



# OUR SIDE OF THE STORY



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



# OUR SIDE OF THE STORY

## INTERNATIONAL VOICES at Black Hawk College



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interesting Facts about My Ethnic Identity By Elmira Shakhbazova .....	2
The Holidays in Vietnam By Duoc Hoang Nguyen .....	5
Ways of Celebrating Thanksgiving in Rwanda By Emmanuel Hakizimana .....	8
Young Initiation in North Togo By Amy Nicole Agboh.....	10
Burmese Calendar and Traditions By George Htain .....	13
Naming in Ewe By Komalan Novissi Gavon.....	16
Music and Musical Instruments of Burundi By Ngiriruburundi Joseph .....	18
History of Albania and Its People by Valdete Neziri .....	20
Consuming Rather Than Saving By Sangho Yoo.....	22
Imilchil: Wedding Festival in Morocco By Latifa Karoumia .....	24
Education: A Study in Contrasts By Amin Rahhal .....	26
My Experience with Dictatorship By Mary Eugenia Mora .....	28
My Trip to Thailand with New Identification By Htoo Eh .....	30
Life of Orphan Children in Tanzania By Bukuru Melance.....	33
Effects of Political Corruption in Burundi By Ndayiziga Levis.....	35
The Rise of Industry in Africa: The Growth of Tanzania By John Teresio .....	37
From Crisis to Peace By Cikunkze Eugonfaunk .....	39
Who Are the Karen People By Haenay Moo.....	41
Education: The Perfect Weapon for a Prosperous Future By Robert Garfias .....	43
Internet Addiction By Angelique Iradukunda .....	45
Mother Tongue Benefits in Learning English By Ameleve Adodo.....	47

These articles were written by the students in the advanced writing classes. I would like to thank the morning and evening students for their contributions. I would also like to thank Janet Francisco and Lisa Torres for their efforts in helping the students find their voices. I would also like to extend a thanks to Dee Canfield who helped us in Lisa's absence. A special thanks goes to Sheryl Gragg, support staff for the Humanities, Languages and Journalism department, for her time, effort and energy in editing and formatting this magazine. Her creativity and patience are much appreciated. Additionally, I want to express my gratitude to Mike Winter, who took our individual and group photos, and Kris Meyer who helped bring this project to production.

Anne Bollati, ESL Program Coordinator

# ELMIRA SHAKHBAZOVA



My name is **Elmira Shakhbazova**. I am from Russia, but I am Turkish by ethnicity. I am married and have three children. I am taking ESL classes to improve my English, so I will be able to continue my education and help my children. I have been in the U.S. since 2005. I came with my husband to the U.S. as a refugee. We were looking for a better life for us and for our kids. I received my citizenship in 2011, so I am a U.S. citizen now.

## Interesting Facts about My Ethnic Identity

“If you don’t know your history, you don’t have a future,” That is what I heard many times from my grandparents. So, I would like to share the sorrowful history of my people, Meskhetian Turks, who were displaced many times during the last 100 years.

Meskhetian Turks are originally from Georgia, a former Soviet Union Republic, which is located in the Caucasus region of Eurasia. When the Soviet Union and Turkey drew the boundary line, some villages from Turkey ended up in the Soviet Union. Most of my ethnic group was living in five districts: Adigon, Ahiska, Aspiza, Ahalkelek, and Bogdanovka.



The name Meskhetian came from the geographical name of the county, which was Meshetia. We speak one of the dialects from the Turkish language; our traditions are partly from Turkey and partly from Caucasus. Life was very difficult and people were very poor. Mostly, they occupied themselves with cattle breeding, agriculture, and many of them were masters of woodworking. One of the largest populations of our people was in Azgur, a village in Ahiska district; my ancestors were from Azgur. When my grandparents would talk about their childhood, it was exciting because they could transmit to us the beauty of the nature, freshness of the air, and the all fragrances of the bouquet grass, flowers, and trees that they used to know. It seemed like they would never forget that even though it had happened more than 70 years before the deportation day.



It happened on November 15, 1944, when World War II was almost over. One day, soldiers came and gave the people several hours to collect their things before they forced them to leave. It was the ideal time to do so because all the strong men of the village who could resist

were in the war. My ethnic group left behind cattle, houses, and everything they earned by hard work. Soldiers loaded my people into cattle cars without telling them where they were going, why and for how long. The trip took three weeks, and a lot of people died during that trip. When the train stopped at the stations, soldiers checked the dead ones and threw them away or covered them with snow.

By the time they arrived to their destination, my people were exhausted, scared, and hungry because of the long trip, obscurity, and lack of food. My grandparents ended up in Uzbekistan, a former Soviet Union Republic, but many other people went to Kazakhstan and Kirgizia, both former Soviet Union Republics. It was a hard time because the whole country had been in war, and that had taken all human and food resources of the country. It was the time when people ate grass with salt to survive, but many of them died. After a few years, when war was over, and soldiers started to return from the war, the first place they came was Georgia because they didn't know about the deportation. My mother-in-law's father was one of these who came back home and didn't find his family. In addition, he saw the cemetery where his ancestors were buried; it was destroyed and vines were planted instead. He could not control himself and tears flowed from his eyes. Later, he found out where his family was and headed that way.

After the war, people became stronger year after year, and the new generation was established in the new land. People started to go to colleges and get new jobs in all fields. We lived as happy as one person could be far away from the motherland, until June, 1989. The government named many reasons for that conflict, but my parents told me that the real one was fraud with cotton. Uzbekistan was mostly known in USSR for growing cotton. The corruption level was very high in the USSR, so the cotton production wasn't excluded from corruption. In 1989, a special commission from Moscow was established to check the fraud with the cotton. People who were in power and who were involved in fraud with cotton had to come up with something to save themselves, so they artificially created an ethnic conflict in Fergana between Uzbek and Turk Meskhetian. They freed and instructed some prisoners and marked Meskhetian Turks' houses with crosses, so the prisoners could find the houses they should attack. A lot of people died and many were burnt in their houses with their whole family. After three days, the government sent troops to control the situation. That was the end of the "happy" life, and we moved to Russia, then, former Soviet Union Republic. At that point, people spread all over the Soviet Union, and some of them got lost from each other. Most us lost everything and had to start all over again. The Soviet Union was in a very difficult economic situation. There was not enough food for everybody, and in 1991, when the country broke apart, our problems started all over.

Russia became an independent country and pronounced itself legal successor of USSR. Also, Russia announced that everybody who lived in the country at that moment would get documents. In one of the states called Krasnodarskiy Kray, where human rights were greatly abused, we were supposed to get our papers. However the officials said that that law didn't apply to my ethnic group. We lived like that for fifteen years. My people tried to find jobs, but when the employer figured out their ethnicity, they stopped the hiring process.



Our leaders and organization for human rights were trying to make international societies to pay attention to the problem. Finally, our voice was heard by the international society, and the first country to help us was the USA. We prepared our documents and

moved to the U.S. It took us one year before we realized that we were really going to the USA, which was a dream for us. We have been here for ten years, and I am proud of my people who are striding with wide steps toward the future in a country where we have all the opportunities we wanted. The new generations have gone to colleges, have gotten jobs, and the freedom that had been missed for many years.

### **Delicious dishes from Meskhetian Turks cuisine**

In my culture, we have lots of dishes and almost all of them are made from dough. One of the most edible Turkish dishes is *kikil*. This dish made of a thin layer of dough, and fill with which made of ground beef or lamb, mixed with onions, pepper, and salt. When we open the dough to a thin layer, we put the filling in the middle and spread it around. We take all the edges and put them together to make a circle. *Kikil* can be cooked in the oven or fried in the pan. Another dish which we cook is *Shakaylama*. It starts with word *shakyar*, which means sugar in my language. They are very sweet cookies and we bake them on the special events. For example, we make *Shakaylama* when someone is getting engaged to wish a sweet life for new couples. It's made with butter, sugar, eggs, and flour. We just make circles snapped in half and bake. When the cookies are ready and cool, we put powdered sugar on top of them.



# DUOC HOANG NGUYEN

My name is **Duoc Hoang Nguyen**. I was born in Gia Kiem, a small town located in the Southeast Vietnam. I'm nineteen years old. I graduated from Thong Nhat B High School in 2013. After the very first semester at International University in Vietnam, I decided to study abroad and chose BHC as my new school. I love studying science, and I will try my best to get a Master's Degree in this field. I choose to live in Iowa because I love the cold winters. I hope to have a very memorable time in the U.S., especially about life style and holidays in the Quad-Cities.



## The Holidays in Vietnam

Holidays can show a lot about a country, and in Vietnam, my country, there are three holidays that reflect our cultural identity: Tet Holiday, Lim Festival, and Hung King's Temple, or also known as the Death Anniversary of the Hung Kings. These holidays contain a lot of special cultural activities, and the Vietnamese people merge with the spirit of the holidays.



First of all, the holidays in Vietnam have a lot of cultural activities. The days before holidays, people usually decorate the roads, or wherever the holidays are going to take place with colorful flags, flowers, and the special objects related to each celebration. For example, before Tet Holiday, which is the New Year holiday of Vietnam and mainly happening in the first three days of the lunar calendar, the Vietnamese clean their houses and decorate them with sunflowers, apricot blossoms, and some lucky distiches, which are written in black with the red background.

Next, most of the holidays begin with spiritual activities because each holiday is related to a specific event in history or a legend of Vietnam; for instance, considering Hung King's Temple Festival, which is held annually from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> days of the third lunar month to remember and honor the contribution of eighteen Hung Kings, at the beginning of this Festival, the first founders and also emperors of the country, the pilgrims go from the Lower Temple to Upper Temple on Nghia Linh mountain to worship Hung Kings with full rituals,



such as processions. “Banh chung” (square cake) and “Banh day” (circle cake) are served to remind people about Lang Lieu - the 18<sup>th</sup> Hung King, who invented these cakes. Similarly, in the very first moment of Tet holiday, people give thanks to God and pray for the brighter year to come. Considering Lim Festival, which takes place in Bac Ninh province, on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> days of the first month in lunar calendar, people start the festival with processions and worshipping rites to Ba Mu - a Buddhist nun who is believed to protect the village from severe disasters.



*“Bánh chung” and “Bánh dày”*

Following the spiritual activities, the holidays keep going with a series of special activities. Specifically, the Tet Holiday is a good time for family and relatives to get together. In this holiday, people exchange wishes with relatives and neighbours and share “Banh chung” and “Banh day” for a good friendship to develop. The children are happiest in this holiday because they have new clothes and receive “lucky money” from the adults, which is some money put in a red envelope because people believe that red color may bring good fortune. Although the holiday occurs mainly in the first three days of the New Year, the Vietnamese usually spend nearly a month relaxing and having parties after Tet.

Next, Hung King’s Temple and Lim Festival are very interesting because there are traditional songs in those events, and people really enjoy the folk competitions; “Xoan” songs and “Ca tru” are sung during the worshipping rites of Hung King, and “Quan ho” is performed in Lim Festival, whose purpose is to promote this kind of folk music. Fantasticly, “Xoan,” “Ca tru,” and “Quan ho” have been recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritages of the world by the UNESCO in 2009 and 2011. After the spiritual part, the people are involved in many folk activities such as chicken kicking , in which people let their chickens fight against other chickens in the uproarious atmosphere of surrounding people. Also, we have a



*Children from an ethnic group of Vietnam receive “lucky money” at school in tet holiday*



*“Quan ho singing”*

rice cooking contest; Vietnamese women are usually excited about this activity because this is their job, but in this contest, they are not allowed to use electricity- they have to create fire by burning the lumber and adjust it so that they can get the tastiest rice. Everyone looks tired and exhausted after those activities, but they all smile proudly and share the great feeling with others during those competitive events.

To sum up, these three holidays reflect the Vietnamese culture; they reflect the people's care in preparing for the holidays. Then, we have many traditional activities during these holidays, but the spiritual part always comes first, at the beginning of the event, which shows that we, the Vietnamese, always respect our ancestors, our guardians. These holidays also remind us of our responsibilities for this beautiful country: to protect and develop it as our ancestors did for us.

### **Ao Dai - The national costume of Vietnamese.**

Ao Dai (Áo Dài) was original from Vietnam and has become the national costume for Vietnamese women. It is a two piece garment with a top fitting full-length tunic; one piece is in the front, and the other is in the back; they are extended from above the waist to the bottom of each piece that makes movement easy and comfortable; it also has a high collar. In addition, Ao Dai is worn over loose trousers with a special turban or a conical hat which is made of palm leaves. The Vietnamese women wear Ao Dai on many special occasions, such as, weddings, Tet Holiday, beauty contests, etc., and the white ones are also the uniform of female-high school students. Moreover, the colors of Ao Dai are flexible and depend on the formality of the events that we wear it in; for example, those which are used for weddings are usually made of red and yellow silks because the Vietnamese people believe that those colors may bring good fortune. The Vietnamese men also have the costume named "Áo Gấm" or brocade robe in English, which is similar to Ao Dai, but it's made of thicker fabric.



*"Ao Dai" for students  
with conical hat*

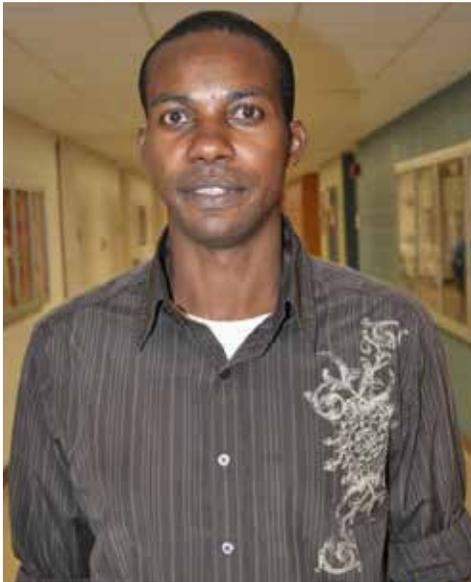


*"Ao Dai"  
at Miss Asia Pacific World*



*"Ao Dai" and "Ao Gam"  
for wedding*

# EMMANUEL HAKIZIMANA



My name is **Emmanuel Hakizimana**. I was born in the Country of Thousand Hills, which is in Rwanda. I am single. I have a mom, one brother and three sisters. I left my homeland in 1994 during the war, which many people and international communities called “genocide.” I have a Diploma in Business Administration. I have been living in this country since 2007. When I came to the United States, I lived in Chicago for four years. In 2010, I decided to move to the Quad Cities. I have been an American citizen since 2012. My career goal is to complete law courses and become a lawyer or judge someday.

## Ways of Celebrating Thanksgiving in Rwanda

People all over the world express their joy by celebrating Thanksgiving. However, the celebration of that ceremony is quite different from one country to another. Rwanda is one of those countries which celebrate the event of Thanksgiving. Every year, on August 1st, Rwandan people begin to celebrate. There are many methods Rwandans use to celebrate Thanksgiving, however, these three are the best: The president of Rwanda visits some villages, people invite their families to their homes, and neighbors invite each other to enjoy that event of Thanksgiving.

First of all, on August 1<sup>st</sup> of every year, the Rwandan president addresses a speech to the nation, and he visits some villages. The president sits with people, shares food, and talks about their traditional culture of Thanksgiving, which is called, “Umuganura.” The president smiles at the people and treats them like family. The president encourages the villages to keep cultivating their farms so that they can get a good harvest. People may give the president some gifts, or “Impano,” and these include various fruits, vegetables, corn, green beans, cows, goats, and chickens. “Impano” is a word from Rwanda’s native language, which means “gift.” The president may also give the people some staple food such as rice, flour, sugar, and salt. This close relationship between the president and people is the best time for people to request some help from the government. People may choose to ask for something for their community, such as schools, hospitals, road construction, etc.



Secondly, Thanksgiving, or “Umuganura,” is a big event where parents and children meet and share their joy. A child who is married invites his or her

parents, brothers and sisters to share “Umuganura.” The new family prepares a traditional drink and cooks food based on the harvest. While they are sharing that moment, the new family tells parents, brothers, and sisters that they are welcome to share and enjoy what that new family has for them. Umuganura Day in Rwanda is the time members of a family feel very close and enjoy their time together.

Finally, friends and neighbors invite each other to their homes in order to celebrate Thanksgiving. The Umuganura starts on August 1<sup>st</sup> and comes to an end in June of the next year. During this long period of time, every Rwandan has an opportunity to celebrate. Even though he may be a poor person, he can invite and enjoy with his friends according to his social class and capacity. During that celebration, everyone may spend all night drinking, talking, and dancing. This kind of sharing every year in Rwandan society encourages Rwandan people to work hard on farms, and it creates strong friendships between Rwandan communities.



They like to get a good harvest in order to share with friends. During this event, Rwandans don't share only food and drinks; indeed, it's also the best time for some people to give gifts, (Impano) to their best friends; for example, cows, farm (land), money, etc. When they give the gift of “Impano,” they give what they have because Rwandan people don't appreciate big gifts;

however, they appreciate the kindness of sharing and giving.

All in all, in traditional Rwandan culture, Rwandan people like to share what they have. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, the Rwandan president visits villages or small cities and farms to celebrate with people, and they enjoy celebrating together. Adults who are married invite their parents and all of the members of the family to celebrate the event of Umuganura. Because Thanksgiving in Rwanda takes a long period of time, it allows everyone in Rwanda to get an opportunity to invite and to celebrate with his or her neighbors and friends. Rwandan people like to share, to give what they have. Thanksgiving Day, or “Umuganura,” is a special event that all Rwandans celebrate.

### **Umuganda:**

The word, “*Umuganda*” can be translated as, “*Coming together in common to achieve an outcome.*” In traditional Rwandan culture, members of community would call upon their family, friends and neighbors to help them to complete a difficult task. In Rwanda, there is a mandatory community service day from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm on the last Saturday of each month called “*umuganda*” (community service). This day is designed to be a day of contribution and builds the country by the citizens themselves. According to the Rwanda's laws, everyone above the age of 18 and below 65 is expected to participate in volunteer community work. During *umuganda*, Rwandan people might build a road, build houses for vulnerable people, etc. After community service, people have a meeting and discuss national and local issues. The concept of *umuganda* in Rwanda is a day to join hands and help make Rwandan communities a better place for all.



# AMY NICOLE AGBOH

---

My name is **Amy Nicole Agboh**. I was born in Ivory Coast, but my parents are from Togo, which is a small country located in West Africa. I am married, and I have a lovely four-year-old daughter. I had two years of experience working as a midwife before moving to the United States. I arrived in the U.S. in October 2009 to pursue the American dream, and I hope I will get it.



## Young Initiation in North Togo



Although Togo is a small country located in West Africa, it has many ethnic groups, and each group shares unique and interesting aspects of its culture. Especially, people from north Togo, who are the Kabye, continue to share an old ceremony over generations. It is the ceremony to pass from childhood to adulthood called “akpena”, which means, “I am a virgin and able to get married” for girls, and “evala” plus “kondo”, which mean fight and adult for boys. The history of this ceremony goes back very long ago and has different sources. Indeed according to Kabye ancestors, the first Kabye who was descended from the sky fought with God Spirit before getting married because God wanted to test his ability to protect his family before giving him a wife. Therefore, he generated many children across the generations that have still kept the ceremony, so over generations, Kabye boys have fought and initiated to become adult, and girls have been submitted to a special ceremony before becoming adults and getting married. Also, other people referred that ceremony to the period of slave trade. Old people say in that period, boys were more trained to catch slaves from other societies, so they were trained to pass through the ceremony to fight and to become adult. Today even though Togo has been influenced by other societies, Kabye people have still shared that ceremony. Every year, young ladies from twenty to twenty two years old take part in the ceremony. The initiation starts on every first Saturday and lasts three days; then, it ends with a big party. In addition, tourists from around the world, people from other societies and great personalities like the Togolese president and ministers take place on the last day of the ceremony.



On Saturday at midnight when everyone is sleeping, girls from different villages are grouped together and walk naked in silence with one long stick and climb mountains until they reach the forest after one hour. In the forest, there is one

small room constructed with clay “where the old and traditional priest always stays wearing an animal skin, which covers his stomach to below his knees”, say the ancient in the community because after the ceremony no one would be able to see the priest again. In that small room, there is a mystic stone on which every girl in the ceremony has to sit to prove her virginity. In the forest, everything is so mystic that no lady can remember exactly what happened in the ceremony, but when someone fails on the passage of the stone, she knows, and she can't celebrate the party after the ceremony.

Next, in the forest, girls are not allowed to eat and drink until the ceremony ends; they sing traditional songs in the night, pass through their body some ceremonial herbs that could make them fertile because the priest gives them through the herbs the power to have many children. Also, through the initiation in the forest, girls receive the power of resistance and perseverance, which means when they become adult, they will not give up on anything. They have to be strong, support their husbands, and take care of their children. To prove their abilities, the priest organizes some fights between girls. Girls are chosen to fight two by two, and when someone fails, she is removed from the ceremony.



Midnight of the third day, girls stand in line in the front of the mystic room; then, the priest passes his hand on every girl's head, blesses every girl and says, “Young lady, if you are virgin, may God provide you a good husband and give you more children, but if you lie, you will bleed for three days,

and you will be the shame of your family. You will not have a good life like your peers who will successfully pass the ceremony. ” Then, every girl one by one enters in the room, makes three turns in the room, sits in the mystic stone and returns outside; all who are successfully approved in the passage of the stone walk together with their long sticks and return back to the community.

When approaching the villages at four or five o'clock in the morning, there is still one old woman on the peak of a mountain who makes a sound to announce their arrival to the community; she repeats many times, “Population, wake up, come and see our new ladies are coming; men come and choose your wife.” Therefore, everybody comes in the street to watch them. People make noise to welcome them; women are singing, crying and clapping their hands. Some married and old men beat on small drums, and other young men are looking to choose a wife by touching them on shoulder, but when a man touches a girl if she does not like a man, she could hit him with her long stick, so the long stick does not only help girls to climb mountains, but if the girl does not like the young man, she can hit him with the stick. All the rest of the day is a celebration. People cook and share foods from villages to villages, and at five o'clock in the evening there is a huge party for every community in the north. People from many parts come, dance and drink until late in the night.



To conclude, the ceremony to pass from childhood to adulthood in Togo started a very long time ago, and till today, it is still happening with very few changes despite all the changes in the Togolese society.

## **Fufu**

In Togo, there are different kind of foods. Even though some foods are specific to some ethnic groups, fufu is eaten in all ethnic groups, and it has a different meaning according to every ethnic group. In the southwest of Togo, fufu is very important; it is not part of our everyday meal; however, it is often cooked to celebrate joy, happiness and success. It is also cooked to welcome a guest or someone we haven't seen for many years. To prepare fufu in Togo, we must have good yams because not all yams are blended smoothly when pounded. Then, peel the yams, cut them coarsely and boil them until they are completely cooked. Finally pound them in a mortar. In a big family, fufu is pounded by two to four people. Fufu is not eaten alone; it is accompanied by tomatoes sauce, peanut sauce or palm nut sauce cooked with different meats such as goat, chicken and baked fish.



# GEORGE HTAIN

---



My name is **George Htain**. I was born in Karen State in Myanmar. With the dream of continuing studying, I moved to Thailand without my family when I was 16 years old. Since I couldn't find any schools to study, I chose to work for three years while I was looking for schools in Thailand. I stayed there for 10 years, and moved to the USA in 2011. Here, I have four family members: my wife and my two little boys.

## Burmese Calendar and Traditions

The majority of countries around the world, including the United States, use a twelve month calendar with each year beginning with the month of January, and ending with the month of December. Special days and festivities are marked on the calendars. The country of Myanmar, officially known as the Republic of the Union of Myanmar or Burma, is quite different from the United States in many ways, but specifically in the use of the calendar and how holidays and festivals are observed. Unlike the United States, Myanmar uses two different calendars and many of the holidays and festivals celebrated are directly related to the prominent religion in that region, Buddhism.

The first month of the Myanmar calendar begins in April and is called "**Tagu**" (April). The Burmese celebrate the Water Festival during this first month similar to the way

Americans celebrate New Year's Day. The Water Festival is a kind of blessing in the form of water which is thrown over friends, families, and even strangers.

During this festival, the young visit the elderly, and they give gifts and show respect to them. Pouring water in the New Year is symbolic of cleaning the bodies and minds of evil from the year left behind.

Following Tagu, is the month of "**Kason**" (May).

People in Burma celebrate the Kasone Festival, which is another water-related event. With the memories of

Buddha, people of all ages go to the pagodas and pour water on the root of the Bo Tree (Bodhi tree). People celebrate this festival because Buddha attained Enlightenment under a Bo Tree. In addition, people enjoy this festival because Buddha was born in this month, and this was the month of his demise. "**Nayon**" (June) is the month when all monks around Burma take examinations. If they are successful in their examinations, they receive popular approval from the government because of the outstanding and great efforts. Additionally, in the full moon day of "**Waso**" (July), Burmese go to the monasteries and donate food, robes,



and medicine to monks, nuns, and people who do errands for the monks and nuns. The young pick beautiful flowers from the forest, and they donate them to pagodas and monasteries once a week.

August is referred to as “**Wagaung**” on the Burmese calendar. This is the month when people in Burma celebrate the “Maha Dok” festival. The “Maha Dok” festival refers to a poor man who became a rich man within a night after his donation to a monk. People all around the country visit monasteries and donate a lot of different things to the monks. They also go to the poor and provide useful support and even money. The next month is “**Tawthalin**” (September) which is the sixth month of the Myanmar calendar. Boat racing is held in this month. Moreover, with the hope that any evil is leaving them, they float flowers, candles, money, and small amounts of food in the bodies of water. “**Thadingyui**” (October) is the month in which people around the country celebrate the Light Festival. One day before the full moon, on the full moon day, and one day after the full moon day, you will see the candle lights and electric lights all along the streets, paths, and roads, and in front of houses and monasteries. People enjoy eating along the roads because people who live beside or near the roads cook or make curry, noodles, cookies, etc. to donate to those who want to eat them. The young people go to their parents, teachers, and elderly and ask for forgiveness for anything harsh they have said, thought, or done in the previous year. The elderly, parents, and teachers also pray for the young people and provide them with gifts. The eighth month of Myanmar’s calendar is “**Tazaungmone**” (November). On the full moon day of this month, people all around the country celebrate the Robe Donation Festival. This festival is held in every village, town, and city. People will buy robes, or they will weave robes by themselves to donate to the monks. Holding or carrying the robes, people gather and circle the monastery three times while the Burmese traditional music and songs play. Some people will jump, scream, dance happily, and throw money while they are circling around the monastery. Some people pick up the money to take home. After circling the monastery three times, they will go inside and donate the robes to the monks.



Equivalent to December in America, “**Nadaw**” is the ninth month of Myanmar’s calendar. The Lecture Festival is held in this month. Famous writers, authors, poets, doctors, and other educated people gather together and go from village to village, town to town, and state to state to give lectures. The villagers prepare the place for lectures, cook food, and eat together in big groups. The lecture will be two to three days long. The lecturers will distribute free books to the people. This month helps literate and illiterate people increase their knowledge. “Pyatho” “**Pyartho**” (January) is the tenth month of Myanmar’s calendar. People in Burma hold horse races called the Royal Equestrian Festival. Every state has a big horse race. The successful candidates will earn memorable prizes from the state governors.. February, or “**Tabodwe**” on Myanmar’s calendar, is the month that people celebrate the Festival of Hta Ma Ne. This is a kind of traditional food made from sticky rice crushed in oil, ground nuts, sesame seeds, ginger, pepper, coconut slices, and sugar. Friends and families will come together and make this food. After the food is done, they give it to other neighbors, kids, and monks. With the belief that they will be healthy, they make this traditional food once a year and eat it this month. The last month of the Myanmar calendar is “**Taboung**” (March). During this month people all



over the country celebrate the Pagoda Festival. The Pagoda Festivals are held everywhere where there are pagodas. During this festival, after going to the pagodas, people shop, see puppet shows, watch magic shows, and join theaters.

The United States and Myanmar separate their calendars into twelve months, but there are several differences between these countries. The Burmese focus most of their festivals and holidays around Buddhist traditions. By involving children and adults alike, it's no wonder the Burmese traditions continue year after year. When the whole family is involved, everyone plays a part and is taught the purpose behind the festival.

### **KAREN CULTURE WRIST TYING CEREMONY**

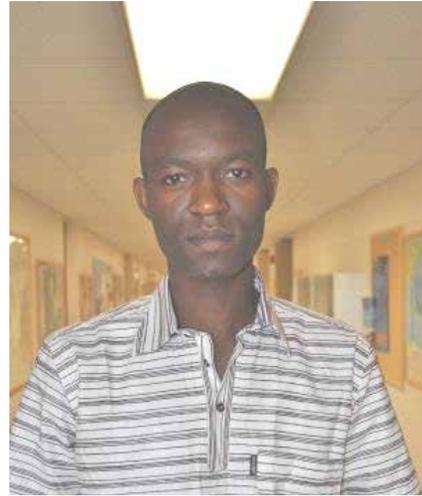
Karen Culture Wrist Tying Ceremony was held by Karen ancient ancestors before Buddhism or Christianity was introduced. With the hope to unite all the Karen people, we celebrate our Culture Wrist Tying Ceremony once a year. In this ceremony, all Karen people must wear full traditional costume. We invite seven couples to tie our wrist with white or red thread in this ceremony. Tying our wrists with thread symbolizes that we are a real Karen generation, and we value our culture provided by our great grandparents. A glass of cold water, white or red threads, seven rice balls, seven sticky rice balls, seven bananas, seven branches of flowers (**Paw Woung**), and seven pieces of sugarcane are required in this ceremony. Water means to recuperate peace of mind; threads represent to protect people from evil; rice balls stand for Karen people being united; sticky rice balls refer to solidarity of Karen people; bananas stand for good discipline and loyalty; seven (Paw Woung) branches of flowers symbolize our ability to inhabit and grow anywhere, and seven pieces of sugarcane correspond to the quality of good ethics, moral values, and racial progress.



**In a Karen Culture Wrist Tying Ceremony**

# KOMALAN NOVISSI GAVON

I'm **Komalan Novissi Gavon**, and I was born on October 12, 1982 in a small village called Amlame, located in the western part of Togo. I have been in the U.S. since November 2011. I'm the youngest among seven siblings. Since I have already completed my master's degree in geography with major in climatology, my ultimate goal is to complete my master's degree in GIS (Geography Information System) here in the U.S., and if possible to pursue a Ph.D. in Environmental Science.



## Naming in Ewe

Even though Togo is a small territory, it is a land of diversity in many ways. Besides its landscape, its cuisine, its culture, Togo has a wide variety of ethnic groups. Roughly, forty ethnic groups populate the country with the Ewe ethnic group included. Who are the Ewe and what should we know about naming related traditions?

From historical sources, the Ewe people came from Babylonia. Before settling in an area today extending over three countries namely Ghana, Togo, and Benin, the ancient Ewe had gone through many settlements. Chronologically, they settled in Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia from AD 500 to 1200, the Kingdom of Tado, and the city state of Agokoli in the seventeenth century, where they got scattered all over the places where they live today. In general, Ewe people have many things in common, especially the naming tradition.

The naming ceremony among the Ewe people is known as "Vihehedego". The



Location of EWE Speaking People

[Back to Ewe History](#)

ceremony is performed on the 7<sup>th</sup> day after the child's birth. The child can go out only on the 7<sup>th</sup> day after his birth. For the ceremony, an adult person of good moral standard is chosen to perform the rites. Libation is offered while the child's name is being mentioned simultaneously. Water is sprinkled on the

named child while he is carried by a family member or a friend.

The ceremony ends with a party, in which family members and friends enjoy themselves and offer gifts to the newborn baby parents. On the naming ceremony day, the newborn Ewe the newborn also gets his name, but newborn Ewe boys are also circumcised, and the newborn Ewe girls have their ears pierced. In general, the Ewe tradition on naming has been kept, and there are some unusual ways to get names, which include day related names, order of birth related names, circumstances of birth related names, and twins' names.

In Ewe culture, newborns, either female or male babies, have special and specific



Baby in the middle of his naming ceremony.

names that represent their day of birth. Those names can be either first or middle names. For instance, a girl born on Monday is named "Adjo", and a male born on that same day of Monday is called "Kodjo."

It is not mandatory to give a newborn one of these names; it is just an option among others. In case parents name their children with day related names, and it happens that two children bear the same name, to distinguish them, the suffix "gan" that means big is added to the elder child's name and the suffix "vi" which means little is added to the younger child's

name.

The order of birth also determines names in Ewe culture. Indeed, traditionally, if the first

born among siblings is a girl, she is called "Ahoefa" or "Emefa" which means "the house is peaceful". This is not applicable to boys. The baby born right after twins is called "Edoh" for a boy and "Dovi or Dado" for a girl. In case the same gender siblings are born consecutively, the third, fourth, and fifth have specific names. In fact, in a family of five same gender siblings, the first and second children can have any name, but there are specific names for the third, fourth, and fifth children according to Ewe people culture.



Family member carrying the newborn after the namina ceremony.

Some names in Ewe culture are linked to the birth circumstances. For instance, some babies are born with their legs crossed; in that case the boy should be called "Agossou" and the girl "Agossi". Also, some circumstance related names are created by parents to remember the events that happened during their child's birth or to express their happiness or their gratitude to God.

Moreover, twins in Ewe tradition have specific names. Those names vary according to the children's gender.

Ewe culture has a lot to share with other cultures in naming area even though today those names seem obsolete for some people. These names normally should be the Ewe people's identity and the way through which they should be recognized. Unfortunately, those traditional names are being neglected to the benefit of foreign names. If nothing is done, in a near future no one will bear Ewe traditional names.

### **Agbogbozan, Ewe people's traditional festival**

Agbogbozan is an Ewe community traditional festivity celebrated yearly. It commemorates the Ewe people's exodus in the seventeenth century and is celebrated the first week of September from Thursday through Saturday in Notse, the current town where the former Ewe exodus took place. During this festivity, coming from diverse horizons (Ghana, Togo, and Benin), the Ewe people get together to exhibit their cultural riches and sleep on ways and means to strengthen their community. During Agbogbozan celebrations, Ewe people rejoice with dances such as "agbadja," "atrikpoe," and "bobobo."

# NGIRIRUBURUNDI JOSEPH

---



I'm **Ngiriruburundi Joseph**. I'm thirty-nine years old, and I'm from Burundi. I'm married, and I have seven children. I have been attending Black Hawk College since 2011, and I am planning to choose my career after ESL graduation. My dream is to finish my studies and have a good job, which will allow me to take good care of my family.

## Music and Musical Instruments of Burundi

When I was a little boy, I went to a party with my mom and everyone had a glass of beer.

They were dancing and singing their traditional songs. Also, they were drinking their traditional beers that are called "Urwagwa and Ikigage". The beer that is called urwagwa was made with bananas, but the beer that is called ikigage was made with sorghum. They were so happy and hugging each other while they were singing those traditional songs, which were of three different types: gospel music, wedding music and proverbs.



Now, in Burundi, 85% of the people are Christians, and they enjoy singing gospel songs. Christians in Burundi worship and praise God in different churches. For example, those churches are Pentecostal, Anglican, Methodist, and Catholic. In Burundi, the remaining percentage consists of Seventh Day Adventists, and Muslims, who worship on Friday. Five Percent of Burundians do not belong to a specific religion.

When people are worshiping and praising God, they clap their hands and dance along with so much joy. Sometimes, they use guitars and other traditional instruments, such as drums and "Inanga". Inanga is the instrument that is made of wood. It also has strings on the top of it. If they do not have any of those instruments, they just clap their hands.

In Burundi, there are special wedding songs that are called "imvyino". Burundians dance their traditional dances to this music. Those songs are used when the groom is going to present the dowry to his father-in-law or when the bride is going to hug the groom for the first time. Those songs are also used when the bride and groom are being accompanied to church celebration. When the celebration is done, the songs called "imvyino" accompanied by the drums are the first used in a Burundian wedding party, and the visitors are usually dancing to songs played by the drums. In a wedding party, the relatives of the bride and groom are always sitting in special seats so



that the visitors can easily recognize them.

Finally, in Burundi, the old people teach their children the proverbs so that they can remember the history of the country. They usually teach them those proverbs with songs that are called riddles. These are some examples of those proverbs: A fence does not enter another; you do not look upwards at a tree that you know you are not supposed to climb; a woman does not sit on her toes unless she wants to develop two careers; a tree is straightened while it is still young; a bird cannot know where the sorghum is ready to eat unless it flies; he who is not careful gets contaminated; you do not tie your goat to a bad goat; when you stay with a careless person, you will end up careless just like him/her; the night does not last until the good season. Like I said before, these proverbs are accompanied with songs that are called riddles.

To sum up, the Burundians sing their songs of three different types: gospel, wedding and proverbs.

### **Burundian Dowry Party & Wedding.**

The dowry ceremony itself is a largely symbolic pageant stemming from old customs in Burundi. Representatives of the two families negotiate back and forth over the marriage arrangements. This can be very funny. The ceremony ends with a parade of party girls pretending to be the bride. In the dowry ceremony, the groom presents a dowry to his bride's family. It should be money or a cow. In Burundian culture, people use a cow instead of money. A cow is very well respected in Burundi because it gives money, milk, meat and a bride. In the dowry ceremony, people drink wine that is made out of bananas (Urwagwa) and (Ikigage) made in sorgham. They also cook different kinds of food such as rice, green bananas, and potatoes and so much more. Furthermore during the ceremony, people dance to different songs and these songs will be accompanied by drums. When the dowry is accepted with the bride's family, the groom picks his bride out of a group of so many different young ladies that have prepared with the bride's family. After that, the bride and groom get to sit together. The next step is a wedding party, but there isn't a dowry given at the wedding since it was given during the dowry ceremony to the bride's family.

# VALDETE NEZIRI

I'm **Valdete Neziri** from Macedonia, Southeast Europe. My nationality is Albanian. I was born on June 1993. I am the first child in my family. Generally, I had smooth childhood because each family member treated me in a special way, and they have tried to make my life perfect. I studied for Business Administration for two years and Computer Science for one year at State University of Tetova. Afterwards, I came to the United States on October 2013, and now I'm dedicated to finish my education here in the USA.



## History of Albania and Its People

Have you ever heard about Albania? Albania is a country in Southeast Europe with area of 11,100 square miles and population of approximately 3.6 million people. There are around 8 million Albanians living around the world as well.



Albanians call themselves as sons of the eagles, and many studies shows that their origin comes from the Illyrians. Early records of Illyria were found in the 4th century BC. They were as sociable and hospitable people as Albanians today. Now one of the largest cities in Albania, Shkodra was the capital of Illyria. Illyrian territories were coveted by its neighbors and have become a cause of war. Illyrians were occupied by Roman Empire, and the endeavors for freedom continued until the formation of Arberia in north of Albania. Afterwards, in the Middle Ages the region that is now Albania became part of the Byzantine Empire. After the Principality of Arber fell, in its territories was created the Kingdom of Albania. Then, it was occupied by the Ottoman Empire, and the Albanian Principalities were united in a confederation on 1444 led by

George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. The modern Republic became independent after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Albania declared independence in 1912, but the drawing of the borders of Albania ignored the demographic realities.

Albanian is the official language of Albania. Its standard spoken and written form is revised and merged from the two main dialects, Gheg and Tosk. Albanian presents its own branch of the Indo-European language family, and it is one of Europe's oldest languages.

Today around 3.5 million Albanians of Republic of Albania are just the center piece of the mosaic of 8 million Albanians living around the world. In other words, there are as many Albanians living outside of Albania's borders as there are inside of it, making Albania a country completely surrounded by itself. More than in any other country, communities have different religious beliefs, and they have lived in unique harmony in Albania.

Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbe and Mother Teresa are people who have influenced Albania the most. They lived in different periods, and they have done different works. They are very close to each other through their message of what Albania was and what it should be.

Gjergj Kastrioti united Albanians to resist the Ottoman Empire. He was born in 1405 in Albania, but the Ottoman Empire took him hostage to serve them for twenty years. In 1443, he deserted the Ottomans and became the headman of a city in Albania. Then, he



fought against the Ottomans. Skanderbeg's skills presented a major obstacle to Ottomans, and he was considered by many people to be a model of resistance. Skanderbeg is Albanians' most important national hero and a key figure of the Albanian National Awakening. After his death, many authors wrote different books about him, and there are many monuments in Albania and outside of it as in Kosovo, Macedonia, Italy, London and the United

States. This statue in the picture is in Rochester Hills, Michigan. Furthermore, another interesting fact to mention is his weapons. Currently, Skanderbeg's helmet and sword are on display in the Collection of Arms and Armour at the Neue Burg in Vienna, Italy. His prayer book is archived at the Shelley Publishing House in Chelsea, London as well.



Mother Teresa is known as a woman of faith and charity. Her real name is Anjeze Gonxhe Bojaxhiu; it is an Albanian name. She was born in Skopje, Macedonia. When she was eight years old, her father died, so she became really close to her mother. When Mother Teresa was 18 years old, she decided to become a nun, and she went in Ireland to join the Loreto Sisters of Dublin. Furthermore, in 1950, in Calcutta, she established a congregation of the Missionaries of Charity, which spread to many countries worldwide such as Jordan, England and the United States. Through her life, Mother Teresa received many international honors and prizes. For her work among the poor, Mother Teresa won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1979 as well. She died on September 5, 1997.



"Every time you smile at someone it is an action of love; a gift to that person; a beautiful thing."

"Peace begins with a smile."

— Mother Teresa

To conclude, Albania is a small and generous country with important people as Skanderbeg and Mother Teresa with whom every Albanian is feeling proud.

**Albanian Flag** is red with a black double-headed eagle in the center. Albania means "Land of Eagles." The first recorded use of the two-headed eagle was the Roman emperors with Illyrian origin, and after that it was used by many Albanian princes. Afterwards, the emblem of Kastriot's family is the one that Skanderbeg used to declare the independence of Albania in 1443.

The Albanian two-headed eagle depicts the people of Albania, who call themselves as sons of eagle. The eagle symbolizes power, courage and freedom. The red color stands for bravery, strength and valor, and the black color stands for the determination to defeat the enemies.



# SANGHO YOO

My name is **Sangho Yoo**, and I'm from South Korea, which is located in East Asia. I've been living in the U.S. for almost one year. Before coming here, I served in the military in Korea, and I had worked for almost ten months in Australia. Since I came here, I have been taking classes in the ESL Program at Black Hawk College to improve my English. I'm really pleased that I can study English in America. After finishing the ESL Program, I will transfer to Palmer College of Chiropractic as soon as possible. I hope that I become a chiropractor.



## Consuming Rather Than Saving

Do you know how many saving accounts South Korean people have? Unlike the young generation, middle-aged people have over 5 saving accounts on average; they take it for granted that they have lots of saving accounts. There are many reasons why middle-aged people have lots of saving accounts, and the most common reason is that they save their money for their old age. They open installment savings accounts, and they control their consumption clearly. They believe that it is desirable that they save their money for their old age; they try to attract the young generation to their money for their old age, as well. It, of course, is true that the young generation must respect middle-aged people's experiences and wisdom about life, but I'd like to criticize it. It is not advisable that middle-aged people make the young generation, which has an infinite amount of potential for development, save their money. The young generation needs to show their potential to themselves, not saving their money but consuming their money.



First of all, the young generation can have more time for self-improvement by consuming their money. In other words, they don't save their money and then they consume their money, which results in creating invisible value. For example, buying clothes people like is not considered a waste of money or extravagance, but it might be considered an action that helps people show off their beauty. It serves to increase their value through consuming money. People invest in themselves so that they make themselves more attractive. If people invest their money in themselves, it must be an investment of tremendous income. If you want to be a literary giant, you should buy books and then read them. If you want to be an acknowledged career woman, you should go abroad to learn English. This time era when people need to be self-effacing, consumption for self-improvement needs to be encouraged more than saving money. People don't need to save their money that helps their potential to develop.

In addition to self-improvement, the young generation can know the importance of consumption. Physiologically, humans have optimal conditions for acquiring new technology and knowledge during the young generation because human's brain cells are amazingly active. The young generation has more creativity and adaptability than other generations, so

the young generation learns knowledge and achieves excellence themselves. For that, the young generation's consumption for learning is an appropriate action. Are you going to spend your money that you consume for learning now or when you are in your old



age? Everything has an appropriate time to put an idea in to practice, and it's time for the young generation to learn. The young generation shouldn't save their money, but they should spend it building up important skills and knowledge that might help them solve difficult situations in life later.

Some people in Korea say that saving their money for their future is the way for themselves. It is hard for us to predict the future. Some people insist that people need to prepare for the future thoroughly through saving money, which results in the way to preserving a stable life; however, it is a paradox in another way. There are the ways to fulfill the purpose of preparing the future risk not only saving money but also consuming money. People can go through difficult times if they have lots of knowledge and ability. People do not overcome difficult times by using a material value, but they overcome difficult times by using their values and lots of knowledge. This is the sincere way to prepare for the future.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a time when one promotes oneself. Now, judging a person by their potential, ability, and confidence more than money has become more important. In Korea, for example, only a few years ago, Korean people believed that men or women who had lots of saving accounts became the groom or the bride who were the most preferred by Korean parents; in contrast, now, men or women who are intelligent and versatile have become the first class groom or the first class bride. People should build up lots of knowledge through consuming money.

The unique item from South Korea is the Red Devil, which is the official fan club of South Korea's national soccer team. During the 2002 World Cup, millions of Koreans wearing Red Devil T-shirts came out of their homes to cheer the national soccer team collectively on the street. First of all, the 2002 World Cup is one of events that the Red Devil represents. For example, during the 2002 World Cup, about 22 million people came out on the streets of Seoul and other cities to cheer passionately. The world media were surprised by Korean's passion. In addition, the world was watching the red wave of an orderly gathering of Korean people. Finally, nationalism is another aspect that the Red Devil represents. In other words, the Red Devil made Korean people renew their national confidence and pride. Regardless of people's age, gender, and background, they spontaneously organized themselves, which resulted in rediscovering their national identity.



# LATIFA KAROUMIA

---



I'm **Latifa**. I'm originally from Morocco. I was born and raised in Casablanca. My family consists of three sisters, three brothers, and my beautiful mom. I have two brothers who live in the U.S.; the others are in Casablanca. In 1983, I got my high school diploma. Then I went to college. I studied mathematics, physics, and chemical engineering. I didn't finish college because I preferred working. I got a job at the bank as a bank teller. I worked at the bank for four years. Then I got a technician job at a different company, which was similar to Mid-American Energy Company. In 1997, I moved to the U.S. with my husband. I lived in New York for eleven years. In 2008, I came to the Quad Cities Moline because my two brothers like it better here.

## Imilchil: Wedding Festival in Morocco

Imilchil festival is a very important festival in Morocco. Imilchil represents a symbol of Moroccan Berber (Tribes speak Berber language) culture. It's a wedding festival which is related to a love story between two lovers who were from different tribes in Imilchil town.

Imilchil is a small town in central Morocco, in the Atlas Mountains with a population of about 1885. It's located at an elevation of about of 2119 m in the valley of White River. It's a center of Moroccan Berber culture. It's warm from May to October. It has a nice view and beautiful weather. However, Imilchil Wedding Festival is related to a love story between two lovers who are Isli and Tislit. This love story is similar to the love story Romeo and Juliet.

Tislit Means (Bride) in Berber language and Isli mean in Berber language (Groom) from their names, we can understand that they had a love story. The two lovers were living in two neighbor's tribes in Imilchil that had problems. Therefore, they were enemies. Isli and Tislit really loved each other from the deep of their hearts, but unfortunately they couldn't be together as their parents didn't accept.

They couldn't obtain the consent of their parents, so they began to cry until death. Also, they formed two lakes of tears named Isli and Tislit near Imilchil town. Now people of Imilchil celebrate the Wedding Festival related to this legend, and some people say that they hear sounds coming at night from the lakes saying "Tislit...Tislit?? Tislit Tislit.... I'm here." On the other hand, parents of different tribes decide to give their children freedom to choose their spouse.



Moroccans celebrate the Weeding Festival in mid- September of each year. However, the Festival is considered a meeting place where young people can find their own partner because young girls and boys came from many different villages to look for a perfect spouse. Parents typically accompany young women and assist them in finding suitable partners; however, older people could choose their own partner without the need to gain parental consents. In addition, the engagement party at Imilchil is one of the largest attractions of the Festival, where the subject is, of course, love. The Festival has a lot of cultural significance,

and gives an opportunity to ensure the survival of the old traditional marriage story and share it with a worldwide audience. During the festival, couples dance, sing, buy gifts for each other and enjoy a good time. On the other hand, the engagement ceremony is a critical element of the Festival. Most couples only sign marriage contracts and save the big ceremony until all family members and friends are together on a special Moroccan wedding day.



In addition, economically, the festival generates important commercial revenue for Imilchil, and it's important for Moroccan tourism, as the festival attracts an influx of domestic and foreign tourists. The number of the visitors expected during the Festival will be in excess of 30,000. People spend a lot of money for buying food, which is homemade and traditional, for example, Moroccan Tagine. They prefer to buy traditional clothes, which are designed in Moroccan Berber style.

In conclusion, Imilchil Marriage Festival is a wedding festival, which came from Moroccan Berber culture, related to a love story between two lovers. It is the most important festival in Morocco because young girls and boys come from different villages to meet each other and get engaged. The marriage festival increases the Moroccan economy because tourists come from all over the world to visit the Festival.

### **Moroccan Tagine**

A tagine is a historically Berber dish from North Africa that is named after the type of earthenware pot in which it is cooked. The traditional tagine pot is formed entirely of natural clay, which is sometimes painted or glazed. It consists of two parts, a base unit that is flat and circular with low sides and a large cone or dome-shaped cover that sits on the base during cooking. Tagine is cooked over hot charcoal, leaving an adequate space between the coals and the tagine pot to avoid having the temperature rise too fast. I'm going to give you the recipe of Moroccan Beef Meatball Tagine.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds ground beef (20% fat)
- 1/3 cup coarsely grated onion
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 large egg beaten to blend
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger



# AMIN RAHHAL

My name is **Amin Rahhal**. I'm from Jordan, in the heart of the Middle East. I'm 34 years old, married, and I have one son. I was born in Lebanon, and I have lived in many places and countries, so I have been introduced to many people and cultures, which allowed me to have a lot of friends around the world. I arrived in the U.S.A four months ago. I spent three months in Memphis, Tennessee. Now I am getting closer to the end of the first month in Moline, Illinois. I've worked in several positions in several places, but I decided to pursue my childhood dream: to be an animal scientist.



## Education: A Study in Contrasts

Throughout my childhood, I hated school for many reasons. My school felt like a prison. It had two faded, maroon, flat buildings that had unpainted, peeling doors, cracked floor tiles, unpaved empty spaces between the buildings, and unusable bathrooms that were only occupied as places for smoking.

Our soccer field, which was barely a field at all, was basically a hill of soil that held nothing but big, heavy stones. The two soccer goals were placed at completely different elevations so that we were either rolling down or dragging ourselves up the hill. Not even trees had a chance of survival. Teachers were unhappy with their jobs as teachers; we could feel the depression coming out of the pores of their faces. They loved to punish their students, as beating was allowed and used at that period of time. We could hear them in the teachers' room, sipping tea and showing off their new, inventive, creative torture devices and methods. "An olive branch," one of them said to the other, "works even better than your pomegranate branch. Olive branches are more fixable, which allows you to use them as whips, too," he laughed as he finished his



clarification. Sometimes, the teachers would even lift students by their sideburns, thinking that nothing ever instills discipline, except pain.

In classes, it was hard for me to understand what teachers were talking about. Once, I asked the math teacher to explain a difficult equation. All he did was to call me an idiot for asking, without even answering the question. That was our daily routine in most classes. This caused me not to even bother asking questions even though I knew that I was a smart, bright boy. At that point, I started hating the educational system, and thinking about the point

of being a student. After all, most of my teachers were struggling with other jobs that did not even require a degree, like selling potatoes or tomatoes on the streets.

These childhood memories greatly affected my future. They led me to pursue a degree in the United States at the age of thirty four, instead of pursuing that degree fifteen years before. However, coming to the USA caused a huge shift in my view on education. I never thought I would enjoy studying as much as I do now.

I discovered that learning here is not about memorization. It is about finding what interests you the most. Subjects are not merely factual; they're also very interesting, making knowledge more exciting. Class discussions are a daily occurrence, and every individual's opinion is valued and respected. Teachers and professors try their very best to answer students' questions to the best of their abilities.

Also, students and teachers get to bond and know each other through extracurricular activities and gatherings off-campus. School does not always have to be serious and strict; it can also be fun and memorable, too. We all get to understand others' points of view depending on cultural differences and unique personalities, and we learn to appreciate the company of others.

Furthermore, everyone works hard to improve and enhance the learning environment. School buildings always look clean and presentable, and all facilities are suited for the needs of students, teachers, and staff. Everyone is eager and happy to work and do the best they can, and the surroundings only add to these emotions.

I always seem to come across differences between educational systems in the USA and systems from other parts of the world. Some of them are barely noticeable, but some of them are as evident and obvious as the sky. No wonder so many people migrate to the U.S for educational purposes. There will forever be more things to know and more amazing people to help you to know them, and here is the best place to start.



The **rebaba** is a type of a bowed-string instrument whose roots date back to the 8th century. Rababa often has a spike at the bottom to rest on the ground. The rababa is quite similar to the Byzantine lyre. Rababa comes with different shapes and sizes based on areas used in. It usually consists of a small, rounded body, the front of which is covered in a sheepskin and has a long neck attached. There is a long thin neck with a pegbox at the end, and there are one, two or three strings. The instrument is held upright, either resting on the lap or on the floor. The bow is usually more curved than that of the violin. The rebaba is valued for its voice-like tone, and was gradually replaced throughout much of the Arab world by the violin and kamancheh which have four strings. A lot of people are in love with this instrument for its magical, sweet, bright, and emotional sound.



# MARY EUGENIA MORA

---



My name is **Mary Eugenia Mora**. I am from Venezuela, and I am 33 years old. I have a degree as an industrial engineer in my country and a MBA at the same university, Andres Bello Catholic University. As professional goals, I am already used to working with different cultures in overseas companies, and now I would like to globalize my skills to be able to work in any country. In that sense, I would like to get proficiency in English through the ESL Program, take an International Global MBA in an American university or in the best university of Spain and get a job as an engineer out of Venezuela in order to get international experience.

## My Experience with Dictatorship

I was born in Venezuela, and I lived there until June 3, 2013. For 15 years, I experienced how people live under Communism that turned into dictatorship, so I experienced huge scarcities, economic problems and lack of personal freedom.



### **Scarcities:**

The government made political decisions that caused the scarcity of goods and services that are necessary to survive. For instance, even having money, people couldn't easily buy diapers, milk for babies and adults, eggs, soap, meat, all kinds of flour, oil and gas for cooking, or medicine because there were not enough goods for the population. When people found what they needed, they had to spend hours in long lines to pay because everybody was at the same place at the same time. Furthermore, since 2010, we have experienced massive electric interruptions regularly, which is hard because Venezuela is a dangerous country. Using weapons, thieves got into my house two times because they took advantage of the darkness, and my family could have been killed. Moreover, the traffic lights didn't work during electric interruptions, and that is really terrible in Caracas, which is a busy city. For example, I could spend almost two hours getting to my house because of the electric interruptions. Additionally, the water supply was interrupted regularly, so I had to save water in containers every day to be able to cook or take a bath. Because of the interruptions in the water supply in the building where I lived, I had to pay expensive bills two times in order to have the electric pump repaired. The scarcity affects every social class in Venezuela.

### **Economic problems:**

The Venezuelan economy has been totally broken, so it has resulted in unemployment, poverty, and inflation. Besides unemployment, because the Venezuelan



government broke the private industry and the public companies are extremely inefficient, there are not enough jobs for the number of young people. That fact has caused a massive emigration of young people who are searching for a better future. It can take one or two years to get a job after graduating from the university. I can take my own experience as example. Although I really liked my job, the salary was not fair, and it was really difficult to find another good job. Another example regarding the economic problem is the poverty. I estimate that approximately 80% of professionals in Venezuela don't earn more than \$1,000 monthly, but the living costs are the same as in developed countries. Additionally, I experienced the effect of the high level of inflation, which means the general price level of goods and services increased to unaffordable levels. For the last fourteen years, the rate of inflation has been 35% every year, but the government reported an inflation of 56% in 2013. Based on the results of the first semester of 2014, there are data that project an accumulated inflation of 60% at the end of 2014.



**No freedom:**

I experienced the scary sensation of losing my freedom. Regarding personal security, I had to carefully choose my environment. I could be murdered by the police or army if I protested on the streets while asking for my civil rights. I could be murdered by a thief if they kidnapped me, and everybody could be victim of kidnapping. Also, I could be murdered by thieves if I resisted a robbery. Regarding private property, the government could take my properties away, so I was not free to invest my money in what I desired. The government has taken houses, apartments, buildings, lands and factories by force. In my personal case, the government took my first apartment away for years, and they took the company where I used to work by force. Regarding the media, the government closed TV channels, newspapers and radio stations because they were questioning the government actions, which represented a threat for the government. Consequently, it was a challenge to be informed with the truth because the few TV channels that were still working belonged to the government, so I was not free because I couldn't know what was really happening in my country.

In conclusion, living in dictatorship is a nightmare. My personal purpose with this article is to inform about the reality behind "communism", in order to warn the readers; just in case some politicians try to change people's mind to get their votes for communism. Always remember that when a "communist" gets the power, he or she forgets about the theory of equality of communism; it has happened in several countries in different eras. Don't believe in communism.



**The Harina Pan is the first brand of boiled corn flour in Venezuela.**

The Pan flour represents Venezuela because we eat it every day in our breakfast or dinner through the arepa, also because we used that flour to prepare the hallaca which is the principal dish in the most important holy days. Venezuelan people eat arepas almost every day for breakfast or dinner. An arepa is kind of rounded flat bread that can be grilled, baked or fried. We typically fill it with one of the following fillings: shredded meat, scrambled eggs with tomatoes and onions, a special salad called "reina pepiada," or our special Venezuelan cheeses. Arepas reflect the Venezuelan culture because it can be filled with what people desire, so immigrants could eat it with recipes from their cultures that can be used for filling. We are a country of immigrants; consequently, it made us open to people in the same way in which an arepa can be filled with all kinds of filling.

# HTOO EH

---

My name is **Htoo Eh**. I'm originally from Burma. Unfortunately, I had been a refugee in Thailand for ten years before I resettled in the United States of America. I have three children: two boys and a girl. My family and I came to the U.S.A. in 2010. Since I relocated to the U.S. A., my life has significantly changed in several ways. For example, when I was in the refugee camp, I had to rely on external supports in order to live, but now I have a job to stand on my own feet. Again, I used to be enclosed in the refugee camp, and I was isolated from the world, but now I am able to explore the world. Additionally, I'm glad to live in the U.S. A. because I am able to work and study. I'm looking forward to studying computers when I finish the ESL program.



## **My Trip to Thailand with New Identification**

It was about noon, and it was a very hot day. Excited, I boarded Delta Flight 3939 on June 11, 2014. The flight took off at maximum speed, but for me, it was too slow. I couldn't wait to see my mother, my siblings, and my friends whom I missed. At the same time, I was sad because I would not be able to see my dad; he had passed away two years ago. It had been a decade since the last time I saw my family. I had dreamed about flying home many times since I came to the U.S.A. Finally, my dream was coming true, and my trip to Thailand turned out to be an amazing trip because traveling overseas, exploring the country where I had once been a refugee, and visiting family members and friends made this an incredible experience.



To begin, my trip to Thailand was a remarkable experience because it was my first time traveling abroad as an American tourist. I realized that knowing the English language made my trip a lot easier because even though I was not able to speak Japanese, I was able to communicate with others when I had a layover for two hours at the Narita International Airport in Tokyo. However, my trip to Thailand was challenging. I regretted that although I had been in Thailand for many years before, but I could not speak the Thai language. When I returned to Thailand, I was a complete foreigner. Not knowing the language, I had to be afraid of being robbed by taxi drivers. In Thailand, foreigners, especially returning refugees like me, are targeted. Moreover, at that time, there was a military coup in Thailand. The biggest involvement of the coup was the nationwide curfew. The curfew was in effect from 10 p.m.-5 a.m. It made it more difficult for my friend to pick me up at the airport and to travel at

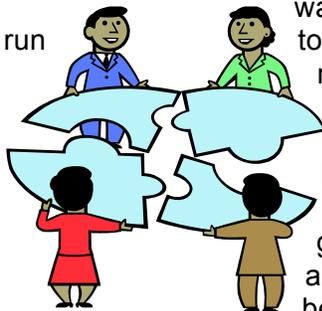
night. However, she made it there when I arrived. I landed in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, at about midnight.

Secondly, my trip to Thailand made me feel special because I had an opportunity to explore the country where I used to live, but didn't have a chance to travel around very much. I had been a refugee in Thailand and not allowed to travel outside of the refugee camp unless I got permission to travel from one camp to another. If I went outside the refugee camp without permission from Thai authorities, I could have faced deportation. However, when I returned to Thailand as an American tourist, I became a different person because I had more freedom, and I didn't have to be afraid of imprisonment or deportation. For example, from Bangkok to the refugee camp, there were several police and military checkpoints where everybody was examined. I saw some people get hauled in by police even though they had passports. I noticed that police were nice to me when they saw I was a resident of the United States of America. Since I was an American visitor, I was able to travel without fear of being arrested. Moreover, although it was a military coup, I was never questioned; instead, I was allowed to get a picture taken with a Thai soldier. Honestly, I learned many things when I visited amazing places in Thailand, but one place that surprised me the most was Free Island, which is situated between Thailand and Burma. I was not brave enough to enter the Island, but I could view it when I stood up at the border of Thailand and Burma. Cobra, my friend, told me that people who live there do illegal businesses. They sell opium, cocaine, and amphetamines, and some girls even prostitute themselves. Neither the Thai nor the Burmese authority takes action about this matter. I saw Thai soldiers guarding the border carrying M-16 rifles. Cobra said they were there to prevent the import of illegal products to Thailand.

Finally, my trip to Thailand filled me with happiness. I had anticipated it for several years. The first priority for this trip was to see my mother and my siblings. My mother was not very well, and she wanted to see me; therefore, I made a tough decision to return home. When I arrived home, I saw my mother

run waiting at the porch, and I was thrilled and felt tears when I saw her to me and give me a big, strong hug. I had millions of words to say in my mind, but I couldn't even say one word. After a while, the only words I could say were that I missed her, and then I saw the tears fall down her face. We both cried, but it was not a sad cry; it was a happy cry. I looked up at the wall, and there was a picture of my father looking at me with a smiling face. I silently asked myself how great it would be if he still lived. Afterward, when the news of my arrival spread throughout the village, people came to me, and I became a very special person. At the same time, I was busy answering hundreds of questions that people asked about the U.S.A. Some people gently rubbed my arm, and they said I looked awesome. They wondered why I was so fat because people from my village are usually skinny. However, returning home, I was still very happy; it was the happiest moment of my life.

In conclusion, I am not sure when I will be able to afford a trip home again because traveling abroad involves a lot of effort, money, and time. My journey to Thailand had a huge impact on me. It was an amazing trip. I have gained a great deal of knowledge about international traveling. Moreover, I have learned a lot about Thailand when I did not know much before. Furthermore, the most significant result of this trip was that I had a chance to



visit my mother, sibling, and friends. Therefore, my trip to Thailand was the most noteworthy of all the trips I have had in my life.

**Thanaka: the Burmese Traditional Beauty Staple**

Thanaka is the Burmese traditional beauty staple that has been popular in Myanmar for over 2,000 years. Thanaka is made of the bark or the root of the tree called “Tha-na-ka”. It was a beauty staple for queens and princesses during the Burmese Kingdom. However, it is widely used in Myanmar because people in Myanmar believe this traditional cosmetic product has beneficial qualities that naturally protect, heal, soften, and smooth the skin. It also contains antioxidants and natural ingredients that tighten pores, cool skin, and control oil. Burmese, women, men, and children usually apply the thanaka on their faces, arms, and legs to protect their skin from hash rays. Many Burmese, especially farmers, put on the Thanaka before long hours of working under the sun; however, some people even use thanaka during the night to make their complexion look better. In Myanmar, Thanaka is used in every season: cold, hot, and rainy.



# BUKURU MELANCE



My name is **Bukuru Melance**. I am from Tanzania, East Africa. I was born in Rwanda on January 03, 1995, but I moved to Tanzania when I was young. I have six siblings: three brothers and three sisters. I moved to the U.S. in 2008 with my parents. I finished my senior year at Rock Island High School. Now I am attending Black Hawk College. I wish to pass all my classes and become who I want to be in the future.

## Life of Orphan Children in Tanzania

Tanzania, located in East Africa, is a country growing economically; however, a serious social problem in Tanzania is the orphans; many children have become orphans because their parents died as a consequence of AIDS. Today there are 2 million orphans in the country and 4,000 orphanages that give shelter to these children.

There are many different orphanages or community houses helping the orphans. Some of these children live in these places temporarily. They stay there until they turn two or three years old and can return to their villages to their extended family. Especially UNICEF applies lots of effort to provide health services and food to these children.

Some other country houses offer food, clothing, and some education. Also, there are many people from different cities who come to the orphanages and community houses to help; especially people who are from Dodoma, Dar es Salaam, and Morogoro. There are some reasons why people decided to do this; the reasons are that God wants them to help the poor, especially little ones.

However, a question comes to our mind: why are these children not adopted? The laws to adopt a Tanzanian child are very strict and follow some steps (A) The interested in adopting must have lived in the country for at least three years, must be married, and must be at least twenty-five years old. (B) An application for an adoption order shall be made to the High Court not at Small Court. (C) An application for open adoption should be made to the Magistrate Court or the District Court.



Even if the couple living abroad wants to adopt an orphan from Tanzania, they will need to live in the country for three years. In fact, in 2011, two Tanzanian children were adopted by American citizens because they had lived in Tanzania for three years. Therefore, this rule



Tanzanian Orphans Get Help After Mothers Die because of AIDS.

has no exception. The government wants to be careful and take care of those orphans, and at the same time, the government wants to eliminate the mandatory, everyone must live in Tanzania at least three years to adopt a child and married and be at least twenty-five years old.

In my own opinion, the government should let people who want to adopt these children do so because an orphan children are a big issue in Tanzania right now. The government shouldn't put tough laws to adopt a child in Tanzania. For example, it is very hard to live in different countries for three years or get married. I think the mandatory law should be changed. I think that the law should change as follows: To adopt a child in Tanzania, the person should live in the country for at least 6 months. This person can be married or unmarried but must have a good income. Everyone should agree to take good care the child and show the income to the government. Orphans are God's children. We can't let the children live a bad life. Moreover, the government should visit the family where the child is at least every three months because there are some people who can abuse the child and treat the child badly.



In conclusion, adoption in Tanzanian has become controversial and the current laws are too strict. Those children don't have hope; everyone should help them. Let's help those young children and adopt them, because children are the future.

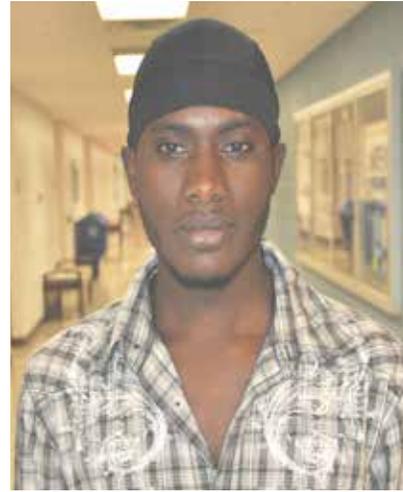
### **Orphan Children's Dreams**

Who wants to take care of those children and get them from the hand of death?  
Both have no mothers, fathers, brothers or sisters to cry for, on the other hand, they are asking and begging to a father and mother who they have never seen.  
There is no one to share their thoughts or dreams.  
They are nobody, and they don't have anyone to give them advice and help.  
Who would feed them and take them from their poverty, especially those little ones?  
They hope and wish to have someone who can help them.  
They ask help to those people who they think that they could help them.  
We should take care of little children, because there are the future.  
Orphan children are looking begging for help.

# NDAYIZIGA LEVIS

---

My name is **Ndayiziga Levis**. I live in Rock Island. I am originally from Burundi, but I have lived in most of my lifetime in Tanzania. I came to the United States of America in 2008. I am unmarried. I also do not have responsibilities such as children. I enjoy being engaged in physical activities. For instance, I like to jog, run, and lift weights. Education is my legacy. I need to try hard until I achieve my future plans. I have been taking English classes for a couple years. If I get a chance, I will have completed ESL classes by the end of 2014. I am planning to become a Human Resource Manager.



## Effects of Political Corruption in Burundi

"You live only once, but if you do it right, once is enough" (Mae West). Also, Be the change that you wish to see in the world"(Mahatma Ghandi). Living well in any country means having and following law. Truthfully, a country should have brutal punishments against anyone who does not follow the law. If a country is corrupt, safety and freedom do not exist. Therefore, the government officials abuse their power by doing illegal activities. There are three effects of corruption in Burundi: abuse of power, injustice for the poor, and lack of education.



The first effect of corruption is abuse of power. The Burundian government uses power to take away people's possessions. For instance, many properties of people who escaped the Civil War of 1972-1993 were sold and given to other people. Some of the people who left during the Civil War did not have proof of their properties. When they returned, complaints were submitted, but the issue was not resolved. The Burundian government did not appear to care about those families who went away to reside in the other countries.

Corruption in Burundi particularly affects the poor. The Burundian government does not follow the law. Therefore, government officials are above the law. Also, law is applied according to money, occupation, and possessions. People are not treated the same way. For example, if a government official commits a crime and pays money, a conviction is not applied. Therefore, the victim does not even appear to exist. For instance, a poor person can be taken to prison for no reason. If money is not paid to bail out the poor person, every possession must be taken by the authority.



The last effect of corruption in Burundi is lack

of education. People pay taxes, but there are no well-built schools. Furthermore, some school districts do not have enough materials. As an example, after secondary school, some people become teachers in secondary school or middle school. Many people pay money in order to pass the final exams. Those people get certificates and diplomas of achievement even with their lack of education. Thus, this leads a country down the wrong path. A country cannot be more successful if it lacks many educated people.

In conclusion, corruption should not be practiced in a community. The government has to stand up and fight against corruption. The people can also raise their voices to protect the country and keep it together. It is very important to report any sort of corruption. It does not matter if the culprit is a government authority. People should put their fear away and do what is right for the country.



### **Burundian Culture.**

Burundi has a diversity of cultural practices. Nevertheless, the main cultural practice is the usage of drums, which is the most popular in the whole country. This culture was created by our ancestors. People still love it today. When Burundians have a big celebration, drums are the instruments that are used to open and close the event. As a matter of fact, the way the drummers dress and dance looks very impressive. They wear sheets that are likely to have the same color as the drums. They also dance by hitting drums and jumping up at the same time. It is absolutely fabulous to watch.



# JOHN TERESIO



My name is **John Teresio**. I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo also known as DR Congo, but I was raised in Tanzania. While my family and I lived in Tanzania, I went to school, but there was a lack of education. We lived in Tanzania for about 11 years, and after that we moved to the United States of America, where I continue my education. I have four brothers, three sisters, and both my parents. My goal is to finish ESL classes at Black Hawk College, and later I get my degree as a doctor.

## The Rise of Industry in Africa: The Growth of Tanzania

In the past years, African industry was poor; however, companies in Africa examined their strategies, product designs, and marketing plans to attract new entrepreneurs to African countries, and now things have changed as the general business activity is rising. Tanzania, located in the middle of Africa, has also taken the wave of the rise of African industry. There is an increase of the markets for food, traditional partners and emerging partners, and employment creation and technology transfer.

According to experts in general business, Tanzania has experienced the necessary rise in the high quality of services.

Europe, China, India, and South Africa have developed the markets in Tanzania. Here are some companies that are developing their businesses in Tanzania: Tanga Cement, Quality Group Limited, Tanzania China Friendship Textile Company, Tanzania Railways Limited, and IPP Media. In addition, TIPER is a company trade mission of Oil, and gas from Dar el Salaam, Tanzania. Also, TTCL is a popular company in Tanzania, and 2,000 employees work for the company. All goods are delivered through merchants and retailers, and they can sell more products for their business. The shoe industry's growth was driven by growth of existing shoe business and new entrants in Tanzania.



Tanzanian markets have increased more products, for example export crops such as coffee, tea, cotton, cashews, tobacco and, on a much smaller scale, cloves and sisal. Traditional agricultural exports accounted for only 20 percent of total merchandise exports by Tanzania. However, Tanzania most important traditional agricultural exports have become fish products, and fishing has become a business. Most people like to fish in rivers or lakes, and they make a business from selling those fish in the markets. Foodstuff

exports are a promising business for Tanzania, which shares borders with eight African countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. Finally, rice is also a strong Tanzanian product in the market.

Tanzania has partners and emerging partners, and Tanzania's main trading partners are Europe, China, India, South Africa, and the United States. Tanzania's top three partners are China, India, and Europe. China takes center stage, but other emerging partners together make up a larger share of many of the dealing with my country. India is also a traditional partner to come there and is emerging as well. Tanzania's exports to the U.S. are dominated by agricultural commodities, minerals, and textiles. Now Tanzania has increased more companies and more employees. Most people from different countries come to Tanzania to make small businesses. In 2010, Tanzania experienced 7% growth in business.

Tanzania, like many other Sub-Saharan African countries, is facing a difficult challenge of creating many employment opportunities. About 700,000 new entrants go into the job market or about 200,000 individuals look for wage employment every year. Tanzania's experience, however, shows that the relatively high output growth achieved during reforms has not resulted into such increased employment creation. In rural areas, farmers make more products in their farms and sell them in stores. They tend to run small businesses, which are more about survival than about true entrepreneurship. People create their own business or job from of small non-farm businesses, so they have make Tanzania industry growing very fast during the rapid urbanization.



In conclusion, industrialization in Tanzania has helped the country to change from being an agricultural country. The increase of investments in the country has multiplied the partnership with foreign countries and the employment in the country. Tanzania is definitely experiencing real and effective industrial growth.

### **The Maasai Tribes**

The Maasai tribes have unique customs and culture. They live in northern Tanzania and Kenya. They could be the most known Kenyan tribe outside Kenya especially for tourists, but they've been a presence around the Ngorongoro Crater of Tanzania for over 150 years. They are a special warrior tribe whose lives circle around herding cattle. Men always keep spears with them, and women wear bright clothes. They all believe the rain God, Ngai, entrusted the cattle. They have their villages in Ngorongoro conservation area. They live very close to the wildlife. Their rites and traditional ceremonies are taken very seriously, and it is not common to allow outsiders to attend. Elders play a very important role in the community and society at large. Women and girls have numerous chores besides building the dung hut, which take about 7 months. They are minors in society, and they are always represented by their father, and later their husband. Nowadays, the Maasai tribe's unique hair is a clear living symbol of their tradition and culture.



# CIKUNKZE EUGONFAUNK

---

My name is **Fonk**. I was born in Burundi. I am 19 years old. I attended primary school in Tanzania; then, when I arrived in the United States in 2007, I started the 7th grade. Now I am at Black Hawk College. My career goal is to become a video editor and also a graphic designer. We have ten people in my family, but only seven including my mom and dad are living here in the U.S. The others are in Africa. In addition, I would like to go back to my country and build strong houses there. I will be able to do so if I find success in what I am doing now.



## From Crisis to Peace

Who could have ever thought that one day Burundi would settle down from its war? Burundi was a very peaceful place before the war happened. It was known as Ruanda-Urundi, but later on it was divided. Before it was divided, people lived in peace. There was sharing and caring in the country. In fact, people were living as one family, looking after one another and helping each other out in any situation. Hatred was put aside and love was in control of the people. Later on, Germany came to colonialize Ruanda-Urundi; then, war began after they colonized it. Ruanda-Urundi was separated into two countries. It was no longer known as Ruanda-Urundi, but it was called Burundi for Urundi and Rwanda for Ruanda. After the split of Burundi and Ruanda, people lived where they wanted, but as for my ancestral family, it all began in Burundi. The ethnic groups started fighting in the nation, which led to war.

In 1962, Burundi got its independence. It was a very special moment for the Tutsis. On the other side, it was a very sad moment for the Hutus since the country received its independence under a Tutsi king that was ruling Burundi in that year. The Hutus didn't think that he would bring justice to the country. So, the Hutus brutally started going against the Tutsi, and violence started in the country. The king fled from the country because he knew that he could lose his life or have to fight for. Most politicians wanted what was good for their groups either the Hutus or the Tutsis. In 1965 there was an election and then a candidate named Pierre Ngendandumwe was elected. At the time he was a prime minister, violence rose up because Pierre was a Hutu, and the Tutsi stood against the Hutu. The politicians tried to see what they could do because the violence was really getting worse at that time. However, they couldn't control the situation, and the war started in 1972 and continued till 1980s.



The 1970s were the worst time our country has ever faced. The genocide started in 1972; both groups couldn't come to an agreement. This year is the year fire rose up in the nation. More than 7,600 Hutus were killed by the Tutsis, and on the other side, more than 6,800 Tutsis were killed by the Hutus. This genocide caused more than 15,000 deaths. Many children fought in this war. For instance, some children were taken from their families by the



rebels to join their army. Many children were commanded by the rebels to kill their families. The fearful children would take their families lives. They had to do their duties as they had been told by the rebels. Many young women were raped till death. When the families were hiding sometimes, the rebels caught them. They made them line up to be killed. 30% of the people in this war died not just because of guns and knives but famine, too. It was a long war and the farms got destroyed, so it was hard to find food. Most of the young babies died in their mother's

hands because they had nothing to eat. Many families were separated because their members ran into different directions. For example, there were a lot of kids that were missing their families, and they had to keep running for their lives until they could find somewhere safe to settle

This war continued until 1990s. Burundi was really broken down because nothing was left except dead bodies and blood. Elections started again in the 90s to see if somehow things would settle down in the nation. The president that got elected was Ndadaye Melchior. He was a great president. After running his campaign, people really hoped to see what he could do in the country. Ndadaye was a Hutu, and he wanted to bring peace. After he was chosen to be a president, he was fulfilling what he had promised to do which was to make people live together and live in peace. Therefore, some people who left the country during the genocide came back to Burundi, but my family and I still remained in Burundi. When people came back, they realized that things had settled down. Everyone started living peacefully, but a couple of months later something shocked everyone. The president was assassinated by Tutsis and civil war started again in 1995. My family and I fled to Tanzania to find a new life. We had had enough. When we got to Tanzania, the U.N started helping us and later on we built our own houses and finally we were living in a peaceful place.

The war in Burundi lasted till 2005, but now people are living peacefully in the country; however, the civil war will never be forgotten. Now things have settled down. The government works with people to continue living in peace.

Christmas is one of the most important holidays in my country. First, before December 25<sup>th</sup>, people get busy with a lot with shopping, cleaning, and practicing plays of Jesus's birth. Before Christmas, you will find many people in big shops shopping for clothes. The family will visit each other and before they do, they prepare lots of food because it's all about having fun, being happy that Jesus is born again and eating food. Since the 25th of December is always on Sunday, the churches will be full of people because special events happen in the church, such as singing, and plays showing how Jesus was born. When choirs start performing their songs and music, it's one of the best of moment in the church. I can only hear shouting in the church because everyone is happy. When church is over, the families start visiting one another. The others go to the movie theater to watch new movies and others will go to out as family to the restaurant to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

# HAENAY MOO



My name is **Haenay Moo**. I was born in Burma or Myanmar. I am 30 years old. I had lived in the "Mae La Refugee Camp" in Thailand for ten years before I came to the United States. I immigrated to the United States in June 21, 2007. I have one younger sister and two younger brothers. I am the eldest child in my family. I am married, and I have two precious daughters. I am a U.S citizen now. After I finish the ESL Program at Black Hawk College, I will continue studying English, and I will try to get my teaching degree. Then, I intend to transfer to Western Illinois University because I hope to become a bilingual teacher someday.

## Who Are the Karen People?

The Karen are much more than a minority; they are a nation with seven million people with their own history, language, and culture. Historically, the Karen descend from the same ancestors as the Mongolian people. However, since the end of World War II, the Karen have been seeking their independence. Since then, the Karen people have been oppressed by the Burmese government. However, even after all the fighting, the Karen have kept many unique and interesting aspects of their culture that are important to know in order to realize who the Karen are.



The Karen people have their own traditional clothing. There are different clothing for women and men. Originally, Karen married people wear tunics and sarongs. The unmarried people must wear long dresses. *"if they do not obey this tradition, a tiger will come to eat them or take them away."*



Traditionally, Karen people do not step or wear shoes while in the house; they always keep the floor clean because they sleep and sit on it. Originally, Karen do not have or use sofa in the houses; usually, they sit on the floor. Moreover, Karen eat by hand, eat a lot of rice and also eat a variety of vegetables.

It is also essential that people know what to do when greeting. Karen people do not kiss or hug them. They may shake with their right hand, supporting the right forearm with the left hand as it is a symbol of respect to use both hands to shake.

When Karen people are walking by someone, they bow their head to be lower than the others. Especially when they are walking between two people while having a conversation, one should avoid walking in front of those who are seated, and one should walk behind them or ask permission to cross between them first.



Karen flag has three colors: red, white, and blue. Also, a frog drum, and nine rays of the rising sun. The color red represents heroism and perseverance, white represents purity and clarity, and blue represents honesty and peace. The Nine rays of light streaming from the rising sun indicated the nine regions from which the Karen people traced their origins. The frog drum symbolizes unity in traditional Karen culture.



unique nation that keep its traditions and its culture, but mainly it is a nation that keeps dreaming about justice and freedom

### **KAREN NEW YEAR**

The Karen people's major holiday is New Year. Karen celebrate their holiday every year even though the Karen calendar is different from the Western calendar. Most of the time, Karen New Year is in January. It is celebrated as a national holiday in Myanmar or Thailand, where the Karen people lived, and is often the occasion for traditional dances and music such as the "Done Dance and Bamboo Dance". People mark the occasion by sounding the Karen horn and drum to maintain the tradition of the Karen New Year, until the end of time. Officially, the Karen New Year began in 1938. Celebrations were first held in 1939. It was on the first of January 1938, (which that year corresponded with the first of Pyathoe), that Karen national leaders demands to the British administration for the Karen New Year were finally recognized and declared an official holiday. The date was also formally acknowledged as being the year 2677 on the Karen calendar.



# ROBERT GARFIAS

---

My name is **Robert** and I'm from Mexico City, and I have lived in the US for about 15 years. I decided to go back to school, but I haven't decided about my career goals, I'm a little confused about what career I should take. It is just a matter of time to decide which one. I hope to go to a university to pursue my goals and contribute to the community where I live.



## Education: The Perfect Weapon for a Prosperous Future

Have you ever asked yourself why the unemployment rate is so high? Well, the common answer will be: There are no jobs out there. That's probably true, but we have to see beyond the facts and find the solution. It is known that an unemployed person without a degree makes his/her way harder to get out of that situation, than a person with a degree, so



when the economy goes down, people with no resources other than a high school diploma are hit harder. Therefore, education is crucial to overcome the circumstances that might affect us in the future.

To accomplish this task, we should have commitment, strategy, and imagination. Firstly, commitment is vital to get us where we want to be, and it all depends on how much we want to excel in life. Being committed at school will be beneficial at the end even though we have to sacrifice great moments in our lives with friends or even family. In addition to that, some people that were committed to accomplish their goals but failed once, lost the desire to try it again and gave up. However, there are plenty of people that have failed several times, but they never gave up. That's what commitment is all about, so we must face all kinds of obstacles that we might encounter in our way.

To make our way along the educational journey, strategy is important to manage the hours at school, hours of study, hours at work, and student loans that for some reason are getting higher, and seem impossible to pay off.

That's a reason why students are so strained. That's what we have to deal with, keeping in mind that it is part of the game and part of how we can direct our lives.

Lastly, imagination is another great point to focus on meticulously because it is essential in the development of our daily life, either at school or outside of it. We all can think big, but if we don't do anything to make success happen, we are not going anywhere, so we must imagine our future and not be afraid of pursuing our dreams because that's the problems of many people



that lost the opportunity to succeed due to their fears. Making up our mind will bring us satisfaction in the long run, and it will be worthy because this world has been built by the imagination of human beings. To sum up, our future depends on each one of us. Getting an education is a plus, but without commitment, strategy, and imagination it will be impossible.

Tepache is a refreshing and delicious Mexican drink that can be served in any time of the year, especially during hot weather. Tepache is made out of pineapple, brown sugar, beer, along with other ingredients that make this drink so tasty. Some Mexican stores in the US sell this drink in a bottle, but it doesn't taste as good as if it were from a barrel, its original container.



# ANGELIQUE IRADUKUNDA

---



I am **Angelique Iradukunda**, and I'm from Rwanda. I have been living here for 9 months. I belong to a family of four children, and I am the third one in my family. The field that I am interested in is computer science. My dream is to become a software designer, and I believe that I will accomplish it. I like chatting with my friends because I get some new experiences from them. I enjoy watching movies that describe the life we live in.

## Internet Addiction

The Internet has made our life easier since we get information quickly and communicate with others, but it has become the center of our life, and it has made us spend too much time on the web. An overuse of the internet is called “internet addiction” because some people always depend on the use of Internet and forget eating or sleeping because they get addicted. Do we know some symptoms of addicted people? If so how can we help those people so that they stop destroying their future?

Signs of Internet addiction are important to know. Sometimes, we find ourselves on the internet longer than we expected. For example, there comes a time when we plan to spend thirty minutes on the web, but we can find ourselves spending more than two hours on the Internet. In

addition, finding ourselves behind in completing other duties is another sign of addiction. Some people have tried to limit the time that they spend on the Internet, but they end up failing. This causes an isolation from the people around them. For example, when they are talking with others, some of them choose to go on the web instead of being attentive to the conversation, but they can't stop themselves because it has become a habit.



There are many consequences of “internet addiction.” Being unable to stop ourselves from visiting websites or checking email all the time is the greatest disadvantage of being addicted. For example, students, who become addicted, cannot complete their school activities on time because they spend too much time on the web. Another example is about employers or employees who do not accomplish their goals because they cannot control themselves and overuse the Internet. Furthermore, the overuse of the Internet affects our behavior. Sometimes, we realize that the time passes rapidly because we don't want to stop using the Internet, and we forget about our daily plan. For example, someone can have an appointment or an interview somewhere, but he ignores all and continues playing games, using Facebook and checking email.

After understanding the symptoms of “internet addiction,” we can decide if we are addicted and try to make a change in our life, so we can avoid spending too much time using the Internet. We can then avoid this by completing our tasks such as homework, studying



and work. Group support will be good for us to fight against “internet addiction” to limit the time that we spend on the web and on phone by having daily schedule and calling people that we want to talk with instead of texting. Additionally, getting friends who are not interested in the use of the Internet will be helpful because we can try to act like them by joining social activities, which will keep us away from the overuse of the Internet.



Even though our culture has been influenced by other countries, the traditional Rwandan music and dance are unique. In the evening, family members congregate, dance and sing about what they have achieved during the day. The event is called "igitaramo." In Rwanda, we have ballet that performs during weddings, birth celebration, political parties and welcoming important visitors. Furthermore, we have traditional instruments such as "inanga," which is similar to the guitar. The drums are named "ingoma," and Rwandese horn is called the "amakondera"; the "umuduri" is a single traditional string instrument.



# AMELEVE ADODO

My name is **Ameleve Adodo**, and I was born in Lome, Togo. I moved to the United States with my husband in September 2012 in order to find a better job. I completed my Bachelor's degree in Linguistics at the University of Lome, and I worked as a secretary for two years in one company because I could not find a job related to my degree. I am pursuing a career as a language teacher in order to help students. I have some hobbies: writing, singing, and cooking.



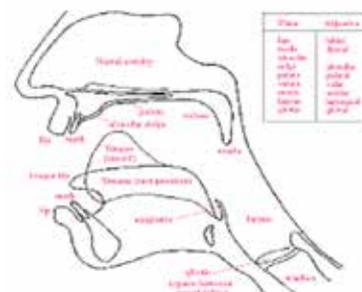
## Mother Tongue Benefits in Learning English

Language is an important tool of communication, and that is why language learning is fundamental. From birth, every human learns how to communicate, and this is through a language which is called the mother tongue or the native language. It constitutes the base of the learning of another language such as English, the Shakespearean language, so what are the mother tongue benefits in English learning?

The sound system of the mother tongue is the first benefit in learning English. It establishes the first base of learning of the English language because we are accustomed to the mother tongue. For example, in my native language, Ewe, some sounds are pronounced the same way as in English when they form words, so it helps me to learn the new language because the canal used to pronounce these sounds is the articulatory system formed by the mouth. For instance, to pronounce the vowel "I" in Ewe, I pronounce it as the vowel "I" in the word "picture". The sound "I", a vowel of the word "picture", is the same sound in Ewe in the word "xevi," which means "bird" in English. The sound "f", a consonant, in English is the same sound in my native language, Ewe. This sound in the word "fear" is the same in the word "fia," which means "king," in English.

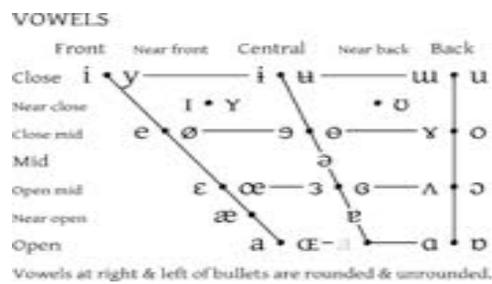
The second benefit of the mother tongue that helps to learn English is vocabulary. The learning of any kind of language involves the knowing of the vocabulary, but this base comes first from the vocabulary that we have in our native language. In fact, the learners will compare their vocabulary with the new they are learning in the new language. They already have the concept of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and so on, so the only thing they will do to

i: FEEL	I SEE	o: GOAT	u: TOO	ɪə HERE	eɪ SAY	ɔɪ FOUR
e BEE	ə AMERICA	ɜ: NURSE	ɔ: MOUTH	ʊə TOUR	ɔɪ FOUR	əʊ NOW
æ CAT	ʌ BUT	ɑ: FART	ɒ HOT	eə HIRE	aɪ MY	ɑʊ NOW
p PUP	b BEE	t TIE	d DO	f FISH	ʒ JAZZ	k KID
q QUICK	v VINE	θ THAT	ð THIS	s SUN	z ZOO	ʃ SHIP
m MILK	n NO	ŋ RING	h HELLO	l LIVE	r READ	w WINDOW
j JACK						



progress in the learning of the new language is the comparison. In Ewe, "atse" means "cat" in English, and "detsugbui" means "girl" in English. These words are both nouns, so some examples about verbs help me during my process. The words "va", "ku", "kpo", and "gban" are all verbs in Ewe and they respectively mean "come", "eat", "watch", and "crush", also verbs in English. We can conclude that the more vocabulary you know in your first language, the better will be the acquisition of another language.

Finally, the third benefit of vocabulary comes from the notion of grammar. Each language has its specific grammar which helps the learners to know something about the language before even speaking it. Therefore, the more people know grammar in their mother tongue, the better they will assimilate the other language. For example in my native language, Ewe, I know how to form the plural of nouns, so when I began to study English, I did not find it so different. I can give the example of "book"-the plural of which is "books" in English, and in Ewe, "agbale", in plural gives me "agbalewo," which means, of course, "books." I already know that I have to add a suffix to the noun in English to form the plural form of the noun. I also know that there are exceptions in English just as there are in Ewe, as well. The typology is part of the grammar and by definition it is a system used by putting things into groups according to how they are similar. To clarify, it is a system that is needed to put together the words to form a sentence. The typology of my native language is SVO, which means Subject Verb and Object, and this typology is the same in English with some



differences. The sentence, "Amy du molu", means "Amy ate rice" in English. The first word "Amy" is the subject of the sentence, the second word "du" is the verb "eat" in past tense, and the third word "molu" is the object "rice" in English. This example shows that knowing the sentence structure of my own language will help me acquire the sentence structure in English. The typology of some mother tongue may differ, but it always helps to learn a second language because the

first forms the base of the learning of a second language.

To summarize, learning a second language does not mean to abandon or forget the mother tongue at all. On the contrary, the better we know our mother tongue, the better will be our learning in the second language, which is English in my case.

**Pepper Soup (Yebeessi soup)**

Pepper soup or Yebeessi is a common Togolese dish made with fried fish, fresh tomatoes, white onions, green peppers, and salt for seasoning. This dish is common in the south of the country because of the presence of the sea and the abundance of fish, and it goes with another dish named Akume, made with corn starch, and Amakume, made with fermented corn starch. The pepper soup and Akume dish can be eaten at lunch and dinner.



# OUR SIDE OF THE STORY

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



Black Hawk College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, national origin or ancestry, age, disability, unfavorable discharge from the military, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran, in the recruitment and admission of students, the recruitment and employment of faculty and staff, or the operation of its educational programs as specified by State and Federal laws and regulations. The AA/EEO coordinator can be contacted at 309-796-5005 or by email at [aaeo@bhc.edu](mailto:aaeo@bhc.edu).

If you need an accommodation based on disability to fully participate in this program/event, please contact Disability Services at 309-796-5900, 309-796-5903 (CAPTEL) or 309-716-3310 (video phone). Students, faculty and staff at Black Hawk College participate in a variety of activities designed to assess and improve student learning and to bring about institutional change. Examples of such activities may include placement testing, surveys, collecting random samples of student work, exit testing, and portfolio evaluation.



# OUR SIDE OF THE STORY



Black Hawk College  
English as a Second Language Program

6600 34th Avenue • Moline, IL 61265  
[www.bhc.edu](http://www.bhc.edu) • 309-796-5000