Disasters and Multiculturalism :

What Disasters Reveal About the Obstacles for Foreign Residents in Japan

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Summary:

The development and limitations of multiculturalism in Japan are examined through analysis of three historic disaster cases and the current COVID-19 pandemic. As the current crisis has brought a noticeable degree of discontent from the foreign population in managing their lives as residents within the country, we take the opportunity to inspect how successful Japan has been in adapting to waves of internal globalization. Case analysis and a study of individual accounts reveal a preceding case of racial stigmatization and continuous non-inclusive infrastructure of Japanese society. In-depth interviews with Presidents of the Chinese Student Association in Tokyo and the Taiwanese Student Association in Tokyo provide insight into degrees of racial stigmatization and inequalities observed within the pandemic. The results do not support rapid social change to be an immediate result of post-disaster shock and recovery. Instead, the study observes a substantial level of continuity in the lack of interconnection between the local and international community, as well as in the pre-existing barriers further developing multiculturalism in the country. The study concludes on the consequences of the pandemic on the nation's foreign communities and finds that while the country has surely advanced towards multiculturalism over the past century, there are a number of issues implicative of persistent skews in social and political infrastructure. From this, the argument is made that a stronger focus on equal and inclusive support reflecting the landscape of society as well as the diversity of foreign residents' positions is crucial to succeed in strides towards a truly multicultural Japan.