

ESL Newsletter

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ESL NEWSLETTER

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“Special Traditional Practice in Togo: Egoun Goun,”

By: Ahlonko AGBOFIN KOKOU

I am from Togo, West Africa. I am a member of the Yoruba, an ethnic group that comes from the southern part of the country. We have rich traditions of which I am very proud. One of the most elaborate and important traditions is called “Egoun Goun.” When a child is born, he or she is named, and the whole village is involved in this ceremony of welcome and protection.

“Egoun Goun” is the name given the spirit of the ancestor of Yoruba, and it is also called “Kvitoh.” This traditional practice is organized usually at the beginning of the life of every Yoruba in the southern part of Togo, such as Akpadeyi Kondji, Atoueta, De Mederos Kondji, and Fio Kondji.

After the baby is born, his or her parents are in charge of organizing his or her naming ceremony. First, the second day after the new baby is born, early in the morning, his or her father goes to see the chief old man of the village with one litter of liqueur(Sodabi,) and lets him know about the new beginning of life. The chief old man calls the chief old woman who is supposed to control the practice and other old men of the village. Then, when they come, he lets them know about the good news of the village. Next, they choose the seventh day after the baby is born to be his or her Yoruba naming ceremonial day. Then they give him a list of ingredients necessary for the ceremony, such as a male sheep if the baby is boy and a female sheep if the baby is girl, one litter of palm oil, corn flour, and Sodabi.



Now that the parents of the new born baby have collected all the ingredients, the ceremony can start, and the celebration is divided into two ways. The first part takes place in the ceremonial room called “Gbaleh,” and the second part takes place in the newborn baby’s house.

Early in the morning on the seventh day after the new child is born, the newborn baby’s father goes to see the committee of old men, the chief old woman and the chief old man. Then with the help of his friends and brothers, the father of the newborn baby takes all the ingredients to the ceremonial room. By the time they arrive there, all the men sit down on benches which are in room, and the chief old woman, the only woman who is with them, goes to sit in front of them on one ancestral chair. Then after she greets people and welcomes them all, she lets them know the purpose of that ceremony. Then she starts consulting ancestors and after she is done, she lets “Alagba,” the old man who is charge of supervising the practice, call the spirit of Abebeh. After “Alagba” kills the sheep, he pronounces some incantations and calls the name of Abebeh three times. When the spirit comes out from the spiritual room, the spirit will tell them what they should do to call the spirit of great great father who will give the new born child the benediction and the name. Once that spirit named “Togbegan” comes out, he, Abebeh, and everybody in the ceremonial room will go into the newborn baby’s house, and the second part of the ceremony will start.



By the time they get in the house, all the women, some young men and children of the village are there. Some men play the drums while others and the women sing. Then “Alagba” orders them to keep quiet so that everybody can

hear from “Togbegan,” the spirit of our great great father. After “Togbegan” greets everybody, the spirit calls the mother of the baby to come out with the baby in her hands. Then the spirit puts the ponytail on the baby’s head seven times and gives the baby his or her Yoruba name.

Then just after that, those who are in charge of playing drums, will play on the rhythm of that name. After that, “Togbegan,” the spirit of our great great father, calls the baby seven times by his new name and gives him or her the benediction. To finish, the spirit puts “leleh,” a traditional food we make with palm oil, corn flour and beans at the mouth of the little child seven times. This means that the new born baby is powerful to develop his verbal intelligence quickly. After everything is almost done, the spirit gives a list of restrictions parents should follow so that the baby becomes spiritually powerful. Now that the ceremony is done, all the ancestors spirits go back to the spiritual room, where they will be prepared for the afternoon. Then a party will start in the newborn baby’s house up to noon.

After the spiritual parts are done, in the afternoon the entertainment starts. Parents bring the newly named baby to the public place where some men play drums, others and women sing in the presence of the committee of old men, the chief old man, and the chief old woman.



Then Egoun Goun dance on the rhythm of those songs and drums. Egoun Goun has a variety of dressing styles which are related to their Yoruba names. Among them we have: “Abebeh,” who is very cool and has the role of announcing events. This name is his common name, but each one has a another special Yoruba name. He has a ponytail in his left hand and a noisemaker in his right hand.



“Togbegan” is the spirit of our great great father. He gives a benediction and gives names and has a staff in his left hand and a ponytail in his right hand. He predicts events, comments on them, and gives the clues to find the way to block bad news and to make good news happen.

“Adekomonde” is in charge of making fun while dancing. Everybody likes his dancing style.



“Okotowassan” has a mirror and comb in his hand and dances by playing women.

“Adja, Djagbo, Afoke and Adjaklevi” are in charge of running after people to make fun.



To sum up, this passage shows how the naming ceremony is celebrated in the tradition of Yoruba people in Togo. This ceremony is very important for all Yoruba because

throughout it, they will have their original name and many blessings.

It is also the crucial moment for all Yoruba to have an original name and to know how to conduct their lives to grow up well.



Therefore, during these ceremonial periods, some Yoruba who live abroad and have their children born abroad come back home for the naming ceremony. After this ceremony, even those away, feel united to the traditions that have been practiced in my ethnic group for centuries. I am a Yoruba and feel proud of this practice.



THE LIVES OF IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN THE U.S

By: Maguette Sow

Is it easy for immigrants to resettle to another country? What is life like for them? What are some of the challenges that they face? Do



they feel like they are in their home country? When I left Senegal and came to the U.S

in 2009, I had to find answers to these and many other questions. As you read my article, you will find out how I answered them.

Believe it or not, the first problem was trying to know my mother. It had been nine

years since I had seen her. I'll never forget that day. That was on September 11th. After I came to the U.S, and saw my mom for the first time, I was really happy to see her. But after, my mom and I had some difficulties



because we hadn't seen each other for a long time. So we had to find ourselves by talking more and spending more time together. And I wasn't used to being in charge of many things like finding a job and doing things on my own without the help of anybody. I had to learn that



the U.S is different from what I thought it would be.

My second problem was school. Although I loved school, I was

shocked at what I learned about American school. The next week, I entered Moline High School. Everything was different from what I thought school was supposed to be. That was the first difficulty that I had: speaking the language and meeting new people were different from me. I had a really hard time my first week at school. I used to get lost in the school, and I couldn't get any help because I couldn't speak English. I used to cry a lot and think that it would be better to be in my own country. In my country, teachers move to go to another class, but here the students move to go to the teacher's class. Second, a student has seven classes a day for the whole semester. But in my country, a student doesn't have that many classes a day, just three or four. I never saw myself as person to stay that long at school, but now I realize that all countries are different.

Next, the daily life is different for young people. In Senegal, students don't go to work; they just have to go to school, do their homework, and have good grades. But here most of the young people go to school and work at the same time. I still have problems finding a job. I have been here for two years, but I can't find a job. Here without a job, a student cannot be independent to do things he/she likes; for example: going shopping every Saturday, hanging out with friends, buying things that are

needed for school, or home. It's a really difficult situation to be able to do everything without needing somebody's help. For example, my cousin didn't have a car, and he was arguing with the person that gives him a ride and wanted to sue him. Then a person told him to buy his own car. He told him, "Whatever you want in the U.S, they will give you, but you just have the responsibility to pay for it, even if it will take you years and years. It depends on you." And that's the truth. Everybody is trying to do things on his own.

And also in the U.S., most immigrant families must live in apartments. That means that a large family of five or six must live in a small



space with two or three bedrooms and only one bathroom. In my country, every family has its own house of six to seven bedrooms, and at least three bathrooms. We live in a big space. Only singles and people who travel live in apartments to be independent of their parents. This living situation in the U.S for us is a big problem because we are used to living in our own houses without paying rent every month.

And finally adapting to the new life style also can be a big problem. When coming to the U.S, I realized how a new culture is difficult for everybody. Americans don't like to be around people who speak a different language. This makes them really uncomfortable. For example, one day my friends and I went to a store to buy clothes, and there were some trouble about the payment because the seller swiped my sister's card instead of my friend's, and we were trying to find a solution about it by speaking Wolof, and the seller got frustrated and told us to speak English when we were in front of her. We told her that we were going to speak our language whenever we wanted. Americans don't know it's really hard when a person is an immigrant who is not able to speak the language.

And the eating habits have also changed. In the U.S., people don't have time to eat together; people eat fast food at any time of day. Everybody goes to work and doesn't have time at all to be with their family and eat. Most American families only eat together on week-ends or on holidays. But in my country, we eat

together. That's in our culture to eat in family. For instance, my mother can't eat without somebody. She is always frustrated because she is used to eating with people. She likes eating with her family better than going out to a restaurant alone. And also in my culture, people don't eat in public; however, in the U.S people do it all the time.

In conclusion, immigrating to another country is hard, but we can adapt in time. My solution about it is to find a way to keep what is best from both worlds. Since we are immigrants, we can deal with many difficulties that we will face. However, we will succeed if we try hard and continue to fight for a better life. Nothing is easy in this world, unless we put a lot of effort into it. We will continue to fight until there is no more fight.



World Relief Empowers New Refugees and Local Churches

By: Phouda Gurung

World Relief is the only sponsor organization located in Moline for refugee immigrants in the Quad Cities. Amy Rowel, Director of the sponsor organization for refugee immigrants, suggests to her clients not to quit ESL classes if they want to get a better job in the future. She also requests all Quad Citians to help vulnerable people through World Relief. The well-respected Director has helped many refugees settle in the Quad Cities. She has helped me to find apartment, to find a job, and to enroll in ESL classes. Here is the conversation between ESL student (Phouda Gurung) and Quad Cities World Relief Director, Amy Rowell

Q: How does World Relief help immigrants in the Quad Cities?

Amy: For clarification, I want to make sure that we know we are talking about refugees and immigrants. World Relief primarily helps refugees, and refugees can be categorized as a type of immigrant. But according to U.S. government, refugees have specific visas when they come to the US. Immigrants many times

come on work visas, religious visas, and student visas, but refugees have specific refugee visas, so World



Relief mainly focuses on refugees. We can help immigrants, mostly refugees. Our goal is initially for their settlement. That means the first three to eight months that start their lives in America.

Q: What is the mission of this organization?

Amy: The mission of World Relief is to empower local churches to serve the most vulnerable people. In this situation, the most vulnerable in the United States are refugees. World Relief has programs all over the world; it does not only help the refugees in the US. Now in Kenya, World Relief is helping hungry people. At the time of the hurricane in Haiti, World Relief helped people to have food and housing, but in the US we are working with refugees by partnering with different types of local churches empowering them to help refugees once World Relief's services are finished because we do not have services for four or five years. We have services for short periods of time.

Q: How many are you helping right now?

Amy: My office is helping 188 people. Starting this October, we will be helping a total of 200 people this year, so most of the individuals next year will continue to come from Southeast Asia – Bhutanese, Burmese, a few Iraqis, and a few Africans.

Q: How many have you helped since you took the office or the office opened?

Amy: I have been here for two and half years. My employees and I have helped 500 people since 2009. In the last two years, the numbers have gone up compared to the last twelve years. For the first eight years, there were very low numbers – thirty to sixty people per year.

Q: You have been helping refugees, what are the challenges in helping them?

Amy: I think the biggest challenge is that World Relief cannot provide longer help. We can provide such a short amount of help. So when people first enter America, there are so many things that people have to learn such as how to do things in the society, for example, using public transportation is difficult because people

are overwhelmed as they are new. If we had funding, we could provide longer services and people would be more successful. The other challenge is to help find jobs as employers are doubtful about refugees wondering whether they are legal or illegal immigrants.

Q: What are the problems that refugee might have?

Amy: Well for sure, the English language is a main problem for a new comer. First, they need to understand English language. Second, they need to get a job. These two things are just the beginning of becoming sufficient and becoming assimilated into American society. If you have the English language and job, you are on your way. But those folks who do not have the English language have a lot harder time than some of the folks do.

Q: Education and language are the biggest barrier of refugees in getting a better job. What do you think?

Amy: I agree. If you have English, you can get a better education and a better job in the future. If you don't, you may end up still working in the first job that you got when you came. If you are not taking ESL classes, you are going to be doing the same job for the rest of your life. But for some people that's ok. I think there is so much opportunity here. That is one reason our country boasts that you have the opportunity that you may not have had where you came from. I encourage you to carry on with an English class to get a better job.

Q: What are the future plans that World Relief has to empower new refugees?

Amy: We have just received another new grant. That new grant is for another employment person as we currently have only one



employment specialist. We are in the process of hiring another person to help people find jobs. We received funds

specifically in partnership with Black Hawk College. A World Relief client will be enrolled in very specific employment, ESL program for twelve weeks when they get here. So, it is different from the regular ESL program that Black Hawk is teaching. This is short-term program. For long-term, in the next couple of

years, we need long-term case management workers and medical case management workers because we continue to help new clients. We will continue to help who we can to empower people.

Q: Do you know any refugees in the Quad Cities who have made accomplishments in higher education? If so, name some of these accomplishments.

Amy: I don't know the refugees who have had accomplishments after they came here, but I know the refugees who have had higher education in their homeland.

Q: At the end, did I miss any questions that you feel I must have asked?

Amy: We have number of churches in the Quad Cities that are offering ESL for folks and family literacy classes. Those are World Relief churches. We want multiple churches to support and empower the refugees. In addition, with those churches' partnership, there are many ways to volunteer. We can take people to appointments, help them make friends, and take people to grocery stores for the first time. Long lasting items can be donated through World Relief. People can help us because we have little money to help refugees. I encourage Quad Citians to donate and volunteer to help World Relief and refugees.



To sum up, the World Relief is a non-profit organization which helps defenseless people of the world. World Relief has the mission of empowering local churches and vulnerable people. The humanitarian

deeds of this organization are praise worthy, but this organization needs more hands to keep its mission in the future.



Togo, Where Malaria Kills.

By: Gabre Djobo

A very loud cry made me jump up from my waiting bench at the Regional Hospital Center of Sokode, Togo, one afternoon of December, 2009. I knew that something dramatic had just happened. A doctor came out of the Emergency Room very angry, disappointed, and said, "This family has just lost two members because of

malaria, something preventable and curable.” It was a pregnant woman who had lost her life and her baby’s. According to the doctor, this was not a single case because the hospital received many cases of malaria every day like every other center of the country; but what is malaria? Why does such a preventable and curable disease cause many deaths? What are the different possible solutions to this issue in Togo?

Before getting into that, let me give a brief presentation of this country. Togo, known as Togolese Republic, is a small country in the West Africa with an estimated population of 6,619,000. Most people live in rural areas. The geographical situation of Togo gives it a tropical climate, which favors the growth of some diseases due to the proliferation of some insects like mosquitos.



Malaria is one of the deadliest parasitic diseases in Togo. Every inhabitant is at risk because of the high presence of the parasite FALCIPARUM transmitted to humans by a mosquito bite. According to World Health Organization, 63% of 617,500 reported probable malaria cases were confirmed in 2009. In the same year, out of 30,632 all-cause admissions 20,833 were malaria cases; also in 2,558 all-cause deaths 1,135 deaths were due to malaria. While all the attention is given to AIDS/SIDA, malaria has become a slow killer in my country, and the Togolese government recognized, in 2008, that it is a first cause of morbidity and mortality with 44% of annual hospital admissions. Children and pregnant women represent a large majority (25% of all deaths of children under five are malaria related).

Although many actions were taken by the government, malaria cases are still high, still deadly. Why is that? Some approaches to the problem, the lack of education and lack of awareness about this disease contributes to its persistence.

I totally agree that the prevention approach must be prioritized and many actions are being taken. The number one action is to



EVERY 30 SECONDS.....

prevent mosquito bites. For example, the last statistics from the government on March 2011, indicate that



77.3% of children under 5 and 65.1% of pregnant women sleep under insecticide treated nets. Also, beginning on August 1st, 2011 over 3,500,000 inhabitants will be given these nets. However, this approach remains insufficient when people are reluctant to sleep under nets for several reasons. Some of them say that it’s too hot to sleep under a net because people can’t afford to have fans and ACs. Other people think that sleeping under a net is like a dead body being covered; this of course makes them afraid of nets.

Another strategy against malaria is to make enough antimalarial medicines available. For example, on January 3, 2010, the Chinese government donated a value of \$588,000 of



antimalarial medicines to the Togolese government. Ironically, because of the corruption and the lack of good governance, these products would be sold, embezzled or given to people who really don’t need them. Also, the poverty of the population limits the access to the health care and increases the mortality rate due to malaria.

In fact, I believe that other solutions should be strongly considered. Among them we have malaria vaccines. We must conduct research to create affordable non-resistant antimalarial medicines. Vaccines will prevent people from developing the disease and will save a lot of money.



For example, I give two thumbs up to *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*, which committed \$10 billion to research for this decade, and whose long-term goal is to eradicate malaria. I think that it’s time for all of us to join this Foundation’s effort to save lives instead of funding research to create new and more destructive weapons.

The most important approach, I believe, is to create public awareness of the real causes of malaria by educating the population. A majority of the population still believes that being

exposed to the sun a long period of the time, and consuming too much palm oil are the causes of malaria. For example, when I was younger, my grandmother asked my



dad to stop buying me soccer balls because my friends and I played in the sun all day, so we could get malaria. Another example is that it's very common to hear from people giving some advice like, "Don't eat too much palm oil because you'll get malaria." Because of all these misconceptions of the causes of malaria, people don't try to eliminate mosquitos' nests by cutting grass or just cleaning up around the habitats. The only way to change this lifestyle is to organize educational campaigns about the real causes of malaria, so people will be aware of them before they adopt any other solutions.

The deadliest, parasitic, and infectious disease, malaria is the first cause of death in my country Togo, and has become the burden of all the Togolese. Children and pregnant women are the most vulnerable target of this disease. Even though malaria is preventable, treatable, and curable, it still kills one child every 30 seconds, for example, because many people, like my grandmother, ignore the true causes of this disease. They are also reluctant to adopt some of the approaches to the problem due to their misconception, for example, the treated nets. It's true that these nets have saved lives, several medicines have helped to cure many malaria cases, and vaccines are being researched and funded by some foundations, but I truly believe that a particular attention should be put on people's education about malaria first. To develop this public awareness, many volunteers are needed, and anybody will be welcomed to help Togolese to overcome the malaria obstacle, and definitely eradicate it.



A New Start in the U.S.

By: Tran Nguyen

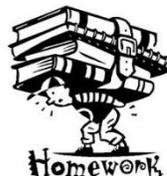
Are you studying abroad? Have you ever met any difficulty when being an international student? And have you known how to deal with those troubles yet? As for me, a Vietnamese student, I chose the United States to study

abroad because of two reasons. Firstly, the United States is known for its good education; once I graduate, I would have greater job opportunities. Secondly, when studying in the U.S., I don't have to study the subjects that I don't like such as philosophy, which is obligatory in my country, Vietnam. So, those are the two reasons why I chose the United States to study abroad. Like every international student, I've encountered some problems with my study and health such as stress, being overwhelmed by homework, eye issues, and so on when first attending ESL courses at Black Hawk College. Fortunately, I learned how to deal with those troubles thanks to many people.

I still remember the day when I took the Michigan Test; that was my fifth day in the United States on August 11, 2011. On that day, honestly, I woke up very early and reviewed everything I'd learned from my Vietnamese teacher. I studied grammar and some vocabulary and read several sample essays in my book. I also had a healthy meal at my sister's home before going to take the Michigan Test. While on my way to Black Hawk College, I was a little nervous; however, I told myself to try my best on the exam. Indeed, when I received the test, I did all my best. Consequently, I was satisfied with the result. Although the vocabulary part was a little hard for me, I scored high enough to get into advanced classes which were Reading II, Writing II, and Listening and Speaking II, as suggested by Ms. Anne Bollati. When I knew the result, I was so glad because I had done everything I could for that test, and this helped save me a lot of time and money.



The school start date finally came; it was on August 22, 2011. I had already thought that those ESL courses would be easy; but I was wrong. I started my first two weeks with many problems. One of them was homework. Every day, I had so many assignments that I couldn't get them all done. So I had to go to bed late and wake up early to finish the homework before the due date. As a result, I was overwhelmed with those assignments and didn't have enough time for my daily activities such as sleeping, playing sports or listening to music and so on. Therefore, after my first two weeks, I was under



a lot of stress. Then, I decided to ask for help from Ms. Juanita Zertuche, the International/Transitional Coordinator of Black Hawk College, and my sister. According to them, the reason for my troubles was that I didn't use my time effectively. So, they gave me some pieces of advice on doing homework in the ESL lab before going home and then taking the bus to my sister's work place to do the rest of it. At that time, I found out that their advice was very useful for me.

After that second week, I followed Juanita's and my sister's advice. Indeed, their advice really worked for me. I could get all my homework done before the due date and my study results were better. But, I still didn't have time for my leisure activities yet. I had to study for all days and didn't have any break or vacation. All day long, I was worried about my homework and tried to get it done, so I was trying to balance study time and my personal life.

Unfortunately, because of working so hard, I had problems with my health. After spending too much time working on my computer and doing my homework, my eyes were exhausted and redness appeared. Although my sister had bought an eye drop for me, the redness and irritation didn't disappear. My vision also reduced despite the fact that my glasses were new. So worried, I went to see Ms. Juanita. She helped me a lot in explaining my symptoms, which were caused by the new weather conditions, finding an appropriate medicine for my eyes, and telling me what I could do to adapt to the new climate. Honestly, I'd never seen anyone who cared that much for me except my parents and my siblings; I owe her a big favor. For me, she was more than just a coordinator; she was like my third mother (just after my mom and my oldest sister) in this foreign country, the U.S.



Thanks to the advice and encouragement from my family and many people at BHC, especially Ms. Juanita Zertuche, I finally figured out how to balance my schoolwork and leisure activities after the fifth week. I tried to finish as much homework as I could, and then spent the following day doing the rest of it. I also have specific plans for my assignments and my



daily activities. For example, when having tests to complete at the Testing Center or project assignments such as class observations, I planned to finish them as soon as I could; that helped me a lot in being more stress-free. As far as leisure activities, I often listen to music before going to bed and spend a little time chatting with my friends on the internet on weekends. Anyway, I haven't found the time for doing exercises yet, but I hope that I'll find a way for that soon.

In brief, those things above are what I've encountered when first attending ESL courses at Black Hawk College. Without the help of many people, especially Ms. Juanita Zertuche and my sister, I wouldn't be as optimistic about my future as I am right now. Thank you so much for helping me stand on my own two feet.



How Helpful is the ESL Program

By: Niyungeko Francois

ESL means English as Second Language. This is a program developed for all foreign and non-English speakers. All foreign students who do not speak English well must take this program, and it has different categories of classes that the students according to their grades from the Michigan test have to take in order to make sure their English is improving. As I am a foreign student from a small country called Burundi, which is located between Rwanda, Tanzania, and Congo, I am taking ESL classes to improve my English. Therefore, the ESL program has helped me in many areas such as improving my English, which was not good when I came to United States, making new friends in this new country, and adapting to the new culture of United States.



First of all, the ESL programs has a big impact on improving my English. For me, I have already seen that this program is helpful. I originated from a country where English is not spoken too much, and I am the first Burundian in my family to attend the ESL program at BHC. Since I started the ESL program at Black Hawk College in January, 2011, I see that my English is getting much better than before. Classes like Reading and Writing I have helped me to

improve my English by learning how to outline and to write good paragraphs academically. Also, I have learned how to identify main ideas and supporting details in a paragraph; my vocabulary skills have also increased because of this program. In addition, I learned how to write effective essays and to identify thesis statements in essays by using various academic techniques. Finally, since the ESL program is divided into many different classes, each class has had a positive impact on improving my English skills. Not only has my English improved by speaking it in and out of school, but it has also improved by composing my own sentences. When I came to the United States, I couldn't speak English very well at all, but since I started attending my ESL classes, my English has begun to improve much more than before. Even after I took my Reading and Writing I classes, I saw the benefits of taking ESL classes because the further I go along in the program, the more my English will continue to improve.



Secondly, the ESL program has been very helpful for me when making new friends in this country. Everyone knows how difficult it is to make friends especially when someone

moves from his/her country to a new country. For the first time he/she must confront a lot of problems to find friends because of the language barriers. I remember the first time I began to study at BHC, I was scared about how I would make friends, but every day when I go in the lab, I find many students from different countries who speak their own languages. Also, it was hard for me to talk to anyone I met without knowing the language he/she spoke; because I have been helped by ESL in many areas, I now have many friends from Togo, Senegal, Morocco, U.S, and Asian countries. Since I started talking to many of them, I finally ended up making friends, and I am happy because there are several students who are taking ESL classes now who can give me a hand in doing my assignments. Even if I am not at school, I can make a phone call to these folks and ask them how a certain homework assignment needs to be done. The ESL program has definitely helped me to make new friends, because sometimes we discuss assignments, homework and read one another's essays to get

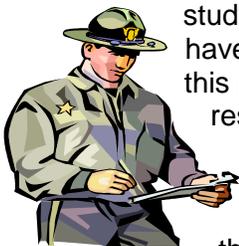
feedback. This helps a lot in making friends. Making friends is not easy, but I recall when I talked to my church pastor about how I can find a job, he advised me not to fear talking to anyone I met because it is by making conversation with people that I can get help or find what I need. Additionally, one day I asked Julie Gray, a family social worker at the Head Start school, "How can I get assistance about paying gas and electricity for low income families?" She answered me, "I know that you speak English very well, so I'll give you the address, and you will go yourself and make an appointment." Because I had already learned how to express myself using grammar patterns, I went to Project Now Agency, and I got whatever I needed. From that moment, I have made many friends because I have a job as an interpreter in all of the Rock Island Elementary and High Schools. The ESL program has helped me to make friends at my workplace because I know how to speak English; I talk to my co-workers and they become my friends because we understand each other when we make conversations. So, the ESL program is helpful for me in and out of school environments.



Finally, I continue to be proud of how the ESL program continues to be helpful to me in many areas. It is not possible to adapt to the new culture of this country without speaking the same language as people of that community. Although, adapting to the new culture is not easy, the ESL program is a good way to ease the transition into a new culture. The ESL program helps me in and out of the classroom environment when addressing authorities like teachers, doctors, police officers and others; I have to follow directions written on the papers hung on walls or given orally. And if I go for a job interview, I must wear appropriate clothes and have eye contact with the interviewer. For instance in this country, people do not shake hands when greeting each other, but in my country we do shake hands when greeting other people. When I go to a certain office and I find a long line of people waiting to be helped, I do not pass them and go in front of them; instead, I stand behind the last person as Americans do when they go in the offices. In school, in order to

answer or to give a suggestion to questions, I must raise my hand. I have been given many of suggestions about how I can adapt to American culture. Some suggestions were from Imelda, who was academic transitional advisor when she told me, "In order to adapt to the new culture, you must learn the language and you must attend some conferences and meetings, and finally you have to speak English very well." She also argued, "You will not adapt to this culture if you do not go to school, as you are a foreign student, you can get a lot of opportunities when you take ESL classes such as choosing careers and getting good jobs." "When you do all I told you, you will be able to help your family, and you will feel like Americans, and you will be able to buy a house, cars, and pay your kids' school fees." Finally, the ESL program has another positive impact for me because I am preparing to apply for citizenship, so being able to speak English very well will help prepare me for becoming a citizen. When I talk to different people who are citizens of this country, they give me some advice which will help me to live better in this country. In English, there is a saying, When in Rome do as the Romans!

In conclusion, I want to encourage all ESL students not to give up because it is by taking the ESL program that they will be what they want to be. Since we are in an English speaking country, we will not achieve our goals without studying English. Therefore, we have to work hard to complete this program and get into our respective careers. We cannot forget how the ESL program has helped us improve our academic lives. In addition, the ESL program is like a bridge that all foreigners and non- English speakers have to pass on in order to get where they want to go. Not only has the ESL program helped me in my academic life, but also in my daily activities and in my workplace. So, for sure the ESL program has helped me to improve my English, to make new friends, and to adapt to a new culture. I can say that the ESL program will continue to help me as I am going forward to other classes.



Senegal, Country of Teranga

By: Aissatou Sow

I have been living in the U.S. for two years. I noticed that the concept of hospitality in the U.S. is not really the concept that we have in my country. I don't mean that people are not welcoming, but their hospitality is nothing compared to my country's hospitality. I'm from Senegal, a country in West Africa. "Teranga" or hospitality is embedded in Senegalese culture.



The Senegalese hospitality or "Teranga" in Wolof really makes me feel very proud of my country. Hospitality is the most important thing there. It's not for nothing that we have the name of "Country of Hospitality". Hospitality is passed from generation to generation. Hospitality is learned from family. At an early age, parents start by telling stories about the importance of hospitality to their children. One of the stories goes like this: Once upon a time, an old and poor man went to a house of a rich man and asked for dinner. The rich man refused because he said that the poor man didn't tell him in advance that he would come for dinner. The old man went to another house of a poor man and asked for dinner. Even though the poor man had just a bowl of rice, he shared with the old man. The next morning, when the poor man woke up, he found a lot of riches in his house. And guess what happened to the rich man? After a day of hard work in his farm, he found out that his house and all his riches had burned, and he lost everything. This story is told to the children to show how important hospitality is in our culture.

Also, parents teach hospitality to their kids by acting, which means showing them how what to do when a guest comes for a visit. When we had a guest at home, my mother prepared a room with new blankets. She cooked a lot different meals. When it was time for the guest to go, she gave him or her money or clothes.



The second part of the hospitality teaching is found on the streets. When someone goes out, he or she will see people greeting and

talking to each other, and it's a symbol of hospitality in my country. Even in the markets, we will see the vendors welcoming their clients by the way they present their products to their clients. They might tell some jokes about the products. It makes the customers want to come back. Sometimes, the clients might not have the money with them, but the vendors will reduce the price or even give it to them on credit. All of this is a sign of "Teranga" in my country.

Schools will teach students norms of hospitality and its origins. The teachers tell some stories about the history of the hospitality, how it is assimilated into our country, and the importance to keep hospitality alive. They emphasize to the children that it is a big part of our culture and that is carried with us wherever we go throughout the world. For example, when my family and I first arrived in the USA, all the Senegalese people came to visit and also brought us gifts. Even though they don't live in Senegal any more, they still practice this custom.



Because of hospitality, tourism is well-developed in my country. Each year, we have millions of tourists coming. Senegalese people also know how to treat tourists. If visitors go to somebody's house, the hosts welcome the guests like they are the most important person in world by making the guest feel comfortable. The hosts make a lot of food, and give him the best room, so he feels like part of the house. People are very friendly over there. There is no need in my country to tell in advance that you will come to visit because a person can go anytime to another person's house and always be welcomed. We don't make any distinction about people: whether Muslim or Christian, Black or White. A visitor can walk into anybody's house during meal time, and they will give him something to eat and drink even if they have not met before. Just recently, a person from Togo came to visit a relative who is our next door neighbor. At the time of his arrival, his relatives were not home, and then he knocked at our door to ask if we knew anything regarding his relatives. My mother welcomed him to our house and gave him something to drink and eat. He then waited there until his relatives arrived at

home. This is a sign of hospitality for us to welcome anyone no matter where they're from or what they believe.

We also have great places to welcome people. The most known region about the "Teranga" is Saint Louis. It's a region in the North West of Senegal. The people over there are known for their hospitality norms. Saint Louis was the capital of the AOF during the colonization. The contact with the strangers had led them to be very hospitable with people. This region gets millions of visitors because of a famous bridge named Fedherb and also the Mouth of the River. It is because the Senegalese River and the Atlantic Ocean meet. It's one of the most impressive natural wonders. We also have a famous Island named Goree, where the slaves were being kept and shipped before coming to the Americas. We have natural parks, and the most famous park is "Niokolokoba". It is known for its variety of animals. We can visit as a safari. We also have many beaches along the coast line of Senegal. People go there to watch the beach activities such as volleyball, beach soccer, and wrestling.



The most important part of Senegalese culture is "Teranga." Hospitality is embedded in our tradition. It's learned from parents, on the streets, and at school. Strangers are welcomed, and treated perfectly. Sometimes I wonder how Senegalese hospitality will be in the future. And I have no doubt that it will not vanish because the Senegalese hospitality is not only intrinsic to our culture, but it's inherited in our blood.



Leaving One's Country is a Hard Decision to Make

By: Komlavi Avonor Selom

In order to have a better life, immigrants go to wealthy countries, where they can find opportunities, so they can achieve their goals. They leave everything behind, and they embark on



new adventures. Their departure has a double effect on the home country, and it brings both positive and negative changes.

Firstly, having children in a foreign country is a family's pride. For example, my roommate confessed to me saying: "When I received the American visa, my father hugged me, and he said people would say that my son is in a foreign nation". As a result of having a son in a foreign country, that father deserves much respect. In addition, immigrants frequently send money to their family, so any additional family can improve their daily life.

Secondly, immigration contributes to developing the home country by helping the government finance one part of its budget while taxing the immigrants. For



instance, the Togolese government said that it will finance education by taking one dollar from any transfer of money and every call made from the U.S to our homeland. In addition, during their stay in the U.S, immigrants have the possibility to continue their study, so they can bring innovations to their countries. As an example, a friend of mine is struck by how agriculture is developed. He plans to export some tractors from here to our country, so he can produce many products. With his effort, he could make the country be an independent country in agriculture.

Thirdly, when immigrants leave, the country has less unemployment. For example, most immigrants have university degrees, but they cannot find jobs in their home country. When they go to the U.S, they work, so the level of unemployment at home decreases. In addition, American educated immigrants who return to their homelands have new opportunities and create new jobs. For instance, my neighbor in my home city set up a security



company when he went back because he had been a security guard in New York City. Besides that, now my country has important beauty pageants because one of us left and returned home with that idea.

Next, immigration can influence people's attitudes. For example, a friend of mine who loves hunting is discouraged by how people treat their animals even wild animals, and he confessed to me: "I will not allow anybody to hurt animals." Although immigration contributes to building countries financially, it can make the home country have less development morally.

First of all, countries which allow their people to immigrate lose value because the government's investment in people who leave is lost. The Togolese government paid for my education and my health expenses, and then I left. The money they invested in me went to help another country. In addition, the immigrants' earning power is not used to the fullest because their diplomas are not recognized. As a result, they cannot transfer as much money as they would if their diplomas were valued in other countries like America.

Secondly, immigration empties out the home country. For instance, many people from Togo immigrate to the U.S every year. As a consequence, Togo does not have an effective work force, so the country has less development. In addition, when the immigrants return back

with lot of changes, those changes make local people think



about going to experience new life in foreign nations, and they do not pay more attention to their studies. Most of them finally immigrate illegally, and then they cannot find jobs in the new country. As a result, they do not have value to the home country.

Also, living in a foreign country makes immigrants lose their own culture as they adjust to the new culture. For example, immigrants who returned from the U.S brought with them



elements of their American culture. They returned home with American clothes and hairstyles, and they lost a lot of their native traditions.

To summarize, I will say that immigration is amazing, but it is controversial. My father feels

pride when he can tell his friends his son is studying and working in the U.S, but in reality, it is not a completely positive situation.



Various Aspects of *My Culture*

By: Asmaa Mouadine

What are some things that define a culture? What do you think is interesting about your culture? Every country from the world has its own culture and civilization.

In my case, I am from Morocco, a country located in North West of Africa, widely open on the Atlantic Ocean from the west, and the Mediterranean Sea from the north; Morocco is the cradle of multiple cultures, and it is famous for its diversity when it comes to the languages spoken such as Arabic, French, Berber, Spanish and English. Still what is amazing about this country is that you can find more than four different civilizations, and they live peacefully sharing the same land. When it comes to religion, the only official religion is Islam; however, there is a minority of Christian and Jewish people living there too. In addition, Morocco is very famous for its cuisine, traditional clothing and sacred music.



Among certain obligations, for Muslims are to pray five times a day at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and evening; the exact time is different each day. Friday is the Muslim holy day; everything is closed during Friday prayer time, and all of the offices are closed on the weekend.

In Ramadan, the holy month, all Muslims must fast from dawn to dusk and are permitted to work only six hours per day. Fasting means no eating or drinking. Expatriates must not even drink or chew gum or smoke in public. Every night during Ramadan at sunset, families and friends gather to celebrate the breaking of fast; then, special evening prayers are conducted during which long portions of the Qur'an are recited. These special prayers are known as "taraweeh." In addition, shops open and closed at the usual time.



After Ramadan, we celebrate the holiday Aid Al-Fitr which is the most popular for Muslims; it is a two-day holiday celebrated after the fasting month of Ramadan. The magic of this holiday is that relatives from all over the country gather early in the morning of the first day to do a common prayer. This event is hosted locally in every city in very wide, large areas where the city hall must prepare it and make it ready for the sacred prayer. After that, people go back to their homes and eat breakfast with the whole family, and enjoy it so much, not only because everybody is there but also because it is the first time there is a break from fasting; the children wear new cloths and ask the adults for money. The mothers make a delicious breakfast with traditional cakes while the fathers also have a duty of making the tea and serving everyone around the table. Muslims usually scatter to visit various families and friends, give gifts (especially to children), and make phone calls to distant relatives to give well-wishes for the holiday. These activities traditionally continue for three days. In most Muslim countries, the entire three-days is an official government and school holiday.

Another important holiday in Morocco and worldwide is to commemorate the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son, Ismail, as an act of obedience to God before God intervened to provide him with a ram to sacrifice instead. The meat is divided into three parts. The family retains one third of the share; another third is given to relatives, friends and neighbors, and the other third is given to the poor and needy. On the first morning of Eid Al-Adha, Muslims around the world attend morning prayers at their local mosques. Prayers are followed by visits with family and friends, and exchange of greeting and gifts. At some point, members of the family will visit a local farm or otherwise make arrangements for the slaughter of an animal. The meat is distributed during the days of the holiday or shortly thereafter.

Mosques are very holy places that only Muslims are allowed access to. Though this is allowed in other parts of the world, the closest you will likely get to the inside of a mosque in Morocco is if you visit some ruins or mosques no longer



used. Most other monuments are on view to the public for a price.

Souks and markets are a major feature in Moroccan life, and among the country's greatest attractions; souks and markets are also a daily destination where locals shop for fresh meat, vegetables, household goods and other items that Americans, for example, purchase at Walmart. In the country side, you can find large numbers of weekly souks (market). Also, there are markets that sell a wide variety of items such as food, clothing, liquor, electronics and other household goods.

When invited to a Moroccan home, you usually have to take sweet pastries or fruit; a washing basin will be brought around the table before and after the meal. The most famous food is couscous, a dish made with granulated seminal grains, usually topped with mutton, veal, or beef and a variety of vegetables such as zucchini, yellow squash, pumpkin, tomatoes. In general, Moroccan culture can be an exciting and worldly experience. The people are friendly, and the place is colorful. Hospitality is really a part of the culture. Usually this results in further association with

these dynamic and interesting people and a real taste of Moroccan life.



Culture is the full range of learned human behavior patterns. We are referring to the shared language, traditions, and beliefs that set each of these peoples apart from others. In most cases, those who share culture do so because they acquired it as they were raised by parents and other family members; Morocco has a minority of Christian and Jewish people living in the same country in spite of different cultures; on the other hand, Morocco is the country that respects other cultures.

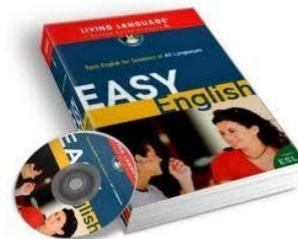


A Personal Journey

By: Eldor Moise

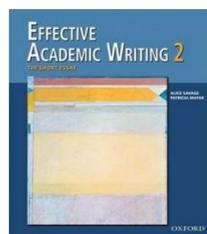
My journey of learning English started when I was in Haiti. At that time, I used to get together with one of my cousins who speaks English. I was always gazing at my cousin and his friends whenever they would practice their

English. I was really passionate about English, and the need to learn the language was like a dry land that is desperate for a drop of water. So, one day I decided to attend an English institute, but it was not easy for me to handle my school at the same time with the institute. I dropped the institute after attending only a few weeks of classes. However, my dream of speaking the language did not fade; as the matter of fact, I decided to teach myself English with some English books along with some English song CDs to help to practice. I would spend up to two hours reading, memorizing new words and listening to English songs; in other words, I would eat all that could help me improve my English.



My English journey took a very interesting turn after the earthquake that hit my native home, Haiti, about one and a half years ago. I never knew that native English speakers would be able to understand me, and in return for me to understand them as I basically started to teach myself English. I volunteered in helping the overseas doctors who were coming to help the population in medical assistance. While volunteering, I made the acquaintance with a nurse mid-wife from the Trinity Medical Center who was astounded by my dedication in helping my own people. She made me put her in contact with my relatives here in the US and decided to bring me here as soon as I graduated from high school.

When I finally got here, the language was still a big challenge for me. Even though I had some English skills, I was deprived of academic English skills which would allow me to attend academic courses. Indeed, facing the Michigan test at Black Hawk College showed me that I was in need of a tough English program like ESL that would help me attending the academic classes. Since I have been taking the ESL classes, my English has improved in three important ways: listening, speaking and writing. Those three major requirements are essential for communication in English, and soon I will be eligible to attend the academic



classes. Before I was attending the ESL classes I had poor listening skills, and sometime I would get frustrated when I couldn't understand what people were saying to me. On the contrary, now that I am attending a class called Communication Skills. It helps me to understand better and more quickly when people are talking to me. So, when I attend academic classes, I won't have great difficulty understanding the classes. The same course also helps me in my speaking. I remember when I first came to the USA, speaking efficiently was my biggest problem. I would spend a lot of time trying to get myself understood, but now I've learned the different sounds in English, so speaking clearly has become slightly less difficult. Yet, I will keep studying so that I will get better down the road. Writing properly requires lots of good thinking and grammatical rules. My writing class helps me to emphasize the coherence of my thoughts that I actually put down in my writing process. Mastering English and attending the academic classes are not my only goals. My goal after graduating from Black Hawk College is to transfer to a four-year college so that I can pursue my dream of becoming a physician. I expect more challenges on my way to success with English especially. Keeping track of medical study as a foreign student for whom English is a second language can be really tough because I will have to learn the terminology for medical school.



My dedication and self-confidence are my strengths that help me to keep moving forward, and I think that reaching my dream is not impossible. Till then, I will always remember how I started learning English and how my English improved.



Dreams Made True

By: Dolores Ojeda

When international people come to U.S. from other countries with the dream of developing a better kind of life, it is hard to struggle and assimilate the changes of culture, food, climate, and language. But for immigrants that faced those changes accompanied by lack of money, it can be harder. The lack of money is also the

principal reason they can't develop their dream to achieve a successful education and life. That is why, it is important to thank the people who help immigrants to achieve their goals through education.

The immigrants dream to come to U.S. to have success in their life, and to work and demonstrate that they are persons with positive attitude and strong desire to work, no matter how heavy or hard the routine can be. I am a member of a non-profit organization which participates in some occasions with the celebration of Viva Quad Cities Fiesta, and I could see the effort of many individuals to work in a group to make dreams come true and keep immigrants motivated to continue their studies. I could see the importance about this purpose to help as Viva Quad Cities Fiesta is doing year by year. Juanita Zertuche has been part of the Viva Quad Cities Fiesta for many years helping with the college fair and scholarship committee, and she is still helping doing this volunteer job because she said, "Now there are many families that need the extra funds to help support their children's education."

Viva Quad Cities Fiesta is an example of encouragement and confirms that with effort volunteers can help others to achieve their dreams. Viva Quad Cities Fiesta was created by people that believe and trust in the honesty and integrity of those who solicit their help. This



organization was founded in 1993, by the effort of the city of Moline, Paul Stewart, Mayor Stan Leach, Alderman Barb Sandberg, Teresa Camarillo, Florencio Mier, Western Illinois University Hispanic Program, and others. The purpose of Viva Quad Cities Fiesta since the beginning is focused on the importance of education. Viva Quad Cities Fiesta gives scholarships to deserving talented students. With its annual festival, Viva Quad Cities Fiesta celebrates Hispanic Culture and "has provided 250,000 in college scholarships." Not only is it important to help students by giving them scholarships, but also by sharing Hispanic culture, music, and food. We demonstrate our thanks to this country for giving us the opportunity to show our customs and for letting us open our wings to fly around this beautiful country the same way as its citizens with

freedom and equality. We want to show our gratitude to them for accepting us by sharing our folkloric dance, our fascinating music, our delicious food, and our traditional culture through Viva Quad Cities Fiesta. The pride of Viva Quad Cities Fiesta is that many students



that have been awarded these scholarships, have finished college and are doing great things, like a girl that started in the ESL program at Black Hawk and was always very focused

that she wanted to become a doctor. She worked hard and had a son but continued her dream to graduate. She got her medical degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago and has just recently started her own clinic in Laredo, Texas. She was touched by receiving one of VQCF scholarships. Another example is a single mom in high school that could have very easily decided not to go to college, but with the support of her family and the scholarship, she continued college and graduated with an Environmental Engineering degree.



College should not be seen as an expense but like an investment in the lives of our children. The VQCF has touched many lives of students from all ages and cultures in helping them graduate from college. Be ready to celebrate with us and enjoy our Viva Quad Cities Fiesta, and I promise that you will have an unbelievable experience, and at the same time, you will help with the funds to our student's scholarships.



The Difference between College and High School

By: *Ousseynou Diop*

It is said that if you want to be successful in life, you have to get an education especially a college degree.

High school is where that training you need starts to have a smooth transition to



attending college. My entire high school years were done in my home country, which is Senegal, and my whole schooling was done in the French language. Even though I went to high school in Senegal, there are a lot of similarities between the education in the U.S. and my country.

I can tell you that I made some good and bad decisions during my high school years. I can recall many fun memories about my high school years, especially the friends I made while I was there, teachers with whom I had a special relationship and also everything I learned while I was there did not go to waste.

Other memories that I am not proud of because we used to ditch classes to go to the beach so that we could impress some girl or sometimes playing pranks on a teacher to disturb the classroom. We would throw house parties whenever the opportunity was there, but I was always a good student.

I understood from the beginning what needed to be done because my parents took it upon themselves to make sure I had good grades or the punishment would be severe for me. My parents also explained the values of an education and how far I could go.

However, a college education is much more serious than that. I had to learn the education system quickly when I moved to the U.S. I had to learn a new language, make new friends and also try to adapt as quickly as possible.

If you have just graduated, and plan on going to college, if you think that college will be similar to high school, you are in for a rude awakening because college is the complete opposite. It is a choice to attend college, but it costs a lot of money and time to get a college degree. The courses are much more difficult than the ones you had back in high school. Students who are aware of these issues, and take the time to study, listen to their teachers and parents' advice, will have an easy transition through college.

For most of us, high school is something that we are not prepared for, and we don't have a clue of what to expect and how to be a good student while there so that we can be successful in college. We are more concerned about popularity than being a good student because we want to feel accepted and well-liked. Sometimes we make new friends that are a bad

influence on our decision-making skills. This is how teenagers will behave if they have no supervision or a mentor to guide them. The fact that some students don't have to pay for schooling out of their own pocket unless they are in a private school is probably why a lot of students behave the way they do because the price they have to pay is so little. I have some regrets based on decisions I made during my



time in high school, but I am happy about what I learned there too.

I had no experience at all when I came to Black Hawk College, but the way I was received by Miss Anne Bollati was wonderful. She took her time to explain everything to me in detail, making me feel welcome because I didn't have a clue about how everything works. I immediately knew that I was in good hands. She suggested that I apply to the Trio Program, and that is when I met Mister Dan Slater who also helps in my transition at school. Tutors were there whenever I needed help on any subject, and I became very close to some of them. It is the total opposite of my high school experience because a student has to pay expenses and the classes are expensive. One credit hour, depending on the university or community college you are attending, can be hundreds of dollars. Also, if you add up all the costs including books, transportation and a place to live, it can be very costly. The more time you spend in college, the more costly it becomes. However, if you had a good habit of studying while you were in high school and staying current on some of the basic material you need like math, reading and writing, it could cut the cost a little and allow for a smoother transition to college classes because you are ready and able to deal with such heavy workload. It can be very time consuming especially if you are a full-time student. It is said that for every credit hour spent in the classroom, you need to spend three hours outside of that class to study. My college experience so far is wonderful



because of the good people I have met along the way.

Students who take the time and study hard in high school most likely will have less of a challenge when they attend college because they have the preparation they need to tackle the hard classes and also have the habit to study for any subject.

College and high school are different in so many ways, and if you don't have the discipline to study, you are setting yourself up for failure. I suggest that you pick your classes very carefully based on what you have a passion for. You shouldn't rush the process it takes to have a college degree. You should take the time to learn the material you are unfamiliar with, and also learn how to become a professional at what is it that you do.



The Lifestyle of Jordan

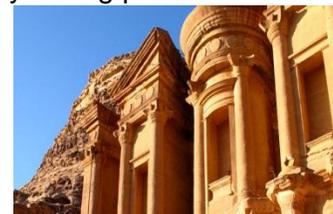
By: Mazen Marar

I'm from Jordan. To those of you who don't know Jordan, it is a country located in the Middle-East with a population of nearly six million people. It is considered as an intersection between the Arab and Western culture. Unlike other Arab countries, the Jordanian culture is unique. The geography of the country, the cities' layout, infrastructure, people and the lifestyle are the points of distinction between Jordan and its neighbors. This distinction came from a large diversity in the Jordanian society which consists of Arab and non-Arab ethnic groups such as European (Circassians, Chechens, and Armenians). These groups have added a special taste to the society and enriched it to become the way it is today and create a unique lifestyle.

The first thing people notice when visiting Jordan is its hospitality. Being part of the Arab world, the culture of Jordan was

influenced by the Arab hospitality, which is well-known. People offer help without expecting

anything in return. You might be invited for food without even knowing your host. When friends visit each other, the host is willing to pay for his guest's food and other expenses. Like most people in Jordan, no day passes without visiting



family or friends. People really enjoy visiting each other on ordinary days and special occasions. When family visits another family, the host family cooks the best kinds of food and sweets for their guest family. As people travel to rural areas in Jordan, people of those places are famous for their hospitality that no traveler is turned away. Even if one doesn't know anyone there, one can still find a place to sleep, food to eat, and stories to be told.

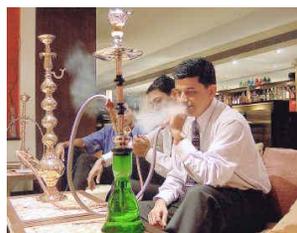
In the same way, in Jordan people value and appreciate family very much. It's not strange to see people remain living with their parents even after getting married and having kids. For us, family is the center of the society and without



it, we are worth absolutely nothing. One of the most famous stereotypical behaviors of people in Jordan is having breakfast with the family. We love to feel that we

are tied to our customs and traditions created by our ancestors. By doing this, we add a flavor and meaning to our life. Like other families in Jordan, we love to have breakfast with the whole family sitting together around one table. Breakfast is typical in every Jordanian house. It consists of traditional Jordanian dishes which are: foole, falafel, and hummus. Foole is beans made in special way and special spices are added to it. It's very rich in protein and gives you the feeling of satisfaction for a long time. Falafel is small, deep fried balls made of highly spiced, ground vegetables (usually chickpeas or fava beans mixed with onions and fresh herbs). As for hummus, it's blended chickpeas. It's impossible for anyone to visit Jordan without trying those dishes that are strongly related to the Jordanian culture.

Like everything else, Jordan has a unique way of recreation and having fun with family and friends. Friends go out together to cafes that offer a modern look with the sense of authenticity to drink coffee, play cards and smoke hookah. But you have to be eighteen+ in order to be able to order hookah and enjoy its special flavors that are made of tobacco and fruits. Smoking hookah became a custom that people



meet together for and enjoy doing in picnics. Nowadays, people start to buy hookahs to keep in their houses, so they can use them when they visit each other.

In Jordan, there are many things that make its culture different from other countries' cultures. There are various things that can't be found elsewhere. When I meet Jordanians who live abroad, we all agree that there is much missing from our lives as we live away from Jordan. But there is always a bright side of things; this will make us enjoy and appreciate our culture and our lifestyle more when we go back to Jordan.



REDISCOVER MY CHILDHOOD

By: Pepe Djondo

As we know, childhood is the early stage in the existence of our life. In fact, I was born in one African country located in West Africa, called (Togo), a country of great sun, a beach, some lakes, rivers and with beautiful parks, so I am Togolese. In Togo having a child after marriage is very important because children give us honor and consideration. It is they who will take over the future. Also, the development of a country depends mostly on the children or young people. How good was my childhood?



After my parents married, it was so hard for them to make a baby and at this time all my father's brothers and sisters had already had children. This problem made my parents experience loneliness. They were very sad, and they used to think about this all the time, but they still hoped that one day God would give them a child. One day God accepted their prayers, and they were able to have a baby.



Since I am the first child, they considered me as a big asset for them. They used to take care of me and gave me all I wanted: some candies, some toys, and some chocolates. Every Saturday, I received some new clothes from them, so I felt so proud of them. I would

often cry a lot and the bad thing is, I cried when my parents were sleeping just to wake them up, so they would sing to me. This moment was also a great time where I spent my time playing with my friends every week on Thursday night. We were very happy because we knew on Friday, it was our favorite day to play some games. First, after class before we left, we decided that each of us would bring some cookies or chocolate, so that the game will be more interesting for us. Second, when it is 3:00 p.m., we met at our national park. Everybody brought their toys and together we played with them.



After that, we also played one game to which we gave more priority. We called that "Ampe". In this game, we jumped and moved our feet. If somebody moved his feet simultaneously with his partner, he would win, so



everyone tried very hard to win and to be the head of the team. Seriously, it was perfect because our hearts were full of joy when we competed like that. The final stage was to tell some stories. Everybody had to tell the one that they've learned from their parents or grand parents. These stories were more like the fables and legends. We learned together how to be polite toward older people, how to be honest, how to take care of education, and how to help our parents at home. In brief, we learned more about life in general, and before we left to our respective homes, we enjoyed our cookies and chocolates together.

Three years later my mom had a new baby, and it was a girl. Nobody could imagine how happy I was at this time because I found somebody with whom I could play. I took care of her, fed her milk, or bathed her. My big experience was when I was seven years and my sister was four years. These were exceptional moments because we went together to school. At school every day, my sister bought me juice because during the first



break, I used all my money I received but my sister didn't use all of hers, so I took advantage of her money, and during every school day, she bought juice for me. Also every Saturday afternoon, our parents took us swimming or to the stores, and we bought some beautiful clothes or shoes. And Sunday was the day when we often went to church. After that we went to the beach or to visit our family members in the afternoon. Sometimes we also received some visitors and together with our visitors' children, we played some games such as basketball or football, or we talked about how well we studied at school in the park that was behind our house.



How bad is it to me to surpass this step today? Now that I am older, I look back these moments, and it makes me sad because life was so easy at that time. In addition, I no longer get presents from my parents, or participate in childhood activities



like I used to. I don't see many of my friends anymore. There are times when I no longer play my childhood games because I am grown up, and I have a lot of other responsibilities. One of them is being able to increase my education since I am the oldest in the family. Also my parents' eyes are on me, so my activities are very controlled. Moreover, my attitude must prove that I am the oldest child by reflecting positively in other words. My attitude will reflect on my siblings because they will follow in my footsteps no matter how well or how badly I act, they will copy everything related to my attitude. All this will reflect on our future.



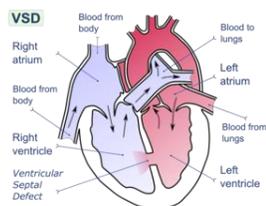
In short, these experiences were part of my childhood that I wanted to share with you. I take this opportunity to thank my parents enormously for their efforts. No matter who your parents are, you should be proud of them.

A Generosity that is Completely Changing my Life

By: *Frandy Dejean*

Our world can be a better place as long as we are devoted to making a difference. We should start thinking about those who surround us and those who are away and in need. Many lives can be changed because of our good actions and generosity. However, I would like to share with you a personal story about some people who have brought a lot of change in my life.

I was born and raised in a populated area called Carrefour in Haiti. It is one of the largest districts in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. I was raised by my mother who raised three boys. In 2001, a doctor who was from Peoria, IL, revealed that I needed heart surgery because my heart was not functioning well. He sent me to a cardiologist for an ECG test. The test showed that I was suffering from Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD). By that time, I needed surgery, but there was no medical facility that could handle my problem in my country. This



American doctor, Dr. John Carroll, began to look for a hospital in the U.S. so that I could come for the surgery. In 2007, he finally found one, and I was able to come to the U.S.

I was 17 years and accompanied by my dear mother. We headed to St Louis, where I would get my surgery done at St Louis Children's Hospital. However, instead of surgery, I got a surprise; the doctor told me the diagnosis that I did not need the surgery anymore. I only had a tiny little hole in my heart, and it was not necessary to be fixed at all.

My mom and I stayed in St Louis for two months, where we were hosted by a generous family, the Ebels. The relationship continued to develop with them when we returned to Haiti. This family promised to assist

me to accomplish my goal in life, which is to be a nurse.



When I returned to my country, I went back to school and began to think about my future. I had three years left to complete high school at that time. This family in St Louis kept in touch with me. We kept sending emails to each other and also talking on the phone. They supported me financially and morally. The Ebel family paid for my high school education. They also assisted my family and me by sending



food. They used to send me packages filled with clothes, books and food. I finally graduated high school in 2008; I began to think about some new perspectives for a college degree with the support of the Ebels, who pledged to pay for college for me. They have become a part of my family.

In addition, I started working on getting a student visa to come to study in the U.S. I remember when I applied for an FI-Visa in 2009. I was refused for the first time. I was very depressed, but I did not want to give up. A few months later, I went back to the consulate for the same case, and I was denied again. Despite of all that, the Ebel family did not to give up supporting me in order to come to U.S. for college. They said no matter what happens, they would continue to assist me, and I should not give up.



I heard about Black Hawk from my current host family, the Ledbetters, who are also involved in the change of my life. I remember checking the website of BHC and found out the process to apply was not complicated. I called the Ebels, and let them know about it. All of a sudden, they accepted the idea. I applied for the nursing and ESL program, and then two months later, I was qualified for the student visa. In fact, I am now going to school at Black Hawk College to be a nurse so that I can be able to help my family and my country in the future.

To finish, it does not really take the whole world to help someone. It only takes love and generosity from an individual or family.



Because of the generosity and love of the Ebels and Lebetters, I am now pursuing my dream. I have learned a lot from them and want to follow their paths. As I was part of a community in my country, so I look forward to going back and extending the helping hand to someone else. Generosity can change lives.



AUTHOR!

I am **Ahlonko Agbofin Kokou**, and I am from Togo, West Africa. I am one of five children. I was born on August 29th, 1977, in Agouegan, a small village in the south of Togo, and I grew up there with friends, cousins and one sister. Though my family was poor, I had a chance to attend college, where I studied mathematics and physics, which helped me



a lot when I was studying telecommunication. Therefore, I graduated in 2004 as superior technician in that field. I am married, and I love my wife, who lives in Africa now. Thank God that I have almost achieved my first goal in the U.S.

My name is **Maguette Sow**. I was born on November, 14 1991. I am from Senegal, a country in West Africa. I have two big sisters and one little brother. I came to the U.S in 2009. So it means I have been here for two years. I am not married, and I don't have any children. I speak three languages: my dialect Wolof, French, and English. I am currently taking ESL classes at Black Hawk College in Moline. I haven't decided my major yet, but I think I will be a flight attendant or a journalist. I hope that one day I will be able to get a job that I will enjoy, so I will be able to help my



family. My hobbies are: listening to music, dancing, shopping, and spending time with my family and friends. I also enjoy going to the movie theater in my free time. And my plan for the future is to work hard and become very rich.

My name is **Phouda Raj Gurung**, and I am



thirty-seven year old. I am from the Himalayan county, Bhutan, which lies in between India and China. In 1991, my family and I were forced to leave the country by the government of Bhutan, and we stayed for almost two decades in Nepal. I came to the U.S in April 2009. I am married, and I have one child.

I live in Rock Island with my family. I am a full-time worker at Jumer's Casino and Hotel. I can speak Nepali and English fluently. Also, I can understand Hindi and Tamu language. My major is accounting, and I want to be an accountant in the future. I like listening to traditional folk music and playing lawn tennis. Apart from my accounting courses, I have planned to take more English classes in the future and be a good English speaker and writer.

I am **Gabre Djobo**, and I'm from Togo, West Africa. I'm 39, and I have been in the US for 5 years. I speak French, Ewe, Cotocoli, which is my native language, and English of course! My next big challenge is to take Spanish class along with sociology after ESL. I have been employed by Tyson



since 2006. All the members of my family live in Togo, and I miss them so much, especially my beautiful five-year-old daughter. I'm interested in politics and social justice. I love pondering over our existence and social rules or society. I am ambitious, dedicated, persistent, and ready to help other people. For me, let's just live and be happy no matter what.

Hi, everyone. My name is **Tran Nguyen** and I'm from Vietnam, an Asian country. I was born in Nha Trang, a beautiful coastal city, in 1993. I can speak Vietnamese, French, and English and I've been in the U.S. for two months. My parents are both business professionals, and they have their own company, so what I want to be in the future is to become an auditor to help run my parents' business. I intend to study at Black Hawk College for two years to get an associate's degree in accounting. Then, I'll transfer to another university and study for two more years to get a bachelor's degree in auditing. After that, I'll return to Vietnam and help my parents with their business. My hobbies are listening to music, reading books, and riding my bicycle along the beach.



Hello everyone! My name is **Aissatou Sow**. I'm 23 years old, and I'm from Senegal, a country in the West Africa. I have been living in the U.S. for two years with my family. I have three siblings: two sisters and one brother. I speak three languages: Wolof, French, and English. This is my second semester at Black Hawk College. I haven't decided my major yet, but I would like to work in an international organization like United Nation or UNICEF to help people from poor countries. I love going to swim or talking to my friends in my free time. I also love shopping.



My name is **Francois, Niyungeko**. I am from Burundi, a small country located between Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. I was born on June 10th, 1978 in Tanzania where my parents have been refugees since 1972. I moved to the United States in 2007. Therefore, I have been living in United States for four years. I have two



brothers, but no sister; I am married and I have two children, a boy and a girl. Unfortunately, I do not have a specific job, but I interpret in elementary schools and hospitals when it is necessary. About languages, I speak Kirundi, my native language, Swahili, French, and a little bit of English. My major is radiology technology. I do not have many hobbies, but when I have free time I watch TV shows. In the future, I plan to go back to my country and open an orphanage to help orphans.

I am **Komlavi Avonor Selom**, and I am from



Togo, which is located in West Africa. I was born on August 30, 1983, in Badja, about seventy miles from Lome, the capital of Togo. I have two brothers and three sisters. I spent my childhood in the capital, and I started my preschool at Notre Dame de L'Eglise. Hunting, reading, watching movies

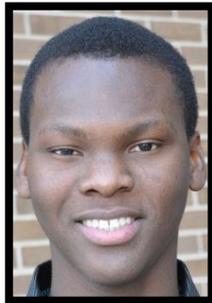
and listening to political talk shows and music are my favorite hobbies. I speak French and Ewe fluently and a little English. When I was in the university in my country, I dreamed of serving my country as the minister of finance, but my dream was shattered when I qualified to immigrate to the U.S. I have been living in the U.S for three years, and I am currently employed by Tyson Foods. I hope to return and become the minister of finance in my country one day.

My name is Asmaa Mouadine, and I was born in Casablanca, which is located in Morocco, which lies in Northwest Africa. I have two brothers: one who lives in New York and the youngest who lives with my parents. I have been in U.S. for five years. My languages are Arabic, French as second language and English as a third. I like to spend free time



with my friends and talking to my family. I like visiting new places; I love swimming and riding horses. I am studying to achieve my goal of being a medical assistant; I am also interested in the psychology of children.

My name is **Eldor Rodnel Jean Moise**, and I was born in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. I have three sisters, and no brothers. I have been living in the United States for almost one year now. I live in Coal Valley with my family. I go to BHC, and my major is pre-med, which I may change down the road. I have three current hobbies and they are: playing soccer, listening to music, and taking in a movie. My ultimate dream is to be a doctor.



My name is **Dolores Ojeda**, I am from Leon Guanajuato, Mexico. I am the third of fifteen brothers and sisters. I came to the U.S.A. on March, 1989. Since I was young, I have been dreaming of being an executive manager. I am married and have two sons. I had been working at Seaford Clothing Company for twenty years, and now I have the opportunity to go to school at BHC, where I am preparing to study my major in Financial Service Management. I am dedicated to my studies to achieve my dream of being an executive manager and a have successful life in the future. During my free time, I like to enjoy sharing with my family, working out, and helping people through a nonprofit organization, where I am a member.



My name is **Ousseynou Diop**, I was born and raised in Senegal, West Africa. I migrated to the United States ten years ago to come join my mother, and also to try to finish my education. My dream is to become a civil engineer because I want to help in any way that I can rebuild the infrastructure in my home country, give access to potable drinking water and



help take care of the environment. I became a student at Black Hawk a year ago and so far it is a great experience and I've met many wonderful people along the way. I am happy to be here and excited about what the future will bring.

My name is **Mazen Marar**. I'm from Jordan. I came to the U.S to pursue my dream of becoming an engineer. I love exercising and swimming as well as driving race cars. My sister "Samar" lives here in the U.S. and the rest of my family lives in Jordan. My parents and two brothers. I love my two little nieces Aisha & Tala the most. They are so charming and adorable. I hope to finish my studies and get my degree so that I can start to build my career.



I am **Pepe Djondo**. I am a student from Togo (West Africa). I am twenty years old. I came to the USA in July 2010. I've been living here almost one year and five months. I live here with all my family. I have two sisters and one brother; I am the oldest sister. I am single with no kids, I don't work and I am full-time student. In my free time, I like to watch TV, read some novels or some articles in English, work on the internet or even cook with my mom. My goal is to have my master's degree in accounting and financing. Family, excellence, friendship and pursuing my ambition and dreams are my passions.



I am **Frandy Dejean**. I am from Haiti, and I'm 23 years old. I moved to the U.S. last year, and I have been living here for almost a year. I speak Creole, French and English. My major is nursing. I plan to return to my country to help people in the medical field. I have not decided yet the kind of nursing area that I will specialize in for the future.



The ESL Newsletter is written by the students in Advanced Writing each semester. The newsletter, however, would not be possible without the help, support, and guidance from Anne Bollati, ESL Coordinator, and Sheryl Gragg, support staff for the Humanities, Languages, and Journalism Department. We would also like to thank Mike Winter for our group and individual photos, and many others who gave of their time to be interviewed for articles. We greatly appreciate all that you do for us!

Jenni Wessel-Fields, Assistant Professor

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.