

New Worlds, New Lives

Globalization and
People of Japanese Descent
in the Americas
and from Latin America
in Japan

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

Nikkeijin and Multicultural Coexistence in Japan

Kobe after the Great Earthquake

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On April 28, 1908, the *Kasato Maru* left Kobe for Brazil with 781 Japanese on board. Famous for its role in bearing Japanese emigrants to Latin America during the early twentieth century, the ship carried *dekasegi* workers who intended to return to Japan after achieving their dreams abroad. Today, nearly a century later, there are more than 254,000 registered Brazilians living in Japan, the majority of whom are the children and grandchildren of these Japanese who immigrated to and eventually settled in Brazil. There are also approximately 46,000 Peruvians and thousands more from other Latin American countries.

In the current age of globalization, transnational population movements have increased on a massive scale. Roland Robertson defines globalization as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole." In fact, people can make transnational movements more quickly and less expensively than before, owing to technological developments in transportation and long-distance communications. Not only can they cross national boundaries more frequently than before, but through global mass media, they can also simultaneously share the lives of other people and make comparisons with their own lives. Yearnings for "different worlds" or potential new lifestyles that they envision through the media urge people to move. Nikkei *dekasegi* workers coming to Japan are no exception.

Nikkei workers from Latin America are generally considered to be *gaikokujin*, or foreigners, in Japan. In conventional usage, the term Nikkeijin refers to descendants of Japanese who reside overseas. The assumptions inher-

ent in sharing Japanese cultural and perceived racial characteristics no longer satisfies the conditions we observe among Nikkeijin in Japan. Changes in the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act that went into effect in June 1990 created a new category of visa in Japan called the *teijusha*, or long-term resident, visa. This visa specifically applies to first-, second-, and third-generation Nikkei, their spouses, and their children.² The new law allows Nikkeijin and their families to stay in Japan for up to three years with unlimited renewals and lifts restrictions concerning occupational categories. Although this law does not explicitly conflict with the Japanese government's long-standing policy of restricting entry to skilled laborers, in reality, the policy change was an attempt to address the serious shortage of unskilled labor that Japan was experiencing in the early 1990s. Because of the Nikkeijin's presumed racial and cultural similarities with native Japanese, and their presumed ability to adapt smoothly to Japanese society, they were the first foreigners to whom the Japanese government offered special immigration status.³

Yet contrary to the government's original expectations that the Nikkeijin from Latin America could assimilate into Japanese society more smoothly than other immigrants, these people are now the focus of various social and cultural services developed for foreigners in cities and towns with high concentrations of migrant workers. Elsewhere in this volume, Harumi Befu discusses the dispersal of the Japanese prior to World War II. Edson Mori presents the *dekasegi* phenomenon's economic and social benefits to Brazilian society, and Masato Ninomiya sheds light on their educational situation in Japan and the way *dekasegi* parents cope with the problems faced by their children. In this chapter, I will explore the arenas in which the flow of Nikkeijin from Latin America has generated conflicts, negotiations, changes, and new social dimensions in Japan, using the city of Kobe as a case study.⁴ The primary focus of this chapter, therefore, is to illustrate how these conflicts, negotiations, and changes have occurred through Kobe's responses to the social needs of Latin American Nikkeijin. This chapter suggests that these Nikkeijin have been the primary force in promoting the concept of *tabunka kyosei*, or multicultural coexistence.

Kobe provides a unique model for twenty-first-century Japan because the term *tabunka kyosei* arose from the aftermath of the Great Hanshin-Awaji (Kobe-Osaka-Awaji) Earthquake, which occurred in the Kobe area in 1995. The term has been gaining popularity in domains involving the presence of foreigners throughout Japan. Furthermore, although there is already an abundant scholarly literature on the motivations, backgrounds, and employment patterns of Nikkei workers in many other areas of Japan, very little research has been conducted on the Nikkeijin in the Kobe area.⁵ I will show

that Kobe presents an instructive contrast to the Kanto and Tokai regions, where there are high concentrations of Nikkeijin. Ultimately, analyzing the interesting theoretical implications of the Nikkeijin-native Japanese relationship will help to advance our understanding of the changing nature of boundary making among native Japanese in Japan.

An Overview of Nikkei Immigrants in the Kobe Area

The wave of globalization that has swept other parts of Japan has certainly reached Kobe. A significant portion of newcomers today consists of Nikkei workers from Brazil, Peru, and other parts of Latin America, most of whom provide unskilled labor to small or medium-size factories. These newcomers have enhanced the cosmopolitan character of Kobe by adding to its preexisting population of "old-comer" Europeans, North Americans, Indians, Koreans, and Chinese who have settled since the late nineteenth century.⁶

Since opening its port to world trade in 1868, Kobe has enjoyed a reputation as one of the most international and cosmopolitan cities in Japan. Currently forty-four thousand people of approximately one hundred different nationalities make up 3 percent of Kobe's population of 1.5 million. Two-thirds of the foreigners are Korean and one-fifth are Chinese. Since 1957 the city government has encouraged internationalization activities such as sister-city relationships (with Seattle being the first), providing assistance to countries in need, and welcoming foreign students. However, most of the municipal government's efforts were directed outside Japan toward enhancing relationships with foreign countries, rather than addressing the situation of foreigners residing in Japan.

The implementation of the new immigration law in 1990 catalyzed a sudden increase in Nikkei migrants from Latin America. The number of Brazilians in Japan skyrocketed from 4,159 in 1988 to 56,429 in 1990, and then to 254,394 by the end of 2000. Brazilians now comprise the second largest newcomer ethnic group, following the Chinese, and the third largest group of residents without Japanese citizenship, following Koreans and the Chinese.⁷ Peruvians are also a significant presence among newcomers, being the fifth largest group. Nikkeijin are estimated to constitute 94.1 percent of Brazilians in the combined categories of "teijusha" (137,649) and "spouses of Japanese, etc." (101,623), and the estimated percentage of Nikkeijin among Brazilians has remained stable since the early 1990s.

In general these immigrants have provided unskilled labor mainly in the manufacturing and construction industries.⁸ The 1990 immigration law changes are evidently responsible for a definite shift in preference toward Nikkei workers and away from unregistered migrants, pushing non-Nikkei

workers out of these industries.⁹ According to Komai, Nikkeijin composed the highest-paid ethnic group among newcomers, followed by Iranians, Bangladeshi, and Chinese, as of 1998.¹⁰

The Nikkei workers started to move into the Kobe area around 1991, apparently as a consequence of the revised immigration law. Initially, many Nikkeijin residing in the Kobe and Osaka areas did not come directly from Brazil or other Latin American countries, but rather through agencies located in Japan's Tokai region and Gunma prefecture in the Kanto region with high Nikkeijin concentrations. Nikkeijin, including many dismissed by employers elsewhere because of the recession, became a visible presence in Kobe around 1994.

In Hyogo prefecture, in which Kobe is located, Brazilians follow Koreans and Chinese as the third largest group of newcomers, and Peruvians rank eighth.¹¹ Other cities within Hyogo prefecture, such as Nishinomiya, Amagasaki, Himeji, Akashi, Kasai, and Sasayama, also have sizable Nikkeijin populations. In Kobe, Brazilians are the sixth largest group of residents without Japanese citizenship, following Koreans, Chinese, Americans, Indians, and Vietnamese. As of October 31, 2000, 911 Brazilians, 219 Peruvians, and more than 100 people from other Latin American countries were legally registered as foreigners with the Kobe city office.¹² If "overstayers" (those whose visas have expired) and unregistered residents are included, the number is probably significantly higher. Most of these people are Nikkeijin and their families, although it is said that many non-Nikkei Peruvians entered Japan disguised as Nikkeijin.

Mainly because of the food-processing industry in that area, 575 Brazilians and 55 Peruvians reside in Higashinada ward in the east end of Kobe. There are five food-processing companies in Higashinada ward, some of which have hired more than one hundred Nikkei Brazilians and their spouses. Until recently these companies provided migrant workers with living accommodations and offered bus service between the factories and the dormitories. The result was an extreme limitation of social interaction between these workers and the outside world. Recently, however, due to financial problems, these company-sponsored accommodations and other services were closed down. Most of the migrant workers were able to move into government-subsidized housing, as they, having suffered the Great Earthquake, were qualified for residence in this subsidized housing. Many Nikkei women in Kobe are engaged in janitorial work or *bento* (boxed lunch) processing. In general, Nikkei women are seen as friendly and caring and enjoy a reputation as good workers.¹³

For many surviving first-generation Nikkeijin, Kobe is a memorable place. It is from this port that an estimated 400,000 out of a total of one mil-

lion emigrants left Japan for foreign destinations. In 1928 the National Center for Emigrants was established to provide information and training programs to departing emigrants. Recently, there has been a campaign to preserve the original center building to commemorate the emigration. Some advocate the use of the building as a center to provide Japanese language classes for Nikkeijin and other migrants from Latin America. Furthermore, a ceremony was held on April 28, 2001 to commemorate the first emigration from Kobe to Brazil, and to dedicate a new monument at the edge of the port.

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and Nikkeijin

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of January 17, 1995 took more than 6,400 lives and damaged more than half a million homes. According to the Hyogo Prefectural Police Department, among the victims were 173 non-Japanese residents, 151 of whom lived in Kobe.¹⁴ Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) estimate the number of victims to be more than two hundred. Although Koreans and Chinese constituted 90 percent of the total number of non-Japanese victims, there were eight Nikkei Brazilians and one Peruvian, most of whom resided in Kobe. About eighty thousand non-Japanese residents were affected in some way by the earthquake, and its destructive impact on residents' lives drew attention to the presence of ethnic minorities and new migrants such as Vietnamese and Brazilians.

Among an estimated 1.2 million volunteers active in Kobe following the earthquake, many groups from established local NGOs, as well as individuals concerned about the welfare of foreigners, formed relief organizations and quickly initiated various services to foreigners in the area, regardless of visa status. One organization concerned with the situation of foreigners was the Foreigners' Earthquake Information Center (FEIC), which later changed its name to the Center for Multicultural Information and Assistance (CMIA). This group was organized in Osaka five days after the earthquake to provide telephone hot line consultation services and distribute short newsletters containing official government information on survivors. These newsletters were translated into thirteen languages, including Spanish and Portuguese. This group also provided services such as the condolence fund, financial assistance, and other programs.

In February 1995, a few weeks after the earthquake, the FEIC joined several other organizations to form the Network for Foreigners' Assistance Kobe. In April, three months after the earthquake the radio station FM Yu-men started broadcasting information in five languages, including Spanish. In July, Yu-men combined with a station broadcasting in Korean and Japanese to start FM YY, which gradually added three more languages, including

Portuguese. Ethnic music was also broadcast to lift the spirits of the non-Japanese segment of the population.

Major municipal facilities either collapsed or were extensively damaged in the earthquake. Information services aimed at foreign residents, particularly those who didn't speak English, were substantially delayed.¹⁵ By contrast, NGOs and volunteer groups took the lead in immediately responding to the need for multilingual services. Catholic churches functioned as the initial shelters for many people from Latin America, although they later moved to officially designated public shelters where food, daily necessities, and various services were provided. Acting upon a request by the Committee for International Cooperation under the Osaka Catholic Archbishopric, a Catholic nun, who was a committee member, and her associates engaged in assistance activities such as confirming the safety of foreign individuals by visiting each shelter by bicycle. This particular service played a significant role that would have otherwise been assumed by foreign consulates, some of which had been damaged and were forced to close down after the earthquake. This group later assisted foreign victims with the complicated official procedures required to receive condolence money and financial aid.

Non-Japanese victims of the earthquake included eight Nikkei Brazilians and one Peruvian. The Peruvian's short-term three-month visa had just expired and did not list a permanent residence. Although no official statistics regarding the number of injured non-Japanese residents are available, the FEIC reported a total of twelve critically injured foreigners who were hospitalized after the earthquake. Among the twelve foreigners were four Brazilians and three Peruvians.¹⁶

One issue that became a subject of debate between NGOs and local and national governments was the definition of "local resident," a term used in the law governing the distribution of condolence money to the bereaved after the disaster. The national government offered all legal foreign residents financial aid on a par with Japanese citizens, paying 5 million yen (US\$45,000) as compensation for the death of a family breadwinner, and 2.5 million yen for the death of a dependent.¹⁷ However, overstayers, unregistered residents, and travelers were denied such aid.

A similar issue surfaced in February 1995. Immediately after the earthquake, victims, regardless of status, received free care at emergency medical centers. After the emergency period, however, foreigners who had been living in Japan less than one year and "overstayers," ineligible for the government health insurance available to other foreign residents, had to cover their own medical expenses. Their cause was taken up by various NGOs and local organizations that stepped in to lobby for foreigners who did not qualify for government-provided condolence money. The Network for Foreigners' As-

assistance Kobe made an appeal that "all victims of the disaster are equal," regardless of whether they were Japanese, registered foreign residents, unregistered foreign residents, or tourists. It should be underscored that after many days of discussion, the term "tabunka kyosei" emerged.

Although the Ministry of Health and Welfare did not change its policy regarding this issue, neither the city of Kobe nor the Hyogo prefectural government made a distinction between Japanese, foreign residents, unregistered foreigners, and overstayers in dispersing condolence money to those whose houses were damaged. The requirement was proof of residence, as demonstrated by such documents as receipts for utility bills or mail.¹⁸ The Hyogo branch of the Japanese Red Cross ignored visa status in offering 50,000 yen (US\$450) to uninsured individuals who were hospitalized or had to make repeated outpatient visits to a hospital for a month.¹⁹ The Network for Foreigners' Assistance addressed the problem by paying one million yen (US\$9,000) drawn from donations for bereaved foreigners who were officially ineligible for the condolence fund. It also established the "Medical Expenses Subrogation Fund," which temporarily paid the medical bills of foreigners who were hospitalized but unable to cover their medical expenses. They later convinced the prefectural government to pay the remaining medical costs of those foreigners. It should be mentioned that Nikkei communities in Brazil contributed condolence money totaling 90 million yen (US\$820,000) to Hyogo prefecture and other prefectures hit by the earthquake.

NGO leaders claimed that the national government maintained restrictive definitions of citizenship and permanent residence, whereas local governments were more flexible in adopting NGO proposals. NGOs were successful in pressuring local governments to consider most, if not all, of the difficulties faced by foreigners in the aftermath of the earthquakes. It is also noteworthy that as discussions continued between NGOs and the city and prefectural governments, an informal study group called GONGO (Governmental Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations) was formed. GONGO ensured that unpaid medical expenses were paid by the municipal government. GONGO also promoted multilingual street signs, educational programs for immigrant children, and other services related to multicultural and multilingual needs in Kobe.

Compared to government officials, local Japanese residents made hardly any distinction in their post-earthquake treatment of Japanese and non-Japanese. According to a number of sources, including leaders of minority groups, Japanese of all ages, both victims and volunteers, made no distinction between native Japanese and non-Japanese in distributing and sharing goods and in extending assistance. Nikkeijin, whether Japanese in appearance or not, were no exception.

Since the earthquake, NGOs and local governments have cooperated to initiate a variety of projects that address the increasing diversity among Kobe residents. One recent highlight is the creation of a multilingual web site intended to provide information in the event of a disaster. Four organizations, including FM YY, created this web site that reflected the lessons learned during the Kobe earthquake, when the lack of multilingual information caused an extraordinary amount of anxiety among newcomers without Japanese language ability.

Nikkeijin and Their Relationship with the Japanese

Despite the fact that they are referred to—and identify themselves as—"Japônes" in Brazil, Brazilian Nikkeijin in Japan are considered foreigners and referred to, in general, as Brazilians. Such categorizations seem to derive from two social domains. One is the domain of daily interactions between Nikkeijin and Japanese, in which some Japanese have formed ideas of linguistic and cultural "differences" between Nikkeijin and Nihonjin. The other is the public domain of media and service organizations in which Nikkeijin are viewed as "foreigners" needing services, such as Japanese lessons, guidance, and legal consultation. As a result, in the eyes of native Japanese, there is a clearer boundary between Nikkeijin and Nihonjin than between Nikkeijin and other foreigners.

Nikkeijin who came with their spouses or families usually have precise plans for when they will return to their home country, expressed in such terms as "I will go home when I have saved enough to buy a home," "to establish a company," or "when my children reach middle school age." This has made their adaptation to Japanese society rather difficult. By comparison with other newcomers, their efforts to adapt are often haphazard and their command of Japanese often fails to improve, despite several years of residence. Since many Nikkeijin work weekends or night shifts, which pay better than regular working hours, little time is left for socialization. Even in factories they often simply stand and work in lines, giving them few opportunities to talk with colleagues. Of course this works both ways: Japanese in general do not make extra efforts to be friends with these gaikokujin. When not working, Nikkeijin typically relax at home or visit their friends' apartments. Despite active mutual support and assistance, such social activities rarely develop into formal organizations. After the earthquake, heavily subsidized, unrestricted public housing became available to newcomers in Kobe, and public organization staff urged migrant workers to take advantage of this opportunity in order to lessen the power of the brokers and employers over employees. Public consultants say that this has the effect of reinforcing the power of brokers and employers.

The majority of Nikkeijin working in Japan have more or less limited Japanese language ability. Some of the most common problems in the initial period of Nikkei migration included visas, labor conditions, housing, and medical care. Especially in this initial period, when working conditions were not clearly specified, misunderstandings and suspicions arose on both sides. For example, some workers engaged in dangerous work and suffered serious injuries, for which they often went uncompensated. This left many Nikkei workers concerned about work safety. Nikkeijin often had high expectations about their work conditions based on what they were told by brokers. For instance, in some cases they were told that their daily pay would amount to 10,000 yen (US\$90), or 17,000 yen (US\$150) for skilled work or work at established companies. Some Nikkeijin were told that they would receive about 300,000 yen (US\$2,700) per month. However, they were not told that their salary could be half that amount in the event of consecutive rainy days. Others clashed with their Japanese employers over the issue of utility bills. Some employers have complained that there are workers who take advantage of the free electricity in company-provided housing, indiscriminately using costly amenities such as air-conditioning. As both Nikkei workers and Japanese employers have grown accustomed to each other's expectations and behavior, terms of employment have become more explicit and, with the help of various public and NGO services, the aforementioned frictions have decreased.

Despite many conflicts and misunderstandings, Nikkei workers are given high evaluations by Japanese employers. Men are willing to do jobs that require hard physical labor, and women have the reputation of being friendly and caring, and are popular among nursing and golf-related employers. It should be noted that when Nikkeijin or Japanese with some knowledge about Latin America mention these characteristics, in their discourse they attribute these characteristics to the overall attitude of "Latin people," not Nikkeijin. For example, I was told that "in Latin America, physically bigger men should do more physically demanding jobs," and "Latin people highly respect elderly people, so the elderly in hospitals are fond of these Nikkei women from Latin America."

With the increase in the number of Nikkei who prolong their stay in Japan, another serious problem has arisen: the nonenrollment and dropout rate among school-age children. Under Japanese law, irrespective of the legal status of the parents, anyone of school age is entitled to receive free public education in elementary and junior high schools. Parents receive information on public schooling when they register at a city office. However, unlike for Japanese children, education is not compulsory for non-Japanese children. According to statistics gathered by the Kobe City Board of Education

in 2000, only twelve Portuguese-speaking and four Spanish-speaking students are enrolled in the city's public schools.²⁰ These figures seem significantly low considering the population of these two foreign groups. Such figures may indicate that a significant portion of school-age children from Latin America are not in school. This phenomenon seems to be the result of a number of factors. One is the "sojourner mentality" among parents who plan to send their children to Brazilian schools or colleges in the future. Also, among some families, children are needed at home to care for their younger siblings. Some children lack or lose interest in Japanese schools because of the language barriers, curriculum differences, feelings of isolation from Japanese classmates, or other reasons. Furthermore, different cultural attitudes toward school attendance and education may also be a factor. The dropout rate of Brazilian schoolchildren in Brazil is significantly higher than that of Japanese schoolchildren in Japan, where nonattendance is rare. One may estimate that roughly one-half to two-thirds of Brazilian students of elementary and junior high school ages do not go to Japanese schools.²¹ The president of CETEBAN, a correspondence education course in Brazil, warns that unless immediate measures are taken, an increasing number of Nikkei children will end up in juvenile reformatories.

Today divorce and marital difficulties have also become serious problems among Nikkeijin, partially due to their prolonged stay. It is suspected that a number of Latin American Nikkeijin living in the Kobe and Osaka areas have not documented their marriages or their children's births. This is partly due to the distance and expense of a trip to Nagoya, where the General Consulate of Brazil is located, and to complex paperwork and the cost of wedding ceremonies. In an extreme case, one couple did not document their marriage or the births of any of their five children. As a result, these children will not be eligible for work permits when they become adults. Unformalized marriages are one factor that precipitates divorce and family breakups.

Multicultural Coexistence Following the Great Earthquake

The Hyogo-Osaka area hosts one of the largest concentrations of Latin American Nikkeijin in western Japan. These Nikkeijin gather at Catholic churches, stores, restaurants, and bars featuring Latin music. It is said, however, that Nikkei workers rarely seek assistance from Japanese for fear that they may lose their jobs if their complaints are leaked.²² At present, Nikkeijin in this area are characterized by their dispersal and the virtual absence of any formal organizations initiated by newcomer residents. Under such circumstances, socializing with, or even meeting, other Nikkeijin is difficult. However, a number of organizations provide social services for Nikkeijin and

other foreigners and act as cultural and social brokers between native Japanese and Nikkeijin. It is noteworthy that almost all of these organizations were formed after the Great Earthquake. In this section, I will describe the needs and problems of Nikkeijin and the ways in which these organizations have responded. I will also describe some new phenomena that illustrate the new multicultural sensitivity that has emerged through such interactions.

Despite the presence of Latin American migrants in the Kobe area, for many years there were no public consultation services available in Spanish or Portuguese. Since 1993, however, the Hyogo International Association, Information and Advisory Service, run by the Hyogo prefectural government, added consultation services in Spanish and Portuguese to those already available in English and Chinese. During the 1999 fiscal year (from April 1999 through March 2000), it dealt with 1,796 cases in Spanish and 818 in Portuguese, two-thirds of the total non-Japanese-language caseload. Services in Spanish and Portuguese were partially in response to a special request from a Nisei Argentine woman, who for several years had advised Nikkeijin and other workers from Latin America on a personal basis. The association's activities now include free consultations on laws, employment, housing, and other issues concerning daily life. Currently, three staff members, including one Nisei Brazilian, provide consultation services in Portuguese or Spanish. The organization also publishes bulletins in Portuguese, Spanish, and Korean containing detailed information on daily life and public services. The association offered a Portuguese and Spanish FM-radio broadcast program entitled "Hyogo Mi Amor," which, from 1994 to 2000, provided information on social welfare activities, visas, health and sanitation, banking, and traffic.

The NGO Network for Foreigners' Assistance Kobe, which was formed after the earthquake, offers telephone hot line consultation services in nine languages, including Spanish and Portuguese. Among the sixty-nine cases filed from August to October 2000, two-thirds were by those from Latin America, mostly Peruvians. Many consultation cases involve visa problems associated with marital relationships. Others concern job loss, governmental aid, and housing.²³

According to a survey conducted by the Network for Foreigners' Assistance, a substantial portion of Brazilians and Peruvians search for jobs through personal networks rather than Hello Work, a public job placement office. This is especially true in comparison with other newcomer groups such as the Chinese and Vietnamese. The survey found that only 7.5 percent of Brazilians and 22 percent of Peruvians had visited Hello Work in search of employment, compared to 40 percent of Chinese and 50 percent of Vietnamese. Moreover, 58 percent of the Brazilians and 68 percent of the Peruvians surveyed responded that they had no knowledge of Hello Work. These

are significantly higher figures than those for Chinese (26.7 percent) and Vietnamese (26.1 percent). Interestingly, responses seem to have no correlation with their language abilities.²⁴

The Center for Multicultural Information and Assistance Kobe opened in April 1998. It initiated the World Kids Community project, which was based on the idea that promotion of multicultural education, rather than homogeneous assimilation-oriented education, will benefit not only foreign children, but also Japanese children. It placed particular emphasis on various educational and cultural programs for children from Brazil. One of its first projects cooperated with city- and prefectural-operated agencies in February 1999 to offer an orientation program for school entrance, with the primary target being migrants from Latin America. They provided illustrated bulletins and information in Portuguese, Spanish, and English in preparation for children's entrance into elementary school. Topics included Japanese customs unfamiliar to migrants from Latin America, such as the school entrance ceremony, the parent and teacher contact notebook, home visits by teachers, parents' visiting days, and the preparation of school materials such as pencil boxes. In June 1999 the center organized Fiesta Junina, a major winter festival in Brazil, with the assistance of a Nikkei Brazilian woman. It was likely the first Brazilian cultural event held in Kobe targeted at Brazilian participants, attracting approximately 170 participants. This event also served as a networking opportunity for the otherwise invisible Nikkei Brazilians in the Kobe area. By collecting the names and addresses of attendees, the center slowly expanded the network of Brazilians, most of whom were Nikkeijin, in the region. Meanwhile, the Fiesta Junina attracted about three hundred people in 2001.

One urgent need voiced by Brazilians at the festival was the exchange of information. In response to this request, the first community newsletter for Brazilians was introduced in the fall of 1999. The center attempted to reach Brazilians by delivering or sending bulletins to Brazilian restaurants and factories that employed a significant number of Nikkei Brazilians. A Brazilian grocery truck that regularly visited Higashinada was also involved in distributing bulletins.

The center also organized free Portuguese classes for Brazilian children in Kobe and Akashi, a city adjacent to Kobe. Communication between parents and children was becoming a serious problem in many Nikkei families. These classes aim to facilitate communication between Brazilian parents and their children, who had quickly acquired Japanese language ability but had lost their Portuguese. At present, there are two dozen children attending classes. The center also started free Japanese language classes in Higashinada, mainly targeting Nikkei workers in the area.

The CMIA Kobe was closed in March 2000, and programs it offered have been taken over by a number of independent organizations. A new organization called Facil, located at the Takatori Community Center in Nagata ward, is one of them. Run by the former director and staff members of the CMIA Kobe, Facil is an NPO (non-profit organization) that aims at financial independence for foreign residents and provides fee-based translation and interpretation services in several languages, including Spanish and Portuguese. The need for financial independence among Nikkeijin and other newcomers has long been recognized, and this new support organization is expected to make advances in organizing mutual support networks to foster leadership among migrants. Following the closure of CMIA Kobe, the Japanese language class in Higashinada was assumed by another NGO, the Higashinada Japanese Class, and the medical coverage program was taken over by the Center for Multicultural Information and Assistance Hyogo.

One product of network building among migrants from Brazil has been a soccer team that was formed in Kobe in March 2000, consisting of a dozen (mostly Nikkei) Brazilian youth ranging in age from thirteen to twenty-one. They gather every Sunday to practice, and occasionally play games with Japanese teams and other teams composed of non-Japanese. The formation of this team was initiated by Facil and is expected to build networks among parents via the youth who play on the team.

Among some Nikkeijin who live in areas where mass services are available, Catholic churches serve as a core of their personal networks. In Kobe, only one church in Higashinada provides masses in Spanish. These are held every Saturday night by a Mexican Nisei priest. On special occasions, combined bilingual masses are conducted on Sundays. Japanese lessons or "catch-up lessons" are also offered by members and volunteers on weekday evenings. The Osaka archbishopric, which covers Osaka city and Hyogo and Wakayama prefectures, has only one Portuguese-speaking priest. As a result, six days each month this priest visits ten different locations in the Osaka-Hyogo area. This means that attendees receive mass services only once a month, making it difficult for them to maintain their relationship with the church. The priest has noticed a drastic fluctuation in the number of Nikkei attending services. For example, at Sasayama, a medium-size town in Hyogo where ten people usually attend, more than thirty people appeared one month and then just sixteen the next month. Such fluctuation, he says, is typical among gathering places for Nikkei.

The radio station FM YY broadcast a program entitled "Tabunka Kodomo World" (The multicultural world for children) that was hosted by two girls, one a Brazilian Nikkeijin and the other Vietnamese, from October 1998 through October 2000. FM YY also aired a world-music program fea-

turing Latin music and offers Spanish- and Portuguese-language programs twice a week.

In 1999, the Hyogo Prefecture School Board of Education distributed a short pamphlet entitled "Follow-up Services" concerning foreign schoolchildren. The pamphlet was based on lessons learned from experiences of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, after which mutual aid crossed ethnic and national boundaries.²⁵ Year 2000 guidelines advocated the "development of a spirit of multicultural coexistence" as one of four basic principles. The specific goal was "to foster students' interest in different cultures through opportunities to study Asian and Latin American cultures based on students' daily lives."²⁶

Since 1991, yearly reports by the Japanese Ministry of Education show that Portuguese-speaking students (the vast majority of whom are Nikkeijin from Brazil) consistently constitute the largest group of foreign students requiring supplementary Japanese instruction. In 2000 they comprised 40.3 percent (7,425 out of 18,585) of so-designated students in public elementary, junior high, and high schools and schools for the disabled, followed by Chinese- and Spanish-speaking students (29.5 percent and 11.3 percent, respectively). The report explicitly stated that the ministry's investigation was prompted by "the increase of foreigners staying in Japan (including Nikkeijin), through changes in 'the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act'" of 1990.²⁷

Both the Kobe city and Hyogo prefecture boards of education now sponsor programs that provide elementary and junior high schools with part-time teaching assistants to assist non-Japanese students requiring Japanese language guidance. Again, the most frequent participants in these programs have been Latin American children, most of whom are Nikkei Brazilian.²⁸ The state-sponsored assistants help non-Japanese students by providing curricular support in their native languages, and the program is highly regarded because it promotes better communication between both teachers and students, and teachers and parents. Furthermore, the assistants play an important role as consultants who can talk to foreign students in their native languages.

A survey conducted among teaching assistants in the prefectural program who speak Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese reveals some instructive cross-cultural approaches and attitudes. Among Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking teaching assistants, those who indicated that differences in the education system and curriculum content were particular concerns for non-Japanese students were higher than the percentages for Chinese- and Vietnamese-speaking teaching assistants.²⁹ Furthermore, higher percentages of Latin American language assistants felt that differences in customs and

ways of thinking were important factors (60 percent among Portuguese- and 50 percent among Spanish-speaking assistants). By contrast, Asian language assistants felt such differences were less important (10 percent among Chinese and 28.6 percent among Vietnamese-speaking assistants). Other comments from Portuguese-speaking assistants illuminate the perceived differences among Nikkei schoolchildren. Concerns of Nikkei schoolchildren included being disliked for their body odor after physical education classes, problems with the standard school lunch and green tea, public bathing with classmates during overnight school trips, and difficulty in the study of Chinese characters.³⁰

As we have seen, in Kobe, various kinds of services and programs have been provided for immigrants from Latin America. In spite of the fact that there are several other ethnic groups who are numerically larger than Brazilians in Kobe, Brazilians are the most visible group among newcomers in terms of multicultural and multilingual programs and services. Organizations and public agencies make no distinction between Nikkeijin and other immigrants from Latin America in their services. The physical or cultural similarities between Nikkeijin and native Japanese are not a factor. A few times in my research, through NGO staff, I came across discourse from ordinary Japanese like "in the beginning I thought they had the same blood as ours." Nikkeijin are categorized as "foreigners," both among Japanese engaged in providing social services and those having first-hand interactions with them.

The Issue of Racism against Nikkeijin

The issue of racial prejudice or discrimination against Nikkeijin is rather complicated and cannot be simply attributed to native Japanese discriminating against Nikkeijin. Some Nikkeijin have experienced explicit or implicit labor exploitation or prejudice by native Japanese, often by small business employers or direct superiors. A typical example of racial prejudice is associating the Nikkeijin's limited Japanese language ability with childishness, resulting in condescension such as calling Nikkeijin "stupid" behind their backs. More serious conflicts included the failure of small factory owners to pay compensation for injuries. It is not clear, however, whether these issues involve race or not.

Interestingly, almost all of the Nikkeijin from Latin America and the one European long-term resident of Brazil who assists migrants from Latin America insist that there is hardly any racism or racial discrimination against people from Latin America in Japan (at least compared to the situation in their own countries). Instead, they argue that Nikkeijin and their families

tend to quickly attribute common misunderstandings to racial prejudice or discrimination. For example, on a certain garbage collection day, one Nikkei found his garbage left at the collection site and blamed it on racism. A Nikkei consultant explained that it was because he had not followed regulations regarding the separation of flammable and inflammable refuse. Another typical example involves behavior when calling on Japanese homes. Japanese in general do not invite unexpected visitors into their homes. However, since Brazilians often invite visitors inside their homes, the Japanese behavior is interpreted as a sign of prejudice. However, among Nikkei schoolchildren *ijime*, or bullying, is a common problem that they face at school, as Ninomiya discusses in this volume. A typical event is receiving such comments as "Why can't you speak Japanese in spite of having a Japanese face?" Their *difference*, either in language, appearance, customs, or in other respects, often invites *ijime* in an explicit or implicit way—especially by children who are shy, have difficulty making friends with Japanese classmates, and therefore wind up feeling isolated.

On the other hand, there have been cases in which native Japanese demonstrate feelings of distrust or "difference" toward Nikkeijin after having close interactions with them and construct generalized images concerning them based on such cases. For example, a nun living in a medium-size town on the outskirts of Kobe shared the following story: When a Nikkei Brazilian couple lost their only child to a fatal disease, they said they had no money to conduct a funeral. She talked to people in the church and community who immediately donated money, materials, and services needed to carry out a funeral for their son. When the couple's apartment was subsequently broken into and one million yen (US\$9,090) in cash was stolen, they again came to ask her for money. She says that she felt betrayed according to "our way of thinking," and that the incident reaffirmed the sense of difference between Nikkeijin from Brazil and native Japanese.

It is well documented that Nikkeijin change workplaces for even slightly higher wages. This is not surprising, since Nikkei workers generally aim to earn the maximum amount of money in as short a time as possible. Their employers, often small family businesses, feel disappointed, since "we did everything for them." These employers expected loyalty in return for their care and protection. They come to feel that what they thought was a reciprocal relationship was, after all, only one-sided.

At this point it is difficult to identify what forms of and to what degree discrimination against Nikkeijin exist. However, as sources of information increase in both quantity and quality, there has been a clear reduction in culture-based friction with native Japanese. In an interesting new development, a polarization is occurring between Nikkeijin who have integrated

themselves into Japanese society and those who have been left out. The relationship between Nikkeijin and native Japanese is entering a new phase.

Conclusion

Kobe has taken the lead in promoting the idea of multicultural coexistence, or *tabunka kyosei*, an indigenous version of multiculturalism, and it is clearly becoming a society more sensitive to multicultural settings. It should not go unnoticed that such transformations were built on the decades-long struggles and achievements of old-comers, and Koreans and Chinese in particular. Furthermore, the formation of various NGOs, local government social services, multilingual radio stations, Japanese lessons, and such are all efforts made by an increasing number of native Japanese who deeply care about their neighbors and partners in a society that they want to make multicultural. The largest force for such social change is Nikkeijin from Latin America.³ The sudden influx of Nikkeijin from Latin America after the amendments in the 1990 immigration law, compounded by the effects of the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, have prompted the rapid development of various multilingual and multicultural programs for non-Japanese. Many have been aimed at Nikkeijin from Brazil.

The massive influx of Nikkeijin into Japanese society seems to have brought about another change, namely the blurring of a boundary once believed to be fixed and essential, the boundary between "Japanese" and "non-Japanese." In spite of the fact that Nikkeijin from Latin America were singled out for opening the door to unskilled labor because of their assumed cultural and racial similarities, through direct encounters with native Japanese, they have come to be included in the larger category of *gaikokujin*, or foreigners. This, in turn, demonstrates that the ideology of sharing the same "blood" is losing its importance in determining how Japanese people determine "Japaneseness" and perceive difference.

The case of Kobe reflects features that are both unique to Kobe and common to many other cities and towns in Japan. Here I would like to emphasize the significant effects of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in changing native Japanese consciousness toward nonnative Japanese. The appeal that "all victims of the disaster are equal" emerged among local NGO leaders in response to the government's treatment of some foreign victims in life-or-death situations during the aftermath of the earthquake. One drastic change involves an emerging consciousness of *tabunka kyosei*, or multicultural coexistence, a term that describes the new concept of society held by many Kobe residents.

An editorial entitled "Foreign Residents' Suffrage Needed for Rebuilding,"

published in the March 20, 1995, edition of *Kobe Shimbun*, discusses this issue:

Why is it that among Kobe's and Osaka's citizens, there is a consciousness, a kind of affinity that they can engender toward Koreans, Chinese, and Filipinos? It is because people of any country are their neighbors in their daily lives. Without mixing with people from other cultures and experiencing their cultures, we cannot find uniqueness and strength in cities like Kobe and Osaka. ... In order to reconstruct our cities, we need to build a new society of coexistence and, together with our foreign residents, choose a path of reconstruction.

It is in the process of rebuilding after the earthquake that the basis of boundary making seems to be changing to a more community- or neighborhood-oriented than nationality- or race-oriented stance, among some, if not all, Japanese residents in Kobe. As an old Japanese saying says, "Close neighbors are more dependable than distant relatives."

On the other hand, many other cities and towns with sizable populations of migrant workers, many of whom are Latin American Nikkeijin, have been experiencing similar transformations. These changes have been brought about by addressing the needs of Latin American Nikkeijin in response to their sudden influx and perceived cultural and language differences. In that sense, Nikkeijin from Brazil and other Latin American countries have represented a force for change in Japanese society.

Although it is too early to redefine the concept of "Nikkeijin," given their brief history of migration to Japan and the tentative formation of their Japan-based community, the situation of Nikkeijin in Japan certainly defies and may eventually change the term's conventional usage.

Notes

1. Roland Robertson, *Globalization* (London: Sage, 1992), 8.
2. As of January 1, 2000, 117,500 Brazilians held *teijusha* visas, and they accounted for 54.5 percent of the total number of registered foreigners holding such visas. Brazilians and Peruvians combined accounted for two thirds, or 64 percent, of the total. Old-comers such as Koreans and Chinese, if not naturalized, have the status of *ei-jusha* (permanent residents) in Japan.
3. For details see Takeyuki Tsuda, "The Motivation to Migrate: The Ethnic and Sociocultural Constitution of the Japanese-Brazilian Return-Migration System," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 48, no. 1 (1999).
4. This chapter is based on my field research, which includes frequent personal interviews with NGO leaders, local government staff, counselors, and other service-related people, including Nikkeijin, in Kobe and its vicinity between February 1997 and January 2000, and follow-up research in November and December 2000.
5. See, for example, Hiroshi Komai, "Immigrants in Japan," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 9 (2000); Takeyuki Tsuda, "The Permanence of 'Temporary' Migra-

tion: The 'Structural Embeddedness' of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrant Workers in Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 5 (1999): 687-722; Yoko Sellek, "The U-Turn Phenomenon among South American-Japanese Descendants: From Emigrants to Migrants," *Immigrants & Minorities* 15, no. 3 (1996): 246-69; Takamichi Kajita, "Toransu nashonaru na kankyo ka deno aratana ijyu puroseshu: dekasegi 10-nen wo heta Nikkeijin no shakaiteki chosa hokoku," Hitotsubashi University, 1999.

6. Following its usage in the literature concerning migrant workers in Japan, "newcomers" here refers to immigrants whose migration wave began in the late 1970s. "Old-comers" is a contrasting term that is primarily used to denote those ethnic groups (mainly Koreans and Chinese) who voluntarily or involuntarily migrated to Japan during the Japanese colonial period and immediately following World War II. Therefore, unlike other migrant/minority groups in Japan, the influx of Chinese and Koreans to Japan has tended to occur in waves depending on time and rationale. In this manner, Chinese and Koreans can be both "newcomers" and "old-comers."

7. Population statistics for "foreigners" (gaikokujin) are based on nationality alone; no government census measures ethnic background itself. The background-specific numbers of naturalized people and their descendants can therefore only be estimated.

8. According to the Employment Service Center for Nikkeijin in Tokyo and Nagoya, among 5,469 posted openings in 1997, 69.7 percent were in the manufacturing industry, and 85 percent of the employers were categorized as small or medium-size companies with fewer than three hundred employees. Kokusai Jinryu editorial board, "Employment and Educational Issues," Special Issue on Nikkei Brazilians Today, *Kokusai jinryu* (1998): 7-16.

9. Takamichi Kajita, *Gaikokujin rodosha to Nippon* (Foreign migrant workers and Japan) (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1994), 153.

10. The prolonged economic recession in Japan has affected Nikkei workers in various respects. Not only their daily wages but also overtime hours were substantially cut. Komai reports that the percentage of newcomers in the wage category of less than 7,000 yen per day increased from 25.6 percent in 1992 to 34.1 percent in 1998. See Hiroshi Komai, *Nihon no gaikokujin imin* (Foreign immigrants in Japan) (Tokyo: Akashi-shoten, 1999), 64; 160. This situation has even deteriorated recently.

11. As of December 31, 2000, there were about 3,862 people from Brazil, 881 from Peru, more than 149 from Bolivia, and nearly two hundred from other Latin American countries who were registered residents in Hyogo prefecture.

12. In the late 1990s, in addition to Japan's more than 600,000 old-comers, the total number of "newcomers" had reached approximately one million, a combination that represents 1.3 percent of the entire population in Japan.

13. Based on her research conducted in the Tokai region, Yamanaka classified Nikkei women into three categories: "Senior Nikkeijin women," "Junior Nikkeijin women," and "Brazilian wives." She identifies convalescent attendant as the primary occupation in Japan for senior Nikkeijin women, whereas factory work is the primary occupation for junior Nikkeijin and Brazilian wives. Keiko Yamanaka, "Return Migration of Japanese Brazilian Women: Household Strategies and Search for the 'Homeland,'" in *Beyond Boundaries*, Diane Baxter and Ruth Krulfeld, eds. (Arlington, Va.: American Anthropological Association, 1997).

14. See as the best source regarding the situations of foreigners affected by the great earthquake, Gaikokujin Jishin Joho Senta (Foreigners' Earthquake Information Center), *Hanshin Daishinsai to gaikokujin* (The Great Hanshin Earthquake and foreigners) (Tokyo: Akashi-shoten, 1996).

15. For instance, the Hyogo prefectural police opened "consultation services for foreigners" two days after the quake.

16. German T. Velasquez, "Situation of Foreigners Affected by the Disaster," in *Japan, Comprehensive Study of the Great Hanshin Earthquake*, United Nations Center for Regional Development, Nagoya, Research Report Series No. 12, 1995, 219.

17. In the case of injuries resulting in serious disability, 2.5 million yen was paid for such injury to the breadwinner, half of this amount for any other family member.

18. The Hyogo prefectural government provided 100,000 yen to those residents whose houses had "totally collapsed or burned down" and 50,000 yen for those whose houses were "half collapsed or burned down." In addition, the city of Kobe paid 40,000 yen to its residents in the former category, and 20,000 to those in the latter category. Payments were problematic, however, because many unregistered foreign residents did not have a stable residence, and therefore had great difficulty in producing the necessary documents.

19. German T. Velasquez, "Situation of Foreigners Affected by the Disaster," 221.

20. Although there are a number of private junior high schools in Kobe and the numbers of foreign children enrolled in private schools are unclear, the entrance fees and tuition are expensive, so the numbers are estimated to be extremely low, if there are any foreign students enrolled at all.

21. As of the end of 2000, there were 11,005 Brazilian children between five and nine years of age, and 10,210 between ten and fourteen years. However, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, as of September 1, 2000, there were only 5,241 elementary and 2,056 junior high students whose native language was Portuguese and who were classified as students who required special Japanese language classes. Although the ages do not necessarily match each other—and we also need to take into account a small number of students who do not need special classes, those who go to private schools, and those who go to so-called Brazilian schools—somewhere between one-third and one-half of Brazilian students at the elementary and junior high levels go to Japanese schools.

22. According to a survey conducted at Hamamatsu, when asked who they talk to when they are in trouble, 48.5 percent of Nikkeijin responded "family members," 28.2 percent "Nikkei friends," and only 2.5 percent and 3.5 percent responded that they talk to "employers" and "Japanese friends," respectively.

23. NGO Network for Foreigners' Assistance Kobe, "Hot Line Report for September 2000," unpublished memorandum. Also see Hiroshi Komai, ed., *Shinrai-teiji gaikokujin siryoshusei* (Data book on Newcomers and resident foreigners in Japan) (Tokyo: Akashi-shoten, 1998), 652.

24. NGO Network for Foreigners' Assistance Kobe, "Hyogo kennai niokeru gaikokuseki jumin no kyushoku nikansuru anketo chyosa" (A survey regarding job search among residents with foreign citizenship in Hyogo Prefecture), 2000, 16-19.

25. Hyogo Prefecture School Board of Education, "Gaikokujin jido seito ni kaka-

waru kyoiku hoshin" (Educational policies concerning foreign schoolchildren), 2000, 1.

26. Hyogo Prefecture School Board of Education, "Gaikokujin jido seito ni kaka-warau kyoiku Hoshin," 3.

27. Ministry of Education and Science, "Heisei 12 nendo Nihongo shido ga hitsuyona gaikokujin jido seito no ukeire jokyo ni kansuru tyosa no kekka" (An investigation report regarding admission of foreign children in need of Japanese language guidance during the 2000 fiscal year), <http://www.monbu.go.jp/news/00000459>.

28. As of December 2000, nearly one-third of the schools enrolled in this program registered Portuguese-speaking teaching aids.

29. Among Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking assistants 46.7 percent and 33.3 percent, respectively, in contrast to 10 percent and 14.3 percent among Chinese- and Vietnamese-speaking assistants, respectively.

30. Department for Promotion of Human Rights Education, Hyogo Board of Education, "Gaikokujin jido seito sido hojoin setchi jugyo dainiki gakkou chiyosa-shu-kei kekka" (A report of the survey conducted among the second-term teaching assistants for foreign students), unpublished document, September 2000. The number of respondents was rather small (fifty in total), and the results should be interpreted as a general view.

31. Although Chinese compose the largest segment of newcomers in Kobe (and throughout Japan), they have recourse to far more established organs of assistance, such as community organizations and personal networks. More recently Vietnamese have surpassed Brazilians in Kobe, and it should be pointed out that their needs are not yet sufficiently addressed in Kobe.

PART IV

Retrospect and Prospects