

[REDACTED] 23
pg 1

I wear several different faces every day. At home I wear the face of a lovable daughter. In class I don the face of a hard-working student. During orchestra rehearsal I am a focused musician. And when I am abroad, I wear another face: that of an American. How I wear this face can determine how the people I meet think of the United States for the rest of their lives. I do not take this responsibility lightly; if given the chance to represent America in Japan, I will wear a familiar face, conveying the mutual friendship, comfort, and respect our nations share.

Already, Japanese and American cultures are relatively comfortable sharing the same space. Japanese fashion has invaded US runways, and American musicians share the Japanese charts with native singers. Japanese electronics are essential to the basic functions of American business, and the US military helps ensure Japan's safety. Our countries already share a cultural and political partnership, and it is this partnership that I want to embody. I want to aid the proliferation of international codependence and respect as I learn and study in Kyoto. I hope to learn both the dynamics of the Japanese language and Japanese culture and society. I want to be a catalyst for an even closer Japan-US bond.

I am no stranger to the friendship that can blossom across cultures. In the first grade, a Japanese girl named Toko happened to sit in the desk next to mine. We became best friends; I chattered endlessly in English, which she barely knew, and she showed me how to draw cartoons and fold origami. I gave Toko her first lessons in the English language and American culture, and she gave me my first lessons in Japanese. Sadly, Toko moved back to Japan in the fourth grade, but we still correspond. Without her, I wouldn't be learning Japanese, I wouldn't have a deep love for foreign culture, and I would have no idea where I was going in life. It is this bond of friendship and understanding that I want to represent and promote while in Japan. I want to use cultural acceptance and friendship to extend the partnership our countries share to the people.