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Séminaire collectif du Centre de
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Histoire du Japon moderne et contemporain : permanences et ruptures

« Chain of Voices: Social Movements in South Africa and Japan, ca. 1970 »

MINE Yôichi (Université de Dôshisha)

Abstract

The 1970s witnessed the rise in demands for social change characterized by a remarkable sense of ownership by the actors involved. A number of groups who hitherto found it difficult to voice their concerns, started expressing strong criticisms aimed at their ostensible protectors and allies. This presentation seeks to put the rise of several critical movements in Japan in the 1970s (handicapped, women, foreign residents, day laborers, etc) into a landscape of global social shifts, most notably the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. While there was no direct link or identified influence between Japanese and South African activists, this presentation sheds light on remarkable resonances between the two cases. Much has changed in South Africa, Japan and the rest of the world since the 1970s. Yet, it may be of interest to raise the question of whether and to what extent the criticism raised by the social movements of the decade remain pertinent today because the issues raised are still inadequately addressed in many cases.