
Being a Minority in Japan: JETs of African Descent

Pre-Departure Seminar June 25, 2016

- 1. What are some of your concerns or expectation as a person of color living in a predominantly Asian society?**
 - a. Sharing the most pressing concerns with the group / rumors about life in Japan.
- 2. My experience living in Japan as a former JET of African descent.**
- 3. What might you encounter as a person of African Descent in Japan?**
 - a. Lots of looks, stares, and touching from people who are curious about you. And sometimes treated like a celebrity.
 - b. Your students will think you are the most interesting person they've met their entire life.
 - c. Some Japanese people may think your interests are heavily into hip-hop, rap, and reggae music. Also some will think you are good at singing gospel, dancing, playing basketball and running track.
 - d. Finding skincare, makeup, and natural hair products can be extremely difficult. Searching for a hairstylist who is experienced with styling and braiding black hair can be hard as well.
 - e. At times you may feel self-conscious of what you do in front of others such as the pressure to not promote certain stereotypes of African Americans or blacks in general.
- 4. Navigating life on JET**
 - a. Be involved in your community and in JET
 - i. Volunteer at local festivals and events
 - ii. Join a local AJET chapter or start a new one
 - b. Start a new hobby, venture to new places, plan cultural events, and connect with nearby JETs
 - i. Learn karate, kyudo, tea ceremony and other traditional Japanese sports/customary activities.
 - ii. Travel to popular destinations in Japan or in Asia.
 - iii. Visit your JET friends in their town/prefecture.
 - c. Learn to speak, read, and write Japanese as it will allow you to:
 - i. Engage in dialogue with your co-workers and students
 - ii. Shop, travel, and making Japanese friend
 - d. Be yourself!!
 - i. Learn and discover new things about yourself.
 - ii. Share your experience as a person of color living in Japan with others.
- 5. Questions**

If you have any questions, concerns or need any advice, please feel free to reach out to me anytime by email at spence1400@gmail.com. I'd be happy to help in any which way possible. Good luck and have a great time abroad!