

### Humor Reaction 2 (Question 2)

The Japanese commercials that stereotyped foreigners were very interesting to see. I understood why there were different reactions between foreigners living in Japan and foreigners living abroad. Most of the enraged foreigners in Japan were probably long term residents who have to deal with the stereotypes constantly. As a foreigner living in Japan for one year, and as of now, having been here for about two months, I can understand the reactions of the long term residents, though the ANA airline commercial was not as off-putting to me as it was to the long term residents.

Living in Japan, foreigners have to deal with these stereotypes in action. Though I'm certain that Japan has become a more friendly and inclusive place to foreigners over the years, foreigners are still painted as different and strange for many people. For example, I'm often noticeably stared at for having blonde hair; while this is, in general, not threatening, it does highlight for me that I am an outsider in Japan, an anomaly. I feel this must be particularly frustrating for long term residents who have made Japan their home. Furthermore, this staring behavior I have not seen directed towards foreigners in the United States. Granted, in the US, particularly in California, people of varied descent are common, but my friends from England and other countries also find the staring behavior to be unique to Japan. Though I admit this could be because in our own countries we would not be the subject of staring, so we do not notice it. Perhaps in the US, young black males in particular might have a similar experience of being looked at, though I think, unfortunately, with much more hostility and wariness than the Japanese generally look at foreigners.

The Japanese commercials we watched highlight what the Japanese consider weird and funny about foreigners. While for me personally, the ANA commercial was not very offensive feeling, it does create a caricature of a stereotypical foreigner in the Japanese way of thinking that is uncomfortably similar to the way caricatures were created of Jews and black people in the past. The makers of the commercial may not have meant any harm, but they are perpetuating the idea that foreigners are 'other', just as the caricatures of black people and Jews separated them from 'normal' people. Pointing out the similarity between these caricatures is probably a bit extreme, as those who drew the caricatures of blacks and Jews probably did feel they were inferior. I think the Japanese commercial makers were just trying to be funny and point out what stereotypically makes a foreigner odd; I just found the slight similarity to be somewhat disconcerting.

In the ANA commercial, there was no indication that the man dressed as a foreigner was an idiot or anything of the sort, he just looked different; this is why I was not personally particularly offended. However, the second commercial showed the 'foreign woman' as both physically different, as well as a bit ditzzy and dumb sounding. I don't think the bread maker commercial meant any harm, but I was more offended by it. I think this commercial was more offensive to me because not only did it stereotype looks, it stereotyped actions. I think negative

stereotypes of how people act are more harmful than stereotypes of how people look. Physical stereotypes are easy to disprove, as obviously not all foreigners have large noses and blonde hair, any Japanese person can see that for themselves. But stereotypes of actions are harder because they create an expectation of personality and skill level, which can require the creation of a more personal relationship to disprove.

Luckily, I suspect that in modern times many Japanese do not truly subscribe to these stereotypes. Although, I still think that even though the commercials were done in fun spirit, they are a bit disrespectful to the many foreigners living within Japan. Probably it would be best if such commercials were toned down or eliminated, so as to not publicly perpetuate stereotypes that can affect how people are treated. (679 words)