

Blowing the whistle on sexual violence by Hirokawa Ryuichi, a prominent Japanese human rights journalist

Tamura Hideharu

Translated by Sandi Aritza

Introduction by Satoko Oka Norimatsu

Introduction

“Those who have power invariably attempt to conceal their victimization, so it is a journalist’s job to go and report to the whole world what they are hiding,” veteran photojournalist Hirokawa Ryuichi said in an interview with author Ochiai Keiko in the Spring, 2019 edition of *Tsuhun Seikatsu*.¹ *Tsuhun Seikatsu* is a triannual magazine published by mail-order company Catalog House that often runs politically progressive articles on topics such as nuclear power and militarism.

Ironically, the issue appeared shortly after weekly *Shukan Bunshun* (January 3 & 10, 2019) went on sale on December 26, 2018. There, journalist Tamura Hideharu, a former *Asahi Shimbun* reporter, published an article that presented seven women’s testimonies concerning sexual harassment and sexual violence by Hirokawa, the founder of the photojournalism monthly *DAYS JAPAN*.² Hirokawa was long a charismatic figure in the realm of progressive journalism. Now, for the first time, journalist Tamura has been able to tell the world what Hirokawa has been hiding.



From Tamura’s first article in the January 3 & 10, 2019 edition of *Shukan Bunshun*)

Ochiai, a feminist writer who has been active for over four decades, almost as long as Hirokawa has been known as a progressive photographer, expressed shock and dismay in her December 27 [comment](#), “If what’s reported in the [*Bunshun*] article is true, I must say that women’s rights were absent from Mr. Hirokawa’s perspective that supposedly upheld ‘human rights’ as the basis of his reporting. As someone who has long condemned sexual violence, I cannot help but feel pain (やり切れない思い).”³

Similar sentiments quickly spread among progressives throughout Japan in response to the “#MeToo” revelations of one of their icons over a decade of sexual exploitation of his much younger female staff and interns whose admiration and awe towards his professional

achievement made them vulnerable to abuse. Some, like author Tamura, blame themselves for not noticing or not taking seriously the rumours that they occasionally heard. Comedian-journalist Oshidori Mako, Hirokawa's ally in warning of the risks of nuclear power, [confesses](#) her responsibility for not having acted on cues, being part of the editorial board of *DAYS*. She admits to being part of the "deification" of Hirokawa which she believes "contributed to further victimization and deterred victims from speaking out and made them give up the fight."⁴

DAYS JAPAN, upon hearing from Hirokawa about the women's accusations against him in the *Bunshun* article, [confirmed](#) that Hirokawa "was unaware of the feelings of those who testified to *Bunshun*, and was not aware that he hurt them." It announced that it had removed him as president and chairman of the board of *DAYS* on December 26.⁵ Hirokawa published a [comment](#) on the same day saying that "I apologize from my heart to those whom I hurt because of my insincerity," and reported that he was not only dismissed from *DAYS* but also removed as honorary chairperson of *Kumi no sato*, a respite centre in Kumejima, Okinawa for children who were affected by the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster that occurred on March 11, 2011.⁶

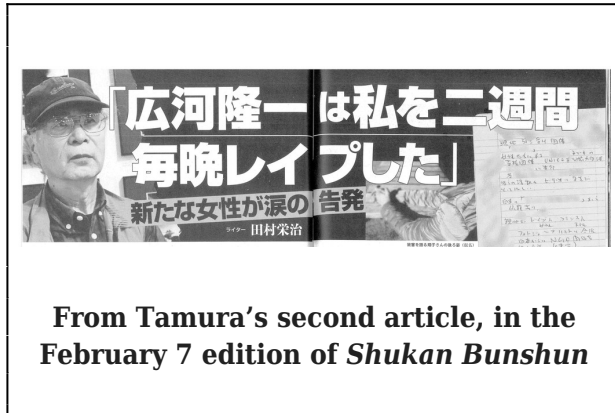
On December 31, *DAYS JAPAN* issued [another comment](#), upon hearing further from Hirokawa. It confirmed that "there were similar [sexual violence] incidents beyond those reported in the [Bunshun] article... there was not only 'sexual violence,' as reported but numerous cases of abuse⁷ against employees and volunteers." *DAYS* admits that the company did not do enough to deal with and prevent such sexual harassment and other abuses of power. It will not only seek the truth about Hirokawa's past victimization but also shed light on the "structure and culture of the company that allowed Hirokawa to have absolute authority."⁸ The journal had previously

announced that it would discontinue publication after its March edition, citing declining sales, and Hirokawa's age and health issues.

Following the *Bunshun* article, other organizations and media outlets one after another provided their own information about the incidents. On December 26, Taniguchi Mayumi, associate professor of Osaka International University who initiated *No More Sexual Harassment in Media* group (*Media ni okeru sekuhara o kangaerukai*), issued a [statement](#) saying, "We have been contacted directly regarding these acts by the women who came forward, and we have sufficient information to believe that their accusations are true."⁹ On December 27, a non-profit organization Human Rights Now [disclosed](#) that it had been consulted by victims before the *Bunshun* article appeared.¹⁰ One of Japan's major national newspapers *Mainichi Shimbun* published the results of its inquiry on January 16. [In it](#), *DAYS JAPAN*'s lawyer and Hirokawa both admitted that the *Bunshun* accounts were "largely true," or "included facts," respectively.¹¹ Two weeks later, one of the victims that *Mainichi* gained access to, Miyata Chika, disclosed her identity and provided a [detailed account](#) of the harsh working environment that undermined her physical and mental health within a month after she started working at *DAYS JAPAN*.¹²

In the February 7 edition of *Bunshun*, Tamura Hideharu published the testimony of yet another woman.¹³ According to the article, this woman met Hirokawa in the fall of late 2000's, when she went to his talk on "discrimination against women." She was in her early twenties at that time and wanted to become a journalist. With Hirokawa's invitation, she started part-time work at *Hirokawa's Office*.¹⁴ Shortly after, he invited her to have dinner and a drink, and told her "My wife and I are sexless. If you become my woman, you will have a good life as a journalist." Seeing her shocked reaction,

Hirokawa left the restaurant, looking frustrated.



As winter approached, Hirokawa invited her to go on an overseas reportage trip, and she agreed. When they reached the destination, she realized that only one hotel room had been reserved. Having heard that Hirokawa had a “local wife,” she assumed that he would go to her, but he just matter-of-factly entered the room with her, and told her that the male staff members where they were supposed to have an interview wanted to “borrow her for sex” and she had a choice between that and “being one” with Hirokawa. After that, for two entire weeks, Hirokawa raped her every night. She said, “I felt I had no choice but to listen to him, in a country where I knew no one. Hirokawa said to me, ‘For someone like you who does not have much education, this is the only way you can survive in journalism,’ and sternly demanded that I stay silent about this.” Hirokawa deliberately used such threat and fear to control her, making her unable to resist, as in the case of many other rape and sexual harassment cases.

She acted as if everything was normal, while feeling overwhelmed with fear of people finding out that she had sex with a man older than her father. She was afraid that even if she spoke to someone, that person would only think that it was her fault for having followed him overseas. He continued to rape her periodically, even in his private office, and took photographs and

videotapes of her. Once when she was in tears during the act, he said to her grinning, “Be careful, as women are more likely to get pregnant if they resist. You know why there are many pregnant women in conflict zones? That’s because of rape.” She finally left work, nine months after she first met him. She became distrustful of people in general, and long suffered depression. She gave up her dream of becoming a journalist.

The article states that neither Hirokawa nor his lawyer had responded to author Tamura’s inquiry about this woman’s experience.

According to Tamura’s [latest article](#) in *Bunshun Online* on February 14, *DAYS JAPAN*’s current executive board includes Hirokawa’s long-time trusted friend and Hirokawa’s wife.¹⁵ The third member, also Hirokawa’s long-time colleague, left the board in response to the revelation of Hirokawa’s sexual assault. The remaining board now has appointed its own “investigation committee” consisting of three experts, one labour relations specialist and two lawyers. In the February edition of *DAYS JAPAN*, the editorial team of three pledged that the upcoming March edition, its last, would be entirely dedicated to “investigation and reporting of [Hirokawa’s] sexual assault and power harassment cases, *DAYS JAPAN*’s response to that report, and opinions by experts.” The chief editor, however, resigned only 10 days after the comment. In Tamura’s *Bunshun Online* article, the chief editor is quoted as saying, “I demanded that we investigate the reasons why everyone stayed silent for fifteen long years, but this fell on deaf ears of the management. That was why I decided to leave *DAYS JAPAN*.” The process of investigation seems to have had a rocky beginning. *DAYS JAPAN* on February 15 announced that its last “investigation” issue would be delayed by a month, going on sale on March 20.

On February 17, Japan’s major news agency

Kyodo News reported testimonies of five victims of Hirokawa's sexual and power harassment. Its report suggests that Hirokawa's reaction to these allegations has shifted from half-hearted admission and apology to full denial. *Kyodo* reports that Hirokawa clearly "denies sexual assault" and claims that his sexual conduct with those women was based on "consent."¹⁶

Whether there will be criminal charges and/or civil lawsuits against Hirokawa in the coming days and months, we will learn how Hirokawa and DAYS JAPAN will face up to the principles of victim-centred journalism that they have long advocated.

Several media outlets reported Hirokawa's sexual assault allegations in English as soon as the *Bunshun* article came out, including *The Japan Times*, *Kyodo*, *NHK*, and *Shingetsu News Agency*¹⁷, and more recently, in French (*Le Monde*). *Asia-Pacific Journal* is translating the original *Bunshun* article to inform anglophone readers of the charges and the issues. Given the scale of victimization and the wide scope of Hirokawa's international work, the article may be helpful to those outside of Japan who might benefit from the availability of an English language text. If you know of any cases of victimization outside of Japan, please contact Satoko Oka Norimatsu at peacephilosophycentre@gmail.com.

Blowing the whistle on sexual violence committed by Hirokawa Ryuichi, a globally prominent human rights journalist

Tamura Hideharu

Translated by Sandi Aritza

The Keio Plaza Hotel in Shinjuku, Tokyo is bustling with people dressed in heavy winter coats.

When Kyoko (then 20; here and hereinafter the victims are all referred to by pseudonyms for anonymity) rang the bell at the door to the designated room, Hirokawa Ryuichi (now 75), who was inside, opened the door. As soon as Kyoko stepped into the room, Hirokawa led her to the bed. Kyoko was too scared to speak and unable to resist.

Kyoko now works at a company in the city. She speaks of the horrific experience of 11 years ago in order to face the memory she had long suppressed.

"I always tried to convince myself that it happened because of something I had done wrong. But when I think back now, I realize I was a victim of sexual assault. When I think that I could have prevented other women from falling victim to the same crime if only I had raised my voice sooner, it makes me feel responsible for their suffering."

Kyoko's testimony shockingly overturns Hirokawa's public image. I will give a brief portrait of Hirokawa before going into the details of Kyoko's story.

After graduating from the prestigious Waseda University, Hirokawa went to Israel to live on a Kibbutz in 1967. There he used photography to capture the struggles of the Palestinians, thus embarking on his career as a photojournalist. After returning to Japan, he continued covering the Middle East, while also reporting on the Chernobyl nuclear accident and incidents of AIDS from contaminated blood products, always standing on the side of the victims.

In 2004, Hirokawa founded the monthly photojournalism journal "DAYS JAPAN" (hereafter "DAYS"). The journal ran for fifteen years with the motto, "A single photo can move a nation" (DAYS recently announced that it will

go on hiatus in February 2019, citing operational difficulties and lack of a successor).

Hirokawa has been the beneficiary of many awards, including the Peace & Cooperative Journalist Fund Award (1999), Waseda University's Ishibashi Tanzan Memorial Journalism Award (2002), and the Domon Ken Award (2003). He has worked to help children of Palestine and Chernobyl, and after the March 11, 2011 disaster, he put his efforts into building a respite center for children from Fukushima. Many are grateful for his efforts.

In his private life, Hirokawa married a Jewish woman of French nationality whom he met during his time in Israel, and later divorced. Around 1990, he married his current wife, an editor at a major publishing house.

I would also like to disclose my own connection to Hirokawa.

In the 1990s I was a reporter for the Asahi Shimbun. I had great admiration for Hirokawa's work, and I wrote an article reporting on his photography exhibits. In 2003, the year I completed a graduate program in journalism in the United States, I learned of Hirokawa's plan to found DAYS, and I offered my support. For over a decade after that, I visited DAYS' editorial office once a month to help with editing.

During that time, I heard multiple rumors of Hirokawa's sexual harassment and assault from people associated with DAYS, but I considered it to be an interpersonal matter and resolved not to get involved.

However, after witnessing the #MeToo movement in the United States in 2017, I realized that my attitude might have allowed greater damage to take place. I started uncovering information about Hirokawa, but my efforts were quite belated, and for this I am ready to accept criticism.

Coming from a place of remorse, I hope that this article serves to reveal Hirokawa's true face, as well as to help spread societal awareness that "sexual harassment and sexual victimization are a human rights issue, not a matter of romantic gossip."

Kyoko met Hirokawa in November 2007, when she was a student at a university in the city.

Kyoko, who aspired to be a photojournalist, started working part-time organizing data and the like at the DAYS editorial office near Meidaimae Station on the Keio line. She often saw Hirokawa, the executive editor, loudly berate staff members and volunteers, and she soon came to think of him as someone who was not to be crossed.

Around a month or two after they met, Hirokawa looked at some photographs Kyoko had taken. Kyoko says that he told her, "Your photographs are no good, so I'll teach you." He then gave her a date and time and instructed her to meet him at the Keio Plaza Hotel.

When Kyoko called Hirokawa on his cellphone after arriving at the hotel, he told her to come up to his room. Kyoko was caught off guard, but Hirokawa had previously mentioned that he sometimes locked himself up in a hotel room in order to get a draft done, so she assumed that must be the case this time too. "I trusted him," says Kyoko.

That trust, however, was utterly betrayed. She was taken straight to the bed, and the sex ended before she even had a chance to resist. As she lay there in a daze, Hirokawa hurried her up, saying, "The model is about to come, so clean up the room." Soon after a young woman appeared in the room, and Hirokawa told Kyoko to photograph her. Kyoko took pictures for around 30 minutes while Hirokawa taught her how to use the flash and other functions. She has no memory of how she made it home that night.

Kyoko continued her part-time job at DAYS after the incident. She explains her reason for doing so as follows.

“I thought that the only place an inexperienced student like me could learn photojournalism was at DAYS. I told myself I couldn’t give up because of what happened. But at the same time, I was determined not to let the same thing happen again.” Those uneventful days for Kyoko, however, did not last long.

In early 2008, Hirokawa called Kyoko to his office in a condominium a few minutes away from the editorial office. She says that as she was making small talk with a male staff member after going inside, Hirokawa, who was in his office, suddenly yelled at them: “Get out of here! This is no place for idle chatter!”

“I thought that if Hirokawa turned his back on me, I would never be able to make it as a journalist. The thought terrified me,” says Kyoko.

As she walked, in tears, along the shopping street leading to Meidaimae Station, her cellphone rang. It was Hirokawa. “I’m going somewhere, so come with me,” he told her. She did as ordered and got into a taxi with Hirokawa. He took her to a hotel in Shinjuku’s seedy Kabukicho area. “At a time like this, if you want me to forgive you, the best thing is for us to understand each other like this,” he told her; Kyoko does not recall if it was before or after the sex. She says Hirokawa used a condom as contraception.

Kyoko had vowed not to allow Hirokawa to have sex with her a second time, and after it happened, she told herself over and over: “It was my fault. It couldn’t be helped.”

One evening in February 2008, Kyoko was alone with Hirokawa at the editorial office. When she stood up from her seat, Hirokawa grabbed her from behind and whispered, “I want to put it in you.”

Kyoko says he then tried to lead her to the small bathroom in the corner of the office.

“I remember his exact words, ‘I want to put it in you,’ because it made me feel sick to my stomach, Kyoko says. “Him doing that in the office, it was the last straw. That was the last day I ever went to DAYS.”

Asako, an aspiring journalist, started visiting the DAYS editorial office in 2007, the year she began attending a university in the city. She wanted to study under a famous photojournalist who published his own magazine. She was only 18 years old.

Asako frequented the editorial office as a volunteer at photography exhibitions and the like. She says she frequently saw Hirokawa shout at staff and volunteers, saying things like, “You’re too slow!” and “Your work is sloppy!” “I never knew what would set him off, so I constantly took care not to do anything that might upset him,” Asako says.

When she was in her third year of university, Asako considered focusing solely on her studies for a while. When she consulted Hirokawa, he chided her, saying, “Don’t be such a quitter.” Afraid that Hirokawa would no longer instruct her otherwise, she told him, in tears, that she would continue to come to DAYS. She found Hirokawa to be tyrannical, but she still had great respect for him.

One evening shortly after this encounter, she found herself alone with Hirokawa at the editorial office. According to Asako, he told her: “You’re really intent on becoming a journalist. I’ll let you be my assistant if you’d like. But if you’re my assistant, we must be one in both mind and body, so we’ll need to have a physical relationship as well.”

Asako, terrified of Hirokawa turning his back on her and of angering him, did not have the option of saying no. As she stood there flustered, Hirokawa, “to test my reaction,” says

Asako, kissed her.

According to Asako, the two met at the west exit of Shinjuku Station that night and got in a taxi. Hirokawa instructed the taxi driver, saying, “Go to Yasukuni Street” and “turn here,” leading them to a hotel-lined street in Kabukicho. The two entered a hotel with a fountain in front, and there Asako had sex with Hirokawa. When it was over, she took the train home.

“On the train ride home, I agonized over whether what I had done had really been necessary. During sex, I kept telling myself, ‘this is something you need to do,’ and I performed it as a work task, but once I was alone, all sorts of emotions started to come up.” Asako’s eyes fill with tears as she recalls the incident.

During the two months after her first visit to a hotel with Hirokawa in June 2009, Asako had sex with Hirokawa at hotels at his request. Asako says that during that time, Hirokawa gave her a digital single-lens reflex camera and took the time to look at her photographs.

“He put me down harshly, always saying that I was unskilled and no good, but I felt that Mr. Hirokawa accepted me as his apprentice. I was worried that if I refused his invitations to the hotel, he would write me off as a failed apprentice and I would no longer be able to get advice from him,” Asako says.

Asako experienced physical and emotional upheaval after Hirokawa pressured her into a relationship with him. Leaving the house felt like too much work, and she stopped answering her phone. She couldn’t sleep at night. She thought it must just be fatigue, but when she went to a psychiatrist, she was diagnosed with “moderate depression” and prescribed a sleep aid and an antidepressant. The following year she took leave from her studies and left DAYS as well.

It seemed that Asako had managed to escape Hirokawa, but he reached out to her once more in 2011, after the major earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident in northeast Japan. Hirokawa contacted her for the first time in quite a while, saying he was going abroad and wanted her to come along as his assistant.

Asako explains her emotional state upon being invited overseas by Hirokawa as follows:

“The people I knew from my time at DAYS were going to the disaster-affected areas to capture and report on what was happening there. Meanwhile, I had stopped taking photographs altogether and felt a sense of inferiority. I thought it might be my last chance to revive my dream of becoming a photojournalist, and so after much agonizing I told him I would go.”

According to Asako, she caught a cold and ran a high fever the day of arrival or the following day at their overseas destination. While she was resting in her room, Hirokawa called her into his own room, saying he would help her get better.

When she went to Hirokawa’s room, he told her, “When you have a cold, take a bath, and when you get out cover yourself with a blanket and sweat, then take another bath and repeat, over and over.” Asako did as she was told and lay down in the bed. A little while later, Hirokawa helped himself to sex with her.

“I had no desire to have sex,” Asako says. “I felt light-headed from my high fever, and I was on antidepressants. Hirokawa was aware of that. He forced me to have sex while I was only half-conscious.”

The following year, Asako heard about the abuse suffered by Tomoko (to be discussed below) and realized, “I was also a victim of sexual abuse.” That was when she ended her relationship with Hirokawa for good.

Some people might think that if Kyoko and

Asako had sex with Hirokawa multiple times, it could not really have been against their will.

However, for a pioneer in one's field, a higher-up in the workplace, a teacher in an educational setting, or any other person in a position of leadership to use their superior position to enter a sexual relationship with a novice, subordinate at work, student, or other person in a position under their leadership is a characteristic example of sexual violence. Mejiro University lecturer Saito Azusa, who specializes in victim psychology, explains:

“When the people involved are in a hierarchical relationship, it is difficult for the person in an inferior position to refuse the solicitations of the person in a superior position, given that doing so might mean the former losing his or her ability to make it in the world they inhabit. It takes a great deal of energy to refuse. That's why someone might not be able to articulate a clear refusal even when they do not consent. It also becomes all the more difficult to refuse once sexual relations have already occurred. It is psychologically difficult for one to accept that they have been the victim of sexual abuse, and the relationship might continue even against their will.

“Victims of sexual abuse tend to place the blame squarely on themselves, and there is a tendency for them to suffer from PTSD and a depressed mood for a long time. It is a kind of damage that affects one's life in a very serious way.”

Actually, Kyoko's and Asako's cases share a commonality aside from the fact that they both had unwanted sex with Hirokawa.

Both were photographed nude by Hirokawa.

Kyoko says that Hirokawa took fully nude photographs of her after they had sex at a hotel.

“He took several photographs and I did not

particularly protest. Mr. Hirokawa said things like, “You look so grown up,” as he gazed at the camera's liquid crystal screen. I felt repulsed, and afterward I felt afraid not knowing how he would use the photos.”

Hirokawa photographed Asako in the nude at a hotel near Narita Airport. Asako says that Hirokawa planned to go abroad the following day. She says Hirokawa snapped shots of her while undressing and showering, and lying naked on the bed.

“Prior to that, he had told me, ‘I'll teach you writing, so let me take nude photos of you,’” Asako says. “At the time I thought it would serve as photography study for me, but afterward I felt doubtful and wondered if he had taken advantage of me.”

Yet another woman has testified that Hirokawa took nude photographs of her. Her name is Tomoko, and she served as Hirokawa's assistant in the spring of 2012.

When he hired her, Hirokawa gave Tomoko a sigma lens, saying it was to celebrate her becoming his assistant. He then said, “Let's take some pictures using this lens. I'll teach you how to take them, so let me photograph you.”

Later, Tomoko received the following messages from Hirokawa:

“I made a reservation for the Shinjuku Hyatt Regency on the 20th (of May).”

“Shall we spend an hour or two taking photographs at the nearby Shinjuku Chuo Park and city streets, then return to the hotel for a meal, or begin photographing?”

That day, after taking photographs of passersby near the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office in Shinjuku, Tomoko went with Hirokawa to his hotel room. There, she says, Hirokawa told her, “I won't try anything funny, and I

won't publish them anywhere, so I'd like to take nude photos of you."

"He was a mentor who was going to help me going forward, so it was very hard to refuse," Tomoko says. "I was also curious to see how he would take the photos. After I got undressed, he instructed me to do various things, like get my hair wet. At one point Mr. Hirokawa started breathing heavily and I started to feel repulsed."

Hirokawa told Tomoko that he had reserved the room for the night, but Tomoko told him her family would be worried if she stayed, and she took the train home. Tomoko says that Hirokawa later gave her a CD with the photographs he had taken at a manga cafe in the city.

Some might think that there is nothing wrong with taking nude photographs of someone as long as both parties consent. However, it is a common understanding among photographers active in the media in Europe in the United States that for someone who takes photographs as a profession to take advantage of their position in order to take nude photographs for personal use is a violation of professional ethics and constitutes sexual harassment.

To give one example, in 2017 it was revealed that Christian Rodriguez, a photographer whose work has been published in such publications as National Geographic, offered young female aspiring photographers positions as his assistant and pressured them into letting him take nude photographs of them for personal use. When this fact came to light, Prime Collective, the international photographer's collective to which Rodriguez belonged, expelled Rodriguez and condemned him harshly, stating, "We have no tolerance for predatory, exploitative, abusive, sexist or discriminatory behavior of any kind."

Tomoko says that there were other incidents, in addition to the nude photo shoot, that caused

her to feel disillusioned with Hirokawa.

According to Tomoko, in late May 2012, she accompanied Hirokawa as his assistant on an overnight trip to the disaster-affected area of Fukushima to gather information on the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. Their initial plan was to report on the daily lives of evacuees who had to leave their homes after the accident, but when they were on location, Hirokawa suddenly made the reckless decision to venture into a restricted area. Hirokawa had promised Tomoko that they would not go to areas with high levels of radioactive contamination, but in reality, she says that he made no move to go back even when their radiation detector alarm kept on ringing.

Hirokawa photographed and reported on the site of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident over a long period of time. From that experience, he has emphasized in his written works and talks the importance of staying away from contaminated land in order to minimize the negative health impact of radiation.

Tomoko feels angry that Hirokawa betrayed her in such a way.

"Hirokawa's actions directly contradicted what he is always saying, and he didn't even try to keep his promise to me. He later sent me an e-mail saying things like, 'Since our driver was kind enough to bring us there, I felt obligated to take photographs to repay his kindness,' and 'When we entered the 50 microSieverts per hour area, I thought that it wouldn't be a problem, since it hardly differs from the radiation level at the Chernobyl observation deck where many people, including women, visit on study tours,' but I felt that he was just making excuses."

In fact, both Tomoko and Hirokawa voluntarily responded to Fukushima prefectural police questioning for having entered a restricted area. Regarding the questioning, Hirokawa stated proudly in a "public letter" dated July

14, 2012: “If they punish me in accordance with the law, so be it. Even so, I will not promise that I will not again break a law prohibiting entrance to a certain area. To make such a promise would be to relinquish my professional responsibility as a journalist.”

Behind that proud façade, however, Hirokawa violated Tomoko’s human right to protect herself from harmful radiation exposure.

Tomoko, greatly perturbed by the incident, quit her job as Hirokawa’s assistant and issued a protest to the editorial office. According to several people associated with DAYS, discussions were held among editorial department members, and Hirokawa announced that he would step down as editor in chief and told Tomoko the same.

In reality, however, Hirokawa continued as editor in chief for more than two years after that, remaining in his position until the September 2014 issue of DAYS JAPAN was published. Even after that, he continued to perform all the functions of an editor in chief under the title of “publisher.”

In addition to these three women, four more women who were involved with DAYS between 2012 and 2017 have come forward to testify that they were sexually harassed by Hirokawa.

- Keiko, then in her late 20s, was asked by Hirokawa at the editorial office, “Will you be my girlfriend?” On a different day, in the late evening, Hirokawa almost pulled her into a taxi with him at Shinjuku Station’s west exit, but she was able to fend him off and escape.

- Ayako, then in her 30s, was told by Hirokawa at a bar near Meidaimae Station: “I use sex to ease the stress of reporting on conflict zones. I’m under a lot of stress right now. If you’re open to it, I’m ready any time.”

- Immediately after being hired at DAYS, Kuniko, then in her 30s, was told by Hirokawa

at a bar near Meidaimae Station: “Shall we try dating?” and “I can’t imagine life without sex, can you?”

- Shortly after being hired at DAYS, Momoko, then in her early 30s, was told by Hirokawa at a cafe bar in Shibuya: “Could you have sex with someone like that (a former classmate)? I can’t imagine it would play out well” and “It’s still early. There are so many places we could go;” he made it very hard for her to head home.

I wanted to see how Hirokawa would respond to these testimonies. I met with him for about an hour at a cafe near Meidaimae Station.

Q: Have you had sexual relations with women involved with DAYS?

A: “I have, in various ways.”

Q: One woman says that upon entering your hotel room you forced sex on her while she was unable to refuse.

A: “There’s no way she could have done that without being able to refuse.”

Q: The same woman says that at the DAYS editorial office, you grabbed her from behind and told her, “I want to put it in you.” Do you remember doing that?

A: “I have no memory of it, and I can’t imagine that I would have done something like that.”

Q: Another woman testified that you told her, “If you’re my assistant, we must be one in both mind and body,” and forced her to have sex against her wishes.

A: “I wouldn’t take someone to a hotel if she didn’t want to go.”

Q: Did you have sex with the same woman at a hotel overseas while she was sick with a cold and taking psychotropic drugs, telling her that you would nurse her back to health?

A: “I instructed her that she would get better quickly if she sweat it all out. After that, I believe that things progressed with no protest from her.”

Q: There are three women who say you took nude photographs of them.

A: “If they didn’t object, what’s the issue? I’m a photographer, and nudes are one of the subjects I photograph.”

Q: Did you do it as part of your work?

A: “Of course. Until about ten years ago I published [nude photographs] under a different name, and sometimes I take nude photographs in order to test a new lens.”

Q: Did they really have to be nude?

A: “That question is utterly infuriating to me. Have you no interest whatsoever in the female form?”

Q: Yet another woman says that you forced her to go to an area with a high level of radioactive contamination.

A: “She said she was scared, so I let her wait in the car. I don’t believe there was any health impact.”

Q: Do you have any memory of sending her an email apologizing for forcing her to go there with you?

A: “Perhaps I do.”

Q: Would you say you used your position as the editor in chief of DAYS and a renowned photojournalist to engage in sex with and take nude photographs of young women?

A: “[Those women] were attracted to me and admired me, and I do not believe I took advantage of my position.”

Q: The women are hurt.

A: “That’s no fault of mine.”

Hirokawa has long stated that “I call places where humans are robbed of their dignity human war zones.” The true “human war zone” was right at his feet.

Related Articles

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Notes

¹ “Ochiai Keiko no shinkokyu taidan No. 35 with guest Hirokawa Ryuichi,” *Tsuhun Seikatsu*, Spring 2019 Edition, Catalogue House, pp. 179-84.

² Tamura Hideharu, “Sekaiteki jinkenha janarisuto (Hirokawa Ryuichi) no seiboryoku o kokuhatsu suru,” *Shukan Bunshun*, January 3 & 10, 2019, pp. 236-41.

³ “2019 nen haru go ‘Ochiai Keiko no shinkokyu taidan’ ni kanshite,” *Catalogue House*, December 27, 2018.

⁴ Oshidori Mako, “Shukan Bunshun no Hirokawa Ryuichi shi ni kakawaru kiji ni kanshite,” *OSHDORI Mako & Ken Portal*, December 26 (modified December 28), 2018.

⁵ “Dokusha no mionasama e,” *DAYS JAPAN* (website), December 26, 2018.

⁶ “Hirokawa Ryuichi kara no komento,” *DAYS JAPAN* (website), December 26, 2018.

⁷ In Japan, the term “Pawa harasumento,” or in short, “Pawahara” (from English words “power” and “harassment”) is used to refer to non-sexual harassment, verbal abuse, severe scolding, and intimidation by those who have more power against those who have less, often in the workplace.

⁸ “Minasame e,” *DAYS JAPAN* (website), December 31, 2018.

⁹ Taniguchi Mayumi’s Facebook post on December 26, 2018.

¹⁰ Ito Kazuko, “Oshirase: Hirokawa Ryuichi shi ni kansuru hodo ni tsuite,” *Human Rights Now*, December 27, 2018.

¹¹ Haruka Udagawa, “Photojournalist Hirokawa admits to coercing female magazine staff into sex,” *Mainichi Shimbun*, January 20, 2019. The original Japanese version came out on January 16.

¹² Udagawa Haruka and Miyata Chika, “Hirokawa Ryuichi shi no harasumento, higai josei ga jitsumei shuki,” *Mainichi Shimbun*, January 31, 2019.

¹³ Tamura Hideharu, “Hirokawa Ryuichi wa watashi o ni shukan maiban reipu shita,” *Shukan Bunshun*, February 2019, pp. 40-43.

¹⁴ Hirokawa operated his own office, called “Hirokawa Ryuichi Jimusho (Office),” supposedly separate from DAYS JAPAN.

¹⁵ Tamura Hideharu, “[8nin no josei ga higai kokuhatsu Hirokawa Ryuichi shi ‘seibouryoku kensho’ wa hokai jotai](#),” *Bunshun Online*, February 14, 2019.

¹⁶ “Hirokawa shi no seiboryoku nado 5 nin shogen ‘Kyofu de karada ga ugokazu,’” *Tokyo Shimbun*, February 18, 2019, p. 22.

¹⁷ Satoko Oka Norimatsu, “[Do Not 'Human Rights' Also Include Women’s Rights?](#),” *Shingetsu News Agency*, January 8, 2019.