

A New Beginning

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I am sure many of you are as excited as I am for 'Reiwa' to begin. The first of May marks a new era in Japan. As our teachers have been telling us, "Reiwa is the era of our generation" and we will continue to celebrate it.

I have mixed feelings about this new era, as Japan is suffering with a lot of problems right now, and it is believed that 'Reiwa' will be an unpredictable time. With the general population and workforce aging, the birth rate declining and more young people withdrawing from society, the economy will likely suffer, making the social security system and the public safety system unsustainable. As the next generation of Japan's future, we need to do something to make this era special.

Our new emperor has promised to 'act according to the Constitution and fulfil his responsibility as the symbol of the State.' As he made his first appearance at the Imperial Palace, on his fourth day as our leader, I joined the many thousands of people who turned out to catch a glimpse of him. It was my father's idea to go. I complained at the idea, saying "Waiting in the sun for many hours just to listen to a short speech is ridiculous!" How wrong I was.

Joining the long lines and the 50,000-other people who were also there, I was pleased to see order and control of the crowds, as police carefully monitored the event. I was expecting there to be chaos, as the tight security meant people were waiting restlessly for a long time to get inside. Even when people collapsed in the heat, the emergency services dealt with it quickly and well, which was an absolute delight to see. But what inspired me, was how calm and peaceful everybody was, simply just eager to get inside.

After four hours, we finally got into the front forecourt where the Emperor was due to give his speech. As he started to speak I was overwhelmed by the peaceful and solemn atmosphere. His speech was simple but powerful, telling his audience "I wish for your health and happiness, and I sincerely hope that our country will develop further while working together with other countries to pursue global peace." He was trying to be the symbol of the state. We were all inspired by his words and I felt overwhelmed, as he hoped and preached for a peaceful future. The incredible harmony at this extraordinary event, told me the people were hearing him.

At the event, our emergency services and police showed us that they value our safety and happiness. We owe it to the people who run these services to keep them alive and thriving so that we can assist in our inspirational new leader's mission to preserve the peace and harmony we so thankfully get to

live amongst.

This is when I realized what we need to do for the future of our country. We need to listen to our new Emperor's powerful words and do what we can to promote the peace. We need to educate ourselves, work and pay our taxes so that we can contribute to our society and maintain the high standard of living we currently have. Like everybody else at the event that day, I was inspired by the Emperor's speech and the peace my fellow Japanese citizens practiced. Such a highly-politicized event would surely bring some form of anarchy, as our people protest their grievances. Yet, the harmony that was shown amongst Japanese people, told me we can set an example on the international stage and help promote the world peace our planet so desperately needs in these trying times.

I urge you all to go out and vote as soon as you turn 18. I know I certainly will be. I know young people are feeling reluctant to vote right now but we need to, for our own and Japan's strong and peaceful future. We are the future and we get to control what happens.

Reiwa means "beautiful harmony" and as we move into this new era, we should listen to its meaning and do whatever we can to promote it. We need to appreciate what we have and do our duty for our country. Together, we decide on our future.