

FEBRUARY, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #76

A FREE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF JAPAN & TEACHERS OF JAPANESE



JAMES TRAN

*Boston Latin Academy
Boston, MA*

This program is perhaps the closest thing to being described as "eye opening" since my younger brother was born a good twelve years ago. At the age of six, my grandmother told me I had the responsibility of being a good role model for my younger sibling. At the age of eighteen, I was told that I had the opportunity and responsibility of representing my country in Japan. Both were tall tasks, but I savored them to their fullest. Being able to participate in this program took me by surprise this year. I never had "visiting Japan" tabbed on my summer 2013 calendar. It took me by storm this school year and the experience was a life time opportunity. Therefore, I would like to thank everyone in the Japan Foundation and my Sensei for making it possible.

My impression of Japan isn't all that different from my expectation heading in. Japan is simply beautiful. However, when I say beautiful, I now say that in earnest about the people. All the communities I visited, Osaka, Rikuzentakata and so forth, had precious people that have made lasting impressions on me. The gems of Japan aren't the tourist attractions that international media displays, it's the people. From orientation to my final day in Los Angeles, the program in its entirety has made me realize this. Before we embarked on our journey to Japan, an assignment asked us "What can you do for the people of Tohoku?" The answer is now clearer than ever.

It was pointed out during the program that media coverage of the 3.11 tsunami was quickly passed over by other upcoming events in the world, making it seem as if the impacted areas were quickly forgotten. In truth, Mr. Kato transforming Hotel Boyo into a refugee will continue to serve as my ideal memo of humanitarian unity. The writing on the walls at NEWsee will continue to be displayed and serve as testament to the efforts made during the tsunami. To the people of Tohoku, my classmates and I will never forget what happened. The stories, the experiences, and tragic events will forever more be ingrained in our memory. Moving forward, what we can do for the people of Tohoku is spread the wealth of knowledge here in the states. Thomas Lin, one our program coordinators, once said that the people of Tohoku just want to be remembered. We must continue to share our experiences in Tohoku with friends and far

because if people are ignorant of the impact of the 3.11 disaster, then what is there to remember? In remembrance, there is a sense of connection. With that sense of connection there is an opportunity to create more good memories moving forward.

As I set foot onto the plane that would take us from Tokyo to Los Angeles, I didn't feel sad that I was leaving Japan. It didn't feel like a one way trip home as if I would never come back again. Rather, it felt as if I had unfinished business and that one day I would return to complete it. It surprised me a little that I could contemplate returning with such confidence since you never know how much can change within the course of a couple years. I would have to say most of that confidence stems from participating in the JET Memorial Invitation Program. They say if you talk the talk you got to walk the walk. I've said before that one day I'd come to Japan and it happened. My home stays were an amazing experience. It was extremely humbling and gratifying to have such wonderful families. I would like to thank the Abe and Mizuhara families for being a definite pull factor in my desire to return one day. I personally told them I'd return one day. Cheers, hoping that I can walk the walk once more.

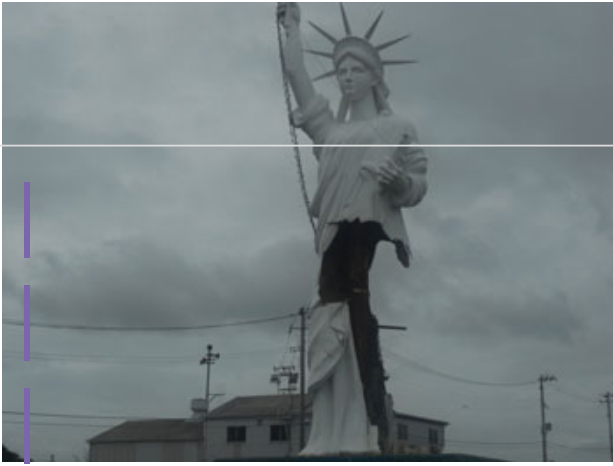
There were three goals for this program: to establish bridges, to learn of Tohoku, and to honor Ms. Taylor Anderson and Mr. Monty Dickson. Subtly, an underlying goal was to introduce us to the JET program. Throughout the course of our stay, we met several current and former JET participants, ALTs and CIRs alike. My most memorable conversation with a former JET ALT was on our bus ride back to the Ark Hotel in Sendai. Frankly, I don't remember his name, but we were discussing careers and his experiences learning Japanese. When he asked me what my future aspirations were, I was sort of dumbfounded and unsure of how to answer. I laughed it off asking "Is just making a living too much to ask for?" The way he replied to my playful comment was perhaps the most genuine and profound comment I heard up until that point on the trip. He said, "No, that's not how you should be looking at things. When I was your age, I never looked at my future as just making a living. When I was your age I wanted to be an idealist. I wanted to change the world. And that's part of the reason I joined JET, so that I could make an impact in the community. I wanted to invent things, do things, save lives and not just make a living." Therefore, as I move forward with my career and education, the JET program has become of genuine interest to me. After college it is something that I will look into. I've perhaps walked out of JET-MIP with a broader view of how to help the world become a better place. It doesn't have to be upscale and flashy. You don't have to revolutionize the world. Playing even a little part in the community goes a long way as well.

To Ms. Taylor Anderson and Mr. Monty Dickson, I want to say that I admire you so much for your hard work and dedication to the communities you lived in. To be able to find your niche, something that you're passionate about, is something I hope to find one day myself. You were beloved by all who knew you and you've touched the hearts of those who are strangers. I don't think words do justice in explaining your impact, but Thank You.

NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION

"Ms. Tall and Talented"

The mindset to stay strong even in the midst of adversity isn't easy. However, the people of Tohoku continue to stand proud like this lady liberty. The fortitude of the people there is unforgettable.



Breeze #86



Breeze #85



Breeze #84



Breeze #83



Breeze #82



Breeze #81



Breeze #80



Breeze #79



Breeze #78



Breeze #77



Breeze #76



2014 Kakehashi Report

Japanese Language Education Update 3

2013 J-LEAP Report: Moe Takahashi

2013 J-LEAP Report: Haruka Nitani

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Lisa Trieu

2013 JET-MIP Essay: James Tran

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Anna Schneider

2013 JET-MIP Essay: Andrew Ryfa

Breeze #75



[Headquarters](#)

[New York Office](#)

[Center for Global Partnership](#)

[Volunteer](#)

[ボランティア募集](#)

[Japan Related Links](#)

[Job Openings \(Updated\)](#)

5700 Wilshire blvd, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90036

P. 323.761.7510

[Annual Report](#)

© 2019 The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

[Web Design.](#)