

Providing Right Message and Information

for General Population

Interview

Miliyah KATO
Singer-songwriter

**I try to do my best for others,
not for myself**

(Interviewed by Mitsuki Kamata, Director, Public Relations Office, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Photographer: Masaomi Arakawa)



RED RIBBON LIVE Activities

Thank you for participation in RED RIBBON LIVE last year and this year. I heard that you have studied AIDS since you were in junior high school. Please tell us what was your motive for this?

Kato: I first learnt about HIV/AIDS when I was watching a TV drama titled “God, please give me more time” (1998, Fuji TV) featuring Kyoko Fukada and Takeshi Kaneshiro. I was in a higher grade at elementary school at that time. I was deeply shocked and ever since, AIDS have been felt like something that wasn’t far away from me.

Then, when I was in the second grade at junior high school, I went to New York for the first time and saw the Broadway musical “Rent”. It was a sad story that all the characters died of AIDS. I could see the musical by chance, because the husband of my voice trainer was playing the guitar in the musical band. The musical was about AIDS, and I somehow felt that I should study about it.

In the third year at junior high, there was a class where students could choose themselves what to study. I wanted to take this opportunity to learn about AIDS, and so that’s when I started studying. I could continue to study it in senior high school, because there was a class same like junior high. In this class, students were required to make presentation about the subject they chose. I thought it was a great chance to raise the awareness of AIDS. There were only 40 students in the class, but it was a good experience to be able to communicate the importance with my own words.

Has there been any reaction to your participation in activities like RED RIBBON LIVE?

Kato: People often have a picture of “Miliyah Kato” as a person who is rebellious to society, and some people commented, “It’s quite a surprise that she is getting involved in such activities appealing to society.” But at the same time, there were also comments like, “Miliyah’s also in to that sort of stuff,” and “I think that’s really cool.” People in my generation said “I’m thinking of studying about AIDS”. I think this is because I have been called the charisma of high school girls, since I was in high school.



Journey leading up to the debut

You graduated from high school this spring (2007), didn't you?

Kato: Yes. I was asked the same question by Tamori who hosts the Music Station (a TV Asahi program), and answered "I got employed by the show business." He burst into laughter hearing this. [laughs]

There aren't any musicians in your family, but you write and compose your songs. Why did you choose to become a musician?

Kato: When I was in the fifth year at elementary school, I myself decided to take entrance exams for private junior high schools. As a result that I got into the habit of spending time at my desk, I was able to have much more time to think to myself. I was going through a rebellious phase, and I hated grown-ups. I hate they labeling me like, "you are such kind of person." At that time, I was always writing down my feelings to express my disgust. Then, after I got into a female junior high school, I got bullied a little and wrote down everything as lyrics. My collection of notebooks was quickly built up, and I thought to myself, "No one's going to take any notice of these if I keep them to myself." When thinking about the way to communicate my feelings to people, it suddenly occurred to me, "songs are the best way." At that time, everyone used to tell me that I was a good singer, and I sort of think that this could work. I was not so knowledgeable about music, but I thought I'd give it a go anyway. I wanted to show my lyrics to adults. If you want to make your CD, you should contact a record company, and of course it should be the world's Sony! I had an audition when I was in the first year at junior high. I showed my lyrics to the adults sitting in front of me, and they asked me if I wanted to work with them. They gave me three years to study, and helped me debut when I was in the first year at senior high.

Shifting from self to society

Comparing the thoughts and feelings that you wanted to express when you debuted, and the social activities including RED RIBBON LIVE you're involved in now, has your interest shifted from your own experiences to society through your experiences as an artist?

Kato: Before my debut, I was only interested in myself. I wanted to express myself, my thoughts, and my feelings. But there were high school girls of my generation who empathized with me, saying "That's how I felt too, I like your songs." It was just like this at that time. Then, my fan base grew bit by bit after my debut, and I began to find the relationship between me and others. Now, I am not singing for myself, but for others. As a result, I became kinder to people, and began to think about my influence on others. Although I look the way I do [laughs], I am really the type of person who takes things seriously. When I watch the news, I feel pressed to do something. I just thought that there was something I could do, because I had opportunities as a singer.

It is important to overcome things on your own

That's awesome! If you feel like that, you're extremely hard on yourself. Are you doing anything in particular to manage your health?

Kato: Because I am a singer, I always need to care my throat. Especially in winter, when it's dry, I really worry about moisture. I often don't turn on the heater; it's also good for the environment, isn't it? [laughs] I sometimes wear five layers of clothing, or put on two pairs of socks at home.

Do you do any kind of regular exercise?

Kato: Basically, I exercise most actively when I'm performing live. I regularly go to a gym and exercise before I start a tour.

You write, sing, dance, and design clothes...then what do you do in your spare time?

Kato: I've got many interests and hobbies, but I love impulse buying best. It is a way to relieve my stress, and the desire for possession is the strongest of all my desires. So, my daily life is a constant struggle against this desire. I absolutely love shoes. Whenever I've got time, I find myself looking for shoes on the net.

Don't you feel stress much?

Kato: I don't have any pain or sadness now. When I was in junior high, it was really tough. I felt so much stress at school that I scratch my desk with scissors. I used to think that life sucks, and felt this was all there was to life. But now, I really think that life is good, and it is important that I have improved my life under my own steam. Life is full of sadness and sad memories are unforgettable, but you can change things for the better by yourself. I experienced this on my own, so I can enjoy my daily life now.

I want to be a person who naturally attract others

What are your future aspirations as an artist and as a person?

Kato: I think people care about themselves first. I want to contribute to society now, but it is because I've established a certain status for myself, and am satisfied with myself, or more specifically, because I have enough money to live on. Otherwise, I think it is pretty difficult to try to do something for others. I think that's why the people like Audrey Hepburn (served as a goodwill ambassador for UNICEF in her latter years) who have established a high profile go to help refugees.

I'm asking myself, "What can I do for others, not for me?" and "what can I do now?" I want to do as much as possible to this end. With respect to this kind of social contribution, I don't think of my own gain or loss. I am participating in this year's RED RIBBON LIVE in that spirit.

I am a dog lover and have a pet dog. If donations are being collected at the dog hospital I go, I always make a donation. I hope that I can make contributions in this area, too.

My dog is a Chihuahua. When Chihuahua dogs became fashionable, everyone bought them. But now, I hear that public health centers are full of Chihuahua dogs abandoned by their owners. I wonder if there is something I can do.



I heard that when you were little, your mom would tell you “be strong and beautiful,” and then when you were 18, she started to tell you “be kind and gentle”. Do you think there is some kind of relationship between your mother’s words and the changes in your music and in yourself?

Kato: My mother is the person who influenced me the most. I clearly remember her words: “Mii-chan [nickname], what do you think you should do to be loved by others?” I didn’t know and just gave an offhand answer. She then said to me, “First, Mii, you have to love others.” This surprising answer almost drove me to tears, and ever since then, I have held the thought in my mind. With so many people in the world, I think it is an amazing destiny to meet others in this way. So I personally think that you should always live with love to others in your heart, even if you don’t know what sort of person someone is. I think if you can do this, you will become the person who attracts others naturally.

Speaking with you today, I feel strongly that your life is full of stories. I wish you all the best.

Kato: Thank you.

(November 14, 2007)

Miliyah KATO

Miliyah Kato was born in Aichi Prefecture in 1988. She began writing and composing songs at the age of 14, and in 2001, successfully passed a Sony Music audition. In 2004, she achieved popularity as a high school student/artist with the debut CD “Never let go / Yozora.” In 2007, she released CDs include “Eyes on You” (the theme song for the movie “Bubble e Go!!), “My Girl feat, COLOR” (the ending theme song for the TV drama “Hanayome to Papa”), “Love is...” (the ending theme song for the TV animation “Toward the Terra”), and “LALALA feat. Wakadanna (Shonannokaze) / FUTURECHECKA feat. SIMON, COMA-CHI & TARO SOUL.” Miliyah has appeared this and last year’s in RED RIBBON LIVE that promote AIDS prevention.



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