

ESL Newsletter

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ESL NEWSLETTER

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Students' View of the ESL at BHC

By Ekue Ayika

There is a story of soldier who joined the Allied army. On the battlefield, there wasn't any possibility of the soldier expressing his thoughts because he couldn't understand any of the languages that were spoken, and nobody could understand his language. Unable to share his fear of death, his desire to see his family, his need to talk to someone about all that he left behind and loved, he began to decline mentally. When his situation got worse, and his case was reported, he was finally removed from the battlefield. A linguist eventually found someone who spoke the soldier's language. It was the end of his trouble because he had someone whom he could speak to, and who could listen and understand him.



This story shows the importance that communication has in our life. All immigrants are somehow similarly "sick." We are sick of not being able to communicate accurately. To "cure" these



immigrants, Black Hawk College offers the English as a Second Language (ESL) program to everyone who wants to start learning, or to continue improving their English. Hundreds of students coming from every

part of the world have enrolled since the program's inception in 1991. The beginning and the continuation of this program have not been easy for the program's builders, the instructors, and the students. This essay is an insight into the ESL program, telling of its impact on my life, emphasizing the advantages of such a curriculum. It is also the opportunity for students to express their concerns about what they think could be improved.

In reality, the ESL program has gone through a number of changes, mostly to keep the program updated. "We always want to make it modern so that students can face the common challenges," declared Anne Bollati, Program Coordinator. She continued saying that "Moving into classes online has been one of the numerous changes we have had to make." It is important to understand that these changes have been made in response to the staffs', instructors', and students' proposals.



Therefore, the latest change in the number of days the classes meet—two days with one online component instead of the previous system of four days with one online—is a response to students who thought that switching to the new system would give them more time to study since many of them are working full time. There are many difficulties that any change brings.

While students have the right to express their opinion by making suggestions, instructors have the responsibility to offer, a program and a system of class attendance that meet with their objectives. This dilemma has made the decision for change difficult, particularly about the recent change of the system from four days. "I had resisted for two years before I decided to experiment the two day system," said Anne Bollati, who took the time to analyze the effects of the eventual change.

The question is to know whether the new system will survive. The ball's in the students' court. We asked for something that was given to us. Keeping the system depends on our reactions to it. How well we

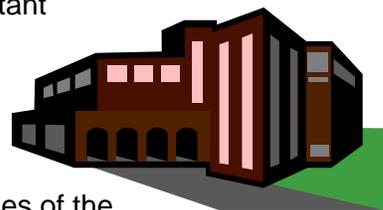


will do during the semester is very important for the continuation of the new system. Anne Bollati said, "If this change helps good students be better, we will keep it." Her reticence is

justified; teachers are still reporting absences and assignments not completed, which are not good signs. Missing a class day in the new system is the equivalence of two days, which is difficult to catch up. "We will try the new system one more semester," said the ESL Coordinator. It will be the semester when the reported problems have to be corrected on both sides, students' and instructors'. This change is for some student's a good action. My Oahn Wilson said, "I have more time for my assignments even though it means more homework; I also save the time that it takes to come to school every day." Dulce Fourneau, another student said, "This new schedule is good because it gives me the opportunity to take another class and to organize myself." For me, the new schedule helps me deal with my fatigue after work. I would probably drop one of the two classes that I am taking if we were in the former system. I save one semester with this change."

"I am for improving changes, but one change the program educators won't consider is the reduction of the number of ESL classes," said Anne Bollati. It is

common to hear from ESL students that the program takes too long to be completed. Anne Bollati was clear, "We have the minimum number of classes," she underlined. It is clear that there is no way to reduce the program. She went further, declaring, "Our job is to prepare students for academic programs in American colleges and universities, which require a very good level of English, not ordinary English." Being accurately prepared to enter a university is very important, and the language is one of the most important conditions for success, no matter what the student major will be.



The eight classes of the ESL program, intermediate and advanced grammar, writing, reading, and oral skills are intended to meet this desire to prepare the students thoroughly. "Once the students complete the ESL program, we don't want them to come back because of insufficient English, but we do want them to come back and tell us how the program helped them achieve their goals," said Anne Bollati in response to the students who want the program to be shortened. No matter which system is considered, learning English at BHC is memorable to me

Learning English is as vital for me as breathing. When I was in high school in Togo, I liked English because of how it sounded to me. Even though I attended all of my English classes, my knowledge of the language was rather thin. Coming to America reawakened the desire to master English. Fortunately, soon after my arrival, I was able to enroll in the BHC ESL level 5. There I found highly motivated and caring teachers who are helping in "curing" immigrants.

I did not imagine the magnitude of all that I have had to do so far. Patience and hard work have been my weapons in fighting during this war of vocabulary, reading writing, and speaking. Even though going through the ESL program has not

been easy, it is not intended to discourage students from learning. "Learning a language is a difficult enterprise," said Anne Bollati. The variety of topics and sessions, the relation between them, and the commitment of teachers and tutors involved in the ESL program make the curriculum ever interesting, for I have never thought that learning could be so much fun. Exactly as expected, each day in class brings a plus to my English, and much more.

The ESL program is more than just an English program. Enrolling in this program has been an opportunity for students to travel around the world without being out of the United States, since we have met with many students from different nations. A typical ESL class is the gathering of at least five different nations, and no trip of that scope would be as cheap as this fictive voyage, which has been for me the greatest opportunity to interact with people with broad cultural diversity. Ekoua, an ESL student declared, "Classes are like the meeting of ministers from different nations, discussing the socio-cultural issues of their countries."

Also, the program covers many aspects of knowledge. Every student sees himself fit in the program. Particularly, students who had already had some college in their country before coming to America tell us how good the multidisciplinary aspects of the ESL classes are. "We all see ourselves fit in the program of discussion," said a former sociology major when one of our discussion topics was about the "Crowd Behavior." For me, this straightforward relation between learning English and discussing a broad range of disciplines is one of the talents of the program creators. We are not only being trained to speak English, we are being prepared to handle discussions in the society, and to give our opinion on a subject regardless the topic. Many students don't even finish ESL classes before they feel the impact of this program on their life.

Students' effort in the program is paying off. Christian Abaya, a former ESL



student said: "The ESL program opens the ways for success." Besides, Herve, a friend from Togo said, "It was all about reading and writing," regarding how what he had learned helped him pass a test for a job. For me, the program is making me more and more confident. Before I started this program, I only thought that my writing was acceptable. Today, even though I still have to learn, I have made tremendous progress in reading, writing and speaking.



Students' reaction of the ESL is not only the benefits of the program. It is also their request for changes or for improvement.

"Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow," said Oliver Wendell Holmes. The BHC ESL program responds to the function of language described in this passage. This important function requires that we give all that we have, to have all that we need in order to grow.



How My Life Has Changed

By Reine Kouete

In 2004 I won the DV Lottery, Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, which "Every year makes 50,000 permanent visas available to people from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States"(*). When I first received the American government letter, I could not figure out what it was. I showed the winning notification letter to Kossiwavi, a mentor at a secondary school who was my neighbor. I showed her this paper because her older brother, Emile, had won this lottery two years ago, so she knew a little about it. She felt so proud of me, and she helped through the process. After six months, everything was done; I got my Immigration Visa for the U.S.A., and I made a reservation at American Airlines for



Thursday, June 23rd, 2004, which marked the beginning of my new life.

That day of June was my first time to travel by airplane. I was excited, but I felt



worried and afraid. When I lived in Lome, the capital of Togo, I could see and hear airplanes pass. I had dreamed about flying, but I did not know why and

when this could happen. Now, came the day; I was waiting to take an airplane at Kotoka Airport in Accra (Ghana) to Moline (US) via Amsterdam (the Netherlands). When I was in the airplane, I was so scared about being in an unknown universe where only clouds, sun light and darkness intertwined. Agnes, a lady I met in the plane, helped me with everything such as ordering food and playing games, videos and music. After a long trip, I landed in Moline, the new land where I settled. Since I came to Moline, several changes have occurred in my life, and these give me hope for a better future.

The most important change I experienced when I immigrated to the U.S. was “returning back to school.” When I was in my country, Togo, I quit school without completing high school. I abandoned education, not because I was not interested, but because I was discouraged by the increasing rate of unemployment and the increase in school fees. My case is similar to most of the Mexican students as revealed by my classmate, Mariá León who said, “A lot of them are interested, but they have to stop because they cannot continue paying for school.” The U.S. offers people a lot of opportunities to keep studying. In fall 2004, four months after I arrived in the U.S., I went back to school, a thing I had never thought could happen again in my life. I began at Level 4 at the Outreach Center after I took an admission test. Today I feel satisfied because I am progressing in school, and also I can express my feelings and opinions using English. School gives me hope to reach the goal my parents set up when they



sent me to school at six years old. My father repeatedly told me, “Reine, I sent you to school to become a nurse.” This goal ran away when I gave up learning; however, America lets me chase after and reset it. It looked like I lost my treasure, and unexpectedly someone found it and brought it to me. America not only lets me dream of a good professional career, but it has also fulfilled my desire to be a mother.

Several years ago, I felt unhappy because I miscarried two times. I was disappointed because my doctor did not find out what was the problem. I tried several times to get pregnant again, but nothing happened; my hope for having children was gone.



All my friends had children except me. My culture values children, so a woman who has no children is not respected. Fortunately, a year ago I gave birth to my daughter who I named Eunice-Joy. Her birth was hard; indeed, she was born by cesarean section. This birth was possible due the advanced technology and good service available in the U.S. at Illini Genesis Hospital. I think I could have had at least one child before I came to the United States if hospitals in my country were as well equipped. Today, I live with a peaceful heart because I am a mother.



Besides the above changes, my life is improved in terms of physical work. In my country, I used to wake up early, sweep the floor and seek water at the public fountain. Everyday I had to go shopping before I made dinner or lunch because I did not have a refrigerator to conserve perishable goods like I do here in the U.S. I cooked my food on a “special kiln” using firewood or charcoal, which is rare and expensive due to deforestation. It was hard and took me three to four hours to make lunch for my friend and myself. On weekends, I washed my clothes with my

hands because there was no washing machine. My life was hard with household chores. In contrast, in the U.S., things are easier to handle. Indeed, electricity replaces human strength. I use a vacuum, washing machine and dryer, stove, oven, microwave etc...All those tools save me time and make my life easier.

In addition, economic changes have occurred in my life since I moved to the country of Uncle Sam.



For instance, I was a street vendor who sold all kinds of things such as shoes, leggings and bags. Even though I went to market everyday, I

could not survive adequately because my income was too low. Moreover, I enjoyed no comfort at the market. My stall used to be too crowded, and sometimes, other vendors liked to gossip about me. Fortunately, all the above negatives belong to the past. Today, I work a full-time job, and I make good money. My income has increased significantly; it is five times higher than what it was three years ago. As a result, not only can I afford my expenses, but I can also help my parents and pay my three younger brothers' tuition fees.

Immigration to the U.S. has given my life new directions; my immigration is a synonym for positive changes and dreams for a good life.

(*) Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa>



Mexican? American? Who am I?

By Mariá León

Last year I was planning to go to Mexico to visit my family before I started school. Because I was born in this country, I had to have a passport, so I could go to Mexico. I decided to go to the post office and apply for a passport. When I got there, I showed my birth certificate to the postal

worker. She looked at me so weird because I was speaking Spanish to my mom; after a few minutes, she asked me if the birth certificate was fake. I couldn't believe what she was saying. Maybe she thought that I was using someone else's certificate or probably she assumed that I wasn't American because when I spoke, I had an accent and my appearance is not like the typical American. We as people with a different cultural background, who were born in the United States, deserve more respect from other Americans because some of them do not understand that even though we are not white, we are still citizens.



Many Americans think of people like me as foreigners because of our appearance. They think everyone that has dark hair, dark eyes and names that are not typical American are foreigners. Instead of thinking that we are Americans too, they ask rude questions about our origin and how we got to this country. For example, Luis Salazar, an eighteen-year-old, Mexican-American was asked if he had to cross the river. Some people may tell us not to speak Spanish. But there is another problem, people stereotype or judge. Sometimes I think that way we look affects us in so many ways; for example, when we want to get a job in a certain place, our appearance would not help us a lot. Also, there are some occasions that people think wrong or have a stereotype of certain group of people; one example is Hollywood, because the roles that immigrants have in the movies are just like the smuggler or the service person, but why doesn't Hollywood show the good side of immigrants. Also, one day I heard a person saying that all Mexicans were lazy. Don't people think that they offend my family and me?



For a lot of people it is so complicated to understand descendents of immigrants because they do not understand

that we live in two worlds, two nations and we have two cultures that we love and respect. For example, people do not think that I like to eat American food, but I do; also I love to eat Mexican food at home, at school or work. I speak English at home and Spanglish with my friends. I also like to celebrate the 4th of July and September 15th (Mexican Independence Day). Probably they would understand more if they were in my situation.



Probably people do not comprehend us because they are not in our situation, but if they were more informed about the topic, then they would not assume that we are immigrants. Probably if we, the "different" people show to America the way we live our lives instead of just keeping it for ourselves then, more people would understand the way we feel.



Struggling with Life in the U.S

By Dulce Fourneau

When I was nine years old, I had to take English classes. I didn't pay attention to them because I never thought that I would need to learn English; however, my grandmother told me that I had to learn English because maybe someday, I would use it in my job or in the my career, and that was the truth. When I started college in Mexico, I was required to take a TOFEL test and an English proficiency's test. After six months, I found myself getting married and moving to the U.S. Suddenly, I left my school, my family, my friends, everything, and started a new life in the U.S



My first problem was adapting to a new life where the people speak another language. One week after I had arrived to the U.S, I went to Wal-Mart where my ex-husband's mother was working. She was very excited to meet me with her co-worker. I would never forget that day. She told me,

"Dulce, come over her; I'd like you to meet Tracy." Tracy said, "Hi, you're so pretty." I did not understand what she said even though I had been taking English classes in Mexico. I answered, "Hi, nice to meet you. I am Dulce."

I know that sounds funny now, but at that moment my response was embarrassing. My ex-husband said bye to his mother and to Tracy, too. He took my hand and then he told me in Spanish, "We've got to go." I knew that I had done something wrong. I asked him what the problem was, and he told me that I only had to answer "thank you," not give my name. After that embarrassing moment, I decided that I would have to take English classes if I did not want to have another problem like that.



Another problem that I had to confront was that I did not how to drive a car. In my country, I was not worried about it because there are many buses, and they are cheaper and easier than in the U.S. In my country, some people drive without a driver's license. It is not a big deal, but in the United States, it is different. Everybody has to have a driver's license if he or she wants to drive. Also driving is almost a basic necessity in this country, especially because of the weather. After I got my green card, I applied to the TEAM, and employment office, but the problem was that I was living in Muscatine. My ex-husband had to work, so he could not give me a ride. That was very frustrating because I had to find somebody to drive me to my home after work.

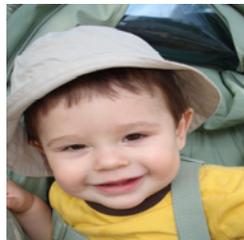
The first day that I started at work, my ex-husband left me at the factory and told me that I would have to ask somebody for a ride, but everybody I saw just spoke English. I was afraid to ask someone a question in English because I thought that they wouldn't understand what I said. The good thing was that one Hispanic woman came to me and asked me if I had a question, so I told her that I did not have a

problem understanding what I needed to do because another co-worker showed me how to do my job, but my problem was that I needed someone who lived in Muscatine to give me a ride home. She asked an old man, who was from El Salvador. He agreed to take me home. In fact, he drove me home for around four months.



I was very frustrated because I did not drive by myself even though we had a car for me. I asked my ex-husband if he could help me to learn to drive; he never did it. My co-worker who drove me home taught me in only one week. He let me drive his car when we went and back from work. Then one classmate in my English class in a church in Muscatine let me borrow her car to apply for a driver's license. The first time I did not pass the test for going over the speed limit, but I came back three days later, and I passed the test successfully. With this, I proved to my ex-husband that if I focus on an objective, I can do it, even if there are difficulties along the way.

Like many other immigrants, I also became depressed even though we had a beautiful apartment, good jobs and two cars; I was not happy because I had no close personal relationships. I missed my family, friends and my country. The first year for me in the US was difficult because I did not feel happy with anything. For example, my ex-husband took me out for dinner to fancy restaurants like Olive Garden, Texas Road House and Biaggi's, but all this time that we spent doing something fun wasn't enough without my family. I cried, was grouchy and lost a lot of weight. One of my friends, Arminda, who lives in Muscatine, feels similarly, to what I did. She said, "I am very depressed all the time because I miss my family, who live in Acapulco, Mexico. I want to call them every day. Now, my husband gets mad at me; the



phone's bill goes up, but I need to call them to feel better."

When I started to understand English better, I began to connect with people; this made me felt very proud of myself. Working with Americans helped me to understand their culture and improve my listening and speaking skills. Also, I got divorced, a couple of years ago, and now I am engaged to an Anglo, who does not speak Spanish. This relationship has made me feel more comfortable and confident when speaking English. Now, I have a baby who was born here, and I am sure that this is the best country to raise him. Also, attending Black Hawk College has helped me to improve my English, and I hope that in a couple years I will be able to continue my accounting career, which I started in my country.



To conclude, all these struggles have helped me not to give up and to improve my English to be part of this society. In my opinion, people who immigrant to the U.S must learn English and try to be more involved with American culture to make their living in this country more comfortable. I hope that one day immigrants will seem like people that come to the U.S with a luggage full of dreams to make a better life in this beautiful country and not seem like delinquents.



BOWING, STANDING, OBEYING: RESPECT IN VIETNAM

By MyOanh Wilson

Culture is the foundation of a country, and it is shows the values of that country. Have you heard or do you know about Vietnamese culture? How many factors are related to culture? What are the differences between the American culture and the Vietnamese culture? My mother said that it doesn't matter wherever we go, we should show others our values through our culture. Although we have been living in

the US, we still keep our traditional culture. Knowing the contrast between the American cultural values and the Vietnamese cultural values helps Vietnamese a lot.

The most important Vietnamese value is respect. In Vietnam, people are very respectful from birth, and the younger people learn to respect the elder people. For example, younger people cannot call the elderly people by their first name. In contrast, I was shocked when the first time my American husband called my mother by her name instead of saying "mom", and later on I knew that was because Americans think of respect differently from the Vietnamese. People in the US just say "hi", "or "hello" to other people, but in my country, people say "hello" and bow at the same time while they



are talking to older people. In addition, the Vietnamese always take off their shoes when they come in to the house. On the other hand, according to the author of the book American Ways,

Americans dislike being the subjects of open displays of respect- being bowed to, being deferred to, being treated as though they could do no wrong or make no unreasonable requests."

The younger Vietnamese people are not only respectful to elderly people, but also they have respect for the teachers at school, and their reaction to the teachers is different from the reaction of American students. For example, students cannot call the teacher's name, and they have to call "teacher" and follow with their first name. So



our writing teacher would be called, "Teacher Karen."

Because of being so respectful, students in Vietnam never ask or say anything during the class, and it causes the atmosphere in

the classroom to be very quiet. In addition, whenever the teacher calls a student's name and asks, the student has to stand up

to answer. In contrast to the Vietnamese classroom, my ESL instructor Lisa said, "Communication between teachers and students is very important, and they can learn from each other."



For example, students analyze a topic, and there are different ideas coming from different students and from teacher's ideas. Unlike the Vietnamese students, the Americans students state their ideas and share them in class. Teachers and students are like ice cream and cake, and they compliment each other.

The Vietnamese children show respect for their parents by being obedient. Parents always tell children what they should do and what they should not do. The Vietnamese children do not have a lot choices and freedom as the Americans. Children have to follow parents' rules until they get married. Vietnamese children have to obey the following rules such as getting back home before eleven at night, getting permission from parents before going out, and letting parents know when they get back home. Some Vietnamese cannot choose the career that they like, and they have to study what parents want them to do.

The Vietnamese respect for parents is based on obedience.



The Americans value independence, but the Vietnamese value respect. The Vietnamese have kept this value because it is associated with the Vietnamese

traditional culture, which is foundation of Vietnam, and most Vietnamese are proud of their culture because it has existed more than four thousand years.



My Husband, My Hero

By Abide Bataba



A typical African husband doesn't do any chores in the house. His first responsibility is to feed the whole home, and it is his job or his right to work hard to get that point. The wife is expected to cook, to take care of the children and to clean the house.

However, although I am an African wife and I have African husband, my life is not typical.

When my husband and I first came to this country, we started working at Tyson. It was a "hell" for me because of the demanding hard physical labor. When we got home the second day, I cried. From his heart, my husband felt pity for me. He told me, "Don't worry. Everything will be okay." I couldn't wash my clothes or get the dishes done. However, my husband could. He used to cook, do the dishes and clean the house in addition to working hard at Tyson. I can say he used to do almost everything. One day while my husband was cleaning the house, and I was talking to him, my friend, Lisa, came in and was surprised about the situation. I could tell what she was thinking, but I failed to say it. Lisa never forgot that situation and kept telling me to obey my husband because he is one of those that every single girl is looking for.



Two whole years passed, and we decided to have a family. I found out that I was pregnant in September 2005, and my situation didn't allow me to work. My husband had never been the sole supporter of the family, so it wasn't easy for him to work and pay all the bills by himself. I felt ashamed and weak at that time because I could see women who were seven to nine months pregnant that could work with courage and strength. I was home all the time, but I still had no time to clean the

house or cook my own food. That same semester, he took the Nursing Assistant Program, and he didn't have a good job. It wasn't easy for us to get through that, but we sat and worked things out. I could say that we were successful. My husband's self-confidence made me feel confident, optimistic and gave me courage.

Our daughter was born on April 07, 2006 and another big problem that came up and surprised us was my second pregnancy after six months. I will never forget the second of October last year when the doctor said, "Congratulations, you are two weeks pregnant." We pulled ourselves together and accepted the fact. Once again, my husband took all the responsibility.



This time it was harder. My husband woke up every night to feed our daughter, Paola. He woke up early to give her a bath and bring her to the babysitter. I worked hard to get my communication skills class done in the appropriate way. The next semester I took two classes, and he took four. He washed Paola all the time and fed her. In short, he took very good care of her. I really appreciate his courage to do what some African men will never do.

One day when he put inappropriate clothes on Paola, I was upset, and I said something bad. A friend who was with me said, "That is not fair. My husband would never do the half of what your husband is doing. You had better watch your words." I will never forget that friend and what she said. I could also say that she envied me, but it wasn't her intention. Her intention was to help me work things out with my husband.

My second child was born right after the last spring semester on May 19. I have a boy named Kyle. This semester my husband is taking four classes, and I'm taking four as well.



He cooks all the time for us and feels happy to do it. For example, Monday to Wednesday, he washes both kids and brings them to the babysitter. He washes their clothes all the time. I can see that he enjoys doing it. I wish this kind of hero for everybody, for every family.



Arranged Marriages in Pakistan

By Mehwish Arshad

“The second mother of Pakistani culture that fills churches, cities and heaven itself is marriage.” This means that the Pakistanis celebrate marriage in grand style. Although the West believes in love marriages, today in Pakistan, arranged marriages are still strong. The process of arranging the marriage begins with how the couples are picked, and once selected how the marriage is arranged.



When males and females complete their education, parents will start looking for their life partners. Parents will go see a matchmaker, and he or she will check the social class of the parents and the personality of the child. After the matchmaker finds the perfect person, he or she will call the parents. The matchmaker arranges the meeting of the two families. If the parents like the match, they will tell their children. After a few days, the young couple can meet each other with the parents' approval. In a separate place, the parents will meet. In this process, the girl's parents will check to see if the young man can support his family. They are not necessarily concerned with social status, as long as the job he is doing is a good job that will not leave his family hungry.

Now that you know the arrangement, let's talk about the young couple. The couples will meet about two or three times to see if they are made for each other. They

will check to see if they have any similarities with each other. While meeting each other the first time, they will find out where they



work. This will help them to find a place near their work, so they can continue to meet. Most of the time, they will meet in a park. When they meet the second time, they will tell each other what they like to do and what they don't. During the second meeting, they will know if they are good for each

other or not.

If they think that they are great for each other, they will tell their parents they like that person. Their parents will meet again and set a date for their children's wedding. For example, my parents had an arranged marriage. They used to live a block away from each other. My grandmothers were the ones who thought that they would be perfect for each other because both of them were teachers. My dad was the principal where my mom was a teacher. My grandparents had a meeting, and they thought they will be great together. My parents found that out, and they had a special meeting with each other about three or four times. Since they both used to work at the same place, they would see each other everyday. They told their parents that they were compatible. They have been married from then to today; they are still perfect for each other. In my parents' case, the grandmothers made the match; however, most of the time it is the father who will make the decision.

When the time comes to organize the wedding ceremony, the parents will meet again, and they will pick the month and the date. A month before the wedding, all the women in the family or friends gather together to celebrate in the traditional way. One woman plays the “doollake,” a traditional drum, while the other sings. They will sing songs and dance everyday for one month.

But if the couples say “no,” the parents will tell the matchmaker that, their child didn’t like that person. The matchmaker will start looking for a new person for the child again. It takes a while. When they find someone, the process repeats. The parents will meet each other. The couple will meet with each other. If they say “yes,” the wedding will be planned. If they say “no” again, the parents will ask the matchmaker to find another person for their child.



Pakistani young people still accept the tradition of arranged marriage. They are eager to go through the traditional process. I



like how they respect the culture. Because of that, the arranged marriages are still strong and rarely fall apart. I can’t wait until the day I get married.



The Role of Music in Our Lives

By Alban Egejuru

Have you ever been touched by music before? Or does music move you? How does it move you and why? I cannot begin to answer the question of what role music should play in a person’s life; I can only speak for how it can affect me emotionally, physically and mentally.



Music, speaking personally, is probably one of the most important emotional supports that I have, and it is also a kind of memoir of my life. I asked my classmate Koffi Eklou, from Togo, West

Africa, and he said, “Without music, I don’t know what to do.” Every circumstance has its own music, and he continued to say that he was attracted to music at the age of 18 but to ragge in particular. His soul is touched by the words, melodies and rhythms. Most of the important events of my life have a musical “hook” which once I hear it transports me back with clarity to the event. This is true for all my emotions. For example, when I was involved in a motor vehicle accident, back in my country, there was a song I was listening to before the accident and the lyrics say, “Do not be afraid, I go before you always..... And I will give you rest.” The words in the song affected me so much because I believe God is before me always and the song reminds me of the accident and how I survived wherever I hear the song.



I can’t imagine a life without a music helping me to carry on my daily activities. For example, every morning I dance to a tune in a gym and put on headphones if I decide to walk. All these keep me invigorated every day. It also serves as early morning cup of coffee taken on an empty stomach causing the day’s activities to zoom off. I asked Samir Badmgul, a classmate from Afghanistan, and he said, “Music has no barriers because it is like a wind that blows where it will.” He loves rap music more than other kinds of music.

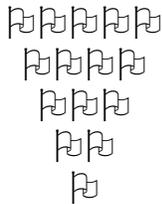


Music has helped me mentally to make the best of my surroundings because it always makes me feel strong. For example, there are many types of music like opera, country, and rock and roll and so on, but ragge is the one that lifts me more in a special way for me to feel comfortable in my surrounding. When I play “Bob Marley and Wailers: every thing gona be alright,” then I remind myself that the song is about patience and determination.



When I was in the fourth grade, my elder sister taught me how to sing; she still belongs to a choir. I was always excited whenever she taught me a new song and through that period, I was challenged with the ideas of notation, clef and rhythm.

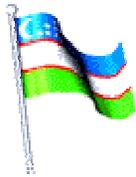
Finally, there many different types of music which I enjoy. Most of my life is based on music because it affects me more than activities. Therefore, the role of music cannot be overestimated in the way it affects me emotionally, physically and mentally.



JOB CHALLENGES THAT IMMIGRANTS FACE

By Samir Badamgul

What do you think about finding jobs in the U.S.? Easy or Hard? Is there discrimination in the workplace? Do you think immigrants have a hard time obtaining jobs? These questions have been asked by approximately millions of immigrants in the U.S., but everyone has his or her own



answers and opinions. In addition, many immigrants move to the U.S. every single day whether legally or illegally to look for jobs that they were dreaming about for years. Even though there are good jobs in the U.S., many of them are difficult to get if you are an immigrant.

My name is Samir Badamgul; I came from Uzbekistan to the U.S. in 2003. I didn't have any experience in legal or illegal jobs in Uzbekistan because I was under age. In Uzbekistan, the legal age of employment is 18 years or older, and if one wants to work then, he or she is supposed to have a high

school diploma. There are many underage kids who are working in Uzbek stores, car washes and black markets.. Working in illegal jobs in Uzbekistan would have been risky for me because if I got caught, there was a chance that I could go to prison for weeks, or I could be forced to pay a fine.

In addition, I had a hard time finding a job in the U.S.. The reason is because I couldn't speak English. For example, my



friend Ahmad and I once applied at a fast-food restaurant. He got hired, but I didn't. I asked the fast-food manager, "Why didn't I get hired?" The manager told me, "It's because your English isn't good enough." So later, I started

working in a gas station as a stocker because I didn't need to speak English. The gas station that I worked for helped me a lot with my English; I picked up new vocabulary words, slang and pronunciation. Then I thought about how the U.S. is different from Uzbekistan in job opportunities. For example, in Uzbekistan if I didn't speak Uzbek or the Russian language, I would never get a job; but in the U.S., one can get a job in some factories even if he or she doesn't speak much English.



The benefits of jobs in the U.S. are amazing compared to those in some other countries. Many jobs in the U.S. give health insurance to people, so if they get hurt during their daily work, the insurance will cover it. Unlike the U.S., Mexico doesn't give health insurance or any medical benefits. For example, I interviewed my friend and classmate Mariá León. She prefers to call herself as "Irasu". She told me that in Mexico, jobs are harder to get than in the U.S., and they don't have health insurance. Also, you have to deal with your problems by yourself. She said, "In the U.S. you can get overtime work where you get paid, but in Mexico you don't get paid for overtime even if you work the whole day." Nowadays some American companies that

are in Mexico such as John Deere are changing their laws and give benefits to their employees.

There are many jobs in the U.S., but the hiring for those jobs is sometimes unfair. Some immigrants are hired fairly. For example, many immigrants that came to the U.S. with their "Contract-Visa" are employed



fairly. People like foreign doctors, engineers, and employees of private companies are being invited to the U.S. for work. The reason they have good jobs

is because they only have to study for a few months and have a year of practice. The company then hires them full-time with benefits. Their background is respected. We notice foreign doctors or engineers at Trinity or John Deere because of their accents.

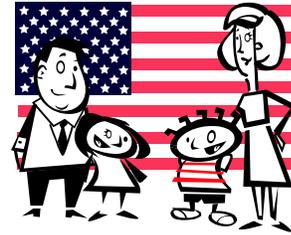
However, some immigrants are exploited. For example, many of my classmates in ESL classes can't get jobs that are like the ones they had in their countries because of their language skills. They were considered to be intelligent persons in their countries, but in U.S. some people think, if the immigrants don't speak English well, they are illiterate people. Some immigrants have bachelors degrees, masters degrees and Ph.D.s, but they can't apply for jobs like they used to have in their home country until their English is much better. They also have to take exams or tests. For example,

my dad, Akbar, was a doctor in Afghanistan and Russia. He has many credentials that prove he was a doctor in Afghanistan and Russia, but the U.S. authorities won't accept his diplomas until he learns English and takes special exams. Nowadays, my dad and my brother, Omar, are working in Genesis laboratory as phlebotomists; there are many immigrants that have higher standards of education, but because of their



lack of language can't get their old careers back.

Despite the difficulties of getting jobs in the U.S., immigrants still have many opportunities for decent employment. I am really grateful and fortunate to live in U.S., the land of opportunities.



What Happened to My Paradise?

By Kokou Logo

Is there any paradise on Earth? As we know, all over the world many people dream of spending all their lifetime in the United States, the country of hospitality with all its jobs and school



opportunities. Like honey, the United States, continues attracting Europeans, Asians, Latin Americans, Africans and people from other nations in the quest for freedom, happiness, and wealth. To reach this imaginary paradise, numerous are the people who sacrifice their fortunes, some, their lives while taking risks to enter United States illegally. What can justify, or explain this attraction to the United States? The reasons are variable and multiple. The evidence is that most of these people admire this powerful country in several domains: technology, education, faith in success, politics, and economy. Did I

escape from the stereotypes about the United States?



When I was kid, my dream was to go to the U.S. to become a rich and respectable person in my native village, like my Aunt Akouvi. She has been in the U.S. for almost twenty years. Now she is a billionaire. She built seven big houses in Accra, the capital of Ghana, has many luxury cars, two African stores in Columbus (Ohio), built a great church in our village, and has many other material goods. She was “an angel” when she returned to the village. She completed many charitable projects through sponsoring orphans, and presenting money to people, and making other donations to poor people. I was impressed by her positive behavior and positive thought about the U.S.; therefore, I swore to live in this source of happiness and prosperity one day.

While growing up, my convictions were strengthened by other stereotypes about my “dreamed about” place. In Africa people assumed, that America is paradise on Earth. It was the only place where we could find the highest level of technology (computer development, the astronomy and NASA’s recent exploits in space conquest, and the electronic revolution.) Americans had the most impressive political system with its democracy and free speech. Television, radio and newsletters also sprayed United States’ good perfume all over the world.



The mass media confirmed my positive thought about the U.S. Television, Hollywood films and movies, and other publications presented the U.S. as the country where everything is possible. Even if most of the films are fiction, in my native country, Togo, people always believe in what they watch and hear, and retain a positive image of the U.S.

Other people’s opinions about the US were also influenced by the television, press, and movies. In fact, Mariá León, a Mexican ESL student declared, “As we know, so many Mexicans migrate to America every year seeking a better life, and that is because most of the people think that they can get much more money for less work. Also in Mexico if they meet a person that lives in America, they would think that the person has so much money. Also, there is so much influence of the American television in Mexico, like in the movies. Sometimes Hollywood presents the perfect country, cities, and families, and I think that influences people to move to this country.”

Not only are Africans interested in the U.S. values, but they are also attracted by its numerous opportunities to become easily rich through easy work. They expect to gain a lot of money to support their families who stay in Africa where many people need assistance to survive. For this reason, they invest a lot in visa fees to get to the U.S. Many other nations also view America as continent of abundance. Therefore, it is by the millions that they travel to the U.S., in some cases illegally.

America is a continent of reference for other developed countries. I got a chance to spend two years studying in France, and I



can testify that most of the French university professors referred to many American books, American professors, and American economy and political theories. They took many practical examples from America while presenting courses. In politics, too, they ordinarily compare their social politics to the American liberal and capitalist economy. Some politicians defend their government programs by claiming their similarity to America’s in order to gain more sympathizers. This is the case of the present day French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, who won the last presidential election. Many French students dream, too,

of studying in the U.S. because they consider the American education system as the best in the world. Fred Alanzo, my former classmate in the University Lyon 2 in Modern Literature, came to study computer engineering in Colorado University last year.

Do people have only a good perspective about America? Certainly, they do not. America has its detractors, too. In



communist countries for example, American social and economic politics, were unwelcome.

MyOanh Wilson, an ESL student, who came from Vietnam, gave her testimony, "As you know, my country is communist. The government doesn't like America; however, they couldn't claim that publicly because they got a lot of benefits from America." They think also that Americans are too selfish and egocentric. They never appreciate American foreign politics. For instance, Maria Ferrell, an ESL student from Mexico, said, "In my country there's a negative perspective in the way that Mexico owes big money to the U.S. but the U.S. possesses a very big part of the territory of Mexico. What I mean is that if the U.S. possesses a big part of Mexican territory, U.S. should give more opportunities to Mexican immigrants, but instead of that, nowadays the U.S. treats undocumented immigrants like criminals." Overall what is the real image of America?

My first days' stay was hard like a rock when I came to the U.S. on October 14, 2005. I figured out that my old perspectives had been exaggerated when I was in Togo and France. The American life was not what I dreamed. I faced a great problem related to English communication. Before, I had faith in the English I learned in my home country, but despite my background in this language, the American accent was strange for me.

The third hard reality is jobs. With a master's degree in communication and



semiology, I thought I could have a good job related to my qualifications. This was not the case. The only opportunity for me at this moment is to cut meat at Tyson Foods Company where many of my compatriots already worked then Farmland Food where I am working now. With humility, I forgot those stereotypes and considered my real situation. I decided to study English via ESL classes simultaneously with pharmacy technician courses in order to get a better job sooner. Thank God, I passed the national Pharmacy Technician Certification this week, and hope to get another job soon.

The United States is still a powerful country where freedom and prosperity are overflowing. Here your dream can easily become reality if you work hard and have faith in progress. Paradise or not, the United States is for me, a model country.



Marriage Ceremonies in Igboland, Nigeria

By Eugenia Egejuru

Marriage is deemed as the continuation of the family line of descendants in Igboland culture. The first and foremost consideration is fertility of the couple. Parents long for this and the father of the family requests this every morning in "oji" kolanut prayer. When asking an Igbo man or woman why he or she wants to marry, their response will be, "I want to marry in order to get children like my parents." The love for children is manifested in Igbo names like Nwabu-uwa [a child is the entire world to me] and Nwakego [a child out-values all money].

Two years ago, my elder sister celebrated her marriage ceremony, which was very different from the typical celebration in Igboland, Nigeria. Because they wanted to introduce themselves to our family, her partner visited our house accompanied by his father where



his father introduced himself and his son. They explained to my father why they were in his house. My father welcomed them and called my sister to come along. Then he asked her if she agreed with their proposals; she answered, "Yes."

After the introduction, her "ime ego" (bride price) settlement started with another visit from her future husband, accompanied by his father and the elders to our house. The following evening, they brought palm wine and kola nuts, which were presented, to my father. We served them pounded yam with vegetable soup, whiskey, palm wine and beer while her bride price was negotiated between my father and his in-laws. They paid a symbolic price on her and later brought other small items like kola nuts, live goats, whiskey, palm wine, head-ties and precious beads.

Usually, it takes more than one evening before a final bride price is settled; for instance, my father wanted to make sure that everything was in order. We prepared a delicious meal of rice with chicken and beer with palm wine, which they drank and ate before they went home. The following evening they came to our house and handed over one hundred thousand "Naira" in Nigerian currency, which was equivalent to one thousand dollars of United States money along with kola nuts, live goats, palm wine, head-ties and beads to my father, which he counted in front of them.



Furthermore, after the bride price was settled, they planned for their traditional marriage ceremony, which we called "igba nkwu nwanyi". Her traditional marriage ceremony was celebrated in our compound where she wore traditional attire: brocade, lace and beads. The couple were welcomed by their guests and also presented to their families.

My sister went around to the guests, selling eggs contained on a big plate along with candies, chewing gum, chewing sticks. At the same time, she was interacting with them, proving that she could open a shop

and make money for her family. Then, my father filled a wooden cup, "iko", with palm wine and gave it to her while her husband found a place between their



guests and hid among them. She continued to search for him among their guests who told her to give the cup to him; she refused. A short time after, she found him; she knelt down to show that she was respectful. She sipped the wine and presented the rest to him, which he drank. He gave her a kiss on her cheek as they danced around. When traditional music, "Osadebe" was on, their guests stood up, spread money, which was left on the floor while they were dancing on top of it to be picked up after they finished dancing.

In addition, after their traditional marriage ceremony, they went to a church wedding where she wore a beautiful wedding gown, silver shoes, and a precious



necklace. Her bride's maids and groom's men were in three groups with different matching gowns, which attracted many people. Some of them were surprised about what was going on because this was unlike traditional marriages where the couple has only one group of bride's maids and one group of groom's men. The whole group entered inside the church where a gospel chorus sang, "You are the one I am waiting for." She was received by her husband at the altar for an exchange of final vows with the priest's blessing them.

In conclusion, the marriage ceremony in my culture is Igboland, Nigeria, is important because of the continuation of the family line having children like their parents. The ceremony must involve

parents, extended families and the villagers in order to be successful.



CULTURE OF PAKISTAN

By Sahrish Arshad

According to Daisaku Ikeda, a Pakistani writer, "People can only live fully by helping others to live. Cultures can only realize their further richness by honoring other traditions. And only by respecting natural life can humanity continue to exist." Pakistan has a rich multilingual and multicultural background.



First of all, let me tell you a little bit about Pakistan. Pakistan is right next to Indian and China. Our country is the size of Texas. We have four provinces. The land is dry and flat although we have the second highest mountain in the world.

Part of Pakistani culture is to show respect by wearing traditional clothes. For example, Muslim women wear a "burue," a long black dress to cover their face and their body. Everyone, both Muslims and Christians, wear "Shalwar Kameez." Salwars or Shalwars are loose pajama-like trousers. The legs are wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. The kameez is a long shirt or tunic. The side seams known as the "chaak" are left open below the waistline. Pakistanis wear shalwar kameez because they don't want to show any skin except their face because it is against the tradition. Shalwar kameez comes in many different



styles, fabrics, and colors and patterns that may make them look really stylish. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is the preferred garment of both sexes. In Bangladesh and India, it is the most commonly worn woman's garment. The Pakistani government has also requested

government officials and diplomats to wear it along with the "sherwani" and "jinnah" cap when they are acting in their official capacity. For these reasons, it is described as the national dress of Pakistan.

In addition to traditional clothing, Pakistan has many celebrations. The famous celebrations in Pakistan are Eid ul-fitr and Eid ul-Adha. During these days, there are national holidays and many festivals and events take place to celebrate Eid. On the night before Eid, people search for the new moon, so they can end Ramdan. After that, they start with morning prayer. The poor are given some money as a form of charity and as gifts to young children. For example, I go shopping with my mom and my cousin and my grandmother before Eid. We cook a lot of food at home. As for me, I remember I always wore new clothes and got money from my cousin on Eid. My friends and went to church together. Eid was my favorite holiday of the years. I remember when I was a kid, I used to get money from my relatives and my parents and later I went and bought things, which was so much fun. These were the good days of my life. Even though I am not Muslim, I, too, celebrate Eid.



About 80 percent of all Pakistanis are Muslims; 77% are Sunni Muslims and some Shiite Muslims. Christians are about 20 percent of Pakistan's population.



Muslims pray five times a day; they always wash hands before going to their mosque. They cover their body completely before going to the mosque. They are very respectable about their "religion book".

Everyone speaks five different languages, but the different languages are based on the provinces, not the religion. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan; everyone speaks that. It is a mixture of Persian, Arabic and various local

languages. It is similar to Hindi but written in Arabic script. To sum up, Pakistan is the tradition land of Muslims people and Christian people. In this multilingual and multicultural country, we have respect for each other and respect our elders. It's land of beauty, and its land of honor and tradition.

ساتھ چلی گئی۔ میرا باپ وہاں ہی سے نظر کر وقت سے پہلے مر گیا۔ بھائیوں نے جیتے جی تھے نہ دیکھنے کی قسم کھالی۔ صرف میری ماں ہے جو کبھی کبھار مجھے دیکھنے آ جاتی ہے خال کی بیماری کا سن کر میں نے لاکھ چاہا کہ اس سے جا کر پوچھوں کہ اس رات جس سانس نے مجھ سے سرگوشی کی تھی وہ تو نے کہاں چھپا دیا ہے لیکن کانے شوہر سے مجھے بے حد ڈر لگتا تھا خال مر گئی اور یہ راز بھی مر گیا میرے اب پانچ بچے ہیں، میں ان میں اس رات کے اندھیرے اور چاندنی کو دھونڈتی ہوں لیکن میں نہیں جانتی میری خال نے اسے کہاں چھپا دیا ہے یہی رات میری زندگی کی کبھی نہ بھولنے والی رات ہے۔ جب میں ماں بن کر بھی ماں نہ کہا آسکی۔

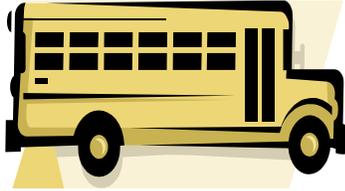


Teachers:

Cure for the Darkness

By Koffi A. Eklou

One proverb in Togo is, "Fear kills faster than a bullet, but ignorance is worse than a bullet." Fortunately knowledge is the perfect cure for "mental" darkness. Teaching is an occupation which can help human beings learn and come out of



ignorance. Last spring, I had to answer my Listening and Speaking teacher's

question, who was my hero. My answer was, "My first teacher in elementary school is a hero." In fact, according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, a "hero is a person who is admired for having done something very brave or having achieved something great."

My first elementary school teacher, Etienne Adjoin, played a vital role in my development. What I learned and experienced during my early years would shape my views of myself and the world and would affect my later success or failure in school, work, and my personal life. I learned basic skills in mathematics such as the numbers by counting short sticks. Many

times, my teacher took my hands and taught me how to write the letters of the French alphabet. Then, step by step, I learned to write the 26 letters. I also remember that one day in social studies, he told us, "Don't forget the three following words: "Hi," "please," and "thank you." They will show your good manners anywhere you go." From my childhood to my adulthood, I have never forgotten this social studies lesson. I use it again and again.

Adjoin was a dedicated teacher whose work extended beyond the classroom. After explaining the lessons very well, my teacher gave us homework.

He was also able to help the students by giving them more explanations about each lesson. Usually, Adjoin continued his teaching until the students went home. He even visited me when I missed class. He used to advise his students to study hard to better their future.



Finally, I was able to write and speak French easily thanks to my first teacher, Etienne. As a tribute to my first teacher, I became a primary school teacher in my country, Togo, and worked in this profession for 25 years. Before I came to US, one day, I was at the market in Lome. While I was shopping with my wife, somebody tapped me on back. Suddenly, I turned and found a face which was known to me. He stated, "Teacher! Do you remember me? I am Komi Adegan and was one of your students in elementary school in 1980. Thank you, teacher! Thank you again, teacher! Thanks to you, I became a doctor. I'm working at the hospital in Aneho." Surprised, we were both very happy and kissed each other in greeting.



Koffi Akakpo, a student in Reading I, said, "A Teacher plays a primordial role in the life of human beings." Miss Linda, one of my ESL teachers in Level 3 in 2005 at BHC

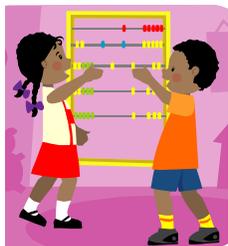
Outreach Center is a good example of a teacher who can explain her lessons very well to her students. Sometimes she gestures to better explain her classes and exercises to her students. This helped many of us to continue in the ESL Program all the way to college. She also gave another classmate and me some cassettes of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. These cassettes still help me to try to be an excellent student in the ESL Program. Again, thank you so much to my marvelous teacher.

Kossi

Azombako, from Togo, said, "I have a lot of respect and consideration for any teacher because of their value to students." Ms. Anne Bollati and some of the other teachers at Black Hawk College, and tutors such as Anne Ney, Elizabeth White, and Christy Hultgren make their schedules so that they can help any student who has problems understanding their courses or doing their homework. Thanks to all of them.



Sinomor Tej, a former English teacher in a secondary school in Togo, stated, "It's obvious that a country without any education system or program for education is like an uncultivated piece of land. In fact, the most efficient way of teaching consists of helping the learners understand the material they need to assimilate. The strategy that guarantees quality is based on the means used to convey the message. Both teachers and learners have to practice what they share. For the education to be successful, knowledge needs to go by steps and never by leaps." A teacher is one who educates and who disciplines, so I believe that a teacher is a veritable cure for the "mental" darkness in the society.



Problem or Paradise

By Luisa Ferrel

Usually people think that coming to work in the U.S. is paradise or it is the best option economically, but oh! The reality they find is that this is a totally new world. When immigrants arrive in U.S., the first years are frustrating. All the daily life activities that were so easy in their country become difficult in the U.S., so people feel like they are lost in a new world.



First of all, finding a job is very difficult if immigrants don't have a working permit. For example, my friend, Laura, who is from Mexico, came on vacation with a tourist visa, but once here, she decided to stay longer. She found many problems when she tried to find a job because she did not have a working permit and a social security number. As consequence of being an illegal immigrant, she could only accept a very hard job with a low pay.

On the other hand, when legal immigrants find a job, they still find difficulties. Getting from place to place can be a very big problem when in their country it likely was very easy to move around because of the access to busses. In contrast, in the U.S., it is a nightmare if people do not know how to drive. For instance, Teresa, a thirty-two-year old woman from Nicaragua, who immigrated to the U.S. two years ago, does not know how to drive a car. She needs to wait until her husband comes back from work to take her everywhere she needs. Also, she needs to ask for a ride to go to work. These problems give people a sense of impotency. I think that when immigrants first arrive, it is natural to have some troubles, but as soon as immigrants can, they should learn to drive in the U.S. and to know the driving laws in order to avoid tickets.



In addition, banking seems not to be a big deal, but consider Lucy my classmate. Once she was shopping and writing the numbers on a check. When she was unable to write the number in English, she felt great shame. Therefore, she needed to depend on her husband every time that she needed to write a check.

Furthermore, communication is one of the principal problems that immigrants can find as soon as they arrive in the U.S. For instance, I like to talk with everybody, but I found barriers when I realized that my English was not good enough to talk with



American people and build new friendships or avoid problems. For example, I want to avoid communication problems with the police like the day that one patrol officer pulled me over and gave me a ticket for speeding.

Also, I realized that getting a white-collar job would be impossible if I do not improve my English. I decided to learn English in order to reduce these problems. I was determined to enroll in school in order to get my English diploma, if I wanted to succeed in the U.S.

Most of the time when we travel, we think that it is going to be a wonderful experience, but immigrants can't have the same thoughts. After living in the U.S. for some time, immigrants find that trying to give a better life to their family demands so many sacrifices, but if they want to succeed in the U. S., they should plan ahead.



The most important goal should be to get an education and learn the language.



THE WRITERS!

Ekue Ayika

I am from Togo, West Africa. I have been living in the United States for two years with Delali, my wife, who gave birth to our first daughter, Odelia, ten months ago. In Togo, I worked as a computer repairer, a video editor, and physics and chemistry teacher.



My dream in life is to graduate from a medical or pharmaceutical school and work in the health field. Reading, watching movies, and playing Scrabble fill my spare time.

Reine Kouete



I am originally from Togo, West Africa. I have two younger brothers and three younger sisters. I have a fifteen-month-old girl. My hobbies are listening to gospel music and reading the Bible. I am CNA, and I work full-time at Oak Glen Nursing Home. My goal is to be a nurse, so I can take care of people.

Mariá Irasu León

My family and friends call me Irasu. I am eighteen years old; I was born in Los Angeles, CA. When I was two years old my family decided to move to Mexico. My life in Mexico was nice; I used to go to school, and I also was involved in extracurricular activities. I moved back to US when I was fourteen years old. Right now I am taking ESL classes, but after I am done, I would like to finish my career and become a lawyer.



Dulce Fourneau



I am from Mexico; I came to the U.S. in 2003. I have one-year-old son, Carlos W. Pollock. I am taking ESL classes because I want to finish my accounting career, and I want to be able to speak English fluently. Additionally, I want to be

able to help my son with his homework when he goes to school. My hobbies are reading motivational books and spending time with my family,

My Oanh Wilson

I have been in the US since 2005. I came from Ho Chi Minh City which is the biggest city in Vietnam. I'm twenty-seven-years old, and I would like to get bachelor's degree in business in five years. My dream is owning a coffee shop with international decoration and international music because customers who I want to concentrate on are people from all over the world. I know and I understand people's feeling while they are far away from home. My coffee shop's purpose would bring home moments for those people. Hopefully, my dream will come true.



Abide Bataba



I am from Togo, West Africa. I live here with my husband and two babies, Paula (1 ½) and Kyle (5 months). I have been living in the U.S. for almost 4 years. I like swimming and playing with my babies. I speak

French, English, and four indigenous languages of Togo. I enjoy learning English because it helps me improve my speaking and listening skills.

Mehwish Arshad



I don't have a middle name. I am from Pakistan. I have one sister and four brothers. I have been in the United States about five years now. I did not know how to speak English when I came to the United States. I learned English in

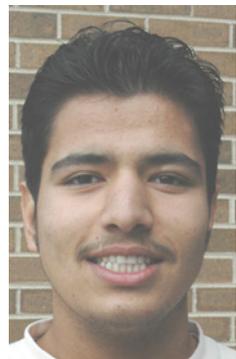
Middle School in the United States. I learned a lot in the United States. I used to live in an apartment, but now I live in a house. I learned how to drive a car in the United States and that was one of the things that I really liked. I also like to sing, dance, and write poems and stories.

Alban Egejuru

I am from Nigeria, West Africa. I have been in the U.S. for a little over a year. Like my sister, I work at Trinity West as a quality patient care tech. I enjoy Christian music, and my goal is to work in the medical field.



Samir Badamgul



I came to U.S. in November 2003 from Uzbekistan. I like to play soccer and volleyball. Moreover, I used to attend Rock Island High School. I like my instructors and classmates at BHC. I am still thinking about my major, but first I have to finish the ESL program

at BHC.

Kokou Logo

Married and the father of two children, Kokou Logo was born in 1975 in the small village Tchekpo-Deve in southern TOGO. He graduated from University of Lome, Togo with B.A. and M.A. and taught French and African Literature at Saint Michel High School of Lome for two years. He then spent two years in Lyon, France and has been in Moline since November 2005 and has already earned his National Pharmacy Technician Certification. Kokou is a full-time laborer at Farmland Foods Inc. in Monmouth, and hopes by the end of this year to start his first work experience in Pharmacy. He is actively preparing for associate/transfer in Pre-pharmacy at BHC. He likes computers and politics.



Eugenia Egejuru



I am from Nigeria. I came here less than a year ago with my brother. I work at Trinity West. My hobbies are listening to music, watching movies. My goal is to have a good education and earn a degree as a registered nurse.

Sahrish Arshad

I'm from Pakistan. I was 15 when I moved in the U.S. Now I'm almost 18 years old; I love being here. When I came here, I went to UTHS. After graduating from there, I went to BHC. My personal goal is to be a dentist.



Koffi Agbeko Eklou

People often call me "Teacher!" I am from Togo, West Africa. I have been living in America for five years. I'm married and have four children who live in Africa with my wife, Yawa Akakpo. In Togo, I was a teacher in a public elementary school for twenty-four years, but in the US, I was welcomed by a factory, Tyson-Foods, where I am working full-time. I enjoy taking English classes at Black Hawk College because I'm planning to become an English teacher. Reading history books, watching movies and playing soccer are my hobbies.



Maria Luisa Ferrel



Though my first name is Maria, I use Luisa. I was born in Guadalajara, Mexico and studied administration in tourism. I've been living in the Q.C. area for 10 years. I am the mother of two kids. My hobbies are playing tennis, jogging, and reading. My goals are to learn good English and to graduate with a physical therapy degree.

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" Each semester the students in Writing II (ESL
" 076) create the ESL Newsletter. We give our
" thanks to Anne Bollati, Sheryl Gragg, Anne Ney,
" Akiko Edmondson and Mike Winter for their
" assistance. If you have an idea that you would
" like the next Writing II class to consider for the
" spring ESL Newsletter, please e-mail me at
" Hindhede@bhc.edu.
" --Karen Hindhede, Instructor
"====="