

## **Japanese:**

□□□Carlyne's Links

Haiti No Kai Cesla (Japanese): <http://www.haitinokai-cesla.com/>

About CESLA (Japanese): <http://www.haitinokai-cesla.com/haiti-cesla-us.html> □□ABOUT CARLYNE YAMADA :

## **English:**

#31 Carlyne Yamada

Special Advisor of a Haiti assistance NGO/actress  
(She's been in Japan since '96)

□I couldn't go back home. Some of my acquaintances perished, which has been very difficult for me.

At 9:53PM on January 13, 2010 (UTC), a big earthquake hit Haiti, a small country floating in the Caribbean Sea. This incident raised public interest in the country. And there was a woman in Tokyo who received an endless array of information sent from the quake area.

Her name is Carlyne Yamada and she's been in Japan for more than 10 years and has been involved in assistance activities for Haiti also. Also she performs as a professional actress.

She'd been translating what victims were saying on the footage from Haiti because she is the only person in Tokyo who understands the Haitian language. She'd been watching tragic images for many hours so I asked her what she felt about that.

Then she talks about her point of view on Japan, which is said to be a peaceful country.

\*Interview at Sakuragi-cho (Yokohama)

□Grind, on the grind, grind.

I'm involved in activities for an NGO called "Haiti No Kai Cesla" as a special advisor. Also I perform on TV, films and boards.

I had worked on stage from the end of 2009 to the beginning of 2010. I got a big job done but a big earthquake occurred in Haiti after a brief reprieve.

Then I started to help a TV newsroom because I was the only person who understands the [Haitian] language in Tokyo. I guess there are 10 people who are like me all over Japan.

I watched feeds from Haiti every day so I felt as if I was in Haiti. But where I was at that moment was Japan, not Haiti. So I wanted to rush back home. I wanted to get people water or food to feed them. But there was no flight to Haiti at all so I couldn't go back home. I couldn't reach my older sister, who's living there. Some of my acquaintances perished, which has been very difficult for me.

□Japan, a very far country.

I'm a Christian and I came to Japan on a Religious Activities Visa. I used to be a teacher of an Order's kindergarten.

There was an office for Haiti assistance in Japan and it was managed by a Haitian and Japanese married couple. A Haitian man and I knew each other so he invited me to Japan. There was no direct flight from Haiti to Japan so I moved to Montreal first and then flew to Japan via Vancouver. We Haitians need to obtain a transit visa so I got it in Canada. But some of us cannot get that kind of visa. People who came from countries where the political situation is highly unstable could attempt to find asylum there, so it often happens that countries don't issue even transit visas.

If we were to go back to Haiti from Japan without a visa, I would go to Amsterdam or Brussels from Narita and fly to the Dominican Republic. Then I would have to travel to Haiti by land from there. But I held a religious visa so I could come here pretty smoothly.

I love human beings.

I have an older sister and she manages a school for poor children in Haiti. It's called "CESLA", which accepts children who cannot pay tuition. My older sister and her husband established CESLA. Her husband coped with the cost of administration and also gave teachers their salaries. It has already produced nurses and economic majors. However after her husband passed away, she came up short and CESLA was forced to close. Fortunately it reopened in 2002. Before opening CESLA, my sister worked at another school and I helped her. I was a junior high school student but class started in the afternoon so I could do it in the morning. I've loved children since I was young so I helped her and her husband after opening CESLA continuously.

I like all human beings, not only children. **When I was a child I often saw poor people on TV and every time I did I felt so eager to help them.** So I wanted to work for the United Nation.

But the entrance exam of the UN was written in English so I couldn't take it because highly-educated people were educated in French in Haiti. That's why I decided to be a kindergarten teacher.

You never get anywhere if you don't take a chance.

I worked for upper class, middle class and the poor kindergartens so I was able to interact with children poor and rich alike.

In 1995, shortly before coming to Japan, the political and social situation was quite unstable. A kindergarten which I was working for at that time often closed classes. It was a school for rich children so some of them left Haiti with their parents.

So I was temporarily out of work. A director told me that I would be able to be back on the payroll if children returned there. I helped my sister's activities as a volunteer again and then I came here.

I didn't hesitate to come to Japan at all, but my friends worried about me very much.

They said, "Carlyne, what are you going to do in such a faraway country? You cannot even speak English! You'll definitely have a tough time." But I didn't care at all.

Because you never get anywhere if you don't take a chance. I don't want to say I can't do something even though I haven't tried to do it.

□ Quiet Japanese.

When I was in Haiti, I often saw ninja and kung fu movies. The social situation of Haiti used to be relatively stable so middle class people like me could engage in pastimes there. I don't know if that's the reason why, but I thought that every Japanese person wore kimono as everyday wear. Women whiten their faces, wear beautiful kimonos, open Japanese umbrellas and traditional buildings are still lined up all over Japan. Of course things are not like that now.

I knew little about Japan so I didn't expect that I would get married to a Japanese man. You never know what happens to you.

Japanese people are very quiet in my eyes. On the train, they don't talk to each other and read books instead. We are totally the opposite. Everybody has a chat in public and becomes friends with each other. So trains are alive with the voices of people.

Japanese are quiet but run in the morning rush hour. Then they work seriously at their workplaces. I feel Japanese are quiet, busy and serious. Even at school, kids are quiet. But once I played Haitian music, everybody started dancing. So I think Japanese kids and Haitian ones are almost the same.

Kids are very cute. But a kid said something bad to me once before here in Japan. When I was shopping at a supermarket, I met a kid's gaze. Then he said, "Your face is dirty." I asked him, "Whose face?" and he answered, "Yours". I told him, "My face is not dirty at all." I taught him that my skin color is different from Japanese one because many of my [Haitian] ancestors came from Africa. That's why we have dark complexions. I didn't get mad at him at all because he was a 4 or 5-year-old little kid. So I taught him that there

are many kinds of people and the colors of skin also vary. His mother was next to him but she apologized to me instead of telling him like what I taught him. I regretted that a little bit.

Other than that, guys who were sitting next to me on a train looked at my face and said, "Scary". They thought that I didn't understand any Japanese. I told them, "No, you don't need to be scared of me." They were frightened.

One day, I saw a Japanese guy saying that a foreigner looked like an animal. That kind of tendency is still deeply-seated here in Japan. So if you're going to live in Japan, you need to have mental toughness.

□□But I thank Japan.

It was very difficult for me to learn Japanese. I thought that I would never be able to speak it. I went to a free Japanese class for a little bit but mainly I learned it by listening. I imitated the pronunciation of native speakers or learned by watching TV.

Actually the Japanese language was difficult for me. I'm happy to be here because I got opportunities to meet people from many countries. So I feel grateful to the Haitian man who invited me to Japan.

Then I thank God that I met Michiko Takaoka, the president of "Haiti No Kai Cesla". Because thanks to her, I could use what I had done in its activities. I got on the truck to support children in Haiti by using my educational experience. Also I got a chance to be an actress here in Japan. I originally love acting so it's very interesting for me.

So now I think that discrimination that I have faced were little things of life. You may face discrimination anywhere, right? You might encounter it even in Haiti. So I don't want to get hung up over that kind of thing. I would like to appreciate the encounters that I could experience only in Japan.

### **Teaching "how to catch fish".**

I would like to support not only education in Haiti but also people who lost their houses from the earthquake. Setting up a facility to house homeless people outside Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, and the reconstruction of it... But I won't be able to do it by myself so I have to encourage the Haitian government or the Haitian embassy to work on them.

Charity screening of the movie called "Miracle Banana". They showed people, the current situation of Haiti and sold products that were made in Haiti. (March 2010)

Also I want to be involved in the tree-planting campaign there. Haitian kids paint their pictures brown when they draw mountains. It shows that deforestation continues in Haiti. We use charcoal for fuel so forests were cut down too much. That's why I want to support tree planting effort to restore green Haiti.

Our way of assistance is to teach hungry people how to catch fish, not giving fish to them. I want to provide independence for victims through activities of "**Developing A New Haiti**". **I think with this organization and other s like it that good things can happen for Haiti.**

□ What is Japan to you?

I love Japanese food like tofu, miso soup and natto. Also Japan is a green country. But where I was born in is Haiti, the country where I can call my country is only Haiti.

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