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A Great Leap Forward from the 57th JASC

Florence Maher's Invaluable Story

written by: Minjoo Jang & Paul Park, interns at ISC

The transformative and unique experience of participating in the 57th JASC and becoming a member of the first Executive Committee of Korea America Student Conference (KASC) motivated Florence Maher to pursue her career as a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) with the U.S. Department of State. Although she had no background in Japan, her interesting connection to ISC started by chance as she came across a JASC advertisement at her school, Earlham College.

Unlike many of her other JASCers, Florence brought a unique background in European Studies to the conference. She integrated this knowledge into her roundtable discussions about regionalism, and compared the European Union to ASEAN. What she quickly realized, however, was how the roundtable spoke about the



Florence Maher with fellow JASC alumni

issues was as important as the issues themselves. For Florence, the most important part of the RT discussions was the way the delegates exchanged viewpoints and learned to work with individuals from different cultures with various perceptions. Delegates could figure out the overlaps among diverse perspectives and expand them in a collaborative way to reach common ground. This experience of a collective bargaining process greatly influenced her career as a diplomat.



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While she had many cultural experiences with various international students before, Florence realized that JASC was something totally different. She intensively engaged with both Japanese and American students

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in an uncertain environment, full of misunderstanding and various dramas, while delegates tried to get along and work together all day for one month. But it was not only the cultural difference between the Japanese and the American delegation that she had to work on: the American delegation, itself being so diverse, had some internal issues with which to deal. On the way from Osaka to Tokyo in the 57th JASC, all American delegates were on the same bus, and it had a karaoke machine. A few of the delegates sang the song “Brown Sugar” by the Rolling Stones. Because some parts of the lyrics are racially charged, there was an intense argument between delegates that they are not being culturally sensitive enough, even within their own delegation. Florence was frustrated with this circumstance initially, but it ended up being rewarding because she learned so much about herself while working with people from different backgrounds. She grew professionally and personally in ways that she did not expect.



Shortly after her participation in JASC, Florence was invited to lead the first KASC by joining the first Executive Committee. Although JASC has very large and strong network of respected alumni that serves as the backbone for the program, KASC was totally new, and Florence had no experience with Korea or Korean culture. However, her powerful and memorable experience with JASC, paired with her willingness to contribute to the new program, led her to help successfully launch the first KASC. The process of organizing KASC's first conference, while a similar process to planning a JASC, was not easy at all: she felt a lot of pressure to make it as successful. Florence worked with her fellow ECs, ISC staff, and the ISC Board of Directors to promote and develop KASC into its own unique form. She participated in year-long planning, as a JASC EC would have, except only two of the student leaders were the past JASCers. This made it difficult for the other ECs to be fully aware of the goals and direction for this first KASC. Florence overcame these challenges with her detail-oriented and self-proclaimed perfectionist personality. These traits allowed her to take more responsibility in the team. She learned valuable lessons, such as how to motivate people with different strengths and weaknesses and program management skills. She went on to use these skills to implement a community service project and to develop her current professional path.

Florence began working at the State Department as a FSO in 2011. She was always interested in international relations, and working in the diplomatic core had been a dream job for her because they get to live in foreign country, work on international issues, and meet lots of people all over the world. As a generalist, Florence will have many different roles throughout her career; she recently finished her first tour, two years as



a consular officer in Mexico, where she conducted non-immigrant visa interviews for those who are planning to visit the United States. She is currently undergoing language training here in Washington, D.C., and her next assignment will be in Rome in which she will be working in the economic section. Afterwards, Florence plans to come back to DC and work at the State Department headquarters and learn how policies are managed here so that she can more effectively work in the field abroad in a long-term career.

Florence cautions young professionals wishing to join the Foreign Service to do their research. She advises them to meet and speak with someone currently working as a FSO, because the job is truly not for everyone. There are many sacrifices need to be made for a career in the Foreign Service, such as living abroad in a completely different culture, away from the comforts of home, friends, and family. She believes experiences like JASC and KASC are invaluable in determining if a career as a FSO is a good fit for you. Although it is important for a person to have strong language skills and study abroad experiences, what she believes makes a person stand out in the course of the hiring processes is the ability to work with a cross-cultural team. JASC and KASC offer the opportunity to work through issues in a very personal, trusting environment as well as to develop strong leadership and team building skills. Of course, regional knowledge and linguistic skills are very helpful, but Florence believes without the appropriate people skills, it is difficult for anyone to stand out in the hiring process.

JASC and KASC changed how Florence perceives world around her. It made her more aware of her strengths and weaknesses and how living in different countries can influence people. Florence encourages all students to join JASC and KASC. She said, "If you are really interested in developing yourself as an internationally competent person who can work cross-culturally, this would be a good test to see whether that is really for you. It can be really hard to put yourself in a situation where you are not sharing the same cultural road map, but you would overall see more than you can really picture in ways that you don't expect and it is very powerful." JASC and KASC were two of the most intense and influential experiences of Florence's life that enabled her to enrich her college years and take a great leap forward to achieve her dream job.



Message from JASC AEC chair: Get excited for the 66th JASC!

My name is Anna Zeng, currently a sophomore at the Johns Hopkins University studying Public Health and East Asian Studies. I am the American Executive Committee Chair for the 66th Japan-America Student Conference!

Since the 65th JASC last August, I have been working with the rest of the student Executive Committee members to plan for the 66th JASC. On the American side, we have Pramodh Ganapathy, Sharon Lu, Ayaka Yoshida, Norihito Naka, Ken Panis, Quyen Nguyen, and Sarah Choi. On the Japanese side, we have Yohei Komatsuzaki (our Japanese chairperson), Yugo Kimura, Yuki Onishi, Ririna Kaneko, Hibiki Sekiguchi, Yamato Komura, Takeshi Suzuki, and Yuki Onuma on the team.

The JECs are currently in the process of interviewing the Japanese applicants! We are fully confident that this year's Japadeles will be the most rigorous group of students.

On the American side, the AECs had just finished Spring Meeting last weekend (March 6-March 9). During this meeting, we focused on applicant selection, recruitment strategies, and site coordination. After a review of our many excellent applications, we were able to select well over half of our delegation. The AECs also decided to extend the deadline to rolling admissions until our delegation is full or until March 31. We are currently viewing more applications as they come in. Because this year is our 80th anniversary, we hope that this extension would bring in an even more diverse pool of applicants to celebrate this momentous year together.

We are also developing our site schedules. We will be visiting Des Moines, San Francisco, New York, and Washington, D.C. this summer. First, in Des Moines, we would like to give the delegates a taste of the midwest, and give them the opportunity to explore the topics of Native Americans, agriculture, and alternative energy. In San Francisco, delegates will delve into the world of entrepreneurship and technological advancements. Delegates will have homestay with local families there. In New York, the land of cultural and social diversity, delegates will learn about international business, disaster recovery, and also experience a career forum. Finally, in Washington, D.C., delegates will not only



JASC 66 American Executive Committee gathers at Fall Meeting

have time to sightsee the nation's capital, but also interact with various Japanese American societies, present at the Final Forum, and cement their JASC memories together at this last site.

Planning so far has been an exciting but also nerve-racking experience for the ECs. All of us feel the weight of responsibilities and the heaviness of this long-standing tradition. However, we also carry with us the precious memories from the 65th JASC. Therefore, we understand just how important JASC is to us and will be to this coming delegation. JASC gave us a platform to hold dialogues that would have otherwise never happened, to discover pieces about ourselves that would otherwise have remained hidden, and to form lasting friendships across the country and the Pacific that would otherwise have dissolved. Planning for the 66th JASC is a constant challenge, but it also serves as a constant reminder of what JASC really means to all of us.

JASC never ends, does it? The AECs realized along the way that planning for JASC is never meant to be a 16-person job. It is not about the student executive committee. It is not about the ISC office. It is about building on the shoulders of past conferences. It is about involving past delegates in the process. It is about creating an extensive family that works toward the same goal of maintaining peace. It is about working together to carry on what JASC is to each of its delegates.

When I ponder about the point of JASC, I realize just how small I am in the big picture. Yet, without you and me, the picture would not be complete. Therefore, I invite all of you to join the ECs in making the 66th JASC--and all the future JASCs--the most unforgettable for its delegates!



From the Executive Director - Save the Date for JASC's 80th Anniversary Weekend in San Francisco (August 9 & 10)



Yuuki Shinomiya
Executive Director, ISC

This August, Japan-America Student Conference (JASC) will celebrate the 80th anniversary of its founding in 1934. Along with the 2014 JASC student delegates, who will be in San Francisco this August, ISC will host a celebration of JASC, the oldest US-Japan student academic and cultural program. Current delegates, alumni, friends, and supporters are warmly encouraged to join us.

ISC, the parent non-profit that operates JASC and our sister program, KASC (Korea-America Student Conference), will jointly host the 80th Anniversary Weekend with the current Student Executive Committee. The Weekend will be a perfect time to reunite with your JASC alumni, get to know the current delegates, and learn the latest in U.S.-Japan relations from our friends and supporters. Here's the sneak peek of the weekend activities:

Saturday, August 9, 5:00 pm (@ Yoshi's SF)

- Reunite with your JASC friends for the informal alumni gathering

Sunday, August 10, 11:00 am (TBD)

- Join alumni sightseeing outing with alumni and friends



Sunday, August 10, 2:00 pm (@ Sir Francis Drake Hotel)

- Re-live the experience of JASC by joining the alumni-delegate joint Roundtable (RT) sessions.

Sunday, August 10, 6:00 pm (@ Sir Francis Drake Hotel)

- Celebrate the 80th anniversary with the current delegate, alumni, family, friends and supporters.

For more information and questions, feel free to contact ISC office at 202-289-9088, or email me yshinomiya@iscdc.org.

Hope to see many of you in August!

ISC Continues JASC/KASC Trilateral Symposium Initiative

On January 30, 2014, International Student Conferences (ISC) hosted its second trilateral symposium in Washington, DC: The Second JASC-KASC Trilateral Symposium: Advancing Trust in the U.S.-Japan-Korea Trilateral Partnership. The purpose of this symposium was to create an environment in which university students were able to speak openly about current sensitive issues and share their ideas on how young leaders in the three countries can work to build stronger personal ties in order to better understand one another. Hosted and moderated by the student Executive Committee



members of ISC's two flagship programs, Japan-America Student Conference (JASC) and Korea-America Student Conference (KASC), this year's symposium included two panels, a keynote speaker, and a lunch networking reception.



Panel 1: Historical Controversies and Security

Moderated by JASC Executive Committee member Pramodh Ganapathy and KASC Executive Committee member Robert DeVico, the Historical Controversies and Security Panel featured panelists Dr. Victor Cha and Dr. Mike Green, and examined how history has influenced current relations and future prospects of cooperation between the U.S., Japan, and Korea.

Panelists answered questions about the delicate position of the U.S. maintaining friendly and diplomatic relationships with both Japan and Korea, who would benefit from deteriorating relationships between the three nations, how young leaders in the U.S., Japan, and Korea can contribute to a brighter future, and how the differences in teaching methods, including text books, can influence the views of the next generation.

Both Dr. Cha and Dr. Green emphasized, in conclusion, that leaders in both countries would want to, and are willing to improve their relationship with the U.S. They agreed that a setting such as this symposium was the perfect way to get young people involved and talking about controversial issues, and that even though it is in a smaller scale, it reflects a positive step towards a more peaceful region.

Panel 2: Women in Society Panel

Moderated by JASC Executive Committee member Sharon Lu and KASC Korean Executive Committee member HyeHee Kang, this panel focused on the role women play in social, political, and economic sectors of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. Panel Speakers Chiyo Kobayashi and Florence Lee began by expanding on their own personal experiences.

Although both speakers said that they were fortunate enough to not experience much gender discrimination during their careers here in the U.S., they agreed that gender inequality is very prominent in both Japan and Korea. They agreed that both Japan and Korea are working to improve the working environment for women by creating laws and incentives to corporations. Ms. Lee and Ms. Kobayashi argued that the gender inequalities in the two countries arise from long held cultural traditions of the female stereotype.

They concluded that tackling the problem of gender inequality requires both a top down and bottom up approach. Companies must be open to hiring and



Glen S. Fukushima gives the keynote speech

promoting women, but at the same time, women must show dedication and a drive to move up. Both view gender equality as a societal issue in which everyone needs to work together. They both showed hope and excitement that the younger generation may be able to create change, and deconstruct these long-held stereotypes.

Keynote Speech by Glen S. Fukushima

As the Symposium's keynote speaker, Mr. Glen S. Fukushima, ISC Board of Directors Vice Chairman and Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, provided remarks about his own JASC experience, the importance of global education and experience, and the need for continued discussion between the young leaders of the U.S., Japan, and Korea. Specifically, Mr. Fukushima spoke about four aspects of his JASC experience that helped shape his distinguished career in government and business: knowledge, experience, network, and friendship. He shared that his JASC experience provided cultural knowledge and international experience that proved crucial in succeeding later in his career. He added one final aspect about JASC – probably the most important – that changed his life: he met his wife, Sakie T. Fukushima, during JASC.

You can read the full Symposium report online at iscdc.org





▫ **Alice Liao and Sharon Lu, JASC 65**, have founded TASC! (Taiwan America Student Conference). They have formed a non-profit and are set to hold their first conference this summer in Taiwan between July 30 - August 17. The early deadline for application passed recently, and they received 22 applicants from the U.S. side - featuring amazing students from Harvard, Yale, Stanford, UCLA, Brandeis etc.! Officially, there are 6 TEC's and 6 AEC's behind the lines making this work along with an incredible support group of advisors and speakers very well connected in the Taiwanese community. Please let Alice or Sharon know if you need more information!



• **Wendy Vincent, JASC 40 & 41**, is still with the Department of State and is returning to Kuala Lumpur in July for another three-year tour, this time as Consul General. Will be good to be back in Asia!

• **Susie Allen, JASC 37**, reports that after several years consulting for the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners, she has accepted a position with the board as a research analyst and head of the research and education department.

• **Alex Evans, JASC 63 (2011)**, will be moving to the United Kingdom later this year to pursue a master's degree at the London School of Economics. Having mainly traveled between the United States and Japan, he would appreciate any advice JASCers have on preparing for and adjusting to life in London. Alex can be contacted at aevans04@villanova.edu.

• **Miryam Sas, JASC 39 & 40**, is chairing the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of California at Berkeley. She had a great time this summer with Sumi Shin (JASC 40) and her family and Harumi Kadono (JASC 41 & 42) and her family at a performing arts camp near the Russian River valley in California!

• **Michelle Lee Jones (JASC 2004 & 2005)** will soon begin doctoral studies in Sociology at the University of Michigan. Michelle's research emphasizes East Asian societies, law and U.S.-Korea relations, topics she discovered as a delegate to JASC. The University of Michigan ranks in the top 3 sociology departments, and is also home to the 4th largest Korean library in the United States. Michelle competed with over 200 applicants to be one of just 10 students admitted to the program and her research will be fully funded for 5 years. Later this year she will complete her MA at Seoul National University and publish her research on South Korean efforts to prevent sex trafficking and police sex workers. She encourages JASCers to carefully consider what they learn at RT this summer, they might just spend the next 10 years studying it!





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SAVE THE DATE!!

JASC 80th Anniversary weekend in San Francisco
August 9 & 10, 2014

JASC is celebrating its 80th Anniversary, and we want to see you there! Join the 66th JASC Delegation, fellow JASCers, and supports & friends for a weekend in San Francisco August 9th and 10th. You can find out more about the weekend, and RSVP here:
www.regonline.com/jasc80th

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