We Shall Overcome

The Bible talks about a hope against hope. “But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” (Romans 8:24-25) These words have frequently encouraged people in situations in which they are trying to break through to a hope that has been closed to them. I’m sure that was the case for those who struggled for democratization in Korea and fought for the end of apartheid in South Africa. When I was studying at Union Theological Seminary in New York, I recall how these words encouraged us as we gathered in the rotunda of the seminary with students from South Africa to pray for the end of apartheid.

In this issue of Crowned With Thorns, we will be updating our readers concerning the window that seems to be opening for the “Sayama Trial,” which is one front on which the struggle against buraku discrimination in Japan is being fought. It is through this new window that the rays of victory are beginning to glimmer, offering new hope for the defendant and his numerous supporters both inside and outside of Japan. Let us continue to endeavor to make that light shine bright, so that our “hope against hope” will finally be realized.

Rev. Iwahashi Tsunehisa
The “Sayama Incident” — Ishikawa Kazuo is Innocent
By Hihara Toshikazu

The “Sayama Incident” occurred on March 1, 1963, when a high school girl was kidnapped and murdered in the city of Sayama in Saitama prefecture. The police decided to look for a suspect in the nearby discriminated-against buraku, and they thoroughly investigated all of the young males in the buraku district. First, they arrested Ishikawa Kazuo (then aged 24) on an unrelated charge.

They then interrogated him day and night in what can only be described as an illegal interrogation, with him handcuffed and tied with a rope around his waist. Even with that, Ishikawa held out, insisting on his innocence for a full month. The interrogator threatened him, saying, “If you’re not the guilty one, then it was your brother. We’re going to arrest him too.” With that, he finally caved in and signed a false confession. This was a clear example of buraku discrimination by the police, as they railroaded Ishikawa to make him guilty.

The first trial took a mere 6 months and resulted in the death sentence. When he realized he had been tricked by the police, Ishikawa plead not guilty, insisting on his innocence from then on. He was granted a retrial, but at that second trial, Judge Terao disappointed Ishikawa’s many supporters, who believed in his innocence, by sentencing him to life in prison. It was also a betrayal of the belief Ishikawa had that the judicial court was supposed to be a place where the truth of the matter would be pursued.

Nevertheless, Ishikawa wasn’t about to give in, and so he appealed the decision to the supreme court. Unfortunately, however, they dismissed the appeal without even looking into the facts of the case. Ishikawa spent 31 years and 7 months in prison before being paroled in Dec. 1994, and even today, he is, in effect, still forced to wear “invisible handcuffs.”

The team of lawyers working towards the 2nd judicial review did their best and produced new evidence, but the supreme court didn’t even question the expert witnesses and simply unilaterally dismissed the case. I really felt deep anger towards a supreme court that would so flagrantly disregard the truth.

Ishikawa and the team of lawyers working on his case filed for a 3rd judicial review on May 23, 2006, with Ishikawa resolutely stating, “This time we will win a retrial.” I made Ishikawa’s resolve my own as well, and pledged to fight to clear his name.

My First Meeting With Ishikawa
In 1990, I received a request from the Kyodan’s Buraku Liberation Center that stated, “The Kyodan has pledged itself to grapple with the discriminatory Sayama Trial, and we want to send a delegation to personally meet with Ishikawa. We’d like you to be a member of the team.” While I couldn’t give an immediate answer, I really did want to meet this man who had already been imprisoned for 27 years.

The team consisted of 5 members, including a member of the Japanese Diet (parliament), Doi Ryuichi. As we were only allowed 30 minutes to meet with Ishikawa, we planned carefully ahead of time what we would ask. As we approached the red-brick buildings of the Chiba Prison, we were all a bit tense. After completing the paperwork, we were led to the waiting room of the main building, and when the appointed time came, we were led to the meeting room where Ishikawa was waiting. It was a very small room divided by an acrylic partition, and the 5 of us could barely fit into our half of the room. My first impression of Ishikawa was that he was a very bright and friendly person. As we greeted him, his face beamed and he greeted us like old friends, talking in a quick and friendly manner. As our time was short,
we dove right into our questions, asking him why he thought he had to sign the false confession, what his feelings were toward the sentence by Judge Terao, what his prison life was like, etc. He said that prior to Judge Terao’s decision, he felt confident that he would win, and so when the guilty verdict was upheld, he was very depressed for a while. “But now,” he said, “I am optimistic, and I’m training both my mind and body for the struggle.” I was really impressed with him, thinking how strong a person he really is. In meeting Ishikawa, the issues surrounding the “Sayama Incident” became my own, and I pledged myself to do everything I could to right this evil.

Recent Movement in the Issue

The legal team had been pressing for the Tokyo Supreme Court to order the release of all of the evidence the prosecution was holding, and finally, in September 2009, Judge Kadono scheduled a three-way meeting with the court, prosecution and defense team, where they discussed the issue of disclosure of the evidence being held concerning the Sayama Incident. In October, the prosecution again sent a report to the court declining to disclose the evidence they had.

A second three-way meeting was organized for Dec. 16, but as there was no further progress in voluntary disclosure, the judge ruled that the prosecution had to produce 8 categories of evidence being sought by the defense, including the report concerning the presence of blood (or lack thereof) in the stand of trees where the murder was alleged to have taken place.

I was so happy to receive the news that there was finally some movement in the case, as the judge advised the prosecution to disclose the evidence. Finally, on May 13, 2010, at the 3rd three-way meeting, the prosecution handed over 36 pieces of evidence, but in only 5 of the 8 categories they were supposed to. Nevertheless, the facts that the court even held the three-way meetings and directed the prosecution to produce the evidence and that the prosecution did disclose 36 pieces of evidence in 5 categories represents a major step forward in bringing this case to a resolution.

However, when it came to the prime piece of evidence, the “Report on the investigation as to whether or not there was blood found at the supposed crime scene in the stand of trees,” the first of the 8 specific items the court directed the prosecution to produce, they said they couldn’t find it. We can’t allow them to get away with saying they can’t locate this report on the supposed crime scene, which is so central to the case. I want so much to see all of the evidence produced, as there is still much evidence they are withholding. I want to see this happen soon, and for the high court to actually do their own investigation of the facts concerning this case. Let’s all work together to see the retrial become a reality.

Ishikawa Kazuo addresses his many supporters at the May 23 rally in Tokyo’s Hibiya Park. Following his address, supporters paraded to the nearby parliament building to appeal to lawmakers.
The Continuing Saga of Okinawan Discrimination: The Satsuma Invasion, The Ryukyu Takeover, and US Military Bases

By Koyanagi Nobuaki

401, 131, 75, 1, 0.6 and 6. These are numbers that we can’t ignore as we consider the past and present of Okinawa. 401 represents the number of years it’s been since the Satsuma clan from southern Japan invaded the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1609. 131 is the number of years since the Japanese government used military force to annex the Ryukyu Kingdom and make it into Okinawa Prefecture. The Ryukyu king, Shotai, was forcibly taken to Tokyo, where he was placed under house arrest. In effect, Okinawa was colonized by Japan, and as one of the policies of assimilation, the Ryukyu language was forbidden. If the Ryukyu dialect were used in school, the offending child would have to wear a cord around his or her neck with a tag saying “dialect.” Likewise, during the fighting in Okinawa during World War II, anyone who used the Ryukyu dialect was considered to be a spy, and some were even killed because of it. Thus, this “dialect tag” was a symbol of the discriminatory colonization policy, which is particularly clear from the fact that in the Tohoku region, where a similarly strong dialect was in use, no such measures were ever taken.

In contrast to those numbers that symbolize the past, the next numbers, 75, 1 and 0.6, represent the present. 75 refers to the fact that 75% of US military bases in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa. Yet, the 1.3 million people of Okinawa represent only about 1% of the total population and the land area of Okinawa represents only 0.6% of the land area of Japan. Thus, only 1% of the population, living on 0.6% of the land, is being forced to bear the bulk of the burden of defense for the other 99% of the population. The legal basis for this situation is Article 6 of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, the “Japan Status of Forces Agreement.” This treaty between the US and Japan was developed in 1960, when Okinawa was still occupied and administered by the US military. Okinawa was excluded from the negotiations, as this was still a time when the bases were being expanded. The Vietnam War played a big factor in this. Governmental administration of Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972, but contrary to the expectations of the Okinawans, that “return” was not based on Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (the article forfeiting the right to wage war) but instead on Article 6 of the Japan-US treaty.

The number 6, then, stands for this Article 6, which states, “The United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan.” Based on this, then, another unfair treaty, that of the “Administration Agreement,” was also implemented, and thus, under the pretext of “military affairs,” the US military ends up being a threat to the lives of the people living in the area. Typical of this is the Futenma base, which the US Secretary of Defense himself pointed out as being particularly dangerous. As a recent example, on August 13, 2004, a helicopter from the base crashed into the campus of Okinawa International University, exploding in flames. The US military forbid not only the Japanese police but also the university staff and students from entering the campus. This is the reality of Article 6. Not being able to enter your own house when it is on fire is the reality of the Japan-US peace treaty, but “peace” for whom?

The return of such dangerous bases was promised in negotiations between the US and Japan in 1968. However, in the meantime, this “return” has morphed into a “base moving,” as the Japanese and American governments have been pushing for a new base to be built at Henoko to replace Futenma as it closes. Reducing the burden on Okinawans is merely taking the
form of closing a dangerous base, and this policy will apparently not change under the administration of the Japan Democratic Party.

Okinawans, who experienced first hand the inhumanity of war, have been protesting the proposed new military base, and since the government began the process of railroad their throats on April 19, 2004, citizens have conducted nonviolent sits-ins on the Henoko beach.

The Satsuma Invasion, the Ryukyu Annexation, the 27 years of US military rule after the war, the continued forcing of military bases on Okinawa by the Japanese government since 1972. The Okinawan people refer to these as the "repeating of the Ryukyu Annexation." On top of this, then, in complete disregard for the will of the Okinawan people, the renewed "agreement between Japan and the US" concerning the development of a new base at Henoko, is simply a continuance of the "Ryukyu Annexation," and is decried as further "discrimination against Okinawa."

I would like to close my commentary as person who will not condone buraku discrimination or any other form of discrimination, with the letter of protest we sent to the Japanese government.

**Letter of Protest**
Buraku Liberation Center of the United Church of Christ in Japan
2-16-14 Midorigaoka, Daito-shi, Osaka, Japan
Makoto Higashitani, Management Committee Chairperson
Kazuhiro Tanimoto, Activities Committee Chairperson
June 14, 2010

To: Prime Minister Naoto Kan
During last fall’s election campaign, Former Prime Minister Hatoyama made a clear statement before the Okinawan people concerning "the Futenma Base issue." He disavowed the moving around of bases within Okinawa Prefecture to lessen the burden on Okinawans, and instead referred to the future site as being "overseas, or at least outside of Okinawa." Likewise, he also condemned the proposed Henoko location as "blasphemy towards nature." Not only the Okinawans, but many other Japanese citizens also supported these statements, pinning their hopes on them.

Nevertheless, on May 28 of this year, that promise was summarily broken with a joint US-Japan statement on the construction of a new base for the US Marines at Henoko (hereafter referred to as "the new base construction"), which is to be built with funds from the Japanese treasury, the first time that our tax money has been used to build a base for foreign military. This is simply a betrayal of the Okinawan people and is, in fact, nothing other than discriminatory towards them.

As an organization of people working to end buraku discrimination, we also stand against any other dehumanizing discrimination, and so we stand in solidarity with the Okinawan people in protest against this new base construction and seek its repeal.

The new base construction tramples the feelings of the young girl who in the fall of 1995 was victimized by soldiers from the base and has cried out that such an atrocity never happen again.

The new base construction will cause further sacrifices by the Okinawan people who have had to sacrifice so much on account of military bases for 65 years since the end of the war.

The new base construction will increase the unfair burden of the Okinawan people upon whom 75% of US military bases in Japan are already forced upon them, and this is in violation of equality under the law.

The new base construction will destroy the beautiful Okinawan sea, and further threaten the dugong, an endangered species declared a national natural treasure, with extinction.

The new base construction is a misplaced policy that goes against the emphasis now being put on environmental protection by the international community.

The new base construction is in complete disregard for the will of the local people of cities of Nago and Ginowan, as well as that
of the people of Okinawa as a whole, and thus strikes at the very roots of democracy.

The new base construction, in the name of "deterrence" for the safety of the Japanese mainland, places additional burdens and sacrifices on the Okinawan people.

The new base construction challenges the continuing opposition movement of the Okinawan people as expressed in the 100,000 people who attended the protest rally in the fall of 1995, continuing on to the 85,000 who gathered for a similar military base protest rally this past April 10 and the 17,000 who gathered on May 16 to surround the Futenma base.

The new base construction puts the emphasis on American military control rather than on the desires of the Okinawan people and the people of Japan as a whole for peace. ("Life itself is a treasure.")

The new base construction proves that the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan is an unequal treaty.

The new base construction puts the lives and livelihoods of Okinawa's people at risk, and tramples on the desire for peace. It is nothing more than discrimination against Okinawans, and as people who will not condone such discrimination, we lift our angry voices in protest, demanding that this proposal be withdrawn.

Map shows the numerous US military bases on the island of Okinawa. The sign next to the tent is protesting the construction of a new military base, which it declares is against the will of the people.

Report on the 2010 National Buraku Liberation Conference

Kitamura Satoshi

The 2010 National Buraku Liberation Conference was held from June 7 to 9 at the Tokyo Human Rights Plaza in Asakusa, Tokyo. It was my first time to attend such a national conference, and the sight of more than 200 people getting together to learn about and discuss liberation was such a joy to see. I really felt privileged to get to know so many people with a passion for liberation, for their enthusiasm overflowed into my soul. I would really like to express my thanks to the organizing committee for their efforts to put together such a wonderful conference.

Before giving further impressions of the conference, I'd like to briefly describe myself. I am presently the chairperson of the organizing committee for the annual BLC youth seminar held each August at the Izumi Church in Osaka. Thus, you might expect from that one fact that I would have a lot of experience in dealing with the various issues surrounding buraku discrimination, but in reality, it is the opposite of that, as I am a bit embarrassed by how much I don't know about the subject, something that I more fully realize every time I attend such a conference.
During this conference, we had opportunity to learn about a variety of discrimination issues, and I chose to be in the group that visited the Tama Zenseien sanatorium for Hansen’s Disease victims. That experience taught me how uninformed and apathetic I had been. The experience that spoke most deeply to me was listening to the testimony of recovered victims, particularly one who said, “Christians were the ones who first build facilities to help us and to serve our needs, and so we are very thankful for that. However, there were also Christian pastors who bullied the state in setting up this quarantine system in the first place.” These words taught me that while these Christians he was referring to all shared equally in receiving God’s grace through salvation, they ended up so differently in terms of their works. Some followed Jesus’ example by diligently serving the needs of the poor, while others joined with the forces of oppression. What was it that led up to this difference in actions? As I listened to the testimony, I thought that this must surely be a difference in response to God’s love.

I believe that the words Jesus spoke, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners,” are indicative of his commitment to the poor and dispossessed. The people he most associated with were those labeled “sinners” according to the value system of that time and culture, and he worked among them even to the point of giving up his life. Scripture also says, “(Christ), who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.” We can infer from this that even though Jesus Christ was God, it was in becoming a human being and then working to uplift those who had been relegated to the dregs of society that he truly became the Christ. It was during this field trip to the Tama Zenseien Sanatorium that I was forced to think about whether I, as a Christian and a follower of Jesus Christ, had really been aware of the suffering of my neighbor and whether I had lived a life that truly followed in Christ’s footsteps.

On the second day of the conference, as I participated in one of the workshops, I heard the example of a pastor at a church somewhere who referred to an actual suicide in his sermon, saying, “If only he had listened to the gospel message in church, he wouldn’t have committed suicide.” Our response to this statement was, “How insensitive and irresponsible such a response is to the person who died and to his family, but also to God himself.” I felt sad that that pastor did not show even a little bit the posture of responding to the love of Jesus as exemplified in his work with those in the most trying of circumstances. Thus, as we all experience the realities of the world we live in, I wondered why it is that we have so much trouble shedding the apathy we have towards our suffering neighbor — the “littlest of these,” of whom there are so many.

As a result of experiencing God’s love for me, I question myself as to how it is I should live my life. I want to live it encountering my neighbors, as I respond to God’s calling, sharing together our joys, our sorrows, and our sufferings. This national conference has spurred me on to work together with my new friends and others to walk the path of liberation.

Uramoto Yoshifumi making his presentation on his experiences as a victim of the “Postcard Discrimination Incident.” (See report below.)
Buraku Liberation Center Report
Kobayashi Akira, BLC Director

First of all, we'd like to report on the successful finish of our 8th Liberation Play, “Forty Days in the Wilderness,” this past November. There were 9 showings of the play (in Tokyo, Tenri, Kanagawa, Hyogo, Shiga (Kusatsu), Fukuoka, Seinan Gakuin University, Nagoya and Kyoto), with a total attendance of about 800. Of our 8 plays, “Forty Days in the Wilderness” was performed at the most venues so far. We are now working on our next play, “Who is your neighbor,” the first performance of which will be at the upcoming Kyodan General Assembly. It is scripted and directed by Kawakami Jo, with a cast of 7 (4 from Kansai and 3 from Tokyo), and we are endeavoring to make this new play even more successful than the previous one. Observers are welcomed and encouraged to sit in on the performance at the Tokyo Metropolitan Hotel from 6 to 7 pm on October 27.

We held our National BLC Conference for the 11th time, with this conference being held in Asakusa, Tokyo from June 7 to 9, 2010. There were 215 participants from around the country, with the keynote address being given by Uramoto Yoshifumi concerning his experiences as a victim of the “Postcard Discrimination Incident,” in which massive numbers of discriminatory postcards were sent between May 2003 and October 2004. Several people active in the liberation movement received a total of some 400 postcards during this 1½-year period, with statements such as, “Eta [the highly discriminatory term used in ancient time and literally meaning “filth abundant”] are not humans and therefore don’t have human rights. Killing them is not a crime.” These were not only sent to their homes but also neighbor’s homes and elsewhere across the country. In addition to such postcards, numerous items, such as English conversation materials, tea, cosmetics, diet products, and even take-out dishes, were ordered in their names to be paid on delivery. Likewise, the power company was contacted under the ruse that the person was moving and that the power should be turned off, with the result that it almost was. The person behind all of this harassment, a 34-year-old man from Tokyo, was finally caught almost by accident.

As there is no actual law against such buraku discrimination, he had to be charged with intimidation, libel, and forgery. Uramoto said that what upset him the most was a postcard sent in his name to the National Sanitarium for Hansen’s Disease in Kumamoto (Kikuchi Keifuen) with the following unspeakably horrifying message: “People with Hansen’s Disease are not humans. You are nothing but maggots, and since you are just maggots, why do you stay in places like hotels? Hotels are not places where lower life forms should stay, as they are for human beings. You must apologize to the hotels.” Thus, such a horrible message was sent in the name of one who himself was living with and fighting against discrimination. Uramoto said he was so horrified by it all that he couldn’t fight back tears of vexation.

The conference divided into 5 groups for field trips to visit areas that from the Edo Period have been working class neighborhoods to see how the people live and to experience the empathy they have for each other.

In addition to the National BLC Conference, the BLC also held an overnight seminar, the annual youth seminar, the BLC-sponsored “Day of Prayer Worship Service” [held in churches across the country], etc., all with the goal of promoting a society and church in which discrimination no longer occurs. The details of these activities are reported in the Japanese publications, “Fluttering Towards Liberation” and “Kaihō eno Habataki” (“The Fluttering of Wings Towards Liberation”) and “Buraku Kaihō Zenkoku Tsūshin” (“Buraku Liberation National Communications”).
The Challenge to Japanese Democracy Posed by its Refusal to Fully Subsidize Korean Schools

Nagasaki Yumiko

The Promise of the Japan Democratic Party to make high school education free for all in Japan was implemented from this past April — that is, with the single exception of Korean schools (which refers to schools affiliated with North Korea). This issue strikes at the very root of democracy and human rights in Japanese society and whether or not Japanese society will be able to become more inclusive and tolerant. The policy espoused by the ruling Democratic Party is that every child has the right to learn and that there should be a level playing field when it comes to educational opportunity, including reducing the financial burden on parents. From that stance, it naturally follows that the children of foreign nationals residing in Japan should also be included. However, Nakai Ko, the cabinet member in charge of the abduction issue, put pressure on the ministry of education to exclude the Korean schools because of the lack of progress concerning the abduction issue. Thus, as widely reported in the media, a connection was made between Korean schools and North Korean bashing, with the government and the ministry of education lacking direction. There simply is, however, no good reason for excluding Korean schools from full subsidies.

The government's rationale for excluding these schools is that Japan has no diplomatic relations with North Korea and that they cannot confirm the quality of the contents of instruction. However, when it comes to Taiwanese ethnic schools, these are included in spite of the fact that Japan has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan either. The curriculum of Korean schools is open for all to see on their websites, and the content of their curriculum is on par with that of Japanese schools, as is evidenced by the fact that some graduates of Korean schools have passed entrance examinations to both Japanese private and public universities and have been admitted. Until the rules were changed last year, officially, graduates of Korean schools were not even eligible to take such entrance exams, as such schools were considered "vocational schools" and were thus discriminated against. Thus, this decision to exclude them from the subsidy system goes against this trend and is discriminatory.

Vocational schools are eligible to receive a small government subsidy, and so the Korean schools have received that, since they are so classified. The average subsidy kindergarten through high school students receive is 90,000 yen. This is in contrast to public kindergartens being 698,248, grade school, 888,339, middle school 1,031,684, and high school 1,115,788 yen per student, while private kindergartens get 157,909, grade schools 247,500, middle schools 247,635, and high schools 315,869 yen per student. In addition, private schools also get a separate subsidy in the form of a cost reduction subsidy for parents and subsidies for building maintenance. Thus, the amount of difference is huge, and so the financial burden on Koreans in Japan affiliated with the North who desire their children to have an ethnic education is great indeed, in spite of the fact that they pay the same taxes as everyone else.

With respect to this issue, both the United Nations and the Japan Federation of Bar Associations have urged the Japanese government to reform their policies. The Jan. 24, 2006 message from the UN stated, "The Japanese government should make every effort to take measures to eliminate the kind of discriminatory treatment Korean and other foreign schools face in Japan." They also added, "When the historical background of Korean schools is considered, it is even more appropriate that they should receive government aid. Likewise, their graduates should be given eligibility to take university entrance examinations." Also, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations expressed its opinion in both 1998 and again in 2008 that the discriminatory treatment Korean schools receive is a violation of human rights as well.
as of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

When considering why there are Korean schools in Japan, one cannot separate that from the history of Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula, the banning of the Korean language and the forced adoption of Japanese names. With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Korean Peninsula was freed. Thus, in order to recover their ethnic identity, Koreans who had been forcibly brought to Japan or who had little other choice than to come on their own due to economic considerations, established ethnic schools. Even though Japan had the obligation to restore the culture and language they had taken away from the Koreans, they instead utilized the Peace Treaty signed in San Francisco to in effect turn the Koreans in Japan into foreigners without rights, forcing Korean schools to close or in other ways oppressing them. That history is continuing even today in the form of excluding Korean schools from the subsidies they deserve.

In my efforts to support ethnic schools, I have come to the conclusion that such schools are not generally focused on narrow nationalism but instead educate their students to respect the dignity of all human beings. What makes the students of Korean schools really shine is being able to take pride in their own roots and being able to accept themselves as they are. Graduates of these schools include many talented people who contribute to Japanese society, such as doctors, lawyers, nurses, professors and artists, to name a few.

Recently, the Osaka Korean School's rugby team represented Osaka in the national competition and won 3rd place. I really wish people would consider how demeaning it is to the children in Korean schools, who will be contributors to Japanese society in the future, to be excluded from the subsidy program. Likewise, rationalizing such discrimination of Korean schools ends up hurting Japanese children as well.

Japanese society is now at a turning point, and so we must raise our voices in protest to this exclusion of Korean schools in order to become an inclusive society that recognizes each other's differences. Let us support and protect each other as we fight to end discrimination and xenophobia.

Recent demonstration in support of Korean schools held in front of the prefectural headquarters in Osaka. The signs being held up have the Chinese character for "anger" written on them.

**Crowned With Thorns Editorial Committee**

BLC Director Akira Kobayashi, BLC management committee chairperson Makoto Higashitani, Rev. Dr. Tsunehisa Iwashashi, Rev. Ken Oguri, Rev. Shigemi Sato, Missionary Tim Boyle

We appreciate your feedback and suggestions for future content and improvements. Like so many deserving ministries around the world in this time of economic uncertainty, the BLC is likewise feeling the budget squeeze. We ask for your prayer support, that God will give us the wisdom to make the best use of the resources we have, as well as increasing those resources. As always, contributions from sources both inside and outside of Japan are deeply appreciated. We now have a means for cashing US dollar checks without incurring banking fees, and so even small contributions are helpful.