

I am Aishat Alli, known around my household as Nana. I am a Nigerian native, born and raised there until I migrated to America in 2004. Growing up in Nigeria, my interest in Japan grew by the stories my mother told me occasionally. My mother had stayed in Japan for a period of time during the wars, and the memories she had from Hokkaido seemed to pass through me as I grew in her stomach. When my mother died, I moved to America. People were always surprised that my name was Nana. Whenever they asked, I had to explain to them that I was named after a friend of my mother when she was in Japan. Although I have a Japanese name, I felt completely empty at heart like I was missing another part of me, and that is why I decided to take Japanese language at Bellaire High School.

It's been 2 and a half years since I have been taking Japanese and I tell you, it is a journey I never regret taking. Not only did Japanese allow me to connect to the culture, the music, and the feeling of Japan, it also helped me to connect to my mother. Along the way, every new lesson I learned in class helped me understand more clearly the stories my mother told me when I was younger. For example, while learning about Hokkaido in class, I remembered immediately the stories my mom told me about the beautiful white snow that covered everywhere during the fresh winter days. I also learned that Japanese is not just a language that you learn; it is a passage way to a whole new culture, and a whole new set of ideas, technology, and people. I didn't expect to just excel at Japanese magically, I realized that I have to love the language, accept the culture, and grow with the lessons I gained from my experience with Japanese. Some people are naturally good at Japanese, some people have language familiarity, and some people, like me, just have to work harder. To not give up on a language is to love it dearly. You never quit it. You have to love the language until you both come to an agreement and I want to come to an agreement with Japanese in the future. I am not going to stop learning Japanese just because I graduate out of high school; I am going to keep on studying the language in university.

With Japanese, I plan to establish a bridge between my goal of being a health professional and my goal of spreading the language. I plan on also getting a degree in Japanese language, so as to open my own school, free to children of any background, in order to share the language. I want to open this school because I would hate for children to miss out on a great feeling such as to know Japanese, and to experience it. I also plan on participating in the JET Programme as soon as I obtain my bachelors degree, because I believe that would be a great way for me to also experience Japan. My philosophy in life is that if you love something dearly, you don't keep it to yourself, you share it. Japanese is my key to unlock all the passageways that stand between me, my past, present, and future. If I hadn't taken a step forward to enroll in a Japanese class at my school, I believe that my life would be missing a great part of it forever. Now, I am not only Japanese by name, I can say that I have grown to be Japanese at heart, and there is no way I am going to allow my love for Japanese to stop here, it already is a part of my life.