

“NSYSU Science Immersion Camp: A Two-Way Avenue”

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It is easy to describe immersion as an intersection; a place where two points, or rather, people meet. Entering this program, this was what I believed, and as such I had expected to be shown the city of Kaohsiung, its people, its food, and other parts of their culture. Needless to say, my expectations were indeed met beginning from the first day to the last — exceeded even — and having now completed the immersion, I feel that I must share my realization that immersion is less akin to an intersection than it is a two-way avenue.

The week began with a city tour, which showed us the areas most frequented by locals and tourists alike. During the city tour, the first thing almost all of us noticed was the heat, which was nearly as hot as the Philippines'. The next thing however, was the state of their city. Upon leaving the airport, it was easy for me to say that Kaohsiung was a very clean and calm city. Public transport and everyday life are really quite efficient, with different train systems available to easily take you around the city, and centralized card payment systems. The low effort needed to get around allowed us all to put more effort into appreciating our surroundings and look deeper than the aesthetic of the city.

The immersion was, of course, more than just being sent to another country. It was also an immersion into the people, their culture, and their way of life. Throughout the next few days, we joined different crowds, talked to different people, and exchanged experiences of each other's culture. In doing so, I believe that this immersion activity became an effective two-way exchange between us visitors and our hosts. On the science aspect, I was invited to join the Nanomaterials Research Lab, where they researched energy systems and materials innovation, particularly researching hydrogen

harvesting systems and graphene material innovation. We were immersed into the life of laboratory chemistry, and gained invaluable lessons from each moment we shared with our senior hosts.

Beyond the lessons of the lab, witnessing the differences of their way of life from ours was perhaps one of the most important takeaways and gifts I was able to receive. One thing I noticed during our stay in Kaohsiung was that there were barely any people alone. There were barely any people rushing to be somewhere, stressing to make it somewhere on time, or visibly upset. Even when our host graduate students were deep in discussion, there would never be a moment too tense to be in the presence of. Slowing things down, being with the people you care for, and taking a moment to be happy — these were the things that I learned from the people of Kaohsiung. Maybe I had just caught the people at a good time of the week, month, or year, but after witnessing that for about a week, I think believing in the happiness of people is something that can never do any wrong for any of us.

I believe we must understand that we meet people every day. We pause at intersections, pedestrian crossings, stoplights, queues, and each time we take glimpses at the other side only to continue forward at the next available moment. Ironically enough, it is only upon realizing that we are on the final stretch that we are able to pause and take a glance at where we have passed, and the people who exist alongside us. In our lives, we will always want to go somewhere, and we will always want to reach our goal, however, do not restrict your mind from immersing yourself into the world. The world does not exist within our goals, but in the eyes of those willing to truly witness it.







