

## Korean girl getting united.

*WELCOME TO MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY!* - Registrar's Office

I was welcomed after all. There was an orientation for international students. I never thought there would be an orientation for 'international' students. The orientation gave me an opportunity to make friends from all over the world. There was a fair where you can get every information you will possibly need. It was okay not to know things. All I needed to do was 'ask.' Asking wasn't hard at all. Luckily I had a Korean guide in my orientation group. If I couldn't say it in English, I was able to ask it in Korean. MSU was that big (in a global way.) If I just ask, and *voilà!* I got every answer I needed. It was the same in the food court, student cafeteria, and the bank, everywhere I can possibly name of. Everybody there was very kind. Even my dorm life was perfect. People in my hall were very energetic and didn't hesitate to say 'hi' to me. I loved my floor people so much I began to open my door whenever I was in my room. I was enjoying my new life in the US *until* class started. On the first day of class, I realized I was a Korean girl in an 'American university' not in an 'international student's university.' I was feeling discrimination in a class where there were a whole lot of people who could be my friend in the future.

Funny thing is, there was no discrimination. I was discriminating myself from other students. To me, talking to a classmate they didn't even know before was only possible between American students. I kept telling myself 'I'm a Korean. I can't do that. They won't like me talking to them. By the way, what should I talk about!?' And at the same time, making friends with a Korean student

was a 'no' either. 'They are Korean. If I hang out with them, I will keep on using Korean. It will be useless coming to US.' Eventually, I was getting lonelier and lonelier inside than I ever felt in my entire life. I couldn't bond myself with anyone. I usually felt a strong bond between me and my friends in Korea. However walking through the campus in MSU, I couldn't feel a slight intimacy with anyone I see. I even began to feel my hall people as strangers, even my door mates! I remembered what Peter Briggs from the OISS said in the orientation about misinterpretation. He said that friendly doesn't mean friendship. Thinking about what he said, 'disoriented' was what I felt. With what standards should I judge whether if he/she is my friend or not? I had no idea. In this helpless situation, an American friend who had that standard came to me. He called me 'friend' first when I needed that word badly. And things started to work out for me. A few weeks later, I had people I can call 'family.' Interesting, isn't it? I bet not many people here will get this kind of relationship I have.

Almost everyone knows 'Winnie the Pooh.' I started as joyful, non-worrying Pooh when I came to the States and became Piglet after. I became scared of every reaction people gave me, scared of the brown and green eyes thinking they will make fun of me, worrying that they might act in some kind of way I won't even realize that I was being discriminated. Then in that dark nightmare of mine, my Christopher Robin came with the warmest blue eyes and asked me. "We're friends, right?" I smiled, and answered right away. "Yes!" He helped me out whenever I had problems staying here. He also corrected my English whenever I was wrong. I learned the rules of baseball

and football from him. I still didn't know the standard of what you call 'friend,' but Christopher was definitely my friend. He just cleared it out for me.

Staying here, fortunately in MSU, where I found my Christopher Robin, I started to have a little bit of self-confidence. I always try to remember what my door mate asked me when we first met. "Tell me about Korea." I know now that there are people who want to know my home country just to know 'me.' My family in Michigan is one of those people, too. I volunteered a program called 'Friendship Family.' They gave me what I call a 'family.' They are not Korean. We are people from different country, but happened to be a family. I got to have two cute younger sisters who really liked me back and a mother with a warm heart. We went to the apple orchard together to pick apples. And we ate doughnuts and drank apple cider. They have the brightest and the purest green eyes I've ever seen. First when I saw people with eye color except black, I found their eye so vacant. Now? Thanks to them, I got to feel warmth and home in their very green eyes. I can read what their eyes are saying, "I like you." And they read my black eyes saying, "I like you, too."

I realized that our rational brain needs to know the boundaries between countries and countries, but our mind doesn't have to. We might have different eye colors, nationality and skin color however, the person inside the various external features is completely the same! Everybody in this world breath air, want to be loved and rejoice in delightful events.

I went to the football game with my Christopher Robin. I bought the ticket for the whole season. I thought as I'm in MSU, I should follow the Spartan's rule which is to enjoy football game. I

received the T-shirt written 'We are one.' I went to the football game wearing that T-shirt and chanted 'my' colors green and white, shouted with everyone around me. I was able to enjoy the football game and sing the fight songs thanks to Christopher who taught me. Whenever there was an event to rejoice, for instance a touchdown, people in the stadium didn't hesitate to give an Asian girl a high-ten! After the game, I came back to my dorm and I could see the depression that had been holding me completely gone. On my back, there were the magic words '**We are one.**' Just one friend, one family, and finally one football game was all I needed to become *one*.

Thanks to...

My Christopher Robin whose real name *is* Christopher (last name isn't Robin) for teaching me the football game rules, showing me the tailgate, taking me to the games. I cherish every moment I was able to spend with him and learning everything he wanted to tell me about America. I am able to see and experience American culture(or Spartan's culture if I can say so.) with positive attitude.

Also, the friendship family I was able to have thanks to the CVIP. I appreciate every effort and care they give me. Thinking that there are things that I would never be able to experience if I didn't have a 'family' to take care of me, I realize I'm a pretty lucky girl.