

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

VOICES

A Publication from the Language and Culture Center



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VOICES – Summer 2016

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Conversation Club Guides



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From the Director's Desk

by Joy Tesh, Director

Congratulations as you complete this hot and beautiful summer of study in the Language and Culture Center! You have been engaged in an extraordinary experience as you have worked and studied and laughed and celebrated with your friends and fellow students at the University of Houston. You will never be the same. You will go forward, and as you continue to grow and learn, you will make a real difference in the world.

At our First Assembly, I promised you that you would learn far more than English at the Language and Culture Center. As you have worked and studied with students from all over the world in LCC classes, you have engaged in intercultural communication, and you have made friends. These friendships will be important to you throughout your lives. I want you to know that, as I see you in the halls of the Roy Cullen Building and walking around on our beautiful campus every day, I realize how fortunate I am to know you and to work with you.

This summer, several members of the LCC administrative and support staff team attended the NAFSA Conference in Denver, Colorado, and returned to the LCC with renewed commitment to make our program one of the best in the world. *NAFSA: Association of International Educators* is a professional association dedicated to the support of international education. On the NAFSA website (www.nafsa.org), there is a report on the positive impact of international students on campuses in the United States. The report states that international students “**build bridges** between the United States and other countries; **bring global perspectives** into U.S. classrooms and research labs; **support U.S. innovation** through science and engineering coursework, making it possible for U.S. colleges and universities to offer these courses to U.S. students; and **support programming and services on campus for all students.**”

Your teachers and I thank you for choosing to study with us and for giving us the chance to learn about you, your language, your culture, and your country. We have been enriched by your presence, and we appreciate the positive contribution you have made to our university.

As the summer term of 2016 closes, we wish you a safe and productive academic break. Summer classes will end on graduation day, August 11. We will miss you, and we want you to know that the LCC office will remain open through August and September as we work with any continuing students who need us and with new students who will be arriving for the fall term. Online registration for the fall term will begin on September 6, 2016.

If you are leaving our program for any reason, we encourage you to stay in touch with us through email, through Facebook, or through our web site <http://lcc.uh.edu>. We are eager to hear from students who continue their studies at the University of Houston or at another school in the United States or who return to their countries to continue their journey. We invite you to join a great network of former LCC students, now living all over the world.

We congratulate you on completing your term of study in the Language and Culture Center. You have been an important part of a dynamic Intensive English Program with an excellent history and tradition of service to students. You have also been an important part of an exciting urban university, which celebrates and welcomes international students.

LCC teachers, counselors, administrators, support staff, and I hope you have had great experiences in our classes and on the University of Houston campus. We wish you the best as you complete the summer term, and we look forward to seeing many of you again as you return in September for the fall term of 2016 in the Language and Culture Center.



FANCHENG MENG, NPON PHAIRATCHAVES, AND



Dr. Jodi Nelms - Associate Director

The Language and Culture Center awards three 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 Valdes, the founder and first director of the LCC. A second full scholarship honors Joseph Davidson, who served as director of the LCC for 23 years before retiring in 2006. A third full scholarship honors the memory of Brad Powell who was a dedicated member of the Language and Culture Center staff from 2002 to 2014 and touched the lives of students and colleagues as a teacher, a counselor, and the Program Director of Counseling and Students Services. Joyce Valdes, Joseph Davidson, and Brad Powell committed their professional careers to cross-cultural understanding and international educational exchange. These three full scholarships cover the cost of tuition, fees, and medical insurance for one term of study in the intensive English program. On Friday, April 22, 2016, the LCC awarded the Valdes scholarship to Fancheng Meng, the Davidson scholarship to Npon Phairatchaves, and the Powell scholarship to Phuong Thi Yen Bui.



FANCHENG MENG, JOYCE VALDES SCHOLARSHIP

Fancheng Meng was awarded the Valdes scholarship. Mr. Meng is from China and is studying in level six. This is his fifth term at the LCC. After he completes his studies at the LCC, he plans to study psychology at the University of Houston. He hopes to ultimately earn a Ph.D. in psychology, with a graduate degree in law. He said, "I have learned a lot from the LCC. The LCC has given me many unforgettable memories."

PHUONG THI YEN BUI RECEIVE LCC SCHOLARSHIPS



NPON PHAIRATCHAVES, JOSEPH DAVIDSON SCHOLARSHIP

Npon Phairatchaves was awarded the Davidson scholarship. Mr. Phairatchaves is from Thailand. This is his second term at the LCC, and he is currently studying in level three. Npon has an engineering degree from his home country. Upon completing the intensive English program, he hopes to earn a master's degree at the University of Houston. Mr. Phairatchaves remarked, "My teachers and friends made me feel like I stayed at home. When I think about being in my classes, it will always make me smile. The LCC is my family in the USA!"



PHUONG THI YEN BUI, BRAD POWELL SCHOLARSHIP

Phuong Thi Yen Bui was awarded the Powell scholarship. She is from Vietnam and is currently studying in level six having been at the LCC for two terms. Ms. Bui has a bachelor's degree in marketing from her home country. When she finishes her study of English, she hopes to earn a science degree from UH and become a clinical lab scientist. Ms. Bui said, "I like studying at the LCC because I can learn about other cultures from my classmates and share my culture with them. The LCC helped me learn and adapt to my new environment."

We congratulate Fancheng Meng, Npon Phairatchaves, and Phuong Thi Yen Bui on their outstanding records in the intensive English program at the Language and Culture Center, and we wish them great success as they continue to study in the United States. We all look forward to learning who will be the next LCC scholarship recipients at the summer 2016 ceremony.

Counseling and Student Services



Sam Long and Adam Chen



In Summer 2016, the Counseling Team was very excited to present different activities and events to LCC students. We welcomed new students and visited the Rothko Chapel, the Menil Collection, McGovern Centennial Gardens (in the pouring rain!), and the Houston Museum of Natural Science. We went to Kemah Boardwalk, where we enjoyed thrilling rides and shopped at unique specialty shops and kiosks.

In addition to advising LCC students daily on many topics, the Counseling Team coordinated three different workshops: the Career Services Workshop, informing students about how to look for jobs on campus and utilize resources provided by University Career Services; the F-1 Workshop, advising students on how to maintain F-1 status; and the Relationship and Consent Workshop, helping students understand the importance of consent and identify key resources on campus. We hope that you found the workshops informative and helpful.

We felt fortunate to spend the term with you, and we wish you great success.

I would also like to recognize the LCC Singers and their director Caitlin Sapaugh. The choir members worked hard to learn new songs, and they performed at the LCC Summer 2016 Graduation Ceremony. We are so proud of the choir members, Caitlin. You have done a fantastic job!

— Adam Chen,
Program Director of Counseling and Student Services

LCC Student Council

Futoon Alouni

5A – Saudi Arabia

Being part of the Language and Culture Center is perhaps one of the most important things that has happened in my life. Having learned many things from my teachers and classmates, I benefitted from being a student representative for three semesters.

It has highly improved my leadership skills by working with a group of multinational students, thinking and brainstorming with them about the various activities to plan during the semester, and developing the old ideas. The LCC usually takes all the students to visit different places around the city, and sometimes around the state, such as Six Flags in San Antonio, art museums, the natural science museum, the circus, the rodeo, and many other enjoyable places.

I encourage all of the students to participate in all the activities that the LCC has provided for us. This builds our confidence and helps us be successful in the future.



Home and Houston

China and Houston

Tianyun Gao

1A – China

In China, I had many friends, and in Houston I have a few friends. I ate noodles in China, and I eat noodles in Houston.

I woke up at 7 o'clock every day in China, and I wake up 7 o'clock everyday in Houston.

Differences

Youmandia Onadja

1A – Burkina Faso

I often rode a donkey in Fada, Burkina Faso, but I have never ridden a donkey in Houston. In Houston, many students take the bus or train to go to school, but in Fada, the students go to school by motorcycles or bikes. In Houston, I sometimes eat leftovers, but I never ate leftovers in Fada.

Life Here and There

Haoqin Cheng

1A – China

I often ate traditional food in Taiyuan, but I seldom eat traditional food in Houston. In China food was inexpensive, but in Houston food is expensive. In China, I had a car, but in Houston I do not have a car.

My Life Here and There

Abdullah Bukhari

1A – Saudi Arabia

In Houston, I follow the speed limit, but in my country I did not follow the speed limit. The winters in Houston are usually warm, but the summer in Saudi Arabia is very hot. I sometimes ate shrimp in Saudi Arabia, and I often eat shrimp in Houston.



TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: JEANNE PEINE

by Dr. Jodi Nelms, Associate Director



One reason that so many students return to the Language and Culture Center—and recommend it to their family and friends—is because the teachers in the LCC are outstanding professionals in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language. In each edition of *Voices*, we profile one of

our teachers, and this term we have chosen Jeanne Peine. Jeanne is currently teaching level one grammar and writing in the intensive English program.

Ms. Peine is a natural in our field. She was drawn to teaching and interacting with international students very early in her career. In fact, she was involved in two high school organizations that foreshadowed what she would do in her professional life. One of these organizations was the AFS (American Field Service) Club, which hosts international students at American high schools. The second organization was the FTA (Future Teachers of America) Club. In this club, she had the opportunity to visit elementary schools where she tutored students who needed extra academic support.

Jeanne received her Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language from Georgetown University, a prestigious university in Washington, D.C. Her very first job out of graduate school was at the Language and Culture Center. Her story is a fascinating one: she arrived in Houston on a Sunday, and classes began right away the very next day. She met her first class about two hours after stepping onto the University of Houston campus for the first time.

Ms. Peine has taught beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels, and she still finds that every level has its rewards and challenges. The LCC is truly fortunate that Jeanne feels so strongly about continuing to improve her skills as a leader and a teacher. She frequently takes advantage of webinars, news groups, and discussions among colleagues in our field. She has readily embraced technology, but also believes that there is no substitute for the experience of attending conferences and interacting face-to-face with colleagues from throughout Texas and around the world. Those of us who have attended conferences with Jeanne find it an honor to participate in sessions with her and to call her our colleague.

While Jeanne has told me that her LCC colleagues are a gold mine of inspiration, ideas, and problem solving, you can be assured that her LCC colleagues feel the same way about her. She models collegiality in the LCC Staff Room on a daily basis. She helps maintain a professionally rewarding environment where veteran teachers and first-term teachers can have open dialogues concerning topics in our field.

One of Ms. Peine's co-teachers, Anna Hood, describes Jeanne as a thoughtful person. Anna shared that Jeanne "approaches her work with care, attention to detail, and wit to ensure that her lesson plans, in-service agendas, and even her emails are engaging, meaningful, and humorous." Anna is not alone in noticing Jeanne's "conscientiousness, creativity, and professionalism" as Jeanne frequently demonstrates these qualities for all of us to emulate.

Doug Jones, a long time colleague of Jeanne's, described her as a "skilled and experienced teacher, a great mentor for new teachers coming in to the program." He added that she is a "stalwart administrator whose judgment I trust. She also has her lighter side. I always look forward to meetings when Jeanne is "emcee." I know we will be treated to jokes, droll comments, and outrageous puns!"

I asked Jeanne if she had any advice to share with us at the LCC, and she quickly came up with these valuable thoughts:

- Hold on to the spark of excitement you had when you first entered the field. Learn or try something new each term.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Read and listen

Jeanne is a truly unique—and truly remarkable—person. My first year here at the LCC has already been memorable. This is in large part due to Jeanne's knowledge of our program, her understanding of how we have progressed to where we are, her willingness to mentor her own newly-hired supervisor, and her incredible wit and humor. For these qualities, and many more, we are all grateful to work closely with Jeanne Peine.

We celebrate the outstanding work of all LCC teachers, and this term we acknowledge Ms. Peine's dedication to her students, her colleagues, and to the future of the LCC. We thank you, Jeanne Peine, for your important and highly valued contribution to our teaching program, and for sharing your gifts with the Language and Culture Center for all these wonderful years.

Exploring Art

Abduladheem Muhaimed

2B – Saudi Arabia

We first visited section that contained molten elements of different colors. They were made of steel and plastic and were painted with special dyes. The shapes varied between rocks and mountains.

Azoof Almanabri

2A – Saudi Arabia

I've learned from this different and modern art that everyone can describe what they see in their own way.

Bosen Liu

2B – China

The Blaffer Art Museum has very colorful rooms. Every room has a different color, and it is very beautiful. There are colors like blue, red, yellow, and green.

Chia-Hua Wu

2B – Taiwan

To the left, there was a yellow flower pot in the shape of a triangle; there were thin green fingers. The fingers had beautiful red nails.

Hamad Almenhali

2A – United Arab Emirates

It was a beautiful day when we visited the museum, and we were extremely happy.

Hindi Al-Qahtani

2A – Saudi Arabia

The art in the museum was in the shape of a heart. It was very different with red and green. I saw different shapes too, like fingers on fire.

JeongSeop (Steven) Kim

2A – Korea

First, I was surprised at the complicated structures at the museum. Second, it felt intricate. There was video art, and it made my heart feel warm.

Jingyan Wu

2B – China

The museum presents many different shapes and forms, and they are colorful. In my opinion, they are like body organs, a little sad. It wasn't interesting to me.

Maha Razzah

2B – Saudi Arabia

The diversity of shapes at the Blaffer Art Museum was so artistic and colorful.

Menhal Alrebh

2A – Saudi Arabia

We saw many things in the museum, for example, many colors of the art and inconsistent graphics.





Mohammed Alsharari

2B – Saudi Arabia

The museum had two different amazing exhibitions with a variety of colors. There is digital animation and visual textures.

Nizhat Ameen

2A – India

The Blaffer Art Museum showed a new way of looking at art. It was colorful and full of Matthew Ronay’s creativity. I especially appreciated it because he is visually impaired.

Peguy Matheu

2B – Cameroon

In the back, there is red and yellow basswood of breathing tone.

Sarah Luaba

2A – Congo (Kinshasa)

The Blaffer Art Museum is very big and contains many works of art, which explain a lot of stories. I was really amazed by the beauty of the art, and it made me want to stay in the room and meditate.

Szu-Jou (Danica) Chuang

2A – Taiwan

The artwork is so blue and made me feel so calm. Also, the artwork’s color made me feel very alive with power and energy.

Vy Dinh Khanh Mai

2B – Vietnam

There were colorful big trees growing from large purple pancakes. There were three yellow pieces of perfectly scrambled eggs.

Xiaoping Sun

2A – China

One of the rooms was mainly blue, and it looked like a big ocean. I thought this room portrayed human origin and evolution.

CLASS Pictures



1 A



2 A and B



3 A



3 B



3 C and D



4 A and B

CLASS Pictures



4 C



4 D



5 A and B



5 C and D



6 A and B and C

SUMMER HAIKU

Mei Sun

3B – China

Hot and sunny sky
We are enjoying freedom
A wonderful life

Huy Nguyen

3B – Vietnam

This is my summer
We hang out and play soccer
Under sunny day.

Sometimes we can have
A small party and some games
So fun and happy.

We can be lazy
Do not go to school and learn
Just sleep all the day.

Jessica Morettino

3B – Italy

The smell of the sea
The taste of salt on the skin
Seeing the white beach

Under the hot sun
The cold water hits my feet
It's vacation time

Swimming in the pool
While children play with the ball
Breathing this freedom

Jun Fan

3B – China

Summer beginning
Little bird stay at green tree
Red sun in the sky

Children are swimming
People are sitting by pools
The girl eats ice cream

Moon climbs on the sky
Stars light around the big moon
Bird is singing loud

Cecilia Obami

3B – Congo (Brazzaville)

Funny sunny shore
School is out summer is in
Hello cool sunshine

Taipeng Su

3A – China

Sunny play is hot
Weather, clouds, drink water, rain
Party, dance, sun, cool

Sultan Alderei

3A – United Arab Emirates

Summer brings warm Fall
Summer sun is very hot
Summer sun is hot

Phuong Nguyen

3B – Vietnam

We go to the beach
Walking along the nice street
Take many pictures.

Opening your eyes
You see nice houses with friends
That is wonderful.

Nake Bassole

3B – Burkina Faso

Great, beautiful time
There's nothing wrong at the beach
Summer is the best

Johnny Medina

3B – Venezuela

The hot temperature
Barbecue cooking on grill
Sunburn hurts so bad.

Vacation is fun
Weather humid in summer
Delicious snow cone.

Gustavo Reyes Palacios

3A – Venezuela

A good mind is mine
A big mind, my mind, sometimes
My mind is confused



Traditional Wedding Fasnewinde Ouedraogo

3C – Burkina Faso

My family has a traditional wedding that we have to do when someone in my family wants to get married. First, we practice this tradition to allow the the families of the two partners to communicate, be blessed with children and show that they agree with the union of the two partners. In my language, we call this tradition PDF, that means presentation of families. It is an occasion for us to value our special culture. Next, we always practice this tradition when the two partners are sure that they want to get married. We do that two or three weeks before the real wedding. Third, this tradition is very important in my country because it includes all the members of the family. The older people come and use some traditional practices that you can never interrupt because you can do the presentation of family only once in your life. Even if you get divorced from your husband later, you cannot do this traditional wedding for a second wedding. Everyone in my country knows this tradition and respects it. It is a wonderful tradition.

My King in My Heart Npon Phairatchaves

3D – Thailand

There are many things that make Phumiphon the best King of Thailand. 70 years ago, he became king. At that moment, he still studied at a university because he needed to bring data to develop his country and new research. After he finished his courses, he went back his country. The first thing the king did was to help people do something to make money; such as: he gave information to farmers and found many obstacles. So, he hurried to fix them. One of the obstacles was the forest. Many farmers usually liked to cut tree in the forest to make a farm. That was a big problem. So finally, he made some accomplishments to fix the problem. Next, he has become a nice king because he has gone everywhere to visit his people. Even if he has to walk 3 or 4 hours through the forest. In fact, all of the people in my country love him. You can see a picture of him that hangs on the walls in every house. He makes us feel happy. In addition, we have Father's Day that is on December 5th every year. Why is it on this date? Because of his birthday. These are the reasons why people say that he is the best king.

There was a Young Girl from Panama

Zumi Yau Chen

5D – Panama

There was a young girl from Panama,
Who she wanted to learn grammar.
But she dozed in class,
and used an eyeglass,
But they named her Zumi from Panama.

Important Traditional Holidays

Shuangmei Liu

3C – China

Two of several traditional holidays are important for my family in China because we can get together to celebrate the holidays. We have a big family, but we spend very little time with each other, even with my parents. I have four brothers and two sisters, and they also have two or three children. We live far away from each other, and everyone has a different work place. Therefore, it is impossible to visit them. Likewise, we do not have much time to take care of my parents, even if they need help. When we go home my mother is always excited, because she really wants us to spend time with her. If I have a vacation, I usually go to my hometown for a few days, especially in New Years or the special holiday in September that people call "ZhongQiu". During those days, we must go to my parents' home to celebrate. It is significant for Chinese people, and for my family too. We can talk about who has new things or plans that we never know about. My sisters and I make cultural food, as children, we played together, laughed and even fought. At night, we ate traditional dinners and sat around the big table. My parents were very happy. We spend nice time during the holidays. So, I can always feel the happiness from my family and in my heart.

Rise of the Planet of the Apes

Yaomu Zhou

5C – China

I had never before seen an ape, except in the movie "Rise of the Planet of the Apes". It was fun to see one when we went on a trip to the Houston Zoo!



SPECIAL PEOPLE

My Hero Trung (Joe) Nguyen *4D – Vietnam*

My mother is my hero. She took care of me when I was a child. Now that I'm an adult, she still takes care of me. A strong woman, she works all day long without complaining to pay for my education.

In addition, my mother has taught me how to be a good person. Every time I do something wrong, she forgives me and shows me how to correct my mistakes. She's by my side and helps me when I'm in trouble. She supports all my dreams and often tells me that I should live a life I'll never regret because I'll only get one chance.

My mother is the most important woman of my life, and I thank God for giving her to me.

My Dear Grandfather Jackelyne (Jacky) Gil Dardon *4C – Guatemala*

My grandfather was a wonderful man who made a difference in my life by supporting me whenever I needed him. I am from a small town in Guatemala, where my parents, my two sisters, and I lived in a house right in front of my grandparents' home. I remember that when I was about three years old, sometimes I would go outside in my

pajamas to cross the street to have breakfast with them. Other times, my grandfather would come to our house, and instead of knocking on the door, he would whistle at me to open the door.

He had a large piece of land outside of town where he grew apples, pears, guavas, loquats, plums, avocados, and limes. When the blackberry bushes were full, I could eat them all day long. He also raised vegetables like potatoes, beans, carrots, radishes, and squash.

We all recognized the sound that his yellow truck made, so when we heard it, we immediately started getting ready to go with him, even if he hadn't asked us to go. He never said no to us because he was always happy to have us with him. My grandmother came with us too most of the time, so while we were helping Grandpa (or at least pretending to help him) pick the fruits or feed the animals, she was making food for us.

My cousins' families visited us on some weekends, and we all enjoyed the day, playing on swings that my grandfather had built, running, or sliding down hills on a piece of fabric. We usually spent the whole day together until it was dark.

When my grandfather died, everything ended. Now there are no more animals to feed or vegetables to harvest. He was the spirit of that place. Nothing is the same without him, and the place feels empty.

I have always thought that nothing is more important than family and friends; no fortune can fill the space that somebody leaves in our hearts when they are gone. Enjoy your life, but don't forget to make time for your loved ones.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CENTER PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT SPRING AND SUMMER 2016

Joy Tesh, Director of the Language and Culture Center, continued to serve on the Board of Directors of UCIEP (University and College Intensive English Programs) during the spring and completed her UCIEP service at the NAFSA Conference in Denver in June.

Ms. Tesh represented the LCC at the CEA (the Commission on English Language Accreditation) Constituent Council Meeting at the NAFSA Conference in June.

Adam Chen, Program Director of Counseling and Student Services, is currently serving as a member of the Trainer Corps of NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Farideh Nekoobahr is serving as Member-at-Large of TexTESOL IV.

CONFERENCE	PRESENTER(S)	TITLE
TESOL International Convention Baltimore, Maryland	Jenifer Edens Sandra Buckner	Better Pronunciation: Just a Phone Call Away
	Vincent Tran Cory Stewart	Google Maps and Google Earth for Presentations



A Special Person

Cheng-Hao Chen

3C – Taiwan

My homestay family's father's name that is special and important to me is Mike Raya. He comes from Mexico, but he was born in Houston. He was the first person I met in the United States when I arrived in Houston. When I met him, he was friendly and kind, and this gave me a good first impression of him. Before I came to the United States, I did not speak any English. He was always very generous, helping me with everything and showing me how to quickly understand the environment of this country. We have a common interest which is the love of cars. Before I came to Houston, I worked for an automobile company. He owns an automobile shop in Houston. We had a lot of the same experiences, which helped us communicate about cars. In addition, this is a helpful way for me to practice English, so I benefitted greatly. Everyday, he checks my homework and helps me improve my English. On the weekends, he often takes me to restaurants to understand this region better. In conclusion, he is just like my father in the United States: my dream country. Because he lets me be very successful, my coming to my dream country has been very smooth so far. I feel very confident and safe when he is around me. I appreciate my homestay family who are helpful and nice. Mike is a very important and special person to me in my life. I will never forget him.

My Special Person

Zixin Yang

3D – China

I have a wonderful mother because she has taught me a lot in my life. My mother, who helps me study, is a strict person. When I was a child, I disliked studying, and she gave me two choices. One was to study hard in school, and the other was to find a job and survive in my country. I hated that my mother gave me those choices, but I still chose the first one because I know knowledge is power. If she had not told me to choose, I would have become a bad person. My mother is a nice person because she takes care of me. When I am hungry, she makes my favorite dishes. She has taught me how to make my favorite dishes. My mother is a successful boss. She is taller than me and has long black hair. In my city, almost everybody knows her. She is in charge of one hundred people. My mother tells me that knowledge is control. In my life, I am glad to have a nice mother. Whenever I have problems, my mother helps me and teaches me. Therefore, I have a colorful life because of her!

My Favorite Friend

Truc Cao

3C – Vietnam

When I was a student in Viet Nam, I had a lot of friends, but my favorite friend is Truong. He is my best friend. He is older than me by two years. He is friendly, nice and smart. He is very tall and thin. He has short black hair. I like a person who can play sports well. He not only plays badminton very well, but he also plays football, swimming and table tennis. He impresses me. He listens to me and supports me when I am upset. He resolves my problems. We spent a lot of time together, so we have many beautiful memories. That is why I like him very much. We have kept in contact since I came to the U.S.A. Our friendship is forever.

A Person I Know

Abdullah Alshammari

3C – Saudi Arabia

A person I know in my life that make me happy is my best friend. His name is Ali. He is 20 years old, and he is from Saudi Arabia. I have known him since I was 9 years old. He helps people, smiles and also when I tell him I need something, he helps me. At the same time, he is funny. He does a lot of things that make me happy. In addition, he is handsome, and women follow him, but he does not care about them because he is Muslim. Finally, sometimes he takes so many risks that it makes him very strong. In conclusion, I love him so much, and I will be with him forever in my life.

A Special Person

Huiyue Luo

3D – China

All of us have a special person who affects our life. Maybe she is your mother, maybe he is your father or another person, but who is special for me is a teacher. To be honest, he is not tall or fat. He always wears a pair of glasses and has a smile on his face. Why is he important to me? First, because he is strong. I live in the north of China and in the winter, it snows heavily, and most of us wear gloves, hats and other things. However, my teacher thinks he is strong enough, so that he does not need to wear much to keep himself warm. Second, he is positive and funny. When we have a test, he thinks we are under too much pressure, so he often tells jokes to make us happy, and after that we will feel relaxed. Third, he is also strict, but patient. As a student, we can not avoid making mistakes. At the time, he is very strict with us, but really patient. Because he does not say slang words, he only tells us what we should do. What I like him most is that he is never angry with us in front of other teachers. Though I did not get a good grade at the end, I am also glad to be this teacher's student. He was my student mentor, and I appreciated him.

Safwa

Hassan Alhashim

4C – Saudi Arabia

I am from Safwa, located in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia. It is not a large town, but it is not far from Damman, the largest city in the area. My town is named Safwa, which means “purity,” because of the clean water that is underground. Safwa has something unique called “ain,” which means “eye” in Arabic. The ain is a huge pool of pure water that has come up to the earth’s surface, and it looks like an eye. The older generations used to swim in this; however, the ain dried up after the discovery of oil in my town. When oil was taken out of the ground, it was replaced with water from the ain. Although the ain in Safwa is only a huge pit now, it is still a tourist attraction.

Venezuelan and American Culture

Ronith Diaz Sulbaran

4C – Venezuela

Culture is part of a country’s essence and identity. It is based on history, resources, migration, and development. Venezuela and the United States are countries on the same continent, and their cultures have many similarities. However, Venezuelans and Americans also have some significant cultural differences, such as attitudes about family and leisure activities.

Compared to Americans, Venezuelans have closer family relationships. They gather for meetings and parties frequently. Children usually do not move out and become independent from their parents until they are about thirty years old or have gotten married.

Another difference between Venezuelans and Americans is their leisure activities. Most Americans attend more cultural events. They often go to sporting events, concerts, and public celebrations. For example, Americans observe Independence Day with passion. They have parties and decorate their homes with flags.

Venezuela and Americas cultures are different, but both have interesting customs to learn from and enjoy.

Lebanese and American Cultures

Odile Hanna

4C – Lebanon

Urbanization has made the world a small city whereas each country has a different culture and identity. In fact, meeting people from other countries helps you to be more open to the world and to know other cultures and civilizations. Culture can differ between the countries on the same continent. Mexico and the United States are on the same continent, but they have different cultures. Differences can also be between countries on different continents; for example, Lebanese culture is not similar to American culture. The most important difference between Lebanese and American cultures is communication skills.

Communication skills are one of the major differences between these two cultures. Actually, greeting people is very different. Lebanese

people shake hands and kiss each other three times on the cheek, but American people say “Hi,” and sometimes shake hands. In addition, facial expressions are difference between these two countries. In Lebanon, people do not show facial expressions. Unlike Lebanese people, American people show facial expressions of happiness or sadness.

In sum, each culture is different. Lebanese and American cultures differ not only in communication skills, but also in other important ways. Each country tries to keep its own culture, identity, and civilization. Every country has beautiful and gorgeous cultures- even if that culture is different from others.

Cultures

Hussain Almarri

4D – Kuwait

Family is one of the major differences between Kuwaiti culture and American culture. In Kuwaiti culture, the family is sacred. The oldest brother should take care of his family and pay attention to his family’s needs. He must meet their needs and help them when they have a problem. It means he takes care of the whole family- unless his sister gets married; then her husband must take care of her. In contrast, it seems that in American culture, there are some people who just think about themselves. They just think about making money, and they forget about their parents.

Awkward Phone Calls

Tao Chen

4C – China

Culture bumps™ are unavoidable when you interact with people from a country that is different from your own, and my American friends experienced that when my Chinese friends called them in Houston. I first met Chase and his girlfriend Alexandra on a basketball court near my house in Houston. They quickly became friends with my Chinese friends and me.

My Chinese friends would sometimes call Alexandra when they wanted to talk to Chase. When Chase was not at home because of business trips, she was often surprised because of the questions my Chinese friends would ask.

In China, if the person you are calling is not home, it is common to ask whoever answered the phone where the other one went and how long they’d be gone. These questions seem natural in China, and they are a way to continue the conversation. However, since these questions seem too personal in American culture, Alexandra felt uncomfortable, but she tried to be polite. The callers were sometimes persistent, which made it awkward, but she avoided the questions by asking if she could take a message or help in some other way.

Now my Chinese friends are aware that it’s inappropriate to ask questions about someone else’s travel plans and schedule on the phone in the United States if you don’t know the person you’re talking to well. Fortunately, Alexandra realizes that my friends had not intended to seem rude.

The Differences Between China And The U.S.

Fancheng (Richard) Meng

6A – China

If our ancestors created human civilization, then different ancestors would be representative of different cultural atmospheres. Exploring a different culture of ancestors is exploring a different culture of a country. But in many different countries, most people who I have chatted with were American and Chinese. I found a lot of differences between these two countries, and I want to tell you the three most important differences between these two countries.

The first difference is the method of education. In the U.S., parents and teachers always ask their children to be independent when they are five or six years old, so their children can do everything they like and solve every problem by themselves. But in China, parents always help their children do everything. For instance, I have an older cousin who is my uncle's son and who went to the U.S. to live with his family when he was a five-year-old boy. After I had come to Houston, I chatted with him. He told me that he had to do everything by himself when he was young like washing his own dishes or cleaning his own room. But for me, I had never done any housework by myself before I came to the US; my parents did all of the housework in my family. Then my cousin told me that teachers in the US always asked their students to think and solve questions on their own. But in China, teachers always told their students the answers of the questions and asked students to remember the answers.

The second difference is based on these two countries' cultures. Every country has its own culture. China and America in particular are at two polar opposites. As we all know, when you visit a Chinese home, you have to take your shoes off to show respect for the host. If you did not take your shoes off, the host might think you are rude. On the other hand, if you do this when you are visiting an American home, they might think rude. In American culture, you can only take your shoes off when you are with your family. Even at your boyfriend or girlfriend's home, if you take your shoes off, it means he or she can do whatever he or she wants. So when you have another friend from another country, you should know their culture. If you don't know it, your friends who are from another country, based on Culture Bumps™, may think you are very rude or something even worse.

The third difference is the biggest difference between these two countries. China is a socialist country, which means the community is a group where everything is publicly owned- which means it belongs to government. Conversely, the U.S. is a capitalist country, which means everything can be private. One day, I was chatting with an American friend, and I told him in China, if we brought a house, we would just get the right to use it for 75 years. After 75, we had to return the rights for this house to our government. He was surprised, confused, and wanted to know why. He asked me why we just brought the right to use it but not own it? In the US, if he brought a house, it would be owned forever until the owner sold it. If their government wanted to take, it would be illegal.

In conclusion, there are many differences between China and the U.S. for various reasons. One is a western country; one is an eastern

country. One is the representative of Western culture; one is the representative of Eastern culture. One is world's biggest developed country; one is world's biggest developing country. And one is the youngest big country; one is the oldest country in history.

The Wrong Restaurant

Mohammed Bakri

4C – Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission gives advice to students who are going to study abroad, so I had heard about culture bumps™, but I never cared about them until I experienced my own.

After I'd been in the United States for a few months, my cousin and I decided to change our routine and have dinner at a new restaurant. When we arrived in the parking lot, we weren't sure we were at the right place because the name on the sign wasn't clear.

While we were in our car trying to decide if we wanted to stay, a huge man suddenly came out of the restaurant and screamed at us. When he yelled to ask if we were talking about him, we forgot how to speak English because we were frightened. When he shouted at us to get out of the car to fight him, we were scared and wished that we had cooked dinner at home. Fortunately, his friend appeared and helped us. He apologized to us and explained that his friend was drunk.

I had thought I knew a lot about American culture, but that was the first time I'd ever seen a drunk person try to get in a fight.

Outdated Traditions in My Country

Huong (Hannah) Nguyen

4D – Vietnam

My country has several positive values, such as cooperation, respect for teachers, and heroism. However, some traditions don't make our lives better. One of these traditions is a lack of respect for women.

Women, who are sometimes looked at as slaves, do not have enough human rights. Most women in my country cannot live the lives they want; they cannot live independently with freedom. Instead, when they finish their jobs, women have to return home to do housework while men go to restaurants or pubs to enjoy themselves. If the children have any problems, it is the women who take responsibility for them.

For Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, women don't have the right to make their own plans for the holiday. Most of them have to visit their mother-in-law and do housework from early morning to late at night. They also have to prepare meals to worship their ancestors while the men eat and drink. If the women refuse, they may be abused physically and emotionally.

How can women get the human rights they deserve? They must release themselves from the outdated traditions. In addition to becoming educated about these rights, women should visit developed countries to witness how human rights can be exercised. I believe that women will become stronger, and they will take actions to rescue themselves to have happy lives.

Differences Between Burkina and American Cultures

Goussanibi (Kate) Soura

4C – Burkina Faso

Coming in a new country like the United States is not always easy. Many differences exist between Burkina culture and American culture. One special difference is attitudes toward elders. Attitudes toward elders differ from United States to Burkina Faso. In American culture, even if elders are respected, they are not considered carefully. In America, people seem to be busy all the time; therefore, they don't have much time to spend time with their elderly parents, or take care of them. As a result, they put them in a nursing home or choose someone to take care of them. On the other hand, in Burkina culture if you put your elderly parents in a nursing home or choose someone to take care of them, it will be inappropriate and disrespectful. Because it is your duty to take care of your elderly parents, you must not abandon them. In addition, if you abandon them, your family will curse you because it is important to take care of your parents even if you are extremely busy. Elders are the most important people in our life, and how we say in Burkina Faso "when your parents become old, they are like your eyes; therefore, you need to take care of them carefully". Being in a new country includes many culture bumps™. The most important for me was attitudes toward elders. However, many others differences exist.



Chinese and American Culture

Xinrui Liu

4D – China

After I came to Houston, I felt like my world had become quieter but friendlier. In China, we use a loud voice for our friends to hear us because we are constantly surrounded by many other people. However, in the United States, everyone speaks softly. They do not speak louder to attract others' attention.

Our body language and facial expressions are different in China too. We stay a certain distance from others, and we do not want others to reach our inner world. On the other hand, most Americans are outgoing and passionate. They hug friends frequently. When they talk, they have exaggerated facial expressions and active gestures to express their friendliness.

Also, men seem more courteous and polite in the United States. They hold the door open for ladies, but in China, most of them focus on themselves instead of making an effort to help women. Sometimes I feel like I have to act like a man to take care of my female friends in China.

Another difference is that in Houston, people say hello to me even if we don't know each other. I enjoy this because strangers don't greet each other in China. One reason for this is that the Chinese media always reports horrible news, so people are afraid to talk with strangers. For example, once when an elderly woman was talking to someone she did not know in a public park, the stranger kidnapped her granddaughter.

I'm thankful to be in the United States and experience a different culture. This has been a wonderful adventure for me.

Summer in My Eyes

Jiaming (Eason) Chen

5C – China

This picture I took shows my mood.



Organic Restaurant Owner

Bryan (Chuan Chen) Kuo

4D – Taiwan

Since I was a child, my father has always taught me that we must set goals for the future. As a result, I have made plans for my career, family, and volunteer work.

I decided on my profession when I was studying the hospitality industry in high school. I hope to open an organic restaurant before I am thirty-five years old. The organic restaurant, which I'll build near farms, will educate customers about food and teach them how to eat healthier.

Building a family is another important part of my plans. My dream is to marry a beautiful woman who is smart, brave, and ambitious. I'd like us to have two children and live in a luxurious house near the coast. To take care of my parents, I'll buy a second house near us for them to live in.

In addition to having a career and a family, my other goal is to serve my community. I'm planning to volunteer with animals at a shelter and with children in an orphanage. Perhaps I could bring food from my restaurant to the children.

Our plans for the future might change, but we cannot achieve a goal unless we have established it. Planning helps us feel happy. Our career earns money for us, our family supports us, and volunteering can be satisfying for us.

Dreams

Shadia Nasr Moya

4D – Venezuela

Since I was fifteen years old, I have always wanted to come to the United States to learn the English language, and my mother wanted it too. When I graduated from high school, I asked my mother if it was possible to come, but she said to me that the economy in our country had declined and it was difficult for her to send me to another country. I was sad because my plans were ruined.

First, I was going to the United States to learn English, and then when I finished, I would come back to Venezuela to study medicine, but my mother said that it wasn't possible and the University where I was going to study was closed.

Six months later, my mother asked me if I wanted to study English and I said "Are you kidding, mom?" Then, my mother said, "No, start doing some research about the universities", but I had already done my research because I wanted to come to Houston. Furthermore, she liked the idea.

In conclusion, I learned that we should never stop dreaming about what we want to achieve. We have to keep dreaming and following our dreams.

Becoming an Economist

Aicha Diallo

4C – Burkina Faso

To be successful, you have to set goals. I would like to achieve some personal and professional goals in my lifetime.

My professional goals are to get a quality education and then find a job that makes me happy, lets me support my family, and lets me help people. I would love to be an economist because they solve the world's financial problems. Economists are familiar with a variety of subjects, and several great presidents have been economists.

I am especially motivated to help my home, Africa, which is the poorest continent. Despite the fact that it provides wealth to the world, some of its own people cannot even afford water. My purpose is to help my brothers and sisters benefit from our natural resources and become happier. I want to make tomorrow better for future generations.

Plans for the Future

Alice Tougouma

4D – Burkina Faso

Success is something that is inherent. First of all, after my English program, I'm planning to start my major in accounting until I finish my Master's degree. I chose to continue my studies in the United States because English is the spoken language of business. Second, if I get my diploma, I will return to my country and work. In addition, after a few years of working, I'll open my own company. If this company prospers, I'm going to open a day care for children and an orphanage to help the poor and abandoned children. I also wish to get married and have children.

Young Lady Wants to Be a Star

Truc Nguyen

5D – Vietnam

A lady wants to be a star,
She spends her cash on a guitar.
She likes to sing and play,
Having shows on Friday.
And would like a touring car.

The Value of Friendship

Long Thai

4C – Vietnam

When I was a child, I thought the only people I needed were my family members because they always took care of me and protected me. I didn't feel a need to have friends since my life seemed complete. I stayed home and spent all my time with my parents.

However, I started to change my mind when I was about seven years old. I felt bored when I watched other children smiling, screaming, running, and jumping as they played games near my house. I wanted to join them, but my parents forbid it, so I stayed inside to play on my computer or watch cartoons by myself.

One day, while my parents were sleeping, I sneaked outside and played with the children in my neighborhood. I felt happy and comfortable, and I made many new friends. I realized I had to have more friends to share life with.

I have missed my best friends since I came to the United States. We talk or see each other every day on social media, but I would prefer to see them in person. I hope I can visit them in my hometown soon. My friends are an important part of my life that I didn't have in the past. They have helped me succeed and enjoy life more. I'm thankful to them for helping me overcome sadness in my life.



The Vanishing Backpack

Jessica Lugo Ortiz

4C – Mexico

When I was a little girl, something strange happened when I was coming home from kindergarten. I lived out in the country, where I usually walked a short distance from the school to my home. As I passed through a forest, I heard laughter every day, but nobody was there.

One day in the school library, I found a book that was special to me because it was the only book written in English. I was excited and wanted to take it home with me. When I arrived in the forest, I set my backpack on the grass while I picked some flowers for my mother. After I finished, I came back to the place where I had put my backpack, but it had vanished.

I searched for it a long time, but I couldn't find it. When I got home, I told my mother what happened, and we spent several hours searching for my backpack. Unfortunately, we never found it, and I still don't understand how it disappeared.

Making a Good Impression on My Boss

Rodolfo Danilo Prado Saavedra

3C – Peru

If you want to make a good impression on your boss, you need to know some tips. First, you should have good personal qualities, such as being responsible on the job. For example, you must perform and finish your daily job as soon as possible, so you can avoid having a lot of work for the weekend. Also, you should show interest in the job. For example, if you observe that your coworker is having trouble solving a problem, you should help them with their job so that they see you as a team player. Second, having a good relationship at work is important to make a good impression - make friends during your breaks so that your boss and coworkers can spend some pleasant time together at work. Moreover, you should be polite to others and have good communication with them. Also, having good manners is highly important because it can make your life easier. Finally, you should avoid slang and always make eye contact while communicating. In conclusion, when you follow these tips, you will feel more comfortable at your job.

The Painful Breakup

Luoc Vong

4C – Vietnam

I learned a priceless lesson my freshman year of college in Vietnam when my girlfriend and I broke up. I loved her, and I have unforgettable memories of our time together. We were together almost every day, and it was the happiest I'd ever been. I thought she was the one I would live happily ever after with, but I was wrong.

After spending three months full of joy together, we started having arguments that gradually became more serious. We didn't have the same perspective about life or the same goals for the future. I was disappointed because she was only concerned about what she wanted and ignored my feelings.

We eventually decided to break up, which was painful. I felt like my heart was broken because she was the most valuable treasure I'd ever had, and I had lost her. It took me a long time to get over her and feel normal again.

The lesson I learned is that I have to focus on myself, do my best to improve, and not let others have too much influence on me.

Dangers of Technology

Ronith Diaz Sulbaran

4C – Venezuela

Life is full of beautiful, sad, wonderful, and risky moments that each has a lesson for us. We must understand these lessons to become a better person every day. Although life may not be easy at times, it always has some positive aspects. Therefore, we have to learn from it, be positive, and set goals.

Learning from every moment of our lives is not difficult if we remember that these moments are temporary—not permanent. I recommend focusing only on the positive parts because that is the best way to enjoy life, especially in difficult times when we're afraid we can't make our dreams come true. However, the only way to reach a dream is to avoid giving up. Thinking positively just requires practice. You can repeat positive phrases in your mind to reach your next step.

My other advice is to set specific goals. These will be your missions in life that help you become better every day as you do your best to follow your dreams. To start setting goals, think about where you want to be in two, five, and ten years from now. Then, establish your goals and write the activities that are necessary to reach them.

Humanity Still Exists

Suvasish Poddar

6B – India

There is a saying: "Being human is given but keeping our humanity is a choice." Frankly, nowadays it is really hard to find people who care for others and know the meaning of true humanity because our planet has more greedy and selfish people than honest people. Nowadays, the majority of people only care about their own satisfaction and interests and do not usually stop to think about anyone else. There are always, however, some exceptions and these are the people who have changed our societies by being exceptional. I think this story will help you to understand that honest and philanthropic people still exist, and that goodwill is not yet dead. This story is more remarkable to me since it plays a big role in teaching me a life lesson.

It was an autumn morning in Kolkata (my city). After I finished my morning walk, I stopped at a village store to get something to eat since I was as hungry as a tiger. There was a table outside the store and an old man was making tea. I asked for something to eat. The old man asked me what I wanted to eat. I told him "Uncle, I'm so hungry! Could you please give me something that can fill me up?" He told me to go inside and have a seat on the bench.

Inside the store, I saw his cute little son studying. I asked the boy what he was studying, and the boy replied that he was doing math. I told him, "In the morning, you should always read first and then you do math." I explained to the boy that in the morning, whatever you studied would stay in your mind for long time. As I was talking with the boy, I saw someone coming inside from the back of the store with a plate in her hand. I asked the boy who she was, and the boy nicely replied that she was his mother. Suddenly, I saw that the shopkeeper was telling her to give me the plate, which was full of Ruti and Sabji (Bengali food): my favorites! I thought that this was probably the food I had ordered, so I started eating. After I finished eating, I asked the man how much I owed him, and he replied that I owed him nothing. "Are you kidding me?" I exclaimed, "I asked you to give me something to eat and you gave me your best. Now you are saying that I do not owe you anything? How is this possible?" The shopkeeper explained that whatever he gave me to eat was not for sale. He told me he had nothing to give me from his store that morning except for some cookies and tea. Since I asked him to give me something to eat that could make me full, he told his wife to give me his part of their breakfast, which basically meant that there would not be anything for him to eat that morning. I stayed quiet for a moment as I wrapped my head around what had just happened. After listening to everything, I felt guilty.

I asked him, "Uncle, why did you do this for me? You could have told me that you did not have anything in your store beside tea and cookies." He replied, "I understand your hunger, so I did not want to make you feel bad by refusing you, so I gave you part of my breakfast." At that time, I felt sad, but on the other hand, I also felt so lucky to meet such a unique person.

I realized that it would be good for our world if every individual acted like him. At that time, he could have refused to offer me food for many reasons, but he did not. According to him, he just did what he was supposed to do as one human being to another. I was very impressed by his generosity and kindness, so I took out a 100-rupee note and tried to give that to his son. As I tried to give the money to the boy, the shopkeeper asked me not to do that. He told me, "If you really appreciated my kindness, then act in the same way I did with you today. Try to help others when they need your help." I told him, "Today you taught me a big life lesson that I will never forget." He smiled kindly, and I started walking towards my home. I couldn't stop thinking about the man and the life lesson that I had learned from him.

DECLARATIONS

Our Declaration of Independence from Fast Food

Hilda Emilia Chavez Cuyubamba

5A – Peru

Futoon Alouni

5A – Saudi Arabia

Eufrasia Owono Nchama

5A – Equatorial Guinea

It has become necessary for us, the New Generation, to dissolve the consumption of fast food that causes many problems in our health. Our birthright is to have liberty, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness and the viability to consume healthy food. The laws of nature dictate that healthy and natural food increase energy and happiness in our life and help us with the pursuit of happiness and welfare. For this reason,

we must declare our separation from fast food as no chain should take such integral rights away. This fundamental issue is so serious to us that we, the New Generation, find it necessary to declare our independence from fast food.

The right to food is the human right for people to feed themselves with dignity. Everyone at birth received a healthy body; first our parents were responsible for giving us the best food to maintain our health; but now it is our duty to follow in their example and to take care of our eating habits in order to protect our welfare. However, it is clear that fast food has caused nothing but problems to our health, and this poison that feeds on our temptation must be cast from humanity. To prove this, we submit the truth, and hereby show our beliefs and the reasons for our separation from fast food.

Fast food is rich in saturated fat, acids and cholesterol; it is also highly processed and contains large amounts of carbohydrates, and, as a result, is very high in calories while offering us little or no nutritional value.

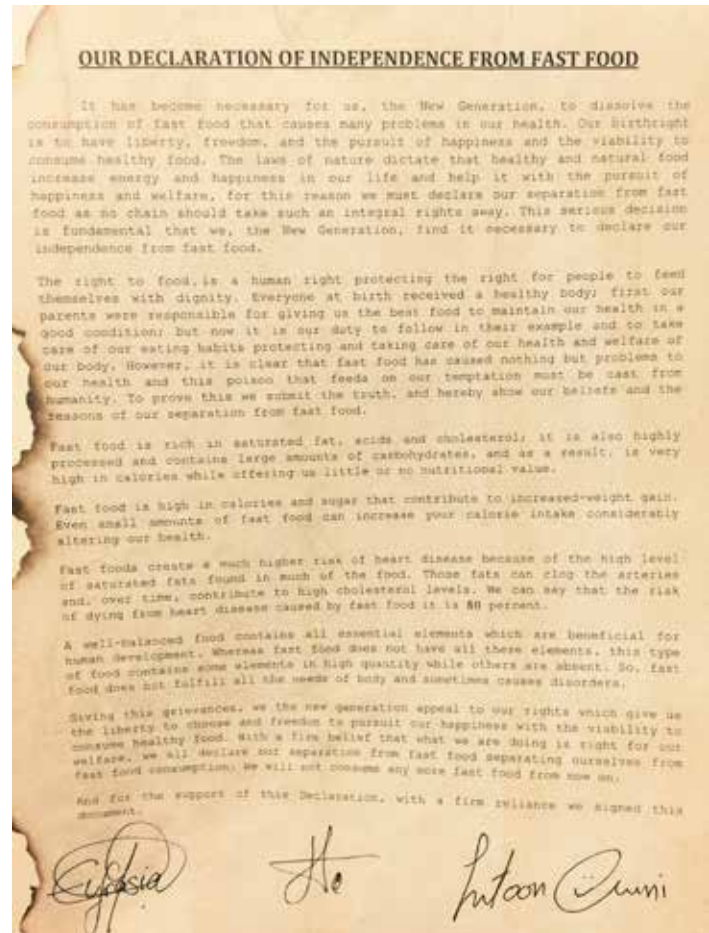
Fast food is high in calories and sugar that contribute to increased-weight gain. Even small amounts of fast food can increase your calorie intake considerably, altering our health.

Fast foods create a much higher risk of heart disease because of the high level of saturated fats found in much of the food. Those fats can clog the arteries and, over time, contribute to high cholesterol levels. We can say that the risk of dying from heart disease caused by fast food is 80 percent.

Well-balanced food contains all essential elements which are beneficial for human development whereas fast food does not have all these elements. Rather, this type of food contains some elements in high quantity while others are absent. So, fast food does not fulfill all the needs of the body and sometimes causes disorders.

Given these grievances, we, the new generation, appeal to our rights which give us the liberty to choose the freedom to pursue our happiness and consume healthy food. With a firm belief that what we are doing is right for our welfare, we all declare our separation from fast food consumption. We will not consume any more fast food from now on.

To make this declaration official, with firm resolve, we have signed this document.



Declaration of Independence

Yasmine Souissi

5A – Switzerland

Henson Fang

5A – China

Ju Chu

5A – China

We, the students, believe that it is vitally important that every government regulate establishments like zoos, circuses, and animal theme parks such as Disney's Animal Kingdom and SeaWorld.

We are suffocated by the behavior of humans vis-à-vis the well-being of animals.

Human beings should free themselves from their greedy need to use animals for their own pleasure.

Human beings should, therefore, seek independence from their own emotional attachment to animal entertainment.

God has created a world containing animals, nature, and humans as one ecosystem—an ecosystem that can only be maintained by all of them co-existing in the proper way, where no one should interfere except to maintain the natural order of the food chain.

Being of the belief that animals should be in their own natural environment, we want to impel the separation from those foundations that exploit animals. Moreover, being put in an unnatural environment, these animals are likely to have dangerous encounters with humans.

Cities and corporations are responsible for setting up the many establishments where animals are exploited for human pleasure. To prove our point, we outline several grievances against these establishments:

They imprison animals in tiny cages, even if they try to make their cages look natural with some sound effects or some vegetation, it is not sufficient.

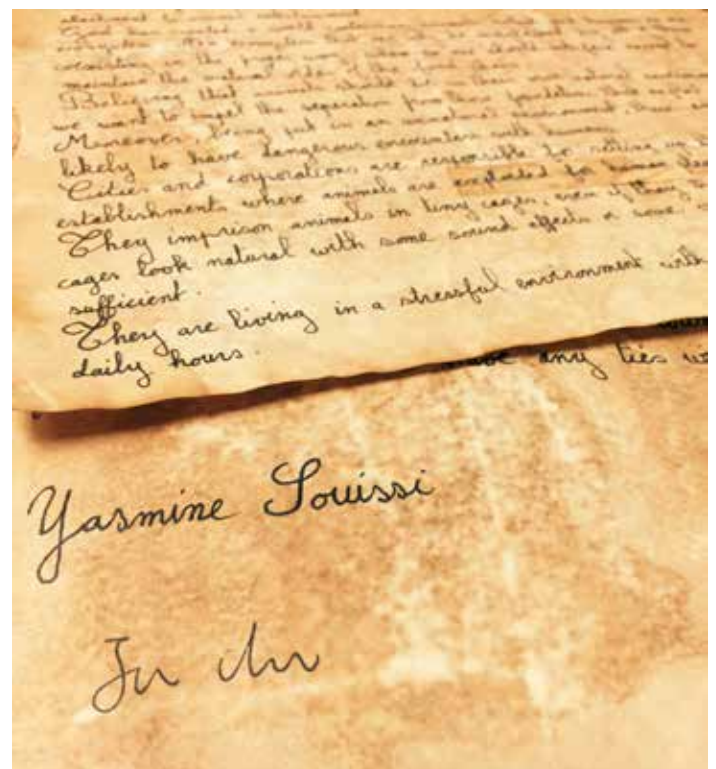
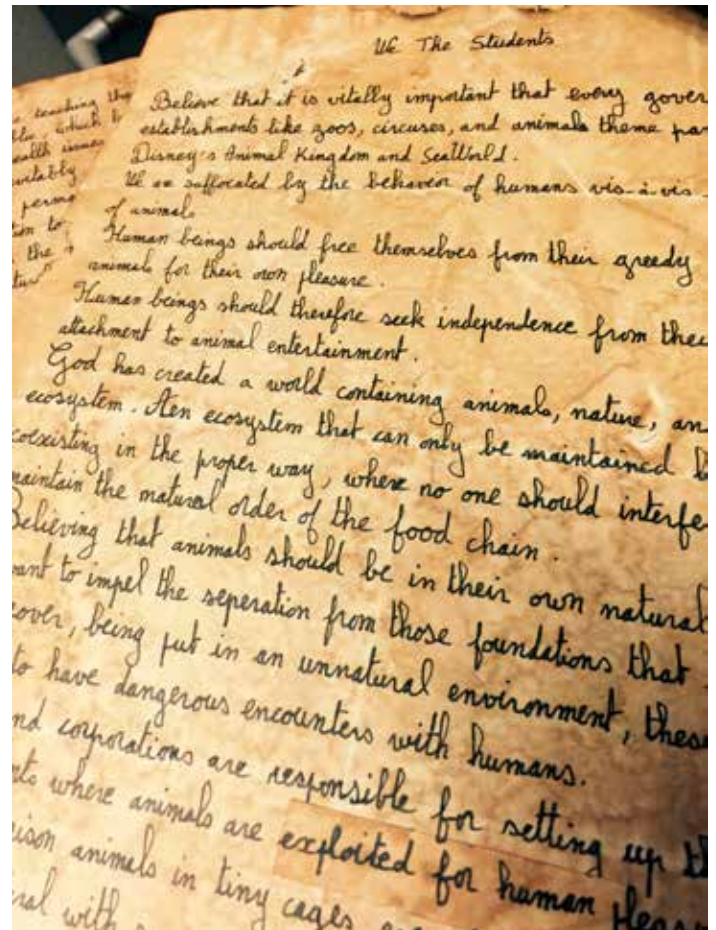
They force animals to live in a stressful environment with visitors around them for long hours every day.

They teach the animals to perform in shows and do tricks for the leisure of the public, which leads to the depression of those animals in addition to other health issues.

They inevitably cause a decrease in the lifespan of these animals due to the permanent stress and hard work that they are forced to do in addition to the deprivation of their natural environment.

They break the natural food chain by taking these animals away from their natural ecosystems, which may lead to the destruction of other animal life.

Hence, we, the representatives of the students of the Language and Culture Center, will not support the mistreatment of animals by visiting these commercial entertainment centers. We do not identify with their selfish attitude towards animals and, therefore, we do not want to have any ties with them.



CONVERSATION CLUB





Our Ideal Country

Victorine Nacanabo

6B – Ivory Coast

Phuong Bui

6B – Vietnam

What is your ideal nation? We prefer living in a place where everyone has liberty, peace, union and democracy. To represent such a country, the flag in our imagination has a white background which represents the peace and union. We believe that in order to build a sustainable country, there should not be the presence of war. This country should also have a strong union between the government and the residents. The second color we would use is sky blue. It would be the color of all the symbols in the flag. On the left top corner of the flag, there are five blue birds that symbolize liberties including freedom of education, religion, press, and civil liberty. The flag also features a big circle of laurels with a capital 'D' inside the bottom right corner to show the importance of democracy. We think the government in our ideal nation would respect its residents' opinions, and listen to the residents' desires. Residents who live in this country have the right to contribute when making significant decisions for the country.

An Ideal Country

Hamady Sangare

6B – USA Citizen

Xiaoyan Sun

6B – China

Siyou Jin

6B – China

We are the people of love and peace. Hand in hand, we stand together and fight for our only treasure, which is our country. Our ideal country's flag means the same. The blue background represents the ocean and the sky. The red stripes are in fact four arms that represent people putting their hands together while the red color represents their determination. The circle in the middle represents our hands. The pink color stands for love and the olive leaves mean peace.

My Country, My Congo

Step Bisimwa

4A – Congo (Kinshasa)

Nearly three quarters of the 70 million Congolese (75%), live below the multidimensional poverty line which allows for access to health care food. In Congo, Kinshasa, where I am from, there are a lot of problems that need to be talked about seriously for the well-being of this country. We are looking into how to resolve them. The major problem in the democratic republic of Congo is poverty, which has a lot of consequences.

So the question is: what is the cause of this poverty? The answer to this question is war, bad financial management, and also corruption.

Everybody knows that war needs a lot of money. Congo is one of countries where people really know the definition of war: several

wars have happened on its territory, especially in the eastern part of the country, where you can find many rebels who pretend to be looking for democracy with guns, but we know that their motivation is mineral rights. They acquired their arsenal for war through the canal of the major powerful countries, including the United States, for fighting against the regular Congolese army, who have difficulty in buying supplies that they need for war in this country where many departments have bad management.

The financial management in Congo, which is the second biggest country in Africa, needs to have a good leader because politicians who come to power do what they want instead of what the population wants. For example, the government built a very modern hospital which is very expensive in KINSHASA city, where people have an daily average income lower than 1 dollar. the hospital is a good idea; nevertheless, the population does not benefit from this building built with their money.

The last cause is corruption, which is impossible to eradicate. In my dear country, corruption is part of the community. Every single person is familiar with bribing. It became very bad when it got into education. For example, students have to bribe teachers who make tests and quizzes very difficult for students, unless the students give them money. Thus, students start taking part in that and forget studying for success. In our society now, it is giving birth the kind of people who have nothing in their brain but still take very important jobs. For example, an engineer like that can waste money on building something that will fall down quickly.

In conclusion, I have one big solution, which is going to be important for new generations but painful for the older. The solution is to keep the young babies with me to restart a new country because people who live in Congo think that life without war, bad financial management, and corruption is not normal. It has almost become part of their DNA.

An Amazing Trip

Chidinma Okereke

6C – Nigeria

The day started off on a good note and with high spirits, considering our eagerness to embark on this trip of a lifetime. We all gathered in front of our hotel in Beijing, met up with the tour guides, and departed appropriately. The drive took quite a while, and we had to leave early in order to get there before the sunrise. This would enable us to start climbing before the sun started smiling at us. At last we made it to the foot of the wall. The place was filled with excited tourists like me, wanting to set out on this life time adventure. If you had told me before then that I would visit China, not to mention embarking on a visit to one of the Seven Wonders of the World, I would have doubted you. It's not that I have not traveled, but I could not imagine flying that distance to Asia. It is like flying to Australia. I don't see myself doing it; nevertheless, one day you may hear that I made it to Australia. There was a lot of buzzing from the eager wall climbers. At last, the journey started one step at a time and one foot at a time. Some of the walls were plain, which made it easier. Some parts were

steep. At some point we had to go on our knees like man's four footed best friend. We puffed, sweated, sat down, ate, and drank, but then the climb continued, one step at a time and one foot at a time. In between, we assessed where we were coming from, and evaluated and asked ourselves if we wanted to continue; of course, we chose to continue. Human nature wants you to go on, to keep walking forward in the midst of adversity, to keep pushing forward in the midst of challenges. The nervous system releases different types of hormones at different times. Eventually we made it to the top of the wall. We looked down, and Earth seemed so far away, as if we were now on another planet. No wonder the Great Wall of China is the only one of the man-made wonders that can be seen from space. How excited we were with ourselves that we had accomplished this feat. We sang a song of victory and then started our descent down to "earth". When I look back on that day, I relish those moments, and I can beat my chest proudly to say that I climbed that great wall. I also jokingly add that I am glad I made it to the top with my two legs and two hands where they need to be, without having to be carried on the shoulders by my imaginary body guards. I look forward to my next trip. Watch this space for my trip to Australia!

Taste of Texas

Kuan-Yi Lee

5D - Taiwan

Since coming to Texas, every friend has asked me "Have you tried Texas steak and is it good?" Almost all of my close friends know that I like to eat steak and know about food, and Texas steak is famous all over the world. However, what is a steak? A cow has 12 parts such as chuck, brisket, rib, short loin, flank, sirloin, tenderloin, top sirloin, bottom sirloin, round, and shank (goodfoodrecipes.com) and different parts can make different steaks. In addition, every restaurant has their own style of cooking, and a steak has 5 ways to be cooked: rare, medium-rare, medium, medium-well, and well-done. Although eating out is nice and people can try every combination of steak, eating out is expensive and takes time. Knowing how to cook a steak is enjoyable whether the steak is eaten by yourself or is shared with your family and friends. A sirloin is easy to cook at a home. If you pay attention, learn how to prepare and cook it and eat it, you will enjoy eating the steak.

First, you have to prepare everything you need, but why should you choose a sirloin? What kind of seasoning should I use? How do I save the steak until I cook it? A sirloin is the cow's hind legs and lower back, so a cow doesn't exercise a lot in those parts; as the result, a sirloin is tender, full of fat, which is called marbling, and has the fat's aroma. Next, you have to prepare salt; we should not choose sea salt because it has iodine, which is not good for the steak's flavor. Add garlic and pepper to let the steak's flavor bloom. Lastly, unless you want to eat the steak right after you buy it, you have to save the steak in a refrigerator. In fact, you can use storage bags to separate each piece of steak in the freezer. When you cook the steak, take the steak out of the freezer and put it in the refrigerator for one day. When all those steps done, you are ready to cook an admirable steak.

Second, it is easy to cook a steak, although you have to know what make steaks delicious. A perfect bite should be soft and tender; a nicely cooked sirloin should be white and pink crossed together, and one side has fat. Next, you have to trim the fat off and save it to make sure that outside the steak does not have any more fat. The basic flavor should be garlic, salt, and pepper, so you can use a saucepan and turn the grill to medium before adding the surplus fat, which was cut from the steak. After the surplus fat is like liquid, add garlic flakes and cook until the flakes' color looks amber. Then, take garlic flakes out of the pan before turning the fire to its hottest setting. Next, smear salt and pepper uniformly outside the steak before you put the steak into the saucepan. Grill each side 5 minutes; do not touch the steak unless it is upside down! You can only turn the steak over one time because beef's sweetness comes from the blood, so that less you turn a steak and hotter the fire the better so the blood stays in the steak. In addition, a sirloin is usually eaten medium rare, medium, or medium well, depending on people's taste, but how do you know when it is done?

When you cook the second side, you can use a finger to touch the steak to tell how done it is. For instance, if the steak is like your left hand make OK sign with a thumb and a forefinger then relax your hand until it touches under the hand's thumb's muscle. This means the steak is a medium rare, and when it is medium, the thumb muscle will connect with the middle finger, and when thumb muscle connects with the ring finger, the steak is cooked medium well (stovesandbros.com). The last step is called 'resting' which is when you allow the steak to sit after cooking so the blood creates enzyme reaction. So when the steak is cooked to your desire, you put the steak on a plate and wait 15-18 minutes. After all of these actions, you can start to eat, but we still can do some little things to make it more wonderful.

Finally, the steak's smell will lead us to where we almost cannot wait to eat it. Yet, we still have two things that can be done. One thing is that the aging steak is delicious, but after putting it out and waiting 15-18 minutes means the steak can get cold; so return the steak to a saucepan to reheat it for minute. Another thing some people do is choose a steak sauce. For example, the best selling American steak sauce is A.1., Terry Ho's Yum Yum, Giorgio Dawn Fresh Mushroom, Country Bob's All Purpose, Tabasco, Jack Daniels, Authentic Chimichurri, Heinz Traditional, Dale's Steak Seasoning, and Satsebeli Classic(amazon.com). Now, you can enjoy your unique and fabulous steak.

When you have finished these steps, you can taste the beef's sweetness from the aging blood in the meat. You can also taste the beef's fragrance from the steak's oil, garlic, salt, and pepper, and the steak's juice from how the steak is cooked. I hope everybody can make their own steaks and share them with the people they care for.

Sources

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Observing the Apartment Manager

Saja Bukhari

6C – Saudi Arabia

The office at the apartment where I live was crowded with many people. The three ladies who worked there were very busy helping people. One of those ladies was named Annie, and her desk was in the corner. She was wearing a short black skirt with a white jacket, which looked charming on her. Her hair was short, straight, and brown. She had a slim shape and was of medium height with brown eyes that shone the entire time I was there. I liked her extroverted personality, which was very sociable and caring towards everyone. She remembered my name and apartment number from our first meeting because she was with me when I signed the lease. While she was sitting at her desk, two people came up to her, and she helped them by giving them information and explaining which apartment was suitable for them. They decided to sign for the apartment they liked. When I left, she gave me a cup of coffee with chocolate. Now, I love going to the office just to say “Hi” to her. She is a very nice person.

Observing an Elderly Gentleman in the Kitchen

Weimin Xiao

6C – China

At about 5 P.M., the door to the kitchen opened and in came an elderly gentleman with an Asian appearance. He walked steadily to the large refrigerator, opened the door, and pulled out a bundle of green vegetables. Then, he turned and walked to the other side of the kitchen where there was a sink next to a window. He dropped the vegetables into the sink and turned the tap on, so the water began to flow. The gentleman stood there, with his back straight like a pine tree. His hair was white and neat, and his face was clear. Many years ago, he might have been a soldier in the army. A few minutes later, he turned off the tap and began cleaning the green vegetables. Softly, with the back of his right hand, he brushed two sides of the green leaves. Although not very strong, his action was rhythmic and coordinated. It was hard to guess his age. About half an hour later, the pile of green vegetables was cleaned. The elderly gentleman then left the kitchen.

Observing a Little Boy

Duy Tran

6C – Vietnam

It was 8 p.m. on Wednesday evening in the food court center at Woodlands Mall. Luke, a very cute five-year-old boy, was standing next to his mother with a brand new toy box in his hands. Luke had a short blonde haircut and shiny blue eyes. He was wearing a Spiderman t-shirt, khaki shorts, and a pair of sporty Nike shoes. When his mom walked close to a sushi restaurant, Luke ran as fast as he could to his favorite ice-cream shop. His mom said, “Son, be careful! We are not going to eat ice-cream this time.” “But I just want some strawberry, Mom,” Luke answered. Then he refused to have dinner with his mom at the Japanese restaurant. After about three minutes of negotiating

with Luke, she finally agreed to let him have an ice cream. Then, Luke was very happy and really enjoyed his delicious ice cream. After Luke had finished, they walked slowly to have a real meal at the sushi bar, which might have been Luke’s mom’s favorite place to eat.

Observing a Gentleman in the Mall

Mashaal Al Barrak

6C – Saudi Arabia

I was in the Galleria eating area. The store in front of me was Footlocker, and to my left was McDonald’s. To my right, there were tables and chairs. I was eating my meal and observing a man who sat in a chair next to me. He was a gentleman who had some kind of business meeting. He had so many papers. He opened his laptop to work, but he was looking around all the time. In addition, he was waiting for someone to start his meeting. At that time, I had finished eating my meal; however, he was looking at his watch and seemed nervous. While he was still waiting, a younger man was coming to him quickly. He asked the young man, “Why were you late?” The young man said, “There was traffic. I am sorry. Let’s start our meeting.” The gentleman was slightly upset. He started talking, using his calculator and writing down notes. Moreover, they had long maps on the table, and they were marking on some areas with a pen. The gentleman asked the young man more questions. I guessed the gentleman was an owner and the young man was a designer for a new store in the Galleria and that was why they met where they did. They spent forty minutes talking; then they went to see the location for the new store. In short, I was observing a man who sat in the food area in the Galleria mall. I learned that I should not be late when I have an important appointment with someone. If something happens, at least I should call him or her to let them know.

An Observation in a Public Place

Ngoc Tran

6C – Vietnam

I was at a restaurant with my friends for lunch. Next to our table was a family of four people: dad, mom, daughter, and a little son. They came there a few minutes earlier than we did, but their food was not yet ready when I arrived. Seeing what they wore and their bags, I think they were going to Galveston Beach. I’m going to describe the little boy because he made everyone in the restaurant notice him. He wore a t-shirt with a picture of Iron Man on it, black shorts, and he held onto his small red car. His face was very cute with black eyes and a small mouth. Nothing happened until the waitress brought the food to them. Then the little boy started to cry and did not eat his meal. He was crying and asking for a glass of Pepsi, but his Mom said no. Then he cried loudly and threw the spoon away; everyone in the restaurant looked at them. The mother tried to comfort him, but he did not stop screaming. At that time, I looked at the Dad and wondered why he did not say anything and kept eating with their daughter. However, a few minutes later, he looked angry, stopped eating, and took the little boy out of the restaurant. He talked to the son while the boy looked

scared and stopped crying. Then they came back; the son had stopped crying but still did not eat. The father called his name and said, "Jason! Remember what I told you? You still want it, don't you?" The little boy did not say anything and looked his mom. I do not know what he said to his son, but I guess he promised to buy something for his little boy. That is such a good way to the boy to keep silent in public places. Finally, he ate the food with his mom. She told him with a smile, "My son is a good boy." Everyone had stopped looking at them and was focused on their meals. That family checked out and left after about 30 minutes.

An Observation at the Health Center

Huy Phan

6C – Vietnam

It was an awful feeling to wait to receive first aid for an injury I got while mowing the grass over the weekend. While waiting for the call from the nurse, I noticed a boy who seemed to be about fourteen focusing on his cellphone. At first, he appeared to be patient; he kept waiting and focusing on his phone. After a couple of minutes had passed, I realized there was something wrong with that boy; it seemed like his stomach was getting worse, and he screamed with tears. His face looked green, and his entire body was wet like he had taken a shower. He clumsily used the left hand to hold his stomach while the right hand was stroking his sweaty forehead under the long, dark, straight hair. His eyes changed to red and his lips turned purple; he shouted in pain. He swooned into unconsciousness after having the pain for ten minutes, and it made for a chaotic atmosphere in the waiting room. His mother was panicking and shouting loudly, asking for emergency surgery. "His temperature is getting higher!" his mother screamed, with tears on both her cheeks. His blue T-shirt was extremely wet and revealed his skinny body. His mother, who went through the room without saying a word, carried the poor boy. I looked at them for a few seconds and then wished for some good luck for the boy who was miserable with pain.

An Observation in a Public Place

Kanyanut Wongwattanakij

6C – Thailand

Today, I went to an ice cream store called Yogurt Land. Yogurt Land had a few people, and it was quiet except for a woman and her child, who was around two or three years old. They chose ice cream while my friends and I were eating. This woman was very beautiful and had a wonderful figure that like she had never had a child. After she chose the ice cream that she wanted, she walked to another counter, which had many toppings. Then she put chocolate, fruits, and caramel on top of her ice cream. After that, she walked to the cashier to pay. When she went to sit down at the table, I realized that the little girl who came with this woman had the same appearance because they both had light brown eyes, and their mouths were quite small. However, they were still different in some ways such as their hair color, nose, and skin color. After a few minutes, the father of the little girl walked into the

store, so I learned how the little girl got that hair color, nose, and skin color; it was obvious that they were relatives. Even the size of their ears was the same, and their skin was tanned. Another thing that made me know they are family was the way that they dressed because they wore black T-shirts and Cooper Team was painted on them; in addition, they wore white Converse shoes. When the father came into the store, the little girl ran from the table to her father and hugged him. Then they went to choose ice cream together. After that, they walked to the table where the woman was waiting for her husband. I could not take my eyes off them because they were a cute family, especially since I saw the father teasing his child while she was eating. In addition, the mother laughed when the father took the ice cream away from the little girl and she started to cry. But when he gave it back to her, she stopped crying. Likewise, the little girl teased her father by pushing the ice cream around her mouth, and then she kissed her father's face. When he cleaned his face, she tried to do it again. Ten minutes later, they had finished their ice cream, and they walked out off the store to the parking lot.

Observing a Lady at the Supermarket

Shakira Vanessa Malaver Zambrano

6C – Venezuela

The lady at the end of the line is just standing, waiting for the next customer. She had long blonde hair, which was partially grey in the front, and perfectly combed into a ponytail. Her eyes were brown; they stood out on her delicate, oval face. Her teeth were symmetrical; they would have been perfect if they were white, but they were a light yellow, which let me know that she was probably a smoker. She was wearing some makeup, but not too much - just enough to be noticed. Her nails had been painted with an impeccable French tip. At first glance, she did not look like someone who worked packing supermarket groceries. Her job seemed to be easy, but at the end of the day, she showed sign of tiredness. Her clothes - a clean uniform consisting of beige pants and a red T-shirt - did not allow me to infer if she was well educated or not. Maybe she was, and she was working just for the feeling of being useful at her age. She was probably in her 60s.

Even though she was tired, as soon as the cashier started to scan the items, she immediately assisted with an enthusiastic face. She started packing the groceries and setting aside every item in a meticulous way: cans on the right side, fruits and vegetables on the other side. She prepared double bags for meats and fish; at the same time, she took the scanner in order to check the heavier items, which still remained in the shopping cart. At the end of the process, she put all the bags in the shopping cart, leaving just one bag in her hands as she told the customer, "Here are your eggs and bread. Be careful." As a gesture of recognition for a job well done, the customer took his wallet and suddenly gave her a tip. She was surprised but happy. With a discrete smile, she took the bill and said, "Thank you." At this time, her eyes looked tired but even then, they showed a brilliant light, as if to say to herself, "Good Job!"

Trip to Colorado

Tran Nguyen

6C – Vietnam

The heat of the summer makes me remember my trip to Colorado last winter. Even though I had only three days to spare, I had a good experience. First of all, my cousins and I decided to drive ourselves instead of taking a flight. It was a long drive from Texas to Colorado; it took us seventeen hours to get there. However, we did not think we were wasting our time driving because we had the chance to pass many beautiful places along the road, such as giant windmills standing along the field, rotating slowly in the wind. In addition, we also saw high mountain ranges stretching on both sides of New Mexico's roads. Secondly, after reaching our hotel in Denver, we had the opportunity to see snow falling. I was really excited to touch snow; it was something I had never seen before. Finally, we went to Vail Ski Resort to ski. It is a beautiful place surrounded by many high hills, which are covered with snow. Above, there are some cable cars moving people up and down the mountain. We were attracted by the most wonderful view I have ever seen in my life. To sum up, I had a great trip to Colorado. I hope you have a chance to experience the places I visited.

The Amusement Park

Ruiying Hou

6C – China

I still remember the day I went to an amusement park with my parents. That trip was exciting and wonderful. The reason we went to the amusement park is that I graduated from high school and was going to study in the United States. My father wanted to create an unforgettable experience. As soon as we entered the gate, we heard a scream from the sky; we found it was coming from a roller coaster. My father was so excited and could not wait to take me to ride the roller coaster. In fact, I was a little fearful because I had never ridden one before. As the line got shorter, I became more nervous. When my father saw I was nervous, he said, "You need to take a risk. If you try something you have never tried before, you will feel different." When I heard that, I felt my courage coming back. I thought of my plans to go to America by myself. I needed to grow up and take this risk. I do not regret that I rode the roller coaster that day. I could not forget that when I opened my eyes, the sky was so close to me, just like I was flying! That trip was a perfect new beginning for me.





An Exciting LCC Trip

Saja Mohammed Bukhari

6C – Saudi Arabia

When I started this semester, I went on an interesting LCC trip. I visited three places: the Miller Outdoor Theater, the Japanese Garden, and the Natural Science Museum. First, the LCC team gave us a box dinner with a drink, which was delicious and tasty. We ate it at the Miller Outdoor Theater, but the weather was rainy and windy. Then, we walked in the rain to the Japanese Gardens; I saw beautiful Japanese flowers. After that, we went to the Natural Science Museum and I saw shells and pearls, which were amazing and charming. I liked this place very much because I love science and thinking about nature. During the trip, I took many pictures, and then I posted them in my Instagram account. It was a great day with the LCC.

My Trip to the Johnson Space Center

Weimin Xiao

6C – China

When traveling to Houston, the must-visit site for me was the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center because it was the first home of 'mission control' in the US. My visit to the Space Center began with the tram tour, followed by exploring activities in the Space Museum. When visiting the Saturn V Rocket Park, I was shocked to see it has a body of 110.6 meters in length and 10.1 meters in diameter. Until 2015, the Saturn V rocket has been the most powerful rocket ever built and used though it was developed in the 1960s. It was this type of rocket that succeeded in putting American astronauts into orbit around the moon; accordingly, they accomplished one of the greatest achievements in human history - landing on the moon. Visiting the Space Center was the most wonderful trip I could have taken. It incites me to ask this question: When will we human beings land on Mars?

First Trip in the USA

Haoyu Zhao

6C – China

Regarding a trip that I have been on before, I would like to mention that my first trip in the USA was the field trip at the beginning of my first semester in the LCC. On that day, I met a lot of people from different countries. I talked with them when we were riding on the bus to the Galleria. The guy I was sitting next to was from Saudi Arabia. We talked about our countries and life experiences. I learned a lot of cultural things that were completely new to me and shocked me a lot. I felt like I was a newborn in the world; I really knew nothing about it. After we arrived at the Galleria, we had lunch together, and that was my first time to eat American food. It was made with shrimp, vegetables, and rice, but I was surprised that it did not taste the same as in my country. Then I met some friends who were from China. I was excited when I first met the Chinese group because I thought it would be hard to find students from my country in the LCC. After lunch, I went shopping with my new friends and had a great afternoon in the Galleria.

LCC Calendar

Important Dates

Fall Term 2016

September 6 – 13

Online Registration Begins

Tuesday, September 13

Student Check-In

Wednesday, September 14

Testing

Late Online Registration

Thursday, September 15

Student Activity

Late Online Registration Ends

Friday, September 16

First Assembly/Orientation

Last Day of Late Registration

Tuesday, January 19

Classes Begin

Wednesday - Friday, November 23-25

Thanksgiving Holidays, No classes

December 5 – 9

Promotion Testing

Final Exams

Monday, December 12

Testing

Tuesday, December 13

No Classes

Wednesday, December 14

Final Student Activity

Thursday, December 15

Student-Teacher Conferences (morning)

Graduation Ceremony (afternoon)

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