

Language & Culture Center

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Voices 2010 S u m m e r



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The Language and Culture Center awards four scholarships each term to returning students who best combine academic excellence and leadership with international awareness and cross-cultural understanding. Traditionally, one full scholarship honors Joyce Merrill Valdes, the founder and first director of the LCC. A second full scholarship honors Joseph O. Davidson, who served as director of the LCC for 22 years before retiring in 2006. These two full scholarships cover the cost of tuition, fees, and medical insurance for one term of study in the Intensive English Program. In addition, the LCC awards merit scholarships of \$1500 each for one term of study in the Intensive English Program. At the spring graduation ceremony on Thursday, April 29, 2010, the LCC awarded the Valdes scholarship to **Waleed Khalid Eilia Al-Hadad**, the Davidson scholarship to **Cristina Trujillo**, and the two merit scholarships to **Igor Landry Bado** and **Mohamed Hadji Traore**.

Waleed Khalid Eilia Al-Hadad was awarded the Valdes scholarship. **Mr. Al-Hadad**, who is from Iraq, speaks Arabic and is currently studying in level four. This is his second term at the LCC. After he completes his study of English, he plans to care for his parents and possibly continue his education. **Mr. Al-Hadad** said of receiving the scholarship, "I will not forget in all my days the



teachers who supported me. I appreciate this nation that does not discriminate among citizens and international students when awarding scholarships to anyone who is entitled."

Cristina Trujillo was awarded the Davidson scholarship. **Ms. Trujillo** is from Venezuela and speaks Spanish. She is studying in level six. After completing the intensive English program, she is planning to look for a job in Houston to gain some professional experience that will be very useful by the time she decides to study for her MBA. She has already earned a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in finance. **Ms. Trujillo** remarked, "Receiving the Joseph O. Davidson scholarship as a recognition of my dedication was a pleasure. It was a big motivation to continue with my studies, and it showed me once again that academic excellence and responsibility are the most important qualifications for success in your life no matter where you are."



Igor Landry Bado was a recipient of a merit scholarship. **Mr. Bado** is from Burkina Faso and speaks French. He is studying in level five this term. After he completes his study of English, he plans to begin working toward his PhD in biochemistry at the University of Houston. Upon receiving the scholarship **Mr. Bado** commented, "I was so surprised! Although I was happy, receiving an



LCC scholarship was more of a sign for me to study hard because I was not alone in believing in my dream. Thank you so much."

Mohamed Hadji Traore was also a recipient of a merit scholarship. **Mr. Traore** who is from Mali, has been at the LCC for two terms.



He began studying in level two and by virtue of his diligence and hard work, skipped to level four where he is studying now. He has a bachelor's degree in finance. **Mr. Traore** commented, "Before I came to Houston, I was afraid to learn English, but the good English program at the LCC helped me to overcome my fear. After my English studies, I plan to pursue my master's degree in finance. I want to be a financial analyst, and I think the University of Houston is the best place to do that."

We congratulate **Waleed Khalid Eilia Al-Hadad**, **Cristina Trujillo**, **Igor Landry Bado**, and **Mohamed Hadji Traore** on their outstanding records, and we wish them great success as they continue to study in the United States.

From
the
Desk
of

Sandra Hartmann,
Associate Director





From the Director's Desk by Joy Tesh

I love being the director of the Language and Culture Center at the University of Houston! I can't imagine a better place to work. When I interview prospective teachers for our Intensive English Program, I always find a way to say, "I can promise you the best colleagues in the field of English as a Second Language and the best students of English as a Second Language in the entire world." I tell them the truth. I love to come to work every day and to be in the middle of all this intelligence and energy and excitement. Thank you, students and friends, for making the LCC an amazing place to work and to study.

If you have checked out our web site recently, you may already know that this wonderful program has achieved re-accreditation! In my last Voices article, I reported that the LCC hoped to become re-accredited through the Commis-

sion on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) in April 2010. Accreditation by CEA demonstrates that an English language program or institution has met nationally accepted standards of excellence and assures students and their sponsors that the program's English language instruction and related student services will be of the highest quality.

During 2009, the teachers and administrators at the LCC worked hard to complete a self-study, examining every aspect of our program and seeking to constantly improve curriculum, student services, policies, procedures, and the entire LCC experience. I am so very happy to report that the commission has completed its review and made its decision and that the LCC is now fully accredited through April 2020.

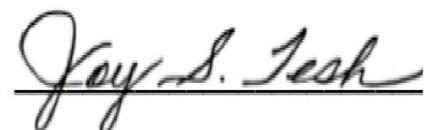
As we celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the LCC this summer, I cherish the memories of many students and colleagues and friends. I am the third director of the Language and Culture Center. Dr. Joyce Merrill Valdes, our first director, served from 1975 to 1983. She was the director who had the vision and did the hard work to get this program started. She was also the director who hired me as a teacher and gave me the opportunity to begin this journey. Dr. Joseph O. Davidson followed Dr. Valdes and served as director from 1983 through 2005. Dr. Davidson was my mentor and my friend, and I am sure that the only reason I had the courage to apply for this job that I love is that I had learned from him exactly what is involved in direct-

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ing an Intensive English Program. Dr. Davidson and I worked together for twenty-three years. He retired on January 31, 2006, and he will always be remembered for his inspiring leadership, his honesty, his fairness, and his very high standards. We thank Dr. Valdes and Dr. Davidson for dedicating their lives and careers to excellence in education for international students.

I congratulate you on your decision to study in the Language and Culture Center this summer. You can be sure that you have chosen a dynamic Intensive English Program with an excellent history and tradition of service to students. You can also be sure that you have chosen a dynamic university, which celebrates and welcomes international students.

This summer, we have been delighted to have 385 students from 37 countries in our vibrant and growing program. We are working hard to make sure we give you the best program possible. LCC teachers, counselors, administrators, and I hope you have had great experiences in our classes and on the University of Houston campus. I wish you the best as you complete the summer term of 2010, and I look forward to seeing many of you again as you return in September for the fall term of 2010 in the Language and Culture Center.



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Broken & Mended

A Trip by Bicycle

Yuta Imoto, Level 4 JAPAN

Many people like to travel by bicycle, and I am one of them. However, I experienced an exhausting and lonely trip many years ago during my summer vacation in junior high school.

When I was 14 years old, I planned to go by bicycle alone to Kyoto, which is a very historical city in Japan. Kyoto is two days by automobile from Tokyo, where I lived. The trip by bicycle took about a week. While I was passing a steep hill in Hakone at midnight, I had a horrible experience. On the top of the hill, my bicycle had a flat tire, so I was not able to ride the bicycle. I was surrounded by gloomy forests. There were no homes and no shops. I was terrified by being there. I decided to walk down the hill and look for shelter for the night.

After walking for about three hours, I discovered an old Japanese temple. Although the temple was creepy and quiet, I decided to knock on the door for help because I was exhausted. After I knocked five times, the door opened, and the chief priest came out. He kindly asked me who I was and what had happened to me. I explained what had happened during the last three

hours. After listening to my story, the priest welcomed me, took me into a hall, and prepared a bed for me for the night. I felt relieved because I never wanted to spend the night outside alone.

The following day, I thanked him and resumed my trip. If the priest had not been there, I don't know what could have happened to me. Although he did not tell me his name, I will never forget his kindness. Ever since, I have always done my best to help those who are in trouble.

~ ~ ~

The Final Game

Kassoum Traore, Level 4 MALI

After playing for only ten minutes, I discovered I was the hero in a final soccer game. It was an unforgettable day in my life. I do not know whether it was my destiny or not, but my choice just changed the way the game unfolded.

First of all, I was not the best player on my team but only one of them, and we had won most of the competitions in which we had participated. The game was very important for not only my team but also my neighborhood.

We had won game after game, and therefore, we had qualified for the final game. However, before the start of the game, my team had lost three good players. I had been sick, another player had been injured, and still another one had left on a trip.

When the game started, I was having a transfusion. Suddenly, some-

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one came and told me that our team was in a difficult situation. As soon as my transfusion was finished, I immediately went to the field and found that in order to win, my team had to score two goals, and there were only ten minutes left.

It was so sad for me to watch my team and to see the dream of my fans crushed. After thinking for a few seconds, I decided to take part in the game without thinking about my own health. My coach thought that I had lost my mind, but he finally allowed me to play.

I had no sooner got the ball than I scored one goal. I could not believe it. Then during overtime, we got a penalty kick. Nobody wanted to shoot that penalty, which would decide the winner. People started to shout my name aloud and encouraged me to shoot it. I was doubtful, but I took my courage in my hands and shot it. It was my second goal and also the end of the game! We won!

I can never forget that day, which not only made me a hero but also made me feel proud of myself. I have never been as happy as I was on that day. Those who watched me play the game even called me Beckenbauer, who played in the World Cup final in 1974 with one hand broken and won the cup. I think it was just my lucky day.

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An Emotional Day

Pegah Zabihi Samani,
Level 3
IRAN

Two years ago, my family decided to travel to the south of Iran. I was not ready to join them, and I did not want to go. On the way, I felt stressed because I thought a bad event would happen. I tried to change my mind, but I could not. Then I decided to go to sleep. My dad was driving. He always drives fast. The way was very dangerous. I woke up suddenly when I heard somebody scream, and I saw a light. I don't remember anything else.

We had had an accident with a big truck on a rainy night. An ambulance took us to a hospital in the nearest city. During the accident, something cut my forehead and eyebrows, so the doctors moved me to a surgery room to stitch my face.

When I woke up two days after the accident, I realized that I was in a hospital. I didn't know what had happened to us. I was very scared. I felt pain in my body, especially in my head. I couldn't move. I thought something heavy was on my body. I couldn't open my eyes because my face was swollen and bruised. I was worried about my parents because they were not in the room with me. My aunts and uncles were in my room, and I asked where my parents were. I was told they were okay.

I was having a hard time. Minutes moved slowly. I cried because I wanted to see my parents, but they were in another hospital. I couldn't believe that they were okay. One week after the accident when I finally saw my parents, I felt like I had regained the whole world. I was so happy, and I forgot my pain. We were happy when we understood we were healthy and alive.

Family members took care of us for one month. I lost a lot of blood, and I had to go to the hospital every day. After ten days, the doctors said I didn't need more surgery. I was very lucky, but I had to take a lot of pills for two months to make sure that everything was okay. After two months, our stressful lives finally returned to normal.

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The Biggest Problem Among Young Chinese

Yan Zhou (Joy), Level 5
CHINA

In China, Internet addiction has become the biggest problem among young people, attracting more and more attention from the public. In 2009, a report about young people's Internet addiction was published by the Chinese Internet Juvenile Association. The report shows that around twenty million teenagers have Internet addiction in China. Among these computer addicts, most of them are between eighteen and twenty-three, and people between twenty-four to twenty-nine come second.

Recently, the effects and solutions to Internet addiction have become

usual topics that are often talked about on TV and radio. Internet addiction causes both personal problems and social problems for these addicts. In Chengdu, a boy who was fifteen years old kept playing Internet games overnight and died suddenly. His mom said that he had been a healthy boy before he started playing Internet games. This is not the only case of sudden deaths in front of the computer. The most recent case happened two months ago. In Hefei, a twenty-three year-old young man was found dead after playing computer games for two weeks without good rest. The tragedies drew people's attention.

Several Internet addiction treatment centers have been built to help teenagers. Psychology departments of hospitals have set specific programs to help Internet addicts. In schools, experts and professors give students and parents advice to avoid addiction. With the whole society working together, I think tragedies due to Internet addiction will be better controlled.





Celebration!

Honduran Independence Day

Jennifer Contarero, Level 2 HONDURAS

My favorite holiday is September 15, Independence Day in my country, Honduras. We spend the day celebrating the anniversary of our independence. In the morning, we go to the Metropolitan Stadium and sing the national anthem in a ceremony. We watch soldiers march in a parade along with students from all over the country. In the afternoon, people come to our house to celebrate with us. There is food, beverages, music, and dancing. In the evening, we go to the park for a walk, and usually, the children play among themselves. This day is very important and fun for us. Our anniversary of independence

is exciting for me because it represents the liberty in all aspects of our lives.

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Kazakh New Year

Aidana Tokova, Level 2 KAZAKHSTAN

Each country has its own traditional celebrations. Kazakhstan celebrates a lot of holidays. However, the main holiday we celebrate is on March 22. It is Kazakh New Year. Before this holiday, women prepare a lot of traditional dishes, such as *beshparmak*, *baursaki*, and *palau*. On the holiday, we cook our main traditional dish. It is called *kozhe*. *Kozhe* is a soup with seven ingredients: rice, raisins, pearl barley, corn, meat, *grechko*, and wheat. People don't eat this soup with a spoon. We drink this soup in a small traditional cup. On this day, the door of every house is open to everybody. On Kazakh New Year, there is always a parade. People often wear national clothes. During this parade, people eat food for free. In the evening, we have a concert with famous singers. In addition, we always play traditional Kazakh games, and we also dance. People wait until midnight because at this time we can see beautiful fireworks. Kazakh New Year is the main traditional holiday for Kazakh people.

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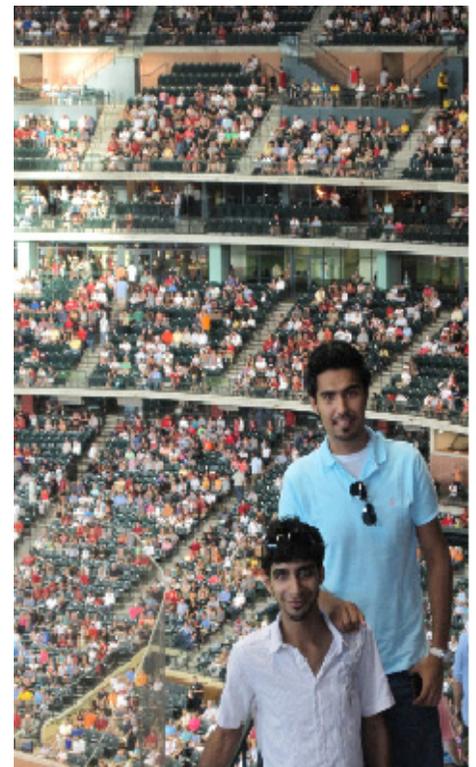
Qarqe'an

Safa Almustafa, Level 2 SAUDI ARABIA

Qarqe'an is a wonderful and ama-

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zing event for many people in the Middle East, especially Gulf people. It's on the 15th of Ramadan. On that night, children go to their neighbors' homes to receive candy, potato chips, and ice cream. Some people also give money. The kids are happy on this night. It's really fun, and all the people decorate their homes and keep their lights on all the time. People walk with their kids along the streets singing and dancing while some drive along in cars. On this night, the streets are very beautiful because everybody walks together. Finally, it's a holy night because the angels come from the sky, and God keeps the sky open to answer our prayers.



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Ramadan

Eid Alotaibi, Level 2 SAUDI ARABIA

Ramadan is my favorite month of the year. This month has a lot of important things. In Ramadan, we fast from sunrise to sunset. During the month, we pray to God. Also, we help our family. For example, we go to the grocery store to bring their orders, or my sisters help my mother in the kitchen. When we eat, all of my family sits together. After eating in the evening, we enjoy watching TV and talking. The special thing about Ramadan is that the rich and poor people are equal. In this month, everyone feels more relaxed and comfortable. After Ramadan, there are three days called Eid Al-Fitr. On these days, all my relatives visit each other. Finally, Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr are great days every year. In my opinion, these days are interesting and exciting.

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Scary Halloween

Sami Bamatraf, Level 4 SAUDI ARABIA

Every year, on October 31, people around the world celebrate Halloween with children dressing up and playing trick or treat. My first celebration was last year here in Los Angeles, USA, where there were a lot of scary games and where people painted their faces to intimidate anyone who was around them.

I went with my older brother and two of my cousins, but before we left for Los Angeles, each of us tried to make ourselves look scary. I put on a mask that looked really horrible. It had a wide nose with a big green bump and uncombed yellow hair on it, which made the mask look even more hideous. My brother put on a long leather jacket with a hood that covered most of his face. He looked like the god of darkness. However, when we arrived at Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles, at around 6:00 p.m., everything was calm, and nobody seemed to care very much about Halloween. It was not like what we had heard. Suddenly, I read a sign which said Haunted Hotel. I enthusiastically told my brother and cousins to go into this place because it looked so interestingly frightening.

We bought tickets and went into that hotel. Inside, it was completely dark, and there were scary voices. I thought that as long as my brother and my cousins were with me, nothing would scare me. Once we started walking, everyone was talking just to know we were together. However, after a little while, all our voices disappeared at once. I was scared to death. I wanted to go back, but I couldn't find the way out.

I kept walking along the hallway until I found a red light coming from a room in front of me. I knew that there must be something terrible inside the room, but I decided to go inside anyway. When I opened the door, the light suddenly turned off, and I heard loud screams. I also screamed and suddenly felt so scared that I kept

myself close to the wall. This, however, was not a good idea because all of a sudden I hit something that felt like a human body. I screamed again and asked with a shaking voice, "Who is this?" At that very moment, the light turned on again and the body turned around and screamed at me and shouted loudly "Get away from me! Get away from me!" I looked at it carefully and found out that it was only my brother! He almost scared me to death!



Coming To America



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Finally in the USA

Kun-Ching Chen, Level 3 TAIWAN

What a terrible and precious experience: my first time to fly and alone. It was a very long trip, and I had to change planes twice. I did not have family or friends to talk with. There were many things I had to handle by myself. I could not speak English well. When I arrived at the L.A. airport, I had only one hour to look for the connecting flight and to deal with many arrival procedures. The L.A. airport is very large and complex. I was afraid that I could not find the right gate in time for the connecting flight. With my poor English, I asked the service staff for help. However, they didn't understand what I said, and I didn't understand them. Finally, I drew some pictures and wrote some simple words to explain what I needed. Then they gave me a lot of help. That flight to Houston was a precious growing up experience for me, but it was also a terrible experience.

Now I have been in the USA for one month, but I still cannot understand most of the words in my classes. Most of the time I am in class, I am blank. I hope that I can learn English and make friends quickly. Living in the USA is my decision, and my parents support my decision. I quit my job and broke up with my girlfriend to study English here. To learn something new is very important to me. I believe that living in the USA will become the most precious experience of my life.

The LCC Experience

Euridice Cortez, Level 6 ANGOLA

I have studied at the Language and Cultural Center for three semesters, and it has been one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. Here, I have not only learned English but also how to be more confident and to work hard.

Studying at the LCC is an amazing opportunity because you have the chance to know more about other cultures and their beliefs. The LCC is made up of a huge variety of students who have no reason to feel sad or depressed because the LCC staff are very friendly and always make sure that their students feel comfortable and are in an enjoyable environment.

I came from a country where the teachers do not have much patience. If a student doesn't get something, they will not explain it to them more than three times, but at the LCC, this doesn't happen. LCC teachers are very patient and egalitarian.

This intrigued me because LCC teachers don't give up on their students; they encourage the students and make sure that everybody understands. They also treat all students equally, no matter how smart one student is.

The LCC is my second family, and I know that no matter what, I can always count on them.

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ences. As a student, you should understand that your families have had their own experiences, but now it is *your* chance.



Leaving Your Family to Study Abroad

Cristina Trujillo, Level 6 VENEZUELA

As an international student who has been studying abroad for two years, I understand that it is really hard to decide to study abroad because one has to leave their family and friends. I am sure that all of you were afraid the day you left your countries, especially when you realized that after that moment, you became responsible for creating a new life in a new country where you did not know anyone. However, this new experience has become one of the most amazing experiences of your life. The opportunity to interact with people from many cultures, discover different customs, and become involved in a new society is what gives a unique value to this experience.

As a recommendation for other international students, I say that the key to enjoying this new adventure is to have a positive attitude and a strong desire to learn from every single situation. After making the decision to go and study in another country, students must encourage themselves to build their new social environment and to take advantage of every great opportunity that appears during their studies.

Students should appreciate the most valuable thing we have in our life: education, which must be built by both our studies and life experi-



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The Drive to the Airport

Angela L.D Rodrigues, Level 6 ANGOLA

Decades it felt for the due date to come,
But a fraction of a minute to arrive at the
Airport for the flight to the States.
It was a horrible moment I had to endure,
Watching my parents cry, having no tears
And giving nothing in return,
But to wander in my emptiness.
Till this date, the emptiness lingers and
It scares me so, as days pass by, physical
Adaptation is visible, but emotionally, I fear I
Will not survive. Yes, I have friends, yes I interact
With others, but, it's not enough to fill
My emptiness:
Only the smile of a loved one
In a distant land.

Home Is Where the Heart Is

Grandfather's House

Fahad Al-Naemi, Level 3 QATAR

On weekends, I used to visit many places where I felt comfortable and happy. However, my grandfather's house was and is one of the best places. My grandfather's small house of mud and stone was built a long time ago. There are only four small rooms for a big family. A well is in the middle of the house for water for drinking, washing, and cooking. My father and my uncles grew up in this house, which holds a lot of their memories. When I walk in, I feel the cracked walls are telling me stories about the cruelties of life and that the broken doors are explaining a simple life without technology. It is a small house, and life there was difficult, but they lived it smilingly. From this house, I learned many things that have affected my life. I learned to respect people, to do everything myself, and to be helpful. From the windows of this house, I can sense the struggle for a living. That gives me courage to be strong when I am discouraged. I miss this house and everything there.

~ ~ ~

My Childhood Nest

Haitem Rabti, Level 3 LIBYA

My family was most important for me when I was a child because I depended on them a lot. I espe-

cially depended upon my father and my mother who were the main poles between which I spent most of my time, learning and discovering the new things in life from my first cry to this moment. In addition, my brothers and sisters were helpful and inspired my imagination when we escaped from doing homework to play together.

My favorite place, where I usually did my homework, was my study. It was equipped with nice furniture, such as a study table with a comfortable chair, and a bookshelf. After I finished studying, I laid myself on the warm, soft, comfortable bed not far from a window through which I could see the garden where my brothers and I played football on weekends.

To conclude, the house of my childhood was the place where I spent the greatest and most amazing times. That house was the factory where this human was made to keep life going on. It was my childhood nest.

~ ~ ~

My Mother's House

Lucio Baião, Level 3 ANGOLA

My mother's house is located in a small village Kabala five kilometer away from Luanda, the capital city of Angola. I still remember my childhood in my mother's village, where the cocoa trees surround the small house giving it the special atmosphere of an exotic place. I remember the fragrance from the cocoa tree and the noisy birds that a child could never forget for the rest of his life. Kabala was so

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calm and serene. In addition, my mother's house was so welcoming that everyone could come around even to drink the fresh water from the river located near the village. In front of the house, there was a big field where kids from everywhere played with others.

When the sun shone, my mother used to cook outside on a big veranda to avoid the high temperature from the kitchen. The kitchen was the best part of the house because that is where my mother used to prepare the most delicious food. The kitchen was big, and it had a big table, which was used to eat food on and talk about all types of things during the day and for studying at night. There was not a lot of furniture, but the small house was very organized.

~ ~ ~

The Houses Where I Grew Up

Mshael Alturki, Level 3 SAUDI ARABIA

I am lucky because I grew up in two houses. I was born in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. When I lived in Riyadh, my family lived in an apartment that had two bedrooms, but my mother and I spent most of our time in my grandparents' house. It was a very big house with a big swimming pool and a beautiful garden where my cousins and I played. My grandparents' house was like heaven to me. I still remember how my

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grandmother took me to the nearest toyshop every weekend to get a new toy. When it was time to leave my grandparents' house, I did not want to go back home to our small apartment.

After five years, my father moved his work to Jeddah, and we moved with him. In Jeddah, we had a small villa with a lot of children living nearby. One neighbor had a girl my age and in the same school. We went to school together every day and did our homework together with my mother. I had an amazing time. I wish these times could come back again.

Weddings

A Wedding in Burkina Faso

Salikou Traore, Level 2 BURKINA FASO

A wedding is a marriage ceremony and the party and special meal that take place after the ceremony. In Burkina Faso, a wedding is an alliance between two huge families who know each other. It's accomplished by the bond between two individuals with family consent. First, the girl is betrothed from birth or at a very young age. Then a few years before the wedding, the parents of the groom bring the dowry. This dowry usually includes 350 to 390 cowries, one guinea fowl for the mother of the bride,

one hen, and a small amount of money. After that, the bride stays in a room for three nights. On the fourth day, all the elderly people are invited to a small ceremony. This takes place in a mosque and is led by the imam. Everyone prays for the peace, happiness, and health of the couple. The next Thursday, there's another celebration, a bigger one where everybody eats, drinks, and dances. Now the couple is married, and the groom has to take care of and protect his wife forever. Wedding celebrations are really very interesting in Burkina Faso. Some people say it's a privilege to attend one.

~ ~ ~

My Sister's Wedding

Doussouba Camara, Level 3 MALI

My sister's wedding was a successful ceremony held during a Christmas holiday. My family spent four months preparing for this wedding. One month before the wedding, my father repainted our house and changed most of the furniture. At this same time, we were sending invitations to guests in our city and other cities.

Two weeks before the wedding, my sister chose her dress and accessories. In addition, my sister had an important appointment with a special woman over fifty years old called *Magnambaga*. In our culture, the bride has to stay in her father's house with that woman for three days before the wedding. That special woman took care of my sister by controlling her diet and giving her marriage advice.

On the morning of the wedding day at the crack of dawn, my sister went to the beauty shop for hair styling and make-up. She returned home at 8:30 AM and was very pretty in her white dress. My parents, brothers, sisters, and I wore beautiful new clothes.

Later the same morning, the groom came to our house and took my sister to the court house where a judge made their union official. Most of the guests followed my sister and her new husband to that place. After the court house ceremony, the bride and groom returned to our home and took pictures with my parents and guests. In front of our house, there was traditional music and dancing. My sister and her husband spent a couple of hours at home and afterwards went to another reception with the younger generation. Everyone enjoyed being there; we danced and ate many different foods.

In the afternoon, only the men went to the mosque to celebrate the religious aspect of the wedding. They prayed for the bride and the groom. After that, *Magnambaga* washed my sister's face, hands, and legs in the presence of the female guests while another person sang religious songs. Later in the evening, the groom's sisters came to our home and took my sister to her new husband.

Three days later, parents and some close friends collected the gifts and brought them to my sister and her husband in their new house. My sister's wedding was wonderful. It is one of my favorite memories, which I will never forget.

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**My Sister's  
Wedding Day**

**Linh Nguyen, Level 3  
VIETNAM**

Like everywhere all over the world, a wedding in Vietnam is always a special and very important event for those who fall in love. I will always remember my sister's wedding day because it made such an impression on my family and me.

I remember that it was a busy time for my sister and my family. Three months before the wedding day, we had the engagement day. On that day, parents of the groom came to my house with six cases of gifts just for the engagement. These gifts are usually wine, tea, cakes, and certain traditional items. When the groom's family came to ask permission for their son to be part of our family, we had a small party in our house. After that party, my parents shared our gifts with neighbors. From that time to the wedding ceremony, the bride and groom were very busy making reservations, choosing invitations, making guest lists, taking pictures, and decorating their new house. Also, my sister needed to buy a traditional, red dress with an embroidered dragon on it and a red hat.

The special day finally came. Early in the morning, my family dressed up and decorated our house with special wedding decorations. In our living room, we had an attractive altar with a beautiful dragon and phoenix made from fruit. Later that morning, the groom's family of twenty or more people came. They

brought eight more cases of gifts: food, fruit, an entire barbecued pig, money, and jewelry. After the bride and groom prayed in front of our altar, family groups came forward to give them best wishes and gifts. Then the groom's family took the bride to their house. There, the bride and groom prayed again in front of the altar to present to the groom's forefathers this new member of their family. Then the bride said goodbye to her family and stayed in her husband's house until the evening festivities.

At the evening party, all members of both families along with friends and co-workers were invited to a restaurant. This event was the most fun for the young people. They dressed in formal clothes. They sang, danced, and played games for the bride and groom. This party ended at ten or eleven at night. Then the new wife and her husband went to their new house. If the bride and groom cannot afford a new house, they will live with the groom's family.

My sister's wedding was the only wedding I attended from beginning to end. It wasn't really a traditional Vietnamese wedding, but this type of wedding is now popular in my country.

## Love Is Blind

### **Falling in Love at First Sight**

**Abdulmalik Almallah,  
Level 4  
SAUDI ARABIA**

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As a lot of young men in my country, I lived my golden years (eighteen to twenty-one) busying myself with playing football, going to the desert, and traveling without paying any attention to the question of who would be my wife. Time went by quickly, and the only thought that I had was that my mother would take care of choosing my life partner for me—till the point that changed my life.

The distance between my hometown, where my family lived, and the capital, where I studied, was 200 miles. I used to go from my school back to my hometown every two weeks. My hometown was small, and the people there knew each other well. For this reason, it was not uncommon to come back home and find it filled with a lot of my mother's, sister's, or brother's friends.

One day, I went back to my hometown without any expectation of what was waiting for me there. It was just three hours driving to that moment which changed my whole life. If I had sensed what was waiting for me, I would have sped up my car. Finally, I was in front of my home and filled with a homesick feeling. While gathering my stuff from the car, I was shocked to find that I had left my cell phone in my apartment in the capital. "Oh my God!" I said to myself. I had to call my sister and ask her to tell her friends that a man was coming into the house so that they could cover up their faces or go to another

# 14 Voices



Chadir AL Abdullatif  
HOUSTON 2010



room. But how could I call her while my cell phone was not with me?

Finally I had an idea. I decided to get into the back garden so that I could call her to inform whoever was inside the house that I was coming. However, as soon as I opened the gate to the garden, my life changed, for in front of me was an angel sitting next to my sister. My sister started screaming at me, telling me to get out till her friend got covered. At that time, I could hear or see nothing except my own heart beating and the eyes of my sister's friend looking at me. As soon as I saw her eyes, I immediately fell in love with her, someone about whom I knew nothing, not even her name. It was the eye contact and the power of love that led me to our wedding, which took place five years later.

In short, a lot of good things could happen without any plans or expectations. Love is one of those things. You could not choose the one you love. Love will lead you to the person whom you will be in love with.

## The Meaning of Love

**Rana Oweinat, Level 4  
JORDAN**

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In ancient times when there were no humans on the earth, only virtues and vices. It was very boring for them to live without any excitement. So one day to solve this problem, Creative invented a game and called it hide and seek. Everybody loved the idea and started screaming, "I want to play." Craziness said, "I am the one who is going to start the game. I'm going to close my eyes and start counting."

He put his head on the tree and began to count, "One, two, three," and everyone started to hide. Tenderness found a place for itself over the moon, Treason hid in a pile of garbage, Brave hid between the clouds, and Satan went down into the ground. Lie said loudly, "I will hide myself under stones," but he then went to the bottom of the lake. Craziness continued, "Seventy-nine, eighty, eighty-one."

During that time, all the virtues and vices completed their hiding except Love because we all know how difficult it is to hide Love. Of course he is not a decision maker; he always follows his heart, and that makes it so hard for him to decide where to disappear. Suddenly he heard, "Ninety-five, ninety-six, ninety-seven," and when Craziness arrived at one hundred, Love jumped into a group of flowers and disappeared inside.

Finally, Craziness opened his eyes and started to search for them. "I'm coming for you. I'm going to find you!" Laziness was the first one he found because he did not make any effort to hide himself. He then found Tenderness hidden in the moon; Lie came over from the lake gasping with no breath because he couldn't stay down anymore. Craziness found everyone, one after one, except Love. He tried and tried until he became disappointed.

Envy approached him and whispered in his ears "I know where Love is. He is hiding among the roses and the flowers." Craziness felt happy and quickly took arrows and started to throw them randomly without stopping until he heard a cry that brought him sadness.

Love appeared from the roses and flowers putting his hands to his eyes, and the blood was dripping from between his fingers. Craziness yelled with regret, "Oh my God, forgive me, my friend! What can I do to fix my mistake after I made you blind?" Love answered, "Nothing, my friend. You can't make me see again, but you can do something to help me." Craziness felt a little satisfied and said "What, my friend? Just ask for anything."

Love said, "Be my guide." This is what happened from that day: Love is blind, led by Craziness.

# 16 Voices

At the Culture Festival,  
students wrote what  
they like about the  
United States.

HERE IS WHAT THEY SAID...

“The country is nice. People are friendly.” Basnewende Arnaud Kere, Level 2, Burkina Faso

“Everybody says hello to me!” Camille Zabre, Level 2, Burkina Faso

“Freedom and the friendly people. I like the kind American culture.” Maurat Ali Alnemer, Level 3, Saudi Arabia

“You can achieve any dream you have in the US.” Souleymane Samassekou (Sam), Level 4, Mali

“The culture of the people.” Dias Abenov, Level 3, Kazakhstan

“It’s international, but contained in a country. It’s so great.” Linghua Kong (Tea), Level 4, China

“It’s multicultural. There are opportunities for talented individuals.” Ying Zhao (Esther), Level 5, China

“Freedom by following rules.” Ali Al Muhanna, Level 2, Saudi Arabia

“I like getting to know new cultures in this big melting pot. I love the radio stations, America itself, being far from home, and learning about different realities.” Maria Rincon, Level 4, Venezuela

“I like people in the USA because they listen to anyone who wants to speak.” Tarek Buzariba, Level 3, Libya

“Freedom, multi-cultural people, music, and places.” Jair Escobar Rito, Level 4, Mexico

“Freedom of speech.” Faisal Alnounou, Level 6, Palestine

“US culture is really nice! I like the language so much—that’s why I’m here studying. It’s been a great experience!” Astrid Patino, Level 6, Venezuela

“I love the teachers.” Chatchart Ratanakitcharoen, Level 2, Thailand

“I love Houston’s crazy weather! It can be so hot, but because our campus is beautiful, there is always shade to keep us cool while we talk to each other and make friends.” Johanna Campbell, Teacher, LCC, USA



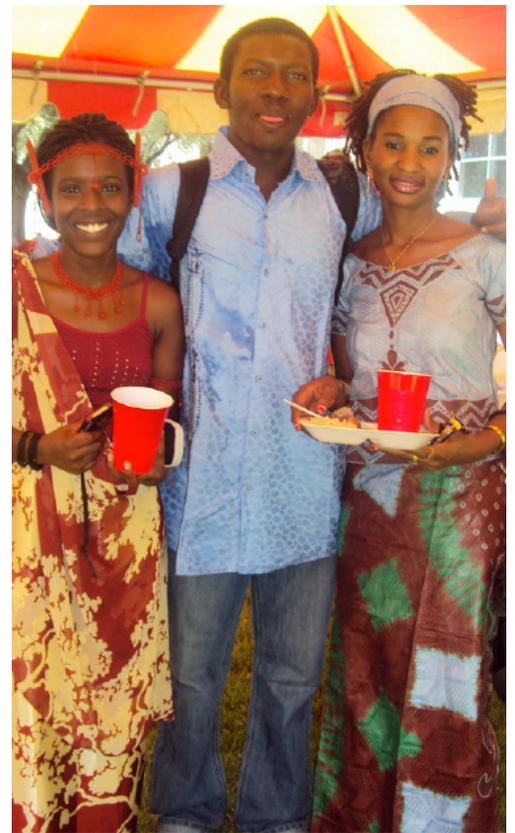
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Ghadir AL Abdullatif  
HOUSTON 2010



Ghadir AL Abdullatif  
HOUSTON 2010



# Voices 19



# 20 Voices



## Letter to My Love

**Cynthia Gutierrez, Level 6**  
**MEXICO**

Hello dear, how are you? I hope everything is okay by the time you read this letter.

First of all I want you to know that I'm okay. People here are nice to me, and I'm studying hard; but guess what? People here seem to know you too! I've heard a couple of things about you around here, you know? Some are bad things, about the way you live. They say you are poor, that you don't have enough education, and that you are dangerous. Some people hate you because they say that your name, your things, and your people are everywhere, that your language annoys them; they don't really appreciate you.

But they don't know you like I do, so don't worry too much about them.

But hey! There are people saying a lot of good things too— good things about you! They say you are wonderful and magical, that they like your traditions, your history, the way you cook, the music that you play, that your language is so romantic and rich, that you are full of fun and nice things to do. Still others say that they fell in love with you.

I'm not jealous. It's okay; there are a lot of people who love you. I know that because I'm madly in love with you. It's easy to love you: you are simply beautiful and wonderful! You have everything one could need. I wouldn't change you for anything in the world. I know you may have some defects, but they are just part of what you are, and I accept you that way. You have so many virtues, you are full of wonders, and I love you.

Leaving you has been one of the hardest things I've done. I miss you so much. I miss your noise, your affection, the freedom that you give me, your smell, your music. I miss your food. I miss everything in you. I bet you miss me too, but don't worry— I'm okay. I'm learning a lot! I met new and wonderful people. I'm still learning about their culture and their language. I've had interesting experiences here, but you know what the best thing is? With all that I'm learning, I will be able to contribute towards giving you a better future.

I will come back soon. I can't wait to see you again! By the way, you have a lot of friends here—they all send you greetings; my aunts and cousins want me to tell you that they miss you very much too, they want to see you soon, and they love you.

Well, if I keep writing I will cry because I really miss you. But I want you to know that I'm proud of you, and I want you to be proud of me too. I want to put your name very high, my love, and I'm doing my best. I will finish this letter by saying that every time that someone asks me where I belong, my heart fills with pride and love to say your name, my beloved México.

~ Cynthia

# 22 Voices

## My Return

### Fernando Amaral, Level 1 ANGOLA

I'm back... for the love I abandoned  
And for the affection I lost  
I'm back... for the people I loved  
And for the feeling I belonged

I'm back... for the kisses I left  
And for the beauty I never forgot  
I'm back... for the dreams I had  
And for the life I built

I'm back... for the memories long gone  
And for the lives close to me  
I'm back... to rebuild the left marks

I'm back... for the broken heart  
I'm back for everything I once earned  
And like that... I returned



## Where Will the Time Stop?

### Quyen Tran, Level 4 VIETNAM

Step by step...  
I miss...  
Vietnam, where I was born  
Saigon, where I used to sit behind someone's back on the motorbike  
My family, whose members are parts of my body, my breath  
My friend, with whom I used to share my happiness, my sorrow  
A shoulder I used to cry on  
A hand I used to hold on  
A back I used to hug tightly  
The faces I used to meet  
And the faces I used to want to forget ...  
All of which have become my past.  
I wonder if I have a wish  
Let me keep my past deeply in the bottom of my heart  
I should rather live for my present and my future than for my past  
Thus, I have to receive what I chose  
Never regret and keep my way going as long as I can



Happy Anniversary to the Language and Culture Center! This 2010 summer, the LCC celebrates 35 years of service to the University of Houston!

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LCC



# 24 Voices

## New Cultures, New Identities

### Culture Festival

#### **Fahad Al-Naemi, Level 3 QATAR**

This one afternoon is the best part of every semester at the LCC. In this one afternoon, I can learn what could take many years to learn. Our Culture Festival helps me to know the customs of other students, to taste different traditional food, and to meet new friends. On this day, many students wear the traditional clothes of their country. For the first time, I saw the special clothes of African and Asian students. Before I came to the USA, I had no idea about these things. Now I know many things about other cultures. On this Culture Festival Day, I enjoyed tasting many traditional dishes from different countries. There were dishes from all over the world. Also on this day, it was easier to make new friends, and I liked that. I met three new friends from different countries: Thailand, Malaysia, and China. Even though the weather was very hot, we enjoyed taking photographs and dancing together. This afternoon is really the best day of the semester. I learned valuable things from this day. Thanks to everyone who wore traditional clothes, to everyone who brought traditional food, and to the LCC for giving us this chance to know about one another's culture.

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Differences between American and Chinese Education

Zhang Yichi (Ethan), Level 4 CHINA

In the world, there are always some essential differences. This is especially true with education. There are two differences between education in America and China.

First of all, nowadays, more and more students prefer to go abroad. The United States has become the first choice for many students. Do you know why a lot of students want to study in America? In my opinion, many students want to study in this country because it has the best education in the world. For example, I am studying in America. I really feel a different study atmosphere. The teachers always ask students to discuss topics in the class. You can feel that you take the lead, and the teachers are listeners. In contrast, in China, teachers are always speakers and students listeners.

The second difference can be found in the fact that the different social structures play an important part in the education systems of the two countries. In America, the education system pays more attention to social skills than to grades. As a result, students can develop the ability to be independent in life and work. After graduating from university, they have great capability for independent thinking, innovation, and creation, which enable them to keep pace with the modern world. They are competent for

challenging work and can easily get a good job in America. In China, all those who can enter the university have received an elite education, and before enrollment, they have devoted themselves to studying hard. Therefore, they are good at getting high grades on mathematics, physics, and so on. However, they lack chances to practice skills in the real world, thus have no social experiences. As a result, after graduation, most students find it difficult to find a satisfactory job.

In conclusion, there is a huge gap in education between America and China. Though education in China has strengths of its own, there are still many things it can learn from the American education system.

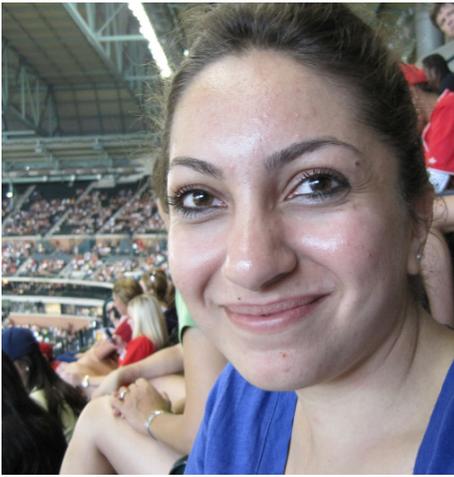
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### **Learning a Foreign Language**

#### **Abdulmajeed Aldakhil (Medo), Level 6 SAUDI ARABIA**

There are many interesting and different languages in the world, and learning another language is challenging for everyone. People who want to learn a foreign language should travel abroad to learn the language in a country where it is spoken. Although learning a different language exhausts people, a lot of benefits and opportunities will come their way if they keep up their effort and energy. In my opinion, speaking more than one language is a priority nowadays.

When you learn another language, you will be able to see your own culture from a new perspective. To improve your skills in learning



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My Africa

**Abdoulaye Coulibaly,
Level 5
MALI**

Four months ago, I read a book that changed the entire way I see the world. The title of that book was *My Africa*, by Seydou Badian Kouyaté, a well-known writer of Mali.

The book talks about the current behavior of our political leaders. Then it discusses the domination of Africa by Europe, which is not new. Next, the book tells us how the poor countries are corrupted by the wealthy nations.

When I first read the book, I was shocked to discover that our political leaders were not actually doing what the people wanted. The media did not really care about us because they are manipulated by those leaders. The leaders were simply doing bad jobs, leading people to be confused in order to steal all our money and also cooperate with Europe dishonestly.

On the one hand, the real problem of Africa is our leaders because they are not playing their role to meet our needs. On the other hand, Europe is acting without any dignity in order to take advantage of Africa, which is horrible. Since I read that book, now I am aware that my country's leaders are cheating me, as well as the other citizens.

Finally, that book positively changed my point of view toward the life I am living and gave me courage to work hard in order to

another language, you should connect with the new culture through reading books and newspapers, watching TV, and, most importantly, through having conversations. In addition, it is essential for you to share your own culture with others in their native country because a new life of understanding will open to you.

Knowing or speaking another language, especially the most spoken languages in the world, really gives you an advanced opportunity when applying for a job. Speaking or using another language makes you an attractive employee. In addition, people who use and speak more than one language are more likely to find jobs, which give them opportunities to travel to multiple countries and exchange information with others. Traveling abroad helps you to depend on yourself to make decisions.

As I have said, learning another language is helpful and worthwhile to communicate with people. It gives people more knowledge of other cultures. Although there are many languages all over the world, whichever one you choose to learn as a second language will give you a gorgeous experience.

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protect my country from bad governance in the future. As the saying goes: the right man in the right place at the right time. I will be the one who will bring change and guarantee a fair future for all.

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**No Excuses**

**Gian Reyes, Level 5  
VENEZUELA**

Approximately five years ago, I was in Houston when I bought a book with the name *No Excuses*. I bought this book because it attracted my attention when I saw a boy with short arms and the words no excuses on the first page of it. This book taught me that there are no excuses when we want to get our goals. We have to look for the solution to our problems or limitations and work hard to get what we really want.

The boy's name is Kyle Maynard, and he was born in the United States of America in 1986 with short arms and short legs. Kyle Maynard has no forearms, no hands, and his knees are connected directly to his feet. He is only four feet tall. However, he has learned to write, drive, and do everything for himself. In addition, he became a champion in wrestling.

Kyle Maynard started to learn wrestling at high school when he was eleven years old. Nobody thought that Kyle Maynard would win a match, but seven years

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later, he was in the top eight in the Senior National Tournament. Kyle Maynard's coach said, "Perhaps the most inspiring thing about Kyle is his 'No Excuses' attitude. In the seven-plus years I have known Kyle, I have never heard him utter one excuse for anything."

Kyle Maynard has been a good example for other people, and we have to give thanks for everything that we have. We were born to be successful in our life, so we only have to work to get that.

## Welcome To Our World

### Chinese Countryside In The Past and the Present

**Aili Li, Level 4  
CHINA**

Great changes have taken place in the Chinese countryside in the past and the present. Among them, the two most obvious differences can be found in education and medical services.

First of all, let's talk about education. In the past, children who lived in the countryside and who came from poor families couldn't go to school to learn or finish their education, even their primary school education. The main reason was that their parents made so little money that they could not afford

their children's tuition fees. Furthermore, the educational resources of the countryside were too bad. There were, for example, no good schoolhouses and very few eligible teachers. Much to our happiness, the situation has now changed. Children can go to school without worrying about money, as the government insists that children be provided with free and compulsory education. Moreover, children now can also receive good education with high-level teachers in new schoolhouses aided by the government. There is no doubt that many families have benefited from the new education.

Secondly, let's talk about medical services. In the past, people from the countryside seldom saw the doctor when they got sick because good hospitals were far from their homes, and it would take them a lot of money each time to see a doctor. At present, the situation has been significantly improved, as the government has given them medical insurance and opened many hospitals in the countryside. Therefore, it has been easier for them to see a doctor.

As mentioned above, there may be many changes in the Chinese countryside in the past and the present, but the two most obvious differences are to be found in education and medical services.



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### The Big Universities in Riyadh

**Abdulaziz Alsalman,  
Level 1  
SAUDI ARABIA**

Riyadh has many universities. The opening date of the first university was in 1950. Sixty years ago, this university was called King Saud University. It is among the top 300 universities worldwide. King Saud University ranked 292 in the world. It achieved first place in the Arab world, Islamic world, the Middle East, and Africa and twenty-first in Asia. The openings of the latest universities in the Saudi Kingdom are the Abdulla Universities. They are on the north coast of Jeddah. The studies began on September 5, 2009. Students study in universities from four to six years to finish a bachelor's degree, two years for a master's, and three to four years for a doctorate. Students studying in public universities get a monthly salary. Finally, I hope education in Saudi Arabia advances for the better with time.



## Dammam

### Turki Al-Eleiwi, Level 2 SAUDI ARABIA

My city Dammam is one of the most beautiful cities in my country. It is in the eastern region in Saudi Arabia, and it's on the coast. It's a good city to study, work, and have fun. Tourists come to Dammam to enjoy the beaches and relax. There are many luxury shopping malls. In my city, people are very friendly and helpful to tourists. People in Dammam usually eat seafood, and they love it so much. Business in Dammam is very successful because it has the second biggest seaport in Saudi Arabia. Most people usually wear the *thobe*, which is our culture's traditional clothing. In my opinion, urban Dammam is one of the best cities in the world.

## Hue City

### LY DO, Level 2 VIETNAM

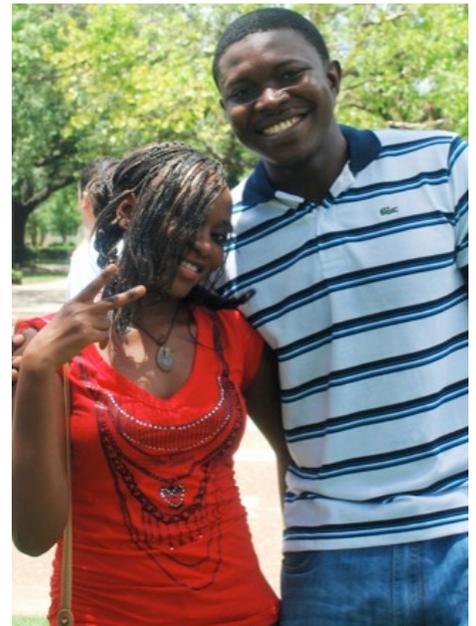
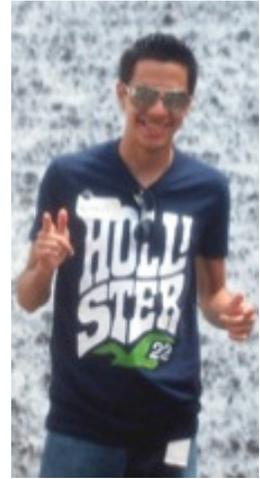
Hue is the old capital city in my country. I used to go to some countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, and a lot of cities in these countries. However, I prefer Hue. I usually go there with my family or my friends in the summer. In my opinion, Hue is the most beautiful city in Vietnam. Almost all the Vietnamese kings lived in Hue, so it is a city of history and culture in Vietnam. Hue's people are very friendly and honest. They are especially optimistic because even though Hue has storms and floods every year, the people don't give up. That makes me love Hue and its people. The landscapes of Hue are very romantic. You can see Xuan Huong Lake, Trang Tien Bridge, Dong Ba Market, and the kings' palaces. You can eat the traditional food of Hue or buy souvenirs at Dong Ba Market. In the evening, you can listen to traditional music on Xuan Huong Lake. In addition, you can have dinner on a boat. Hue has pure air because it is a popular spot for tourists, not industry. Hue is a mix of history and modern life. Hue is a wonderful city. I think you will like Hue if you go there one time, and you will want to go to Hue a lot of times.

## Martial Arts in Korea

### Eunjee Lee, Level 1 KOREA

The Korean martial art is tae kwon do. It is a traditional Korean sport. Only two people compete. They use their hands and feet. Now some people from different countries want to learn tae kwon do, so they come to Korea to learn. They study at a special school. Tae kwon do is a very honorable sport. A person doesn't fight using tae kwon do. It is for defense more than battle. Everybody can do this sport, from children to older people.

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## A Famous Place in Kazakhstan

**Alex Lyssenko, Level 1**  
**KAZAKHSTAN**

A popular place to visit in Kazakhstan is Medeo. It is located in the upper part of Medeo Valley in the Zailisky Alatau mountain range at an elevation of 2,200 meters above sea level. Medeo outdoor speed skating rink is one of the most famous skating rinks in the world. It is located in the valley of Malaya Almatinka River on the southeastern outskirts of Almaty, Kazakhstan.

## The Mosque of Timbuktu

**Ramata Doumbia, Level 1**  
**MALI**

The places in my country Mali are beautiful. A popular place is the Mosque of Timbuktu. The mosque is very big and important. Many Muslims visit it every year because it is traditional place from after the time of Mohammed. Many tourists visit it every year. Europeans, Americans, and Asians go too and pray on Friday every week. I like the Mosque of Timbuktu.

## Men's Clothes in Saudi Arabia

**Ibrahim Aloqafi, Level 1**  
**SAUDI ARABIA**

The men's clothes in Saudi Arabia have several varieties like other countries. The uniform in Saudi Arabia is named the *thobe*. Men wear this most of the time in my country. The young men wear it sometimes. Men wear the *thobe*, *chmagh*, and *agal* on special occasions, at work, and at school. The scarf is called the *chmagh*. The *chmagh* is kept in place by the *agal*. Sometimes, we add some things with the *thobe*. It is named the *mhalah*. We use it at events, holidays and marriage ceremonies. That is what we wear in Saudi Arabia.

# Reflections

## First Time At UH

### Chunling Lin, Level 3 CHINA

Last summer holiday was my first time to study abroad. I was a bit excited and a little scared when I came to Houston, the fourth largest city in the United States, and entered the University of Houston. I now have a lot of impressions about the weather, the campus, and the people.

First, weather affects all of us in one way or another, directly or indirectly. For example, good weather makes people happy. Bad weather makes people sick and depressed. On a fine day, we can go out for a walk or play a game in the open. On a rainy day, however, we can only stay indoors. In a word, I don't like the summer season in Houston because the weather is so hot, and it is usually raining.

Second, this university campus includes a lot of buildings, which are very clean, quiet, and beautiful. There are plenty of libraries with all kinds of book. You can enjoy as many as you like. The sports areas are very big, and you can play football, basketball, soccer, or baseball. There are many trees at our school. Green grass is everywhere. There are flowers of all colors.

Finally, the teachers and staff are kind and friendly to us. They always encourage us to speak and read more English. They often say, "Practice makes perfect." As we

know, foreign teachers are good at teaching and try their best to make every lesson lively and interesting. They are not only our teachers but also our friends. I respect and love them. However, it is difficult to find a teacher who can speak Chinese, which can result in misunderstanding. I don't like this.

In conclusion, other than the summer weather and the difficulty of finding a teacher who speaks Chinese, I believe I will slowly fall in love with this place.

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Happiness

Mohamed Erandi, Level 3 LIBYA

There are several ways to achieve happiness: with money but sometimes without taste, with success in all you want, or in relationships and associations with others. I believe you will find happiness in the company of another or others, in just being with others. Happiness is associated with quietly accompanying another or others. Happiness means a great deal of comfort to everyone and is not difficult to achieve. Happiness is not a mystery. If you take up pen and paper and write something nice to make someone else happy, your relationship will be stronger. In my opinion, happiness cleanses the heart of hatred and fills the heart full of love for yourself and others. You will be at the top of happiness. I wish much happiness for us all.

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## My Cultural Adjustment

### Alice Bouda, Level 2 BURKINA FASO

The cultural adjustment cycle is a period of finding balance for foreign people in a new place. In this cycle, I am at the last stage. When I first came to Houston, I thought that all things were fun, so this was my honeymoon. After two weeks, I entered into culture shock, and I worried a lot, especially when I drove in town. Some time after this, I tried to adjust and organize everything I was doing, but I wasn't feeling well because I missed my hometown. Now I think it's good to accept my new town. I go out frequently and have American friends. Every weekend, I go to the movies, and that helps me to improve my English. Now I think that no culture is better than another. It's always good to discover another culture but also to keep part of your own.



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## **A Very Interesting Book**

**Richard Mahe, Level 5  
FRANCE**

One of the books that influenced me most was entitled *La Francafrique* and written by Francois-Xavier Verschave. This is a special expression joining in the words *France* and *Africa* to describe the special ties that existed and still exist nowadays between France and several countries in Africa, especially West Africa. I have always been attracted by all the relationships you don't see between countries, I mean, all the events you will never see in the news because the main goal of this kind of relationship is just to remain secret.

I read that book when I was writing one of my research papers related to oil issues in Subsaharan Africa, and I was extremely surprised by all the things I discovered. First of all, France gave independence to all its foreign colonies but in reality it didn't change anything. The French government chose the presidents "elected democratically" and ran the countries the same way to keep on exploiting the natural resources.

Secondly, maybe the majority of the conflicts which occurred in Africa were driven by one reason: oil. All the Western countries do not have any resources and need to conserve them whatever it costs, and this includes creating wars and financing the opponents of the governments who wanted to break the relationships created before. If you pay attention to the conflict in Darfur, you will see behind the curtain the repartitioning of the oil fields in this country.

Third, this book was really interesting because the situation it described is still ongoing. France organizes an annual summit to reaffirm those close relations, and a lot of countries have created the same kind of event to get a part of the resources they need for their own development. But at the same time, the countries defending their interests do not care about the people in Africa. Their own development is the priority, and they do not hesitate to deprive African populations of their chances to become what Africa should be: the richest continent in the whole world.

I consider *La Francafrique* as one of my favorite books for all the incredible things I discovered inside which encouraged me to be more knowledgeable in African issues.



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## NOTES FROM THE STUDENT ADVISOR

### STUDENT ACTIVITIES

New students from summer and continuing students from spring went on the first trip of the semester during registration week. This was a time to get to know one another and make new friends. We went to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, a very impressive art museum. Next, we went to the Galleria where students and teachers shopped and had lunch. The trip ended with a stop at the Waterwall where we took photos, and then we went home to UH.

In June, we had the LCC class photo and sports tournament. After taking photos by the fountain, students went to the UC Game room to participate in billiards, table tennis, and bowling. The winners were as follows: Bowling: 1st –Ying Zhao, 2nd – Abraham Sogoba, and 3rd –Daulet Begenov; Billiards: 1st – Yu-Liang Lin and 2nd – Yen-Chun Lu; Table Tennis: 1st (tie) – Abdulmajeed Aldakhil and Salloom Alsalloum and 2nd – Saleh Aldakhil.

At midterm we welcomed a large number of new students who joined us for the Summer II session. Among the new students is a group of visiting Russian students who will return home in August after the Summer II session.

The next event was the LCC Culture Festival. We shared each other's cultures as we tasted delicious dishes from around the world prepared by our own students and staff. Many students wore traditional clothes from their countries. Students listened to a variety of music and learned new dances from their classmates and friends. Thanks to everyone for helping make the Culture Festival a big success.

As this is being written, we are getting ready for our final field trip of the term. We are going to San Antonio to Six Flags Fiesta Texas! There are many rides and attractions there as well as swimming. I hope everyone has a good time.

The day after the trip, the semester comes to an end with the graduation ceremony and a reception. We wish good luck to those students who will be leaving us. For those who will be returning, start planning for the fall and prepare to welcome the new students who will be joining us.

### SOCCKER TEAM

The LCC soccer team, the Falcons, was honored at the Culture Festival with a trophy and recognition for their great success this summer. Our team won the UH intramural soccer championship! Servando Hernandez Vargas was the very able captain and coach. We have many excellent team members including Abdulmajeed (Medo) Aldakhil who has been a star player for several terms. Other players included Medo's brother Saleh, Rosario Simao, Fawwaz Alsalloum, Salikou Traore, Ali Alshikh, and Anas Alodini.



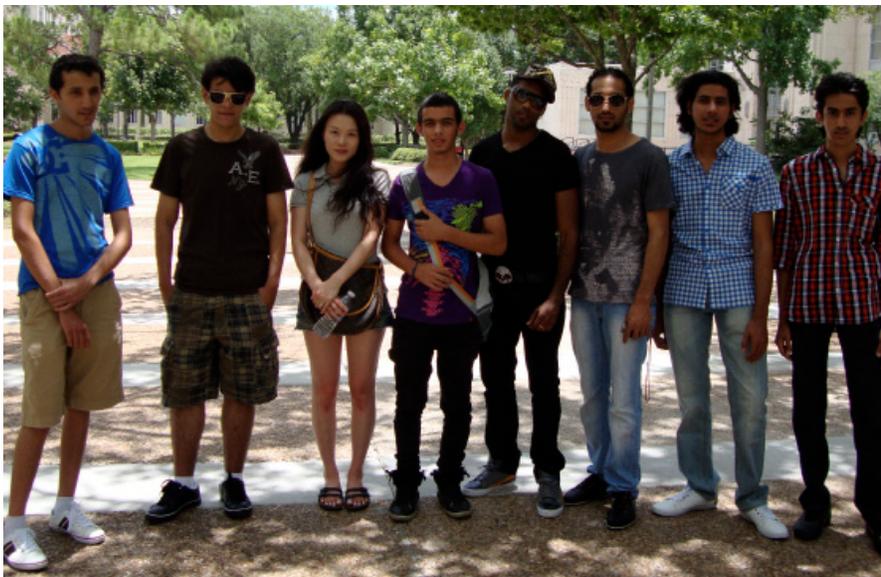
## IMMIGRATION

Students in F-1 status need to make sure they maintain their immigration status. If you are planning to take a vacation during the break, see Dave Burns or Sam Long first. If you are travelling outside of the U.S., you will need to have either your current I-20 signed on the back or get a new one.

If you are planning to transfer to a new school for fall semester or to take a fall vacation, please see Dave or Sam to make sure you are following the immigration rules. If you have any doubts or questions about immigration, be sure and ask Dave or Sam. It is very important that you maintain you F-1 status. It is very difficult to get your student status back if you lose it.



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 HOUSTON 2010**