

The 12th Annual Youth Forum

Reflection

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Moderator Kanako Date

It was an honor to be the moderator for the 12th Annual Youth Forum. With our theme “Living together in the Universal Age”, we addressed the human diversity with its various facets. The recent trend of globalization has brought us an environment that makes us aware of diversity. And the intention to actively unify people has arisen in people’s mind. On the other hand, the rapid diversification is one of the factors for the wide spreading social disorder influenced by the religious, ethnic, economic, or cultural matters. In the discussion, we shared the perspective how young people think of these circumstances and also consider what the world, a nation, and each individual can deal with the great changes awaiting in the age of globalization. Especially, it was very meaningful to frankly discuss with the promising youth from different parts of the world in this year of having Brexit and Trump getting elected as the President.

Despite the short time, the panelists had a deep communication throughout the forum. Also, the interactive exchanges of views with the audiences in the Q and A session successfully made the forum more participatory and lively.

In the Keynote speech of Ms. Naoko Yamazaki, she mentioned the words which vividly showed a fundamental purpose of the event and highly encouraged us to engage in the mutual understanding: “the antonym of ‘Love’ is ‘Not being Interested’ rather than ‘Hatred’. The most important thing is to keep trying to know others.” It was a wonderful learning experience to be able to meet each other and find a way of how we can Live Together in the Universal Age.

I would like to show my greatest gratitude to all those who made this year’s youth forum possible, especially to H.I.H Princess Takamado for joining us and enlightening us with the inspiring speech.

I sincerely hope that this youth forum would last long as a platform for the youth to dream forward to the world and their future.

Japan Yutaro Nakayama

YFJ was a great experience for me mainly for two reasons: stimulating discussion with other panelists and audience and implication to my research/study. Through this forum, as a Japanese panelist, I have got a chance to meet and discuss with 4 other panelists who have different backgrounds. Each single panelist's presentation was very interesting and stimulating to me, and the discussion that we had before the forum was also fascinating. The country/culture where each of us came from had challenging situation in terms of diversity, and I found both differences and things in common. As a result, I realized the diversity is exactly what we, the world as a whole, have to work on for the future. On the day of the forum, I truly enjoyed interaction with audience and impressive speeches by Princess Takamado and Ms. Yamazaki. Each speech and question was quite insightful, and I could get deeper understandings about this topic.

In addition, the entire process of this forum gave me great insights on my research/study. I am currently doing LGBT research, which is relevant to the topic. The discussion through this forum was insightful to my research as well, and I have got wider perspective on diversity.

I truly appreciate this great opportunity, and I would like to express my gratitude to all the forum staffs. Thank you very much.

United Kingdom Monib Baber

The overarching topic (diversity/working together in a globalized world) was a great choice as it gave adequate room for the panelists to express their different topics while still allowing the audience to get a real feel for what the speaking youth thought. In addition, the current political hot topics of trump/Brexit/immigration were well balanced by the more general topics of gender diversity and food - the decision to talk about food was especially interesting as it lightens the mood and could relate easily to everyone.

The event ran well - appropriate venue and layout/format. I think there may have been more benefit to discuss for longer but overall the evening's events were well balanced. I would have also enjoyed a slightly longer talk from the invited guest astronaut. The time allocated to the presentations was appropriate, in 5 to 6 minutes. I also very much appreciated the singing entertainment. At the post-debate reception, I would have preferred if the guests spoke English but that is because my Japanese is not up to the standard of most of the invited guests. In terms of the event's organization, Miss Date's efforts were excellent. The pre-event meetings were few and concise (both great qualities), and I never felt poorly informed. Deadlines were appropriate and well maintained, to the benefit of both the quality of the event and the panelists. Overall I was very pleased with how the event ran as well as the substance and content of the exploration into diversity.

Germany Philipp Maas

The Annual Youth Forum this year was a great opportunity to discuss a very important topic with a broad-range of interesting people. Not only the panel discussion, but also the informative speeches of the keynote speakers were able to stimulate the audience's mind to rethink the drastic changes in the recent years in regards to globalization and diversity. One might call the root cause "lack of interest" or "non-exposure", but in the end we have to open up to the unknown and mysterious by learning about other people and their cultures. With the speeches of 5 panelists from different countries, the subsequent discussion had enough opinion and knowledge variety to develop into a fertile and animated debate. It was very important to not hear only the facts about current politics, but be able to listen to personal opinions, which make the discussion even more interesting for the audience. Further, with the panel discussion being framed by the two keynote speeches the discussed points were first introduced and at the end once again reflected in condensed manner, thus guaranteeing a suitable opening and ending. The discussion could enrich my own thoughts, and has shown other possibilities and ways of thinking. Especially the role of the modern media (classic media with the addition of internet associated media channels) chastens me, while considering the influence of the press for the recent presidential election of the USA, the Brexit issue and the European refugee crisis. The global spread of IT might be the trigger for some future human catastrophes and conflicts.

China Dan Xiao

I think this forum is a very meaningful and successful one. The panelists from Japan, England, Germany, America and China talked about "diversity in Japan", "Brexit", refugee crisis in Europe, American president election, and cultural communication, which both highlights hot politics issues and interesting cultural phenomenon. All the topics are closely related to the theme of the forum: Living in a Universal Age.

I have learned a lot through the presentation, panelist discussion and Q&A section. All the communications are very fruitful, and I'm really happy that we were able to make a connection between our topics. Also, the comments and keynote speech from Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado and astronaut Naoko Yamazaki were excellent, from which I got really inspired.

Here I want to express my sincere gratitude to the host of Youth Forum Japan, the other panelists and all the audience for jointly presenting us with such a great activity.

Youth Forum Japan is a really good attempt to promote global interaction of youth, which is very important to eliminate the present misunderstanding and establish mutual trust and consensus between youth from diversified background. I hope it will continue to be held every year and wish it getting better and better in the future.

United States Nicole Thomasian

One of the highlights of my Fulbright experience in Japan thus far was participating in Youth Forum Japan's (YFJ) 12th annual conference. The theme of this year's forum was mutual cooperation in this global era, and each nation's representative panelist was tasked with briefly presenting on an issue that relates to diversity in their respective country.

After learning of this year's theme and of being asked to present at the YFJ conference by the director of the Fulbright Japan Program back in October, I was very excited but also apprehensive about taking on the role of the US panelist speaker. I wondered if what I had to say could really be representative of youths in America, but at the same time felt compelled to make good use of this precious opportunity that I had been given to speak out about the current state of race relations in the US and to take a stand against the outcome of the recent US election even though I am currently so geographically far removed from the situation.

I felt that my questions and concerns about the forum were met with compassionate understanding and encouraging remarks by the forum chair and by my fellow panelists throughout the entire YFJ process, from the nascent, brainstorming phase all the way up to the day of the conference. Having the support network of the event chair and other panelist speakers was very motivating to me, and it made the task of formulating a presentation much more enjoyable.

As for the day of the event, I was satisfied with the way my presentation went, and I hope that it was also well-received by the audience. Interestingly, although as a panelist speaker I was not expecting to learn much from YFJ forum itself, I actually learned a lot by listening to my fellow panelists speak and by ruminating on the stimulating questions and comments from members of the audience.

During the forum's reception I even had the privilege to speak with some of the conference's special attendees such as Japan's Princess Takamado as well as the conference's keynote speaker and astronaut, Naoko Yamazaki. Getting to inhabit the same space and to talk with such powerful women who share a common interest in global cooperation and diversity was a poignant moment for me. Even more moving than that, however, the YFJ annual conference was the culmination of over a month's worth of preparation and collaboration together the event chair and my fellow panelists, and it was a very rewarding to see our efforts come to fruition so successfully.