

My First Love

My first love was a girl. I couldn't tell anyone.

Back then, I felt like I was trapped inside a cold, invisible bubble. Around my classmates, I laughed and smiled to cover up my real feelings. But inside that bubble, I was completely alone. My friends talked freely about their crushes and held hands in the hallway. As a lesbian, I could not join them or hold hands with the person I liked. In Japan, I cannot even marry her in the future. I felt a heavy pain in my heart and thought: This is not fair.

One day, I read an article stating that nearly half of LGBTQ youth in Japan have considered suicide. I could not treat it as someone else's problem. I was one of them. That pain became my motivation. At school, I joined an LGBTQ group, held workshops, and introduced gender education. We even won the Shibuya Gender Award.

However, in Japan, support for LGBTQ students still depends entirely on individual passion, not on official systems. When I went to Australia, I was shocked by the difference. Their GSA Gender and Sexuality Alliance operate like an official school club, and surprisingly, about 60% of the members are allies—students who are not LGBTQ+ themselves. Seeing straight students standing up for diversity as part of everyday school life blew my mind.

Through Tobitate Ryugaku Japan, an initiative backed by Japan's Ministry of Education, I stayed with a host family of two mothers in the Netherlands. Connecting with them and people at WorldPride, I received so much genuine warmth from around the world. Now, I have been accepted for a one-year exchange program to Australia through AFS.

I am not just dreaming about change; I am already making it happen. I have already reached out to local GSA student leaders in Australia to prepare for my exchange. During my year there, I will study their operational systems, ally training programs, and how they work with teachers. My goal is to bring this blueprint back, establish the first official GSA model in a Japanese high school, and share a practical handbook with schools nationwide.

I was saved by the safe spaces and warmth given to me across the world. Now, I will give that back, so no student ever suffers in a lonely bubble again. It is my turn to build that home.