

## CAMPUS Asia Field Study in Singapore

### 1. Dignity Kitchen



This is a place that provides training in the food and beverage industry for people with disabilities and offers them employment opportunities.

We were honored to hear the founder of Dignity Kitchen share his entrepreneurial journey. I will never forget his encouragement: "You must show your ambitions. If you want to build your business, you have to speak it out, because you never know who is listening." I realized that we are often told to stay low-key, as if you're gold, you'll shine. But opportunities do not always come to you on their own. You need to present yourself, communicate your strengths and value to the outside world, and only then can you seize the opportunities you want. I tend to wait until I feel perfect before revealing my ambition, and I know that inevitably lets some opportunities slip away. Therefore, one key takeaway I gained here is the importance of catching every chance to appeal and present oneself.

The founder shared that his venture began with a simple observation: on the streets of Singapore, you rarely see a homeless person, so where had they gone? From this, he realized that most people with disabilities are trapped at home, unable to go out or live independently.

To notice overlooked minorities in society and to let society see them, thereby creating a world where being a minority no longer means being excluded, is one of my visions. Dignity Kitchen showed me an approach beyond just raising one's voice; it is about creating real, tangible change.

### 2. NTU

Early the next morning, we took a long bus ride to Nanyang Technological University (NTU). The open-air buildings allowed the hot and humid Singaporean breeze to pass lightly through the corridors, washing away the drowsiness brought on by the swaying bus.

My brief day at NTU was rich with new knowledge and offered a university atmosphere quite distinct from those in Japan. However, what I want to focus on here is my reflection on the lecture by Dr. Gary Lit, where we got to know some untold stories of the Japanese occupation in Malaya and Singapore.



As I grew up in China, the war with Japan has been an inescapable theme, woven into our history books and films. It is often mentioned that this chapter of history tends to receive less focus in Japanese education, and that it can be denied and forgotten. Yet, I realize that I have, in a way, been avoiding it as well. I feel that it is painful, and I only need to know of its existence, but delving too deeply into the details can make me feel heavy hearted. In this class, however, I came to deeply understand that the more people who know this history, the more it is respected; To remember is to advocate for peace; to forget is to risk the repetition of tragedy. The phrases I have encountered in history textbooks and on National Memorial Days became vivid in my heart through the Dr. Lit's lecture.

What left the deepest impression on me was a moment when Dr. Lit interviewed an elderly survivor and was brought to tears. The scene was so intense that even the restaurant staff suspected the professor was mistreating him and nearly called the police. Yet, despite revisiting wounds long buried and never fully healed, the elderly man pleaded with the Dr. Lit: "You must publish it." Some memories can only be passed

down orally. Once these stories cease to be told, they fall into dust, and when they are forgotten, they risk repeating.

Dr. Lit told us that most survivors he interviewed chose to forgive. After class, I raised my concern, mentioning that I had seen online discussions suggesting that some believe we have no right to forgive the invaders on behalf of our ancestors. He responded that, as a descendant of war victims, he would choose forgiveness like many survivors. He explained that the wrong did not lie with individual soldiers, but with war itself, which distorts human nature. He emphasized that if we remain trapped in past hatred, nothing will change.

It is understandable, however, it is also acknowledged that separating the topic of historical recognition from personal emotion is difficult, even if we try to treat history as a closed chapter, the echoes of the past still resonate in our cultural identity today. Old wounds are not something that can be simply brushed aside with a single word. Perhaps when this history is confronted, acknowledged, and reflected upon, many people's emotional burdens will finally begin to lift, carried away by the winds of understanding and remembrance.

### 3. City Gallery



During my visit to the Singapore City Gallery, I was particularly drawn to the preservation of antique architecture. Singapore is a small country with limited land, and we often assume that modern urban development inevitably conflicts with the protection of traditional buildings. However, Singapore presents a different vision: cultural heritage is not an obstacle to modernization, but an essential part of it.

In many cases I have seen, traditional culture is confined to



museums or compressed into a single “old town” street, existing more as display than as daily life. In contrast, Singapore’s conserved districts remain vibrant. In Chinatown, shops still sell traditional spring couplets, In Little India, rows of gold jewelry stores line the streets. In small grocery stores, one can find familiar fruits, vegetables, and spices that evoke memories of home. Shops selling religious items quietly sustain faith and ritual practices. These are not staged performances for tourists, but everyday scenes of continuity.

As a result, different cultures are able to take root, grow, and interact on the same land. Rather than dissolving into uniformity, they intertwine and gradually form what we now recognize as Singaporean culture, which is diverse, layered, and inclusive. Modern skyscrapers rise beside conserved shophouses, and neither cancels out the other.

#### 4. The desire to be seen

During the tour, “Singapore has nothing” was repeated many times. As I explored the city, I felt that it was less about lacking resources and more about motivation. Maybe because Singapore does not have natural advantages, it puts extra effort into designing how it wants to be seen.



When I stood under the Supertrees at Gardens by the Bay, I was surprised by how artificial and natural elements were blended together. The trees are artificial, but they also support real plants and ecological functions. Compared to the feeling of returning to nature, it was more like creating a new version of nature through technology, which struck me most.

I felt something similar at Changi Airport. The massive indoor waterfall, surrounded by glass, greenery, shops, and travelers pulling their luggage, turns an airport, which normally a place of transit and hurry, into a destination. People slow down, take photos, and spend time there. Efficiency and spectacle exist at the same time. Moreover, even when I walked along streets, I kept noticing buildings with distinctive shapes and thoughtful details. They were not always iconic landmarks, but they clearly showed a strong awareness of design.



Gradually, I felt that the idea of “having nothing” may have become a driving force that pushing the city to constantly design, innovate, and redefine itself.

## 5. Appreciation

I feel truly honored to be part of Campus Asia field study of this year. I am also very grateful to have met and traveled alongside everyone in the team. Their sharp insights added so many diverse perspectives to the classes, and their passion for life made these five days as colorful and lively as the Old Hill Street Police Station.

