
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fukawa case demonstrates need for Sayama retrial

I read with interest the report in the July 15 edition of The Daily Yomiuri about the retrial of the Fukawa case ("Retrial OK'd in Fukawa case: Pair who served 29 years for '67 murder get chance to clear names," Page 2).

It seems the "confessions" of the two men charged were forced out of them to substantiate the case against them, but those "confessions" obviously were not consistent with the facts of the case.

The reluctance of the Japanese court system to truly seek truth and justice instead of expediently "saving face" is something that concerns me greatly.

For many years I have been following a different case, which involved the murder of a young girl in Sayama, Saitama Prefecture, in 1963.

In the Sayama case, Kazuo Ishikawa, a young man from the discriminated-against "buraku" area of the town, was fingered as the culprit because he was in the general area and had no alibi. He was held without legal representation and interrogated for many days, and, believing their threats against his family and their false promises, he finally agreed to sign a "confession" the police had jerry-rigged together.

Having personally walked through the route supposedly taken and in view of the acts supposedly committed as described in the "confession," I am amazed at how little forethought was put into making it ratio-

nally hold together.

It involves numerous implausibilities and is not consistent with many other pieces of evidence.

Yet, because Ishikawa "confessed" to the crime, the court has refused to reopen the trial and hear the numerous lines of evidence that prove his innocence. Since his provisional release in 1994, Ishikawa is still restricted in his movements and, in his words, is still bound by "invisible handcuffs."

Hopefully, Tokyo High Court presiding Judge Hiroshi Kadono's decision in the Fukawa case will spur the judge overseeing the Sayama case to do the right thing and grant a retrial.

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