

Like the spectrum of light, there are different cultures contributing to the world, rarely and lucky enough, we are concentrated in a building named International House. It is amazing to find that people varies a lot in the States and what I'm used to contributes only to a narrow range in this broad band of colours. I have to admit that I'm too timid to become very close to so-called "westerners", so that I am now even better at differentiating the near-by worlds while gaining crucial but general knowledge of other countries.

**The girl in lower bed is my Japanese roommate.** I still remember the surprise I had when she entered our room for the very first time. If not for the screen name on rooming list, I would never have guessed that she was from Japan. She was (and still is) a tall, open, enthusiastic, soooooCAL girl with a perfect English accent (and a look of Korean!). With every night we spent together in our tiny room, I get to know her more. We talked about the foreignness in this country, the way people act and what is different from our countries. For instance, I can't believe people started partying from Thursday nights and the Greek life is just as it is named-all Greek to me! While Kaho couldn't understand how people can stay up until three in the morning, be so drunk, and show up in the library and study the following day, being productive. She claimed that "In Japan, we drink hard and then we sleep hard!" It is in this difference that we talk but share the resemblances and differences in our two cultures. For once,

I understand why people like to refer to “Asians” as a whole, not only because our appearance but also the perspectives and attitudes towards life.

English wasn't our mother tongue, but we have to live with it. It became a habit to *partager* (Since I'm studying French, I found this word even suitable for the word “share”, to me it is putting things in parts and that's why we have partners!) our days, our achievements, our difficulties, our worries and concerns. We have a tendency to start endless late night talks, and we both know that it's precious. It's this sometimes annoying “double room for undergrads” policy that gets us our very first roommate in our lives. To think of it, it's really a blessing in disguise. Sometimes it is very frustrating when we would like to express our feelings but ran out of words. Holding the advantage of being Chinese and Japanese, we wrote in kanji and Chinese characters to communicate the more precise meanings. I can't recall all the words that we went through but I always remember the phrase 一期一會 *yi chi yi hui*, once in a life time. When she put down the words, I felt like crying. The moment, the context, we two, sharing one another's company, defined the expression exactly.

**Across the corridor lives a Chinese girl.** This Chinese girl is from China, and I, am from Taiwan. We became very close in a short period of time. Sharing the same language really helps developing relationship although the personality is always fundamentally important. Being asked countless time about the relationship

between Taiwan and China, I really can't give a general answer. But, it is so easy for me to take two steps from my room to knock at Fang's and go to dining hall together. We always sit across one another; the table seems like another metaphor for the Taiwan Strait when we came to the different usage of words or extraordinary customs that we thought should be universal for all Chinese. They weren't anything grave, just that we like to compare the differences. For example, I had asked Fang if she have scissors. Reflectively, she asked "are you going to *jian ji toe*?" Startled, I ensured her that I have no intention to hurt myself. Then, it was her turn to pause. It turned out to be that the *ji toe* were referred to two sets of characters. In my understandings, it means fingers; while Fang simply meant paper stripes, a usage which I've never heard of. It is amazing that I flew 6445 miles over the Pacific ocean to California and learned about a province across a strait. Maybe it is again the larger differences in the environment that brought us together, but I would rather say that it's the openness and willingness to mutual understanding that nourishes our friendship.

"As I can't travel around the world, International House brings the world to me."-International House is a place without borders-all except the locked bathroom doors!