

## Study Abroad Case 5

# Getting Out of My Comfort Zone

by: Rihoko Nikaya

I had a high expectation on my study abroad experience because, as a CJSP student, I was already studying in English in a prominent university like Waseda. While my life at Waseda was busy enough, I was not fully satisfied. I needed to be challenged. I was eager to gain deeper academic knowledge, study what I am passionate about, acquire wider networks of international professionals, live independently, and push myself to experience the unfamiliar. The Global Leadership Fellows Program (GLFP) coincided with my interests and passion. The program, which includes a semester of classes that prepares students for their time abroad, two semesters of seminars and forums, and the creation of a graduation thesis with U.S. students after studying abroad, provides learning opportunities beyond a simple study abroad experience. It was an honor to be selected for both the GLFP and the Tobitate Study Abroad Scholarship program as this gave me the opportunities to dive into such a stimulating environment.



Life at Georgetown University was not easy. Living away from my parents, having a crazy roommate, managing my life and studies, withstanding the pressure of constant competition, and finding new opportunities... such challenges came up one after another. Not to mention that I'm having trouble with the language, too.

However, it is precisely by overcoming these challenges that I could truly appreciate what I learned, experienced, and the people around me. Studying inequality, injustice, and various social and global issues with excellent professors and passionate students was an exciting and fulfilling environment for me. Also, I was able to lobby on behalf of the UN at the U.S. Capitol. This experience made me realize how much I still



have to learn on the topic and ignited my passion to further deepen my understanding on the issues.

At the UNA-USA summit, a three-day training program for lobbyists, I got to meet with many local activists, professionals, diplomats, UN officers, students, and young professionals, who all have faith in and endeavor to spread the values of the UN. That was simply one of the most inspiring and encouraging experiences in my life. Besides school and work, my trip to Cuba and my stay with the Amish community in Indiana during a school break greatly expanded my knowledge on local culture and values. At the end of the school year, I was

reluctant to say good-bye to my friends, but we all hope that our paths will meet somewhere again along our future career.

My study abroad experience has not ended, however. I still have two more months of my internships at a Japanese TV station and a NPO working for nonviolent social movement, and I will have the GLFP seminars after returning to Waseda. But my experiences here have given me the confidence to jump at challenges and to get out of my comfort zone. From now on, I will continue to challenge myself, because I believe that is how one gains the greatest lessons, joys, and accomplishments.

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