

Haafu or Daburu?

Since I was a child I was labeled *Haafu*. Sometimes when I got asked where I belonged to such a question like, "What are you?" I introduced myself as *Haafu* in Japan. The reason why persons in Japan labeled me *Haafu* is, as in my case, because I look different from other "Japanese" and because my mother comes from a foreign country. In Japan, individuals who were born between parents in an "international-marriage"* could be labeled "*Haafu*"** (the name was adopted from the English word "half").

However, there are some people who claim the word as politically incorrect, and those people argue that *Daburu* (adopted from the English word "double") should be used instead. Before late 1990's I had only heard of the word, *Haafu*, referring to individuals like me. However, since then, I hear the word, *Daburu*, from so cold "human rights activist" who never even once were labeled *Haafu* and from "international marriage mothers groups".

The reason behind the efforts to change the name *Haafu* into *Daburu* lies in the meaning of the original words. Advocates claim that children of "international-marriages" have two cultures and two nations, and that there is not only one culture or one nation to choose from. For these children, this use of "Half" (*Haafu*) is not preferred or suitable, it should be replaced with a much more "positive" word such as "Double" (*Daburu*).

Before the set up of this Website, *Die Kreuzungsstelle*, I searched for this theme on the Internet and was able to find some opinions. Most opinions concluded that the term, *Daburu* is more suitable. However, interestingly, this conclusion was brought about by parents (mostly by mothers) and not by the person himself/herself who was named *Haafu*.

Here, I would like to ask whether parents or other persons have the right to make such a decision. Is it safe to assume that parents are not making a misjudgement? Such names or titles have the potential to influence the lives of individuals like me. It is not the parents who live as *Haafu*, but individuals like me who live as *Haafu*. I think such conclusions about the title which should be used to designate one's identity can only be made by the individual himself/herself who is named *Haafu*. I would also like to discuss this issue with the individuals who cling on the use of *Daburu*, not only on internet but also in real life.

For this dispute, I have consulted the opinions of persons living in similar situations as me, and I found out

that some think *Daburu* is more suitable but generally, the most common opinion was that *Haafu* is better. However, to be exact, many individuals who are labeled *Haafu* were not given serious attention during such discussions. The reason is probably due to the present mood of the Japanese society. ***

For example, stereotypes of individuals who are labeled *Haafu* are images like fashion models, linguistically inclined with foreign languages, or native bilinguals, etc. The source of such stereo-types is apparent when we consider how such individuals are portrayed in show business. For example, there are many famous individuals who can be named *Haafu* (or *Kuoutaa*); BECKY(entertainer and actress), Kaela Kimura (singer), CRYSTAL KAY(singer), Angela Aki (singer-songwriter), Rosa Kato (fashion model and actress), Erika Sawajiri (actress and singer), Jun Hasegawa (fashion model), Izumi Mori (fashion model), Marie(fashion model), Lena Fujii(fashion model), Elli-Rose(fashion model),and Eiji Wentz (singer, entertainer, and actor). Because of this trend, there are persons who make such comments as, "In the next life, I wish to be born as a *Haafu*".

Needless to say, individuals who write or express such comments only admire individuals in show business, but the influences of TV and fashion magazines are very strong. The images of specific individuals have become the overall images of persons who are named *Haafu*. Through this trend, both individuals who are not labeled *Haafu* and individuals who are labeled *Haafu* think the word *Haafu* is not as bad a term as the activists of human rights or mothers of international marriage said.

But I think the principle reason is that many individuals who are labeled *Haafu* as well as individuals who do not recognize that changing the name to *Daburu* is meaningless, because there are so many variations of that name, and adding a new one is not necessary.

According to my experience, now in Japan, the general word used to name an individual like me is *Haafu*. However, at the same time, there exists another word, "*Konketsu*" or "*Konketsuji*". The former can be translated as "mixed-blood", and the latter can be translated as "mixed-blood-children". However, nowadays in English "mixed-blood" is not generally used (colloquially), "*Konketsu*" can also be translated as mixed-race/ethnic or racially mixed. Furthermore, in the past, another word, "*Ainoko*"(which means "children in-between") was used. Additionally, some scholars who study education use the term "*Kokusaiji*" (which can be translated as "inter-national-children").

The reason why I think such diversification of terminology has no meaning is because the practice itself does

nothing more than simply add new names to the preexisting collection of "outdated" terms. Furthermore, the practice only reestablishes the classificatory border between "Japanese" and "non-Japanese". Mostly, *Haafu* is used to refer to the non-Japanese side of an individual, but the person who is categorized as *Haafu* is at the same time, Japanese.

Some individuals who do not deeply think about ethnicity or race describe *Haafu* in terms of ethnicity, but in my opinion *Haafu* is not an ethnic term - rather, it is only a category. The use of the term as an ethnic demarcation only exacerbates the border between "Japanese" and "non-Japanese", and I think it can also be a form of discrimination (but for general use, I use the term *Haafu* as a name to describe mixed/multi/bi-racial/ethnic persons).

According to my personal experience in Japan, many individuals think there are only two types of persons - Japanese and non-Japanese. The use of the word "Japanese" to describe an individual is not based on an individual's nationality/citizenship, ability to speak Japanese or knowledge of Japanese customs, and the possession of a Japanese name, but is based on whether the person's appearance - namely the individual's face or hair color - looks "Japanese".

This is an opinion which is based on my own experiences. But in the near future, I would like to break the border between recent Japaneseness and non-Japaneseness. To accomplish this objective, perhaps I must struggle against the urge to make or join a membership group that is bounded by a common internally or externally defined identity, such as groups formed under a common *Haafu* identity. However, as I am also human, sometimes I find myself searching for such membership groups, and also I catch myself constructing such groups in my mind.

At this point in time, I think a discussion regarding the necessity to find a common ground in terms of terminology used to name such individuals is not necessary. What is necessary is the effort to step away from efforts to find new names. I implore the parents of new born children and parents who are now bringing up their children, to refrain from naming their children *Haafu* or *Daburu*, or any other name that society has invented.

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by Hyoue

*A marriage in which wife and husband each have a different nationality/citizenship or are from different nations. In Japan this marriage is called "*Kokusai kekkon*"; "*Kokusai*" means "international" and "*kekkon*" means "marriage".

** Strictly speaking, *Haafu* can be separated into two types: visible or invisible. From my experience in Japan, mostly in terms of the media, *Haafu* is only used to name visible type of individuals labeled *Haafu*. This standard designation between visible or invisible can be thought of in similar terms to designations made along "racial" lines. However, it can not make a clear distinction between visible and invisible; some individual who were not born in "international-marriage" parents, have an experience labeled as *Haafu*, because he/she looks like something different from other "Japanese".

*** This opinion is said by Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, the author of the book "Amerasian no kodomotachi: *Shirarezaru mainoritii mondai* (Amerasian children: An unknown minority problem)". In addition, according to my research, the first "*Haafu* boom" began at the end of the 1960's and after 2000 the second "*Haafu* boom" was started.