

## Step Across the Borderline

同志社高等学校 3年 相 山 由 衣

We tend to hesitate to ask what we don't know, because we think not understanding things is shameful, and I used to think so too. But last year, my thoughts completely changed. Today I would like to share an experience which changed my mind.

I participated in SGLI program, which stands for Student Global Leadership Institute. We talked about global issues with students from all over the world. I was really excited participating in this, but after the first day, I was knocked out at once. I couldn't even understand what we were supposed to talk about, so I couldn't say anything. But still, asking questions was shameful for me, and I didn't want to be looked down on.

A week passed and one day, I couldn't understand the topic of the discussion again. All I could do was remain silent, and so did some other students. In contrast, the native English-speaking students talked on and on. Suddenly, the teacher said, "This is a leadership program so you have to say something. You all have to speak on the next topic, OK?" Oh my god. I was desperate, and just wished that I could understand the next topic, but no, God didn't save me. And the teacher looked around at everyone. "No please, not me", I prayed. But the last person he looked at was me. I had no choice but to say, "I don't understand the topic." It was the worst moment I had ever had. I felt ashamed of myself. I felt all of my classmates looking down on me. Then the teacher explained the topic in easy words, and I understood that I should talk about the food crisis. I was able to answer, and so were the other silent students.

After the class, the teacher came up to me. "He must have been disappointed at me", I thought. But he said with a bright smile, "Thank you for saying, 'I don't understand.' You changed the whole world." I had no idea what he was saying. He continued, "Since we have different backgrounds, we might have understood the word in a different way. That's why saying that

you don't understand is important. Your words let everyone understand better, so the discussion developed. And remember, when you don't understand, usually, others don't either." I was so surprised, but soon after, I figured out what he meant. I realized that I didn't need to cover the fact that I don't understand. I decided to never be scared of asking questions anymore.

In the days after that, I could join the class positively, and this attitude really worked. I learned that asking questions is a great thing. What the teacher told me actually changed my whole world. I had the best weeks I had ever had.

We all are ashamed of letting others know that we don't understand. But I want to say to every individual here that asking questions enables you to learn more, enables the discussion to develop, and builds a bridge between people. So when you hesitate to ask questions, you're missing all these chances. In order to overcome your concerns, which are your shame or your pride, you may have to pass a big borderline. But when, but only when you step across the borderline with courage, then a whole new world will appear right in front of you.