



## **‘Wa’ — Harmony — is Shoko Kanazawa's 1st Reiwa New Year Kanji for JAPAN Forward Readers**

Shoko Kanazawa, 34, a Japanese calligrapher who also happens to have Down Syndrome, decided that the kanji for the first New Year of the Reiwa era will be wa, which means “harmony.” It is also often used as shorthand for “Japan.”

We visited Shoko at the close of 2019, and, for JAPAN Forward readers, she wrote a bold wa to ring in 2020.

We rang the doorbell at Shoko's family home in Kugahara, in Tokyo's Ota Ward, and Shoko came to the foyer to greet us, wearing a cream-colored kimono and hakama bearing a stylized block lightning pattern in silver and gold that she had made just for this occasion.

As she took her place before the washi (Japanese paper), Shoko assumed the seiza seated position, closed her eyes, and quieted her mind. After offering a prayer, she took in her hands an enormous brush and wrote out the kanji in one sudden go.

### **Shoko's Amazing Year Ahead**

When her calligraphy work was done, Shoko was back to being all smiles. “Happy New Year!” she said.

“My heartfelt wish while writing wa was that I want everyone to be happy and well.”

Shoko does much of her calligraphy work at her family home, where we visited her. But ever since she turned 30, she has been living by herself.

During that time her career has also broken new ground. In 2018, for instance, she was selected to be one of just 12 artists asked to create an official art poster for the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics.

From January 1, 2020, she will be in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, where there will be a solo exhibition of her artwork. In April of 2020, she will again visit Taiwan, this time in Taipei, for a live performance of her calligraphy. She will also give calligraphic performances in Los Angeles, as well as in the Japanese Garden in Portland, Oregon.

### **Light, Prayer, Harmony**

This marks the third year in a row that JAPAN Forward has arranged with Shoko's mother, mentor, and manager, Yasuko Kanazawa, for Shoko to write a New Year's kanji for our readers. The first year, 2018, Shoko wrote hikari or “light,” and in 2019 her kanji for us was inori — “prayer.”

The idea for a Shoko Kanazawa New Year's kanji is inspired by the “This Year's Kanji” event organized every year by the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation, which sponsors a calligraphic exposition at Kiyomizudera Temple in Kyoto. The kanji chosen for this 2020 was rei, the first character in the new era name of Reiwa, so Yasuko and Shoko decided that this year's Shoko Kanazawa New Year's kanji should be the second character in Reiwa, wa.

[GO TO THE NEXT PAGE]



There is more to Shoko's wa than the era name, however. As Yasuko explained: “People have all sorts of difficulties, and there are problems everywhere. We want the world to have wa. We want people to live in harmony and reconciliation with one another.”

From all of us at JAPAN Forward, and on behalf of Shoko and Yasuko Kanazawa, we wish all of you a happy and harmonious Reiwa new year!

Source: **‘Wa’ — Harmony — is Shoko Kanazawa's 1st Reiwa New Year Kanji for JAPAN Forward Readers**  
<https://japan-forward.com/wa-harmony-is-shoko-kanazawas-1st-reiwa-new-year-kanji-for-japan-forward-readers/>

## 令和初「新年の一字」は「和」 書家の金澤翔子さんが揮毫

ダウン症の人気書家、金澤翔子さん（34）が揮毫する令和最初の「新年の一字」が「和」に決まり、翔子さんが令和元年の年の瀬に、力強い「和」の一文字を完成させた。翔子さんは令和元年の12月27日、東京都大田区の久が原にある実家の応接間に、この日のためにあつらえたという金色と銀色の稲妻模様が特徴の袴と明るいクリーム色の着物に身を包み登場。和紙を前に正座して目をつむり、まずは心を鎮めた。しばし祈りを捧げた後、巨大な筆を手にとり一気に書きあげた。

揮毫の後、笑顔に戻った翔子さんは「ハッピーニューイヤー！元気ですか。皆さんに元気になってもらいと思い、心を込めて書きました」と語った。

30歳になってから一人暮らしに挑戦している翔子さん。昨年は、2020年東京五輪に向けて公式アートポスターを描く12人のアーティストの一人に選ばれたほか、新年には、元旦から台湾の高雄市で個展を開催。4月には、台北や米オレゴン州のポートランド日本庭園、ロサンゼルスでの揮毫パフォーマンスなども予定されている。

「新年の一字」は、翔子さんと二人三脚で活動する母親の泰子さんに、一年の始まりに最もふさわしい一字を選んで揮毫してくれるよう、JAPAN Forwardが提案して今年で3年目。今回は、年末恒例の「今年の漢字」（日本漢字能力検定協会主催）が昨年12月12日に、「令」となったのを受け、泰子さんと翔子さんとで「和」とすることを決めた。前回の一字は「祈」、前々回は「光」だった。

泰子さんは、「人間にはいろいろと問題はありますが、調和を大切にしていきたいですね」と話している。

出典:令和初「新年の一字」は「和」 書家の金澤翔子さんが揮毫

<http://japan-forward.com/japanese/>令和初「新年の一字」は「和」 書家の金澤翔子さんが揮毫/