

MY STORY IN
CHINA



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The idea to further my studies after completion of my undergraduate degree was not a difficult decision to make as my father had always encouraged me to do so. I must confess that, in all my searches for institutions to pursue higher education, I had not considered China as my destination for further studies. An uncle of mine, a current student of Jiangsu University, after seeing my undergraduate results, admonished me to apply to JSU. Though I was sceptical at first, I decided to give it a try. Within 2 weeks, I received an email. In that email was my congratulatory message and acceptance into JSU. One could imagine the joy with which I received the news. Preparations were made for my VISA applications and on Saturday, 10th March, 2018, I boarded an Ethiopian plane from the Kotoka International Airport on what would be my first International flight out of my country, Ghana to China. After 19 nerve cracking hours, we finally touched down at the Shanghai Pudong airport.

My first impression of China was how vast the country was and how security conscious the officials were. I was met by my uncle at the airport and we took a bus to the train station. It was obvious I couldn't hide my amazement as I was still adjusting to the sight of high-rise buildings and the amazing road infrastructure. The first lesson I would learn in China was never to miss the train. Amidst the heavy luggage, we had to literally run to board the train as that was the last train from Shanghai to Zhenjiang. The train station was filled with people, some looking at us as we rushed for the train. On arriving in Zhenjiang, we took a taxi to campus. That night, I was introduced to Chinese food at a restaurant outside the library gate. The food is popularly called 'cocking' amongst international students. It's basically rice and chicken soup. I really enjoyed it.

In the subsequent weeks, I joined other international students for campus registration. I was amazed by how big the campus was. I used to think that I would never fully tour the entire campus (well, I still haven't). I was determined to study the Chinese language and make as many Chinese friends as I could. Interestingly enough, the first Chinese friend I made was a China Unicom vendor. I made friends with her when I purchased my China Unicom SIM card. Camille (her English name) was a very kind and patient woman. Despite her work, she had time for me anytime I passed by her office. Though she wasn't that fluent in English, she was always ready to assist me. Through our friendship, I got to learn some Chinese words and also know more about her personal life. She made me appreciate the good character traits of the Chinese people. I must confess that Chinese are one of the most helpful people you will ever come across. Students, lecturers and even the ordinary folks in the city are always ready to help you at the expense of their comfort. My Chinese laoshi, Weiwei, was also one of the first Chinese I interacted with. She was open and also down to earth. As we were the first batch of international students she was lecturing, she was as excited as

we were. Her devotion to teach us the Chinese language and help us improve was incredible. I could send her any Chinese text any time of the day and she would be willing to help me understand it.



Through her help, I met a Chinese friend, Aaron, who though was an undergraduate student, always had time for me, especially with the Chinese language and also aiding me to set up some of the Chinese apps like, 淘宝, 饿了么, the JSU campus card online recharge system and others. I'll forever be gracious to him for his immense support and selflessness



My supervisor, Prof. Jia Qiang also shaped my mentality about the Chinese people. Though, the course I intended to do was not granted to me, Prof. Jia Qiang was determined to help me steer the course of complex networks. His concern for my academics was impeccable. Through his motivation for me to study complex networks, I developed a passion for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT), having been privileged to attend three AI and IoT conferences and exhibitions in Suzhou, Wuxi and Shanghai. Through these conferences and exhibitions, I came to learn a lot about ongoing technological advancements in the

field of AI and IoT and how China was a powerful force to reckon with, in regards to technology. Prof Jia has been truly instrumental in my life on campus and I'll forever be grateful.



Another personality who left a lasting impression on me was Prof. Wu Yuhai. Prof Wu taught me Basis of Dynamical Systems in my first year on campus. I still remember the subtle smiles he gave when teaching and how dedicated he was in helping me understand the fundamentals of the course. He was always understanding and could pause the class just for me to understand a concept before continuing. This showed the extent to which a lecturer would go to help a student. Though not all people who have directly impacted my life and experiences in China were mentioned, all these personalities I met in China, one way or the other, gave me a sense of belonging. This reveals one fundamental thing I have learnt which is that Chinese people are very kind and helpful.



Being enthusiastic about the Chinese culture and language, I made sure I was present at a lot of programs which involved Chinese and Foreign students exchange like the Cross Culture Park weekly programs organised by the graduate school where I met different calibre of Chinese students who were always shy at first but eventually felt comfortable relating to me. I also joined a group of Chinese students to learn some traditions of the Chinese people, such as the paper cutting, tea making, traditional Chinese dance and also playing of the 古筝, guzheng. In all I learnt of the value Chinese people placed on tradition and I was really impressed by this.



Another transformational factor in my life since I came to China was the opportunity the Overseas Education College (OEC) through Olive Media gave me. As a self-taught graphic designer back home in Ghana, I wondered how I could develop the talent once I got to China but with the help of Olive Media and the opportunity to be one of the designers for the Olive Newsletter, I have advanced in my designing ability

at an exponential rate. This opportunity has exposed me to a lot of Chinese designing trends and design principles.



I feel it necessary to mention one key thing I noticed about JSU and China as a whole which is that the misconceptions about the country are far from true. I was amazed by the level of technology being used in the country. From WeChat to Alipay to electronic vehicles to high speed

trains, in fact a whole lot. Since I am tech savvy, I quickly learnt a lot of stuffs since I was determined to make good use of the technology in the country and also learn as much as I could. The philosophy I learnt



from my stay here is that 书山有路勤为径·学海无涯苦作舟, which means There is no royal road to learning and also 友谊地久天长, the older the friendship, the stronger it gets.



Although I occasionally face challenges especially with regards to the language barrier, I'm always relieved knowing well that any of my Chinese friends will be readily available to help. In all, coming to China has granted me an opportunity to view Chinese people in a positive light and also motivated me to strive for excellence in whatever I do. I now go anywhere confidently knowing very well that I can rely on any Chinese person to help me with any issue I may face.