

ESL Newsletter

Published by
English as a Second Language Program Students



www.bhc.edu

ESL NEWSLETTER

A publication from Spring Semester 2011 English as a Second Language Students

Rediscover Africa

By: Houevi Dosseh

I am Togolese, and West Africa is my home. My heart cries out: Africa, my Africa, land of my ancestors, I will always pledge allegiance to you. Land which heard the first crying of my existence, my heart will always be with you.

Land of sun! How could I forget the warmth of your sunny days? Your simplicity and closeness were my companions in the time of distress and



solitude when I bonded with you through the moments I had on your beaches, rivers and hills. You witnessed my pain and joy, my laughter and tears, my weaknesses and strengths. Your

invaluable values made me who I am today. Wherever I am, you will always be in my heart. No matter what people think of you, I will always be proud of you. This is my view of my continent.

What images come to people who have never traveled to Africa when they hear the word Africa? Of course, the first images are hunger, war, and wild animals because these are the only things they have seen about Africa on the television screen. So, is that a complete view of the continent? If you think that nothing good ever comes from this continent, let me tell you that you are totally wrong. As a proud African, my first thought was to exhibit the immense natural resources of this continent that have fostered wars and different kinds of troubles. Afterwards, I decided to focus on something simple, but very personal. Let me reveal to you some simple, but pure joys of daily life in Africa.

I am from the Western part of Africa, Togo, which has beaches, lakes, and rivers. When I was a child, I did not grow up with video games. Instead, I grew up near a river, where I spent my

time playing with my peers. Every Saturday, we used to go to the river to learn how to swim. I still remember those exceptional moments that I had with my friends on that river. Every Saturday, we spent time playing different kinds of games in the river. Those games were to measure our strength, and the one who lost had to do something extra. So, everyone tried hard to win the games. It was a perfect



opportunity to develop our team spirit and to learn how to follow rules. It was a moment of true, innocent, and natural joy because we really enjoyed ourselves by laughing a lot. Also, during evenings, we gathered together to tell different kinds of stories to each other. Those stories were based on fables and local legends. I learned a lot of morality through those moments because every fable always had a lesson. At the end of every story, we took time to learn the message behind the fable before moving to another story. We learned how to be kind, to care for other people, and to be honest. We also learned through those fables why we should avoid envy, jealousy, and wickedness because the villains always had a bad end in the story.

The social life in Africa is also something I am very proud of because human beings are the central point of everything. Some of those invaluable values are the following: hospitality, the relationship between people, and the significance of family. Hospitality is common sense in Africa. The African people are thrilled by what breaks their daily routine. They welcome strangers into their communities with warmth and sincerity. When I was a child, my grandma used to say to me to always welcome strangers and to be kind to them because every good deed we do in people's life always comes back to our lives, and the reward is even bigger when it comes to a stranger.

Furthermore, the relationship between people is paramount. For example, in African societies, the raising of a child is not only the responsibility of the family, but also the responsibility of the whole community. From this perspective, someone from another family can step up and bring a child back onto the right path when he is doing something wrong outside of the family. This combined with the parental authority lets the child know the boundaries and learn his or her responsibilities.

Also, the elderly people are respected and have a highly praised position within each family. It is an obligation to take care of them because they sacrificed their time and energy to raise their families. It is a shame for a family in Africa if they are not capable of taking good care of their elderly people. This is a responsibility that I do with honor by sending money to my paternal grandma, for example. She spent her time raising me. I owe her my life, so the least I could do to thank her is to take care of her today. For me, it is not a burden, but a blessing to be able today to take care of somebody financially.



In addition to those values, family is sacred. I am from a big and a close family. I have a lot of sisters, cousins, aunts, and uncles. The atmosphere I experienced was warmth and laughter when we gathered together for a special event. It is an opportunity to count not only on parents and immediate siblings, but also on cousins', aunts' and uncles' support in times of joy and adversities. For



instance, when I got my visa for the U.S.A., one of my cousins helped me a lot. He ran most of my errands for me. He also helped financially when I was without money. He had always been a shoulder I could lean on when I needed somebody.

Lastly, I want to share with you the marvelous moments I had on the beach of Togo when I moved to the city after my high school graduation to continue my study at the university. Oh, God! I still feel nostalgic about

those moments every day, especially, in the winter when I have to stay indoors here because of the harsh cold. In my country, you don't have to be rich to luxuriate on the beach. On the contrary, the middle class enjoy the beach more than the rich people because rich people prefer to go to the swimming pools in fancy and expensive hotels. On Saturdays, my friends and I used to go to the beach to play different kinds of games on the beach. Sometimes, we spent the whole time running barefoot on the beach, which it is a unique and delightful sensation. On other days, we would play beach ball, handball, or soccer. All those moments were not only exceptional moments to stay active and healthy, but also amazing opportunities to interact with people of different ages. Life was simple but full of delight. All the laughter and all the sweating we had at that moment on those sunny days on that beach are a part of my life I can never forget, and I would pay anything to relive those moments again.



The most personal experience was the moments I used to have alone on the beach some Sundays just for recreation or to relieve stress when I felt overwhelmed by the daily activities or depressed by my own issues. I calmed down instantly when I stared at the blue sky, the blue color of the ocean, the white sand under my feet, the green leaves of coconut trees over my head, and the golden color of the sun. That natural bond with the beach made me feel so close to nature, and nothing is more relaxing.

These experiences were part of my daily life that I want to share with you to show you that war and hunger were not my daily realities. But, if I say today that there was not any struggle, it is a lie. Even in the moments of struggle, I still had something left to enjoy myself. Life in Togo is not easy because we have to fight for everything. We never take anything for granted, and we are always thankful for every achievement, even the smallest one. All those struggles were part of the processes



that made me who I am today, a strong mature human being.



How Does Moving to the USA Affect Some Foreigners' Attitude?

By: Aissatou Bah

In Guinea, people are very attached to their traditions, values, and culture. But when they leave their country and come to the US, they feel free to do anything they want especially what they were not allowed to do in their country. As a consequence, they change completely and abuse their freedom. They become somebody else, and forget who they are and where they come from. They forget their roots and get lost between two cultures; one that is not theirs and another one that they have forgotten.



When Guineans don't live in their home country, they try to conserve their values, so they try to teach them to their children because they always plan to return to their home country; no matter how long they stay outside of Guinea, they wish to return. If they don't teach their children what they were taught during their childhood, they always end up being ashamed of the children. They feel like they can't present their children to their community. In reality, they feel really ashamed and sorry when their child is not educated in the way they believe he should be.

In Guinea, when a parent or a family member returns from Europe or America, he is welcomed with a big reception; however what people are really looking for is the behavior. If the person acts like one of them, they will accept him and be happy to live with him, but if during the trip here, the person has changed and has become somebody else, they will accept him but behind his back, they will be sabotaging him.

In our African countries, people are not free. It begins in the families where children can't talk to adults or parents without respect. They are obligated to accept everything their parents say even if they don't like it. They have to keep their mouth shut when adults, elders or

parents are talking to them, and they have to execute whatever their parents tell them to do-like orders; especially what their fathers say. The males have the right to rule the families; they are the chiefs of the families, and everybody has the duty to respect them. Males are never wrong. They have the power to do anything they want to their wives, children or sisters; the others can't even protest.



But the good part of this kind of education is that children are very respectful to other people, and they are never insulting because they know that they can be beaten for that. So they are very kind and help anybody they see, especially old people. They respect their traditions and assumptions more than anything.

The relationship between the government and the population is the same. The government



officials think that they have the right to do anything they want to the people of their country in a regime that is called "democratic". The police lock up anybody they want even without any proof of his or her guilt. They can arrest people and beat them whenever they want, just because they have the power to do it. The army helps them, too. They can do very dangerous things to you when you disturb them or try to protest against them. For example, during the last year in my country, they were thousands and thousands of people that were killed by the army because they were protesting peacefully against the government, saying that they wanted democracy. President Dadis Camara, who was there only for a transition, had been stealing more than anyone else in the country. When the population came out to protest, the army shot thousands of defenseless people. It was awful, but unfortunately that is how the people are ruled in Guinea.



For somebody who grew up in this atmosphere, it's amazing to live in this country,

where the government serves the population and where anyone has the right to say anything he wants if he does not hurt other people. This is why when foreigners come here; they feel free to be what they want and who they want to be. Even though the process of assimilation is difficult, most immigrants succeed in their objectives because life in the US is easier than in their home countries. In addition, there are no parents to pressure them or to tell them what to do or to criticize them. In fact, they feel freer with themselves and others. Consequently, they have much more self-confidence, which helps them to be successful in their studies and in their life. Their fear of everything and anything disappears, and they can finally breathe. They become more free-minded and open to other behavior and thoughts that they couldn't have accepted if they stayed in their country.

However, the dark side of this is forgetting the roots, values, traditions, that really make us who we are. For instance, I know relatives and friends who completely changed when they



came to the USA. They forgot about their

families and friends and became "Americans." They don't call their family in Guinea. They erase every single memory of the people they left there from their minds. They try to live the life here without any problems. I saw many of them become alcoholics or smokers, something that they couldn't have even thought about when they were in Guinea. The worst part of it is that their parents living back in their country, who hoped that one day they would rely on their son or girl that they sent abroad, are tremendously disappointed. These parents will have to live for the rest of their lives with the shame of seeing their child become a failure. They won't be able to stand up in their community, make decisions in society or other issues or even talk in front of people. In fact, this is reason why many parents are afraid to send their kids abroad. They are afraid to lose them and lose their dignity in front of their whole community.

To sum up, coming abroad is a good thing for some people because it makes them leave the boundaries of their country and community.

Consequently, it makes them more open-minded, accepting other people from other countries. On the other hand, some people become alcoholics and thieves, throwing shame on their parents and community.

My advice for foreigners here is to always keep the best of everything. Remember what they have learned in their country and remain the same person with some good changes. Consequently, they will become successful people who are proud of who they are and where they come from.



It's Hard, but not Impossible to Transfer your Culture to your Children

By: Ana Melendez

Nowadays, parents find it more difficult trying to transmit their culture to their children, especially when these children are born in the United States. For most of these children, the only culture they really know about is about American culture. Do you want to know what is really sad about this? Well, parents of these children feel that their children don't care about their culture, that they feel embarrassed about it, and that they won't have a way to preserve their culture and values for the next generations. Even though it's hard to maintain two different cultures adequately, it's not impossible.

My name is Ana, and I am from Mexico. I have been living in the United States for more than eight years. I don't have any kids, and I haven't experienced any of these situations in which I have rejected to speak my native language or feel embarrassed about my culture. Even though I came to this country as a teenager and not as a little kid, I have faced situations in which I have felt that I don't fit into



this culture, but I have started to adapt myself to this culture little by little. Many parents struggle when trying to transfer their culture and values to their kids, but sometimes it is just the way they attempt do it that is not

the best technique.

My aunt who has been living in the U.S. for more than 30 years is a great example because she has been able to transfer Mexican culture to my cousin who was born in the United States. My cousin joined a Mexican folkloric dance group when she was a little girl. Lorena, my cousin, was able to participate in performances for the community and even in our family reunions in Mexico and in the United States. She used to wear traditional dresses which consisted of long dresses with bright colors that her mom made for her and for all the members of the folkloric group. My aunt filmed every single event in which my cousin participated, so it is something that Lorena will keep to show to her own children one day. It is something that she will always feel proud of because she not only learned about traditional dances from Mexico, she also learned about the traditional food, traditional clothes, and her ancestors through her participation in this dance group.

Laura, my sister, is another example. She was born in the United States, but my parents took her to Mexico when she was a baby. She didn't return to the United States until she was fifteen years old. I came to the U.S. at that same age, so I think my sister and I felt the same way because it was hard to adapt ourselves in high school, trying to make new friends, and missing everything in Mexico. We experienced sadness, anxiety and frustration by being far away from our closest friends and family from Mexico. It was very hard for her to adapt to the American culture, but little by little she began to adopt the American culture as part of her life. One of her teachers in high school helped her a lot. This teacher used to teach American History and both my sister and her teacher used to go to museums and American restaurants. Her teacher was a counselor too, so she helped my sister to endure the situations that my sister was facing at that time. But, things began to reverse themselves when she started to have her own family. Now it was her turn to transfer the Mexican culture to her own children, who were born in the United States. My sister is doing the same thing that my aunt did with my



cousins. She takes her children to Mexico every year, so the children spend time in Mexico with our family. My sister takes her kids to historical museums where they can learn some history of Mexico, and she always cooks Mexican food for them. She also speaks Spanish with them at home, but she also encourages them to be proud of their American culture, so that's why she lets them spend time with their American friends. My nephews are happy and even when my sister couldn't take my nephews to Mexico this year; they still celebrated each traditional Mexican holiday. They celebrate Independence Day, Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Day of the Dead because they don't want to lose those traditions.



To conclude, we can see by these personal examples that it's not impossible for immigrant parents to transfer their culture and values to their children. They just have to be patient and helpful when teaching their children about their culture. "If we want to travel by two boats it is certainly not possible. But talking about two different cultures to a newborn child is definitely hard, but not impossible." said Naresh Rai, an ESL student at Black Hawk College. Hopefully, immigrant people won't lose their values and that both parents and children will feel proud of their roots, so they will be willing to share their culture and values with future generations and educate others about their cultural background.



The Journey Begins with ESL

By: Naresh Rai

There is a saying, by Allan Bloom, which goes like this: "Education is the movement from darkness to light." No matter how long it takes to reach the moon, even if we don't, we can become one of those stars in life. In my life, the journey from darkness to light has been the ESL Program at BHC. I began my ESL program in Grammar I, and now I would like to share personal information about my first ESL class, the help we get from the ESL lab, and our ESL career advisor.



I still remember my first visit to Black Hawk College; it was in July, 2009. I was so amazed to see a lot of foreign students doing their own work in the ESL computer lab. No sooner did the year 2009 end, when I had already enrolled for my Spring Semester 2010. I was so excited to take my academic classes. My first ESL academic grammar class was very exciting. There were 15 students from all over the world. Following the instruction, we had to introduce ourselves in order to know each other. I was so nervous when the instructor began to announce all sorts of rules about the right ways to get good grades. Moreover, I was so glad to see all different kinds of teaching equipment, like the elmo, audio video projector and the computer with internet in the class. Wow! To tell the truth, I had never been in a learning environment like this in my country. I felt something inside my heart like I was getting out of darkness and going into the right direction of my life. And by the end of my first class, I got homework from my instructor to turn in for my next day's class. Subsequently, after every class I attended, I always got homework. Despite this fact, the first class and those that followed remain an exciting experience in my memory.

I was also excited to have access to the ESL LAB. This lab is basically for international students, whose first language is not English. The ESL lab has around 20 computers with



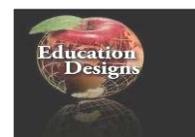
internet all the time, a printer, some reference books for ESL students, two white boards, and an audio video projector. It is very important for ESL students for their research, homework, and online work. I love doing homework in the ESL lab. When I first enrolled for my English grammar class, I didn't even know how to do online work. So, I asked Anne Ney, who is the current assistant teacher for all ESL students. She is always there to help



anyone at any time when she is in the lab. I usually discuss my homework with my friends in the lab, and I do my online work. If necessary, I print out my worksheet. Twice I took workshop classes in the ESL lab for online work from my instructor and from the book publisher. It is really fun because I have a lot of new information and experiences, which is why I feel I am moving forward every day and every time in my ESL courses.

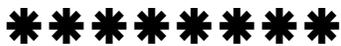


Lastly, I am very glad that the ESL students have someone to help them plan their future perspective. In order to succeed in future goals, one needs guidance to reach the destination. I interviewed Imelda Crinklaw, who is currently working as the Transition Coordinator for ESL students. Her job is to help students make the right decision in choosing the career courses and help them with financial aid or scholarships for those who seek further studies for future goals. I asked her, how a student could become successful in setting the right future goals during ESL program: She said, "There are three things that students usually look into for their future goals: for example, students' interest, the job opportunity, and the money." She also said sometimes a student's turning point comes when he or she can't find what he or she wants, and in this regards, she helps to find another choice for professional development, whether it be a two-year course at a community college or a four-year college degree, which will help students be the best in the future. The best part of this service is that we can make an appointment at any time with Imelda for our future ambition. She is always there to help the ESL students find their future aim through financial aid or scholarships.



In conclusion, I believe that we shouldn't wait until tomorrow when we can do things

today. So, let us get started today to prepare for our wonderful tomorrow. There are always possibilities of success for those who go after them in life. The ESL Program at Black Hawk College has a wonderful environment to build the back bone of our future life. Remember, a journey of thousand miles begins from one single step. In my case, I have already begun my new life at Black Hawk College moving forward from the darkness towards the light of education.



Dissoving Into the Big “Melting Pot”

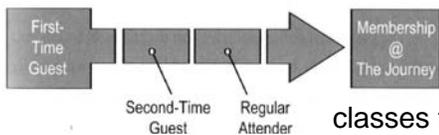
By: Dzilsime Beciri

New place, new culture, new way of life.

This is what a lot of immigrants face when they leave their native countries and look for a better life in a new country. This happened to me when I came to live in the United States. I am from Macedonia, but by nationality, I am Albanian. Before coming to live in the United States, I came twice, once for three weeks, and the second time for six weeks. These two times, I saw just the bright side of United States. I used to visit relatives that I hadn't seen in years; I visited a lot of different places and went shopping very often. In other words, I did everything that one might want to do when visiting a new country. Based on these two visits, I couldn't even imagine what my life was going to be like when I came to live here for long period of time.

The third time I came to the United States, I stayed here for six months. That's when I can say that I truly started to actually live in the

JOURNEY ASSIMILATION PROCESS



United States. Even though I knew some English, I decided to take ESL

classes to improve my English skills, in order to

be able to communicate more easily in a new society, and get a better job. I enrolled at Black

Hawk College, and I am now taking my last two classes, hoping to graduate and get the Certificate of Proficiency for English as a Second Language in May. I was interested in improving my English because I wanted to be able to translate my Bachelor's Degree in Law that I earned in my country to the US. All this proves that I am trying to find a place in a new society and be part of it. Even though I am doing everything to adjust myself to a new culture, I never forget my culture and the place where I came from.

The United States is the perfect place for assimilation. It is multicultural, multireligional, and multiracial nation. Everyone who comes here can find him/herself. It is for good reasons called the perfect “Melting Pot.” The United States is one of the very few countries where people find it amazing to have freedom of speech, religion and have equal rights. Besides,

everyone wants to pursue the

“American Dream.” No matter what their original culture is, when people come to United States, they accept the values of the American culture and celebrate the United States



holidays; all of this they accept as

very normal. In my country, we celebrate two religious holidays each year. Those are Ramadan Bajram and small Bajram. Since I came here, even though I want to celebrate them, I can't. For these holidays, we eat the Bajram lunch with all the family members together, and then we go to visit most of our close relatives. Here all of the family members have different work schedules, so we cannot gather even to eat the Bajram lunch together. It is also difficult to visit relatives because they are few in numbers, and we live far away from each other. On the other hand, when it is Christmas time or New Year's Eve, even if we don't want to celebrate them, we have to because no one is working or going to school, which gives us time to see one another.

Although I've only been in the US for a short period of time, I have some relatives who have been in the United States for more than thirty years. In those families, I can see the results of the process of



assimilation very easily. Most of them own great houses and have good jobs. In other words, most of them have adapted very well to the American society. They cannot even imagine the idea of returning back to Macedonia to live. Some of their grandchildren speak very little, or never speak the Albanian language at all.



Besides the language, there are a lot of examples where Albanian women have gotten married to American men. After marrying American men, they usually don't have contact with their families because this is

considered a serious offense to the family. Since they don't have contact with their families, they are assimilated into their husband's culture faster and more easily. There are also example when Albanian men marry American women, but the process of assimilation is more apparent and easier in the first case.

The process of assimilation is like an infection which touches everyone who comes in contact with another society. The experience of those before us has shown that it is almost impossible to stay untouched by it. I believe there are some ways which can help immigrants to preserve their language and tradition. One of these ways is that we should always speak in our native language to our children and maybe make a rule that they cannot speak the foreign language at home. It is even profitable for kids to speak more than one language, and having bilingual parents they deserve to know where their parents come from and what language they speak. Also, they should try to send them to visit their native country at least once a year and learn that language to perfection. While having contact with people from their native country, the children will learn their ancestor's tradition better, will start to make friends, communicate with them, and in this way they will know the language of their parents better.

In conclusion, the decision to come to a new country is a big decision. We should never forget our roots, but be proud of them. We should remember that there is no other place in the world where we have more value than in our native country. In my country,



there is a popular quote which says that "The stone weighs in its place," so returning to our birthplaces should be our biggest target in life. Even though we are thankful for the rights and opportunities that we have here as immigrants, we should also keep in mind that there is a small country in Europe that we call "our motherland," and it is waiting for us.



THE EMOTIONAL COST OF BEING AN IMMIGRANT

By: Essi D. Blame

It was a Monday morning, when my phone began to ring; my mother was calling from Togo: "Hey, my daughter, congratulations! How are you and your baby? Is everything OK? As the conversation was going on, my newborn began to cry. I hung up and ran into his room. He was



born just a few days before, and I hadn't completely recovered from the delivery. "Good morning, my baby." When I picked him up in my hands from his crib, Jeremiah

smiled up at me. It was time to feed and bathe him, but the night before was not fun for me at all. I couldn't count how many times I had to wake up to feed my little baby and to change his diapers. I was very exhausted: "Oh my gosh! I'm feeling a little dizzy!" There was nobody else around, and my husband was at work. It wasn't like that seven years ago when my first child was born in my country. I began to feel the nostalgia of the lovely members of my extended family and friends.

Actually, in my original culture, women are very spoiled for at least two months after they give birth to their baby. When Joshua, my first child was born in Togo, my mother, my mother-in-law, my sisters, my sister-in-law, my cousins, my aunts, my friends, and our church members were all involved. My mother-in-law traveled from miles away just to stay with me and help me for a while. She was responsible for my baby's bathing and feeding: "I love you, Jojo! You are a big, intelligent, and handsome boy. You'll become president one day." As she continued blessing little Joshua while she was feeding him, I could see a joyful and smiling face

of my baby, expressing his gratitude to his grandmother that morning. The day was so sunny; I walked into the front door of my house to see what was going on outside on the street: "Good morning! Essi. How did you sleep? What do you want us to cook for you today?" It was my sister-in-law, arriving to my house to help me. I remember that every morning, at least two members of my extended family stepped into my house to do my laundry, my cleaning, and my cooking. There was always somebody to do my shopping and errands. Every evening, my mother spent some time with me when she came back from work. All that I had to do was to rest or to sleep, to eat, to watch TV, or to chat with my visitors. I used to take a nap during the day while my mother-in-law and others were watching my baby. In my culture, any woman has to make sure she is involved when a baby is born in the community. Therefore, every woman schedules at least one free day to go help the new mom until she completely recovers from the delivery. It's a way to show love to both the newborn baby and his or her mother. It's also a sign of how much people care for each other in the community. People in my original culture are nothing but the very opposite of self-centered community members.



In addition, immigrants feel the nostalgia of special events celebrated in their home cultures such as Independence Day, Christmas, and Easter. My favorite celebration, when I was in my country, was Easter. Celebrated around March and April as a religious holiday, Easter is to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the Friday before (the Holy Friday), charismatic Christians gather in their local churches for all night prayer and communion. At that moment, the country became more alive than ever. Local markets are overcrowded just like inside a termite mound. Hairdressers and fashion designers are overwhelmed by an endless list of customers to satisfy



before Easter morning. I remember the noisy roads and streets that were full of people who spent the whole night outdoors, walking, singing, and laughing. On Easter day itself, we used to party after church. I will never forget the enchanting smell of the Togolese special dishes like "fufu" or pounded yam with meat soup that my husband and I used to enjoy with our extended family members and friends while listening to gospel music. We used to end the day on the beach, where we would go for fun, and we didn't return home until the inspiring cloudy sky got dark.

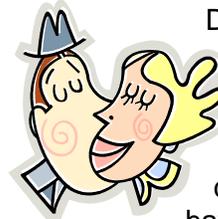


To conclude, immigrants, just like myself, are exposed to lots of feelings of nostalgia especially family nostalgia and the one that is related to their home countries' special events' celebration. All the warmth that they used to get from their family members remains in the past, but they can always overcome those emotional feelings by being open to new experiences, by getting involved in some of the activities on and off campus, by spending time with friends, and by meeting people at their attending church in the host country.



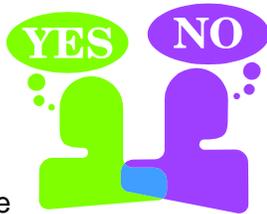
Hug and Kiss

By: Jihee Cheong



Did you ever have an experience where you felt dumb because aspects of your new surroundings were very different from your own country? Like other people who have faced culture shock, I also have had some different experiences in the U.S.A. I came here about six months ago. When I met students for the first time here, I was very embarrassed because the greeting ways were very different from my country. Someone gave me a kiss on my cheek, and someone gave me a hug. However, Koreans usually bow politely or shake hands slightly when greeting one another. So, although I met just a few people, it was

enough to be surprised by how things were done quite different from my own country. I was especially unfamiliar with American expressions, attitudes, and the way they live.



In comparing my language, to English, I have noticed that certain words are used differently in the U.S. First, in my country, people carefully use words like thanks and sorry. We use the words “thanks” or “sorry” when we sincerely feel thankful or sorry towards other people. But in the U.S., people say thanks even when someone passes the salt or says sorry even when someone passes by another person. Second, how we express ourselves in Korea is different than the U.S. People here do not hesitate to express what’s on their minds. On the other hand, Koreans usually hesitate when they say, “no.” Of course, we want to speak directly, but it is not easy for us because some words like “no” could easily hurt other’s feelings. For example, when I was young, my family visited my grandmother’s house. She offered us a very elaborate dinner. Because I already ate some snacks, I said “No, thanks.” She felt bad because she made all this food for us, and she wanted us to eat some of the food she had prepared. Since that time, I carefully express my thoughts. Sometimes, some words, which are not specific, can hurt and create emotional problems for us, so we are alert to possible troubles by the kinds of words we use. Third, people here often use gestures to communicate with others. For example, young students exchange a high-five when they meet each other. They are expressing themselves with not only their words but also their whole bodies. In my communication skills class, I was encouraged to use gestures, but it is very hard because Koreans rarely use gestures. We use gestures to communicate only when we meet the elderly, a deaf person, or a small child.

The living style in the U.S. is totally different from my country. First, the U.S. is not similar in expectations for children. Parents in my country teach their children that the most important thing is to study well. They believe that getting good grades is the best way to get a



good job one day. In another aspect, a good student means he or she is a diligent person. The grades they receive are a good criterion of their diligence. If someone sees a child’s school score on a school test, he or she can judge whether he or she is a good student or not. So, all parents living in Korea try to be sure that all their children attend good universities. But here, many parents do not push their children to study, and they let them make their own decisions concerning what they want to do. Also, many parents in the U.S. allow their children to have a boyfriend or girlfriend at an earlier age. I often see very young couples when I drive my niece to her middle school.



On the contrary, my niece said, “It is very common. If someone does not have a sweetheart, it means that person has big flaws.” In Korea, parents do not allow children to have romantic relationships until the age of twenty, especially girls. Generally, after they enter the university, they can have their first date. In addition, the U.S. is different in playing sports. In my country, all sports are for leisure. So, in Korea, we can play sports only when we have extra time when studying is complete. But here, many children go to the park or gymnasium to enjoy basketball or swimming. When the basketball season started, my son and his friends always went to the gym to see the games. It looked like these sports were a necessity part of their lives here in the U.S.

Attitude in the U.S. is very different than in Korea. What is considered more important is different here. In my opinion, people in the U.S. believe that credit scores are more important than the money one has in the bank. I often hear



if you want to buy something, it is better to have good credit. A young man, whom I met, said he always uses his credit card to buy everything even coffee and quickly pays it back by using the Internet. I asked him, “Aren’t you annoyed that you have to do that?” But he said, “This is the only way to build up my credit.” In addition, when I bought my car, the car dealer refused to sell any car to

me because I did not have any credit or a security number, although I had enough cash. So, I eventually bought my car in my sister's name. I still do not understand why good credit was needed to buy a car. But, in my country, there are no problems with buying anything or renting a house as long as you have enough money. Also, the relationship between the parents-in-law and the children-in-law is different in the U.S. One day, I visited an old friend's house since it was her birthday. All of us were Koreans except her daughter-in-law. We helped to make food or arrange dishes because we believed it was proper etiquette. But her daughter-in-law stayed on the sofa and played with her son. If we were in Korea, it could have caused a big problem. People in my country do not allow younger people to sit still while older people do something. Especially, when parents-in-law do something, the daughter-in-law should help them. Finally, the roles between men and women are different. In the U.S., it looks like there is no distinction of roles between genders. For instance, some time ago, when it was a blizzard outside, I saw that the woman who lives by my apartment cleared the snow instead of her husband. It was weird. In Korea, this kind of hard work is taken care of by the men. All outdoor work is the job of the men, and all household chores are the women's jobs even though women work outside of the home as well. Although the obligations are continually changing, laborious work still continues to be the responsibility of the men in the household.

Every day, I experience something new in the U.S., which is very different from my home country. I realize that these differences are part of living in a new culture, and I must learn to live with some of them. I am already acquiring new things, which are not originally part of my culture. I let my sons freely play sports. I am also happy when my sons and I play at the park. I believe that playing sports will help my sons to

enhance their physical health, as well as mental health. And, I use my body motion to express my thoughts. It is still not easy, but it is getting easier each day. Although I will face new challenges here in the U.S., I will delightfully learn something new every day as well.



◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆
Elderly in African Society

By: Mamadou Sow

In Africa, there is a proverb saying that when an elderly person passes away, it is like a library burned down. This is because they are considered as wise, and they are the head of the society. People show them respect because of their role in the society. Therefore, they have a big responsibility in our culture, but they also benefit from some privileges. Easy access in the public places and the public transportation are some of the privileges.

First, in Africa the elderly are the relation between the people and the ancestors, and they are witnesses of the past. They have faced many problems, and they have long life experience. They are witnesses of the big problems that we had in the past, and our history has shown that because of the colonialism, many Africans have been involved in the world wars. They have also fought for our freedom against the colonialists. Even their good actions in our history, they still help the society nowadays. Therefore, the elderly have the responsibility of providing solutions and making judgments. They are the first to consult when a problem happens before it goes to court. For example, when there is problem in a couple, they can give advice before it ends in a divorce. In my village, there are a group of five people who are selected for their wisdom to make the right decisions and provide solutions for the village.



Second, their relationship with the society in very fluent, and it is important for young people to get closer to them in order to learn about their knowledge. People show them a lot



of respect because they have done a lot for them. As an example, in my country we have to give them salutation by shaking hands with two hands to show them respect and consideration, and when they get into a bus, and there is no place to sit, people should give them their place. Also, when there is a ceremony or a party, they must have

the best of the meal. The treatment depends on their culture, so they have different treatments.

Third, in my country even though they do not have as much power as they had before, they still work in their fields with their children and grandchildren. They also have their own religious school, where young people can go and learn about their religion and culture. They teach in those religious schools and help in the education of children. Moreover, they are the guide of the society, and people follow their advice because all problems that the young generations are dealing with now have been experienced by them in the past.

In conclusion, the elderly have a big role in African society because they provide peace and harmony between the people. People help provide and take care of the elderly until the day they die. However, they have many benefits in the society, but what the elderly have done is more important than all of these privileges.



The Lives of Immigrants Living in the U.S

By: Eh Moo

Is it easy for immigrants to resettle in another country? Do they feel like this is their own country? Does their host look down on them? Since we are the immigrants, it is very important to learn how to adjust ourselves in this new culture. As an immigrant from Thailand, I have been confronted with a number of problems since I got here. It has been almost four years since I got here, and there are many different problems and difficulties for me or



immigrants to deal with in order to become successful. Most immigrants like me encounter mainly three barriers: educational problems,

transportation problems, and eating problems.

The level of education that immigrants bring with them determines the difficulties in their lives. The people who have limited

education will find more difficulties in their everyday lives. For example, since my mom doesn't speak any English, she has a hard time going shopping by herself. Also, she can't take a bus by herself. Just like my mom, English is the language problem for every immigrant. There are many ways to solve this English language barrier. Attending an ESL program will help settlers to overcome the language problem. Moreover, after taking ESL courses, further education programs will be opened and provided for those who are interested. There are thousands of job opportunities waiting for them. Some languages like English are complicated and so difficult to learn. From my own experiences, when I first got here, I had a hard time understanding the American accent and gestures. The way Americans use gestures represents the meaning of what they are saying. For example, I remember the time when I was lost in San Francisco, I asked an American man for the directions to where I was living, but he moved his shoulders up and down. I could not understand what he meant with that gesture, so I kept asking him until he shouted out, "I don't know!" I felt so embarrassed and painfully shy to ask anyone else for help. It is very hard for every immigrant to understand all the gestures and expressions that Native Americans use.



Secondly, eating habits are another kind of culture which immigrants have to face and adjust to. There are many differences between eating habits in my culture and American culture. To illustrate, most American people eat fast food such as McDonalds, Subway, and KFC at any time of day. However, in Thailand, every family tends to eat together at the same time. We usually eat twice a day. Breakfast will be morning at 7 am with rice, curry, fish paste, raw vegetables, and soup. Dinner will be at 5 pm, with the same food as breakfast. Lunch and supper are not the main meals in our culture. When looking at American food consumption, most likely Americans eat fatty foods and sweets and not enough fruits and vegetables. As we all know, fast food plays a large part in the American diet, and meals are always taken in a hurry. Parents are working full-time; kids are in

schools or clubs. For this reason, the American family tends to eat outside or consume fast food instead of making home-cooked meals. It would be hard for immigrants to adjust to this aspect of the culture because they are not used to do it. For my own experiences, working and being student, I tend to eat outside more than at home. I almost always pass up the meal with my family because time does not allow me to spend time eating with my family. However, some of the immigrants are following their former eating habit, which they usually do. For instance, Naresh, who is my friend, has always followed his own style. He always eats breakfast with his family at 8 am with tea, bread, and tortillas. He eats lunch at 12 pm with rice, vegetables, meat, and beans. Dinner will be at 8 pm with noodles, vegetables, green leaves, and peas. He doesn't follow American eating habits. He likes eating with his family more than going out.

Thirdly, transportation is another kind of problem that new immigrants should adjust to in this country. Especially, those like me, who come from smaller countries with limited forms of getting around. When I first came here, I had a hard time finding the right bus to go to my work. It took me a while to get familiar with commuting in the city because buses are changing every other day. Unless you know the date, the time, and the numbers, you cannot reach the place where you're going. For instance, one of my friends, named Noe Noe, who comes from Burma and



lives in Oakland, CA, had the same experience as I had before. During his first week in Oakland, CA, he was lost for two days in the city until the police sent him

back to his house. In addition, my friend Naresh Rai, when he got here, he felt so bad and frustrated since he had no car, which made it difficult to

commute. He had to ask friends for a ride and pay for it. Public transportation such as Metro Link is



available in Quad Cities, but it's very difficult to get to work or school on time because of a limited bus schedule. These are the difficulties my friend had to face and struggle with in his first two months in the U.S. Since we all must go to work and school, we need a way to deal with all of these issues.



To sum up, learning another culture is hard, but it is possible in time. Since we are immigrants, we deal with many difficulties adjusting ourselves to our new culture. However, we will succeed if we try hard and continue to struggle for a better life. Nothing is easy unless we put a lot of effort into it. Therefore, *Morris Alder*, whose saying goes, "The purpose of learning is growth, and our minds, unlike our bodies, can continue growing as we continue to live." So, we immigrants will continue to grow!



Opportunities For Immigrant Students at BHC

By: Date Houedakor

Coming to the USA was not a dream for me. It was a life "thing" that happened to me one year after I lost my job in my country. All I planned to do there did not go well, and I was disappointed because nobody wanted to help me. One of my friends living in the USA suggested that I apply for the lottery visa. I did it, but not really hopeful that anything would come from this lottery. The fact is, I passed all the tests and on July 24th of the year 2006, I moved to the USA with my family.



One month after, I started working and going to school at the same time because I needed to provide security for my family, and I was worried about a job or a career that really fits me. Going to school appears to be one of the positive ways to leave the kind of job I am still doing at Tyson. I do not really like this job because it is boring; I do not learn anything, and it does not give me any real experience for my future. During the past two years, I have been trimming fat on beef with a knife and hook in hand, eight hours a day, five days a week. I got

hurt on the job and had to have surgery for two of my fingers. I was told I could no longer use a knife anymore. One year after being on light duty, I went back to my job. However, this time not as a fat trimmer but as a quality controller. Since then, my job consists in making sure that



the product is cut and trimmed to meet the company's quotas. Unfortunately, I am still using a knife and hook, and my

left hand and wrist are still in pain. Due to these unpleasant work experiences, my mind was set. I really needed to do everything I could to become a physical therapist. More than ever, BHC gives me more opportunities through the ESL program and its objectives.

First of all, the ESL program begins at Level Zero and goes up to Level Six. The objective of this program is to help Immigrants learn to speak English since this is the local spoken language. Although I learned this language in school in my home country, I did not practice it. I started at Level 3, and once I was at BHC one of the classes that really helped me was the listening and speaking class. After this class, I really started to understand American English a little bit more. At that time, it seemed that my goal was very far from me because it takes a while to finish the ESL program. I needed to call my friend to know about her own experiences in the U.S. She told me not to give up because when she first came to the U.S, she experienced unemployment for almost three years, and she finished the ESL program before taking her academic



courses in computers. For ten years she has been working as programmer and technical support person in Virginia. When I asked her why she decided to live here, she told me she lost her job in her home country because like me she wasn't affiliated with any political group or lodge and didn't belong to the ethnic group that was leading the country. No matter how efficient, loyal and experienced you are, when the time comes, you are just thrown out to let somebody affiliated take your place. It is unfair to put someone's future in jeopardy just because he is

not affiliated with the political group that leads the country, but it is one of the sad realities in my country. Therefore, many people are facing unemployment there. The solution is to find a place where equal opportunities are possible.

After that, I made a commitment to myself. I would do everything I could to reach my goal no matter what it took. On my way to this goal, BHC offered me an unexpected opportunity in logistic courses. The objective of this specific course was to prepare a few Immigrants, adult students, for a Warehouse and Distribution



Specialist Certificate. I took that course, and today I have a Warehouse and Distribution Specialist Certificate and two majors: Business in

Warehouse and Physical Therapy. I still need to finish the

ESL program since the economy is bad even though a few of my colleagues are already working with their certificate in warehousing. They found their way out of Tyson and other factories, but for myself I need to go further than that. As a short term opportunity, this certificate was welcomed because it allowed me to find a better job. I did not spend many years, but just a few months for a certificate that could open the way for a career. BHC also offers other short term possibilities like CNA and welding certificates. It could be interesting for me to find a job in warehousing, and I am already working on it. This will help me prepare for a two year degree as a physical therapy assistant at BHC.

After getting the qualification as a Physical Therapist, career opportunities are widely opened in this field. At this point, it would be interesting to work a few years in this field to gain experiences and time to get used to this professions' realities. Finally, a good career as a physical therapist is possible anytime here in the Quad Cities.



Adopting a new culture is not easy for adult immigrants who have decided to go to school while working. It is better to have my family with me, but more challenging at the same time because of the inherent and multiple responsibilities I face every single day at school

and at work. But it worth the price, and I strongly believe it is the best way to change my life.



How can Illness Interfere with Your Path to Success?

By: Ramanou Marouane

Each person has goals set up in his life and he works hard in order to achieve those goals. The best way to achieve those goals are with courage and willingness, but the most important factor is good health. Being successful in life involves a lot of efforts. Indeed in our daily life, we work hard and we give our best. Unfortunately, bad health can have an impact on our performances but that doesn't mean the end of everything. When health is absent, courage takes its place.



During nights, I had difficulty breathing and when everybody was sleeping, I was awake. In the beginning, my parents thought it was a cold. I took tablets and used different decongestants but nothing changed. It was worse at school; I was almost unable to run for my EPA classes. I was very young when the doctor told me that I was sick. I was probably too young to understand the impact of this disease on my life.

The only person aware of this was my mother. I remember, she hid her face with her hands. Through the years that have followed, I started to be aware of my sickness, but at the same time, I discovered my attraction for basketball. I was interested in school especially when I was getting good grades. Dealing with my sickness, I was trying to keep it on track.

Having an illness doesn't mean the end of everything. Especially when this disease allows you to be mobile and doesn't confine you to a



bed. It's true that sometimes I'm a little bit sad. However, I never let my cynical side control my mood because courage is the most important factor to success. When you lose it, you lose everything. To illustrate this idea, I want to talk about Lance Armstrong who is an athlete: a cyclist. He is famous because he won the Tour de France, seven times. On October 2, 1996 at age of 25, Armstrong was diagnosed with a stage-three cancer. He didn't give up and the most important aspect for him was saving his career; in 1999, he made a comeback and won the Tour de France. In my daily life, I use his story to encourage myself even if my sickness is not as dangerous as his illness.



Being sick doesn't mean the end of everything. The most important thing to remember when you are sick is to stay focused on your goals. Nothing should interfere with your purposes. How can that be possible? The first step is to always keep your mood up. When you have to perform, you have to forget your sickness. Keeping in mind that we are sick often reduces our performances. The second step is to avoid persistent working when you don't feel good. In my case, when I'm doing my homework, and I feel pain, I never continue working. Instead, I use my inhaler and I go out to breathe some fresh air. To continue working when you feel bad is dangerous, because it can distract you from your work and maybe from your goals or purposes.



To sum up, a disease is a physical failure that courage and willingness can control. Life is a race and the most important part in this race is to cross the finish line. You may brandish your success like a trophy if you always keep your mood up. Lance Armstrong did the same thing; why not you? And at the end, keep in my mind that nothing is impossible.





Balancing College, Home, and Family Obligations

By: Gurpreet Kaur



It was a wonderful Friday morning when I got up bright and early. I started my morning with a cup of tea. After that I started my chores at home, and took my mother in-law to her doctor's appointment.

Suddenly, I realized that I hadn't finished my online homework. I had to finish it by Friday because I was running out of time to finish it, and I was supposed to work on Saturday at Metro Lab. It is hard for me to balance college, home, and family obligations. Despite all these responsibilities, I am trying to find a balance in my life.

Firstly, balancing college work is not easy for me nowadays. For instance, I am now in the ESL program. When I started these classes, it was my misconception that there would not be too much homework. However, Anne Bollati, who is the coordinator of the ESL program, explained to me that there would in fact be lots of homework. Moreover, before the classes started, I wanted to complete all my classes in one semester because I thought it will be easier,



but I was wrong. Nowadays, it is not easy for me to balance my college homework and make time for my children. I have two children: one is 4 years-old and the other one is 18 months-old. Since I am taking these classes, I

feel I am away from children more, since I don't have as much time to spend with them. On the other hand, my daughter feels the same way, too. For example, whenever she wants to ask me something, I tell her that I am doing homework, and we can talk about that topic later. She always complains that since I started classes, I am not playing with her as much as I used to before. Moreover, whenever I get a chance, I do all my homework in a timely manner, so I have more time to spend with my family. In addition, I prefer to do homework in the library after class because it is quiet and free from distractions. When I started my classes, I didn't expect these kinds of problems. It is hard for me to balance college life while still caring for

my children, but I am finding ways to manage my time, so I can do both.

Secondly, it is hard to balance my home responsibilities while attending college. I have to fulfill my responsibilities as a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. Likewise, my mother in-law and father in-law live with us. In my culture, the son of the family has to take care of his elders. So, I have the responsibility of caring for my in-laws. I have to take them to the doctor, shopping, and to our relatives for visits. In addition, my mother in-law is vegan, and I have to cook something with vegetables two times a day. For example, she likes to eat mixed vegetables, daal, and curry. Every day before I attend class, I do all my chores such cleaning the house, washing the dishes, and cooking lunch for my family. Hence, it is hard to find time to attend college while still caring for my family.



Thirdly, I am unable to fulfill all my responsibilities towards my family such as going out shopping or to dinner with my husband. Moreover, my other obligation

is my job. I am working at Metro Lab, and my shift begins at 2 pm and ends at 10 pm. Moreover, my husband is working during the morning time at our own store, and I'm taking some classes during the morning, also. Nowadays, I can't go anywhere when somebody invites me over for dinner because I'm either at work or in class. So, I am unable to fulfill all of my responsibilities towards my family due to my job and classes.



Finally, I have found some solutions to



dealing with all my problems. First, I do all my homework at college rather than at home. Otherwise, I will do my homework when my children are sleeping. Second, I will

try to take care of my in-laws' needs when it is my day off. Third, I reduce my hours at my job by switching from full-time to part-time.

In conclusion, it is not easy to balance college life, home, and family obligations.

Achieving balance is an important goal in everyone's life. I am trying to achieve balance in all areas of my life; although it isn't easy, I'm taking steps in order to make it happen one day.



MY TRIP TO CUBA

By Susana Enriquez

Being on a trip is always exciting. The first thing you think is that it will be so good, and you will have a great time during your vacation. This is what happened to me last January. I was very excited because of my trip to Cuba. Cuba is a little Island 90 miles to the south of Florida. It is a beautiful country; it has nice weather and gorgeous beaches. I'm one of the luckiest people who could visit Cuba because not



everybody has that privilege; American citizens are not allowed to go there. In my status, as a permanent resident, I can't do it either, but my

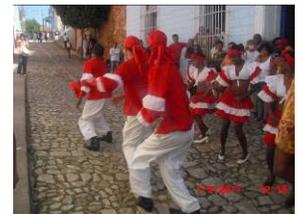
case is different because my husband is from Cuba and my in-laws live there. This was the first time I was going to meet them, but also my trip was full of surprises.

Starting here, in US when I bought my ticket to fly there, my first surprise was that I had to buy insurance for the days I was going to be there. Then, all the security they have made me feel very nervous the day we were going to fly because the customs agents weighed my luggage, and they also asked me about my body weight, which really offended me because I had been in different places, and nobody asked me this before. "Well," I said to myself, "This cannot ruin my trip," so I decided to forget about it. The next thing was the arrival in Cuba. It was a nightmare because the agents there asked me about the insurance I had bought with my ticket. They wanted to make sure I had it in case I needed to go to the doctor in that country. Then again the customs officers weighed my luggage, but this time they checked me as if I was going to board the plane again. I guess they wanted to make sure I did not bring anything illegal into their country. During the time I was in the airport,

people from state security came to me to ask me about my life here in the US. I felt very special because the officer told me that I was the only Mexican person there. They had not had any one from Mexico for a long time. I answered all the questions they asked me and then they finally let me go out of there.

My in-laws were waiting for us outside; it was a nice moment when I could finally give them a hug. My mother in-law was crying because she was very excited. My husband is her only son, and they hadn't seen each other for three years. I was very nervous too because this was the first time we were going to meet. It was a nice moment, full of happiness and emotions.

Besides meeting my new family, I got to meet a new culture. Cuba is a nice place. It's like going back to the past century. I traveled to different cities in Cuba; I went to Cienfuegos, Trinidad and Santa Clara. I went to "El Malecon", which is in Cienfuegos, and then I went to the beach called Ancon in Trinidad, a very interesting city. It is interesting because I could inform myself about the story of this place. This city was constructed by slaves, so black people were the first occupants in this country. Then when the Spanish people came, they got mixed, so now this city is multicultural. I was very lucky because during my visit I had the opportunity to see the different customs they have. One of them is the "Conga", a group of black people who represent the ancestors. This group has very colorful clothes. They were there on the street, drinking and talking with each other. I saw many people around them, but I did not imagine what would come. After a little while I heard the drums playing and the guys singing, they were walking down the streets, singing, dancing and drinking "ron", an alcoholic drink. Everybody was following them. It was very exciting to be there and enjoy this wonderful moment. My father-in-law was very happy too because he loves this "carnaval". Finally I went to Santa Clara, the big city where the statue of "El Che Guevara" is located. I could not take pictures in the museum because it is prohibited to take cameras in there. I could see few cars on the streets, and almost all of them were from the 1950's and 60's.



People walk, have buggies, and use bicycles and motorcycles as taxis. The place where my husband is from is a little town close to Santa Clara,



Clara, a big city; it is called Guinia de Miranda. The houses

there are almost all the same style: one floor, old wood doors, and very strong because of the hurricanes, with windows without glass. Instead of glass, they are made of metal blinds, which are open during the day and closed during the night, so people sleep well without mosquitoes.

In all places, the people there are very affectionate. Everywhere they see you they come to you and kiss you on the cheek. It was one of the customs that I had to adopt during the time I was there because my husband has a lot of family, and all of them came to meet me, so I felt like I had to be friendly to them. Another custom I had to adopt was the time to eat and the kind of food they eat. They drink coffee after every meal, but it is not a regular cup of coffee; it is a very small cup,



and the coffee is very strong and sweet. The basic food is steamed rice and black beans, and sometimes pork because people there are not

allowed to eat beef. They can go to jail if they kill a cow, so they never eat it. Breakfast is about 8:00 am. Lunch is around 2:00 pm, and dinner is between 8:00 and 9:00 pm. This is very different from the US. In Cuba, not all the people can eat meat every day because the majority of them are very poor, and they cannot afford to pay much for food.

Another surprise for me was that toilet paper there is a luxury, which people just can't pay for. Toilet paper and other products like pop, beer, wine, toothpaste and other basic products are sold in the dollar store only, which means that people have to buy dollars first, so they can buy these luxuries.

Money is complicated in Cuba. There are two different kinds of money circulating in Cuba; one is called "Peso Cubano", which is Cuban

money. The other one is "chavitos" or convertible money, which has the same value as the USD. However, when you exchange it, the officials take 20% off of your money, so from 1 dollar, they give you only 80 cents back. One chavito equals 25 Cuban pesos and a regular worker makes about 250 Cuban pesos a month.

Well, on reflecting on these surprises, I think people in Cuba are deprived of some basic things, but are rich in relationships and in social services. Most people in

Cuba are very humble, and they also well-educated. They also have some advantages such as free schooling and free health care.



People can have any degree: doctor, nurse, engineer, and even lawyer, because they don't have to pay for their education. In health care, they have an advantage because they can have a tooth pulled or major surgery without paying anything.

To conclude, I think I'm one of the luckiest people in the US since I had the chance to visit Cuba. I had a "different", but wonderful trip, and I also had a great time meeting my in-laws. The experience I had during the flight, the impressions I had about this beautiful country, and the pleasure I had to meet my in-laws are something that I will never forget.



AMERICAN DREAM: A NEW DEAL FOR TOGOLESE YOUTH

By: Boss Noumouvi

Generally considered as the land of opportunities, the U.S. is the country in which everyone, especially Togolese youth, would like to reside. I'm still wondering why the Togolese youth choose the US. What is the mindset of the Togolese youth in regard to the U.S.?



According to the interview of my friends and classmates, I noticed that the Togolese choice of the US is due to many reasons such as the welfare of their parents and bothers living in the U.S., the well-known universities, and American pop culture.

In 2010, there were about 1,500 Togolese who immigrated to Europe and especially to the United States of America; those people travel to their home country from time to time. Moreover, they are generally the owners of some beautiful houses in the capital city of Togo, Lome. They send money to their families whenever they need it; they are totally different when they come back from the U.S. in their dress and general welfare. In contrast, there are some youth who are highly educated in Togolese universities, but they could not even find an appropriate job. Then based on their brothers' and parents' experiences, they think that all people in the US can succeed to live happily and successfully. Consequently, in order to live this successful life, the Togolese youth choose to travel to the U.S.

Apart from their family experiences, the well-known American universities also inspire Togolese youth. Known as the first world power, America has important renowned universities that everyone would like to attend. All Togolese youth after his/her high school diploma would like to attend Harvard University. For instance, Togolese government members who have enough money send their children to the American universities; after their graduation, those children come back and work in the big companies in Africa. In addition, the current president of Togo, son of the old President Eyadema, obtained a Masters of Business



Administration Degree from the George Washington University in the US. All of this compels the Togolese youth to look to the US. Seeing themselves

studying in the U.S is an honor.

It is not only their family experience or the American universities that inspire the Togolese youth, but typical American pop culture is another factor. Most Togolese youth grew up watching American movies and listening to U.S. music. Then, they usually have in mind that they would like to see the famous American artists singing or acting live. They also desire to wear and possess U.S. brands as they can watch in the movies. To have this entire dream realized, they have only one choice: travel to the U.S. For example, I was chatting on Facebook with a friend who is still in Togo last time; he asked me if I had already gone to a concert of Beyonce.

When I answered "No", he asked me to tell him why I travelled to the U.S.

The three factors listed above represent an America where all is cool



and modern for the youth abroad. However, once they arrive, those Togolese youth discover that their mindset in regard to the U.S. is totally different from the reality. The American Dream is not just a better life or welfare. Those youth, forget that in America only hard work leads to a better life. They ignore the concept of the "hard work", which is imperative to anyone who would like to live an American Dream sooner or later. For instance, I was surprised to see myself working as meat cutter when I arrived to the U.S. because I had a bachelor's degree from the University of Lome. In my mind, I thought I could find a job relative to my education when I came



to the U.S. That was my first personal deception. My second deception was about the transfer of my credits and the cost of education. I have to

start as a freshman because the university here in the U.S. does not have an agreement with the universities of Togo.

Nevertheless, I still believe in my heart that the American Dream is not unrealistic. According to S.E. Smith, the American Dream is possible, but people are usually impatient; for some it may last decades, for others it may become true in a year. The concept of hard work does not mean automatically working harder, but means working smart, working better, working safer each day (Smith 3). Since I discovered that this dream is still possible to be realized, I will continue working hard and smart to attain this goal. The opportunity of working while going to school is very exciting. For instance, most of the Togolese students of Black Hawk College are still working full-time while taking classes. Our goal is to have a degree at a well-known American university and find a better job.

In summary, when going through this article, we discover that Togolese youth's choice to travel to the U.S. is due to their family

experiences, the well-known American universities, and the America pop culture. Unfortunately, most of them are deceived when they arrive, but some still believe that their American Dream must be realized. I'm one of the believers.



BIOGRAPHIES

My name is **Houevi Dosseh**, and I am from Togo, came to the 13, 2009. living in the two years. I family, so I siblings.



West Africa. I U.S.A. on June So, I have been U.S.A. for almost am from a big have many Actually, I am living with one of my sisters, Diane. I am a young, beautiful, and dedicated lady. Ever since I was a child, my dream was to be a voice for voiceless people like abused children, raped women, and women dealing with physical violence in their marriage. That's why I majored in law when I went to the university in my country. But I did not have the chance to finish my studies because of financial problems. Today, I am living in the U.S.A., and I have a second chance to go to school. I am totally dedicated to my studies, the key to my future, successful life. Ever since my desire was to have a career that could allow me to help other people, and I could not pursue my study in law, I have decided to major in nursing after the completion of the ESL program and the other pre-requisites. My hope and dream are to have a happy family of my own down the road. I would also like to be able financially to create a charity for needy people.



My name is **Aissatou Bah**; I come from Guinea, a small country in West Africa. I arrived in the U.S. 7 months ago. I am 18 years old, and I am actually taking ESL classes at Black Hawk College in Moline. I haven't decided my major yet, but I think it will be biology. I speak three languages: French, English and my dialect, Fulani. Back in Guinea, I have a big family: my mom, my dad, with two brothers and four sisters, cousins and other relatives. I hope that one day I will be able to get a job that I will enjoy, and I also hope that I will be able to help my family and country. My hobbies are reading, watching TV, listening to music, and shopping. I'm really enjoying my experience here at Black hawk College, and I hope that I will have learned more by the end of the year.

My name is **Ana Belen Melendez**, and I'm 24 years old. Coahuila, been living in since 2003. I parents and have two are married. the youngest



I'm originally from Mexico. I have the United States live with my my brother, but I more sisters who I'm the fourth and of my siblings. I like to spend time with all my family, but another thing I love is visiting places and enjoying their landscapes. One of my biggest dreams is to travel to different places in Europe and Latin America, especially Brazil. One of my favorite hobbies is to be in quiet places because I love reading all kind of books.

Naresh Rai is my name. I am from Bhutan. I lived in Nepal for more than a decade and finally I came to the United States in June 2009. I live in Quad Cities with my small family. I have a sister, a brother and mom. I am still single. I know Nepali, Hindi, and English languages. Also, I understand Bengali. I am a full-time job holder. I love playing music, cooking, driving, swimming, collecting old stamps, listening to music, watching movies, taking pictures, and exercising



is my regular routine. Besides that, I am fond of playing table tennis, badminton, Frisbee, and chess. My aim in life is to become a successful business man.

My name is **Dzilsime Beciri**, and I am from Macedonia (Southeast Europe). By nationality, I am Albanian. I was born in 1986 in a small city called Kerçova. I have just one younger brother who lives with my parents in Macedonia. I have been



married for three years, and that was the reason why I came to the United States. My husband and his family are Albanians, but they live and work in the United States, so I had to follow my husband. The first time I came to the United States was in 2008, and from then I have lived here for just one year. In Macedonia, I finished college and got my Bachelor's Degree in Law. Then I started my masters studies, and currently I am working on my masters thesis. I like reading, visiting new places, and doing some kinds of sports. My dream is to get the PhD title for law, and work as a college professor in Macedonia.

My name is **Essi D. Blame**. I'm from Togo, a French country in West Africa. I have been in the U.S. for about three years. I live with my lovely husband and our two handsome kids who make me the happiest person in the world. I love reading novels and biblical literature. My dream is to become an engineer in the next four years.



speaking West Africa. I in U.S. for years. I live lovely husband handsome kids me the person in the

My name is **Jihee Cheong**. I am from South Korea. I have two sisters. My older sister lives here, and it was the motive for me to come to BHC. I am married, and I have two vivacious children. They are great pride to my husband and me. When I have free time, I go to a park or a gym to play with my children. Because I did not have enough time to spend time with them, it is



a great delight to us now. When I lived in Korea, I was a nurse. My first language is Korean, and English is my second language. I came here to study English ten months ago because I want to get a job for an international hospital in Korea. I will go back to my home country after studying English. I enjoy studying English and living here. It has been a wonderful experience for us.

My name is **Mamadou Sow**, and I am from Guinea in West Africa. I am 26 years old, and I have been in this country for two years. I am living with my family; I have two brothers and two sisters. I am single, working at Tyson. My language is Foulani, but I also speak Wolof, French, and English. I want to major in diesel mechanics. I like to listen to music, and I love soccer. In my free time, I like to spend time with my friends. My plan for the future is to open my own business in my country.



My name is **Eh Kaw**, and I am from Thailand, which is a country that lies in the heart of South East Asia. It is bordered to the north by Burma and Laos, to the east by Laos and Cambodia. I am a second born child in a family of seven; two girls and three boys. I like playing soccer, fishing and driving. I have been living in the U.S almost four years. The area of academics that I would like to pursue is criminal justice. I am a sociable person and helpful to people.



My name is **Date Houedakor**. I am a Togolese born in Dakar (Republic of Senegal). I am 45 years old, and I have five siblings: two sisters and three brothers. I have been living in the US for almost five years. I am married and I have three children. I have two areas of interest since I moved here: business in logistics and physical therapy, where I would like to have a career in the future. Actually, I am still working at Tyson, but I do not really like this job. I speak French, Ewe, and English, and I like to read, to watch movies and to play ping pong.



Hi. My name is **Ramanou Marouane**, I'm 22. I come from Benin. A West African country located between Togo and Nigeria. I came to the US for my studies, and I have been here for 11 months. I have two young brothers and no kids. I speak French and a little bit Spanish in addition to English. When I was in my country, I was always stapled to my mum and unable to spend 72 hours far from her. That's why when I first came here, I was a kind of lost. Through the time I spent far from her, I learned how to live alone and by myself. I like to play basketball. Unfortunately my coming in the US has changed my hobbies. Bad weather and other factors have decreased my love for this game. I stay focused on my goals. I want to be criminal lawyer. I like this ability to defend people especially when they are innocent.



My name is **Bossou Noumovi**; I'm from Togo, West Africa. Born in December 1987, I grew up in a village called Tado which is on the western side of Togo. I have been living in the US for almost two years. I have two siblings -- three sisters and two brothers. I'm single with no kids. I'm currently employed by Tyson Food, Inc. located in Joslin. I speak French fluently and Ewe which is one of Togolese dialects. My hope is to get my Associate's Degree in Business at BHC and then transfer my credits to WIU. My favorite hobbies are soccer and basketball. I pass my free time singing, worshipping, and praising God with all my heart. My favorite book is the Bible. In the recent future, I plan on marrying a lovely lady I have not met yet.



My name is **Gurpreet Kaur**. I am from India. I am 32 years old. I am married, and I have two loving daughters. I have been here for 4 years. I did nursing in India. Now, I want to be a RN. It's my dream, too. So, I am trying hard to fulfill my dream.



My name is **Susana Enriquez**, I'm from Guadalajara, Mexico, and I have five siblings, three sisters and two brothers. I'm married and I have a three-year-old beautiful girl. I have been living in the United States since 1995. I'm fluent in Spanish and English. During my free time, I like to walk and play with my daughter. I enjoy cooking and learning new recipes, too. I worked at Seaford Clothing in Rock Island, IL for 14 years. After the company shut down, the opportunity to take a different course in life arrived, and here I am, studying hard to achieve my dream of being a medical assistant.



The ESL newsletter is written by our Advanced Writing class each semester. We would like to thank Anne Bollati, ESL coordinator, for assisting with the editing and revising process. A special thank you goes to Sheryl Gragg, support staff for the Humanities, Languages, and Journalism Department, for her time, effort and energy in editing and formatting this newsletter. Her creativity and patience is much appreciated. Additionally, we want to express our gratitude to Mike Winter, who took our individual and group photos. Much appreciation to you all!

Jenni Wessel-Fields, Assistant Professor

ESL

English as a Second Language Program

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

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

TESTING:

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

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

Placement Scores are as follows:

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

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

PROGRAM PROFILE:

New Arrivals – Level 4

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

Level 5

Offered at the Illinois Employment and Training Center, Moline

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

Levels 6 & 7: Offered at Black Hawk College

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

INTERMEDIATE ESL:

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

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

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

Courses

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

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

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

ADVANCED ESL:

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

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

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

Courses

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

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

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