

**The Views of the Central Headquarters of the Buraku Liberation League
on the Article by J. Mark Ramseyer**

March 15, 2021

Central Headquarters of Buraku Liberation League

1. In 2019, the academic journal *Review of Law and Economics* published an article by J. Mark Ramseyer, Professor of Harvard University, titled "On the Invention of Identity Politics: The Buraku Outcastes in Japan". The article sets forth Professor Ramseyer's unique views on the Buraku issue in general, including the history of the discriminated Buraku, the Buraku liberation movement in the prewar and postwar periods and the Dowa measures implemented by the government. However, underlying the article's contents are fallacies and prejudices that go far beyond what would be expected in an academic paper.

For example, it is clear from many historical documents and records that in the Edo period, people who were called *eta/hinin* were engaged in tanning the hides of cattle and horses. However, the Ramseyer article falsifies the historical facts that have been affirmed in research and surveys by stating that "(m)ost importantly, most *kawata* never skinned carcasses and had nothing to do with the leather trade" and "(i)nstead, most Burakumin trace their ancestry to poor farmers." Amazingly, he even goes so far as to assert that the identity of the Buraku people as a "leather workers' guild" was invented by Marxists within the National Levelers' Association.

2. Professor Ramseyer also taunts and disrespects the National Levelers' Association, which stood up in the hope for liberation from discrimination against the Buraku people and aimed to build an equal society by overcoming unjust oppression and obstruction, as well as the Buraku Liberation League, which inherited the spirit of the National Levelers' Association after WWII. The article explains that the National Levelers' Association was created by the Bolsheviks to expand their political activities, and that the Association was soon hijacked by criminal entrepreneurs. He names Matsumoto Jiichiro, who was a member of the House of Representatives before WWII and was elected as the first deputy speaker of the House of Councilors after WWII, as a representative of the group, and insults him by calling him "a don of an organized crime syndicate." Of course, the National Levelers' Association was not a group of criminals, and his perception itself is prejudiced. It is true that the National Levelers' Association was influenced by the social and political movements of the time, but the Association was not formed for the sake of political movements. The discriminated Burakumin who joined the Association stood up for themselves out of anger at the blatant

insults and discrimination they suffered in their daily lives. Professor Ramseyer treats the discriminated Burakumin, who participated in the movement out of compelling emotions, as criminals and insults them.

3. Furthermore, the article ignores the significance and achievements of the Dowa measures implemented by the national and local governments after the war, and distorts the facts by giving an impression as if the Dowa measures were implemented through the "extortion" of the Buraku Liberation League. The government conducted a detailed survey of the discriminated Buraku twice during the 1960s, and the 1965 report of the Council on Dowa Measures stated that the discriminated Buraku were "in an extremely alarming state," and that the government reaffirmed "the importance of promptly improving the economic conditions and living environment of the residents of the areas concerned and ensuring their lives as equal Japanese citizens." In 1969, the government enacted the Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects and implemented measures to improve the living environment, enhance social welfare, and improve education and culture. The Dowa projects were historical undertakings implemented by the government to protect the lives and rights of the discriminated Buraku people who were held down at the bottom of society due to discrimination. However, the article describes that the Buraku Liberation League blackmailed the government to implement the Dowa projects for the purpose of "extortion," unfairly distorting the historical process, significance and achievements of the Dowa projects implemented by the national and local governments.

4. In addition, Professor Ramseyer uses completely baseless numbers and equations to calculate population migration, crime rates and birth rates of children of outside of marriage among Buraku people, and applies them to support his own inference that Buraku people are a criminal group, thereby manipulating the image of the Buraku people into a vicious image. For example, in order to give the impression that the discriminated Buraku people are associated with criminals, he estimated the Buraku population in 2010 to be 1.8 million based on the 1935 survey data and Japan's population growth rate, and using the numbers of members of criminal organizations in the 1989 White Paper on Police, calculated the percentage of members of criminal organizations in their 20s and 30s among the discriminated Buraku people without any evidence or relevance.

He uses irrelevant figures to indicate that children born outside of marriage are far more prevalent than in non-Buraku population, that drug use is more widespread, that they are associated with violent crimes, that organized crime was primarily a Buraku phenomenon, and that BLL has ties to the mob, to conclude that the reason the Buraku people are discriminated is because they continue to lead lives that go against ethics and morals.

5. In addition, Professor Ramseyer ignores many surveys and research findings related to the Buraku issue, intentionally picking only what is convenient for developing his false theory.

In his explanation of the population migration from the Buraku areas, he states that the government's Dowa measures "caused young burakumin to drop out of school, join the mob, and pursue Buraku-specific criminal careers" giving the impression that young people stayed in the area and joined gangs for the subsidies. In reality, however, the living environment and employment conditions of the discriminated Buraku had improved during the period when the Dowa measures projects were implemented, and the school scholarship system enabled young people to attend high school and university. These young people were hired by various companies after graduation, which led to many of them to move out of the Buraku areas. Meanwhile, the older generation remained in the area, making the ratio of older population in the Buraku areas considerably higher than the national average. This is evident from surveys conducted in many different parts of the country. The paper completely ignores these surveys and research findings, and distorts the facts to fit its own irresponsible reasoning.

6. As described above, the entire article is filled with hatred and prejudice against the discriminated Buraku people and the Buraku liberation movement, including the fabrication and distortion of history, extremely vicious slander against the National Levelers' Association and the Buraku liberation movement, and distortion of the Dowa measures projects. It is written to discredit the Buraku people and the Buraku liberation movement, and it encourages discrimination against the Buraku.

In particular, the slander and defamation regarding the Sayama Case cannot be tolerated. Chapter VII of the article takes up the Sayama case and asserts that Ishikawa "obviously played a key part in the rape- murder" and that there is "little doubt that he was at least part of a gang that raped and killed the girl." This is despite the fact that in recent years, the defense team for the retrial of the Sayama case has submitted new evidence using scientific methods that shows Kazuo Ishikawa's innocence, and efforts to realize the retrial have been making progress, however, the article gives no clarification on what basis it determines that Kazuo Ishikawa is the murderer.

No integrity or humility as a researcher can be seen in Professor Ramseyer, who wrote such an irresponsible article. The article does not mention the discrimination against Buraku people in marriage or employment, and nowhere in the article indicates any recognition that discrimination against Buraku people is actually causing the people to suffer. He also completely abandons the main principle of human rights research, which is to learn

from the people concerned and to engage in dialogue with them. The article only shows hostility and hatred toward the Buraku people and the Buraku liberation movement.

It is not known what motivated the author to write such a vicious article, but whatever the motive is, it is an utterly unforgivable discriminatory article. The publication of such discriminatory content in an academic journal is in itself wrong and unacceptable.

We strongly urge Professor Ramseyer and the journal *Review of Law and Economics* to retract the article.