The First Step as a World Citizen

Last April, there was a murder in Tsuruoka, the town where I live. When I noticed a newspaper headline saying that the suspect was a “Chinese Male,” I thought to myself: “Ah, after all.” I somehow thought a Japanese person could never do such a cruel thing, and created this image that all foreigners are scary.

But after thinking about it for a while, I realized there are also many foreigners who are not scary at all: baseball player Randy Johnson for example. Not only would I like to meet him, I even want to shake hands with him! Also, each year, there’s a foreign teacher at my school. Last year, our teacher was Miss Mia. Her skin was white and her eyes big and round. Miss Mia played many games with us. She also taught us that it is very impolite in America to hold up your plate while you’re eating. This really surprised me, and it also made me realize that people can easily cause misunderstandings by not knowing anything about cultural differences like this. I also think that misunderstandings can sometimes pile up to one big problem. But Miss Mia played basketball with us during playtime, and helped us clean up after class. She was not scary at all. In fact, she was very nice.

So I came to understand that I had judged people purely on the basis of “image.” I now think that it is wrong to think that someone from a particular country is scary only because a TV show mentioned an incident that involved a person from that country. Just as there are Japanese people who commit crimes, there are also foreigners who are very nice. I think that making a distinction between Japanese people and foreigners can become a source of discrimination. It would be good if people could interact as world citizens and learn more about cultural differences and good qualities of other countries.

First, I need to get rid of the image that foreigners are scary people, and instead get to know them better. This can be my first step to becoming a world citizen.