

**Parliament Hill Panelist:
for the Era 21 Networking Breakfast for Young Canadians**

Pursuing Life with Purpose and Passion

Ana Miura

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Ottawa**

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Good morning Senator Poy, distinguished guests and students – especially students. I want to congratulate you all. You have been invited here because someone thinks you are extraordinary.

The last time I was at the parliamentary restaurant, I was 12 years old. I had been selected as one of 4 official representatives for the annual National Patrol Jamboree. I met Prime Minister Mulroney and many other political figures. I remember eating prime rib for lunch. It was so good I ate the fat.

To start off, I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself. My name is Ana Miura. I am a musician, a student and a single mother. I was born in Kingston but moved to Ottawa at the age of four. I am a first generation Canadian. My mother was born in the U.S., the eldest of 8 children. My father was born and raised in Argentina to Japanese immigrants. I have one older brother who is married and also living in the city.

I am currently finishing my Honours degree in psychology and upon graduation want to embark on a full time music career. I graduated from St Pius X Catholic High School, attended Queen's University and now am finishing up at the University of Ottawa. After graduation, I will be a full-time musician.

A large part of my achievements this year in music and discoveries of life have been based on my Asian background. We live in an incredible country that celebrates our cultures and encourages us to build the cultural mosaic that is Canada. We are allowed to fully express our heritages, our backgrounds, our roots, with freedom. There are many other countries where this is not so – we are very fortunate. In our cultural mosaic, the effect that my Asian heritage has had on my life has been vast. My Asian blood lets me look 6 or 7 years younger than I am!

I have had many opportunities this year because of my Asian heritage – including speaking before you right now! If you would have told me last year that by this time I would have:

- attended a Japanese tea ceremony in my kimono;
- been a kimono model on Japan day ceremonies at one of our national museums
- had the privilege and honour of learning how to sing in Japanese from Minister Tarahara of the Embassy of Japan,
- and had the opportunity to perform for two Japanese ambassadors,

I may not have believed you!

These incredible opportunities have had a ripple effect on my career and my life. Over the years, I have learned to pursue my goals with passion and purpose. I would like to share with you how my heritage and culture has enriched my life personally, as well as contributed to my success professionally.

PERSONALLY

A Connection with my Culture

I have always felt an affinity with my Japanese roots. My dad always said that I was ‘more Japanese’ and my brother was ‘more Argentinian’. Japanese art, culture and language always interested me.

Wearing Kimono on Japan Day

This year I was asked to participate in Japan day at the Museum of Civilization. Wearing the kimono my father had brought back from Japan for me, I was able to wear my heritage with pride. My father was in attendance and later I heard him speaking to my mom saying, “You know Clare, our daughter is really beautiful.” To which she replied “OF COURSE she is Carlos”. Being 27, you are not always told by your parents how beautiful you are as much as when you’re young! It was such a special moment for me to hear my parents’ validating words.

My Obachan

My grandmother, or Obachan lives in Argentina and only speaks Spanish and Japanese. I have no real way of communicating with her. To be able to sing in Japanese is something I can share with her and it has been a huge joy for me to be able to do so. Being involved in the Japanese community and learning more about my culture has allowed me to gain insights into who my family is; not

only my Obachan but other relatives, my father and most of all myself! It has shown me my strengths and my weaknesses.

PROFESSIONALLY

From an artistic standpoint, being able to sing in a different language is something unique, especially in Japanese. I currently perform 2 songs in Japanese and wish to add many more to my repertoire, including translations of my own compositions. I would love to do an album of only Japanese songs, which would help me to get closer to my deepest artistic and personal desire which is to tour Japan.

Through music in general I am learning so many lessons. I'd like to touch upon three.

Networking

You are now making relationships with people who are going to support you in achieving your dreams and goals. I have always approached these interactions with sincerity and consistency. Take the time to make a real relationship with people, not just a superficial one of only asking or taking.

I challenge you to remember the names of all the people sitting at your table and something personal about them.

Attitude is everything

Having a positive attitude is a key to success. Who would you rather work with: someone who is cranky and negative or someone who is upbeat and positive? Having a great attitude and being someone people want to work with may get you opportunities you might not have otherwise had.

Try to remember a time where your attitude hindered you. Think of ways you could have turned your negatives into positives.

Giving back to your Community

This is such an important thing to do, not just professional but personally as well. Each of us has a responsibility to help because we are able. To serve is the gift you give from your heart. It need not cost money; it is just a matter of giving your time. When I had this realization in 2003, this desire to help my community, I started Babes for Breasts, a music event benefiting social programs for those women with breast cancer. As founder and executive director of this not-for-profit entity, in January 2007 over \$10,000 was raised

for the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation. We performed 7 shows in 6 days, through 5 cities with 5 different female musicians sharing the stage. It was one of the most incredible experiences of my life.

I encourage you to give your time to your community in any way you can.

In becoming more involved with my community, I have been so fortunate to come across many mentors or as we say in Japanese, "sempai". Ms. Rebecca Benoit has been an inspiration to me as an amazing example of grace and intelligence in not only the Japanese community but outside it as well. I have also had the honour of learning from Minister Tarahara as well as Mr. Toshi Yonehara. These two distinguished and intelligent gentlemen have taken their own time out of their very busy schedules to bring me into the Japanese community. I have learned lessons of patience, hard work and diligence through their example.

As I have had great sempai, you also will have them too! Seek out these people in your community. There are always elders willing to teach someone with an open heart and mind.

You are the future. I leave you with one more piece of advice: FOLLOW YOUR HEART. I did not always know I wanted to be a musician. I come from a family of health care providers: my father is a psychiatrist, my mother is a nurse and my brother is completing his PhD in neuroscience. I went against the grain to do something I love. For many years I changed my mind about my career, but whatever I did, I pursued with passion and purpose. I encourage you to do the same.

Cherish the amazing country you live in, CELEBRATE and EMBRACE your culture!