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Nina De Bisschop, Assistant Professor ESL
As a victim of bullying, I was interested in the definition of bullying: “use superior strength to influence people to intimidate (someone), typically to force him or her to do what one wants.” There are two types of bullying: psychological and physical. Psychological bullying involves gossiping, spreading destructive rumors, and talking trash behind people’s backs. Pushing, slapping, smacking, punching, tripping, physical wounding, and destruction of property are signs of physical bullying. The victim of bullying should use a variety of options to deal with bullying. Options to counteract or deal with psychological bullying can be painful. Ways to deal with those kinds of bullying could include ignoring the insults, asking for help, and talking to someone. In my point of view, the best way to deal with this is to stand firm and try to talk to someone who may help like a professor, a friend, parents, or anyone else who could help. For a bystander, the only way to stop psychological bullying is to help the victim. Do not walk past, but stop and say something. People may be surprised that only that one word said may change a life or even save someone’s life. For instance, if you see that someone is being bullied, do anything to help that person. You may not know this, but your stopping will make a really big difference in the victim’s life. Also, the bully may change his or her bad behavior. Many people become a bully because they were bullied before at school or home, or they may even have been abused at home by their parents or another family member.

Psychological bullying can be worse than physical bullying because it is really hard to notice since you cannot see the victim’s pain. Before you notice that this person is being bullied, it may be too late. You can see when a person is being bullied physically. Physical bullying involves the victim getting beaten, being pushed around, or hurt in any other way. In my opinion, in order to stop this kind of behavior, people should not act scared, but should try to fight for themselves. It will stop sooner or later, but the only way it can stop sooner is to stand firm.
This is my own personal story of psychological bullying. In high school, during my freshmen year, I did not know any English; I could only speak French. Then one day, a bunch of girls came to me, stood next to my locker and tried talking to me, but I could not understand them, so I wrote on a piece of paper “only French”. They laughed at me, threw my books on the floor, and stepped on them while walking away. So I know how it feels to be a victim of bullying. At that time, I felt like my place wasn’t here. I just wanted to go back to my home country. I asked myself a lot of questions. “What did I do wrong to deserve this?” I felt so alone and really sad about the way they were treating me for no reason.

What options did I use? After they left, I sadly picked my books off the floor and went to class. After class, I went to my French teacher, the only teacher who understood me, and I explained everything that had happened to me. She told me. “Do not let those girls bring you down. Try and talk to them the next time you see them and if nothing happened, then come talk to me. I had this friend who speaks French as well as English. I asked for his help, and with his help, I talked to the girls in a nice way. The next day, my friend came as he had promised me, and I said. “I don’t know what you guys want from me. I just moved here with my family. If there is anything I ever did to offend you guys, please, I strongly apologize for that; however, please don’t try to make my life miserable. I would appreciate it if you guys would leave me alone and never bother me again, and if you do, I will tell the principal of the school.” Doing that every single day, I kept myself from being bullied every day. I also stood tall not to look like a victim. After that, I felt great but still a little scared because I thought they may come again to bother me, but it turned out fine after I had talked to them. After that, I had the best year in high school.

In summary, ways to stop bullying include ignoring the insult, getting help, and standing tall to not make yourself look small. Because bullying is on the rise, people should be taught by their school and their parents about how to counteract and deal with bullying of all types. Knowing all types of bullying and knowing how they all function will allow a child to know if he or she is being bullied at school, on the playground, or in any other place.

New Year’s in Togo

In Togo, New Year’s is such a special holiday. On New Year’s Eve, the family goes to pray at midnight in order to thank God and ask for forgiveness for all the sins they have committed the last year. Therefore, they pray for everything to go away and ask God to bring their family happiness and prosperity, so they can start a fresh new year. On New Year’s morning, we all go to church again and after the ceremony, we celebrate with other members of the church. Then we go home and celebrate the rest of the afternoon with our family and eat traditional food called “fufu”. We get to wear our special African clothes made for New Year’s. Some choose to go to a friend’s house to play music and do a dance competition to see who the best dancer of all is. Others go to a relative’s house to watch a funny African movie, or they go back to church for a picnic with other church members. However, I like to spend New Year’s with my family and wish for many good things for the New Year.
Is ISIS the Main Problem?

Being made a part of something you have nothing to do with makes you lost, confused, and sometimes disgruntled. Because of the current events in other parts of the world, Americans point to Muslims as members of ISIS, and as a part of the Muslim community in the US. This article is my chance to explain my point of view, and I appreciate your time reading it and trying to understand another point of view of what is happening in the Middle East.

ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, has been handled a lot in the media recently. ISIS started in Syria in the last couple of years. Members of ISIS have exploited the weakness of the Syrian people who are fighting against their government. In a few months, ISIS gained control of many cities inside Syria by dragging young Muslims from around the world into joining them to help the oppressed people in the Arab countries through their revolutions against the dictatorial governments. In June 2014, ISIS attacked and occupied the second largest city in Iraq, al-Mosul. Until today, al-Mosul and other cities are under their control. ISIS used the same method that they have used in Syria: helping people to get rid of their dictatorial governments.

But after that, they started to share their ideas and force people to follow them. They introduced a new picture of Islam that doesn't even exist, except in their minds. They started to kill and force people from other religions, such as Christians and Yazidis, to leave even though Islam mentions the coexistence with other religions. For example, in Iraq, the devil worshipers and traditional religions have lived together for centuries. Also, ISIS forced Muslim people to follow very strict rules. Men have to have long beards; women must not only wear the scarf, but also something which covers all their faces. One of my friends from Mosul told me that his relative, who is a doctor and used to work in a hospital there, had to escape from Mosul after a man hit her on her back when she was coming out from the surgery room because she was wearing a scarf without covering her face. She told him, “How can I see while I’m working inside? I was saving a life there.”

My name is Aroa. I'm 24 years old now. I've lived in many different countries before my last move to the United States in 2012. Originally, I'm from Iraq, but I had to leave my country with my family in 2007 because our lives were in danger. We moved to Syria, then Lebanon. I've lived the war in all of the above countries, so now, I feel that I have a chance to live for something good, and that's why I'm working hard for a better future.
After all, ISIS presents a misguided and extreme view of Islam. If they had read what our God said in our book, the Quran, "There is no compulsion in religion," they should have understood what that means. They are willing to blow themselves up between civilians, slaughter people with knives, burn dead bodies and sometimes burn people alive. Take, for example, what happened with the Jordanian pilot earlier this year. While he was fighting ISIS in Syria, they captured him and burned him alive inside an iron cage. These extremists commit many hideous acts that no one can imagine while God describes Islam in the Quran as the religion of mercy. It is clear to everyone that they don’t know anything about Islam.

Still the main question is: Is ISIS the main problem?

Through the last decade, starting with Iraq in 2003, and the other Arab countries during what is called the Arab revolutions or the Arab Spring, the Middle East went through many disturbances. These disturbances have created a lack of security and stability, and as a result, the governments have become very weak; weapons are everywhere, and everything is out of control. This allowed the birth of many political and religious terrorist groups, one of which is ISIS. They present one of the two poles of Islam, the Sunnis, and believe it or not, other terrorist groups from the other pole of Islam, the Shiites, are fighting with the Iraqi government against ISIS!

It is clear that what is happening in the Middle East today is the worst civil war in history in the name of religion. Terrorists make their own rules to kill each other or to kill others, and ISIS is just one of many groups doing the same. The main problem is: There is no law and no governments or good armies who follow the law to deter these terrorist groups, but who is the first aggrieved? Is it the people in Europe or the United States?

Millions of people in Iraq, Syria, and other Arab countries have lost their lives, or they are living as refugees in many countries around the world because of these terrorist groups. I’m an example, I had to leave my country, Iraq, to live in Syria as a refugee for three years. Then, I had to leave Syria for the same reason. The suffering caused by these religious terrorist groups has spread from the Middle East to other parts of the world. ISIS and others make their own violent rules to defend their own brand of Islam, just like what happened at Charlie Hebdo. An extremist group attacked and killed the cartoonist who made fun of Islam. However, they forgot what God said in the Quran, "And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so do not sit with them until they enter
into another conversation." See that God didn't even say get angry or don't talk with them forever! Just don't sit with them until they change the conversation.

Islam or Muslims like me and my family have nothing to do with what is happening. When I heard about the recent events in the Muslim community in the United States – the murder of three Muslims in Chapel Hill, setting the fire in the Houston Islamic community, and what happened in Dearborn – I didn't see all Americans as terrorists. I just saw all the love and support that have shown up for the victims and their families in these attacks. I hope that someday others in the world will see Muslims as separate from religious extremists. We are all humans on this planet, and everybody deserves to be treated according to his acts, not for the acts of others.

Shahryar and Scheherazade

When I talk about our culture, the first thing that comes to my mind is the old stories that we grew up hearing. Some of them carry a lot of imagination, and others are true. Very famous characters, such as Shahryar and Scheherazade, have become important parts of our rich culture. Shahryar was a king who found his wife cheated on him, so he hated women and wanted revenge. He killed his wife, and he then got married to a different woman every day and killed her the next morning until Scheherazade appeared in his life. He married her, but she was very smart. She used to tell him a new story every night and not finish it until the next day. Shahryar couldn't kill her because, every time, he wanted to know what would happen next in the story. Scheherazade finished a thousand stories for Shahryar. By that time, he had fallen in love with her and got rid of his hatred for women. Many other stories like "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves", "Aladdin and the Magic Lamp", and "The Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor", have been translated into English, and many interesting cartoons were made. Also, there are statues of these characters in the streets of Baghdad, the capital of Iraq. These stories and characters will represent us for centuries, and we will continue to be very proud of them.
Trekking in Nepal

Just because a country is small and poor, its value does not become less. Nepal is a landlocked country and the land of mountains. It has eight of the world’s ten tallest mountains, including the highest point on Earth, Mount Everest, called Sagarmatha in the Nepali language. Nepal is divided into three belts: the Plains, called Terai, the Hill Region, called Pahad, and the Mountain Regions, called Himal. Travelling on foot through mountains or other flat lands for several days is called trekking. I came from Chitwan, and there’s the famous Chitwan National Park to go for trekking, and Nepal is one of the best trekking places in the world; but there are other ways to do trekking in Nepal, and they are by climbing the Himalaya, and by enjoying the thrilling rivers of Nepal to do rafting.

Chitwan National Park was the first national park in Nepal. It is located in the Chitwan District of Nepal. It was formed in 1973, and later it was given the title of a World Heritage Site. It used to be a hunting ground for Nepal’s royal class during the winter seasons because, in the summer time it’s too hot and humid. One of the kings was assassinated in that national park also. It used to be called Royal Chitwan National Park, but after the king lost his power, the name changed to just Chitwan National Park, so now-a-days it is prohibited for poaching of wildlife animals. People go to the park to see wild animals like elephants, tigers, birds, snakes, and rhinoceros, and so on. The rhinoceros in Nepal is called the greater one-horned rhinoceros because it is the largest rhino among all, and it has only one horn. The rhinoceros was nearly extinct in Nepal because of illegal poaching.
There are many hills and mountains in the Himalayas and several routes to choose for trekkers each year, but especially the Mount Everest, Annapurna and Langtang treks attract several thousand trekkers each year. The reasons for the popularity of these treks among foreigners are clean comfortable lodges that are available along the routes, and the tea houses that serve fresh, delicious meals and drinks. There are also some of the very oldest Buddhist monasteries along the treks; these are so unique that we can’t take pictures inside these temples.

People choose Mount Everest because it is the tallest mountain in the world. The height of Mount Everest is 8,848m. Tourists have to pay for climbing the mountains, and some of the tourists train for a long time because it is so dangerous. People usually go in a group because it’s safer. The Sherpa people of Nepal help tourists to carry their equipment, and they also put up ropes and ladders to help people to climb mountains. Sherpas are also known as the tigers of the mountains because climbing the mountains is their daily job. While traveling to the higher peaks, trekkers should carry oxygen, tents, food, a portable stove to warm the food, ropes and additional equipment needed to climb the mountain.

Rafting is a sport in which people travel down a river on a raft. It is also part of the adventure in Nepal. It is thrilling and dangerous because the current of the river is very strong, and there are big rocks in the river as well; after Monsoon rains and the melting of the snow is the best time for river rafting in Nepal. Rafting can be done in groups or individually. Trips can take days, so tourists usually stay in hotels or sleep in tents for the night. There are organizations that plan rafting trips, offer tourist guides, and rental equipment.

Finally, the three best ways to have fun while trekking in Nepal are visiting Chitwan National Park, climbing the Himalayas, and going on a rafting trip. Going to a different country without knowing the language or people can be dangerous because you can get lost, and other people might take advantage. Trekking in Nepal is especially dangerous because you have to climb for hours and hours; if you are not used to this, you might hurt yourself. The paths can be dangerous while trekking in the mountains and rafting in strong currents, and visiting Chitwan National Park can be dangerous because of wild animals, but at the same time, it is an inspiringly beautiful and fun experience. I hope you will have fun while traveling to Nepal. Good luck, and I wish you the best.
Hataka maila sunaka thaila ke garnhy dhanale?
Saga ra sisnu khaeko bes anandi manale!

**In English**
Purses of gold are like the dirt on your hand. What can be done with wealth?
Better to eat only nettle and greens with happiness in your heart.

Chhetri ko choro, yo pau chuncha ghrida le chudaina
Manis thulo mana le huncha, jata le hudaina

**In English**
This son of Chhetri touches your feet, but he touches them not with contempt.
A man must be judged by the size of the heart, not by his name or his caste.

These are taken out from a poem written by Laxmi Prasad Devkota. The poem is called “Munamadan”, and it is one of the most popular works in Nepali literature. Muna is the wife, and Madan is her husband. Madan goes to Lhasa to make money, and while returning, he becomes sick on the way. His friend leaves him on the way and says to Madan’s wife that he has died. When Madan returns home later, he finds that his wife has died. This story describes the life of a poor man and his wife and how they used to live in the old times. When Madan was sick on the way home, he was saved by someone from a lower caste. At that time, the lower caste was considered impure, and this is the reason why the poem says that a man must not be judged by his name or his caste but by his heart.
Music and Singing in Tanzania

Tanzania is located in East Africa. It is a country encompassed by great music, songs, and dances. Also, Tanzania is home to wonderful, lovely, hardworking people who keep the dancing music and songs alive. Have you ever listened to Tanzania music before? Or have you ever seen the way Tanzanian people dance to this music? Tanzania is a wonderful country with many different types of music and songs. The most popular types of music are Gospel, Bongo Flava, Talabu, and Hip-Hop. All those types of music have different ways people play and sing them.

Talabu is a great musical style that many Tanzanian people love to sing and dance to. The instruments that are used are the keyboard and drums. Sometimes Talabu can be played with drums only, and people who can play Talabu are usually professional musicians. Tarabu is music written about people's lives, their stories and lifestyles. People from Zanzibar, who are mostly Muslim- love Talabu a lot more than people who live in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, and other places in the country because it sounds like Islamic music and originates from Islamic countries. Moreover, Talabu is played during parties, especially weddings, engagement parties, and special events.

Bongo Flava is another wonderful type of music that many Tanzanian people like to listen to and dance to. Bongo Flava sounds a lot like Hip Hop and R&B music. We use guitars, drums, and other instruments and beats. People who create that music are usually DJ in the studio, and not everyone can play it. To play this music, artists need to go to school because it is not easy to play. Bongo Flava is the kind of music that people enjoy during parties and at clubs. In the rural areas of Tanzania, people get excited and jump to the music at parties. Gobo is basically the same as Bongo Flava, even the instruments are the same ones.
Gospel is the most important music in my country. People love Gospel a lot, especially Christian people and young people. The reason why people in Tanzania love Gospel music is that the music helps them get closer to God and speak to him. Gospel music is very important because it helps them forget all their problems and make them happy.

Come to Tanzania and enjoy Tanzanian music and songs. Tanzania is full of music. Every market is full of Bongo Flava, Talabu, Gobo, and Gospel. All types of music, including music from around the world, have become more and more popular in Tanzania. Music and songs help all Tanzanian people live better, love one another, and stay strong in everything they do.

Art in Tanzania
Tanzania has a great art center called Cultural Heritage in Arusha; it is the best and largest art center in Tanzania. Many people from Europe, Australia, the U.S and Asia love going there to visit and take pictures. The art building has many different beautiful art pieces in and outside. For example, the Heritage Center displays masks, small statues, paintings, and many different artworks. It is also a great place to buy some souvenirs, carvings, jewelry, etc. This place can give you a lot of pleasure as you walk around. Even if you don’t want to buy anything, the gallery is definitely worth visiting because it has a huge collection of many beautiful and unique pieces of sculpture and paintings. Arusha is a wonderful place, a great city, and it has beautiful art. Try to visit Tanzania. I have been there, and I hope you will like it, too.
Racial Profiling in the United States of America

Racial profiling can be defined as any “use of race, religion, ethnicity or nation of origin by law enforcement agents as a means of deciding who should be investigated, except where these characteristics are part of a specific suspect description” (Lead. Conf. on Civil Rights Ed. Fund 11). This practice undermines the basic human rights and freedoms to which every person is entitled. It violates what the American Constitution and international human rights associations call for. “According to the U.S. Constitution and international treaties and law, every person has the fundamental right to equal protection under the law regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or national origin. Racial profiling is an insidious violation of human rights that can affect people in both public and private places – in their homes or at work, or while driving, flying or walking.” (Amnesty International USA). It is one of America’s most controversial social justice issues, and it has been alive in America since slavery.

“Driving while Black”, coined by Henry Louis Gates, is an unofficial phrase for the most notorious form of racial profiling in America. This phenomenon has been carried out for decades within African American minority communities. Law enforcement agents think that African Americans are more likely to be engaged in a criminal activity. Statistics have proven that African Americans are more likely to be stopped than Whites. Robert Wilkins and three members of his extended family were driving to Washington, DC from Chicago. The four, all African Americans, had traveled to Chicago for the funeral of Wilkins’s grandfather. As they drove on a highway, a Maryland State Police car pulled them over. The trooper intimidated Wilkins and had him and his family wait for a drug-sniffing dog. The family was forced to get out of the car in the dark and in the rain as the dog sniffed every inch of the car. The search turned
up nothing. Wilkins found out later that he was stopped because of a written profile prepared by the Maryland State Police that described him perfectly as a black male in a rental car (Harris).

Since the September 11 attacks, “Driving while Arab” has joined the diction of racial profiling in America along with “Driving while Black.” Arabs, South Asians, and strangely, Sikhs (who are not Muslims) are frequently subject to traffic stops and searches. This practice is perhaps caused by law enforcement’s opinion that any person from the category mentioned previously, is more likely involved in a terrorist activity. According to the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, on October 4, 2001, in Georgia, an Arab American girl was stopped, searched, humiliated and was called a “Ben Laden Supporter”.

It is important to note that the American media coverage of the “War on Terror” played a negative role by supplying the audience with pictures of potential terrorists without mentioning that Arabs and South Asians are innocent of terrorism. Arabs, Muslims and South Asians have been subject to racial profiling in restaurants, grocery stores, taxis, buses, trains, and most commonly in airports. When I asked a friend of mine, Imane Sifeddine, a Muslim girl who was in the United States for an exchange student program, about racial profiling, she said, “While I was in the U.S., I experienced a few incidents that I believe happened because of how I look and the scarf I wear on my head that represents my religion and also because of my name. One time, I ordered something online. When I received the package, it had been opened. Another time, my friend and her husband invited me for lunch at a casino; they refused to let me in. The agent called in her supervisor, and they kept looking into my passport for a long time. It was as if they wanted me to leave. I felt really uncomfortable. After some time, they let us in and kept following us and reporting each of my moves. Eventually, we had to leave because I got too uncomfortable. Another time, at the airport, I was ‘randomly’ selected for body search. I felt really uncomfortable and kind of humiliated, but I thought then if it makes them safer when they do these things, so be it”.

When law enforcement agents profile people basing themselves in generalization, intuition and stereotypes, it only makes the process of policing ineffective. It can also create a hostile relationship between minority groups and police departments. Profiling may work better if the characteristics profiled are based on behaviors. It may work if the characteristics are not race, ethnicity, religion and/or national origin. I’m an Arab Muslim living in the United States. I don’t want to continue facing any form of racial profiling. I’m Muslim but NOT a terrorist.

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Moroccan Kaftan
Kaftan is precious Moroccan traditional clothing, and it has been worn by Moroccans for thousands of years. It is a variant of the robe because it is made of special types of fabrics, usually light-weight and loose-fitting like silk with unique styles. Kaftan is commonly a one-piece dress reaching the ankles with long sleeves and a belt, but there is also another version similar to Kaftan called Takshita, which is composed of two or more pieces. Both Kaftan and Takshita are worn on special occasions like religious feasts and weddings. In the Moroccan wedding ceremony, Kaftan and Takshita are the official clothing. Wearing them by the bride and all the invitees gives the wedding a sophisticated touch and makes it a typical Moroccan wedding.
My name is Kofitse Gbongli, and I am from Togo, located in West Africa. At 29 years old, I am the youngest of my family. I have two brothers and one sister who live in Togo with my parents. In July 2013, I moved to the U.S, and I have been living in Moline since then. I got married to my fiancé last October when I visited my home country. After getting my Bachelor in Business Law, I served as a legal assistant in the Department of Justice for one year before moving to the U.S., so now my goal is to become a lawyer one day.

Coping with Unemployment

Among all the social miseries, is anything as heartbreaking as unemployment? Unemployment is the most serious problem that my country Togo, located in West Africa, is passing through. With 6 million of people, more than eight percent of the population is unemployed, according the International Labor Organization in 2010. Thus, we should think carefully about the causes and the effects of this phenomenon, and the solutions provided by the government.

First, political instability is a great factor in explaining unemployment in Togo. Since 1992, my country has been struggling for democracy with no effective result yet. Therefore, job opportunities are not accessible to everyone, and only members of the President’s political party are most privileged for employment in the country. Both public and private factories, and other employers as well, use nepotism in their hiring process by favoring relatives, siblings or friends who might not have the qualifications required. Every sector in public service is corrupted. For example, when people file a job application, the clerks in charge of processing the application ask for money before considering the application.

A lack of investors is also one of the causes of this problem. Even though we have human capital, we do not have many companies because the taxes, especially for foreign companies, are very high. Then, even the few existing companies are closing their doors.

As a result, Togo faces some negative consequences, such as the flight of human capital. For example, many Togolese people move to the U.S. for job opportunities.

Famine is another effect because only a minority group is working while a larger part of the population is unemployed. Although most people may have a college degree, they don’t have a job, and there is no government assistance for the unemployed. Life is expensive, so people constantly complain about the high cost of living.
Also, robbery is another negative outcome of unemployment in the country. Some young men become armed robbers, who attack and devastate a few banks but are involved in other criminal activities as well. One shameful example is the sad story of a businesswoman who was in transit at the Lome International Airport in Togo last year when she was attacked and killed by armed robbers. They subsequently took a significant amount of money from her, and as a result, fear overwhelmed the people of Lome because of the climate of insecurity that was emerging.

Finally, being aware of this problem, the government provided some solutions. To cope with unemployment, a department named “Grassroots Development” was created, which initiated a voluntary system in 2011. The aim of this system was to allow people to get required experiences, which can help them get a job more easily in the future. After three years, there are nine thousand people who are working as volunteers, and my case serves as an example.

Indeed, after earning my bachelor in business law, I sought a job for two years, but I couldn’t find one. Therefore, from 2011-2013, I worked as a volunteer in the position of legal assistant at the Department of Justice before I moved to the U.S. My task was to explain rights and duties to citizens and execute daily operations in assisting convicts in regards to their rights, including requests for provisional release for sick prisoners.

The government gives monthly assistance to these volunteers according to their degree; however, the problem is so far from being resolved because we have more than a hundred thousand people who are still looking for a job.

In order to fight against nepotism, another solution of the government is the National Employment Agency, which is in charge of receiving job applications and then submitting them to the companies in need of manpower. Furthermore, new strategies are being implemented to fight against corruption whenever anyone who appears to be a victim of corruption files a complaint.

In conclusion, in view of these consequences, unemployment is a serious problem, so the government has to do its best in order to better handle this matter. If people have jobs, the country will become well-developed, and life will be more comfortable. Togolese people must know that our own destiny is in our hands; therefore, let us do the right thing in order to positively push our country forward. I hope we shall come to achieve this goal one day.

**Adémè Sauce**

Adémè sauce is one of the most common sauces in southern Togo. Usually, most people prepare it with adémè leaves, fish, crab, shrimp, palm oil, and eventually adequate seasoning (salt, pepper, etc.). Adémè sauce goes along with a corn paste (corn flour mixed in boiling water) called akumè. It is an interesting delicious sauce that we eat with akumè at lunch or at dinner. In case anyone wants to taste it, let me know.
Observations of Differences between US and Nepali Schools

School is the best place to build our future. It is the place where we learn and practice using our education. Since I started going to school in my country in 2002, I have loved going to school because every day my goal has been to learn something new. I started school in the US in 2011. I liked coming to school in the US also because each day I have learned many good things that have helped me to adjust in school. At the beginning, I was unable to understand what was going on around me, but after working really hard, I was able to understand American English more and more, and each day I have learned many good things that have helped me to adjust. In my personal experience, I have found some differences between school in Nepal and school in the US. There are different rules and regulations, teaching styles, and facilities.

Firstly, the rules and regulations of school in Nepal and school in the US are different. In America, we don’t get violent punishment if we make certain mistakes in class or in school, but in Nepal, beating as punishment is used for every mistake that we make in school. One time, my friends and I tore the papers out of a notebook and made paper wallets just for fun. When a teacher entered the class, he noticed our paper wallets. He hit us on our backs using a big bamboo stick. I felt like my back was on fire. I had a red mark on my back for a couple of days. After that moment, I felt uncomfortable communicating with my teachers. Later, when I was in a higher grade, I received physical punishment several more times. We weren’t allowed to give excuses if we made a mistake knowingly or unknowingly. For example, if we forgot to do our homework, if we got few points on a test, or if we misbehaved in class, we were punished. In America, teachers never do that. They always show love and mercy to students even if they fail to do something. After I started coming to school in America, I felt so comfortable talking with my teachers because they talked so politely, and I knew I was not going to receive any physical punishment. I felt I had found a second home in the US.

Secondly, the teaching style of both schools is different. In Nepal, we always had to memorize lots of things, but in the US, teachers help us to understand more than asking us to
memorize things. They use activities involving pair and group work, so students can practice what they learn. I really like this system of teaching. I used to memorize whole books in my country without understanding, which is pointless, but after I came to the US, I have learned to understand, which has helped me more than ever before. In Nepal, we only had two big tests the entire year. A test was given every six months. For the first test, we had to study all the things that we learned in the six months, and for the last test we had to study everything that we learned the entire year. Because of that system, some students failed, and if we failed the final, we were not allowed to go to the next grade. In the US, we have lots of homework, quizzes, and tests, which helps us to earn the points to pass the class throughout the year.

Thirdly, the school facilities and materials are different. In Nepal, we only got one notebook and textbook for each subject every year, and besides that we had to provide for ourselves the things we needed for the entire year. For example, we had to provide notebooks ourselves if we needed more. We also had to provide our lunch for ourselves, but in the US, schools provide only textbooks and lunch. In Nepal, we had to walk to our home at lunchtime, and our school didn’t have a heater or air conditioner, but in the US schools, they provide healthy meals at lunchtime. We don't have to walk to our home at lunch, and they also provide a clean and appropriate space for us to study. In Nepal, we had really cold temperatures in winter and hot in summer. When I first started high school here, I looked forward to attending school every day because of the places where I got to study. I didn’t freeze inside the class as I used to do in my country.

To conclude, rules and regulations, teaching styles, and facilities are different in the schools of Nepal and the US. Even though I have had different experiences in both schools, I got an equal amount of education in Nepal as in America, but in both schools, I learned in different ways. Learning something doesn’t depend on the school, but it depends on our passionate heart for education.

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**Sel Roti: Cultural Food of Nepal**

Sel Roti is a cultural food of Nepal. We make Sel Roti for special occasions like wedding parties, birthday parties, festivals, etc. They look like donuts, but Sel Roti is less sweet and thinner than donuts. We mainly make Roti out of rice flour, water, sugar, and cooking oil. Some people use milk, but it is better to use water if we want to keep them for a couple of days. Before making Roti, we have to wash and soak the rice overnight. After that, we have to grind it by mixing sugar and making the rice flour greasy. On the side, we have to heat the oil. After the oil is ready, we have to make a ring shape out of the greasy floor and put it in the oil by hand. We have to keep frying it until both sides turn brown or golden. We have to make sure that both sides are brown or golden. We use one big plate to keep the Roti after they are done cooking. We call it Nanglo. To serve Roti, we need some curry on the side. In Nepal, everybody loves Roti because it tastes really good.
Alone, even if there are a lot of people around you; deaf, even if you hear very well: This is the situation of an immigrant when he or she arrives in a new place. I think most of us immigrants felt these feelings when we came to America. Language is very important; without it, any person can feel alone, alienated, and lifeless. When I first arrived from Syria, I felt that I was foreign, and I couldn’t connect with people. I couldn't express my opinions, my feelings, and my thoughts. To improve my language, I tried to read the newspaper and listen to English programs on the radio. Actually, it was helpful, but it was not enough. I decided that I had to study the basics of the language, so I came to Black Hawk College in 2014. I remember that when they asked me to write a small paragraph while I was taking the Michigan Test, I wrote a paragraph full of mistakes; it was funny and was a beginner's writing. With Mrs. Anne Bollati's advice and her hopeful smile, I started to study the ESL Program's courses. I found that the ESL Program is a beneficial, complete, and skill-building program.

The ESL Program is a helpful program in many ways because it teaches English to foreign students by choosing topics from their lives and their cultures. This effective program is made for improving the English language with the use of special profitable subjects. For example, in the reading class, when students study articles about stress and culture shock, they learn English. Additionally, they realize a lot about stress and culture shock, which will help them in their new life in the United States. Moreover, the variety of topics attracts these students and facilitates their studies. For example, culture themes are very close to their thoughts. Students have a chance to share information about their own culture and learn a lot about their classmates’ cultures and American culture at the same time. Another beneficial assignment is the interview and cover letter, a writing assignment in Intermediate Grammar class. It is more than helpful. Its purpose is to teach students modal verbs and to train them to do interviews successfully in the future.

Besides, the ESL Program pays close attention to all the details like helping students with their studies, searching in books, and searching on the Internet. In fact, to make studying easy and clear, there is a large computer lab with a caring tutor. Indeed, students have many
choices; they can go to the lab when they need help, or they can go to the library, which has a great number and a variety of books, when they need to research a subject. In the library, many professional employees are ready to help. Valuable library resources, modern computers, and caring teachers make studying easier and more practical.

This complete program is composed in a smart way because it teaches all the language aspects: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar, and each class has an online component. What I like about these classes is the connection between all of them. In fact, during the time that you are taking the reading class, you also learn the basics of the writing class. “Read, read, and read. To understand any paragraph or article, you have to read it many times.” This is the golden rule that we were given in the Reading 1 class.

It's more than helpful. Also, “To write, just start with any simple words; then try to write anything that comes to your mind; then you will know what you have to write.” This was the best advice that we took advantage of in the Writing 1 class. In fact, if I compare my current writing and reading assignments with previous ones, I find a big difference.

The ESL Program plans to improve all students’ skills. Writing, reading, and searching online are essential skills in the ESL Program. For example, the discussion board in the writing and reading classes is designed cleverly because it combines many skills. First, we should write. Second, we have to read all other paragraphs. Third, we have to think and decide to which paragraph we will respond to. Another skill that the program enforces is researching a topic fully before writing about it. We learn that we have to research the topic that we are writing about in the library, print the research, write the essay, and type it. In fact, I was unfamiliar with all these skills and uncomfortable with this process since I had not taken online courses before.

In contrast, now, it has become my pleasure to take these steps. In this way, a student can continue his or her academic journey easily and increase his or her knowledge and skills, which will be very important for ESL students once they start taking classes in their chosen field.

Studying the ESL Program is like a learning package because it teaches more than one thing at once. Improving language, increasing knowledge, and gaining study skills are some of the benefits of this great program; this Program is full of advantages. Some students may think that in this Program we are given a lot of assignments, but I personally think this is the greatest advantage of it because it allows learning and practicing the new skills that we learn in class. Taking the ESL Program allowed me to challenge myself to study something new, but also rewarded me with the pleasure of success every time I tried and worked hard. Now, after I have almost finished taking the courses that this program offers, I feel more confident about myself. I can face my new life, achieve my goal, and connect with people around me. I can understand this new culture, and be a successful person in the society, especially in my future career, regardless of what I choose to do. I am not alone anymore; I can hear and understand everything. To learn another language is very hard, but with the ESL Program, it is not impossible.
Convent or Miracle
Saidanaya, is the name of my holy native town. Saidanaya as a name means (hunting gazelle). This name has a special sacred story. In the sixth century, a Byzantium emperor, whose name was Justinian, was crossing Syria with his army. They stopped in a desert and were looking for water or a lake. Suddenly, the emperor saw a gazelle near a pond. He approached to hunt it, but it transformed into a shining icon of holy Theotokos, the Holy Virgin Mary. Then, he heard a voice saying “No, thou shalt not kill me, Justinian, but thou shalt build a church for me here on this hill.” (“Holy”) After that, the holy light disappeared. After seeing that, Justinian needed a plan for the building, so he told his soldiers about the light so that they could help him make the plan. When they couldn’t, God sent a gazelle, which was the holy Virgin Mary, to Justinian in his dream to give him a great plan for the convent. After that, Justinian followed that plan and built a magnificent convent. This is how Saidanaya got its name. “Said” means hunting and “naya” means gazelle. Recently, this heavenly convent, which features one of only four icons that were painted by Saint Luke, the Evangelist, himself, has become a place of pilgrimage. Moreover, it has more than fifty nuns who take care of orphan girls.

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Dhaanto: Somali Cultural Dance

Though there are many dances in Somalia, Dhaanto is the most honored and, in fact, the most favorite and interesting dance that is held in almost every theatre in Somalia at the present. This type of traditional dance is specific to Somali speaking areas in East Africa. In the past, people used to define Dhaanto as a song which was often sung on horseback to raise the spirit of the soldiers in war periods. Presently, Dhaanto is not only a song, but also a dance that takes part in a form of competition. This competition takes places twice a year, and many Somali ethnic groups within the region participate. In Dhaanto, the dance competition, the height, the way of dressing and the judges are very important.

First of all, Dhaanto dancers must be fit because the dance is physically demanding. Most dancers are tall, and shorter dancers have disadvantages due to their physique. Dancers must continuously train to improve their stability and maintain their technique. They must be able to balance, be flexible and strong. Except for the beginning of the year, Dhaanto dancing is typically a year-round activity; dancers attend classes and competitions by combining their new ideas with their group elders’ skills to refine their competitive routine, and after competition season, they prepare for the up-coming one.

In addition to the traditional dance, the music is also part of the tradition. The music used is typically recorded by professional artists. At some competitions, the music for the dance

My name is Mohamed Ibrahim, and I was born in Kenya in a small city known as Garissa. Later on, we moved to a bigger city named Nairobi, where I finished middle school and got my high school diploma. We had a small happy family living with my grandparents, parents and my siblings. My father, whose name is Mohammud, is an accountant at a bank in Nairobi. My mother’s name is Amina Hassan. I have four siblings, two younger than me and two older. Even though, I have faced many problems in my life, I never gave up on achieving my goals. However, my main goal was to get a scholarship so that I could study abroad. I came to the USA in 2014 with the help of my aunt. I took ESL classes in the Quad Cities and took the Michigan test, which brought me into the writing class. Hopefully, I will pass this class with flying colors so that I can start college to start building my career walls.
competitions is brought to terms of appropriateness for the performers and suitable for the dancers. The quality of the music, however, is not explicitly judged. Sometimes, dance competitions may be performed without accompanying music. Although very rare, it is commonly employed to motivate the performer’s spirit by featuring the sound and rhythm of the dancer’s shoes.

Secondly, in Somalia Dhaanto competitions, the dancers are known for their way of dressing. Every group that is in the competition needs to obtain a unique way of dressing; otherwise, they will not be allowed to take part in the competition. The main purpose of differentiating the dress is to actively encourage the dancing (participation) in a group. The dress that is chosen should represent the national flag. However, dancers are free to join groups from diverse cultural backgrounds. The otherwise passive dance viewers often feel encouraged to chant or even join in the dancing. Dancers who compete in these regional competitions are mostly college students eighteen years and older. However, dancers do not attend class for their competition practice, but rather they are taught by their group elders. In contrast, dance schools often arrange for classes to compete as groups before the competition. Moreover, competitions typically begin in early March and end in December.

Finally, the judges in the competitions are usually professional dancers. As usual, they observe all the dances by sitting at the front of the audience and facing the stage. Moreover, the adjudication categories in the competition vary at different stages, but the most regularly judged section cover aspects such as the dressing style. The judges complete a worksheet for the performances and award points for costume, technique, facial expressions, impression and choreography. In addition, the judges may also disqualify a group of performers if it violates the rules of the competition. In some cases, they also record the audio comments in CD or DVD form and give it to dancers to benefit the performers as well as the choreographers.

In conclusion, Dhaanto is a common dance to illustrate a range of performance disciplines, and it is widely used to teach cultural dance. Furthermore, Somalia not only emphasizes the dance training but also publicly displays the results of each group’s performance.

**Anjero**

These sourdough pancakes are one of the Somali traditional dishes and are made daily in most Somali kitchens. They are light, spongy, chewy, and taste a bit like crumpets. We eat them for breakfast, drizzled with butter and a sprinkle of sugar. They also make a regular appearance at our lunch and dinner tables, usually served with meat based stew (*maraq*). Somali *anjero* is made in various ways. Some add eggs to the batter while others use flours, such as sorghum. Some Somalis don’t ferment their batter, but I like my *anjero* fermented. Fermentation gives *anjero* a tangy sourdough taste that is very moreish! The fermentation process takes two days. Keep a cupful of fermented batter in the fridge to start a fresh batch if you want to make more *anjero*. *Anjero* is also similar to Ethiopian *injera* bread; however, the Somali version is smaller, dinner plate sized, and thinner. Breads similar to *anjera* are common in Yemen (where it is called *lahoh*) and Israel where it was introduced by Yemeni Jews. Moroccans also make a similar bread called *baghrir* and eat it drizzled with honey and butter. Be creative: stuff *anjero* with cheese and olives or roll them with stew chicken and salad.
Nepal, the country of the Everest, is situated in the lap of the Himalayas, forming the patterns of ranges. Along with its sovereignty over most of the Himalayas, arts and crafts have played a paramount role since the origin of Nepal. Arts and Crafts in Nepal provide an interactive platform for Nepali artists; however, they also represent the artistic skills of the people living in the rural areas of Nepal.

People are attracted to the arts and crafts as a moth to the flame because they are a good income-generating task to support their family. The rich art design of Nepal is best seen in the Pagoda, Stupa, Shikhara, and Thangkha styles.

The Pagoda form of art is seen in monuments, buildings and temples across Nepal. The multiple layered roof made of carved wood, which covers a broad space, is the main feature of the Pagoda. In addition, the roofs built in this pattern are triangular spires, which look like a real bell. The most popular sites of this style can be seen in Kathmandu’s Basantapur Durwar Square, the Pashupathi temple, the Changu Narayan temple, and the Manakamana temple. This style of artwork is believed to originate from the period of the Malla Dynasty, the ancient kings of Nepal.

Stupa is another important art pattern in Nepal. Mostly, this pattern of art is reflected in monasteries of Buddhist culture. Stupas are long-
hemispherical pillar-like structures segmented into many parts and rounded at the top. This style of art is popular in the religious monuments of Buddhists. Mostly, this pattern of art is used in Buddhist temples and other places of worship. The famous sites to view the Stupa style are Baudhanath temple, Swoyambhunath temple, Maya Devi temple, etc.

Equally valuable is the Shikhara pattern in Nepalese art. This pattern of art is mostly seen in Hindu temples. It consists of five to nine vertical sections forming a high pyramidal tower. The beautifully curved wooden blocks used at the top are called Gajurs, which signify purity.

Pottery is another corner of Nepalese art and craftsmanship. This is very common in the rural areas of the country because people in the rural areas are far behind the light of technology, so people are used to working with handmade materials, which are of traditional and ancestral importance. People usually make a wheel out of bamboo or stone to rotate the mud and form it into the desired shape; the bamboo wheel is controlled by hand. People make utensils like pots, plates, spoons, cups, and trays, etc. from mud. Many old aged people seem eager to work as a potter as to show their skills in pottery.

Nepal, the sandwich between India and China, is very rich in the field of arts and crafts. Indeed, Araniko, a famous artist and architect was the first Nepalese artist to get international recognition. Seeing his artistic and architectural skills, the Chinese emperor of the time complimented, "Nepalese are not only as hard-working as ants, but also as creative as bees."

On the whole, the artistic variety, along with the rich cultural diversity and the lingual vivacity, are like the two parts of the same coin.

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**Deepawali: A Special Holiday in Nepal**

Deepawali, one of the important Hindu festivals, is one of the greatest holidays observed in Nepal. Deepawali or Deepavali is also known as Tihar, the festival of lights. This festival is celebrated for five days, and each day has its own significance. The first day starts with special honoring of the crow, for it is considered as the best messenger to the God in Hindu Culture. People offer varieties of food to crows during the first day. On the second day, people put garlands on dogs and feed them with delicious food. Dogs are considered as honest animals in Hindu culture. On the third day, special credit is given to oxen. Oxen are taken to ponds or nearby rivers to bathe, and delicious food is given to them. On the fourth day, people worship Laxmi, the goddess of wealth in the morning. Cows are worshipped because they are considered as Laxmi, the goddess of Wealth, and in the evening people light different colored Diyo, which is called deepavali. The fifth day is Bhai Teeka. On this day, brothers and sisters get together and play Deusi Bhoili. In addition, sisters put garlands on brothers, and brothers give gifts and dresses to sisters. During these five days, all offices, schools, and colleges remain closed. This is a very special festival and holiday season in Nepal. People play Deusi Bhoili and perform dances for all five days.
No More Bad Practices

Social practices are activities, rituals, festivals, and ceremonies followed by the people in a society since ancient times. Basically, social practices may be good or bad. There are many bad social practices that are based on Hindu culture. According to the Nepalese Religious Freedom Report, in the 2012 census, approximately 81.3% of Nepalese people identified themselves as Hindus. The geographical and climatic diversity along with difficult transportation and communication have resulted in a social and cultural diversity. Although social practices are strongly affected by modern societies and the influence of Western culture, some bad social practices are still performed by Hindus in the villages of Nepal. The lack of education and literacy are the contributing factors to the persistence of these practices. The three bad social practices in Hindu culture, which hinder the development of the society, are the dowry, sati and child marriage. Due to these practices, people are facing a lot of problems in their society.

Dowry refers to the property or money brought by a bride to her husband during their wedding. Dowry is one of those social practices, which Hindus still practice and spend a lot of money on. The dowry continues to be given and taken by everyone even though they know that it is a bad practice. Even among the educated people of society, the dowry is considered an essential part in the wedding ceremony. During the marriage ceremony, things like televisions,
money, vehicles, and washing machines are displayed proudly. A number of marriages break down if the bride’s parents can’t give a dowry. We have heard a lot of news regarding deaths of girls who do not bring a complete dowry. Although no one knows when and where these practices originated, it can be supposed that the dowry and bride price came into being when the monogamous marriage became more common.

Sati is a negative aspect of our culture. The former Hindu practice of a widow throwing herself onto her husband's funeral pyre is known as Sati. According to Hindu mythology, Sati, the wife of Daksha, was so desperate about the death of her husband that she threw herself on his funeral pyre and burnt herself to ashes. Since then, her name ‘Sati’ has become the common name of women who die with their husband in the fire. The custom was popular particularly in Nepal and India. After centuries, many Hindu inhabitants now disagree with the practice. Therefore, Sati is not practiced in today’s culture as it was completely removed about 75 years ago. Nowadays, widows only have to wear a white dress and cook food by themselves. They cannot eat the foods made by others because people think that other people are impure as they eat meats.

Child marriage is defined as a formal marriage or informal union before age 18. This custom originated in the Medieval Ages when there were no laws and regulations, so this practice was common. As the dowry system is practiced in Hindu culture, parents have to spend a lot of money on their daughter’s marriage. Hence, parents knowingly force their children into marriages at an early age and save their money. Every year, an estimated 15 million girls aged under 18 are married worldwide with little or no say in the matter. Neither physically nor emotionally ready, young girls marrying at an early age have a greater risk of experiencing dangerous complications in pregnancy and childbirth, becoming infected with HIV/AIDS, and suffering domestic violence. With little access to education and economic opportunities, children who marry at an early age are more likely to live in poverty. However, this practice is slightly decreasing in Hindu culture these days.

Finally, the activities that are mentioned above are bad social practices in Hindu culture, but there are many good social practices too. Worshipping gods, giving respect to elders, celebrating festivals, sharing love and happiness, dancing, language, etc. are just a few of the positive aspects of Hindu culture. Nowadays, people are educated, so the three activities described above are becoming rare in Hindu culture.
Mount Everest, which lies in Nepal, is the highest peak in the world at 29,035 feet or 8,848 meters. According to Wikipedia, it is over sixty million years old and was formed by the movement of the Indian tectonic plate pushing up against the Asian plate. It consists of different types of shale, lime stones and marble. The wind can blow over 200 mph, and the temperature can be -80 Fahrenheit. Everest is called “sagarmatha” in Nepal, which means goddess of the sky. The first person to climb Mount Everest was Tenzing Norgay Sherpa. There are 18 different climbing routes on Everest. According to Wikipedia, there is 66% less oxygen in each breath on the summit, so almost all climbers use bottled oxygen. It helps keep the climbers warm. It takes about 40 days to reach the top. The legal age to climb Mount Everest is 16 from Nepal’s side and 18 from China’s side. Sherpas are the people who live near Everest and help tourists to train and climb. They have migrated from Tibet over the last several 100 years. Thousands of tourists come to visit Nepal every year to climb Mount Everest. It is the pride of Nepal.

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Two Unique Nepalese Festivals

Nepal is known as the land of festivals. There are more than 50 festivals that are celebrated every year, and most of these festivals are related to different Hindu and Buddhist gods and goddesses. These festivals bring together all the Nepalese people of diverse cultural backgrounds as one nation. Specifically, Nepalese people celebrate two great religious festivals, Dashain and Tihar, with blessings, harmony, peace, fun, and worship of all gods. All government offices, educational institutions, like schools/colleges, and other offices remain closed during these occasions, and it makes them a joyful time of the year.

“Long dark winter nights always make us feel how important sunny days are.” Dashain symbolizes this proverb to all the Nepalese people because it comes once a year, and it reflects the importance of the family. Dashain, which is a 15 day long celebration, is the biggest religious festival of Nepal. It starts in September or October during the bright lunar fortnight and ends on the day of the full moon. It is one of the most favorable festivals for us. During this festival, mostly Nepalese Hindus worship countless gods and goddesses with sacrifice of thousands of animals in the name of the gods. Similarly, flying kites has been a very important part of celebrating Dashain in the whole country. Not only the children participate, but all ages of people join to celebrate on the roofs of the houses with different colors and shapes of kites. Inside the family, all adult members pass their time by getting together and playing cards for fun. However, the most memorable and entertaining part of the celebration is a bamboo swing, which we call Ping. The rope for the swing is made from bamboo and coconut tree leaves. All people swing during this festival to forget their tensions for a
while and to enjoy the festival, and people used to think that it will bring more happiness and take away the stresses of life.

The second largest festival of Nepal is Tihar. Tihar is the festival of lights, flowers and fruits. It is a five-day festival, which comes soon, only 15 days, after the Dashain festival. The first three days of the festival are all about worshiping birds and other animals including: crows, cows and dogs; it is also about worshiping the goddess of wealth. During this festival, every street and city is clean and glorious with the smell of marigold flowers. All day and night, people celebrate by singing and dancing to the festival's songs and enjoy great home cooked meals. The fifth day is considered the final day of the festival, and it is about brothers and sisters. It symbolizes the strong relationship between them. On this day, all sisters vertically put seven different colors on the forehead of their brothers and pray for their brothers’ long-life and progress in the future, and in exchange, the brothers give some money or gifts to their sisters.

In addition, we have more than 50 festivals that we celebrate in Nepal, but as immigrants here in the United States, we just celebrate these two festivals because we don’t have a large Nepalese community and also limited time. I think there are lots of differences between the celebrations of the festivals here and back in our country. In Nepal, we used to celebrate by singing and dancing in front of every house in the community. In the U.S., if we celebrated in the same way, we could get arrested for disturbing to other neighbors. So, we just celebrate this festival with our own family. Therefore, most of us desperately miss our country during the celebration of our festivals.

Nepalese Momo

Nepalese Momo is one of the most delicious delicacies of Nepal. It was derived from Tibetan food. It is a kind of fast food, which is mostly sold in the markets or bazaars of Nepal. Among the other fast foods, it tends to attract tourists’ attention. Momo is the most common food in Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, and Northern India, too. Mostly, people who live at high altitudes usually eat this food to get warm because it is hot, fresh, and spicy. This food isn’t linked to to any religion or tradition, and we also don’t need any special occasion to eat it, but people usually prepare this food during off days to enjoy over the weekends. In Nepal, some people like to eat Momo with meat, but it could be made vegetarian, too. For vegetarians, people make it from cabbage or green papayas; and for non-vegetarians, people make it from pork, beef, chicken and buffalo meat.
The Culture of Feeding Infants: Brazil versus the USA

According to Collins Dictionary, the term eating habits means "the way the person or group eats, considered in terms of what types of food are eaten, in what order, quantities, and when". These habits have always been linked to cultural factors, so even though the science of nutrition is the same worldwide, how to feed the population depends on the country. Since I worked as a dietitian in Brazil and I have two little kids, the food culture in the United States wakes my curiosity and interest, and in the short time I have lived here, I can see that some aspects of food introduction to babies are different from those in Brazil.

First of all, breastfeeding is widespread among Brazilians from birth until the age of two. The mothers receive encouragement through the maternity leave minimum of four months and the hourly load reduction of two months after the mother’s return to work. In the United States, the maternity leave is around twelve weeks; however, most of companies do not pay their employees during this period; hence, many mothers choose to return to work earlier, reducing the chances of mother’s breastfeeding their babies for a prolonged time. In fact, in Brazil, it is possible to see mother’s breastfeeding their babies in public places, and that is considered very natural by the population. However, during the twenty months that I have been here in the USA, I’ve never seen a mother nursing her child in public.

Another difference that I noticed is the use of ready-made food in jars or plastic containers in the food introduction of babies, which is not common among Brazilian families. Because we try to encourage a balanced diet, low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium in order to prevent chronic diseases, such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension and obesity, Brazilians avoid offering ready-
made baby food to their children. Brazilians usually prepare soups and baby food using fresh food, often from their gardens or directly from farmers. Nevertheless, since the technology of food production in the US is more advanced than in Brazil, then, it is possible to find ready-made food of good nutritional quality. Furthermore, due to the rush of everyday life, Americans opt for practicality while Brazilians usually cook their own meals from scratch. In Brazil, women learn to cook early, and few families have meals in restaurants regularly; instead, it is most common for mothers to cook at home daily.

Finally, although Brazil has followed the guidelines of the American Dietetic Association, some adaptations were made due to cultural differences. Since in the United States the children are more motivated to acquire independence early on, it is possible to observe some peculiarities in feeding as well. For example, in the US parents teach their children to feed themselves at an early age while in Brazil children are spoon-fed for a longer time. Also, the method "baby-led weaning", in which the baby is introduced to the same foods the family eats without mechanical modifications (blending or mashing), is only recommended in Brazil in children over one year of age because before that they do not yet have the number of sufficient teeth and reflections for a good chew. However, despite the choking hazard, in the USA the consumption of finger foods begins earlier in general, sometimes as soon as the food introduction begins.

To conclude, when I got here, I soon realized many cultural differences, including the feeding of children. Making a general analysis, I have noticed the tendency to independence and practicality among Americans from the first days of life while Brazilians tend to play the role of "assistants" in the feeding of children. Certainly, feeding is one of the most important human activities, not only for obvious biological reasons, but also because it involves cultural aspects.

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**Chimarrão: Cultural Symbol of Southern Brazil**

Chimarrão (or mate) is a characteristic drink in southern Brazil, discovered by the Indians and later used by the colonizers. Chimarrão consists of a gourd to store the yerba, a pump to suck the liquid, ground yerba mate to provide flavor, and warm water to infuse, and it is a strong representation of Brazilian culture. The yerba used to prepare chimarrão consists of leaves from a tree typically grown in South America and has physiologic effects related to the presence of caffeine and polyphenols that provide a bitter taste as well as antioxidants. Chimarrão is consumed daily between the main meals, and it can be taken alone or with friends as it is considered a form of social interaction and integration. Because of its stimulant properties, chimarrão is for south Brazilians as coffee is for Americans; that is, it is a perfect infusion to relax in between some tasks or to incite physical and mental activity.
"When in Rome, do as the Romans do." This proverb means that when you are in a new country with a new culture, do what the local people do and respect their manners. "Easier said than done." This idiom came to my mind when I arrived in the U.S. Lots of people, including me and my friends, have experienced embarrassing situations with a different language and different manners.

Language is always the most important thing when you go to another country because you have to talk to and understand other people. In the U.S., people frequently use proverbs, slang, and idioms in their daily life, but it is really hard for foreigners to figure out the meaning. When I lived in a dormitory, my roommate was very busy every day, so I never saw her in the apartment. One day, I asked her, "Why are you always busy? Sometimes, I don't see you for a few days." "I am wearing two hats," she answered me. I was most surprised and wondered if American people loved hats. Do they have to wear two hats on some special day? Do I have to buy hats? I was so confused and asked her slowly, "Why do you have to wear two hats? Do American people have to wear two hats on some days?" She laughed and told me wearing two hats means having several responsibilities, like having two jobs.

Also, foreigners often use a wrong word in certain situations. One time, I was taking the bus. When the bus arrived at the station, I was going to get off the bus; however, lots of people were standing near the bus door. Therefore, I got off the bus and said "Sorry" to the people who gave way to me. Suddenly, a woman stood ahead of me and said, "You didn't do anything wrong. Why do you say sorry? Don't say sorry to us." I was so shocked and embarrassed because everybody was looking at me and laughing. However, in China, "sorry" and "excuse me" are one word, and in this situation, most Chinese people would say "sorry." Anyway, through this incident, I knew that "sorry" is more
serious than “excuse me,” and in this situation, I should have said “Excuse me.”

In addition to the language, different manners can also cause a foreigner to have an embarrassing moment. Before he came to the U.S., one of my friends, Jonathan, heard someone say American people hug and kiss people when they meet. Thus, when he came to the U.S. and met his roommates, he hugged and kissed them. His roommates were scared. He continued that a few more times until one day a woman rejected him and told him Americans don’t hug and kiss people when they first meet. Because of this, his friends joke and say to him, “Do you want to kiss me today?” and “Jonathan, hug me.”

All in all, each country has a different culture, and I think all foreigners have had some embarrassing moment with language, manners, or something else. Sometimes, you just laugh or feel awkward; sometimes, however, it could make you offend the local people unintentionally.

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**Chinese Knot**

China, which is a continuous ancient civilization in the world, has a rich and complex culture. Therefore, China has lots of unique items, and the Chinese knot is one of them. In ancient times, almost all people would hang it on their waistband with jades or a sachet. Now, people don’t hang it on their waistband anymore, but they hang it in their houses or cars. The Chinese knot stands for longevity, reunion, and peace. First of all, the Chinese knot implies having a long life because it is made with only one long string. It also means China has a long history and civilization, which has never been interrupted. Secondly, the Chinese knot is composed of many little knots that signify all family members together. Furthermore, it refers to the big family of China, which is composed of 23 provinces and 53 ethnic groups. Finally, the Chinese knot looks like the Chinese word “安,” which means peace in English. Therefore, Chinese people believe that it will bless them. On the whole, although China has a number of unique items, the Chinese knot is one of the most special and important items in China because of its implied meanings: longevity, family, and peace.
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