

Why I wish to study in an American School

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At the end of March this year, I retired because of the mandatory retirement age. I am now 60 years old. Prior to my retirement, I have also served as a correspondent for the Seikyo Shimbun, the organ newspaper of the Soka Gakkai, a lay Buddhist Organization in Panama, for 10 years, from 1976 to 1985.

During that time I had the opportunity to visit almost all the countries in Latin America. Many articles and pictures that I sent to Japan were printed in the Seikyo Shimbun. With my family in Panama, I experienced clashes of different cultures everyday. There were different ways of thinking, sometimes on buses, at restaurants, and on the streets. I communicated these experiences with Japanese readers in my reports, on various topics.

In addition, I contributed some articles about cultural differences between Japan and Latin America to the local newspaper in Panama in Spanish, with the hope of promoting mutual understanding among nations.

Now I am living in Akishima City, next to Fussa City. I am one of the leaders of the Soka Gakkai in this area. I also have contacts with American members of the Soka Gakkai International who work on Yokota Air Base.

It is necessary for me to improve my English in order to have better communication with my members. It is very important, also, for me to know the cultures and traditions of the United States and the way Americans think in order for us to understand each other better.

In general, it is thought that politics is moved by power and economics is moved by the theory of gain and loss of the time. I believe, that cultural exchange, however, is eternal, and that it will contribute to promote friendship among nations. Lacking the understanding of each other may sometimes bring conflicts. The most extreme example of this is war.

In the Second World War, the military government of Japan prohibited its citizens from using and studying English saying that English is the enemy's language. Back then, when children played baseball they would have to say I-I TAMA(good ball) instead of strike and WARUI TAMA(bad ball) instead of foul ball.

This seems to be quite ridiculous since baseball originally came to Japan from the United States and players had naturally been using imported English words when playing it.

I believe that one of the very first steps to promote mutual understanding is to remove the language barrier. With the development of international communication, beginning from telephone, email and TV broadcast, the geographical borders between nations have become vague.

Under such circumstances the relationship between nations has become broader and more complicated. I read that one respected scholar says that in addition to national level diplomacy pursued by diplomats, the time has come to promote people to people diplomacy and citizen to citizen diplomacy,.

When a large number of people in one country develop friendship with people of another country and understand their culture, it will be unlikely for these nations to attack one another. In other words, mutual understanding and friendship will play an important role to avert war.

This process may seem very slow and appear to be possible only by tiny steps, but I believe this will work in the long run. I would like, therefore, to become an individual who contributes to this process and to help others to understand, by writing about it in some media.

Now, going back to the question again why I wish to study in an American School, I would like to improve my English and deepen the understanding of the American culture, its traditions and their ways of thinking. I can achieve these goals to a certain extent by taking classes at a college and by chatting or exchanging opinions with American students.

I have a dream also to study in the United States or in Spain in the near future.