

Reese Asato
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Trip Full of Memories

The trip to Okinawa will be two weeks that I will always remember because the moment I arrived in Okinawa, I felt more than a tourist or a guest, I felt like family. There is countless places in Okinawa that we traveled to, such as Churaumi Aquarium, Shuri Castle, and Okinawa World, but the most important places I believe we went to are the Peace Memorial Museums in Himeyuri.

At the Himeyuri Peace Memorial Center, we met a veteran who survived World War II. The stories she told about her experiences during the war were far greater than what I could ever imagine. She was my age at the time she was forced to join the army as a nurse, and she had to go through hardships that most adults could not endure. When she told us about the caves she had to live in with her friend and the conditions they had to live under, it was unbelievable and would be unbearable for most teens today. When I experienced one of the caves that was used as a hiding spot for some Okinawan citizens, I could barely stay in there for ten minutes without becoming nauseous. I always believed war was for the better of the people in both countries, but I now realize how one sided a war can become. The vast number of names on hundreds of stones at the Peace Memorial Park prove that the casualties of war far out weigh the benefits.

I experienced kindness first hand when I had the opportunity to home stay at Daisuke Zaha's house. Although I never met Daisuke before I arrived in Okinawa, I felt like I was his brother when I left. Over the span of two weeks, I was able to bond with Daisuke and go to his school, Tomishiro High School. At his high school, I attended all of his classes along with his extracurricular activities, experiencing what it is like to be a normal teenager in Japan. I

encountered many wonderful teachers and students who were very inviting and amiable. Physical education and tea ceremony are two classes I made the most memories in and I will always remember how fun they both were. On the weekends, we went bowling, played ping pong, and went to the beach. Spending time with Daisuke's friends from school and his other family members was unforgettable.

Going to Okinawa was truly a once in a lifetime experience. I'm glad that I was introduced to this program, and I got to meet great people from both Okinawa and Hawaii. Learning the past of our sister island, Okinawa, and the obstacles it had to overcome can only help to nurture and make people cherish the future that is hopefully without war and suffering.