

1. Tell me about yourself (for example, current job, hobbies, something that made you happy recently etc)...

My name is Mariko Kageyama (蔭山麻里子). I am originally from Nagoya, Japan. As an active independent woman, I have lived in various parts of the United States for the last 19 years. I currently live in Seattle and telework for a law firm.

I wonder if I deserve a title of a lifelong learner—I was brave enough to go back to school in my forties as a full-time law student at the University of Washington and obtained a Juris Doctor in 2018. Most recently I passed the bar examination on my second try earlier in 2020 (Note: I was probably the very last in my class who managed to pass the exam). I am proud of my educational accomplishments despite multiple unexpected turns and challenges I encountered in the past.

2. What is your relationship with CWAJ (scholar, volunteer or something else)? Both your current position/situation and any previous involvement, please.

I was one of 2001 CWAJ Study Abroad Scholars. It was this scholarship that made it possible for me to earn a Master of Arts in Museum Science at Texas Tech University and begin my museum career immediately afterward. I am still truly grateful to the CWAJ for its general support.

I used to be a zoologist-to-be at Kyoto University studying wild animals. I had never travelled abroad until one hot summer day my first cross-Pacific flight left me alone in the middle of Texas deserts. My new life started rather dramatically—a week into the first semester when the 9-11 happened, the day I remember vividly still today. Fortunately, however, I had a wonderful experience and made best friends while there. The interdisciplinary training successfully equipped me with special knowledge needed to manage natural history collections, unique resources for scientific research and education. Upon graduation I was happy landing a dream entry-level job at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and then a permanent job at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History in Boulder, spending nearly a decade as a zoological collection specialist (Note: you can find out more about my profile from this [link](#)).

Around 2013, I bumped into formidable obstacles at work. Without going into much detail, I felt completely at loss and miserable in the dark tunnel and had to leave the museum position I was passionate about. After careful self-reflection I decided to pursue law as an 'add-on' to my intellectual strength in science and museums. I also wanted to become more useful to society in a meaningful way. The rest of my story is what I already described earlier.

3. What are your goals for the future (professional or personal)?

With a new lawyering skill under my belt, my next goals are to become legal counsel and practice law in my favorite space of science, technology, art and culture. I am eager to give back to the communities that enabled me to grow professionally and personally over the years. My hope is that eventually I will be able to provide creative solutions to complex legal questions for clients.

4. What would you say to your younger self if you had the chance?

Your trajectory is never going to be a simple straight line but rather a winding curve with full of bumps and forks. Deviating from your originally planned course is not necessarily a failure. Be flexible with your future plans, but once you make a decision, take full responsibility for it.

Second, listen very carefully to people with different or even opposite views from yours, especially constructive criticism from your bosses, mentors and peers.

5. What would you like to say to the current members or future scholars of the CWAJ?

Probably it is preaching to the choir, but enjoy building new relationship with people you meet and more importantly, stay in touch with those you liked working with, not to mention this remarkable group, CWAJ! Fortunately, today's social media makes networking so easy for you. Do not hesitate to "friend" me personally.

To recent and future CWAJ scholars—wherever you are in your life journey, you are in the driver's seat. Your life is going to be filled with excitements, adventures and happiness, but also with occasional challenges. Once in a while please give yourself a treat and a good rest. Reflect on the path you have followed and express your gratitude to those who have offered help and sent cheers to you along the way. Remember to pay it forward. Always look out for interesting opportunities to seize.