We Shall Overcome

Fifty years ago, a young man from the buraku of Sayama in Saitama Prefecture, Kazuo Ishikawa, was arrested on what were clearly trumped up charges. After having been tricked and threatened into signing a confession for a crime he clearly was not guilty of and while Ishikawa was awaiting the death sentence he was later given, Martin Luther King was giving his famous “I have a dream” speech, in which he described his dream of a new America that actually lived up to its principles of justice and liberty for all. King said, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” To paraphrase these immortal words, we too “have a dream” that here in Japan, those of buraku descent will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the occupation of their ancestors but by the content of their character! We have a dream that one day soon Kazuo Ishikawa will be granted the retrial he deserves so that his name can be cleared and the “invisible shackles” that still bind his wrists will be taken away so that he can live out his remaining years in dignity. To further paraphrase King’s speech, “Let freedom ring from the top of Mt. Fuji. Let freedom ring from the hills of Sayama and Osaka. Let freedom ring for every persecuted minority in Japan so that we can sing together with Martin Luther King, ‘Free at last, free at last, Great God Almighty, we are free at last.”

Timothy D. Boyle
Fifty Years Since the Sayama Incident

This issue of Crowned With Thorns consists mostly of translations from the April 15, 2013 issue of “Kaiho e no Habataki,” a special edition of the regularly published newsletter of the Buraku Liberation Center. It consists of personal observations and recollections by several people who have been active in the movement to gain a retrial for Kazuo Ishikawa, the buraku youth who was charged with a murder he clearly had nothing to do with.

What the “Sayama Incident” Means to Me

These 50 years since Sayama have been 50 years of anger and humiliation. It was a crime of political power by the Japanese state. We heard that anger most clearly and sincerely expressed by Ishikawa’s father, Tomizo, when he said, “Kazuo didn’t do it!” When his parents were still living, they would describe with tears in their eyes the various “evidences” planted by the police on the lintel above the door, etc.

The police were desperate to “find the culprit alive,” and the candidates they had in mind were those of the local buraku community, who, as despised and discriminated-against people, were in a vulnerable position. For this special edition, we have gathered together several voices to give their testimonies. We ask you to read these testimonies and share in that indignation against the real perpetrators of this crime.

Mitsuhiro Inukai, retired Kyodan pastor

Kazuo Ishikawa and I were both born in 1939. Ishikawa is already 74, and I turn 74 at the end of April. I sometimes have thoughts about what my life has really been about, but when I think about Ishikawa san, even though I’ve lived essentially the same amount of time, I feel embarrassed that my life has been so insubstantial.

When Ishikawa was arrested on May 23, 1963, I was taking a year off from my university studies at Doshisha University and living with Hajime Matsuzaki in Fukuyoshi, which is a part of the Chikuho District (Ed. note: Located in Kyushu, it was famous for a coal mine in which human rights abuses took place).

Later, shortly after Ishikawa first formally entered his not guilty plea on Sept. 10, 1964, I participated in a large protest rally and demonstration in Kyoto. The children of discriminated-against buraku areas carried a large banner saying, “Return our elder brother Ishikawa to us!”

Then, when the Judge Shoji Terao of the Tokyo High Court handed down a life sentence to Ishikawa on Oct. 31, 1974, I was serving at the Fukuyoshi Church and was involved in the issues surrounding Chikuho, along with the Koreans in Japan issues and the Kanemi cooking oil incident (where many were sickened by PCB contamination). Youth from the Buraku Liberation League located in Moji came to support us in our activities, using the experience and wisdom they had gained through the “Samaya Struggle” to encourage us. I became aware of how many people had been encouraged by the struggles of this one individual, Kazuo Ishikawa, and his fight for justice. Ishikawa had had so little education and was thus functionally illiterate, and so his efforts to
I have been to the site of the Sayama Incident 3 times to study the events. The first time was on Oct. 24, 1978 as a member of the Kyodan Task Force on Buraku Discrimination, the forerunner of the Buraku Liberation Center. I recall vividly how Ishikawa’s parents, who were still living at the time, repeatedly appealed for support, saying, “Kazuo didn’t do it. Please help us fight for justice.” The second time was as a member of the Kyushu District’s Committee on Buraku Discrimination, when we held a similar study conference in Sayama, and then the last time was 2 years ago on July 4, 2011, as a participant in the BLC-sponsored Buraku Liberation Caravan in the Kanto District. At the last meeting of the Caravan, Ishikawa san himself gave a speech full of optimism, saying, “If only they would make public all of the evidence they hold, it would be clear that I was framed, and my name would be cleared.” Ishikawa was released on parole in 1994, but without a retrial, “It’s as though his hands are still shackled with invisible handcuffs.” The “Sayama Incident” was a case of false arrest and conviction due to buraku discrimination. Even though there have been numerous documents submitted demanding the truth of the matter, the door to a retrial has remained closed. While we have all wondered as to why that is, we are nevertheless encouraged by Ishikawa himself, as he firmly believes that “even in the midst of hopelessness, there is still hope.” As so I for one will continue to struggle on.

Why Kazuo Ishikawa wrote his name with simple characters
Nobuaki Koyanagi, member of the BLC Activities Committee

As I thought back on when it was that I became conscious of the “Sayama Incident,” I think it was the incident that took place at the Urawa District Court building, when an activist group lowered a banner from the roof protesting buraku discrimination. Wondering what this was all about, I decided to read up on the subject. The first book I read was by Tomu Kamei, and from that, I learned about Kazuo Ishikawa, who at the time was being supported by a local Liberal Democratic Party member.

It was a trial that lasted only 9 months, and on March 11, 1964, the Tokyo High Court handed down the death penalty. Ishikawa appealed, reversing his guilty plea and formally pleading not guilty on Sept. 10, 1964.

In the magazine “Sekai” (“World”), Hiroshi Noma wrote some articles concerning the trial and the discriminatory attitudes surrounding it, and what particularly caught my attention was the aspect of buraku discrimination and education. During that period, from 1968 to 1975, I worked at the Airin Elementary and Junior High School in the Kamagasaki district of Osaka (which is a slum area known for being a place where day laborers congregate looking for work). I was a caseworker for truant children, and dealt with the parents of several children who could not read and write. As it was difficult for them to even write their own names, these parents often chose simple characters for their names, and since there are many names that have the exact same reading but with different characters, even if it was not the characters of their real names, they often opted to use the simpler ones. Many of these parents had not received even the basic compulsory education.

This is the point that I noticed as I read through the court records and the various evidences. For instance, in the written report, Ishikawa wrote his given name Kazuo as 一夫 instead of the actual 一雄 it is. (Both are pronounced the same way, but his family register shows it as the more complicated one.) It was clear to me from that one fact that even without waiting for an
expert analysis of the handwriting that Ishikawa could not have written the ransom note. Another point was that Ishikawa could not understand the difference between the police and lawyers involved in the case and who was really there to be his advocate. Thus, he was easily fooled by the “sweet words” of the police and thus signed the false confession. Both were the result of his right to an education having been denied.

Another thing that really sticks in my mind is that after the Kyodan Task Force on Buraku Discrimination was formed in 1975, we held committee meetings in various districts around the country, and the Kanto District included a field trip to Sayama to meet with Ishikawa’s parents. They said, “We really want to be able to stay healthy until Kazuo is found not guilty, so that we can thank everyone who has helped.” But this opportunity was denied them by the state.

In September 1974, I skipped school to join in the 110,000-person Sayama Rally, and I recall the euphoria I felt being convinced of his innocence. But I recall how shocked I was on the following Oct. 31 as I watched the news at lunch break at school and heard the sentence of life imprisonment handed down by Judge Terao. It was a rainy day in Osaka.

Since he was paroled, I have listened to Ishikawa give presentations numerous times, beginning with his appearance at the Omi Heian Church. The one that made the deepest impression on me was on Dec. 9, 2011 at the “Anti-oppression Rally” against the unjust arrests of Takao Otani and the others related to the Kansai Concrete Company. He showed again how the “Sayama Incident” was a case of collusion by the police, prosecutors and the courts to skillfully use buraku discrimination, and was thus an abuse of power crime.

Kazuhiro Tanimoto, Pastor of the Omi Heian Church in Shiga

I first met Kazuo Ishikawa in the fall of 1991, while he was still in the Chiba Prison working in the laundry. “Ishikawa san, I’ve wanted so to meet you. I wanted to meet you earlier, but they wouldn’t let me. But I’m so happy to meet you today. I now want to be able to meet you again outside of these prison walls. I’ve come from Shiga Prefecture. I want to be able to accompany you home. You are no murderer and you shouldn’t be here.” The prison guard seemed to be surprised by the words I said to Ishikawa, and said, “One more minute.” It was clear that the guard intended to interfere with our communication, and so I finished by simply saying, “Ishikawa san, our church is fighting to prove your innocence and to get you released from prison as soon as possible. I believe that we will get you out of here. So let’s keep up the fight together.”

Ishikawa entered that Chiba Prison under a life sentence on September 8, 1977. I was 33 years old at the time. When I heard on the news that he had been incarcerated in that prison, I called on our church members and other like-minded people in the area to raise support, saying, “This trial was in error. We just can’t trust judges here in Japan, and so we must take this to the Supreme Court. So first let’s start a postcard campaign to call for a retrial, and let’s all plan to attend the Sayama retrial rally scheduled for the end of October.”

We simply couldn’t let this sham trial go unchallenged, because the judge had not even examined the crime site and evidence, but had instead simply trusted the prosecution’s words and made Ishikawa into the guilty party. Newspapers everywhere had headlines along the lines of “Ishikawa and the Burakumin — A Savage Bunch,” “Burakumin Are Murderers,” and “A Nest of Evil and the Ringleader: Burakumin Kazuo Ishikawa.” These newspaper articles spread groundless accusations that made this innocent man into the murderer and solidified the prejudices that burakumin in general are murderers. We must not allow the media and the government authorities
whose complicity allowed this to get away with it. Ishikawa was a victim of state power. Unless we are able to clear Ishikawa of this sham conviction, then none of us from the buraku can really be free and have equal rights and value.

The two issues of buraku discrimination in general and the discriminatory Sayama Trial are two sides of the same coin, and are thus inseparable. So, in order to work towards Ishikawa’s release, the young adults group at our church (called the “Ibara no Kai,” or “Society of Thorns”) loaded up a van and began travelling to various discriminated-against buraku areas to facilitate study on the realities of discrimination and to promote solidarity and fellowship. They went to Sayama itself and visited Ishikawa’s house, and then they joined in the large demonstration and rally held at Tokyo’s outdoor amphitheater in Hibiya Park. The more they involved themselves in these activities, the more obvious it became that it was buraku discrimination itself that was the basis for the Sayama Incident. Likewise, others at the forefront of the fight against buraku discrimination also came to more clearly see the issues involved in buraku liberation — indeed, human liberation — and how important it is to keep in mind the dignity and value of all human beings and to show empathy with those who suffer. The “Ibara no Kai,” along with the rest of the members of my church, grew through this involvement. But I really wish that those in authority concerning the Sayama Trial would simply go to the site of the crime and take a look at the supposed route and events of the “confession” Ishikawa was forced to sign. Truth does not only come out of a book, but also from the places where real people actually live.

Ishikawa was granted parole in 1994 and came to visit our church the following year. Omi Heian Church was standing room only, with many local residents, people from discriminated-against buraku and even some foreigners in addition to our church members, and everyone was deeply moved by the words Ishikawa spoke. Everyone was convinced that he was speaking the truth of his innocence and that the prosecutors and judges had made him into the culprit for expediency, and so our resolve to see him exonerated grew even stronger than before.

It was through engaging this Sayama Incident that we really understood the underlying buraku discrimination that was behind it. We understood how buraku discrimination degrades human beings and the society they constitute by ruining the human relations that are so important to its existence. The Sayama Incident was from the very beginning a case of an abuse of power by those in authority, as they looked for a scapegoat in the buraku community to cover up their mismanagement of the case. But that plan that they hatched up is falling apart. They may think they can get away with belittling the powerless victims of discrimination, but we have more pride in being humans than they do.

Those getting involved in the Sayama Struggle and developing a sense of solidarity with others mature as human beings and help bring maturity to the society itself. We begin to realize how those in power have deceived us and we begin to understand just how wonderful it is to be a valuable and worthwhile human being. Likewise, we see how stupid it is to live one’s life based on a lie and how silly it is to live a life based on putting others down through discrimination.

The Sayama Struggle has been going on now for 50 years. Let’s commit ourselves to working even more for the exoneration of Kazuo Ishikawa and the realization of human equality and dignity.
Fumio Tanba, Kyodan Headquarters Office Worker

When I was a junior high school student, there was a kidnapping-murder case known as the “Yoshinori Chan Incident” that was highly publicized in the media, and I remember well the connection it had with the “Sayama Incident” that occurred shortly afterwards. (Ed. Note: The police had badly botched this investigation, and so they were under added pressure to make the next murder case, which happened to be the Sayama case, to go well. Thus, this contributed to the rush to find a convenient scapegoat.) But my first real encounter with Sayama didn’t come until 1978, when I accompanied the Task Force on the Buraku Discrimination Issue to Sayama for an on-site seminar as a reporter to write an article for Kyodan newspaper.

We started the seminar by walking along the supposed route Ishikawa followed as laid out in his “confession,” beginning at the small freight dock in front of the station. We passed the shrine where the festival was going on and then arrived at the intersection where he supposedly abducted the victim. Next was the stand of trees where the murder supposedly took place, which was next to the orchard where a farmer was working at the time. Next, we went to Ishikawa’s house, where his father explained the process by which the victim’s fountain pen had been found lying on the door lintel. Even though that was 35 years ago, I still remember very clearly him saying that he was convinced that the policeman had planted it there. (Ed. Note: Since it wasn’t until the third police search of the house and was in such an obvious place, it’s inconceivable that trained searchers could overlook it on two previous thorough searches.)

As I prepared to write my article, I also carefully read two books on the subject by Tomu Kamei and Hiroshi Noma. I was absolutely sure now of Ishikawa’s innocence. The ransom note that the kidnapper had written was easy to read, but the document that Ishikawa had written for the trial was written poorly and difficult to read. No matter how you look at, it is obvious that they could not both have been written by the same person.

My first encounter with the buraku discrimination issue came through the “Sayama Incident.” I became aware of the reality of such discrimination through becoming acquainted with Ishikawa’s life history, and it was very clear that he had been made into a scapegoat by those who used the deeply held discrimination against people of the buraku for their agenda. I became aware of the diseased roots of the legal system and police in Japan through my study of this case. The organizations that control the legal system in Japan have a chronic illness. Thus, Ishikawa’s fight for justice is also a fight to bring health to that legal system, and those of us involved in the struggle are simply following his lead. At seminars sponsored by the “Association of Religious Faiths Dealing With the Problem of ‘Do wa’ (a term referring to integrating the buraku people in the general society),” Ishikawa often would apologize for having signed that “confession,” as that was what led to his conviction and thus all of the trouble it brought on everyone involved in the struggle to get it reversed. Once, when he said that, I challenged him by saying that he was the one who had opened the way and that we were all following along, and so he doesn’t need to apologize. He countered that in a loud voice and indicated he wasn’t about to accept my logic.

Kazuichi Imai (the founding director of the Buraku Liberation Center) was also a bit stubborn, just like Ishikawa. The first time I met him was when I met with him to work on an interview manuscript, and during the conversation, he rather angrily responded to something I said by educating me about how I should be aware of buraku people not being able to read and write when they were given so little education. But after that, Imai san was always like a saint to me, and so to me it felt as though Ishikawa was like Imai’s younger brother.
I wonder how many times I’ve been to Sayama now. My house is close by, and so I often ride my bicycle along the path Ishikawa supposedly took. The Sanoya Store has been replaced by a convenience store, and the Kengen Bridge is now part of a main road that has been built. The housing area around the victim’s house is pretty much the same as the first time I saw it 35 years ago. I was really surprised to find the gravestones of the victim and her sister at the corner of a field across from their house. The gravestones certainly did show signs of weathering and how much time has passed since then.

I have learned a lot about the buraku discrimination issue — as well as what it means to be a human being — from Kazuichi Imai and Shigeo Nakayama, the father of the lead attorney trying to overturn Ishikawa’s conviction. This has really changed the direction of my life as well, as I’ve become involved with other discrimination issues, including that of the indigenous Ainu people of Japan. Ainu leaders such as Tatsue Sato, Hatsue Nishimura and Riseko Ikabe, who have all passed on, are true saints in my eyes, and their lives still speak to me. But foremost among them all is Kazuo Ishikawa, who I place right up there next to Jesus, as it were.

I think that the third appeal will be the end of the Sayama case, as I can’t see there being any possibility for a fourth appeal. The final decision on the third appeal could come at any time, and so as time allows, I plan to join in the vigil with Ishikawa in front of the Supreme Court.

The Sayama Discriminatory Trial, Ishikawa San and Me
Sanji Higashioka, Pastor of Joge Church, Chairman of the Hiroshima Association of Religious Faiths Dealing With the Problem of “Dowa,” Chairman of the Committee on Buraku Issues of the Nishi Chugoku District of the Kyodan

When Kazuo Ishikawa was unjustly arrested on May 23, 1963, I was already involved in the buraku liberation movement, but it wasn’t until some ten years after the death sentence had been handed down in March 1964 that the Kyodan’s Committee on Social Concerns began to push for church involvement in the issue. In 1975, the Kyodan organized the Task Force on the Buraku Discrimination Issue, and then in 1978, I was appointed as special secretary to work on the Sayama Case and the buraku discrimination problem. It was from that time that I began to regularly participate in the Sayama Trial Protest Rally held twice every year in May and October.

My involvement was not only on the Kyodan level, but also at the local church I was the pastor of. I showed the movie “The Black Rain of Sayama” at the Hikone Church and got many people both within the church and in the outside community to think about the buraku discrimination issue. I have never heard of any other trial that was even close to being as slipshod as the trial of Ishikawa. For someone like Ishikawa, who had not been able to attend school enough to even learn to read and write properly, to be considered the author of the ransom note is ludicrous. But the police were under tremendous pressure from the governmental authorities to find the culprit at all costs, and so they made him the scapegoat to take the pressure off. They felt they simply had to make Ishikawa appear guilty, and so without any hard evidence, they railroaded it through. Even though Ishikawa’s fingerprints were nowhere to be found, they simply said, “The lack of fingerprints doesn’t show he was not guilty. He’s guilty anyway!” The lack of logic in this case is truly amazing, and so the kind of crime that the legal system has perpetrated is something we must get as many people as possible to understand.
I also got my own family members involved in this issue. My eldest daughter got involved in the buraku issue while in high school, and I arranged for her to correspond with Ishikawa while he was still in prison. Later, when her own son was old enough to attend a meeting in Osaka that Ishikawa was speaking at, he was deeply moved by Ishikawa’s presentation and talked with Ishikawa in his room until late that night. And a few years ago, when Ishikawa spoke at an event sponsored by the Buraku Liberation League in Fukuyama (a city in Hiroshima Prefecture), my nephew, who is also involved in the buraku liberation movement, attended and spoke at length with him.

This past Feb. 22, at the 30th anniversary celebration for the founding of the Hiroshima branch of the “Association of Religious Faiths Dealing With the Problem of ‘Dowa,’” Ishikawa was invited to be the main speaker. I had the privilege of hosting him, and from the time I welcomed him at the Fukuyama train station, I was with him the whole time. There were about 70 people in attendance, and at the banquet following his speech, I sat next to him. He, however, refrained from eating the prepared food and didn’t drink any of the alcoholic beverages either. He seemed kind of like an ascetic monk sitting there. He really has a strong sense of purpose and of his position in society, so that he is extremely committed to maintaining a strict diet and exercise program to maintain his health until he is finally exonerated and his “chains fall off.” He exemplifies the words of the “Levelers’ Association (Suiheisha) Pledge,” “We awaken ourselves to the principles of humanity and charge forward towards the goal of a complete humanity.” (“Suiheisha” was founded in 1922 and is the forerunner of the Buraku Liberation League.)

The unjust suffering Ishikawa has experienced because of his buraku background is the suffering of the three million people whose roots are in the 6000 buraku areas of Japan. Ishikawa’s struggle is my struggle as well. We all need to stand together with Ishikawa until he is fully exonerated of the crime he did not commit.

Toshikazu Hihara, Member of the BLC Activities Committee

The “Sayama Incident” refers to the kidnapping and murder of a high school girl in the city of Sayama in Saitama Prefecture on May 1, 1963. The police decided to look for the culprit in the local buraku, and they intensively investigated all of the young men there. They arrested 24 year-old Kazuo Ishikawa on an unrelated charge, placing him in a jail cell where he was interrogated day and night for many days. Ishikawa maintained his innocence for a full month, but he was threatened with the claim, “If you’re not guilty, then it was your brother, and so we’re going to arrest him.” And so he finally broke down and agreed to sign the false “confession.” This was a clear case of a frame-up conviction, where Ishikawa was made into the guilty party due to the extreme prejudice the police had towards those of buraku descent.

I first learned about the “Samaya Incident” in 1973 at a seminar on buraku discrimination held at the Akashi Church. We studied such things as Ishikawa’s “Prison Diary,” and there is something he said that sticks with me even today. “Every day, I take pen in hand to struggle to write letters proclaiming my innocence, to the point I feel like my fingers are breaking. But even as I write, anger wells up from within, and I shake with vexation at my situation.” Because he was not given the opportunity to get even a basic education, his ability to write was very poor, and so he struggled to learn how to read and write while in prison so that he could appeal to the outside world. At first, I wondered whether I’d be able to answer that appeal, but I continued to study. Around 1983, I began to promote a booklet on the Sayama case, asking people to purchase it, and presently, I have 54 people who are reading it now.

In 1990, I received a request from the Buraku Liberation Center saying that the
Kyodan was planning an interview with Ishikawa in prison and asking me to be a member of the delegation. He has been in prison for 27 years already. I really wanted to meet him, and so I gladly accepted. There were a total of 5 of us that would be allowed to meet him, and we would only be allowed 30 minutes. So, prior to going to the Chiba Prison, we carefully planned out who would say what. Ishikawa was waiting for us in the small 6 by 9 foot room as we crowded in. There were so many things we wanted to ask, and so the time went by quickly. I was impressed by Ishikawa, as he was so warm and energetic, and by meeting with Ishikawa, the “Sayama Incident” became very close to my heart. And so this was a great encouragement for me to get even more involved in the fight to clear his name.

Ishikawa was finally paroled in 1994, and so there was added incentive to go to the mass rally in Tokyo every year, as I could meet him there. Likewise, every year, the Hyogo District has sponsored a “Sayama Site Investigation Seminar,” and so I have been able to keep in frequent and close contact with Ishikawa and his wife since then.

As part of the process for the 3rd Appeal for Retrial in the Sayama case, the lawyer team for Ishikawa met with the court and prosecutors for the first time in 2009, and in January of this year, they held the 12th such meeting. Nineteen items related to the case that the prosecution holds were released, but the investigative report of the crime scene that the defense lawyers sought access to was not forthcoming.

In this year in which we witnessed the 50th anniversary of the “Sayama Incident,” we must continue to demand a retrial with the examination of the witnesses and fact finding by the courts through postcard campaigns and other means.

**Buraku Liberation Center Report**

BLC Director, Akira Kobayashi

This year marks the 50th anniversary of both the “Sayama Incident” and Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech in Washington D.C.

In recent years, right-wingers on the internet have increasingly been using social media such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs to spread their xenophobic and racist views. Concomitant with that has been a continuation of the more traditional inflammatory remarks promoting buraku discrimination. So, this continues to be a concern the BLC is endeavoring to combat.

For several years, Rev. Chizuko Ichiki (from the Takaishi Church in Osaka) has headed up the Buraku Liberation Center Activities Committee, but this year, Rev. Takuya Okamoto, of the Minami Sumiyoshi Church in Osaka, has taken over the reigns. Makoto Higashitani remains the head of the management committee, and together, we all are working hard to increase the vibrancy of our activities.

We held our Kyushu Caravan from June 20 to July 3, which was jointly sponsored with the Kyushu District. The “caravan” consisted of 4 members, who travelled in a van around the island to lead meetings and rallies at various locations on Kyushu and the neighboring Amami Islands. In addition to myself, as director of the BLC, Kyeongho Kim, a graduate student who also serves on the church council at the Yokosuka Church of the Korean Church in Japan, along with two seminary students from Doshisha University in Kyoto, Inoru Okawa and Shoki Masuda. Masuda also participated in the Kanto Caravan 2 years ago. We were able to fellowship with numerous people as we thought together about the various issues of unjust discrimination within society. We were so thankful that everything went well in our journeys.

In August, we held our annual Buraku Liberation Youth Seminar. This was our 16th such conference, and it was held from the
21st to 24th in the Kinrin Church in Kyoto, with 26 in attendance. Other events and activities included an overnight retreat, the annual Buraku Liberation Day of Prayer in the churches, hosting an intern, publishing our newsletters in both Japanese and English, and strengthening ties with other organizations. This fall, we will be presenting the Liberation Play, “Bringing Hope” in Chuo Church in Nagoya in September and Okayama Church in Okayama in October.

Next June 9-11, we will be going up to the Aizu Wakamatsu Church in Fukushima to hold a conference on the theme “Nuclear Power Discrimination: Listening to the voices of Fukushima.” Jointly sponsored by the BLC and the Aizu Radiation Information Center, the conference will focus on building a society without discrimination in which each person can live in the joy of being loved by God.
Ishikawa and his wife speak to his many supporters, who then proceed in a demonstration through the streets of Tokyo demanding his day in court.

The four people kneeling in the front are the Caravan members, from left to right, Akira Kobayashi, Shoki Masuda, Kyeongho Kim and Inoru Okawa. This picture was taken at the beginning ceremony of the Caravan at the Kyushu District office on June 20.
Top left: July 2nd meeting at the Kurume Higashi Church. Top right: Kazuo Ishikawa speaks at the Aug. 18th Kyoto District Buraku Liberation Summer Seminar, which included a performance of the current Liberation Play, “Giving Birth to Hope” (pictured in the lower left). Lower right: The annual Buraku Liberation Youth Seminar, which was held at the Kinrin Church in Kyoto in August.

Crowned With Thorns Editorial Committee
We appreciate your comments and suggestions concerning this newsletter and how to make improvements. Donations in either Japanese yen or US dollars are greatly appreciated and can be made by personal check.