

# ESL Newsletter

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# ESL NEWSLETTER

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## A Big Loss of a Great Leader: Cristina Greene

By Marco Garcia Ibarra

How many of you knew her? How many of you worked with her? How many of you talked to her? According to Vince Lombardi, an American football coach, "Individual commitment to a group effort that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." So, I am very sure that most students, colleagues, friends, and the BHC staff members were touched in some way by her personality. Right? I am talking about one of the most passionate counselor advisors: Cristina Greene.

I received the bad news of Cristina's death when I was at my girlfriend's house in Bettendorf, Iowa on January 6th. Before that, I had gone to the Mexican store, The Monarch, where I picked a bilingual Hispanic newspaper called *Hola-America*. I took the newspaper to my girlfriend's house because I like to read the sports section. Unexpectedly, I saw Cristina's picture with many others of her friends waving flags in a parade. Proudly, I showed the picture to my girlfriend and explained to her how Cristina had helped me in the ESL program. Then, I started to read the article called, "Latino Community loses an important figure," where I found out about the death of Cristina Greene. I was disturbed with what my eyes were reading because I had talked to Cristina about my next classes six weeks



before. I couldn't avoid crying in front of my girlfriend who held me in her arms to give me solace. After that, I drove back home while my thoughts started to give the



reasons why Cristina had not responded to my calls, which were set on her telephone's answering machine because she usually called someone back as soon as she could.

I had the opportunity to know Cristina in April in 2003 when I was in Level 5 of the Adult Education ESL program at the Illinois Employment and Training Center. As usual, Cristina arrived to the Level 5 room with her characteristic smile. She introduced herself to all the students who were working on assignments given by the teacher, Connie Kappas. Giving a complete explanation about the students' transition from the adult education program into the academic ESL program, Cristina encouraged all the students to continue into a higher education at BHC QC campus; she also offered help for all those students who had any questions or concerns about the

next steps that they would have to take in order to go to college. Since then, Cristina became my advisor, who helped me to go through the process in order to be part the ESL program. The Grammar I class was the first one in which Cristina enrolled me and it was my first experience in college she also helped me to make better decisions in choosing classes every semester.

Not just me. Cristina always had time for every student's concern even if she had a busy work schedule because she knew how to treat a person; she knew how to say the right word at the right moment because she loved her profession. According to classmate, Amadou Dia, "Cristina was the perfect example for you and me because she knew exactly what to tell people. She was a creative, professional, and respectful person."



In my personal opinion, Cristina was born to be a counselor because she always cared about others with passion and love like her own family. Cristina also took students' difficulties and students' goal as hers because she always gave students more than they expected. According to a classmate, Adiba Sirojeva, "Unfortunately, I did not know Cristina Greene closely, but I heard a lot of good words about her. She was a very nice, kind, and reliable person."

Cristina's death is a tremendous loss not only for the Latino community but also for all those who had the opportunity to know her personally because she worked for all the people who were around her without preferences. According to an

advanced writing class student, Sara Montes, "I believe Cristina will be very missed by all the people who had the good fortune to meet her."

Cristina's works, words, and efforts are alive in every person who had the privilege of knowing her because through her passion as a counselor, she helped many students not only to achieve their academic goals but also to be excellent and responsible human beings in society. According to Guillermo Treviño, the current president of the BHC Association of Latin American Students (ALAS),  "Cristina worked as the chair of the counseling department at Black Hawk College, and she was also an advisor to the ALAS and helped the Viva Quad Cities scholarship process since its inception." As a result, the passion for her profession, the dedication to solving students' concerns, and the ability to understand others were the qualities of Cristina Greene, who will very missed by all the people who knew and worked with her. Let's say good-bye with a big smile to the best counselor that I have ever known in my life because her smile was the way that most people knew her. Thanks Cristina.



## What Brings the Africans to the Quad Cities?

*By Amadou Dia*

The most common question a native speaker asks an African living in the Quad Cities is, "What brought you here?" People hear our accents and are curious, especially because there are so many more Africans lately. Now there are over 2000 people



from a variety of west (and some east) African countries. My answer as to why I came here used to simply be, "My mother." But, after thinking, I realized that wasn't the right response to the question. I came to the U.S. because of my mother, so I asked her what bought her here. Her response was, "IBP" (now known as Tyson Foods). This made me more

curious to know more about the why, how, and when.

It was in late 1999s and early 2001 that IBP had the idea to find new workers because at that time the only workers they had were the Latinos and the Vietnamese. The company was having problems with the government with some of their workers not having the right documentation to work. In search of new employees, the IBP administration sent people to New York City to look for new immigrants. Once in New York, the IBP staff found a great number of West Africans, particularly Senegalese.



IBP offered a very good deal to those who wanted to come to the Quad Cities for work. That package was a free ride from New York to Moline, two hundred dollars in pocket money, which they had to take out of their paycheck once they started the work. IBP staff also paid for the immigrants to stay for two weeks at the Holiday Inn near the airport. From there they made another deal with Indian Bluff Apartments (now Pine Ridge) in Moline. The company made the housing deposit, and the Africans paid for the first month. My mother came in the fourth group of African immigrants; there were a total of sixth groups coming from New York between 1999 and 2001.



My mother, who is from Mauritania, came to the U.S. for political reasons in 1997, like most of the Senegalese who also came about this time. Mauritania had a civil war between the Black Africans and Moors (Arabs), which spilled into Senegal. My mother arrived with political asylum and was working in New York trying to save money in order to bring me and my brothers and sisters to America. At IBP she was earning \$9.50 per hour compared to \$5 or \$7 per hour in New York. She thought IBP would be a good opportunity for me and my siblings. After



six months, my mother gave up because the work was too hard and returned to New York.

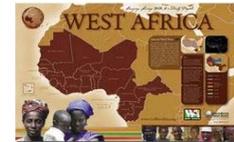
After two weeks in that city, she came to the conclusion that the Quad Cities is a better place for a family than New York. At that time, I was what people call here a



high school drop out, sitting back in Africa with my aunt and waiting for my mother to do something for me or send me money. I recalled when she first told me and my siblings that we were going to live in a small town. I wasn't too happy about it, but she told me then that Moline was a very nice place, and now after almost seven years here, I have to agree with her.

The Africans who first came here to make a living through IBP came because the pay was quite

necessary for most of them. A decade later, the Africans still coming to work for IBP do not come so much



for political reasons, but for economical reasons. The majority of Africans now are from Togo and they arrive via the diversity lottery, which is where the American government gives people the right to stay and work and after five years they can be eligible for citizenship. Now most Africans still working at Tyson are living the American dream of buying a house or car or are going back to school or are getting married and starting family life. Now, if Americans see Africans around, the Americans may know a little more about why the Africans came to the Quad Cities in the first place, and why we are now a part of the local population.



# The Long Journey Home

By Michael Ayuen

Home could be in the jungle, or it could be the nicest environment with beautiful trees. For me, home was Sudan; it was the



place where all my memories were burned. I can still imagine living with my precious mango tree, which acts as a symbol of love for the community; where older people came to discuss the family matters; it was a place where friends and I could go to plan the next day. In my village, Mother and I would run down the alley in the evening or early in the morning to stretch ourselves if we got bored at home. As an eleven-year-old boy, I was energetic and full of dreams. I remember Mother and I often used to go to a small city called Magalla, five miles from our village. We normally walked to the town back and forth, and my mother could carry me on her back if my feet got sore. I recalled the moment my mother said, "God give us shoes, so that I won't have to carry this big boy on my back." To me, it was enjoyable to be carried on her back despite how she felt.

However, these wonderful moments with my mother were cut short when the war started in 1983 in Sudan. The war came close to our village, separating me from my mother. I know my mom was desperately looking for me just as I was searching eagerly for her in every town and village



while crying day and night hoping to see Mommy again. I often called on Holy God to reunite us again because I was not convinced that my mother had died, and I thought she was also optimistic that I was alive. But there was no way for me to extend my search because all roads that connected the towns, and villages were closed due to the ongoing war between the government of

Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army.

In fact, I was scared to go to town because I could be killed by the Sudanese forces who were slaughtering people, especially men. Every man was labeled as a rebel despite his age. Therefore, I had to leave with the people who were going to Ethiopia. Other people from the village and I hid in the day time and walked at night because of the Sudanese planes and soldiers who patrolled the borders everyday, searching for people who were trying to escape. In addition, I had to eat wild vegetables and drink urine because of the lack of water and food for survival.



Eventually, some of us reached an Ethiopia refugee camp, but some of us didn't due to thirst and lack of food. But we, survivors, were glad to be in the camp where the Sudanese soldiers wouldn't hurt us any more and to be in the hands of the United Nation High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) which delivered food and blankets to us; my friends and I stood in line to receive our food and blankets that evening. Then my friends and I went under a tree and took tree breaches to clean the ground, so that it would be a dwelling place. That tree remained our home for seven years before we moved to a Kenyan refugee camp in 1991 due to war between the Ethiopia government and its rebels.

Again refugee lives were jeopardized by the Ethiopian crisis. Everybody in the refugee camp including myself was overwhelmed because we did not



know where to go. I personally was nervous and terrified, but some of refugees, including myself, ran toward the Sudanese border then to the Kenyan border. It was a rainy day, and all the rivers were flooded, so it became impossible to cross for those of

us who did not know how to swim. However, I jumped into the river with the others while the Ethiopia rebels were shooting at us. Many people drowned and others got shot in the river. It was an awful day because children and the disabled were victims.

Even though I survived the shooting from the Ethiopian rebels, another tough moment was ahead of me. I thought about how I would get to the Kenyan border because I was mentally and physically tired and my feet couldn't make it due to wounds. However, I draped a piece of cloth over my feet and started to move slowly down the road. I walked five miles and then I set down to tie my feet again while other refugees passed me. But before dawn, I got to the Kenyan border, which was a twenty-hour journey.

All the refugees were relocated from Lokochoki to a new refugee camp called Kakuma. I arrived on August 8, 1992 to Kakum Refugee Camp. UNHCR gave each group of people land without anything on it. I built a small tent out of sacks and cardboard papers. Wind and dust blew through my tiny room. In fact, I was sick of camp, but I had no choice because of the ongoing war in Sudan. Then in 1996, I decided to have a family of my own and by June 1997, our first



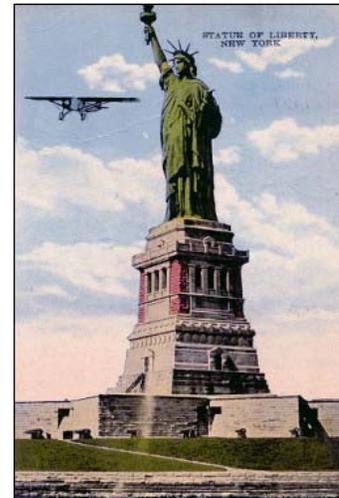
child was born, then the second, third, and fourth came at the time we were leaving to U.S. after twelve years in the camp. However, I got relief when UNHCR gave the special consideration to 3,000 boys and other refugees to move to the United States.

My family and I were excited to get out from the Kakum Refugee Camp because we were tired of shooting, burning, and the duration we had in the camp. To us, twelve years in the camp was a lot to be in one place. In addition, I wanted my kids to have a good future, not to be like me who had spent my entire life in camps. To us, the refugee camp was like a prison because the refugees were not allowed to go to nearby cities. One time I went to Nairobi, the capital

city of Kenya. I was abused by police on my way to the city. The police asked me to give them money, but I refused to give it to them. I was kicked and put into jail and the bus left; I insisted I would not give in to any bribery because I believed bribery was a sin. After many hours, the police allowed me to go back to camp.

Finally on December 8, 2004, my family and I flew to the United States. My children were amused by the snow on the ground, and asked me, "Daddy, see the white flour on our backyard," but I said, "No that is not flour; it's snow." Despite the difficulties, my family and I strove to improve our lives here in the Quad Cities. With God's help, we found folks from the Presbyterian

Church and nice people from neighboring cities who helped us a lot. For example, the church helps us with transportation. Others invited us to have Thanksgiving dinner with them for the first time.

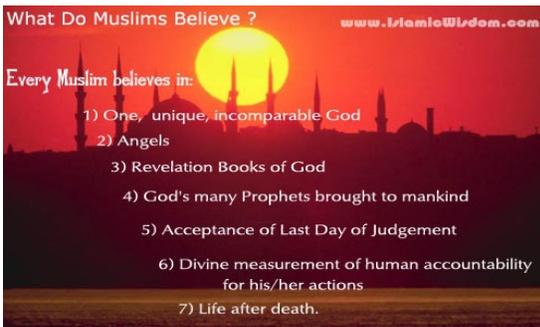


These individuals became the apple of our eyes. Until now folks from the church and World Relief: Kent, Careen, Tim's family, Joe's family, Diana's family, and Dorothy's family, have all made sacrifices to help us live in the United States by showing us the American way. Kent, my best friend, once said from the depth of his heart, "You should not involve yourself in debt." Now I live up to his wisdom, and I have seen the fruits from his advice. I have come to know that brothers or sisters can be made again.

I have a privilege to share with Americans who are not familiar with the war in Sudan by explaining the causes starting from the Southern Sudan war which lasted for 21 years apart from the current Darfur war. I urge Americans and the international

community to focus on what is happening in Sudan and not only Darfur, but also promoting the South-North peace accord that will end the longest war in the horn of Africa.

In brief, I would like to encourage Americans to read more about the Sudan, and especially the war between North and South which resulted in 2.5 million lives lost and 2 million people being forced to leave the country. These figures are apart from current war in Darfur, Sudan in which 200,000 people have died and 2 million became refugees. I strongly recommend all of us to work to bring peace to all parts of the world that are in war. We should strive to promote justice around us and even to those who are strangers by making their dreams of home to be true. One generous act would help turn the sorrow of people like me to joy; I have achieved success here in the US. This is my home.



## Living as a Muslim in the USA

By Kamal Bouzegou

After September 11<sup>th</sup> I won the DV Lottery (Diversity Visa Immigrant Program). Unlike everybody else, I wasn't happy to come to the U.S. On the contrary, I felt sad and confused. It was a really hard decision for me to proceed in this program especially after the events of 9/11. I had lived most my life in a Muslim country, Morocco, surrounded by Muslims and practicing Islam. I started questioning myself: How can

I live in a non-Muslim country, and how shall I maintain my religion in that country?

Flashing back, I remember my life in my country and how I used to live there. As a Muslim person, I was breastfed Islam and



learned the concept of religion at a tender age. In my town back home, I used to hear the Athan, call for prayer, five times a day. When Ramadan, one of the

five pillars of Islam, comes, everybody is obligated to fast so he or she can fulfill his or her spiritual obligations. At this time, the relationship between the members of the family becomes especially strong and close.

Coming to the U.S alone with no family nor friends and lacking good English language skills was a big challenge and hard journey to take. The first hardship that I underwent was at the airport. I was the only person required to stay at the last minute before entering the airplane because the police took me to a special place and started questioning me like I had done something wrong or like I was a terrorist. From that moment I realized that I was an "undesirable" person. However, when I reached my destination, I started having different feelings toward people. My life had changed completely, so I had to do something to keep my identity. No calls for prayers, no kosher meat, no place where to pray, no time to break my fasting during work. Those were some of the difficulties that faced me in the beginning, but to overcome those obstacles, I tried to create an Islamic environment in my apartment with the help of my friends.

I start going to school to learn English with the intention to convey and show the right meaning of Islam. Because people have judged us Muslims by



stereotypes, it is obvious that Americans or someone else will look at Muslims as if we are terrorists. I remember one day at work

when break time came, and everybody headed to the cafeteria to take his break, I went to the locker room to change my dirty clothes and to pray.

Before I started prayer, one Mexican guy started speaking in Spanish and saying bad words to me. He called me Osama Bin Laden and said many bad words in Spanish; I knew the meaning all of those words. I didn't care about what he had said,



but after I finished my prayer, I went to him and asked him why he called me those bad words. He was an impolite person, yet there were many good Mexicans who didn't like this person, and they tried to stand by my side to help me.

Does Islam mean violence? What is the real meaning of Islam and how does Islam look to the other religions? Islam was derived from the Arabic verb "aslama" which means submitted, and thus means peace, so how can this religion be a symbol of violence or terrorism? God said in the Quran, *"And we have not sent you except as a mercy to mankind."* (The Prophets 21:107). God sent Mohamed (peace be upon him); Muslims should send blessing to every prophet when his name is mentioned, to all mankind, and the first thing that Mohamed started with was the establishing of good manners. Also, he forbade the killing of the new female children. He called for the equality between all races. Mohamed said in his last sermon, *"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action."*

This is one of the essential teachings that most Muslims absorbed from their Islamic teaching; they look to everybody as equal as they are. For example, when I used to work at Tyson, my supervisor was an African-American, and



one day a problem occurred between me and him, and later on he told me, "Kamal, why do you hate me? Is because I am Black?" I laughed and I told him "I don't judge people by their skin. You are my supervisor, and I don't talk to you or act playful with you as others do because I respect you." Also, I added some sayings of my Prophet.

Suddenly, he smiled and gave me a big hug, and from that moment, we became friends.



As other people have their stereotypes, I also have mine. The cause of that is that people, including me, listen and believe whatever the news brings. Some of us can search for the truth and some don't. To illustrate that, when I was in Morocco people saw Americans as devils, mean and rude; they see them like they are blood thirsty, yet when I came here I found the opposite. People are friendly and respectful; they don't like war. They raise



their voices against the government to say "No for War." I was happy to see that. Also, Americans see

Muslims as blood thirsty. To avoid this misunderstanding, I beg non-Muslims to read about Islam and its teaching before forming any bad ideas. Also, don't judge a whole nation by one person.

When I first met my neighbor, Jennifer, she asked me about Islam and my opinion on Christianity and other religions. In a few words, I explained my view and what God said in the Quran, *"Say (O Muhammad): 'We believe in Allah, God, and in what has been sent down to us and what was sent down to Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Yaqoub (Jacob), and the tribes, and in the Books*

given to Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus), and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another of them, and to Allah do we surrender our will.” 3.84.

Over and above, I've been living in U.S. for almost four years now. Do I feel the same way as I did about the country I now call my home? No, I have found freedom in my new home. I found kind people who respect me. In few words, Christianity, Judaism and Islam are religions that share many values such as the love of the one God and the love of thy neighbor. I crashed all my stereotypes in the rock of reality and threw them behind me, and I started feeling tenderness for people with my heart and try to build good relationships with everybody.



## **Between a Rock and a Hard Place**

*By Quynh Nguyen*

Since I was young, my parents have been telling me, “You have to strive to study hard otherwise people will step on you.” The same as my parents, all Vietnamese parents encourage their kids to study hard because of the kids’ future. The problem is there is no way to have a good living without studying. Thus, Vietnamese students have to care about their future early in life by studying hard since they are very young. Consequently, studying so hard for so long ruins Vietnamese students’ precious time of their childhood and youth.



Just like American kids, Vietnamese kids start going to the first grade at six years old, but most Vietnamese kids know how to read and write when they are four years old. Vietnamese parents usually send their kids to tutors beside pre-school to study reading and writing when the kids turn four. Kids have to handle two places of study at the same time. Sometimes there is more than that if the parents want their kids to take dance classes or music classes.

How do the kids feel? Why would the parents do that? I remember the time when I was taking my first tutoring class in pre-school. I went to pre-school at 7:30 in the morning; my parents picked me up at 3:00 in the afternoon, then they took me directly to the tutoring class. I stayed in the tutoring class until 5:00 every day.

Moreover, I always had a lot of homework from the tutoring class. I did not like it. Vietnamese teachers are so strict, so kids are always scared of the teachers. Kids always have to listen to the teachers well; they cannot play freely during class, and they cannot talk or say whatever they want to. Just like me, I think all of the kids do not like it. We had to study a lot at a very young age, and there was no fun, no time for playing, no childhood memories... The only thing that we got was the exhaustion of studying.



Once, I asked my dad why I had to study so much, and my dad answered that I needed to prepare for the future.

Preparing for the future with Vietnamese kids is a very long and hard path. It is like a battle; if you are not the winner, you will be the loser, and there is no good place for the loser.

From the first grade to the twelfth grade, besides taking the tests to pass each grade, Vietnamese students have to take three important tests, which are given when entering middle school, high school, and college. Unlike American students who are transferred to middle school and high school



automatically, Vietnamese students have to take hard entrance tests. If they pass with good grades, they will continue their dream of being good students. However, if they fail or get bad grades, they will study in bad schools which do not have enough qualified teachers to help them to enter college. Therefore, all Vietnamese students strive so hard; they have to deal with main school,

tutoring classes, and tons of homework every day even on the weekend which is only one day, Sunday. It is not that students



forget their youth; it is just because they have no time to think about it. They always have to stay strongly in their studying battle; if they do not fight, they will lose.

Of course, Vietnamese students are tired of studying without resting, but they have no choice. Their parents' pressure and their futures do not allow them to rest...

The hardest time for Vietnamese students is when they are in twelfth grade. They have to take the biggest test of their student lives to enter college. It is extremely hard to enter college in Vietnam because we do not have many colleges, but we have a lot of students. If students fail the test, they will waste their hard twelve years. Also, they will have no job without college degrees, and they will probably have hard lives in the future. However, the students who pass the test will continue their hard lives as students to finish their college education.

As long as students still go to school, they have to ignore everything else but study. Therefore, Vietnamese students do not have part-time jobs because they



obviously do not have time to work. They do not even have time for any entertainment. Everyone goes to school even in the

summer.

Over and over, Vietnamese students can never have real time to enjoy life. They just keep worrying and worrying. The Vietnamese have an idiom that says, "If you study, you will lose your youth, but if you enjoy your youth, you will lose your future."

Where is the escape for Vietnamese students? The question is still an unsolvable problem for Vietnamese government, parents, and students. Maybe if they

change the education system, build more schools, create more jobs, it will help changing Vietnamese students' lives.



The Vietnamese should realize that childhood and youth are precious times of life. We cannot ever have those times again if we have already passed them.

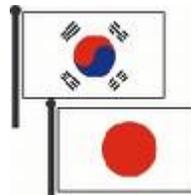


## LOOKS CAN BE MISLEADING

*By (Sarah) Hyeonju Lee Kalsic*

Since I came to America, one of the common questions that I have been asked is, "Are you Japanese?" It is natural that foreigners can't distinguish Koreans from Japanese. Even my daughter and I can't tell if some Asian people are from Korea or Japan until we hear them speak. I have an interesting recollection about it.

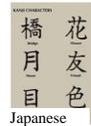
In January, we went on vacation to Florida. While we were having a good time in Miami Beach, my daughter and I saw an Asian family. A boy and a girl who looked like five and six years old were squatting on the sand looking at something. We got curious about their nationality, so we decided to walk close to the kids in order to hear them speak. I said to my daughter, "If we stay too close around the kids, the parents might think we are weird. Let's walk as slowly as possible so that we can catch any words that they are speaking." We whispered to each other just like detectives who are looking for a clue. The kids were looking at a jellyfish talking to each other in English. Suddenly, I heard, "Haepari Manjijima." which means 'Don't



touch the jelly fish.” Right away, we could tell that they were from Korea.

A lot of people tend to think Koreans and Japanese have similar or the same culture and traditions because of our very similar appearance. Korea and Japan have interacted with each other for a long time. Though the two countries have been in conflict throughout history, they will be able to achieve a better future by trying to understand each other and cooperating.

Of course, Korea and Japan have many similar points. First, what points do we have in common? Though Koreans and Japanese speak different languages, the



two languages are similar in some points. The Korean and Japanese languages have the same order of words in a sentence. In English, subject and verb are followed by object. In Korean and Japanese languages, the object is placed after the subject. For example, Koreans say, “Nanun pizzarul joahae. (I pizza like)” for “I like pizza.”

Another similar point is both languages have two ways to speak according to the age of people. One way is to elders, and the other way is to peers or younger people. Unlike Korean or Japanese, English is spoken in same way to both elders and younger people. In both countries, people consider politeness very important, so people express respect to elders by using honorifics.



Another example of similarity is when Koreans and Japanese enter the house, they take off their shoes. There is a deeper meaning regarding this custom than just keeping the house clean. The act of taking off shoes shows respect to others. Thus, I still don't feel comfortable when I step on the carpet in somebody's house with my shoes on. At the same time, I am beginning to think it is very convenient to move around in shoes at home.

Another value that Korea and Japan share is favoritism for boys. My classmate,



Miku, said “In Japan, when a boy is born, all the family is happier than when a girl is born.” The feeling is mutual in Korea. These days in Korea, each family usually has one or two children. If a family has three or more kids, it might be because

parents want to have a son after two daughters. One of my friends gave birth to three kids. When she gave birth to two girls, her mother-in-law showed her dissatisfaction indirectly. Believe it or not, when she finally gave birth to a son, my friend received a pearl necklace from her mother-in-law. This is very

difficult for Western people to understand. Knowing about the culture of Korea and Japan may help foreigners understand this behavior. In both countries, the son is considered as the main support of the family because only sons continue the family line.



Korea and Japan also have differences. First, Korea is a peninsula bordered in the north by China in East Asia. Japan is an island east of Korea. Japan



has various seafoods like other island countries. Koreans enjoy many kinds of vegetables and meat. While Koreans like spicy food and use a lot of garlic and red pepper powder, Japanese don't use red pepper powder a lot. Japanese dishes are carefully decorated to please the eyes.

Kimchi is a very significant food for Koreans, so Koreans think that a meal is not complete without Kimchi.

Kimchi is a combination of vegetables with red chili pepper powder and garlic. Koreans use chopsticks and a spoon, but Japanese use only chopsticks when having traditional food. When Japanese



have soup, they lift the bowl and sip the soup.

Korean cars have the steering wheel on the left side and people drive on the right side of the road just like Americans do. Interestingly, in Japan, people drive in the opposite direction like in England, New Zealand, and Australia. Another interesting difference is Japanese parents want their children to continue the family business. For instance, if a Japanese father has been working as a carpenter for all his life, his son is expected to continue his father's job. On the other hand, Korean parents expect their children to study hard in order to move up into a higher class. The bottom line is they want their children to be better than themselves.



We can see that there are many differences as well as similarities with Korea and Japan. Here I have just touched the surface of differences and similarities of these two countries. I hope that I have inspired your curiosity to look into these two beautiful Asian nations. The more we know other cultures, the better we can understand other people with the hopes of having peace around the world.



## The Uzbek in USA

By Adiba Sirojeva

When I started to study at Black Hawk College, I was surprised that some students knew nothing about Uzbekistan and often identified it as a part of Russia or Pakistan. Sometimes people from neighboring countries can speak the same language and celebrate similar holidays. Thus, Uzbek people can generally



communicate in all Central Asian languages like Tajik, Turkish, Kazakh, including Russian and

Tatar. Despite the fact that there are some cross-cultural similarities between bordering countries, each of them has its own unique culture founded in customs and traditions. So, Uzbek people, being outstanding in multilingual abilities, have many distinctions representing a unique culture.

The official language of Uzbekistan is Uzbek, but it is not the only one spoken in the country. Uzbek people are known as multilingual; thus, in many families children are taught more than three languages. The historical factors have influenced this cultural enrichment and developed the ability of Uzbek people to know many languages. Also, a present, school programs require studying one or more international languages. So, the first known distinction of Uzbek people is their multilingualism.

Uzbek culture has its own distinctive elements founded in celebrated national holidays and traditional



food. Among different customs and traditions, the most widely celebrated holiday is a Navruz. It is a state holiday and is celebrated on the twenty first of March. This day of the year coincides with the spring equinox, the day on which the number of daylight hours equals the number of night time hours. The name of the holiday means "new day" and comes from the Zoroastrian religion. This holiday has been celebrated in Uzbekistan since the old



times, around the seventh century. It has become a tradition to gather before the holiday for "hasher" (voluntary team work) to clean streets to and decorate houses. On this holiday, national meals are cooked: "pilov" (meat dish with rice), "shurpa" (vegetable soup), and "kook somsa" (made with a greenplants filling). But the most delicious meal is "sumalak".

Sumalak is prepared only one time in a year- Navruz. Because sumalak is made from flour and wheat sprouts, it symbolizes the eternal life.



Usually old women cook sumalak all night while singing songs and dancing.

Another traditional Uzbek food is a pilaf. It is cooked from rice, carrots, meat, and onions. It is served during a wedding feast to celebrate the arrival of an honorable guest, at the crowded jubilee celebrations and in the family circle. One of the family traditions is a "Nahor Osh".

It is usually served during big celebrations in the morning, where a lot of guests, around 50 or more people, are invited to eat this meal. I still remember how tasteful the pilaf was cooked for my wedding. That day people were invited at seven o'clock in the morning. Before the pilaf was served to guests, there was a prayer for the happy future of my new family. Everybody enjoyed the "Nahor Osh", because it was done by "oshpaz" (a master) from fresh lamb meat, delicious, yellow carrots and selected sort of rice.

And now, being here in the USA, I like to cook the Uzbek pilaf and invite my friends. There are about six families from Uzbekistan, who live in Quad Cities, and the most of us are students of Black Hawk College. We meet each other to celebrate



our national holidays, where we speak the Uzbek language, put on our national clothes and enjoy the traditional food.

We feel like we are sitting with our family in Uzbekistan, talking about news from our native country and remember relatives, who live there. We also invite our friends from other countries – from Russia, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and the U.S. Creating an Uzbek environment during our national parties, we introduce Uzbek culture to other

international students. Although we understand that there are some cross-cultural similarities between Central Asian countries, Uzbek people have their own cultural heritage that makes them unique.



## Life: Not So Bad!

*By Miku Uehara*

Before I came to the United States, my father told me, "You can just give it a try; that's all I want." It was an abrupt decision to come to the United States to study. I wanted to change my life. Life in Japan wasn't so bad for me, but



there was something missing, and I thought I should do something in my life. When I was in Japan, I worked every day at my father's furniture store, and I also

worked at a bar at night time because I was on my own and had to pay my bills. I led a full life in Japan, but at the same time, I thought I had to do something for my future, too. I had a hard time when I was Japan, and I was a little sick, so my father wanted to help me to live in the United States to start my new life. His words made my life completely changed in a good way. He saved my life.

I decided to come to the Quad Cities because my father is from here, and my grandmother is living here. Now I'm living with my grandmother, who is very helpful for me because she always takes good care of me and helps me with my homework all the time. Without her, I wouldn't be to go through the classes that I took in summer the first time when I just came to the United States in June 2007. My grandmother is very smart woman, so I have learned a lot from her. I didn't know many things when I got here in April 2007. She showed me how to get to places, and how to get gas because in Japan, there are people who will do everything for you at the gas station, so a lot of Japanese people



don't know how to put gas in their cars. Also, she taught me how to cook American food, and about American holidays and events. I was a little ignorant about the United States, so she taught me so many things, and she is still teaching me a lot of things that I need to know.



I started to attend to Black Hawk College in June of last year. I was so frustrated at first because I wasn't used to the system of education in the United States. I had to study almost 24/7. I couldn't have any break because there were so much homework plus the classes were every day. When I was in Japan, I didn't go to school since I was working every day. I wasn't patient.

I wasn't used to studying like that all the time. However, this experience has made me very patient, and I have made a habit to study all the time.

I have made so many friends from all over the place. I could get to know other cultures, languages, and the different points of view. If I had stayed in



Japan, I wouldn't be able to experience these precious moments. I've learned about other people's religions. I was invited to my friend's house for dinner, and her mother explained to me about the Christian rules about fasting. They

couldn't eat any meat for forty days before the Easter day. Also, I learned about Muslim's fasting too. One of my classmates did fasted during the last semester. He couldn't eat or drink for a month from sunrise to sunset. I was very surprised because it was really new to me. I hadn't experienced that before. Moreover,

I have gotten to wear other countries traditional costumes. I have worn Chinese, Pakistani, and Indian costumes since I have been here. We participated in the Chinese regional minority fashion show which was part of a costume exhibit at Black Hawk College; I wore a beautiful southern Chinese costume. It was



a good experience for me to try other things. Now, I have more curiosity to know about a lot of countries since I have so many friends from many different countries. I am more motivated to learn about new things than before.

In conclusion, my life has changed in its style and point of view; I now see the world more widely.



Right now, I'm trying very hard to prove to myself that I can do this on my own like my father told me to. I am so glad that I decided to move to the United States because I could meet so many people and be able to learn a lot of things that I couldn't imagine in my life when I was in Japan. I would like to travel to all of my friends' countries in the future, so that way I will be able to expand my view with more knowledge and interest. My life has changed a lot since I came here in the United States, and these experiences made me much stronger than I was. I gave it a try, and I like it.



## The Best Celebration in Town

*By Sara Montes*

Mexican celebrations are lively and colorful. Every state has its very own festivities, but one of the festivities I like the most is the one celebrated annually in my hometown in Guanajuato. It is called "Fiesta de San Nicolas." Saint Nicolas of Tolentino is the saint venerated in my hometown. He is the saint of the souls in the purgatory. Saint Nicolas was born in 1245 in Saint Angelo, Italy. He was named after the town where he was born and died. His parents were poor but rich in virtue. His mother who was an elderly woman, prayed to the Lord to conceive a child, and her prayers were heard. Saint Nicolas was a kind child, and he shared



everything he owned with the needy. Our town is named after this kind saint. To celebrate him, our town has a very unique celebration rich in faith, color and traditions.



I still remember myself as a child, anxiously waiting for this celebration along with the mechanical games, raffles, and little tents selling wooden toys and dolls. And of course, the cotton candy and the popcorn would make my mouth water. All of my friends, siblings and I would gather to watch the marionettes show.

It all starts on January 9<sup>th</sup> with what we call, "La Alborada," a reveille that begins on January 9<sup>th</sup> at 3:00am outside the Church. A band starts playing and begins walking along the streets. Everyone who wants to join the band is welcome to do it; everyone from kids, teens, adults or even entire families joins the singing and dancing. A unique tradition to my hometown involves a donkey with a pitcher on each side.

Anyone who wants to donate a bottle of tequila can just empty the bottle into the pitchers. Any adult who wants will get half a glass of the blend of all the tequilas people bring. After the run at 6:00am, all the people go back to church where mass is celebrated.



People are thankful for the good harvest, the blessings and for the family. All the people sing praises. Other people go to church and kneel to ask for forgiveness for their sins or pray for a miracle. Also, during these festivities, children make their first



communion and have their confirmation in honor to Saint Nicolas of Tolentino.

The Fiesta of Saint Nicolas is the best celebration of all the surrounding towns. After the reveille music bands play all morning in downtown, then there is a rodeo in the evening. On the next day, there is another

mass, and bands play music in the downtown. In the afternoon, there is a parade with dances and pilgrims who come from other states praying to St Nicolas.

There is "The Dance," which is a particular dance in which all parishioners dance to Our Lady of Guadalupe. A drummer and a violinist lead the group. Men put on a hat decorated with colorful ribbons and rattles on their hands; women have a small basket full of fruits. They all go dancing to the beat of the drum. Behind the dancers, there is a group of children dancing and dressed up as Indians, and then there are girls dressed up as ladies from viceroyalty times. This is a way to remember our native roots and the conquest by the Spaniards.



After these parades, there is a dance with popular groups.

Finally, on the last day, there is more music during the day. In the afternoon, people gather in downtown where a pole about thirty feet tall is all covered in pig's fat and with plastic bags with money at the very top. Everyone who wants to try to reach the top for the money is welcome to do it. Usually there are groups of six to eight men trying. At the end, they share the prize. Another rodeo takes place in the evening. After the rodeo, everyone gathers in the downtown around the band to dance, and at midnight there are lots of fireworks. The big finale is beautiful castle with the image of Saint Nicolas and Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is a very emotional moment. The music stops; everyone looks at the fireworks applauding, and cheering is heard.



To summarize, the Saint Nicolas Fiesta, is a one of the best Catholic celebrations in all the state of Guanajuato. There are so many things to see and enjoy from these traditional festivities. Hopefully, some day I will go back to celebrate Saint Nicolas

Fiesta, only this time I will have my two kids, and I will proudly share with them all the beautiful and colorful traditions I grew up with.



## Queen's Day

By Manon Meijer

On April 30<sup>th</sup> in Holland, the red white blue flags fly throughout the country, and the houses are decorated with orange vines. People dressed in orange clothes have a nice time with friends, eat snacks, drink all kinds of drinks, dance, sell products on the streets, play games and sing the national anthem "The Wilhelmus" and songs like "Oranje Boven," which means "Orange on Top." Everywhere are activities like concerts, flea markets, children's activities, fairs and parades.



What does the Netherlands celebrate on this day? Well, on April 30<sup>th</sup>, it is Queen's Day in Holland; this is a national holiday celebrating the birthday of the Queen of the Netherlands. On this day, local Queen's Day associations organize parties and



other festivities everywhere. The Royal House visits one or two communities.

Actually, the birthday of the Queen, Queen Beatrix, is on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Why then do the Dutch celebrate the Netherlands Queen's Day on April 30<sup>th</sup>? Well, April 30<sup>th</sup> is the birthday of Queen Beatrix's mother, Queen Juliana. When Beatrix became Queen in 1980, she decided to keep the

Queen's Day on April 30<sup>th</sup> as a way of honoring her mother, and for the practical reason that on her own birthday, it is too cold for festivities.

During the time Juliana was still Queen, there was a parade at Palace "Soestdijk" every April 30<sup>th</sup>. The Queen and her family stood before the palace while the Dutch walked in a parade and gave the queen and her family presents and flowers. The current queen changed this way of celebrating Queen's Day. Nowadays, Queen Beatrix and her family visit one or two communities in Holland. In these communities, they are welcomed with special activities like dancing, sports and singing demonstrations.

Why does everybody wear orange clothes during Queen's Day? Orange is the color of Holland. The reason for that is that the Royal House is called "Het Huis van Oranje-Nassau" (translated it means: "The House of Orange Nassau") So, on Queen's Day everybody wears orange clothes.

Almost every community in Holland has its own Queen's Day association, which organizes special activities. Typical Dutch children's activities in almost every community are bite-the-cake, sack races, walking on stilts, walking on tins and climbing posts. The night before Queen's Day is a special night out; bars and clubs are opened. This night is called "Koninginnenach" or in English "Queen's Night".



Free markets are very special in Holland. Normally, people can't sell products without permission, and children are not allowed to sell products on the streets at all. However, on Queen's day this is allowed. According to newspaper *De Telegraaf*, tourists find free markets typical of the Dutch because they even try to trade on holidays.

In general, tourists see the Dutch as real traders.

Amsterdam has the most famous activities. For example, it has the biggest free market and the biggest open-air party/concert on the "Museumplein", a big famous plaza. My cousin told me, "This is the best festivity during Queen's Day." For a lot of tourists, Queen's Day is the most important festivity of the year in Amsterdam.

When I was a little child, I would celebrate Queen's Day as every other child. I went to the soccer field in my village to sing the national anthem with my class and to do children's activities. After that, my little brother and I sold our old toys and old things we found at home at the free market. The last couple of years, I found Queen's day the most fun day of the year. First, I used to celebrate Queen's night in the



Festival on "Museumplein"

dance clubs where I used to go out. Then, the next morning I would take the train to Arnhem with

all my friends. In Arnhem there is always an open-air party, and the bars and clubs are open. We used to dance, and party until it was about 11:00 pm. I have a lot of nice memories about Queen's Days.

To conclude, Queen's Day is a very special holiday in Holland. Like my friends used to say after Queen's Day, "We can't wait till it is Queen's Day again."

Unfortunately, I won't be able to celebrate this holiday in Holland the next four years, but I will catch up. I can give you one recommendation: you should visit Holland on Queen's Day.



## Celebration of New Year, Epe Ekpe

*By Akuete Fumey*

Traffic became busy. The people arrived by cars from the neighboring countries with a lot of luggage. Some people landed by airplane. Family members

rejoiced. Businesses flourished. The town was so active and noisy, and curious visitors asked what was going on. Certainly some event was about to happen in the city of Aneho. Then the crucial date arrived. People gathered for the celebration of the traditional New Year, Epe Ekpe or Prise de Pierre Sacret which translated in English means "Coming Year." This ceremony coincides with another event called Yeke Yeke, Harvest of Maize. The event is so important that people who are absent feel that they are missing something capital in their lives. The celebration has two steps: public manifestation and family celebration.

According to the importance of this event, people dress nicely with traditional clothes. Men wear trousers with a cloth tied on their belly and much traditional jewelry on the neck; on the other hand, women wear a nice dress but, a little fancier than usual. Women dress with layered clothing, adding tattoos, wearing a corsage (a piece of cloth tied over their dress) and a lot of traditional jewelry on the neck. They go shoeless. People arrive in the Stadium of Glidji in Aneho city in small groups and sing the traditional songs that stimulated and helped them to accomplish the ceremony. At the stadium, some authorities arrive with their campaign. Europe's ambassadors and America's ambassador are among the great personalities. The stadium is crowded with many people.



The public celebration occurs on Thursday. However, the great priests began the preparation three weeks before. They call that part the Trace of Direction. A man will go into a divine forest through this road. During the public festival, the crowd starts to cry at the approach of the stone. The man who holds the stone with his two hands is surrounded by great priests and leaves the circle. The public wants to know the color of the stone. Everyone's eyes turn in direction of the great priest. Then he shows the stone to the four directions: south, north, east, and

west. After the crowd has seen the stone, the representative of the priest explains the divine message. Subsequently, the event organizers invite the public to eat the first harvest of maize. From this comes the name of the celebration Yeke Yeke, which means "People should eat for free." The origin of Yeke Yeke goes back into far in the history.

Historians say that people who celebrate Epe Ekpe came from Ghana, the neighboring country to the west. During their travels they took one stone with them. And every thirteen month (September in European calendar) of their year, they gathered and the great priest showed them this stone. The priest did so to remind people where they were from and why they came. Meanwhile, the color of the stone changed. Color change is significant.

According to Mr. Kokou Djondo, a native of Aneho who spent his childhood in the areas, the color of the stone means a lot to the locals. "The events that will happen during the coming year is predicated by the color," said Mr. Kokou Djondo. They have the following colors:

- Black means: death, accident, war, disaster, famine, and extreme fish deficiency.
- Red means: health and wealth of old people.
- Blue means: too much rain, that could lead to flooding, good agriculture, production, and animals
- White means: good year, a year of prosperity.

Once the people learn what color the stone is that year, it is followed by a particular message which is the prediction of the coming year. "Moreover according to the prophecy," Mr. Kokou Djondo adds, "the great priest can do some traditional ceremony in case the year will be dangerous, but this ceremony can't stop the dangerous events, but the ceremony will just minimize the effect." Once the natives know the color of the stone and the divine message, they go back to their family houses where the celebration continues.

The Togolese have strong faith about divine prophecy. My grandfather always recommended to my father, "Adje, please don't joke with our tradition's prediction; believe it; everything the priest said did happen." In 1970, the color of the stone was blue. There were too much rain; streets and houses were flooded. Since that time, my father told me, "I started to believe the prediction." Due to the



faith the Togolese have, they make some secret ceremonies in their houses in order to have the divine protection all year.

When celebrating in their homes, family members come with their sacrifices to thank the traditional God for his protection during the year and take the moment to ask him for more protection during the coming year. The sacrifice depends on how wealthy the person is and what the person has

promised for his protection. Today, the celebration has changed more into a holiday with dancing, drinking and playing music. The family members imitate or incorporate European celebrations of the New Year. The young people go back just for the carefree celebrating and the dance. The divine character seems to disappear.



The first day of a New Year is significant for many people. Europeans consider that period a time of new resolve. People wish at that time happiness for friends, relatives, and family members. In my village, Aneho, into South part of Togo, West Africa, we celebrate our traditional New Year which coincides with the harvest.

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## Difficulties Faced by Exchange Students

By *Babaanam Lequessim*

My name is Babanam Lequessim; I am from Togo, which is located at West Africa. I came to US to continue my studies as an exchange student. It took me so long to get a student visa. First of all, to get a student visa I had to have I-20; what means that I had to be admitted to an American college or university. Secondly, I had to have a high school diploma. I also had to prove that I had enough money in my or my parents' bank account, which shows that I can afford the tuition, housing, and expenses in US. Finally, I had to explain to the consul the reasons why I am going to study in US, and which major I am going to study.

Besides this information, I had to be confident and show the consul that I really wanted to go to US for my studies. I showed all this information; I explained and proved to the consul that I really wanted to continue my studies in management administration in US, and would come back to my country to help my father in his company.

Because of these reasons, the consul gave me a visa, and that represented a big opportunity for me. I thought studying in US would be easy, and the student life would be so wonderful. I was so excited to leave my country to study and find adventure; at the same time, I was sad to leave my family because that would be the first time that my family and I would be separated for long time. Finally, the great day came!!

When I arrived to Chicago airport, I was so happy to be in America, I told myself "Welcome to America," but I didn't know that here a difficult life was waiting for me. I



started my first semester at Western Illinois University in Macomb, where I started in the ESL program. I was living on campus in an international house. There, I had a chance to learn things from other international students. My problem was the language, and how to interact with American students. I felt lonely because I couldn't speak English well, so I couldn't communicate easily with them which made me feel dumb. I remembered when I went to cafeteria and I wanted to order French fries. I didn't know how to say it, so the attendant asked me if I would like to order pizza, and I said, "Yes," even though that was not what I wanted. Besides food problems, when I was with my classmates or with my roommate, sometimes they were discussing interesting things, but I couldn't participate well.



Things have changed a lot. The following year I moved to Moline, and I transferred to Black Hawk College where I have been studying in the ESL program. Now I am used to ESL classes even though I had some difficulties in Listening and Speaking II class. Since I came to BHC, I have been happy with my classes, with nice teachers, and I don't forget my classmates Miku and Youma, and the two tutors who are nice and help with my English. Finally, the most wonderful teacher and ESL coordinator that I ever had in my life is Anne Bollati. Anne has been so nice to me, and she has been helping me to improve my English and be a successful after my ESL program. Moreover, she gave me hope to continue studying hard because I was ready to stop and go back to my country because I thought I was wasting my time in the US.

After my experience in both schools, I realized that US studies are better than in my country. Here, I have chance to communicate with my teachers, and to tell them my problems in some subjects. Students have tutors, and they also have computers which can help them in their

research. One thing I like here is a student can work and study. This opportunity helps a student to be independent. I can say that studying is comfortable here; I don't have to take many courses during the semester. But in my country, to study is complicated; there many students in the classrooms; sometimes there is no teacher, and everyone has to take many courses in a year. They also are not divided into semesters. Students don't have scholarships like here. I have had a scholarship since I started BHC because of my good grades.

Manon is an international student from Holland, and she said, "When I came to the United States, I had some problems with all the papers for my application. It was a lot! I also was too late with my appointment at the consulate, but they



made special time for me, so I came to the US on time. I think the studies are good, but I would rather have more time in school and less homework, like I had in Holland. The first day in class, everything was strange, but I really liked it because I wasn't the only international student."

Janet who is a tutor in the ESL Program and is from Brazil, said, "I didn't have trouble to get a visa to come to U.S. because my husband had been transferred from Brazil to here to stay for two years. I arrived here in May 2001. As usual, the beginning was hard because my daughters were so little and I was afraid that they would forget Portuguese (our first language). As everything changed in my husband's professional life, our status changed as well, and we would stay for more time. At that time I realized that U.S. was not only a beautiful place but also a land of opportunities for those who want to study, and I wanted to study. I started my Composition I and as my degree in Brazil was English, I decided to apply for a



Masters degree program at Western Illinois University. I was accepted and in the spring of 2004, I began working toward my degree. I found wonderful people and amazing teachers. In January 2007 I got my Masters degree in English. Besides my personal experience as an international student, I am very happy with my daughters' education, and by the way, they are bilingual: they did not forget Portuguese, and they have a beautiful and natural American English!"



In conclusion, the international student's life is not easy for all the students, but it can be full of victories when someone gets used of it.



## Americans, Naughty or Nice?

By Leon Sardi

When it's time to travel to another country, it is very common to ask ourselves if the people of the place where we are visiting are kind, helpful, mean, respectful, quiet, etc... There are many reasons why people come to the United States, but most of the people ask themselves, are Americans nice people? Am I going to have good experiences with them? It is really hard to generalize and say, "Yes, Americans are very nice people" or "No, there are not nice at all," but by just focusing on Moline and asking people, who are not Americans, we can have an idea how Americans are perceived.



Marco Garcia, an international student at Black Hawk College, thinks Americans are respectful people, "Most of them help each other and preserve strong values." Also, Marco emphasizes the level of education of the Americans, "Most Americans are educated because they follow the rules to live in harmony in the country." At the same time, Marco knows that it is very hard to generalize the

American's behavior, so he added that there is always someone who wants to break the harmony.

An international student from Japan, Miku Uehara, compares the different behaviors of Americans and Japanese. She says that Americans are outgoing, and they have an easy way of expression with others;



Japanese don't usually express their feelings. "They [Americans] are more outgoing compared to our people in Japan. We don't express our feelings, especially in class. So, I think that this is a very good

quality to have."

Quynh Nguyen, an international student from Vietnam, says, "I think that there are good qualities that Americans have. They have responsibility for their work. They are on time. They respect privacy of others."



An international student from Sudan, Michael Ayok, also known as "Charles" said that Americans around the area are very friendly and helpful people. He had American friends that taught him how to drive, and they helped take care of his kids. He emphasized how his friends here have become like family to him.

People have different opinions about Americans according to their experiences. I have had some experiences that have



showed me that Americans can be patient, helpful, and kind. The first time I arrived in the United States, my English skills were poor. As a consequence of that, I had a lot of misunderstandings. When I

was in the airplane going to Moline, the flight attendant came to me to ask what kind of snack I wanted. As a consequence of my lack of communications skills, I could not figure out what she was trying to say. I thought that she was asking what kind of food I wanted. So I replied, "I want a snack."

After I said that, she asked again, "What kind of snack do you want?" and I replied again, "I want a snack." After five minutes of asking what kind of snack I wanted, and replying I want a snack, the flight attendant decided to show me all the kinds of snacks, so I could choose. At that moment, I figured out what she was asking five minutes ago. I felt dumb. The flight attendant realized that I was embarrassed, so she said to me in a kind way "Don't worry; I know that English is not your first language."

The judgment about if Americans are nice or not is according to the experiences. In this area, most of the people think that Americans are nice people with big values.



To conclude Mariá Leon, an international student from Mexico said that when she was in Mexico, she used to hear bad comments about Americans, but when she came here, it was a big surprise to realize that what she heard about Americans wasn't true. Her experiences in high school made her think that Americans are helpful and most of the time nice. She said, "They are friendly; also they made me feel really comfortable."



## The Second Time Around

*By Abdel Kader*

When I was in my country, my professor told me, "No matter what your goals are, work at maximum efficiency. Be a student who works smarter as well as harder. Successful students force themselves to understand." And he also told me, "Education helps to find the realization of the beautiful good life." Education is an important foundation for personal success and growth.



Education starts very early in life. The most important teachers are our parents. Our parents start by teaching us how to speak properly. Our parents only want what's best for us. They send



us to school to become brighter. While we are teenagers, some of us don't really know why our parents send us to school, but later we can see that they are only doing what's best for us. A well-educated person can have an easier lifestyle. Usually a person who has less education is less likely to go far in life because his career possibilities are limited.

When I first came to the U.S. in 2002, I had a lot of problems. My first problem was communicating with people. For example, I went to a store to return items and the salesman thought that I had bought items. I was frustrated. My second problem was answering the phone. For example, one day the phone was ringing and nobody was home. When I picked it up, I heard "Hello, bla bla.....hello, bla bla." I said, "I don't speak English." She said, "When Mohammed comes, bla, bla," she ended by saying her phone number. I was baffled; when my roommate came back from work, I gave him that phone number. After he called her back, he told me that the call was from Mediacom. "What's that?" I asked. He had asked for the higher speed internet.



My third problem was reading something. For example, when I was in my country I used to read newspapers and magazines; when I came here, I could not do that so I felt disconnected from the world, and I felt deeply sad. As time went by, I couldn't endure facing those sorts of problems; I decided to find a solution to my problems. First, I thought that I needed to read books. I had to use the dictionary to

translate every book, word by word, to accomplish it. So, I expected to resolve my entire problem in that way. Even when I tried hard many times, it didn't work to help me understand the exact meaning. After that, I bought a small TV with a DVD, which helped me to watch movies and to rewind the action so I learned the words. It did work but not really well, but it was at least better than the first way, and finally, I went to school.

For my first semester at Black Hawk College, I used to wait until the last moment to start studying for exams. As a result, because I was so tired after exams, I could not go to work, and I would not start studying for the following exam. It became a vicious cycle. Many of my classmates have faced some difficulties in their learning process. For example, Catharina Meijer said, "In the second and third year in high school, I didn't do very well because I didn't do my homework and skipped a lot of classes."



Another example is that Leon Sardi said, "Most of the time when I haven't done well in my learning process is when I don't understand the material. It can be because of English, or because it is hard to understand. The consequences are not good. When I have a hard time following the teacher, I sometimes get a bad grade."

I kept losing sleep, and I was not prepared for my daily activities. Eventually I dropped out, and I took some time off to think. Later I reenrolled at B.H.C. I started studying very hard from the beginning until the end of the semester. I avoided doing things that kept me away from being a good student. For example, I didn't and still don't talk out of turn, read other materials, or look out windows when I am in class. I am attentive in class, polite and respectful. I don't ask rhetorical questions, and I get little mad when someone interrupts a teacher by asking those kind of questions.

My classmates have a different opinion in this case. For example, Leon Sardi said, "I think that it is normal for people to ask questions when they don't



understand. I think that people pay a lot of money for education, so at least they have to ask questions to make sure that they understand. It is better be dumb one second than forever." Marco Garcia-Ibarra said, "I feel disappointed when someone asks rhetorical questions because asking those kinds of questions, the students and teachers have lost time which would be helpful for different explanations about other themes or topics."

I developed my self-discipline. I listen and train myself to pay attention. I demonstrate to the instructor that I am an active participant in the learning process, and that I take the job of being a student seriously. Most of students believe that taking notes and reviewing the material at home before class are highly recommended for a student to be active in the learning process.



I always do my best to balance between work and school. For example, I very often try to work only the minimum hours and save the maximum time for school. I always try to manage my time correctly as much as I can. My older brother used to tell me, "You always have to finish your homework first, and then you go to play soccer or to watch movies." And he also told me, "A minute now is as precious as a minute later." I started doing my homework, and then I do laundry, clean my apartment, go shopping, and then spend the rest of the weekend watching movies or going out. I always try to make my daily activities equally balance each other.

In short, I believe that a person cannot be completely successful in his or her life unless he or she is a well-educated. It is not likely for a student who works smarter as well as harder to drop out or to have bad grades.



# OUR WRITERS!

**Kamal Bouzegou:** My name means perfection in Arabic, but I am not perfect because nobody is. I am the youngest among my siblings. It was hard for my parents to let me travel to the U.S, but they knew that I could make it. I came here without any previous knowledge about English; thus, I



found many difficulties to communicate with people. That's why I chose Black Hawk College to improve my English and to make it as the first step in my career of radiology. Because everything needs a strong foundation, radiology also needs strong English. I hope I can make it.

**Amadou Dia:** I am originally from Mauritania, West Africa, which is between Senegal and Guinea. I have been living in the Quad Cities for seven years with my whole family. I worked at IBP for 4 years; now I am a Kraft food employee. Besides working and going to school part-time, I am a happy father of two lovely boys.

**Akuete Fumey:** My relatives use to call me Foko which is the affectionate nickname of Akuete. It means male twin. I am from Togo, the little country in West Africa. I came to the USA in 2004, but I have been living in the Quad cities for two years. I'm married with two daughters. I was a computer soft-ware programmer in my country. My goal is to become Microsoft specialist.



**Adiba Sirojeva:** I am from Uzbekistan. I have been living in USA since 2005. I have a handsome two-year-old son and a lovely husband. We like to spend time together— watching movies, walking in the park. We like being in the USA. It is a country of opportunities where anybody can get a lot if he or she works hard. As for me, as soon as I finish my ESL classes, I am going to start the academic nursing program.



**Leon Sardi:** I am 19 years old. I come from Colombia, which is located in the north part in South America. I come from a small family; I have just two older sisters. I have been in the United States for two years, and I am living in a small town called Alpha where I am staying with a very nice host family that I met when I was a foreign exchange student in high school. This is my second semester at Black Hawk College, and I am planning, after two years, to transfer my credits to Columbia College in Chicago. My career goal is to become an animation artist and create my own animation company.



**Babanam Lequessim:** I am from Togo. I have been living in US for one year as an exchange student. I like dancing and listening to music. My goal is to have a Bachelor's degree in management.



**Marco A. Garcia Ibarra:** I was born in Veracruz, Mexico, but I grew up in Mexico City. Although I was born in Veracruz, my heritage comes from Oaxaca because most of my extended family lives there. I am the older son of two, and my mother, Sabina, and my brother, Israel, are my nuclear family. I have been living in the Quad Cities area for almost eight years. Since then, I have taken English classes from Level I at the Outreach Center to the ESL academic program at Quad Cities campus. I am focusing on finishing the ESL academic program first, and then, I would like to study to be a lawyer.



**Michael Agok:** I am from Sudan. I have finished a two-year degree in theology, and now I'm working toward another two-year in Biblical studies. My dreams and hopes are going to be in the pastoral field. I'm thirty-two years old and am married with four children.



**Manon Meijer:** I am from the Netherlands. I am twenty-years old. I already have a four-year education in hotel management. Last August, I came to the United States to improve my English and to get a bachelor's degree in business. After I finish this education, I will go back to the Netherlands. My goal for the future is to work in the hotel business.



**Quynh Nguyen:** I am from Vietnam. I came here three years ago, and I am living with my family in East Moline right now. I came to Black Hawk College to make my dream happen. I have dreamed of becoming a chemical engineer. Hopefully, I can graduate from Black Hawk and transfer to a university to get my Bachelor's degree. I also hope that I will have a very good time in Black Hawk College with all of my friends and teachers.



**Miku Uehara:** I'm from the beautiful island of Okinawa, Japan. I came to the U.S. ten months ago by myself. I have three younger brothers and one younger sister back in Japan. Now, I live with my grandma. I haven't decided my future goal, but I love kids and traveling, so I want to do something related to that.



**Sara Montes:** I was born in a small town in Guanajuato, Mexico. I came to the U.S. about ten years ago with my parents and youngest sister. I have a five-year-old boy and a four-month-old baby girl. I enjoy watching movies with my family, reading books to my kids and being involved in outdoors activities. My goal is to save enough money to go back to Mexico and open my own business.



**Hyeonju (Sarah) Kalsic:** I am from Korea and came to the U.S November 2007. I live with my husband and a daughter. My husband led me to study at Black Hawk College. Though I do not have much free time, ESL classes give me a chance to study



many new things. Now I have further goals after the ESL courses; I want to study nursing or chiropractic. Many people say both are difficult to study as a non-native English speaker, but I want to try. I also enjoy listening to my daughter play the piano. My husband is crazy about scuba diving, so he enrolled me and my daughter in scuba classes. Now we are certified divers.

**Abdelkader Kraï:** I was born in Berkane city, which is located in the northwest of Morocco. I have been living in Moline for five years. I am taking the ESL program because good speaking, reading, and writing are very important for success in an American university. I like chemistry because I enjoy creating new products; I would also like to work in research relating to drugs and finding new medications for diseases. Reading novels and playing soccer are my hobbies.



Each semester students in ESL 076 (Writing II) put together a newsletter. This newsletter was possible because of assistance by Anne Bollati, Sheryl Gragg, Anne Ney, Mike Winter, and Akiko Edmondson. Thank you to them!  
-- Karen Hindhede, Instructor

# ESL

## English as a Second Language Program

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The ESL program is a seven-level program designed for non-native speakers and international students who need English skills to participate in American society, to enroll in vocational or academic programs at the college level, to enter or advance in the workplace, or to earn citizenship. Students will attain and refine language and study skills as well as deepen their knowledge of U.S. culture through a series of specially designed courses that include sentence structure, reading, writing, speaking, listening, pronunciation, and conversation. Students have access to computer, video, and lab equipment through the Independent Learning Center. Individual and group tutoring is available for any student needing help. Students have access to all college services and may participate in college clubs and attend all extra-curricular activities

### TESTING:

Before class registration, all first-time students will be given the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency. This test is composed of three segments:

1. Michigan Test of Aural Comprehension (listening)
2. Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (grammar, vocabulary, reading)
3. Writing Sample (short composition)

#### Placement Scores are as follows:

* Below 60	Levels 1—5 (Beginning)
60—69	Level 6 (Intermediate)
70—80	Level 7 (Advanced)

\* If students receive a score below 60, they will be given the ESLOA/CELSA test and a short oral interview to refine placement

### PROGRAM PROFILE:

#### New Arrivals – Level 4

Offered at various satellite locations:  
Black Hawk College Outreach Center  
Florescente Center (Moline)  
First Lutheran Church (Moline)  
(Other locations as determined)

#### Level 5

Offered at the Illinois Employment and Training Center, Moline

New Arrivals – Level 5 follow the schedule for Adult Education classes. Students have several opportunities to register. Call the Outreach Center for specific registration dates.

**Levels 6 & 7:** Offered at Black Hawk College

Levels 6 and 7 follow the academic schedule. Students enroll in classes for 16 weeks. Please refer to the college calendar for specific start dates.

### INTERMEDIATE ESL:

Students who enter this level have decided to begin academic or vocational programs. All reading, writing, speaking, listening, and sentence structure activities are taught in the context of a variety of academic disciplines. Students study the simple sentence from a linguistic perspective, write paragraphs using all rhetorical modes, write college essays, give five-to-ten minute oral presentations, use library resources, listen to academic lectures and take notes.

All courses are web-enhanced. Students attend classes two days a week (1 hour 40 minutes per class) and also complete one credit hour of online instruction for each class\*.

\* All classes labeled "A" are the online component associated with the face-to-face class.

#### Courses

All of these courses are offered at Black Hawk College Quad-Cities Campus.

ESL 062/ESL 062A	Intermediate Grammar
ESL 064/ESL 064A	Intermediate Reading
ESL 066/ESL 066A	Intermediate Writing
ESL 067*	Listening/Speaking I
ESL 070/ESL 070A	Communication Skills

\* This class is not web-enhanced and is offered only in the evening program and during the summer program.

### ADVANCED ESL:

Students in this level advance their language skills and knowledge of the academic culture so that they can enter academic classes or vocational programs. They study complex sentence structure, write documented academic essays and research papers, read a variety of texts from many disciplines, read a novel, listen to lectures and take notes, and give ten-to-fifteen minute speeches. Students at the advanced level participate in a number of special projects. They create an ESL newsletter that is distributed campus-wide, listen to lectures given by Black Hawk College professors, and interview professionals in their chosen fields.

All courses are web-enhanced. Students attend classes two days a week (1 hour 40 minutes per class) and also complete one credit hour of online instruction for each class\*.

\* All classes labeled "A" are the online component associated with the face-to-face class.

#### Courses

All of these courses are offered at Black Hawk College, Quad-Cities Campus.

ESL 074/074A	Advanced Reading
ESL 076/076A	Advanced Writing
** COMM 105/ESL 072/ESL 072A	Advanced Grammar
** COMM 100/ESL 078/ESL 078A	Advanced Oral Skills

\*\* Students receive 3 transferable credits for each of these courses.