

特別賞

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このエッセイでは、15 年間、朝鮮学校で民族教育を受けてきた私が、母国語での挨拶をきっかけに生まれた日本人女性とのつながりを通して、「自分らしくあること」の大切さに気づいた経験を綴りました。彼女との出会いから、互いを理解し合うことが憎しみを減らし、愛やつながりを広げる鍵だと感じました。

Annyeonghaseyo

I am a Korean living in Japan, and I go to a Korean school. My parents and sisters went to the same school, too. At Korean school, we always speak Korean and spend time with Korean friends and teachers. We receive lessons like students at other schools, and we also study the Korean language, history, and culture. I am also a member of a Korean dance club. I really like my Korean school.

Korean schools are classified as international schools, but most people do not know much about them. Moreover, some people do not like our school simply because we are Korean. There is hate speech written about us, and there are voices that insult our school. Because of this, I am always scared. Therefore, I sometimes hide the fact that I am Korean.

When I was a child, I often met an elderly Japanese woman from my neighborhood on my way to a park near my house. Every time I met her, I said, "Konnichiwa."

One day, when I went to the park with my sisters, she asked us, "Which school do you go to?"

My sister told her, "We go to a Korean school, so we can speak Korean."

Then she smiled in surprise and said, "Really? I like Korean. Can you tell me how to say 'Hello' in Korean?"

We told her that "Hello" in Korean was "Annyeonghaseyo."

After that day, we greeted her with "Annyeonghaseyo" whenever we met her, and she greeted us in the same way.

As I entered elementary school and grew older, I became more aware of myself as a Korean. There were only five students in my class, but my school life was really interesting. However, I sometimes felt a little anxious because I knew that there were people who criticized our school.

In fact, while walking home from school, one of my friends was told by Japanese people, "Go back to Korea" and "Don't speak Korean." After hearing about this, I was scared whenever I went home.

Hearing those words made me wonder whether speaking Korean outside school was dangerous. Little by little, fear taught me to hide a part of myself.

One day, I met the elderly woman near my home. At that moment, I said, "*Konnichiwa*." I did not greet her in Korean.

However, she did not return my greeting. Instead, she asked me, "Why did you say *Konnichiwa*? I always look forward to hearing you say *Annyeonghaseyo*."

I was surprised.

"Why didn't I speak Korean? Why?" I asked myself again and again.

Looking back now, I think I was anxious that she might someday hate me because I was Korean.

However, when I heard what she said, I felt happy. At that time, I had hidden my true self as a Korean.

But I realized that I did not have to hide my true self.

Some people may not like Koreans or Korean schools. However, they are part of my identity, now and forever.

The fifteen years I have spent at Korean school have helped me understand and take pride in who I am.

If I hide these things, I cannot be my true self. I want to live as my true self, and everyone wants to do the same.

There are many people in the world who still hide themselves because they are afraid of being hated by others. I think they need to be understood by many people.

Actually, I wanted people to understand that I am Korean and that I go to a Korean school. I still want them to understand that today.

Having someone like her who understood me encouraged me and helped me feel proud of myself.

I believe that those who hide themselves feel the same way.

The door of the heart, which is closed to hide one's true self, can be opened through mutual understanding.

The world is filled with love and hate.

If we understand one another, we can reduce hate and increase love.

Understanding creates positive connections.

It is our key.