

## From Harlem to Sri Lanka: A Journey of a life-time

On January 29 1992, I began the day getting ready to embark on trip to a country that I never heard of or knew anything about. The country I was about to embark on for the next two years was Sri Lanka. On this day, I had no idea about history, culture, or politics of this country. The only thing I knew at the time was that I was leaving Harlem and taking a trip to a third world country to help with the alleviation of poverty. Therefore, on January 29, 1992, I was preparing for a new beginning. A new beginning that was going to take me from Harlem to Sri Lanka. The following excerpt was written upon my arrival to Sri Lanka:

It was February (the day I do not remember) and we have just landed in Sri Lanka. My first international trip to a poor third world country in South Asia. On this trip there are 14 Peace Corps Volunteers in total. Of course, I am the only African American from Harlem on this trip, so I feel a little out of place until I stepped off the plane and started to walk into the airport terminal. As I walked into the terminal I noticed something very strange. I noticed how most of the Sri Lankan people looked just like me, with only one exception; their hair looked a lot like Harlem's Congressman Charlie Rangel. After experiencing a couple of glances from the Sri Lankan government armed security forces standing at the airport entrance when I started to walk into the airport with my other mostly white Peace Corps Volunteers, I started to wonder whether I made a mistake. As I approached the airport entrance I was asked by a Sri Lankan armed security guard to step out of line so I can allow the Americans to enter first for customs processing. Of course being from Harlem I looked at the armed guard like he was crazy. In kindness, I advised the armed guard that I too was an American and that I was a part of this contingency group called American Peace Corps Volunteers. The armed guard was shocked and stunned that a black man was a part of this mostly white group entering his island for the first time. Well, I guess the Peace Corps experience in Sri Lanka has just begun.

In the next section, I will provide some brief comments from other batch number 18 Peace Corps Volunteers after settling into their assigned Sri Lankan villages:

Maricella: "Doing well in my new village, but missing all of you. Take good care".

Betsy: "Hello, hope everyone is doing well. I have been sick for the past three days and definitely not enjoying myself as much as a Bob".

Jenny: "Believe it or not I am actually very busy doing those agricultural surveys".