

More Voices of U.S.
by Windsor 8

*King Middle School
Portland, Maine
January 2006*

More Voices of U.S.

by Windsor S

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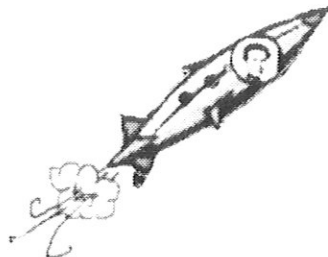
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Our Willing Interviewees



Foreward

All of the stories in this anthology have been brought to us through the generous sharing and collaboration of students and community members who were willing to reveal their experiences of entering a new world. Diving head first into the United States is not always easy. How do you make a living? How do you survive the language, the food, and many times, the laws that are literally a shock to your system?

Many of the students in Windsor 8 can empathize with this experience. Immigrants themselves, they navigate similar cultural trials from the perspective of a teenager.

Other Windsor students who have never left native soil have expressed an understanding for what it means to be uprooted. In class discussion students have articulated their appreciation for stability in a world that is often unstable.

We began our expedition journey with a cultural walk through the neighborhoods of Portland. Students collected artifacts and interviewed business owners. They met at the Center for Cultural Exchange to view and participate in traditional Cambodian dance after hearing one man's tragic story about his escape from the Khmer Rouge. Our kick off also included a panel made up of students who emigrated from various countries who shared their experiences and answered questions posed by Windsor 8 students.

In Social Studies students researched the countries of their interviewees in order to build background knowledge before the interview. They used the information to create posters displaying geographical, statistical, and cultural facts. In World Cultures class students cooked and presented a dish from various global regions. In English class students drafted and revised their stories. They made connections with their interviewees by reading about the experiences of many who have left their home countries as refugees.

Putting this book together has been a great journey for the students of Windsor 8 and would not have been possible without the help of the interviewees. Many people have supported the editing and revising process. Special thanks go to Amy Levasseur, Alexis Muskie, David Grant, Sharon Bresler, Stacy Alvarez, Pat Crowley-Rockwell, Chip Cain, Hiram Sibley, David LeBranche, and Kelley McDaniel for their inspiration, patience, and professional modeling.

*Elaine
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Why do People Move?

Why do people move? This is the question King Middle School students from Portland, Maine set out to answer in their expedition this fall. Portland seemed like the perfect place to answer this question because of its recent immigration explosion. This project, More Voices of U.S., was kicked off in October of 2005 with a walk around the city to look for examples of how immigration effects community and to interview local business owners and employees about their personal experiences.

This book is a compilation of interviews and stories composed by students about immigrants coming to Maine. After some preliminary study students and faculty arranged formal interviews with volunteer immigrants in the school library. To prepare for these interviews the students composed a list of questions designed to gain insight into the experience of immigration to Portland. Groups of 3 or 4 students met with their interviewee. Each student then wrote an independent interpretation of the interview in the form of a story.

In the following pages you will find that the answer to the “Why,” of immigration is as diverse as the immigrants themselves. Coming from places as different as Somalia and Wales these stories have only their geographical destination in common. These are the stories of decisions affected by war, economics, personal or family ties, and/or the simple desire for change.

Part I

Seeking a Better Life

Imagine moving to a different country, not knowing anyone or anything. Imagine moving to a different country to get better jobs, better opportunities, and a better life. Would you do that? Well many people in this book, you see, came to America just for these three reasons. It's really hard for them to move from their homeland to another country. Mostly knowing nothing about the country or how life is lived there. It's just like moving from one state to another. You get the same feelings; scared, excited, nervous etc. How did these people get here to the US? What did they think of the country when they first arrived? How did they compare the country they came from to the country they came to? For example; Mr. Bruno, an ESL teacher here at King came to America for the education experience and yet.

You Don't Need to Stay Poor: Immigrating from the Dominican Republic to the U.S.

By Kayla

On the morning that we interviewed Raphael Clariot (pronounced *Clarío*), I didn't know what to expect. He had not showed up for our first attempt at an interview, so I did not know whether he would be in the library or not as we headed down there to meet him. He was there. He looked like he was sixty-something, and was average height. He had light brown skin, slightly wrinkled and creased with laugh lines. His brown eyes were kind and smiley, but also looked like they had seen hard times. I liked him instantly. We introduced ourselves, and began with the interview.

Raphael was born in the Dominican Republic. His childhood there was happy, but not perfect. He lived with his mother and brother in a one room house with no hot running water, living off of the money his mum made keeping house for a wealthy Turkish lawyer and his family. They had to boil all of their water before they drank it, because it was filled with bacteria. Food was often scarce, but Raphael and his brother provided some by hunting small game like birds and rabbits with a slingshot. "I was pretty good at it," Raphael admits, smiling a little. He and his brother also made some money by selling eggs and oranges at the market.

When he was eleven, his aunt, who lived in the U.S., gave them money to make the trip to America. "We had heard that the streets were paved with gold, that everyone had a job and a car and a big house. We wanted to experience that. We wanted opportunities to get a good education and be able to help all the poor people back in the Dominican Republic," Raphael says, talking of why his family wanted to come to America.

So he, his brother, and his mother flew to New York City in 1962, and were picked up at the airport by the aunt who had sponsored them. It was the middle of March, and much, much colder than anything that they had experienced back home, where it rarely sunk below sixty. Fighting a bit of panic, they made their way to the train that they were to take to their aunt's apartment. Raphael had never seen a train before in his life. Back in the D.R., he didn't even have a bicycle. They struggled onto the train, only to have his mother's luggage get stuck in the closing electric doors. A cold, disapproving automatic voice came on the intercom, no doubt chastising them in indecipherable English for their carelessness. His mother went hysterical, thinking that she had broken the train. Fortunately, his aunt had experience with trains, and sorted things out. That is

Raphael's first memory of the U.S.

They settled into the aunt's tiny apartment in the city with her, and almost instantly Raphael started school, even though he didn't know any English. Back then, things were much harder for you if you didn't speak English, because there was no **ELL** class like there is today. Right away he encountered a huge problem. He did not know the words to ask to go to the bathroom, so every day after school he would return home humiliated and with wet pants. His aunt thought that he had a learning disability or was mentally retarded because of this. One day, returning with the typical wet pants, Raphael, who had been scared to admit it before, shouted out "No! That's not it. I just don't know how to ask, and I'm scared to get up and leave."

Finally, his problem was solved when he made a friend who taught him how to ask to go to the bathroom, and a few other things. With the aide of his friend, Raphael began to learn English quickly.

Christmas time rolled around, and Raphael saw his first snow. "I thought that it was magic," he says. "I remember that I waited for it every year, and was really excited when it happened. After a while, though, it got boring because I had to shovel it like everyone else."

Eventually, he moved to Maine, where one of his cousins, who is a teacher at USM, lives. Here he married, had children, and started a business.

Comparing life in the Dominican Republic to life in the U.S., Rafael seems to prefer the pace of life in the D.R. "Life was simple. There is a lot of stress here in America. Back home you had the stress of being poor, but otherwise things were fine. Here the stress is brought on by having money and wanting more. In the Dominican Republic, life is more laid back because people are resigned to their situation." He would love to have a home there so he could return during the winter, which he doesn't enjoy as much as he did when he was younger. He also wants to share his culture with his children and grandchild, and have them learn Spanish. "I miss my language," he says regretfully. "It's hard to keep it here in America, where you are surrounded by English, but I try to read books in Spanish for practice."

But despite snow, his initial hardships, and being away from his culture, Raphael is glad that he came to the U.S. "America has taught me that you can have a dream, follow it, and have it realized." He says firmly. "You don't need to stay poor."

Starting a New Life

By Bouradee

Rosalinda Burch was a young girl when she came here from Peru. She came to the United States in 1974 by airplane all by herself. When she first got here everything was different and better. "It was not bad when I first came to the U.S. I could **adapt** really easy. It is more wealthy and more organized here," she said.

When she first arrived here, she stayed at her godmother's house in Pasadena, California. She was treated very well by everyone. She left her country because she was looking for a new life. "I was only going to stay for six months but things changed." she told us.

Although she felt sad and homesick she was still able to support herself by house keeping for three weeks. She says that she has a good life here but she is losing her family values. "I had to change to fit in and learn how to speak better English. I speak both Spanish and English. I think that both languages are equal speed to me," she said. She sent money to her family in Peru hoping that one day they too would come to America.

In 1980, Rosalinda Burch became a U.S. citizen. Her sister came years after she arrived. She visits Peru and likes our country very much. "I like it better here, but I think that people take things for granted. I met good people during the first year I was here," she paused, "My family was happy for me but they were also sad because they knew that I was going on my own." She moved to Maine when she got married because her husband lived here.

The laws in Peru aren't so strict. "People don't read signs when they drive and they don't follow the traffic lights," she said. At night time, trucks don't have headlights so it is very dangerous. Buses drive very fast and it seems like nobody cares. The living conditions are very poor and people live in poverty.

Rosalinda Burch still celebrates all the holidays that she used to celebrate in Peru like Peru's Independence Day. She also celebrates Christmas, Thanksgiving and America's Independence Day. "The food in America is okay but I am proud of the food that we eat back in Peru," she said with a smile on her face.

Raphael Comes to a New Land

By Miles

Imagine coming to a brand new land that you've only heard rumors about. Raphael Calriot is a immigrant from the Dominican Republic. He arrived when he was eleven years old in the year of 1962 in New York. His aunt, who was already living in the U.S., was the one who put up some money for him, his brother, and his mom to come to join her in the U.S. His first memory was when he got on a train and his mothers bag of clothes got stuck between the sliding doors and she thought she had broken the train. Luckily, his aunt was there and helped him to get the bags out.

The main reason for the huge move was for the three of them to get a better life. There was a lot of poverty where he was living and he recalls the water wasn't healthy to drink because it had bacteria and other parasites that are bad for your body.

Raphael was very excited about coming here to the U.S. when he was young. All he remembers bringing is a small bag of clothes. He grew up hearing all the myths about the U.S., things like "The streets are paved with gold", and "Everyone lives in a nice house, has three good meals a day, and nobody is poor." Before he moved to the U.S. he had never seen snow. When he did see snow for the first time he thought it was something magical, and he liked it. Now he feels like most other Mainers, he hates snow when he has to shovel. He says that the hardest part about moving here was learning English. When he was going to school there was no **ESL** so he was forced to pick English up on his own during school. One of his worst memories was during some of his first weeks of school. He would come home with wet pants because he didn't know how to ask for permission to use the bathroom. Finally, one of the nice kids who was from Italy kindly told him how to ask to go to use bathroom. After that the two became friends.

Just because Raphael isn't a citizen yet (he is studying to become one), it hasn't stopped him from getting a good job, raising kids, and having a nice house of his own. He thinks that the life here is a lot more stressful because even if someone has money they are always looking for ways to get more. Back home he remembers that his people were laid back and helped each other out a lot. But that has helped him to start to cherish things like work and not being poor anymore. "Back in the Dominican Republic if you are born poor you stay poor," Raphael recalls when looking back to the Dominican Republic. He likes it here because if

Seeking a Better Life

you are poor you don't have to stay that way. You can work your way up to the top and have a job.

Although he is grateful for living here, he still misses some things from home. Climate, food, beaches, people, and the language are the things that Raphael misses most from the Dominican Republic. Raphael still says that he thanks the U.S. for the gift of education that he has received. Back home, he says that he didn't get much education. Although he doesn't have any more family there, he went back to the Dominican Republic two years ago and says that not much has changed since he left. He hopes to buy a house there in the future to go to in the winter and then come back here for the other parts of the year.

"If you apply yourself to a dream, you can achieve it. If you get stuck, there is lots of help," Raphael says about setting goals in the U.S.



Culture brought to Portland by immigrants

From South to North:

Victor Molina

By Matthew

Victor Molina came to Maine in 1998. He traveled on buses and sometimes in vans, crossing Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States. He is handicapped and is forced to use a electric wheelchair.

Victor wanted to immigrate for a number of reasons. He left his grandmother, some uncles, and his dog behind. After about a year of living here his grandmother passed away. One of the reasons Victor came to America was to learn the language and to get a better life. He also wanted to come here because of the economy in El Salvador. His favorite thing about living here is that he can do things that he couldn't do in El Salvador. He likes how he can use the buses here, and how they have a lift so that his chair can be lifted. They don't have that in El Salvador.

He thinks people here are nice when they are talking to him, but they could just be fake. He thinks that some people in Maine discriminate against immigrants, because they are different.

He says if the economy improved he would go back to his country. The main reason he came here was to be with his parents. He loved his life in El Salvador, because he lived on the beach, and because it was a beautiful place.

He went to Portland High School and graduated. He says he wants to work a radio station, but he cant go to college because he believes they aren't accessible. He thought that America was like a dream place before he came here, where everyone is perfect and rich. He said that a lot of people from El Salvador believe the same. When he came here he realized it wasn't like that at all.

Raphael Clariot

By Muna

If you saw Raphael Clariot walking down the street you might think he was just another face. But like many people, he has a long and unique story. Recently my classmates and I interviewed him and he was kind enough to share the details of his life. Raphael was born in Haiti, but grew up in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He came to the United States in 1962 during the middle of springtime when every flower blooms. He came with his family when he was only 11 years old. Raphael now lives in Maine.

Raphael remembers very little of his country because of his age when he left. He remembers the most important memories, like how they used slingshots to go hunt for birds. Even though they did not have much money they would still give gifts for Christmas. He remembers they would take a tin can, put grass in it with 3 cigars, and then leave the can under the bed of the person that they gave it to. Most people who lived there were poor or had low-income jobs, so it was very hard for Raphael's parents to raise all the kids. Raphael's mother was a maid for a middle-class Turkish family. She didn't get paid much but raised all her kids well. Raphael remembers earning extra money with his brother by selling oranges outside of the markets.

It was his aunt who brought the family to America. She saved little by little until she had enough money to bring all of them here. His earliest memory of America was his first train ride with his mother. His mother took such a long time coming out of the train that the door slammed on her and she panicked. Raphael didn't know what to do, but he finally got some help and got her out. After that day everyone would laugh when the story was brought up.

When he got to America he settled in New York City. He liked it there but his mother was afraid that something would happen to him. She was fearful of the amount of people around whom she did not know and couldn't understand, because there were so many people from different countries. But after going to school with all the other people from Asia, Africa, and Europe, Raphael made many friends and felt safe. After a few years, his mother brought him and his brother to live with his cousin, a teacher in Bath, Maine. They eventually moved to Portland, Maine, where he still resides.

Raphael's parents thought, "The streets in America were paved with gold, and that everyone has a home, an easy job, and a nice car." Raphael learned that you have to cherish what you have in order to survive. But it's very hard to survive in this lifestyle we live in today, where a good job is hard to find without an education. But lucky for Raphael, he came here when he was a young boy. He has a good job and enough money to raise his family, and he will soon become a United States Citizen.

Raphael has a really nice life in Maine. He definitely likes the snow coming down, although he does not like the cold. He has a family and is a grandfather. Last year he went back to the Dominican Republic with a hospital called Maine Medical Center to interpret in English. He still sees poverty back home, especially in the big cities such as Santo Domingo. In some places it had even increased through the years. But he still wishes to go back to his country and eventually buy a home there. He has no family down in the Dominican Republic but wants his kids to feel the cultural experiences. He just can't resist the tempting beaches, food, and parties.

The Three Borders that Victor Crossed

By Amanda

When Victor was seventeen he crossed three borders to get to America. He came from a poor country where it's very hard to make money. It's very hard to support a family there. The three borders that he crossed to get to America were the Mexican-American border, the El Salvadoran-Guatemalan border and the Guatemalan-Mexican border to join his parents in America.

To get here Victor had to take many different vans and buses because he has been disabled for most of his life and it is not easy for anyone to get around in a wheelchair, especially for an immigrant.

When Victor came to America, he thought life here was going to be easy, and that he could make a lot of money quickly. Many people in El Salvador think this. He went to Portland High School for a year and six months, and he wanted to graduate and go to USM to work in a radio station, but the school was not handicap accessible making it very hard for Victor to get around. So Victor's dream ended. I feel very bad for him because he could not fulfill his dream like a lot of other people could.

After he left El Salvador Victor lost his grandmother and his dog. He still has family in El Salvador and he talks to them when he can. He would go back to live with them if the economy was better because he misses his family. I hope that he can go back to live there if his country has some improvements. Its really a beautiful place and it's a shame that people have to leave El Salvador to find work.

A Story, a Trip, an Adventure

By Will

Rosalinda came to the United States in 1974 in search of a better life. She thought that America was a great, rich, heaven on Earth, but it was harder than she thought. She said, "Everything was different, but I adapted easily." She came to California by plane. Her family was happy for her at first, but after six months they were discouraged to know that she wasn't moving back.

In Peru, Rosalinda lived reasonably well. She graduated from high school there. She began college but had to drop out, and then came to the United States. When she got to California she briefly stayed at her godmother's house. She kept herself afloat by pursuing a mini career in house keeping. She became a legal United States citizen in 1980. Her sister followed her to the United States a few months later.

She especially likes Maine because the traffic laws are better and people follow them in Maine. In Peru most of the traffic laws weren't enforced, much less followed. She also finds herself discovering things that she doesn't like about the United State, such as our fading family values.

Rosalinda visits her remaining family in Peru annually. She also sends money to them. She said, "I like the United States, but I do miss Peru." She met a man from Maine and they got married and have a child. They live in Maine and are very happy.

Rosalinda Burch

By Andrew

Rosalinda Burch is an older woman who moved to The United States from Peru. In 1974 Rosalinda, a single woman with a high school education, planned a six-month visit to the United States. She came to America searching for a new life. She packed her bags, left her family, and boarded a plane to Pasadena California. Rosalinda knew one person in America, her godmother. When she arrived in Pasadena, California she was excited.

Rosalinda supported herself by working as a house keeper. She not only worked to support herself but her family back in Peru. Even though both her parents worked, they depended on the money she sent back. When the six months were up Rosalinda chose to stay. This soured the rest of the family's feelings towards her stay in America. Later, her sister came to another part of the United States.

Rosalinda says much was new and different to her in the United States. She found she had to study more English, but that was the only major thing she had to change to fit in. She found the clothing styles were similar to those in Peru. The only holiday new to her was the American Independence Day. Now she celebrates both Peru's independence and ours.

A major difference from Peru was, Rosalinda says that "In peru, they had traffic laws, but people would not obey them. They would not stop at stop signs, and would run red lights. I was proud of the United States for achieving this level of strictness." She said, " America is a good life, but we're losing family values. We take [too] much for granted."

Rosalinda received American citizenship in 1980. She realized her life was in the United States; (with) her husband, her kids, her job, and she didn't want to start all over again. She moved to Maine to live with her husband. Rosalinda annually visits her family in Peru.

It's Not as Easy as I Thought:
Victor Molina's Story

By Laurence

Victor Molina, a native citizen of El Salvador came to America through many ways of transportation. He Crossed three borders, Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States. His goals and reasons to come to the United States were to learn the English language and to live a better life.

Leaving El Salvador wasn't that easy mostly because he was leaving many of his family members behind. One year later, finding out his grandmother passed away was difficult, but he still calls back home on a daily basis to let them know how life is going in America. When he first came to America, he was shocked with the way things worked but was still treated with respect and warm welcomes.

Victor remembers El Salvador as having a beautiful exotic style of living, filled with tons of people and always welcoming. One day Victor hopes to fulfill his dream of being a DJ for WMPG. Living in El Salvador, like many others, Victor saw America as a dream land, where money grew on trees and everyone was always rich. But he soon came to find out, just like any other country, you need to work in order to make a living and survive each day.

His favorite thing about being in America is the freedom to do things he couldn't do in El Salvador. Although he still hasn't been back in El Salvador in years he still knows it as his first home. America is now his second home.

If he had the chance, he would bring his family members that he left in El Salvador to finish their education or to simply have one. Going back to visit is also one thing he really wants to do. Maine is a nice welcoming place to him, but he still hopes to one day go back and enjoy the warmth of being back in his first home. Starting all over again in a new country for him seemed hard at first, but in the end it all came to be worth it for Victor. Seeing his parents again, meeting new people and making friends was all part of experiencing the **American Dream**.

An Immigrant from Germany

By Sokvanna

“Just living a life where everything completely changed,” is how Mike Bruenjes described his life to me. At the age of ten he traveled with a lot of other immigrants arriving to the United States, by boat. It took at least a week to arrive here in the United States. He arrived in New York City in 1960. Five years ago he moved to Maine.

When Mike came to the United States, he did not know any English. His parents taught him some English. Being around the kids at school, and hearing people talk, also helped him learn the language.

Mike is glad he moved away from Germany. “I’m glad I left Germany, my parents made the right decision coming here. Everything here is much better than Germany, but more strict!” His parents planned on moving here to seek their fortune and create a big future ahead of them. Mike has grown up most of his life in the United States, but misses his relatives, his culture, and life style, back home.

“Germany is quite different from the United States,” Mike said. “The kids are more wild here than in Germany; they were running around everywhere, and got too crazy at times.” He pretty much didn’t fit in when he arrived in America.

Mike didn’t keep in touch with family back home when he got settled in New York with his parents. When he got independent, he started to keep in touch with family in Germany by sending them money and making phone calls. He wanted to go back to Germany and see what changed since he left. He said “I’ve grown up in the United States most of my life, so it already feels like home.”

“The United States had more options and choices, back home we didn’t have choices we had to make our choices. In the United States they mentioned what school, job, college you want to go to.” In Germany it was “Make your own choices pick your job now, before it’s too late!” Germany doesn’t feel like anything he imagined it from the United States Mike told me.

The Life of an Immigrant

By Nicole

How would you feel if you had to leave your own country without everything you've been working hard for? Well, Sohkani Seang knows exactly how it feels. She immigrated to the United States from Thailand after being in a **refugee camp**. She is originally from Cambodia. She and her young son had to leave due to the starvation going on in Cambodia, and because she wanted to start a new life and find a better education for her son.

Sohkani gave us a detailed description of what her life was like in Cambodia before she had to move. Like every Cambodian person who lived in the city, she lived in a middle class two floor house, with their own balcony. She didn't have a job and took care of the cleaning, cooking and the kids at home, while her husband worked.

Sohkani arrived to the United States in 1981, she came straight to Portland, Maine. She knew right away she was going to spend her life here and had to find a job to support her two year old son all by herself. Sohkani's husband was still in Cambodia and didn't get to leave for the plane trip here.

Sohkani also had a daughter that was born in the United States. Her two kids are now off in school. Sohkani became a US Citizen in 1987. She learned English in two years and helps out once in a while by translating for other Cambodian people.

After writing this story and getting to learn more about all the different stories from different people who all came from different places, I learned that a lot of our interviewees were scared when they were on their way here, and since they didn't know much English it was harder to find jobs and start their new lives with little money. Especially if they brought kids, you would have to support them and buy clothes for school. I really respect the elders more, and I think about how hard it must have been for them to leave their country, family, and friends then to start a new life in a completely different world from their own.

Part II

Employment

Some people leave countries because they want a change of scenery or a job. Sometimes there is no threat of any danger that causes them to leave. My interviewee left Ghana so that he could teach in other places. He wanted to have new experiences. When someone leaves their country to teach, they can stay there and get a permanent job, or they can work hard to make money and then go back to their country to be in a better situation than before they left. This was the case a couple of times. For Mike Bruenjes, he was going to stay here for 5 years and then go back to Germany, but found so many opportunities that his parents decided this would be a great place to grow up.

Agahsi's Journey to America

By Patrick

Imagine being presented with an opportunity of a lifetime, a chance to come to a whole new country and start a new life in what is considered the world power. Would you do it? Agahsi is a young man from Armenia, a small country in the middle east next to Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. He has light brown skin, like the people in his region, and black hair. He speaks exceptional English with a very small accent, and it was a pleasure to interview him. He was very willing to talk and we lost track of time listening to him speak and tell stories of his past. Through our interview we learned a lot about Armenia and Agahsi, and his story is a story worth telling. Here is what we learned about Agahsi, a great American and native Armenian.

Armenia is one of the oldest countries in the world, and it has a rich history and culture. It used to be a very large country, taking up much of Turkey and the Middle East, but over hundreds of centuries and many territorial disputes Armenia has shrunk in size. Armenia is a very traditional and family oriented country. Much of the country's jobs are factory based. Factory workers make vehicles, computers, electronics, and metal work. They are also working to develop a high technology industry. Compared to some countries, Armenia is pretty technologically advanced, but it is nowhere close to the United States as far as electronics is concerned. Armenia has just under three million people spread across 29,800 square miles, an area about the size of Connecticut. They are not a very wealthy people considering that 50% of the population is below the poverty line. Their major religion is Orthodox, and their major language is Armenian. The capital city is Yerevan, with a population of 1,462,700 people.

Armenia is by no means a third world country, because they have a literacy rate of 98.6%, and they have a GNP per capita of \$4,600 United States dollars. As far as everyday lifestyle, Armenia is in some ways very similar to the United States, but in some ways it is a world apart. People enjoy doing some of the same things as people in America, with some differences. They enjoy playing sports, just not all the same ones played in the United States. Like in many countries outside of the United States, soccer is very popular, but they also play baseball, basketball, and other popular American sports. Some of the major differences will be explained more as we learn about the adjustments Agahsi had to make to get used to life as an American citizen, a life that has opened many doors for Agahsi's

future.

In Armenia much of the image of the United States is conveyed by MTV (which can be seen on Armenian broadcast stations). People talk about how good America is. They think it is a perfect country with lots of money, technology, and opportunities. They think it is a megapower. So you can imagine that when the company Aghasi worked for in Armenia offered him an internship in the United States, he was excited to come. He left behind his life in Armenia and headed to San Francisco to begin his new life in America. He lived in San Francisco for six months. During that time he noticed lots of differences between the United States and his homeland of Armenia. America was also so much more diverse than his homeland. He also had some major adjustments to make to get used to life in the United States. Language was a hard thing to get used to, even though he had studied it since he was nineteen back in Armenia. He had all the basics down, except for the little parts of language like the slang words and all the little things that are individual to the English language.

The culture was also very different. Work culture in Armenia is very different than in America. That part was the hardest to get used to. In Armenia, there is time for work, time for friends and family, and time for fun. People don't work overtime or do their work at home. In the United States, people are sort of workaholics compared to people in Armenia. In America, there is a big emphasis on finishing your work, and there is not as much time to do the other things in life. Another big difference is the education quality. Education is far superior in the United States. When Agahsi was in undergraduate school in Armenia, it was similar to America in some ways. However, they only had one computer for the whole class, and it was kept in a cage. The professor would point it out to the students and it was a big deal to see a computer.

There were several things that drew Agahsi to the United States aside from the internship. The opportunity to study was a big factor in his decision to leave Armenia. Now that he is here, he is glad that he lives in America, but he misses his homeland. Most of his family is still in Armenia, but in 2001 his brother came to visit and ended up staying to go to school in Maine. Agahsi is pretty sure he will stay in the United States, but there are parts about his country that make him kind of homesick. He misses his family and friends and the way of life in Armenia.

There are certain things he likes about both countries. Armenia looks similar in many ways when you just walk down the street, but a lot of things are also

different. There are different ways of hanging out with friends, different food, different economy, and a variety of other things that make Armenia unique and special. He has visited Armenia a few times and still keeps his culture alive while living in the States. He is a pretty good cook and makes lots of the traditional Armenian dishes. He also celebrates both Armenia's major holidays as well as all the holidays in America. For example, he celebrates Christmas on January 5 like they do in Armenia, because the United States and Armenia have different calendars. The things Agashi likes most about America are freedoms, the open and welcoming society, and all the choices. In Armenia there are barely any choices compared to the United States.

When Agahsi came to the United States he lived in San Francisco for six months. He has been many places since then, and he says places like San Francisco are very different from Armenia, while places like Colorado are very similar such as the landscape, the population density, and in some ways elements of the lifestyle. After his six months in San Francisco, he went to college at Bentley for two years. Then he started looking for jobs. It was pretty hard, but he knew what he wanted to do and that made it easier. He got a job for Idexx and moved to Portland, where he currently resides. There isn't a very big Armenian population in Portland, but he enjoys living here.

That was the story of one immigrant's journey to America. Agahsi is one of about 8,000 immigrants that legally immigrate to the United States each year. Unlike some immigrants, he was not forced out of his country because of violence or tragedy in his country, but he was drawn by all the United States has to offer. He, like millions of immigrants, lives happily in the land of opportunity called America. Immigrants help to contribute to America's diverse culture, and America continues to be a **melting pot** for all the countries of the world. That was Agahsi's story.

Mr. Robinson

By Joe

Johnny Robinson is a man who moves around. He owns a restaurant in Falmouth called Finches. Mr. Robinson moved here because of financial reasons back in his homeland. He wanted to start a business in the United States, which he successfully has. He said he enjoys it in the States, and likes the fact that the taxes are lower, and life costs way less in America.

Mr. Robinson grew up in Ireland. He came here when he was about 30 and lived in New York City for 6 years. He said the pace of life is much faster in New York than Ireland. That was something to adjust to. He loved his homeland, but hated his economy, and he is a businessman, so he figured the United States would be a perfect match for him, especially New York City. One thing Mr. Robinson did not have to adjust to was the culture; they dress the same in Ireland, they have almost the same holidays, except for Thanksgiving, but the thing that is different was the lifestyle. He loves the American lifestyle, fast paced, never slow going. They even have the same TV shows in the United States and Ireland. Although, he missed being able to talk the same way with people. They talked English in Ireland, but in a different accent, or slang. He misses talking the old way he talked. When he came to the United States he described it as "people are easier going, and easier to do business with." It might have something to do with the money problem in Ireland, with the high taxes. The sales tax is way, way less here, so business will cost less.

After his journeys in New York City, Mr. Robinson decided to move to Portland, Maine. In New York he was not a citizen so he did not feel very safe. There are many problems with just being here on a green card. His business could have been taken away. He prayed he would not even get a speeding ticket. Finally Mr. Robinson got citizenship and he felt much more safe about life. He started a business when he came to Maine. The restaurant is called Finches. It's in Falmouth, just outside of Portland.

When people talk about connecting back to your culture, or your homeland, I think Mr. Robinson fits into that category. I'm not so sure if he practices his culture, but I think he misses it. When he lived in Ireland he lived on the ocean, then he moved to New York City, which is also on the water, now he is living in

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Portland, Maine and he is still on the ocean. I think it all connects, and he agreed with me.

At the end of this interview I realized that it is not easy to come here from another country. It's not like Ireland was a war-bound country and he swam here clinging onto a log. He has a simple businessman life, and he still managed to struggle a little. I can't imagine what the life of somebody from a war setting or dangerous country would be like.

“I’m Legal, I’m British, and I’m Welsh.”

Christian Perry’s Story

By Maggie

Why do people move? Is it because of political unrest in their homeland? To join their family? To get an education? To be a camp counselor? Christian Perry first came to the United States from the Rhondda Valley in southern Wales in 1994. Through a British program called Camp America, which sets somewhat adventurous British people up with spots as camp counselors in the States, he got a job at Maine Teen Camp. Christian came back to the U.S. quite a few times over the next decade or so, up until the summer of 2005, and in the fall he got married, and has been living in Maine for a few months. He works at King Middle School, although only in volunteer capacity, because he isn’t an American citizen. “That must stink,” adds my fellow interviewer Bridget Alex.

“I didn’t have much trouble getting into the country when I was coming to Maine Teen Camp,” he says. But now, married, he is having difficulties entering the United States. “which is a bit silly, because I’m legal, I’m British, and I’m Welsh.” He says that one of the major differences between America and the UK is the somewhat disturbing significance (my words, not his) that people place on politics. “People take it much more seriously here,” says Christian. He doesn’t get involved in all of the political disputes: “I really just don’t care.” But Mr. Perry said that maybe someday, when he has children, the whole tangled web (again, my words) will start to matter more.

Back in Wales, Christian played football (soccer, as I suppose it is my duty as an American to say), at a relatively high level, representing the country when he was younger, and as a member of a semi-pro team. He says that he would like to continue playing if he can find a team in Portland. Unfortunately, football/soccer is a good deal less popular in the U.S. than it is in Wales.

The United States is different from Wales in a lot of ways. For one, there’s the government: Britain is a **constitutional monarchy**. (“We don’t really like the monarchy, they’re just there for tourists,” says Christian, of the less important branch of British government.) Wales has seats in Parliament, its own political party (Plaid Cymru, or The Party of Wales) and First Minister Rhodri Morgan, but, when it all comes down to it, British Prime Minister Tony Blair is the highest single person in the government. “Although I don’t know what he does half the

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time,” Christian added. I agree. Wales and England have had their run-ins, although they are now part of the same country. There were the various (failed) attempts by the English to conquer Wales, and, on the Welsh side of things, Owain Glyndwr, national hero, kicked out all the English. But now, things have settled down to a good old-fashioned vicious rugby rivalry.

Christian told us that while he was never entirely stereotyped in America, there were various untrue assumptions that people made. Americans tend to pronounce his name wrong, think he’s English, and then, when informed of their error, have no idea where Wales is. “I think it’s ignorance, mostly, and lack of education.” Christian said of the reason for these errors. But on the whole, he likes America, thinks it’s beautiful, although in a different way from Wales, and will probably continue to live here. (But, possibly in New Hampshire, for the lower taxes.)

When Taxes Rise By Tra

Johnny Robinson moved to the United States because the **economy** was really bad and the taxes were very high in Ireland. Nobody in his family was a **refugee**. The reason he decided to stay here was because he could make a better living. He loved the weather and the freedom. There is more freedom to do business in the United States than in Ireland.

Johnny wasn't surprised when he came to the United States because he knew lots about this country. He was an educated man. He speaks English, so it wasn't hard for him to fit in. It was easy for him to come to America, because he could communicate with other people very well.

Johnny came here with his wife when he was 34 years old. He had a great uncle who lived in the United States, but when he came, he didn't look for his great uncle. The first place he settled was Brooklyn, New York, because he had friends there. He felt it was familiar, because he grew up with a lot of American **culture**. When he arrived, he was treated very well; people helped him with paperwork and helped him find a job.

Johnny was born in Ireland. He enjoyed living in Ireland. His earliest memory is when he picked tobacco in the fog and mist every morning. He has lots of family in Ireland. What he misses the most about his home country are the natives who speak same language with the same **accent**. When he is in The United States, he can tell whether the person is Irish by looking at them.

Now Johnny is 54 years old. His goal was to have his own business which he already has accomplished. The holidays that he brought with him are Saint Patrick's Day and Christmas . He has a child that was born in the United States. He loves the American lifestyle. He became a U.S. citizen five years ago and he feels safer. He was glad that he came here because now he has a good life.

Christian Perry's Story

By Danny

Christian has told us that Wales is a **monarchy** and that they also have a representative who is the one who talks to the rest of England. He said that Wales is a very beautiful place. He thinks it is about the size of Maine, and it has a population of about 6,000,000, which is a lot to fit in a small place like Wales.

The reason that he has been coming to America is because he was working at the Maine Teen Camp and was able to come back and forth, which was working out for him. But lately he has been having a hard time with going back and forth to visit his family. This is because he is married now, and he has to wait until his papers go through. When he gets his Visa he will be able to go back and forth more easily than before. His parents just came over from Wales and they liked the life style in Portland more than they did in Cape Cod, Mass.

He told us a little about Welsh sports, like how he used to play rugby . He played on a soccer team in Wales but now he is getting too old to play on the team. He enjoys watching the Welsh team play the British team in rugby, and Wales just has to win. "It is like a life or death situation for us. If we win it is good, and we can brag, but if they win then they get to brag and won't stop until we win!" He also said that he doesn't play on any teams because he doesn't play basketball or football. He said they can be confusing. He also said he wants to coach soccer in this school or a another school.

He told us that he doesn't think an Englishman should be called Prince of Wales. He thinks that they should get a Welsh prince or princess so they could have Welsh royalty again. Christian thinks that it would be a lot better to have Welsh history again. The Welsh have not had a Welsh prince or princess sense the English invaded. He feels that Prince Charles is the only one who does anything. Mr. Parry is a person who cares a lot about his countries history. He is still very patriotic about Wales and he believes it doesn't belong to England. It has its own identity.

Mike Bruenjes Comes to America

By Donald

As a ten year old, Mike Bruenjes left Germany for a new life in America. Like many other European immigrants, his parents were looking for better jobs and a better life. They did not intend on staying here for very long, but it was much too difficult to make a living here and save money to use back in Germany for a new business. Many other European immigrants traveled with Mike and his family, and it took an entire week to sail across the Atlantic Ocean. He arrived in the busy city of New York, and began his new life in the United States.

To Mike, New York seemed like just the opposite of where he came from, a small town in Germany outside of **Hamburg**. He was struck by how big everything was. Abundancy seemed to be the norm. "There was so much of everything. I was astounded by (the) amount of food, toys, and material goods that everyone had," he said.

Initially, Mike found it difficult to communicate because he came to America with very limited English. When he started school, Mike had no other choice but to learn the language and customs of the other kids, but with the help of his parents, who knew a little English, this wasn't hard. His first school experiences were far from enjoyable. He remembers kids teasing him because of his accent. Meeting new teachers and making new friends was also hard on Mike. He said, "The most difficult thing about moving was learning the customs of the kids on the playground." He found the kids in his new school to be a lot more unruly than in his homeland of Germany which surprised him very much.

Mike has had many opportunities to visit his relatives in Germany. "Every time I visit Germany it becomes a little bit more Americanized," he said. With a fair government, advanced technology, and modern conveniences Germany is becoming a sophisticated and peaceful place to live.

He has also kept in touch with all of his friends and family back in Germany. He knows the importance of keeping his German contacts and thinks that he should never leave Germany out of his life. To me that is the most important thing to remember. No matter how much an immigrant likes America he or she should always keep his or her country in his or her heart.

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Even with the hardships Mike experienced early on when he moved to the United States, he has no regrets about immigrating. He is still a German citizen, speaks his native language, and celebrates German traditions, but Mike feels as though America is his home. Like so many other immigrants, the United States has offered Mike and his family a safe haven, liberty, and financial opportunities.



Culture brought to Portland by immigrants

Ireland Interview

by James

Johnny Robinson lived in Brooklyn, New York before he came to Maine. The reason he moved here was because of the bad economy in Ireland. Also he said the sale tax is less here. The culture in Ireland is very close to that of the United States. Most of the shows Johnny Robinson grew up watching were imported from the United States. Before he moved here he visited here when he was a student.

In Ireland the roads are much smaller and they drive much faster than we do here. He adapted to the American culture fast and easily since it's not that much different from Ireland. His goal was to open a business here. When he came here he didn't think much about it. He said he doesn't plan on bringing family here to America but before he got here he had a great uncle. His wife also had an uncle that lived in Boston.

The thing he misses about Ireland is being able to talk in his native tongue. He said that he had distant cousins that live in the United States. In Ireland it was hard to make a good living. When he was younger he made money from picking tobacco in Ireland. He likes the American life style because of how its fast paced and busy. He has a son that was born in Ireland. They don't celebrate thanks giving in Ireland. He finds it hard to live in a place not close to the ocean. When he came here the laws were a lot less strict compared to how they are now. He arrived in America by plane and when he got here he didn't feel safe because he didn't have a citizenship, he felt like every thing he worked for could be taken away by just one thing, but then he got a citizenship later on.

Mike Bruenjes' Journey to America

By Tomas

How would you feel if you had to come to a country that you didn't know much about, and you didn't even speak the language? Well that's how ten year old Mike Bruenjes felt when he came to America. Mike's parents intentions were to come to America for five years to get jobs so they could make money, then they would go back to Germany. After five years Mike's parents decided that America was such a large new land and that there were so many opportunities in America, they decided to stay in America. Unfortunately, a little while later his parents were divorced .

He came with his mother and father, and when they arrived in the United States, they were living in New York. They came to America looking for a better life and to make more money than they did in Germany. When Mike first arrived, New York was so big to him compared to the small town that he once lived in back in Germany; he was amazed at the American lifestyle that he would soon be accustomed to.

Mike had no understanding of English when he and his family came over. It took Mike awhile to adjust to the language, but with his parents teaching him the English they could, and with the help of listening to people at school and on the street, he was able to learn the language. He had difficulties making friends at school and getting to know people to fit in, but this chance gave him an opportunity to start a new life here in America.

When Mike came to America, he had to leave everything behind, his friends, family, personal belongings, and other things that he enjoyed. Fortunately when Mike and his family moved, they had relatives and friends in the United States that could support Mike's family until they were on their feet. One of the family's good friends in America, happened to be a secretary that took out a loan for them. Mike's grandparents were also in the United States at the time so they gave his family some money to get started on their life in America.

After a couple years in the United States, he really started to get used to the American life style and began to **assimilate** into the American culture and with the other people in the United States. Although he was born in Germany and spent his early years there he said, "I consider the United States to be my home since this is where I grew up and I have no regrets about moving."

He still misses his friends, family, and the culture that he left behind when he came to the United States and he has gone back to Germany numerous times and still keeps in touch with his family in Germany. If you had a conversation with Mike, you would have never guessed he was from another country because he speaks fluent English and has no accent. Although he has lived in America all his life, he has decided not to become an American citizen and still keeps his German heritage.

Agahsi Journey

By Suad

“My first impression of the United States was that it was a mega power,” said Agahsi. Agahsi is from Armenia. He came alone to this country in 1997. He first came to San Francisco. He lived there for two years looking for a job. Then he got a job with Idexx and moved to Portland, Maine. For him it was not easy to find work. It took lots of searching but he knew what he wanted to do. One of the biggest reasons he moved to the United States was for freedom. “There are a lot of choices here. The United States is an open society and the country is very welcoming,” said Agahsi. When he was at the airport coming from Armenia, he asked for a cup of tea and when he was asked what kind of tea would he like, he couldn’t believe the choices. It was kind of overwhelming for him.

Agahsi said some parts of the English language were very tough to learn. Agahsi had the opportunity to study and got the chance to earn a degree. He received a high quality education. He said the education in the United States was superior to that of Armenia. Although he said attending undergraduate school was similar to attending school in the United States.

Back in Armenia, when you walk down the streets you see some cars, people, etc. He said that the industry is based on technology and there are lots of factories. He told us the land was similar to Colorado because of the mountains.

He misses his family and the lifestyle there. He also misses the traditions. In his home country Christmas is celebrated in January. Agahsi said that clothes were different in his country too.

Even though Agahsi misses some things about Armenia, he said he is very glad to be here. He said, “The United States is an open society and the country is very welcoming.”

Mr. Bruno is from Ghana

By Brian

Mr. Bruno has been to a lot of places in the world. He is a teacher for **ESL** at King Middle School. His home country is Ghana. The reason he left was that he wanted to teach in other places. There were no political problems. The climate is tropical, warm, and comparatively dry along the southeast coast, hot and humid in the southwest; hot and dry in the north. The population is 21,029,853. English is the main language. Many other languages are spoken.

Before he came to the United States he worked in Nigeria for six years, and Turkey for eight years as a college teacher. Mr. Bruno came to the United States in August of 1994. The people who came with him were his three kids and his wife. He has been teaching here at King 11 years, and has enjoyed every hour of it.

Some of the differences between Ghana and the United States are that the holidays are weeks longer, and the weather is warmer. It is a poorer country, but there is more of a family feeling among the native people, and life is slower.

Part III

War

You flee your country for your safety, but where do you go? Do you wait? Or do you move on, and leave your country? For some people it's an easy decision, for others, it's probably the hardest decision they've ever made. Would you leave your family, your friends, your house, and everything you know just to be safe? Would you even be able to? How long would you run, how far would you walk? Could you walk until the your feet were stained red from blood? Some people would, just to flee for safety.

In these stories, you'll hear about many people who have decided that it was no longer safe to live in their countries, and did what ever they could to get out. Many of these people came with nothing and had to worked their way up to where they are now. In Sudan, the war is religion based, while in Cambodia, the war is political based. People fight for many different reasons, but none of them are good.

Sohkani Seang came here from Cambodia with her son. She came from an Thailand refugee camp. Naya Peni came from Sudan with her three children because she no longer felt safe in Sudan. Biljana Deliskovic came from Bosnia to the United States with her whole family. Some of these people are more fortunate than others, but they all come for the same reason, to find a safer home.

From War to Peace: the Story of Sonja Messerschmidt

By Molly

Sonja Messerschmidt was one of the lucky people to survive living in a Jewish concentration camp in Germany. She was very fortunate to get a chance to move with her daughter to start a new life in the United States of America.

Before she came to the United States, the majority of her life in Germany was difficult. When she was a very young child still in elementary school, the **Nazis** took over Germany in 1933. "For a little while life basically stayed normal and didn't change a lot for me. On the other hand, life did not stay the same for my parents, it affected them greatly."

The first signs of change for her were when she and all of the Jewish kids at her school were thrown out and moved to an all Jewish school. "I liked being in an all Jewish school because I felt I was with my own [people] there." Another change for her as a child was when her Christian friends wanted nothing to do with her anymore. "People who used to be my friends suddenly didn't want to talk or play with me; this was very hard because I didn't understand why."

Soon after she noticed these changes, she was taken away with her family and forced into a concentration camp in the capital, Berlin. In this camp her mother, father, and the rest of her family were killed. She and her three year old daughter were fortunate enough to survive, but it wasn't until many years after that they finally were able to move out of Germany.

Before the Nazis she had a normal life, much like life in the United States. She grew up in Munich which is in western Germany and had a very nice life living with her mother and father. After she was released from the camp she immediately decided that she needed to move out of Germany and start a new life. "There was no way I wanted to spend the rest of my life in Germany, and I really didn't want to raise my three year old daughter in Germany."

To be able to move away from Germany she needed to be **sponsored**. It took years for her to finally be able to come under an order of **DP's**, or **displaced persons**. Because she had no money to come everything was paid for and taken care of by a Jewish-American organization. These groups of people took care of all

the refugees and provided them with apartments, and food. They also helped people, including her husband, find a job. These organizations really made it a good experience for them and many others to come over.

Sonja chose America not because she had learned English in school, but because to her it seemed like the closest thing to heaven on Earth. "I didn't know anything about America except that it took in a lot of people and that you had a future. You could make your own future." Her first destination, like most people, was New York City. She moved there in 1950.

Although her husband had a job in New Jersey she was never really happy in New York. "I grew up in Berlin which is a much larger city than New York City, but New York was very overwhelming because it was much more built up with many more people than in Berlin." As soon as her husband found a job out of the city, they moved. His new job was as a cantor, or a helper in the Jewish church, in Portland, Maine.

When they first moved here they were discriminated against by many people, but they also received more privileges than Americans such as more food stamps because of what they had been through in Germany. "We were discriminated by some, but welcomed and treated extremely well by others, we really got a little of both." Since she moved to Portland she has really enjoyed living here.

Sonja has gone back to Germany once since she emigrated. She went because she was invited by the government along with all of the other people who managed to survive the **Holocaust**. "I was reluctant to go at first, as I am sure most people were when they were invited. But the government sent out a strong message stating that they are not expecting any of us to move back to Germany, they are just showing us how it has grown since then."

All of the people were put up in nice hotels and got a chance to meet and share stories with other survivors. "I became a US citizen as soon as I came here. It was very exciting because I had never been a citizen of a country before." She had never been a citizen because her mother and father were both born in Eastern Europe and never became official citizens of Germany; therefore, even though she was born in Germany, she was not considered a citizen in the government's eye.

War

Many people just like Sonja move to the United States everyday for various reasons such as war, natural disasters, and persecution. Sonja was very fortunate to have survived living in a concentration camp and was given a second chance to start over. She and her husband have worked hard to take advantage of this opportunity and currently live on Cragie Street in Portland.



Culture brought to Portland by immigrants

Naya Peni

By Vesna

Imagine living in a country that has been fighting wars since the early 1980's, and then one day you decide to leave it all behind.

Naya Peni immigrated to Portland, Maine on June 10th, 1998. She came here because there was a war going on in her home country of Sudan. She didn't feel safe so she left with her 3 children. She left her parents, her house, and basically everything that she had. For Naya, it wasn't easy to leave.

Before she and her children came to Portland, Naya went to the U.N. to apply for **asylum**. She didn't really choose the United States, but at that point, she didn't care where she went. She just wanted to leave. The four of them took nonstop flights from Cairo, Egypt to New York, which took 12 hours. From there, they flew to Portland, Maine.

When Naya came to Portland, people treated her with respect and dignity. Her goal was to further her education. She now attends classes at the University of Southern Maine.

For Naya, life is very difficult and different. American life is very busy and too fast. There isn't enough time in the day to spend with friends and family. Now, Naya questions how she can adjust to American life.

She knew just a little bit of English before coming to America. She knew how to write English but she couldn't speak well enough. It didn't take her long to learn how to speak English. Today, Naya Peni can speak three different languages: English, **Nuar** and Arabic.

In Sudan, Naya was a housewife. Her job was to take care of her children, provide food and clean. She says that America is very different than Sudan when it comes to languages. In America, there is only one official language even though there are many different people from different cultures who speak different languages. In Sudan, there are many different official languages. She also says that the American cooking styles are much different than the Sudanese. Naya and her family still celebrate **Ramadan**, but also celebrate Christmas.

War

One of Naya's worst experiences was buying food. For her, it was difficult to tell the difference between animal food and human food. She once almost bought dog food. One of her best experiences was receiving the help of the American people that she received. They helped her get services and medical help.

Naya doesn't like the fact that American children are given too much freedom. She says that most children don't really understand what freedom is. She does like the schools, freedom of speech, and the teaching that's offered.

Naya misses the places that she grew up in. She also misses the language even though she still speaks it sometimes with her children.

Naya Peni left everything she had for the safety of herself and her 3 children. Now she focuses on the future. She will further her education and hopefully, one day, return to Sudan.

The Journey from Somalia

By Max M

In 1935 a completely unique individual was born, Abdullahi Jama. He became a **refugee** in Kenya and was given the chance to come to America with his family in 1997. He was 62 years old at the time. He had read newspapers and books that mentioned America and he also had many American teachers. From what he had learned, America seemed like a “heaven” of sorts.

From Kenya he came directly to where he lives now: Portland, Maine. He was welcomed by a Catholic charity and treated well, but realized that America is very different from Kenya and Somalia. Since Mr. Jama already knew English it was easier to begin to support himself and his family by getting a job almost immediately upon arrival. His first job and only job so far in America is as an Educational Technician at King Middle School.

The American lifestyle is much different than what he expected. He anticipated it to be something like the heaven he read about. “But,” he says, “it was on the contrary.” Mr. Jama feels that his skills were not fully appreciated in America and says that he liked being an Italian Professor at a university, his occupation in Somalia. He also liked the life he was living. “I had my own house, my own car, and my own people that worked in my home... service people.” but he says, “I am glad I came here, because I came to America with my whole family, I don’t really miss Somalia. “I have been able to maintain all traditions, because I am 62 years old I can’t easily change it.”

Mr. Jama became a United States citizen, renouncing his loyalty to Somalia which is in a very unstable state. Somalia was once two settlements of Italy and Britain which were freed and formed one country. Soon after, the president was assassinated by the military commander who fled the country a year later. This left the warlords in control. Large groups controlled by warlords started staking out swaths of land and creating “mini-states.” This rejuvenated the idea of government and a temporary transitional government now holds control of 10% of the country.

Gaining his Freedom: Pirun Sen's Survival Story

By Melanie

He ran out of the country to Thailand, fleeing the **Khmer Rouge**. This is how it was for Pirun Sen trying to leave his homeland of Cambodia. After Cambodia gained its freedom from France, the war between Vietnam and the United States spilled into Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge took control over Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge wanted to change Cambodia to a **communist** country, but the people who were educated didn't like the idea. The Khmer Rouge wanted to reeducate people so they would accept communism. They eliminated everyone who disagreed with their ideas. So far, over 2.7 million people have been killed.

In Cambodia, Pirun Sen was a private English teacher and was considered educated. The Khmer Rouge set out to capture and kill him. Pirun ran up to the border of Thailand and became a **refugee**. On December 19, 1981, Pirun was finally in the United States. He flew from the Thailand refugee camp straight to Portland. He never expected to get help from his new community, but he was grateful for it. Pirun got housing for three months and then got monthly support for another seven months after that.

Pirun had to take English classes here in the United States before he could become a U.S. citizen. Pirun didn't understand English as much as he thought he did. It took him six months to pass the **E.S.L.** class and after that he went to **U.S.M.** and took a two-year course.

When Pirun left Cambodia, he had to leave his wife and only son behind because it would have taken more time to flee with them. The Cambodian government was only after him because the Khmer Rouge didn't want anyone to disagree with their way of ruling. If there was no one to disagree with them, they could control the country without too much protesting. From what he knows, his family is still in Cambodia. Now, Pirun is remarried and he has three children, two are in college and one has completed college. His only other relatives still living in Cambodia are his stepmother and an aunt.

Pirun says he misses the land of Cambodia, but he doesn't miss the way the country was controlled. He still eats rice with his meals and takes part in at least

seven celebrations each year. “I feel a personal connection to Portland,” he said, “even though I’ve traveled around the country.”

Cambodia is still a communist country and Pirun doesn’t plan on going back until it becomes more peaceful. Because Pirun has a good connection with Portland, he doesn’t plan on moving.

Sonja Messersmidt's Run

By Veroth

"If you had a choice between running from danger or staying, what would you do?" Sonja Messersmidt is someone who had to run away from danger. This would make her a **refugee**. She came from Germany. Germany is a country in Europe and its capital is **Berlin**. She left Germany because of the **Holocaust**. She came with her three-year-old daughter to the United States in 1950. Like most **immigrants**, the first state and city she came to was New York City, New York. When she came to New York City, all the people that came with her did not know how to speak English. New York City was a big city with loads of people and giant buildings, but it was not bigger than Berlin.

When Sonja was a child, life was normal. It was kind of like an American lifestyle until the **Nazis** took over in 1933. She had a normal life when she was young but her parents did not because her parents were non-citizens of any country so that also made her a non-citizen. "When the Nazis took over it affected me because my friends that were my friends were not anymore. I did not understand why they were that way." Sonja says. "All of the **Jewish** kids were thrown out of public schools. The Jewish kids moved into a private Jewish school. I liked that idea because I felt that I was with my own kind."

Sonja left Germany because she was Jewish during the Holocaust period. All of her family did not survive and she no longer wanted to live in Germany. She has no family in Germany anymore. She was born in Berlin and she lived in west Germany. Then she moved to Munich, but later in her life she was forced into a concentration camp in Berlin. She needed to be sponsored so that she could immigrate to America and so that people could take care of her.

"Coming to America was wonderful. America sounded like the closest thing to heaven," She says. "I feel more free here, but it took some getting used to the American lifestyle." When she was in America she did not have a job but her husband did. Her husband had a job in New Jersey and then his job moved to Maine and he had to move there too.

When she came to America people **discriminated** against her. There were no laws to protect her. Immigrants had more privileges than Americans and they got more food stamps because of what they had gone through to get to America. Sonja learned her English in school when she was a child in Germany but she learned the British way to speak it so it was very hard to convert it into the American accent.

Sonja never thought of going back to Germany. She didn't go back until 30 years later when she was invited to go back by the German government. Everyone who was Jewish that had survived the Holocaust all got to stay in a nice hotel. The German People wanted to show that Germany was a new Germany and not a bad one. They wanted to make the survivors of the Holocaust feel better. Sonja felt better that the people of Germany did not hate people that were different from them and that they welcomed everyone.

Now Sonja lives in Portland, Maine. She can still speak German but she forgets words sometimes, just like she does in English. She can still speak German but she prefers speaking English. She does not like reading German writing. Her children cannot speak German; if they did talk to Sonja in German, she would answer in English. She had decided that it was important for her daughter to speak English but it was a mistake because she could have been bilingual.

The Journey to America

By Sean

Our interviewee, Pirun Sen, came from the war torn country of Cambodia. He was born at a time when Cambodia got its independence from France. In Cambodia you have a choice of taking French or English when you are in school. He decided to take English. Most people took French because it was occupied by France, and English was considered a dead language. After school he became a private English teacher in Cambodia.

When the **Khmer Rouge** invaded the country they took over the capital, Phnom Penh and executed over 1.5 million people. Pirun fled the country because he was afraid that he could be next since he was intelligent and spoke another language. He decided to flee to a **refugee camp** in Thailand, but in order to go he had to leave his wife and son behind. The reason he wanted to go to America is because he spoke English. When he got to the camp in 1980, it took him two years to apply to go America. When he got to America he went right to Portland, Maine. He heard that there was a good-sized Cambodian community there but nothing else. He had to wait five years before he could even qualify to become a citizen, then another two years to become a one.

When he got to America he was surprised to get help from the people here. He had a lot of help from church groups and associations, and the American people were really nice to him. He shared an interesting story with us about the kindness of the American people he encountered. The story was, when he got his first car he was driving and he got it stuck in the snow, to his surprise people came out and started to help him. He had other experiences like this where he was amazed in the kindness of others.

During the five years where he was not a citizen he took **ESL** classes and driver's ed. Even though he taught English in Cambodia he still had a lot to learn. It took him six months to finish the ESL classes. In America he remarried and had three more kids, two of which are now in college. Pirun misses the land of Cambodia but not the people, he also misses his family in Cambodia. When we asked him if he would go back he answered only when the fighting stops and peace is accomplished.

He now has a well paying job which includes traveling more than once a year. Since his kids are now done with college they're starting to get jobs and have kids of their own. Even though he is in America now, he has not forgotten his Cambodian past. His family celebrates some of the same holiday that he did in Cambodia. He also still enjoys eating foods from his country. For Pirun it was definitely a good choice moving to America.

Sonja Messerschmidt

Escaping the Nazis

By Samantha

Sonja Messerschmidt is a very lucky person to have been able to come to America and live a happy life with her husband and her daughter. She has been here since 1950. Sonja said that she was sponsored by Jewish people and got food stamps and were very privileged. And when that happened the Americans became very jealous because of the fact that they were treated very, very well. They got put into nice hotels and were pretty much in heaven. "America was the closest thing to heaven," Sonja said.

Back in Germany, she had a very complicated life. From going into the concentration camp, to the Nazis taking over, and to none of her family surviving except for her husband and her daughter. "Before I went to the concentration camp, I had a normal life. None of my family lived after the Holocaust," Sonja said. "When I was in elementary school, my friends made fun of me and I didn't know why. Then I came to see that it was because of the fact that I got put into a private school just for Jewish kids. I think I felt more comfortable there because I was with my own kind. When I was put into a concentration camp, I was still in elementary school. When I got put there, it changed my life," Sonja said.

"When I came here to America, I knew little English. It was a good thing my husband knew English otherwise I wouldn't be able to talk to people myself. It was a good experience coming here because America took in many immigrants from all over the world," Sonja said. She arrived in New York City. She didn't find a job in New York City, but her husband found one for himself in New Jersey. She and her family were in a hotel and she stayed home everyday with her child. "My husband soon found a job in Portland, Maine," Sonja said.

"My daughter went to King Middle School when she was old enough. I had a son a little while after I arrived here in America," Sonja said. "When my son graduated from high school, he was able to go to either Yale University or Harvard. He went to Harvard and graduated from there. My daughter went to Berkley University and graduated from there," Sonja said. "I soon got a job at the mall when it was very different and I worked at Filene's," Sonja said.

“I don’t like reading in German because I just can’t read the language and because I don’t remember it well,” Sonja said. “I now live on Craigie St. with my husband and I’m very happy to live life freely in America and in Portland, Maine.” Sonja said. She sounds as if she is really happy here in America because she is very free and she also gave her children a good life and they also got to go to good schools and get a education. They graduated and it’s all thanks to their loving mom and their dad. Her mom went through a lot to get her family to the United States and she succeeded and she’s very proud of that.

Sonja is a very interesting person. “If I had the chance to start over in Germany, I wouldn’t take the chance because I’m happy here in the United States of America,” Sonja said. “I’m proud to be an immigrant and happy to be here,” Sonja said. Sonja Messerschmidt, her husband, and her daughter are true immigrants.

Biljana Dilskovic

By Meron

Imagine hearing gun shots everyday and feeling unsafe in your own home. That's the feeling that this woman had until now. On Thursday November 10th, my group (Tu, Eric, and I) interviewed a woman who came from a country located in southern Europe. This woman's name is Biljana Dilskovic. Biljana immigrated to the United States because of a horrible war that ended about ten years ago. She also left her homeland in hopes of having a better life.

Even though Biljana first came to this country and knew no one, she was very fortunate and came here with her family. However, she has lost friends that meant a lot to her because of different religious beliefs. As a result, she got split from people she cared about. "The most important people in my life that I have lost were my friends. We got split because we had different religious beliefs," she said as the memories of the incident left her with a sad face.

Though it may not seem so, coming here and getting to the point where Biljana is today was no easy task. In order to first get here, Biljana had to take many exams. "They are very strict," she recalled. She came here through an agency called I.O.M Agency. This process took her about a year- and- a- half to complete.

Biljana first came to New Hampshire. After nine months of getting around and adapting to this new life and world, she moved up to Portland, Maine. She moved here for the following reasons: she visited and she liked it and it was close to where she was currently living so that made transportation easier. "People told us about here and that it was a nice place to live. After visiting here we decided to move up," she replied.

For someone who has had a rough life, Biljana is a well educated woman. She had an education back home and has a degree. In America, getting a good job requires a good education which is why she has also attended classes at the University of Southern Maine. Its pretty clear that moving here has transformed her life. Biljana is doing things that she thought she would never even consider doing. For example, some of her first experiences were driving a car and learning a new language. "That was exciting because I never thought that I would be able to drive a car and speak English", she said. Although everything is different such as

the law, transportation and culture, that's what she likes most about the U.S..

It's been a while since she left her home, but Biljana still celebrates Christmas on January 7th, the day that she would celebrate it back home in Bosnia. That's one of the customs that she has brought with her.

She doesn't plan on going to Bosnia soon because right now there's no one she keeps in contact with. "Never say never," were her last words.



Culture brought to Portland by immigrants

The Journey from Cambodia

By Marianne

Sohkani Seang is an immigrant from Cambodia. She went through many difficulties to get to where she is today.

Even though she is originally from Cambodia, she immigrated to the United States from Thailand. In Thailand she lived in a refugee camp because of a war and starvation in Cambodia. It was hard living in the camp, there was no freedom or resources and the only family she had was her son.

Before the war Sohkani lived in a large city in Cambodia. She was middle class and lived in a house with her son and husband. Sohkani was forced from her home because of a civil war. The war also caused starvation, forcing many others to flee the country.

Sohkani and her son left the **refugee camp** and took a plane to Portland. They arrived here in 1981. Sohkani wasn't scared or worried about coming to this new country, she was excited. She brought nothing with her and they had no possessions or relatives in Portland when they got here. Sohkani knew very little about the United States before she arrived and what she did know came from books or stories. When she first arrived here Sohkani was surprised at the people and how many cars there were. She was also disappointed. She thought that all of the cities were big and tall, and they were all like New York City. When she saw the size of Portland she was surprised how small it is compared to the city she lived in back in Cambodia.

It was really hard and scary when she first moved here. She didn't know about the culture, where anything was, she couldn't speak English, and she didn't know anyone to ask for information. Sometimes it got so hard she would cry. But after she got her first job as a hotel maid things got a little easier. As a maid she met people who could help her. She also earned money to help support her son and got to go to school. She took **English as a Second Language** (ESL) classes part time for three years and got her high school diploma. It took Sohkani two of these years to learn English. She also went to college at USM for three years but never finished. After Sohkani went through school things got even easier. Sohkani had a daughter born a United States citizen and became a citizen herself in 1987. Even though things got better it took Sohkani about ten years to get used to the US.

By moving to the United States Sohkani gained many things and lost things. She says she gained education, language, and human rights. She says she likes it here because of how secure and safe it is. Sohkani thinks it's more peaceful, there is more freedom, and the laws give more protection. "In Cambodia if you have no money the doctors won't help you, you could die. Here if you have no money they take care of you." Sohkani gained all these things but she also lost things. She lost some of her culture, part of her family, and her style of living.

Although Sohkani likes it here she still misses Cambodia. She has gone back to Cambodia three times to visit her mother and sister. She is very grateful she got the chance to move here despite the things she lost. She found that what she went through was worth while for her and her kids.

Sudan to America

By Henry

Imagine living in a country that has been in a civil war for the past couple of years. Florence is from Southern Sudan. She came from Sudan as a refugee because of a war, and moved to Egypt where after awhile she came to the United States. Florence was 40 years old when she came to the United States and has been here for 7 years. Florence had been to Maine before and stayed with her cousins during the summer. Florence's first impression when she came to Maine was that it's not very crowded.

Florence likes living in Maine. She was very surprised when she first saw snow. She doesn't mind the snow but she likes the summer a lot more than winter. Florence has not forgotten any of her friends, family or culture of Sudan. She said "I occasionally call my mom and keep in touch with her".

When Florence emigrated from her homeland she was stationed in an immigration camp. "It was hard to get going when I first got here but the immigration camp gave me shelter and food until I could live on my own." Florence also said, "I was treated very well on the trip here and had no bad experiences."

When Florence first came to America she wanted to pursue her masters degree in college, but she has been too busy to go back to school. She thinks she would be very good at school because she works hard and is happy to have had the advantage to be able to come to America. Florence likes her job a lot because she gets to work with children and encourages them to take their studies a lot more seriously. Florence has eight children. Her children are almost all 2 years apart. Her youngest is 14 years old and her oldest is 27.

Florence so far has liked living in the United States and her first thought when she arrived here was "security" because back in Sudan there wasn't very good security if there was even any. She hopes someday to be able to go back to Sudan for a year or two and maybe even stay there forever. She says the life over in Sudan was a lot easier than here in America because she didn't have to pay bills or have taxes and there's a lot less people in Sudan.

Pirun Sen and Cambodia Dancer

by Mike

Pirun came to this country December 19, 1981. Pirun had learned English in his homeland so he wanted to go to either England or America. England wasn't taking any new **refugees** so he came to Portland, Maine directly from the refugee camp. He was forced to leave his country because over 2.7 million men, women and children were killed by the **Khmer Rouge** which was the ruling government after Cambodia gained their free dom. from France. The **Khmer Rouge** tried to kidnap him so he escaped.

I got to hear his story when he presented an example of Cambodian dance at the Maine Cultural Exchange Building as part of our kickoff expedition. Our group learned a lot about the Cambodian people's culture from their dancing. Traditional Cambodian music and dance is very exotic and peaceful. The costume was very traditional with lots of shimmering gold and flowing silk. The traditional dancer had studied since she was only seven years old and she started late! For over ten years she has done two hours of exercises to keep her nimble. She travels all around the country trying to keep the traditional Cambodian cultural arts alive

Pirun Sen misses his country and its people very much, but he will never go back with the bad government running it. Instead he teaches Americans about his homeland by sponsoring cultural events, and telling his story

When he came to the United States he didn't expect any help but got help from relief and church organizations for seven months. He had been an English teacher in Cambodia, but found that his English was not understandable here. He had to take a ELL class and exam to get into U.S.M. He feels a personal connection since this was where he came from a refugee camp. This is where he got his education and first home. He misses his country's beauty and people. He feels he can only go back to visit because the government is bad.

From Cambodia to America

By Joshua

Sohkani Seang had a husband and a 2 year old son. Her husband worked while she cleaned the house and took care of other various things. She lived in Cambodia, but then she went into a refugee camp in Thailand. That was how it was before she came to America. When Sohkani came to America, she was scared and excited at the same time. She flew directly to Portland, Maine from Thailand in 1981. She flew with just her son because she had to leave her husband there. She didn't want to talk about it, but I think her husband died. She ended up becoming a U.S. citizen in 1987.

When Sohkani came to America, she didn't have any goals. She just wanted to gain an education, and earn some money to send back to her family in Cambodia. She doesn't have any relatives except her son and her daughter that were born here in the U.S. "It took me two years to learn English," she said.

When Sohkani got here, she went to high school in an **ESOL** class. After graduating high school, she went to USM and dropped out after the third year. Her first job here was a hotel sweeper and she didn't like the job that much. It was low paying and a pretty boring job. It took her about ten years until she got into the swing of things. "In Portland, it's so much colder than in Cambodia," she said. "But I do prefer Portland because it's a lot more quieter and peaceful." Sohkani is kind of disappointed because she thought it would be a little bit more like New York.

Sohkani doesn't like the food here or the system that we use to eat the food. For example, she doesn't like to use forks and knives and having to be all formal and stuff. She also tries to keep most of her Cambodian culture that is inside of her, but it is hard. She goes to the Cambodian Temple once or twice a year on Cambodian holidays.

She has visited Cambodia a few times since arriving here, but she said that it would be hard for her to move back to Cambodia. She's doing fine over here, but Sohkani does miss her family a lot and cries sometimes too. She really wishes that peace could be brought back to Cambodia and maybe she might have the courage to go back.

Naya Peni's Journey *By Esmad*

In the summer of 1998 on June 10, Naya Peni came to America. She came because of the war in Sudan. She was with three of her children. First she had to go to the **United Nations** in Sudan and apply for asylum.. They chose the United States for her. She didn't want to go, but she didn't have a choice. She just wanted to get out so her family would be safe. She took a plane to Cairo, Egypt. Then she took another plane. It took twelve hours to get to New York City and then one more hour to get to Portland, Maine.

Life in Sudan was very different. In Sudan there were many languages spoken, such as Nuer and Arabic. Naya speaks **Nuer**, English, and **Arabic**. The foods were also different, as were the ways they were cooked. In Sudan it's the wife's job to clean the house and take care of the children. "In the United States there is no time to spend with family because of jobs and school," she said. "Life in the United States has been different and difficult."

It was not easy for her to leave her country. She misses the place where she grew up. She still has many good memories. People were very nice to her. They treated her with respect and dignity. "I left my parents behind and now all I have here is my house." Sometimes she feels left out. She wonders if she will ever adjust to American life.

Naya also has had many good experiences here. " People helped me to get services and medical help." One funny experience Naya had was trying to figure out the difference between people food and dog food. She has also been able to continue her education at USM. She enjoys celebrating Christmas along with **Ramadan**.

Naya told us that life here is very fast and busy. Her goal now is to continue her education. She became a **citizen** just last year.

What could have pushed someone to move?

by David

Why would anyone leave the country they love to come to the United States? Florence's home country of Sudan is divided into two sections, Northern and Southern Sudan. Florence was from the south. She came here as a **refugee** because of a war. She had to bribe the security guards in Cairo, Egypt to let her go through. Florence was 40 when she first came here. Now she's a **citizen** here.

What can be an **immigrant's** goal when they first land in America? When she came here she had to start everything over, so she decided to wait and get her masters degree later. Florence was a single mom working in the United States. She said, "There are too many responsibilities." She had to start from the beginning and she had nothing except for the clothes on her back. Florence loved it in Sudan. She had her family, friends, and a decent job. I think that Florence had to escape the fighting for her own safety so she couldn't bring anything along with her on her journey here. In my opinion, she wasn't able to bring anything with her because the war was dangerous and she just wanted to get out. Florence came here with others on a plane.

What do you think some of her likes and dislikes are? She said, "It's too cold here. I don't like it." She wasn't used to the cold and didn't like it, but Florence had cousins here. She does like it here sometimes. She was welcomed and she had no bad experiences. In the summer she likes it because it sometimes gets hot. Sometimes she likes the snow because it can be pretty. Just like the rest of us, she thinks snow can get annoying.

How does she live her life now? Florence did get some support for being a **refugee**, so she does get some of the basic needs. The government supported her in some ways. She does keep in touch with her family back in Sudan. Florence calls her mom from time to time. She feels safe here but she hasn't decided if she is going to stay here for the rest of her life. Florence does want to go back to Sudan. She might visit Sudan the beginning of next year.

How was she successful in Maine? She was able to raise her children over here and the oldest one is 27 and the youngest one is 14 with 2 year intervals in between the oldest and youngest. Now her job is working with children and she loves it. She encourages kids to concentrate on their studies. She used to own a restaurant but then she decided to close it down. She wanted to do other business.

Florence thinks if she ever goes to school, she will be good at it because of her job. The way of her job is that she is very social and she learns a lot everyday. Her job is very social and she learns a lot of new things. Florence said, "Hopefully I will be able to attend school next year."

How did Florence impact Portland? She brought along with her, her way of child bearing, she did not tell me the way but I think that they didn't go to hospitals to bear children. She brought over other holidays that her country celebrates also. She told me she celebrated Christmas differently from the Americans. Florence's life hasn't changed a lot. She just doesn't get to talk face to face with her family. Those are some ways she has changed Portland.

How has Portland has changed her? Some ways were that there are so many conveniences here in Portland and Florence is making the most of this. She doesn't have to walk very far to get what she needs. As you can see, Florence has a fabulous life both here and in Sudan.

Memoir of Godfree

By John

Godfree is a Sudanese athlete who once lived in Sudan. Godfree is a great athlete who adores sports but loves soccer. The war had caused him to **flee** from his country. He moved to Portland, ME hoping to find freedom. "We don't have something to eat or food, clothes, and stuff that's why we came here to save our lives," he told me about Sudan. But he had to go through a journey. He first went to Egypt for about two years. He says that he had to go through interviews. But when he did arrive he felt really good, relieved, and curious for his safe arrival. He came with his family but no friends came with him except for a person that he never knew would be considered as a friend.

He tells me that there are many differences between Sudan and America. Godfree says that there are not many organized teams (kids just play), and teachers are able to hit children. for example. The same thing happened in Beetles and Angles (a book I read). The author got hit for answering the right question. There are nicer parks in Sudan, and not much basketball in Sudan. Also he saw street lights for the first time, and he was delighted when he saw snow. He heard about this snow but never saw it. Godfree misses swimming and playing with his friends (in fact that's how he learned soccer). But now he doesn't keep in contact with his friends. He hears about them through family but only once in a while. Godfree had a grandmother that came with him to the U.S., but she was shot in the leg during the war and barley can walk. He sometimes visits her.

Godfree keeps his tradition by eating the foods from his country. One of them is called "**As-eei-duah**"(not the correct spelling, just pronunciation). It is a type of food that can be eaten at breakfast, lunch or dinner. It is like oatmeal but yellow and smooth. He likes chicken soup and white rice. He came with both parents. Godree doesn't want to go back because he is afraid that he might get killed. "No, No, No I'm not, I'm like wow I'm going back there again, that's really sad..." he tells me.

Biljana Delsklovic Comes to America

By Eric

My interviewee is Biljana who came from Bosnia. She left there in 1992. She brought her family but left a lot of friends behind. She lost a lot of friends, especially after the war started, because the war separated people by religion. In order to get here she had to take many exams.

She had a degree in her own country. Then she came here and got her M.A. and now works for Portland Public Schools. When she arrived here she took classes in New Hampshire to learn English better. After that, she moved to Maine.

She was very fortunate that her family came with her. Also she has become a citizen just recently. She said, "It was difficult because I had to do a lot of work and study American Studies so I could pass the test." It looks difficult. I got to look at it in Social Studies and I wouldn't be able to pass it. Also I took the test, and I only got about 20 out of the fifty questions that I answered right, and there are one hundred questions.

Biljana didn't leave anything behind in Bosnia. In Bosnia, Christmas is celebrated on January 7th. In America, she still celebrates Christmas on that day.

Biljana also said the whole system was different her country. For example, transportation was different. She said, "Learning how to drive was the hardest because it's on the opposite side of the road and it's a lot different." And thinking about it from her point of view, I think it would be very difficult for me.

Biljana has no plans of going back to her home land, but she said, "For me I would like to go back to my culture to see my friends and my father and mother left behind. And all in all I would go back because love my home country."

Fantastic Voyage of Florence

By Salah Abdi

Think of not seeing snow until you're around 35-40 years old. That's that same feeling my interviewee had when she came to America. My interviewee's name is Florence. She came to America with her family. They came to America when it was winter. They came to America with shorts and T-shirts. When she came to America she was welcomed to Portland. Florence got help from the community for a while because she was a **refugee** from the war. She said if she could go back to Sudan she would if it felt safe. She does miss Sudan, because she misses her family as well as the people that she was with in the refugee camp.

She came here with her kids. She has eight children. The oldest is 27 years old and the youngest is 14. She doesn't know if she's going to stay here. She might visit her country next year. She said that she feels safer here than in Sudan because there isn't a war going on in Maine.

In Sudan it's always hot in the northern part, and it's cool and wet in the southern part. This is because the northern part of Sudan is mostly desert and the southern part is like a wet and cool place. When I asked Florence what she likes about Maine she told me that she likes the weather in Maine, mostly the snow. She likes the snow because its beautiful, and sometimes she doesn't like the snow because it can get annoying.

Florence has lived in Maine for seven years. Florence is now attending school to help her with her English. She is also thinking of opening up her own restaurant around the area of Portland, Maine. Florence said that even though she lives in America she still celebrates her traditions, and she celebrates American traditions too. Florence got a **citizenship** after awhile, and became a **citizen**.

A Story about Biljana Nedeljkouil's Life

By Tu

What if you didn't have any relatives in America? The interviewee was Biljana Nedeljkouil. Meron, Eric and I were the interviewers. She was born in Bosnia. She came to America with her whole family, they were her only relatives here. She likes the city of Portland, Maine. She likes the long winters.

She was treated well when she got here, better than she expected. Before she left Russia the **I.O.M** agency interviewed her. They had to give her lots of documents to fill out to leave Bosnia. It took a year and a half long for all the interviews, but finally she got to leave Bosnia.

At first she didn't know any English, but she took classes to learn. She went to school with her friends who had also moved here from Bosnia. She hasn't planned on going back to her country. She lost a lot of friends when the civil war started. Now she has a Bachelor's degree in America, along with degrees in her home country. She also has become a U.S. **citizen**.

She chose Maine to live because it was close to New Hampshire, where she had lived when she came here. She likes the weather and the transportation in Portland and the opportunities for money. She didn't think she needed to learn how to drive a car in her country, but here she did have to take some tests to drive in America.

In America the laws, schools, and foods, are different than her country. Besides the differences cooking in America, there are many things that are completely different from her country. Such as well as the climate, culture, customs and people. She has changed a lot to adapt to the new environment. However, she keeps celebrating her Christmas on January 7th instead of on December 25th. Biljana has brought many of her traditions here, but she is learning new ones as well.

A Teacher from Somalia Immigrates to America

By Chelsea

This is a story about a 61 year old man named Mr. Jama. Mr. Jama came here to America from Somalia. He was A **refugee** who needed to resettle.

Mr. Jama has been living here in America for about nine years. He came here when he was fifty-two years old. Mr. Jama came with a few of his family members. To get here he traveled by plane.

My partners that interviewed Mr. Jama asked him if he likes America better than his old country in Somalia. Mr. Jama said, "America is Like HEAVEN!" Mr. Jama says there are many things different about America.

When Mr. Jama lived in Somalia he worked as a teacher. My guess is that he loves to teach because in Somalia he worked as a teacher for twenty-four years. When Mr. Jama came to America he continued his teaching. Mr. Jama has been working here at King Middle for nine years now.

Mr. Jama says life is kind of different in America. He says, "The climate is different also the culture and the religions." I would agree with him on the different climate, because from what I have seen in movies, and read in books, Somalia seems very hot. Also from what I have read in books their cultures seems very different.

Coming from Cambodia

By Josiah

Sohkani Seang is from Cambodia. She really liked living there until there was a **civil war**. She had to leave the country because she was scared and she wanted to get away from the war. She was a refugee in Thailand with her son.

Then she came 8,611 miles to Maine in 1981 and became a U.S. citizen in 1987. She said she thought it was going to be more like New York but she still liked it. After she got here she had a baby girl.

After two years of **ESL** she learned English and she got used to living in Maine. She said she still keeps her culture by celebrating holidays and going to the Cambodian temple twice a year. She has visited her family three times since she left. She likes it here better than Cambodia because it is more peaceful and there is more freedom. She said if you were poor in Cambodia you might die, but if you are poor here people will help you. She worked as hotel sweeper until she was done with beginner **ESL**.

She is now a student taking advanced **ESL** classes at **USM**. She says she likes it in Maine. She doesn't like the cold but she does like the quiet which is why she decided to stay in Portland. Over the time that she has lived here she has learned how to speak English. She has a better education and she has more rights. She says she misses her family but she likes it here a lot.

Life with the Angels:

Naya Peni

by Koang

Naya Peni came with her three children and without her parents to America on June 10, 1998. Her parents are in Sudan. She left her country because of the war. "Life in America is very fast, oh, yes, it's fast and busy," says Naya. She also said life is not easy in America. Everything in America for her and her children has been different; every thing from the food to houses.

"In Sudan most our life wasn't hard, for example cooking, we used rocks. We used three big rocks in a triangle, and we put the wood between the rocks and lit them on fire. When we used the U.S. stoves it was very different. In Sudan we ate two times a day and in the U.S. we eat three times a day. In Sudan we ate breakfast and dinner. In the U.S. they eat breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Before she came to America Naya lived in Sudan with her family. In Sudan she spoke English, **Arabic**, and Nuer. I speak **Nuer** also. In Sudan she was the one to do all the work in the house. She cooked, washed the clothes, and cleaned other things. Her family bought food almost every day, and the good thing was that neighbors helped her with some of the things she had to do, like finding medical help. Another difference in Sudan, was women gave birth at home with the help of family and neighbors instead of a hospital.

In the U.S. school is different. In Sudan if you passed 8th grade, you would have a party with your family and friends. Its like finishing 12th grade in America. Our schools are different than the U.S. schools. "In Sudanese schools, we don't have school buses. We had to walk, and also we didn't eat lunch at school. We have to go home and eat when school was over. The schools looked very different. There are no windows, doors, (just door ways) computers, or pencils. A lot of things you have, we didn't have in school in Sudan."

Now she has a new life in Portland, Maine. She has been respected by people here. She got her education at U.S.M. She likes all the things that she is doing in America, especially in school. Now she also has time with her family. She became a **citizen** last year in 2004. She was very excited!

Mr. Jama Came to America

By Ashley

Mr. Jama came to America when he was sixty two years old, and he is now sixty-nine years old. He has had a tough life. When he got here he got a job working with **ESL** kids. He told us that he taught an Italian language class in his homeland. He told us why he came to America. He was a **refugee** and he came because of the war in Somalia. He said it was nasty there and that some people were mean. When he came to America he said that Maine was welcoming. The people here in Maine were nice.

That day when he got his first job and how much he had liked the job being a teacher. I would like that job too if I had first come to America and got a really good job like that. He told us things that I don't think that he had shared with other people. Some of his story was hard to believe . Like how he had come to America and how hard it was to get here and now that he is here, he loves it. It was amazing I was happy that now that he is here he likes it here in America and how we treat him here in America.

He had told us that he was a refugee for some time and that it was hard leaving his homeland. It had taken a lot of time to get here to America. He has been in America for seven years, and Somalia is still in chaos. There is still civil war, slavery, child labor, and government detention camps. They're mean and cruel to people.

Sometimes people have a chance to come to America, but when they come, they have to work, pay bills, get food, clothes and send money back to Somalia for their family to get some food. I think that is hard to be a refugee. Most of his life Mr. Jama was a teacher. It's not like the color of your skin matters. It is what you do that matters. Everybody is different, but in some ways we are all alike.

He had also told us much about his life in **Somalia**. One of the traditions he told us about is wearing a **hijab** and the men have to wear it, too. Women have to wear the hijab, which covers you from your head to your toe. Between the ages of 6 through 9 you have to start wearing the hijab. Then you wear it until you die. Also, they pray five times a day, in school or out of school. That is part of the **Muslim** religion. The life style is very different from ours here in America. They have many things to see but most of the people there are poor and not clean.

In 1997 when he came to America, people treated him well. I thought that,

War

that was nice of them to do that. Life was hard in Somalia. May miss this country but said that this country is a hole lot better than that country (somalia). I think instead of fighting I think that we should be helping them and giving them food because they can not afford somethings. If we help than maybe we won't have anymore wars.

The Life Experience of Godfree

By Abraham

In Sudan, Africa there was a war. Godfree and his family were running to save their lives. Instead being killed or bombed, they ran to Egypt and they lived there for two years but they couldn't get enough money. Since they were refugees the family could go almost anywhere. Godfree and his family decided to go to America because they heard that money flowed in the streets and everyone was rich.

Once they were in America everything was different like, food, traditions, houses, weather and even the color of the peoples skin. One winter morning Godfree woke up and he saw something white coming down from the clouds like rain and but he didn't know what it was, until his friend told him that the thing was snow or frozen water, like rain. He played outside in the snow until he got cold and he went inside.

He came from Egypt to Portland, Maine but before he got here he met someone in the plane and they became very good friends. After two months he went to Boston with his cousin. He saw all these big buildings and apartments and lots of lights at night, he thought it was beautiful and strange. One week later he got in school and he learned some of the English language.

After a while Godfree was interview by three eight graders from King Middle school and he told us his story about the war in Sudan and how he got here. He told us about the war in his country because of religion and other problems that he does not know. He told us that he doesn't want to go back to his country because he could get killed but if it gets safe he will go back to visit.

That's when something hits me and I remember about the time I was reading a book about war in Kosova and a girl and her family fleeing her country to a better place. I made a connection to what Godfree said and to the book I read. War in Kosova like war in Sudan and her family and her trying to move to a save place because her house got bombed, Godfree and his family trying to get to a save place because of war in his country and because their was not enough food.

Giving Back to His People

By Ian

In the year 1935 a person that would grow to be a wonderful teacher was born. His name was Mr. Jama. While growing up, he had many American teachers. In Somalia he was a teacher, and principal of a high school. Finally, he became a school inspector. As a teacher he taught Italian language. Life in Somalia was very easy for him. He had his own house, his own car, and people that worked for him in his home. He knew English while living in Somalia.

While in Somalia living as comfortably as he had always dreamed, Mr. Jama was taken as a **refugee** into Kenya. Mr. Jama got a chance to come to America. He had to take a test first, which he passed. Finally, at 62 years old, In 1997 Mr. Jama **emigrated** from Kenya to America with his family. His arrival in Portland, Maine was welcomed by many people from the **Catholic Charity**. He supported himself from the beginning and felt very safe and welcomed in Portland.

Mr. Jama said, "American culture is much different than I expected. I thought it would be like heaven, but it was on the contrary." Even though America isn't what he expected, he is still glad that he came here. His first and only job in America was a teacher in King Middle School.

Mr. Jama doesn't miss anything from Somalia, because he lives with his family in Portland. He has maintained all of his Somalian traditions. He has become a United States citizen. Mr. Jama currently teaches ESL at King Middle School. He has given back to the children of his country by teaching them.

In my opinion I think that Mr. Jama has achieved great things. Such as coming to America as a teacher, and continuing the career that he loves and enjoys. It must have been challenging to leave his home country with his family because of war. He had to leave a great life with all the things he ever wanted and enjoyed. He had to come to America even though he knew so little. He had expected to come to a country of dreams, but even though America wasn't as he expected he still fulfilled living in his new country comfortably as a teacher.

Godfree

By Abdi

Godfree is a young boy who came to this country because of a war in Sudan. "There is not much food or clothes in Sudan," Godfree says. So, to get away from the war he went to Egypt. He stayed there for two years. His family had to go through interviews to come to America. He felt good when he came to the United States. When he came to America he played sports, especially soccer.

A memory of his homeland he still has is playing soccer on a team in Africa. He learned how to play soccer by playing with his friends. The things he misses most about his homeland are swimming and playing soccer. Some of his friends who were also refugees went to Australia and Canada. He has not been able to see them, but he is in contact with them. Godfree makes friends fast. He even made a friend on the airplane coming to America.

There are a lot of things that are harsh in Sudan like teachers hitting kids as if they weren't human. They have nothing to lose because parents want their kids to learn and they are afraid that the teachers will say, "I will not teach your child." Also you pay for lunch and every other thing you need in school. If you forget to even bring a pencil or other things you need you would get hit so badly you would bleed. They make you bring the sticks to use for your punishment. Sometimes the teachers would blindfold you and beat the life out of you. One good thing about the schools are you get a great education and you get to go home for lunch.

We thank Godfree for letting us interview him.

Part IV

Education

In America, we take education for granted. It is just another part of our life, like the weather. We complain about it good-naturedly, and at times resent it, but could not imagine life without it. It is what helps us eventually become successful in life, to get good jobs, make money, and raise families.

Tragically, people in some parts of the world do not receive any education at all. The reasons for this vary from the country they live in being too poor to provide education for them, to their culture or society looking down on education. Without an education, these people can't get decent jobs, and so can not support themselves.

It is with a hope of escaping this fate that people from all over the world come to America seeking education, whether it is because they want the best for their school-aged children, need to get a high school diploma, or wish to attend a good college.

The stories that you are about to read are all about people leaving their native countries looking to improve their lives through receiving a bit of the gift of education.

A Class of Opportunities

By Eileen

Mr. Bruno works in an **ESL** classroom at King Middle School. He chose to come here from Ghana for the educating experience, having already worked in Nigeria for six years and Turkey for eight years as a teacher for college students. Mr. Bruno came to the United States in August of 1994. He traveled here with his wife and three children. He also came here because it was recommended by his friends and employees who had lived here before him. Mr. Bruno's decision to leave Ghana was entirely voluntary. There was no war, famine, or drought there beforehand, and he had a very easy life. He decided to leave purely out of the desire to teach in other countries. He has been teaching here for eleven years, and hopes next to be able to teach in the far east or Australia.

When Mr. Bruno first moved here he taught at a private school in ESL. He continued on to college and came to King after he graduated three years later.

Mr. Bruno left Ghana a very long time ago, so it's hard for him to remember what it's like. He says that what he misses most about it is his extended family and a feeling of community throughout the whole village. He does keep in touch using the phone, but would really just like to see them and be with them again. Here, we mostly stay within the boundaries of our friends and family during holidays. In Ghana the whole village gathers together and celebrates holidays for weeks. He misses a sense of belonging to a huge family rather than just his nuclear one.

Mr. Bruno likes it here very much because he says he's gotten used to the way things operate. He is very happy he moved here and has gotten a lot out of the educating experience.

Like all immigrants, when Mr. Bruno first moved here, he had to take an immigration test to get into the country. He is now a United States citizen and easily became one. Since he had taught so much in other countries, he knew all about the kinds of questions that would be on the test, and passed effortlessly.

Luckily for him, he already knew English before he came to this country because he used to teach Americans. They were in his schools and there he had an opportunity to learn English.

When we asked Mr. Bruno about the traditions he carried out from Ghana,

he said that it was very hard to remember any because it had been so long since he had been there. He says that traditions do fade, so it can be difficult to carry them out, especially in a different country with a different culture that is quickly expanding its technology. Everyone in the United States really just does their own thing and leaves everyone else alone. In Ghana, their traditions are communal and celebratory for much longer than a day.

When Mr. Bruno arrived here, his goal was to experience what it was like to teach in America. Well, I think that he certainly has achieved that goal.



Culture brought to Portland by immigrants

Getting the Education

By Reaksmey

“India vibrates; it hums,” says Charu Saxena. She was born in New Delhi, the capital of India, and came to the United States for college. Charu Saxena came alone when she first moved to the United States. She stayed in New Hampshire with her sister who was already here getting her Ph.D. As Charu arrived, she was treated very well. She really enjoyed it. Adjusting was good; it was like adapting to a different culture. “Everyone is unique in a way,” says Charu. She was never discriminated against in a harsh way. She has had that happen to her, but she would usually think hard about it and not take it so offensively. “I think it is because I have denser skin.” Charu had no fear because she was different.

Charu came to the United States so that she could get a masters degree at UNH. She also came for the fun and change. Before Charu came to the United States, she went to a university in New Delhi. She had received a few bachelors degrees there. She taught and worked with computers while at the university in India. She told us about the university and how you have to follow a stream and if you get out of it, it was hard to get back into it. Education was a big deal to the kids in India because everyone is striving so hard to get ahead. Charu knew how to speak English before she came to the United States. She said if you were born in one of the major cities, English was taught to you. She also said that the universities there have a “totally different culture in a certain way.” She liked that she could talk to the professors. Her goal was to get her masters in the United States because it was very difficult to get back into the flow of education. Also, she didn’t want to get married at such an early age. If she was going to stay in India, she would have gotten married. She is now married to a man she met at her college in the United States.

The things that Charu enjoyed included staying in the dorms and the diversity of the student body. She said, “Staying in dorm was a great experience because the floor was international. I enjoyed that meeting.” She liked that there were people from all over the world. “The academics and the learning was great,” and, “what I really enjoyed most were the people and the snow.” Also, “Getting my masters was a completely wonderful experience,” says Charu. Charu enjoys learning and being educated. Charu has visited India a couple of times. “You start to observe your country,” says Charu. Things that she grew up with are forgotten or taken for granted. She thinks some things are wonderful but other things she wants to forget. “You start to grow a shell of indifference.” She was glad that she

came here, but she would be fine in either place. She hated the riots that are in India, especially the religious ones. She likes the democracy and the ability to choose here. She really likes the social structure also.

Things are different compared to India. Charu was used to the variety of people and the religions. "India is a varied place. You see a lot of variety. You see the different ways. The way that people walk. The way that people speak. Everything changes." Compared to India, the roads are a lot bigger in the United States. She also said that she would see a bunch of people turn up at the malls and then nowhere else. It was a strange experience to Charu not seeing people everywhere because she was surrounded by people growing up. There is always something happening in India but she doesn't see that in America. "America is very **affluent** and India isn't." In India, the majority of the population is extremely poor. You can see rich people and poor people right next to each other, and the contrast is remarkable. "The cities are always moving compared to America. Life is moving. America seems still. It depends on the person, and what circumstance you come from."

To Charu, both countries are everything. She likes the society and the diversity that both countries bring. There are bad things but there are a lot of good things about them too. People meet a lot and she likes that. She likes that people are connected and that is it very open. She has two countries and both of the countries bring her warmth.

Getting Used to America

By Igor

Do you have any idea how lucky you are? If you were born and live in America, you are very lucky, because you live with your parents. When immigrants come to America it's like coming to a new planet. The person that overcame the challenges of coming to a new place is from Armenia. His name is Agahsi Chitchyan. The company that he worked for in Armenia gave him an internship so he could come to the United States. He took that opportunity and came here.

He came here in the year 1997. His brother followed in 2001. When Agahsi first arrived, he lived in San Francisco, California. He lived there for six months. After that, he spent two years attending Bently College. Following that, he found a job at the Idexx Company. Because of this, he relocated to Portland, Maine.

Agahsi's biggest reason for coming to the United States was the freedom. His other reason for coming here was for the opportunity to have choices. When you choose a college or go to a store, there will be lots of choices. He explained that when he first arrived at the airport the waiter asked him if he wanted a cup of tea. He said yes, but then the waiter asked, "Which kind?" He showed him all the choices and Agahsi was stumped! In the United States, even the smallest things have lots of choices.

After living here for a while, he realized many differences between Armenia and the United States. He said that San Francisco was a lot different than Armenia but places like Colorado were similar to Armenia. Armenia is a very family based country which means that most of the factories are passed down from one generation to the next. Agahsi was named after his grandfather, because it's a tradition to be named after your grandfather. One of those traditions is being named after your grandfather, and there are lots of traditional foods. Agahsi still celebrates all of his traditions and tries to keep his culture alive. He is a really good cook, so he makes traditional foods like bread, soup, stew, and meat. This is a great way to keep your culture alive. It's also very diverse in the United States, compared to Armenia. By this, from experience, I mean everything is different. The lifestyle, cars, communication, how you talk to people, shopping, how things work, even the houses are different than the ones in Europe and Asia.

He also came here because of education. He wanted an opportunity to study

higher education and also to earn a degree so he could get a good job. The jobs in Armenia were harder to apply for, because there weren't many of them. The economy is mostly industry based. For Agahsi, the work culture was hardest to get used to, because in the United States, there is a big emphasis on finishing work. If some people are assigned a task, they will stay overtime as much as they need to, in order to get the job done.

Usually the first impression that one gets about the United States, is that it is a mega-power center for technology and financial wealth. The only way that people in Armenia see America is through the showing of MTV music channel. Agahsi plans to stay here, but some part of him misses Armenia and his family over there, and wants to go back. This is what I learned about Agahsi Chitchyan and how he came here. I think he is a great man, and my group was lucky to have him as an interviewee, because he gave us half a page of information for only one question. If you want to learn more about the Armenian people or their culture, go to Armeniansofmaine.org.

A Life Changing Journey

By Nina

On November 22, 1992, Luc Nya made a journey across the Atlantic Ocean that changed his life forever. He had been living in Cameroon, a very poor country on the western coast of Africa. When he was 32 years old, he boarded the plane traveling from Cameroon to New York City with only a small suitcase containing clothing, a few books, and some food, and a mind filled with determination. Luc then flew from New York to Portland, so he could go to the University of Southern Maine. While he was attending college, he lived with the people who had sponsored him to come to America. He had been corresponding with them for quite a while, when he lived in Cameroon, so when he got here, he already knew them pretty well. "It felt like coming home to a family," Luc said during the interview.

Cameroon is a country with a lot of problems. It has been in a war with Nigeria for over ten years. The people there regularly get diseases that are sometimes fatal, including malaria, HIV, tuberculosis, and cholera. There are also some natural disasters that occur in Cameroon, like volcanic eruptions and periodic releases of poisonous gases from Lake Nyos. Luc didn't tell me specifically why he left Cameroon, but based on the research I've done, I have learned that Cameroon is a very corrupt country, and I can understand why someone would want to leave there.

He didn't tell me why he left Cameroon, but he did tell me why he came to America. He wanted to get a college degree. After living here for awhile, Luc graduated from USM with a M.A. in public policy and management. He said that it was hard for him to get a job at first. "Immigrants are often discouraged from getting jobs, because they are stealing jobs from Americans," he explained to me. Eventually he did find a job. Luc started working for the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, and he still works there today. He enjoys it very much. He said that it's very interesting, because he gets to meet a lot of new people.

Because Luc decided to come to America, he has had a lot of opportunities that he never would have had in Cameroon. There are things like owning a car and getting to travel to different places. "I have visited 45 out of the 50 states, including Hawaii and Alaska, France, England, Germany, Canada, and Bermuda,"

he told me during the interview. But the biggest opportunity he's gotten is the freedom to express himself, to do what he wants with his life. He doesn't have to follow any traditions. He can be who he wants to be.

Although Luc has been having a great time in America, he still misses a lot of things that he left behind in Cameroon. Not only his house, and his furniture, but a lot of his close friends. He often wonders what his life would be like if they had come to America with him. Luc told me that although the people here are very nice and polite, he doesn't think he will ever be able to establish the same kind of relationships with them, as he did with the people in Cameroon.

Coming to America has certainly changed Luc's life. It has given him so many more choices and opportunities. He said that he isn't necessarily happier here, but he is glad that he left Cameroon. "It meant redefining myself," he told me. "I had a lot of personal adjustments to make to the situation. It was a very challenging transition." By coming to America, Luc has been able to get a college degree, a job, and a car. He has gotten so many chances to do things that he never could have done in Cameroon. For Luc, coming to America was certainly a good decision.

A Journey of Education

By Max

Before Charu Sexena came to the United States, she had already received a couple of bachelor degrees, including a bachelor of education. She had also completed a course on computers. Charu is the kind of person that likes to learn and have more and more knowledge, so while she was teaching at the university in India she realized that she wanted her masters. Because of the intensity of education in India, after she stopped going to college and started teaching, it was hard to get back into a university. So she decided to come to the United States where people can go back to college any time they want. She also wanted some change, and she wanted to get married. She ended up marrying a man from the United States.

Her sister was already in the United States getting her Ph.D. in New Hampshire, so she decided to go to the University of New Hampshire. Her mindset was to have a good time getting her masters degree and she wasn't disappointed. She commented on the fact that schooling is different in the United States than it is in India. "It is a totally different culture" she said. What she noticed was that schooling in India is a lot more serious and competitive. But she liked it here; she liked the engagement she had with the professors. "You can ask questions and discuss things." All in all she said it was a good decision to come here and she accomplished what she wanted to. I'm glad that people like her come to the United States, it brings diversity as well as college students and people who really want to learn.

Charu was already used to the variety of people because in India there is great variety as well. She was used to walking down the street and being surrounded by people, but here she was surprised to find that so many people could show up at the mall and have the streets be empty. The size of the wider roads here were also new to her. The thing Charu enjoyed most about the US were the people. At the University of New Hampshire she was on a completely international floor so she got to meet a lot of people from different places. One thing that was disappointing to her was that America doesn't vibrate, in India there is always something happening, something going on, while she didn't feel that in the United States. I think she is wrong about that. I think that in America there is more going on than anywhere else. I think America vibrates a lot.

"There is a warmth to India." Charu said. She admires the social structure

and the society in India. She loves the food and the fabric of India. She is glad to be away from the riots between the Muslims and the Hindus. Charu described democracy as being “big” in India. “People can choose, like in the United States. There are goods and bads, but it’s still good.”



Culture brought to Portland by immigrants

Luc Nya's New Life

By Ian

When Luc Nya came to America from the African country of Cameroon he had nothing but a few of his belongings and a goal to earn a college degree. He came here on November 22, 1992. He was 32 years old when he came here. He took a plane to New York City, and then he came to Portland, Maine to attend college at USM.

When he came here, he was sponsored by people from his own culture. He wishes he could have brought all of his belongings with him when he came here, but like I already said before, he only came with a few belongings. He said that his life would be very different if he had brought some of his friends because he says it's very difficult to establish the same kind of relationships he had with them in Cameroon with someone else here. If he had not been able to get into America, then he would've gone to either Switzerland or England.

When he came here, he said that there were a lot of "personal adjustments" he had to make. He already knew English before he came here because Cameroon is a British and French territory. It was hard for him to get a job here because people thought that immigrants were stealing jobs from Americans that were born here. I think that's not true because some Americans either work at home or are too lazy to work, so what are we supposed to do, save the jobs for the people who won't use them just because they were born here? But he eventually got his job at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

He has not gone back to visit Cameroon, but he says "I would love to." When he came here he came alone. When he graduated from USM he got a master's degree in Public Policy and Management. He had finally attained his goal for coming to America.

One thing he likes about America is the lack of dust because back in Cameroon, his house was full of dust. He misses the food there, and that's why he gets some African food once in a while. He misses being able to go out in his backyard and "walk forever." He's visited 45 out of the 50 states, France, England, and Germany, and he wants to visit his friends in Cameroon.

The Big Decision

By Anthony

Mihn Canfield has always dreamed of becoming a teacher her whole life. It wasn't until later in her life when she realized that she wanted to come to America and make a living by teaching.

Mrs.Canfield grew up in a small city with two other siblings. She and her two sisters went to a fairly small school and attended it regularly. At the school, Mrs.Canfield, as well as her peers, all studied English as a second language. This would later help her come to America.

When asked about studying the English language Mrs. Canfield said, " It was very hard to understand. We didn't have a lot of the developing technology that the kids in America had. We didn't have libraries were you could go and read. We didn't have very good school conditions, for example when it rained we would crowd to the other side of the classroom because the roof leaked."

Some of the school conditions she went through would be considered as unexpected and inappropriate for school conditions in the America. On one occasion she had to ride her bike to a friend's house where she had to copy down definitions of words in English and then she had to ride back to her house.

As the years went on, Mrs.Canfield kept studying English and later graduated from high school and went on to study to become a teacher in college. While in college she got her degree in teaching. It wasn't until later when she decided that she wanted to come to America and teach.

Mrs.Canfield decided to come to America, but it wasn't the first time someone in the family decided to come to America. Like her two sisters before, she decided to come here and make a living. Making this decision wasn't an easy choice for her but she said she is glad she made the choice. The two people that really didn't agree with her choice was her parents.

When she told her parents about her decision to come to America she said that they told her not to go. When Mrs. Canfield arrived in America she could only speak a little English and didn't know much about the American culture. She was surprised at all the cars. In her first few days in America Mrs. Canfield moved in with her sister who already made the journey to Maine.

Education

As the years and days went on, Mrs. Canfield picked up a job at a Chinese restaurant to make money to go to college at U.S.M. After studying a while she, got her degree in teaching and was able to finally start a career and make a living in the United States.

Now Mrs.Canfield has a job here at King Middle School as an intern math teacher and will later have her own job as a teacher soon. She is also in the process of having her first child sometime in February.

Luc Nya's Journey to America

by Kaleb

In November 1992, Luc Nya started a journey of a lifetime. At that time he was 32 years old. He was flying in a plane from Cameroon, Africa to New York, New York. He only could bring a couple suitcases full of cloths, pictures, and music. He knew English and French by the time he got here because those are the official languages of Cameroon.

He came here as a student so he could get an education from a college. There were a lot of people traveling with him from Cameroon. He wanted to come into a home that would feel like a family. He knew a religious **sponsor group** here in Maine. He said there were a lot of personal adjustments that had to be made. He had to figure out all of the different ways of life and places to go. He went to the University of Southern Maine and got a masters degree in public policy and management. He said, "it was hard to get a job here because I didn't want to take away jobs from people." Luc currently works for the Maine Health Department in Portland, Maine.

Back in Cameroon he said, "it is a nice place to live." He misses a lot of things back in Cameroon. He misses the friendship, the music, the food. He said, "I miss being able to go out into my back yard and walk forever." He lived in a rural area of Cameroon with no running water. He is glad now that he doesn't have a dirt driveway. He says it is hard to have a relationship here. People were more friendly there. He misses all of his friends and family. He wished that he had brought a lot of furniture and friends that he had back in Cameroon.

He has not visited Cameroon. He said, "I would love to go back to Cameroon." He says a lot of things are more convenient here in the United States. He likes it how you can heat up food fast and you can go to the super market instead of going to gather it up yourself. His best experience in the United States was graduating from USM. He now has a car, but in Cameroon the cars are very expensive and you have to be rich to own one.

He said, "I am not necessarily happier here in the United States." He is happy that he came here. He has visited a lot of countries including Germany, England, Bermuda, and more. He has been to 45 states including Alaska and Hawaii. He said, "Hawaii was very exotic, I loved it." He had other choices of countries that he would have gone to if the United States had not let him in. He would have gone to Switzerland or England. I probably would go to England too. He likes the United States and is willing to travel back to Cameroon, but not to move back.

A New Way of Life: the Story of Minh Canfield

By Viet

When Minh Canfield was young she always dreamed about becoming a teacher and always loved teaching.

Growing up in Vietnam was hard for her having lots of chores. Some of them were picking vegetables, taking care her family's fifteen ducks, and going to school and studying at the same time. Mrs. Canfield got her college degree and studied English in high school in Vietnam although the education there wasn't good she tried to make the best of it. The schools there were bad and poorly built. "The schools had leaks and some didn't even have copy machines," said Mrs. Canfeild remembering back when she was a kid. So they had to copy the work from a board down on paper during class. In Vietnam students were very respectful of their teachers and never spoke out of turn or they would be disciplined. There wasn't a local library where she lived so she had to borrow books from friends, being very careful with every page because where she lived there weren't many books to go around. She lived in the city back then in Vietnam. They only had bikes so every day she would have to ride her bike far to school.

In 2002 Mrs. Canfield came to America (even though her parents disagreed), and went to go live with her sister who was already living here. She didn't know much about America, but she heard that it was easy to get books, a job and make a good living. With that said, she was eager to learn the American culture. Knowing education was better here, she went to college in America and got a college degree as well as the one she got in Vietnam. She paid it off with the money she got working at a Chinese restaurant. Her best experience was learning how to drive a car because in Vietnam they used to get around usually by bike.

Mrs. Canfeild still enjoys Vietnamese cuisine as well as her Vietnamese culture. She is getting used to the snow, and she still enjoys celebrating Christmas. She is working to be a math teacher in King Middle School where I think she has a big chance of getting her own class.

During the interview I asked, "Knowing the American culture and how it is, would you still come here?" She said, "Yes, because of the opportunities that America has." Her opportunities came and she took advantage of them. With a baby on the way I hope that she and her baby have a happy and successful life in America.

Interview with Mr. Bruno

by Staci

Mr. Bruno is an ESL teacher at King Middle School. He moved here to the U.S. in August 1994 from Ghana. He was a college teacher in Nigeria for 6 years and a college teacher in Turkey for 8. He has taught in Europe and Africa for a long time and also hopes to teach also in the far East and Australia. Mr. Bruno wondered what it would be like to teach here in America. He came with his wife and three children. He says, "I knew that America is a country for many things where you can always get a good education."

When we asked Mr. Bruno what he misses in Ghana he really had to think about it. He said that it was a tricky question for him mostly because there's so much poverty in Ghana and it's so different there then it is here. When he finally thought of what he misses the most in his country he told us that it was his extended family. He does keep in touch with them on the phone but he wishes that he could see them. He says that "Families in Ghana are so different from families in the U.S. Families here are so nuclear, he says "You've got your mother, father, sister brother." His family is so different in Ghana because he lives with his grandparents, uncles and aunts nephews and nieces. He said that he would really like to talk to his family members in person not just on the phone.

Mr. Bruno is a U.S. citizen. The immigration test was not hard for him because he was a teacher at that time for ten years and he taught history in Africa. He also already knew English which made it easier for him than for other immigrants that don't speak English very well.

Mr. Bruno's life before coming here was not difficult. There was no war or any danger that had affected him or anyone in his family.

Mr. Bruno told us about the way that people in Ghana celebrate holidays. He doesn't carry any traditions to America from Ghana. He does celebrate some of the same holidays as we do such as Christmas but they celebrate it differently than we do. He tells us that in America people stay home with their families for Christmas. In Ghana people are all over the place dancing, singing going over there neighbors houses to celebrate. He wishes that it was like that here.

He has accomplished his goal here in America which was to get the experience of what it's like teaching in America and he definitely has.

Journey

By Khalid

In Vietnam it is hard to get an education, but one woman overcame the difficulty. That woman is Mrs. Canfield. Mrs. Canfield came to America for more opportunities to teach.

In Vietnam it was very difficult for Mrs. Canfield. She had to study English, which was hard because there weren't lots of resources like a library or people who knew the language. She had to go to a friend's house to use a dictionary. The schools were not built so well. The roof leaked and there was not a lot of money for supplies. The teachers worked hard through all the obstacles, and the children respected their teacher by standing when he walked in and waiting until he told them to sit.

When Mrs. Canfield came to America she moved in with her sister who came before her. Moving was her own decision. Her parents didn't want her to leave, but she did.

Mrs. Canfield was amazed when she got here. There were cars everywhere as far as the eye could see. Mrs. Canfield lived in a city with only bikes. That's why she was amazed. Mrs. Canfield said, "The hip hop culture here is strange."

Her favorite experience was when she learned how to drive a car. She didn't have to walk everywhere now, she was an independent driver.

Mrs. Canfield is **Buddhist**, but she still celebrates Christmas with her sister and gets presents.

The Story of Charu Saxena

By Larissa

When Charu Saxena was a little girl it was always her dream to come to America. After she graduated from high school she went to a University in New Delhi. Charu basically came to America to get her masters degree. Her sister was here in the United States before she came.

The most important things I have learned about India are that the universities are different in Maine than they are in India. People in America think that India is a very different place but it really isn't and in some ways it is. The schools in India teach English, and they have their own cultural traditions. People in India do almost everything we do. They have many of the same values we have. The only things that are different between the two countries are the foods, the native dress and English isn't spoken all the time. To Charu, India is always vibrating. There is always something going on, and in America it is more laid back and relaxed.

Something that I really didn't know is that the majority of the population in the country is very poor, but when you come to America and you become a citizen you can help with that situation. Our next question for Charu was how was she treated when she came to America. She said that she was treated very nicely not because she was a newcomer but because the people of the United States treated everybody with kindness and care.

Charu's dream came true. She came here for her masters degree, only in college she met her husband and now she has children and she now is here for a good long time. Charu would like to go to India more often because she only has been there twice since she left and even though she loves it here in America, she misses her homeland.

Part V

Family and Marriage

One reason to emigrate from your home country is family or marriage. Whether it's to join a family member overseas or to follow a soul mate abroad, plenty of people choose to leave what they've known all their lives in order to spend more time with and be nearer to those they love. The people whose stories are told in this section of *More Voices of United States* all chose to make the journey to the United States for reasons such as these. When your family is already in another country, it makes it just that much easier to join them. But still, even for love, abandoning familiar surroundings for those that are unknown is a difficult undertaking.

The Best Fish Sauce in the World

By Charlotte

From talking to her, it's impossible to tell that Grace Valenzuela hasn't lived in America her whole life; but she was born on the island of Malabon, in the Philippines. The small town where Grace was born is known for only one thing: supposedly, it has the best fish sauce in the world. Grace moved here nineteen years ago with her American husband. She wasn't too apprehensive about coming to America because she "looked forward to new opportunities here."

In the Philippines there were more than one hundred languages and dialects. Her dialect was Tagalog, and of course English. Grace was an English teacher in a Filipino **refugee camp** until she was twenty-eight years old. In September of 1986, she came to the United States. Grace's first job in the United States was teaching **ESL** here at King Middle School.

She says that she wasn't very lonely or scared when she first arrived here, because she knew that one day she would be able to bring her family here too. Her parents did come to the United States two years later. Her brother is in the US Navy, and he is currently stationed in Japan. Every few years Grace goes back to the Philippines to visit her sisters and their children. There is a big Filipino community in Portland, and a Filipino society in Maine. Grace's family's roots are well established here by now; her mother's house is a "congregation of Filipinos from all over Maine" on Sundays.

Ninety-five percent of the population of the Philippines is Christian, so its holidays are very similar to America's. There are small Muslim and **Pagan** populations. Christmas is a very big deal in the Philippines, as is the New Year celebration. Every New Year people run outside and hit pots and pans together "to ward off bad luck and evil spirits and to welcome the New Year's blessings." Grace's favorite holiday is **Good Friday**, because it is a time for reflection, and it comes during a pleasant time of year in the Philippines.

Portland was predominantly white when Grace first arrived, and she says that it's very different now. Getting used to a new country wasn't too hard, but at times she felt different from the white natives, and missed the community she had felt in the Philippines. Here, it took her years to make real friends. She still doesn't feel that she totally understands or is part of American culture

Everybody in the Philippines watches MTV, and Grace thought that “everything would be like Hollywood.” She was shocked at all the choice, money and privilege that some people had here. But she was also shocked at the way that some had nothing. Although she likes America’s freedom of speech and religion, she misses a few things about the Philippines--namely, the food and year-round tropical fruit! She loves all the opportunities in America. Also, Grace loves the American Dream, and the way that if you work hard, you are rewarded.

What Do Donkeys, a Teacher and Ostriches Have in Common? An Interview with Stephen Crawford Payne.

By Alexander

Stephen Crawford Payne is from South Africa. His nationality is South African, but he just recently received his American citizenship. He grew up in a somewhat privileged family in Subowy, South Africa. Mr. Payne says that he has never had any bad experiences in his life. He has had many good ones, including meeting his wife. The only experiences that he would consider to be bad, were being robbed several times for no apparent reason.

Mr. Payne was introduced to his current wife by his brother in South Africa. They have lived in America for over thirty years and own a nice house and car. Mr. Payne has had the opportunity to ride many different animals in South Africa, including elephants, ostriches, and donkeys. This is an activity more common in the country than the city. He has even been in the South African army. But did not see any combat. He does not plan on having any kids. He has only one brother. Mr. Payne said that the life in South Africa is the same as in America, but there is arguably more crime in South Africa, it also has noticeable differences in language, customs, traditions, and festivities. When he retires, he wants to relax on a boat and fish.

Stephen Crawford Payne has an uncle from Ireland that he was named after. Mr. Payne's ancestry mostly comes from England, Ireland and a range of various scattered countries. The remainder of his family resides in South Africa.

South Africa is one of the more technologically savvy countries in Africa and is overall more advanced. Many cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Soweto are good examples of how it's a more advanced country.

Mr. Payne says that education in South Africa is as good as here in America, if not better. He says that he wants to go on teaching here. I do not believe that he intends to leave America and return to his homeland. Mr. Payne seems like a very good teacher. He was very gracious and kind to us during the interview, and had a sense of humor. Mr. Payne's recollection of his immigration was quite a story.

Wales, It's an Actual Country

By Bridget

Christian Perry was born in the town of Porth, and later moved to Pontypridd, both cities in the Rhondda Valley, Wales. Most people do not know where Wales is, but in fact it is a part of the U.K. along with Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland. In the Rhondda Valley you are close to the mountains, coast, and the capital. Christian says that mountains surrounded the area, and when he looked out the school window he saw mountains. As a boy he and his friends would go up and play soccer on a flat area of the mountain, or find and make new trails. Sometimes they would walk 30 miles to reach the top of the mountain and they could see everything even the coast which they were not close to at all. In Wales they have large communities, their houses are actually built together like one long line of condos.

Christian first came to America in 1994 with Camp America, a program that takes people from the U.K. and brings them to American camps during the summer holidays. He worked at Maine Teen Camp as a counselor for eight years. When he first came to America he didn't know anyone but the man who hired him. Over the years he gained many acquaintances.

Coming in and out of America was a lot easier as a camp counselor than it is him being married. In Wales they speak English as well, but like America, they have their own little twist, as Christian says "Americanism". He said it was somewhat hard to learn the slang, but he got it eventually. Politics currently don't really affect Christian all that much right now, but he says it might when he has kids.

Christian's family recently came to visit America for the first time. They loved Maine and weren't big fans of Boston or Cape Cod, unlike most visitors. This probably reflects how it is in Wales, because Maine doesn't have as many people as does Cape Cod and Boston.

Katrina Sibley From Sweden

By Irin

Katrina was born in Sweden and was brought here by her husband, Mr. Sibley. When Katrina was one and a half years old she used to come to the United State with her father because her father was going to college here.

When she was three years old her mother died and her father raised her. Her grandmother helped him a lot with raising her. She was the only child in her family so it was easier for her father to raise her. In 1993 she moved here to live forever because she married an American. Her father wanted the best for her, so he was glad she was able to come to the U.S. with her husband. He wanted her to go to school and find a good job.

Katrina started school in Sweden and finished high school there but she went to college here in Maine. When she first got here it was hard because she didn't know how to really speak English, but at the same time people treated her pretty nicely. She also found some people here who were from her country and knew how to speak her language. She didn't really think that there would be anyone from her country and she was really happy to see them.

When she moved here the main thing she wanted to learn was how to drive a car. Learning how to drive a car was the hardest thing for her because she had never learned. At first she was scared that she might crash into buildings, cars, or houses and that she might get hurt, but then she got used to it.

The things she misses about her country are the foods, people, and Christmas. Christmas is a celebrated differently. It is not about spending a lot of money. It's a quiet celebration. People concentrate on spending time with family and eating traditional food.

Another holiday is St. Lucia Day. It's on December 13 and it's called the celebration of light. The oldest girl in the family dresses in white and wears a wreath of candles in her hair. She brings her parents cookies and cake for breakfast in bed. Then the children also do something similar at school that day.

Sweden has darkness during the winter months. Above the Arctic Circle there is complete darkness. In the summer they have light all the time. Katrina travels back and forth from the U.S. to Sweden. She goes to visit her father every year and her father comes to the U.S. to visit her. Even so she still misses her family the most.

How Life is Going for Mr. Payne in America

By Brittney

Why did Mr. Stephen Crawford Payne move here to America? I did this report to find out why people move here. One reason could be that he was robbed a couple of times in South Africa. Mr. Payne came to America to be with his wife. That tells me that not everybody comes to America to get away from war or crime. Well, I can't really say that because he also moved due to crime, but his main reason was to be with his wife. He has never had any bad experience. His best experience is that he met his wife. His nationality was South African but now he is American. Most people move here for a better life like the rent is cheap and you can find more houses and it is peaceful sometimes. Some people move here to get away from the war because they could be afraid to be bombed in the middle of the night.

I will tell you a little about his family. His uncle came from Ireland. Mr. Payne was named after his uncle. He has a lot of family in South Africa. He said that none of his family died yet. He is from British ancestors. He met his wife through his brother from Ireland. They both have been here for 30 years. His brother has 4 kids, he has 3 boys and 1 girl. The boys have already been through college. The girl just started college. She is a freshman.

When Mr. Payne moved here in 2001 he became a teacher just like he was back in South Africa. He only had to get one subject of schooling to get a degree to teach. He always wanted to be a teacher. He enjoys his job. He said that he has been teaching for 30 years. He is glad to be teaching here at King Middle School. He wants to carry on with his teaching. In Mr. Payne's country, schooling was different than in America. They have 4 quarters. The quarters are Jan-April, April-June, July-Sept; October-December, followed by a short break.

His name didn't change when he moved here. Mr. Payne is 53 years old. Mr. Payne said that he does not plan on having any kids. When he retires he said he wants to relax on a boat and fish. I think that that is when Mr. Payne has accomplished his goal of being a teacher.

In South Africa it's cold on the edge of the coast, and hot inland. It doesn't get as cold in South Africa as it does in the U.S. During summer it's hot but when the sun goes down it gets cold and rains. Mr. Payne likes the hot weather. He would love to live in Florida. Mr. Payne has been to California, North Carolina,

Massachusetts, Virginia and New Hampshire.

He grew up there and he wants to go back there some day. He grew in Zimbabwe. Before it was called Zimbabwe it was called Rhodesia. He was in the Zimbabwe Army. He has been on donkeys, ostriches and elephants. In South Africa there are the same houses, parks, clothes, and people, that you find in the United States. Americans are a lot richer than South Africans. The life in South Africa is the same as America, just different landmarks. South Africa has different holidays. He said life is easier here in America. One day he plans on going back to see his family and see how much his native country has changed.

There isn't much about the Philippines that I miss anymore:
The Story of Grace Valenzuela

By Thy

Working here at King Middle School as an ELL teacher was Grace Valenzuela's first job here in America. Grace came from a small town just 25 miles away from the capital of Manila. At the age of 28, Grace came to Portland, Maine with her American husband. In the Philippines, she taught English in a **refugee camp**. She and her husband moved to Portland, Maine in September 1986.

Two years later her parents came from the Philippines. She wanted them here so that when she had children, they could learn her Philippine culture instead of just the American culture. A couple of years later she gave birth to a daughter who is now in 7th grade and attending Waynflete School here in Portland.

There are 1700 islands in the Philippines. There are also more than 100 different languages spoken there, but Grace's native language is Tagalog. The religion of the Philippines is made up of a small percentage of Muslims and **Pagans** and a large percentage of Christians at 95%. Filipinos have a different dressing style for each and every different holiday that they celebrate. They have familiar holidays as we do here, like Good Friday and New Year's. On New Year's they make a lot of noises to chase away the spirits.

When Grace first arrived here, Portland had a large population of white people, but things change and so did the population. There were times when she felt different from white people. She really wasn't interested in being a part of the American culture and she still isn't today. "In the Philippines," she said, "there was more of a community and it was easier to make friends, but here it took me a few years just to make friends." I would've felt the same if I'm in her situation where I just came from a different country with no friends. It would be a scary/exciting journey. Her mother's home is the gathering place for local Filipinos. She said that people are much more privileged here. She was shocked at how much choice and money everyone had. Filipinos believed that Americans always have a lot of money and privileges. But it wasn't true, as Grace discovered while living here. Grace was shocked at the poverty here in Maine.

As you know, Grace has been living and getting used to life here in the U.S.,

so there isn't much about the Philippines that she misses anymore. But, if there is one thing that she misses the MOST, it would be its tropical fruits, which grow depending on season changes. She still visits the Philippines once in a while to see her friends and the rest of her family, like her sisters, nieces, and nephews. Even though Grace has been here for almost 20 years, she hasn't lost her Filipino roots, and her colors haven't faded.



Culture brought to Portland by immigrants

Mrs. Sibley

By Abdi

I would like to introduce you to Mrs. Sibley who is from Sweden . She went to school in Sweden from first grade through high school. She came to the United States for college. She spent half of her college years at U.S.M. This was her first time in Maine.

Her husband was from the U.S.A. She met him in college. After they finished school, they both went back to Sweden. Mrs. Sibley moved back to the United States with her husband in 1993. Mrs. Sibley moved to the United States because her husband was American and it was easier to get jobs. Mrs. Sibley and her husband have two kids. They have two girls: Sigrid, six years old, and Lovisa, four years old.

Christmas is celebrated differently in Sweden. People eat a lot. It is quieter. St. Lucia is another holiday in Sweden. They celebrate the light. It is on December 13. Girls dress in white. The oldest daughter wears a ring of candles in her hair and brings cookies and cakes with saffron to their parents as breakfast in bed.

The weddings in Sweden are different from weddings in the United States. In Sweden when someone is getting married the bride and groom both walk down the aisle together. Guests save wedding cake slices and bring them to the wedding couple at night after the wedding.

Sweden has complete darkness in the part above the Arctic Circle during the winter, while the rest of Sweden also has some darkness. In the summer there is daylight for almost 24 hours. Winter and summer are the exact opposite. If I lived in Sweden I would probably sleep all winter because it is so dark!

Some memories Mrs. Sibley had about being new here were the mailboxes. They looked funny to her because they were shaped differently and looked smaller. Swedish houses are also different from American houses. They have fences and bushes and they are more private. When she moved here, she had to learn how to drive because she had used only public transportation in Sweden. It was scary for her to learn because she was older and understood how dangerous cars can be. "What struck me when I first came to the U.S was the two door cars."

Now, Mrs. Sibley enjoys life with her family in the United States even though she misses her father. She travels to Sweden every year to visit, and brings her American family with her.

My Story About Mr. Payne

By Dawn

Did you know that Stephen Crawford Payne has been teaching at schools in South Africa for 30 years? He grew up in Zimbabwe. Mr. Payne now teaches at King Middle School.

He left South Africa because he wanted to be with his wife. Then he moved here so he could be here with her. He met her in America. He is glad to be teaching here at King Middle School. He came here in 2001. He also left South Africa because of the crime and political problems. He doesn't get as cold but when the sun goes down it becomes cold rainy its cold cold on the edge of the coast , and hot inland of South Africa. He prefers warm weather. South Africa has a different school system then America they have 4 quarters March-April, May-June, June-August, September-October, Novemeber-December. They have a long vacation.

Mr. Payne said "life is easier here in America." He has never had any bad experiences. One of his experiences was that he met his wife in America. He served 2 years in Zimbabwe. Mr. Payne thought that Americans were loud mouths but he has changed his mind now that he lives here in America. His name didn't change when he moved here. He wants to carry on with his teaching. When he retires he says he wants to relax on a boat and fish. He had to take one subject of in college to get his degree to teach. He always wanted to be a teacher. He enjoys his job.

Mr. Payne has been on donkeys, ostriches and elephants. His nationality was South African but now he is an American. He is from ancestors that were British. In South Africa they are the same houses, parks, clothes, and people. He was robbed a couple time in South Africa. Americans are a lot richer then South Africans. The life in South Africa is similar to America just different locations, and South Africa has different holidays. They don't have Christmas, Thanksgiving I don't think Hanukkah. He is upset about George Bush's foreign invasion.

Mr. Payne got his name from his uncle, and he has a lot of his family in South Africa; his brother is from Ireland. Mr. Payne's brother has been in America for 30 years since Mr. Payne has been in America. His brother has 3 kids: 2 boys 1 girl. The boys have already been through college. The girl has just got in college. She is a freshman. He met his wife with his brother from Ireland. He would love to live in Florida. Mr. Payne has been to California, Northern California, Massachusetts, Virginia, and New Hampshire.

The Woman Who Left Russia for Love

By Shane

“I couldn’t believe the difference between Russia and America!” Mrs. Canfield said, as I was talking to her. Mrs. Canfield is from southeast Russia; she married an American citizen who brought her here to America when she was fifty-nine years old. Zhanna Canfield is an Orthodox Christian citizen. When she first saw Portland, Maine she thought it was very small like her home town. It took Zhanna ten years to learn and speak English and she still is learning.

Mrs. Canfield thinks America is very friendly, but it is very difficult to adjust to the culture. She is not employed, but in her free time she likes to walk around. “In Russia a lot of people camp in woods or at national parks,” Mrs. Canfield said.

Zhanna speaks many languages. Her main language is Russian, but she also speaks Ukrainian and English. She says America has given her more confidence. Mrs. Canfield has a son who lives in Russia and she doesn’t plan to move him here because he has a good job back home. Zhanna thinks that the cars move way to fast here. It was her first thought when she got here. She said it has been very hard and difficult to adapt to the American culture.

Mrs. Canfield is now an American citizen. One of her favorite dishes is a lot like a dish we have here in America, pancakes. Mrs. Canfield said she would like to go back to visit her son again because she misses him very much. She likes how we keep our environment clean and not trashed, and she also likes how the people here are very nice.

Some things that she likes to do are sewing, and typing on her computer. Every evening she reads aloud in English for a while. Zhanna was employed when she first came here to America, but now she is retired. Her last thought was that she was glad that she had come to America.

Tae Chong's Journey to America

By Walter

Tae Chong is by far one of the most interesting men I have ever met. He is a very nice man and it was a pleasure having this interview with him. When he first came to the United States he was seven years old. He came from South Korea with his mom and his four brothers. At his age he didn't know about the "**American Dream**". He just wanted to see his father who was already in the U.S. He came on a plane with many other people who wanted to go to America. They arrived in America safely.

When he came with his family he didn't bring everything and everyone. He had to leave many things behind. I don't know what he didn't bring, but I do know that he didn't bring a lot. Between himself and his family they brought a couple pairs of clothes each, pots, pans, and silverware. He left home his belongings and most of all, his other relatives back at home in South Korea. He left the people that meant a lot to him. He still tries to keep in touch, but the phone is too expensive so he just writes to them.

He did not know any English at first. While in second grade, it took him six months of English to become fluent in the language. He went through all of the grades including college. Up until college, he wasn't treated as good as he thought he should have. The reason may have been that he was the only Asian in all of his classes until college. If I was in that situation knowing that I was someone who was not liked by everyone, then I would be hurt. In college it was a different story. He was included and well liked by most people in the class.

Before he went to college he became a United States citizen at the age of 18. Tae's perspective of America is that if you want to be successful in life and have a good education, then you need to come to America. He believes that America has so many more opportunities than other places. If he didn't feel that way about living in America then he wouldn't have stayed here. He still lives in Portland and is having a great life as a United States citizen.

Immigrant From Russia

By Claudia

“My name is Zhanna Canfield and I am an **immigrant** from Russia.”

This was the first sentence that our interviewee spoke to us. At first we couldn't understand her heavy accent, but then we realized what she said. She was a very nice and quiet being. She seemed very sad when we talked to her, and you could see in her eyes that she had been places.

Zhanna is from a city in the south part of Russia. She was 59 years old when she came to America with her husband. They came here because her husband was an American and wanted to live here.

When Zhanna first came to Portland she thought that it was very small. She liked that it was small because it reminded her of her hometown. She also liked the fact that Portland is a port, just like her hometown. Her hometown was a very small and quiet place. She liked it there because everyone was nice and helped each other out.

When she first got here she did not speak any English. Right away she was employed by the Portland Department of Education. Her husband had connections and helped her get this job. It was really hard for her to communicate. It has taken her ten years to get to speak English well and she is still learning. Every night she reads in English to practice so she can get better at speaking it.

Not being able to speak English was only one reason that made it hard for her to adjust. At first it seemed like she couldn't get through to people, because she couldn't communicate. She felt she was very lucky because the people she met were very friendly and helpful. She can't imagine how everything would have turned out if she didn't have the help and support of her American friends. I think she must have been very strong to overcome this burden in her life.

Zhanna likes America because she thinks we set a good example for other countries by managing our money and trying to improve our ways of taking care of our education. She likes how education is one of the first things that comes to mind. She also likes the way we take care of the environment by promoting clean parks and nature, and how America has given her more confidence by having more opportunities for her to do activities. The kinds of activities she likes to do are hiking and walking around in nature.

She hopes to someday go back to Russia to visit. She would like to do this because her son lives in Russia right now. She doesn't want him to come here though, because of the good job he has right now. She would love to see him and will try to get there soon. I think it is so sweet that she cares about her son a lot and she loved talking about him to us.



Culture brought to Portland by immigrants

The Cars Move Too Fast Here!

Zhanna Canfield 's Story

By John

When I first met Zhanna Canfield I saw a small woman who appeared to be around my grandmothers age. Knowing my grandmother, I figured that she would be quiet but outspoken as a lot of elders are. To my surprise she was very lively and active in walking and various other activities. I also learned that in her old country she even used to camp! Zhanna moved to America when she was 59 years old. She moved here with her American husband.

When she **immigrated** to Portland, Zhanna Canfield saw a small town right on the ocean along a small bay, a similar version of her home town in southern Russia. When she lived in Russia it was very unorganized because it hadn't been its own country for very many years. She explained to us how she really likes that Americans are really clean, and also she really likes how we care for our environment. Zhanna also explained to us how easy it is to make friends because Americans are very friendly. This helped her to adjust, but it still took her awhile to adjust. It took Zhanna 10 years to learn English!

Back home in her country, Zhanna left her son, who is doing well and has a good family and job.

Before leaving us Zhanna was sure to thank us and even ask us some questions about ourselves! This showed me she was very grateful to be with us, and we were grateful to be with her.

From an Island in the Tropics to an Island in Maine

By Jennie

Grace Valenzuela comes from an island in the tropics to an island in Maine. In the Philippines it is warm all year round and in Maine it's cold in the winter and in the summer it's warm. The Philippines have so many fruits like atis, durian, guava, jackfruit, mango, and many more, but Maine has so few kinds of fruit, only bananas, apples, strawberries, etc.

Grace Valenzuela was born in the Philippines 25 miles from the capital. She taught English in a **refugee camp**. She moved here in September, 1986. She was 28 years old. Her mother and father came two years later. Her sisters and brother are still in the Philippines. She goes back sometimes to see her brother and sisters.

Grace came to America because she married an American man and he was returning to America. She also came for new opportunities. She likes the **American dream** that involves working hard and moving up. She said that she would be sad without her mom here.

When Grace first came here she worked at King Middle School as an **ESL** teacher. It was hard to make friends when she first came to America. After she had her daughter it was easier to make friends because her daughter was into sports and they met a lot of people.

Grace doesn't miss much about the Philippines now but she misses the tropical fruit and other foods. There is not much that she doesn't like about America. She still doesn't feel she is part of the American culture.

Immigration from Sweden

By Nate

Katrina Sibley is from Sweden. She is married to Mr. Sibley and has two kids named Sigrid, who is six, and Louisa, who is four. She visited the U.S. when she was one-and-one-half years old. She came here permanently in 1993 for college; first she flew to Stockholm then Boston and finally here to Portland. She applied for a green card and said it was easy. She got married and went to the embassy to get the card.

She said she had a hard time getting a job, and she had to learn how to drive so she had to use public transportation. "Life here is faster; people don't sit and talk and relax or visit", Katrina says. In Sweden everyone gets five weeks off. People in America shop and buy more. In Sweden they make more things from scratch. Her memories of Sweden are about Christmas and her wedding and her country. The weddings are different in Sweden. The guests save wedding cake and bring it to you on your wedding night. The marriage ceremony is different. Everyone sits in church together and the bride and groom come in together. Christmas is celebrated on Christmas Eve.

She misses the people and the food. She remembers that in Sweden there are a lot of forests and lakes in the north and a lot of water and coastline and industries. In Sweden there is a lot of skiing. Katrina's favorite part of Sweden is her grandmother's house. Orebro is a town on a lake and she remembers her wonderful child memories.

The Story of Tae

By Thorn

Tae Chong was born in the suburbs of Seoul, South Korea. Tae's father left for America while Tae's mother and his four brothers remained in South Korea. When Tae was only seven he left with his mother and brothers for America. He didn't know what to expect. He heard it was the best place to get a good education and to survive. He didn't have a goal in mind when he came. He didn't know much about it. The only thing he really wanted was to see his father again. There were Koreans on the plane when he came to America, but they didn't end up in Maine with him. They left for different parts of the country.

Tae Chong did not know English before coming here. He had to go to school like an American kid, but without knowing English. It must have been hard for him to go to a public school where he couldn't understand or communicate with anyone. He didn't take **ESL**, so the teachers had to work with him one on one. It took him six months to be able to speak in English fluently. He was young so it would have been easier for him to pick up a new language. Tae wanted to keep in touch with his relatives back in South Korea as often as he could. Writing letters was the only way to keep in touch, as phone calls were too expensive for his family.

When Tae came to America he was treated well, but there were times when he was badly treated. The students weren't exposed to people from other countries. He was picked on and treated very badly through his whole childhood. It must be hard being picked on and treated badly during your childhood. When he was in college he was treated better.

When Tae arrived all he could bring were pots and pans, and a couple pairs of clothes. He couldn't really bring anything as he had nothing to bring. His friends and family were most important to him, although he could not bring them.

Tae Chong attended school from first grade all the way to college in the United States. He had hard times from elementary school to high school. In the first grade it must have been the hardest time for him, as he could not speak English. He would not be able to communicate with people, so it would be hard for him to do things. Now Tae is out of school and in his 30's. It doesn't matter if his job pays well or not. He just wants to help out with the community.

Tae Chong

By David

Tae Chong is a very kind man who tells us about his country. He's from South Korea, which is in Asia. He told us that when he was on the plane there were other immigrants from other countries like North Korea, Vietnam, and China. When he was coming to America he thought that America was a good place for him, and that there were good jobs. He thought that the people would be kind and nice to him. Tae brought a few things with him. Tae Chong was seven years old when he came to America to visit his father. He told me that he came to America in the 70's. He didn't know anybody from his country. He didn't know anyone from South Korea or the United States of America at the time.

Tae started school in second grade where there were ESL classes. He said to us that he was very angry in elementary school because of kids beating up on him, making fun of his color, and saying how he looked different from the other kids. He didn't feel good when he was the only South Korean boy in his classroom. It took him four or six months to learn English in America. When he was in middle school that's when he made friends. When he grew older, he went to visit his family in South Korea. Now it seems different to him. Tae said that everything that he knew before was now not the same as it used to be. Then he came back to America with his family and friends.

Tae Chong said his goal was to have a better life in America. He also wanted to have a good education, to go to college, and to have a better life compared to his old life in South Korea. In the 70's there weren't many immigrants from his country, plus the jobs were hard to get and he didn't get paid that much money. Now Tae Chong lives in Portland, and he is having a good life for a 36 year old. Now he doesn't have to worry about anything because he is married and has a good life.

Glossary

- accent-** the way a person speaks, depending on their native region.
- adapt-** to change or to change something to fit a new situation.
- American dream-** the American idea of a prosperous and happy life.
- Arabic-** having to do with the culture or language of Arabs, an Islamic people that inhabits northern Africa and the Middle East.
- assimilate-** to conform to a new culture while keeping some native traditions.
- asylum-** when a government allows a political refugee to stay in the government's country for a certain amount of time.
- Berlin-** the capital city of Germany.
- citizen-** a legal resident of a certain country either because they were born there or passed a citizenship test.
- civil war-** a war between two groups of people in the same country.
- Communism-** a type of government in which no person has more property or wealth than anyone else.
- concentration camp-** a camp where citizens and prisoners are forced to live, usually in a harsh climate.
- constitutional monarchy-** a government ruled by a king or emperor and usually a prime minister or parliament.
- culture-** the way a group of people live in place together.
- Darfur-** an area in western Sudan torn apart by two recent civil wars.
- economy-** the wealth or business issues of a country.
- emigrate-** to leave one country or region for a new one.
- ESL/ELL-** the English as a Second Language and English Language Learners programs.
- Good Friday-** a holiday the Friday before Easter where Christians remember Jesus' death.
- green card-** a document that people from other countries receive from the United States so that they can legally work here.
- Hamburg-** a city which lies on the Elbe River in northern Germany.
- Holocaust-** the persecution and slaughter of Jews and other groups during World War II.
- immigrant-** one who enters a new country from their native country.
- immigration-** moving into a country or region that isn't your own.
- I.O.M.-** International Organization of Migration.
- Jewish-** relating to Judaism, a religion that does not acknowledge Jesus as a savior.
- Khartoum-** capital and largest city of Sudan.
- Khmer Rouge-** a Communist organization that controlled Cambodia under Pol Pot

from 1975 to 1979.

melting pot- a place where many people of different cultures and races live together in one society.

Nazis- officially, members of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Nazis were responsible for the genocide of Jews in World War II.

Nuer- a language or tribe of Sudan.

Pagan- a person who is not religious, or is not Christian, Jewish, or Muslim.

Ramadan- a holiday that lasts the ninth month of the Muslim calendar and involves Muslims fasting from sunrise to sunset.

refugee- a person escaping their country for religious or political reasons.

refugee camp- a shelter for people who are trying leave their country for religious or political reason.

sponsor group- organization that helps refugees settle in the United States.

Tagalog- language of native Filipinos who live around Manila.