

Dear Vision First,

I am an African woman and a post-graduate student at a University in Japan.

I was traveling mid-September 2014 from Africa to Hongkong to then proceed to Japan to continue my graduate studies. However, I had a terrible experience in Hongkong as Immigration thought that I wanted to enter Hongkong on a one way ticket and stay illegally. In fact, I had a one way ticket but I was continuing to Tokyo. I showed them my visa and itinerary originally scheduled with Emirates before I missed my flight and rebooked with Delta Airlines.

Immigration thought I was showing an expired itinerary and I was lying about going to Japan. They suspected that I had just bought a one way ticket to Hongkong with Emirates. Oooops, all that was them assuming I was lying and me telling the truth which they didn't want to accept! They even wrote deportation order me and bought a ticket for me from Hongkong to Africa as I continued to defend my position. The officers even carried my bags and tricked me to the Emirates check-in counter for the flight to Africa.

By the time this happened, they had already checked me and my bags intensively three times – including removing my underwear – Ghosh! I thank God who gave me the calmness to stay strong. I refused to board the flight. I told them, I wasn't to miss my flight to Japan above all things, and if I did, I wasn't to go anywhere but go on hunger strike and die in Hongkong. I stood my ground!

It was not until midnight that a senior Immigration officer was called. He examined my documents and wanted to prove the authenticity of my flight to Tokyo with Delta Airlines but they had closed business until 5am. By the time I was cleared the next morning it was time to check in for another flight to Tokyo.

You can imagine the humiliation of undressing me, the deep suspicion as I told the truth, the intimidation that they would report me to the Japanese consulate to stop my travels to Japan. I wonder what they had to report - maybe that they had treated me unjustly in the hope the Japanese would do the same! Among 10 Immigration officers, only 1 was telling the others that they were wrong and even read to them in English some article of the Immigration Ordinance. They heard but went ahead with their unjust acts. It was this one Immigration officer who asked me to write a letter to his senior for me to be finally free. His senior cancelled the deportation order although it was too late to come downtown to sleep.

I'll find a way of sending my gift to you, glory be to God for these officers never knew that an African who overstayed her visa once in Hongkong (seeking for 'greener pastures) could voluntarily move on

and even go to Japan to study for master's degree in business. For that alone, I forgive them and the next time I come to Hongkong, it will be on a business trip and I'll be working for an organization because God elevates the meek and places them among princes.

Questions:

1. Was it reasonable for these Immigration officers not to check if I had an authentic visa and purchased an ticket to Japan, but act solely on their suspicion?
2. I have no criminal record in Hongkong, so was it fair to undress me to check my knickers and bra?
3. Was it just to hold me in the airport from 3pm until 8am while threatening and insulting me?
4. Was it just even after cancelling the deportation order, as the senior Immigration officer realized I had committed no crime, not to apologize to me but condemn me for not presenting my Japanese visa and onward flight ticket to Japan even when I had done so as soon as arrived at the immigration desk?

God bless Vision First,

A friend in Japan

19 September 2014