

Women at JWLI summit call to turn crisis into chances

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The 2023 Japanese Women's Leadership Initiative (JWLI) Global Summit was held at the East-West Center in Honolulu on March 23 with the theme "Transforming Crisis into Opportunity." The JWLI is an executive women's leadership program started in 2006 by Atsuko Toko Fish, the recipient of prestigious awards including the Champion of Change award from the White House in the U.S. as well as the Order of the Rising Sun from the emperor.

The event had a keynote speech followed by a global panel moderated by Anisa Kamadolli Costa, chief sustainability officer at Rivian Automotive.

The keynote speaker was Suzanne Puanani Vares-Lum, the president of the East-West Center. Since its foundation in 1960, the center has contributed to better understanding and cooperation among the U.S. and countries in Asia and the Pacific region through initiatives and educational programs, and has had 9,000 alumni from Japan alone. Her talk emphasized the importance of ensuring opportunities for women worldwide and transforming crisis into opportunity, which are part of the broad strategic mission of the center.

Allies and transformation

One important theme in the speech was the idea of male allies. When Vares-Lum, a retired major general, showed pictures of herself on the job in uniform, she pointed



Nearly 40 graduates of JWLI flew from Japan to attend the Honolulu summit along with 200 others attending in person and 300 participating online from 17 countries. JWLI

out that most of the others around her were men. "But these are my friends, my allies who have my back. I wouldn't have been able to get where I am today without my male allies," she said.

Of course, there are nay-sayers — "barking dogs" who say, "You can't do it" or "You're not supposed to be here," Vares-Lum said. "I just learned to ignore that. If you focus on that, you will never get to the goal." She spoke of her mother, who grew up in Japan in the 1940s and once accepted some of these negative ideas. Even as Vares-Lum rose through the ranks of the military, her mother expressed doubt that her daughter could succeed

in a male-dominated system. In the end, though, Vares-Lum was inspired by how her mother's perspective shifted over time, which proved that "people can change, the way we think can change."

In response to those on the periphery who have expressed discomfort with groups like JWLI as being "for women only," Vares-Lum suggested that the perspective be changed to "a human event" that addresses issues for half of the population that often go overlooked. "But it can't come from only women. We need men's voices as well, because these are human issues," she said. Empowering women also makes good economic sense, she added: "Men and societies as a whole benefit when women thrive. The countries that do well and thrive, opportunities for women are there."

From crisis to opportunity

The global panel consisted of five female leaders who shared their stories, perspectives and ideas about turning crisis into opportunity.

Megumi Ishimoto is a graduate of the JWLI program and the founder of the nonprofit Women's Eye. Ishimoto's work is involved with connecting grassroots-

level issues to policymakers at the top. In the aftermath of the Tohoku earthquake, Ishimoto visited evacuation centers and witnessed that no special considerations had been made for women's hygiene or privacy. "There were no partitions or sanitary products," she said. In her view, part of the reason for this glaring oversight is that there were no women in decision-making positions. Single mothers were even more adversely affected in the aftermath of the disaster. With school closures and a lack of day care services, many of these women had difficulty continuing their employment and making ends meet. Ishimoto and her team saw an opportunity in the crisis and wanted to make a positive change. "We collected more than 5,000 single mothers' voices," she explained, "and we now have this data which led to a single mothers' allowance from the government." For social change, data is a powerful tool.

Panelist Cathy Betts is the director of the Hawaii Department of Human Services. She was tasked with modernizing support systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. She mentioned how antiquated some of the processes and systems were. "There are typewriters in my office, and

some of the systems we rely on take 45 minutes to log in," she said. They needed to modernize not only to deal with the pandemic-induced increase in applicants for programs like food stamps, but also to create a better, more sustainable working environment. "A lot of caregivers work for us, and I'm one of them, with two young children," she added. She is elated that her workplace now has embraced policies like teleworking and more flexible decision-making that does not depend on one person always being there. "I learned that when you uplift women, you don't just uplift their families, you uplift entire communities," she said.

The philanthropic sector was not spared by the pandemic either. Patricia Mathias is head of the Gender Platform for the Asia Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN), which seeks to improve the lives of women and girls across Asia by mobilizing capital. The pandemic's travel restrictions and lockdowns challenged AVPN's traditional strategy of meeting with specific organizations to provide direct relief. "So we developed pooled funds with our partners across Asia," she explained. By collaborating in this way, they were able to amass large-scale funds to the tune of

millions of dollars, which different organizations could apply for remotely. The strategy of pooled funds worked so well that AVPN has continued it. "Our most recent fund focuses on women's economic empowerment in Asia — including Japan — and it is our largest to date, at \$25 million over five years," she said.

Roz Lee, the former head of philanthropy at the Equality Fund, which is committed to funding feminist futures, commented on the effectiveness of philanthropic dollars as a whole. "It still is just a drop in the bucket compared to what governments are capable of doing," she said. "If we think about gender equality in the global context, at the current rate at which we are investing, it will take 300 years to achieve it." But with philanthropy, there can be fewer restrictions placed on the funding, and she expects that, if allocated properly, it can help accelerate change.

To the future

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 put out by the World Economic Forum, there is still a lot of work to be done in achieving parity between men and women worldwide. In the report, 146 countries were examined across a wide range of measurements, and Japan ranked highly, for example at 14th place for education compared to the U.S. in 51st place. "But when we look at the economic gap," Vares-Lum said in her address, "the U.S. is 27th and Japan is 116th. So there is a huge economic gap in Japan despite having a highly educated population." The Hawaiian language, she said, has a phrase that means "strive for the summit." Achieving parity will be a treacherous mountain road filled with obstacles, some that might make us fall down. "But we have to get back up, never give up, and keep moving towards that summit."

Aiming to highlight issues related to a sustainable society, The Japan Times gave its support to this event by becoming a media sponsor.

JWLI ECOSYSTEM



From left: Yasuhiro Yamakawa, Roz Lee, Megumi Ishimoto, Anisa Kamadolli Costa, Atsuko Toko Fish, Joshua Green, Patricia Mathias, Cathy Betts, Larry Fish and Suzanne Puanani Vares-Lum JWLI

Helping trustworthy data flow freely: Keio symposium

ESG/SDGs

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Questions of trust are growing about online information and its sources. However, it is not for any one person to decide what is trustworthy and what isn't in the ever-expanding data. More than ever before, enhancing people's information literacy is needed.

To discuss how technology can help deal with this issue, a symposium gathered speakers from academia, the government and media at Keio University in Tokyo's Minato Ward on April 10, organized by the Cyber Civilization Research Center at Keio's Global Research Institute.

One of the keynote lectures was given by Satoshi Nohara, director-general of the Commerce and Information Policy Bureau at Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, on the concept of "data free flow with trust" (DFFT) and the effort to promote this further at the upcoming Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima.

The concept was first proposed by then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in January 2019. Abe said it "should top the agenda in our new economy," considering data as something that "connects and drives everything, helping to fill the gap between the rich and the less privileged."

It was then discussed and received support at the Group of 20 summit in Osaka the following June and made it into the

leaders' declaration based on the common understanding that facilitating the free flow of data and strengthening consumer and business trust will help to harness the opportunities that the digital economy presents.

Nohara said that letting data flow across borders is indispensable for supporting economic growth, resolving social issues and providing opportunities for new innovations, while at the same time it is necessary to make efforts to prevent falsification, protect intellectual property and secure trust in sources. To achieve this, he said, an international system needs to be established, and "the Japanese government proposes to start from among nations that share similar values, such as the G7 states."

"We are aiming to reach an agreement at the G7 summit to establish the Institutional Arrangement for Partnership on DFFT, the first global system related to data," Nohara said. He said some of the projects that the partnership will work on are summarizing and listing participating countries' regulations and systems related to data security and protection, plus supporting technologies that ensure data quality, fact-checking and the keeping of records on alterations. He stressed that such efforts are necessary to protect companies from losing potential opportunities and suffering increased costs of compliance.

One of the technologies that may be useful in this regard is the Originator Profile technology, which would help confirm the identities of content providers and



Panel session moderated by Tatsuya Kurosaka HIROMICHI MATONO

website operators, thereby reducing risks like getting fake or altered information or falling victim to ad fraud.

Keio University distinguished professor Jun Murai, an advocate of Originator Profile technology, said in his keynote lecture that the use of the internet and related new technologies expanded at an unexpected speed in the last three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that advertising and media developed rapidly at the same time, creating some problems. "There is discussion in the world that something has to be done about this, and this is where OP can contribute," Murai said.

He said the rapid advancement of JavaScript-based technology to provide various ad services has made the world of online advertising too complex, leaving room for abuse. "Sophisticated and complicated technologies tend to be abused. Simple technologies are easier to understand and have transparency, so they are harder to

abuse." Transparency is exactly what OP can provide, because it shows who the originator of a piece of content is.

Murai stressed the importance of the effort to internationally standardize this technology by implementing it on all major web browsers through the World Wide Web Consortium.

"I feel the expectation from the international community for Japan to create a good example of making good use of the internet in a real sense, and I believe that OP can help us meet the expectation," he said.

The second half of the symposium was a panel discussion moderated by OP Technology Consortium Secretary-General Tatsuya Kurosaka. It featured three speakers: Atsuo Fujimura, a fellow at SmartNews Inc.; Masatoshi Kokubo, a researcher in the Graduate School of Law at Keio University; and Tatsuhiko Yamamoto, a professor at Keio University Law School.

Yamamoto, who specializes in consti-

tutional and information law, shared his view that Originator Profile may be one of the more effective ways to solve the many problems caused by the online "attention economy." He explained that the danger of the attention economy is that it prioritizes the kinds of information processed by "System 1" thinking, which is intuitive and instantaneous. "System 2" thinking, which requires a lot of time and effort, is a must for the maintenance of democracy," he said, noting the danger that excessive reliance on System 1 thinking may lead to short-sighted, simplistic speech and actions resulting in division and violence.

However, Fujimura, who has decades of experience in media and information technology, said it is not realistic to apply System 2 thinking to everything one sees on the internet — you can't think hard about everything — and suggested that Originator Profile could contribute to the creation of a system that allows one to make a quick decision that is also a good choice, which is important from a business perspective.

Kokubo, who specializes in "neurolaw," an interdisciplinary field that encompasses neuroscience and lawmaking, pointed to universal behaviors like addiction and novelty-seeking. "It means that people who become addicted to extremely unconventional and unusual information provided by fake news are not special. We all have the potential risk," he said. He added that there is so much that science can reveal about human cognition now. "The field of neurolaw deals with the question of how to accept such scientific knowledge and technologies and use them to change laws or legal interpretations," he said.

In addition to updating laws to catch up with modern science on how people think and can be manipulated, Yamamoto stressed the importance of enhancing people's critical literacy as well as nurturing a market culture that adequately criticizes providers of malicious or manipulative information.

However, he also warned that trying to determine if a particular piece of information is wrong and then eliminate it is dan-



Satoshi Nohara, director-general of the Commerce and Information Policy Bureau at METI HIROMICHI MATONO

gerous in terms of protecting diverse and free speech. He suggested that a kind of mechanism to "attach more prominence to trusted information, making it easier for people to access," will be needed and that Originator Profile can potentially contribute to this. He said that just like food labels help people choose well, Originator Profile can put labels on information describing who created it, and how. "The right to know what information one is getting may become more and more important from the perspective of constitutional law as well," he said.

Kurosaka concluded the session by saying that the insights gained through the discussion will help define potential problem points related to the Originator Profile technology, which is still under development.

The Originator Profile technology will be presented at the Digital and Tech Exhibition to be held from April 28 to 30 in Takasaki, Gunma Prefecture, where the meeting of G7 digital and technology ministers will take place.

This section, "Sustainable Japan," features issues related to the environment and a sustainable society activities. For more information, see <https://sustainable.japantimes.com>



Distinguished professor Jun Murai is co-director of Keio's Cyber Civilization Research Center. HIROMICHI MATONO