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WELCOME

BY JODY O’CONNOR,
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISOR

The spring 2012 edition of Cambio highlights the complexity of returning home after living abroad, whether to make a long-overdue visit or to reestablish life in one’s home community. Living and working in another country changes us forever—this much we know going in. For me, with the excitement of reaching my dream of moving abroad for employment came the inevitable waves of culture shock. More than that, my biggest struggle was “reverse culture shock.” Surprisingly, and seemingly out of nowhere, I was hit with overwhelming confusion and a lost sense of self soon after returning to my “home” country. Coming home has its own challenges that I had taken for granted. Eventually the shock wears off, but the experience of returning can not be separated from the adventure of living abroad.

A career in student affairs has offered me wonderful opportunities to make use of my cross-cultural communication skills and my desire to help to enrich students’ academic and personal experiences while studying in the U.S. It also keeps me connected to my own past and future experiences of studying, living, and working internationally. At CIIS I have the distinct pleasure of interacting with a diverse and international group of people who feel so moved by the Institute ideals and programs that they relocate to the Bay Area to pursue a graduate degree. What they come away with is a transformed sense of self in the world that is enormously energizing, but which sometimes makes it challenging to reintegrate into the country they left before arriving in the States. In this edition of Cambio, CIIS international students and alumni offer insights into their experiences of going home.

To experience with students semester after semester the excitement of new beginnings in a foreign place and the struggles during the phases of culture shock is a constant reminder of my own similar experiences. My goal in my professional capacity at CIIS is to offer warm and sensitive support to each of those students.
Everyone’s cell phone alarm starts chiming the moment the 5.0 earthquake hits. Before that, I didn’t realize that Japanese cell phones automatically alert you to the bigger earthquakes. However, this is just one of many aftershocks that come daily. None of the thirty women around me even bother to get out of their sleeping bags, nor do they speak. I don’t either. After a few long seconds the earthquake stops and we all lay back down and wiggle in our sleeping bags. I try to relax my constricted muscles so I can fall asleep again. In my half-asleep state I think about how the children I saw today are doing on the coast, and what it must be like to live with such constant reminders of 3/11.

I am at Tono-Magokoronet volunteer center in Iwate prefecture, Northern Japan. Lying inland, Tono was unaffected by the tsunami, but the inundation still affected the hearts of the locals. After seeing the devastation in the coastal areas, city workers, local business people, and representatives from various NPOs and NGOs immediately came together and created this volunteer center to aid those on the coast. The volunteers can stay here without depleting the resources of the affected areas.

From here we drive daily to the coast, just one hour away, for various kinds of volunteer work. It is one of the few disaster volunteer centers that will accept any willing workers, even if you are solo, non-Japanese speaking, or very young or old (volunteers I saw ranged from a six-year-old, accompanied by parents, to eighty years of age!). Volunteer projects vary from debris removal to running a café at the evacuation centers. There is enough work for everyone, even today.

For the first couple of days I worked as one of the bilingual staff in the central office, then I became part of the project group that delivered art supplies to preschools and afterschool programs. These school buildings were intact because they had been on higher ground, but the teachers and students were greatly affected. At one preschool, the principal told me that she lost a daughter and a grandchild in the tsunami. The teachers and the children could see the tsunami from the school and they had stayed at the school that night because none of the parents could come and get them. The teachers told me that the children were so good and well-behaved that night. Not many of them even cried. In reality, some of the kids and teachers still seemed frozen in their bodies. At some schools I was allowed to set up an art table for the kids, not as therapy, but as an activity. Either way, my hope was that it would provide some creative outlet and relief for them. Some kids wanted to make many drawings, and some kids wanted to talk to me while drawing—“My father lost his job because of the tsunami so he lives far away now”—“My house got washed away.”

“I live in a temporary housing,” said one child as he pointed in the direction of the elementary school grounds where many temporary structures had been built. Then a chime was heard from the town’s speaker and the child stopped drawing and listened with an intense focus. The speaker was distant and I could hardly make out the announcement. “It’s a thunder warning,” the child tells me. The same chime was heard on 3/11.

At other schools the teachers and kids seemed to be happy and thriving, even though the schools were surrounded by mountains of debris. Delivering art supplies and providing activities were both good ways to check in with the preschools in the region, where mental health services are only marginally available or accepted to begin with. If I could gather enough resources, I would start a preschool consultation and play therapy program for these affected schools. There is much work to be done.
My mental health volunteer work with survivors of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami was an unforgettable experience. In December 2011 I went to Koriyama City in Fukushima Prefecture, about 44 miles west of where the Daichi nuclear disaster occurred. Today more than 80,000 residents who evacuated the area remain scattered across the country, with no immediate prospect of being able to return to their homes and businesses. About 2,000 people have evacuated to Koriyama City in Fukushima and have been living in shelters.

I visited Fukushima just before the new year, one of the most important holidays in Japan. The winter weather in the Tohoku region in the northeast of Japan was freezing cold. The temperature was nearly zero degrees and it sometimes snowed.

I worked with a group called Community of Japanese Creative Arts Therapists (CJCAT). It is organized by Japanese art therapists who live in New York and Japan. Since the earthquake on March 11, 2011, CJCAT has been continuously sending mental health professionals to provide group counseling to the survivors. My role was to provide mental health services to survivors and to help them live healthfully in the shelter. Although the mental health field has developed in Japan, a cultural bias against this field still exists. Therefore, the group counseling was instead called an “art workshop.”

A typical “art workshop” lasted 90 minutes and consisted of about 21 people. Those who participated were mostly seniors who were evacuated from a town called Kawauchi. I started the workshop with easy exercises because the temperature in the room was extremely cold. Stretching the arms and the neck and massaging one another’s shoulders worked very well to create group cohesion, as well as warming up the body. I provided a short meditation and guided them to imagine the things that they like, such as old friends, or a special time or place.

After the meditation I asked the students to make drawings. I was shocked that almost all of participants drew their hometown, which the government had forbidden them to return to. Their drawings were very light. As is typical of Japanese seniors, they have great patience, known as gaman in Japanese. Though they have had an extremely difficult time since March 2011, they never expressed their personal desires or difficulties in public. This is not only because it is not customary to disclose personal feelings, but it is also because they were trying not to make the others meltdown by expressing such things. In fact, the first time they expressed their desires and wishes was on paper in our drawing exercise. It was still hard for them to share their drawings, desires, and wishes with others, but they had an opportunity to express themselves because the workshop encouraged them.

Cultural norms have a great effect even after such a destructive disaster. What I saw in the workshop was the fact that they were still trying not to express their feelings. Emotional disclosure and sharing with others might be difficult for them, but it seemed drawing could provide a small outlet to release their tension.

My sympathy and care for them moved me to collect their individual drawings and make one big tree in the room. We named it “Kawauchi’s favorite tree.” Someone scribbled one more phrase and pasted on the middle of the tree trunk, “Wishing for a great year for all of us in the new year.” Finally we opened our arms and imagined that the tree had our collective energy and each of us took this energy into our own heart. We all held our hands around our chest for a moment.

It was a great moment for sharing their feelings. Experiencing their daily life will be difficult because I live outside the country. However, my heart is always with those Japanese survivors and I am able to support them in many ways even from afar. Sharing this time with them was so valuable for me. No matter where I am, I will always feel them close by and believe in their bright future.
No one was more surprised than me to find that, after thirteen years abroad in Greece and America, I yearned for a return to the United Kingdom. I had thought that I was going to live in the United States for the rest of my life, but life had other plans. The wheel turned. By the time I actually moved back to the United Kingdom in June 2006, part of me had already returned to London, wandering the old streets, taking in the familiar sights, sounds, tastes, and smells. The relief I felt at returning was so great that I actually cried when the plane’s wheels hit the tarmac at Heathrow. I looked at the country I had grown up in with fresh eyes. After being away and immersed in other places, my perception had altered irrevocably. The U.K. was both deeply familiar, and a foreign country. It had changed, as I had: it was the same and yet different. I relished this new way of perceiving—the freshness of it. And, at the same time, I was shocked by the depth of the sense of return. This is a place that, frankly, I had disliked when I left. And yet now I feel my nerve endings soothed through reconnection with my roots.

Standing on the street opposite my long-deceased grandmother’s London flat, a few weeks after returning, I had a powerful sense that the circle was complete. I had gone away to grow, to create myself in ways I could not have done had I stayed. But I had to come back in order to fully integrate the growth, for it to touch and transform the way I experience my roots.

The work I do, both as a writer and as a psychotherapist, is an essential part of that process of integration. The novels I am working on are set in Greece. The therapy I practice is informed by my training at CIIS. I have reconnected with Spectrum, the humanistic psychotherapy practice I went to as a client before I ever left England, and through which I ultimately found CIIS. Today, I continue my training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with Spectrum, finding that their approach is synergistic with my CIIS training in ways I find inspiring and exciting. I have returned home, and now experience it in a totally new way because of the “home” I also experienced in Greece and in America. All three places swirl together inside me, continuing to nourish me. Who knows if there will be a fourth, fifth or sixth “home” ultimately, somewhere in the future? I will not say that this is it now, or that I’m back here for good. Life may have other plans. But I do know that, for me, returning was an absolutely necessary part of the cycle of leaving.
This past summer I participated in the joint annual conference at Pomona College of the Association of Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast (AS PAC) and the Western Conference of the Association of Asian Studies (WCAAS). I presented my paper there on “Confucianism and the Rise of China: a Discussion on Chinese Cultural Identification.” Through this conference, I got to know some scholars who gave me good suggestions for my future study and career. One friend, a PhD candidate majoring in Chinese history at UC Davis, told me that in order to write an excellent paper, besides research and writing, you should also spend a lot of time correcting your paper draft again and again. Moreover, she suggested that for international students, it is always helpful to ask for help from a native professional who works in the same field to review and examine your paper. A Japanese professor working in a private school advised me that if you are interested in academic jobs, it is better to try staying in one school long enough to get tenure; moving around from one school to another is usually not good for either your career or your scholarship.

In my panel there were four presenters. Our moderator was Professor Allan Barr. Our studies concentrated mainly on Chinese history and philosophy. We learned a lot from each other. My paper discussed in the contemporary era how Chinese can reestablish their cultural identity by connecting Confucianism and modern society. It explored the current study of Confucianism and the definition of Chinese cultural identification, reviewed Chinese cultural identity in the twentieth century, analyzed difficulties in constructing Chinese cultural identification nowadays, examined essences of Confucianism in Confucius’s time and Zhu Xi’s period, and interpreted the relationship between Confucianism and Chinese cultural identity. It also suggested that practicing Confucian wisdom and philosophy in Chinese society and the rest of the world can aid a mutual understanding of different cultures. After my presentation, my panelists gave me good suggestions on how to further improve my paper.

Besides my event, I also attended some other panels. Presenters shared interesting topics on history, religion, women, literature, economy, or politics in Asian countries. It was meaningful to me to see so many scholars in the Western world discussing Eastern cultures.

Shanshan Yang received an MA in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (MTCSoL) from Beijing Normal University and a BA degree in Chinese Language and Literature at Hebei University of Science and Technology. She was awarded prizes in writing and poetry for her works “The Doll of the God, Gold, and Time,” “The Prophecy,” and “View.” She founded Mandarin-language programs in both lower and middle schools at Bentley School in Oakland, California and is currently a PhD student in Asian and Comparative Studies at CIIS.
On April 2, 2011, I arrived back in Kyoto from San Francisco after a twelve-hour flight. I was tired but excited, anticipating a warm welcome from my native city. However, I had forgotten how harsh the weather in Kyoto could be during the spring. Everyone has an image of a beautiful Japanese cherry blossom under a sunny blue sky in April, but only the native people know how cold it can be at night, and how high the temperature can rise during the daytime in this valley surrounded by mountains. So I went through a re-initiation into the Kyoto weather—and I got a cold!

As Tetsuro Watsuji so eloquently described in his book *Fudo* (translated into English as *Climate and Culture*), our lives are tightly connected to climate: we are products of climate, in a sense. Existing with all that holds and embraces us, we are literally embedded in the web of interconnected networks of material and immaterial beings. I had to be remolded and become a product of Kyoto weather again. And it was during this re-initiation into the Kyoto weather that my whole being slowly started to remember its connection to my birthplace.

I had always wondered what my Gen-Fukei (original landscape) might be, the landscape that evoked in me belonging and origin. Yesterday, while walking down the street from my rented apartment, I found six tiny Jizo shrines along the narrow street, and I realized immediately that the presence of Jizo was definitely part of an original landscape for me. Jizo is a symbol of the compassionate protector of villagers and travellers. Jizo is a bodhisattva who made a vow to save all children from going to Hell. Often called Ojizo-sama affectionately, Jizo can mean Earth Treasury, Earth Store, Earth Matrix, or Earth Womb. Often the shrines to Ojizo-sama are very small and stand along dirt roads at the entrance of a village, with a bib around the Jizo’s neck. People offer flowers, water, and sometimes food.

Since childhood, when I had no idea of the meaning of Ojizo-sama, the image of a small Jizo shrine by the roadside symbolized the compassion that we are endowed with innately—the same compassion that we are born with and are showered with all our lives. For me, the Ojizo-sama always meant that everywhere we go, we are protected and loved, we are held and cared for, often in some mysterious way.

When I found several such shrines a short distance from my apartment, my heart jumped with joy and excitement. The feeling that I had come back to my native land overwhelmed me. Ojizo-sama was still here. I had been away for so long, journeying for my entire adult life, through thirty-six countries and innumerable cities and villages. But Ojizo-sama protected me all the time, and finally I am back to see his shrines again, so that I can pray and express my gratitude to him from the core of my heart.

My return to Kyoto has had a good beginning. My mind is floating in another world, full of wonders, many of which are yet to be discovered. When the Tohoku earthquake happened on March 11, 2011, my whole being was shaken as well. Since then something has changed in me—no more desire to seek definite answers to questions or certainty about any phenomenon in this world. It is time for me to just be without judgment, presupposition or prejudice. It is time for me to be as transparent as possible so that my unconscious current can guide me and reveal the wonders and wisdom I am destined to know. I am full of gratitude for this opportunity.

**A Re-initiation into Kyoto** 京都
by Hiroko Shiota, Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness PhD Program

Hiroko Shiota is a doctoral student in the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness program. She has practiced and taught yoga and meditation for the last twenty years in more than thirty countries. She has also been engaged in holistic education, working with children of kindergarten age around the world. Her dissertation will explore a new human-Earth relationship through her own experiences of weaving together Japanese traditions, tantric yoga and meditation practice, and a new Western cosmology.
In fall semester 2011 CIIS welcomed 35 new international students. They are from Taiwan, Canada, India, Israel, Colombia, Hong Kong, Sweden, Chile, Japan, Spain, Russia, Slovakia, South Korea, Mexico, Argentina, and the U.K. The breakdown of the new students is as follows:

SUS: 1
SPP: 22
SCT: 12 (5 online)

Immediately upon learning of the disaster in their home country, CIIS Japanese students and alumni living in the Bay Area supported one another and worked together to support Bay Area relief efforts such as:

- Fund-raising
- Interpreting and translating crisis care manuals for NPOs
- Offering support groups to Japanese communities in San Francisco
- Offering free counseling sessions on Skype
- Organizing a network of Japanese therapists in the Bay Area

The School of Undergraduate Studies (SUS) at CIIS hosted the third annual celebration of Día de los Muertos on Saturday, October 22, 2011, in Namaste Hall. There was poetry, music, face painting, danzantes (dancers), food, and more.

This year’s celebration had a special altar to honor the 23,000+ Japanese victims of the March 2011 tsunami and earthquake. The altar was created by SUS student Coleen Higa and the International Student Advisor Jody O’Connor.

Day of the Dead (Spanish: Día de los Muertos) is a Mesoamerican tradition that focuses on gatherings of family and friends to pray for and remember friends and family members who have passed. Although in some ways the Day of the Dead can be compared to the Obon festival in Japan, it is a more festive celebration with bright colors and candies, along with lively music and skeleton-face paintings.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK 2011

The week of November 14–18 is the sixth annual International Education Week (IEW) celebrated at CIIS. Our intention is for the IEW to foster a greater sense of a global and diverse community at CIIS; and to encourage a greater awareness of other peoples, other cultures, world affairs, and their influence on all of our lives. We wish to inspire an even stronger commitment among students, faculty, and staff to becoming more globally educated.

For the third consecutive year, Adrián Villasenor-Galarza, PhD student in PCC, organized IEW at CIIS. The 2011 theme was Landscapes, Soulscapes, and Everything In-between: The Intimacy of the Earth-Human Dance.

There were nine presentations by CIIS students, alumni, faculty and friends. For a listing of the presentations please visit the IEW page of the CIIS website.

2011 REPORT: International Students in the U.S.

Each year, during International Education Week, the annual “Open Doors” report is published by the Institute of International Education (IIE). The report shows the international student and study abroad participant levels from the previous year.

Students from China increased 23% from the last year’s figures. They now stand at 157,558 international students in the U.S., followed by India with 103,895, and South Korea with 73,351. Apart from China, the top five countries sending students to the U.S. (Canada at #4 and Taiwan at #5) have all seen declines or only slight increases. Students from the top five places make up 53.5% of all international students in the U.S. Like last year, the top U.S. state to host international students is California, with 96,535, up 24% from last year.

The largest increases in this year’s report were Saudi Arabia, with a 43% increase; and Iran, with an 18.9% increase over previous years.

For more information about the data and to view all the details you can visit the Open Doors website for more information:

Theatre for Change, an initiative of the Drama Therapy program, created a show titled, *In Transit: Braking at the Intersections*, which it performed in November and December 2011. The performance was one of the most complex, generous, emotionally charged, vulnerable, and transformative pieces addressing diversity I have seen and (I am not embarrassed to say) it moved me so much that I cried during most of it. I met with the cast for a quick interview and asked them some questions.

**Q. Why did you get involved with Theatre for Change?**

Daniel Smith: When I was talking to Renee [Emunah, codirector], she described it as different people's stories put together in a theatrical and thoughtful manner. That is what I liked about it and why I joined.

Sarah Pizer-Bush: I knew I wanted to do it from the time I applied. I'd seen the last Theatre for Change show and was really impacted by it. To me it was a case of “act hunger” both in terms of wanting to do a community theater project and wanting to do something really process-oriented, as well as craving an interconnected creative process and a change process that begins internally and goes outward.

**Q. What was the process of putting together the performance?**

Latille “Tia” Phillips: The process for me was very challenging because we didn’t start with the stories we have; we didn’t walk in knowing what we would be working on when we started. Once we were together, we worked on different themes. We went through many stories; we processed a lot of our historical stories and traumas. In the process we really created a tighter bond among us, which shows in the performance. We started rehearsals in March and had our first performance in November, and in between we were rehearsing three to ten hours a week. It’s a lot of work. It’s a lot of writing; a lot of thinking; a lot of working with pain and things that haven’t been dealt with yet. So, for me it was a very difficult process but very rewarding in many ways as well. I ended up having more respect for people I didn’t really have a chance to get to know during the cohort time.

Aileen B. Cho: We did a lot of drama therapy exercises, what our director Alexis [Lezin] would call “kicking up the dust,” so dust would be kicked up, and we would explore and be told to go write.

Truc Thanh Nguyen: We did some form of drama therapy in every session, from the time of our warm-up to transformation. We were really using the modality that we are being trained in to create this performance, to integrate the writing component. I don’t have a theatre background, and having an artistic director helped us figure out how to theatrically portray the stories and how to connect them. So there were two parts to the process: first, generating content, and then distilling the themes, the similarities that we could thread together. This way it ended up being the story of the entire group rather than just about one person.

Aileen: This is the longest theatre group I’ve ever been in. Usually it is from a month to three months at the longest, and, including performance, maybe four. So this has been different. Nine months!

Tia: This is a pregnancy: a hard, long, beautiful pregnancy.

Alice Velazquez: One reason why this piece is so unique is the fact that it is a self-revelatory process. We are disclosing our personal stories. We are creating it: the piece is original to us, original to this troupe.

**Q. Any memorable moment from the rehearsals?**

Marissa Snoddy: When they were forming the human chains around me, it was just an idea in my head. And when each person got into it, it came alive. And it felt bigger than myself. I could feel the presence of each person, each link in the chain. And I felt their support. Inside the chain, I felt held by the group. And I didn’t even realize that they were reacting to the words I was saying. Just hearing the different ways that each person related to that—it was really powerful for me. It really helped to share my story, seeing the universality of it.