

◎ホノルル市長杯第44回全日本青少年英語弁論大会 全国大会出場

高校1年生のAさんは、2014年6月22日に大阪市で行われた、第44回ホノルル市長杯全日本青少年英語弁論大会全国大会（ECC外語学院ほか主催）に出場しました。

この弁論大会では、「相互理解を深めるために Understanding Each Other Better」というメインテーマで全国の高校生・大学生が応募し、地区予選を通過した者のみが全国大会に出場できます。Aさんは地区予選において全国大会に出られる代表者8名に選ばれました。

Aさんの弁論の演題は「**Make No Assumptions**（先入観を持つのはやめよう）」でした。

また、1学期終業式の際に、全校生徒の前で発表を行いました。

以下に、スピーチ原稿を掲載いたします。その下に、内容を日本語で要約したものも掲載いたします。

<Make No Assumptions>

When you hear the phrase, “understanding each other better,” I expect that most people would connect that with “communication.” But it is far more than that—it is about acceptance, of understanding someone’s culture and not getting your assumptions ahead of you. It is about leaping over cultural boundaries and getting to know people simply for who they are.

Blond hair. Fair skin. Bright, blue eyes. On my first day at my new school in California, perhaps this is what I had expected to see the most. But what I saw was very unexpected. Instead, among the sea of students I saw various faces and cultures, ranging from Asian American to African American.

At first, I was unsure of what to make of this situation. I grew up in Japan, where I spent most of my days with my Japanese friends, eating Japanese food in a Japanese house. I certainly had not spoken with people from five different countries in a single day. This was what was expected of me at my new school. My days were hectic, and I gradually grew frustrated at the prospect of getting used to this blend of culture, when I could not speak English fluently in the first place.

However, looking back I see this as a turning point in my life. Sure, getting over the cultural differences upon arrival in California was not easy. In turn, though, I attained the knowledge that blond hair, fair skin, and bright, blue eyes did not an American make. But most importantly, I have no problem working alongside people of Spanish, African American, American, British, or Indonesian background now.

But the struggle did not stop there. After coming back to Japan, I faced another problem, of fitting in. Upon arrival, I was hit with the difficulty of transitioning from my previous American life to an entirely new Japanese life. Perhaps it was the fact that I could speak English and had a distinct “returnee” aura, but my new classmates did not try to befriend me. They did not try to come near me, and I gradually grew afraid. I felt that I had to lose all of my American traits and become very Japanese if I wanted to fit in

and make friends. I became constantly obsessed with hiding my English abilities and stowing away the real me that was lying underneath my strained attempts to fit in. It was excruciating, because I had assumed that once I stopped assuming like I had back in California, everyone else would do likewise. But I was wrong, and during those painful days, I saw assumption as a tragic, hateful act when you can learn so much from the people you decided to discriminate and eliminate from your life. I was disappointed with how so many people in my own country did not understand the true concept of “understanding each other better.”

Nearly ten years ago, my fellow classmates took me in, even with my broken English. But do I see such an act of kindness here in our society, today?

In order to change our society’s way of thinking and create an environment where we can truly understand each other, we must first lose assumptions. Assumptions, like biases, prevent people from finding others’ talents, abilities, and secret inner beauty. America’s proud baseball player Jackie Robinson is famous for his strong will to not fight against assumption. Despite the jeers of the crowds and even his teammates based on the color of his skin, he did nothing. Robinson simply did what he could for his team, and leave the words, “I’m not concerned with your liking or disliking me...All I ask is that you respect me as a human being,” I am not saying that we all need to become like Jackie Robinson. All I am asking is for each one of you in this room to take a step back and see whether or not you make assumptions in your daily life, and take a moment to observe your ways of thinking. And to realize that it is not the outside but the inside that really matters, and that everyone deserves respect as a human being. The responsibility of “understanding each other better” lies on all of us, and we had better start acting like it.

<日本語要約>

「相互理解」と聞いて、大抵の人はそれを「コミュニケーションをとる」と理解するだろう。しかし「相互理解」とはコミュニケーションをとることだけではなく、国境、人種、あらゆる違いを乗り越えお互いを知ることである。この社会を実現するために、一人ひとりがまず先入観を持たないようにすることが大事である。



▲ 1学期終業式での発表の様子