow it'll be me. As for how patients with dementia are treated nowadays, it's a miserable condition of being restrained or overmedicated.

HT: That's so sad.

CU: And so, I want to get by without that being done to me. And I want to remain in my home without going into a facility. What can I do to make that possible? The issue I'm focused on now is wanting to create that kind of society.

HT: I'm looking forward to the release of your next book. Thank you very much for taking so much time with me today.

CU: I should be thanking you. I really enjoyed it.

HT: Let's meet again someplace.

CU: Yes.

HT: Yes, yes. Pardon me for leaving.

CU: Pardon me for leaving.

<https://www.cdc.gov/aging/dementia/index.html#:~:text=Dementia%20is%20not%20a%20specific,a%20part%20of%20normal%20aging>. Accessed 11 March 2023.)

⁶⁰ Haruko Wakita was a Japanese academic on women's history during medieval Japan. Wakita was a professor at the University of Shiga Prefecture and has had much of her work published. ("Haruko Wakita." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haruko_Wakita. Accessed 11 March 2023.)