

Nobue Tokudomi, President of International Youth Exchange Organization of Yamaguchi

Yamaguchi Program was blessed with good weather during the program and the participants who had looked a little tired got energized instantly as they were embraced by nature in Yamaguchi.

In the main activity of the program, Discussion Camp, we learned about history of the end of Edo period related with Shokasonjuku, one of the heritages in Hagi City which had just been designated as the World Heritage Site as well as Shoin Yoshida and young patriots. They chose key words which impressed them and had a discussion in groups. Many groups were impressed by the fact that Shoin Yoshida equally accepted anyone who wanted to study without discriminating by hierarchy, and participants presented active opinions stating the importance of equal opportunity for education and gender equality in promotion at work.

Next day after we learned a lot about Hagi, we visited Hagi city. By Seeing Shokasonjuku, participants seemed to be very surprised to learn how small the school was but influenced such a number of young men who became the pioneer of modern

Japan. This visit could help them understand the lecture of the previous day even more. We also visited Hagi Pottery Workshop. Hagi pottery artist, Mr. Nobuhiko Kaneko has been making pottery for fifty years and his works seemed to have messages beyond language to the participants.

At the courtesy visit of Yamaguchi Prefectural Government, participants asked questions such as how Yamaguchi Prefecture has been implementing international exchanges or how citizens' voices are delivered and utilized in the policies, and how the prefecture promotes culture. Afterward, we visited Junior High School of Yamaguchi University. In the English class participants had a chance to communicate with students. The participants were surprised that the students were able to point where Dominican Republic and Mozambique were on the world atlas, and they were impressed by the students' positive learning attitude in class.

The phrase by Shoin Yoshida "Practice what you learn is important": I hope the participants will practice what they learned from this visit.



Takato Ohashi, Discussion Participant

Since I have studied in England for a year and been interested in cross cultural exchange, I decided to join this program. Both Mozambique and Dominican Republic were not familiar to me so I was more nervous and anxious rather than excited to meet them. Also I was a little worried because I had a feeling what if they didn't have a good impression about Japan.

On the first day, everyone of each country seemed nervous and hesitated a little. But through the orientation and ice breaker, the tension instantly melted away. In the welcome reception at night, I served as an emcee and with the support of the interpreter I was able to conduct the ceremony well although I struggled with differences in nuances between English and Japanese.

On the second day we received a lecture about Shoin Yoshida, and had a discussion as well as a

presentation. As we discussed among three countries, I realized that it was more important to exchange ideas actively than pursuing the right answer. Though discussing seriously we were able to have fun and became good friends after all.

On the third day, I accompanied with the participants to Hagi City. I felt sorry for my lack of knowledge when participants asked me some questions.

As globalism speeds up, the importance of English language to nurture the sense of internationalism has gained attention. However, from this experience, I came to realize that it is important to have enough knowledge to speak about one's own county. Even though you don't have confidence in English, to have positive attitude to deliver your idea with your own words is very important.

