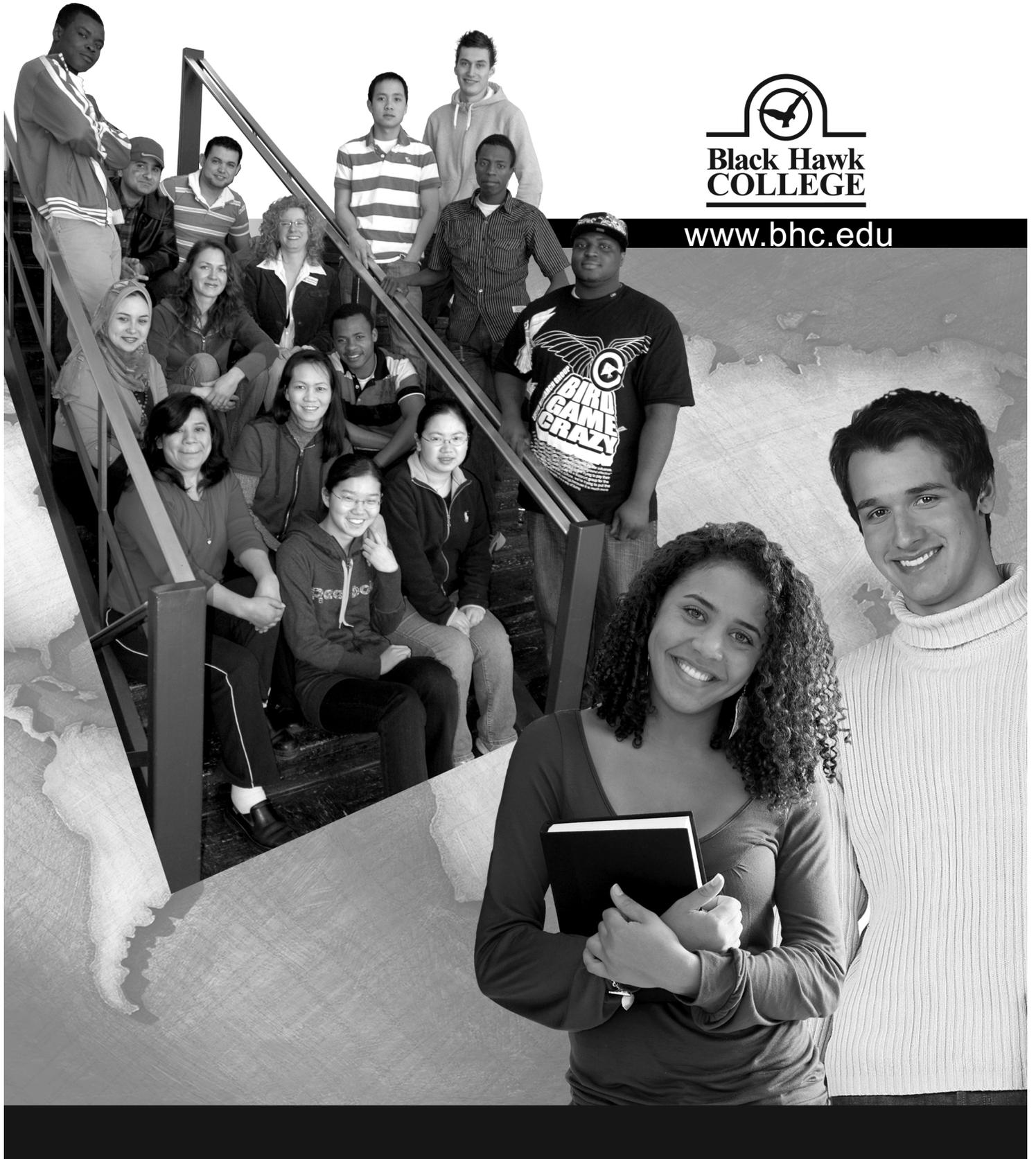


ESL Newsletter

Published by
English as a Second Language Program Students



www.bhc.edu



ESL NEWSLETTER

A publication from Spring Semester 2009 English as a Second Language Students

Superstitions as a Part of Russian Culture

By Olga Betzel

Every culture has a certain set of beliefs that reflect its history and the way its people view the world. These beliefs can be either rational or irrational. For centuries people all over the world tried to explain things they did not understand, and one of the ways to get control over the unexplainable was to believe in superstitions. Despite the fact that modern science has proved most of the irrational beliefs wrong and senseless, in some cultures people still, cling to superstitions in their everyday life.



I was raised in Russia, a country abundant in superstitious beliefs, but I never thought about the nature of these beliefs until I moved to the United States and saw a different culture. In the U.S., people do not care much about the supernatural forces and ill omens; they look at things in a very materialistic way. After seeing the differences in the two cultures, I realized that superstitions are truly an important part of Russian mentality which reflects its ancient and modern history as well as the nature of Russian people.

What is a “Russian superstition”? It is something that Russian people do



or avoid doing in their everyday life out of fear that something bad will happen. For example, people do not whistle indoors because they might lose all their money, if they do. I have been living in the USA for about a year and still do not feel comfortable hearing somebody whistling indoors or in the car. In Russia, as well as in some other cultures, talking about future success, especially boasting about it is considered bad luck. It’s safer to be silent or to sound pessimistic until the success has been achieved even when one is sure of success. If you cannot help yourself, after saying, “Next month I will get a promotion”, immediately spit three times over your left shoulder. Don’t do it literally – three symbolic spits will do. You can also knock on wood. Knocking on wood is practiced in Russia as well as in other countries; however, Russians tend to add a symbolic three spits over one’s left shoulder (or simply with the head turned to the left), and Russians will often knock three times as well. Traditionally one was spitting on the devil, who is always on the left.



Another very popular superstition has to do with flowers. If you want to get off on the wrong foot with a Russian woman, give her an even numbers of roses; even numbers in Russia are for funerals. She will think that something is wrong with you. I am lucky because my husband even though he is American, knows about this superstition and always puts an additional rose for me in the traditional American bouquet of dozen roses.

The list of popular Russian superstitions can go on and on like an endless train. They encompass every aspect of life from birth until death. Many of the superstitions come from folk tales or fairy stories, Russian Orthodox tradition, or have peasant roots. Since most Russians are only one or two generations from



the farm or village, superstitions are wide spread not only in the rural areas of Russia, where people believe in witches and magic spells and blame health troubles on the evil eye,

but also in the big metropolitan cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Russians are raised with these superstitions, so they have no need to consult a manual. Everybody in Russia knows that if a cat in your house washing its face it means you should expect guests soon; if you have the hiccups, someone is remembering you at this moment; if your nose itches, you'll be drinking soon, or you will get hit in the nose; if your right hand itches, you're going to get money soon; if your left hand itches, you're going to give someone money. People all around the world think that kitchen utensils are just instruments for eating and cooking, but Russians have found another meaning for this. People in Russia know that if a fork or a spoon falls on the ground, they should expect a female guest; if a knife falls, a male guest will show up soon!

Superstitions in Russia are passed on from generation to generation like a box of family's treasures. I have learned about the strange meaning of things from my family. My mother did not let me sit at the corner of the table for the fear that I would never get

married. She also always reminded me not to place an empty bottle back on the table. That is considered bad luck. My father recommended to me not to start anything serious on Mondays. If something is lost in the house, my mother usually addressed a "**domovoj**", an imaginary creature that supposedly lives in every house,



with words, "domovoj, you have played enough; give it back to us now." After that, we usually found the missing thing. My mother also used to tell me that coming back home for forgotten things is a bad omen, and it is better to leave it behind, but if returning is necessary, one should look in the mirror before leaving the house again. Otherwise, the journey, will be bad. Everybody in my family used to look in the mirror in that case. Every time before leaving the house for a long journey all my family would sit together for a moment in silence. It was a time "to sit and think" of anything we might have forgotten.

Many superstitions became customs and traditions. For example, when someone sneezes, Russians say, "Be healthy".

Otherwise, the sneezing person will get sick. I think 99% of Russians think this "Be healthy" thing is just a tradition. But actually, it's a superstition whose

meaning was forgotten long ago. It took me several months of life in the USA to give up telling someone who sneezes to "Be healthy", but I still keep saying these words in my mind, just in case.



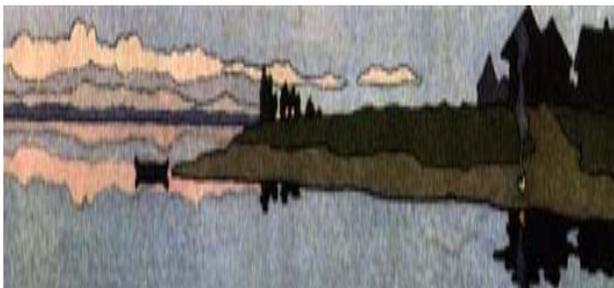
I believe there are two major reasons why people in Russia still cling to superstitions in their everyday life. For the last hundred years, life in Russia has lacked stability. Constant political and economic changes have made people worry about the future and left them feeling helpless. When people do not have anything to hold on to, they turn to superstitions. Superstitions give a certain degree of confidence, encouragement, and control. For example, students never wash their hair before an exam for the fear of forgetting everything they know. Of course, it does not make any sense, but it sure helps those who did not study feel better. The second reason is hidden inside the Russian national character. It is easier for a Russian to blame the misfortunes of his or her life on supernatural forces than on his or her own



mistakes. It can be blamed on a black cat or a woman with an empty bucket, or whistling inside the house - anything that one can possibly think of. It is amazing that even if one or several birds defecate on a Russian, he will satisfy himself with thoughts that it was for a good luck! Moreover, it is so tempting for a Russian to eat a lucky bus ticket, when the sum of the left three numbers equals to the sum of the three numbers on the right, to be happy forever!

There are, however, a few things that most Russians are not superstitious about at all. Most Russians are not particularly concerned with the number 13, opening umbrellas indoors or walking under a ladder, but it is just a drop of common sense in the ocean of prejudices.

Ultimately, the Russian people may believe in superstitions for a number of reasons - out of fear of tempting fate, out of habit, or just to be on the safe side, but the fact is that superstitions have played a very important role in the life of Russian people throughout history. It is something that we, Russians, have lived with for centuries, something that we do consciously and unconsciously in order to get through the difficulties of ever changing life.

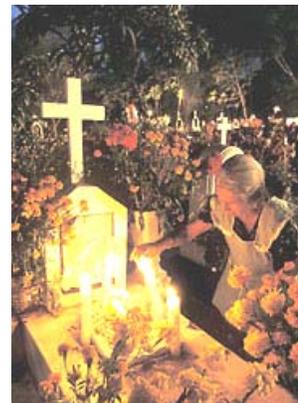


A Powerful Celebration - "The Day of Dead"

By Maria "Teresa" Reyes

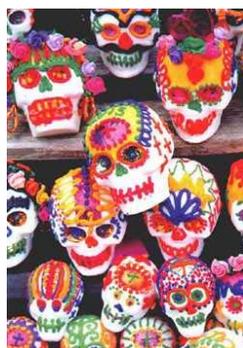
The Day of the Dead is a very special ritual in which Mexicans celebrate in many towns and cities. There are many activities like parades where people dress in scary costumes mainly skeletons, witches, ghosts, and vampires.

Churches mass, plays, and outdoor markets which sell all kinds of items related to the holiday, but the most magnificent activity is a very old tradition in which all Mexican families gather to honor our ancestors through altars at home or in graveyards.



Two days before the celebration of the Day of Dead, my mother, sisters and I set up on a table the altar, which is decorated with different kinds of fruits like apples, tangerines, oranges etc. We include bread of the dead, made with flour, butter, sugar, eggs, orange peel, anise and yeast. The bread is adorned with strips of dough simulating bones, and at the top, a small round piece of dough symbolizes tear drops. Sugar skulls are decorated with paper foil for eyes and colored icing for hair. Candles, special dishes, marigolds and glasses filled with water, juice, milk or chocolate are also on the altar.

Moreover, we put up some photographs of my grandmother and my uncle, who both passed away several years ago. Finally, we add their favorite food, drink or objects; for example, my uncle used to like to drink tequila so my mom put one bottle of tequila on the altar. My mother said, "Children, remember you can't eat anything from our altar; this food is especially for your grandmother and uncle." She added, "We all know that their souls won't eat this food, but their souls come to smell and enjoy all that we leave for them." We all agreed



and avoided the temptation to eat anything from the altar. Then we waited for the celebration day.

I remember one very special celebration in November 1985. On November 1st, we received the children's souls, and on November 2nd the adult souls came. At five o'clock in the morning, my brothers, sisters, parents and I were already up. This time I got up without whining because we all knew that day we had to get up early before the traffic got awful. My father and brothers grabbed the buckets filled with flowers and put them in the trunk of the car and also a shovel and scissors. My mother brought some sandwiches and drinks while my sisters and I carried some plates, napkins, glasses and candles to the



car. We were all set and ready to go. My father drove for forty-five minutes to the cemetery. There were very few people, but very soon, many families came and filled the cemetery. My brothers and father carried the flowers while my mom brought the candles. One of my

sisters brought the shovel, and I brought the scissors. We walked through the dirt and passed many tombs on which there was a cross of wood, cement or metal. Each one had the name of the person, birth date, death date and some thoughts from their relatives or dear friends. When we had reached the tomb of my grandmother and the tomb of my uncle, we started to clean the dirt and weeds. After we finished, we put the flowers in the vase of each tomb and some yellow marigolds around each tomb and filled the vases with water. Finally, my mom lit the candles and started to pray, and we repeated her words.

When she had finished, we all said good-bye. By the time we left the cemetery, there were many people doing the same thing. Some families brought Mariachis to sing the favorite songs the person used to like. Outside, many



people were still selling flowers and candles to those who didn't have time to buy them before. As we got in the car, we started to eat what my mom had brought.

Instead of going home, we decided to visit some friends who lived in Mixquic, which is a town where people celebrate the Day of Dead all day and all night. Their altars were marvelous; I mean more than just beautiful. Most of their altars were big and had many items; especially, flowers, bread of the dead and candles. Many houses were open to let us see their magnificent altars. There was a street market in which you could find anything for your altar. And if you were hungry there were several food stands. Next to their main church was the cemetery in which the people from this town come inside and did the same thing we had done when we visited the cemetery in which their relatives rest in peace. There was one big difference. They stayed in the cemetery all night. My father said, "There is nothing to be afraid of my children. There are thousands of lit candles and many people around us, besides the souls come to visit us not to scare anyone." And my father's friend added, "We are very busy praying, talking about our dead relatives, remembering sad or happy situations and singing songs so that the night passes very quickly."

To sum up, the Day of Dead is a powerful celebration, which brings together all the Mexican families. I personally experience love, hope, wonder and unity from my family. On



November 1st and 2nd we wait for the souls to come to visit us at home and in the cemeteries. When you see how much love is reflected through those altars, you will understand what all Mexicans already understand: that death is part of our lives and we learn to respect, honor and remember our dead relatives.



Switzerland-Soccer?

By Tim Alimi

Do you think that Switzerland is famous because of the cheese and the famous chocolate? Because the mountains there, you may think, skiing could be the only fun. These are some thoughts that most American people



think when they hear the word "Switzerland." However, I would like to tell you something new about Switzerland and about Swiss soccer.

I realize that not many people know that the Swiss are passionate about soccer, but I can tell you the opposite because Swiss people like soccer a lot. Soccer has become the most attractive sport in Europe including Switzerland. Italy, Spain, England, Argentina and Brazil are known for their soccer passion because they are bigger than Switzerland.

I am Tim Alimi, 19 years old, and I am from Switzerland. My passion is soccer. I began to play soccer when I was a little boy. Every time I played soccer, I was so happy. I was just satisfied when I was playing soccer. As I grew up, I liked soccer even more because I understood how important soccer is for each country. I moved two months ago from Switzerland to the United States. At the moment, I am out of touch with soccer because I can't play anymore for my team. I used to play for FC Basel (Basel is my home city) and for the U-16 and U-17 Swiss national team (U means under 16 or 17, the age). I really enjoyed my time with my team because we were a unit. We always tried to give our best even when we lost a game. It was a good experience in my "soccer" life because I



learned a lot of things that also helped me in my "normal" life.

Soccer is a sport where I learned how to respect and how to behave well. I also learned to be a sportsman,

which means to be fair against the team you are playing. I had to follow different rules in the Swiss national team because if I didn't follow the rules I couldn't play. To join

the Swiss national team made a big change in my life because I was on my own. I was under pressure because my coach wanted me to give 100% in each game, so every single game I had to be in a good shape to play well. Even when I was 95 % in shape to play, I couldn't because my team players were better than me, so everyone who was in good shape could play. It was a lot of fun because we went to France, Spain, Sweden, Netherlands, and Italy etc.

The Swiss National championship is not one of the biggest championships in the world, but it is popular, too. Switzerland became famous because the team could represent the Euro Cup 2008 in their country. To know more about the

Swiss soccer, I interviewed my friend Boris Muller from Switzerland. He plays for the U-20 National team.



Tim (Interviewer): First of all, tell us something about you before we start our interview about the Swiss soccer.

Boris: At first, I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent my country and help you with this interview. My name is Boris Muller. I am 19 years old, and I am from Basel, Switzerland. I have played soccer since I was a child. At the moment, I am playing for the FC Basel youth team, U-20, and for the Swiss U-20 team too.

Tim: Thank you very much for such a nice introduction, Boris. My first question is, Is soccer popular in Switzerland?

Boris: Yes, it is definitely because Swiss soccer has made such a great change because of the Euro 2008 in Austria and in Switzerland. This big event has made the Swiss soccer more popular because all of Europe participated in the Swiss World. I also think that the Swiss soccer is at the beginning because Switzerland is a small country compared to the other countries in Europe. What I can say is that the Swiss soccer is developing very well and very fast.



Tim: So the Swiss like soccer?

Boris: Absolutely. I am a soccer player, and I can tell that when I have a game with my club team or national team, there are a lot of people in the stadiums, who are motivating us our country, so my answer is yes.

Tim: Wonderful. You said that the Swiss people like to come to the stadiums and motivate their teams. Could you tell me how it is for you, as a soccer player, when you see all these people in the stadium? Have you had some wonderful experiences? For example, in Basel do the fans yell your name, or is there something that touched you?

Boris: Yes, of course. I just can say I love it. You know, if you see all these people in the stadium, you can see how they are motivating you. That is like they push you to do give your best and only the best. That is an incredible feeling. I can't explain it because you need to be on the field to feel that feeling, but I think you know what I am talking about.

Tim: As a former soccer player, I should know it. But let's go to my next question. Could you tell me how many teams are represented in the Swiss championship?

Boris: The Swiss championship is one of the smallest championships. There are only ten teams represented in the major league. On the other hand, the Swiss championship is very exciting because the teams are playing against one side four times, so that is different from

other championships. The Swiss championship is called Super League, and the ten clubs that are represented in the Super League are FC Basel, FC Zurich, Young Boys, Grasshoppers, Aarau,

Sion, Bellinzona, Neuchatel Xamax, Vaduz and FC Luzern.

Tim: You talked about the teams. Could tell me which is the strongest team right now? And for which team you are playing?

Boris: Right now, I am playing for FC Basel. I have a contract until 2010. At the moment, at the top of the table is FC Zurich, our biggest rival. FC Zurich has a two-point

lead. We are at the second place at the moment.

Tim: That seems to be a very close championship between FC Zurich and FC Basel. What I want to know is which team won the championship last year?

Boris: Thank you, for asking me such a nice question. I want to ask you this question. Do you know which team won the title last year?

Tim: That's nice. I guess that FC Basel won it, am I right?

Boris: Yes, you are. Yes, we won it last year, and I am very proud because we also qualified for the Champions League. Unfortunately, we were knocked out in the group, but it was nice to see how the team was messing with the best clubs in the world. I couldn't play because I played for the youth team, so I hope we can win the title again this year because I want to play in the Champions League. That's my dream.

Tim: Is the Super league better than the other European leagues?

Boris: Like I said, the Super League is one of the smallest leagues in Europe, so the Super League is behind the European leagues at the moment. But in a few years, the Super League could be on the same level with the European Leagues.

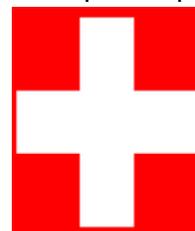
Tim: The Super League doesn't have a big influence in the European soccer world?

Boris: Yes, that's true. The other European leagues are bigger. That means, they have more teams represented in their championships. Most of the European leagues

have 18 to 20 teams, so more teams can qualify for the Champions League and that affects how important the league is because they are represented in the Champions League and that's the highest competition.

Tim: Thank you, Boris, for this Interview. I liked talking with you about soccer, and I can say you did a great job. Last but not least, what do you want to add as a conclusion to this interview?

Boris: I enjoyed it. I am glad that I could talk about soccer and Switzerland. It was



pleasure because I could help you. In conclusion, I want to say that Switzerland and the Swiss soccer is growing, like a city, and maybe in a few years we can be on top with the top leagues in the world. Thank you, Tim, and have a good stay in the United States.

Tim: Again, thank you, Boris.

People, don't forget that Swiss soccer will catch up, one day!



Life in Refugee Camps

By Twizerumukiza "Jean" Baptist

I was born and raised in the southern province of Rwanda. In the midst of 1994, a war broke out in the country when I was eight years old. For our safety, my family and I sought asylum in Burundi. In fact, I have lived in exile and spent most of my life in several refugee camps all over central Africa, including Zambia.

When I arrived in Zambia, my family and I were taken to the transit center where new comers reside temporarily inside the country borders. We stayed there for seven months, and life was not easy. There were more than one thousand people living in small, close shelter, an area about the size of Black Hawk College

campus. Any time a house caught fire; other houses would immediately burn, too.

This was a big problem for us to leave our house because it could easily catch fire and be destroyed. We could move about the camp, but we were not allowed to go into the host community.



Finally, we were taken to another transit center where we stayed for one week. Then we were relocated to a "permanent" address. We were given an axe, hoe, slasher, and plot of land and told to clear and cut down trees to build our house. After cutting those big trees, we had to cut medium poles for the sides and then cut grass to create the roof.

The head of households were also given identity cards and food ration cards. We received beans, maize, sorghum, cooking oil. Even though we were given food monthly, it was not enough. We would usually finish the food a week before the end of the month.

Restrictions on employment affected us negatively because it was commonly illegal to go to work outside our camp. Within the camp, there were refugees already settled many years ago; however, we would seek casual agricultural and construction work from them in exchange for food.

While in the camp, we had access to primary school, but high school was difficult to access. It belonged to the government. We were required to pay school fees like any other national student; however, it was hard to work for both food and school supplies since my three siblings and I were in high school. My mother and I did piece-meal work in order to buy one or two school supplies.

Those refugees who resided in the



camp had access to health care through camp health care centers. These were very small health posts

in operation to attend to minor illnesses. The life was difficult for us in terms of an emergency or an outbreak because the hospital was located far away from the camp.

In a nutshell, I think that life in the refugee camp is difficult to lead. Camp based refugees lives remain challenging. This situation seems to expose refugees to a hopeless, dark environment. Even though I endured until the end, it is still hard for many needy refugees who are in the refugee camps to have access to health care, food ration,

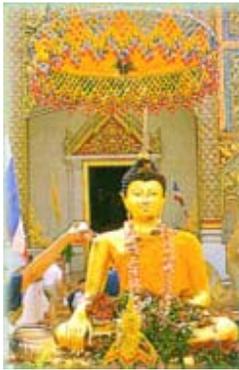
education, and housing in order to restore opportunities they deserve just like any other human beings.



Water Festival: A Unique Thai New Year

By Arporn Chantawee

During summer in Thailand, the temperature rises up to 100 degrees or more. This high temperature has led Thais to create a unique tradition in their country. In late



afternoon, people like to go to the temple to bathe the Buddha images. We use water scented with jasmine to splash on the Buddha images; then, we use the rest to throw on each other. We believe that splashing the Buddha images with water will bring happiness to us in the future. A month later,

we have three days of celebration called Songkran or the Thai New Year Festival.

Songkran is a Thai word, which means "move" or "change place". April 13th of each year is the day that the sun changes its position in the zodiac. This is the hottest day of the year for Thais. A smart idea that our ancestors had was splashing each other with scented water to cool ourselves down from the heat. As we throw water on each other, we call this special day the "Water Festival". It is not just to cool down from the heat, but we believe that water will wash away bad luck and bring good luck to us in the future.



The temperature stays high for a few months; however, we celebrate this special ceremony for only three days. The first day of Songkran Festival is April 13th called "Maha Songkran" or the day to mark the end of the

previous year. The second day (April 14th), which is called "Wan Nao," means the day that links the previous year to the new year. April 15th is called "Wan Thaloeng Sok", which means the New Year begins.

Thus, each year, everyone is waiting for these special days. People who are working away from their hometown are looking forward to returning home to visit their parents and celebrate the Festival. It is a national holiday.

One week before April 13th, people usually prepare for Songkran days. They clean and decorate their houses, trim the bushes, and decorate their yards. Parents are excited to welcome all children and grandchildren who will come to visit. They look happy; every house looks nicer and cleaner than usual. They talk and plan parties to prepare to celebrate the new year.

The first day of celebration is the most exciting day. We get up early and prepare food, fruits, dessert, gifts, and alms for the monks. Then we will bring these to the temple. At the temple, we will have a long worship. Normally, the senior monk will give us a speech about

human life reminding us to follow the Buddhism's rules. We will make a wish and then, we will free animals such as birds, turtles, and fish. We believe this will bring us health and long life.



After we come home from the temple, we have a big breakfast; then, all family members gather to express our respect to the parents, grandparents and the elders. To do so, all seniors sit together while all family members sit in a line from the oldest to the youngest. Then, each of us pours scented water on our parents' hands. While pouring the water, we also make a wish for them. In return, our parents and the elders wish us good luck and prosperity. More reverently, we express our respect to the ashes of our ancestors, which are kept in an urn.

In the afternoon, we join the Songkran parades. Each village creates their own parade with different ideas; however, each parade has

a beautiful girl called "Miss Songkran" who is dressed in a traditional Thai costume. During the parade, both young and old



people joyfully splash water on each other. Again, at night we will have a Miss Songkran Contest along with entertainment such as movies, Thai traditional dance, and circle dances.

The second and the third day of Songkran are days of continued activities. People start the day with activities that are related to religion, admiration of parents and elders, and set up water tanks in front of houses. This water will be used to throw on everyone who passes by. They also go visiting their relatives, friends and neighbors to soak them with scented water. Many groups of young people like to put water tanks in their trucks and travel to many different places. While traveling, they throw water on everyone they meet. In late afternoon, they return home, have parties in the evening, and enjoy entertainment in the night.

We recognize the Songkran tradition as a valuable custom for the Thai community, society, family, and religion. For family, the value is to provide the opportunity for all members to gather together to express our respect to the parents, grandparents, and the elders.

The values for the community are to provide an opportunity to create unity, such as worship, meet each other, and to enjoy the entertaining events; we always play sports and games during the day and watch movies from the open theater, listen to music, and join Thai traditional dance at night. For Thai



society, the value is to create concern about the environment with cooperation, such as to clean houses, temples, public places and official buildings. This value religion by means of practicing Buddhism, offerings alms to monks, meditation, listening to sermons, and freeing animals.

Everyone loves Songkran Festival. During these three days, it is very common to get soaking wet all day. The only exception is for people who have to work and are not able to join activities. Songkran Festival is not only an enjoyable time; it is also the marking of the beginning of each year life. Many times when thinking of these memories, I miss my country and wonder when I will be able to enjoy this special time with my family again. Living far away from my country, I can only live with my memories. It makes me realize how fortunate I was to be born in Thailand where I have had unforgettable experiences in this marvelous tradition.



Islamic Women: Beyond the Stereotypes

By Wala Hosameldin

What comes to your mind when you think of a Muslim woman? A mysterious, veiled victim of male oppression, awaiting Western liberation? A slogan-shouting terrorist? An uneducated foreigner with whom you have little or nothing in common? Unless your social circle includes Muslim friends, the chances are that your impressions of Muslim women have largely been formed by negative media stereotypes; images that usually have little to do with real life, and may have been designed to attract more viewers or sell more products. However, the truth, like real life, is beyond the stereotypes. Islam doesn't make any difference between man



and woman. Both of them are essential for life.

First of all, the Muslim woman is equal to man in her chances of education and knowledge. Islam doesn't make any distinction between man and woman in this domain. As for me, since I am a Muslim woman, I can study whatever I want and nobody can push me to study something that I don't like. For example, when I was in Egypt, I attended the University of Education to study foreign languages. I didn't find any refusal from my father or my mother. They told me, "You are free to study whatever you like".

Next, a woman in Islam has an unlimited space of expression similar to a man. Her opinions are taken into consideration and cannot be neglected just because she belongs to the female sex. For example, I have the same chance as man has in the freedom of expression, and I can share my ideas and my opinions, which are taken into consideration with other people. When I was in high school in Egypt, I used to write

suggestions to develop the educational system, and my school always took my opinions and ideas into consideration. In 2004, I told my school's principal to create a suggestion box and to put it



in the main office of school, so if anyone had any suggestion to develop the school or to help other students to study better, that person could put his or her opinion in this suggestion box. The principal told me, "What a great idea. Certainly, we need more suggestions from our students to develop our educational system. You did a good job." A month later, I found a suggestion box in the main office of school. I was very happy because I participated in changing my school into the best.

Then, God gives woman in Islam the right to earn and to possess her own money independently. She can have her own business and her own property. If she commits anything wrong, she would have the same punishment as a man has in a similar case. For example, last month, I just learned that my neighbor and his wife believed in magic and were reading daily horoscope news. The penalty of that in Islam is that God will not accept their prayer for forty days, so both of

them will get the same punishment regardless of their sex.

Last of all, the Muslim woman has to wear something called the "veil" or the headscarf.

She has to cover her whole body except her hands and her face. Some people would say that this is unfair because men don't



have to wear a headscarf like women do, but the reason for that is very important. That is because, generally, a woman is more attractive than a man, and Islam wants to protect her from the man's sexual desire. My father always says to me that the girl cannot show her beauty to anybody but her future husband. Wearing a veil saves me from the looks of strangers and leads me to the right way in life. When I wear my head scarf, I don't feel that I am inferior to the man, but I try to express myself because the scarf forces people to judge me by my character rather than my looks. I am glad I cover my hair because I think that it is a symbol that I am attached to my religion and that I am proud of it.

Now unfortunately, this is not the way people see things. Just as Islam is so stereotyped in the Western societies, the status of women in Islam is one of the most extremely misunderstood and incorrectly portrayed things in the Western world. So many false depictions were made of women in Islamic countries. Plus, in many so-called Islamic countries, women aren't treated according to their rights that God gave to them.

But this isn't the fault of the Islamic ideology. It's the fault of the misapplication or sometimes even outright denial of the ideologies in these societies. Many of the practices and laws in Islamic countries are totally unrelated to the origins of Islam. Instead, a lot of these practices are based on cultural and traditional customs. At that point, we cannot



combine the legislative rules of any country and Islamic rules because they are not the same.

Also, it is clear that the status of woman in Islam is high and suitable to her nature. Her rights and duties are equal to those of man. In the Quran, no difference is made between the sexes in relation to God, "For men who submit and women who submit, for believing men and believing women, for humble men and humble women...." Allah doesn't only talk about men, nor does he only talk about women. In the eyes of Allah, we are all equal. So if God, who created us, who gave us life, who provided us with all that we have, sees mankind equally, why can't we?



The Time of Life, "Vung Tau Sea Festival"

By Trung Nguyen

Vung Tau has many beautiful beaches that extend for miles, and it is the place to go for a scuba diving in its coral reefs. It is surrounded by mountains on three sides and has a large island on the fourth side. The mountains are a beautiful place of their own, and they also protect Vung Tau from major storms.

Because Vung Tau benefits from the mountain protection, it also has great weather all year round, and it is considered one of the most beautiful places in Vietnam. Although this place is famous for its natural beauty, it is more famous for its Sea Festival that occurs every two years. Vung Tau Sea Festival is a tradition within the rich traditions of Vietnam. Vung Tau Sea Festival is a chance to give the new visitors a glimpse of the country's beauty and at the same time gives the old visitors the sense of change that has taken place. The



Festival attracts thousands of visitors daily from dusk to dawn.

In the morning, Vung Tau has its beauty to offer the visitor. Under the morning sun, the radiant rays reflect in every direction upon the blue ocean that is a beauty to the beholder. Because Vung Tau lies in the south eastern part of Vietnam and to the northeast of the Mekong Delta, it is a fishing location for many fishing sports that are offered from morning until dawn. The morning is the preparation time; many visitors are able to see employees setting up tents, gathering equipment and setting up boats to prepare for the evening



They also prepare the boats and rafts with a lot of fireworks, so when the night comes in, they will go to the middle of the sea to light them.

They also prepare the boats and rafts with a lot of fireworks, so when the night comes in, they will go to the middle of the sea to light them.

In the afternoon, all the action begins. Visitors are now able to watch the sports they would like to see. Some of sports people like to play are water soccer, soccer on the beach, volleyball, and tug of warThe sports featured during the Festival are so countless that visitors are amazed to see the things they could do and watch during their visit.

At that time, I used to skip class. I got all my friends together to hang out there. We felt very interested because everything looked so nice that we didn't think it could be real. We went there at 2 o'clock pm, and my friends and I



participated in playing the sports that the people organized and prepared for the festival day. We played soccer and made a separate volleyball teams to play with them; our team usually lost. Although we lost, we felt very happy and carried away wonderful memories with a lot of my friends and new friends' team.

In addition to sports, the Festival features a great variety of activities such as a stone sculpture camp, a competition to make sand statues, a sea beauty contest, a water-skiing competition, a canoeing race, a rowing race, and a sea diving competition. After enjoying the featured activities, visitors can relax and watch the beautiful sky filled with exploding fireworks. The beauty of nature collides with the manmade beauty. This is breathtaking. One has to see it to believe it.

The night is very exciting and relaxing. The visitor can smell the aroma of the foods miles away. Vung Tau is famous for its seafood dishes that are unique to the area. Visitors have many choices. Either they can dine at the finest restaurant by the ocean, or they can stroll the street where food vendors have setup their stands on both sides. These are the well-known traditions of Vietnam sidewalk foods. Food vendors setup their stands or booths by the sidewalk and offer customers the display of their food; customers can choose what to buy just by pointing at the



item. This tradition is well accepted with the Vietnamese people because they can try all different kinds of food in one place. It is like a food festival itself.

Then people prepare to go to the middle of the sea to fire the fireworks. At that time, the road becomes dense with a lot of people. I never thought that so many people could hustle together on the road to go watch the fireworks in the middle of the sea. My friends and I climbed up the mountain to watch the fireworks. We could see everything very clearly. The fireworks were so nice and so big; we couldn't imagine the spectacle because this was the first time in my life to see the fireworks.

Since we were so passionate about the fireworks, I forgot the time on the day we skipped school, so I forgot the time to return home. If I went back home late, my parents would know that I skipped class to hang out with my friends, and they would hit me. Everything went wrong on the trip home. There

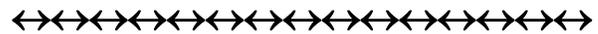
was traffic and a lot of people in the road, so



we couldn't return home on time. We were in traffic for 3 hours to get out the city, and we went home at 2 o'clock am. On the way heading home, my parents

kept calling me to ask where I was. My friends and I were scared at that time because they were also late. I picked up the phone and lied, "I went to a party for my friend's birthday, and my motorcycle had some problems." After that, I turned off the phone, and I drove my motorcycle very fast to go home.

In conclusion, there many things one can say about Vung Tau, but if one hasn't visited Vung Tau Sea Festival, he or she is missing a great experience of the lifetime. Attending the festival is well-worth it, even facing your parents' angry faces.



The Process of Becoming an American

By Munyengabe "John" Bosco

In 1994, when I was three years old, I left Rwanda with my family, together with other thousands of people. We fled to the neighboring country Burundi, in fear of death and torture at the hands of the prosecutors, who were just killing everybody regardless of their race. After two months in Burundi, life was not as good as it was in my native country, Rwanda. My family and other thousands of refugees decided to move away from Burundi and migrate to Congo. We spent three years in that country while moving. Life was very challenging; we had never moved long distances before. Many people were dying because people were exhausted and hungry. By that time my father was dead, and my mother was raising my four siblings and me.

In 1997, we moved to Angola, still with other thousands of people, and there I started first grade. After one year in Angola, the soldiers of Angola began fighting amongst themselves. We, the refugees, became fearful of more possible violence and the loud noise

that the guns were producing; therefore, we decided to flee to Zambia, which is the neighbor to Angola. In 1998, we went into a refugee camp, and I started second grade. After five years in Zambia, my family decided to apply for citizenship from the immigration of Zambia; however, our applications were rejected because no one was allowed to naturalize if that person was not born in Zambia. I went ahead with education and completed twelfth grade.

When the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an agency that takes care of refugees who are facing problems, announced that application for resettlement was open, my family applied. Last December, the UNHCR in conjunction with the immigration of the United States approved



our application; we passed the interviews and came to United States. Now I live in Rock Island. The first days when I arrived here, I found it difficult to start anew because everything was new to me, but now I am trying to cope with American way of life.

My admission as a legal refugee allows me to reside and work in the United States and eventually apply for the citizenship. As a legal refugee living in the United States, I should always carry an I-94 and Employment Authorization documents as a proof of my legal status. I really have to obey these rules and regulations. There are some things I can't do such as work for the government, vote in elections, leave the country or join the military, but I can work in public places and other jobs, which do not require citizenship.

After one year in the United States, I can apply for permanent residence. A permanent resident has not yet obtained citizenship but is in the process. At this point I can obtain a passport and travel overseas. I should be learning the US history and the laws. I also have to be a good moral character and behavior. Since I will have to take a citizenship test eventually, I need to speak and write English well. This will really make the process easy.

When I obtain citizenship, I will have the same right and privileges as anyone born in the US. I will be able to join the military, vote in the election and hold any governmental jobs that require citizenship. As a citizen, I will be able to buy a house and enjoy the American life. I will be able to travel overseas and work in any country without any problems.



Immigrating to the United States to live permanently is an important and complex decision for me. Even if I have left my homeland to stay forever, I still remember that Rwanda is the country to which I was born, and I really like it, yet I live away from my country because there is no freedom and security. I decided to go into exile in search of freedom and a better life; hence, I could not find it. I lived in Zambia for ten years, but there was no guarantee for me to obtain citizenship. Now here in America, it is a short process to become an American, and I am really interested in naturalizing. I now feel good because I have experienced freedom; furthermore, I want to enjoy benefits the citizens enjoy.

THE WAYS THE MEN AND WOMEN INTERACT IN NEPAL VERSUS THE U.S.

By Yogendra Raj Prasai

Every culture has its own identity, norms and values, and a kind of geography based reality. The culture of a nation sometimes can be seen as a kind of superstition to another nation. I am from Nepal, one of the Asian countries, which is situated between two large and developed countries: India and China.



Cultural norms and the vicious cycles of poverty are the two main reasons of not

achieving social advancement in my country.

The reflections of the norms and values, and the taboos spread all over the country are seen on the men and women as images; how they behave and how they interact. The ways the men and the women interact in my culture are characteristically different from the ways they interact in the US culture.

First of all, the men and the women are not open to each other on several critically important matters like sex, health, plans, love and marriage. I remember the first time I talked with my wife; she was shy, and she even did not look at my face. Then just breaking the silence, I asked her, "Do you accept me to marry?" I just told her my future plans and about myself. She just listened to me. All of a sudden, she replied to me, "I accept you, if you support me and the family all through life."

After about half an hour-long conversation, we came to the conclusion that we were ready to accept each other and marry. During that conversation,



we were not supposed to touch each other, and we were supposed to maintain distance. At that time, we did not talk about love; we did not talk about sex and about other sensitive and sensible matters. In contrast to the Americans, Nepalese are reserved and shy to express their feelings to the opposite sex. They feel it is immoral and unsocial to discuss love and marriage with the opposite sex before they get married. Nepalese men and women talk in keeping distance more than is necessary. The men and the women of our culture remain



almost reticent on talking about health problems especially related with reproductive health even with the doctors of

the opposite sex. Unlike Nepalese, the Americans are broad and open-minded on interacting with the opposite sex.

The second way we are different from

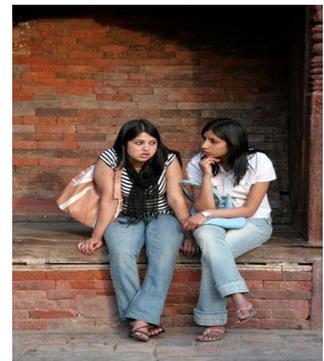
Americans is that the men and the women of my country dislike mixing with the opposite sex. The men are generally seen interacting with other men. For example, boys are seen talking with other boys in a group in any kind of social gatherings or feasts; on the other hand, girls are with the girls. The main reason of lack of mixing among the men and the women is



that Nepalese society sees it with skeptical eyes. When I was in my country, once I saw my friend and called her by name, "Hey Laxmi, How are you?" After some days, some of my

relatives spread nonsense rumor of love between her and me. That's why I gave up calling the friends of opposite sex by name. Just as I have a fear of stigmatization in the society, so do others. Social norms and values are attached with this pattern of behavior. Unlike Nepalese, Americans are free not only from the strict social limitations but also from the fear of being stigmatized in society. Americans respect each other irrespective of age, gender, status, and race. They have the feeling of equality and freedom. "Hi, guys, how you doing?" A six-year-old child says to one who is almost like his grandfather's age. This is the main reason that allows the Americans to interact freely with the opposite sex.

Finally, the pattern of the social and educational development is another factor that influences the men and the women's interaction with each other. In Nepal, people used to think that a woman would become pregnant if a man touched her accidentally even on the knee. They used to think that a girl was said to get married with the boy who talked and touched her accidentally. The effects of these kinds



of superstitions of the past have not completely gone. The interaction of the men and the women that is seen nowadays is a result of the

superstition that was in the past. Different from the Nepalese, the Americans are not affected by any kind of superstition that could exist in the society, and they have more scientific knowledge and greater education; as a result, they feel free to talk with the opposite sex.

Conclusively, in my culture, the men and the women interact with each other in a way so that they would not be labeled as immoral. Though they interact with each other formally, they do not touch each other and do not forget to keep distance. Once I asked my wife, "How do you feel about the way the Americans talk to each other?" She replied, "I think they are really advanced and they feel someone of the opposite sex an equal, unlike Nepalese." She replied with wonder, "That's a big difference!"



MY LIFE AS A MUSLIM IN THE USA

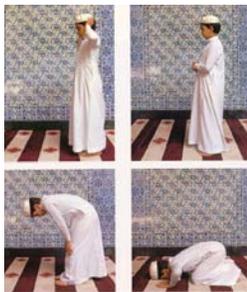
By Abdilghani Zouhair

People get confused when they find themselves in a new society and have to face a completely different culture from the one, which they were a part. Also, for some people their religious life is very important for them to keep and practice when they live in a new society that has different religions. As a Muslim living in the USA, I have experienced difficulties practicing my religion and adjusting to the new society.

First of all, as every Muslim, I have to practice my worship activities, which are part of the five pillars of Islam. The first pillar is faith or belief in the Oneness of God and the finality of the prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing

be up on him). The second is the establishment of the five daily prayers performed early morning, mid day, late afternoon, sunset and nightfall.

Then the third is giving charity, which is an



important principle in Islam that teaches everything belongs to God. The fourth is fasting during Ramadan (the holy month in the Islamic calendar). As God said, "You who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may learn self-restraint," (Quran 2:183). Fasting is from dawn until sundown—abstaining from food, drink, and sexual activities.

The fifth one is to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca (Makahin Saudi Arabia) for those who are able.

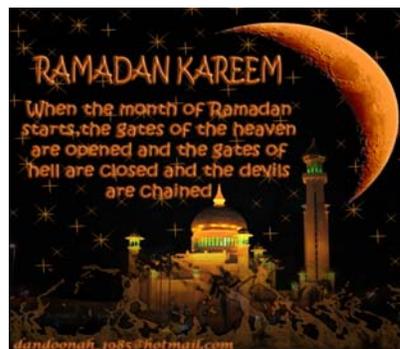
Completing the five daily prayers and fasting for Ramadan are the biggest challenges that a person who comes from an



Islamic country will face and feel here in America; these two activities are a part of our culture that everyone enjoys and practices in the Islamic countries.

When I first arrived here, I found it hard to practice and perform my worship in the proper way. As I mentioned before, I have to pray five times a day at different times wherever I am, even at work. In my first job, I had only break time to pray, and I had to perform my prayers in the locker room in front of everyone, and few of my coworkers knew anything about Islam. My coworkers used to ask me a lot of questions about what I was doing and the religion of Islam, yet I didn't have enough English to talk and explain ideas to them.

Next, my first fasting (holy month of Ramadan) was very strange and weird



because I was far away from my family. Being without my family at this time was unusual for me. Also, sometimes I used to fast longer than

what I had to because of my work hours. While I was used to gathering with my family for breakfast during Ramadan, I did not have them

around me now. Therefore, after I explained and discussed my difficulties with my supervisor, he gave me permission to take extra breaks to perform my prayers and in order to break my fast on time. Then he used to ask me some questions about Islam because he used to have wrong ideas about Islam and Muslims, similar to many other Americans.

Similarly, many other friends have undergone my experience in different places of employment. For example, my friend, Kamal Bouzagou, from Morocco has experienced similar difficulties as mine at his job, but since he has recently started working in



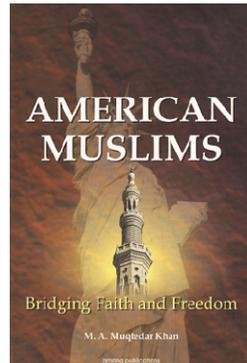
a store, he has more chances to connect and to communicate with Americans. He told me, "I had some difficulties at first about performing my prayers at work because people around me had never seen a Muslim performing his prayers. Also I received many questions from people about Islam especially my supervisor who was very surprised to know some first-hand information about Islam."

Another friend works in a factory where there are many Muslims, and he told that they used to have problems performing prayers, but they received the right to pray on time; plus the company built a room for them to pray. Freedom of religion is included in the tenth amendment to the constitution of the USA. According to this right, people feel free and more comfortable to practice their religions wherever they are here in the U.S.A. While freedom of religion is guaranteed, it is not required for employers to make special accommodations. This seems very nice of them.

After a period of six months, I started getting adjusted to my new life, which necessitates adapting and dealing with the new environment and society without losing my Islamic identity. People began to know more about me and Islam. Making friends at work, school and outside was another reason which helped me to know more about the American

culture and how Americans think and look to me. Also, some of them really used to communicate with me for a longtime which helped me learn and improve my English skills. This gave me the opportunity to break the obstacles between us. Another thing that helped me adjust to my new life was getting involved with the Islamic Center in Moline, where I can feel and practice my worship as if I was in my country with my family and friends. Finally, some friends from my country were very helpful; because of our common culture, they were able to give me their advice and share their experiences which helped me to learn from and to have more chances to know about the U.S.A society.

To sum up, the changes that I have been through and the process that I experienced in my new life as a Muslim in the USA to practice my religion, and adapt to the new society was obviously easy to get over it. Even the difficulties that I faced at first were workable. As my friend, Kamal Bouzagou, said, "You like it or you dislike it. You are representing your religion, culture, and country, so be good enough to be able to explain your society to others and adjust to theirs;" however, I also think that it depends on people's qualities and skills as to how they deal with their new experiences in a new society.



religion, culture, and country, so be good enough to be able to explain your society to others and adjust to theirs;" however, I also think that it depends on people's qualities and skills as to how they deal with their new experiences in a new society.



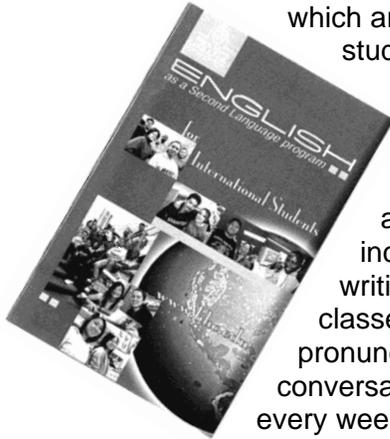
Learn More About Black Hawk College

By Jingying Zhang

I think studying at Black Hawk College is happiness for ESL (English as second language) students because there are very kind teachers and advisors, extremely advanced equipment, a complete education system and great surroundings for each of the students who study in BHC.

If people want to study English, I believe Black Hawk is the best choice because there are complete ESL courses which are suitable

for everyone, even adults. There are level 1-5 adult education courses, which are set for people who are not full-time students, and Levels 6-7 are academic courses which are offered to full-time students.



Students are able to take other academic courses when they finish Level 7. A variety of ESL courses are provided which include listening classes, writing classes, grammar classes, reading classes, pronunciation classes and conversation classes. Generally, every week the students will take two classes, and each class will take 16 weeks.

The BHC instructors are all very nice, encouraging, supportive and helpful, which is particularly important for foreign students. Teachers always find extra time for students who have problems with their assignments. Moreover, students can also get help from tutors. A lot of students who have studied in BHC think the whole surroundings for learning English are great!

I often study in the ESL computer lab, and there is a very kind tutor whose name is Anne. I can still clearly remember the first time I asked her question. One of my homework assignments was writing a summary about an article titled "Are there "his" and "her" brains"? After I finished my article, I asked her to help me check it out, and she was very pleased to help me, and then, she talked with me about the topic. She told me that when she was young, she was naughty, and she also liked climbing trees. She told me she was a tomboy. From her, I learned a new word and remembered it easily.

One thing that most students care about is scholarships because tuition is more expensive for international students than American students. Anne Bollati, the ESL program coordinator, told me that if an international student has good grades in high school, that person can also get a 3-credit scholarship.

What's more, the school tries its best to satisfy the students' needs. For example, there was just one cash machine which was in

Building 1, and students thought there should be one more near the bookstore, for it would be convenient for them when buying books. Now, there is another cash machine just beside the bookstore.

The students, who come to U.S. alone, must be anxious to make more friends, and I'll tell you that there are almost 20 kinds of clubs here for students, like Clean Sphere, Sisterhood on Campus (SOC), Association of Latin American Students, and Brotherhood on Campus and so on. I picked three of them to introduce, which are quite active and easy for international students to join to make new friends.

The first one is International Student Association (ISA). The purpose of ISA is twofold: to foster international interaction and friendship among students, and to benefit the BHC and Quad-Cities communities through cultural education and fundraising efforts. I believe this one is easy



for students to join and the members in that club are all friendly. I attend the ISA club and the advisor is Juanita, who is a kind-hearted lady.

Another organization is Student Government Association (SGA), the official representative governing unit for the students and all students are considered members of SGA and are welcome to participate.

The third organization is the African-American Student Union. I think this club will give a big help for students who come from Africa, and this club open to students of all cultures in order to promote intercultural communication and friendships.



Now, do you have more idea about the study surroundings? I hope all of this

information can help international students. I must say, everyone at BHC, not only the teachers but the students are all friendly; they will be glad to help new students who need help. The surroundings are great and quite suitable to study.



TYPES OF MOVIES THAT PEOPLE ENJOY

By Yannio De Souza

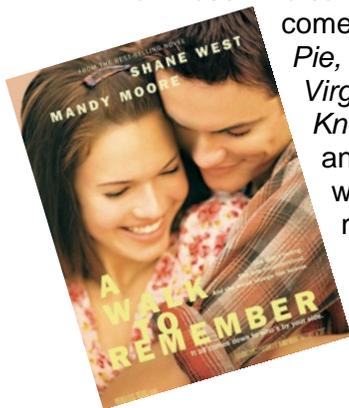
When we go to a movie theater to watch a film or rent one to see it at home, do we watch the movie just for the pleasure or for the strong emotions that we feel during and after watching? Furthermore, why do people watch some kinds of movies more than other kinds?

Personally, I love watching action and comedy movies. Why? They make me feel in my comfort zone and kind of match with my personality, which is funny, friendly, competitive and outgoing. In addition, most of the time, I watch them because they make me laugh, relax and forget for a while about the stressful daily life that I live.



Not being 100% percent sure if people enjoy the same category of movies that I enjoy, I went and asked some students of Black Hawk College about the kind of movies they enjoy watching and why. After my report, the results were like I predicted: people differed. In all the 19 students that I asked, 7 of them preferred to watch comedies, 2 stated actions, 4 went with romantic, 4 chose horror and 2 said they are fans of science/fiction with action movies.

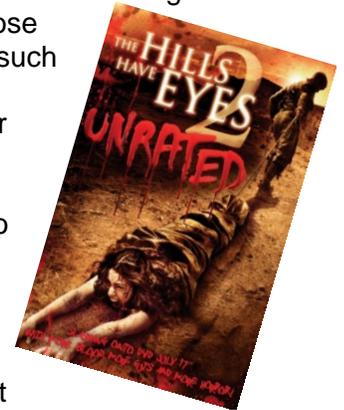
For those who said they prefer watching comedies such as *American Pie*, *The 40 Year Old Virgin*, *Pineapple Express*, *Knocked Up*, *Yes Man* and others, their answers were mostly because the movies are funny and



made people laugh, and some people said that life is hard, so anything that helps them to smile can reduce their stress and make them feel good emotionally.

Next, for those who stated that they preferred action such as *Push*, *Transporter*, *Rambo* and others said so because these movies are exciting; they make them feel like they are into the lead actor character which most of the time is a hero or heroine who saved or protected people against bad intentioned folks. Those movies send a message such as to defend and protect against negative forces or criminal people.

Then, the four students, all females, who said they prefer romantic type of movies such as *The Notebook*, *Titanic*, *A Walk to Remember* and others, generally said that because most people who have been or are still in love relationships with someone can relate to these types of movies. Often they lost someone that they were in love with due to a break-up or death.



After that, for those who went with the preference of horror movies such as *Saw*, *Hills have Eyes*, *The Night of the Living Dead* and others, the students said it because the movies are exciting, not really scary. They endured the terror, and then enjoyed a sense of relief at the end of the movie.

For the two people that stated that they preferred science/fiction with action movies, such as *Star Wars*, *Armageddon*, *E.T*, *Matrix*, *Men in Black*, *X-Men* and others, they like the adventure, the imagination, the creativity of the story and the special effects such as aliens, robots and spaceships.



By the way, some movies combine all categories such as *Hell Boy II*. These can attract all those people of different kinds of movies to watch that one. The interview that I

made with those students has some different responses about what kind of movies people enjoy, but I'm pretty confident that it will help people clearly understand the motive of the audience when they are watching some types of movies.



My Lovely Country

By Yawovi "Yawo" Kinto

Abdilghani Zouhair an international ESL student from Morocco said, "In Morocco, there



are various lands from mountains to the beautiful desert. Jingying Zhang another international student said, "China is the most important place to

visit because of the Birds Nest which is one of the Seven Wonders of the World." These students are proud of their countries. I, too, am proud of mine. Togo is small country located in West Africa. It's the smallest country in Africa. Located between three countries, which are Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, the south side of Togo is opened to the Atlantic Ocean. Also, in the north side of Togo, there are tall mountains. It is the most interesting country in West Africa.

After we gained our independence in



1960, Togo became the most popular country in West Africa. For example,

Togo produces cement for many foreign countries. Ghana, which neighbors Togo, has a business relationship with Togo in order to receive any amount of cement they need every month. Because of the port, which is opened to the ocean, many business people are interested in doing their businesses in my country. Moreover, Togo has some important

relations with many other countries. Togo exports products such as oil, cotton, fish, cement etc... to countries like Benin, Nigeria, Liberia and others.

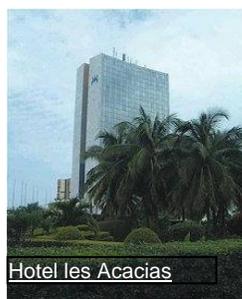
After we gained freedom from France in 1960, we created a flag, which is beautiful and represents important ideas. My country's flag has four colors and each color is symbolic. For example, the white color means victory for the independence; the red represents the blood that was poured on the ground during the fight for

independence while the green stands for the country's vegetation, and the yellow means the famine that occurred during the fight for the independence.



Mercuré Lome Sarakawa Hotel Lome Togo

One of the most important reasons why I admire my country is that it is beautiful and friendly. Like we all know, every traveler wants to travel to a quiet and peaceful place and have fun. Every month, thousands of people



Hotel les Acacias

come to my country just to have fun. For example, because my country is open to the sea, people spend their time swimming, playing games and drinking in hotels near the ocean. There are some interesting clubs that play different kinds of

music. In addition, not only it is a place for fun, it is also good for tourism. For example, tourists are interested to see our big market, which is opened everyday to anyone. In the market, there are many kinds of products. Thousands of people attend that big market everyday for business. Beside the market, there is a zoo, which has lions, elephants, different kinds of snakes and many other animals.

In summary, Togo is the most interesting country in West Africa. Togo attracts thousands of people from the foreign countries. The popularity, kindness, and happiness are three points that make me so proud of my

country.



One Former ESL Student

By Li Zeng

A Chinese proverb says, "A long march starts from the very first step." This proverb means success does not come from nothing. Instead, it comes from concrete hard work. Lynn Kwan is the person who proves it. She is a former ESL student, who came from China in 2000. She graduated from Black Hawk College one year ago, and she has already realized her goal. She is working in Illini Hospital. I set up my goal to be a nurse, so I wanted to learn something from her and get some study experience from her.



Through her example, we really learn never to give an excuse for not doing something because of our age. Lynn was thirty-nine years old when she first came to the Black Hawk College; furthermore, she spent five years to obtain her associate degree in nursing. While going to school, she needed to handle housework and a job and her family. How did she handle the class work, the housework and the job? She said, "I needed to make my schedule very tight. I never hung out with friends, never attended any parties; I only went to three places, home, school, and the restaurant."



Lynn didn't start from a high level in English; she started from the lower levels English. She began her ESL classes in Grammar II, Writing I, Reading I, and Speaking I. Because she was out of school for a long time in Taiwan, it was hard for her to catch up the material in the classes. During this semester, she worked seven days at a Japanese restaurant as a waitress. In order to finish the homework, she did the homework

during the two-hour break at noon in the restaurant. In such a situation, she spent three semesters studying ESL courses. After three semesters, she took more classes as a full-time student, and then she worked less as a waitress. Even though she already overcame the first obstacle, there were more difficulties in front of her. The nursing program in Black Hawk College is famous for its difficulty; even many the native students don't dare to try it.



At the beginning of the pre-nursing program, Lynn said she spent two hours to read only one page of biology in a textbook. She thought she couldn't keep reading so slowly because of her language problems. She tried her best to read faster and faster. Lynn said, "I don't know how I lived for those five years." She studied hard; therefore, her grade point average was high. Because her GPA was in the top 40, her application to the nursing program was accepted. Thus, she started the nursing program study, and the more practical study in the hospital. Because Lynn is so perseverant and diligent, she has already reached her goal.



After graduation from Black Hawk College, she applied on the internet for the job that she is working in right now. She says she loves the job because she can do what she loves to do; also, she says the nurse is the bridge between patients and doctors. Nurses need to instruct the patient, take care of them, make contact with doctor, and find a social worker for patients, provide references, etc. Since Lynn has successfully overcome difficulties in America, she already made her dream come true. Through interviewing Lynn Kwan, I think although we are ESL students or immigrants and have a language disadvantage, we still can pursue a new life and succeed in the U.S.A. Her diligent spirit represents every immigrant's spirit, and I hope every immigrant can realize their dream also.



OUR AUTHORS!

I am **Olga Betzel**, and I am from Russia. I arrived to the USA in March of 2008, and I live in Rock Island with my family (my husband and 2 children). I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, but I do not have many friends in the USA yet. I earned PhD in Physiology and Histology in Russia, and I am looking forward to finding a job in my specialty in Quad Cities. The ESL program helps me to become stronger in English. My motto is Per aspera ad astra (Latin: Through adversity to the stars).



My name is **Twizerumukiza “Jean” Baptist**. I am twenty-three years old. I am from Rwanda, and I moved to the U.S. three months ago with my family. I live with my mother, two sisters and two brothers. I am attending Academic ESL classes at Black Hawk College in order to improve my English. I have not chosen my major, but I would like to pursue an Associates Degree in Science and transfer to a four year college for a medical related field.



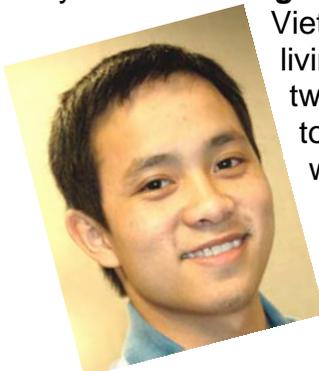
I am **Li Zeng**. I was born in Tai Shan in Canton in China. I am twenty-nine years old. I didn’t move out of Tai Shan until I went to study in Zhan Jiang Ocean University. I gained a Bachelor’s Degree in 2003, and my major was International Trade. After graduation, I immigrated to San Francisco. I stayed there for four years. Recently, I moved to Moline. I am studying at Black Hawk College, and being a nurse is my goal in the future. My hobbies are watching movies, shopping and listening to music.



My name is **Munyengabe “John” Bosco**. I am seventeen years old, the fourth born in a family of five children and Rwandan by nationality. I left my homeland when I was three years old, together with my family. We passed through Burundi then we went to Congo, from Congo to Angola and finally we went to Zambia. I grew up in Zambia where I started second grade and completed the twelfth grade. Last December my family and I came to the United States; we now live in Rock Island. I am planning to major in accounting after I complete the ESL program. My hobbies are watching educational movies, spending time with friends and going for walks. I also like playing volleyball, especially when I am at school.



My name is **Trung Nguyen**. I am from Vietnam. I have been living in here for almost two years. I like to listen to music and hang out with friends when I have time. My favorite sports are playing soccer, volleyball and bowling.



My name is **Walaa Hosameldin**. I was born in 1986. I am from Alexandria which is the largest city in Egypt. I have Turkish origins. My grandfather is Turkish, and my father is Egyptian. My native language is Arabic, but I speak French and English, too. The main reason that led me to immigrate to the United States is looking for better life and better education. I have been in the USA for two years. I am attending the ESL classes in order to improve my English level. My goal is to become a great French teacher and to travel to France to get a Master Degree in French grammar from there. I like watching movies and reading novels and love stories in different languages.



My name is **Abilghani Zouhair**: I'm from Morocco, which is located in the north of Africa. I like to play soccer and travel. I love working with math, chemistry and physics because they give me the opportunity to create new things. I am the only one in my family in America, but I come from a big family that has eleven children. The BHC ESL program gave me the opportunity to make my dream happen—study in America.



My name is **Yawo Kinto**: I'm from a small country located in West Africa named Togo. I come from a family with three brothers and one beautiful sister. I came to U.S by the end of 2004. I love sports, especially soccer and basketball.



I'm too short for playing basketball, but I do enjoy playing soccer. I'm still in

the dark about a profession; I don't know what will be my goal because a lot of choices are going through my head right now, but I hope I'm getting closer.

I am **Yannio Desouza**: I was born and raised in Togo, West Africa. I moved to the United States when I was seventeen. I speak French, German, English and a bit of Spanish. I love hanging out with my friends and making people laugh. I'm



interested in sports such as football, basketball and soccer. I also enjoy listening to music. I want to become a movie/music producer.

My name is **Jingying Zhang**. Jingying is my first name, and Zhang is my last name. I come from Beijing, China. I am 19. My hobbies are writing, playing some musical instruments and sports. My favorite subject is math, and I hope my major is math or some other which is related to math. I just graduated from China and I will finish my college in the United States.



My name is **Maria Teresa Reyes**. I am from Mexico, city. I have three brothers and four sisters, my father and a stepmother. I came to the U.S.A on December 1996. I used to live in California. I was a babysitter where I took



care of two lovely children. Later, in February 2001, I came to Moline, Illinois. I like to read, play soccer, run and over all I love to keep in touch with my family. Right now I am planning to finish the ESL program.

My name is **Arporn Chantawee**. I am from Thailand. I have been living in the United States since September 2006, and I have learned many things in this country. I want to improve my English skills in order to continue to a higher degree in school. I like music and traveling.



My name is **“Tim” Alimi**: I am nineteen years old, and I am from Switzerland. I love soccer. I am from Switzerland, and I like to play soccer. I just moved months ago to the United States, and I really like it because it was a dream to come and visit the U.S. I also am looking forward to staying here and maybe living my life here, but I will see what will happen. I really like the English language because, for me, its a vivacious language. I also hope that one day I can speak English very well.



My name is **Yogendra Raj Prasai**. I am from Nepal, the country situated between India and China. Religiously, I am Hindu. I have completed my graduate degree from Nepal. I worked almost about three years as a teacher. I am almost 33 years old, and I am married. My wife name is Nikan S. Prasai. We are living in East Moline. My parents have four sons, and I am the youngest one. My eldest brother lives in Silvis and the second older brother lives in Oxford, UK and the third elder brother lives in Kathmandu, Nepal. My aim in my life is to study economics.



The ESL Newsletter is written by the students in Writing II each semester. We would like to thank Akiko Edmondson, Mike Winter, Andy Olson, Sheryl Gragg, and Anne Bollati for their help in this endeavor.