

Invites you to a discussion with **Satsuki Uno**, Global Marketer and localizer for a Japanese Gaming Company, **Robin O'Day**, University of North Georgia

# “Japanese Freelance Workers Struggle during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Social Media, Critique, and Political Resistance”

Date: Wednesday, November 4

Time: 7pm-8pm (Tokyo time)

Presentation will be followed by Q and A

On Zoom. Open to all; Language English

Please register [HERE](#)



<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=p-YOaaVN3E-jFrtZnYKlopSDtnsMuJVAtzRnSitkskJUN1NKQTBCVtDER1E4VkJZKTEc4MIJR1l2Ri4u>

Freelance work has proliferated in Japan over the last decade due in part to the Abe administration's encouragement of work style reform to reinvigorate the economy. However, freelancers have heavily criticized the government for treating them unequally in their compensation program for workers affected by the coronavirus. The COVID-19 pandemic and emergency declaration have exposed freelancers' employment insecurity and lack of access to a social safety net during an economic crisis. Intense debates have erupted on social media about how much companies and the government should be responsible for freelance workers' welfare. Defenders of providing lower levels of compensation to freelancers draw on pre-existing neoliberal arguments that freelancers, like other irregular workers, are personally responsible (jiko sekinin) for themselves. However, many freelancers have pushed back by arguing that freelance work has become so mainstream that it no longer makes sense to treat it as some unique and separate work category. Being technologically savvy, freelancers have quickly leveraged their familiarity with social media platforms to criticize the unequal economic compensation and to demand increased benefits and recognition for their work in a surprising act of political defiance.

**Satsuki Uno** is currently a global marketer and localizer for a Japanese gaming company. MA graduate of ITASIA program at the University of Tokyo. Her main research projects include the Japanese Millennial generation's work cultures and social media analysis. Publications include "[SEALDs \(Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy\): Research Note on Contemporary Youth Politics in Japan](#)" in the Asia-Pacific Journal (2015) (with Slater et al.) and "[Mothers, and Radical Women](#)" in Anthropology News (2015) (with Haruka Danzuka and Maya Hauser).

**Robin O'Day** is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Georgia. He is a cultural anthropologist who focuses on contemporary Japanese civil society, social movements, political protest, and activism. Publications include "[Differentiating SEALDs from Freeters and Precariats: The politics of youth movements in contemporary Japan](#)" in the Asia-Pacific Journal (2015) and "Mass Media Representations of Youth Social Movements in Japan" (with David H. Slater and Satsuki Uno) in [Social Movements and Political Activism in Contemporary Japan: Re-emerging from Invisibility](#) edited by David Chiavacci and Julia Obinger from Routledge Press.

Uno and O'Day will be discussing their recently published paper: "[Japanese Freelance Workers Struggle during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Social Media, Critique, and Political Resistance](#)" from our collection in the [Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus](#)

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**Notes on the full series:** This discussion is the first in a series we will hold over the autumn on the causes, effects and current status of vulnerable populations in Japan during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each discussion will be moderated by David Slater and will give listeners a chance to meet the authors and others associated with the articles (advocates, activists, supporters, and participants). The authors will provide insight into the articles, as well as background to the conditions of data collection in the age of Corona, an update on the situation and a look forward—asking if we are any better prepared for next time.

An introduction to the whole collection here: [Vulnerable Populations in Japan under Covid-19: A lull in the storm](#) by David H. Slater

**Abstract for the full collection of papers:** This is a collection of original articles on diverse vulnerable populations in Japan in the wake of the new coronavirus pandemic. The effects of COVID-19 are felt differently, with some among us at much greater risk of infection due to preexisting health and welfare conditions. For others, perhaps more than the risk of infection, it is the precautions taken to mitigate the risk for the whole population, such as lockdowns and business closures, that have pulled away the already fragile safety net of state and civil society organization (CSO) support, leading to increased marginalization and social exclusion. The goal of this set of papers is to document the conditions of those that have been most directly affected by the virus and to provide background on the conditions that made them vulnerable in the first place, notably chronic conditions that are brought into more obvious relief in light of emergency measures. Each of the authors had a pre-established relationship with those affected populations and employed various ethnographic approaches, some face to face, others digitally via Zoom interviews and SNS exchanges. In this moment of what appears to be relative calm, we hope that our collection, quickly compiled in an attempt to capture the ever-changing situation, will give some insight into how those most vulnerable are faring in this time of crisis and provide information that will allow us to prepare better before the next wave comes our way.