

Teachers College
Columbia University
Japan Alumni Association

TC Alumni Spotlight – Lavette Coney



Lavette Coney

“Being a part of my students’ lives is one of my favorite aspects of my current job.”

On anthropology, social justice and teacher self-reflection

What drew you to TC? I enjoyed teaching, since I was a tutor in high school. One of my volunteer activities was to tutor new immigrants at the Boston Public Library as senior in high school. And even though my undergraduate degree is in anthropology, I pursued teaching. Since, teaching is also a part of learning, I knew that I needed a well established school of teacher education in Japan to accomplish my goal of being an effective teaching and consummate educator.

Describe your path since graduating TC until now. I have always been interested and intrigued by the intersectionality of culture and language. My anthropology background complimented my passion for teaching. When I asked more questions about the English language and culture, it led me to understand the reasons why English is the dominant language in the world. The roots of colonization and stigmas around nativism peaked my interest. This later evolved into social justice and equity in the TESOL field with a focus on teacher self reflection and implicit bias. With continued research, I have surmised that even though TESOL is known as the ‘nice’ field, the lack of teacher reflection has negative impacts on learner outcomes.

What class/teacher/classmate has had a lasting effect on you? John Fanslow for his out of the box thinking, Kip Cates for his compassion for the world, Terry Royce for his resourcefulness, and Peter Sakura for his unrelenting support.

What is your favorite thing about your current job? The hardest thing? Being a part of my students’ lives is one of my favorite aspects of my current job. It is an honor to work with the international learners and their families, because they value education as much as I do. The hardest part of my job is being in an unsupportive administrative environment as a female of African descent. The lack of understanding of institutional racism, White privilege and fragility among my colleagues impacts me even more in a private educational institution.

What message would you like to share with the TC community? The message I would like to share with the TC community is a message of teacher self-reflection. I truly believe we are doing a disservice to both the learner and to ourselves when we do not take an introspective look at ourselves as teachers and as human beings.

Find us on Facebook at “Teachers College Columbia University Japan Alumni Association & Community”

To nominate a classmate for the Alumni Spotlight please email the TCCUJA at tccu.tokyo@gmail.com