

When I first realized that I was the first generation in my family born here in the USA, I was about 12 years old. I had recently become interested in learning a new language in addition to the Spanish I already spoke at home. I discovered that speaking more than one language was an incredible asset and I wanted to challenge myself to something completely outside of my regular day to day life. I realized that I had a very specific interest in Japan. I began looking up "how to learn" tutorials on the internet on a regular basis but my real journey didn't start until I was in high school. My high school offered 3 years of Japanese instruction to prepare students for university and beyond. As I grew older and entered adulthood I also dove into reading Japanese literature (translated into English) by authors such as Banana Yoshimoto, Haruki Murakami, etc. Reading contemporary titles by these authors led me to begin reading poetry, short stories and folktales from Japan, thus beginning a new branch of my studies, to learn about Japanese culture and society. When I arrived at CSUMB it was after a long hiatus from school in which I could not afford classes and had actually at one point been homeless. Being homeless and on the streets further strengthened my resolve to find a way to go to school and give back to my community and my family. I knew that if I focused on my language studies I could find my voice and my place in society. My parents are immigrants and did not have a chance to travel abroad until quite a bit later in their lives. My father is the only person in my family who has graduated from university and he did so at the same age I am currently, 28 years old. He also struggled to pay for his schooling and worked many jobs in order to afford his classes, sometimes even taking night classes in order to fulfill his degree requirements. Finally when he graduated he not only enriched his own life with a new career but also the life of my entire extended family who saw him as the head of the family after my grandfather passed away. I want to become this type of inspiration for new generations inside and outside of my family. Through my dad's example I too worked full-time in order to afford housing and classes while I completed my general education required for CSUMB admission. It was a challenge to balance work and school but his model helped lead me to success. Now I will study abroad which is something my father was not able to do in his day and I will bring back this new experience to share with him and my entire family.

Going to Japan to experience first-hand the art and history I have studied for over a decade but also to witness the complicated social issues that affect their society is an opportunity that will create a new drive in me for graduate school, my future career and beyond. I'm from San Francisco which is a very saturated city, with many cultures and people all congregating in one small 7 by 7 mile space. I chose to go to J.F. Oberlin University in order to be near Tokyo at which I am curious to see what differences and similarities there are to my hometown. Japan is mostly homogenous and I think this dynamic provides a lot of opportunity to research implicit and explicit language/behavior because Japanese is only spoken in Japan. This is a unique experience that I can only find in Japan, there is no other country that counts Japanese as their official language. Being able to speak to the Japanese people will only enhance the experience of an entire year abroad. I chose to spend an entire year studying abroad because Japan has a distinctive 4 seasons and specific ways they celebrate each season and its holidays. There are

festivals for every time of the year that are exclusive to Japan and found nowhere else in the world. My future career goals are to become an interpreter of English to Japanese and Japanese to English. I want to work with the U.S. government or an American company that is overseas with ties to Japan. I feel that living in Japan for a year will provide me with the insight and direct experience with the Japanese lifestyle and their specific social expectations. This will give me an advantage in all international relations as adapting to a foreign culture is character building and can never be forgotten. Additionally the course work and classes I will take at J.F. Oberlin will increase my Japanese skills exponentially in a way that I could not experience in the USA. Complete immersion is the best way to become highly skilled at any subject, especially in regards to a foreign language. Japan is the only country I can go to where Japanese is spoken officially and this opportunity to study abroad is without parallel.