

You Don't Get the Same Moment Twice

Chinatsu Tokuzato

When I looked out the airplane window with excitement, I thought, "What kind of study abroad life is waiting for me". I will make many friends, eat American traditional foods, and spend a great time with my host family. It definitely will be fun! I couldn't wait to arrive in the United States. At that time, I didn't expect I would learn an important thing while studying abroad.

I'm Chinatsu Tokuzato, a senior at Okinawa Christian University. I have an experience studying abroad from September 2019 to March 2020, around 7 months. I went to Portland, Oregon in the United States. Supported by Okinawan Christian University's scholarships, I got a study abroad opportunity. Today, I would like to tell you about how important these moments are. I'd be happy if you feel like "now is an important moment, let's do something right now!" after my speech.

I've been a dancer since I was 12 years old, and I had a dream which is to dance in the United States. Not only was I really happy to make one of my dreams come true, but also, I can live and learn about some American cultures there. Also, my host family was very kind. I had a lucky environment and spent a lot of great times with them. I usually went to school on the weekdays, and church on Sundays. Every single day, everything was fresh and stimulating for me. I was enjoying my study abroad life. However, I wasn't expecting that this would happen.

On December 26th, 2019, suddenly, I got a call. I lost a girl who was my friend. Her dead body was found in her car. That was all I heard. I couldn't believe it because we went on a trip with her two weeks ago. It was not only that. Before leaving Portland, my host mother's grandson passed away due to drug use. I had met him a few times, but Christmas was the last time.

I saw many people who were saddened about the passing of my friend and my host mother's grandson. That was so hard for me and I deeply regretted it. I should have had more conversations, taken pictures, and hung out with them. Who could expect that? I don't think anybody could. I didn't think such things could happen either. After these things happened, I cried every night and didn't want to do anything. I was depressed so much and suffered mentally. But finally, I realized one important thing. That is, I need to cherish every moment. Time waits for no one. Nobody can expect tomorrow. It's probably possible that I'll die tomorrow. It's probably possible that earth will explode right now. We don't know what will happen to us. These experiences changed me. Now I challenge anything that I want to do, and I cherish people around me. In fact, I participated in a Dance Battle event in Portland, and I was chosen as the best 8 out of 90 participants. I started a OCU Dance team which I thought I never could in my busy schedule with thesis and job hunting. Above all, I'm standing right here making my speech in English. Participating in this contest was never an option for me when I was a freshman or a sophomore.

Through the experiences I had during studying abroad, I learned how important moments are. I want to tell you. . . no, "tell" is not enough. I want to REMIND you that it is important to recognize each moment as something you'll never have again. That's why I'm here today. We all could die at any moment. There is no guarantee for tomorrow. Please tell people you love that you appreciate them. It's important. We need to cherish the present moment because you won't get the same moment twice. Thank you.