

Japanory

Tales from Tokyo. Expats in Tokyo. A British family experiencing their new life in Japan.

Wednesday, April 06, 2011

Gaijin, Flyjin, Stayjin and Tryjin

Gaijin

For the non Japanese speakers, the word "*gaijin*" means a foreigner or outsider. Or to be more precise "non-Japanese", or "alien". This word is a short form of *gaikokujin*, which means "foreign country people". [*"Gai" rhymes with tie with a hard g*].

We tend to stand out. Some *gaijin* find it an offensive word, but we aren't Japanese and cannot **be** Japanese, so why find it insulting? It's a description, that's all, and one I'm perfectly happy with.

Flyjin

A new term has arisen since the mega-earthquake on 11th March - *flyjin*. Now this term can be considered offensive as I believe it's intended to be a disparaging description. But I must admit to finding it a funny pun. *Flyjin* refers to those many thousands of expats who left Japan in the week or two after Fukushima started its ongoing crisis.

Of course, those that left the devastated areas shouldn't be labelled with this derogatory term. Perhaps it should only apply to those who left Tokyo? And anyway, it isn't just expats who have left; many Japanese have evacuated Tokyo as well. Some have moved to their families further away from the perceived dangers, while others have moved overseas.

The decision to leave must have been very hard for many people. Especially for those who had to leave the rest of their family in Tokyo or elsewhere in Japan. The incorrect and hyperbolic reporting in the Western media fueled the pressure on them to leave. Families in the "home" countries put immense demands on their relatives in Japan - I too had some emotional blackmail to deal with, so I know how it felt. Not nice.

For others though, it was a chance to take a long, paid-for holiday, for example, "[US Military Families That Fled Japan Receive Generous Travel Allowances](#)"...which hasn't helped "international relations" at all, as you can imagine.

Several people had no choice in the matter as their companies insisted upon them leaving for insurance purposes. Not everyone left Japan altogether, some moved further south in the country. A few are now returning but, as far as I have been told by their work colleagues, they aren't so highly respected anymore. Some may not even have jobs to come back to if the rumoured move of Tokyo companies to Osaka happens. It's also been hinted that if jobs are cut in the near future, who will be first against the wall? I must emphasise that this is speculation from talking to various business people here.

Others have just instructed removal companies to pack up all their belongings and ship them on - they are not returning to Japan at all.

Stayjin

Some people have accused those of us who stayed in Tokyo of being stupid, gullible, misinformed, brave, stubborn, bad parents, reckless or smug, amongst numerous other judgmental expressions.

Which am I?

Lots of guilt-trips have been poured onto us. "Think of the children!", "What if X happened, then Y and Z? What if? What if?" We've been judged as much as *flyjin* - but admittedly this judgement has probably just been made in private and hasn't appeared in the press.

But for some reason, it is the *flyjins* who feel they have to defend their actions repeatedly. Why is this? Is it because the word is out there? Surely people are allowed to make choices? Whether or not you agree with their choices is up to you and judgement is unnecessary, unkind and uncalled for. People make their decisions based on what they feel is best for their family at that time.

However, there does appear to be a palpable divide between *flyjin*, *stayjin* and Tokyoites. You see it when you go into a store, bar, restaurant, coffee shop. I see the surprised and pleased reactions in people's faces when they meet me on my regular dog walks. Few people really voice their true opinions, which may only make this worse. All I know for sure is that throughout the past three weeks, we have been greeted with happy surprise and a great deal of appreciation by our local shop and restaurant owners.

So, do I regret *not* leaving? An emphatic NO! The "What ifs" didn't happen. I am not glowing around the edges with radiation. It turned out the main problems I personally faced were having Rhiannon at home from school the whole time and the frequent, unnerving aftershocks. Oh, and the [*jishin yoi*](#). None of which were enough to take me away from my beloved Tokyo. Radiation was not an issue.

If I *had* left with Rhiannon, Tim and the pets would have had to stay in Tokyo. If there is one thing I've learned from this disaster is that **family matters more than anything**. Keeping us all together was vital for all our wellbeing. That was our joint decision and we don't regret it.

Incidentally, I met a girl yesterday who, as a child through to her teens, lived very close to Chernobyl when it went - she's fine. And as has been stated in this blog before, Fukushima cannot ever be another Chernobyl, whatever happens. I have done so much research I feel I could write a thesis on nuclear crises!

Tryjin

I really like this term. It's positive, it's go-getting, it's the can-do attitude that spurs people on to make the best of a very difficult time. And the *tryjins* are getting some amazing results.

Tryjin was coined by an amazing venture called '[Quakebook](#)', a "Twitter-sourced charity book about how the Japanese Earthquake at 2:46 on March 11, 2011 affected us all. All revenues from the QuakeBook Book go to the Japan Red Cross." *Tryjin* means foreigners who are trying to do everything they can to help Japan.

Buy the book, help Japan



I wish I could do more to help, and I wish I could be personally involved with Quakebook, but I found out about it too late and our impending move means there's little I can commit to right now. For now, all I can do is help publicise it as much as possible via Twitter, Facebook, various media contacts and here. Maybe in a few weeks when we are settled in Berlin, I can properly help Japan, albeit from afar. No idea how, though. Something will come up, I'm sure.

Other *tryjins* I've already mentioned (because I know them personally) are [Caroline Pover](#) and Dee and Trace from [37 Frames](#).

BUT, with the worldwide media concentrating on the nuclear crisis, the real tragedy is being overlooked.

Quelle:

<http://japanory.typepad.co.uk/japanory/2011/04/gaijin-flyjin-stayjin-and-tryjin.html>