

Study in America, Work in Tokyo:

Female Exchange Students Make Progress in 1960s Japan

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It is a forgotten fact that Japan's 1960s growth was enabled by women who had studied abroad in the United States. Between 1949 and 1966, at least 4,713 Japanese students studied at American universities with the best known fellowships at the time—GARIOA (1949-1951) and Fulbright (established in 1952). This group included 651 women. Japanese women also received private scholarships. They were among the first Japanese people to



Yoko Matsuoka McClain (Natsume Soseki's granddaughter) at the University of Oregon, 1952

travel abroad and the first women to earn graduate degrees. U.S. graduate degrees helped men achieve high-level positions in Japan, but study abroad for women had different symbolic meanings in the early Cold War Era. Yet returning female students pioneered careers and worked in historical events like the 1964 Olympics. Drawing upon personal interviews and archival research, I argue that female exchange students were a hidden force behind Japan's development. Their professional and personal setbacks teach much about women's roles in the academy and workforce. Whether they realize it or not, their jobs were highly political.

Alisa Freedman is an Associate Professor at the University of Oregon and the Editor-in-Chief of the *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*. Her books include *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road*, an annotated translation of Kawabata Yasunari's *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, and co-edited volumes on *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan* and *Introducing Japanese Popular Culture*.

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