

From our man in Japan

RICHARD EVANOFF

I'd known of John Rensenbrink for quite some time and read his books on Green politics, but I didn't actually meet him in person until 2007 at a conference sponsored by the International Society of Universal Dialogue (ISUD) held in Hiroshima, Japan. John had introduced me to the ISUD, a group composed mainly of philosophers devoted to promoting dialogue among people from different cultures with various belief systems and worldviews. He was president at the time. John's vision for a global Green movement included a deep engagement with others around the world to promote deeper cross-cultural understanding, mutuality, and world peace. Apropos, here are some notes about the status of the Greens in the country where I reside now: Japan . . .

Green political organizing in Japan began with the formation of the Japan Green Party and the Japan Green Federation in the mid-1980s, leading eventually to establishment of the Rainbow and Greens in 1998, a network which supported Green-minded candidates who ran as independents. A member of this group, Ryuhei Kawada, was elected to the House of Councillors, the upper house in Japan's National Diet [parliament], in 2007. Kawada became famous at the time for being the first politician in Japan to come out as HIV positive (due to a blood transfusion) and for participating in a successful lawsuit against the Green Cross Corporation (similar to the American Red Cross) for knowingly distributing unsafe blood products.

In 2008 the Rainbow and Greens merged with the Japan Greens to form a wider network known as Green Future (*Midori no Mirai*). Running under the Green banner, Kazumi Inamura was elected mayor of the city of Amagasaki in Hyogo Prefecture (part of the Kansai region of Japan, which includes Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe) in 2010 with 54% of the vote. Inamura was the first popularly elected Green mayor in the history of Japan and, at age 38, also the youngest. Green Future formally established itself as a political party in July 2012, adopting the name Green Party/Greens Japan (*Midori no Tou*...which I reported on in "New Green Party Launched in Japan" in the October 2012 issue of *Green Horizon*).

Formed shortly after the March 11, 2011, Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, which resulted in the meltdown of three nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukushima Prefecture (the area has still not fully recovered from the disaster), the Green Party/Greens Japan immediately began calling for the reduction and ultimate termination of nuclear power generation in Japan. Together with various agricultural groups, the party also campaigned heavily against Japan's entry into the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a free trade agreement among countries with borders on the Pacific Ocean that was eventually ratified in modified form in 2018 (without the support of the United States, due in part to objections by Donald Trump).

More recently the Green Party/Greens Japan has expressed opposition to proposed laws that would expand the role of Japan's military and clamp down on dissent, as well as to holding the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2021. The party has also issued statements supporting the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change accords (e.g., the COP21 Paris Climate Agreement); opposing discrimination against

LGBTQ+ and women in both politics and the workplace (in 2021 Japan ranked 120th in the world for gender equality); and condemning violence by terrorist groups (such as ISIS) and war in the Ukraine.

CLOSE TO 80 OFFICEHOLDERS NATIONWIDE

On July 4, 2021, Akiko Kando became the first member of the Green Party/Greens Japan to win a seat in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly. Currently the party holds close to 80 local offices nationwide. The Greens are organized into local groups and coordinated by a national office based in Tokyo. The party is also a member of the Global Greens. While exact membership figures are hard to come by, the most recent estimates are in the low thousands.

Other Greenish groups not directly affiliated with the Green Party/Greens Japan also participate in electoral politics, including the Seikatsu Club Consumers Cooperative, which has about 307,000 members, mostly women, throughout Japan and has elected more than 100 candidates to local office.

The website of the Green Party/Greens Japan includes a page in English at <<http://greens.gr.jp/world/english/>>. The Seikatsu Cooperative has an English website at <<https://seikatsuclub.coop/en/>>. A history of early Green organizing in Japan can be found in Lam Peng-Er's *Green Politics in Japan*, published by Routledge in 2015.

RICHARD EVANOFF

is an activist and community organizer living in Tokyo, who has been involved with Green politics since the early 1990s. He is also active in literary circles in Japan as a poet, writer, and editor.



CALL FOR PAPERS:

"Environmental Philosophy as World Philosophy"

GUEST EDITORS

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The defining and most urgent issues in our time and place are ecological. Profound ecological disruption and change such as runaway global warming, mass extinction, and ubiquitous pollution are now existential threats to all living beings. These are simultaneously local and globally shared issues—challenges that demand a globally shared response which does not silence local voices. What can comparative/cross-cultural/intercultural/transcultural philosophy contribute to our understanding of how humans might better interact with each other across cultures to successfully resolve mutually shared problems related to the local and global environments they inhabit? For the upcoming special issue of *Dialogue & Universalism* authors are invited to submit papers which explore the possibility and need for environmental philosophy to be world or transcultural philosophy.

SUGGESTED TOPICS

- Anthropocene and world philosophy
- Environmental philosophy and intercultural dialogue
- Bioregionalism
- Social ecology
- Local vs. global in environmental philosophy/ethics
- Indigenous, post-colonial, and non-western approaches to environmental philosophy/ethics
- Intercultural ecological philosophy and the problem of incommensurability
- Possible forms of convergence in world environmental philosophy in the absence of shared ethical foundations
- Global human civilization and future generations as moral patients
- The possibility of a comprehensive earth ethic(s)
- The possibility of an intercultural dialogical global ethic(s)
- Does environmental philosophy need a transcultural global ethic(s)?
- Does world environmental philosophy require a single universal ethic?

Please send submissions (deadline Dec. 15, 2022) or inquiries to:

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