

Message from Dr. Kuniko Inoguchi, Member of the Japanese Diet

On the occasion of the Opening Ceremony in the 31st Black Ships Festival

July 18, 2014

Newport, Rhode Island, US

Spencer Viner, President, Japan-America Society of Rhode Island,

The Honorable Lincoln Chafee, Governor, State of Rhode Island,

Rear Admiral P. Gardner Howe, III, President of U.S. Naval War College

The Honorable Harry Winthrop, Mayor of Newport

Members of the City Council,

I am truly honored to have this opportunity to deliver a few remarks on the occasion of the Opening Ceremony of the 31st Black Ships Festival.

I am a member of the Upper House of the Japanese Parliament, and I am here to express my wholehearted gratitude to all of you for your continuing efforts to deepen and refresh Japan-US bilateral friendship.

It has been more than 160 years since Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Japan, seeking a diplomatic relationship with Japan. Commodore Perry was courageous and brilliant. He had the patience to wait for the right timing. He had a strategic mind to choose an appropriate location for negotiation, and he was deeply aware of the importance of the black ship in expressing his determination to make a new history. I am very excited to be with you today at this place where such a brilliant and forward-looking mind was nurtured.

The relationship between the state of Rhode Island and Japan has been deepened at various levels over its long history. With 31 Black Ships Festivals in Newport, and 75 Black Ships Festivals in Shimoda held so far, we have accumulated many wonderful practical accomplishments. Recently, a student exchange between the University of Shizuoka and Roger Williams University has been put into operation. The cooperative friendship between Japan and the state of Rhode Island is a treasure for Japan.

The government and people of Japan strongly support the Black Ship Festival. It is important that Japan and the US, both of which are committed to the values of democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and economic growth and innovation, will continue to remember the origin of our diplomatic ties and friendship, and communicate to the generations to come of the importance of our relationship. And we all know that excellent diplomatic ties start at the local community level. The efforts of the city of Shimoda and Newport is an excellent case in point. This year, 11 people from Japan, including Mr. Shinobu Tsuchiya, the Chairman of Shimoda City Assembly, are attending this festival. Last year, Mr. Takashi Sasagawa, former Minister of State, made a speech at the festival.

I myself have been closely connected with the United States at various levels of education. I was an exchange student in Massachusetts, where I attended a high school called Concord Academy, from which Ambassador Caroline Kennedy graduated. I had a fulfilling experience at Concord Academy thanks to my very warm host family, and I still keep in contact with them. I obtained a Ph.D. in Political Science from Yale University. I also served as a Fulbright research fellow at Harvard University. The education I received in the United States prepared me for my professional career. I became a professor of political science at Sophia University in Tokyo, and later served as Ambassador of Japan in Geneva on disarmament affairs. Most recently, I served as Gender Equality Minister in Prime Minister Koizumi's Cabinet.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all the participants of this ceremony, including the US Navy participants for the help you have extended to our people in the disaster of the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011. Operation Tomodachi was most effective and saved thousands of lives. It also inspired the rest of the world to come to Japan and help the affected. We shall never forget your swift and decisive relief operations, and the following continuous commitment to help our recovery.

I thank you, and wish all the best. Thank you.