

SINO-JAPANESE YOUTH CONFERENCE 2019

REPORT - CYRUS CHAK



2019 19/7 - 25/7

SUMMER HOLIDAY - AT LI PO CHUN UNITED WORLD COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

THE SINO-JAPANESE YOUTH CONFERENCE (SJYC) IS AN ANNUAL EVENT, HELD TO BRING TOGETHER TEENAGERS FROM CHINA, HONG KONG, TAIWAN AND JAPAN. SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONSHIPS HAVE BEEN COMPLICATED AND UNSTEADY SINCE AT LEAST 1895; THE ORGANISERS OF SJYC WANT TO CHANGE THIS, AND THEY BELIEVE THAT SUCH A GOAL COULD NEVER BE ACHIEVED UNLESS THERE IS MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE PEOPLE INVOLVED. US TEENAGERS ARE THAT IDEAL 'PEOPLE', SINCE WE ARE THE NEXT GENERATION THAT CAN IMPACT FUTURE SOCIETY. I WAS LUCKILY ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE ELEVENTH CONFERENCE, AND I WOULD HONESTLY SAY I NEVER REGRET JOINING IT.

APPLICATION — A SURPRISING ONE

I EXPECTED THE APPLICATION FORM TO BE SOME BLANK BOXES FOR MY PERSONAL INFORMATION. WHAT I WAS NOT EXPECTING WAS THREE ESSAY-BASED QUESTIONS, FIVE HUNDRED WORDS EACH. THE EXPERIENCE WAS QUITE A STORY.

ON THAT DAY, I PROMISED MY TEACHER TO FILL IN THE FORM ONCE I GOT HOME, SINCE I THOUGHT, 'WELL, IT'S JUST AN APPLICATION FORM'. BY THE TIME I FINALLY FINISHED MY REVISION ON MIDNIGHT, I OPENED UP THE FORM. BEING GREETED WITH MORE FIVE-HUNDRED-WORD ESSAYS WAS QUITE A FRUSTRATING EXPERIENCE! AND GUESS WHAT, THOSE QUESTIONS WERE ALL BASED ON RECENT SINO-JAPANESE EVENTS, WHICH I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT. I FOUGHT ON FOR TWO HOURS, BESIDE MY BED WITH MY TABLET, JUST TO FIND THAT I FORGOT TO SUBMIT WHEN I WOKE UP AT 6. THE PAGE WAS REFRESHED WHEN I SLEPT, SO, I HAD TO REDO EVERYTHING ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL. LUCKILY, I MANAGED TO COMPLETE THE MISSION IN TIME, BUT WITH LITTLE IDEA OF WHAT I HAD WRITTEN IN THE FIRST PLACE!

OF COURSE, I UNDERSTAND THAT ALL THIS PROBABLY NEED NOT BE IN THE REPORT, BUT TO ANY HISTORY STUDENTS WHO ARE GOING TO READ THIS, I BELIEVE THIS WILL BE A COMMON EXPERIENCE. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THIS INCIDENT STARTED AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE. I LATER UNEXPECTEDLY

GOT ACCEPTED TO STAGE TWO, WHICH WAS AN INTERVIEW, ABOUT PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, OPINIONS TOWARDS POLITICS, AND INTER-PERSONAL COMMUNICATION. YOU CAN PICK ANY LANGUAGE TO ANSWER IN, SO I CHOSE ENGLISH. AND THROUGH THE ONLINE SKYPE INTERVIEW, I MET THE HEAD ORGANIZER IN THE HONG KONG TEAM — ARIF. (THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE CHANGES EVERY YEAR.) AFTER A FEW WEEKS OF WAITING, I EVENTUALLY RECEIVED THE CONFIRMATION EMAIL. REALISING THAT I GOT ACCEPTED DESPITE GIVING SOME UNCONVENTIONAL VIEWPOINTS (IN BOTH THE WRITTEN FORM AND THE INTERVIEW), I WAS LESS WORRIED. THIS WAS A CONFERENCE THAT ALLOWED ALL SORTS OF OPINIONS, ONE WHERE WE WERE FREE TO SPEAK OUT.

ACTIVITIES IN SJYC

OPENING CEREMONY - BREAKING THE ICE

THE FIRST NIGHT AT LPCUWC WAS THE OPENING CEREMONY, HELD DURING DINNER TIME. WE HAD TO WEAR OUR NATIONAL COSTUMES, WHERE I SAW MANY QIPAOs, TANGZHUANGS AND KIMONOS. AT FIRST, I WAS FEELING A BIT CRINGEY, BUT THE ENTHUSIASM ON DISPLAY CHANGED MY MIND. I REALISED THE ONLY WAY I COULD ENJOY THE ACTIVITIES AHEAD WAS IF I COULD READ THE ROOM AND TRY TO FIT IN. SJYC HAS A 'BUDDY GROUP' SYSTEM, WHERE WE WERE SPLIT INTO GROUPS. AT THAT NIGHT, I MET WITH MINE. SINCE IT WAS THE FIRST TIME, AND DUE TO LANGUAGE BARRIERS, IT WAS QUITE EMBARRASSING. THE ORGANISERS PLAYED GAMES WITH US TO BREAK THE ICE, FOLLOWED BY AMAZING PERFORMANCE WHICH COMBINED CULTURES FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, INCLUDING LION AND DRAGON DANCES, AND ALSO POP DANCE. I FELT MUCH LESS SHY AS NIGHT FELL, AND IT HELPED ME A LOT IN THE UPCOMING ACTIVITIES, BECAUSE ALL OF THEM WOULD INVOLVE GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

CULTURAL SECTION - GETTING TO KNOW MORE PEOPLE

THE FIRST ACTIVITY ON THE SECOND DAY WAS ABOUT THE CULTURE OF OUR FOUR DIFFERENT REGIONS. THIS WAS DIVIDED INTO GENDER, FOOD, EDUCATION AND TRADITION. EACH PART HAD ITS OWN GAMES AND LESSONS.

TO ME, THE MOST MEMORABLE ONE WAS ON TRADITION, WHERE I LEARNT DRAGON DANCING, AND HAD TO CO-OPERATE WITH COMPLETE STRANGERS. IT WAS NOT AS DIFFICULT AS I THOUGHT, THOUGH PROBABLY BECAUSE IT WAS FOR BEGINNERS. THE KNOWLEDGE OBTAINED WAS FAIR ENOUGH FOR SUCH A SHORT EVENT, BUT ONE COULD HAVE LEARNT MUCH MORE FROM A SIMPLE WEB SEARCH. IT WAS THEREFORE THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS THAT PROVED THE MOST VALUABLE. SINCE WE WERE GROUPED RANDOMLY AND NOT IN OUR BUDDY GROUPS, I GOT TO MEET A LOT OF NEW PEOPLE.



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT — PURE SKILLS

THIS ACTIVITY TAUGHT US THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 'GOALS' AND 'VALUES': TO PUT SHORTLY, GOALS ARE GENERATED FROM OUR VALUES. WHEN MULTIPLE PARTIES HAVE THE SAME GOAL, BUT ONLY ONE CAN BE SATISFIED, CONFLICT EMERGES. FOR A RESOLUTION, WE HAVE TO DETERMINE CORE VALUES — WHERE THAT STAKEHOLDER'S GOAL COME FROM. FOR EXAMPLE, TWO COUNTRIES DISPUTING OVER AN ISLAND. OWNERSHIP WAS THE GOAL, BUT THEIR CORE VALUES WERE VERY DIFFERENT: ONE WANTED TO USE THE LAND TO REDUCE POPULATION DENSITY, WHILE THE OTHER WANTED TO USE THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE ISLAND. WE COULD THEN MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON THEIR VALUES, PERHAPS TO DIVIDE THE ISLAND, OR LETTING ONE COUNTRY OWN THE TERRITORY, BUT IN THE CONDITION OF GIVING UP ITS NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE OTHER COUNTRY. A MUTUALLY AGREEABLE CONCLUSION.

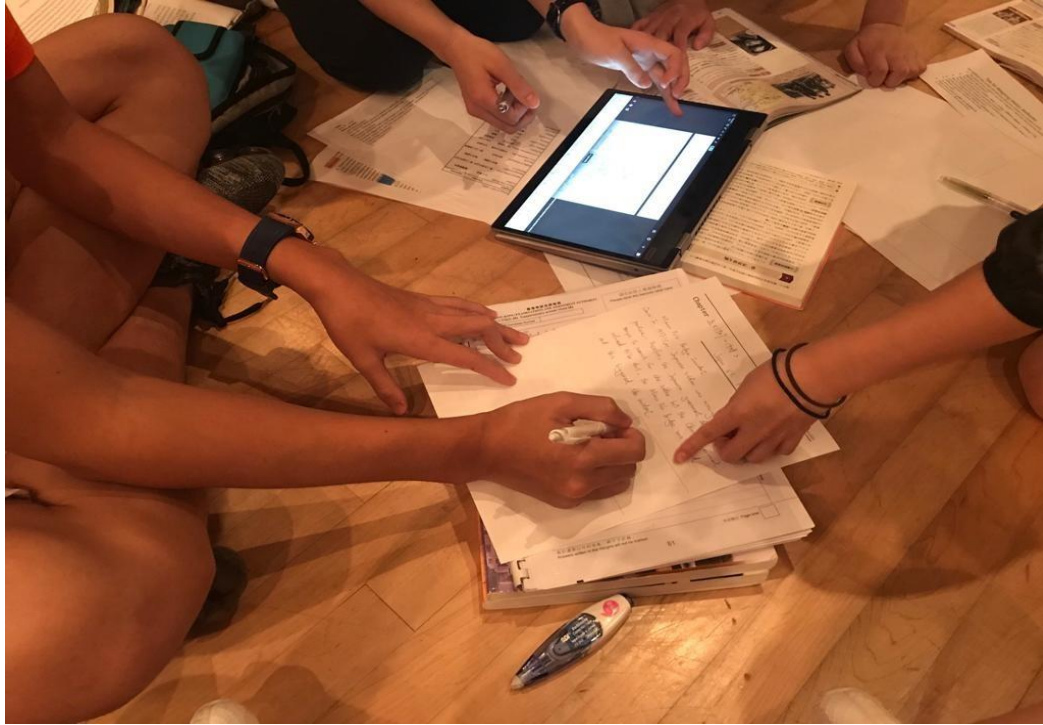
MEDIA LITERACY — Co-operation

THIS SESSION TOLD US HOW THE MEDIA CAN STRONGLY AFFECT OUR VIEWS TOWARDS OTHERS. IT ALSO TAUGHT US THREE WAYS OF HOW THE MEDIA PERSUADES - LOGOS (STATISTICS, WHICH CAN BE FAKED), ETHOS (BRAND OR AUTHORITY), AND PATHOS (EMOTIONS). IN THE END, WE TRIED MAKING A NEWSPAPER BY OURSELVES.



HISTORY SECTION — BIAS?

AGAIN, THIS WAS DEBATES AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS. BUT THERE WAS AN EXTRA ACTIVITY, WHERE WE HAD TO COMPARE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS FROM OUR REGIONS AND FIND OUT THE DIFFERENCES. AS EXPECTED, THE JAPANESE BOOKS BARELY MENTIONED THE NANJING MASSACRE AND THE MARCO POLO BRIDGE INCIDENT. MOST JAPANESE STUDENTS DID NOT EVEN KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON. REALISING THAT HISTORY CAN BE PRESENTED WITH BIAS, I, AS A HISTORY STUDENT, PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON CRITICAL THINKING THAN EVER BEFORE. BEFORE WE FORM A STANCE, WE SHOULD ALWAYS RESEARCH AND THINK FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, TRY TO SUM UP ALL THE INFORMATION, AND CREATE SOMETHING NEUTRAL. IN THIS CASE, WE CAN AVOID MAKING WRONG DECISIONS AND STUDYING HISTORY WOULD BE EASIER.



HONG KONG EXPLORATION - THE GREATEST CHALLENGE

THIS WAS THE MOST FRUITFUL ACTIVITY IN THE ENTIRE CONFERENCE. AS A HONG KONG PARTICIPANT, I HAD TO LEAD MY BUDDY GROUP AROUND HONG KONG. THIS WAS NOT A TOUR OF MY LUNCHING SPOTS EITHER; EVEN I HAVE NEVER BEEN MOST OF THEM. ON THE EVE OF THE EXPLORATION, I SEARCHED FOR HOW TO GET ABOUT, SWITCHING FROM METRO TO BUS, THEN BUS TO MINIBUS. IN THE END, I EVEN BROUGHT THEM TO TRY THE STAR FERRY, A FIRST EVEN FOR MYSELF. NOT EVERYTHING WENT TO PLAN, BECAUSE THERE WERE TOO MANY PEOPLE AND DIFFERENT THINGS COULD HAPPEN. THEREFORE, I HAD TO CONSTANTLY CHANGE THE ROUTE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIP: WHILE EVERYONE SLEPT ON THE BUS, I WAS STILL SEARCHING FOR NEW PATHS. LUCKILY, WE DID NOT GET LOST. TO BE HONEST, IT WAS TOUGH, BUT IT MADE COMPLETING IT A PROUD ACHIEVEMENT. AS SOMEONE WHO ALWAYS STAYS AT HOME ONCE SCHOOL FINISHES, I THOUGHT WHAT I DID WAS UNBELIEVABLE. OUR GROUP MANAGED TO GET TO THE LAM TSUEN WISHING TREES, THE HONG KONG RAILWAY MUSEUM, KOWLOON WALLED CITY PARK, THE HAWKERS OF MONG KOK, THE STAR FERRY PIER AT TSIM SHA TSUI, THE

FERRIS WHEEL AT CENTRAL AND THEN BACK TO THE CAMPUS IN WU KAI SHA ALL WITHIN ONE DAY. I WILL NEVER FORGET THE EXPERIENCE.







FINAL EVENT

IN THE 'FINAL' EVENT, WE HAD TO PLAY THE ROLE OF DIPLOMATS, TASKED WITH CREATING A UNIVERSALLY SATISFACTORY PROPOSAL IN THE SENKAKU / DIAOYU ISLANDS DISPUTE. MY GROUP ENDED UP DECIDING TO GIVE THE ISLAND TO JAPAN CONDITIONALLY; WE GAINED SUPPORT FROM THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT, THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT, THE PEACE COMMUNITIES, THE INDUSTRIES, AND THE TAIWANESE TRAWLERMEN — THE BEST RESULT AMONGST THE GROUPS. PLAYING DIPLOMAT WAS FUN, BUT I ALSO UNDERSTOOD THE DIFFICULTIES IN BALANCING INTERESTS BETWEEN IDEOLOGICALLY INCOMPATIBLE STAKEHOLDERS. THIS HELPED ME UNDERSTAND WHY SIMILAR CONFLICTS ARE STILL ONGOING, BECAUSE, IN REALITY, THINGS ARE EVEN HARDER.

PEACE INITIATIVE

THIS WAS THE VERY LAST ACTIVITY AT THE CONFERENCE. WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO OUTSIDE THE CAMPUS TO SPREAD THE IDEA OF PEACE, BUT DUE TO THE CHAOS IN HONG KONG AT THAT TIME, WE ENDED UP DOING IT ON CAMPUS. MY TEAM DECIDED TO WRITE A SONG FROM SCRATCH, SINCE OUR TEAM HAD A TALENTED SONGWRITER. AFTER SPENDING TWO HOURS COMPOSING ON A PIANO, WE STARTED TO WRITE THE LYRICS, IN CANTONESE, JAPANESE AND MANDARIN. I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CANTONESE PART AND IT WAS ACTUALLY VERY DIFFICULT. CREATING A SONG WAS A COMPLETELY NEW EXPERIENCE, SO THAT DAY WAS QUITE INTERESTING.



CLOSING CEREMONY

EVERY BUDDY GROUP HAD TO DO A PERFORMANCE IN THE CLOSING CEREMONY; MINE DECIDED TO COMBINE DANCE AND KUNG FU. AFTER ARRANGING, WE REHEARSED UNTIL THE VERY LAST HOUR. I HATED PERFORMING ON-STAGE, BUT DID NOT FEEL EMBARRASSED AT ALL FOR PERFORMING KUNG FU; I LEARNT SOMETHING ABOUT MYSELF THAT DAY. I GUESS THIS IS ONE EFFECT THE CONFERENCE HAS BROUGHT. THERE WERE ALSO SAD MOMENTS SINCE IT WAS THE LAST NIGHT AT THE CONFERENCE. WHEN A GROUP PLAYED THE SONG *SEE YOU AGAIN*, PEOPLE AROUND ME CRIED. I PREVIOUSLY DID NOT BELIEVE THAT SEVEN DAYS WAS ENOUGH FOR

PEOPLE TO BUILD UP SUCH GOOD RELATIONSHIPS, BUT THEY PROVED ME WRONG. I ALSO WISHED THAT I HAD MORE TIME TO PLAY WITH EVERYONE.

DAY ROOM

THE DAY ROOM IS A PLACE WHERE PARTICIPANTS CAN HANG OUT AFTER THE ACTIVITIES. I REGRET NOT GOING THERE ON THE FIRST FIVE DAYS, BUT ON THE LAST NIGHT, I STAYED THERE UNTIL 2 A.M., SPENDING THE VERY LAST MOMENTS OF THE CONFERENCE WITH THOSE PEOPLE.

REFLECTION

I KNOW, THE ACTIVITIES MAY NOT APPEAR ALL THAT VALUABLE. BUT I WOULD NEVER REGRET JOINING IT, *BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE THERE*. INTERESTS AND HOBBIES ARE RARE WITHIN CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN HONG KONGERS; SOME DO NOT EVEN WANT TO TALK AT ALL. EVEN AS I WALK ON THE STREET, I SEE DEJECTED FACES EVERYWHERE. MAYBE OUR LIFESTYLE IS SIMPLY TOO COMPETITIVE AND EXHAUSTING. THIS SLOWLY MADE ME DEFENSIVE, MAKING ME NOT WANTING TO GET IN TOUCH WITH OTHER PEOPLE TOO, OR AT LEAST A MAJORITY OF THEM. AS A RESULT, I LACKED THE CONFIDENCE TO EXPRESS MYSELF IN FRONT OF OTHERS, WHICH WAS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. HOWEVER, IN SJYC, THAT PRESSURE WAS GONE. IN WHAT SOME MAY DESCRIBE AS 'NAÏVETÉ', 'KINDNESS', OR 'SHYNESS', I SAW HONESTY AND SINCERITY IN HOW PEOPLE EXPRESSED THEMSELVES. THIS CHANGED MYSELF A LOT TOO; I WAS ABLE TO PROACTIVELY CHAT AND EXCHANGE IDEAS IN THE CONFERENCE WITHOUT WORRY. CONFIDENCE WAS BUILT ONCE AGAIN. I GUESS THE BEST WAY TO DESCRIBE IT IS THAT 'I AM AT PEACE WITH MYSELF'? IT IS SOMETHING EASIER EXPERIENCED THAN PUT INTO WORDS. SJYC WAS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE. I WOULD NEVER FORGET THE MEMORIES IN IT.

My ROOM:



My BUDDY GROUP:



GOOD-BYE SJYC

