

My experiences have truly enhanced the course of my life and given me a deeper appreciation of my own Jamaican culture as a non-diplomatic 'Ambassador at-large. Having returned to Jamaica almost ten (10) years later, I'm grateful that my Japan-related experiences have gone a long way towards defining me as an individual both professionally and personally. Living and working in the Japanese society especially in Kobe City, has given me amazing opportunities which have enabled me to meet and maintain some lifelong mentors, mentees, friends, associates and acquaintances. My all-round success as a "Jamaican'anese" ALT was possible because of the highly reputable JET Programme through whose reflexive lenses, I was able to explore new horizons and garner a deeper comprehension of human communication within the unique Japanese society which is absolutely opposite to my familiar Jamaican culture.

Each day in Japan was a day I spent investing in the growth of my students in understanding how to speak, listen, understand and communicate not only in the subject of English as a Foreign Language, but also the cultural aspects of Jamaica. Through these interactive exchanges, I too gained more in-depth knowledge of Japanese culture and society through visits to dozens of cultural festivals, historical places, shrines, temples, or by trying Japanese foods, learning Japanese language as well as calligraphy, or by experiencing a very punctual public transit (bus taxi and train) system which was made possible by the endless generosity of all ages of Japanese people that I met.

I'll tell anyone and everyone that I'm glad that since the beginning of my teenage years, I've consistently followed my own curiosity in search of unique opportunities, met and spoke to the right persons, backed by supportive Jamaican family and friends, I was completely unaware in 2004 that that single action of "moving to live and work in Japan" would change the course of my *life*. *I wouldn't trade my Japan-related experiences for the world. Totemo Arigatou Japan!*

Karen Bailey-Coleman  
Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture  
2004-2007

