

When I arrived in Japan in July 2002, I was nervous and apprehensive about my new life. Being a person with dark skin, I was worried that I would have trouble fitting in. Those concerns however quickly dissipated upon meeting my new colleagues, the students and members of the local community. Over the three years as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) at a Sakai Senior High School in Tottori Prefecture in Japan I felt loved, appreciated and at home

Being an ALT on the JET Programme was not just about teaching the English Language to students with a mix of attitudes to the subject. The experience allowed me to be a Cultural Ambassador both at school and in the wider community. In addition, I gained valuable skills that have enriched my personal and professional life. My experience in Japan has made me more confident, self-assured, tolerant, open-minded and culturally aware than I ever was.

Some of the unforgettable memories that now flood my mind are dressing up as Santa Claus and handing out Christmas presents to delighted kids; cooking Jamaican food for an appreciative group of locals; singing the Bob Marley's song "Three Little Birds" with some of my students in the school festival; harvesting sweet potatoes with a group of elementary school kids; climbing a mountain for the first time (Mt. Daisen); wearing a kimono; and participating in the many Japanese cultural events.

Being on the JET Programme confirmed my passion for Japan and my commitment to continue through my work in the Jamaica Japan Exchange Teachers Alumni Association (JJETAA), of which I am the Vice President, to strengthen the cultural bridge between Japan and Jamaica.

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