

Winner's Voice of the "JFTC Essay Competition 2008"

Recently, Japan Foreign Trade Council, Inc.(JFTC) announced to sponsor "JFTC Essay Competition 2009" with a submission deadline of September 30, 2009.

Last year, Ms. Kamila Pieczara (Poland) won the Prize for Excellence and attended the awarding ceremony held on January 9, 2009 at Hotel New Otani, Tokyo, Japan. She clearly remembers the memorable experience of the award as well as her visit to Japan and comments that it, she believes, positively affected her application for a PhD program at the University of Warwick, UK.

The following is her message on how she is now and what she expects of the competition, encouraging potential applicants for this year's competition.

Kamila Pieczara
(Poland)

As I was preparing my paper for the Japan Foreign Trade Council Essay Competition 2008, I could not expect how rewarding this experience was going to be. In December 2008 I learnt that my essay, entitled "Reinforcing the Japanese Brand as Environmental Leader: The Role for Corporations", was selected for a Prize for Excellence. In this way my memorable experience with Japan and the JFTC began.

To my great contentment, I also received an invitation to the awarding ceremony in Tokyo in January 2009. Since I had never been to Japan before, it seemed an excellent opportunity that I could not miss. At that time I was a recent graduate in International Economics, planning to become a PhD student in the next academic year. For this reason, I was very happy that at the New Year's reception following the ceremony I could meet professors, business practitioners and fellow awardees sharing my passion for research. In particular, I recall our discussions about economic issues of Japan and East Asia. It helped me to formulate my PhD research proposal, as well as find fresh ideas. Soon after I came back from Japan and sent applications to universities of my choice, it turned out that the University of Warwick in England accepted me into its PhD program. Thus, in October 2009 I am going to start doctoral studies there. My experience with the Essay Competition gave me not only confidence to incorporate Japan in the area of my research, but also practical hints from experts whom I met at the ceremony and reception.

I am glad that also this year interested individuals from Asia, Europe, and other continents will have the chance to participate in the competition run by the JFTC. The times have changed as a result of turmoil on financial markets. In my opinion, the JFTC has responded appropriately by selecting a topic of global capitalism and its reform for this year's theme. Of course, it does not mean that last year's focus on environmental issues is not valid anymore. However, the current economic crisis is certainly worth of analysis from the perspective of Japan's corporations. Interestingly, there might be a link to environmental challenges, so in my opinion conclusions from last year's essays are still relevant. It is my hope that the JFTC will continue to organize the competition, inviting young people and experienced researchers alike to analyze burning issues of our turbulent times.

Convinced by my personal example recounted in this article, I am sure that participants in the JFTC Essay Competition 2009 will have a similarly rewarding experience. I can assure everyone that a strong will to learn more about Japan and global issues is the most important quality to write a good or even outstanding essay. But is it solely for the purpose of winning? Certainly not. The knowledge I have gained while researching for my essay is bearing fruit to this day. It is also a source of inspiration: I plan to learn Japanese and never stop being curious about Japan and its role in the world.

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