

Contentious Performance and/as Public Address: Notes on Social Movement Rhetorics in Post-Fukushima Japan

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This article discusses the reemergence of plebeian social movements in contemporary Japanese society. After a period of hibernation, demonstrations and rallies have again become part of Japanese political life. From a participatory critical-rhetorical perspective, the article addresses issues concerning the practice of such critical public communication by taking a close look at verbal and extraverbal dimensions of the following social movement rhetorics: the rhetoric against nuclear power, the rhetoric against the government's proposal for constitutional revision and hawkish defense policy, and the rhetoric against racist and hate rallies. The article concludes that this reemergence of street politics signifies the rebirth of Japanese public address that deserves serious scholarly attention in the field of international rhetorical and communication studies.

Keywords: butterfly effect, Japan, participatory critical rhetoric, protest, social movement

In these times, "contentious performance" (Tilly, 2008) by civil society's various constituents has become a significant part of plebeian political power exercised in many parts of the world. From the antiglobalism movement in Seattle to the Occupy movement in the streets of New York City to the Arab Spring in the Middle East/North Africa to Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution, examples abound (Ganesh & Stohl, 2013; Ito, 2012; Thornson et al., 2013). Against this backdrop, students of communication and rhetoric have begun making a participatory turn, engaging a scholarship that accounts for the rhetorical power of not only *mediated* but also of *im-mediate* communicative experiences in the street. One such attempt is what Middleton, Hess, Endress, and Senda-Cook (2015) called participatory critical rhetoric. It is a critical approach that draws attention to the "immediacy" of a critic-participant's experiencing of rhetorical communication and to one's own "recognition of the production and reception of rhetoric at the moment of its inception" (Middleton et al., 2015, p. 129). At the same time, participatory critical rhetoric does not merely accentuate the importance of a scholar's own "subjective" experience in the street; it also warns scholars that they "cannot and should not rely solely upon their own understanding of advocacy; judgment includes the immediate responses and perspectives of those [others] present" (p. 131).

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This article is an attempt to join such a critical-rhetorical endeavor. In what follows, an attempt is made to discuss the current state and future prospect of street politics in Japan, a country whose "civil society [is] transforming into one in which anyone can readily participate in demonstrations" (Hasegawa, 2018, p. 130). Tokyo is now a metropolis where political rallies and demonstrations have become part of the city's cultural landscape. As Steinhoff (1989) recalled, social movements used to be an important part of Japan's political culture, "help[ing] to strengthen democratic institutions by encouraging the expression of diverse opinions and reinforcing the constitutional civil liberties which permit such expression" (p. 194) in the post-World War II era. Particularly notable were rallies and demonstrations that continued from the early 1960s through the early 1970s in which student groups, labor unions, and other segments of the country's civil society took to the streets to protest the government's signing of the revised mutual security treaty with the United States, a nuclear-powered American aircraft carrier's port of call to Japan, and (Japan's support for) the U.S. military involvement in Vietnam (Krauss, 1974). These protests decreased over time as the country's younger generation became politically apathetic, and the power of labor unions weakened. It is the ambition of this article to demonstrate the revitalization of such street politics in the new millennium. Given the strategies, tactics, and rhetorical styles specific to this time, the reemergence of social movements as politically enabling praxis in the streets of Tokyo is a sociocultural development that students of the humanities and social sciences, including those in rhetoric and communication studies, should not ignore (Chiavacci & Obinger, 2018).

Critical discussion that follows in this article will focus particularly on the rhetorical power of the following three instances of street protest that have emerged recently: rhetoric against nuclear power, rhetoric against the government's attempt at expanding the country's collective self-defense, and rhetoric against racist and hate rallies in the streets. In the aftermath of the gigantic earthquake and level 7 nuclear crisis in 2011, hundreds of Tokyoites took to the streets and raised their voices of concern, anger, and protest, criticizing the government's pronuclear energy policy. After the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) seized the regime in 2012, protesters' criticism was directed toward the LDP's ambition regarding constitutional revisions and allowing the country's Self Defense Forces (SDF) to more actively collaborate with the U.S military overseas. Corresponding to this political development, the discourses of the political right have become energized at the grassroots level and increasingly vocal and racist, calling for the country's racial purity and condemning the foreign residents; as a result, those who oppose these displays of racism and hate in the streets have also become active, engaging what they call "counteraction." These are the protests this author personally experienced, and, more important, there are good reasons why they were selected for rhetorical analysis. First, these three are the plebeian political uprisings that are large in scale. For instance, one rally against the government's national security policy that took place in front of the National Parliament, or "Diet," in August 2015 drew 100,000 protesters. Second, their rhetorical impacts continue; these movements (albeit in different forms and scale) are still having success in many parts of the country. Finally, these gatherings are more or less *unorganized*, thus enabling those with little or no previous experience in street politics to take part in, and become part of, these protests more casually.

Before commencing the discussion of rhetoric in these movements, some remarks on methodology and theoretical construct are in order. First, because this is a work of participatory critical rhetoric, the study will take a look at a plethora of texts and non-text materials that comprise the author's rhetorical experiences of these plebeian assemblages. Namely, the effort will be made to recreate such experiences

and analyze their verbal and extraverbal rhetorics, which the author wishes to share with international scholars of rhetoric and communication.

Second, as someone who has participated in these protests, this author will undertake the discussion of their rhetorics in the hope of further energizing what is called "butterfly effect." Coined by MIT zoologist Konrad Lorenz, the concept

charmingly models . . . how some extremely small simple actions, properly targeted, can come to have highly complex and large effects in certain contexts. Yes: a butterfly opening and closing its wings in Brazil can ultimately produce a tornado in Texas. (MacKinnon, 2017, p. 1; also see Fleckenstein, 2009; Miller & Toro, 2015)

Citing the words of Pat Moony, a Canadian biologist and a champion of biodiversity, Derrick Purdue (2017) argued that the butterfly metaphor can "[give] the credible source of agency" to social movements against the powers that be, "[representing] a novel 'solution' to the enduring dilemma of exposing, or naming, the structural power of the hegemonic adversary, while simultaneously developing the sense of agency in the movement's ability to challenge that hegemony" (p. 107). With this theoretical-practical construct in mind, the article will proceed with three rhetorical case studies.

No Nukes

On March 11, 2011, a large-scale earthquake hit the northeastern area of Japan's main island. The quake recorded 9.0 on the Japanese Richter scale and was the worst in the country's modern history. The Pacific coastal area of Fukushima, the home of two aging nuclear power plants (Daiichi and Daini) operated by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), was among the most damaged. Two hours after the quake and tsunami hit, the first malfunction was reported: the debilitation of the emergency core cooling system installed at Fukushima Daiichi. In the next few days, the troubled reactor units experienced a series of blasts and explosions, causing injury to the restoration workers and delaying their work, and leading to further loss of coolant and the release of high-level radioactive substances outside. Five days after the first malfunction, radioactive substances were detected at various monitoring sites just outside the plant facility. A week later, farm and dairy products produced in Tokyo's northeastern suburbs were found to be contaminated by radioactivity. The advisory evacuation area became a government-ordered "no-go" zone, and a conservative estimate indicated that it would take two to three decades before the communities surrounding the plant could return to their normal life (Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission, 2012).

Approximately 20 days after the quake and the nuclear crisis, a sizable number of people, approximately 15,000 (Iwadare, 2011), gathered in Koenji, Tokyo. They were there to participate in the 4.10 No Nukes Mass Demonstration, the first anti-nuclear power rally held in metropolitan Tokyo since the Fukushima disaster. This rally took place in Koenji for good reason. With a plethora of bars, cafes, restaurants, clothing shops, used bookstores and CD/record shops, and live music venues, Koenji is a relatively small yet vibrant shopping district that particularly attracts young and hip people. It should also be noted that Koenji is the home of the Amateur's Revolt (Shiroto no ran), a recycled goods shop run by

Hajime Matsumoto. A Tokyo native, Matsumoto is known as a social activist; as an activist, he is also unique in that as a college student, he initiated a series of “potluck parties” occupying the college campus to protest a tuition increase and other school administration policies. Since then, he has organized other demonstrations and rallies in the streets of Koenji (TwinNoNukes, 2011)—and it was Matsumoto who organized the 4.10 No Nukes, using his home court advantage. Figure 1 is a poster Matsumoto circulated to solicit participation in the 4.10 No Nukes.

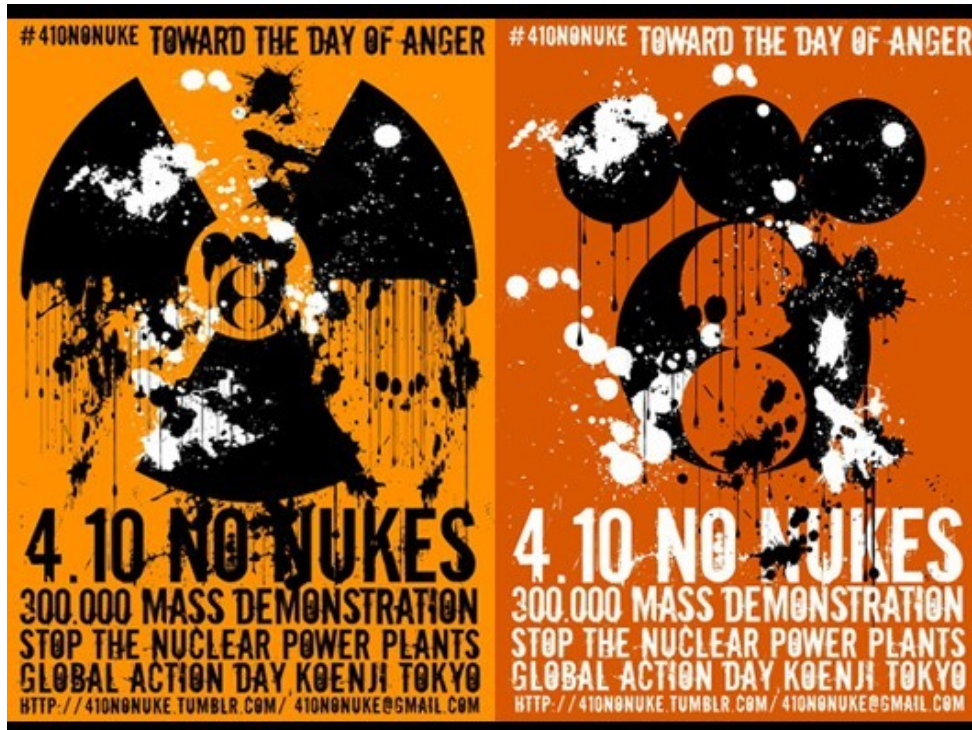


Figure 1. "Koenji 4.10 No Nukes Mass Demonstration" poster.
Source: <http://www.webdice.jp/dice/detail/3001/>

Before the 4.10 No Nukes, this author had never participated in a street demonstration of any kind, but he did know how to get around the area fairly well because he had visited Koenji many times. Getting off at the train station near the venue in the early afternoon of April 10, the first thing the author noticed was a kind of festive atmosphere in the area. It was a Koenji street he knew, and the scene was not what people would typically imagine when they hear the word *street demonstration* or *rally*. Lines of people were here and there; it was as if a big sports event or an outdoor musical concert was being held. Many in the street were shouting strong words criticizing nuclear power, the government, and the power company that had promoted it, as well as the mainstream media, which had been silent about the danger of nuclear power. However, the demonstrators were not only engaged in expressing anger; they were also enjoying themselves just occupying the street!

Looking around, the author also found the demographics of these rally participants to be very diverse. Although the majority looked relatively young, older people participated too. Many came to the demonstration in groups, including parents with their babies in strollers, but a noticeable number of solo participants could be seen as well. Racially, they were also diverse: Asians, Africans, and Caucasians were present in the street. Most important, the majority of these participants (including this author) were dressed too “casually” to be identified as political demonstrators. A typical street demonstration in Japan features participants with distinct and uniform cloth headbands and banners, chanting political messages orchestrated by their group leaders. Although some did carry placards with anti-nuclear power messages and logos, without them, many in Koenji looked too “ordinary” to be recognized as “serious activists.” In addition, no one forced the crowd to chant anything. As Hasegawa (2018) observed in the streets of Tokyo, these are distinctive characteristics of the plebeian political praxis in 21st-century Japan:

These protesters were not mobilised by organisations such as trade unions in the traditional way. Baby boomers, families, young people and other ordinary citizens voluntarily took part in these actions individually or in small groups. Rally organisers tended to let the participants act spontaneously rather than providing a formal program. Many of the protesters had never attended a rally before, and the actions were more akin to peaceful “walks” than typical demonstrations. (p. 129)

The demonstration started at the public park near the train station. As this author was walking down the streets of Koenji with the crowd, the atmosphere was gradually getting noisier. Eventually, he found himself surrounded by those performing live on “sound cars”: vans and pick-up trucks equipped with a small performing stage and public address system. Songs played included Victor Jara’s “*El Derecheo de Vivir en Paz*,” John Lennon’s “Imagine,” and Japanese anti-nuclear power songs. Hardcore punk rockers generated a particularly loud and violently fierce sound, making utmost use of their voices and musical instruments.²

In particular, two professional musicians in the 4.10 No Nukes stood out. One was Rankin Taxi, a veteran respected as the godfather of Japanese reggae. In 1989, Rankin Taxi released a song titled “No one can see or smell it (*Darenimo mienai, nioi mo nai*).” It was an anti-nuclear power song in which he sang, “Achtung, nuclear! Achtung, accident! Radioactivity is great. It never discriminates against anyone. Radioactivity is almighty. No one can see or smell it.” Some 20 years after its original release, it was the greatest pleasure and honor for this author to see him perform this song live (particularly with the reggae-music-loving crowd gathering in Koenji).³ The other was Rumi, a Tokyo-based female hip-hop artist. Although she had released several CDs on an independent record label, among the 4.10 No Nukes demonstrators, her name was virtually unknown. Rhyiming along the beat of hip-hop, she sang, “A bunch

² Many videos that captured these performances can be found on YouTube. See, for instance, Wakamono power sakuretsu! Koenji han-genpatsu demo ni 15000 [Youth power explosion! 15000 gather in Koenji for anti-nuclear power demonstration]. *LabornetTV*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7llbVEM14Y>.

³ Part of Rankin Taxi’s performance was featured in a video uploaded to YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdEuIJzft2M>).

of dickheads repeating, nuclear power is safe. These dickheads going, nuclear power is safe. Is it really safe to inhale plutonium, then? How come they ban other safer things [such as 'weeds']?" Although Rumi was less known as a musician, her rhetorically powerful and politically pointed performance likely has had a lasting impact on those who walked through Koenji with her on April 10, 2011, as it was featured in YouTube videos that captured the demonstration.⁴

Besides these musical performances, other communicative practices by the demonstrators in Koenji should be noted as well. As already described, many in the street were dressed rather casually, as if they had been there for window shopping. Walking with the crowd, the author also found that the 4.10 No Nukes featured demonstrators who stood out visually, with distinctive costumes, outfits, and even body paint, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.



Figure 2. A No Nukes demonstrator with "No More Nukes" T-shirt.
Source: <http://getnews.jp/archives/110107/ca3c0263>

⁴ Part of Rumi's performance was featured in a video uploaded to YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gDZMAmS29I>).



Figure 3. No Nukes demonstrators with body paint.
Source: <http://getnews.jp/archives/110107/ca3c0257>

Pressed to describe, in simplest terms, his rhetorical experience in the 4.10 No Nukes, this author would refer to what the great Bob Marley once called a “punk reggae party,”⁵ an event in which rockers, punks, musical Rastafarians, and hip-hop artists, among others, get together, engage in politics, make noise, and have fun. And gathering from the reactions and expressions of others walking with this author in the street, their experience in this “party” must have been quite positive. The atmosphere in Koenji was so peaceful, subcultural, and freewheeling that it attracted not only seasoned veterans in anti-nuclear power activism but also ordinary citizens who wished to exercise their right and raise their voice, but did not know exactly how to do so.

Additionally and equally important, the 4.10 No Nukes was unorganized enough that no one was forcing the demonstrators to do anything specific. Those who wished to join the demonstration were just told to follow the crowd in the street, and the police officers were kind enough to lead the crowd. Although it was not entirely leaderless, the crowd that gathered in Koenji on April 10, 2011, could be described as something similar to what Hardt and Negri (2000) once called “multitude” (p. 393). Many joined the crowd after the rally started; conversely, many others left the street before we arrived at the designated final destination near the train station. Nevertheless, as a plebian social movement, the 4.10 No Nukes did have

⁵ *Bob Marley-Punky reggae party lyrics*. Retrieved from <http://www.metrolyrics.com/punky-reggae-party-lyrics-bob-marley.html>

significant politico-cultural impact; the physical presence of these demonstrators in the street—the bodies that assembled in the public space—constituted the significant political presence in the aftermath of the nuclear crisis. As Judith Butler (2015) noted,

How, then, do we think about these transient and critical gatherings? One important argument that follows is that it matters that bodies assemble, and that the political meanings enacted by demonstrations are not only those that are enacted by discourse, whether written or vocalized. Embodied actions of various kinds signify in ways that are, strictly speaking, neither discursive nor prediscursive. In other words, forms of assembly already signify prior to, and apart from, any particular demands they make. Silent gatherings, including vigils or funerals, often signify in excess of any particular written or vocalized account of what they are about. (p. 7)

It is noted that the 4.10 No Nukes received no mainstream press coverage. Yet, the news that some 15,000 people gathered and walked in the streets of Koenji for protest was quickly shared via individual websites, YouTube videos, tweets, Facebook pages, and other social networking platforms on the Internet. Namely, the 4.10 No Nukes took place against the backdrop of what Ganesh and Stohl (2013) called “digital ubiquity.” This is also true for other anti-nuclear power demonstrations and rallies that erupted throughout the country. With the help of the Internet, smartphones, and other digital technologies, those who have no prior experience in demonstration or formal ties to activist groups could organize a gathering against the powers that be. Indeed, this is consistent with what Thornson et al. (2013) found in the global expansion of the Occupy movement. The technological advancement of social network services and other social media has enabled activists in the world to realize what Jurgen Habermas (1962/1989, 1992) called the (re)politicization of the public sphere. Namely, in our digital era, political struggle not only takes place in a physical space; it also occurs metatopically when the realm of *mere* sociality such as Facebook and Twitter can become a space for critical publicity.

No War

The 4.10 No Nukes was the first anti-nuclear power demonstration held in Tokyo since the 311 (March 11, 2011) Fukushima nuclear crisis; it also was the only anti-nuclear power demonstration held in Koenji. Yet, a small butterfly opening and closing its wings there created many followers. Following Koenji, a number of anti-nuclear power rallies have been organized throughout the country. Indeed, in post-Fukushima Japan, the eruption of anti-nuclear power movements has been unstoppable. At TEPCO’s headquarters in downtown Tokyo, a group of anti-nuclear power activists have continued “sleeping-in” and protesting nuclear power every day. Every Friday evening, activist groups still gather and continue to raise their voices of protest in front of the main gate of the Prime Minister’s Official Residence; the areas adjacent to the Diet Building became Tokyo’s *mecca* for political demonstrations and rallies.

In the early summer of 2015, these anti-nuclear power protestors were joined by other demonstrators. These “newcomers” were protesting Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of the LDP and his political ambition. A grandchild of Nobusuke Kishi, former prime minister and a Class A war criminal, Mr. Abe is a third-generation career politician. The LDP’s landslide victory in the 2012 general election enabled Mr. Abe

to come back to the Prime Minister's Office for the second time. Although his policy had been drifting and flip-flopping, he had been very consistent when it came to national security and constitutional amendment: Mr. Abe wanted Japan to once again become the country that could play a leadership role in the world, with a strong economy and powerful military. For that, he wanted to amend Article 9 of the Constitution and "militarize" the SDF. In May 2015, legislative bills were submitted by the Abe cabinet to the Diet for the revision of 10 existing statutes regarding national security. These were to legally allow the SDF to more actively and militarily collaborate with its allies overseas, most notably the United States. It was these security bills that the newcomers to the protestors' *mecca* firmly opposed.

When this author first came to Kokkai zentei, a park just outside the Diet Building, in mid-June 2015 to join the protest against Mr. Abe's security bills, the gathering was relatively small. The author was with a group of college professors called the Association of Scholars Opposed to the Security-Related Bills (Anpo hoanni hantaisuru gakushano kai), and the total number of scholars gathering there was no more than 200. More important, however, is that the scholars' gathering was not only the one taking place there that day. The scholars' gathering lasted about an hour, during which time all the featured scholars delivered their speeches. Instead of going home, many scholars, including this author, stayed for a while as other groups of protesters started preparing for their protest in the area. What was to take place, namely, was a series of back-to-back rallies, whereby one group came in and took its turn to protest, and others joined in and raised their voices of protest in unison. During the summer of 2015, the author frequented the area and witnessed the size of the crowd getting larger and larger. Initially, a gathering took place once a week; by late August, gatherings were happening daily. The voice of protest raised by the participants became louder and louder as more people came to the area and joined the demonstration.

During these back-to-back rallies against the security bills, Total Action for No War (Senso yurusuna sogagari koudou) has played an important organizing role, putting together various groups and coordinating speakers; Total Action for No War also conducted a series of call-and-response chants, encouraging the participants to repeat slogans such as "Defend the Constitution (*Kenpo wo mamore!*)!" and "Scrap the Warfare Bills (*Senso hoan wa haian!*)!" The presence of Mothers Against War (Senso ni hantaisuru mama no kai), as well as that of various other peace groups, including Article 9 Societies, was also significant in the area.

Perhaps the most visible and significant among these groups was Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy-s (SEALDs) (Kingston, 2015; O'Day, 2015; Okuda, 2016; Osaki, 2016; Ostaszewski, 2015; Slater, O'Day, Uno, Kindstrand & Takano, 2015; Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy-s, 2016; Takahashi & SEALDs, 2016). Organized by young college students in the Tokyo area, SEALDs was the outgrowth of the Students Against Secret Protection Law, a group formed in 2013 against the enactment of the law substantially limiting the nation's right to know and free speech for the sake of national security. Figure 4 shows the front and back covers of a SEALDs brochure.

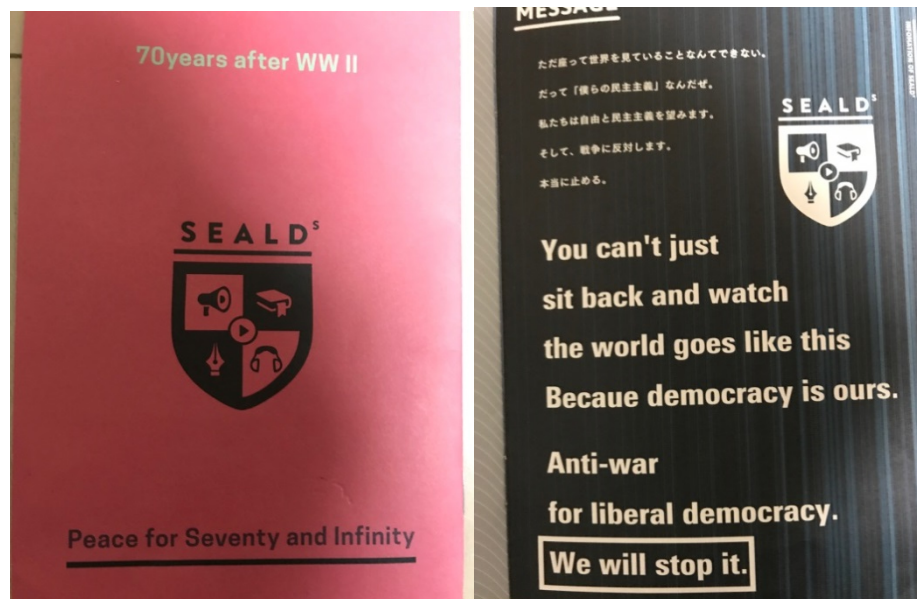


Figure 4. A brochure (front and back cover) by SEALDs. (The author's possession.)

First, compared with other groups protesting the security bills, SEALDs members were considerably younger. Accordingly, their discourses of protest were louder, faster, and more intense, a youth power explosion that no other protest groups in the area could beat. In addition, to maximize the impact of its rhetorical power, SEALDs devised a strategy of what Gonzalez and Makay (1983) once called "rhetorical ascription." They wrote,

An underlying principle governing the use of rhetoric in song is . . . ascription: communicators impute meanings to things and experiences and then express the meanings through symbolic processes. . . . An experiential capacity is required to understand and interpret any rhetorical event by ascribing meanings to the symbols which compose it. . . . Further, in song simplicity with previous experience gives rise to ascriptive meaning. . . . In the expression of feelings and ideas or images, communicants practice ascription in symbolic reciprocity. (p. 4)

Whereas other groups conducted the call-and-response chants in a traditional "labor union" style, SEALDs orchestrated the same collective discourse in a way specific to the young generation, ascribing it into the music and rhythm of hip-hop (Sunda, 2015). Echoing the voice of Occupy Wall Street, they were engaged in call-and-response chants, such as, "Tell me what democracy looks like (*Minshu shugitte nanda*)! Tell me [what it looks like] (*Nanda*)!" and "Tell me what democracy looks like (*Minshu shugitte nanda*)! This is [what it looks like] (*Koreda*)!" in the rhythm of hip-hop. While on the surface, this exchange involved the two parties—the one asking the question and the other answering it—"these are not questions and answers, as if the responses could put the calls to rest" (Hardt & Negri, 2017, p. xxi). Rather, they are specific, communicative "calls and responses [that] speak back and forth in an open dialogue" (Hardt & Negri, 2017,

p. xxi). Namely, what they were engaged in was the call-and-response chant that would never cease. Figure 5 shows a SEALDs member leading the chant.



**Figure 5. A SEALDs member with the crowd in front of the Diet in September 2015.
(Photograph taken by the author.)**

By late August, the rally against the security bills had expanded greatly, literally occupying the vast area in front of the Diet. The largest took place on August 30, 2015, drawing more than 100,000 people (Takenaka, 2015) shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. A bird's eye view of the anti-security bills demonstration in front of the Diet's main gate on August 30, 2015. Source: <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/raymiyatake/e/276aec1e7b83776913b956a89eef9ea3>

The angry plebeian gathering in the area was putting pressure on the government “in a sieglike manner” (Habermas, 1992, p. 452), and some of those inside the Diet did hear and respond to their voices (Okuda, Kuramochi, & Fukuyama, 2015). Particularly energized were the parliamentary minority opposing the bills. They included the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the Japan Communist Party (JCP), the Social Democratic Party, the Japan Restoration Party, and the People's Life First. Putting aside their ideological differences, the opposition called Mr. Abe's bills “warfare” bills and criticized the government that tried to pass them in the Diet without substantive parliamentary debate. DPJ's Kiyomi Tsujimoto, for instance, came out of the Diet Building, telling the crowd, “Your voice is certainly reaching us inside the Diet. We will have to be back inside soon and try the best we can. . . . We will try hard to abolish the bills” (Kokkai mae demo, 2015). Other opposition politicians also joined the demonstration. Two JCP leaders, Akira Koike and Kazuo Shii, gave speeches to those in the street; a social democrat, Mizuho Fukushima, also paid frequent visits to the gathering.

By this time, a new call-and-response chant had been added to the protestors' rhetorical repertoire: “Opposition parties, unite and fight together (*yato wa kyo-to*)!” By making a lot of noise outside the Diet, they tried to lend support to the unified opposition inside it. In the words of Tetsuro Fukuyama, another DPJ

politician, “never before [has he] experienced a moment in which politics [inside the Diet] becomes more united with people [outside the Diet] than now” (Okuda et al., 2015, p. 184). As many more people came to join the demonstration and raise their voices of protest just outside the Diet, their rhetorical power also intensified; more police forces were deployed to regulate the crowd, and minor clashes took place here and there in the area. Figures 7 and 8 depicted part of what this author saw and experienced at the site.



**Figure 7. Police officers dealing with the demonstration in the area in September 2015.
(Photograph taken by the author.)**



Figure 8. Protestors seized by police officers at a pedestrian crossing near the main gate of the Diet in September 2015. (Photograph taken by the author.)

Despite these oppositions inside and outside the Diet, in the early morning of September 19, 2015, the security bills were passed and became law. Yet, the protest against these laws and military operations they allow continues to date. Street demonstrations and rallies against Mr. Abe and his national security policy can still be seen across the country.⁶ Additionally, lawsuits against the passage and unconstitutionality of these statutes have been filed at 22 district courts throughout the country.⁷ Finally, although SEALDs stopped its official activities in 2016,⁸ many of its former members still remain active in the street, having formed a new group called Public for Future (Mirai no tameno koukyou). Finally, on the 19th day of every month, a sizable group of people gather in front of the Diet, criticizing Mr. Abe's national security policy and "commemorating" September 19, 2015—the day the bills were passed. Namely, the protest still continues, albeit in somewhat different fashion. Although the effects of the protests have yet to materialize, among the successes of the protests is the shared sense of agency in their movement's ability to challenge the powers that be. Again, the butterfly metaphor applies.

⁶ For instance, *Demo kaisai joho matome, han-sen, han-shinjiuushugi* [Information concerning anti-war, anti-neoliberalism demonstration] web site publishes an updated list of scheduled street demonstrations (including ones against the security laws) throughout the country. See <https://www57.atwiki.jp/demoinfo/>

⁷ See, for instance, the official website of Anpo-hosei iken kiso no kai, a group of plaintiffs filing these lawsuits (<https://anpoiken.jp/>).

⁸ Commemorating the stoppage of their activities, SEALDs released a hip-hop tune titled "To be" and uploaded it to YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI6GtoAb_dM).

Counterhate

The conservative's landslide victory in the 2012 general election not only enabled Mr. Abe to proceed with his agenda in the government, but also energized the country's political right outside the government. In fact, for the past several years, the words and actions of these political extremists have become more aggressive, more xenophobic, and even more racist. Put more simply, these "wingnuts" formed hate groups, calling for the country's racial purity and erroneously, yet much more loudly, condemning the foreign residents who they believe are "stealing" the country. Walking through a street in downtown Tokyo one sunny Sunday afternoon, one may likely encounter a rally staged by one or more of these groups, and their hate speech making (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2014; Kingston, 2014; Osaki, 2013). They not only glorify Japan's imperial tradition, but also call foreign residents in the country, particularly Koreans, "criminals" and "cockroaches," demanding their immediate "extermination" (Fackler, 2010; Higuchi, 2014).

These hate groups contend that those engaged in criminal acts in Japan share one thing in common: foreign origin. This is an *argumentum ad hominem* and a conspiracy argument, both of which are fallacious. They contend that we should hate not crimes, but those who commit crimes. For them, it is natural to hate these foreigners, because they firmly believe that all of them are (potential and real) criminals; according to their logic, these foreigners are engaged in criminal acts to destroy Japan from within and to make "real" Japanese look bad and ashamed of themselves. (Figure 9 shows what an assembled hate group street rally typically looks like.) The most notorious among these groups is the Citizens Group That Will Not Forgive Privileges for Koreans in Japan (Zainichi tokken wo yurusanai kai or Zaitokukai), which claims 12,000 members. Zaitokukai members have launched direct activism through their hate speeches and actions and have instigated racial tensions nationwide.



Figure 9. A hate group rally in Tokyo with the Japanese Imperial Navy's flag and hate slogans.
Source: http://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q13104255148

The call for tougher regulations on hate speech has been made both within and outside the government (Johnson, 2013; "Penalizing hate speech," 2013). Yet, regulating hate speech in Japan should raise questions regarding constitutional law and the free speech it guarantees (Kim, 2014). The Japanese Constitution guarantees freedom of expression as a fundamental human right, and it does so almost without exception. More specifically, while defamation is punishable under the Criminal Code (Article 230), it is not applied and enforced as much as libel laws in other countries are, particularly in Europe. Article 21 of the Constitution not only explicitly prohibits censorship, but also is interpreted to make any other forms of content-based prior restraint on the freedom of expression unconstitutional (Kudo, Hatajiri, & Hashimoto, 2014). Because any legal restriction on hate speech is necessarily content-based, it is understandable that discussing the possible enactment of such a law would necessarily invite strong resistance in the Japanese context.

While it would be hasty to give up taking legal action, however, those who fight racism and hate speech (and crime) in Japan have found another, and perhaps more effective, means: waging counterhate activism by way of rallies and demonstrations. The most prominent and visible among those who undertake this activism is a group called the Counter-Racist Action Collective, or CRAC (Racist wo shibakitai) (Noma, 2013). Led by Yasumichi Noma, a freelance writer/editor, the CRAC engages in counterhate activities, doing whatever is necessary to stop racism in the street. It "is a platform for those who are going to carry out various anti-racism action such as street protest, speech, photograph, art, music, petitions, lob[b]ying, events, workshop."⁹ Regarding their activities in the street, CRAC members go after racist rallies to stop their hate speech. Wherever you encounter a hate rally in Tokyo, you will most likely find CRAC members and their counterhate activism as well. For instance, during their hate demonstration in Shin-Okubo, Tokyo's Korean Town, in June 2013, CRAC members effectively and forcefully blocked hate groups so that they could not enter the main street.¹⁰ The CRAC has also organized a music gig at Shinjuku LOFT, a premier live music venue located in downtown Tokyo. Figure 10 shows an advertising poster for that gig.

⁹ CRAC's official website is <http://cracjpncs.tumblr.com/post/63156478071/c-r-a-c>.

¹⁰ See, for instance, see the CRAC visual archive (<http://cracva.tumblr.com/post/59012670746/june-30-2013-shin-okubo-tokyo>).

rhetorical environment, and to ignore them to focus only on verbal discourse means we understand only a miniscule portion of the symbols that affect us daily” (p. 303).

It can be argued that the CRAC is engaged in its own version of apparel activism and political aesthetics. When engaging counteractivism against hate and racism in the street, they express themselves not only verbally but also extraverbally. For instance, some CRAC members often show placards with the words, “Tokyo Against Racism.” More significantly, the author has also seen members holding sports towels printed with the same message as shown in Figure 11.



Figure 11. CRAC members carrying sports towels with the “Tokyo Against Racism” logo on them. Source: <http://cracva.tumblr.com/page/3>

In addition to merely displaying words, others wear T-shirts with the “No Swastika” symbol to protest against hate groups (See Figure 12). Namely, the rhetorical power of these clothes is generated both verbally and extraverbally. It is not only the outfit/body that argues (Palczewski, 1997); it is the language on the outfit/body that argues as well.



Figure 12. In a black T-shirt with the "No Swastika" logo on it, a CRAC member protesting the far-right racist/hate rally with a banner in the back that reads, "No pasaran; Pasaremos!"
Source: <http://cracva.tumblr.com/post/101855827062/nov-2nd-2014-shinjuku-tokyo-tokyo-no-hate>

As McGee (1975) and Charland (1987) noted, it is the language of people that creates their collective consciousness or "the people". What is suggested here is that the power of constitutive rhetoric is found not only in our discursive, verbal acts but also in our extraverbal communicative experiences. As they assemble at a particular place at a particular moment, the presence of these counterhate activists is a rhetorical projection of their own lifestyles; the way they dress themselves is part of their communicative act, generating powerful influence and effects on themselves and others. As Butler (2015) noted,

"the people" are not just produced by their vocalized claims, but also by the conditions of possibility of their appearance, and so within the visual field, and by their actions, and so as part of embodied performance. Those conditions of appearance include infrastructural conditions of staging as well as technological means of capturing and conveying a gathering, a coming together, in the visual and acoustic fields. The sound of what they speak, or the graphic sign of what is spoken, is as important to the activity of self-constitution in the public sphere (and the constitution of the public sphere as a condition of appearance) as any other means. (p. 19)

Del Gandio (2008) also explained the immaterial effects of our lifestyle choices when he wrote,

You can use your lifestyle to communicate radical messages of social change. Many activists do that already by avoiding sweatshop apparel, drinking fair trade coffee or volunteering at worker-run bookstores and cooperatives. . . . But our lifestyle choices

shouldn't be reduced to material effects only. Realize that your lifestyle also produces immaterial effects. (p. 168)

In Tokyo, this type of activist aesthetics is observed more frequently than one might imagine. When riding on a subway, for instance, it is not so uncommon to encounter a youngster wearing a T-shirt with a "No pasaran" or "ANTIFA" logo on it. Meaning "Fascists shall not pass," *No pasaran* was a Spanish slogan used against the fascist dictatorship during the Spanish Civil War. ANTIFA is the acronym for an ANTI-Fascist movement that uses both direct and indirect actions. Both T-shirts are widely available from online clothing shops, including the one run by the CRAC (See Figure 13).



**Figure 13. A "No pasaran" T-shirt sold at the CRAC online shop.
Source: <https://crac.stores.jp/items/53ad8a1283f1530fef000192>**

For seasoned activists, these T-shirts offer a means of powerful political identification. Additionally, and equally important, these clothes are fashion items designed so that even nonactivists may find them "cool." This is exactly the reason that they generate the strong rhetorical presence. Anyone can casually wear activist aesthetics such as *No pasaran* T-shirts, whether she is a CRAC member or not. For instance, this author occasionally wears a T-shirt with a logo that reads, "ALL YOU FASCISTS BOUND TO LOSE" (see Figure 14) to show his empathy with, and lend support for, the counterhate group. Even when the author has no plan to participate in counterhate activism, he chooses to wear it simply because he feels like it. And when the author wore this T-shirt for a nonactivism occasion, he was once approached by a stranger who said, "I like your T-shirt (*Sono T-shirt iidesune*)."



Figure 14. An "ALL YOU FASCISTS BOUND TO LOSE" T-shirt. (The author's possession.)

Without vocalizing anything, anyone can thus engage in the rhetorical practice of protest just by wearing these pieces of political aesthetics. According to the butterfly effect idea, one small butterfly could provide an impetus for larger social change; it would be more effective and significant if we had two or more butterflies opening and closing their wings, thus multiplying their effects.

Conclusions

By way of participatory critical-rhetorical analysis, an attempt has been made to demonstrate the revitalization of plebian social movements in post-Fukushima Japan. It is to be noted again that political rallies and demonstrations now are never uncommon events in Tokyo. As indicated, the three cases of plebian political uprisings discussed in this article continue today, albeit in somewhat different forms. Anti-nuclear power activists still convene near the Prime Minister's Official Residence every Friday evening. Rallies against Mr. Abe and his government have not ceased as their ambition for constitutional revision is coming closer to reality. Finally, counteractions by the CRAC and other groups still continue to disable racist and hate rallies in many parts of the country.

Regarding the judgment on these rhetorics, sharing the rhetorical moment with others in the street has given this author an opportunity to assess the immediacy of their impacts. The experiences the author has had with these three protests are massive. Having observed the diversity of the participants and the size of the crowd growing, the rhetorical power of these movements should not be underestimated. While these protests were *unsuccessful* in that they failed to realize the total ban of nuclear power, the rejection of Mr. Abe's security bills, or the complete eradication of hate speech and crime in Japan, the critical rhetorical spirit of these post-Fukushima social movements has become *successive*, as people are still engaged in street politics in many parts of the country. From the butterfly effect perspective, we never know if and when they will become *successful*. The rhetorical power of a small butterfly opening and closing its wings is not only *effective*; it is also *affective* (Nakagawa, 2018, track 1).

It should also be noted that the powers that be have found these plebian political uprisings to be so annoying and powerful that they feel the need to regulate their protest rhetorics. For instance, regarding the rallies against the security bills, Sanae Takaichi, a conservative LDP politician and the former Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, strongly criticized their "noise-making" in front of the Diet, saying that her party would like to regulate them just as they would do to hate speech rallies (Jiminto kokkaimae demo, 2014). Masamune Wada, another conservative politician, seconded Takaichi, saying that the noise generated by the protesters in front of the Diet was so loud that it disturbed people's quiet life and disrupted their good night's sleep (Wada Masamune giin, 2015).¹¹

Indeed, characterizing the exercise of plebian political power in the street as mere noise-making is misleading and unfair. While they have some noise-making aspects, these rallies do feature more traditional forms of political communication, such as public speaking. Between music and call-and-response chants, for instance, many do take the podium and deliver powerful speeches to (and as part of) the crowd. Following is an excerpt from the speech delivered by Beniko, a SEALDs member, against Mr. Abe's national security policy and his ambition for military buildup:

I do not want unstable peace created by the threat of arms build-up and by the military alliance. I do prefer secure diplomacy that needs no force or threat of force. . . . It is no accident or miracle that under the present Constitution Japan has had no casualty of war in the [past] 70 years. Please do not destroy [this] peace that has calmly but firmly continued to date by hastily wanting to become "stronger."

One year ago I never imagined myself participating in demonstration; nor did I imagine myself making a speech like this. Some said to me, "You changed," and they walked away from me. Other unfortunate things, such as losing friends, happened to me as well. But I always call spade a spade, a part of my character that never changes. And doing so should be normal when it comes to talking about politics.

¹¹ It should be noted that no residential buildings or facilities are in the area surrounding the Diet; it may be that politicians taking a nap during the Diet session are the only ones finding the noise we make disturbing.

Just before coming here today, I was thinking about questions such as when I should go shopping and get swimsuit for this summer or when I should put on eyelash extension. I hope it should become nothing abnormal that a person like me, the one preoccupied with getting swimsuit or putting on eyelash extension, can speak on political issues.¹²

Finally, the author would like to mention an interesting recent development in Japan's street politics: "silent standing" (Yamada, 2017). Those engaged in this type of demonstration carry placards and banners with slogans and do not make noise; they stand still in front of local commuter train stations, shopping malls, and other public places. Recall Butler's words that the graphic sign of what is spoken is as significant as the sound. Just like the noise making in Koenji and at the front gate of the Diet, the rhetorical presence of protesters' unvoiced messages should make a strong impact on those who see them (see Figure 15).



Figure 15. A group performing a silent standing demonstration.

Source: <https://www.asahi.com/articles/photo/AS20170919003254.html>

It may still be surprising to those residing outside Japan that the movements discussed in this article have received little, if any, coverage from the mainstream domestic mass media in Japan. In fact, more coverage of these movements is found in English-language daily such as *The Japan Times*, or even international news agencies such as Reuters, than in Japanese-language vernacular media. It should be noted that Mr. Abe and his government have largely been successful in controlling mass media discourses for their own benefit (Homma & Nambu, 2018; Tsuda, Kayama, & Yasuda, 2013). According to Reporters Without Borders, Japan is ranked 67th (0.86 points below El Salvador and 0.14 above Lesotho) in the 2018

¹²The entire recording of her speech can be found on YouTube. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZULJBLScNI> (English translation is the author's).

World Press Freedom Ranking.¹³ Given this ranking, the future prospect of plebian social movements and of free speech in Japan should concern international scholars of communication and rhetoric. For this reason, the only surest way to grasp what is going on in the country's politico-discursive sphere may be to take to the street and share immediate communicative experiences with others. Although there is some "risk" involved, for a critical-rhetorical scholar wishing to better understand the working of political discourse, it is a kind of risk worth taking. It should be noted that these rallies and demonstrations take place topically and metatopically. With the help of the Internet, smartphones, and other digital technologies, even high school students with no prior formal ties or connections to "adult" activists could organize a gathering against the powers that be.¹⁴ By retweeting a message posted by someone rallying in the street or sharing someone else's photo taken during a counterhate activity on Facebook, one can lend support for, and in some cases become part of, the crowd's contentious performance. As a scholar of communication and a concerned citizen, this author finds no good reason not to become part of the plebian critical public regardless of one's location, whether online or offline.

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¹³ Retrieved from <https://rsf.org/en/ranking#>.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Koukousei group T-ns SOWL kokkaimae kougi [A demonstration in front of the Diet by a high school student group T-ns SOWL]. *LabornetTV*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CrOGg34upg>

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