

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

【Children's Category – 3rd Prize】

Overcoming Our Differences to Work Together

(Original in Japanese)

Hiroki Kimiwada

(Age 10, Japan)

Yahata Elementary School of Setagaya City, Tokyo

Have you ever felt that it seems impossible to work together? I have. When I was living in the United States, I entered a science competition. I was in a group with people from different countries and ethnicities whom I'd never met before. The project for the contest was to make a model volcano. However, the members of our group couldn't agree and we started arguing, and in the middle of making it our volcano erupted. I felt very frustrated and disappointed.

Two years later, I had another chance to take part in this kind of competition. This time, the project was to build a tree house. Like in the previous contest, I was in a group of people of many different nationalities and ethnicities. At the beginning, we couldn't agree on how to build it, and everyone was getting annoyed. But then someone said, "Let's just do the best we can to work together toward the goal of finishing a tree house." I agreed with this comment, and called out to everyone, "Let's all work toward the same goal." We went all-out to join forces, and after a few hours we had completed our tree house, and we came in first place in the competition. And after that, I became friends with the other members of the group. From that experience, I learned the importance of overcoming our differences to work together for a common goal. It was a very valuable educational experience for me.

I think the same thing can be said about larger scale challenges. On March 11, 2011, an enormous earthquake hit Japan, causing a tsunami that washed away homes, livestock, and bridges, as well as many, many people. Watching the events on television in the United States, I was extremely surprised and saddened. Time passed, and in 2016, I visited places that were damaged by the earthquake and tsunami. Some of the damage could still be seen, but the area had largely recovered. It seemed to me that the people of Tohoku did not despair, but worked with a lot of other people to try and rebuild the region. In such a difficult situation, I imagine that there would have been many different opinions. And yet, it seemed that they had

worked together to accomplish their common goal of restoring their towns and returning to normal life. I felt the power of what they had done, and it touched my heart.

What I learned both from my experience at the science contest in the U.S. and from seeing the rebuilding after the Tohoku Earthquake is the importance of overcoming differences to work together. When many people work together, we can achieve great things that we could not do on our own. Not only that, I think that working together deepens the bonds between people. Today, the world is facing many serious problems, such as war, climate change, and terrorism. I think these problems might also be caused by people's inability to accept each other's differences, and what is needed is to overcome our differences and work together for a greater common goal.

The importance of overcoming our differences and working together is something that I think should be taught to all people in their education. It can be difficult for adults to change their thinking quickly. But if children are educated about the importance of this, then in ten or twenty years, I think we will be able to create a better world. In order to create this better future, I would like to continue broadening my knowledge, gaining more experiences, and learning.