



Malaysia Town, Singapore

**Japan Needs Political Power**

Azusa Nishimura

From Singapore

**◆ The first thing I learned**

The first thing I learned was that "politics moves the country." This is one of the lessons I learned during my stay in Singapore. Singapore, a country that achieved rapid economic growth after its independence from Malaysia in 1965, is continuously growing. During my 11-year stay, the number of foreign workers increased, and construction of housing and buildings was constant. The land keeps expanding, and the convenience of living keeps increasing.

**◆ A country like a big company**

Singapore, with a population of 5.6 million, feels more like a big company than a country, with strong governance that makes it easy to manage. This is the primary reason for its rapid economic growth. The ruling People's Action Party has strongly promoted foreign investment attraction, bureaucracy, ethnic integration, and human resource education since independence, creating the Singapore we know today. To someone like me, raised in Japan, Singapore's uniform values, press restrictions, and strict penalties felt constricting. These are the drawbacks of policies that prioritize economic efficiency above all else. However, it seems that the majority of Singaporeans, including my colleagues, are satisfied with their politics. Even sacrificing freedom of speech and expression, economic prosperity seems to offset that. In fact, many people seem unaware of all the controls. So, what should Japan's national principles be?

**◆ Japan lacks a sense of crisis**

Growing up in post-war Japan, we have taken clean water, air, and safety for granted, and it seems our thinking about the state of the nation has stagnated. Statistics and international affairs show that Japan's influence in the world and ASEAN is significantly declining, but upon returning to Japan, I don't feel such concerns or a sense of crisis.

**◆ Let's strive, Japan!**

No matter how wonderful a product, culture, or country, without clear goals, competitiveness, attachment, or vitality, there is no bright future. The more I feel this in Singapore, the more I think Japan needs political power now. "A country in ruins with mountains and rivers remaining" would be a loss. As political power is at a low ebb, I think daily from distant Singapore about what I can do to make Japan a better country.



**SHARE YOUR  
HAPPINESS WITH  
YOUR COMMUNITY**

Anbi Yamamoto

From California, USA



**College in Pomona**

Driven by the sole desire to go abroad, I continued to look for jobs overseas and finally found a position as a Language Resident at Pomona College in Pomona, California, USA, in September 2023, after graduating from university. Founded in 1887, Pomona College is a prestigious school with an acceptance rate below 10%, known nationwide for its rigorous education and dedicated teaching staff, upholding a strict small-group education philosophy. As a Japanese ALT, there are many things to learn from college life, but I'd like to introduce two lessons.

The first is that I had left my childhood innocence behind. Before coming to the US, I was someone who could never dance in public without alcohol. One day, a friend invited me to a "dance night in the park on Friday." As an "Yes-man," I decided to go to this dance night. The moment I entered the venue, everyone was losing themselves in dance, genuinely enjoying it from the bottom of their hearts. I felt like fleeing from the scene (while inwardly thinking, "Isn't there any wine here?").

At first, I was dancing with a forced smile, but suddenly I thought, "Why am I trying to dance well?" At that moment, the weight on my shoulders lifted, and I could enjoy the dance from my heart. Probably, from the outside, it looked like I was just fooling around, but at that moment, everyone was regaining their childhood innocence. Continuing to hold onto that innocence adds a little joy to life, I realized.

The second lesson from Pomona College is the significance of community. The college has a wonderful language community. From Monday to Friday, there is a language table where you sit at the table of the language you are learning and converse in "no English." It's a very open community with tables for Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, and even sign language. The community is built around students who come daily, but anyone is welcome to join at any time. It's similar to KOCHI IYEO. Core members elevate each other, and more importantly, it serves as a place for various people to belong. I am learning many things, including the importance of community and people.

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