



# OUR SIDE OF THE STORY



**INTERNATIONAL**  
**VOICES** **A**t Black Hawk College

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## INTERNATIONAL VOICES at Black Hawk College



  
Black  
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Nina De Bisschop

# AHMED AFEF

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My name is **Ahmed Afef**. I'm 24 years old. I was born in Iraq, and I lived between Syria and Lebanon for about five years before coming to the United States. I have been in the US for a little over three years, and I study at Black Hawk College. My goal for now is to get a college degree in computer science, but I might change my mind and become a dietitian. I hope that I can accomplish that in less than five years.



## Adopting a Vegan Lifestyle

Veganism refers to a diet that is based on plants. A vegan person does not eat anything derived from an animal source such as meat, dairy products, eggs, etc. and does not use products that are made from animal sources such as leather, wool, etc. It is controversial because many people think that a plant based diet is not healthy while many others say the opposite. Animals, environment, and health are three crucial causes that make people decide to go vegan.



First, animals are creatures that share similar characteristics with humans. They have feelings, families, and most important is that they are not simply willing to die, just like each one of us. The meat industry is basically based on murdering animals in order to produce food for everyone, but what is even worse is the dairy industry because animals suffer for an extended amount of time.

To produce milk, a cow has to give birth to a baby calf first, and then the baby is taken away from the mother to be slaughtered or used for the dairy industry. Keeping the baby calf near the mother is not efficient for business owners. They want to keep the baby calf away from its mother so that they can use the milk instead. We don't treat dogs so terribly; therefore, cows and pigs should not be treated in this way either.

Second, meat and dairy industries are causing a lot of damage because growing animals requires a lot of land space. Cutting trees and ruining more green forests are the only ways to provide this land space, and that is causing harm to the environment because trees are the main producers of the oxygen that we breathe. Also, those industries use so much water to produce the food for the animals. Producing vegetables and plants requires a fraction of the water that is used to produce meat. Moreover, dairy and meat industries are responsible for methane gas emissions which are not good for the environment as they contribute to global warming.

Finally, food plays a significant role in human health. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle requires healthy food. Meat and dairy products are the most harmful things to the human body. They have a lot of fat and cholesterol that can lead to several health issues including diabetes and heart attacks. Diabetes is a very common disease around the world, and it is primarily caused by obesity. Diabetes can lead to serious health issues such



as strokes, which can leave people partly or completely paralyzed. Also, a heart attack is the number one killer, and the fat found in food derived from animals is a prominent cause. On the other hand, a vegan diet is much better because it doesn't include all the fats and cholesterol found in meats. Plus, it can significantly decrease the risk of having these diseases.



My personal transition to a vegan diet was so easy. As I started reading and watching videos on the Internet about those harmful industries, I decided to give it a try. I took it step by step, so I first became pescatarian and then vegetarian, and now I'm completely vegan. I didn't face any difficulties, and it has never been easier to become vegan. Vegan products, such as fake meat, nondairy cheese and ice cream are now hitting the market, and fortunately they are so delicious. Also, a vegan diet can be full of delicious and easy to make recipes. Most of those recipes contain ingredients that have high amounts of protein such as legumes and grains.

In conclusion, becoming vegan is not an easy decision, but it reduces the harm of animals and the planet. We have to be responsible for what we have. This planet is getting ruined by us, and if we don't make changes now, then no one will. We can start with small steps and increase our efforts over time. It would be selfish if we considered a vegan diet only to keep ourselves healthy; we have to think about the animals, the environment, and about our health.

### **Rice with Lentils and Caramelized Onions**

Rice with lentils and caramelized onions is a very popular dish in several Middle Eastern countries. It's served for dinner or lunch. It's very easy and cheap to make and has a lot of nutrients.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup dry brown lentils
- 3/4 cup brown rice (Uncle Ben's whole grain brown rice)
- One large onion (sliced)
- Sea salt
- Olive oil

#### **Instructions:**

- Place the lentils in a small sauce pan and cover with about 2 inches of water. Bring water to a boil and then lower the heat to medium. After about 30 minutes and when most of the water is absorbed, drain the lentils, rinse with water and set aside.
- Bring about 5 cups of water to a boil in a large sauce pan and place the rice in the boiling water for about 15 minutes. Drain the rice.
- In a small skillet, heat the olive oil and place the onions and stir them for about 15-20 minutes until they're brown. Or you can use fried onion topping.
- Mix the drained rice with the lentils and serve it with the caramelized onions.



# CIZA OLEVIA

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My name is **Ciza Olevia**; I'm from Burundi, which is located in East Africa. I'm 23 years old; we are three children in my family, and I'm the youngest. Because of discrimination, war, and a lack of peace in my country, my family and I got a chance to migrate from our native country to the United States. I started attending middle school at Stone Mountain Georgian, Atlanta in 2008 and got my high school diploma at Rock Island High School in 2014. Attending Black Hawk College has given me the best opportunities to become the person that I always dreamed to be. My career goal is to get a BSN degree. Plus I would love to work as a missionary nurse because helping those who are hopeless is my number one priority.

## Life after Genocide in Burundi

Burundi is a tiny country in East Africa. The life expectancy in Burundi is very low, but the country holds many people. After Burundi had gained independence from Belgium, so many mysterious things happened. If we look back to the year of 1972 the genocide in Burundi was the most devastating thing that happened to many families. The two tribes, Hutu and Tutsi lived happily as brothers and sisters before colonial time. In 1972, it was bloodshed in Burundi. The UN tried to stop the genocide by fighting back against those who were causing the war and migrating some of the Burundians who were not in support of any of those political parties. Later in 1993, the first Hutu president was elected, but three months after being elected, he was killed by Tutsi officers. As a result of the murder of the Hutu president, the Tutsi and the Hutu slaughtered each other, resulting in over 100,000 citizens killed that year and over a million fleeing to neighboring countries. Many people died including my relatives. During the twelve years of civil war, over 500,000 Hutus and 100,000 Tutsi were killed. It would take years and years to finish entirely writing about everything that happened, but there are three main things that occurred after the war, which are loss of property, poverty, and life as a refugee.

First of all, the genocide of 1972 led many families to lose their property. Imagine how would you feel if you woke up in the morning and found yourself homeless where you used to have a place you called home? There was no justice for poor Burundians citizens. The government took their land and everything they own in order for them to suffer. For example, in Burundi they had numerous uneducated people whose occupation was to cultivate, so visualize how they would survive when the government takes away their land and farms. Their life was full of nightmares, and they had doubts about seeing tomorrow come; therefore; they didn't have much hope for a better future.

Secondly, Burundians' became poverty-stricken after the genocide. Because the government seized Burundians lands and their properties, it led the whole country into poverty and led many citizens to death as a result of malnutrition due to lower access to food. Famine was spread around the country, and no one heard the cry of Burundi's citizens. Thousands of

people died because of the lack of food and even those who had the ability to provide for their family were not able to do so. No one in Burundi was allowed to do business or farming because their land was taken away by the government. Today, people in Burundi are suffering from hunger and the lack of food is still a major problem there.

Last but not least, many Burundians speak of how they lived as refugees. Many of them fled to the neighboring countries—Tanzania, Congo, and Rwanda. Many of you may not know what it is like to be a refugee, to have no control over your life and be unable to make your own decisions. A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave his or her country to escape war, persecution, or a natural disaster. Now, many Burundians are happy where they are, and more importantly they have found a new home. Even though they are refugees where they are staying; at least, they have peace of mind and freedom of speech.

In conclusion, people in my country lived a difficult life, especially those people who had not participated in killing innocent souls. Because of that, many people have lost their property, and they have lived in poverty, and many of them live as refugees in many different countries. Since the UN and the US government helped join the two ethnic groups together, no genocide has happened again, and I hope someday my country will shine again, forget the past and learn from the past to form the better future.

#### **How to Cook Mandazi (African Donuts)**

This recipe is really common in South, East, and Central Africa. Most people eat mandazi in the morning as breakfast and sometimes for dinner. My suggestion is to try mandazi with hot tea because it really goes well together.

##### **Step one**

Sift the wheat flour, add sugar, add salt, add Cinnamon, then mix well

##### **Second step**

Put water in a different bowl, add bakery yeast, add and beat eggs, then add milk (optional,) cream, and melted butter. Mix the ingredients for about 2 ½ minutes.

##### **Step three**

Combine the liquid mixture with the dry ingredients. After that, mix by hand or with a mixer for about 5 minutes. After a while, knead it well until smooth and well integrated. When the dough has softened, cover it with a plastic bag or kitchen towel for 1 ½ hours. Knead the dough again. Put the dough on a counter and divide it into 4 or 5 parts.

##### **Step four**

Heat the oil. Cut the dough into the desired shapes. Deep fry the mandazi until they are puffy and golden brown.

I hope that this will be very helpful to someone who wants to try African dishes.



# DANIELE BAYER DE ANDRADE

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My name is **Daniele Bayer de Andrade**, and I'm from Brazil. I've been leaving here in the U.S. with my family for 19 months because my husband is on assignment here. We have two boys. The younger one is thirteen, and the older one is eighteen years old. Before moving here, I dreamed of learning English, but I couldn't. Since I started English classes at Black Hawk College, I have enjoyed learning even more. Now, I feel more capable of reaching my dream.



## Being the Middle Child

Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Bill Gates – What do these people have in common? They were all the middle child in their families. Being the middle child means to have older and younger siblings, and this position in the family forces the middle children to learn at an early age how to get the attention of their parents, how to negotiate with the older siblings, and how to dominate the younger sibling. I am the middle child, and growing up as one has really affected who I am today.

My journey as a middle child started in April 1978 when my younger sister Denise was



born. I remember the day when I met Denise. My mom was holding my little sister like a doll. She was wearing a beautiful white knit set and seemed very sweet and calm. When I kissed her head, her smell was delightful. I was capable of understanding what was going to happen in our house because I was six years older than her and my older sister Andrea was eight years old. My parents' attention was focused on the new baby girl, but at that time, I had my older sister Andrea to play with and distract me from my middle child position. Not everything was bad or harmful until we started growing up.

While we were growing up, the gap between us was sometimes the reason we had fights. An example happened during our summer vacation. My mom used to go downtown with us to eat something unusual. Imagine three daughters trying to hold their mom's hand. Of course, my mom always held my younger sister's hand. Denise always had her "throne", and the problem was between Andrea and me. In my opinion, normally Andrea had better arguments to convince my mother to hold her hand and not mine. How did I feel? Jealous and insecure and sometimes I would cry to get my mom's attention. Even though I had disadvantages in some situations and felt neglected and underprivileged, I was only



trying to strive for my family's attention. However, today I know that these experiences led me to be independent, persistent, and strong.

Even though I had struggled when I was a child, becoming a teenager as a middle child was even worse. Although I wasn't a child anymore, I still didn't know how to express my opinions well, and sometimes I continued feeling that I was neglected and at a disadvantage. When we were teenagers, my older sister Andrea used to use her "power" only on me while she protected our younger sister. Since she was in charge of the house when my parents were working, she believed she had privileges. For example, when we all wanted to take a shower, she demanded to be the first. Her argument was that she had long hair, but I think she was just using her status as the oldest child. When my parents arrived, I reported all the events and, of course, most of the time my parents didn't take my side because I used to argue more than my sisters. Sometimes my parents treated me like a tattletale, and my sisters got all praises. I think I probably complained more when I was a teenager than when I was a child. By the way, complaining and negotiating were things that I did really well to survive the pressure of being the middle child. Nonetheless, today I can understand my parents' decisions and my sisters' opinions because my strong personality needed to be shaped, and I had to fit in my family's structure where everybody worked together towards strengthening.



Something changed when we became adults. After I reached maturity, of course, my points of view changed a little bit, but not completely. Not everything was as I thought. After I became an adult, I could understand my parents' views because we talked like adults, and I was more open to understanding their views. I understood that when they allowed my older sister to experience some things that I couldn't, like driving, leaving out, putting her in charge of the house, hanging out with friends, or even dating, etc., I was learning, and my life was made easier because my older sister was going through these things before me. In other words, it was easier for me to make the right decisions based on my older sister's experiences. Also, other experiences as adults confirmed that my opinions about myself were wrong. For example, when I was married and pregnant with my first son, I started feeling left out by my sisters because they didn't invite me to spend time with them, and they were still single. Then one day, they invited me to go shopping. Our discussion started when I got into the car. I started to complain about our time together just to get their attention. How did this happen? The feelings of my childhood were back, and I felt I was neglected and invisible again. That day, we didn't go shopping, and we had to stop and talk like adults. We came back to my house, and we talked about our feelings and views. I realized that throughout my life my feelings had been wrong, and I clearly recognized that I was responsible for some of the damages in my relationship with my sisters.

I totally agree with some psychologists who believe that birth order and age gap affect the middle children more than their siblings. In my opinion, it influenced who I am today more than anything else, and I can say that the impact was more beneficial than I imagined. Moreover, when my family and I moved to the U.S, during the first few months, we had some difficulties adjusting. Knowing that we weren't doing well, my sisters decided to come here to help us and to be sure that everything was going to be fine. This confirmed I was important and significant for them.



In conclusion, my own experiences of being the middle daughter have brought me amazing lessons and indescribable life values, such as sharing, patience, giving, protecting and loving, and they have shaped who I am today.



### **Joao Pessoa**

If you are planning to visit Brazil, you should visit Joao Pessoa. Joao Pessoa, the capital of Paraiba, is located in the northeast of Brazil, and it is the greenest city to visit in the northeast. It has tropical weather throughout the year, which is favorable for walks in the sand and relaxing at the beach. Sympathy and hospitality are qualities of the people who live there, and this makes your travel much better, especially when you go to visit cultural places. Joao Pessoa has delicious fruits and tasty nuts. Because of the ocean, Joao Pessoa has excellent restaurants with fish, red lobster and shrimp. For these reasons, many European retirees have chosen to live there, and English is the second language spoken there.



# EMIN HUSEINBEGOVIC

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My name is **Emin Huseinbegovic**, and I am from a small country in Europe, which is Bosnia and Herzegovina. I came to the USA to learn something new about the cultures that this country offers, a new language, which is English, and the biggest reason is my major that I want to study after the ESL program. My goal is to finish my major, which will be pre-engineering because I have always dreamed of being an engineer after I graduate college. When my grandfather was alive, he dreamed that I would study in another country, and after I graduate college, I would be able to do something that will change my life. I have my mother, father, two sisters and a brother. I live in Coal Valley with my sister and her family. I hope that I will become an engineer, and with that knowledge return to my own country and fulfill the dream that my grandfather had.

## Bosnian Folk Dance

Each country has its own traditional dance. Nowadays, many communities have their own interesting style. During each dance performance, people enjoy themselves together with others, which creates good connections. Bosnian Folk dance is a dance that has existed in Bosnia and Herzegovina for many years. This dance requires unique clothes that dancers wear, unique music that dancers follow, and of course unique rules and steps that dancers learn.

Firstly, dancers need to have unique clothes which will give a better picture to the audience. Actually, the clothes that dancers wear are the traditional dress of my country. Mostly, the costumes worn by the dancers during the performance are made of leather, linen, hemp, and wool. The most popular colors we can see are white, black, and dark blue. Women wear dzecerma (skirts), curdia (richly embroidered vests), and long white dresses, while men have black trousers made of a heavy cloth, which is called krmez, and different types of shirts and vests. Also, opanci are a kind of shoes that men wear during the performance on stage.



Another important part of this dance is the music. Sevdalinkas is a traditional Bosnian music style which helps dancers a lot. Usually, people who play instruments start, and dancers follow them with a unique dance. One of the most famous people who played accordion in my country was Omer Pobric, who was one of the best composers of Bosnian sevdalinkas. The most popular songs in my country heard during the dance performances are "Carnation, My Flower" ("Karanfile Cvijece Moje"), "Snow Fell on the Blossom; on the Fruit" ("Snijeg Pade na Behar, na Voce"), "Why aren't you here" ("Sto te nema"), etc. Other instruments in Bosnian Folk dance are the guitar, the flute, the violin, the saz (traditional folk music instrument), etc.

Sevdalinkas is a slower type of music that is very hard to sing. Actually, this type of music is the hardest for many singers to sing in my country.

The last part that is really important to know are the basic rules. Bosnian Folk dance has rules and choreography that is important to know if we want to dance. At the beginning of the performance, we will see two lines of dancers (one line of women and a second line of men). They start with the right foot, two steps to the right, and two steps to the left. Then they take one



step to the right and one to the left. In the middle of the performance, dancers form a circle, which is interesting for people who are watching them. Each woman has handkerchief in her hand, and the handkerchief can be in different colors. When they start to dance in the circle, men grab the handkerchief from the women.

In short, Bosnian Folklore dance is a unique dance from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In my opinion, this kind of dance is very good to know because it brings happiness in our life, friendship with people from other groups, and many positive things. Dance is a beautiful part of our tradition and a form of art that countries have to share with people from other cultures.

#### **Watermills on the Pliva River in Jajce**

My country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, has many cultural pieces of art that look amazing. One of the cultural piece would be the watermills located on the river Pliva in Jajce, which is one of the historical cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first watermills were built during the Austro-Hungarian period. All of the watermills look the same. Actually, each of them is the same size, without a chimney or window, and they all stand on thin wooden legs. These days, we can see 19 watermills that have been renewed. Renovated this place brings lots of people from my own country and also from different countries. Between the watermills, we can see a wood bridge that connects all those small houses or watermills. People who come here can enjoy the beauty and the natural environment that this place offers. The watermills are the most popular attraction in Jajce. In 2009, they became a natural monument of my country. The watermills are built on the rocks between the Great and Small Pliva Lake. The sound of the water running between the lakes is amazing, and the water is crystal clear. To sum up, the image of the watermills, the bridge that connects them, and the crystal clear water are some of many things that make this place a unique cultural piece of art in my own country.

# MENSAH TETTEH

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I am **Mensah Tetteh**. Born in Lomé, Togo with a Ghanaian dad and a Nigerian mom, I was raised in a Christian family, and I have one big sister and one small brother. I have a high school diploma in my country, and I attended college before moving to the USA in September 2014. Because English is not my first language, I have made a decision to improve my English by taking some ESL classes at Black Hawk College. My principal goal is to be a chemical engineer, so I have also started to take some math and physics classes. Right now, I want to finish the ESL program and focus on my academic classes, and then after that transfer to Western University. I also work in the evening as a full-time employee in a company named XPAC. Working and going to school is not that easy, but I have made a decision to combine school and work, and I know that with courage and determination I will succeed.



## The Political Situation in Togo

One of the smallest countries in Africa, Togo is located on the west side of Africa. Togo is bordered by Ghana to the west, Benin to the east, Burkina Faso to the north, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. The capital city of Togo is Lomé, where the government is located. Togo is one of the French colonies that gained independence in 1960. Since then, my lovely country has passed through good and bad times. The politics, the economy, and the life in the society started to change in 1963, just after the father of the nation was assassinated



To begin, the history of Togo has a lot of impact on the politics. After the defeat of Germany during World War I in 1918, Togo became a French colony until its independence in 1960. Sylvanus Olympio, who is called the father of the nation, was the first president after the independence. Everything went well until the father of the nation was assassinated in 1963 by Lieutenant Eyadema. Between 1963 to 1967, Togo had the two presidents: Nicolas Grinisky and Kleber Dadjo before Eyadema became president from 1967 until his death in 2005. For 38 years, my country was led by a dictatorial regime. During every election, he was the one who won even if he didn't have the majority of the votes. I remember in 1990, during the insurrection, people wanted things to change, but nothing happened; a lot of people were killed at that time, and some people were forced to move to Benin and Ghana.

One of the most important turning points in Togolese politics was when General Eyadema died in 2005. The military decided to replace the president with his son without an election. After an insurrection and a message from the United Nations, they reversed their decision and

organized an election, which President Eyadema's son won. According to the Togolese constitution, a president can serve only two terms, but Eyadema's son Faure was running for the third time in 2014. For protesting against the government, politicians were forced to leave the country or were sent to prison. This political situation has had a large impact on the society and on the economy of Togo.



The society has encountered a lot of economic problems. Because of the dictatorial regime under which the Togolese live, they have a lot of economic punishment. My country lacks a lot of benefits due to the dictatorship. The United Nations, the UNDP, and other organizations would like to invest in the economy, but due to the political situation, they decided to invest in democratic countries like Ghana. In 2005, after General Eyadema died, Togo was under embargo; countries like France and the USA stopped their help to Togo. It is similar to Cuba. Due to bad governance, the population suffers.

The majority of the population lives below the poverty line. They have less than \$1 per day. That leads a lot of young people to theft and drugs. Moreover, a lot of youth have their diplomas, but they don't find jobs. The high unemployment rates push the young people to migrate to the neighboring countries. Poverty is more acute in rural areas than in urban areas, and 67.1 % of the population poor in Togo.

Another major factor that affects the society is the corruption. From the highest to the lowest level, there is corruption. For example, if somebody gets arrested by the police for speeding, he just needs to give the officer some money, and that is it. Moreover, in some companies, the director or "boss" gives jobs to employees from his family or region even if they are not qualified. For example, if I'm not from his family, ethnicity, or clan, I wouldn't get the job. This corruption results in unemployment, and a lot of graduates leave the country to settle down in other countries like Ghana, Nigeria, France, and the USA.

Moreover, the prices of food and tools are increasing, but wages never increase, so university students, doctors, and teachers protest against the government because of the low wages. Sometimes, during these protest walks, a lot of people are injured, and some are put in jail. I remember during a protest march in 2010, the military arrested lots of people, and they used a lot of tear gas on the protestors.

To summarize, living in Togo now is hard because of the bad politics of the leaders, which impacts on the society and the economy. I can say that politically, life before 2005 was better than after 2005 because of the changes in politics, but all Togolese want changes. Now, we need to forget our differences, and it doesn't matter where we are from, south, north, east or west, we need to work together to rebuild our country.



### **Akoume**

Eaten by almost the entire Togolese population, akoume is our favorite food. It is one of the cultural legacies that our grandparents gave to us. Eating akoume gives you a lot of strength. It is rich in vitamins and contains the sufficient amount of protein. We have three steps to prepare this delicious food. The first step is to put half a liter of water and a cup of maize powder in a pan over high heat for five minutes. The second step is to stir the water and powder mixture until it thickens; it takes almost ten minutes, but it depends on the amount used. The third step is to add more maize powder and stir again. After that, we wait for the liquid to reduce and the mixture to thicken. It takes another ten minutes, and we finally have our akoume. It takes almost thirty minutes to prepare this food, and we can combine it with soups like Togolese chicken soup and other local soups.

# MOHAMED IBRAHIM

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My name is **Mohamed Ibrahim**, and I was born in Kenya, a town called Garissa. I grew up in Nairobi, the capital city, where I spent almost all of my life. I have a big blessed family, including my grandparents, parents and four siblings. To illustrate, I am the middle child, who has two older siblings and two younger than me. My father, who was an accountant, is called Mohammud, and my mother's name is Amina. Even though there was much misfortune in our family back in the country, I never gave up on my goals. In particular, my main goal is to work hard and become a successful man in life. I came to the United States in 2014 with the help of my aunt. Although I had a high school diploma from my country, I had to go through an Adult Education ESL program because English isn't my first language. Fortunately, I have completed that program, and now I am in this writing course. I hope to work toward my career, which is computer science, after this class.

## Universal TV

Although the country of Somalia has many kinds of media, including radio, internet, and print media, Universal TV has become one of the biggest news broadcasters in the country and also to the outside world. Universal TV, which went live on many African televisions, was launched on air on February 06, 2005. In 2007, with the help of President Abdullah Yusuf, the fifth president of Somalia, Universal TV was aired worldwide. Later on, it became associated with one of the largest news broadcasters in the U.K. known as Channel 4, which played great role in its progress. Even though Universal TV has faced many problems due to political instabilities and competition from other news media, such as newspapers, radio channels, internet outlets and print media, they have brought many advantages to the Somali nation. Universal TV has affected the Somali nation for fighting for women and helping poor and needy people.

First and foremost, many people love Universal TV because it stood for women's rights. Traditionally, in many communities, Somali men believe that women have no control over their lives. Therefore, the only reason women live in the community is to get married, do the household chores, and take care of the children. It was surprising to me when I asked Abdala Musa, a 70-year-old man, how they treated women in their community during his time; he said, "During our time, women had no right to look up at us, let alone speak." In 2007, Universal TV started a weekly program called "Fikrada Dumarka", meaning the ideas of women. This program was modernized by Americans and became viral in overseas. Because many women inspired the youth, young girls expressed their dreams and what they wanted to become in the future.

Furthermore, Universal TV exposed many rich men who went to Somalia to marry underage girls against their will by paying their parents. As Universal TV was expanding larger and prospering with more women's programs, women were feeling secure to join the programs and also praise them on regular basis. During the process, Universal TV were held on many accusations such as teaching fake rights, going against the law, misleading young girls, threatening foreigners, and so on. As a result, it lead the station to shut down within the country; however, it was later re-opened due to public strikes and debates from the neighboring countries.

Another crucial aspect of Universal TV is it helped many poor and needy people. Because Somalia has undergone many problems during the civil wars, many people became homeless while many others were either killed, or they fled from the country. Parents lost their children and vice versa, and others abandoned their properties. Universal TV started off associating with UNHCR, an agency that started helping refugees in 1991. They helped the poor and needy people by providing them clothes and shelter. Furthermore, they not only provided their basic needs, but they also broadcasted to the entire world how to help the poor people in Africa.

In other words, good news media are those that help people who are not able to help themselves. As Universal TV grew larger, many people and even the government were benefited from it. Besides, Universal TV is the best news media Somalia has ever had and still prospers on a daily basis. Two major aspects of Universal TV are the fight for women's rights (WR) and the help they provide for poor and needy people.

#### **Hijab**

Hijab is a cultural tradition, a piece of cloth worn not only by Somalian women but also many other Muslim women. It signifies one's purity. Hijab is derived from an Arabic word meaning *cover*. However, there are various kinds of hijab with different names that are worn at different times. One type of veil is called khimar, which is very popular and well known by many people. Now, khimar is a long and cape-like scarf, wrapped around the head, covering the head, neck, and the shoulders. Chidor is another type of hijab that hangs down a woman's back to her feet covering the entire body of the woman. These last two types of hijab are known by many as niqab and burkha, which in some cases people say are the same, but they are different. Nikhab, for instance, is a face-covering piece of cloth that leaves the eyes clearly visible but covers the mouth and the nose. In contrast, burkha covers the entire face and body of the woman, leaving a small net-like screen for the woman to see through. The hijab can be used both as a cultural tradition and a religious sign.

# NAWAL QAMHI

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My name is **Nawal Qamhi**. I'm from Morocco, and I'm 31 years old. I have been here for 8 years. I'm married, and I have a daughter. I also have five siblings. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my lovely family and friends as well as cooking. I was an accountant back home. I am attending Black Hawk College in Moline to improve my English. I haven't decided yet which career I will follow, but I'm sure that I will reach my goal.



## Why Speaking My Native Language Is Important to Me

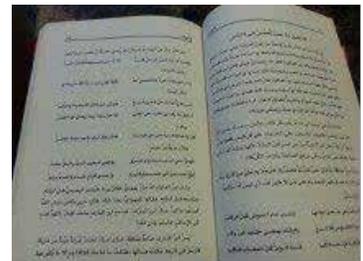
Arabic, which is the language of the Quran, has been spoken for thousands of years by North African and Middle Eastern people. The first thing I learned as a child was the Quran and the basics of the Arabic language, as all Moroccan people do. After coming to the U.S.A., the first obstacle I faced was learning English, but for my daughter it is different. It will be up to me to teach her my native language, and I am planning to proceed for three reasons: to understand and practice her religion, to be able to travel to my native country, and to have the benefits of speaking two languages.



Firstly, the most important thing for me is the religious consideration. If my daughter can't speak Arabic, she won't be able to read the Quran and practice our beliefs. So, it makes a big difference if she speaks and understands Arabic. As a Muslim, we pray five times a day, and we read Quran in Arabic. Since it was written in Arabic, it is hard to understand it in a different language; therefore, speaking Arabic allows her to have an overall understanding, practice, and knowledge about the cultural values through my native language, which is a big part of my religion.

Secondly, my daughter should be comfortable with my native country; therefore, it is critical for me to keep my native language, which is Arabic, at home, so my daughter will not lose her identity. If she goes to Morocco, she will be able to communicate with her relatives. I think if she couldn't communicate with them, she would feel lonely and upset, and those feelings could lead her to not having any communication with them, and she might even refuse to visit Morocco again. I expect that when I take her to Morocco, she will feel more familiar and comfortable with my family and the language spoken around her because she will be used to hearing it at home, with my friends, and on the phone.

Thirdly, she will have benefits of speaking two languages. She will be more sociable and have knowledge about both Eastern and Western cultures. Some studies have shown that



children with bilingualism have a significant increase in memory as well as job opportunities. People who speak more than one or two languages often have more job options, especially during this time of globalization. We have more international companies that work overseas. She would be able to work with those companies t need bilingual people. Also in the U.S., they prefer to have teachers who can speak more than one language that is also thru in other fields.



For these reasons, I am very strict about speaking Arabic with her, and I have a plan for her, which is to teach her Arabic at the same time as she starts to learn English. For instance, now she is speaking Arabic at home, and she understands everything I say. Furthermore, she can communicate with my family and my friends. I have already taken her to the mosque to learn the Quran, but she has to be 5 years old to take a class or participate in certain activities at the mosque (now she is 3 and a half years old); therefore, I have started teaching her at home, so she can memorize it quickly because her brain is still very fresh. For example, I bought a small board to teach her Arabic letters. I know it won't be easy for her, but she is smart. When she hears Arabic, she answers in Arabic, and if we are outside at the store, she answers in English. Already, she knows the difference between both languages.

In conclusion, speaking Arabic at home has been affecting my daughter positively. Therefore, I recommend immigrants to keep speaking their native language at home, so their children can deal with their parents native country, understand or practice their religion, and have benefits by speaking two languages.



### Seffa Madfouna

Seffa medfouna means vermicelli covered with chicken. It is a special dish, and we have it on different occasions, such as parties and on holidays. This meal has a two-part cooking process. The first one is putting the chicken, one big onion, black paper, salt, olive oil, ginger, smen (salted fermented butter), saffron, cinnamon and cilantro in a pot. The second part is preparing the vermicelli. I steam it in a different pot with oil, salt and dry raisins. I steam it 3 to 4 times. After the vermicelli is well cooked, I mix it with butter and powdered sugar. Then I put the chicken on a plate, and I cover it with the vermicelli, and I decorate it with almonds, cinnamon and powdered sugar.



# NENA BIRLEY

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Hello, my name is **Nena Birley**. I am originally from the Philippines, but I lived in Singapore for a decade before relocating to the United States. I am currently getting my prerequisites out of the way before getting into the nursing program here. My parents still live in my hometown, along with my older brother and older sister. I also have a brother in Saudi Arabia and a younger sister in Tokyo. I have a wonderful husband who supports me in everything that I do. My goal is to become a pediatric nurse.

## A Tale of Two Weddings

Have you ever heard of a couple who had two marriage ceremonies? We did. Most couples look forward to the day that they will be married. Our wedding was unique in that we had two ceremonies on two continents, the United States, and the Philippines. Both involved a lot of preparation. The challenges were almost overwhelming at times, but in the end, we succeeded thanks to organized planning, beautiful clothing, and perfect venues.

First, both weddings took a lot of planning. For the U.S. wedding, we had to plan long distance, since my husband was here in the U.S., but I was in Singapore. The pastor who married us had to be contacted and given directions as far as when and where the wedding would be. I arrived here on July 22nd, only to have the wedding on the 23rd. We had to go to the courthouse in downtown Rock Island to get a time waiver from the judge so we could be married that evening. After that interview and waiver, we went to the City of Rock Island to obtain a marriage license. Our wedding in the United States was private, only including my husband's family along with his pastor and his pastor's wife. Our Filipino wedding was different in that we were both not physically there to arrange the wedding. We relied on family and a wedding planner, through phone calls and text messages. Every detail had to be precise, and we had to rely on descriptions and visualization for everything to be perfect. It was a social event involving preparing for hundreds of people. Officials and close family members received a formal invitation while friends and community were verbally told to come. We contacted a dear friend of mine who contacted the pastor of his church who would officiate the ceremony. The pastor had to be made aware of the time and date of the wedding and arrange his schedule as he was five hours away from where the wedding would take place.



Next, the clothing we wore had to be determined for each wedding. Since I was in Singapore when we were planning the U.S. wedding, and it was a private wedding, we decided not to wear a wedding gown just yet. I wore a formal dress, and my husband wore dress pants and a dress shirt with a necktie. My in-laws wore dress clothes as well, as well as the pastor and his wife. In our Filipino wedding, I wore a spectacularly studded wedding dress which we hand carried onto the airplanes. As you can imagine, I received a lot of attention from the stewardesses as this does not happen every day for them. They gave it the best care; it rode



first class, and it arrived safely with us for the wedding day. My husband wore a black tuxedo with a bow tie and cuff-links. Our bridal entourage consisted of six sets of principal sponsors, the maid of honor, the best man, four sets of bridesmaids and groomsmen, three sets of secondary sponsors, the little groom, the little bride and the bearers. The principal sponsors are the ninong's and ninang's (godfathers and godmothers) who will advise the couple when things are challenging in their marriage. The maid of honor wore a white dress while the bridesmaids wore flame red knock-out dresses, which were custom made to my specifications. The

best man and groomsmen were dressed in black vests, white long sleeve shirts, red ties, and black dress pants. The entourage proceeded down the aisle before my husband, and I made our vows before God.

Finally, the venues and food for the ceremonies had to be chosen and prepared. The ceremony in the United States was an outdoor wedding under a famous gazebo used for weddings in Lincoln Park, in Rock Island. The park we chose has rolling green grass, beautiful trees, and gorgeous flowers, which made for a perfect summer wedding day. The wedding meal was a full course meal at Duck City in Davenport. In the Philippines, the wedding took place in my front yard, overlooking the mountains, the Abra River and hectare upon hectare of beautiful green rice fields. The ceremony in the Philippines included around three to four hundred people, including government officials. The government officials were the governor and the mayor of our province who came to our wedding because of the prominence of our family. With all of those people coming, a lot of food had to be prepared. The food was a ten-course meal, which included eight freshly slaughtered pigs, which weighed 100 to 120 pounds each. We also had a dance at night with a live band.



To sum it up, having two wedding ceremonies can be challenging, but it worked out just the way we wanted it to be. Our American wedding honeymoon was in Florida, and our Filipino honeymoon was in Hawaii. With the best preparations, attire, and locations, dreams do come true.

### **Calle Crisologo**

In the 1500s, the Spanish came to the Philippines and conquered the islands. Along with the Spanish came Christianity. As a result, the Filipino culture is heavily Catholic. "Calle Crisologo" is one of the outstanding remnants of this Filipino culture. Calle Crisologo is located in Vigan City, a port on the South China Sea, which remains virtually the same as in the 16th century. It has been preserved by the government as a national treasure. No one can bring development to the area, which would change its appearance or uniqueness. Its streets look like one is walking through a city in Spain hundreds of years ago. In 2014, it was named one of the "New Seven Wonders of the World", thanks to being one of the most perfectly preserved remnants of the colonial days.



# SANGJUNG KIM

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I'm **Sangjung Kim** from South Korea. I'm 29, and I have 3 year-old son. I got a job before graduating university in a textile trading company, which is related to my major, clothing and textiles, but I moved to New York in 2010 to work as a jewelry designer. During my internship, I graduated Busan National University getting intern credit for my last semester. I had worked and attended design schools in New York for two years. I had my baby in 2012, and our family moved to Moline after my husband graduated in July 2013. After I moved to the Quad Cities, I was really bored and couldn't find anything to do. My son and I went back to Korea for a year. During that period, I finished a jewelry making and cad/cam course and then worked as jewelry cad/cam designer. After I had more experience for my career, my son and I came back to Moline again. Now, I am just waiting to someday develop my ability to have my own business, study English, and take care of my family.



## My Intern Life in USA

What's your dream? What brought you here to America? When I decided I wanted to be a jewelry designer, there was no big company, no famous Korean jewelry designer, and no jewelry school in Korea. I was frustrated, but I found GIA Korea, which is a branch of the Gemological Institute of America, and I enrolled as my first step to reach my dream. I didn't



know why I wanted to start studying about diamonds and color stones first rather than designing, but clarifying and defining the quality of small diamonds and color stones was not easy. Unfortunately, the jewels started losing their beauty to me, who wanted to be a jewelry designer; and they just seemed like stones. I quit jewelry school, and I took a rest. However, during that time, I realized that I wanted to try to become a jewelry designer one more time. That time was my last semester at my university, and I already had a job related to my major, which was clothing and

textiles. Finally, in April 2010, I quit my job and moved to New York to get experience as a jewelry designer. This is the story of my intern life in New York whether it is fabulous or abject.

Before I came to New York, I knew I should get a jewelry related job, so I turned in my resume with a portfolio to an agent who connects companies in the United States with applicants in Korea, taking a chance. I got some interviews with company managers via online video calls first. I craved for an offer, so when I received an acceptance email from a company, I was really on cloud nine. It was a nervous time for me when I quit everything in Korea and wanted to start a new life in the USA. The agent arranged everything, so it was easier than I thought even though it cost quite a bit of money. When I arrived at JFK International Airport, I breathed in the frosty, unfamiliar air at the beginning. It was dark inside, and I wanted to go out immediately. Two days later, the first meeting was waiting for me. When the elevator door

opened, I couldn't hide my disappointment about the products displayed on the wall. I heard that the company, whose owner is Korean, was the biggest wholesale fashion jewelry company, but I felt I would never spend my money buying those products. It was a culture shock. Then, I was disappointed again about my position; it was in the sales department, not the design department. I knew that giving a design position to someone whose major is not jewelry would be a little weird, but at the time, I felt lost. My first intern experiences as a jewelry sales assistant started.



In the beginning, my primary tasks were organizing and displaying stock. After that, I used the EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) program to get invoices when costumers ordered. Also, I organized catalogs by new product, preference, color, or promotion using EDI. Then I e-mailed the catalogs once or twice a week. I assisted the South American sales department, and I was surprised that it was a really big market, and my supervisor was the best salesperson in my company. There are two major jewelry shows, which are held in Las Vegas every summer and winter. During this season, staff was busy selecting the products, displaying them on boards, and packaging everything for travel. I was sad that I couldn't go to the show, but I was excited to



help. Sometimes, I helped the Texas sales department, too, but there the preferred style was entirely different, and then I could understand the reason they separated the design for Texas and other states and countries. Sales couldn't excite me, but I could learn a lot of things about the American jewelry market and styles. Besides, unlike Korea where the people usually work overtime at night, I could finish work at 6 o'clock, and then I could attend jewelry making classes at FIT (Fashion Institution of Technology) and SVA (School of Visual Arts). I was happy and excited that I could live in New York, a diverse and fast paced city, and I studied

at famous fashion schools. It was a bonus that I could visit any museums and galleries on the weekend.

After the one-year experience as an intern, I found a position in a jewelry design. The boss recognized my previous experience as a sales person and adopted me as a jewelry designer. I was lucky because I entered the company as a main designer. Besides, my boss trusted me, and I happily worked as a designer every day. Finally, my boss gave me a chance to go to the Las Vegas trade show that summer; it was just four months after I had entered the company. After that, I designed and made some jewelry that became a big hit, and I became much happier working there.



Twenty months was not a long time to work, but it was a good experience. It helped me realize my dream and decide on my future career even if the language and my young child are a barrier. When I decided to move to New York, I was a little afraid even though I had self-confidence, but now I know it was the best choice in my life. My effort to make my dream come true continues while I collect trends and design and manufacture products when I have time. In this vacation, I'll contact my teacher, who has taught me how to make a jewelry in Korea, and send him pictures of my designs to make samples. Also, I keep hoping that I'll create my own brand someday.

### **The Beauty of the Hanbok**

This is the Korean traditional clothing, Hanbok. There are many types, and they vary by occasion, age, gender, and season. The hanbok has a straight line and a few curves in the patterns. The hanbok that I am wearing in the picture is for brides. The color combination for the bridal hanbok is traditionally a green top and red skirt. The red color of the dress represents the glaring sun on a beautiful summer day. The texture of the hanbok, which is made from silk, is as soft as cotton candy. The skirt is like a floating balloon. The length of the top, Jeogori, can be different, but it is usually short. In my case, I'm tall, so I extended the length of the Jeogori for proportion and in order not to show underwear when I raise my arms. Because of the wide and wrapped skirt, it feels like I am wearing nothing. However, I should consider whether the underskirt is exposed or not when I move. In the past, Korean people wore a cotton Hanbok in their daily life, but now, they only wear the silk hanbok for special occasions or on holidays.



# ZIFENG SU

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My name is **Zifeng Su**; I am 30 years old. My family lives in China, and I have a younger brother, who is still in high school in my home town. I am from Baishai City, which is in northeast China. Right now, I am at BHC to study because I want to be an engineer in the future, but I have to learn English first because I am new here. I would really like to hear from you if you have your own story to share with me.

## The Spring Festival

The Spring Festival, Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year, is the most important festival for Chinese people all over because it is a big event in our country. Not only in China, but in other Asian countries like Singapore, Indonesia and Korea, people also celebrate the Spring Festival.

All family members gather together on the New Year's Eve, the night before New Year's, to have a big meal. A big family party is held to celebrate it, and the most popular food is dumplings, which are supposed to bring good fortune. At the same time, everyone celebrates together. At midnight, parents and children in every city light fire crackers, and we watch the fireworks excitedly.

On the first early morning of the new year, many senior citizens get up early and hang the reversed Fu, a reversed Chinese character, or hang some verses on the front door, and some houses' windows are covered in red paper, which means good luck in the new year in Chinese culture. This tradition comes from a story about a monster, named Fu. My grandparents told me that this happened thousands of years ago in China. When the New Year Day was coming, the monster Fu would come to every family to grab food for himself, and he ate all kinds of animals, so the kids were very scared of him, but one day, people found out that Fu could not see anything with the color red; that is why when the New Year Day is coming, we still write the reversed Fu on red paper and stick it on the door and windows of our houses.



The Chinese New Year Celebration lasts fifteen days. So during the fifteen days, we always visit our relatives and go from door to door. However, nowadays this part is often being replaced by short messages and greetings sent by some people. During this time, children are the happiest because they get many red packets, red colored envelopes with money; from their parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and so on. The last day of the Chinese New Year is another festival, named the Lantern Festival; every street would be decorated with colorful lights, and the Chinese New Year Celebration comes to the end.

When I was a child, I dreamed that every day would be New Year's Day because it was my most favorite festival and I would get red packets, fire crackers and parties for fifteen days, and additionally, I didn't go to school at that time because the Department of Education gave us a long break to celebrate our special holiday, so we can see how important the Spring Festival is for the Chinese people.

My classmates asked me what is the difference between Christmas and the Spring Festival. Christmas arouses increasing attention year by year in China. Christmas greeting cards have become popular with students, and people like to hold parties and exchange Christmas greeting cards or gifts. A lot of TV and radio programs about Christmas are on. Meanwhile, the Spring Festival is becoming less appealing to youngsters. Thus, some people wonder if Christmas will replace the Spring Festival. This worry is fairly unnecessary. Why? One reason is that Christmas only affects Christians in China; only young people, students and some foreigners like to celebrate it. Another reason is that Christmas is mostly celebrated in the cities in China. In contrast, the Spring Festival is the most influential traditional festival in every family. I think that is natural exchange with the West, and a lot of Western holidays have been gradually introduced in China. For centuries Chinese have observed this traditional holiday to welcome the beginning of a year. We will treasure the Spring Festival forever.



#### **A Story about the Spring Festival**

I am going to tell you a short story about the origin of the Spring Festival, the Chinese New Year. Usually, we celebrate it in February, but nobody knows the reason behind the Spring Festival. There is a very ancient story about our festival that my grandfather told me when I was seven years old. Thousands of years ago, there was an ugly scary monster, named *New Year*, living on the earth. Every year in February, *New Year* would be walking around to every house to look for foods, but when the little kids saw the monster, they were very scared because *New Year* looked like a beast, so people had to think of a solution for this problem. They were thinking of it over and over; finally, they had an idea of how to deal with *New Year*. They started preparing food for *New Year* in February when it would be coming soon, and they also set up a lot of firecrackers around their houses. When *New Year* was close-up, they fired up those fire crackers in order to scare it, so thousands of years later, the Chinese people still do this every February. That is how the Spring Festival started.

# SOPHORN BECHTEL

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My name is **Sophorn Bechtel**, and I am from Cambodia. I am 49 years old, and I attended Moline High School. My goals are to get better at reading and writing. I have been married for twenty-four years, and I have three children, two boys and one girl. My hope and dream is to do well in English, and I hope to go to nursing school.



## Living with the Bingham's: My American Family

The Bingham's are very special and unique, and I call them "my American family." They sponsored my whole family through Catholic Social Services to come here to the US in 1981. Because of the Khmer Rouge, we were forced to flee from our country of Cambodia to escape a genocide that killed over 1 million people. We made our way to the Thai border, then to Indonesia, finally finding refuge in the US. The first day we got here, Una Bingham, who worked for Catholic Social Services, found us a home and bought us groceries and other items to get us on our feet.



My mother was very sick even before we came to the US. We lived in a little yellow house on Fifth Avenue in Moline until my mother passed away in 1982. Things became difficult for us, and my father decided that we should move to Stockton, California to be nearer to other Cambodians. While we were living in Stockton, it was very difficult for all of us. My father was not able to take care of five of us while we were living in California. I cried every day because it was like living in a prison. I hated there so much that I wrote a letter to my American family asking for all of us to live with them. My dad Pum decided to send only my sister Sophiny and me, keeping my other three siblings with him. We came to live with them in 1983, and I was 16 years old and my sister Sophiny was 15. The next summer Terry Bingham and my father agreed to allow the rest of my siblings to come to Coal Valley and live with the Bingham family. I owe the Bingham's for their generosity and big heart: they provided a roof over our heads, supported us in our education and shared the American holiday traditions with us.

We used to live in Coal Valley in a great big white house. Eventually, we all moved to Moline. We lived with their three natural children and a total of twelve foster and adopted children from many countries. There were fifteen of us all together at that time, and we ate at two long tables at breakfast, lunch, and dinner time. We shared chores and did everything together as a family. They took us to church every Sunday and had devotions every morning before school. We shared bathrooms, clothes, jewelry, and we also braided each other's hair.



My American family greatly supported my siblings and me with our education. They helped us with difficult homework in math, English, and science every night. It was very difficult for us because we didn't speak English at the time. They hired tutors to help us with reading, cursive hand writing, and algebra. My siblings and I participated in sports and academic activities with their encouragement. My sister and I played softball, and I enjoyed the bowling team in school, and my brother played football and soccer. My siblings and I had everyday struggles with speaking and understanding the English language. We also had difficulty sharing our feelings because we had been taught not to talk back. We were frustrated many times when they wanted us to share our feelings, but Cambodian culture does not encourage dialogue. My American family also shared their holiday traditions with us. At the beginning, they told my siblings and me we had to come to live with them before Christmas. We gladly came as they requested. My siblings and I came to stay with them in December of 1983. It was Christmas day when we arrived to be with them. The American family was very happy to see my siblings and me. It was the first time that I ever met Santa Claus, who wore a red outfit and a white long



beard, like a polar bear in the snow. It was chaotic and noisy with so many presents being opened as music played and people talked, and we appreciated the gifts we received. We were given new clothes and items we would need to live here. There were a lot of presents under the tree, and the love we felt was overwhelming. I loved the Christmas tree lights. They twinkled and were as bright as daylight. There were beautiful decorations all over the house; the tree garland lights and ornaments, with an angle figurine on the top Christmas tree. We learned about new foods and smells like

chocolate chip cookies and roasted turkey. We learned to enjoy Christmas with a really big family. With our family combined, it made the Bingham's family even bigger.

I liked Thanksgiving with my American family. They would prepare ham baked with brown sugar, and sweet yellow pineapple. Their oldest daughter would bake three golden crust apple pies. We would take turns around the table, sharing how thankful we were for what we had. Again, it was a time we gathered with the larger family and filled the house with extended family, the Bingham children and all of the foster children.

Easter was another joyous time for my American family. My siblings and I cooked dozens of eggs and dipped them in red, blue, and yellow coloring dye. At night, while we were sleeping, my American parents hid the eggs all over the house, the laundry room, living room, and in the kitchen. In the morning, we searched throughout the house to find them all. They were delicious with salt and black pepper. We were given candy, and then we dressed in our Sunday best and went to the Easter services at our church. I loved the soft pastels of Easter time and the hope of spring and new life.



The Bingham's are my American family, who have always been there for my siblings and me. Some of my siblings did not see eye to eye with them on every matter, and we had our share of problems, but I will always be thankful for their support and for giving me and my family shelter, education and the American holiday traditions. I would not be the person I am without the Bingham's and the love they shared with all of us.

### **Egg Rolls and Banchau**

I don't know what you would call it, a tradition or a party. My siblings and I get together at least twice a year. We are a very close-knit family, and we like to eat when we are together. Unfortunately, some of my siblings live very far away from here, but when we get together, there are a few dishes that we like to cook: egg rolls and "banchau" (a crepe with bean sprouts and flavored ground meat).

For the egg rolls, it takes longer for me to prepare them. First, I shred the carrots by hand and soak the rice noodles in warm water, drain them, and then mix them with ground pork. A way to help with the taste is the seasonings that I use: soy sauce, salt, black pepper and garlic salt. Then I roll them in a thin square rice sheet that comes in a package of twelve. Next, I warm oil on medium heat for ten minutes, and then I drop them individually in the hot oil. Then I keep an eye on them until they turn golden brown. In order to accommodate for a healthier diet, I serve them with rice and add fresh cucumber, and we dip them in sweet and sour sauce.

The second dish, banchau, is tricky because I have to mix flour, coconut milk and water precisely; otherwise, the banchau will not stick or hold together when I cook them. I spread oil in the frying pan, pour the batter and after the crepe is set, we add seasoned ground pork with fresh bean sprouts, and fold them together. I serve banchau with fresh mint, cucumber, cilantro, lettuce and dip them in fish sauce.

These are two dishes my siblings and I enjoy cooking for friends and family. They are savory and very popular with our children also. We like to give egg rolls as gifts and even sell them to raise money.

# SUI SUNG

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My name is **Sui Sung**, and I'm from Burma, which is also known as Myanmar. I'm married, and I have two kids, one boy and one girl. My family and I have been living in the U.S. for seven years now. I have four brothers and two sisters. My eldest brother still lives in my country, and the rest of my siblings live in the U.S. I enjoy spending time with my family, and my hobbies are reading, watching movies, cooking new recipes, and being with family and friends. I graduated from Monywa University in Myanmar, and now I'm continuing my education at BHC.

## My Beautiful Village

Have you ever visited a place where there is no transportation? When I was 15, I visited my grandfather in the village of Phaipha, which was a total of 70 households. I felt like I was in a different world. Phaipha was totally different from the city of Kalaymyo where I lived growing up. Even though I had heard a lot about my grandfather's village from my parents, everything was a big surprise. The village of Phaipha in Myanmar had many good experiences waiting for my family when we visited my grandfather. During my visit I was fascinated by the beauty of the village, the day to day lives of the villagers and how the villagers survive without technology.



Our adventure started by riding a big traveling bus from my home town Kalaymyo. The ride took two days to a town called Hakha, which is the capital city for the state of Chin. There is no transportation from Hakha to my grandfather's village, so I walked with my family for two more days to reach my grandfather's village of Phaipha. On the first day of walking, we started at five o'clock in the morning and walked until it was dark. It was not easy to walk all day. We had to walk through a narrow pathway, but we did see many interesting things on our journey. The view of nature and the wild flowers were as beautiful as the New York Botanical Garden in autumn. We could hear the birds singing, and we enjoyed the perfect weather of the forest, so we did not realize that we were tired. Before we arrived in my grandfather's village, we stayed one night in a small village called Sakta. On the next day, we continued our journey, and we arrived at my grandfather's village late that night. My grandparents, uncles, aunts, and other family members were waiting to welcome us. They were very happy and excited to see us since it was our first visit to my grandfather's village. We stayed in the small village of Phaipha for one month.



The beauty of nature makes the village a paradise. The village is as small as my childhood home, but there are many wonderful places to enjoy around the village. The village houses are built in the farm fields, and are as

beautiful as the flowers blooming in the spring. The fields are full of tall grass and wildflowers with beautiful fragrance. The wooded areas have tall pine trees that provide a cool area for the animals to graze and for wild berries to be picked. There is usually a stream close by with cool running water.

The people of Phaipha are content with their simple life and survive by using the natural resources in this small village. They don't have any electricity, so firewood is used in place of electricity. There are a lot of pine trees in the village, so they use the wood from the pine trees for their firewood. None of the village houses have running water, so baths are taken outside of the house. A normal day for the villagers involves going to the farm land every day. They walk at least 2 hours a day, and when they return home from caring for their animals or from working in their field of crops, they take a bath and eat dinner. The villagers do not appear to have a lot of stress like the people in the city. They all work hard, but they don't complain about their life. Their life is busy providing food and taking care of their most basic needs. A few of the villagers move to the city in hopes of an easier life, but most villagers are satisfied with their life in the small village of Phaipha.



The villagers survive without modern technology. They eat organic food every day, and they walk about two hours. They even have their own homemade traditional brewed drink, which is made of red millet. This beverage is a type of alcohol, but it is not mixed with any chemical substances. As a result, people in this village are very healthy. Furthermore, there are no hospitals or clinics in the village. It is rare for the villagers to get sick, and they seldom if ever go to the hospital or clinic. However, when they have a serious health problem or need surgery, they have to go to the nearest city. Most villagers can't afford the travel or the cost of hospital care. As a result, if they have a serious health problem, they sadly often have to wait to die. Village women do not go to the hospital to give birth, and all women in this village give birth at home. Even though there is no new modern technology in this village, there are many benefits to living there because the natural resources bring the villagers a healthy and happy life. However, I also noticed that the lack of modern technology can have a negative impact. In this village, the tools they use for farming are very old fashioned. They don't have any modern technology for farming, so all the work is done manually. They farm using traditional methods. They still use animals especially cows, for plowing. The rest of the farming process, including planting and harvesting, is done by the villagers. Life in the village is not easy. All the work is done by hand. Additionally, there are no agricultural exports because there is no technology for farming or harvesting. Unfortunately there is no opportunity for the villagers to get ahead financially by farming.

To sum it up, if you have a chance to go to Myanmar, I would really recommend that you go to this small village called Phaipha. You will have many enjoyable experiences during your visit. If you are a fan of hiking and love nature, you will definitely enjoy visiting Phaipha. You can also experience their traditional food, drinks, and exotic culture. You will be fully fascinated by the beauty of the village, the villagers' day to day life, and how the villagers' survive without using modern technology.



### **Traditional Chin Wine (Zupu)**

In Chin state, the most famous beverage is called Zupu, which is a kind of alcoholic beverage made from millet seeds. However, it can be made with any grains, like rice or corn. First, the rice (or whichever grain you would like to make with) is cooked, and it is allowed to cool down for a while. After that, yeast is added and mixed properly. Then, it is put into a clay pot and sealed tightly. This is the process to prepare the wine, but the wine needs fermentation, at least one month. Some people put it away for many years without opening it to get the best quality of wine. The longer the fermentation time, the better the wine will be. When it is ready to be opened, the seal is broken and water is added to the pot. Then, we put a straw into it and drink through the straw. The taste is amazing, and it is an important cultural beverage in our Chin state. I would say that you should try it once if you go to our Chin state.



# TLANG K PAR

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My name is **Tlang K Par**, and I am twenty years old. I was born in the Chin state in Myanmar, which is located in Southeast Asia. I came to the United States with my parents in 2010. I have one brother and two sisters. I am taking the ESL program to improve my English, and I have two goals that I want to accomplish in my life. My first goal is to finish the ESL program and transfer to another college or university and pursue my major in International Economics. My second goal is to go to a Bible college and become a missionary. So I can't decide yet, which one I should go for, and I am still praying. In my free time, I love reading about religion, playing guitar, drawing cartoons, and making videos.



## First Time Coming to America

Have you ever lived in a foreign country? When I was younger, I never actually imagined myself coming to America, but things changed. In 2010, I flew from Myanmar to the Quad Cities. I remember being very nervous and scared. When I came here, I didn't speak English, which made me feel even more uncomfortable. Residing in a different country that has a different climate, language, and culture, has been an adventure for me.

First, the weather conditions in the U.S. and Myanmar are very distinct. Myanmar has a tropical monsoon climate, so we don't have snow like the U.S. does. Although it was April when I arrived in the U.S. and the snow had already melted, it was still cold for me because I was used to a warmer climate. I still remember feeling cold because when I came to the U.S., I didn't have any coats to wear. I only had a light jacket with me. My first time seeing snow was in November. I was amused and delighted. I felt like I was in another world because I never thought that I would see snow in real life. I was excited to see snow up close, and touch it with my hand, so I went outside. During that time, I saw a couple of kids trying to slide down a hill



using a snow sled. I felt like it was a dream because I had only seen snow in movies before, so I pinched myself, but I could feel the pain. It was another adventure for me. Moreover, the U.S. time zones are opposite from Myanmar's time zones. For example, when it is night-time in the U.S., in Myanmar it's daytime. So it took me about one month to get used to these different conditions because during the day I felt sleepy and at night I felt wide awake.

Second, four months after I arrived in the U.S., I registered at Rock Island High School. English wasn't my primary language. The first day of school was like watching a suspense movie because I had to change classes for each period and had no idea where to go. Everything was different and new to me because I had never had to move from classroom to classroom in my country. During class, I sat alone, and I didn't understand what

the teacher was talking about. I felt like I was going crazy; all I could hear was a buzzing noise like a bee, which was people speaking English. I was afraid that the teacher would ask me a question; during that time, all I could think about was getting out of school. Learning English as a second language was not as easy as I expected. Before I came to the U.S., I thought I would be able to speak English fluently after six months of living here, but suddenly, I felt like I would be learning English for the rest of my life. However, a few days later, I met Mr. Anthony McConnell, an ESL teacher at Rock Island High School. I stayed after school for help, and he taught me English; as time passed by I could say a few words in English.

Finally, as I live longer in the United States, I see the differences in American culture. Something that impressed me about this culture was that they celebrate Halloween. I still remember my first year of school at Rocky. In my English class, my teacher asked us to write about Halloween. During that time, I was confused and did not know what to write about because in my country we had never celebrated Halloween or even heard of it. When the bell rang, I went to another class; in the hallway, I saw some students wearing weird costumes, and some had weird makeup on their face, which amazed me even more. I asked myself, "Why are people dressed crazy or dressed like ghosts?" I had no idea and was still confused, but when class started, my teacher explained it to me, and I felt more comfortable. I went home, and that night of Halloween while I was studying in my room, I heard the doorbell ring; I opened the door, and I saw children dressed up in costumes with jack-o-lanterns. They said, "Trick or treat!" Again, I was surprised to see children in costumes, and I did not know that I was supposed to give them candy. I called my sister, and she gave them candy; then they left. That day was one of the most remarkable days in my life. Another part of the culture that astounded me was how many opportunities American women have. For example, here in the U.S., both men and women go to work while in my country it is more common for a woman to stay at home and take care of the kids. Also, in my country, women have to ask for consent from their husbands if they want to work.



To sum up, living in the United States is not as easy as I thought, especially when the language, climate, and culture are different. But, nowadays, my English has improved a lot since I came here, but I still have trouble when I talk to the American people. I still need to learn more English so that I can speak English fluently. Also, sometimes to live with different weather conditions is still hard for me because I am not used to cold weather; however, I feel more comfortable than when I first came here. Moreover, even if I live here for a long time, it is not easy for me to adapt to American culture because most of the time I spend my time with Burmese people.

**A POEM**

**SEMNAK LAIRAM**

Semnak Lairam means My Motherland Lairam.

I love, respect and value my Motherland.

I will stand up and defend it with all costs.

I will never forsake it. This land is my land.

It belongs to my forefathers and to me.

I will never give it up to any other people on earth because it is the land where my first blood dropped on its soil when I was born from my Mother's womb.

I will defend it with my life, sweat and blood.

I will defend it and never give it up until I die.

This is my duty.

By- Anonymous

# OUR SIDE OF THE STORY

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# OUR SIDE OF THE STORY



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