

BRADFORD WRITES!
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Going Out

By Kafka Zprava

Before we can even deal with every trifle and settle down in our regular life, motivational speakers, such as Jordan Peterson are already advocating us to move out and absorb more chaos, or as it been called, “getting out of our comfort zone.” From my point of view, it was an inevitable statement in the adult world; on the other hand, it was also an incomplete sentence that left out a question of what we should do next after jumping out of our comfort zone. As a trivia collector with strong curiosity, I wrapped myself up and went aboard the flight across the Pacific Ocean. I arrived in the land of the United States, looking for an opportunity or challenge that would enlighten me about the meaning of exploring outside my comfort zone.

From the first day I opened the trial of my new life in high school, I was already having trouble adapting my learned behaviors from the past. As former boarding school, I was not able to wake up in the time since the iconic bell ring in my memory had gone off, yet I needed to adapt to the ringtone on my phone to realize it was the ring rather than some random music played by my host family overnight. I also had to finish breakfast before popping up on the vehicle. That made my stomach uncomfortable since my habit was to feed myself after taking the first period so that my head would not start to feel dizzy and deluded to continue my study. Being in a new place to study, it was also difficult to find emotional support and meet friends. Not everyone welcomed me sincerely. When I made my introduction to the classroom, everybody besides my teacher moved their eyes away from me. The deadly silence between me and the rest of my classmates had prolonged for the whole week. As a new-in-town, I had to try to accommodate my classmates, who had spent more than ten years together as one. As a result, I

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felt disconnected, and a feeling of embarrassment had rooted inside my heart out of the shame of failure to prove the validity of staying out of my comfort zone. In the evening, when I hugged my pillow, I sat on the grass under starless dark dome of the sky and let my past life flood in my mind. I made a negative argument: stepping out of the area I used to live in is unwise, and it is detrimental to me for destroying my well-being.

This awful situation had remained throughout the first year of my high school, and it caused me to feel paralyzed in keeping relationships with everyone. My parents once thought of bringing me back to China to be re-educated in the way I used to be. They preferred my old self who respected them, loved them, and connected with them. Even I was shaken by the plans they made for me, but all I did was to tell them to wait for one more year. On the second year, the critical point of twisting my mind had occurred. It was an open selection of positions in the student council, and one of them was the chair of International Students to serve as the connection between locals and students coming from other countries.

To be prepared for the selection process, I started to pay attention to the people who were around me and attempted to make conversations. It was hard for me to initiate a talk since the embarrassment from the beginning of the school was still deep down inside of my heart. I could not stop stuttering at first when I approached the crowds. Also, the memory slips and loss of voice had also killed me socially for losing topics in chats. But what surprised me is, no one was making fun of it, and they looked forward to talking to me later. Thanks to my enormous collection of information, I was able to develop the topic of baseball and video games programming after I forgot my Korean physics lab mate's name, which makes it less cringe. To talk in Japanese for short phrases and sentence was also a piece of cake for me, and I spoke in the correct pronunciation for sure. I made those Japanese students laugh since they found

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connections with the slang and memes that they were familiar with. Nevertheless, I mastered cooking since I was ten years old, and I showed my interest in Southeastern Asian cuisines in front of my friends who came from Vietnam and Indonesia. They invited me to the local immigrants' party and taught me how their food was made, how is the manner during festivals and how they think, what they value, and to go out to a new world and adapt to the new enjoyments. These affairs that came from the real person's experience had made me reconsider my point of view. The pain of leaving comfortable areas might be sorrow and passive, but once I saw the people who were also coming from the same background yet building up miracles and waiting for love from other human beings, I felt their power of compassion and courage to explore a new path of betterments. At last, I got the answer I needed for the question above.

The day had arrived, and I scripted a long speech about how I learned in the past days as a person who used to self-isolate himself because of the withdrawal reaction caused by moving. Even so, my heart was gradually fueled up by the power of the people I met. Their noble minds fighting for their fate made them the pioneers looking for new opportunities in the outside world. In the last paragraph, I wrote these sentences that finished my exploration, the answer that represents the change of my heart: "Getting out of the comfort zone, is not just a call to encourage people to make pointless sufferings. It required us to explore the outer world and expand our connections with people, events, cultures, and characteristics. Eventually, the territory we conquered would become the new fertile ground for us to live in."