

Being a Minority is Precious

We ELI students are among the minorities in the USA. Also, I am a fourth-generation Korean living in Japan. So, I have spent all my life as a minority. I have a question. Are you a minority? People who are minorities tend to think of themselves negatively, and act with no confidence. If you sometimes feel negative about who you are, you should try to know yourself more deeply, and become aware that you are already brilliant. How well do you know yourself? I do not mean knowing your name, age, and hobbies. It is more about how you have lived your life. Let's take a look at how minorities are precious in the world based on a little about my life experiences.

I was born and raised in Japan as a Korean, because my great grandparents came to Japan, a long time ago, due to Colonization. Living in a foreign country is no picnic, especially in my case. It is so challenging because Korea and Japan have a negative political relationship. Today Korean and Japanese citizens are mainly friendly toward each other. However, it sometimes happens that Koreans are discriminated against by the Japanese government.

One of the discriminatory examples toward Koreans is that Korean schools in Japan cannot accept assistance money from the Japanese government. This policy means that education is very costly for Korean families living in Japan who want a Korean education for their children. Therefore, my siblings and I went to Korean schools from kindergarten to high school and paid high tuitions. This discriminatory policy applies primarily to Koreans whose

ancestors came to Japan before Korea was divided into North and South Korea. South Korean schools like most other schools including Chinese and Brazilian schools are eligible for assistance money from the Japanese government. This discrimination in education creates many challenges for the Koreans living in Japan.

Few Koreans who live in Japan can afford to go to Korean schools. So, they have no choice except to go to Japanese schools. To help these students, my classmates and I taught them how to read and write in Korean, when we were in high school. By doing this, we Koreans, living in Japan, have helped each other to live in Japan as Koreans. It means you can overcome your difficulties even if you are a minority because there are at least some comrades who do understand your feelings and have the same mindset as you.

Another satisfying experience I had as a minority is that I taught some Japanese university students about the culture of Koreans, living in Japan, in order to spread information about us. There is much biased information in Japan due to newspapers, education, and misunderstandings. So, I taught them our culture and history to improve the relationship between Japan and Korea. I hope my actions such as teaching Korean language, and our culture will bring about improvement in our relationship.

Be brave, be confident, and remain positive. Find your strong points, and you can be effective. For instance, I can speak both Korean and Japanese fluently, and understand Korean and Japanese feelings. Moreover, I can speak a little English. Also, I can feel for someone who

has a broken heart since I spent time as a member of a minority group. It is really precious, isn't it? It was possible to change my minority experience and negative memories to preciousness and positivity.

People tend to think that being a part of a majority group is advantageous. However, being a member of a minority group makes one "extraordinary". So, it depends on you to judge whether being a minority is negative or not. You can change negative feelings to positive thinking. I ask you again. How well do you know yourself? It's likely that you have something, that makes you feel a part of a minority, whether it's a belief, an experience, your sexuality, a health problem, or your nationality. Be proud of yourself, and know that you are precious. Let's change our perspective to positivity from now on. Know that you are precious, a precious minority.