

ESL NEWSLETTER

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Experiences in the USA

by: Sassou Koffi Akakpo

The United States of America is a wonderful land where experiences and dreams differ from one individual to another. From all over the world, most immigrants' expectations before coming into the USA are unrealistic. They think that America is the land where



anyone can begin a new life, earn a good salary and drive big cars as soon as they start working in the land of Uncle Sam, but this is not the case all the time. Indeed, everyone can start a new life here in the

States as soon as his or her documents are delivered, but gaining sudden fame and money is a long story. As far as I am concerned, my experiences and dreams in America have been both positive and negative.

Indeed my positive experiences began as soon as I came in America. My friends, Kossi Ayikey and Kwami Dansou helped me to settle down. Those friends were Togolese mates who lived in the USA before I came here. They offered me a place to live in and shared their food with me. They helped me with transportation until I was able to find a job at Tyson Fresh Foods (IBP) in Joslin, Illinois. They even helped me with a loan for my car by cosigning the paperwork. Add to that, they helped me to bring my wife to the USA, find an apartment, and begin my life here.

Apart from the Togolese friends, I met some Americans who helped me too. Some of them gave me kitchen utensils, a bed, blankets, shoes, and armchairs to begin my new life. Others gave me advice which enabled me to boost my integration without big trouble.

But one afternoon during the month of August, I went to Wal-Mart with my three year old daughter. Unfortunately, she was sleeping

when we reached the supermarket. I love her so much and do not like to bother her when she sleeps. I thought that she would be fine because in my home country of Togo, people leave their children inside their car without any consequence at all. But by the time I came back from the supermarket, law enforcement agents were searching my car. As soon as they saw me, they asked me if the car and the child belonged to me. My affirmative answer was the beginning of my problems in the USA. They arrested me and brought me to the Rock Island county jail where I spent almost two hours before some Togolese friends came and paid the bail for me. The police released me but told me to come to the Court House the following Monday.

Consequently, I went through sorrow and worries. For instance, I could hardly sleep during the night when I was asked to appear in court. I was under extreme stress. All my attention was focused on this event. Add to that, I could not eat because I was so scared and so lonely. Fortunately, I found psychological and emotional support with Black Hawk College's counselor: Cristina Greene. What she did for me was priceless because no one else spoke more friendly and patiently to me than she did since I had arrived in the U.S. She understood me like a mother used to being with her favorite son. It was like fresh air for me in this difficult situation. First, she gave me some clues – I mean background information- to help me understand the American culture and why the laws and rules governing child care is so severe upon those who unknowingly or unwittingly leave their child inside their cars.

She helped me a lot. For instance, she assisted me psychologically by telling me to be



strong, patient with my wife and daughter in order to handle everything perfectly. Her advice encouraged me and showed me that I was not alone.

Moreover, Cristina voluntarily came to the court to support me physically. Her presence enhanced my morale mood, and I answered correctly the questions of the judge with patience and humility. After several appearances in the court, the final decision was made by the judge. He gave me one full year of court supervision. I thought everything was finished but the Department of Children and Family Services brought another case against me. This time, the punishment was very heavy on me. They will keep this case "open" for five long years. They said that if I would not do anything wrong during this period they would dismiss every charge against me. Indeed, this traumatic situation was very harmful for my mood and my nuclear family because we are new immigrants in this country. I think that we do not deserve all these problems with the law because most of immigrants are not aware of every single rule and law in this country. So it would be very helpful for future immigrants to know the rules and laws in use in a country before they go over there. Therefore, the American Embassies abroad should try to help future immigrants figure out which laws are necessary for those immigrants. It would be a very good experience for them to know in advance some of the laws before coming here.

Just as the United States is very wide, experiences of immigrants are very different. Indeed, I interviewed other ESL students who have had different and sometimes frustrating experiences. I interviewed Oumar Coulibaly, who is from Senegal. He is a Muslim, and he used to pray five times per day. During Ramadan, he could not eat the right food when he finished the fasting period because it is not available and if it is, it is so expensive. Also Oumar could not find a right place to slaughter the goat necessary for the final sacrifice. Muslims, like my friend Oumar, cannot kill a goat like the Muslim religion requires them to do because most of them live in tiny apartments and their landlords will not allow them to do so, whereas they could do this in their home country.

Meanwhile, this is the case of another ESL student I had interviewed too. Her name is Martha Ramirez. She came to the US when



she was sixteen years old. She spent thirteen years in California and seven years here in Moline. Still, she feels very alone in the USA even if she lives with her parents. She misses her friends who lived in Mexico. Her only problem is that she wants to go back to Mexico in order to stay with her close friends. Meanwhile, she likes her work in the U.S.A. and cannot leave it.

To sum up, I would say that experiences are very different from one individual to another. Mine are both positive and negative because I met wonderful people who helped me during and after my coming to the U.S. Moreover I had a troublesome experience with the American rules about the child care, which taught me that one should know the basic rules and laws in a country before he immigrates to any particular state. On the contrary, some ESL students like Oumar Coulibaly and Martha Ramirez have more pleasant experiences in the land of Uncle Sam even if they still miss their friends and family members who still live in their country.



Culture Stereotypes

by: *Lillian J. Lara*

Some people think because I am Mexican I used to wear a long skirt and a colorful blouse while I was living in Mexico. One day, when I was in high school, a North American girl asked me, "How do Mexicans usually dress?" I said, "Mexicans dress just like you do." She told me that she thought that Mexicans usually wear big hats and boots. When I heard that I felt a little disappointed, but then I explained to her that just like here in the U.S in some places like Texas people wear a hat and boots but that doesn't mean that all Mexicans wear them. In my hometown, people dress like city people. I also told her that in Mexico there are a variety of people: city people, indigenous people and ranchers. I didn't want to be mean to her because I also used to think that all Americans usually wore tennis shoes, long shorts and t-shirts. It is easy to stereotype other cultures or countries from what you see in movies,



magazines, TV and books. Stereotypes can help to make a picture of other countries even if you have never been there because can help you to understand other cultures.

Ayako Hirai, my classmate who is from Japan, had some experiences about dress stereotypes with a friend of hers who is an American. This North American girl asked her if she used to wear the "kimono" when she went to school. Ayako told me that at first she laughed.



The American girl thought that Japanese people usually dressed in the kimono and the samurai which are traditional Japanese clothing. Ayako explained to the American girl that Japanese only wear those clothes on special celebrations like when Ayako wore for the coming of age ceremony. However like me, Ayako didn't feel bad about the comment of the American girl because Ayako said that she used to think in stereotypes about other cultures. Besides, Ayako thought that Africans usually do not wear any clothes in their daily lives. She thought that Africans lived in tribes, and they hunted animals for survival. Just like her American friend, Ayako was brave and asked an African friend about her doubts. Ayako used to think that about Africa because she saw a program on TV about this country. She said, "It is easy to believe in what you see on TV and in the theaters."



To know more about cultural stereotypes, I interviewed Monica Salas, who is from Ecuador. She had other experiences about how other people think that Hispanic girls prepare for the future when they grow up and became adults. She remembers a North American lady who told her that Hispanic girls usually do not go to school because they just expect to grow up and get married, have many children and then wait for the husbands to pay the bills. When Monica heard that she felt disappointed and angry. She thought that it was normal that other people think in that way



about Hispanic girls; however, she explained to the American lady that Hispanic girls used to think like that a long time ago, but now there are many Hispanics that want to be independent and pay their own bills. In addition, Hispanic girls are educated to

be part of a family because some Hispanics think that the concept of family is very important and if you decide to get married, it is because you can take care of it, and it is part of the beliefs of the culture. Monica said that it will be hard to change this stereotype that other people think about Hispanic girls, but it is not impossible. The times are changing, so the stereotypes will change with the time.

Sarah Powell, a North America girl who is a student in Black Hawk College, told me that she heard that other cultures stereotype the USA like a rude country. For example, she



heard that North American people do not care about elderly people. Sarah thinks that it is not because they do not care, but it is because they are trained to be independent. The older people usually do not like others to help them because they will feel useless. In addition, when the older people feel that they will need help, they prefer to go to a nursing home because they do not want to bother their family. Sarah's grandmother is living in the house with her family, but her grandmother is a person who can do everything by herself and maybe in the future if her grandmother gets sick, Sarah thinks that her grandmother will prefer to go to a home. It is because she wants to. It will be her grandmother's decision. Sarah told me that she would not like to be put in a nursing home, but she does not know what will happen in the future.

In conclusion, I think people should not judge others by what they see or hear. Even if we make stereotypes of other cultures, we should look and inform ourselves about what is true and what is not because we can be wrong and offend other people. Each country is different, and I think this is what this life is about. Making stereotypes about other cultures is not bad when you do not offend others. What stereotypes do you have about other cultures? If they are not true, try to find out the truth! You will be fascinated!





Does Islam Oppress Woman?

by: Oumar Coulibaly

Recently, I have read an article from a local newspaper in which Muslim women have been depicted as if they were brutally oppressed in Islamic countries in general. At the end of my reading, I felt a shock because so many fallacies have been written about our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. As a young Muslim man, I found it necessary to grab a pen and a piece of paper to enlighten some minds that still do not understand the part women play in Islamic societies. I would like, therefore, to request the readers for the shake of fairness and objectivity as they approach this article to try to clear their mind of any preconceptions they may have about Muslim women and Islam.



The media often shows or makes us believe that in the Islamic faith women are oppressed, and people start linking three words: Islam, woman and oppression. They think that Islam commands oppressing women. In fact, Islam condemns oppression of any kind towards women. The first reference the article mentioned as a sign of oppression is the veil Muslim women wear. It is wrong to think that the veil is a sign of oppression. By covering their head, Muslim women try to fulfill a religious commandment dictated by our Lord and Creator. The Qur'an is the sacred book by which Muslims live. This book was revealed fourteen centuries ago to Muhammad, a man, who would later become the prophet of Islam. In its surah (Arabic for chapter) thirty three, entitled "Al Ahzab" (Arabic for the Clans), on verse fifty-nine it says: "O prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw cloaks all over their bodies. That will be better as they shall be known (as free respectable women) and will not be annoyed and Allah (God) is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful." This verse of the Holy Qur'an shows that Islam makes wearing

the "hijab" necessary. "Hijab" is the word used for covering, not only the headscarves (as many people may think) but also wearing loose clothes that are not too bright. By covering themselves, Muslim women try to be modest, but it is not a sign of oppression. In fact, Christian nuns cover their heads out of modesty. Also when we see frequent pictures of the Virgin Mary, she is covering her head out of modesty. Therefore, Muslim are doing the exact same thing as righteous Christian women. In the Holy Bible, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle, Paul, writes in 11:6-10: "For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. For this reason, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head because of the angels."

These two verses also show how important it is for true believers whether they are Muslims or Christians to have their heads covered.



In addition, it is also said that there is unequal treatment between men and women in Muslim countries. This statement is also wrong. In Islamic belief it is openly declared that the souls of men and women are equal. They will be bestowed the same obligations as well as the same rewards. If in spirituality men and women are equal, in fact, physically males and females are different. And according to the apostle Paul, women have been created by God to please man, not the reverse. From that point, men are to lead women. Men are the head of women. And for example, let us see what the Holy Bible says about that. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes in 11:3: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." My choices of these quotes from the Holy Bible can be explained by the fact that many people do not believe the Holy Qur'an to be revealed by God to prophet of Islam. Like men, women get economic independence. The money they bring into marriage is theirs as well as the money they earn. In Islam, a woman has the right to be educated, contrary to what the contemporary world might think. They also have the right to vote for the choice of the leader of their nations. If Islam allowed women to vote fourteen hundred years ago, it is only recently in 1920 that the US women started to vote.

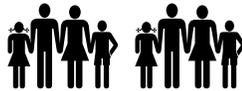
Muslim women got rights before Western women got any. Islam is a religion that holds woman in high regard. I think that sometimes people fail to distinguish between culture and religion; two things that are completely different. Long ago in Arabia, in the birth place



of Islam, when baby boys were born, they brought great joy to the family. Girls brought less and occasionally none.

Actually, girls were hated so much that they were sometimes buried alive. Islam was always against this female infanticide. People also fail to distinguish between politics and Islam. As I have already mentioned above, women have the right to be educated and to practice a profession. But in some Muslim countries like Afghanistan, when the Taliban was leading, they forbade females to leave their homes for work. Islam did not command the Taliban to treat women like they did; in fact, they were only oppressing women in the name of their political way of ruling.

Islam is a religion that honors women. Covering their heads is not a sign of oppression, but it is a divine obligation they respect. Oppression is condemned in this faith, and there is no room for masculine favoritism.



What I Miss about Home

by: Ai Gohda

I was an exchange student almost three years ago in Davenport, IA. From that experience, I had great time, appreciated staying there and loved to stay there, but because of staying in the U.S, I have learned lots of things about Japan such as how important my family and my friend are for me, and how much I love Japanese food.

Since I came to the U.S, it has been 7 months. During this time, many people have asked me, "Don't you miss your country?"



Each time I say, "Of course, yes." I miss my hometown, Osaka, Japan, which is always crowded with people and cars; there are lots of tall buildings like in

Chicago. I also miss my family, my friends and Japanese food.

First, I miss my parents, my older brother and my younger sister a lot. My family is a very cheerful and joyful family. My father is 168cm tall and has black hair and a brown complexion that gets suntan when he plays softball every Sunday. My mom has long dark brown hair, and she is slender. She likes shopping and playing softball as well; moreover, the best thing about my mom is that she is really good at cooking. My older brother is 178cm tall and is kind of big guy. Although he likes to fish and to play sports on weekends, he never gets suntan, so he has a white complexion and brown eyes. In contrast, my younger sister has a really dark brown complexion like my dad due to running outside every after school. She joined in the field and track team at her junior high school. Sometimes we practice softball together in the park because everybody in my family has played it.

Having a tight relationship, my family tends to stay together a lot.

When I came home from school, my mom was always at home in the kitchen that was filled with fantastic enticing aromas as she was preparing for supper. Even if I came home first, I could soon find my mom or my brother, who came home from shopping or work, but here in the U.S, I always come home to an empty house with no enticing aromas. I'm used to it, but sometimes I feel really lonely.



Mealtime was always a special time in my family. I always ate breakfast and dinner with them. While we were eating, we usually talked about what we are going to

do for the day, and how the day was. My sister always talked about her club, track and field. She loves to run, so she always talked about that. I usually talked about what I did at school and with friends. Because of these times, we could know each other more and more.

On the other hand, in the U.S, I eat by myself, and there is nobody to talk to about what I'm going to do or how I did at school. There are only my plate and I in the living room. I feel sad especially when I don't feel



good. Unfortunately, mealtime is not a special time in the U.S.

Secondly, I miss my friends, especially my best friend, Mami. Three years ago, we met at a part-time job that we worked at as



waitresses in the restaurant that is located near her house. She is older than I am, has a white complexion and has a long brown hair that she

curls everyday. She is fashionable and friendly; she likes to wear black or pastel color clothes and jeans or black pants; moreover, she decorates her nails neatly. She smiles a lot and always cares about others; she hates any kind of sports but loves shopping.

I can tell her everything about me, and she tells me about her. If each of us was happy about something we shared our happiness, for example, when I had a really good day, I saw a really nice looking guy or I got extra money, I always told her about it. We shared everything. If each of us was angry about something, such as about family, friends, work or boyfriend, we talked about it and got rid of our stress. If each of us had a problem, we talked about it and gave advice to each other to try to solve problems.

For instance, one day when I picked up the telephone, I heard her angry voice. She said, "My boss was really mean to me today. He was mad at me even though I didn't do anything bad. I think he just took out his anger on me because he wasn't feeling good today. That really annoys me!" I

listened to all her story and gave her some advice,

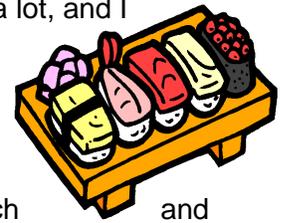
"Bosses are humans, and sometimes they can't control their emotions. What he did to you was really bad and I'm sure you don't feel good about that, but why don't you forgive him this time." Then she calmed down and got rid of her anger. Beyond that, we went shopping together and went out to eat a lot. We like to go to an ice cream store, which is called 31(thirty one), which has many kinds of ice cream like Whitey's



Thirdly, I miss Japanese food the most. People may ask why I'm missing Japanese food more than my family and my friends. The reason is I can talk on the phone or send e-

mail or letters to my family and my friends, and it doesn't cost much, but I can't eat authentic Japanese food that I really want to eat. In Iowa and Illinois, the Japanese restaurants, do not serve real Japanese food.

My family can send me some Japanese food via plane, but it costs a lot, and I don't think anybody can bring food that my mom cooked for me. That is why I miss Japanese food the most.



Japanese food has rich and varied tastes. We eat many kinds of vegetables, not just tomatoes, lettuce, onions and carrots like in the U.S.; besides those vegetables, we always eat spinach, pumpkin, eggplant, lotus root, cucumber and cabbage.

We also eat meats, seafood (squid, octopus, shrimp, fish and clams) fruit, rice and noodles everyday. Foreign food like Chinese food and Italian food are also available. Their taste is much better in Japan than in the U.S. because they are not oily and greasy.

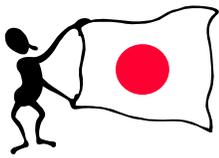
Japanese noodles are my favorite food. I miss "udon," "ra-men" and "soba." "Udon" is white, flat and round. The noodles aren't thin like pasta. We dip them in special soup when we eat them cold, and but we can also eat them with hot soup.

"Ra-men" has yellow color like pasta and has many kinds of taste: soy sauce, salt, miso and soup from pork bone. We usually put the noodles in the hot soup with seaweed, boiled egg and leek. In summer, we sometimes put them in cold soup.



"Soba" is gray and thin; it is made from buckwheat flour. We dip them in a special cold or hot soup.

And also I miss the food that my mom makes. She is really good at cooking; because of this, I don't like to go out to eat. She cooks many kinds of food like Japanese food, Chinese food, Italian food and desserts such as puddings and cream puffs. She always cares if the food has variety of colors, if it looks appropriate and if the plates' colors and shapes go with food. Her cooking is perfect not only the tastes but also decoration and look.



I'm having a great time in the U.S, like when I was an exchange student. I like my new friends who are from other countries and good food like pizza and hamburgers.

However, when I stay at home by myself, I think about my family and my friends in Japan. I miss them so much.



How My Life Changed

by: Masako Yoshizawa

My American life has had a great influence on me because it has changed my personality little by little every year. I have been the U.S. for almost three years, and I have made a lot of American friends; for this reason, I have learned about their cultures, behaviors, and experiences. This information has helped me to develop a strong personality.



When I was in Japan, I always got up six o'clock in the morning and traveled to school by train for two hours. At school, I stayed together with the same friends and lived with the same school style life.

My usual life was not exciting because my school, which is from kindergarten to high school, was a high level private school, so our teachers only wanted us to study. It was boring, and I became a negative thinker. I did not develop a strong personality, and I did not have a dream, so I decided to go to America because I wanted to stay in a completely different country and find my dream.

Fortunately, my life has changed for the better. I can make a lot of American friends here, so I have learned about American culture. For example, my American friends have parties in someone's home every weekend. They like dancing, drinking beer, and talking a lot with music. The first time, when I was at Marycrest International University, I did not want to go to the parties with my American friends because I was shy, and I did not know how to dance, but



they wanted me to go to the party, so I decided to go there. My American friends taught me how to dance, and they introduced me to their friends. I could make a lot of American friends at this time. Also many Americans are kind; for example, most American men open doors for women. They think of ladies first. Sometimes women also hold the door for me. This behavior is a good example for me to follow because it is not usual to open and hold the door for someone in Japan.

Secondly, speaking English will help my communication between international people and me. When I was high school, I could not talk with American teachers in my school even though I wanted to know American culture, so I always asked my friend who can speak English what did the American teacher say. It was not good for me, and it was regrettable that I could not speak English. Now, I am in the United States, so I must speak English everyday, and I always study hard with English because if I can not speak and understand English, I can not do anything here, and it will be the same situation as in my high school. Fortunately, I can understand and speak English little by little, so I have got new information from my international friends such as food style and culture. For example, sometimes I go to my Taiwanese friend's home to study.

She makes some delicious Taiwanese food for me. I had never tried these foods before, so I wanted to know how to make them. I always pay attention when she makes food and sometimes I help her by cutting fruit, washing dishes, and cleaning the dining table. I enjoy spending every time with her, and English keeps our communication, and it is necessary for my life.



Thirdly, living in the United States gives me a strong personality. When I was in Japan, I could live very easily because my parents did everything for my brother and me such as making some food, paying utilities, and cleaning our home except when they were busy. Now, I am living alone, and I do every thing by myself. Sometimes I have problems with my accounts, so I have to go the company and ask some questions of the shop assistants. Their words are difficult to hear because it is difficult for me to understand their fast replies, so I try to ask again and again. This American life is completely new for me; for this reason, I take everything seriously.



In conclusion, I can get a lot of good in the United States, and I am really exhilarated to meet my international friends every day. Actually, I have no regrets over this study abroad.



The Imaginary Trip to Japan

by: Naomi Iizuka

“Seeing is believing.” When I came to the U.S. first, I really realized this proverb’s meaning. I thought I had enough information about America, but I did not understand the true American life. After starting to live in this country, I got a lot of new knowledge of the U.S., and I felt it is better to visit the country once than to read many guidebooks. Although you would like to travel to foreign countries, you are too busy to go to other countries so often. It is too sad for you to give up visiting other countries, so I would like to invite you to my country, Japan, with your imagination. Have you ever enjoyed an imaginary trip? Even if it is the first time, you can travel to Japan very easily because you just need to read my information and imagine.

Before going to my country, let’s learn about Japan a little. Japan, which is located in East Asia, is an arc-shaped archipelago that stretches a long way from northwest to southwest, and it has the four main islands: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. Even though the total area of Japan is the same as the area of California, around 120 million people are living in the small country. Except for the southwestern islands, most of Japan belongs to the temperate zone; also, Japan has clearly four seasons, like the Quad Cities. I think my country has two characters since people have different lives in the urban side and the country side. I can not choose only one side, so I would like you to enjoy both sides of Japan. Why don’t you go the urban side with me first?

Now, we are in one of the most famous cities, Kyoto. Kyoto was the past capital city of Japan, so there are a lot of old temples and buildings. Although there are many old buildings, there are also a lot of high buildings similar to Tokyo, the present capital city of Japan. I think the high buildings are not rare in

the U.S., so I would like you to visit the old Japanese temples, Kinkakuji and Ryoanji.

Let’s go to Kinkakuji, the real name is Rokuonji, first. In 1397, Kinkaku, the most famous building in the Kinkakuji, was built by Yoshimitsu Ashikaga, who was the then general; also, it was declared a world heritage building in 1994. I am looking forward to seeing your face when you finish passing through the lane to Kinkaku. I know



people will be surprised and gasp at the elegant scene when they look at the golden building, Kinkaku. Since Kinkaku is reflecting on the surface of the pond which is at the side of the building, the water is also sparkling in gold. I will give you enough time to gaze with rapture, so you can enjoy Kinkaku sufficiently.

After enjoying the gorgeous temple, I would like to take you to another temple, Ryoanji. Of course this building is excellent, but the garden is the most famous in the Ryoanji. When you go to see the famous garden which is called Sekitei, another surprise is waiting for you as there are no trees and



flowers, unlike American gardens. Ryoanji has a dry landscape garden which is a typical

style of Japanese garden. The garden expresses landscapes without water and flowers, only rocks and sand. The rock construction expresses hills and waterfalls, and the white sand expresses rivers. The white sand has lines spread with bamboo brooms to depict flowing water. The area of Sekitei is 250 square meters, and the three walls surround the rectangular garden, so we can see it from only one side on the porch. Don’t fall down from the porch! You will break the precise line of the sand. This garden looks very humble; however, it is the best place when you would like to be absorbed in your thought. The simple scene of the garden must give you the “unlooked-for” idea. Well, I would like to enjoy the urban side of Japan more, but it is the time to go the country side. Let’s move to the country side of Japan.

Welcome to Gunma! Upon looking around, you can see mountains everywhere.

By the way, please raise your hand if you feel tired. Oh, most of you are tired! I would like to take you to Kusatsu hot springs to relax. Kusatsu is one of the most famous hot springs in Japan, and the water of the hot spring is effective for diabetes, neuralgia, bruises, and so on. Many people come to Kusatsu to bathe in the hot spring; however, the water is so hot that you must follow tradition before you enter the hot springs.



There are women who cool down the hot water with long boards in the Kusatsu; also, they stir the hot

water to cool it. While cooling the water, they sing a song. Can you hear the lively melody? The women are singing, "Kusatsu is a good place. Come to take the hot springs at least once." I think not only the hot spring water but also this women's song will remove your fatigue.

Then, I would like to take you the Agatsuma Gorge. This is my favorite place; thus, I really recommend that you visit this picturesque gorge. The Agatsuma Gorge is 3.5 km long, and there is a 1.8 km hiking road along the river. Let's walk on the hiking road. The murmurs of the river and leaves make you relaxed, don't they? You can enjoy the young green leaves in the spring and see colorful fiery leaves in the fall. Please look at the play of sunlight through the trees. You cannot see such soft natural art in the urban museum, can you? Unfortunately, we will not be able to see the fantastic scene after a few years because of a dam. My friend, Mr. Sano, who is a



Japanese painter said, "Japanese people have to keep the scenic nature of the country side because even

if the scene of the urban side, like the night view in Tokyo, is beautiful, it is just artificial."

How was Japan? I hope you enjoyed this imaginary trip. I love my country, so I am glad that you visited with me. Most of you must be busy now, and you do not have enough time to travel by plane; however, you have a chance to travel to other countries with your imagination. Please look around you in BHC. There are lots

of international students who know good places of their own countries, so if you would like to go to foreign countries, you should ask them to take you on the imaginary trip. Whose country would you like to go to next?



Becoming an Adult

by: Ayako Hirai

January 15, 2004, became the most unforgettable day in my life. I had already felt different when I woke up at five o'clock in the morning. In the dark, I went to a beauty salon near my house with my mother. When I got there, there were many girls my age, and beauticians were putting up their hair, and putting on their makeup. I sat down, and told a beautician with a smile, "I'd like to stand out from everything else." She set my hair, and put a comb in it with two big yellow lilies. While I was making myself up, my mother was taking many pictures. After I had got my hair done, two elderly ladies put a beautiful purple "furusode". a kimono with long sleeves, with cherry blossoms on me. Even though my furisode was made from cotton, and it was not expensive, I felt special like a beautiful woman who is the most well-dressed in the world. I'd been preparing for everything for almost five hours, and finally I was ready to go.

My friends and I went to large hall in my town, Nara. A large number of people were outside of the hall. Almost all of the girls were wearing brightly colored "furusodes" and a shawl, which were pink, blue and black to reflect their tastes. Almost all of the boys were wearing suits. I couldn't hear any announcements above their delighted conversation. We all were excited to talk to friends because we hadn't seen each other for a long time; therefore, it is said that the ceremony is similar to a reunion. We were part of "Seijinshiki," which is the ceremony of Coming-of-Age-Day, an annual Japanese event. On the second Monday of January, the ceremony is held by the municipal government in every town. That day, Japanese people who have reached twenty years old attend the



ceremony with their friends. "Seijinshiki" is a wonderful traditional Japanese event for every new adult and their families. That day, I also realized that I had become an adult, and the ceremony encouraged me to become more independent and make-up my mind more responsibly. During the ceremony, we listen to congratulatory speeches and many kinds of music from popular music and traditional music inside the hall.

These speeches and music encourage us to be members of society.

Because young people are considered adults after the ceremony, they are permitted to drink, smoke and vote. Besides these rights, they should become self-reliant as members of society. They should be responsible in their opinions and actions; therefore, the ceremony is a big turning point in our lives in Japan. My friend, Yoko said, "I feel more stress to be adult because I have to have responsibility in every action." Another friend, Yoshiko said, "I'm very excited to become an adult because I can drink and smoke."



The ceremony comes from an event for boys between thirteen to sixteen in the Nara period (710-784) called "Genpuku." and also from "Mogi" for girls between twelve and sixteen in the Heian period(794-1194). Young men and women changed their outfits, name and hairstyles to be treated as adult. The most important part was that no one was allowed to get married before the ceremony at that time. Thus, the ceremony of "Genpuku" and "Mogi" were the foundation for the Seijinshiki today.

Today, only unmarried women dress in traditional clothes with long sleeves are called "Furisode." Women wear "kimono," and men wear "hakama," which is a traditional men's outfit rarely seen on the street. Traditional clothes are worn only on special ceremonial occasions, in traditional restaurants and by women who teach people in the traditional arts such as Japanese dance and tea ceremony; therefore, the coming age of ceremony is a good opportunity to wear "kimono" and "hakama."

"Seijinshiki" is the most important event because it ties modern Japanese society to its past events. We celebrate adulthood today.

Hopefully, future Japanese young people will feel the same excitement that I felt on January, 15, 2004.



Persian Weddings

by: Reza Khalajabady

When I was 14 years old, my older sister got married. Those days were some of the best days of my life. Why? Because I had never been so involved with a wedding event until my sister's wedding.

My house has three floors, and we provided two rooms for that wedding. We



provided one room for about 20 guests who were the close family of the groom and bride. Also, we provided one room which had a special

decoration for the groom and bride. I was in the guest room when my cousin said, "Come on up, Reza. The bride came from beauty salon," so I ran upstairs to the decoration room, which is another interesting custom of weddings. The decoration room is adorned with many colored balloons, colored lamps, colored letters which say, "Happy Wedding to the Groom and Bride," and a fancy sign with hearts and kisses. Moreover, they set one table, and they put a wedding cake, many different candies, some color candles, some color bonbons, water, honey, some flowers, the Holy Book, the gifts of the groom and bride's parents and the wedding rings. Some of these items have significance. For example, the water and mirror mean brightness for the wedding, and the honey is after the groom and bride wear the rings, they should taste the honey with their finger before they kiss each other. The Holy Book is important because it has the letters of God in it. The Justice of the Peace comes to the decoration room and pronounces the groom and the bride as husband and wife, and that's why I ran fast not to miss this ceremony.

After this ceremony the groom and bride went with other guests to the hall for a bigger celebration. In fact, we invited two hundred people which were the extended family of the groom and the bride to the hall.

Like Americans, Iranians spend time dating each other, and they get this agreement to get married. But the boy should talk about this decision to his parents, and his family must call the girl's parents to get permission to go to visit them. Before the engagement, the boy's parents must visit girl's parents. They must

approve of the boy by considering his job and education.

After the engagement, both families determine the date of the wedding. From the engagement party until the wedding day, the girl's parents have time to collect all the furniture for a furnished house for their daughter. On the other hand, the boy's parents must promise one gift such as new car, an apartment or about 500 coins of gold for the bride. In fact, the groom gives this gift in one of the anniversaries of their married life.



On the wedding day, both families invite everyone they want and all charges are paid by the groom. Most people make very big weddings to save their reputation among the families. In fact, if the groom's family plans a big wedding in the garden of a big hotel, their reputation is enhanced.

Weddings take about six hours in general, and people start their weddings at 7 or 8 p.m. until midnight, but some people start their weddings in the afternoon until midnight. I experienced a wedding in the north part of my country. People there celebrate weddings for three days. They start late in the morning until evening, and on the third day, The Justice of the Peace unites a man and woman in marriage, but in my own custom in the center of my country, weddings are one day, and the couple gets married on that day.

Americans bring their gifts on the wedding day, but Iranians bring their gifts one day after the wedding day into the new groom and bride's house. Moreover, one night after the wedding, the bride's mother must cook some special food with chicken, fish and rice and send it to the new couples' house.

There are some special customs. For example, some families have the tradition to give money as gift to the bride or the groom in weddings. One custom is that when someone dances in front of the groom or the bride, the groom or his family gives money as gift to show appreciation for person who dances at the wedding. After the wedding is finished, the groom or bride may take the honeymoon. After they come back, each extended family member should invite the groom, bride and their parents for dinner and show them respect.



American Schools with Junk Foods

by: Dede Kuegah

Today, many American schools provide food through vending machines and snack bars. Some school cafeterias, including the one at Black Hawk College, serve strange rectangular pizzas, mashed potatoes with rich gravy, soggy French fries, jello with some sort of salad with rich ranch dressing. What will parents say when their kids come home and say, "Mom, we had pizza and French fries for lunch at school today?" The parent says, "I told you not to eat fatty food because it is not good for your health." A least that's what my mom said whenever I told her what I ate for lunch at school. At Black Hawk College, some students spend most of their time on the campus. How can those students stay healthy by eating in the campus cafeteria? Why are our schools allowing junk foods and vending machines in the school building?

And what has been done about it. These parents and students must address the issue of junk food for the well-being of the youth of America.



According to David Nakamura in his article, "Schools Peddling Junk Food to Kids," the appearance of vending machines, selling everything from candies to chips to soda is not a new development. They have been around since the early 1980s. Almost every school in the United States has vending machines in the school buildings. However, schools allow vending machines and junk foods in the schools because of the compensation from the vendors. Some schools need money to fix some things or to buy some books missing in the school, so they negotiate with the soda or snack bars companies in order to get the money to fix those things. For examples, Gary Koeller, the principal of Moline High School said, "Last year, the Pepsi Company offered the school thirty thousand dollars if I allowed Pepsi vending machine in the school instead of Coca Cola vending machine, and I accepted the offer because the school needs money to buy

books for some classes.” He also said that he is not the only one accepting offers from the vendors. “ Most principals, locally and across the country, negotiate with vendors, for exclusive use of a product; in return, the companies pay the schools cash or buy equipment and goods.” Are the cash and the goods worth the health of us, the students?

Students take health class, and in the classroom, they are taught about good nutrition and the value of healthy food choices.

However, in the lunchroom, they are surrounded with junk food and vending machines. When students come to school in the morning, they usually head to the vending machine to get bag of chips or candy bars with soda. Mrs. Stephanie Jordan, an ESL teacher at Moline High School said,



“Some students come in a 7:30 in the morning eating bag of Doritos and drinking Mountain Dew. As a parent of two kids, I would not like to see my children with soda and chips in the morning.” Most parents feel the same way. That’s why some of the parents pack lunch for their children. Even though, the junk food that our schools sell causes many diseases to the students, the students still buy food from the cafeteria. Some of the foods produce cavities, malnutrition, obesity and stomach upsets and make students more vulnerable to diabetes and other chronic degenerative diseases. My last year biology teacher at Moline High School, Diane Anderson, said, “Most snack bars have too much sugar, and almost every doctor says that foods high in sugar can cause tooth decay, diabetes and a lot of sugar transforms to fat in our body.” Sugary and fatty foods can cause students many health problems later in life. Some of us, students, who are a little overweight can’t seem to lose weight while we are in school because all we eat is vending machine food and cafeteria food.

In order to stop selling junk foods to students, our schools can add extra activities and serve healthy foods in the schools. Instead of getting money from the vendors, the schools can make money by offering healthy and appealing foods at affordable prices, which should be available in the cafeteria. When I used to go to a private school in my country, Togo, the



school organized extra activities like concerts and theater productions that students do to get extra money for the school. Parents, students and school principals should think of more creative solutions. If parents are really worried about children’s development of life-long eating habits, they have to ban vending machines and junk food sales in the schools. The parents can start by telling the students to leave campus during lunch and go buy themselves some good nutritional foods. As for the young kids, parents can make them some nutritious food that they can bring from home. Students can also eat breakfast at home, so they will be full in the morning. Nadine Larson, a parent and a teacher at Moline High School said, “We are continuing to feel that the health of our young people is at risk because of the eating environment at our schools.” Our schools should replace all the soda and snack bars by yogurts and fruit bars and also water.

Therefore, our schools are allowing junk foods in the schools building because the need extra money. The schools can still make extra money by selling healthy food. In school, we are thought to eat healthy everyday but how can we eat healthy while our schools are serving unhealthy food. Students and parents need to find a way to help schools raise money for extra stuff, so that they can stop accepting vendor’s offers.



Introducing Filipino Cuisine

by: *Mary Jo Perez*

“Sophisticated and exotic” are words used when describing Filipino foods by the New York food critic, Barbara Costikyan. For me, Filipino dishes are indeed unique and simple. Our ways of cooking vary from other countries, and our dishes are usually easy to prepare or cook. Filipinos have adapted to the different cultures, and this is evident in the style of cooking. The Philippines is located in the heart of Southeast Asia, an archipelago composed of



7,107 islands and surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea and Celebes Sea. The many races that have influenced the different traditions of the Filipinos are Indonesian, Malays, Spanish, Japanese, American cultures and other neighboring countries in Asia have left their mark on the way Filipinos eat.

The Chinese influence can be seen in noodle dishes; the most popular one is called "pancit." Pancit Molo is an adaptation of wanton soup. There are many variations in noodles. The difference lies in the type of the noodle used and the garnishing and flavoring. However, of all the variations of pancit, pancit bihon (sticky rice) is my favorite. I can still recall that every time my mom cooked it, she used to bring some to her work and share it with her American co-workers because they liked the taste. Since my mom's co-workers liked it, and it is my favorite recipe, I decided to share the pancit bihon recipe because the readers might like it, too. The recipe is so easy to prepare, and I know whoever wants to try cooking it will probably have few difficulties.

Pancit Bihon

Ingredients:

- 1 whole chicken cut into pieces, boiled in a big casserole with one medium sized onion, 2 stalks of celery and pepper corns. Cover chicken with enough water. Remove meat from bone and don't forget to save the stock!
- 1 lb sliced thin strips pork
- 1 cup cooked, deveined and unshelled shrimps
- 1 can straw mushrooms
- 1 can water chestnuts
- ½ head sliced into julien strips bok choy (pechay)
- 1 piece julienned carrot
- A few pieces of snow pea pods
- ½ lb mussels or scallops (optional)
- Soy sauce to taste
- Patis (fish sauce) to taste
- Salt to taste
- 2 cloves crushed garlic
- 1 medium sliced sized onion
- Ground black pepper (fresh if you can)
- Oil for frying
- 1 or 2 packages of pancit canton or a package of vermicelli or angel hair pasta. If you really can't find pancit, try egg noodles – although they may be soft, or spaghetti if you're desperate!!!
- 4 or 5 green onions
- 1 lemon

Directions:

Heat oil in a pan (or wok if possible). Sautee garlic and onion slices until the onion is transparent. Add chicken and pork. Cook until pork is brown. Add half of the chicken stock. Boil for about three minutes. Sprinkle some ground black pepper. Simmer for about another three minutes. Add shrimp, mushrooms, carrots and other ingredients except the noodles themselves. Simmer for another 3 minutes or so (covered). Add the remaining stock. Adjust the taste with salt, pepper, patis and soy sauce. Add the noodles. Mix thoroughly until noodles are soft. Garnish with sliced green onions and sliced lemon. Serve with lemon.

Bicol cuisine tastes great and is distinctive among the spicy foods that I've tasted before. The people of this region are fans of all known spices. But unlike Japan, Korea, Taiwan and other Asian neighbors of the Philippines, most Filipinos do not like chili-



hot dishes; however, dishes from the Bicol region are distinguished by their use of chili and coconut milk, similar to Indonesian, Malay, and Thai foods. "Bicol Express," for example, is a dish of pork strips sautéed in garlic, onions, ginger, and turmeric, mixed with bagoong alamang (salted and fermented shrimp sauce), coconut cream, chopped chilies and hot green and red peppers. The Bicolanos ways of cooking are sometimes imitated in the other parts of the country but only with fewer spices

While on the other part of the country, the Muslims (living in the Mindanao, the southern part of the Philippines) retain more of a Malaysian flavor in cooking. The dishes used are coconut milk, chilies, cassava, and rice. They are similar to Bicol but only vary in the way they prepare.

Filipino cooking, like other Oriental preparations, involves a lot of chopping and labor-intensive preparation. We flavor the foods with dipping sauces (sawsawan) according to individual taste. Patis and bagoong (fermented fish or shrimp sauce), similar to those produced by Vietnamese and Thais, are also used when cooking. Other dippings used by Filipinos are vinegar, soy sauce, ketchup and chilies, a squeeze of calamansi (Philippine lemon) in the soy sauce or patis, a touch of mustard, and even mince

garlic in vinegar that creates new flavor. Filipinos also use sour sauce as accompaniments to foods, such as chopped green mangoes mixed with shrimp bagoong, or pickled shredded papaya (achara). Many of my friends in America, as they visit Philippines, told me those mangoes in the country taste better than in other countries. It made me now realize that I must be proud of the many foods or dishes in my country.

Many Philippine desserts, especially those made of rice and coconut are similar to those of Indonesia and Malaysia. Examples are biko and suman, sticky



rice cooked with coconut milk and sugar and wrapped in banana or pandan leaves; puto and kutsinta,

which are different types of cooked cakes; and bukayo, a crunchy sweet made of grated coconut cooked in molasses and pressed into bars. For tourists our desserts are too sweet. I guess its indeed true because diabetes is one of the dominant diseases of many Filipinos.

The names of dishes in Filipino foods often suggest how they are prepared. "Prito" means fried; "gisa", "ginisa" or "gisado" means sautéed; "ihaw" or "inihaw" means grilled or boiled; "adobo" means to sauté in vinegar and garlic; "paksiw" means stew in sour fruit like mango, or vinegar. "Ginataan" is anything cooked in coconut milk. To create a thin sauce, "sinigang," add some acidic fruit like tamarind or small green kamias.

To those visiting the country, "adobo" is worth trying. It is a dish showing Spanish and Mexican influences but with regional variations. Pork, or chicken (sometimes vegetables or seafood), are stewed in a mixture of vinegar, bay leaf, peppercorn and garlic over a slow fire. Here in America, Filipinos still cook adobo. The ingredients are easy to find in supermarkets and the steps are trouble-free. It is also one of my favorite dishes because of the sour taste. The smell of the cooked vinegar, soy sauce and garlic are so tempting to me. Since this is the most famous Filipino dish, I want to include the recipe.



Traditional Adobo

Ingredients:

- 1½ lb cut into ½" cubes, pork shoulder or butt
- 1/3 C vinegar
- 2 tbs. soy sauce
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3 cloves minced garlic
- 1 small bay leaf
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 tbs. sugar
- ½ C water
- 2 tbs. cooking oil



Directions:

Combine all ingredients except cooking oil in a pot and let stand for at least 30 minutes. Simmer covered for 1 hour or until meat is tender. Drain and reserve the sauce. Heat cooking oil in a skillet. Brown meat on all sides. Transfer to a serving dish. Pour off all remaining oil from skillet. Add reserved sauce and cook for a minute or two scraping all browned bits sticking to pan. Pour sauce over meat and serve.

Variations:

May be done with chicken or a combination of chicken and pork. Beef or chicken livers may be added too if desired.

Filipino ways of cooking are reflections of the evolution in Filipino's culture and lifestyle. The ancestors have handed down these traditional recipes which have survived over the centuries from one generation to another. In fact, even I inherited many cooking recipes from my parents and grandparents. The tastes of these recipes are the combination of the countries that colonized the Philippines in the past. The cooking techniques, preparations and local innovations distinguish this cuisine from the rest of the Asian countries. The flavor is enchanting to taste and must be tried. Sad to say, Filipino cooking has not gained much attention in mainstream USA. Perhaps this cuisine is just waiting patiently to be discovered, and hope that moment will start today.



The Traditional Polish Food During Holidays

by: Marcin Kozicki

Every country all over the world has its own eating habits. There are specific meals or kinds of food that characterize countries' culture. For example, there are types of food eaten during holidays in the United States like green bean casserole and turkey on Thanksgiving Day, or the three meals like breakfast, lunch, and dinner that is common in the U.S. In Poland,



there are also specific kinds of food that characterize Christmas and Easter. The typical Polish Christmas Eve

table has twelve different dishes which are made in a special traditional way. Easter has special Polish food too, but only one meal with tons of ingredients. During holidays there also must be a specific dessert with different kinds of pies, cakes, and drinks. As a Polish person, I would like to show you the eating customs in Poland and variety of food during the holidays.

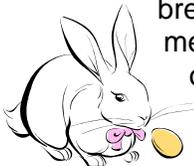
To begin with, the Polish day has only three meals: breakfast, dinner, and supper. Breakfast usually starts at eight o'clock, and it has different kinds of sandwiches with turkey, ham, and other kinds of daily meat. In my family we had sandwiches for breakfast everyday. It was a little boring because I ate the same thing every morning. Dinner, which is the most important, is



usually around one o'clock. It contains two separate courses. The first is always a traditional soup like tomato, sour kraut, "beet" soup, sour pickles, and chicken noodle. The second dinner meal is different. It is a real meal with mashed potatoes, vegetables, and meat like fried chicken breast, meatballs, steak, ribs, cooked chicken, and stuffed chicken breast with butter and cheese. Supper, the last meal, is usually at seven o'clock, and it has sandwiches just like breakfast. This is how Polish daily meals are, but holidays are different.

The first interesting Polish holiday meal is during Easter. This is the only time when

breakfast is the most important meal. It starts usually around nine o'clock right before the church ceremony. The Easter breakfast is a traditional meal



made only for this holiday. It is a "beet" soup with eggs, Polish sausage, bread, beef, and spices. This is definitely my favorite meal of all. I remember I was always very excited waiting for it. I wish we could have Easter beet soup more often than once a year. After breakfast there is a special traditional dessert, a pie, which is called "mazurek," in English. It is very unique because it has to be made a month before baking it. Like beet soup, "mazurka" is also made only for Easter.

The second holiday with Polish traditional food is Christmas. It is very original because every Polish Christmas Eve table has twelve different kinds of food. They also have to be made in a special way. I remember my mom making the dishes for two days because they take a lot of effort



and time. The twelve kinds of food are divided into eight courses, dessert with three kinds of cake, and a special Christmas drink made from dried plums. According to the tradition, every table has to have beet soup with a special kind of pasta called "ears" stuffed with mushrooms, fried carp, herrings marinated in oil and honey sauce, dumplings stuffed with sour kraut, a "Greek" fish which is a fish in tomato sauce, a fish in jelly sauce, a special kind of ranch with pickles and mushrooms, and a vegetarian salad. The Christmas Eve dinner starts at five o'clock, with all members of the family. First, there is a traditional Christmas prayer. After dinner, there is a dessert with three kinds of cake: baked cheese cake, a cold cheese cake made from jelly and yogurt, and a poppy – seed cake called "makowiec." With all that food, Christmas Eve table is the richest of all Polish holidays. The interesting thing is that I have never been able to try all twelve courses during the dinner. I was done after the first three. Believe it or not, it is really hard to at least sample all of the meals.

As you can see, the holidays like Christmas and Easter have to have traditional Polish food. Because of the custom, it has to be different from daily food. Every type of food characterizes the specific holiday. For example, all kids in Poland know that fried golden carp is for Christmas, and eggs with beet soup are made only for Easter. Of all the holidays, the Christmas Eve table is the richest, and this is what Poland is known for in Europe.



What's going on with BHC?

by: Oscar Garcia

Many things are going on and no one knows anything about them. Can anyone imagine what might happen if BHC doesn't have any money? You can have an idea about what will happen. BHC is going through many changes right now because our budget is getting cut.

BHC is losing money and that is affecting the entire school. Let me inform you about the things that are going on around our school. We are facing a budget deficit. This budget cut has



been going on for about a year and might last another year. These cuts have many effects on the staff, faculty and students.

In order to balance the school budget, the administration began to cut jobs. To inform the staff and faculty about the possibilities of being cut, the administration sends a pink slip in their pay checks. That warns the staff that BHC has the right to cut the job if needed. BHC needs more money and so the result was to cut jobs. Not everyone gets a slip, mostly workers with less experience and fewer years of service. But all of this has brought many people insecurity about maintaining their positions and jobs.

Budget cuts affect the school in many ways. If there is less staff and more students then that will cause over-crowded classes and more frustration to the teachers and students. Teachers will need to teach more than one section of class, and they will need to have a lot of patience with the numbers of students that they will have. The reason why some teachers will teach other



classes is because of bumping. For example, if a teacher has less experience and years working in BHC then they can be bumped by someone that has been here for longer time and with more experience. When teachers are bumped, no one can do anything. Another effect is that some programs might be cancelled, and students won't have programs to attend. The students service effects were stated on the budget booklet, and it read that the student service was cut by \$ 55,778.00 dollars. Last years budget for students was

2,586,034 and this year was 2,271.475. This has brought changes to our school.

The school is thinking of increasing tuition. I personally think that it's not a good idea because if tuition is too expensive many students won't want to attend BHC. Students in BHC will probably transfer to another college that will provide better classes and programs for their major.



Just like Anne Bollati, the ESL Coordinator, mentioned "Really now the legislature should be careful on how they spent our money."

To prevent this from happening again and to let everyone know about BHC, the students should be informed so that they can give their opinion about all this. Maybe they can come up with ways to help lessen the effects on the school. A good way for students to become involved is to join committees to discuss the issues with administrators. For example, the administrators could get the opinion of the students, so that we can get together, and discuss how can we help to avoid this happening again. Really everyone is worried about this because students might not have the best education that they need.

The reaction of the staff and faculty knowing that their jobs are at risk really brings rumors and madness. Many are basically mad at all this and scared because it is something to be mad and scared of. Losing jobs means that some people lives are threatened. It also means students might not have the right education and attention that we need. "The best thing right now is to stick together" was said by Dr Fitzgerald, Dean of Instruction Services.



INTERVIEW

by: *Sassou Koffi Akakpo*

Hobbies are activities people are likely to do often in order to relax themselves in their spare time. Thus, people have different hobbies, habits and interests in life. The ESL students have a variety of experiences and desires in life too. Indeed some of them are very busy.

For instance, **Dede Kuegah**, a Togolese

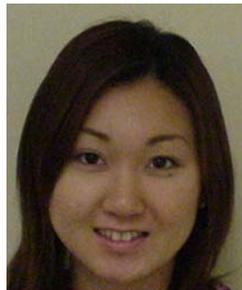


ESL student is a fan of soccer. As a result, she played soccer in high school, and she enjoys every single soccer tournament she can see on her television. Moreover, she likes to watch movies, go outside

with friends. Like every teenager, she loves to dance and listen to music also.

As for **Masako**

Yoshizawa, a twenty-one-year-old Japanese international student, who is from Kanagawa, she prefers to listen to music and talk with friends. Her hobbies also include driving her car and shopping.



Mary Jo Perez is

twenty-one years old and is from the Philippines. She was born on October 8, 1982 under the zodiac sign of Libra. She likes listening to music, reading poems, and surfing the internet.



Juan Gomez, a twenty-year-old ESL student from Mexico, is concerned about his hobbies which are driving his car, and listening to rap music. He also likes spiky hair. In addition, he works part-time with FedEx as a package handler.



Naomi Iizuka is a twenty-two-year old



Japanese exchange student. She is from Gunma, a suburb of Tokyo. Her spare time is spent watching movies. She started "kendo," a martial art here in the Quad Cities because she never had

the opportunity to learn it before in Japan. She also likes to go to a café with friends during the weekend.

Another ESL student is **Lillian Lara**, who is a twenty-one-year-old

Mexican-American lady who is a happy mom of a two year old baby. One of her several hobbies includes caring for her little Renata. Indeed she enjoys spending much of her time with her little girl. Lillian likes Spanish and



rock music. She sometimes goes to the cinema. Most of her spare time is spent in front of the television.

Ayako Hirai is a twenty-year-old

Japanese international student. She is from Nara. Her dream is to become a famous hairdresser. This hobby leads her to do her



own hair and her own make-up at home during her free time. She is looking forward to finishing her ESL classes and to register for the style classes. She prefers to read magazines related to

her passion where she can learn new fashion and design. Moreover, she likes to listen to music and go shopping with friends. She also learns the Japanese martial art, "kendo."

Therefore, she is a practitioner of kendo, which is a technique of self defense enabling someone to defend him/herself against adversity. During the interview, she told me that she spent one year in Davenport as an exchange student before she transferred to Black Hawk College. Thus, she is in her second year at school in the USA. She wishes to find a job related to her hobby, which is in the field of beauty. If she can choose, she wants to stay in the US more than three years.

Marcin Koziicki is a twenty-two-year-old ESL student who registered in the ESL program more than one year and half ago because he wanted to improve his English. He is from Krackovi, a small and beautiful town in Poland (Europe) where Pope John Paul II is also from. He likes



to listen to music and watch television during his spare time. In addition, he likes to work on his computer, drive his car and go dancing in night club with friends. Some of his hobbies include also martial arts like "kiokushin" and watching DVD's. He said that it is a real pleasure for him to work with Happy Joes as a delivery driver for pizzas.

Oumar Coulibaly is from Senegal in West Africa. He has been at Black Hawk College for two years. His dream is to complete his education. His hobbies are reading and playing soccer.



Another student is **Sassou K. Akakpo** who came to the USA with his small family one year ago due to the fact that he won the diversity visa. He is from Togo, West Africa. He is a permanent resident of the United States of America and is grateful for the opportunity the American government gave him in order to immigrate and work here in the States. He started the ESL program in order to communicate with Americans very easily. His hobbies include listening to music, driving his car and looking at DVD's.



Ai Ghoda is a nineteen-year-old-student from Japan. She likes to play softball and likes baton twirling; now she has just started to learn judo in the United States.



Oscar García is a young Hispanic who was born in Chicago but raised in Cicero, Illinois. He loves dancing, music and cars. He will receive his associate's degree at BHC and will then transfer to the University of Illinois for landscape design.



Reza Khalajabady is a twenty-seven year old student from Iran. He has been living in the U.S.A for four years. His hobbies are watching NASCAR racing, camping and fishing.



Karen Hindhede is a teacher at Black Hawk College who will adopt a baby and care for her because she has too much love to give to children, even if she is waiting for her own child. She likes her students to come to class prepared and ready to participate fully in the class activities. She expects them to respect each other and to be friends. One of her hobbies is to read, to help students with their homework and to give full commitment to her teaching. Moreover, she hopes to study Spanish in order to travel to central and South America.



We would like to thank Sheryl Gragg for her cheerful patience in helping us prepare this newsletter!

