



JAPAN

FUKUSHIMA GENERATION

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Students from the university of Fukushima practice their dancing skills at the university campus.

- ▶ On 11 March 2011 in Japan, an earthquake caused around 20 thousand deaths
- ▶ The earthquake and tsunami damaged the Fukushima power plant resulting in the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl
- ▶ Almost 200,000 people were evacuated. But thanks to an extensive clean up operation, some areas are now habitable once more and their original residents have returned
- ▶ Today Fukushima natives aged in their twenties – children at the time of the disaster – are striving to bring the entire area back to life
- ▶ Artists, cooks, musicians, workers in the social sector, farmers: the rise of Fukushima is taking place thanks to the activities of these young people



Cuddly toys in the Futaba Gift Shop, a centre that collected and catalogued objects washed away by the tsunami in 2011. The Gift Shop was created with the aim of conserving the memory of what happened and of reuniting the objects with their original owners or their families.



Kaori Sato, an artist from Tamura, and some of her friends take a walk behind her house after a meeting to come up with new ideas. After the nuclear accident Kaori began to create artworks that used the earth as pigment, in order to raise awareness about the issue.



26-year-old Yuto Nakano, Originally from Hiroshima, lives in Fukushima where he has started up two businesses: the proceeds of his web app programming business fund the other business to help children and young people in difficulty.



Kent Kawamura, a member of the performing group "Lomeo Paradiso" from Fukushima, on Mount Shinobu.

After the nuclear disaster the Japanese city is experiencing a rebirth thanks to the younger generation

On 11 March 2011 one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded struck off the coast of Japan provoking a tsunami that devastated the northern coast of the country, resulting in 20 thousand deaths. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station was gravely damaged by the earthquake and the consequent tsunami; the meltdown of three reactors caused further explosions of air and hydrogen that released a huge quantity of radioactive material into the atmosphere. It was the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl. Almost 200,000 people were evacuated from the area around the plant and many towns remained uninhabited for years.

Following extensive clean up operations, today some areas located near the plant have been declared habitable once more and, thanks to incentives from the Japanese government, former residents have returned to their homes. Almost ten years after the earthquake in 2011 the generation aged in their twenties – children at the time of the disaster and raised under the spectre of the nuclear accident – face not only fear and prejudice from the rest of the world (the name Fukushima is now closely associated with the 2011 disaster), but also in Japan itself, where the country's inhabitants are loathe to purchase goods from the area that was subject to contamination.

The tenacity and drive to start over in Fukushima is reflected in the stories of some residents' love for their place of origin. The story of Sota Oshima, for example, a student who in order to raise public awareness of the safety of products, sells waffles made to his own recipe and with soba (buckwheat) flour from one of the towns affected by the disaster. Another story is that of Kaori Sato, an artist who after the disaster began to produce artworks to help children and young people in difficulty. Then there is the story of Takashi Moriyama, a young man who opened a coffee bar that involves local students from a nearby school to learn about working and to create a sense of community.



A temporary storage site for radioactive soil, near Odaka, collected during the contamination clean up. The owners of the land, who previously cultivated rice, have allowed the government to use it: the area has remained uninhabited for a long time and few returned even when it was possible to do so.



Youngsters play a video game at the station in Fukushima.



One of the symbols of modern Japan, drinks vending machines, in an abandoned area of the town of Tomioka.



Students at the University of Fukushima do some guitar practice in the music building at the university campus.



Kaori Sato, an artist from Tamura. After the nuclear accident she began to create artworks using soil from the affected areas.



The city of Fukushima at sunrise, seen from Mount Shinobu.



Mr Suzuki in his surf shop in Minamisoma, where he has built a training board. Mr Suzuki was the first to start surfing again a few weeks after the nuclear accident, requesting a special authorisation to be exonerated from the ban by assuming all responsibility in the case of contamination.



Naoto Matsumura feeds his "ghost cow" that he managed to save from the obligatory slaughter of all farm animals in the area. Naoto returned home immediately after the evacuation in order to save domestic and farm animals in the area that otherwise would have starved to death.



The city of Okuma, evacuated just after the nuclear accident and still uninhabited due to the high levels of radiation.



Mr Nemoto, centre, with his wife. Before 2011 he cultivated and sold rice. Now, even though the products are certified as safe, sales have collapsed. Yasuhiko Niida (left) president of Kinpou (a company founded in 1711 and one of Japan's oldest producers of sake) suggested Mr Nemoto grow rice for the production of sake. On the table is one of the first bottles to be produced thanks to this new partnership.



Cameras conserved at the Futaba Gift Shop, a centre that collected and catalogued objects washed away by the tsunami in 2011. The Gift Shop was created with the aim of conserving the memory of what happened and of reuniting the objects with their original owners or their families.



Two girls in traditional Japanese dress head to a town festival organised at the offices of a wine producer near Nihonmatsu, in the Fukushima Prefecture.



Sota Oshima and a friend prepare to try out a variant of their recipe for soba waffles. Sota had the idea of making and selling waffles using flour from the fields in Kawauhi, a town affected by the radiation that has now been cleaned up, in order to raise awareness and demonstrate that the danger, in some areas, has now passed.



Fields of PV panels in Fukushima Prefecture. Due to the tsunami that struck the coastal area, for safety reasons entire areas have been subjected to a ban on building so are being used for the production of solar and wind energy. Fukushima Prefecture has made a commitment to satisfy all of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2040.



Young people enjoy themselves at a rock concert as part of a town festival near Nihonmatsu, in the prefecture of Fukushima.



Students at the university of Fukushima practice Kyudo, a traditional Japanese form of archery, at the university campus.



A fireworks display at the end of the town festival near Nihonmatsu.



Makoto Homma, founder of the Hop Japan brewery, collects sacks of freshly harvested hops from a farmer in Tamura, one of the cities completely evacuated following the nuclear accident and reopened in 2014.



Young people study in silence on a Sunday morning in a room at the top of a building in Fukushima city.



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