

Film about Japanese teachers highlights their opposition to suppression

by [Hisashi Yukimoto](#)

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Tokyo, January 12 (ENInews)--A new Japanese film highlights the struggles of a Christian music teacher and two former teachers to defend their beliefs, including their disagreement with the compulsory singing of the national anthem in schools.

Scheduled to be shown in Tokyo from 14 to 27 January and in Osaka from 28 January to 17 February, and available on a Japanese-language DVD, the film, "True to Myself," was shown with English subtitles at the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in Japan last October. The director, Toshikuni Doi, hopes to make it available on an English-language DVD and YouTube video by March.

"[The film] is a record of the 'way of life' of the three teachers who struggle in dignity to resist Japanese society leaning to the right and returning to the prewar period," said Doi.

Miwako Sato, a music teacher and a member of the United Church of Christ in Japan, said she wants to raise awareness about the enforced use in Japanese schools since 1999 of the national flag and anthem, known as Kimigayo.

Critics say it violates Japan's postwar constitutional freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and education, because the anthem and flag were symbols of the quasi-religious militarism under the emperor. Sato told ENInews she sees the country's emperor system as "a pyramid of status discrimination" and idolatry worship.

Sato is opposed to the emperor system mostly because her late father, who was a prisoner of war before he devoted himself to life as a pastor in the cause of peace, told her that "unless you resist the emperor system, not only the country of Japan but you will also be judged by God."

"I sincerely hope that the film will be distributed to the world's Christian communities," she told ENInews. "Our efforts within Japan have reached their limits. I want external pressures from abroad," she told journalists at a December news conference.

One of the former teachers, Nobuo Dohi, sued the Tokyo education board in 2009 for dismissing him from his position as a high school headmaster for his protest against the board's regulation of speech at teachers' meetings at the school.

The other former teacher, Kimiko Nezu, sued the Tokyo education board, personnel board, and the governor in 2007 for suspending her for six months after she refused to stand when the anthem was sung at her school's admission and graduation ceremonies.

Dohi and Nezu hope people in Asia will see the film to gain insight about Japan's democracy.

This article was corrected on January 17.