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Difficult Challenges of Immigrant Children in the United States

By: Assimi Alawoe

How do immigrant children fit into the United States schools? What factors contribute to their achievement or failure in schools? What problems do the children and school encounter? Do immigrant children have the same chance of success like their peers of the host country? How do various immigrant cultures interface with the United States culture? As an immigrant to the United States, I see how the immigrant in general and their children in particular face many challenges in adjusting to American culture.

For the immigrant children who start early at pre-school and follow the rest of the courses, the problems are not really expressed. They start like other native children, so they quickly integrate into the program. For example, my daughter, whom I brought with me to the United States when



she was two years old and who is in the first grade this semester, speaks and understands English well. Her teachers from pre-school to first grade said she is doing well in her classes. Also, she easily makes friends in the classrooms, and she doesn't ever complain about any bad treatment from her classmates or teachers.

However, not all immigrant children are as lucky as my daughter. Children who start

school before coming to the United States are confronted with linguistic problems. For example, my friend's children who came six months ago face this problem at their school. The elder has problems following her middle school teacher. In fact, taking into account the school grades in her country, her age, and her writing test, she was accepted at the school, but the child had difficult time following her teacher. I went to my friend's house, and his daughter told me that she didn't understand what her teacher said. Sometimes she answered "yes" when she had to say "no," and the class laughed at her. I told her father to talk to the principal of the school about that. When he got there, the principal informed him about the ESL classes his child could take to perfect her English.

Those immigrant children, because of their linguistic problems, their parents' linguistic problems, and their parents' jobs have a low level of education. Their linguistic problems are an important factor in their scores at school. To illustrate, a child who doesn't understand correctly what his teacher says can't earn a good grade even if this child is intelligent.

Also, the parents' linguistic skills affect the learning of the children. How could the parents who don't speak English help their children with doing their homework or reading the instructions teachers send to them? For example, another of my friends who doesn't speak English came to me really surprised about what his son interpreted to him during the parent-teacher

conference. His son said, "My teacher is giving me a two-day vacation for my excellent work at school." In fact, when I went to school with my friend, the teacher was suspending him for not doing his homework.

Some parents, in addition to their language problem, don't have time because of their jobs to help their children to do their homework. For example, some parents have to do two jobs or more to pay their bills. Other parents go to work after bringing their children to the daycare. Unfortunately, the babysitters don't have time to help the children with their homework because of the many children in their care. Sometimes, children have to wake up early in order to do their homework. Those children who can stay by themselves at home use their time doing other things such as playing in the garden or watching their preferred shows on TV.



Another challenge the immigrant children face at school is racism. In fact, the children are mistreated, insulted, and harassed by other students. For example, another of my friend's child refused to keep going to school the second day she started because two of her classmates didn't want to play with her. The reason was the fact that she is from Africa, the part of the world



where there is poverty and the jungle. I don't blame those children. The fault is the television, which shows this continent as a miserable area. Also, the attitude of some teachers who asked the embarrassing questions to the children highlights this fact. For example, look at the teacher who asked his student to talk about his country. When the child presented his country, the teacher interrupted him with further questions. She asked, "Do you have electricity, TV, cars,

roads in your country?" I can't imagine a teacher asking such questions to the children in this country. What could the reaction of the native students be? Another thing I have noticed and I would like to mention is the fact that when the immigrant children come to college from the high school, they have to follow the ESL classes before beginning a major. For example, I have a friend whose son has taken ESL classes in college for almost three years. I know he speaks English well, so I don't understand the fact that he has been taking those classes for all that time.

The host country culture influences the immigrant children in their dressing, speaking, and walking. In fact, to be accepted by American kids, the immigrant children dress like them. For example, they change their traditional clothes to the big jeans and T-shirts. Sometimes, the back of their jeans is under their thighs. Some girls refuse to wear the headscarves, which are the part of their religion. Their parents can't control their choice of clothing.

They also copy their American peers in speaking. For example, I was in my friend's house when his son came back from shopping with his mother and said, "What's up, Dad!" I was so surprised to hear him talking to his father like this. He came to me and said, "Big up, Uncle!" Others don't want to talk their native languages when their parents talk to them; they answer or speak to them back in English. Between them, they talk like American children. They use the words their parents will never accept. For example, they like to say, "God damn it," "fuck you," or "mother fucker."



The immigrant children walk like native children by going left to right in their movement. My friend's child can't walk around without his walkman in the ears; he sings and doesn't hesitate to dance a few steps in the road. This child didn't do such things in his country before he came to the United States two years ago. His father told

me the last time we met, “I am not comfortable about this situation. I feel like a bug sitting under a magnifying glass.” Because the law gives more liberty to the children in the United States, parents don’t have the possibility to beat them when they do wrong things. For example, an immigrant girl called the police on her father because he refused to let her go out in order to meet her boyfriend. Such things can’t happen in their country.

Coming to the United States with their children, parents think that they sought a new direction in their children’s life. Unfortunately, those children become the repositories of parents’ anxieties, ambitions, and dreams. However, they hope their children are strong enough to face the difficult challenges in their future. Since immigrant



parents have a hard time helping their children during this time, educators, researchers, and policymakers must take a look at how the immigrant children should fit into the United States education system, and be a part of its development.



Great Cities to Visit in the United States and Mexico

By: *Xavier Vera*

Are you having a hard time in this bad economy? Do you think it’s not possible to afford traveling on your vacation? Traveling is a very important part in anyone’s life. It is important to spend a little money in traveling because it helps you relax, and it takes the stress away. To visit a place you’ve never been before takes you away from your everyday routine and gives you energy to go back to work in a good mood.

I’m a customer care representative for American Airlines, and I’ve worked for the airline industry for over 10 years. I can give you some ideas to help you choose a place to go visit or to ensure your decision is the best for you. By giving you some city facts and some lodging prices, you would be able to make the right decision. All you have to do is think of how many days you want to spend, how much money you want to spend, and what is the purpose of your trip? After you take the time to answer these questions, I would say you’re going to have a very good time on your next vacation.

Let’s start first with the United States: You have fifty-two states to choose from, and each one of them has a beautiful and interesting city. Let’s mention some of those cities:

Washington, DC is the most important city in the U.S. You can go visit the President’s house, a lot of interesting museums, and monuments such as the Lincoln Monument and the Washington Monument. All monuments are free to visit, and the museums have a small fee between \$20 and \$35 dollars. This city is not expensive to visit if you have no problems walking. The subway is really easy to follow, and you can get all the rides you want for just \$7 dollars a day. The hotels in Washington cost \$120 to \$500 dollars a night; however, if you don’t want to, or if you can’t spend that much in a hotel, you can use a hostel. There are some hostels with clean rooms, clean bathrooms, and great locations for under \$25 dollars a night. You can get an airfare with advance purchase around \$280 dollars roundtrip per person, depending on the airline and availability, of course.

San Antonio, TX is a beautiful city to visit with main attractions consisting of the Riverwalk and the TexMex food among others; the Riverwalk is a beautiful attraction, which



consists of restaurants, stores, and shows right at the side of the San Antonio River. You can have fun with your friends on the riverboats, or you can have a very romantic dinner at the river shore. This river walk has free shows and concerts; it's free to walk, however, if you plan to eat or to have dinner, you might spend a little over \$40 dollars for two people. Hotel prices vary from \$45 dollars to \$350 dollars a night. It's not a very expensive city to visit; nevertheless, you will have to rent a car to visit around; the car price can vary from \$19 dollars to \$120 dollars a day, obviously depending on the car. You can find a great airfare for this destination online for about \$189 dollars roundtrip per person.

Los Angeles, CA is a very big city with a lot of interesting attractions such as Hollywood, Disneyland, Universal studios, The Walk of Stars, Star Houses, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, etc. If you want to visit Disney or Universal Studios, the prices can be expensive; it costs \$45 dollars to enter, and you will have to eat inside, which might be a little expensive in general. If all you want to do is walk, I recommend Santa Monica and The Walk of Stars; these places are free. If you want to stay in the city, it might be a little expensive. Hotels cost \$120 to \$2,000 dollars a night, but if you stay outside the city, you can find clean, hotels for less than \$60 dollars a night. You will have to rent a car for this city as well, and car prices are similar to those in San Antonio. The airfare for Los Angeles is normally \$380 dollars roundtrip per person.

Secondly, let's talk about some Mexican cities. Mexico has a lot of interesting, and relaxing cities to visit.

Mexico City, Mexico; this city can amaze you or give you a headache. It is the biggest city in the world, which means it's very crowded and with a lot of traffic; however, there're some places where you can find relaxation or a lot of fun: The Teotihuacan Pyramids, Garibaldi, Xochimilco River, museums, the Beautiful Arts Monument, The President's House etc. All these attractions are free; your only expense would be food and drinks, which are very

cheap. You can buy a meal with two drinks for less than \$15 dollars. Your day can be as expensive as you want. You can stay in the best hotel for \$1300 dollars a night, or in a regular hotel for \$50 dollars a night. The food is delicious, and the history is very interesting. The airfare for this city is \$450 dollars roundtrip per person. Please remember that you need a valid passport to get there.

Chiapas, Mexico is another city with a lot to see. This city is very interesting because it's not crowded, and it is mountainous

and forested. All the natural wonders like the mountains, jungle, and waterfalls are free;



however, remember to have a lot of change for tips because everybody will help you with all your needs, but not for free. Most of its inhabitants are indigenous people, so be sure you speak a little Spanish or that you have a translator. This city has extraordinary Mayan ruins and murals. The history and sights of this city are just amazing. The hotels vary from \$50 dollars to \$120 dollars a night. It's a great place for adventure. The airfare is a little expensive, it's around \$600 dollars roundtrip per person; the reason for this price is mostly because you'll need two different airlines to get there.

Guanajuato is one of the oldest cities in Mexico. You can find a lot of churches, and streets steeped in history. The main attraction is "The City Mummies" which is a show of very old corpses mummified in a very different way in comparison with the Egyptians. You just can't miss it. This show has a minimum charge of \$5 dollars to enter. Another attraction is the "Rondalla" which consists of walking through the whole city (it's not very big) drinking and singing along with the university's music band. This is free of course; you just have to pay for your drinks. The hotel prices in this city vary from

\$50 dollars to \$400 dollars a night, and the airfare is \$480 dollars roundtrip per person.

Lastly, both the U.S. and Mexico have great beach destinations to help you relax:



In the U.S. we can mention Hawaii, Miami, and Wilmington. The hotel prices in these cities vary from \$90 dollars to \$500 dollars a night. The public

beaches are of course, free, and mostly you'll need to rent a car for your convenience. These destinations may be a little expensive for some people, even when the beaches are really beautiful, they might not be the cheapest destinations. The airfares for these cities vary from \$250 dollars to \$630 dollars roundtrip per person.

If you're thinking about economical and beautiful beaches, I recommend the next cities in Mexico: Acapulco Ixtapa, or Puerto Vallarta. These beaches are really attractive, and they're free; however, you'll need a lot of change for tips and little things at the beach, such as, chairs, food, and rides. The hotels vary from \$50 dollars to \$350 dollars a night and the airfare for these destinations vary from \$470 dollars to \$580 dollars roundtrip per person.



In conclusion, I can tell you that there are a lot of cities to go visit either in the U.S. or in Mexico. Some cities are fun to visit; some other cities are interesting to visit. Even with the current world economic crisis, it is always good for you and your family to save a little money for relaxation and some family time. Having at least one travel destination in your vacation each year can help you and your family resist the stress and worries of your everyday activities. I hope that this information can help you find a fun, interesting, and affordable city to visit on

your next vacation. There's an old saying in Mexico that says, "There's no better way to spend money than to travel." Have you ever regretted spending money on traveling?



A Special Month

By: *Rachid Lagzouli*

The news was announced, and the children went out to the streets to express their joy to meet the beloved month. This is the time when my mother's heart is filled with happiness and joy! This is the time when my father sits in delight with pride. This is the time when my brothers' and sisters' hearts come together by the arrival of this month; it is the month of Ramadan. The month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. All Muslims around the world celebrate one of the greatest months of the year, the month of Ramadan, which represents one of the five pillars of Islam, and it is also the month when the Holy Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Fasting during Ramadan in the United States is more challenging for me as I try to navigate the requirements and recommendations of Ramadan, which are to fast from sunrise to sunset, to pray the five the daily prayers at their time, to attend special evening prayers, Tarawih, at the Mosque, and to read the Qur'an every day for the whole month, while managing the demands of work and school.

The month of Ramadan means not only refraining from food and drink during daylight hours, but it is also a time for me to do my best to practice self control and discipline which includes not getting angry very easily or not insulting anyone. In addition, I have to control myself from using bad words or bad language. In other words, I try my best to control my tongue, eyes, hands, and mind



from evil thoughts. My father used to tell me to try to be a forgiver. When someone commits a bad action towards me, I try not to be mad or angry, but instead I try to be a forgiver. The prophet Mohamed (peace is upon him) said, "If someone insults or wants to start an argument with you, tell him that I'm fasting." During Ramadan, many friends of mine give up their bad habits and behaviors. A friend of mine used to smoke, but during Ramadan, he was able to give up smoking. Since that particular Ramadan, he has never smoked again.

However, Ramadan is the best time to spend extra time with family. Everybody enjoys a half day with his or her family because the work and school schedules change during Ramadan in my country. When



I was in my country, my family used to get together around the table for Iftar, which is the breaking of the fast at the sunset just before sunset prayer. In fact, breaking fast with my family was a great opportunity to reconnect, to strengthen ties, and to discuss many topics of interest with my family. My family sometimes invites our friends and relatives to have dinner together in order to build strong relationships between our relatives and to make peace between those who have been in conflict with one other.

My favorite moment of Ramadan was in the evening after we finished our Tarawih prayers, special prayers that Muslims attend at the Mosque every night of Ramadan, because I felt that my faith increased after fasting and praying each day of Ramadan. When Ramadan came, it changed many people who were bad.

They became ready to do good deeds.



Moreover, people who were not praying before were now found standing next to me performing

their prayer at the mosque during Ramadan. Nights during Ramadan were amazing since almost everyone visited his or her relatives during this time. The children enjoyed playing soccer, and hide and seek games out in the streets. In fact, those moments made me feel the blessings of Ramadan.

Fasting during Ramadan in my country is enjoyable. When I was in my country, I could hear the sounds of the Athan, the call for the prayers, throughout the whole city at one time. The streets were empty during Iftar, and the restaurants were closed during daily hours. During this time, I could enjoy a variety of foods that my mother would make for us, the atmosphere of the neighbors and family members cooking for one other and sharing food, as well as, the sounds of the fireworks, and the cannonball being launched into the creek. Indeed, Ramadan is a very special month back home.



Fasting during Ramadan in the United States was a new experience for me. Living among so many different cultures made Ramadan lose its meaning. The fact that almost everyone around you is eating during the day sometimes made it hard to feel that I was fasting during Ramadan. I felt lost during my first Ramadan in the United States because I did not find the atmosphere that I was used to having when I was in my country. Since I did not have my family around me during breakfast time, I used to break my fasting when I was by myself. Now, because of my work and school schedules, I do not have time to break my fasting. This spiritual time of the year helps me realize the emotional value of this ritual, and often helps me build stronger relationships with Muslims who share my same beliefs. With my Muslim friends, we are able to create the atmosphere of Ramadan. During each weekend of Ramadan, we get together and try to cook delicious food for our breakfast. We go together to the mosque to attend Tarawih prayers. What I love about fasting

during Ramadan in the United States is how more people become interested in my religion. During my break at work, people wonder why I do not eat, and I explain to



them the ritual of fasting during Ramadan among other things. In fact, answering these questions makes me proud because I serve as a model and representative of my

religion.

Ramadan is a true school for me every year to learn many lessons. Fasting during Ramadan allows me to practice self-control and will power. Through fasting during Ramadan every year, I learn how to control my natural desires such as the desire to drink and to eat. Like every Muslim, fasting during Ramadan is way of experiencing hunger, which helps me feel compassion for those who are less fortunate and underprivileged. Fasting during Ramadan allows me to feel what poor people are feeling who cannot afford a daily meal. My father always reminds my mother to send some food, drink, and fruit to the mosque, so that the poor people can go to the mosque and break their fasting. When I was in my country, I used to go with my father to the mosque, and my father used to give me some money to give to the poor people we met on our way to the mosque.



Ramadan is considered the most blessed and spiritually beneficial month of the Islamic year. Therefore, like every Muslim, Ramadan remains a true school for me to renew my faith and also to absorb these qualities that I have learned throughout Ramadan in

order to hold to them for the rest of the year.



APART BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

By: *Dina Turayeva*

When people ask me what country I am from, I answer Uzbekistan.



Their reactions tell me that they don't know where this country is, so I usually have to explain my country to them. The reason why people do not know much about Uzbekistan is because it used to be a part of the Soviet Union. However, Uzbekistan became an independent country on September 1, 1991. Uzbekistan is located in Central Asia and is on the historic Great Silk Road, which is the crossroads of trade and cultural exchange between the East and West. As a result, Uzbekistan has very rich customs and traditions that date back through many thousands of years of history.

Uzbekistan is a country that descended from an ancient civilization. What Uzbekistan is known for is its amazing and powerful architecture.

Some of the ancient architectures are Gur-Amir, Shahi-Zinda, and The Great



Registan. Even though these monuments were built hundreds of years ago, they are still powerful, cultural icons to the Uzbek people. The monuments range from palaces to religious centers, which serve as tourist attractions. The beauty and openness of the Great Registan represents the Uzbek culture and way of life. The Great Registan was built in the Great city of Samarkand by Temurlane. Temurlane was one of the greatest leaders in Uzbek history, which came into power after the rule Genghis Khan the Mongol. Today, Samarqand is one of the oldest cities and famous just like Rome, Athens, and Babylon. The Uzbek are also known for their contributions in math, science and medicine. Al-Kharazmi, the

founder of algebra, is a perfect example of this because he was one the greatest mathematicians of all time. The world “algorithm” comes from his name. Al-Kharazmi wrote and gave analytical solutions to linear and quadratic equations. Another important person was Avicenna (Ibn Sino), who is known today for being “Prince of Physicians.” There is a hospital named after this legend of medicine in Los Angeles. In fact, this shows the great patience and intelligence the old Uzbek people have given the world with their knowledge and power.

The most important value in Uzbekistan is family. In the Uzbek family, so many traditional practices take place like respecting and taking care of parents, the idea of family unity, being honest with one another, and having a strong belief in education. Parents are the most important people in our lives. It is also very important in my country that children respect parents, teachers, and elderly people. A very interesting event happened to me when my family had moved to America. While my son was waiting for me at the bank, he sat down on one of the chairs that were available. Just then, two elderly people came in, and my son got out of his seat and gave his seat to the elderly person. They were so happy to see someone behaving so nicely that they gave my son \$5. To this day, I remind my children to be respectful to anyone who is older than them.

Uzbeks believe that when people get older they shouldn't be sent to nursing homes. We believe in our parents staying with us, so we can help take good care of them. Children should follow the family rules no matter what. For example, my dad's parents lived with us. My dad was responsible for taking care of them, and I will have the same responsibility of caring for my parents when the time comes. For generations, our parents have been teaching us to do this, and I will teach my kids to do the same.

A strong belief in education is also important in our culture. My parents were highly educated. I also received a very good education along with my siblings, and I have

taught my kids to believe in a strong education as well. They know that in order to lead a good life, they will need a good education.

When I came to America, I was shocked to learn that you didn't have to be married in order to live together. Some of the people I encountered had children with their boyfriends and weren't married to them. This is not the case in Uzbekistan, and marriage is considered a very serious issue in my country. After you get married, the chances of getting divorced are not great. Uzbeks believe that both parents need to be involved in their child's upbringing, and this is part of reason why they don't get divorced.

An important tradition that I still continue with my family is eating dinner together. No matter what is going on with my family, we gather at the same time to enjoy dinner together. Although I have noticed that most Americans



don't have dinner with their families, I make sure that my family keeps this tradition because it has made my family stronger and helps me interact with my kids a little better.

The Uzbek people are known for their hospitality, friendly personalities, and peaceful nature. Even if the hostess doesn't have any food to offer, they make sure to get at least a cup of tea on the table. We have a saying, “That you have to be respectful to your guest as to your father.” Moreover, one of our traditions involves celebrating the holiday, Navruz. Navruz is like another New Year, where families celebrate together and visit each other. I still celebrate this holiday with my family here in Moline every year. Furthermore, it is a good way to understand

a country's culture and lifestyle by the foods they eat. For example, people can find many products, which are made of rice. One of the traditions



that I continue today is making the traditional food “pilaf” once a week for a meal. Relatives and friends are invited over so that we can enjoy this tradition together. This particular dish uses rice, fresh vegetables, and meat, and it has great nutritional value. Most days of week, I also make other traditional foods, so that I can stay connected to my culture.

Islam is the main religion of my country. There are many mosques and special buildings commemorating this religion all over the country. Even though Uzbekistan is a Muslim country, people have the right to worship how they wish. Most people expect Muslims to cover up, but in my country, it

is your choice. We have complete freedom of religion.



Along with religion, the economy has been growing as well. My country’s economic standing is one of the best when it comes to exporting goods. Uzbekistan is the second leading country in the world when it comes to exporting cotton. Uzbekistan is also the seventh largest world producer of gold.

Even though my country seems rich, most of people there are not. Although I love my country very much, I still would change this factor. I wish that the people were not in poverty. I wish that everyone could have a good education, food, and housing. I wish the government helped out people who were struggling to raise families. I believe that someday my country will be thriving once again and that things will turn around. My hope is that this description of Uzbekistan, my birthplace, will encourage more individuals to learn more about and maybe visit my country someday. It is by far the most beautiful place I know. Being raised there, I was greatly influenced by my surroundings. The country is a big part of who I am today, and for that, I will be forever grateful.



Why people come to the United States of America.

By: Koffi Lissa

Have you ever been to paradise? Everybody thinks that life in the United States of America is easy, sweet like life in paradise or seventh heaven. I remember that when I was in a high school, my geography teacher said, “If you live in the U.S, you will own a big house; you will have nice cars. Also, you will get a good job with a high wage.” She also said, “You will not have to work hard before becoming rich.” In fact, with my five years experience in this country, I have met lots of immigrants who have lots to say about this paradise. Briefly, this powerful country known by everybody drives new immigrants crazy and can create agreeable or disagreeable surprises that they would not ever imagine.

I am an immigrant, and I have a right to be here. I have been in the United States since November 2004 as a legal permanent resident. As a young man desiring to know the true story about everything, one day I heard from a friend that you can go to the United States if you become a winner of the visa lottery.



Without hesitation, I tried for the first time and I won! This was an amazing surprise. I had no clue about the situation. However, I am a man who always follows instructions, in order to do whatever I want. As a result, I completed my medical exams successfully and got my visa to the U.S. This has helped me improve myself in many ways, especially in education, which has given me a lot of opportunity. But today,

I feel lonely because I miss my country. Somehow, I am a strong man able to do what I want in this country full of freedom.



Dina, a student in my class from Uzbekistan, said she came to U.S with the lottery. Today, she does not have any regret to be here with her family. When she was in her country, only her husband worked to support the family. But, here both are working. She also has the opportunity to go to school. Talking about her children, she is happy because they will have a higher education. Dina likes the stability that her family has as permanent residents.

Some people come to the United States for political reasons. In order to save their lives, some people or political leaders have to leave their own countries forever. For instance, some people with a good job in their country become simple workers in factories in the U.S. This situation is so stressful for the political refugees, and the worst is they cannot go back home if they desire. They endure this present situation with the hope that things will change, and they can go back home someday.

Higher education means more money, doesn't it? Some people come to the United States for education. The reputation and academic awards of the U. S. colleges and universities make them famous or highly reputable. For this reason, people like to



study in this country with the goal of getting better jobs down the road. However, studying in this country is not as easy as we think. Despite many good services, it is difficult for foreign students to succeed. However, with dedication and hard work some become more successful than if they had stayed in their native countries.

Freeedom!!!!!!What does freedom mean to you? Do you like to be free from everything? Yes, of course. One of the reasons people come to the United States is freedom. In fact, everybody likes freedom and consequently wants to be free.



Unfortunately, some countries cannot provide this freedom since the civil war is going on. For example, in the Quad Cities, in general ,especially in Moline, lots of refugees from Africa, Europe, and Asia are not able to go back home now even if they are home sick. The unsafe condition due to the war obliges them to stay here for a while even if they do not want to. Some want to go back to see the land of their roots destroyed by the war. In addition, some refugees are here without parents or family. Their parents or family passed away during the war. It is terrible when you hear people telling stories about what happened.



For instance, I know a woman of 35 years of age who is a refugee, and has no family today. She said her three children, two boys and one girl, and her husband died one night in front of her. They were killed without sharing any last words. Life is more important than everything; that is why freedom is above all in this country. In short, people who come to the United States for freedom are satisfied with the way the government cares about their integration into the society. John, a refugee student from Sudan, in my class said, "The civil war was the veritable reason for me to be here. Tribes fighting for 21 years make the country unsafe and insecure." He left his country to live in Kenya for 6 years. He was in the refugee camps, where life was very different than before. He has been in the U.S for 2 years.



Some people come to the United States for career reasons. As we know, a career is something very important for human development. In some countries, there are not enough jobs and the rate of college graduates who did not have a job is high. Facing this situation, some people prefer to come to the U.S to get a good job to satisfy their needs and desires. The U.S

dollar today is not the highest currency in the world, but it has a big impact on the world economy. In the U.S., a simple worker can make \$ 2000.00 a month, whereas in some countries a management staff can make less than \$500.00 a month. Everybody wants a higher income in order to be independent in his society. For sure, lots of people who come to the U.S for career reasons are not disappointed at all. The beginning is hard, but the end could be described as a better life according to people who have had that experience.



Here in the U.S., it seems like the theory is not equal to the practice. In fact, working in this country is not easy. For instance, I work hard in a meat factory in order to pay for my rent and satisfy my needs. The fact is, once you come here you cannot go back; you have to struggle to survive. This is America. This is freedom; this is a paradise which some still fight for. Life is difficult in the U.S, but I would not trade it for anything. I know I made the right decision to come here and make a life here. It is the most sublime and unforgettable moment of my life.



Lifestyles in the U.S. and In My Own Country

By: Amsatou Sow



Coming to the U.S was a dream come true for me because I thought it would never happen. When I flew to the U.S, I was so excited and puzzled at the same time. At that time, lots of ideas started popping up in my mind. While the airplane flew in the sky, my

heartbeat so fast that I thought something was taking my breath away. As the airplane



landed at the airport, I could feel my excitement rising. Suddenly, the stewardess announced,

“Welcome to the U.S.” I felt so relieved to walk into the airport after so many hours in the plane. I looked around to see people laughing and sharing tears of happiness. I was also listening to the sounds of the people’s voices as they spoke English. Walking closer to pass the security door, the aroma of food made me so hungry that I just couldn’t wait to eat an American pizza, so I followed the crowd right in front of me to ask for some information. During that time, I started seeing many differences between the U.S. and my country before I began my new journey in a new place.

As a foreign student in the U.S, I have experienced a variety of lifestyles that have

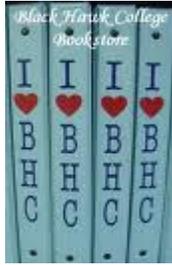


influenced my behavior, culture, and work style. I have noticed strong differences between life in

the U.S. and life in my own country, Senegal. In the U.S, everyone can further their education while working a full-time or part-time job, as well as, raise children since the educational system is divided into fall, spring, and summer. This allows everyone to take a different number of classes depending on their schedules and time. During my interview with a student from the Success Center, she mentioned that she is able to come to school three times a week for her classes, which allows her time to raise her two daughters and work full-time while still attending school. This three day a week system for class works perfectly for me also. I am able to get many things done



such as my homework and housework in a short amount of time. Also, students choose their majors and courses without anyone else's influence, and every student has the authorization to drop a class early when certain circumstances occur. I schedule my classes without worrying about when the semester ends which allows me to focus on my assignments and learn my lessons better. Every day, I feel like I have something different to achieve. Fortunately, in the U.S, colleges provide financial aid or scholarships to students who qualify for them. This makes my life easier than before since I can buy my books on time, sell them back when my classes have ended, and use the money for charity in December.



In my country, Senegal, succeeding at school means having the dedication and willingness to sacrifice your entire free time to achieve it. In Senegal, everyone has to make a choice between studying and working because students from high school to college must study full-time from Monday to Saturday between 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM. For example, it was hard for me to stay at school for the whole day since I was forced to take courses that I didn't like and wasn't good at. In general, a person cannot attend school and work at the same time. Also, professors decide which courses students will take in the future based on their grades. Although I studied very hard to pass my classes, I had no choice in future classes or financial help until admission to a university.

American culture has been one of the strongest influences among other cultures for a long time. Americans believe in individualism, freedom, competitiveness, and privacy. In America, children are taught to be self-reliant and responsible for their own actions early in life. In America, at the age of 18, you are considered an adult who must know wrong from right and be able



to make your own decisions regarding your life. Also, in the U.S, people are free to be religious or not, and that decision is up to each individual person. They completely believe in and respect one another's personal privacy. Amazingly, instructors don't talk about students' grades or improvements unless students give them the authorization to do so. Americans also assume people have private thoughts that may never be shared with anyone. For instance, psychiatrists won't talk about their clients' conditions to others since that would breach the patient's trust and confidentiality laws.

In the Senegalese culture, you must respect and follow certain virtues or you will bring disgrace to your family. For example, if a single woman got pregnant, she would be dishonored by her family or avoided by her friends. In my country, a family consists of parents, children, relatives, and neighbors. In Senegal, most people live in an extended family. Women have the responsibility to feed and take good care of the children, as well as, complete housework even though they also work outside the home.



Men's duties involve providing for all the family's needs and paying all the bills and expenses. Therefore, children are held accountable to their parents until death. They are expected to follow their parents' advice, and even after turning 18 years old, they are still under their parents' control whether they live with them or not. In one word, there is no freedom at all. Thus, I struggled with this every single time. So far, Senegalese culture has amazed many tourists, visitors, and foreigners



since we are so relaxed with time, where as Americans are always rushed.

In addition to education and culture, it may surprise some people to know that work styles in the United States and Senegal are completely different. In the



U.S., some people work over-time, some work full-time, and others work part-time. In many factories, employees work in groups and in assembly lines. However, working in an office has really improved with the onset of high-speed internet and new computers, faxes, and photocopiers. In the U.S, everyone uses computers for a variety of different purposes.

Also, lots of employees are paid every week, and some of them have two or three different jobs in order to make enough money to meet their basic needs. Since these jobs are tough, many immigrants decide to change their lifestyle in order to make their dreams come true.

Like the U.S., people in Senegal mostly work all day whether in administration or in a particular industry. Even though there has been a lot of change with the new technology in the world, it doesn't seem to help workers in Senegal at all.

Employees are still working slowly in hospitals, restaurants, and airports. In Senegal,



all employees are paid by the month, not by the week, and there is no hourly wage. When there is still work to do, employees have to finish it before they go home. Employees are also paid based on the degree they have acquired, not by the time spent on the task.

All in all, education, culture, and work styles make life in the U.S. and life in my country, Senegal, very different. This is why many immigrants from Senegal have to overcome culture shock before they are able

to adjust to these differences. However, once they do, they realize all the opportunities that the United States has to offer.



THE MELTING EVEREST

By: Rohit Chitrakar

A current study shows that the temperature of the Earth is increasing, and its effect can be seen directly on the world's highest peak, Mt.

Everest (8,484 meters), which is located in Nepal. Mount Everest may not be the highest peak in the future,

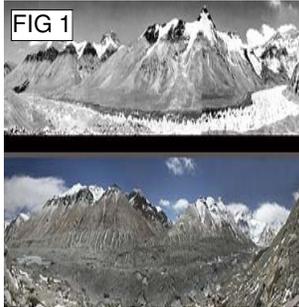


as the study shows that Mount Everest is melting day by day. The main reason for this is global warming. Different changes have already been observed in the landscape of Mt. Everest. Recently, a team from National Geographic, sponsored by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), reported that many new lakes are being developed on Mt. Everest because the ice is melting rapidly, and it has also been reported that the old lakes are in the state of flooding.

Many satellite photographs were taken and these photographs indicate that the amount of snow and ice have decreased tremendously within the last 10 years. It has been found that around 44 glacial lakes are in the state of flooding. Some of the results have already been seen in the area since several floods have taken place within the last year. The biggest threat is to the people living in those areas. They are worried about upcoming danger to their homes, and they are looking for help. Nepal is a poor country, and the government is not able to help these people. They are forced to live in these areas due to their income since they don't have any other options. If preventive measures are not taken now, then many people will surely lose their lives.

In an interview with Peter Hillary, the son of Edmund Hillary, who has reached the

summit twice, he said," I have seen the result of glacial lakes bursting their banks, which is catastrophic like an atom bomb. Climate change is happening, and this is a fact. The base camp is sinking each year; it used to sit at 5,320 meters. This year it was at 5,280 meters because the ice is melting from the top and side" (The Independent World).



generations. Let's talk about global warming and save the Earth.

References: *The Independent World*. N.p. N.d. Web. 25 Sept. 2009.

In the first part(FIG-1) of the picture which was taken in 1986, shows the clear view of tilting pinnacles of ice, 20 meters form Rongbuk glacier on the northern slopes of Everest and second part of the picture, which was taken recently, shows the disappearance of the ice.



UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

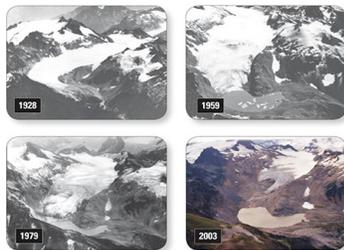
By: *Tan Pham*

Many people know that there are many roads to take in life. But, sometimes it is difficult to have enough confidence to choose your own road in life and make the decision to study at a university. Why must we study at a university?

There are in fact many reasons for studying at a university, but the main reason is to have a better



life in the future. In fact, there are many successful people who have had good achievements in education. The university is a stepping-stone on the ladder of success in life. Due to this concept, many young people have studied hard in order to become a university student. Looking at Facebook or MySpace posts, you can see many people expressing their sorrows such as, "Too much homework or trying to pass the test in order to go to the university." For good students, who have reached high academic achievements, it is not hard to go on to any university; but for weaker students, it is a big problem and challenge. The weak student already knows they don't have the ability to



For Sherpas living on Mount Everest, this is something they can see every day, but they can't do anything about it

on their own. The scientists of Nepal are worried about the cascade effect, whereby one overflowing lake empties into another causing a chain reaction. Nepal is a country full of the Himalayas, and each year the temperature in Nepal is increasing by 0.06 degrees Celsius. This might kill thousands of people and wipe out the agricultural land. This is one of the examples of global warming. The Himalayas are the sources of fresh water and natural beauty; it's time to save these mountains, the Himalayas. It is important to keep in mind that these mountains are important in order to keep the ecosystem balanced.

Many steps have been taken to conserve Mt. Everest, but it's still not enough. More research and more awareness programs must be conducted. Global warming is not only affecting Mt. Everest but the entire Earth. Each and every individual must be warned about the climatic changes and put their effort towards reducing the green house gases. It is not too late; we can still prevent global warming and leave behind a good environment for the future

succeed at the university, but they will close their eyes and keep trying to go down this academic road. Many times, they don't have the confidence to go another way. Hai Nguyen, who attends Phan Ngoc Hein High School in Vietnam said, "Although there are many ways to succeed, only a small percentage actually will succeed." He is not passing his classes, although he is trying hard to go on to a university. His conception is the same as many other teenagers who don't have enough confidence or energy to go down their own road. Many teenagers make this mistake.



On the other hand, society and pressure from family members can also cause an additional strain on the student. Ngan Nguyen, a Chau Van Liem High School student said, "My sister is a good student, she passed on to a top university; now, it is my turn since my parents expect me to do that." Her parents expect that she can do better, and she doesn't want to disappoint them. Her sister told her to have discipline when it comes to her studies in order to be successful. But, sometimes, she can't do that. She is sometimes very easy-going and wastes time doing other things besides homework. Many times, she fears that her family will be frustrated by her actions, and it may take many years for her to pass on to a university. Nhan Cao from Nguyen Binh Khiem High School feels the same way. Many students are obsessed by the label, "university." Even those students, who passed on to a college or a professional high school already, still want to try to become a

university student. Many students are ashamed to say they've learned at a college, instead of a university. "People laugh at you when they hear this," said Linh Nguyen, a student at the College of Textile Technology.



Indeed, because of the Vietnam society's view, "University is the best," so many young people receive disapproving looks from others when they get a degree from a school other than a university. However, the value of success is what we achieve, not from where we attend school. Whether you're a university, college, or professional school student in Vietnam, you can learn at any institution if you are determined to do so, and you will find success. Just follow the path that is best for you and you will find your own success.



Report on Careers in High Demand

By: *Mohammad Taimuri*



When I asked students at Black Hawk College if they can find good jobs, they told me that they couldn't because of the status of the economy these days.

Unemployment today is 9.5% in the USA and in Illinois is 9.9%.

However, if you plan right, you may choose a career with good job possibilities even in this bad economy. There are some careers, which will be in high demand in the next few years. I went to the Career Center under the Black Hawk College Library and spoke with **Dr. Bruce Storey**, the Director of the Career Center at the college, and he told me that the promising careers are anything

in the medical field, environment, going green, and any type of medical job.



Additionally, he told me that there are some companies in the Quad Cities that have the most openings. They are John Deere, the Arsenal, Alcoa and the

hospitals. He told me that there are services at Black Hawk College that are offered to its students to help them find jobs, help them chose their career, and show them the best way to talk to the interviewer. He added that all services are free to any students.



Dr. Bruce Storey, told me about the economy in the QCA and that the QCA economy will get better. However, the companies don't hire until one year after the economy gets better. He also told me that there are some best ways to find a job; they are asking any experts in the field, getting information about the place, and getting help finding a job.

To conclude, the economy in the Quad Cities will get better and speaking with Dr. Bruce Storey, the



Director of the Career Center helped me understand which careers are promising in the future. His advice and information were helpful, and Black Hawk College students should take a look into these areas in order to get all the help they need at the college. Students of Black Hawk College should take advantage of these services.



My Culture (Dinka Culture, Sudan)

By: John Manyang

Does everybody know what culture is? To me personally, it is society's way of life, economic activities, and rituals. My culture is that of the Dinka. The Dinka is a tribe in Southern Sudan where I stem from. These people are found along the Nile River. They are pastoralists and farmers as well, so they move with cattle from one place to another looking for fresh pastures and water. This is done in the dry season. Nowadays, the Dinka people are scattered around the world in places like the United States of America, Europe, Australia, and Asia as a result of a civil war that lasted for twenty-two years. Even though the Dinka are far away from home, they still carry on the Dinka customs: rites of passage, religion, and pastoralism. In fact, these reflect the identity of my people.

First of all, the rite of passage is an essential social activity of the Dinka. This is the time for 18-to-20-year old boys to mark



Dinka wrestlers

the beginning of adult life. At this stage, they avert childish behavior

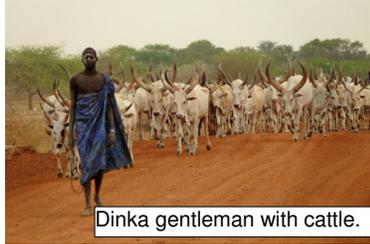
and start to act as fully-grown up folks. They don't cook, milk cows or stay near places where women cook. In Dinka norm, boys are trained on men's jobs before they become mature. Furthermore, they are not dependent anymore, and the responsibilities are given to them. Again, they also take part in intercommunity wrestling.

It is very clear that Dinka young men enjoy this sport mostly at maturity. Each one who reaches this juncture helps his family in whatever needs to be done. I myself was taught how to graze cattle, cut grass for thatching the houses, cut long poles, and clear the farm for cultivation by my dad. So I know what roles boys play in the family.

Secondly, religion is greatly valued by the Dinka. For instance, we believe in only one creator of the universe. The name for

God in Dinka language is “Nhialic.” According to our faith, God is the soul provider, and the power of powers. In places of worship, prayers are led religious leaders. Certainly, there are many different ways of which people call for the spirit of the Maker.

For example, some people pray in the traditional manner in which they call for the Spirit of their



Dinka gentleman with cattle.

ancestors to bring blessings on to them. On the other hand, others use scriptures to preach the word of God to non-believers. Sacrifices are offered in diverse forms: lambs, goats, bulls, and the best farm produce. Therefore, all the gifts present their gratitude to God for keeping them alive to do what they intend to achieve.

Besides the rites of passage and religion, is pastoralism. Pastoralism is in the soul of every Dinka including me, I like cattle. Although, at present, the Dinka have permanent homes, they used to move with the cattle. The movement of folks with cattle from one place to another is common in the dry season like summer.

One luaak accommodates at least

But in rainy season, some cows are kept in byres “Luaak.”



fifteen to twenty livestock. They graze their cattle on fresh grass along the Nile and small rivers Kolnyieng. Dinka depend on cattle for their living.

They keep cattle for milk, meat, hides which are used for tethering and drums. Also, cow dung is burnt to keep cattle free from parasites

such as the tse tsefly and ticks.

In conclusion, the Dinka observe the rites of passage, religion, and pastoralism. Today, Dinka are civilized; many of them

have advanced education and live in modern style. But we don’t want the Dinka custom to vanish. We want the best of both worlds. I, myself, know the old and present traditions. I don’t want my original culture which has existed for years to disappear.



Cattle in search of pastures in grazing field



A Bad Decision Led To Worst Day at School

By: Yannio Desouza

Have you ever felt lonely even though there were people around you? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like a stranger or felt like no one wanted to talk to you? Did you ever go to a place where you felt like you didn’t belong there? As for me, I was in those situations on the first day of school in the U.S.

I was 17 years old, when I moved from



my native country, TOGO, in West Africa, to the U.S. My experience in English was at the lowest level

before I came here. Being a foreign student, it was a weird experience for me to go to a school where some of the people didn’t have the same skin color or talk the same language as me. I was nervous and excited at the same time. I was wondering what it would be like to have a conversation with an American. When I first arrived to the school, it looked like a huge building painted orange and dark blue. I went to the front office with my uncle, and on the way there, some students were looking at us in a strange kind of way. We signed up for my classes and then a few minutes later, my uncle left. I waited for my advisor, who later on came to talk to me about my schedule. At that time, my English was poor, so I was having

difficulty understanding him. All I was doing was nodding my head or saying “yes” or “no,” even though I didn’t know what he was saying. A few minutes later, we left his office, and he brought me straight to a class full of Americans students.

Going to that class, was the beginning of the worst day of school in my life. When I entered the classroom, I started getting nervous because

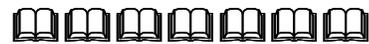


I was feeling unwanted and uncomfortable. They were staring at me, some students were giggling, and others were looking at me like, “who’s this kid.” I was quiet during the whole day in all of my classes. After a while, the bell rang, and it was lunch. At lunchtime, I went to the dining room, walked toward a table, and then sat down all alone, thinking about leaving the school to go home. A few minutes later, while lonely at the table, two girls came up next to me, one black and the other white. They started asking me questions, and since I was not good at speaking English, I completely failed to interact with them. They looked at me in a bizarre way and went away. I felt ashamed and disappointed with myself, and I was thinking that they would never talk to me again, so I left the table and went outside all frustrated. When I got outside, some students were smoking. One guy proposed to me that I smoke, but I said no at first. However, he insisted, so I fell under his peer pressure. I didn’t know that the school had a policy against smoking outside on school property. When we got caught, we were sent to the principal’s office. I was so scared because it was my first day and since I couldn’t speak or understand English very well. When I was suspended from school, I couldn’t believe my bad luck!

When we arrived at his office, all I was thinking about was how I was probably



going to get kicked out of school on my first day. It would be an embarrassment to me and my family. They would not appreciate it at all. The principal ended up getting really mad and decided to punish us by making us do a public speech about the policy of not smoking in and around the school building. At that point, my day was going from bad to worse. Since I couldn’t speak English fluently at that time, I didn’t know how I was supposed to do a speech in front of my whole class. That was completely insane to me. The principal also called my uncle and told him to come and get me from school. My uncle came and was angry at me for doing such a stupid thing. I was suspended for one day and definitely learned a lesson from it all. That day was by far the worst day yet in my life in school here in the United States, and I still couldn’t believe my bad luck!



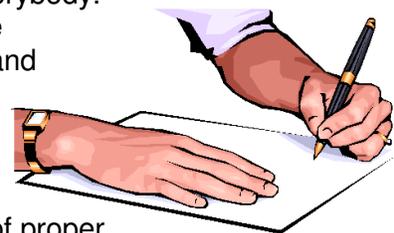
The Importance of Writing Properly

By: Hakoubou Kassim

Young people recognize that to be competitive in today’s world, one must have the skills for real success. Writing, as expression of thought on the paper, is one of the measures to be competitive. For these reasons, everybody should want to improve his writing skills. Good writing skills improve student’s opportunities in school and workers opportunities on the job.

When I write, I convey a message to the audience about what I’m thinking. To allow people to understand my thoughts correctly, I am supposed to write properly and neatly. Not only does proper writing show the level of education but it also is a dream of everybody.

It gives more opportunity and confidence. To know more about the importance of proper



writing for those opportunities like employment, I interviewed Dr. Bruce Storey, the Director of the Career Resource Center at BHC.

Hakoubou: What's the importance of proper writing skills in job placement?

Dr. Storey: Good writing is very important starting with your resume and cover letter. The employers look for that and, they will recognize your competence by how you write your resume and cover letter. If you write them with mistakes, you will not be hired.



Hakoubou: Do employers always ask for experiences? Do these experiences include writing skills?

Dr. Storey: Yes, if the job requests it. But it is important to know that good writing and good communication skills go hand in hand. Also, you need them to cooperate better with your co-workers and customers.

Hakoubou: Can somebody be certified without good writing skills, and is it possible for him/her to be employed?

Dr. Storey: Without good skills in writing and communication, you can't be hired with your certificate.



Hakoubou: So, what is the relationship between proper writing skills and employment?

Dr. Storey: Having good skills in writing and communication leads employers to believe that you can handle the job.

Hakoubou: Finally, what can we conclude concerning the importance writing has in job placement?

Dr. Storey: Not only are skills in writing important, but good communication skills are also necessary for job placement. They both go together.

In addition to the importance of writing skills for employment



opportunities as illustrated by Mr. Bruce Storey, I interviewed Mr. Jacob Claud, a Manager and owner of a supermarket in New York about

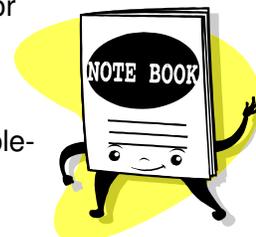
the importance of writing properly in sales.

Hakoubou: What is the importance of proper writing skills in business?

Mr. Jacob: The customers listen and read the information about the products they buy.

Hakoubou: What is the effect if the writing on the label conveys the wrong information?

Mr. Jacob: The consequences are sometimes very bad. For those reasons, before sending the products to retailers to sell, the companies should double-check everything.



Otherwise, with the mistakes still on the products, this could result in losing his or her customers. Sometimes people can complain for misinformation also. For those reasons, there are specialists for the product label writing with good skills.

Finally, to learn more about the importance of writing at school, I choose as my last and final interview a teacher whose name is Mr. Daladani. He is teacher at Maryland French School.

Hakoubou: Mr. Daladani, what do you think about proper writing at school?

Mr. Daladani: Writing correctly or having skills in writing is a source of "excellence" and "honor." That means those students who you see with "excellence" and "honor" have good skills not only in language assimilation but also in writing. They express their thoughts neatly by writing. When you see their homework or their tests, everything is clearly written. You can't stop reading their work, and their copies are neat and correctly written without grammar and spelling mistakes. Do you remember what Harold Pinter said? "Good writing excites me and makes life worth living." So to be perfect, you should have good writing skills because with good writing skills you can transmit your thoughts exactly to your audience.

Hakoubou: How can somebody improve himself/herself in writing?

Mr. Deladani: By writing all the time because writing goes hand in hand like Madeleine L'Engle said, "The inspiration comes while you write."

Hakoubou: Thank you, Mr. Daladani. Those examples of the importance of writing properly will push us to make more effort to improve our writing skills at school, at home, and on the job.



Culture Shock

By: *Hussain Taimuri*

Although the American culture and Afghan culture have many differences, I am proud of both of them because I have been living between both of them since I am originally from Afghanistan, but I have been living in the United States since 2003.

First of all, what does culture mean? Some scholars of

sociology say culture is the behaviors and beliefs, which describe one's style of clothing, values and beliefs, entertainment, leisure activities, etc.

However, culture shock means that someone has difficulty agreeing with or adjusting to another culture. This new culture is unacceptable to them. Sometimes different cultures can cause conflict between two people, communities, and even between countries. The three parts of culture that are controversial for me are style of clothing, belief system, and entertainment.

First, the style of clothing of Afghanistan is different than the American style. For example, in Afghanistan women wear long pajamas, which have two or three different colors with a long scarf that can cover the body, even her face is covered (Chador or Borga).



However, in the U.S. most women wear T-shirts and short pants. When my family and I came to New York, my youngest child was shocked and surprised by a woman working in the immigration office who was wearing a T-shirt and pants. When I saw that woman, I felt that I had lost my integrity because I was trained in my culture that if a man looks at a strange woman who isn't wearing a scarf, God might punish him. After coming to the Quad Cities, my family, a close friend, and I went to the community clinic to check our health. During that moment, a young nurse saw my friend and suddenly she became shocked by her clothing. She asked her why she had wrapped herself in all of this cloth in the summertime. Then, my friend immediately replied that this is part of the Afghan culture. She said, "I am a Muslim woman and I like to wear hijob." Hijob, in the Islam culture, means a Muslim woman has to cover her hair and all her body (without her face, her hands, and her feet). The nurse and I were both shocked during that visit because I saw a woman in a T-shirt and pants for the first time, and the nurse saw a women-wearing hijob for the first time. In the U.S. everyone has the freedom to practice their own religion and culture and wear different kinds of clothing. This story illustrates how different kinds of clothing are part of a communities' culture, although it may be strange for others.

Secondly, differences in one's beliefs can cause culture shock. For example, dating, kissing, and sexual activities

are not a problem among boys and girls before marriage in the U.S., but these kinds of activities are forbidden and illegal before marriage in Afghanistan. If someone commits sexual activities before marriage in Afghanistan, both of them would be severely punished and may even get the death penalty. The couple may have to go outside of their community or their own native country because they have committed a big



crime. In fact, dating and sexual activities outside of marriage are against the Afghan culture and Islamic beliefs, as well, since the majority of Afghan people are Muslim. Also, in the United States, marrying a first cousin is shameful and embarrassing, but it is very common in Afghanistan. While divorce is common in the United States (the rate of divorce is 50% among American people), it is only 2% in Afghanistan because divorce is considered shameful there. In Afghanistan, a couple fears losing their integrity and their reputation inside their own community as well as missing their children. Since American and Afghan belief systems are very different, this was a big source of culture shock for me when I first moved to the U.S.

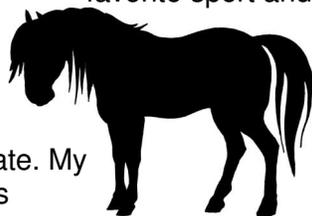
Imam Ali's Shrine is a respectful place in Afghanistan; people believe that Ali had a great successful judgment government in Islamic land.



Finally, the type of entertainment or leisure activities that people enjoy can be a source of culture shock. Sports like football or wrestling are boring for me in the United States. Sometimes, I ask myself why these men are killing each other when I watch football on TV since these kinds of sports seem too dangerous to me. But this kind of entertainment is very interesting for my children, and they have spent many hours watching



American football or wrestling because they are being raised in the United States. One time I invited my classmate over to watch Afghan's horseback riding race on cable T.V. An Afghan horseback riding race is called Buzkashi. It is my favorite sport and entertainment; however, it made my youngest children bored, as well as, my classmate. My classmate, who was born in the United



States, said that this kind of horseback riding race is very fatal and harmful. What was the cause of my classmate's and children's negative reaction towards Afghan horseback riding races? Because I wasn't raised in an American community, and because my classmate and my children weren't raised in Afghanistan, we have very different views on what we enjoy watching for entertainment purposes. Another form of entertainment, gambling, is considered a crime in Afghanistan, and it is against the Islamic belief system. However, in the United States, people can go to the Casinos, and they can gamble without any problems.



Afghan's ridding racehorse back is called Buzkashi.

Differences in style of clothing, belief systems, and entertainment can cause culture shock for those adapting to a new culture and way of living. While women have to wear hijab, and gambling, divorce, and dating before marriage are crimes in Afghanistan; in the United States, these things are not shameful, illegal, or considered crimes. However, differing cultures between eastern and western countries are a big problem. One of the elements in Afghanistan conflict is culture shock because some people of Afghanistan believe that the western countries push their culture into Afghanistan. I think it is better to analyze other cultures in order to inform ourselves and in order to respect other people's differences.



Mexican Cultural Influences in the U.S.A

By: Maria Vital Tapia

The story began in February 1999 when I came to the U.S.A because I got married a year before, and I was six months

pregnant. On top of that, I was surprised when I saw the snow for the first time. It was at O'Hare airport in Chicago, IL. Then, I could not talk with people who only spoke English; it



made me feel frustrated. This is one of the reasons that I am taking English as a Second Language classes. Also, I am trying to adjust to the weather and the American lifestyle. Fortunately, I am finding a lot of my culture is already blended with the American culture.

This is especially true regarding the language. For example, Spanish language is more common than other foreign



languages. I heard in the U.S., Spanish courses are usually offered to students in schools because Spanish is more popular in high schools than any other language. As a result, a lot of students have been taking Spanish classes, and I have met bilingual classmates, teachers, or staff. For instance, my cousin and some Mexican-American high school students are taking Spanish to know reading or writing. Also, community colleges or universities offer Spanish courses. I am proud when I hear some American people are speaking Spanish very well. For example, my daughter's doctor is from Canada, and he speaks perfect Spanish. My coworker can communicate in Spanish because she learned it from her Mexican husband. My priest, who is bilingual, lived in Puerto Rico to learn Spanish. Specifically in places like Miami, Los Angeles, California, Phoenix, or Chicago, people speak Spanish as a first language. Of course, Hispanic people in the Quad Cities area speak



Spanish, and more American people are learning Spanish to communicate with "us" in the hospitals, schools, and stores. They also work as translators who create bonds between Mexicans and Americans.

Besides language, more American people are enjoying Mexican food. For instance, there are almost as many Mexican products in the American stores as in the Mexican stores. People can find many items imported from Mexico. When we find an extensive variety of Mexican products:

peppers, corn flour, pastas, juices, sauces, chips, etc., we feel as if we're in one of our markets. My daughter is very interested in knowing about these products. She asks me about them. Then, I encourage her to learn how to cook Mexican food. We use original



ingredients to make authentic recipes from my grandmother. Still, it is so important to find a lot of food products, cooking utensils, and party decorations in America. Before, my friends or family visiting from Mexico used to bring us the necessary goods. However, at this time, I can find them here in the U.S.A. So, I am living here now, and I am more comfortable with this new lifestyle because I am proud of how American restaurants are including Mexican food on their menus. In both American and Mexican restaurants, we can eat Mexican food in traditional styles.

Finally, language and food are not the sole influences from bringing Mexican culture to American culture. In addition, music is a contribution that Mexican culture brings here. For example, there are Spanish radio stations in many states of the U.S.A. Also, some Mexican restaurants play music on the

weekends, and they even have Mariachi music people can



listen to and dance to. Plus, there are some cultural events where we can enjoy the Spanish music, and it is easy to find a wide selection at stores, bookstores, and libraries. Some singers in the U.S. are including Spanish words, phrases or songs, or famous singers are singing together using both languages.



Overall, Mexican people have brought their culture into America through language, food, and music while sharing their lifestyles at schools, jobs, churches, cities, and counties. Simply, my daughter and I do not miss my family. So, when we call them, my daughter always asks her grandfather, aunts, or uncles what they did, or they ate. They respond in Spanish with the food's name. Then, she tells to them what we did, or what we ate because we are cooking Mexican cuisine with authentic Mexican ingredients. It is so delicious, and we are enjoying our lives in this country.



SMOKERS: THINK BEFORE LIGHTING UP!!!

By: Kowuvi Houndjo

Most the time before people start doing something, they already have an idea about the consequences of their actions. Therefore, what should smokers look forward to gain by smoking if it is not sickness, disease, or even death?

I was amazed to see a lot people smoke in the U.S.A, even women. In my country,



Togo, women who smoke are considered prostitutes. When I approached some smokers to know the main reason why they become smokers, the answers are multiple. Some of them don't really know the reason. A friend of mine said his mom told him, "Do not smoke. You are going to be begging for cigarettes." However, he started smoking thirty- five years ago. Others smoke to relax and be less stressful. Also, some

students said that if they smoke, they are able to study better. After asking these smokers when they started smoking, I found that the common age is between twelve and fifteen. One of my co-workers who had heart surgery almost two years ago and died this year said, "I smoke a pack per day, sometimes two if I have my vacation and stay at home watching TV." There are some who confessed that they want to quit smoking, but they don't know how.

After all this, I wondered if they knew well what level of damage smoking caused to their health. I asked this because if an invalid is aware of death's presence close to his house, he would be the first person to run away even though he didn't have feet. But this is not the case for smokers who must know that smoking is synonymous with death.



So, what should people who smoke expect to happen to them? Smoking brings so many diseases. Smoke is able to reduce blood flow in the veins and the arteries, which cause impotence. It is also the cause of heart attacks and strokes. The human body needs oxygen to operate and be healthy. Conversely, smoke provides dioxide to the body, which is harmful for the organism. With the same waste product, the lungs blacken, because of the lack of oxygen and other nicotine inside



tobacco. Sooner or later, these waste substances damage most organs, and the smokers get lung disease or lung cancer. Moreover, smokers are susceptible to a slow, painful death caused by tumors. Smoking provokes many diseases such as: lung cancer, stroke, gum disease, mouth cancer, pneumonia, asthma, heart disease, and other many kinds.

The worst aspect is smoking and pregnancy. A pregnant woman, who

smokes, harms her baby and that baby has more of a chance to die from respiratory disease like asthma or pneumonia. Therefore, women that smoke during their pregnancy should be considered as potential



criminals because the baby is an innocent creature without any defense. For instance, when somebody is smoking besides me and I don't like smoke, I am

able to move far away, but a baby inside her mom's womb cannot. Smoking in pregnancy is infanticide. Smoking not only affects smokers, but also the environment.

Cigarette smoking appears to have minimal damage to the environment, but it destroys more than it seems. Many smokers after smoking carelessly throw the lit



cigarette butts anywhere. Therefore, cigarettes can be a cause of forest fires and house fires. Due to cigarettes, if a forest fire happens, no one can imagine

how many animals and plants will be destroyed. The same cigarette smoke affects

the ozone layer which becomes smaller and smaller each day. According to the *New Scientist: Tobacco Control* (Vol 13, p 219), the air pollution emitted by cigarettes is 10 times greater than diesel car exhaust.

Cigarette smoke not only affects smokers, but the people around someone who smokes are seriously involved. They are able to develop the same diseases as a smoker. They are called "passive smokers." *Web MD* said, "It is estimated that around 35,000 non-smokers die from heart disease each year as a result of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke." With all of these consequences in mind why do people still smoke?

My message to my lovely smokers is as follows: New smokers, occasional smokers, heavy smokers; no matter the pleasure you feel, no matter how addicted you are, think about your health and people around you. Instead of spending money to speed up your death, spend your daily cigarette money to help the homeless and the whole humanity will avoid the worst; you can do it. It is high time to quit smoking.



References: Vince, Gaia. "Cigarettes More Polluting than Diesel Exhaust." *New Scientist*, 24 Aug. 2004. Web. 10 Oct. 2009.
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS!

My name is **Assimi Alawoe**. I am from Togo, which is situated in West Africa. I have been living in the United States since December 2004. My wife, named Ganiatou, gave me two children who are my happiness. My wish is to finish my ESL classes and to carry on in accounting in order to find an office job in this country. I enjoy watching soccer games, listening to music, and playing scrabble.



My name is **Dilorom (Dina) Turayeva**. I am originally from Uzbekistan, which is located in Central Asia. In 2004, my family won the Green Card lottery and moved to the US. I came here without any English knowledge, but now I am feeling better because I am learning in the ESL program, and my English language has improved a lot. Also, I would like to increase my computer skills. I have three wonderful kids and a lovely husband. I love to play with my kids and to spend time with my sisters, brothers and friends. Reading children's books, listening to classical music, and cooking different kinds of food are my hobbies.



My name is **Xavier Vera**. I was born in Texas, but I was raised in Mexico City. I have been living in the United States since August 2007. I'm 30 years old, and I have one younger brother and one younger sister; they live in Mexico City along with my parents since I was the only one who was born in the United States. I'm single, and I have no kids, although I wouldn't mind having children some day. I work for American Airlines at the airport, and I love that job because you get to travel a lot, and I love to travel. During my free time, I enjoy playing golf, watching movies, reading, and playing videogames. I speak Spanish and English; I'll try to learn French next year.



My name is **Koffi Lissa**, and I come from West Africa, Togo. I have been in the United States for five years as a permanent resident, and I work at Tyson Fresh Meat as a maintenance technician. I am going to school with the goal to become an ironworker or boiler worker. I chose this career because I have done it before, and it brought me a lot of success and happiness in my life. I love to play soccer and watch soccer games on TV. My upbringing was as a Catholic, and I have a strong belief in God. I like to make good friends based on honesty, humility, and forgiveness.



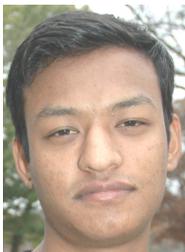
My name is **Rachid Lagzouli**. I am from Morocco, which is located in the north of Africa. I am the oldest child in a family of five. My favorite hobbies are playing soccer, swimming, and watching movies. My major was chemistry when I was in my country. Therefore, I am planning to continue studying chemistry to get a degree, and BHC is the bridge to make my goal come true.



My name is **Amsatou Sow**. I am from Senegal in the capital, Dakar, and I am twenty years old. I am also single, and I hope that I will stay single during the next six years in order to accomplish my goals. I speak French, Spanish, Arabic, and English. I have been living in the U.S. for almost two years. I moved to the U.S in order to live with my parents and two adorable siblings and to improve my English skills in order to make my dreams come true. I plan to double major in computer science and criminal justice, and I will sacrifice my time and attention in order to devote my entire life to completing those goals. Besides school, I like hanging out with my friends and little sister as well as playing basketball, tennis, and bowling. Also, music is my best friend. My pains go away whenever I listen to music. I hope that I will be able to help people around the world to achieve their goals in the future.



I am **Rohit Chitrakar** from Nepal. I came here to the United States on January 1, 2008. I am the only son of my parents, and I miss them very much. I love watching soccer, hanging out with my friends, and playing guitar. I am here to complete my pre-engineering degree and do something good in life.



My name is Yannio Desouza, and I'm 21 years old. I was born in Kingston, Jamaica, but raised since the age of 3 in Togo, West Africa. I like going out at night and hanging out with my friends. I love playing basketball, videogames, listening to music, and drinking alcohol with my buddies. I want to major in sociology or sports science.

My name is **Tan Pham** and I'm from Vietnam. I'll be 24 years old in the next three months. My hobbies are listening to music, playing soccer, reading comic books, and chatting with my friends. My first challenge in the U.S was facing the cold weather in winter in this country when I first came two years ago. I can speak my mother language (Vietnamese) and English. I don't work now, but I'm looking for a job like a cashier in a market or store. When I have free time, I usually like watching soccer, using computers, and playing games. My major is mechanical engineering, and I hope I can get a good degree in my major before I return to my country in a couple years.



Hi, my name is **Mohammad Taimuri**. April 25, 1990 is my birth date, and now I am 19 years old. I was born and most of my life grew up in Afghanistan. I have four siblings, three sisters, and one brother, and I am the eldest of them all. I am also living with my parents. I have been living in the United States for six years now. I used to live in Quota, Pakistan, when I was the age of nine. I moved out of Afghanistan when I was nine, and I lived in Pakistan after that for about five years. May 30, 2003 was when I arrived in the United States. I was at the age of fourteen then.



My name is **Hakoubou Kassim**. I'm from Togo (West African Country). I am 35 years old, and I have lived in U.S.A since April 2007. I like soccer games. During my free time, I like hiking and listening to music. Studying in sciences like biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics is my study goal. I dream one day of becoming a physician's assistant or a science teacher.



My name is **Kuot Manyang**, but most people call me John. I am from the Sudan, Africa's largest country, located in Eastern African. I left Sudan for Kenya in the year 2000, where I took refuge in Kakuma Refugee Camp. I studied in the camp up to the



eleventh grade before I found my way to the US. I arrived in the United States of America in 2007. I have dwelled in the Quad Cities for two and half years. I reside in Rock Island, IL. Further, I am a poli-lingual; I speak Dinka, Arabic, Kiswahili, and English. The first decision I made was to take the ESL classes. I am at Black Hawk College taking ESL courses. My family is in Sudan, Africa. It would be better if I were there with them; however, I do communicate with them on the phone. My hobbies are listening to the music, watching movies, and playing games. However, I dislike articles written in big terminology because they are too intricate to comprehend. All in all, after finishing the ESL program, I will take courses in my major. In fact, I would like to be a doctor or a pharmacist down the road, and that is the goal I covet to achieve if it happens, as I desire.

My name is **Hussain Ali Taimuri**. Originally, I was born into a farm family in a mountain village in a remote area of Afghanistan. I grew up and was educated there. My family and I have been living in the United States since May 2003. I have been learning many things since I moved here. I would like to improve my English skills in order to be able to write English essays in my native language (Persian) when it is needed. I enjoy watching National Geographic programs on TV.



My name is **Maria Vital Tapia**, and I am



from a small town in Guanajuato, Mexico. I have been living in the Quad Cities area since February 1999; the same year my only daughter was born. I am the only one from my immediate family in the U.S.A. I have a

degree in elementary education from the college of Motolinia, Mexico. I will complete Black Hawk College's ESL program in May 2010. I am looking forward to continuously improving my communication and writing skills in English.

Kowuvi Houndjo is my name, and my close friends call me Libert. I was born in June 23, 1966 in Lome, the capital of Togo, a country located in West Africa. I had been teaching mathematics in high school for 8 years before coming to the U.S.A



by "visa lotto" in June 2007 and was hired at Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. In January 08, 2008, I started my ESL class, and I hope I will be finishing in the next semester. I like traveling, sports, mainly soccer, basketball, volleyball and judo, a kind of Japanese wrestling that I practiced for more than 15 years. I spoke French when I was in Africa and English now while I am attending Black Hawk College. I will decide my major later, which might be pharmacy or statistics. I am planning to go back to my country for a few years after finishing my studies, with a purpose to build an institution that should help students. I started that plan before coming to the U.S.A; unfortunately, I gave up due to finances. I wish strongly to return to it. I left my seven-year-old daughter, Balchita, in my country. I miss her very much.

The ESL Newsletter is written by the students in Writing II each semester. We would like to thank Anne Bollati, Sheryl Gragg, Mike Winter, Bruce Story, and all of our other interviewees for all their help in this endeavor. It is very much appreciated!

Jenni Wessel-Fields, Instructor

ESL English as a Second Language Program

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

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

TESTING:

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

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

Placement Scores are as follows:

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

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

PROGRAM PROFILE:

New Arrivals – Level 4

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

Level 5

Offered at the Illinois Employment and Training Center, Moline

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

Levels 6 & 7: Offered at Black Hawk College

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

INTERMEDIATE ESL:

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

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

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

Courses

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

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

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

ADVANCED ESL:

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

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

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

Courses

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

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

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