

# Journeys

Stories and Poems  
To Open Your Mind



You are never too old to learn.

Minnesota Literacy Council  
The 2007 Collection of Writings by Adult Learners in Minnesota

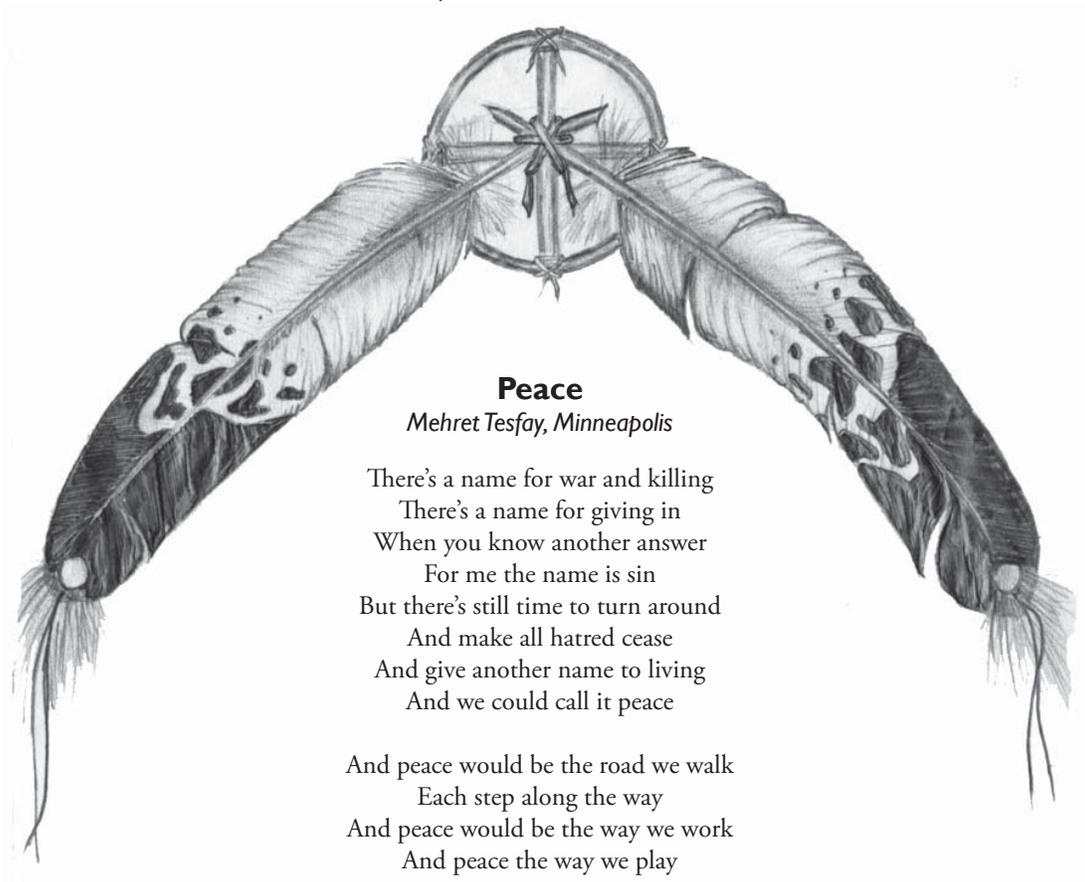


**MINNESOTA**  
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*Sharing the Power of Learning*

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# Journeys

Stories and Poems  
to Open Your Mind



## **Peace**

*Mehret Tesfay, Minneapolis*

There's a name for war and killing  
There's a name for giving in  
When you know another answer  
For me the name is sin  
But there's still time to turn around  
And make all hatred cease  
And give another name to living  
And we could call it peace

And peace would be the road we walk  
Each step along the way  
And peace would be the way we work  
And peace the way we play

Yes there still is the time to turn around  
And make all hatred cease  
And give another name to living  
And we can call it peace.



Dear Reader,

The Minnesota Literacy Council is pleased to bring you this journal of writing and art work by Minnesota adult literacy students. This is our 18th year of publishing original writing by adults enrolled in basic reading, English as a Second Language, GED, and other basic skills classes.

Over 500 individuals submitted pieces for publication to this literary journal.

Many of these learners are writing in their second, third, or even fourth language. Others are writing after years of self-doubt and frustration because of their low literacy skills. Each writer, however, is speaking for and by themselves about their own experiences and the things they care about. In this journal, the podium is raised for some of our state's most disenfranchised citizens to share what the world looks like from their perspective, with an often heart-piercing freshness and frankness. We applaud them for their courage, candor, and great insight.

We are particularly grateful to be able to publish the book this year because funding cuts nearly made it impossible. We are extremely thankful to our three unpaid interns Ann Dybvik, Anne Fifer, and Claire Thurman, who have worked tirelessly for several months planning, editing, organizing and designing this book. Their work has made this year's publication, I believe, our best ever. You'll notice their creative minds at work in the new design and layout, and in the way the stories are organized. They also helped us come up with a new name for the book: *Journeys: Stories and Poems to Open Your Mind*, which we feel better reflects the tone and intent of this publication.

We would also like to thank Todd and Mimi Burke, who donated \$500 from the Burke Family Fund in memory of Todd's late mother, for the journal. Without their hopeful donation, we couldn't have completed this project.

I hope you enjoy *your* journey through this book. As you read, consider checking out the online version of the journal at [www.theMLC.org/Journeys](http://www.theMLC.org/Journeys). It is accompanied by a new section that includes interviews with some of the authors at [www.theMLC.org/JourneysInterviews](http://www.theMLC.org/JourneysInterviews) and an expanded *Teacher's Guide* at [www.theMLC.org/JourneysGuide](http://www.theMLC.org/JourneysGuide), with tips and exercises for using *Journeys* in the classroom.

Thank you for your support of the literacy cause.

Sincerely,

Eric Nesheim  
Executive Director

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Cover art:  
Front - Khoai Huynh Van, Mankato  
Back - Walter Mills, Duluth



**Future**

*Istar Said, Minneapolis*

My family  
came  
to Minnesota  
9-28-2007  
from a plane,  
for safety.

**Becoming a Citizen**

*Khoai Huynh Van, Mankato*



## *Origins & Destinations*

### **Why Are We Here?**

*Isabel Malagón, Waseca*

Many people asked me, why are you here? Why have you emigrated? Each day more and more Latino people have been emigrating. I think the most powerful reason is hunger. Hunger is the principle reason why the people leave the family, house, language, all things we love.

I remember when I listened to histories about people who came to the United States. I never really paid attention, because I was living in this situation, and I never thought to live there. Usually only the farmers emigrated, because the government stopped the loans. They started to compete with the big foreign companies to offer more products and low prices. The government gave more importance to those companies, and the citizens, the real people who worked the land, could not support their payments and many of them had to emigrate. Some others were more lucky with their family.

After the Free Trade Agreement, the poor people were poorer and the rich people were richer. After that, many people have been emigrating to different countries and continents, not only to the United States. The people choose to feed the family first. It does not matter the price that they need to pay. The nightmare starts when they make the decision, some have been lucky and obtained a permit to travel, but others risk their lives, walking, swimming, hiding. And that is why we are here, looking for opportunities.

## **From Vietnam**

*Thanh Vu, Hopkins*

My name is Thanh. I moved here a year and five months ago from Vietnam. I came here with my daughter and son-in-law. I like flowers. I don't like snow. I miss my car. It has been hard to learn English. I work at a Bellboy company. I hope that I will learn good English.

## **Moving to Minnesota**

*Keat Chheng, Shakopee*

I came to Minnesota from California.  
I came with my son.  
I like to cook and go shopping.  
I don't like smoking.  
I miss my mother.  
I like my job.  
I hope that I will visit Cambodia.

## **Boots**

*Ikran Bainah, Minneapolis*

I have this story about when I came in the U.S.A., and I saw snow for my first time in Minnesota. It was all white like sugar or salt. It was very cold and I worried about my legs and feet because I used to wear open-toed shoes or flipflops. My feet got cold. It was very hard for me to go outside. I liked staying at home all the time. I don't like to wear boots. It was my first time to wear boots. Now I like to wear boots. It covers my feet from the cold.

## **My Life Story**

*Dang Yang, Minneapolis*

Hi, my name is Dang Yang. I was born in Laos in 1975 during the time when General Vang Pao left Laos. So after four years in 1979, my father decided to take my family to come to Thailand. My family came to Thailand in December 1979. We lived in Banvinai Camp and in my family we had three brothers and one sister. I'm the middle boy. I went to school in 1986. That was the first time I learned Thai language and Lao. I finished high school in 1992.

I remember when we lived in camp. We looked like animals in the surrounded fence. We didn't go outside of the camp. On October 28, 1993, we moved to Phanacnicom Camp. We were the last group from Banvinai Camp to Phanacnicom. In 1993, I went to Thamkrabok alone, but my family came later in 1994 to live with me.

I got married in 1994. We were married for about 10 years. She couldn't get pregnant. In 1999, there was once a time that I was very sad. It was because my father passed away. I miss and love you dad. I had one cousin who came from Laos. She lived with us and went to work outside of the camp. About a year later, my cousin's sister got pregnant, but she didn't tell me the father of the baby. When she gave birth to the baby, she was shy to all the neighbors. She then ate a poison. She passed away in 2001, and her baby was a girl. I love her daughter as much as I love mine, even though she has seizures. I'd still love her the same. And when we got this daughter, my wife was also pregnant. She had a baby boy, and we had the best of luck in 2003 to have the chance to come to the U.S.A.

I came to the U.S.A. on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005. My family had been here for about six months and then my wife separated from me. Now I'm still learning English. I dream of getting my GED some day, but I don't know how I can do it. If I get my GED, I hope to find a good paying job, so I can start my life all over again. I'd also want to get enough money to help my daughter's seizure, and all of my children's education.

## **I Remember My Country**

*Hadson Jama, Minneapolis*

I remember when I was a child in my neighborhood. As a child, I played with friends. We lived in a good and safe neighborhood. I remember the weather in my country and its beautiful sunshine, no cold. I remember the birds, the sights and sounds of different animals, like camels, goats and cows. I remember on Eid, the rich people helped the poor people and gave some money or clothes or fresh food.

I love my country. I hope they will stop the war between each other and solve problems. I was 14 years old when I moved to Kenya on 01-01-1991. I came to the U.S.A. with my brother and my sister in May 1994. I like to live in the U.S.A. It is my second country and I miss my country, Somalia.

## **My Story Before**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

I was born in Laos. The president of Laos didn't like Hmong people so in 1975 the Hmong came to Thailand. In 1984 I came to Thailand. I lived in Thailand 22 years. In Thailand I liked sewing and I liked to garden plants like tomato, onions, broccoli and everything. My first child was born in 1991 in Thailand. He had black hair, black eyes and he was fat.

The president of Thailand didn't like Hmong people. The President of America came to Thailand. The President said the Hmong people should come to the office, sign your name to come to America.

I came to America with my family and my husband in 2006. I was with my seven children and my husband's father and mother. We live in St. Paul. I am happy because the government gives money for my family and has school for my children and I have a medical card. When I'm sick I go to the clinic or hospital. It is free. I am very happy.

## **My Life on the Farm**

*Koua Her, St Paul*

One day I lived on the farm. I raised some animals on a farm. During the winter it got cold. We didn't have enough heat to help the cows and pigs and chickens. Then some animals died or were not healthy. They didn't have plants grass or corn to eat during the wintertime. It was a bad year on the farm.

## **The Return**

*Ana García, Plymouth*

In the year 2000 I came to Minnesota for the first time. I came here for work. I was looking for an opportunity to stay here to work. I didn't want a boyfriend or to get married. I went dancing and to restaurants with many friends. From time to time I liked this one man. He called me every night and gave me attention every day. I went out with him for six months. On January 6, 2001 we started dating. He was my boyfriend.

In June 2001 we separated. He lived with another woman—his fiancée—for one year. I went back to Mexico for four months in 2003. I came back to the U.S. in April 2004 and lived in California. I moved back to Minnesota in February 2005. My old boyfriend was in jail for two years. When I came back to Minnesota he was out of jail and we moved in together. I never forgot him and I thought about him when I was gone. I decided to stay here with him. We got married on May 28, 2005. We are very happy.

## **Living in Minnesota**

*Miguel A. Bautista, Plymouth*

When I was 18 years old, I lived in Mexico with my parents and one brother. But one day, my other brother that was working in the United States, gave me a call and told me, "Miguel, I got a job for you. Come soon please." Then I moved to Minnesota.

I remember very well the first day. I was happy to see my brother Francisco and my cousin Juan. The first week we went to some stores and bought many things. I needed clothes and shoes. The second week I began to work. I was excited, but also sad because I missed my parents and brother a lot. Time has passed and now I have been living here for two years.

I have been working hard and I can help my family. Each month I send money for them, but I have a problem. I can't speak English very well, so now I'm going to school at night. My dream is to learn this language because then I may look for a better job or return to my country and finish a career. I'd like to be a teacher or an engineer. Minnesota is really beautiful for its nature. There are many lakes, parks and others places. Also Minnesota has two beautiful cities.

## **The Moment We Met**

*Matt Ventura, West Saint Paul*

That night walking into my friend's house and seeing her as beautiful as a pearl in an endless sea  
Nothing mattered to me but one thing—her name.  
As the night went on I was able to talk, laugh, and have a conversation like I had never had before.  
There and then I knew this was the night I would always remember.  
Having the chance to talk and meet a special woman that now I love and care for  
And want to spend the rest of my life with.  
Always remember there is always someone special for somebody out there.  
All it takes is patience.

## **Growing Up**

*Miguel Aldape, Waseca*

My best buddies in the school were Victor and Enrique. We did so many things together. For example, we rode on the bikes every night, played basketball, and did some homework together. We were born to be very fast. Sometimes I think it was a dream but they were good times. All the time, there was the hand of God to keep us safe.

## **Big Day**

*Jane Lee, Saint Paul*

My baby's birthday  
Waiting, pains, little angel, gift  
How can I forget.

## **Think Too Much Will Headache**

*Waxiong, Minneapolis*

My name is Waxiong. I was born in 1971 in Laos. My mother gave birth to two sons, my older brother and me. In 1975, we moved to Thailand when I was three years old. My father carried our blankets and my brother on his back. My mother carried a kawm and me on her chest. We came from Laos to Thailand. We did not have a car or airplane to drive to Thailand. We only walked three days and two nights to Thailand – walked in rain and in sun – nothing to eat, hungry, sick. And some grandfathers died during the walk from Laos to Thailand. It was a difficult move for my family.

In 1975 my family came to Hmong refugee camp Bannamyao in Poua Nan, Thailand. We lived eight years in Bannamyao. On July 31, 1985, we moved to refugee camp Banvinai Thailand. In 1990, I got married. Next I moved to refugee camp Wanthamkrabok in Saraburi, Thailand. On July 6, 2005, my family came to Oregon. On July 8, 2005, I began school to study the English language. My school name was IRCO and it was only for refugees.

In my class I was the only Hmong person. I didn't know how speak English language. I didn't know how to talk with friends in my class. I was sad because I didn't know how to talk with my classmates. I studied a month. My job counselor wanted me to work. She got a job package for me to work. In Oregon it rains. I wanted to be a good man in my life. I had no car and no driver's permit. At first, I walked 30 minutes to my company. After six days, I bought a bicycle. I rode my bike eight minutes to the company. I rode in the rain and in the sun. It was very difficult for me about my life.

In Thailand I had many brothers, sisters, and brothers-in-law. We built beds in a line with a little space to walk to bed. Many people lived together fun and enjoying. Ate very good. No more bills, not worried about the money. Only to buy food.

In America I had to eat and had no clothes. I had my own bedroom. Only one room, only one person. Nobody helped to pay bills. Only eat, only live, only pay. It's difficult for single and family. I think too much headache for me. My parents' move from Laos to Thailand was difficult, but for me much more difficult.

We new Hmong came too late. Don't think too much headache.



## **My Life**

*Nan Thida, Saint Paul*

I was born in Burma. I have four brothers and one sister. I'm the youngest of my family. My family is a little wealthy. We own a mine, hotel, and transportation company. When I was five years old, in 1962, a military group took power from the parliament government and they changed all economy business to state ownership and we became a poor family.

In 1963 my father went to the Karen revolutionary army. After one month a military group came to my home and arrest my mom sent her to prison. In prison they hit and abused my mom and until now we can see scars on my mom's back.

For me I grow up under my brother and I try to learn my education and in 1976 I got a certificate from teacher training college. In 1978 my mom release from jail and she called my brother and me, we follow to where my father living. We cross Salween river jungle and mountain pointed to Thai border. On the way we have to eat raw food, chew rice and swallow with water because we scare military group get smell and see smoke.

1986 I married with Kham K. He is Pa-O soldier at Marnarplaw. My son and older daughter were born at Marnarplaw. When my youngest daughter was born my husband he went back to Pa-O area and the time military came to attack and no nurse no midwife and her eye got accident and become blind one side.

I never scare hard job because I want to support my family my kids. My kids must complete education. My son now he is a U of M student; next year my daughter become a University student. My youngest daughter is now seven grade.

I take care and I advise my kids don't kill people don't be stolen don't have sex illegal, don't lie, don't drink alcohol and illegal drug. You must be smart, honest, neat and kindness, helpful. I want to tell more than now but we have limit and I stop here. Next time I will tell you again.

Thanks teacher and Hubbs Center.

## **I Remember Chiapas, Mexico**

*Joaquín Vázquez, Minneapolis*

I remember the most beautiful state of Mexico, Chiapas. I am Joaquín and I live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I miss many things of my state, Chiapas. I miss them only because when I lived in Mexico I didn't have the opportunity to visit other states. I remember your rivers where I swam every day in the mountains.

## **My Story**

*Cornelia Stanescu, Woodbury*

My name is Cornelia and I am from Romania, Europe. My country is very beautiful. I love it very much. It has the Carpathian Mountains, the Black Sea and the Danube Delta. It also has big churches and monasteries which are considered among the most beautiful in Europe. I am a widow since 1968. In Romania I have one sister and a nephew and nieces and I come to the United States on 15 February 2002. My daughters moved to the States eleven years ago. My daughter is a teacher of English for Saint Paul Public Schools. My grandson is a student in high school. He is 18 years old and is a senior. He trains in the martial arts and has a 3rd degree black belt.

I'm planning to learn English and to be a U.S. citizen one day. I like it very much here. This is real democracy. The Americans are nice and friendly.

## **I Remember**

*Kao Vang, Brooklyn Center*

I was born in 1965 in Laos. I lived on the mountain. I remember in 1971 I was six years old. My grandfather had a story he told to me. He told me that some day a number of birds fly to find and eat fruit in the forest, but they do not live there. After the fruit was finished, they moved and moved to a great forest that had more fruit. It had a lot of fruit there at this time. The birds have lived there ever since.

## **Living in Minnesota**

*Phuong Chi Tran, Blaine*

I am from Vietnam. I have lived in Minnesota for about five months. What I like about living in Minnesota is the weather, the four seasons, and the culture. I want the chance to stay in Minnesota. However, what I don't like about living in Minnesota is the winter. In Minnesota it is very cold and there is snow, but in my country it is better. However, I like living in Minnesota because my life is very good for the future.

## **Winter**

*Hanaa Ayano, Brooklyn Park*

I like winter. In my country I never saw snow, but in Minnesota I see snow and I play in the snow. It is amazing for me. The first time I said "Is that the U.S. or another planet?" because everything was white outside, so I love snow. In winter the weather is cold but I wear my gloves, hat, and jacket. If it is hot it is not good because you take a shower and you feel still hot so it is not good. In my idea winter is good, not bad for me.

## **Thailand**

*Suphorn Karunyarat, Brooklyn Center*

I came to America on November 5, 2003. I like the U.S.A, but everything is difficult for me because we are new people in America. But I can study English. I must for my dream.

I like my country. In Thailand, during the time I lived in Thailand, I saw Chiang Mai. It is the most beautiful place. I went on a tour of Chiang Mai.

## **My Mother Story**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

My mother is a wonderful woman. She had gotten married to my father in Laos. My parents married at 12 years old and they had six children, five daughters and one son. Their family was very happy with my father. He was nice to his wife and children and he was friendly to anyone, but my family wasn't lucky because my father died in 1986. I really missed him.

My mother didn't have a husband to help her take care of her family. My mother has many things happen to her but she took care of everything. My mother had a problem one year later. Her three daughters didn't live with my mother because my three sisters died. One year later my mother and I went to Thailand. We lived in Thailand two years. My mother had gotten married one more time to my new father. We were happy because we had a father who came to my family and my mother had a new father for three children and three boys. In 2004 my mother's family came to the U.S. Now my mother's family lives in Alaska.

## **My Story about Fun for Me**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

When my family and I were in Thailand we had a lot of fun. I had a lot of friends, which makes it really fun. When I was back in Thailand I sewed shirts for 200 baht per day. For holidays my husband and I took my children and friends out to play and visit the zoo. We walked around and it was fun. We took our children to eat at a big restaurant. We love eating Thai food because it tastes good. We like to eat noodles and fried rice. After we eat we went to the beach. There were a lot of people at the beach. It was really fun.

I came to America here. When I think back about Thailand, I really miss having fun in Thailand. I was thinking that my husband and I are going back to Thailand to visit there.

## **My Life**

*Nhia Xiong, Minneapolis*

In 1979 I was 11 years old. My family were refugees to Thailand. I lived in Ban Vinai 13 years. I was very happy but in 1992 my family had to move to Thamkraboth. My family lived there 12 years. My family lived in Thailand 25 years.

I was born in Laos. In my life I was born in the time that was very dangerous. My life started in the war. I didn't have a home to live in. I was five or six years old. I had to live in the jungle every day and every night for four years. I did not have food to eat for four years in the jungle. My family had to eat the leaves and trees for food for four years. I left the jungle when I was nine or ten years old.

When I came to the U.S. my age was 36. I have to practice English. It is difficult for me but I have to go to school five days a week for three hours a day.

## **My Story Before**

*Mee Vang, Saint Paul*

We were living in Laos. My father went to be a soldier with President Vang Pao. He (father) died in 1975. In the year 1975 the president of Viet Nam came into the country of Laos. The president did not help the Hmong people and we were hungry. Hmong people did not have rice to eat. People died, many, many people. We moved to the country of Thailand. The President of Thailand didn't like Hmong refugees. Many, many lived in that country. Thai Hmong were hungry like when they lived in Laos. The U.N. brought food for the Hmong people.

The president of America liked all people. Refugees went to the office and signed their name to come to the country of America. The president said many, many refugees lived in every state. He said OK. The President of America liked Hmong. The Hmong are lucky.

Hmong came to the country of America. They were not hungry. Hmong have fun and are happy. We are refugees come to live in America. Some work and some go to school. Many Hmong refugees live in America and have citizenship. The Hmong and Lao and Thai and Chinese all want to come. In America we see the Hmong and Americans living together like one family. We are happy.

## **Ethiopian New Year**

*Michael Teffera, Fridley*

When I was a child, my favorite holiday was Ethiopian New Year. This is the first time that I couldn't celebrate it in Ethiopia because I am staying in Minnesota this year. The Ethiopian New Year is celebrated on September 11th, according to the western calendar. Ethiopia follows its own calendar, which consists of 12 months of 30 days and a 13th month, Pagume, of five or six days, depending on whether or not it is a leap year.

On New Year's Eve, torches of dry leaves and wood are bundled in the form of tall and thick sticks. These tall and thick sticks are then set on fire in front of houses as the young and old sing together until the fire is finished. In the New Year, early in the morning, Ethiopian people take a shower and wear traditional Ethiopian clothes. Depending on their income, each family prepares a meal that includes injera (flat bread) and wat (straw). The girls go from house to house singing New Year songs for money and the boys sell pictures that they have drawn.

In the evening families go to visit their friends and relatives. They play games and watch TV. In addition, they drink tella, the traditional Ethiopian beer. While the elders discuss their hopes for the New Year, the children go and spend money by buying candies and chocolates. No one forces the children to buy this or that because they have earned the money by themselves. In recent times it has also become usual to send each other New Year's greeting cards instead of the more traditional bunches of flowers. One of the most beautiful parts of the holiday is that after three months of heavy rains, the sun comes out, creating a beautiful, clear, fresh atmosphere and the highland fields are covered by the yellow flowers (Adey Ababa). It is a time to express hopes and dreams for the future.

## **Enjoying Minnesota**

*Ella Riley, West Saint Paul*

Since my son, Charles, and I moved here, a year and a half ago, our stay has been very delightful. I have joined a church. I enjoy the fellowship with a group of people from all walks of life from many different countries. I enjoy the assemblies. They are very nice people. I am taking classes to get a GED. I like studying. I love to read. My sister, Cora, attends the same classes.

## **Living in Minnesota**

*Aliaksei Pisarchyk, Blaine*

My name is Aliaksei Pisarchyk. I am from Belarus. I have lived in Minnesota for four months. I like living in Minnesota because this is a very, very nice land. I like living in Minnesota because I like lakes and this state has many lakes. I like living in Minnesota because this state doesn't have a yearly inspection for a car. I like living in Minnesota because people in this state are very friendly. I don't like living in Minnesota because this state has very many mosquitoes in summer.

## **Coming to Minnesota**

*Rottana Vong Pich, Richfield*

I moved to Minnesota from Cambodia with my family on September 20, 1998. I came here because there are a lot of jobs. I don't like the cold and snow and I miss my family and country. I work at Douglas Corporation. I like my job. I hope that I can visit my family and friends.

## **My Childhood**

*Fadumo Abdi, Saint Cloud*

When I was a child I liked summer school. When school was closed, I liked that time because my family went to the bush. We got fresh milk, fresh meat, and fresh air. We felt good, healthy. We saw many different things too. We played with the baby camels, goats, and cows. We had a wonderful time. One time we saw a lion kill a camel. When the lion killed the camel some men killed the lion. That was wonderful to me.

## **I Remember My Mother and My Country**

*José Violante, Minneapolis*

I remember the Mexican food when my mother cooked, because the smell was very good. I always miss my mother. I never forget her. My favorite food is a fried fish plate. I miss the sound of the birds, because when I went to my job every morning the birds were singing.

## **Living in Minnesota**

*Nong Vang, Blaine*

My name is Nong Vang. I am from Thailand. I moved to Minnesota 11 months ago. I like to go to the park and I like snow and the spring because they are beautiful. At night the snow is bright and shining. I like to see the snow at night and eat snow. I put sugar water in the snow. I eat and drink snow sugar. I do not like Minnesota in the summer because it is very hot. I do not like the temperature of 85° F and up. I like 75° F down to 70° F.

## **My Life in Minnesota**

*Myunghwa Oh, Saint Paul*

My family lives in Minnesota now. I have been here for one and a half years since 2005. It was not my decision, but my husband's, because he decided to study even though he was a senior researcher in Korea (I mean he was not very young to start study abroad). Actually I was very scared of living in another country. I have two children, a boy and a girl who would have to go to a new school. My children, as well as I, could not speak English very well to adapt here, so it was really a huge barrier for me to settle down. I felt scared to meet Minnesotans, so I spent most of my time at home missing my homeland and relatives. I totally lost my self-confidence to meet new people. Also, we didn't expect such extremely cold weather. This made me stay home much more time and I failed to make new acquaintances. It was a very hard time not only for me but also for my family. However, a Korean friend recommended MORE School where I could get together with new people naturally. It was enough for me to open my mind so I could recover my confidence. They were very nice and kind unlike what I had anticipated.

I have recognized now that I changed to understand other people no matter what their nationality and I found more value of my family. I am happy to see that my children are bilingual in Korean and English. Overall, I am satisfied with happy times here with new friends, although sometimes I still have a hard time due to the limited language and familiarity. Surprisingly, I also turned to love such a beautiful all-white Minnesota winter. If somebody comes here like me, I would tell them first of all not to be afraid of meeting new friends and speaking English. My family thanks God for having our new life here.

## **Minnesota State**

*Juan Alvarez Bermúdez, Saint Paul*

I came to live in Minnesota in July 4, 2005 from Ponce, Puerto Rico. I decided to come here because I visited a friend who studied with me in Spain. In the Minneapolis airport I met a girl named Ana. We became a couple quickly, then I stayed here because of her.

Once in Minnesota, I went to visit different places that I wanted to see. For example, Minnehaha Falls is good for picnics and relaxing your self. In Duluth, Lake Superior makes you think it is a sea without salt. In the Twin Cities, you can choose from many places to hang out at night. They are two cities and you can find double fun.

After my first month in Minnesota, I decided to stay to live. I applied for a Spanish Teacher position. Quickly, I started to work in a Public Immersion School as a Spanish Teacher. In the school I taught Puerto Rican games, culture, slang and about a couple places in my country. I became the best teacher in the school, recognized by the students and staff. Now, I am still working as a Spanish Teacher in Saint Paul. I still visit many places in the state because I've started my new life living in Minnesota.

## **When I Was a Child**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

When I was a child, I liked to use a knife to make toys and I never saw a store until I grew up. First of all, in my childhood I had never seen the factory-made toys. I played with the toys made by my parents. My father used a knife to create the toys like cars, airplanes, bicycles, dolls and any kind of toys I wanted. One day, my parents weren't home, so I grabbed a knife, and I went to make a doll by myself. It's very hard to cut the wood, but I got an accident, I cut my middle finger. My middle finger was cut half of the bone and it had a little bit of skin to hold the top of the finger. It was bleeding a lot and I didn't know what to do, so I tore my dress to wrap my finger but the bleeding wasn't stopping. I wanted to come home but I was afraid of my parents, so I just sat there and cried. Then my sister heard I cried, she went to me and the blood was splashed all around my dress. She went to my parents' bedroom. She took my father's cigarette, came to me and she put it on my finger and wrapped it. When the blood was stopped I felt tired, I lay on the bed and slept all day long. After that time, when I woke up, I heard my father talk very loud and seem like he was very angry. When my father came to me, he was so mad and scolded me. I was crying again. My father put some medications on my finger and wrapped it. I was patient with my hurt finger for three weeks.

Finally, I never saw the factory toys and new things or progress until I grew up. I saw the airplane flew above the sky, it seemed like the wood plane I had. My first time I saw cars and I thought how come they make them, they're too big. My father said, "These are the real one I just make the example for you." I felt very interested and when I saw everything advance, I knew it was over – the age I played like a baby and I never ever needed toys any more.

## **My Life Before and My Life Now**

*Musa Milki, Minneapolis*

I was a businessman in my country. I had a grocery store. I lived with my family. In 1994 the government police came to my home and arrested me and searched our house for guns. After that I was put in jail for five months. Then some people came and were fighting the government. We went outside and ran for two days from my country to the Somali border. After that I lived on the Somali border for one year. Then I went to the city of Mogadishu for two years. After that I went to Kenya in 2000. I lived in Kenya until 2004. Finally I came to America in July 2004. In America I live a good life. I'm happy and I'm studying English.

## **I Would Like To Share**

*Sergio Moroch, Minneapolis*

I would like to share what I always remember about my country, Ecuador. I remember my town. I remember a tradition we celebrate every year. The name we call it is Carnival. I remember about my beautiful mom. How she planned with her neighbor, to prepare delicious food. After that everybody ate. Then we played with water and special flowers and danced. This game we played for three days, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. After than on Wednesday everybody went to the church to pray. This is our tradition, in my beautiful town, Gualleturo.

## **Story about My Cousin**

*Felix Flores, Minneapolis*

I remember when I was 11 years old. I visited my cousin in another city. I was very confused because the city was very different. My cousin asked, "How do you feel?" I told him "Very terrible." Many streets smelled strong and a lot of garbage was everywhere. All the people spoke very late in the middle of the night. They drank a lot of beer on the street.

In 1991 I moved to another city very quietly. My grandmother lived there. It was very nice. The city was very quiet. Everyone was there when you needed help and asked something. They had some solutions about your questions. Now I feel great because I see different changes in all people.

## **My New Home in Minnesota**

*Patricia, Saint Paul*

I was very young when I left Mexico. I flew from Mexico to Los Angeles, California. My brother was waiting for me in the airport. He's been living in this country for 20 years. When I was in California for these three days I really enjoyed it because he brought me to this nice restaurant where they serve the best food from my town in Mexico. My second flight was in October from Los Angeles, California to Minnesota. I was so freaked out because it was very cold here, and Mexico is a very hot place. I remember it was Halloween, Oct 31 of 1998, when for the first time in my life I saw the snow. It was white and beautiful.

It wasn't too difficult for me to adapt in Minnesota. My brother was here to help to find a school to learn English. My only problem was the English language. I know that I always have a strong accent. I am taking classes at the MLC School to improve my English. I really like this class because I meet students from other countries.

I like my job in the hospital but it is always stressful because I see sick people, burning kids, and people dying. It's very sad to see this every day. I never thought that I would be working in a hospital here in Minnesota and speaking English because when I came from Los Angeles it was only a vacation!

## **Fadumo's Story**

*Fadumo Gurhan, Minneapolis*

I used to live in Mogadishu. Now I live in Minneapolis. Mogadishu is bigger than Minneapolis and it is older than Minneapolis. I used to work in Mogadishu but I'm not working now. I have a car now but when I lived in Mogadishu I rode the bus. But life is different. My children rode the city bus but now ride the school bus. In the United States life is hard, but in Somalia life is easier. I have more free time but here is faster. In Somalia I owned my house, but now I rent.

## **Hamdi's Story**

*Hamdi Mohamud, Minneapolis*

My name is Hamdi. I am from Somalia. I liked the weather in Somalia but I didn't like the violence because Somalia has many problems. I like Minnesota because it is very good for me. Now I am learning English and they help me. I have a little money because I work. I don't have to worry about violence here in Minnesota; however, I don't like the cold. I would say that I am happy most of the time, but I am not happy all of the time because I worry about my sisters who are still in Somalia. I love them. I hope that they can come to Minnesota soon because the civil war is still going on.

## **Khadija's Story**

*Khadija Ali, Minneapolis*

I grew up in Somalia but now I live in Minnesota in the United States. I came in 1992 from Kenya. I lived in Kenya for eleven years then I came to the United States. In July 2003 I went to Washington and lived there for two months. Then I came to Minneapolis. I live with just my husband. My family members live here too, two brothers and one sister, and my mother. I started my first job in September, I babysat for six months. My second job was in home care. Now I work at Target. I like work. I work 40 hours per week.

## **Happy and Sad**

*Hawa Hassan, Minneapolis*

My name is Hawa. I am from Somalia. I came to the U.S. eight years ago. I miss my family and friends very much. I feel homesick in these eight years here. I would like to visit my home town but can't get enough money to travel. Also I am happy because I live with some people I love and our life is very good in Minnesota. We make a living only and we are happy with it.

## **My Life in Refugee Camps in Thailand**

*Na Xiong, Saint Paul*

My name is Na Xiong. I am a student at the Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc. English Education Program. Now I am still learning English. I have been in the United States for one year. I came to the United States on August 8, 2005. I came from Thailand. I was born in 1982 in a small camp called Ban Vinai. When I was a child I liked to play with all my friends. My friends were friendly with me. We liked to walk to school. We got rice, vegetables, meat and fish from the U.S. Aide for refugees. I spent my childhood in Ban Vinai about 10 years. In 1992 my family was moved into Saraburi City. We lived in Wathamkrabok.

My family was very poor. We didn't have money to buy foods and clothing. On Hmong New Year we didn't have money to buy new clothing to wear for the celebration. I decided to go to work, so I worked in the gas station in Ayuthaya City. I was a gas station attendant. I worked in the gas station about six years. In 2003 I decided to come back home and go to school again. At that time, I tried to learn English and Thai together at the same time. I had school all day. I studied hard all the time. But I didn't understand English well. I only understood a little English. I didn't understand why. On October 18, 2004 my school was closed. At that time, I was 23 years old. I decided to marry my girlfriend, Mee Yang. We married December 19, 2004. Then my wife and I liked to grow vegetables in our garden. I love my wife so much. On August 8, 2005, I left my wife behind with her family because she was signing up to come to the United States with her family.

When I arrived in the United States, I missed her a lot. She and I talked on the phone for hours every day. She came to the United States a month later. Now we live together in St. Paul. We have one child and the second one is coming in May 2007.

## **Life in a Different Country**

*Maryan Ahmed, Minneapolis*

My name is Maryan Ahmed. I am from Somalia but I have never been to my country. I remember when I was a child my mother always brought me with her because I liked the taste and flavor of the neighbor's food. I also remember the sound of the children when they played. But everything has changed because we moved to another country. Life was difficult when we went there. We were afraid of the people, but I remember one thing was good, that I spoke the same language. It was helpful to me. The problem is I never go to my real country. But I hope one day to go to my country.

## **Living in Minnesota**

*Phoua Khang, Coon Rapids*

My name is Phoua Khang. I am from Laos. I have been here three years and a half.

I really like Minnesota in winter time because when I lived in my country, I never saw snow and just saw pictures. So when snow falls, I like to play in the snow because it is very white and clean. I really like all of the seasons because when the leaves change colors and fall down, it is very wonderful to take a walk and take some pictures to send for my family to see. When I am alone I miss my family and friends back home.

What I don't like about Minnesota is some of the winter with ice because it is very hard to go to work and people will get in accidents.

## **Moving from Iran**

*Simin, Bloomington*

My name is Simin.

I moved to Minnesota on 1/10/2006, from Iran. I came here with my son and husband.

I like Minnesota. I don't like Minnesota because the weather is very cold in winter.

I miss my job in Iran.

I work at home and help my family.

I do like my job.

I am trying to learn English now.

I hope that I will speak English and my children will come to Minnesota.

## **From Cambodia**

*Bunthoeun Pol, Eagan*

My name is Bunthoeun Pol. I moved to Minnesota in November 1982 from Cambodia. I came here with my family. I like Minnesota and the people are friendly. I have a good job. I don't like snow. I like lakes, trees and green grass and I like to garden.

I miss my country and my family, sister and brother in Cambodia. I work in Rosemount. I like my job. I hope I will learn to read and write in English.

## **About Myself**

*Naw Play Say, Inver Grove Heights*

Hi! I am from Thailand refugee camp and the name was Shoklo. I was in 9th grade but I didn't finish my high school because our camp had moved to another camp. In the year of 2002 I had the opportunity to come to the U.S. Later that year I became pregnant. I had a baby boy. He was barely a month old when I became pregnant again. And guess what? I had my precious little daughter. I am now in school, working on my GED.

## **My Home**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

My house in Laos is different because we don't have a bathroom inside. We made a little house behind the big house. Then we made the bathroom inside that little house.

## **The People under the Military Regime**

*Khaing Aung, Saint Paul*

Our country is one of military dictatorship in Southeast Asia, called Burma, also known as Myanmar. People who are living under the military government are in much trouble. Most of them are farmers who are poor. The main production is rice. The farmers have to sell their product to the government as a result from borrowing money from the government to buy their needs in order to farm. They also have to give their products, which are wheat, as an interest to the government. In some cases, when farmers cannot pay the full amount or the interest, the government will confiscate their farm animals such as cows and buffaloes.

When I was in high school back in Burma, my friend told me about a ghost couple that haunted the village. The couple was living peacefully with their three children. They were farmers. They borrowed some amount of money before they started farming. Later in the year there was a flood. The couple's farm was destroyed by seawater. By the time of harvesting, the couple had neither money nor rice to pay the government. The husband was arrested and imprisoned for three years as a punishment. The government also seized their cows and buffaloes. It was the most troubling time for the couple's family. Their unfortunate lives were ruined by the poverty. One day, the wife was sick and sent to the nearby hospital. She died. She died the day her husband was discharged from prison. Once her husband heard about the death of his wife, he felt like he lost everything he had. He started drinking every day and he wouldn't eat anything. A week later he was also dead.

It wasn't the end just yet. After the couple died, there were many strange things happening in the village. The broken pot and glass were seen every day. There were also cuts on the wall and furniture was displaced. People in the town said that it was a work of the dead couple. Since the announcement of a ghost in town, people in the village were frightened by the story of a dead couple. After my friend finished his story, he remarked that this is a true story.

## **New Story**

*Pha, Minneapolis*

I came from Thailand. My family and I lived in the village and had fun together. I helped everybody in the village, and we had fun and were happy. I had a good friend in the village. She and I had some fun together in the village; we jumped rope together every day. There were people who came from the jungle to the village. They didn't have houses. I had a best friend in the village. She and I had some plans together.

Everybody had something special for me because I helped everybody to build a house in the village. I loved everybody in the village. Where I live now, I don't have a good friend.

## **I Remember My Country**

*Ashraf Mohammadi, Minneapolis*

My name is Ashraf. I come from Iran. I remember many things about my country. I remember a few beautiful mountains of my city. That every Friday, a group of my friends went to one of them and we had a lot of fun. I remember picnics out of town with my family. I enjoyed the beautiful view of mountains, trees and streams. The streams had very clear water. I remember the sky of my city in summer night. There were many, many stars. So, it's very nice, even it's famous for a sky full of stars. I miss a lot of things from my country.

## **I Remember My Town and My Parents**

*Emigdio Raymundo, Minneapolis*

I remember my town and my parents. My name is Emigdio. I am living in the United States. I remember my town far away, the sounds of a small river and songs of the birds in the spring. My father went to prepare the earth. He planted the corn seeds, after, he grew the corn.

My father and mother were a good example of married life because I didn't see fighting any time. When I was a child I went to school in my town. I remember parties, food, desserts and water. The weather is different in my town, my town is south of Mexico City.

## **I Remember My Country**

*Muhibo Mohamed, Minneapolis*

I remember my country. The children played outside. The parents didn't have to worry about their children because it was safe back home. The children enjoyed themselves and had a lot of fun. I remember sunshine, lots of trees, and animals grazing on the fields. I remember celebrations of Eid. We received gifts, money, new clothes, and a lot of fun. We would have festivals and much much more. We would go out to eat.

## **I Remember My Childhood**

*Abdirahman, Minneapolis*

My childhood was very exciting, because all the time I remember I was happy and I was busy, too. I was busy playing with other children. I remember how I liked Thursday evenings and Fridays, because there wasn't school. I didn't have a "Duksi" (it's a place to learn Qur'an). I remember how my mother was worried about me when I was outside playing with my friends. I remember her when she talked about how much I liked playing over food. I remember how sunny my country was and how people like it when it rained. People weren't worried about the weather. I never bought jackets because the weather of my lovely country was temperate. We didn't have too much heat and there wasn't cold. I miss my country and I miss my childhood.

## **My First Year in Minnesota**

*Amparo Sánchez, Minneapolis*

I'm from Mexico. I have been living in Minnesota about seven years. I remember my first year that I lived here. It was in January 2000. There was a lot of snow and too much cold, something new and very different for me. My brother was living in Minnesota for five years before I arrived. He found a job for me. I remember that I had to take the bus when sometimes the temperature was below zero degrees. This was very hard for me because in my country the temperature is never colder than 45 degrees.

I started to work in a company making and packing different products for personal uses like shampoo, perfumes, and toothpaste. I liked that job but not how much I earned per hour (\$6.25). I worked there for six months, and then I left the job because I was pregnant with my first son, who is now six years old. When he was born on September 30, 2000, I didn't go back to work because he was in the intensive care unit of the hospital for five weeks because he got pneumonia and then meningitis. I decided to be at home taking care of him. The rest of the year I enjoyed my baby a lot, but I missed my little town, Joaquin Caamano, Morelos, and especially my parents.

## **Moving to Minnesota from Togo**

*Bintou Issaka, Bloomington*

I moved to Minnesota on April 4, 2004 from Togo. I came here with my husband.  
I like summer. I don't like winter and snow.  
I miss my mom and dad.  
I stay at home with my children. I like being with my children.  
I hope that I will speak English, go to work and visit my family.

## **My Move**

*Jeng Traing, Maplewood*

My name is Jeng Song Traing.  
I moved to Minnesota on July 9, 2006, from Cambodia. I came here with my sister and mother.  
I like to play table tennis and I like to watch movies but I don't like smoking.  
I miss my sister, brother and friends.  
I work at Asian Noodles. I like my job.  
I hope that I will visit Cambodia.

## **My Move to Minnesota**

*Hung Ly, Bloomington*

I moved to Minnesota in October 2001 from Vietnam. I came by myself.  
I like working on the computer.  
I don't like winter. I miss my parents.  
I work as a machine operator. I do like my job.  
I hope that I will learn more English and go to the Technical School.

## **Minnesota Surprises Me**

*Bophacheat Kang, Minnetonka*

My name is Bophacheat, and I'm originally from Cambodia. I came to the U.S.A. on August 26, 2003. For the first time I was so scared because I came here by myself and I didn't understand English very much. I knew how to speak English very little. After I was here a couple weeks I went to school to study English. I liked to go to school to improve my English and to learn more about American culture. I also like school because I can meet people and make friends. When I started, I came to school in the morning and night. One month later I got a job. I work assembly. I had to work in the morning from 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., eight hours a day, five days a week, and then I couldn't come to school in the morning any more, but I still come to school on Monday and Wednesday night; two times a week.

My big surprise was the weather. It's really difficult for me because we don't have the weather like this in my country. My country is very warm. Minnesota has a lot of snow and it's so cold in the winter. I had never seen it before. I only saw snow on the TV. Driving on the snow is trouble. Last winter I went in the ditch when I drove to work at 5:30 in the morning. The weather was so bad. It was snowing and windy, and the road was so slippery also.

Three months ago I had an accident. A deer ran into my car and died. My car had damage to the passenger side, but I did not get hurt. I hate winter but what can I do because I live in Minnesota. Minnesota is a new home for me. I enjoy winter inside the house, like when I get up in the morning and look through the window I see a lot of snow. It looks so beautiful, so white, so shiny, so bright. When I see it, I feel peace.

## **Why I Like Minnesota**

*Sarah Gerald, Saint Paul*

I like Minnesota because it has a lot of things that I like such as good schools, different sports, and they celebrate many holidays. Children must go to school and learn. My children go to a good school. I go to school too. My school's name is FIRE School. We have good teachers. Our teachers have good experience. Minnesota people like sports. I like baseball and hockey. Sometimes I like football. I watch games when I have time. Minnesota people like holidays. Everybody celebrates very well. Some people celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Ciid, and other different holidays from different cultures. My family and my friends celebrate Thanksgiving. Minnesota has good schools, different sports, different holidays, and different cultures. Minnesota is a good place to live. That's why we live in Minnesota.

## **I Am**

*Hayat B., Moorhead*

I am from Iran.  
The second oldest of 3 brothers and 4 sisters.  
Living in a house,  
A beautiful city,  
The river close by coming down from the mountains,  
Smelling the white flowers blooming in the trees,  
The pink roses on the bushes.

I am from spending nice days with my family,  
Helping my mother in the house.  
Playing volleyball with friends.  
Speaking Kurdish at home  
And Farsi at school.  
Walking long distances to school each day,  
Riding the bus the 3 coldest months of winter.  
Wearing a uniform to school,  
Scarf covering my head.

I am from liking school,  
Being a good student,  
Having a best friend.  
Two weeks' vacation from school for Noroze,  
On the 13th day picnicking in the mountains  
With family and friends,  
Celebrating the start of spring.

I am from missing my family and friends.  
Always remembering my past life,  
Sometimes I'm laughing and  
Sometimes I'm crying...

## **My Life Before and My Life Now**

*Hodan Nur, Minneapolis*

My life before was no good because one day in 1991 the military came to my house. The man said, "I need money." Because my father wasn't there, my grandfather was there, and my mother, me, and my brother. Then my grandfather was shot and my mother was raped and then shot. I felt terrible about my life before. It was no good, but sometimes I remember. I feel pain because I love my mother and I miss her.

My father came to the U.S.A. in 1998. Then he applied and he said "I want my children." But I came to America on June 10, 2006. Now my life is good. I feel happy. Everything is OK.

## **Somali History**

*Mohamed, Rochester*

Before 1960, Somalia was under colonial rule. Somalia was divided into five sections. For example, Southern Somalia was an Italian colony. Northern, Western, and South-Western areas were under English rule. North-Western Somalia was a French colony. North Somalia got freedom on the 26th of June, 1960. After four days, Southern Somalia got freedom. Northern Somalia joined with the South to get freedom on the first of July in 1960. When they came together, they got the name of Somalia Democratic Republic. The Southern part was ruled by a president and Northern Somalia was ruled by a prime minister.

From 1960 until 1969, we had a democratic government. On October 21, 1969, we had a military revolution that resulted in a dictatorship that lasted until 1990. In 1990, people started fighting, and then civil war broke out. Civilian and military groups began fighting each other and I left after my country became very violent. My wife and my kids came to Rochester, Minnesota, in 1999, and I came in 2001. I then joined with my family. We started a new life in Rochester. My wife and I began studying English at Hawthorne Education Center in 2001. We now have jobs and go to school. My kids also go to school. My family and I appreciate this country and this state. They have given us an opportunity to learn English and make a better life. We now have a chance to start again, and I can rebuild my life.

## **My Life**

*Phengsay Somsanith, Minneapolis*

I came from Vientiane Laos on June 17, 2004. Laos is beautiful with the mountains and rice fields. It's very hot in the summer time. I went to temple on Saturday morning. I have one parent and two brothers and two sisters. They still live in Laos. I came to the U.S.A. because I need a good future. In the U.S.A., I study English and I learn about American culture. I live with my husband, my little son, and my parent-in-laws.

## **Moving from Iran**

*Shamsy Motamedi, Edina*

My name is Shamsy Motamedi. I moved to Minnesota eight years ago from Iran. I like the seasons. I don't like mosquitoes. I work at night making alterations. I miss Iran. I hope that I will learn English.

## **The Blizzard**

*Anonymous, Plymouth*

When he was at home, he didn't think how the weather was going to be, but he dressed in his fur coat, wore warm boots and took a hat and gloves that he never wore. He must drive 50 miles but he again didn't think what can happen with the weather in the winter. Now he sat in the car and heard the weather forecast, and he heard that the weather would be nasty, but he didn't care—he drove.

When he made 30 miles, the snowfall began and the wind rose; after a while the snowstorm was there. The snow blizzard and the strong wind fought, and he couldn't see the road any more. He stopped the car on the side of the road and looked out the window. The snowflakes covered up the car windows and the wind howled terribly. He couldn't see anything outside and couldn't listen to the wailing of the wind. His radio was dead. Then the phone was dead too. He was lost. For a few minutes he didn't understand what to do, but he sat in the warm car, and he was desperate.

Little by little he came down in his mind. He could sit in the car when the snow was around the car and the motor ran. He took out the key from the ignition, but now the car became cooler and cooler. He remembered that he had on the back seat a warm, soft blanket and he took it and covered himself. He was warm but he was angry that he drove. For him the situation was too difficult; he never was in that situation before and alone. He was isolated from the world and nobody in the blizzard drove that road. He thought how long he would sit and now he cares about how the weather progresses.

## **Coming to America**

*Abdulle Jisow, Minneapolis*

My name is Jisow. Originally I come from Somalia. I had a good life in Somalia before the civil war. I had a big garage repairing cars. I lived in a beautiful big house with our five children. One day five men who had guns came to my house and they killed two of my brothers. I escaped with my family. After that I left my family for Ethiopia. After ten years I came to Kenya. We stayed until we had the opportunity to immigrate to the U.S.

## **My Life in Laos under Communist Control**

*Der, Minneapolis*

I was born as a Christian in Laos. My life in Laos was very difficult and upsetting because it was under communist control, and communists didn't like Christians. If the communists found out who was worshiping or praising God, then those people will be put in jail. Some might even be hit or killed. The communists said that they would take the girls at age 12 or 13 away from their families to another village to go to school. That's why I was very scared. At that time I was only 13 years old. My mom didn't know how to get to Thailand, so I had to follow my dad and my step mom to Thailand because my dad left me and my mom and my three sisters behind in the village. My father left with my step mom and her children. They had found a way to get to Thailand, but I was very scared so my mom paid the taxi car for me to follow my dad and step mom to Thailand.

Life in the refugee camp was very difficult because there wasn't enough food. In 1977 my older brother and his wife came to America. My dad didn't let me leave with my brother to America. I wanted to follow my brother to America, that's why I married my first husband. At that time, I was 15 years old. In America my older brother had made a form for me to come to America. I am very happy because now I have freedom. I have my own job, I can go to Church, and I have a family. I thank God for that a lot!

## **I Am an Amharic Speaker**

*Sofia Ali, Minneapolis*

Hello. My name is Sofia Ali. I am thirty years old. I have been in America for five months. Even though I have been married for two years I had to wait for processing to travel to America to be with my husband. My husband wanted me to come to America. He has been here for ten years. He works at the University of Minnesota in Facility Management and he likes his job. My husband speaks English very good and he likes me to go to classes to learn English better. I am lucky in that I have a part-time job working at the Mall of America in a women's clothing store and am able to work 28 to 30 hours per week. In Ethiopia I would get only 40 dollars per week for working full time and here I can make 250 dollars or more per week. I have enough money to send to my family to help them out to have a better life. My husband does not take my money and is happy that I can work. The experience is very important and gives me the chance to work around English-speaking people so I can learn to speak better and learn more every day. It makes me feel good to go to English classes and to work all the hours I can.

## **Moving from Cambodia**

*Leakhena Ly, Brooklyn Park*

I moved to Minnesota on December 12, 2006 from Cambodia. I came here with my husband. I like the people in Minnesota and I like snow. I don't like driving the car when the snow is falling down. I miss my family, friends and neighbors. It has been hard to do homework and go shopping. I stay at home. I hope that I will speak English well and that I have a good job and get money. I hope to study at college in Minnesota.

## **From Cambodia**

*Roni Klein, Hopkins*

I moved here from Cambodia in July 2004. I came here by myself. I like to go shopping. I don't like speaking English. I miss my mother and father. I work at a hearing aid company in Eden Prairie.

## **Moving from Vietnam**

*Nancy Tran, Minnetonka*

I moved to Minnesota in July 2002 from Vietnam. I came here with my son and husband. I like the water in Minnesota. I like my job and I like my teacher. I don't like hot weather. I like snow but I don't like ice on the highway. I miss my mom and my sister and my parents. It has been hard when I speak English. I work at Starkey in Eden Prairie. I hope that I will live in Minnesota. It is a very good place to live.

## **Blood Red Sand**

*Anab, Minneapolis*

I am from Africa  
Where some sand is red.  
From a country where the  
Land is blessed.  
From Somalia where  
Religion is the best.  
From a house where I love  
My tribe and respect the rest.  
And I know why my children are not  
silly.  
I will do it with my culture and still  
hold hand in hand  
For the blood shed it is the color of  
the sand.  
For all the struggle I've been through  
I hope you understand.

## **Leaving Cambodia**

*Kevin Ka, Bloomington*

My name is Kevin Ka.  
I moved to Minnesota on May 20,  
1993, from Cambodia.  
I came here with my family.  
I have a job. I work at Douglas  
Corporation. I like my job.  
I like Minnesota.  
I don't like the cold.  
I miss my country.  
I hope that I will visit my country.

## **My Life**

*Rachidatou Lamidi, Brooklyn Center*

I came from Togo. I have lived in  
Minnesota for two years and one  
month. I live with my family and  
one son. I love my son very much.  
My life changed because it was  
different, the weather and the food.  
I like to learn English because of my  
life.

## **What I Miss About My Home**

*Ojulu Omat, Bayport*

Wow! Home, home where you were born is the same as your only precious mother. I definitely miss the poor hamlets where I was raised. I prowled between my country Sudan and neighboring Ethiopia after good things, especially school. I miss my villages that I grew up in, particularly Okadhi in Sudan, and Gog in neighboring Ethiopia. In general, I miss my tribe called Anuak and their territory. I have missed the area for the ten years I have been away due to the long twenty-two-year civil war.

I also miss all memorable activities that I had been doing in my hamlet. For example, when I was there I used to hunt the different kinds of wild animals for food with my dogs, that I called soldiers. I just kept doing that because my father was poor. He didn't have tame animals to kill for food. Moreover, at the time I was not hunting the wild animals for food alone, I was also prowling after leathers. I wanted to get as many leathers as I can so that I could find something to sleep on as the mattress and blankets. Because at that moment we didn't have mattresses and blankets in far rural villages to sleep on like modern rich countries. Even if there were mattresses and blankets, still I had to sleep on my smooth snug leathers too, because of the chronic poverty that we were in.

In addition, I miss bathing in the wide-open strong spinning river water. Oh yeah, I still feel regretful when I think about bathing in the natural God river water. Always. When I was bathing in the rivers, I was really delighted—it made me feel like king of the entire villages, because there was nothing more pleasurable than that bathing to me. I was comfortable and excited watching different kinds of beautiful birds and animals close around me. I was delighted watching the hippopotamuses, crocodiles, eagles, cranes, and many more birds and animals. Wow! I miss so many important things that I cannot count them. Anyhow, there is no sweeter thing in this hectic world like the place where you were born called home. It is the same as parents, particularly my beautiful precious, protector, and angel mother. I miss the uncountable, beautiful things of my family and country.

## **Sunshine**

*Temesgen Lema, Minneapolis*

I remember my country for 12 months has sunshine.  
I remember the waterfalls.  
I remember the baptism celebration. I remember the New Year celebration, people enjoyed and relaxed.  
I remember around the lakes, people swam and relaxed.  
I remember my children's birthday celebration. I remember my family around the table, discussion.  
I remember everything in my country.

## **My Precious Friends**

*Maiko Ito, Little Canada*

When eight months had passed since we came to Minnesota, my husband went back to Japan temporarily without me. So I had to stay in the U.S. by myself for a short time. At first, I felt a little bit anxious about being in such an unfamiliar country. But I had a wonderful experience during my husband's absence. Some friends worried about me and gave me a call. Some offered me help or invited me to have dinner together. So I spent a lot of time with my friends and enjoyed myself without feeling any loneliness.

Before I came to the U.S., I didn't expect that I could make good friends. But now I realized that I can make friends away from my own country even though it is hard to communicate to each other in English. It motivates me to learn English more and more. I hope I can understand them more and promote our friendship.

## **The Season in Minnesota**

*Arturo Montelongo, Minnesota*

There are three seasons in Minnesota. Here in Minnesota we have six months of winter, four months of summer and two months of fall.

Minnesota is a state that has six long and cold months with temperatures below the freezing range. Also this winter we had an early winter, because it started to snow in the first days of October. The colder months in Minnesota are January and February. Next, we have the summer months which are May, June, July and August. In the month of May the temperature is warmer and sometimes we get some rainy days. But in the months of June, July and August we have the hottest months of summer. In July and August we get temperatures in the eighties and nineties and some days we get one hundred degrees.

As you can see the state of Minnesota has three seasons. But even with the short summer months, and the two months of fall, and the long six months of winter, living in Minnesota is a very good place to live in.

## **My First Winter**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

When I was coming to Minnesota everything was difficult for me, especially the winter. I saw snow for the first time. It is amazing for me. I tried to take the snow with my hand and it looked like sugar. So it was very amazing for me. When I got outside I didn't know how to wear the clothes. My uncle told me how to wear gloves, jackets, hats, and shoes. Now I know about the snow. I will learn about everything and change my life in MLC Learning Center.

## **My Life in Laos**

*Ong Lor Moua, Saint Paul*

When I was in Laos and I was young, we lived in a small village but we still had a school. I always walked to school because we were poor and we didn't have any transportation. But when I wanted to hurry I could run very fast.

Sometimes my school was on break, so I went to study on the mountain with friends. In my school in Laos we didn't have much fun because my school was poor and we only played soccer sometime for fun. On the weekend, I went to help my parents work on the farm. In the evening time I did my homework next to the fire camp, because we didn't have electricity in my house. I always spoke Hmong and Lao when I was in Laos.

My life in Laos I felt bored because I did the same thing over and over. I felt the sun moved very slowly. I can't go to another city because we didn't have money and no place to earn money.

## **I Remember Somalia**

*Lul Mohamud, Minneapolis*

I remember my country every day. I miss everything. I left my country 16 years ago. I remember my friends. I have memories of my country when I was a child. My dad was a doctor and my mom was a midwife. I remember my dad was a first shift worker and my mom was second shift. I loved my grandmother because she took care of me until my dad finished work and my mom was working. I remember my country's ocean. I miss a lot of food and the beautiful weather.

### **My Move to Minnesota**

*Guillermo Carrillo, Hopkins*

My name is Guillermo. I moved here on April 17, 1990 from Los Angeles, California. I came here with my friend Tommy. I like to come to school to learn more English and be a better person. I don't like spicy food. I miss my family in Mexico. Especially my mom. I work at 4 o'clock in the morning. I hope to get a better job in the future.

### **Moving from Mexico**

*Armando Rizo, Bloomington*

I moved to Minnesota from Mexico in February 2002. I came here with my family. I like students, English and playing volleyball. I don't like winter. I miss my brothers and sisters. I work as a janitor. I clean the building. I don't like my job. I hope I will speak English better and move back to Mexico.

### **My Home in Minneapolis**

*Xeng Thao, Minneapolis*

In my family there are six people. We have a living room. The house has three bedrooms and one bathroom. The kitchen has a sink and refrigerator.

### **My Beautiful Motherland, Nepal**

*Bisho Kirti Maharjan, Minneapolis*

I am going to explain to you about my beautiful country, Nepal. I believe many people don't know where my country is and haven't heard about it very much. So, I thought this is a good opportunity for me to give a little information about my country.

Nepal is a small country in comparison to the United States. It is located between India and China, which are very large countries. The capital of my country is Kathmandu, which is surrounded by beautiful mountains. So, when you are in the city, you'll see the mountains around you. They are very beautiful in the rainy season because you can see them clearly and there is green everywhere.

We have many lakes, which are big and natural. Fewa Tal, Begnas Tal and Rara Tal are some of them. Mt. Everest, the highest peak in the world and where many people try to summit, is located in my country. It looks very white and beautiful in the morning and red before the sunset. We experience five types of seasons: monsoon, winter, summer, spring and autumn.

In the world, there are few countries left where the monarchies are alive. One of them is my country, where the King and Queen still live. The present king is the brother of the late Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, whose name is Gayendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev.

Hinduism is the main religion of my country, and it is the sole Hindu Kingdom in the world. Although it is a Hindu country, the Buddha, who is the greatest person and teacher for the Buddhists, was born in this land. Lumbini Garden is the place where the Buddha was born and it became one of the four Dhamma condolence places for the worldwide Buddhists. The other Dhamma condolence places are Buddhagaya, where he got Enlightenment; Saranath, the place where he taught his first sermon; and the Kushinara, the place where he passed away.

Agriculture is the main occupation of my country, and rice, maize, and sugarcane are the main crops. Approximately 50% of the population is educated. Nepali is the national language of my country. Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, but I am happy and proud to speak about it.

## **My Life, My Family in Cambodia**

*Kemsrean Kheng, Minneapolis*

I was born in a small family in 1971. Since I grew up my country had war. It mistreated my family who suffered. I have to remember that some of people had to die, became crippled, and were separated from parents, brothers, sisters and their lovely home. The Khmer Rouge regime killed more than three million people from 1975 until 1978. My father also died in that regime. My mother took care of the children. I didn't have enough food, no money to pay for everything. I was 13 years old and I went out to look for a job and sold something and took the money to help her. So I hate the war because I saw it for a long time and I got the suffering from it. It doesn't give anyone happiness. I was patient and tried hard to do everything for my life.

Finally, I could get the victory on myself and it. I have come to live in a very sufficient country that gives me happiness. I want to see the world at peace. Please, the countries are fighting each other to stop the fight, to avoid all evil deeds, which means to abstain from physical, verbal, and mental evil. To do all good deeds means right conduct in words, deeds, and thought; and to purify the mind means getting rid of mental impurities, that is greed, hatred and delusion, because everybody wants happiness and healthiness. Nobody wants to suffer.

## **My Life Story**

*Hawa Mohamoud, Minneapolis*

I will be writing about my life story, which I had in Somalia, Ethiopia and finally the U.S.A. My name is Hawa. I was born at night on first January, 1986 in a big city in Somalia. That city was quiet and clean. It was called Borame. I grew up there.

After five years we moved to Jig-Jiga in Ethiopia because the civil war exploded. When I was six years old, I went to elementary school. It was small but the building was beautiful. There were seven teachers and 150 students. My favorite teacher was Abdu Rahman. He was very patient and kindly. He always helped me do homework. I studied there until the sixth grade. Then, I went to another school called Sh. Bashir school. It had many trees and flowers. There were 15 teachers and about 300 students. My favorite teacher was Fatima. She was tall and thin. She was very beautiful. I really liked her because she was very nice. I studied until eighth grade. After that the school was closed, because it was a private school.

In April 2006, I came to Minnesota with my mama, two brothers and one sister. It was in the spring, the weather was very nice and beautiful. I was at home three months. At that time, there were no classes. In August, I went to the Minnesota Literacy Council. I was confused how to learn, but now I am very happy because I adapted. I like Minnesotans because they are friendly and helpful people. I admired them. I am so lucky to be in Minnesota.

## **My Beautiful Country**

*Dymang Tan, Maplewood*

There is a small country in Southeast Asia

It is called Cambodia; that is the name

There are many resorts  
But the Engkor Wat is the most amazing

It was built by hand without machines

Between 1113 to 1150  
In Seam Reap Province  
And don't forget to go there  
To see the sunset at Phnom Bakheng  
Everybody wants to see it  
When they visit Cambodia

We also have beaches in Kampong Som

And the other one is in Campot  
Mondul Kiry is the name  
For people to camp and relax  
Don't forget to see the waterfall  
It is in the jungles

One other thing is the land  
Where farmers grow many plants  
Jackfruit, Durian, Longon and Rambutan  
They are fruitful all the same

There are many places where I want to tell  
But I wonder might take so long

## **Minnesota Winter**

*Yuko Larson, Elk River*

The cold air comes into my chest.  
I can see the white breath coming  
out of people's mouths.  
The ice looks nice and smooth.  
People bring their skates and start  
skating.  
Kids are twirling, falling down, and  
playing tag.  
An old man is pulling a sled for his  
grandchildren on the ice.  
Adults, kids, and teenagers put on  
their skates, hats, and hockey gloves  
and walk over to the hockey rink.  
They don't know each other, but  
people just make teams and play a  
hockey game.  
At night, in the dark, there are few  
lights spotting the ice.  
I can hear the sounds of the puck  
hitting a stick and the edges of  
skates.

## **A Letter to My Mother**

*Kezia Schutz, Rochester*

Dear Mom,  
Today is a very special day for me.  
For the first time in my life I saw  
snow. I saw snow, I touched snow,  
and I played in the snow. I confess  
to you that I was mesmerized by  
the snow's white flakes falling. They  
were falling on my body, on the  
streets, on the trees, on the houses,  
and transforming everything into a  
beautiful white scene. I hope that  
you come to Rochester to visit us.  
All the cold weather is compensated  
for when you see the snow's beautiful  
white flakes falling.  
Love,  
Your Daughter

## **About Ukraine with Love**

*Lyudmyla, Rochester*

Dear friend!

Writing this to you I hope to shed a little sunshine to my homeland, a country in Eastern Europe called Ukraine, slightly smaller than Texas that however seems to be unknown.

Did you know that Ukrainians struggled for freedom and independence for centuries and finally won it a few years ago – throughout times facing threat of disappearing. Razed, invaded, annexed, partitioned, forced into servitude by many empires, incorporated into the Soviet Union, controlled, starved to death, repressed, suffered from consequences of nuclear explosion, but still alive, preserved its national spirit and culture, its own territory and language.

I still believe in Ukraine's shiny destiny, prosperity and honor, in restoring the lost paradise, the loss of identity and self-worth. I believe in Ukraine tomorrow and hope to see the awakened Ukraine today, a nation with an open mind being able to develop the instinct of home and self-preservation, reducing to dust the idols of communism that have been suppressing any Ukrainian national idea. I believe in a united nation without right-banking and left-banking countrymen, speaking one language – it doesn't matter, Ukrainian or Russian – living in a friendly environment, without violence and pollution, being a merry hostess in your own house.

I still love my plundered misled country, exhausted by injustice and instability. I love the beauty and fertility of its land, the wisdom and the wit of its people with an open generous Slavic soul. I love its unique melodic language compared with the soft song of nightingales. I love the colors of my flag, blue and yellow, like the clear peaceful homeland sky, war-smoke free with golden boundless fields of wheat. I like to return home wherever I am, expected or unexpected, because I know I am always welcome to the place where I belong.

I am happy to be born in Ukraine, on land with the glorious history of Kyivan Rus, one of the largest states in ancient Europe, and brave heroes Cozaks, my homeland's warriors.

And now, being independent I hope to live inside the country "u crayini," instead of being a part of an outlying district "ocrayina" in someone's neighborhood.

With love.

Yours,

Ukrainian

## **Making a Normal Chinese Dinner**

*Anonymous, Shoreview*

In my family, a dish of vegetables, a bowl of meat, a pot of soup, and some rice, form a normal dinner. Today I will take 85 minutes to make a Chinese dinner.

To stew a pot of pork ribs and turnip soup takes about 80 minutes. First I put the ribs, cut into 1x1 inch cubes, in a pan and pour some water just over the ribs, then heat the pan on the stove. When the water in the pan just boils, I turn the heat off. In order to get rid of the foam caused by pork blood, the ribs are washed again. I put the clean ribs in a pot, add some sliced ginger, green onions and peppers, then pour some water three inches over the ribs. I let the soup boil for 15 minutes and add some cooking wine to get rid of the smell of the meat, then turn the heat to low to stew the soup. In 50 minutes, the ribs become very soft. It's time to put the turnips cut into cubes in the soup and add some salt. Finally I turn the heat to high, cooking for 10 minutes. The soup is ready.

When stewing the soup, I put rice and water in a rice cooker, then turn the button on. The rice begins cooking. Now I start to make a dish of steaming fish. I scatter some salt over both sides of the defrosted fish, and keep them in a pan for five minutes, then move to a dish. Also, I scatter some sliced ginger, green onions, and sprinkle a little bit of cooking wine over the fish. When the water in the steaming pan is boiling, I put the dish with fish in the pan, steaming for 15 minutes, then move them out of the pan.

While the soup has been stewing, the rice has been cooking, the fish has been steaming, I am preparing a dish of stir-fried bok choy. I heat a frying pan on the stove, then add some cooking oil and salt in the pan. When the cooking oil gets hot, I put the leaves, cut into one inch, in the pan, stir-frying for one minute, then put a lid on the pan for four minutes. Finally I load the bok choy in a dish.

A normal Chinese dinner for my family is ready now.

## **Yasmin's Story**

*Yasmin Isahaq, Minneapolis*

I grew up in Hisgalol. It is a small town, located in the northeast of Somalia. But now I live in Minnesota. So Minnesota is more convenient than my city. It has better transportation and more educational opportunities than my city. Minnesota is more quiet and safer than my city. My city is friendlier and more polite than Minnesota but life is difficult. It is hard to find a job. Most of the young people live with their family and they don't have anything to do. They just stay with their family and help them. My city is more relaxed than Minnesota. I had more free time when I was there. In my city I lived with my great family. I lived with nine of my family members but now I live alone. So in that way I feel bad and I miss my family.

## **My Family's Life**

*Pa Houa Lor, Saint Paul*

I was born in Laos, in the city Xam Nua. My mother and father have been married since December 15, 1979. They have 12 children: six sons and six girls, but eight children had passed away. Right now they have two sons and two daughters. My two brothers and my younger sister are living with my parents in Laos. My family lives in Van Vieng. My birthday is September 4, 1984. I married my husband on July 17, 2002. I am 17 years old right now. I have one child. She is a girl. Her name is Gao Jay Vang. I'm happy for my life because my husband is my soul and my daughter is my life.

## **I Remember My Lovely Country**

*Fabian Pesantez, Minneapolis*

I remember when I was a child I had to walk to school every day. Sometimes I escaped from school to go swim in the rivers with my friends. After I finished school I went to college for four years. Then I decided to go to the army but the life in the army was hard but I had to finish what I started. After I finished my services in the army I met my lovely girlfriend who is my wife now. Then we came to the U.S.A. and we have very good children. But I still miss my country because I have my little brothers there. I am out of my country but my country is still living inside of me.

## **A Comfortable Home in Cambodia**

*Chansamnang Thol, Hopkins*

After my mum got married my grandma gave her house to my mum. It is a very big house. Mum stayed there until she had me, my sister and two brothers. I grew up in that house. It was a beautiful house to me. There were 5 bedrooms and it had two floors. Downstairs there was one room for storing some stuff and it had a big space for keeping a motorcycle, bicycles and my dad's car. I don't know what it was called; in my country they don't call it a garage. Usually downstairs is not underground; it is not like in the U.S.A.

What I liked the most about the house was upstairs in front of the house my dad planted some flowers and plants. Some flowers he hung up; some he put on the floor. There was a swing for us to sit on. In the kitchen was a hammock. My sister and I usually sat on it when Mum was cooking. We always were around her and sometimes we helped Mum cook. Dad also liked to sit on that hammock after he came back from work to see Mum cook. My brothers liked to play under the big tree behind my house. We had a big house and a lot of land. My grandma liked to grow fruit and vegetables. We had a lot of different kinds of fruit in the different seasons. At the side of the house there was a well where we got water for use every day. At the side of the well my grandma grew some flowers that had a very good smell.

After dinnertime what we usually did was sit on the swing in front of the house and listen to Dad tell stories and smell the flowers from the side of the house. It felt so good to live in a comfortable house with a happy family. I still remember everything like it just happened yesterday.

## **My Life in Laos**

*Yia Vang, Saint Paul*

My name is Yia Vang. Now I'm 43 years old. I was born in 1964 in Laos Country. My birth place was in Moung Chang City.

In 1970 my family moved to Long Cheng and I lived there for five years. I went to school every day. I needed to know how to understand the Laos language. In 1975 the Laos government changed to communism and the population was moving to Thailand. So my family moved back to Moung Chang City again.

In 1976 the Laos communism and Vietnam legion were having a survey of Hmong people in Laos Country. Many schools and markets were closing, and then my family moved out in Moung Chang City to a small village on the hill far from Moung Chang about five miles. In 1976-1979 I had no clothes and shoes and no food; I was very poor. On May 15th, 1979 I decided to move out of Laos Country to Ban Vinai Camp in Thailand.

## **My Country**

*Zeru Temanu, Minneapolis*

I am from Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a beautiful country. Ethiopia has more than 60 million people. They speak different languages. They have different cultures and religions too. The weather isn't like Minnesota. It never happens to snow. It never happens to get below zero. Most of the time it is green. So if you need a vacation, go to Ethiopia. You can visit a lot of historical churches, different cultures, and different wild animals.

## **My Life Before and My Life Now**

*Halimo Omar, Minneapolis*

I am from Somalia. My name is Halimo Omar. I was 46 years old when I came to America. When I was in Somalia I was a beautiful girl. We had a big house and it was beautiful. It had six bedrooms. Many people lived in our house. They were my brother and sister and their children. I was always happy because I was with my family. That's why I was always happy. Now I live alone. I always worry about my family. I want one day to see all my family again, if God says.

## **I Dwell on My Family**

*Anonymous, Rochester*

I dwell on my Family best of all  
I am Ali, Father of the house  
"Maddam Iman" is my kids ma'am.  
Mohamed, Yasin, and Shuuriye are my hope.  
Barira, Zahra, and baby Abdullahi.  
I love my Family best of all.

## **Hmong Refugee**

*Yia Yang, Saint Paul*

I remember when the Vietnamese and Lao Communists came to take over my country. My family decided to move to Thailand in 1979; I was a little girl. I lived in Thailand for 25 years. I didn't get Thai citizenship. It was difficult for me to go anywhere. I felt like a farm animal. In December 2003, the U.S. government had a notice from Mr. Johnson of the Embassy stationed in Thailand.

He came to welcome the Hmong community to the U.S.A. I was very happy.

When I came to the U.S. my life had to change. Everything was different. Some things I want to do I will do. Some things I want to learn, I will learn. The U.S. law is different than the law in Thailand. I am so happy. Thank you.

## **I Am a Black Coffee**

*SoHyun Lee, Roseville*

I am a black coffee.

I wonder if people like me or not.

I hear that people like me just for health.

I hope that people relax with me.

I touch people who are tired.

I am a black coffee.

I sometimes pretend to be a milk coffee.

I worry about my bitter taste left in people's mouth.

I want some milk, sugar, cream, and chocolate.

I can understand that people say, "Milk coffee, please."

I am a black coffee.

## **A Prejudice**

*Luiza Cernea, Roseville*

Even though I have never experienced prejudice on a personal level nor shown it towards anybody, I have witnessed prejudice on several occasions. Approximately two percent of the Romanian population is of gypsy ethnic background. This community is categorized mainly on the occupations that they have had for centuries – spoon makers, bucket makers, bear trainers, etc. Their groups were stable from the very beginning, settling in small villages, never traveling, unless their trade requested them to go sell their products, and respected by the rest of the population. There are a few other gypsy groups that like the nomadic life, traveling with their tents and carriages all over the country. These groups were always seen by the rest of the population (be they of Romanian, Hungarian, Serbian, German or Gypsy descent) as cheaters, thieves and criminals.

In the more recent history of Romania a fairly large chunk of the Romanian population started to show prejudice against all gypsies. For example, if they would get into the same room with someone of gypsy descent, they would either leave right away or stay as far as they could from that person. They would check their pockets instantly to make sure they still had their wallet. Even when people were meeting a gypsy on the street, one could see such a prejudice. People would try to avoid getting close to the gypsy, some would show fear in their eyes, some would hold on to their wallets or purses. If a gypsy family would want to buy an apartment in an upscale building, the neighbors would try to prevent that from happening. And so on. While some would have considered this as a normal behavior, based on the background and historical facts, it was plainly wrong to categorize every single gypsy as a thief or a cheater.

Nowadays things are a little different. Especially the young generation is no longer showing prejudice, but rather they act in each situation according to the circumstances. If they realize the person they meet is a cheater/thief, they consider him/her a cheater/thief; otherwise they treat the other person as a normal human being.

## **My Life**

*Rosa Aparicio De Santos, Richfield*

When I first came to the U.S., I went to visit my parents for one week. It was very sad for me because my parents are old. When I lived in Mexico City, I visited my parents every six months. Now it is very difficult to visit them because I need a lot of money and someone to take care of my daughter. I miss my family every day, especially my parents. When I cook chicken, I call my mom and ask what ingredients to put in the sauce and how many minutes to cook it.

## **Hmong Story**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul,*

A long time ago, when I was a child I heard my father and my mother talk about my grandfather's story. He came from China Country. They talked about Chinese people and Hmong people they were fighting and many people died. Then Hmong people could not live in China, so Hmong people left to Laos. They lived a few years in Laos after that, about 1974 to 1975, my father's family could not live in Laos because they were fighting for Vietnamese War. Then my father's family came to Thailand, but Thai people were not very polite to Hmong people because we didn't have our own Country. When I heard about that story I felt very sad about Hmong story. I know it was a true story about Hmong. I read Hmong story from a book and I asked from the old people who know about Hmong stories where they came from and what happened to them.

## **I Remember the Time My Mother Was Sick**

*Mani, Minneapolis*

I remember my family lived in the little town. We did not have cousins, relatives, aunts, or uncles who lived close to my family. My father was at the war. I have three brothers. I was eight years old. My mother started to get sick so many times she stayed in the hospital. I stayed home with my brother. He was 19 years old. We ate whatever he cooked. Sometimes I missed my mother when I went to bed. She would tuck me in the bed. One time I came back from school for lunch. Nobody was home. I was hungry and I didn't know what to do. I walked from my home to the hospital to see her and had lunch with her. Before I came back home, she gave me a letter. She told me to give it to one of her friends. She told me when I needed something, just talk to her friend. They didn't have any children. One year later, I came back from school. My mother's friends told me and held me and said my mother died. No one saw her at the last minute. I was shocked and cried, and cried.

## **My Country's Climate**

*Ayan Mahamed, Minneapolis*

I remember my country's climate. I came from Somalia in 1991, specifically Mogadishu City. The weather in my country is not too hot or too cold. You can say it is the best weather all over the world. I liked the rain of the rainfall. The weather of my country didn't bother me and I loved it. I remember my best friends, my neighborhood and my beautiful country. I remember my friends, how they played with me when we were in my country. We played outside in the village. We jumped and sang songs. Right now I miss all of my best friends.

## **Foos and Somalia**

*Foos, Minneapolis*

I miss fresh fruits, vegetables and fresh meats that I used to eat when I was in my country. I remember eating fruits such as bananas, mangoes, and papayas that were picked that same day. I remember drinking fresh milk that came from cows, goats, or camels just a few hours ago. I remember eating almost everything when they were fresh. Of course I can include all the good stuff that I used to have in my motherland, but I really miss the very delicious, fresh foods and every time I remember I feel homesick.

## **Rice**

*Suad Mohamed, Saint Paul*

Rice grows in my country. Our people like to eat rice because a lot of it grows in my country. Every other day I cook rice. My husband likes to eat rice every day, but I don't. My favorite is injera. When I cook injera, my husband says "Suad, what kind of food did you cook today?" I say, "I cooked my favorite today." Why does he like rice? Because I cook nice, delicious rice. That is why he likes to eat rice every day. My father liked rice too. I saw when I was young, my mother cooked rice every day. I asked her "Mom, why do you cook rice every day?" She said, "Your father likes to eat rice, that is why I cook it." So my luck too. My husband likes to eat rice.

## **Back to Basics**

*Mai Abe, Minneapolis*

My favorite family food or dish that I can remember is a dish my grandmother used to make when she thought that the family was a little out of energy. It was a Hotpot Japanese Salmon, with a base of the Japanese finest sake, veggies and, I think, pork. This dish takes about six to twelve hours to prepare because it needs to be simmered for a long time. My grandmother told us that this is the most energetic, most nutritional meal you'll ever have. I don't think there's anything out there in the supermarket that can compare to it. No packaged product can compare to my grandmother's recipe. She never eats packaged foods, now that I think about it. She always eats healthy, homemade foods, and prepares them the best way possible, "The O' Natural." My favorite packaged food, I would say, is chips. Chips have these textures and a phenomenal taste that can't be stopped. I know that they aren't at all nutritional and can be bad, but I believe it's like everything else. You get addicted to something, and it's just your ultimate choice to stop or continue indulging. Chips have salt and saturated and/or trans fats that aren't natural and may have a damaging effect on the body, causing such diseases as high blood pressure, etc. Candies that have sugar substitutes can also be damaging. I think all in all, it's all about moderation.

## **My Life**

*Carmen, Minneapolis*

My name is Carmen. I am from Ecuador. I want to tell about my history. When I came to this country I came on the ship in 2004 on February 9. The day was Saturday. It was night. Many people came. The total was 223 people on the ship.

I like my country. In the city I went to play soccer often. I went swimming with my family and we went to parties together. I miss my family.

I live in Minneapolis. I like it mostly in the summer and a little in the winter because it is cold. I have different friends here but they speak English. They don't speak Spanish. I feel very sad, but now I go to the school to learn English. In the future, I will speak English and feel good with my friends. This is my story about Me.

## **My Life in This Country**

*Manuel Bernal, Minneapolis*

My name is Manuel, I'm from Ecuador. I came to Minnesota in 2001. I came to make a better life for my family back in Ecuador. I didn't know any English and it was very scary for me. Now I have a good job at an Italian restaurant and I've been there for five years. I also have a part-time job where I am a manager for a cleaning company. At night I go to school which makes my days very full. They are very proud of me and miss me very much. I'm very happy to have all the opportunities that I'm given for work and for school. I only wish that when I was back in my country I would have taken my school more seriously. My greatest wish is that someday soon my family and I can be together again.

## **Not Feeling Alone Anymore**

*Mayela Pliego, South Saint Paul*

I grew up in Mexico with my grandmother and grandfather until the age of 15 years. My childhood was not the same. For the first time, I felt that there was something else in life for me out of Mexico. I never had happiness and always felt the loneliness in my heart. I wanted to study but it was expensive. I looked for a job but it was not enough. Then I decided to come to the U.S.

Everything changed for me. I met my husband and became a mother. I have a wonderful kid. He is three and half years old, he is the light of my eyes. He brought the happiness to my life.

## **My Life in the Camp**

*Xai, Minneapolis*

I was born in Thailand in the camp Ban Numyow. I have one brother and one sister and my mother. My family was very poor because my father died during the war when I was one year old. But we didn't know about my father dying because he didn't come to Thailand with us. We had to wait and wait for him to come back. Two years later, my father's friends came from the war, and they told us he died. We were very sad to hear that.

After four years, we moved to the camp Ban Vinai in 1984. We lived in the camp Ban Vinai about 10 years. We moved again to the Thamkrabok Refugee Camp. My mother didn't decide to go to the United States because she thought she didn't know English and it would be hard to live in the United States. In 2005 we were very happy because we got a program to go to the United States. Then finally we came to the United States and got a new life. We were so happy.

## **My Story**

*Tashi Nyima, Hopkins*

My name is Tashi Nyima. I am from Tibet. I grew up in my country village. I have two older brothers and three older sisters. My father and mother are farmers. They don't have school in my country. They don't have electricity and telephone.

I am eight years old. I care for yaks, goats, sheep, cows and horses. I don't have work shoes, pants and shirt. I wore only a coat. The roads are rough. My foot is too difficult.

I am 15 years old. I work on a farm. We have a small farm but the place is too high and too low. We live in the valley in the winter. Sometimes we live elevated in the spring. I moved up and down. I packed my things on a black yak and horse. My older brother went to China. He went to driver's school for six months. He bought a car and lived in the city. Then we moved to the city. I am 20 years old. We don't have a house in the city. We lived in an apartment. I rent a store. My sister went to Nepal and then to India. My sister stayed four years in India. She went to America. She sent a letter to Tibet. She wrote her address and phone number on the letter. She found an American job. She told me I have much money. I sent to Lhasa money. You buy a house in Lhasa she said. I said yes. I go to Lhasa and buy a house. She sent Lhasa money. Then my brother and me went to Lhasa. It is a very big state. My sister called me on the phone. America is a very good place. You and your children come to America. I said yes, OK.

March 4, 2006. My sister's husband came to Chicago and picked up me and my children. I am surprised America is a flat place. The roads are too big. I went to Adult Options School. This school is very good. These people helped me. I am very happy.

## **Oromiya**

*Abdala Yusuf, Minneapolis*

I remember when I was in the school with my friends. We played soccer and football. I remember when we sat under the shadow of the trees with my friends. I remember the fresh weather. I remember when we went to the village to visit our grandfather and grandmother. They gave me some fresh fruit. I remember the sound of the hyenas. I remember the sound of the birds. I remember the sound of the rivers. I remember when I was working and owned my restaurant. I remember when I was counting my money. I remember a wedding in my country when we had a celebration and a big party.

## **I Miss Our House**

*NW, Hopkins*

I came from a beautiful city which is located in the middle of Somalia. It is one of the biggest cities in my country. The city's name is Galkacio. It had a beautiful downtown, many places for vacation, tall buildings, museum, zoo and beautiful lakes. My family had a big house close to downtown on the south side of the city. Also it is close to two lakes. We had flowers in the yard. The house was five bedrooms, three bathrooms, and basement. The paint was blue and white. Outside was grass which was graceful to watch. Always I enjoyed sitting there. We had a nice neighborhood. My mom still lives there. I love our house and I miss it a lot.

## **Eating Together**

*Teklu Mazengia, Minnetonka*

When I was a child, about six or seven years old, I lived with my father and mom. At this time my dad took care of me. He fed me and I slept with him. That was the hardest time for me because I couldn't live far from my father. However, my dad was transferred to another city that was very far and I couldn't go with him. So he took me to my grandma. This is the time my story begins.

Before I moved to my grandma's, my brother and sisters already were living with her. That was a good opportunity to see and join my brothers. They had discipline, because our grandma was very strict. They ate together and they washed the dishes. The first day we ate together, they were very fast. I couldn't eat like them, before I was satisfied, the dish was finished. I was still hungry. My grandma watched me and said, "The next time you won't eat with them. You have to eat alone." At this time I felt two things: now I can eat very well but I will miss a lot of fun with my brothers.

## **I Remember My Family**

*Tikdem Yilma, Minneapolis*

I remember my family. I remember my mom cooked very nice, made enjera. It smelled very nice. My mom bought shoes and clothes. My father died in a car accident. I was very sad. My father woke up on Sundays at 5:00 am. All of the children together went to church. It sounds very nice in church. I miss my family and my country.

## **My Story**

*Yong Yang, Saint Paul*

My name is Yong Yang. I was born in Laos. I have two sisters and three brothers. My father worked as a teacher and my mother worked in the market.

In 2004, the Lao Government killed my father. They said that my father was a CIA Veteran working with the American government in the Vietnam War. After they murdered my father, my mother couldn't live in Laos anymore. To stay alive, my mother took my brothers and sisters and fled to Thailand. During this time, I couldn't go with my mother because of my study. After my family left, I decided to move to live in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos where I attended the University. Two years after that, I met my wife. She is an American. She was traveling in Laos and I saw her at the New Year celebration. We spent a lot of time together. We were in love so I proposed to her and six months later I came to live in the United States. We are now married.

At this time, I live in Saint Paul, Minnesota with my wife. She is majoring in accounting. I am studying English at Hmong American Partnership. My dream is to attend college and obtain a degree in Business Management.

## **How Is It Important To Learn English?**

*Hana Hassan, Minneapolis*

In my opinion, it's very important to learn English because if you live in the U.S. you must understand what people say both for education and every day life.

English for education is necessary, if you want to go to college, you have to know English. If your English improves, everything will be easy for you. For example you will understand tests or homework. A poem says, "Understand a question is a half your answer." If some one translates test questions to your language you understand. Also you need English for your children's education. Every child has a lot of homework. And ask you many questions. In addition to education, English is also necessary for everyday life. When you go to market you need English and also for your public transportation, when you go everywhere you need English and when you want to ask people information, you have to use it.

In conclusion English is necessary, I have lived in the U.S. and I need to use it for education also for every day life situations.

## **My Name Is Mohamed Shirelle**

*Mohamed Shirelle, Saint Paul*

My name is Mohamed Shirelle. My sisters are named Amino Shirelle and Fadumo Shirelle. I have a big family. I have eight sisters and six brothers. I ask myself, "Mohamed, what do you like your future to be?" I like to be a teacher or a nurse or lawyer or help people. I speak English for one year. When I came to America, I do not know how to write. I do not know how to read. Now I know.

## **About My Country, Oromia**

*Bashila Dube, Champlin*

Oh I miss everything. I don't know when I will see these things. I thought everything changed except the ocean. I can't go there, it is hard for me to go there and come back, until they change the government. Let me tell you something, this comes from my heart. One day I called my grandmother and she told me "I'm getting too old, when can you see me?" I told her I will see her after one year. I hope I will see everything. I miss you my country!

## **My Experience in United States**

*Josemeire Muniz, Golden Valley*

I am from Brazil, from a city called Juiz de Fora in a state of Minas Gerais. I love my country. It is a beautiful country with friendly people that work hard to survive and try to make it better. Unfortunately, in Brazil, we don't have many opportunities to get a good job and to study. Even more we need to be more qualified. We need to speak other languages. Because of that, I decided to come to the United States as an au pair to improve my English and to study more. It was a difficult and important decision, because I left my job, college, my country and my family.

It was very hard in the beginning. The culture, the holidays, the food and the language changed completely. I lost weight in the first weeks because I couldn't get used to American habits. The hardest thing was the language. It was very difficult to express myself, and to understand other people.

Everything is still new and different because I am living with an American family, studying English, making new friends from a lot of countries, driving in a different system, and living with wild weather. Now, I have been here for six months. I have been living amazing moments that I have never lived before, and discovering things about myself that I have never known. For example, I discovered that I need to have challenges.

I had so many funny moments too. I often misunderstand things in English. I used to get lost every time by car, taking the wrong exit in the highway and getting lost for hours. I remember one day I took the wrong exit and went in a city that I didn't find in the map. I stopped to ask for information and the guy gave me the directions. So I realized that I took the wrong direction of the highway. I had to pick up the South and I was in the North, so far from my destination.

I want to go back to Brazil to help my country get better, helping people because you see things differently when you are living in another country, but I am really enjoying my life here in the United States and I will always remember what I learned.

## **A New Life**

*Z. Watanabe, Minneapolis*

My daughter and I left our home and moved to Minnesota to escape an abusive relationship. It has been difficult but I believe God was with us (and still is) because there have also been so many miracles. We didn't have much when we left. We had no money, no source of income, no transportation, no home of our own, no furniture or beds to sleep on, no cookware. But we made it out safely and God provided everything we needed every step of the way. I prayed every day for guidance and to thank God for watching over us. It's been amazing to see how He has provided for us, even the things I thought we would not have for a long time, like a couch and a computer. Don't ever give up hope.

## **The Three Holidays**

*Kadra Hussein, Blaine*

Christmas, New Year's, and Ramadan in Ethiopia are Muslim holidays. In my country, I like the Ramadan holiday. It is important because you celebrate it once a year. The special foods we eat on important holidays are rice, injera, chicken, meat and we drink Coca-Cola, Fanta, Sprite, water, etc., without alcohol. The children get new clothes that we buy and shoes and toys. The children go to our neighbors' houses and get money. They go to our next-door neighbor to get money and eat food. On Hajji Holiday many people from another country go to hajji macca madina and we visit my family. The children go play and there is music. You celebrate it once a year.

## **The Story of My Life**

*Trinh Ngo, Saint Paul*

I was born in 1972 in a small town in Vietnam. I grew up there. When I was five years old I started in kindergarten. I finished high school in 1987. After that, I helped my mom's business. I still lived there. In 2003, I met a good man. He lived so far away from my country. I knew him by my uncle, then one year later I engaged with him and I married in 2005.

I came to the United States with him. He lived in Minnesota 29 years ago. He is a U.S. citizen. He is a machinist. He is a good person. Two months later I got pregnant so I did not go to work. So I need to go to school to learn more English because English is my second language. I cannot drive a car, so I have to take the bus to go to school during pregnancy.

Now I have a child but I still go to school with my child. She is 11 months old. Her name is Lisa. She now crawls and she holds on to something to stand. She does not walk yet. She has four teeth. She can talk – ba ba, ma ma – and she imitates what someone does. It looks like monkey see, monkey do. So I'm very happy. I have my husband and my daughter and we live together in my home. I have a happy family.

## **I Remember My Country**

*Aynalme Shikur, Saint Louis Park*

My name is Aynalme Shikur. I am from Ethiopia. I remember my country's people lived friendly and we celebrated a culture. First of all I remember the day of Christmas Day. All Christians go to church at night. After that, we come back from church and we eat a big meal of food. All the family sits at a big table and eats food. We made chicken, meat and cabbage. We made a different kind of food. We made the day of Christmas day an event, neighbors got together and we ate food. I remember that day, Oh!

## **History**

*KaYing Xiong, Minneapolis*

My mom taught me about moving from Laos into the refugee camp in Thailand. The secret war in Laos was stopping in 1975, and some Hmong people decided to move to Thailand. But some didn't decide about moving to another country because they didn't want to leave their home country. In 1975 I was still not born yet. And I was born in 1979. So my father decided to move to Thailand because our relatives had already moved to Thailand.

So in our village we just have only a small group. When we were moving into Thailand, we just walked and carried food, clothes and something important. And my grandfather was very old, so he couldn't walk and my father had to carry him. He had to be responsible for the family. The way to Thailand sometimes was up hill or down. First he had to carry my grandfather ahead about one mile and come back to take his family after. At the same time, Thailand had some group of bad people who wanted to kill you just for your money. If you didn't be careful or not lucky, maybe you were going to be killed by them. And when you arrived to the Meng Khong River, you had to pay money to the people who were taking you to Thailand. If you didn't have enough money to pay them, they could take you out, and maybe you got killed by Vietnamese soldiers at the river. When we crossed the river, Thai policemen took us to live in temporary and checked out the people. Then sent into refugee camp in Bavinai of Thailand. In conclusion, this is a very sad or bad story. About migration to another country, it is hard and dangerous for everyone in the world.

## **Remembering about My Country Farm**

*Shafi Adam Hassan, Minneapolis*

I also remember our large and beautiful farm. Which has every thing you need to see, like animals, fruits, vegetables and many kinds of things. I remember our beautiful or biggest mountain which I didn't see, bigger than in East Africa except Kilimanjaro Mountain in Kenya. Usually, I dream about my country which I missed since I came here. I love my country. I miss you! I miss you! I miss you!

## **Childhood Is Beautiful!**

*Aminat M., Rochester*

How often we recall our childhood! It is happiness to remember about a childhood, but it is also sadness because we cannot return into childhood. It is a long way away. The memories of childhood which we cannot forget have always lived with us. Everyone has different memories of childhood about which he/she remembered. I want to remember about some of them.

First, I still remember about the windy, snowy winter with snowdrifts in the town where I grew up. I still have not forgotten the fierce noise of the wind which blew in the town of my childhood. Most likely, it was due to the location of the city. My home city is located between the sea and the mountain. In general, it is situated at the foot of the mountain. In addition, there is the lake that is located between the sea and mountain. Especially, I like to remember the rink on our street on which I sledged all day! My face was red from the cold and freshness of the air. One fine evening, when I was going home with the sledge, I tripped and broke my right collar-bone. For all that, it is nice to remember because it was fate, and it was a happy childhood. Likewise, I want to remember about the summer evenings on our street where I grew up. Many years ago, our street was the one-sided street, and on the opposite side was the big freshwater lake. Around the lake was a lot of greenery, and the air was cold and fresh. I remember the croaking of the frogs which I compared to music. I liked to sit on the bench in front of my house for a long time and to hear the croaking. I have heard nowhere a sound like that. The summer evenings nearby the lake have never been forgotten. The nature was wonderful.

Last, I remember playing with my first doll when I was a child. Especially, I can remember being very happy when my father bought it for me. It was a beautiful doll. What next! My doll could say "Mommy." It was very interesting for me, and I was always impressed by that. To my mind, childhood is fantastic, but it was long ago. Finally, I want to wish the happy childhood for every child.

## **I Remember**

*Ahmed Askar, Bloomington*

Hello, my name is Ahmed Askar. I am from Somalia. I lived in one town. It was beautiful and everything was different. The fields and the river were beautiful. The air was very nice.

I miss my family and especially my mother, my sisters and my brothers and all of my family. I worry about them because they are still in Somalia.

I have been living here in the United States for 15 years. I like English, but I don't speak it very well. I am coming to school now. I don't understand everything, but my teacher is very nice. She helps all the time with my problems. English is very important in my work. I am a taxi driver. I would like to get a better job such as math teacher.

## **Jewelry Maker**

*Pao Lee, Saint Paul*

My name is Lee Pao. I am from Thailand. I was born in Laos. My family and I came to the United States on Wednesday, July 7, 2004. I work at school. I'm a student. Right now I can't have a job. I think someday I will have a job. I had a job one time before in Thailand. I can tell you a little. My job was self-employed. I had fourteen years as a silversmith. I can make a ring, a bracelet, a necklace, and an earring. I make them out of silver and gold. I can use a hammer, a pliers, a tweezers, a scissors, a ruler, and a tape measure for my job. This is how I made a living when I was in Themkra Bok Refugee Camp. I liked my job and I miss it very much. I don't know how long until I can have a job. I dream someday I will get a job in my life in America.

## **From Brazil**

*Silvia Peixoto, Woodbury*

My name is Silvia Peixoto. I'm from Brasil. I just arrived in the U.S. I'm 25 years old. I saw everything different. I never saw the snow before. It is hard for me. I don't speak English and I don't have friends. I miss my family so much. I feel alone. I want to stay one year here. I work in the house of Beatriz as a nanny!

## **Pretty Red Wing**

*Mary Ommundson, Red Wing*

I have lived in Red Wing all my life. I like several outdoor activities. The parks have the Mississippi River, sculptures, fountains and the swimming pool. There are also bluffs to climb. I like to fish and walk a lot. When I go for walks I look at the hanging flower baskets in the spring and summertime.

I also enjoy shopping at Wal-Mart and Target and like the many restaurants and the casino. I do not do them all the time, maybe once a month. I also enjoy the history of Red Wing. My grandma used to make pottery pieces with her name on them. I also like looking at old black-and-white historical photos of downtown Red Wing. Red Wing is 150 years old in 2007. In March there will be a birthday party for it. It is going to be a big celebration. I think people from all over will be here.

## **My Beautiful Mexico**

*Crescencio Roldan Diaz, Minneapolis*

I remember a lot of things from my country. When I was six years old I started to go to school. I was so happy because my mom made a shirt for me. My father taught me my first words and read to me. Four years ago I decided to come to the U.S. My father was very sad because my brothers and sisters were here in the U.S. When I was in the U.S. my life was so hard.

## **About Myself**

*Orlando Lara, New Hope*

My first day in the U.S.A. for me went very great because I had the hope of finding my brothers after a long time of not seeing them. But sometimes I feel for my mother and father that stayed in my country. But when I found my brothers, the time went very quickly, for me.

Now I remember many things of my country, the sound of birds, the smell of fresh air in the fields when I worked on farms and in the fields. I miss my food, the great flavor and taste of enchiladas, mole, drink. Only my life is fine because it is a little different than my country. Some things, for example, school, cities, the transportation but more interesting is the people. They are hospitable here. I learned to speak a little English with good teachers. I hope to learn more faster to speak this language.

## **Indians in Poland**

*Daria Klimaszewska, Chaska*

My name is Daria. In Poland I live in Grudziadz. It's a 1,000-year-old town. We have many monuments. Now I live in Minnesota, the climate is the same. In Poland people say that U.S.A. is freedom, open mind country, land of milk and honey, but it is not exactly fairyland. In the United States many things are so different, but this doesn't mean it's bad.

You have something that I love and treasure. It is culture of Native American people. In my country we have PRPI (Polski Ruch Przyjaciol Indian)-Polish Association Friends of Indians. We have some meetings every year and people live like the Indians. Women and children wear special dress, men wear special pants. Almost everybody lives in tipi, sing songs, some play on big frame drum, dance pow-wow. This is so amazing.

In Poland I work in camps with children and I teach Shoshone culture, and show Indian life. Many American know almost nothing of this culture. That is sad for me. I love Indians because they revere (respect) nature and don't kill animals if they don't need. The Native Americans are natural born artists. Indians are oldest peoples. Their spiritual ideas should be recognized and valued by all people. And I think now you understand why I love Native American people. Sometimes people from my country go to the U.S.A., because they want meet real Indian, and Indian people go to Poland. This is so exciting. We can learn many things, like being friendly and how to take care of nature and animals, herbal medicine, and how to help unselfishly. I hope this year I can go to Indian places. I think in this country still lives spirit.

## **Cultural Differences between Senegal and the United States**

*Mame Fatou Thiam, Saint Paul*

In the world there are many countries but, all of them are different. We can compare them by the location, such as the countries that are in North America and those that are in Africa. As an immigrant from Senegal to the U.S., I see a lot of differences between these countries but sometimes I see some similarities. There are two differences that shocked me: the people and the houses.

Although there are differences between people everywhere in the world I notice differences strongly. For example, the older Senegalese people don't wear clothes such as jeans, shorts, pants. They always wear something which can differentiate them from the young people. Also the old people are never left alone or put in the nursing homes. They are always with their families which is not the case here. In contrast there are many similar things from Senegalese young people to U.S young people. They get dressed in the same way and have the same realities of life, but there is a difference in that unmarried Senegalese boys and girls don't have the right to leave the family house. However, here if you are 18 years old you can go anywhere you want.

Like with people, there are several differences concerning the houses. In my country the majority of adults get a house as soon as possible and live there with their family. That's why all Senegalese houses are large with a big space where you can do anything. The majority of residences are houses not apartments, whereas in the U.S many people have an apartment. The apartments are really the opposite of Senegalese houses. They are small and you can't cook anything you want because the smell is still in. It's very hard to live in this apartment if you had already lived in a big house. The only thing similar is that houses are very expensive.

People and houses are the two things which have impressed me when I came here. Both are different from those in my country but also have some resemblances.

## **Untitled**

*Verónica A. Mongenye, Minneapolis*

My name is Veronica. I am from West Africa, Cameroon. My language is Meta, which is from Buea state. In Cameroon we grow cassava, plantains, yams, bananas, peanuts and coffee. These are just some of the food we grow. I came to the United States of America in 1998 to help my daughter who was giving birth to her first child and also married to an American. My first experience in America was going straight from the airport to a restaurant to eat pizza which was very different from African food. I love it here in America! This is where I learn how to speak English and other things. A woman in America has a voice. Freedom is wonderful! America is a land of opportunity for every race.

## **My Life**

*Olivia Serrato, Inver Grove Heights*

I came to the United States when I was 18 years old. I came with my parents, two sisters and two brothers. We came to California to see my brother who lived there. Then after one week we came to Minnesota where another sister lived. My dad got a job when we stayed in Minnesota. I did not know very much English, but I went to St. Mary's church in downtown St. Paul for English classes. Then I got a job packaging cards.

In 1996 I met my husband when he came back to take a job after living in Florida. I started a job in the same place on the same day, but we didn't know each other. We worked together for a year and some weekends we go to the show together. We went together for a year and decided to get married. We went back to Mexico to get married in 1997. Our twin girls were born in 1999. They're now in first grade. We also have a baby boy, sixteen months. I'm happy here. I have my family and a nice life.

## **Reza Shah: A Wonderful Leader**

*Peyman Lari Najafi, Woodbury*

Twenty five years ago Iran had a wonderful king. His name was Reza Shah. He was a helpful, powerful and independent person. During that time Iran was a wonderful country in the Middle East. Reza Shah helped the Iranian people to be successful. For example, my brother came to the U.S.A. 30 years ago. When he decided to come to the U.S.A my family couldn't support him. He applied to the Iranian government if they can solve his problem and they did. He became a professor in the U.S.A. Iran was a powerful and independent country in the Middle East when Reza Shah was a leader of Iran. Saddam Hussein tried to attack Iran in 1973 and conquer the land, but Reza Shah had the power to prevent that. All and all Reza Shah was a wonderful leader for Iran.

## **I Remember My Family and Friends in Mexico**

*Pedro Morales, Minneapolis*

I remember my family and friends in Mexico. I remember my mother when she bought my first toys. I remember my father when he gave me clothes. I remember my friends when they and I bought tamales. I remember my sister when she prepared those delicious chilaquiles spicy. I remember everybody's nephews when we played on the street. I remember the sounds of the cars, the screams of the children. I remember the elementary school so near my house. I remember my first language, Nahuatl, I forgot it. All of this I remember with pride and love because I am Mexican.

## **My First Day in the U.S.A.**

*Asha Mohamed, Minneapolis*

My name is Asha Mohamed. I am from Somalia. I remember my first day in the U.S.A. It was a happy day and a sad day at the same time. I remember one thing made me happy – when I saw part of my family. They lived in America. And I remember the other thing; it made me cry all the first year when I remembered my country. I was crying all the night but the people I lived with, my family, were sleeping and nobody heard me.

I cry when I remember my free life in my country, like I can arrive anywhere I want to. I cry when I remember my friends. I cry when I remember Eid time. I remember when all my family was together it was a good time. But in the American family you never see them together. When I asked myself why we don't sit together and get a good time together, I found the answer, because there is no time. The time in America is very short. Nobody has time for anybody and nobody cares about you. That makes me cry.

## **My Tibetan Life**

*Tenpa Tsering, Minneapolis*

My name is Tenpa and I am from Tibet. I am Tibetan. The history is with my family in my country. I am going to write about my family and my friends. So, when I lived in my country, I lived with my family and friends, I was very happy and it was always a beautiful day. I had two brothers and one sister. We lived together and we worked together. We shared our problems and enjoyed life together. I loved my family every day. They loved me. I had many friends in my country. But I had two very good friends. We played and worked together. It was a very happy day and I miss all my past history and I will never forget those histories. I love my family and my friends.

## **I Am From**

*Lisa W., Moorhead*

I am from a family of divorce,  
From being asked to choose  
Between Mom and Dad at the age of four.  
Upset they had asked me that question.  
Without any choice,  
Moving with my mom to North Carolina,  
Then back home to Florida,  
Then to Moorhead a year later to be closer to family.

I am from going back to North Carolina and Florida every year  
To visit my Grandparents and my Dad,  
From missing him so much between visits  
And being so excited to see him.  
I am from being poor,  
From not having nice clothes like the other girls,  
Being made fun of at school.

I am from playing kickball and ditch with the neighborhood kids,  
From playing on the snow hills and sledding.  
I am from being an only child,  
Feeling alone and sad and bored,  
From having no one to share my dolls with.

I am from knowing that education is important,  
From regretting the choice I made,  
But always going back to school.  
I am from continuing to try my best in everything I do.

## **My Story**

*Mohamed Ali, Minneapolis*

In this story I will be writing about my life story, which I have had in Somali, Kenya and finally, the U.S.A. The first, Somalia, is where I was born. My life in Somalia was good. In 1991, when civil war exploded everything changed. One day as I was playing with my friends we heard explosion and fire fighter. Everybody was shocked, especially us, because we had no idea what was going on. Every one came back to his home immediately. The fire was continuing till the next morning. I went out side and I saw people were to shot death and others taking their last breath. That was a horrible moment for everyone .The next day we decided to leave the country before militants got us. There was no transportation so we had to leave country by foot. We went to the neighboring country, Kenya. We live there as refugees until when I come in America. I am concluding my speech.

## **Strange Buddha Boy**

*Neng Vang, Saint Paul*

When I lived in Laos, I saw a child that was different from many other children. The child was a boy whose name was Prince. His head was seven steps high, about 20 cm. His head looked like the head of a Buddha. Because of his special and rare appearance, according to our beliefs, we believed that he was a leader from the past who passed away and was now reborn to finish his duties as a leader in this life.

When he was born, there were many talks and stories about him. Because his family worked for the government, they asked the Laos authorities to help protect the boy in case of any threats. Since the Laos authorities took over, there were many gossips that the boy was kept in a safe. Others said that the boy died. Up to this day, no one really knows what happened to him.

## **My Country, Ecuador**

*Ramiro Espinoza, Crystal*

I lived on a farm with all of my family. I remember when I was a child I dreamed to come to the U.S.A., but I was too young. Also my family disagreed. My mother told me "Before you go to the U.S.A., you have to go to the army first." I said "OK mom, I want to try how the military life is." So I went to the army for 15 months. After that, I came to the U.S.A. When I got here, I was so very sad because I left my family behind.



**Strange Buddha Boy**  
*Neng Yang, Saint Paul*

**Moving Here from Mexico**  
*María Germán, Richfield*

I came to Minnesota in January 1999, from Mexico City.  
I came with my family.  
I like Minnesota and living in a big city.  
I don't like the cold in January.  
I miss my family, Mexican food, and my brothers and sisters.  
I work part time in the factory. I work at night.  
I hope I can study more English.

**New Year's in Russia**

*Nadezhda Batchenkova, Kensington*

I'm from Russia and I'd like to tell you about a celebration of New Year there. In my country the New Year is the most important holiday for many people. The New Year parties at the work places, in schools and kindergartens start a few days before the New Year. Instead of Santa Claus our kids have Ded Moroz or Grandpa Frost. He has a long silver-white beard and hair. He's tall and dressed in the long red fur coat which is edged by white swan down and embroidered in silver. He's got white felt boots on his feet, white three-finger mittens with silver pattern on his hands and a red round hat with white down edge. He always holds a long silver staff in one hand and carries a big sack with presents in the other one. He lives in the old Russian town at the north of Russia – Great Ust'ug. Children write letters to him and ask him for presents during the year. Grandpa Frost and his granddaughter Snow Maiden named Snegurochka deliver the presents on New Year's Eve driving the sleigh with three horses harnessed abreast.

On the New Year's Eve, families get together at their homes and have a holiday supper. At midnight the main clock of the country on Spasskaya tower at Red Square in Moscow strikes twelve and all the people open bottles of champagne and wish one another a happy New Year. We go out to the streets and squares, walk to look at the city's decorated New Year's trees, make plenty of fireworks, eat and drink a lot and keep celebrating all night long.

The all-national new-year problem is the morning hangover on the 1st of January. If somebody wanted to conquer us, he would do that without a single shot on the first day of New Year. The whole country has 10 days New Year/Christmas holidays. Banks, post offices and any State institutions don't work for almost two weeks. This is pretty hard but, we love our New Year holidays.

**I Came from Guatemala**

*María, Minneapolis*

September 20, 1990 I left my family. My life in my country was very hard. I was afraid to stay there. I was very sad for my mother, and brother and sister. I lived in California. My job was to clean the houses. I worked in the hospital, in the factory. I went back to my country in May. My mother was very sick, so I took my family.

I decided to get married in June. I came to America together with my husband. It was very difficult travel. The immigration took me away for one day. I traveled to Mexico for three weeks. I lived in California. I went to my country to see my mother again. She was very sick. I was pregnant when my mother talked to me on the phone, "Please come." I needed to see her, so I decided to go in February. My baby was born in March. I think I stayed in my country for one week. I was afraid to live in my country. I asked the doctor if my mother was better. The doctor said, "Your mother has an ulcer. She is a little better. She is happy to see you."

## **My Life in Refugee Camps in Thailand**

*Na Xiong, Saint Paul*

My name is Na Xiong. I am a student at the Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc. English Education Program. Now I am still learning English. I have been in the United States for one year. I came to the United States on August 8, 2005. I came from Thailand. I was born in 1982 in a small camp called Ban Vinai. When I was a child I liked to play with all my friends. My friends were friendly with me. We liked to walk to school. We got rice, vegetables, meat and fish from the U.S. Aide for refugees. I spent my childhood in Ban Vinai about 10 years. In 1992 my family was moved into Saraburi City. We lived in Wathamkrabok.

My family was very poor. We didn't have money to buy foods and clothing. On Hmong New Year we didn't have money to buy new clothing to wear for the celebration. I decided to go to work, so I worked in the gas station in Ayuthaya City. I was a gas station attendant. I worked in the gas station about six years. In 2003 I decided to come back home and go to school again. At that time, I tried to learn English and Thai together at the same time. I had school all day. I studied hard all the time. But I didn't understand English well. I only understood a little English. I didn't understand why. On October 18, 2004 my school was closed. At that time, I was 23 years old. I decided to marry my girlfriend, Mee Yang. We married December 19, 2004. Then my wife and I liked to grow vegetables in our garden. I love my wife so much. On August 8, 2005, I left my wife behind with her family because she was signing up to come to the United States with her family.

When I arrived in the United States, I missed her a lot. She and I talked on the phone for hours every day. She came to the United States a month later. Now we live together in St. Paul. We have one child and the second one is coming in May 2007.

## **Prodigal Son**

*Florence Iketalu, Brooklyn Park*

O there is a Prodigal Son calling you to come without delay!  
O there is a Prodigal Son! O there is a Prodigal Son!  
O there is a Prodigal Son calling you to come without delay!  
O there is a Prodigal Son calling you to come! Come! Come!

Come without delay! Without delay!  
Come without delay! Without delay!  
Come without delay! Without delay!  
O there is a Prodigal Son calling you to come! Come! Come!

## **My Story of Coming to the U.S.**

*Bee Yang, Plymouth*

My name is Bee Yang. I came to the United States because I wanted freedom for me and my family. It was very dangerous in my country because of war. My family and I were very scared that something bad will happen to us. I wanted a better life for my kids. My family and I were sponsored by a Lutheran church in Illinois to come to the United States from Thailand. We arrived in Chicago. We lived in Hanover Park in an apartment. That was the first home we had. We didn't know any English and didn't know how to read or write. Our sponsor's names are Barbara and Danny Walters. They were the ones who helped us and transported us to places we had to go. But everyone in the Lutheran church took turns to take care us. They taught us to read, write and speak English at that time.

## **Moving from Moldova**

*Mariya Reylyan, Plymouth*

I moved from Moldova on July 10, 2000. I came here with my mom, sister and brother. I like living in Minnesota and I like my job. I don't like driving my car when there is a lot of snow. I miss my family. I miss my job as a cook. I miss my friends. It has been hard to learn English, drive and find a job. I work at a big nice house as a housekeeper. I hope that I will speak English better.

## **I Am From**

*Nidar Hassan Salman, Moorhead*

I am from the mountains,  
Once beautiful mountains,  
Robbed of their natural color and scent by chemical rain.  
I am from walking miles throughout these mountains,  
Cautiously collecting sticks.  
From living in a dirt house,  
Rain dripping on my bed most nights.  
Not a bed, but a mattress for five people  
Lying next to one another like eggrolls.

I am from growing up in violence, internally and externally.  
From playing with toys of broken glass and guns.  
Everywhere there were threats of violence,  
A fear of bombs hidden where we played.  
I am from getting hit by teachers at school for not  
Cutting my nails shorter.  
Instead of going to school, I scrubbed my nails  
Against the cement to remove the polish.  
Hiding behind my house all day  
So I wouldn't get in trouble from my father.  
Mother didn't care--  
She was there physically, but not mentally.  
Always struggling from the abuse.  
Not a day of my childhood  
Was all happiness and peace.

I am from washing clothes with cold water,  
Getting special nuts from trees with Daper (Grandma),  
Cooking food over a fire, carrying water on my shoulder.  
Muddy roads everywhere.

I am from playing jacks very late at night.  
Nobody would care, no mom or dad  
To call me in.  
Too busy arguing and fighting.  
Mom being physically attacked by my father,  
Fleeing from village to village, blood covering her body.

I am from a village,  
Unhealthy conditions and wide-open spaces,  
A village where you know everyone and everyone knows you.

I am from being appreciative of everything,  
At least pretending to be,  
Having to accept the way things were.  
Grandma's stories about religion, relationships,  
And daily routines were boring to hear but  
Now I realize they were  
My only education, my only source of healing.  
I was always alert  
Yet always a blamer.  
I was quiet, reserved, timid, irresponsible, careless,  
Yet always enjoying my rare moments of happiness.  
I am from the mountains of Kurdistan.  
I am from becoming a survivor.

## **My History**

*Genet Balcha, Minneapolis*

I came to America on August 29, 2006. I am an Oromo woman from Oromia in Ethiopia. My life in our country was very bad because I did not have freedom in Oromia. The government is very cruel. It is killing and fighting the Oromo people. My life now is very happy because the U.S.A. government is good. I have freedom. The school is free, and my children are very happy. The children's transport is free, the children's breakfast and lunch are free. The government donates it to my children. I am living in Minnesota with my spouse and children. My family is happy, and so am I.

## **The Review of My Life**

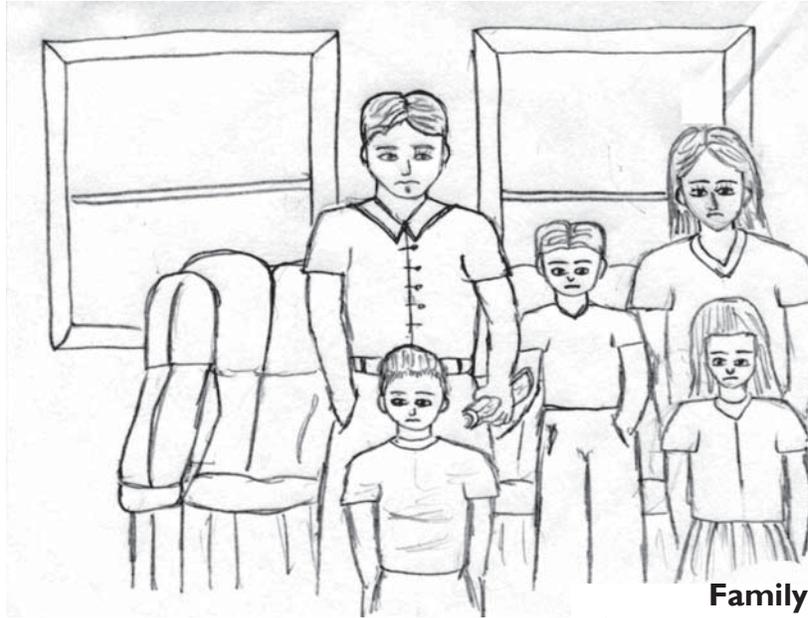
*Cristián Rojas, Minneapolis*

My name is Cristián Rojas. I am from Puebla, Mexico. I was born in 1980, and I came to the U.S.A. on September 21, 2006. I lived in my country with my mother and my brothers. I studied computing because I like very much the computers; this was my work. I am married, the name of my wife is Leticia, I love her. I don't have children. I came to this country to work and get money to build my house. When I achieve it, I will return to my country, to be happy with my family.

## **I Remember Eid**

*Layla Mohamud, Minneapolis*

I remember when I was back in Somalia. The holidays we used to celebrate were wonderful and great. Those days were the happy days when my family and I were together. My favorite holiday was Eid. It was the best holiday. I remember we woke up early in the morning to go to prayer with a large group of Somalian people. Then afterwards, we came together and feasted until noon with wonderful food, desserts and lunch of all kinds. There are two kinds of Eid. They are called Eid al Fitr and Eid Aladhad. These are the major holidays. Eid al Fitr is the celebration of the month of fasting, which is called Ramadan. This is the second largest holiday which is very important. There are family gatherings and plenty of gifts are given to children. The other Eid is the most important holiday. It is a celebration of charity for the poor people. On this day, children have freedom and fireworks are played with through the whole day. This is a very special day for families to celebrate the happiness of being together. We visit our neighbors and people who are related to us. We knock on their doors. Eid is celebrated three days, and Eid al Fitr is the most special day.



**Family**

*Por Yang, Minneapolis*

## **Vietnamese New Years Holiday**

*Tuu Van Vo, Blaine*

The most important holiday in my country Vietnam is “Tet.” My country uses both calendars, the English and Asian calendars. As usual, the Asian New Year, or “Tet,” comes in January or sometimes February. This is an important time for everyone in every house. It is a big holiday in Vietnam.

This season is without appointments so every person in Vietnam stops his daily labor to prepare for a New Year. We have three days of holiday beginning in “Lunar” January on the first, second and third. Before these three days everybody bustles to go to the market to prepare rice, meat, flowers and many kinds of vegetables. Some families make their own traditional cakes. Almost all houses have to be painted and decorated, including the altar for greeting ancestors.

The first day begins at one o’clock a.m. Every family has festival greeting, cult ancestor fire works, at church and at the Buddhist Pagoda the bell rings.

“Tet” is a time the family comes together under one roof at whatever cost and from whatever distance. They visit their neighborhood, cousins, and go to the cemetery, pagoda or church. Everyone congratulates each other with Happy New Year, “Tet.”



## *Stories & Snapshots*

### **Some Trouble with an Elevator**

*Halwa Abdulkadir Hussein, Saint Paul*

My name is Halwa Abdulkadir Hussein. I was born in Somalia in the town of Hargeysa in 1989. I grew up in Somalia. I am Muslim. I have four brothers and a mom. My father died in 1994, and at that time I was young so I moved to Kenya.

I came to the United States of America on June 6, 2006. I saw many challenges in the United States such as the weather. The weather was very cold. I saw many snow storms that came from the sky. I hadn't seen snow before, so it was a surprise to me. My country in Somalia was different than the United States. My country's weather was hot and warm and rainy. When I came to the United States I began high school at Arlington High School as a tenth grader. I am a student and I am also single.

At the beginning of my time in the United States I had some trouble with an elevator in my apartment. One day I was going to the store and a man operated the elevator on the way down, but nobody was on the elevator to help me when I wanted to come upstairs. I didn't do anything, I just stood on the elevator and it started to move. I ended up on the twenty-fourth floor. I knocked on the door. A man came out who didn't speak Somali. I said, "What are you doing here?" in my language. He didn't understand. He only spoke English. He said, "Who are you? What do you want?" Then I said, "This is my apartment!" He said, "You are crazy." I got back in the elevator and tried again. I went to the seventh floor. I went to apartment 703 and knocked again. A girl came out and she said, "What do you want?" She was speaking Somali so I understood what she was saying. I said, "Ok, I am wrong." I got on the elevator and someone else got on and I found my apartment. I felt so happy!

## **Who Are You? Where Are You?**

*Qing Fang Chang, Mounds View*

This is my true experience. On December 24, 2004 at 1:10 pm, I had waited for No. 25 bus on Spring Lake Road, Mounds View, but the bus didn't come yet. So I decided to take No. 10 bus at Central Avenue and I had to walk there. When I arrived at the bus stop, it was 3:20 pm. I waited and waited for 30 minutes, but the bus didn't come yet.

The biggest trouble was that there was not anyone who walked on the street, so I could not ask why there weren't buses. It was so cold and so strong a wind that my body shivered. I worried that I would freeze to death if I waited so I returned to Spring Lake Road.

I carried many foods with me. I was very tired. I cried and my tears froze on my face on my return road. Suddenly one car stopped near me. "Can I help you?" I heard so kind a woman's sound. I felt very strange. I thought, "Is God really coming to help me?"

"Where are you going? It is so cold and you can't walk on the street. I can take you."

"I'm going to my home in St. Paul," I answered her.

"I'll take you to go back to your home. Come in please!"

I got in her car. I felt so warm and comfortable that I wanted to sleep. Now, it is 4:30 pm. "Please take me to North Town where there are a few buses to go to Minneapolis." I really wanted her to take me to my home. But I couldn't do that.

"I'll drive with you, it is faster than bus," she said.

"Today is Christmas evening. I can't let you spend so much time for me," I said. "Well, let's go." After I got on the No. 10 bus, she talked with the bus driver for a few minutes.

"Everything is OK. Don't worry," she told me.

When the bus started I said, "Happy Christmas and Happy New Year!" to her. I smoothly arrived at my home at 6:00 pm. It was very dark. I think of her very much, but I forgot to ask her name and phone number. It is a pity. I often miss her and pray to God peace with her.

My friend, who are you? Where are you?

## **From Somalia to the U.S.**

*Nadifo Dahir, Minneapolis*

I am from Somalia. I came to America in October in 2003. That time I saw a new life and new country, but I was happy because I found my brother and my relatives. When I came to Minneapolis it was summer time. In December for my first time I saw snow. It felt very difficult, but now I feel it is easy because I live in Minnesota, work, and walk outside. I know everything about the weather. I am OK now, but I need to learn English because I don't know enough English. In my country of Somalia, there is no snow and cold. Always the weather is nice – sometimes sunshine and rain.

## **My First School**

*Rosalva Ulloa Pérez, Lake Crystal*

When I was six years old, I went to school for the first time and it impressed me a lot. In 1967 my parents sent me to school with my older sister. I still remember this day. The name of my first school was, "Revolución Agraria." The school was in another village. There I saw more cars, factories, and big stores than I ever saw before.

My favorite store showed toys in the windows. When I went to school, I was excited to see places different from my house and to know other children. The school was big and I saw a lot of children speaking together. All the children wore the same blue and white uniform. When I saw all the children, I felt confused and searched for my sister. I was glad when she took my hand and went with me to my new classroom. But when she left me I began to cry. I felt better when the professor came and told me that everything was OK. My first professor's name was María Z. Olmedo.

My first time in the school impressed me so much that I never forgot my first time in the school. I remember still the new smell of the books and pencils.

## **I Remember the Past**

*Ger Lee, Minneapolis*

My mother helped me with everything. But my mother said some things were difficult for me to learn. So right now I am married, I have five children. I go to school to learn and study English very hard.

## **A Terrible Winter Day**

*Kokou Azalekor, Minneapolis*

It was a very cold shiny day in February 2002. One of our friends named Jimi woke up in the morning and said, "Oh! How beautiful it looks outside!" He got dressed without a coat and went out to ride the bus. When he got to the bus station, the bus arrived after thirty minutes. He was very chilly and his fingers were freezing and he couldn't even move his feet to walk. While the bus driver was helping him to get on the bus, his cell phone fell into the water on the floor. He didn't see it. So, when he got home and needed to talk on the phone, he knew it may have fallen down at the bus station. He decided to go back. When he just walked outside, the cold air blew on him even though he now had his coat on. He felt very scared to go outside again. But luckily, he came across one of his friends who gave him a ride. The cold and gloomy weather made Jimi feel very sad. While they were driving behind a big truck, some ice fell down and broke the windshield. They had to stay outside until they got help but it was very cold and freezing. Since that day, Jimi promised himself to never go outside without carrying a coat – even in the summertime.

## **The Person I Admire Most**

*Tin M Nyein, Hopkins*

The person I most admire in my life is my mother. When she is near me I feel safe and warm. When I hear her voice it encourages me.

My mother is a beautiful woman with a smiling face. She is not fat but not very thin. She was a teacher in Teacher's Training College and retired as the headmistress. She was the first teacher in my life. She taught me how to live and learn. She always said learning is the most important in life. Gold can be stolen but knowledge and experience will not be stolen. I will always remember what my mother said. Although she was a career woman, she was fully responsible and gave love to the family. She was always beside me when I had my surgeries. She was very strict. When I did something wrong she did not blame me. She taught me what was right and wrong. She speaks slowly and clearly. She always encourages and supports me. I love my mother and she will be in my heart forever.

## **Paulo and Friends**

*Paulo Benevides, Minneapolis*

Paulo and friends traveled to Ilha Grande in the summer of 2004. We had fun those days. It was very hot...we were playing soccer on the beach. We were celebrating the birthday of a friend.

## **The First Ride in an Airplane to the U.S.**

*Blong Thao, Minneapolis*

When I was in the airport I felt scared. After thirty minutes, we went into an airplane. There were a lot of foreign people in the plane. I didn't know where my family could sit. We stood there for a while. I felt embarrassed in the plane because I didn't know any English. I waited for a little while. The flight attendant came to ask me, but I didn't know how to tell her. I passed my ticket to her. She suggested the seat for me and she used her hand gesture to make me understand. When I arrived in the U.S. I felt foolish because I didn't know any English. So that was a problem for me in the past. Now I feel a little better speaking English.

## **The Accident**

*Neng, Minneapolis*

I had an accident. An armored truck hit my car, and left. I followed them and honked the horn until they stopped. I told them, "You hit me and ran away. You should call the police; you have a cell phone, right?" They said yes. Then they called 911. The officers didn't ask me any questions. Just gave me a ticket. I asked the officer, "Why do you give me a ticket? You didn't ask me any questions." So the officer said, "I just do my job. You have to sign the ticket. If you don't sign, we will take you to jail." But my wife said, "Please don't do that, sign the ticket because we have to go to the hospital, the baby will come out now." So I told the officer, "I will sign it, but I will see you in the courtroom."

I went to find a lawyer. I needed an interpreter, but the lawyer didn't give me one. So I went to the court. The first time the judge said, "You want to pay, yes or no?" I said no. The judge told me, "You have to come back because you can't understand us." The second time, the judge said the same thing to me. So I asked the judge, "This isn't fair to me, why?" The judge told me I don't have a lawyer to represent my case. I said, "That is not fair, because I already went to the lawyer's office and they made an appointment for me. They said I was at fault and I must pay the ticket." I asked the judge, "Could you let me talk a little? I will explain all I can. If you can't understand me you can ask me again?" The judge let me talk and I explained how it wasn't my fault. "The officer just wrote without asking me questions. The report was not correct. Also, the officer in the courtroom is not the same officer." The judge asked the officer if he wrote the ticket. He said, "I am his partner." The judge said, "A long time ago we were sued for this same kind of case. I think we should cancel this case and let him go."

A month later, the phone rang. It was my lawyer asking for my help. He told me he would lose his job because he did not show up in court with me. I said, "It wasn't your fault. If you need help just call me."

Two months later, he called me and thanked for help. He won his case. "If you win, just take care of your office. They said you and I were wrong. But the judge let you and I win." So now their office is closed.

## **One-Way Ticket**

*Juan Miranda-Companioni, Saint Paul*

One year and seven months ago I came to the United States from Costa Rica for three months to work. I had been there for ten years. Costa Rica is a wonderful country and the people are very friendly.

I had worked in Costa Rica as an Information Technology Engineer and came to the United States to work. It was a contract to develop a web page for a bank. The project was very important; the subject was to develop the business tier for credit card transactions. They are still using my program right now.

After I finished the project in the bank I didn't go back to Costa Rica because I like the United States and Minnesota. So I started my immigrant life, it is very hard but interesting. I decided to take a challenge.

## **In the Vietnam War**

*Tong Wa Pha, Minneapolis*

A special thing I remember about my life in the mountains and the forest is in 1967 to 1975 in my country Laos. I am a right soldier of the old Governor in Laos, sent to kill the left Lao soldiers and Vietnamese soldiers. One day I saw the left Lao soldiers take the big 37 mm gun and shoot down an American jet in the sky and land near my position, about one mile away. The American pilot died with the jet. So my friends and I go to help the pilot. But the left Lao soldiers and Vietnamese soldiers came first. Our soldiers came too late so the left Lao soldiers shot our soldiers and two of them died. After that, our leader called an American jet to come and help shoot the left Lao soldiers. Eleven soldiers died, and three were caught. We took the American pilot back to our position. I remember this story all my life.

## **The Best Christmas Ever**

*George Burkhart, Saint Paul*

The holiday was Christmas. I got leave from the Navy, but my mom and dad did not know I was coming home. Well, I got on the train. I got into St. Paul at 3 a.m. I didn't want to wake everyone up, so I slept in the shed. I was still sleeping at 7:00. When my mother came back by the shed, she saw somebody sound asleep. She started to yell and everybody came running out of the house. When they found out it was me, they were happy and I was too. It was the nicest Christmas my mom and dad said they ever had.

## **Memories about My Teenage Life in Mexico**

*Alfonso Castillo, Minneapolis*

My name is Alfonso Castillo. I was born in the South East State of Chiapas, Mexico. I remember an exciting experience. I was a student in high school, and I went on an adventure with my best friends. I met on Saturday morning at 6:00 a.m. in the local park. There are those people who know the location. We started walking from the mountain and after one hour, we crossed the city and the last little town. And we were all ready to continue walking and sometimes climb to arrive up and penetrate into the forest zone. After traveling some miles, we arrived at a small village where they decided to take a rest and breathe fresh air. After half an hour, they were ready to continue walking for five hours more. We experienced some problems because my girlfriends were feeling tired and didn't want to keep walking. We all gave a hand and support to continue going and the same way because we were almost to the top of the mountain.

After one hour, we arrived at the goal. Everybody felt tired but happy that they arrived at the place. All together, we were all ready to start exploring. The principle place is one big stone that is the symbol of the city where I was born. Anyway, the stone was over 160-200 meters width and 90-110 meters high, but when we finished exploring around the stone, we found a cave where native Indians came at night on full moons to bring food to a goddess. They decided to have a rest and cooked lunch and eat all together. We took a rest for one hour and finally we came back in the same way. After six hours, we arrived at the park in the city and everybody felt really tired but happy because we got the goal.

## **My First Day in America**

*Qali Haji, Minneapolis*

The first day in America was Monday. I came to the airport in Chicago. When I climbed down from the airplane, I was scared because I didn't know anyone, and I didn't know the language. I transferred in that place, but I didn't even ask, "What time does the airplane fly?" And I was afraid to miss the time the airplane would fly because I didn't know what the person said. If he said, "The airplane will fly in 30 minutes," I didn't understand. I just sat in the chair and looked around at the people. At last I found a black man who knew the Swahili language, and he said, "Are you Somali?" and I answered yes. And he asked many questions, but I didn't answer because I didn't know what he said. At last he got my documents and caught my arm and he said, "If you sit here 20 minutes you will miss your airplane." Then they reached the airplane and I climbed up into the airplane, and I came to Minnesota on that airplane. My relatives were waiting here and I was feeling happy. At last I got to my relatives' home. Now I have stayed in Minneapolis, MN for six months and I like learning the English language.

## **A Memorable Event in the Garage**

*YongHong Zhu, Waseca*

Last Saturday, I was excited. I wanted to go to a Chinese store in Minneapolis. Unfortunately, my car had broken. When I was filling the gas in my fuel tank, I couldn't start my car. At this gas station and garage together, an old man checked out my car. He told me my car's starter was broken. I needed to spend more money to change this piece. I couldn't believe what he said. I told him, he should have called me and talked about this price when he was changing this starter.

There are many car shops here. It is easy to find a car shop that is face to face with this gas station. I asked about this starter's price. A sales clerk told me this price was 200 dollars, but if you returned this broken starter, you could receive a rebate of 70 dollars. You only need to pay 130 dollars. I thought this price very reasonable. When I was coming back to my home, the old man called me and he told me about this starter and I needed to pay 260 dollars. I told him about the real price and the return of this thing. He told me if a customer bought the starter it might be cheaper and if he bought it might be expensive. In the store, it is impossible to return this money. He lied and was an unreliable person. Finally, I bought it by myself, and I paid 78 dollars for labor cost. I paid total of 208 dollars. I wasn't cheated by this garage. I am happy now. Next time, I will never go to this garage.

## **Our Bilingual Bird**

*B.M., Moorhead*

My fourteen-year-old daughter,  
Rojin, wearing her light blue jeans and white tee shirt,  
Sits on the carpet in our sunny living room,  
She puts the big, white, square, metal birdcage  
On the coffee table. Through the bars I can see the birds  
Eating, scratching and tagging each other.  
Rojin picks one of them named Blue Sky,  
To teach it how to speak English and Kurdish.

First she separates the birds into different cages  
So she could work with one at a time.  
The reason for this is because  
If one of the birds stays in one cage  
And doesn't mix with the other birds,  
It will only talk to herself about what she learned  
From the human language through listening to us.  
By recording it in her mind and repeating it all the time,  
The bird learns to speak the Kurdish or the English language, it doesn't matter.  
But this creates a harder job for us because it takes more time  
For us to train the birds.  
We must always be aware of what the birds hear us say.  
They are good at copying the sounds they hear in our house.

She takes Blue Sky's small cage to her room  
To keep it separate from the other birds.  
She wants the one bird to remember what she has taught it.  
Rojin takes the bird out from the cage  
And puts the bird on her left shoulder.  
She turns her head toward the bird,  
Holds her hand to her mouth and whispers in the bird's ear.  
She says, "I love you" forty times.  
This is the only sentence for the day.  
Sometimes Blue Sky makes soft little sounds,  
But sometimes she seems nervous and flies away.  
Rojin puts her back in the cage alone  
And gives her some water and seeds.

It is hard to leave one bird in the cage alone.  
The other birds look for her.  
She makes sounds to let them know where she is.  
Then they all come to her cage and try to get in or get her out.

## **When I Was a Child**

*Gregory Mnushkin, Minneapolis*

In my opinion, when I was a young  
child I seldom did anything bad.  
But when I turned about 6-7 years  
old, I misbehaved. For example,  
one day my parents invited a family  
(a couple) to our apartment. Both  
couples sat at the table and spoke  
and ate. I was free; they didn't watch  
me.

I took a key with a hole, a nail, a  
hammer and matches. I put heads  
of matches into the hole of the key,  
inserted the nail and began to beat  
on it. I beat, beat, beat, but there  
wasn't a detonation (bang). At last it  
happened – a sound of a shot. I was  
very afraid, but not only me. The  
woman became badly frightened.  
My parents told me the man would  
take me to jail. I began to yell and  
cry, "I don't want to go to jail." I was  
excused, but my parents did not let  
me eat dessert.

## **It Was Not My Day**

*Isabel Jones, Minneapolis*

Hi Margaret. How are you today?  
You know this Sunday I went  
shopping at Walmart with my  
husband. We came right back  
because we had too many problems.  
You know that our car stopped  
running at Walmart. You see it was  
too cold yesterday. My husband  
was angry at me because we went  
shopping yesterday. It was not my  
day.

## **My Minnesota Camping Trip**

*Jaime Melby, Minneapolis*

It all started about two years ago, when a friend and I planned a camping trip around the state of Minnesota. One day my friend Troy drew up some maps of places to go like Rochester, Winona, Stillwater, and many other places.

The first day we went to Beaver Creek State Park, located 3 miles southeast of Rochester in the state of Minnesota. While we were there we went hiking, bird watching, swimming, and then came back and played cards for a while. Later that evening we joined some neighbors for a barbeque and some football.

The next day we packed up and left for Blue Mound State Park located 5 miles west of Winona. Also that day we stopped in Rochester to see the Mayo Clinic. That same day we drove 4.5 hours through cities like Tracey, Houston, and Stacey. Later, when we got to the park, we set up camp and did the same things that we did at the previous place.

The third day we went to Big Stone State Park located near Alexandria. That day we went hiking, biking, and we got to experience going into caves and looking at really cool rocks formed millions of years ago. Later that day we got to go out to eat in Stacey, Minnesota where I got to eat lobster. Later that same day we went on a boat ride with some of our neighbors and enjoyed a picnic.

On day four, we drove to the legendary Itasca State Park. When we got there we went exploring and came upon the headwaters of the mighty Mississippi River. Later, when sightseeing, we saw some interesting plants, animals, and caves.

Day five, we drove north for about 5 to 6 hours until we reached Cascade River State Park. We really didn't do anything there because it was too cold. The final day of our trip we camped at Interstate State Park near North Branch. That day we tried to do everything like swimming, fishing, biking, hiking, and mingle with other campers.

Overall, the trip is one that I will never forget. On the trip I got to experience the great outdoors. I met a lot of new friends.

## **My First Day in America**

*Issa Ali, Minneapolis*

My first day in America was 12/31/2001. At 3:30 I arrived in the airport in New York. I saw all the land was white with snow. I was thinking it was sugar. I exclaimed and asked myself, "What is this?" But my luck was that my children were in America before and they told me what everything meant. So I was happy to stay in the airport with the American employees. They understood everything you needed. They are good people to help all people, immigrant or no immigrant. But we had people from the Catholic Church and immigration people and police. All people in the airport were helping all the passengers. Every time I remember that and I want to say "thank you" to all the people who work in the airport.

## **A Terrible Experience**

*Asya Viner, Minneapolis*

I rarely misbehaved when I was a child, and my parents did not have many problems with me. I remember one terrible story that happened after the war. There was starvation in our country. It was a big problem to find something to eat. One day my father brought a beef leg to cook jelled meat. My mother was sick, and she asked me to prepare the meal. She explained how to prepare the leg for cooking. The biggest problem was to take off the hair. I worked in the kitchen for two hours and couldn't do it. Then I remembered that my father had a razor to shave his face. So I took this razor and the problem was resolved in a few minutes. I was very glad.

I washed the razor to put it back in its place, but I saw that it was broken. A small piece of the blade was missing. I looked for it everywhere. I rinsed the leg ten times, but I couldn't find it. I had to cook the leg because my family was hungry and waiting for the meal. So I did it, but the whole week I couldn't sleep at night. I thought that somebody could die. I never told my parents any word about this case. Nobody punished me, but I punished myself.

## **Never Give Up**

*Marina Stickel, Dresser*

In 2002 I wanted freedom, but the only way to have freedom was by driving. In order to drive, I had to get my driving permit. I talked to my husband, and he said it was okay. His mother offered to take me to the DMV.

When I walked into the DMV office, they gave me two test papers. Because I couldn't read, I didn't get one answer right. I didn't expect to pass because this was my first try. The second time I tried, I wanted to at least get a few right answers. I got eight answers correct, but I still failed the test. The third time I took the test on the computer, but still failed. On the fourth try, I wanted to tell my mother-in-law good news, but the only thing I could do after the test was shake my head meaning "no".

My mother-in-law is so sweet. She encouraged me. She said, "You will pass your driver's license test someday. Never give up."

After the fifth test, I looked at her and cried, because I failed again. Then my tutor and I studied very hard, and my husband sent me to a driving school. The driving school had all teenagers, except me. They all called me "Mom." When I completed driving school, I went back to the DMV for the sixth time. It's good news, I was close, the bad news is, I failed again.

The seventh time, my tutor drove me to the test. This time, I got all the answers right. I told my teacher, "I passed!" I screamed and she was so happy for me. We high-fived and celebrated with lunch.

I then tried for the road test. For three weeks I practiced with my driving instructor. He told me I was ready for the road test. My mother-in-law took me to the DMV. All the employees there knew me by this time. I took the test, but failed. A week later, we went back to the DMV, and I took the road test. I wasn't sure how I had done, but the DMV tester gave me the paper and said, "Congratulations! You passed." I screamed, "Mom, I passed the test!" Everyone in the room clapped for me. Now I have all the freedom in the world.

## **My Marriage**

*Anatoliy Khmel'nitskiy, Minneapolis*

I think that people marry for different reasons. One falls in love and marries, another wants to grow rich, a third by necessity, a fourth owing to gratitude. I think that the best marriage has to be built on love. Then the family will be strong and children born in this family will grow kind, jolly and happy. I met my fate fifty years ago in Moscow at a concert. Anna came with my friend. She caught my fancy and after several days we met. We walked together to movies, concerts, a park and to our friends. After the walk, late at night, I accompanied her home. I fell in love with Anna and proposed to marry her. She gave me her consent. Our parents gave us their consent too. We were married, and for 48 years we have lived in friendship and love. We have two daughters and four grandchildren. We have lived in the U.S. for six years.

## **When I Lost My Mom**

*Amal, Saint Paul*

My name is Amal. I was born in Somalia but I grew up in Ethiopia. I lost my mother in 2001. She was 39 years old. At that time I was a teenager. When I was born my mom got sick. My mother's sister took her to Mogadishu. My mother gave me to my aunt. After two years the civil war began and my aunt took me to Ethiopia because my mother's family was living in Jigjiga. My mother went to the home place after I was gone.

She saw the house empty. Then she went to Jigjiga. When she saw me my mom felt very happy. Seven years later my mom got sick again. She stayed at the hospital and every day I helped my mom and I also went to school because my mother didn't have other children. I did whatever she needed because I loved my mom. After one year she died. I was alone. Her family was my family. They took me to America. Whenever I saw a person who said "mom," I remembered my mom. If you don't have a mom you feel like you are nothing.

## **Wa Chao's Story**

*Wa Chao Yang, Minneapolis*

Wa Chao and his family will be came to the United States, to Minnesota on February 2006. We were very tired because we had long traveled by plane, and too the Vietnam war.

## **The Best Decision I Ever Made**

*Lilia Kloster, Shorewood*

I remember it was a sunny day when I left Germany to live with an American family as an au pair. It was very hard for me to figure out what I wanted. I thought getting a fresh start in a totally new place might be what I needed.

After six months in Minnesota my mom decided to buy a ticket home for me as a Christmas present. I used the chance and went home to Germany. I was so excited to go after six months and see everybody! I felt indescribably happy! When I arrived in Germany everything seems so different to me. The streets were very small compared to Minnesota, the people seemed more superficial to me, the cars were very small, everything was different. I was so emotional I couldn't stop crying. My aunt prepared dinner and invited the whole family and this all for me. I was very grateful for what she did! Six days in Germany also showed me a lot about myself. I started to compare my life in Minnesota and my life in Germany.

And then I realized I had changed and that I learned a lot in this time alone. I first learned what it is to be responsible for myself. I learned how to use my time wisely. I learned about things I really wanted to do, rather than what other people wanted me to do. For example, at home I stopped going to church because some friends of mine were laughing about it. But here I feel very comfortable about going to church without people making judgments. It was an amazing risk I was taking.

In this time alone, without my parents, friends, and any relatives, I learned a lot. During this year, I realized that the teenager time is gone and that I have a different relationship with my parents, especially with my dad. They see me more as an adult and they trust me. It was the best decision I ever made.

## **My Life**

*Mo Aweis, Minneapolis*

My name is Mohamud Aweis. I am from Somalia and my country is in East Africa. I lived there during the civil war. Somali people went to Ethiopia. We lived there for 10 years. I sold clothes to people in Ethiopia for the last three years. After we lived there I called my mother who lives in Atlanta, GA. I asked, "May I come and live with you?"

She said, "Yes, I'd love to see you."

Then she said she would call me to say when I could come. My first time coming to America it's difficult to speak English. My brother took me to Cross Keys High School to learn English and to make a better life for myself. I met my wife when she came to visit her family. We got married and moved to Minnesota and then we had three children. We have good life.

## **Doggone**

*Keith Norling, Alexandria*

Three years ago our old family dog passed away, after that I said NO MORE DOGS. Well times got hard for my daughter so she asked if she and her dog could come back home. I was glad to have her. But, what I didn't know was her doggy's tummy was full of little doggies. Before I knew it, we had ten little Huskies running around. Well we found homes for all of them but one, and this one is a new member of our home. The next winter my son had to move in also because his house had burned down. Now we are up to four dogs. The problem is these dogs have a high I.Q. because the mother dog always tries to trick me out of my spot on the couch. WARNING: do not eat off clean plates that look clean! Because those dogs do a real good job of cleaning plates, I ate off one. A few days after that I cooled down; I thought I would be good to them and run them on the sled, which they love. So I get them all hooked up and off they go without me. DOGGONE!

## **My Favorite Sport Is Running**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

A long time ago when I was in Mexico I ran a lot – four times a week. Once upon a time in Mexico, I ran a marathon. It was a big experience. I ran three hours and 30 minutes. Now I live in the U.S. I work too much, but I would like to run and I can't. I think in the future I will run more.

## **We Do Not Have Equal Rights**

*Malee Vue, Minneapolis*

In February 2005, in the country of Thailand, Thai soldiers assaulted people and they vandalized houses. One day my family went shopping in the store T V K. My husband's friend, Chao, called him.

"Ge, where are you going? Right now soldiers are vandalizing your house."

Chao said to the soldiers, "Please wait. I know this house has people living in it." The soldiers did not listen. Then they assaulted him.

Chao said, "I'm sorry. I am scared."

My family took a city bus to arrive home. Three men vandalized my house. Everybody who lived around us were scared. They said, "Don't talk or they will assault you."

My husband did not talk. I think I was not scared. We do not have equal rights. Under my country's law, I asked questions. They vandalized my house. Why? A soldier said, "Because your house is large."

I asked many questions when our luggage was stolen. "You pay for me," I said.

The soldier did not answer. He walked straight. I need help. First I went to see an American person. He spoke Thai. Well, I talked with him. He called the manager soldier. A man was sent to go with me to the captain. The manager called one soldier.

"You come in right now! I have questions for you."

There were six soldiers. I am one woman, we talked to finish.

One soldier said. "I'm sorry. You forgive me, please."

I said, "I think you said sorry to my husband. Because you got him scared."

The manager said, "Ok, I would say again for your husband."

I want to say thanks for American people that you helped me. Thank you very much again.

I am very sorry because we do not have the equal rights. First we do not have our country. Second we do not have the government.

I am very sorry for the Hmong people.

## **Life from Laos to the U.S.**

*Fai Dang Lee, Minneapolis*

Fai Dang first lived in Minneapolis. I was born on March 6, 1959, in Laos. My family came to the United States on September 27, 2004, because my family came with the program to help the Hmong people come to the United States. I am happy about the program and my life in the future will be better. I go to school at Northside ABE. This is very good for studying English for Hmong people.

The United States is very good for my children to go to school every day. Then children have hope for the life in the future. I think next I want to work to help my family. In the United States and Minnesota I like some things because they are very good for me, but something like snow is no good for me because I don't like it for my family.

## **How I Changed My Mind**

*Galina Koltun, Minneapolis*

I was about nine. I remember something bad that I did. All the students did it. We didn't like German. We sat at special tables (desks). Two students sat at one desk. We lifted our desk with our legs and moved ahead or behind and laughed. Suddenly the teacher looked at us and wondered. Sometimes we glued buttons or special paper on her chair. You can imagine what was in the break. We laughed and had fun. Our teacher was very kind. She never told about it to the director of the school.

Only later I understood that we lost knowledge in German. We were stupid. We thought we were heroes.

## **How Difficult if You Don't Know the Language**

*Ahmed Hassan, Minneapolis*

I remember my first year of school. This was October 10, 1999 at Sanford Middle School. This was math class. The students gave me a hard time because they knew I didn't speak English. What one person did was hit me on my ear. I did not know how to tell the teacher. I used bad language; the teacher kicked me out of that class. Then I went home and I said, "I am not going back to school." My uncle said "Why you not going back to school?" So he gave me a letter saying that Ahmed doesn't know English and somebody gave him a hard time in his class. I took the letter to the school. Then everything is good.

## **Finding Myself**

*Anonymous, South Saint Paul*

Not too long ago I lost my friend. No, she's not dead. She's just lost. "Who and where is she?" you ask. It's me. How can someone lose its own self? Well there are infinite answers to this question. But today I will tell you mine.

My mom was at work and I was supposed to be studying in school, but I couldn't stop thinking of him. I found out I was pregnant, I was a little worried but I wanted my baby. I moved in with my love. My mom found out and she sent the police behind us, because I was underage. While running from them, we had to jump out of a window and I lost my baby. With that I began losing myself. I tried hiding my pain by getting mad instead of sad. By trying to survive everything that was happening around me, I thought I was my pain but I was wrong. Without knowing this I was getting lost in the process.

Bitterness grew in my heart. I missed me, but my anger was winning the battle each day. I drew friends and family away with my attitude. I thought I was expressing what I felt by acting this way, but no one understood my language. I became pregnant again, and nine months later I had my firstborn. He brought joy back to my spirit, seeing him smile made me want to live life. A year later I had my daughter Malka, my queen. My children have taught me so much. My husband loves our family and we love him. Little by little I started fighting to come back, I'm a young mother, but that's why I'm doing this, because I'm a mother and my family needs me, like I need them. I went back to school and I'm going to graduate this year.

So how did I find myself? I didn't. It was my family who with love and patience brought me back. Bitterness won the battle, but love won the war.

## **Buddha**

*Witiyala Seewalie, Minneapolis*

Buddha was born in Northern India in 623 B.C. He was born as a prince. First his name was Siddhartha. After he got enlightenment, he was called Buddha. His father's name is King Suddhodhana and his mother's name is Queen Maya. As a prince he studied very smoothly and faster than other students.

When he was sixteen years old he got married to Princess Yasodara. She is very beautiful and wise. Prince Siddhartha spent time with his family until twenty-nine years of age. He had a small baby whose name is Rahula. Prince Siddhartha was twenty-nine years old, he did not understand human suffering. Then he left from his palace. He became a monk by himself and studied under two teachers. Finally, when he was 35 he practiced Meditation and he got supreme enlightenment by himself.

After he got enlightenment he did teach Nature of life, Suffering, Cause of suffering, Reduce the suffering, and Ways to reduce the suffering. He taught Buddhism for 45 years. When he was 80 he passed away. Today many people all around the world are practicing his teachings.

## **Culture Party at Northside School**

*Mai Xee Xiong, Minneapolis*

Every year during Christmas time, all my teachers at the Northside school have a culture party for every adult learner. During this event we have a lot of fun because all my teachers share their songs to the students. Also, many people bring their loved ones to come and enjoy the party. In the following sentences, I am going to talk about the songs, foods, and games.

Before this event happens, all my teachers have to choose the best day for the party. At Northside school, there are many students who come from different countries that might bring different kinds of food. For example, some might bring Asian foods or American foods. However, it doesn't matter what kinds of food they bring to this event; when I taste them they are just perfect and very delicious.

After the food, we have a raffle, which is putting everyone's name into the box. Then another teacher would draw out the names. So, whoever the lucky person is, the teacher might call his/her name. The gift during this party could be anything. At the end, everyone has a chance to sing whatever song they like. Some students prefer their own language songs, and some sing English songs. So, it doesn't matter what kinds of songs that they sing, it will be fine.

In conclusion, I enjoy this party a lot because I have a chance to taste the different kinds of food and learn new things from around the world.

## **The Accident**

*Ronita Hyde, Minneapolis*

It was 1981; I was three and a half years old. It was a nice, hot summer day. It started out as a beautiful day. Around 7:00 pm my mom got a phone call from a dear friend. She really needed her to come over and visit.

My mom got me and my sister dressed and we headed out. On the way we had to go through the Lowry tunnel. All of a sudden the car got a flat, and my mom had to pull over to the side of the tunnel. While my mom was looking at the car she heard loud screeching of another car. The driver was weaving and driving crazy. She got back into the car. Before she could tell us to get down the car crashed into us. The car hit us so hard we were knocked out of the tunnel into the on-coming traffic with the car about to tip over.

My sister and mom were okay and they got out of the car. I was in the back seat and I was not breathing and I did not respond. The glass from the car cut me in the head and face. The ambulance arrived and they said I was not going to make it. When I arrived at H.C.M.C. hospital they rushed me in, thinking I was not alive. The doctors finally got my heart pumping again but I was still unconscious. I was in a coma for a month and a half. When I finally came to, I was just like a newborn baby again.

For the next several months I had to learn how to walk, talk, and eat all over again. I had a lot of brain injuries and the doctors said I was never going to be the same again. I learned how to do everything all over again but I would have life-long problems. It took a long time for me to learn how to walk and talk again. I went through a lot of years of therapy and going to the Courage Center. Now I am 28 years old and I am doing just fine, I'm living a normal life. I can do a lot of things the doctors said I would not be able to do. I have minor disabilities, but I am all better. I told my story because a drunk driver caused our accident. I feel I am very lucky to be here and to live like a normal person.

## **My First Winter in Minnesota**

*Zeitoun Mahamed, Burnsville*

My first winter in Minnesota was very difficult for me because I had never seen snow before. The first time I saw snow was in 2004. It was at noon and I was going to work. When I came out of my house I saw a lot of snow falling down. I was scared to drive. I called my manager and I told him I can't come to work today because a lot of snow is falling. He said, "No. You have to come to work because we don't have anyone to replace you. Otherwise you will lose your job. That is what our weather is doing all wintertime." I tried to drive down the side road. The snow was falling about six or seven inches. When I tried to stop at a traffic light, I couldn't control my car. I was nervous and scared. I stopped and called my boss again and let him hear what happened to me. Finally he let me go back home and get some rest. In conclusion, I went home and when the snow stopped I took three days off from work.

## **My First Day in America**

*Chol Jud, Mankato*

My first day in America my husband had to go to work, so I was home in the apartment and my brother-in-law was home with me. I was so tired I was sleeping and he was going to cook for me. He had not been in America for very long either. He said, "Wake-up—come and eat!" He had made meat and he wanted to put bullion cube, the magic chicken broth cube in the meat. He somehow mistook a tea bag for a bullion cube and he put the tea bag in the meat. It was very bad. It was black. It was not good. Also neither one of us knew how to turn off the oven.

Then my brother-in-law went to the store because he wanted to get food for my child. He came home with catsup. He poured a lot in a bowl. "Nsebit, come and eat! This is food for kids," he said to my daughter. "This is American food for kids. It is good for you. Come on! Eat it up!" So my daughter ate it. For two days she vomited. That was my first day in America.

## **My Lovely Kids**

*Marvat Rofaail, South Saint Paul*

I came from my country eight years ago. I like the U.S.A. I came for new life. I came with my husband. I work for four years. I have three beautiful children.

In my life I work part time at United Hospital and go to a family literacy program with my kids. I am learning English and my kids are learning in a pre-school. I am happy in the United States.

## **My Life Before and My Life Now**

*Sahro Hassan, Minneapolis*

My life was good when I was with my family. I was a student. I had a very beautiful life. Now I miss my siblings because if you are between siblings, sometimes you are fighting with them and sometimes you are playing with them. My parents raised me well. We had everything we needed at that time. My life was happy. Then one day in Somalia the civil war started. We left our beautiful house and we were running through drought-stricken places. We were so afraid and so bored at the same time. We did not have enough food and water, and we did not even have our dresses at that time because we ran with empty hands from our house. After that I got to Idir Dawo, Ethiopia. I was there from 1992 until 2000. I dreamed to go somewhere else than Ethiopia. I came to America in June 2000. Now I'm married and I have two children and I have a happy life. Thanks God!

## **Bed Time**

*Jones L., Saint Paul*

I sit straight up in the bed awakened from a good sleep, it's dark except for a blinking light coming from outside my window; it's the street light and it's reflecting off the end of my bed. I've been meaning to call the city and report it but haven't gotten around to it yet. I'll get to it before I no longer am able to use it as my night-light. Feeling for my left hand, it feels like a hard ball. Shaking it because I don't understand what's going on I begin to feel a tingling sensation. I turn to the wall where the clock sits on the nightstand and I can see the numbers change to 1:30 a.m. and I have to be at work by 5:00 a.m. I'm trying not to get excited because I want to go back to sleep but how do I go back to sleep? What position do I turn? It's not like I have many choices because my bed is a twin but it's very comfortable.

As I lay back in the bed I look around; it's a very soft cozy feeling room. The walls are a light green that are bare except for the shadow from the streetlight that reflects a palm leaf from my plant that sits in the window. I lay there and start to pray asking the creator to help me to do well in school so that I can start applying to other well-paying jobs with insurance. I feel in my hand that repetitive work is causing all this pain. You see I've been cleaning buildings since elementary school and now I am forty-nine years old. The work has taken a toll on my body.

Pills come to mind; maybe something extra strength might help. When I reach into the drawer next to my bed I pull out an empty bottle. I want to scream loud enough to wake everyone on the house. Someone took the last pill and didn't let me know. My pain has not let up. If I could only get back to sleep, maybe I could sleep the pain away. My discomfort makes me more determined to continue going to school and not give up.

## **A Terrible Day**

*Jesus García Valdez, Minneapolis*

On Saturday, everybody got ready to go out, but the car did not start. I tried all possibilities that it could be, but the car still did not start. I cleaned the battery's terminal for corrosion, after that I tried again to start the car. But the car did not start and then I thought it may be because I left the car's tank with half a tank of gas overnight.

I walked six blocks to the gas station; it was freezing. My ears and cheeks were in pain. I bought five gallons of gas. I filled up the car's tank and I added antifreeze in the tank, but still the car did not start. Then my wife called her sister for a battery jump. Later on she came, and we set the cable on the car's battery, but the car did not start. Then she gave me a mechanic's telephone number. I called him and explained all the things I had done, and then he said, "I will be there."

He got to my house, I opened the car's hood, he just pressed a tube line and some gas came from the tube line and then he told me, "Start the car." I did and the car started. I asked him why the car did not want to start, he said, "The car's gas line was frozen."

## **My Gift from God**

*Mayra Avanda, Plymouth*

My name is Mayra and I am from Mexico. I am an au pair having the greatest time in Minnesota. I would like to tell you a most beautiful story that I will always hold. I went to San Antonio, Texas last May to visit my family. My uncle delivered me 22 years ago and then he baptized me. That is why this trip was so special.

It was a sad day when I had to fly back to Minneapolis. I was tired and I just wanted to be in bed. I couldn't wait for the plane to take off. I was saying to myself, "I hope a cute guy sits next to me." Then I saw a cute, good looking, tall and thin guy standing in the aisle. I looked at him and he reminded me of a friend from home. I looked at him again and our eyes met for a second. I saw him coming; he put his luggage in the overhead cabin. He sat next to me! I was so tired that I gave him a bad face and fake smile and I turned my back to him until he said, "Oh, I think you took part of my seatbelt." I got mad. He said, "I'm just kidding." I gave him a fake smile again and I said to myself, "Oh a fool!" He introduced himself, "My name is Gordon," he extended his hand to me. We started talking about our trip and when I told him that I got baptized, he got very excited.

It really impressed me because it was meaningful for him like for me. I shared with him some snacks I had in my purse and some pictures and he did the same, he showed me pictures of his family. We spent our time talking until we got to Minneapolis, he asked for my number, unconvinced, I gave it to him. We had a nice conversation but still I didn't know if I should trust him.

I thought about what just happened; guy talking about God right after my baptism. It was definitely a gift from God. I was ready to go to bed that night when he called. We have been together ever since. I don't believe in destiny but I believe in God. I believe He crossed our paths to share our lives in this moment.

## **When I Was a Child**

*Tatyana Levina, Minneapolis*

I remember when I was in the orphanage with my two sisters. We were very hungry all the time. Every morning we had breakfast, which was a small piece of bread, two teaspoons of sugar and a cup of water. We never had any candy. Five of us collected the sugar until we had 20 teaspoons of sugar. In the kitchen we cooked the sugar in a pan. We made small cups out of paper, and when the sugar turned to liquid, we poured the sugar into the small cups. The sugar had turned to brown in color. When it cooled, we had home-made candy.

One day in September or October a medium truck came to the orphanage loaded with cabbage. The teacher told me to watch the cabbage so the other children did not steal the cabbage. But two boys stole two cabbages apiece. I told the teacher who stole the cabbage. The boys caught me and beat me with a whip. I had three red welts on my body. I decided then to never talk about anybody again.

## **How I Was a "Brat"**

*Ilyas Aliyev, Minneapolis*

I remember an event in my life when I was in school. I was 13 or 14 years old and I had a lot of hair on my head. Once our principal decided that all boys in school had to cut their hair because it was a hard time (World War II) and many students didn't have soap to wash their heads. Our principal was a strict woman. So all boys cut their hair except me. After that she called my mother and explained to her why all boys had to cut their hair.

I didn't cut my hair. Instead I asked my mother to transfer me to another school after summer vacation. On the first day when I came to the new school, I was very staggered and frightened. I saw my old principal who was greeting students and congratulating them on beginning the new school year. For some reason she also decided to change her school. At the new school we became friends. She was a good principal and a good person. Many years later after I graduated from the high school, I was always glad to see her and talk with her.

## **My Children**

*Paulette Griffin, Minneapolis*

My children are very close to my heart. When I need anything they are right there. If one can't help, there is one that will. They found that what I have been telling them was the truth. They found that life is not a bowl of candy; it is what you make it out to be.

## **My School**

*Diem Huynh, Minneapolis*

When I lived in Vietnam I went to school. I went to 6th grade. I walked to school every day because my school was near my house. It was about 10 minutes to walk. When I began school I was ready for everything, I had my notebook, book, pen, pencil, bookcase, and ruler. I went to buy these in the bookstore. I paid tuition for education. I paid one semester a year. My country was very poor; they didn't have money to pay for your school. The classes began at 7:45am and went to 11:45am. We had five and six periods in the day, every period was about 45 minutes and then we had break time for five minutes.

I went to school Monday through Saturday, and my day off was only Sunday. When the teacher came in the class, the students stood and said hello and good morning. Then we sat down. After that we began to study. In the class we studied history, math, reading stories, writing paragraphs and English. We changed schedules about every three months. We had three tests in a year. The first test one semester, second test next semester and we have final test for the year. If you did a good on the test, you went to the next grade in the next year. If you failed the test you needed to take the test again the next summer. We had no school for holidays, Christmas and New Year.

## **Coming to America**

*Pheng Chang, Saint Paul*

My name is Pheng Chang. I am from Laos. My mother and my father lived in Laos. I have one sister and five brothers. They are living with my mother in Laos. My husband and I came to Thailand. I and my family lived in a little house in Thailand. In Thailand my husband and I sewed Hmong clothes. We ate rice and chili peppers and eggplant, tomatoes and green onions and lettuce. I married in Laos. I have four children. The first child was born in Laos and the second, third and fourth children were born in Thailand. My first child is eight years old, second child five years old, third child three years old and fourth child two years old. Our children were born at home because we had no money for the hospital. My husband helped me. He cooked hot food for me and took care of me and my baby at home.

Only I and my family decided to come to America. On December 9, 2004 at 2 a.m. we took the bus to the airport to America. I stayed home three months. After three months I went to school in the Hubbs Center. Now I go to school at HAP. I like to study English and I like snow. Two of my children go to school in Hayden Heights Elementary School. My son is in 3rd Grade, the girl in 1st grade. In America my family is living in a good house with four bedrooms. I pay the money every month. In America I like to eat chicken and steak and everything. My family is very happy and am I happy too.

My father died in 2003. I miss my mother and in Laos my mother misses me and my children and my husband.

## **I Remember My Country**

*Fuely Yang, Minneapolis*

I remember my country every day. I miss everything. I left my country 25 years ago. I remember it had beautiful mountains with beautiful forests. There was a lot of wild fruit. Hmong people eat mostly that fruit. Every year I miss that fruit. When I go back to my country the first thing I want to eat is that fruit. After the civil war came, we moved to Ban Vinai refugee camp in Thailand. I married my wife. And I have four children, two boys and two girls. They were born in Thailand. Two more boys were born in the USA. There are eight people in my family. The oldest daughter goes to college. Two sons go to high school. Now I am 40 years old. I have a full time job and I get money to take care of the bills and everything for my family.

## **My First Time in the U.S**

*Kee Khang, Minneapolis*

My name is Kee Khang. I am from Laos, a very small country in Asia. I thought I would never see the United States, but I was lucky. In June, 2005, my wife came to see me, and she made some documents. After nine months, in April 2006, I came to the U.S. It took me about 21 hours flying from Laos, my native country, to the U.S. I arrived at the airport in St Paul, Minnesota at 6:00 am in the morning. Then my wife and my cousins came to pick me up from the airport.

First I think living in the U.S. it will be very hard for me because I just came and I don't know English very well, but after a few months I realized that everything is OK because I think everybody must have this problem when they first came to the U.S. However, several months later the winter came again. It was so cold outside. One day I stayed at home with my wife and we were talking about what we were going to do on the weekend. Suddenly, I looked outside through the window and I saw some snow was falling down. It was the first time I saw snow. A few hours later I went outside and I saw the streets, parks, everywhere become white. I like to play with snow but I hate shoveling snow around the sidewalk.

Living in the U.S. was a little hard for me but I like it. I promise I'll be a good man and find a good job in the future. I love Minnesota and my Family.

## **My Nephew "Bubu"**

*Abeba Gebrekirstos, Saint Louis Park*

My nephew, Bubu, loves playing and watching soccer; he is obsessed with it. He started playing soccer when he was three. Every time when he wakes up in the morning, he searches around the house for his big ball. If he doesn't get it he starts crying. Before he begins crying somebody has to give him the ball, otherwise nobody can do anything. His legs are stronger than his friends'. Every time he wants to be a big boy. His friends are five or six years older than him and they call him to play in the yard. Every time he wants to be a winner. Sometimes he returns home crying; then we all know he didn't win. He watched "World Cup" from the beginning to the end sitting on his special chair without moving. If there is soccer he stays without sleep till midnight. He knows the names of most of the popular players and their countries. When he was five, his name was "David Beckham"; he wants to be like Beckham. If we go out shopping with him he wants a big ball, even if he has more at home. One day he started playing by himself and he kicked the wall so many times. My father was taking a nap, and told him to stop kicking the wall, but he was an inflexible boy. After a little while, my father asked him to bring his ball. He started crying and put his ball in front of my dad. We all know what he was going to do next. He went outside, looked on the ground and started playing with small rocks.

## **The Little Boy on a Big Horse**

*Russell David Platz, Little Falls*

Raised on a farm, my few friends weren't exactly next door. Aside from school days a lot of my time was spent alone capturing wild snakes, tadpoles, or frogs in the creek, or out hunting Big Game with my BB gun in the woods.

The highlights of my life were being somewhat apprehensively led-around on Gipsy, a well-bred American Paint, well-proportioned, of balanced color, and about 14 hands, with high spirits. He was beautiful, smart, and had character. Also Roman eyes – captivating, mystical, actually scary looking.

One day I was handed the reins, while a gate would be opened? Wrong! I was nearly dumped from the saddle as Jip broke from a standstill to a gallop in the blink of an eye! As we flew across the field I'm reasonably sure I could be heard screaming on the surrounding farms. But when we got back, I knew how to ride.

No more time wasted catching minnows, chasing grasshoppers or squirrels for me. I was Billy the Kid, Jessie James, Shalako, and the Lone Ranger all rolled into one. Riding fence, out on patrol, fording rivers and scouting for Indians were my lot. Lever-action Daisy tied to the cante in case of trouble, be it man or beast.

Nearly 40 years would pass and one day I walked into Tom's Bar, sat by this pretty girl and ordered a beer. I introduced myself, she said,

“Marylin, and you’re from where?” I told her, and her eyes got big as Christmas! “You’re the little boy on the big horse!” she gasped. “Did you know that every girl in the county was in love with you?” Well, Marylin and I became friends. From time to time I would run into her and we’d talk of places, people and things long past. Unfortunately, Marylin succumbed to cancer a few years back, but every time I think of her and what she said, I smile. And here I felt like I was the loneliest boy in the world!

## **My Family**

*Thong, Minneapolis*

My name is Thong. I was born in 1983 in Thailand. In Thailand my mother and father helped me to do everything. My brother, sister and I went to school together so when I went to school I was eight years old. My brother was 18 years old; my sister was 10 years old. I started school at level 1, so I stopped school at level 5. After I stopped school I got married. I was 16 years old and I had two children. When I came to the United States I had one baby but now I have three children. When I came to the United States my brother helped me because I didn’t know how to speak English. He helped me come to the MFIP office and filled out information for me. He took care of my family. I told him he is a good brother. I think he is very busy so now I drive and I got a job and I study English. I think I take care of my family. It is OK.

## **Family Reunion in New York**

*Jackie Munn, Saint Paul*

I think it is important to have fun in life, so I always schedule a lot of fun activities with my friends and family. When I found out that my family was going to have a reunion in New York, I made sure I could go. The reunion lasted an entire weekend, and it was fun every minute.

The reunion began with a dinner Friday evening at a restaurant. We had a private room for our family. There were 70 of us. We ate and talked until the restaurant closed. We had a lot of fun catching up, because many of us had not seen each other for years.

On Saturday morning we met for a boat tour of New York. Our tour took us up the Hudson River. I moved away from New York ten years ago, so it was nice to see how the city had changed. There was a lot of talking and laughing as we told stories about different people and places. Then we went to a Chinese restaurant that was in our old neighborhood, where all of us had eaten there at least one time. After that, we went to the aquarium, where there were fish from all over the world. That night we had a family talent show. There are a lot of talented people in our family, and different relatives played musical instruments, sang, and read their poetry. My sister, Krista, is a professional dancer in New York, and she performed for us. The youngest performer was my nephew, Dominique, who is five years old. He played a song on a tiny violin.

On Sunday, we had a family picnic in the park. Everyone brought food and drinks to share. Then we had family sports; baseball, volleyball, flag football, and basketball. One of my cousins plays volleyball at her college and she taught all the little kids to play. Everyone brought family pictures, movies, and videos. Some of the photos were almost 100 years old. The oldest was a painting that our great, great grandfather painted. That painting was from 1875! My brother is an Internet genius, and he is going to make a family web site with pictures, videos, and movies.

As you can see, our family reunion was wonderful. We renewed our friendships and grew stronger as a family. I hope that we have another great reunion next year.

## **My Parents**

*Nhialue Khang, Brooklyn Park*

My mother and father helped me do everything when I was a child. My father was training me to do everything I liked and he showed me how to be a farmer. He told me, "You can do for yourself later in your life."

I came to the United States in 2002. My first job was as a janitor in a casino and at Target. My uncle helped me to do everything the first time I did it. He showed me how to move things inside or outside. I was with him for two years, then I was a janitor too. Right now I am a janitor in the airport. I started in 2004. My job is good for me to do.

I was born in Laos, 1952, during the Vietnam War. I was a soldier from 1964 to 1976 in Laos I stopped being a soldier in 1976. Then I came to be a farmer for my family in Laos. I learned to be a farmer from 1976 to 2001. I moved to the United States in 2002. The government helped me come to the U.S. Right now I live in Brooklyn Park with my son. His name is Leng xor khang. My family lives together. My son has a big family. We live together. There are ten people in our house, five women and five men.



## **Landscape: India**

*Jain Shaily, Minnetonka*

## **My Home**

*Chai Kao Lor, Minneapolis*

My family has seven people. I have a living room, dining room, table, chair and sofa. We have a kitchen, a bathroom and sink. There are four bedrooms and lamps. We have mirrors, a computer, a radio and a freezer. My family has no money.

## **The La Xiong Family**

*La Xiong, Minneapolis*

I was born in Thailand. I had one brother and four sisters. When I was six years old, I went to school to learn the Lao language for about five years. Then my family moved to Watthankrabok, a new camp. I went to school again and learned the Thai language. I finished grades one through six.

In 2000, I married Pa Yia Thao. Then I worked at sewing by hand and other general jobs. In 2004, my family moved to the United States of America because the camp closed.

## **Family**

*Inés Salamanca Sánchez, Saint Paul*

My name is Inés, I am from Mexico. I like Minnesota because I am with my children and they go to school here. They like when it's winter because we go outside to play with ice. We like the summer too because we go to the lake, walk, and swim.



## *Family & Home*

### **Ouch! (My First Memory)**

*Mary Chamdak, Mankato*

When I was four years old I was outside playing with my twin brothers. My father had a lot of land and cows and a big yard. There was a big tree out in the yard. It was the kind of tree that had big pods and leaves drooping down. My brothers had made a swing by tying the leaves together. I was swinging in the tree and they pushed me. My younger brother kept on pushing me harder and harder. I fell off the swing. My arm really hurt and it swelled up very quickly. I was crying. My father came out and said, "What happened?"

"She fell off the swing," my brother said.

"How did this happen?" my father asked.

"I pushed her very hard," said my brother.

My father put mud on my arm and it became hard like clay. There was no doctor in my village so we had our own way of doing things. For one month my arm was in the clay and it hung straight down. Also they gave me shots. It cost one cow for each shot – very expensive. We like shots because they work quickly for the pain.

After one month, they took a knife and made some cuts in my hand and arm to let the blood out. They took off the clay and set the arm in bark and wrapped it with string and kept it that way for another month. So for two months I couldn't move my arm. My whole side with that arm turned red. So half of me was red and half of me was black. Even now when I lift a heavy pot I can feel some pain in that arm.

## **A Story about My Country**

*Luis Paredes, Minneapolis*

I remember my family. I remember when my mother cooked. Her way of cooking special food smelled beautiful. We have cultural food. I remember when my mom cooked it. It smelled good. We usually ate together at dinner and holidays. I used to help my mom take it from the kitchen. I remember when we ate with my brother. He made jokes and made everyone laugh. My name is Luis Paredes.

## **A Family**

*Ge Pha, Minneapolis*

My name is Ge Pha in Minneapolis. I am from Thailand. I am twenty years old. Before coming here my family lived in Chicago for two years. My family likes Mexican food and Chinese food. I have three brothers and four sisters. My father and mother are happy for their children.

## **Family**

*Gerardo Fernández, Saint Paul*

My family lives in Mexico. My family has eight people. My mother is dead, my father lives, but he has a new wife and two sons. I have two sisters and three brothers. So the total is five siblings. My brothers live in Wisconsin and my sisters live in Mexico. One sister has three sons and my other sister has one son. My wife and I live in St Paul.

## **Expecting a New Baby**

*Edgar Lema, Minneapolis*

My wife and I had two kids already. They are teenagers now. Their ages are fourteen and thirteen years old. When my wife tells me about the other baby on the way, she and I were surprised because we didn't have plans for this happening. After she told me she was pregnant we decided to go to the hospital to make sure to get new things for the baby until the baby was born. When the doctors tell us the test is positive we were worried about this because we had to go back to start again.

My wife called the older girls to tell them the news and they were very surprised when they first heard of the new baby coming. But the next time we called them in Ecuador they were so happy and said to send them pictures of the baby when it is born. My wife was getting bigger and bigger day by day. She is feeling tired and heavy because she has to have her baby in her body for a long nine months, plus two weeks because the baby was two weeks overdue. We were waiting for the day the baby would be born. I was feeling a little nervous when she started having little contractions so we went to the hospital. Since we were two weeks overdue we had an appointment to induce labor that night. We got into the hospital early in the morning and they took my wife to the maternity place. We spent all day in there and the doctor put something into the bottle in her arm to induce the labor pain.

I was nervous and so sad because I never see my wife in such pain. Then the doctor came to check her and decided she is very ready to have the baby. I was so excited when I saw the baby's head come out I wanted to cry. The nurse said it was a girl. My baby was born at 5:45 pm. Then I held the baby in my arms. I was so excited because I never saw how life starts in this world. We called the baby Stephanie. My wife and I are very happy for all these three daughters. I just say thanks to my wife, my mother, and all women giving us life.

## **My Dad**

*Elisa Paredes Escobar, Woodbury*

Every person has his or her own stories. This one really touched me because it is part of my dad's life. My dad was not raised by his real parents. There were economic problems which made my grandmother make the decision to leave her three-year-old son to be taken care of by strangers. He knew the truth all the time, because he was treated different; however he considered them like his family.

When my dad was 21 years old, he moved to the capital by himself, a whole new city. He started to work and study there. In a casual conversation, he heard his biological mom's name and he decided to contact her. He finally met her and her other sons, my dad's brothers. Then he moved to live with them, so he would not need to pay rent; also he could help them economically with house and school expenses.

Although my dad doesn't keep any resentment against his parents, he wished he had lived with them.

## **Sailor Ba Tin**

*Tun M Han, Hopkins*

My grandpa told me many stories when I was a child. One of those stories made an impression on me and gave me a lot of inspirations when I was young. That was his sailor adventure.

My grandpa said that when he was young he was strong, intelligent, and obedient and wanted to learn everything. Especially he liked to travel around the world. Before World War II, he lived in Rangoon, which is the capital city of our country Burma. There is a big port.

According to his story, one day he was standing and looking at the foreign going vessels. He said that those steam ships were really huge and very interesting. Suddenly, one big white man came down from the gang way and asked him if he wanted to be a sailor. My grandpa answered yes and came along with him.

When they were on board, the ship started sailing. The ship sailed to England. After a few weeks, the ship arrived at the Suez Canal in Egypt. When the ship sailed along the Suez Canal, he saw the statue of the engineer who built the Suez. Then his ship stopped at the port. He went ashore and visited the statue. He said that it was built out of bronze and he got an idea to write his name on the back. Then he climbed and wrote his name “Ba Tin (Burma)” with a very pointed sharp folding knife.

After a few weeks of sailing, he arrived in England. The war had just started. His captain asked him to go home. He did not mention his journey home. I thought it was not very important to this story.

When I grew up and became a seaman, I always wanted to look at the back of the statue at the Suez. Unfortunately the recent container vessels were moving so fast and they did not stay at the Suez port for enough time to go ashore. I am still wondering if my grandpa’s name is there or not. Who knows?

## **Time with My Grandma**

*Lee-Ching Hsieh, Plymouth*

I had a wonderful time with my grandma, when I needed to stay with her because my little brother was born. I was six years old at that time. She lived in the suburb in which my grandpa’s factory was located. It was a fresh experience that I stayed with my grandparents without my parents being there. I followed my grandma wherever she went. When she did the garden work or fed the chickens and geese she would tell me stories about her childhood. “We owned a hotel before grandpa started a speaking career” and “How we got our factory.” Was this grandma talking about you or herself? Perhaps it should be “they”—I had a memory of when I observed the worker do her job—was this grandma or another worker? She brought me cookies and milk. The cookies and milk which condensed grandma’s love were so tasty that I have never forgotten. The ginger chicken mushroom soup that grandma made impressed me. My mom cooked the same soup too, but grandma’s I like better. I didn’t know why I felt I was closer to her than Mom. But I know for sure that my grandma loved me.

## **I’m Happy for My Sons**

*Angelina Oropeza, South Saint Paul*

Seven years ago I came to the United States. I was pregnant with my first baby when I got to Minnesota with my husband. At 4½ months my water broke and I spent the next two months in the hospital. My baby was born at 27 weeks. My baby stayed in the hospital for the next three months. He weighed one pound and five ounces. Brandon is six years old and in kindergarten now. He wears a brace on his right leg and a special shoe.

## **My Family**

*Marilia Ferreira-Perez, Saint Paul*

My family lives in Brazil. My family has nine people: my father, mother, three brothers and four sisters with me. In the moment I live in the U.S. I have one nephew who lives in Kentucky. I have thirteen nephews. My father is an architect and my mother is a stay-home mom. In my country, when the parents work outside the home they pay somebody. My mother has somebody to help in the house. My dad and mom live in an apartment together with one nephew. I miss my family a lot. They are all fun.

## **Remember My City**

*María Ramírez, Saint Paul*

I remember my city for the traditions and the food, but more for my mother and family. My mother is special for me. It’s my wish to go back to Veracruz.

## **October 17**

*Cher Vang, Minneapolis*

When I was in Laos I was still a young man. I did not know where were Thailand and America. When I came to Thailand I didn't know where to go. Then my family and I came to Thailand in Ban Vinai. My family and I lived in Thailand for 10 years, and that time I had four children in my life. I had six people in my family when we moved to the U.S.A. When I came to the U.S.A. I saw a lot of white snow and it was very cold outside. When I came to Ohio State I lived there for 9 years and I had to move again to the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Right now I'm still living in Minneapolis.

## **I Am a Busy Mom**

*Ka Khang, Minneapolis*

My name is Ka Khang. I am married. My husband and I have nine children. When we came to the U.S. I did not go to school. I didn't know how to speak English. I have a big family. My husband works hard. We need money to buy good food and clothing for them. I stayed home and took care of my children. I am so busy but I am very happy because all my children go to school. They have good schools and good teachers. They have a good life, good education. Now I am working and going to class at night. It is very hard for me, but I am trying because all my teachers are very nice. Thank you for reading my story.

## **Love for Mom**

*Anonymous, Edina*

I love my mom very much and I miss her every time I'm away from her. I missed her especially when I was away for school or medersa (religion school) because that took a long time away from her. When I came home I gave Mom a hug and kiss and lay down on her lap. After that I told my mom what happened in school or medersa. I liked the way she touched my hair and listened to my story.

She said my story was wonderful. She also picked things from my hair. After five minutes of doing that and listening to my story, she said, "Let's eat something and you will finish the story at the table." I did that until I became a woman and started high school.

## **My Wives**

*Nikolay Yakovlev, Minneapolis*

When I was a youth, my grandmother told me about her marriage. Her family found the person she married. She did not have love. I think the best way is when a person falls in love with someone. But that is only in novels. It's very difficult to find a good partner. I think it is very important to have a good example or model in one's family. You'll be able to copy behavior by mother or father. But most families in Russia had only a mother or father with stepmother.

I met my first wife in the evening school and we saw each other six years before our marriage. We had six years together because I was six to eight months a year on expedition, and we divorced. Our son left with his mother for another city. Sometimes he had a vacation in my new family, but it was hard for everyone.

I met my second wife in the hospital where I received my thigh surgery and we got married after one month. It was 1968. I was fascinated by her face, hair, figure. She was beautiful and delicate, and she was like my mother (so I thought) and I still don't tire of admiring her.

I think for a good family you need love, patience and the wish to live together

## **My Sister**

*Ermilia Pierre, Saint Paul Park*

My sister Malerne was just 17 when she got married. My parents were very afraid for her because in my culture it is very hard to even have a boyfriend at this age, but she got married anyway. She lived in Haiti for 15 years after she got married. She made a small business to care of her family. Then in 1994, God opened a door for her and her family to come to the U.S.A. She lived in Michigan with her family of six very nice children. Last summer Malerne and her family came to visit me. It was a very good time. I love her and her family.

## **My Family Life**

*Khousa Xiong, Minneapolis*

My family lived in the Ban Vin Nai about 15 years. We have 15 people in my family. 1992 was the last year for the Hmong people who lived in the Ban Vin Nai. My mother and father were very angry, because my older brother was not listening to them. He was wrong to go back to Laos into the army. My father said you can't go, but he didn't believe him. He ran away to go to Laos. He was married, and he had one daughter. My mother, father, and his wife didn't know when he was going. When we know he was away, we were very angry at him. My sister-in-law waited and waited for him to come back. After that we got news of him. He was in the jail in Laos. They didn't have more food to eat so he was skinny.

After that we moved to another place until 2004 when we moved to the U.S. We also did not stop to follow him. We have a cousin in Laos too, and he was able to see my brother in the jail. One day my cousin called for my father. They said if you want your son, you must have \$5,000 so you can get your son back. My father said, "OK, I prepare that." My family was very happy that my brother came back. He came to live with my cousin. My younger brother and my parents talked together on the phone with him. After one week he died. We were sad and wondered what happened to him when he got out the jail and one week later died. But right now we are not worried about him any more because he is going to be in a good place.

## **The Friend I Left Behind**

*Nasra Mohamoud, Minneapolis*

Sofia and me are very good friends. We grew up together, we went to intermediate and high school together, and we went to Tanzania together. Now Sofia lives in Somalia, and I live in America. Still, we are very good friends. We never forget each other. We communicate to each other on the Internet and telephone. We send messages about our life. She calls me every week. I call her, too. She married eight months ago and I sent her a beautiful gift. When we were living in Somalia, we helped together. We were going to school too, and we went to market to visit different places. We miss each other, and we love each other. I wish to visit her sooner or later. Because we had a good life together, and all in all, I do hope to go to her soon. I want to finish my high school; then I will go to college, so after two years I will be a nurse assistant.

## **Felipe's Family**

*Felipe Bautista, Minneapolis*

My name is Felipe. I'm talking about my family. I have four sisters and four brothers. My sisters are in Mexico and I have one brother in Mexico and the other three are here. They work hard but they have their family in Mexico and my parents are in Mexico too. My mama's name is Angelina and my father is Felipe. That is my family history.

## **My Memories of India**

*Vasanta L. Kanneganti, Woodbury*

I never thought that I would come to the U.S.A., and see this hi-tech world, and start a job and have a busy life. Once I look back and think about when I was in India, this is a dream to me. I enjoy it over there and I like here too. I miss my country, my place, but my kids like it here so much. That is the good thing for me. I think it is OK for me because my brother and sister are also in the U.S.A. Still I miss my parents and one of my brothers.

## **My Dream**

*Farhiya Yusuf, Minneapolis*

My name is Farhiya Yusuf. I was born in Somalia and finished high school in Somalia. I had a wonderful family: mother, father and seven brothers. I am the only sister they have. My dream was to have a sister, but it did not happen. My parents told me you don't have a sister, but now you have brothers and we wish you that someday you have your own daughter. Then when I was in refugee camp in Kenya, I fell in love with the man I married now. I have a husband and two beautiful children. We live together in Minnesota. So today, I have a daughter. She is everything to me and my dream came true.

## **My Daughter**

*Habiba Farah, Minneapolis*

My daughter is very well. She is eating food. She is drinking milk already. She is good. Her doctor says my daughter is getting well soon. Her name is Munira. She is 4 years old. She is not going to school. My son is going to Sanford Middle School.

## **Safe and Loved**

*Carla Gomes, Hopkins*

My dad and I always liked to walk in the forest. When I was young, I loved to see the animals, smell the flowers and the pine trees. However, we needed to be careful with wild animals like wolves and snakes. I was scared to walk in the forest alone, but when I had my father by my side I felt protected and safe. I loved to go with my father to the countryside. He always helped and took care of me.

## **My Baby Girl**

*Candis H., Fridley*

When my daughter was born it made a new person out of me. She just turned two years old. Right now she is the best thing going in my life. Whenever I'm sad, she brings me up. My daughter is the reason why I get up in the morning. She makes me smile whenever she looks my way. My daughter is my first child and my last.

## **My Children**

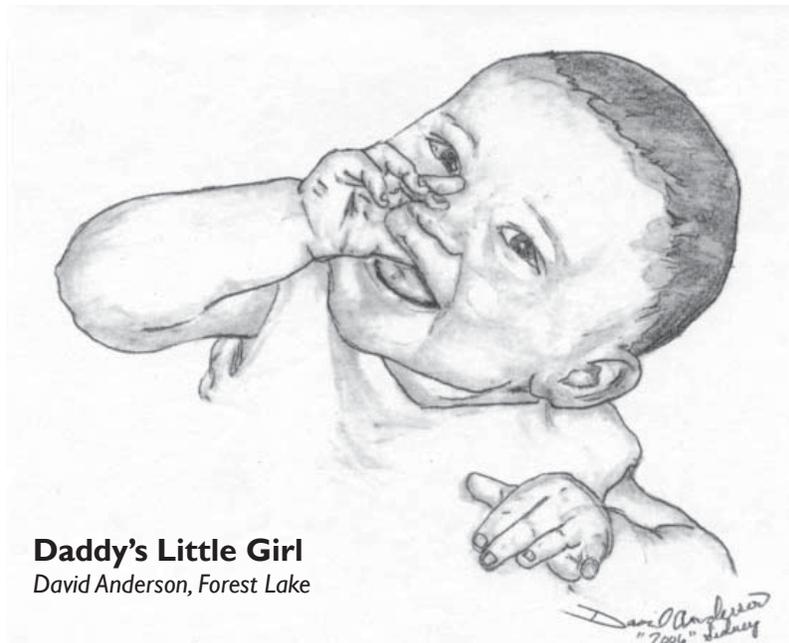
*Margarita Cortez, Minneapolis*

I remember when I was in college I felt very sad and frustrated because I didn't finish. Sometimes we make wrong decisions. It's true when some people say, "Every act has a consequence." I learned the consequence.

When I came here I met my husband and I became pregnant. The first time I was very scared because I never held a little baby and never was near a baby, but I learned the wonderful word "MOTHER." God changed my life. Before, when I was single, I took care more of the things and not the feelings.

It should be strange, but my baby taught me how to love other people. It doesn't matter defects. He also taught me when you say "I love you!" you do everything for that person. When I have problems, my son reminds me that it doesn't matter what happens, everything will pass and tomorrow will be better.

Every day I am grateful to God because he blessed me with two beautiful children. I try to be a good mother in everything because I want my children to always remember good things and then do the same with their children. I want my children to finish the university – that is something I can't do. That is my dream – to see them have some professional career. I will work hard to do that, and after I see this I can rest.



**Daddy's Little Girl**  
*David Anderson, Forest Lake*

## **Untitled**

*Samuel García Cortez, Minneapolis*

My name is Samuel García Cortez. I am from Acapulco, Mexico. Before I came to the U.S.A., I was working in Acapulco in a restaurant. I was a server and a car washer and was in school too. First, when I came in the U.S.A. it was very hard for me and my family, because before we were never separate. And I'm missing my girlfriend because she is very important in my life in the years to 2000. I had completed five years and six months with her.

I came to the U.S. in March, 2000. Arizona was the first state I saw. I visited there a sister of my girlfriend's for two weeks and after that I came to Minneapolis, MN. Now I have seven years in Minneapolis. My girlfriend came to North Carolina in April 2000. She stayed there for three months with an older sister. After that, she came to Minneapolis with a brother. When I knew that, I felt very happy. I married her on August 29, 2000.

So, now I have two daughters with her. The first one is three years and six months old and the second one is 10 months old. The name of my wife is Lourdes. The name of my first baby is Ashley. The name of my second baby is Adaliz. So, this is my story. I love my family—forever. I am missing and I love my family in Acapulco Mexico too.

## **Coming to America**

*Shukri Aden, Minneapolis*

I am writing about the reason for coming to America. I received a DV lottery. I came to America on February 12, 2004. The first day I came to America I was very sad because I missed my children and my relatives, so that I was crying all night and day. After a few months when I received a job and school I prepared to support my family, and I asked the government to give my family visas and accept them. I have waited for the visas until now. My life before was very good because I lived with my family and relatives, so that was very happy. And my life now every night and day I am thinking about my family and I hope they will come here. I will be so happy. I hope to God my family will come quickly, please.

## **My Family**

*Bao Vang, Minneapolis*

I am Hmong. I came from Thailand on September 15, 2004. I married in 1986. I had 7 children. One girl married in Thailand. The second girl is married and lives in Wisconsin. Now I have five children. I live with my family. My first son went to study at Breck School. One son went to the Hopkins School and three children went to the Jordan Park School. After school they came back home and told me to help them with homework, but I didn't know how to help my children because I didn't know English anymore. I thought very hard and had a headache every time. Right now I study English to help myself.

## **Family**

*Saul Gil Flores, Saint Paul*

My family lives in Mexico. My mother and father have seven sons. My two sisters live in Guerrero, Mexico, and my four brothers live in the United States of America. One brother lives in Florida. My brother, my wife and me, and two sons live in Minnesota, U. S.

## **From Mexico**

*María Ramos, Cottage Grove*

I am María Ramos.  
I'm married.  
I'm from Mexico.  
I have three sons.  
One goes to Park High School.  
Another goes to Oltman Junior High School.  
The third goes to Pine Hill Elementary School.  
I live in Cottage Grove.  
My husband works in the factory.  
My little son has a cat named Rufus.  
My family is very important.  
I love my family.

## **Children Are a Gift from God**

*Kim Jennings, Red Wing*

I have been blessed with a wonderful son. When he was born, he was faced with health issues. He has a wonderful personality and a caring heart. Through all he has been faced with, he has always held his head up high and has never given up. He's my inspiration and has taught me that whatever life throws at you, keep going and reach for your dreams no matter how long it may take.

## **The Important Values**

*Asti Paath, Saint Cloud*

We have been living in the United States for five years and a lot of values from this culture have impacted my kids. That's fine with me but I don't want my kids to forget about our roots. They have to learn all the important values from our culture.

I grew up in a really strict family, my grandma taught me a lot about values. We have to respect elders, study hard and get the highest education that we can, love each other, help others and a lot more. All the important values that I had I will pass on to my kids. They have to know that they live in this world with other people. They can't be selfish about themselves.

## **I Remember**

*Pao Ge Her, Minneapolis*

In 1973 my father and mother, they helped me and my sister. We lived in Laos. After my father died in 1989, my mother helped me come to Thailand and come to the United States. I think my mother was one of the most loving people.

## **My Home in Minneapolis**

*Choua Pao Vue, Minneapolis*

My family in the house is happy every day. My family has seven people. My house has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen, a sink, a living room, a dining room, and a TV.

## **My Family Is Important**

*Mauricio Martínez, Lynd*

My family is the most important thing in my life. My family members are my wife, four daughters and one son. Everything I do is for them. Coming to school and trying to get my GED for a better job is for them, giving them a better life and future.

It's really hard to keep a family together these days. My wife and I sit and talk frequently to our children, but still there are always some problems with them, especially now that they're growing up. I have seen several families separated for many causes or reasons and I wouldn't like any of those problems to separate my family. Besides all of the little problems we are a very happy family. I'm looking for a better future for them, maybe buying a new house. Most important of all is always to be together.

I give thanks to my God for giving me a beautiful family, and I hope always to have my family with me forever.

## **Remember My Mother**

*Tania T. Sánchez, Minneapolis*

When I came to the U.S.A. I never did imagine what was going to happen. In Mexico I left one person that was very important in my life, my Mother. After six years here in Minnesota, my mother had a stroke in Mexico and for one year I lived an anguished and stressful life, for her recuperation was difficult. I thought about returning to Mexico, but I would have to leave my husband and separate from my kids. But I also knew that I couldn't pay for the hospitalization. She died without me. Life teaches you various difficult decisions. Then it leaves you a very hurting pain in your soul—because I would have given it all away to stay with my Mother.

## **Who Are Very Important to Me?**

*Yang Pao Thao, Minneapolis*

Mother is the first one who is very important to me. Father is the second one. Teacher is the third one. Wife is the fourth one. Brothers and sisters are after that. Mother gave me birth. Father told me how to drink, eat, talk, and walk and many other things. Teacher taught me how to read, write and gave education. My wife is my lover. Brothers and sisters can help me. They made me happy and I enjoy them. All these people will make my life happy forever.

## **My Life in America**

*Genoveva Hidalgo, Minneapolis*

My first job in America was as a janitor. I was cleaning rooms where they were making computers. That job is where the employees had to wear special clothes: over-alls, glasses, boots, caps. I liked this job, but there were yellow rooms when pregnant women couldn't go inside. The people who made the computer pieces were Chinese, and employees who cleaned the offices were Mexican people.

I was working in St. Cloud, about 45 minutes from my brother, Rene's house. He likes drinking beer. I remember when he drank too much. One time I was working and when I was returning to my house my husband told me, "Geno your brother took your car." This time everything went good. The second time he took a car they brought my husband, and my brother-in-law. And this time he crashed into a tree. The police came and they took the car. He was in jail for one week. Now he doesn't drink beer any more. When we came to the United States we arrived with my friend. Before I came I called María and she was happy because we had one year to not see each other. We have special children. My child he is autistic. Her child has Cerebral Palsy. Our purpose is that they must have good medical treatment.

## **My Family**

*Farhiya, Saint Paul*

My name is Farhiya. I am from Africa. I was born in Ethiopia. When I was two years old my family moved to Somalia. After then all my brothers and sisters were born in Somalia. My family size is 11 people. My father was working and my mother was taking care of the children. She never worked. We didn't have a lot of money, so sometimes we didn't have lunch or dinner but we always had breakfast. But we still lived a good happy life.

After I was an adult, I came to Kenya. I got my visa to come to the United States. Now I am married and have five children: four boys and one girl. I am happy to live in Minnesota. I get up at 5:30 in the morning and I start cooking breakfast. I wake up my children at 6:30 and send two children to school. After they go to school, I make breakfast for my husband. I clean the house and take care of the other children. I pick up the kids and get dinner ready. I go to school in the evening at Hubbs Center and learn to speak English better. I am also in a Citizenship class and want to become a U.S. citizen soon.

I am very proud of myself because I take care of my family well. Not only do I take care of my own family but I also I have a lot of responsibilities because I am the oldest child. I brought all my brothers and sisters to the U.S. and now some are working and some are going to school. I love my family and I am very happy that my family is doing well. The most important thing is we are all together.

## **My Daughter**

*Xiao "Lexie" Li, Minneapolis*

Since I delivered my daughter, she changed my life. Having her in my life, I feel I have everything. I have gold in my daily life. I should be a good example to her and I should work hard and give whatever I can give to her, and I hope she can become a good person in the future.

## **I Remember My Family**

*Armando Padilla, Saint Louis Park*

Every day I remember my family. I remember the voices and smiles of my son Carlos. I remember when I smelled the food that my wife cooked, special dishes for our sons and me. I remember when I visited my sisters and brothers at our Mother's home. I remember a lot of my country. I miss the sounds in my house and work. It was music for me.

## **My Life and Being a Single Parent**

*María Asitimbay, Minneapolis*

My name is María. I am from Ecuador. I came to the U.S.A. when I was 16 years old. Then I went to high school in New York City, but I did not finish because I used to party a lot and skip school. I fell in love with a Peruvian guy, José. I decided to move to Minnesota to be with my sister, Norma, and a few months later José did the same. We lived together about four years. At the time, I found out that I am going to have a big responsibility – my first baby. I was in shock. The relationship between the baby's dad and me was OK. I got married, but less than a year later, I got divorced. Since that time my responsibility got bigger than before, because I have to work two jobs to get enough money. The bills do not wait, everybody knows that. The whole time I felt so sad when I have to go to work and leave my baby with the babysitter. I had days when I worked double and I did not see my baby until later that day. I got really mad and sad when that happened. I did not want to keep doing this my whole life, that's why I decided to go back to school and finish. That way I can go to college and get a better job. I am doing all this because I want my baby to be proud of his mommy. He is the one who keeps me strong. I love you Nathan so much.

## **My Orphan Life**

*Ei Yang, Minneapolis*

I was born in 1983 in a normal family and in a small village on a high mountain. It was a long distance from town. My family has seven people including my parents. I have three brothers and one sister, but at that time I was unlucky, I lost my mother and two brothers and one sister. I became an orphan when I was five years old.

This is how it happened. My family was a family who lived with big love and happily. My parents spoke softly and never argued with each other. That is why my siblings have to follow and act like them. At that time my family was a good, simple family. My older brother had to go to school and I had to take care of my younger brothers and sister. After school was over my older brother and I had to go to get firewood and palm trees for cooking and feed the pigs every evening.

One day in 1988 my mother had a terrible sickness. A few days later my mother died. After that, every year we have lost one person in my family. Three years later I lost two brothers and one sister. After that my father and my youngest brother and I had to move to live with my cousin. I lost everything in my life and I miss my mother and my siblings very much. I began to suffer and it was very stressful. I don't know why my god sent something bad to my family and destroyed everything I had. That made me feel sorry and sad, look like I sit down in a pit and don't know how my life would go on. That caused me hopelessness and other things. I don't like communist rules. That's why I come to the U.S. So now my family and I started a new life in the U.S. living in North Minneapolis, MN. Even though I have had a hard time through my life I had to have effort and find the way to solve problems.

Although I have lost my mother and my siblings a long time ago, I still miss them now. When I think about them I feel that they appear. But I'm so sorry and regret that they don't have a new life with me in the U.S. now. Finally I wish all you friends never have a problem like this in your lives.

## **Exciting Experience**

*Mee Kyeong Shin, Roseville*

I'm from South Korea. Ten years ago I was married. In Korea, my husband was a research engineer with the Korean Government Institute. He works for a computer science company. The company asked him if he wanted to continue to do research at the University of Minnesota. He did and he came to Minnesota one year ago.

We have an eight-year-old daughter, Somin. Our daughter and I came to join my husband here in Minnesota six months ago. I wanted to come to the U.S. for the educational experience it will provide for my daughter and me. Somin began playing the violin in Korea two years ago. She is continuing her study here in Minnesota. She dreams of being a good violinist. My hope is to learn to speak and write better English.

## **My Story**

*Kia Thao, Minneapolis*

My family came to the U.S. in 2004. I have four kids, two boys and two girls. I am happy. I have a wonderful family. I like to go to school but in my family we don't have enough money to pay for everything. I think in my family each should be working so, I tell my husband I can be the person working to help him to go to college. I see in other families the husband is the one working. I don't want my husband to be that person because I think he is a good student in the school. He goes to school every day. I told him he should be on his target. This I write to him.

## **Seven Years Ago**

*Angelina Oropeza, South Saint Paul*

Seven years ago I came to the United States. I was pregnant with my first baby when I got to Minnesota with my husband. At 4½ months my water broke and I spent the next two months in the hospital. My baby was born at 27 weeks. My baby stayed in the hospital for the next three months. He weighed one pound and five ounces. Brandon is six years old and in kindergarten now. He wears a brace on his right leg and a special shoe.

## **Mother of Children**

*Thao, Brooklyn Center*

I am a mother of four children. Two of my children go to school and two are in the house. One is 15 years old. He is in grade 9, and he goes to junior high school in Brooklyn Center. One of my children is in 2nd grade, and he goes to a Hmong Charter School in Minneapolis. I am a good mother to my children because I cook healthy food for them to eat and take care of them every day. I prepare clothes for them to wear before they go to school and let them go to school on time. I give money to them if they need it. I will support them to finish their high school diplomas and go to college. I will support them to get enough education in their lives.

My husband works on 2nd shift, and he takes care of my little children in the morning. I work in the morning, and I take care of them in the evening. When I go to school, my father takes care of my kids after I am gone. I hope they go to school next year. When all of them go to school, I will have nothing to worry about and time to take care of them at home. I will help them until I have not life. The children are my life in my heart.

## **My Life as Becoming a Father**

*Anthony L. Morris Sr., Minneapolis*

Well it started off as just one of my hobbies (sex that is). I was into the streets at an early age and wasn't thinking about what I really wanted to do with my life at that point. The day of June 15, 2002, one of the females I was involved with called, so we talked for a while. At the end of our conversation she told me since she had been out of town that she had been getting fat. So you know I had to see for myself. I went over to her house because she asked me to bring her a soda. I walked in the door, saw her belly and said, "You're not fat, you're pregnant." She said, "I know!" I asked her who the baby's father is, because I haven't seen her in three or four months. That's when she told me that it was mine. I was only eighteen. I was thinking to myself, what am I going to do, I don't have a job, I sell drugs. But now it's four years later and I'm the best father to my two kids.

## **Remembering My Childhood**

*Jua Chang, Minneapolis*

I remember sixteen years ago, when I was a child in Thailand. I liked to play with my father and he taught me about helping or doing something good for other people. Make a good friend, have pity on them, and have love for everybody. If I could do that, I would be happy in my future.

## **I Miss My Country**

*Fredi Carachi, Minneapolis*

Yes, I still miss my country. Fifteen years have past already since I left my city (Cuenca), but I always remember my people, family, friends and all those traditions. Now I have been living here in this beautiful city (Minneapolis) with my wife and three kids.

They are the reason for my life. That is one reason I can't go back. I want the best for my family, and this is the best country to live in. I always will miss my village, and I won't forget my roots.

## **My Life**

*Karina Mendoza, Waseca*

Hi! My name is Karina. I am 21 years old. I live in Waseca, MN and I have two weeks here. The life takes you many ways. A little time ago I lived in Texas with my aunt, uncle, sister and cousins. Me and my sister lived with them in the border with Mexico. They traveled very successively to Reynosa, Tamaulipas in Mexico. We visited my mother's family. I liked to go because my aunt told me "let's go to the ranch to visit your grandpas." I have beautiful memories about my childhood because always all vacations are with my grandpas. They took us to the corral to see the animals and played every day. I miss them because I can't see my family.

## **My Parents**

*Edna Gisel Pérez, Woodbury*

My mother was very strong woman. She had too much work to do with eight kids. Young woman she was, when she decided to marry with my dad.

Papa worked hard to give to us a great education. Admirable my mother was, to support my father when he lost a lot of money. Rich family my father had, but he never received anything from them. Energy and challenges my mother had, to take when our family had a hard economic situation. Never I saw my mother cry, she always showed to us a beautiful smile. They took the difficult decision to decide to move to another city when my father lost a lot of properties. Safety life, my parents always wanted to bring to us with love and respect for each other.

Conclusion: Sometimes in life we have to make hard decisions, but it is important to grow up with strength and belief in ourselves with all the security that we can reach our goals.

## **Someone I Love**

*Mohamad Mohamad, Saint Paul*

When I was seven years old, I had a friend at school. She and I studied together for twelve years. When we were at secondary school, we felt new things happening. We made a nice story for love and all the people and relatives knew we had love for each other. Unfortunately her family did not agree for me to be married to her because we have a tradition. The girl does not get married outside of her tribe and so she was married to someone from her tribe. When I was twenty-one years old I lost her because she was married to another person. I lost my heart with her. I was sick for one year and all the doctors did not know what I had, but really I lost my memory and I missed my school for one year. After that I took some traditional medicine, and got better.

Now she has a nice life with her husband. She had a child and gave him my name. She has a good life and I wish her a good life with her husband. From that time until now, I don't have a girlfriend. I would like to trust all the people, but the bad things in the past taught me that I can't believe all women.

## **My Family History**

*Patricia, Saint Paul*

I was born in Mexico. I have three brothers and five sisters. I moved here to Minnesota in 1992 and in 1993 I was married. I have three daughters, Diana, Evelyn and Perla. I like this country because it is peaceful. My dream is to understand English.

## **The Desperate Family**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

My family had a bad economic situation in Tijuana, Mexico. My husband came to the United States first. He crossed to America on March of 2003. He lived for nine months in the United States. When he talked to me he said I can come with my children to the United States. My husband felt sad and he felt alone.

Then my family came to the United States in December of 2003. My family lived with my mother-in-law in Santana, California for one month in her house. But there were many problems in the house, so we moved far away from her house. I cried a lot because I was lonely here in the United States. But my sisters, Carmen and Francis, were in Minnesota. Francis invited me to her house. My other sister went to California, and then we came to Minneapolis. And now I thank my God that I came to this earth. Life is very funny and beautiful. My family loves Minnesota very much.

## **I Am a Busy Mother**

*Tahira Mao, Waseca*

I am a busy mother because I have 8 children. I go to school. I am learning English. I go to school most days.

I showed the class how to make Sambusa. I enjoy the cooking classes. All recipes are in English except the Sambusa.

## **Marriage**

*Jean Claude Ndaruzaniye, Minneapolis*

I think it is good for you to choose alone somebody you want to marry. When, for example, there is a divorce, you are responsible alone. When you fall in love with somebody, you make your decision and you can give her the time like one year or two years for preparation. Something else I like about marriage, for example, is to have a big family – like six children.

## **My Husband**

*Valee, Brooklyn Park*

My friends and I first met my husband and his uncle. They liked my cousin. It was Hmong New Year celebration. I never met him until the New Year celebration. I was with my cousin, my husband, and his uncle. He saw me and my cousin. But then my husband started to like me. He no longer liked my cousin. I really liked him because he was really sweet and handsome.

The most important thing that I liked about him was his smile. We were together for three months. We later got married. Back then, I couldn't tell him I loved him but inside, I loved him so much.

## **Family**

*Mao Lor, Saint Paul*

My family lives in Laos.  
My family has ten people.  
My mother, father, three brothers,  
and four sisters live in Laos.  
Me and my husband came to the  
United States of America.  
I like studying English now.

## **My Hope for My Children**

*Aida Habtemairam, South Saint Paul*

I was born in Ethiopia but  
I am from Eritrea.  
I have five children, four boys, one  
girl.  
I read with my children  
At least one hour every night.  
I take them to the library two to  
three times week.  
I buy them as many books as I can.  
I do all this because  
I want them to go to college.

## **The Mother of My Child**

*Melvin Dunigan, Duluth*

Desirable  
Extraordinary  
Negotiable,  
Irresistible  
Sensational  
Exciting.

Honorable  
Awesome  
Nice,  
Lovable  
Obsessed  
Noticeable.

## **Good Parents Can Be an Example**

*Rahma, Minneapolis*

My name is Rahma. Let me talk about my dear father and his belief of equal rights and my wonderful mom. Many years ago, the people didn't like women to learn. When a man had boys and girls, he wanted the boys to learn and the girls to work in the house. When my father saw what was going on, he didn't agree with them. He said, "Please stop that action. This is not fair and just. Boys and girls both are your children. They have to learn equally." Then he said, "Oh Allah, please give me nine girls to teach them and people to follow culture." My father was a leader and hero and a lovely person. He was respected in the society. When he got married, he got boys and girls. He started to teach us. He did everything equal. And my heroic mom was an intelligent woman and a kind person. She supported him for us. She cared for us. Many people followed my father when they saw him. I never forget how my parents did a great job and hard work. I want to care for them how they cared for me when I was a child.

## **Brittany's Prayer (143)**

*Richard Michael Lund, Gauley Bridge*

Once again I'm up against the wall, and nowhere to go,  
Legs bound, arms stretched, and no one left to call, ya know?  
Lord, this is my prayer, written out to you,  
Because, at this point I have no clue what to do.  
If You're listening, Lord, I hope you can hear my plea,  
For this time, the help I need is not for me.  
It's got to do with this girl, and a daughter we just had.  
Ya see, she is younger than me and her parents are mad.  
Lord, I know you put her in my life to help figure things out,  
And, honestly, it's exactly what she's done, and then some, without a doubt.  
Along with her, you gave me a daughter; I don't understand why.  
Don't get me wrong, it's everything I've ever wanted and asked for, and that makes me cry.  
I would like to add that up till now I've just gone with the flow.  
I've called on You several times in the past, Lord; this you know.  
Now I ask You, Lord, for guidance as to which direction I must go, and where I must start.  
The problem isn't so much in my head; it's more in my heart!  
You have always had a way to amaze me, Lord,. This is true.  
For you gave me five boys and a girl, and I don't know what to do.  
So, again, Lord, if You are listening, I hope You hear my plea.  
Please take care of my children –  
Kathleen, Jordan, Alexander, Nathan, Christopher, Kelsey!  
I love this girl deeply, along with my children, with everything I've got.  
Would it be too much, Lord, to let them know to forget me not?  
In Jesus name, Amen.

## *Love & War*



### **A Word Called Love**

*Miguel A. Gutiérrez, Waseca*

Love, do you know what love means? It is a word we use, see and hear everywhere, anytime. We demonstrate love in many ways. For example, when you see a mother hug her child, a husband giving a red rose to his wife, when you hear a couple telling wonderful words each one to another, and holding hands, that is love. But we can't just see it or hear it, we can feel it Yes, feel it!!! Although it sounds ridiculous, most of you have had this feeling. It comes from the depth of the heart. Anyway, I think love is the most wonderful and beautiful word we have and use to express that feeling called love, love.



### **Untitled**

*Daniel Peña, Saint Cloud*

*Journeys 2007*

### **Asleep with You**

*Margoth Flores, Minneapolis*

Asleep with you.  
I am one with you,  
I feel love.  
While you will be in love,  
Wake up my heart.

### **The Ultimate Gift**

*Bryan Yaroscak, Chisholm*

Where to begin  
I haven't a clue.  
I suppose I could start by saying  
I don't know what I'd do without  
you.

The moment you were born  
I was totally amazed  
Something so precious and  
prestigious  
to brighten each and every one of my  
days.

There is no better feeling in the  
world  
than receiving a little one like you.  
The love that your mother and I have  
for you  
is as big as the world times two!

I am looking forward to the years to  
come  
and the future they hold,  
Knowing we are doing what father  
and son do  
and the stories that will be told.

Where to begin?  
I guess now I have a clue.  
There is one great gift in this world  
And that gift is you!

### **Someone I Love**

*Hodan Salah, Saint Paul*

I love my mom because when I was young she raised me. Then she gave me good advice. My mom said "Go to school all the time and don't forget your religion and culture." Also she said "Have good behavior with the people and roommates, and work together with your neighbors." My mom gives me advice about everything. She is very nice. Also she is equal to all the people. I love my mom so much. I hope I will see my mom one day.

### **A Couple, Husband and Wife**

*A Xiong, Saint Paul*

A long time ago there was a couple, husband and wife. They were married a long time, but they didn't have any children. They tried everything, but they didn't have children. They were very sad. They think they will have children in the future. They volunteered in a kindergarten where the children were orphans. They gave money to the kindergarten and orphans. They loved children very much. Two or three years ago they had a very cute child. The child's name is Huab Cua.



### **Untitled**

*Robert Benoit, Granite Falls*

## **Sweet Soul Mate**

*Perla V., West Saint Paul*

From the moment you picked me up from the sad, cold floor that I had fallen on, I knew we'd be together. It didn't matter how lonely and sorry I felt for myself at times, you never cared to lecture me about it. You were too busy loving me and healing my wounds. "X" years later and the thought of you in my life still brings tears to my eyes. Am I worthy of such love? Maybe not, but I can't ponder that for too long because now I'm too busy. Too busy melting away when I witness you being an amazing father. Too busy wiping my happy tears away. You have made it a priority to place us first above all else. My Sweet Soul Mate, for the time that we've had and for what's left to come, I thank you! I also look forward to growing old with you.

## **Love**

*Bozel Rulford, Saint Peter*

Love has a lot of ties, a lot of pain, a lot of cries, a lot of its. and lots of why.  
I looked love dead in the eyes.  
Love asked me a lot of questions, a lot of is, a lot of go  
I think it is time to teach love a real good lesson.  
Love kiss, love hugs, love push, love shove.  
I feel good when I get real good love.  
Love walks with a lot of pain.  
Love walks with a lot of game.  
I walked away when that type of love came.  
Love comes with silver, love comes with gold,  
I did not have those things, so my love did not hold.

## **Untitled**

*Shara Heath, Saint Cloud*

When I look into your eyes  
my love for you grows.

When I hold you close  
my love grows.

When I hear your voice  
my love grows.

My love for you, children, will be here  
till the end of time.



## **To My One And Only, Ericka**

*Exiquio Raul López III, Hutchinson*

## **Leaving My Country**

*Hue Her, Minneapolis*

In 1975 when I was a child, my family had to leave from Laos to Thailand. We came to the Ban Nanyow Camp. We had twelve people in my family. I am almost the last person in the family. Most people in my family were very happy because the U.N. had a program to help. They gave rice, pork, vegetables, and fish for us. But I think my parents were unhappy because they left their country, hometown, cousins, farm, and pets. They missed them very much. The Ban Nanyow Camp had a school for the immigrants. They had three languages for immigrants to learn: Thai, Lao, and Hmong. I had to go to school two years after we moved to the Ban Vinai Camp. My father died in the camp and my mother still lives in Thailand.

## **About Myself**

*Naima Omar, Minneapolis*

My name is Naima Omar. I am from Somalia. In 1992 I went to Yemen. I was in Yemen until 2004. I married in 2002. My first baby was born in Yemen in 2003. I came to America on 9/22/2004. I am a student at Lincoln International High School. I like to study English because I want to go to college. I work in Starbucks. I like my job so much because the first time I started my job I couldn't speak English. My manager David helped me a lot in learning to speak.

## **The Courage**

*Ali Egal, Saint Paul*

Courage and determination are what are needed to change the future of my country. My country, Somalia, has been in civil war and starvation for over sixteen years. I always think about the future of my country. I know what my country needs is a democracy, as well as law, order and stabilization.

When I moved to this country, I learned how this modern world adapted using a democratic system. It always fascinates me, when I see people going to the polls and electing their future leaders when in my country we have had only one leader for twenty six years. A long time dictatorship caused in my country an anarchy and bloody civil war, which leads to starvation and displaced millions of Somalis.

Finally, I believe that other Somalis and I, who immigrated to this great country, can defeat Fanaticism, Warlordism and Dictatorship and change our old country to a democratic system. I know this is hard work and a difficult task but I still think that is a do-able and worth it. Changing in Somalia just needs courage and determination.

## **My Country at War (Lost Paradise)**

*Abdirashed M. Elmi, Minneapolis*

Somalia was a beautiful country in East Africa. It has one language, one religion, and one culture. By January 1991 Somali civil war started in Mogadishu between government and rebel tribes we called warlords. It was unfortunate for my family because our property was destroyed and was damaged. There was a heavy gun explosion on our roof, and then the house collapsed. My aunt was shot at that moment. My family and I were shocked.

We were unable to go outside for many months. If we went outside or bought food we might get killed or wounded. However, finally we decided to leave the country and find a safe place. We left the country and arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, to a refugee camp. I believe our dreams, identity, and history were lost. We faced a lack of reconciliation and leadership. I hope the country has a better solution.

## **Moving from Iran**

*Simin, Bloomington*

My name is Simin.

I moved to Minnesota on 1/10/2006, from Iran. I came here with my son and husband.

I like Minnesota. I don't like Minnesota because the weather is very cold in winter.

I miss my job in Iran.

I work at home and help my family. I do like my job.

I am trying to learn English now.

I hope that I will speak English and my children will come to Minnesota.

## **Time of My Life**

*Vonekham Lee, Saint Paul*

My name is Vonekham Lee. I was born and lived in Laos but my home town is Vanghay village, Xay, Oudomxay Province. Laos is a small country but pretty and has many nationalities. We have three nationalities, Alaoloum, Laothang, Laosung. We speak different languages. Laos has very good weather and very nice nature.

I have a small family. My husband is Hmong. He was in Minnesota before we got married. Then he stayed with me in Laos. We have two children. The boy is six years old. The daughter is eight years old. After nine years we decided to come to the U.S.A. because we wanted my children to have some education. My husband came before me with my kids because they are U.S. citizens. I stayed alone in Laos. I'm alone, so sad, and missed them a lot.

I had my own gift shop store in Laos. Every day in Laos at 7:30 a.m. I went to the store. At 6:00 p.m. I went back home. After six months I came to the U.S.A. I never thought that before I would come here, because I had a good life in Laos and I had a home, car and own land, and my parents and cousin live there. But I came here.

Here I didn't have anything. I didn't know English. I knew how to drive a car but I didn't know streets. When I came here for four months, I didn't like the U.S.A. I wanted to go back to my country a lot because I didn't have my cousin; no friend, no job, and didn't know anywhere. I stayed home alone every day, stayed home and stayed home because my husband went to work and my children to school. It was a boring time. After five months I went to study English. It is helpful for me a lot and I met new friends.

Right now I understand English a little. I think I will be learning English little by little and be much better. Right now I'm feeling OK and happy with my family. I love the U.S.A. more. In the U.S.A. I see everything is good. I like learning English and I like snow. It is beautiful but I don't like the cold. It is the first time I saw the snow fall.

## **Amazing Story**

*Bahar Omer, Minneapolis*

My name is Bahar Omer. Let me tell you about myself. When I was 10 years old I used to play soccer and I went to school. Then, I liked to play with my friends. When I was 16 years old I left my country, then I went to Kenya. That is the first time I left my country. I missed my family and my friends. When I came to Kenya I was really scared. Then I started a new life in Nairobi, Kenya. Day after day my life became difficult because I didn't know their languages. After a few days, I went to shop with my friends. After that, I saw a lot of people on the street. They burned one man. I never have seen before a human being burned in my life.

## **My First Day in the U.S.**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

My first day in the U.S. was on July 8, 2005. My family came to my brother's house. I saw everything new and different than in Thailand. I didn't know how to go to other places. First my brother brought my family to the park. My family and I stayed home all day. I helped my brother and sister clean the house or cook.

Sometime I wasn't busy. I watched TV. One month later I went to school. The teacher said words I don't know because I can't speak English. The teacher taught me a long time. I could understand the teacher a little.

I went to school and sometimes I wanted go to shopping. Only my sister took care of me. Seven months later my brother brought me to see a car and bought a car. Sometimes when my brother and sister weren't busy they brought me to go to learn to drive the car.

## **Life Story**

*Gilberto Anfoso Rodríguez,  
Minneapolis*

I remember my country Mexico. I remember my family and my old friends. When I was in Mexico, I worked hard on the farms. I started to work when I was a teenager. I did not continue my school because my father did not have money to buy my utilities. When my father died, I was 17 years old. I sold some cows my father had. I gave some money to my mom. The rest of the money I used to come here to Minneapolis with my sister because we needed to support my family in Mexico. But when I came it was hard because I did not speak English. Everything was different in my life. I started to change. The first couple years I worked in temporary. It was hard because I did not drive. All the jobs were far from Minneapolis. When I found one job downtown in 1998, I started to be a janitor cleaning. I worked hard and in 2000 I became janitor supervisor. My life started to change, my family in Mexico also, because I make more money. Now that I'm a janitor manager, I'm okay right now because I'm happy. I have a lovely wife and one little princess and a good job. I only need to learn more English because I need to move up in my job.

## **My First Step to the United States**

*Na Xiong, Saint Paul*

When I first came to the United States my life was more difficult than my life in Thailand because I couldn't speak any English and I couldn't drive yet. The United States is more modern than Thailand and my native country. I knew that The United States was a good place for my family to live. The first year I arrived in the United States I couldn't go anywhere. I stayed at home and watched TV and looked out of the window most of time.

There was a supermarket nearby my apartment where I lived. My parents and I walked to the supermarket to buy some food for my family. At that time I started to miss my country and neighborhood and my neighbors because this country was difficult for me. A few months later I still liked this country because I could drive to the supermarket and I could drive to anywhere if I wanted to.

I attended school on September 3rd, 2005. My first teacher's name was Maggie. She was a good teacher and she was friendly with students. But now my teacher's name is Holly. She is a good teacher and she is friendly with her students too. Teacher Maggie and teacher Holly gave some baby clothes to my newborn child when I had my first in the United States. I knew teacher Maggie and teacher Holly love my child like I do. At that time my wife was one of teacher Maggie's students too. My school was small, but there were many students in the class. We only had two classrooms. All the students in the classes were friendly with their classmates. I like teachers, school and my classmates. Thank you for reading my story.

## **My Life**

*Mee Yang, Minneapolis*

I am Hmong. I came to Minnesota with my family in September 2004. The first time it was difficult when I arrived here because I stayed home by myself. I saw that everything was very different: the houses, the streets, the stores. I was homesick. After 3 months I went to school. I was a new person. I didn't have money to buy a car, so I couldn't drive to school. I walked and took the bus to school. It was very cold and I was scared that I didn't know what was going to happen to me. I didn't know anyone and I didn't know how to speak English. I was upset that I couldn't understand anyone. Now I have a car and I can understand a little bit. But I couldn't talk back to say something to my classmates and my teacher. Sometimes I feel tired because it is hard for me. But I can try to learn English better. I like the school now. Thanks a lot to the teachers for teaching me.

## **One Day in My Life as an Au Pair**

*Lena Koerner, Woodbury*

6:15 a.m. - My alarm clock rings mercilessly. I struggle to get out of my bed. I go upstairs and meet my host dad, who is ready to go to work. Now I have to kill 30 minutes until I can wake up my two host kids at 7:00 am. I clean up the kitchen area and start to prepare breakfast. Then the daily fight to wake up the girls begins! I lure them with breakfast.

The girls are very busy in the morning. They have to practice piano or violin, read, feed the dog and the lizards, and they often have homework to finish.

9:00 a.m. - finally I drive the kids to school. Now I have time for household chores, to take care of our dog, Scout, to write e-mails or to call my family and friends in Germany.

3:40 p.m. - I pick the girls up from school and bring them to their many activities such as basketball or soccer. Then we rush home. My host kids have a snack and start doing their homework while I try to prepare dinner. My host parents come home, we have dinner all together, and after that I am off duty.

Now I have time for my English class, to meet other au pairs, to go to the YMCA, or I just spend my evening with my host family. On the weekend I meet my friends. Most of them are au pairs too. We go clubbing, sight-seeing or shopping. Sometimes I go to watch basketball or soccer games of my host kids or I go skiing with them in the winter. That is always a fun time. Sometimes I ask myself, "What am I doing here? Why did I leave my sister, my parents and my friends to live so far away for one year?" Especially on holidays like Thanksgiving or Christmas or my birthday, it is hard not to be with my family.

But then I look at my wonderful host kids Kim and Andrea and I remember all the new and great things I have seen and learned since I came to Minnesota six months ago. I know that is why I am here. I know that it was the right decision to leave home for one year. And another day starts. 6:15 a.m. my alarm clock rings mercilessly...

## **History of My Father**

*Meka Hedo, Minneapolis*

My name is Meka Hedo. I am from Oromiya, and today I'm going to talk about my father. My father used to be a great person. All Oromiya people used to love him. He was fighting the Ethiopians for Oromo freedom. My father never gave up. He had a gun and everything to help him survive. There were these people called Darges that he fought. They always tried to kill him, but they didn't have a chance because he had some secret place that he always hid. No one knew where that place was – only my mom. In 1988 my father was killed in the wild forest. He was walking and that was my father's last day in the world, so I'll always remember my father as a great person to the end.

## **Life Struggle, Nobody Help**

*Nor Xiong, Saint Paul*

I am an immigrant from Laos, to Thailand and the United States. I was born in Laos July 16, 1960. My father died in 1971 in the war of Americans C. I. A, or leader General Vang Pao wars. After 1975 the country was at war again. My family had no place to live; we moved from town to live in the jungle at that time. We were very afraid of the communist Laos and Vietnamese armies. My family just moved from the mountain to the hill, hill to the mountain. There were no places to live day or night maybe we had to move three times a day or night. There were not any places to live for about a week. So many people died, I don't know how to count. Then I decided to move from Laos to Thailand. We took thirty days walking in the forest to the border between Laos and Thailand.

I saw the immigrants who had died lying in the road. I was surprised and very nervous. Then I crossed the border of River Mekong to Thailand. I arrived in the center of the refugee camp. My life was like the sky, it was a little shiny. But there was no place to live there too. I had to move to the United States. It is better, but in other ways it is a very big headache. I am unhappy and don't sleep thinking about the future. Everything is by myself, because I don't know how to speak English, and anything in the United States.

My story is finished. Have to remember Hmong – poor in mountain Phubia, Laos.

## **My Home City**

*Shukri Hirsi, Minneapolis*

I was born in Mogadishu. Mogadishu is the capital city of Somalia and it is located in the south. Mogadishu is a beautiful city and it has beautiful buildings and parks. Its people are friendly. About two million people live in Mogadishu and they all speak the same language and they have the same religion. People in the city go to school and work even though Mogadishu is a place of war. People never stop trying to survive from this nightmare. Mogadishu is a warm and wonderful city, but it doesn't have nightlife because there is no place open after 9:00 p.m. My home city has a bad point because it's the place that the war started and is still going on. I hope that one day Mogadishu becomes the real Mogadishu it used to be. Then it was beautiful and peaceful and a safe place. People enjoyed living there.

## **Ethiopia Government – United States Government**

*Abraham, Minneapolis*

Ethiopia Government  
Murderous, Cruel,  
Killing, Arresting, Oppressing,  
Dictator, Prisons – Asylum,  
Freedom,  
Traveling, Speaking, Working,  
Wonderful, Great  
United States Government

## **One of My Worst Days**

*Mustafa Abdi, Saint Cloud*

It was one beautiful morning and I was getting ready to go to school. It was about 7:30 a.m. It was a regular day for all the kids that went to First March Middle School, but what happened next surprised every one including students, teachers and parents. It is not easy to have your life change in one day. This was the first day of civil war in Hodon County in Mogadishu.

Nobody knew what was going on. It was around 12:00 p.m., 1990. It was time to go home for students, but there was a problem. The teachers told the students, "No one can leave the school until parents come to pick them up." After that the students were scared and wondered what was going on. The parents came and explained that there was a civil war beginning in Hodon County in Mogadishu. As the day went on the war kept getting worse and worse. The war expanded to a lot of counties and cities in Mogadishu.

The second day a lot of families decided to evacuate the town. My family was one of those families. I was only 8 years old at that time. My family and I decided to leave everything behind, including our valuable things such as family albums and most importantly, a book that I used to write every story my grandmother told me. It was really hard to leave those things behind. It took us 2 days to travel by car and go to the next town. The town we moved to was called Kismayo in Somalia. It wasn't as great as Mogadishu, but life goes on and I got used to living there. We stayed there for three months. We weren't able to start a new school because we didn't know how long we were going to be there. As the year passed, my family and I lived in a lot of places in Somalia, and countries near Somalia.

I will always remember that one beautiful morning that I went to my school. The war surprised everyone and affected a lot of people. Families just got up and left everything behind. My family and I stuck together through good and bad, and it finally paid off because we have a beautiful life. That was the worst day of my life.

## **My Life**

*Blong Chang, Minneapolis*

I was born in Thailand in 1982. My family is very interesting because my family lived in many states in Thailand. I have three sisters and three brothers. My first sister got married and she came to the US in 1990. My first brother got married too and he lived with my family and we went to Na Pho. My brothers came to the U.S. too and my father can't come to the U.S. My father and mother and two sisters and one brother and I moved to Wat Tham Krabot when I was 19 years old. I got married and I have two boys. I think I want two girls for my wife and me. I came to the U.S. I worry about my family because I don't know English very well and I don't speak English very well.

## **Nhia Bee's Story**

*Nhia Bee Vang, Minneapolis*

When I studied in Laos in school, level six, the CIA soldier came in to my school. They made the students go out with the soldiers. We had to stand together to see who was big and tall, because many soldiers died, and they needed more soldiers. So they pointed to us and said, "You, you, you come with us, other children go back to school." If father and mother have money, they pay so their children can stay in school. The other children went to be soldiers. I was 15 years old.

They gave me a gun. I put it on my shoulder. It was a big gun. It touched the ground. It was bigger than me. I learned the gun in one month. We fought the North Vietnamese and made them go out of the country. The U.S. left Laos. The Hmong soldiers went to the mountains, because the Vietnamese soldiers came back. If we helped the CIA, they would take us to jail. So we went to live in the mountains. We had no food. We ate leaves and mountain potatoes for food. We lived like this from 1975 to 1984.

My father had two wives. I have one brother; we are from the first wife. During the Laos-Vietnamese war my mother ran away. I was 15 years old, and my brother was 10 years. My father's second wife took care of us, but she died in the war too. My father told me and my brother to get out of Laos. He stayed in the mountains. We went to find our mother in Thailand. I was 24 years old, and my brother was 19. When we got to Thailand, people told us that our mother was not there. She died in the Mekong River. So we lived with our uncle's family, his last name was Vang.

I lived in the refugee camp in Thailand for 20 years. My brother's mother in-law sent for him and his family to come to the United States in 1990. I came here in 2004. Now my brother and I both live in Minneapolis with our families.

## **The War of Vietnam**

*Sue Xiong, Minneapolis*

During the Vietnam War, there were two groups of Americans. One group believed Americans must fight against Communism in Vietnam. The other group was against sending Americans to fight in Vietnam. This group grew larger and larger during the war. These people said too many American soldiers were getting killed. They wanted the people of Vietnam to fight the war themselves. It cost millions of dollars for Americans to fight in Vietnam. Many Americans wanted this money to be spent in the United States. By 1967 many Americans became protesters to show they were against the Vietnam War. They marched in large cities against the war. Some protesters burned American flags. Others fought with police. There were fights and protests in every part of the country. A few protesters were killed.

## **My Best Friend in Sierra Leone**

*Diana Saidu, Minneapolis*

When I was ten years old I had a best friend, Margaret. She was about my age. We were the same height. My parents and her parents are not related, but we lived in the same village for a long time. My best friend and I grew up together. We played jump rope and went to school together every week. The school was far away from our village. We got up early in the morning to cook breakfast and lunch. We packed lunch and then my best friend and I walked two hours to our school. The school was far from home, but everybody had fun walking to school.

When everybody came home, we helped our parents to feed the pigs and chickens. Later we cooked dinner and studied and went to bed to sleep. Two or three months later, some jungle people came to burn my village. At that time we ran away until now. I haven't seen my friend since then and I don't know where she lives now. That was ten years ago.

## **My Life in the U.S.**

*Sofia Guzman, Minneapolis*

My name is Sofia. I came to the U.S.A with my husband and my daughter on June 5, 2001. I like to live here in Minneapolis. I miss my family. I remember my work and my dog. I miss my father, too. I love my father.

## **Silver Lining**

*Emayet Omaid, Minneapolis*

I remember when I was twelve years old and was going to a musical high school in Kabul, Afghanistan. I had been learning how to play violin and piano for about two years. My love for music was very strong, and I was enjoying it. Soon a civil war started, and our high school was destroyed. Indeed, that year of 1996 was the beginning of a tragic war that has lasted for almost ten years now. Poverty and misery struck the whole country, and my musical skills weren't strong enough to play any song that could make me forget the reality and have a good time with my friends.

However, during those two years I had learned a lot about music, and when I came to America I bought myself an organ and started to practice some songs that I played when I was young. Now I can say that the silver lining of experiencing the war is that I have overcome those bad times. With the few musical skills that I have, I fully enjoy life again. Playing piano sometimes is a therapeutic way of coping with the depressive thoughts of my home country and makes me feel like I'm twelve again.

## **About the Civil War in Somalia**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

As we know, there is civil war in Somalia since 1991, and that was the last time we had a central government.

First of all, Somalia is located in east Africa and has borders with Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. The country has two large rivers, and both the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean meet in Somalia. The people who live there have the same religion, the same language, and the same culture too. It almost looks like one family, but unfortunately for more than fifteen years there is huge misunderstanding between us, and I really don't know what is causing that. You know I don't believe that there is one country which has what we have. I mean we have everything which could make us to build our country together, but that is not what is happening there. Every day people are dying for gunshots, for hunger, for lack of medical facilities. Some of us keep moving from city to city just to look for a better place where we can sleep peacefully. So, the main question is why are we fighting? Nobody knows the answer of that question, but as time goes by, we have to understand what is good for us because we are the only ones who can decide our future and we have to remember that nothing can be like home. "East or west, home is the best."

## **My Worst Day of My Life**

*Sadiya Ereq, Minneapolis*

My name is Sadiya. I am from Kenya. My nationality is Somali. I lived in Kenya for a long time. Because of that, I don't remember much about Somalia. I have seen some things when we were running from Somalia in 1992. I would like to express some things about when the civil war started in Somalia. There was a government in Somalia and some people fought that government because they needed changes. They kicked out that government and they did not bring anything except gunshots, killing, raping, looting and corpses lying in the roads of Mogadishu. I asked my father what they were. He said to me, "It is the body of a human being." It was the worst day I had ever seen.

That was our final day in Mogadishu. We decided to run from our country to our neighbor, Ethiopia. That was hard, when you leave a house, a country, empty-handed to another country. How do you feel?



## *Immigrant Experience*

### **My Dream Country U.S.A.**

*Zoe Boimah, Minneapolis*

I'm Zoe from Liberia, West Africa. My country had a civil war from 1990-2003. People got slaughtered like animals. My family and I walked through the bushes for three days without eating any good food. It was only by God's grace that we arrived in the Ivory Coast. When in the Ivory Coast, we had to report to the refugee camp to register for clothing, food, shelters and medicine. We lived in Ivory Coast until 2003.

Another war broke out in Ivory Coast. We had to leave for Ghana. When we got there, life was different. My family and I had to start a new life all over. We lived in the refugee camp for about 2 and a half years. The living conditions in Ghana were very difficult, because my parents were not working. We washed people's clothes just to make ends meet. I always prayed to travel to the U.S.A. and my dream came to pass.

I arrived in the U.S.A. in August, 2005. I was excited. After three months, I decided to attend the Nursing Assistant School, and I got my certificate as a Nursing Assistant. I'm working in the health field. I hope to become an LPN or RN. I thank the Almighty God that my life has improved so much.

## **My Difficult Life**

*Por Yang, Minneapolis*

I am a Hmong refugee from a camp in Laos and Thailand. My family came to the United States on September 15, 2004. My family was very happy because my family had to change to a new life and meet many Hmong friends in the U.S.A. But after that my family felt very sad and lonely because after one month my family got many bills to pay such as house, Xcel Energy, phone, Centerpoint Energy and other things. In my country we never had to pay a lot of bills. Finally my family thought in the U.S.A. it was very different from my country, such as different language, laws, people and religions. So my family stayed home and looked out the window every day. My wife and I did not speak English and did not go anywhere. I thought my new refugee life was very difficult. It is still very difficult for my wife and me. It is difficult for our children, too. We go to school and that helps us a little. It is difficult to understand English, but we try.

## **Free Life**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

In the United States everyone has a free life and good life. You can do anything, like your religion. Everyone has a different religion, like Muslims and Christians, and everyone has freedom of their religion. We have freedom to drive. We have freedom to go outside. We aren't scared to go where we want. Also we can live at home in peace. I'm so glad to live in the United States.

## **The Story of My Life**

*Wilder Sosa, Saint Paul*

My name is Wilder Sosa. I'm 22 years old. I'm an immigrant from Guatemala, and I'm an orphan. I grew up with my grandparents. My mother died when I was born and my father was killed when I was just four years old. My parents were very young and I was their first baby. My grandfather was killed on September 13, 2003. I have only my grandmother and she's 71 years old. She is the most important person in my life. I studied in my country and I studied a little English. Because of the situation of poverty in my country, one day I decided to borrow \$6,000. With some tears in my eyes, I left my home and traveled to the U.S.A., and thanks to God I'm here.

I came here in April 2005. I live with my aunt (really like my sister because I grew up with her). She brought me to MORE school and here I found a very, very big support. The teachers are helpful persons. Right now I'm living a better life and my English is improving every day. I have a job working at a laundry and can send money to help my grandmother. I hope that someday soon I can travel to my country and see my grandmother. I really miss my country.

## **I Changed My Life**

*Ambari Ahmed, Waseca*

I was born first January 1984. I was born in Muqdisho Somalia. When I came to Kenya I was very young. I lived there many years. I got married when my age was 19 years. My husband came from New Zealand. After we got married he went back to that country. I lived with my family. I came with my family to U.S.A.

My first visit to hospital with the doctor told me that I was pregnant one month. My first child was born in Des Moines, Iowa. It changed my life because I had to learn how to care for a baby. My mother showed me how to take care of my baby. I want to learn more English for reading, writing and speaking. When I came here to Des Moines, Iowa I went to the church to learn English. After that I moved to Minnesota. I go to the ESL class. I appreciate my teachers that teach me English very well because education is important to all of the world. When I came here to Minnesota it was summer and I had no idea what that next winter would be. When I saw it I didn't like it. But nowadays it gives me hope to live in Minnesota. I like to travel to visit my sister in Kenya. I miss all my friends and relatives so much. Sometimes I call and I say I will come back to visit you and I'll be very happy.

## **Somali Community in Minnesota**

*Saida Nur, Minneapolis*

My name is Saida. I am from Somalia. I live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I would like to share my ideas in writing with different people from around the world. I would like to write a little bit about the Somali society in Minnesota and their activities of lives and businesses. I would also like to say something about the family problem, meaning parents and their teenage children. Somalis have a great opportunity to work and study in the United States, particularly in Minnesota. Somali people have their own businesses, like shopping malls, Halal groceries, restaurants and cafeterias. Most of these business places are located in Minneapolis.

Many Somalis take advantage of the opportunities that they have. Some of them are educated. They prefer to keep their education and go to college and get a degree in order to have a better life. Others are hard workers. They try to work hard and save money.

However, there are some problems. There is a big misunderstanding between parents and teenagers. I think this problem is common in the United States, no matter what group of people it is. The problem is that Somali society has its own culture, but the children born in the United States or raised here don't understand much about their own culture. They start acting and dressing like Americans, especially black Americans and some of the parents don't like that. They usually try to stop their children from dressing like that, but I don't think it matters what way they are dressing. The problem is that some of the teenagers don't know exactly what they are doing. Even if they realized that what they are doing is wrong, they don't care when their parents try to make them change.

In conclusion, the Somali community is a large and important part of Minnesota. Even if they have some problems, they still are proud to live here.

## **Story of the La Xiong Family**

*La Xiong, Brooklyn Center*

My name is La Xiong from Laos. One day my family moved to Thailand on July 25, 1979. My family lived in Thailand from 1979 to 2005. My family was lucky to move to the United States. We lived in Providence, RI for one year. There was no one to help my family. In October of 2006, my family moved to Minneapolis to be with my mother and father, sister and brother. I am very happy. I am getting help, and I am going to school.

I like my mother and father because my mother and father love my family. In the home my mother and father like to cook and we always eat dinner together. We are from Thailand, and we like fresh Italian food. My mother shops in the afternoon. She usually buys cheese, chicken, fish, steak, rice, and fresh vegetables. For dinner we always have pasta.

I love my mother. I thank you, my Mother, always.

## **My First Plane Ride**

*Kou Vang, Saint Paul*

My first ride on an airplane was exciting. My first time was in 2004. When I got into the airplane, my seat was by the window. While the plane took off I looked out of the window. I saw the houses and buildings were smaller and smaller. At this moment I felt scared because the plane went up and up, but it looked like the plane would fall down. So I closed my eyes for awhile. After that I opened my eyes and couldn't see anything, just the beautiful white clouds. When I came to the United States I couldn't sleep in the nighttime because the day and night were different from Thailand, and when I slept I felt I was still in the airplane. It took me one more month to change.

## **Sang Kai Yang's Story**

*Sang Kai Yang, Minneapolis*

I was born about 1958. I became a soldier to help American soldiers in 1972.

I was a soldier for 12 years. I didn't have shoes.

I carried a gun. I'm from Laos.

I went to Thailand in 1979.

I was a refugee in Thailand for 22 years.

I got married there. I have five sons.

My wife's name Cha Xiong. She was born in 1962.

## **My Work, My Kids and Their Homework**

*Javier Hidalgo, Minneapolis*

Today is Wednesday and I'm thinking about what I am going to do Saturday and Sunday. Maybe I'll work Saturday, maybe not. I make plans with my kids where we can go for fun. During the week they have homework but I can't help them because I work and start at 2 p.m. and work until 10 p.m. This is too difficult because they come back from school at 2:05 and when I come back from work they are sleeping.

My wife can't read or write in English but she always tries to help them. On Saturday and Sunday they don't have homework but my daughter likes to read to me and my son plays football soccer on Saturday nights. On Sunday I try to be with my kids and teach them something or just stay with them because I can't see my kids during the week. And Monday, it's back to work again. I know, I know, it would be better if I moved to a different shift but I can't do that right now because I didn't work for two months. The company called me to come back to work for them again. So that is the reason that I came back to work on the same shift. I wish to be with my kids most of the time but I have to work. I know my kids understand me. I know.

## **Biography**

*Fuad Diriye, Minneapolis*

My name is Fuad. I was born in Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia on the first of January 1985. My parents were very happy that day because they got their first born child. They named me Fuad, which means "heart."

Our life was so good before 1991 when the civil war broke out in my country. Lack of law and order, security, and stability caused chaos, people killed each other and destroyed all facilities of life. That made us move away our country. From that day up to end of 1999 we lived in Ethiopia as refugees. We moved to Kenya when my father came to the U.S.A. He requested the US government to allow him to reunite his family. Finally we came here on November 20, 2006 and we were reunited with our father again. I am very glad to have come here to Minneapolis, Minnesota. I want to establish a new life here and upgrade my education. That is why I came to VOA High School.

## **I Did It!**

*Fernanda Rafaela Machado Scaburri, Chanhassen*

It was not easy for me to leave Brazil. When I was 13 years old my life seemed perfect. I had everything that I could wish. My sister was starting the college and I was so excited for her that I decided about my career too! I decided that I would take International Relations at the university. I'm still sure about that! After I made my decision I knew I should improve my English because I was sure that I would travel to be an au pair and spend some time in another country. But I couldn't imagine how everything could turn upside down.

My parents lost their jobs at the same time. My grandfather got sick and spent eight months lying in his bed with Alzheimers. After these eight months when my grandfather died, my parents got divorced. I was 16 then and allowed to work. I got a job, but it was so hard to study in the morning and work until 10:30 p.m. every day. I changed my job, and started my English course and studied hard, because even with the hard times I was focused on my trip.

The financial situation was terrible, but my family sold our beach house, so with that money I could pay my trip. It was like I had two options, I could fail with my big dream or I could travel and have a happy end. I was running against time, but I did it!

In July of 2006 the host family called and on August 14 I traveled to the U.S. and now I'm here! I'm 18 years old enjoying every change that happened and will happen. Every time I feel disappointed, I think about everything I did by myself and passed through. Now, even with some difficulties I'm very proud of myself and I really worry less about the future.

## **My Story**

*Ln, Minneapolis*

When I was in Thailand, I went to school and then I met my husband at the school. He liked me very much, but I didn't like him. I was very scared about him because he was following me from the school to my house every day. And at night he still came to my house again. But I didn't talk to him, and I didn't want to see him either because I didn't like him. But he kept coming to my house very often, and he just looked at me only and he said hi to me, but I didn't say anything to him. I just found the way to go away because I didn't like him.

He lived about four miles away from my house. He had a long walk far away every night to my house. For almost three months he didn't stop. So that time a police officer beat him up very bad; he almost got killed by the police officer. So that's why I changed my mind, and I think that maybe his love will be true love for me. So when he came back to my house, then I said hi to him and talked to him.

So we became boyfriend and girlfriend, and he took me to a special place. If I said no then he didn't want to go, too, so four or five months later we got married. By that time I was 13 years old and my husband was 20 years old. So we have been married for twenty-five years now. We have five children and four of them are in the college and the younger is in high school. So when I got married to my husband I was happy. I respect and support him in every way and with everything. But my life is still unhappy. I am very sad because life is not turning good and what I believe for. Love was very dangerous.

## **First Time in the U.S.**

*Chong Thao, Minneapolis*

I came to the United States on September 15, 2004. It was the first time I saw this wonderful place. This was the first time I saw snow and Minnesota's beautiful seasons. It excited me to see many things in my life in the United States. I thought about my life between before and right now and it was very different. I had to rent a house and pay many bills. I had to go to school to learn English; speaking English is important. I had to learn how to get a driver's license, find a job and earn money. Every thing was hard and new for me in this new country. But I never lose my hope.

## **My New Job**

*Zam Zam Hassan, Minneapolis*

When I work nighttime I was scared because somebody tell me bad words. After that time until now I don't like night shift. Then I found day shift. After ten days I got a new job. Then I will be OK. That was good for me.

## **Happy To Be Here**

*La Lee, Saint Paul*

On January 19, 2004 all Hmong people in Tham Krabok were lucky refugees because the UN came over to rescue them. After that, the Hmong in Wat Tham Krabok all came to America. For me, thank you very much, President of the United States. Now I live in the United States. I am happy very much in America. I think after I study English more I can help all the people. I am very, very happy with everything in America. I see everything is good in the U.S.A.

## **Moving from Mexico to Minnesota**

*Lucina Ramirez, Minneapolis*

I moved to Minnesota three years ago from Mexico with my grandson. I like to stay here because I live with my husband and two sons.

I don't like the weather because it is very cool and snowy.

I miss my country and seeing my daughter and grandsons.

I work at Arby's restaurant. I like my job.

I hope I will save money and can move back to my country.

## **Moving from Nicaragua**

*José Chavarría, Crystal*

I moved to Minnesota on January 1, 2000 from Nicaragua. I came here by myself. I like to play the piano. I don't like winter. I miss my family. I install insulation for my job. I like my job. I hope that I will learn English.

## **My Home in Minneapolis**

*Haweya Jibril, Minneapolis*

My living room is big. My dining room is not. My kitchen is small. My bathroom is very big. My bedroom is very big. My stove is not big. I have two sinks. My refrigerator is very cold. My microwave is good. I have many cabinets. I have my neighborhood. My neighborhood is safe.

## **My Experience in the U.S.A.**

*Khadija Mohamed, Minneapolis*

When I was back home, I used to dream about coming to the U.S. I was so excited and happy when I heard I'm coming here. It was like a dream come true, because I wanted to get opportunities that everybody was talking about. I knew my life would change and I will have a better life for which I'm so grateful to be here. Having said that, now I'm able to do what I was dreaming such as living a better life, because now I'm able to work hard and study. I was so surprised when I saw how people here have equal opportunity of education, jobs, and so on. The biggest thing that I had experience to see was how age doesn't limit people to get education.

## **Somali Community in Minnesota**

*Muna Nur, Minneapolis*

I'm thankful for my life. This world and this life works in mysterious ways. Growing up I thought I had everything that I wanted, but little did I know that I would be separated from my family and from my parents. When I was about six or seven years old, I visited my uncle Yusuf and his wife Maryan in Mombassa, Kenya. After a couple of months I started to miss my family. My home was not safe any more. The civil war had started in Somalia. Uncle Yusuf had contacted my family and told them to come to Kenya. I continued to live with my uncle and he loved me like his own child.

Life in Mombassa was okay even though I missed my country, my family, and my friends. I took private classes there. I was taught Somali and English. Maryan, my aunt, was an English teacher from Sweden and my uncle was a pediatrician. They used to live in Sweden, but they had moved to Mombassa, Kenya, to help the people there. Of course they liked the weather in Kenya and the people. They knew that life was good in Mombassa and they had no plan to move from there.

Even though my life was good, I wanted to move to either the United States or Sweden. After all, Swedish was my second language. Most of the time I had home schooling and my aunt was my teacher. She taught me Swedish and English. I wanted to go to school like a normal kid, but I wasn't allowed to do that. After all, I wasn't legal to live in Sweden and also I wasn't accepted.

Finally, I got the opportunity to come to the United States and I was excited to reunite with my family. I have now been in the U.S. for about seven years and I'm preparing for my GED. My goal is to go to college and to get a degree to be a pediatrician. I like taking care of children because they are precious.

I'm thankful to God for giving me a chance. After losing everything that we owned, now I have life and a purpose.

## **To Make Friends**

*Miho Akiyama, Little Canada*

I came to Minnesota about two years ago, because my husband worked at the University. When I started to live here, I didn't have any Japanese friends. When I started to go to ESL school, I could make friends who were from other countries. Especially, I have many Korean friends, because our cultures are similar, so we can understand our feelings easily. A few months later, one of my Korean friends who had Japanese friends introduced them to me. She thought that I felt lonely because I had no Japanese friends. When I met Japanese friends, I was so happy. Since I met Japanese friends, I rarely miss my country. Now I enjoy my life in Minnesota. I think that making friends is good for foreigners because if I had stayed home, I would felt so lonely. I appreciated a friend who gave me a chance to make Japanese friends.

## **My History**

*Patricia Cordova, Minneapolis*

I was a very young child when my parents brought me to Mexico. I remember my mom didn't want to go back and she didn't want to stay there. My brother wanted to go back. I didn't. I wanted to stay in the U.S., but we went back. I lived there for 17 years. I always had a dream to go back to the U.S. I didn't remember a lot from the U.S. I studied and worked in Mexico. In my last job I worked for a lawyer. I saw that he helped people get visas to visit the U.S. I told him my version and he told me he never had a case like mine. He wanted to learn how to get me a passport. He made an appointment for me at the consulate of the U.S. in Mexico City. I didn't have sufficient documents. I only had pictures, some papers from the school, my record of shots, and my birth certificate, which was only a copy in black and white not the original in blue.

We went to Mexico City. I lived four hours away by car. I didn't speak English. He knew English. I presented all I had. I brought my picture from the school with my group and the consulate asked me "Which one are you?" I pointed to the bottom of the picture, and then he asked me, "Can you come back in nine days?" He gave me more papers to get my birth certificate, and other official documents in order for me to get my passport. I brought my Baptism certificate and went back with it and \$60.00. I was surprised they gave me my passport. Another lady told me, "You were lucky. We didn't give the passport if the person did not have the old requirements."

I moved back to the U.S. five months later. I arrived first in Los Angeles, California, the city where I was born. I stayed in California for five months. Then I moved to Minneapolis. Now I'm married and I have one child. He is 5 years old and I'm studying to learn English.

## **When I First Moved to the U.S.A.**

*Anonymous, Hopkins*

I moved to the U.S.A. in March, 2004. When I came, I was not worried about anything, because it was a big difference for me. I had been a refugee in Kenya almost for five years. Now I had independence. Refugee life was gone forever. I think it is never coming back anymore. I know how it was bad. Now I have become a U.S. resident.

When I first moved to the U.S.A., I used to live with my brother. It was hard to get the first job but I was looking for a job for six months with patience. Finally, after I decided to move to another state, I got my first job. After awhile I bought some stuff that I needed and then I bought a car. Six months later, I rented an apartment and moved to my own place. Life became better and better.

## **Home**

*Claudia Dudziak, Woodbury*

I left my home and all the people I love behind when I came to the United States. My friends and my family were such a big part of my life. I knew it would be very difficult to be away from them, but I felt that I needed to do something just for myself and make new experiences. So I decided to come to the U.S.A. and work as an au pair. That means I live here in a host family and take care of their kids.

Being part of an American family and their daily life really is more exciting and interesting than I thought it would be. And pretty soon, I met people my age. Some of them are really good friends of mine now. Together we got to know the American way of life. And I met one very special person and though I do not know what the future holds for us, words can't describe how thankful and happy I am that I met that person.

All the people I have met since I came here have influenced me, changed me and made me learn new things about myself. And they all contributed to something I would have never expected to find – I found a home away from home.

## **Coming to Minnesota**

*Boo Jae Lee, Bloomington*

I came from Korea to Minnesota on April 21, 2004. I came with my wife and my two sons. I like the movies and music in America. I don't like snakes. I miss my brother and sister. I work at the Electric Wire Company. I like my job. I hope I will speak English good.

## **My Dream in the U.S.**

*Lm, Minneapolis*

I would like to talk about my life in the U.S. I remember the first time I came to the U.S. It was very difficult for my family and me because my language wasn't good and nobody translated for us. It was very difficult to go anywhere, and I still remember when I went to register for school. I wanted to go to school, but the first time I didn't know how to take the bus and I didn't know how to drive a car. Nobody helped me or took me to school every day because they were busy too.

But Hennepin County has some agency to help the people who are immigrants. The Hmong agency taught me how to take the bus to school. I liked my school and I liked my teacher, too, because she was a very nice teacher. She taught a lot of things to me.

In the U.S. it was difficult for my family and me, so I had a little problem with my financial situation because in the U.S. I have a lot of responsibility to do. I have to take care of my children; I have to study English; I have to clean my house, so I have a lot of things to do. I apply for many jobs but, unfortunately, I got nothing because in the U.S. that company wants people to have experience in their country. I don't have enough experience, but I think I will get a better job soon in the future.

## **My Experiences Finding a Job**

*Amina Abdulkadir, Mankato*

When I see there is a job fair or there are a lot of job openings in the newspaper, or I see new hiring signs on some shops, I say it is a good time to get a job. However, finding a job is never as easy as it seems.

Two years ago when I came to America I began to look for work to earn my own daily living. I went to the local job agencies to fill out employment forms. I also looked in the newspapers and asked my friends if they knew about any job openings every day. Then, after two months of looking, I got a temporary job. I worked there for four months. I wasn't happy with that work because it was too hard and I used to work all night and sleep all day. I didn't have any other choice, but still I was looking for another job. I was so tired and I felt sick.

I knew that a new large company would be opening in the town soon, but the problem was their long interview and their hard long exam. I said to myself to go ahead to the interview and take the test for good experience. I went there and they interviewed me on two separate days. It was a very hard exam. I didn't expect to pass it, but I was so lucky I passed. I started the new job, but it wasn't easy. I still had to work all the night and sleep all day. I still needed to look for another job. I saw a lot of openings in the Minnesota Job Bank every single day, and so I called them and they always said to call the next day. I even went to a job fair and they said just wait for our calls but no one called me.

After eight months of looking for a job, the company where I used to work called me saying I can come back to my position. I went back to it and worked there another seven months, then got laid off again. After another four months of looking, I got a new temporary job. It was a very easy job, but the problem is they don't hire permanently. Although it's not easy I am still looking for a good job.

## **My Hopes**

*Hodan Diriye, Minneapolis*

My name is Hodan. I live in Minneapolis. I am from Somalia. I would like to talk about my hopes. When I came to the U.S.A., everything was beautiful looking. It was September 21, 2006. Before I came to the U.S.A., the people told me that it is winter time and I got afraid of cold because I didn't see cold before. But after I saw the cold weather, now I know. My hope was to first start learning English. I was here three months and a few days when I started to learn English. It was really difficult to talk to the people before I came to school. When I came it was the first day; I talked to someone alone. It was interesting. I feel better, and I started my new class. Now I am in class 5/6, and I wish when I finish ESL, I would like to go to GED and then prepare to go to college. I would like to prepare to become a pharmacist. I wish to get good life and education in the U.S.A.

## **The Person I Admire: My Neighbor Janelle**

*Faith, Woodbury*

My husband was chosen to work for a year at his parent company, so in July, 2006, we moved from the Netherlands to the United States. We came together with three other colleagues of my husband. They all lived in downtown Minneapolis. We have two kids, so we wanted a house with three bedrooms. So that's how we ended up in Woodbury.

Of course we didn't know anybody in the U.S.A. But we didn't worry about that. Because we knew that God will provide. And He did! The day after we arrived we met our neighbors, Mike and Janelle. They have three children and two of them are the same age as our kids. We started to know each other better and after a few days they invited me and my kids for an American lunch. The lunch was hamburgers and macaroni & cheese – real American food!

Janelle started to take me everywhere. She took me to Lake Elmo and to the Mall of America. She also invited me for a mothers group. So she helps me integrate in the American culture. And I'm so thankful to her for that!

## **Coming to the U.S.**

*Camille Laure Njoh, Saint Cloud*

My name is Camille Njoh. I came from Cameroon to the United States almost three months ago. When I arrived in the U.S. I had many difficulties; I didn't speak or understand English. My problems started in the Chicago airport. Then I saw people lining up together to the different boxes of the security people. I didn't know where I should pass. Then a woman who saw that I had trouble came to me and asked me if I had a problem. I said yes, I don't know where I should pass. She said please can you show me your passport? She looked and talked to me in French: "You can go in the row over there."

When I arrived at the security, the policeman asked me for all of my documents. I gave them to him and he checked them and I asked, "Please can you show me where I'm going now?" He showed me and I said, "Thank you." He answered me, "You're welcome." I thought, "How did he know that I'm new in the U.S.?" I went in the way which the policeman showed me. I asked again a policeman who was beside me, but he didn't understand me. I saw another person. I showed him my ticket. He went with me in where I should take my plane for Minneapolis.

Now, I try to speak English. But it's not so good yet. I'm going to school at Hands Across the World at Boys and Girls Club South every morning and to McKinley two days in the evening to improve my English. So, writing is better than listening because people speak very fast. They don't pronounce all the letters. If I don't pay attention, I can't understand. But the real problem is speaking yet. I hope that in one year it will be better with the help of the great people here and the blessing of God.

## **My Story**

*Seng Yang, Minneapolis*

Last weekend I took care of my children and my family and I watched television. I cook breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day for my family to eat. I go to buy food in the Cub Food store. I was born in Laos. I wake up every morning at 7:00 a.m. I go to sleep at 10:00 p.m. Since I came to America, it is very good. My family came to America. We are very happy, but I don't speak English, and now I study.

## **The Life Just Came**

*Theng, Minneapolis*

On August 13, 2004 I came to the United States. I was mad. I couldn't talk because they had a different language, different people, and different places. I didn't know the language. I couldn't ask somebody to help me find a house. I couldn't shop. I thought, "Why?"

When I lived in my Native Country, I was smart. What happened to me in the United States? I couldn't help myself. I wanted to redeem myself, the same as when I lived in my Native Country. How many times can I find myself redeemed, to be the same as my life in my Native Country?

What can I do now?

## **My Life in the United States**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

When I came to the United States it was like starting a new life. The lifestyle in the U.S.A. is different from the country I came from. I left my family and friends. I had many dreams and hopes before I decided to come. I was sure that my life here wasn't like in my country because the culture and language.

The first month for me was very sad because I didn't know the city and the people. Also, the biggest problem was the English. I couldn't speak a word and even understand. For that reason I started going to school to learn English.

Sometimes I miss my family but I'm glad because I learn new things and I'm still meeting new people.

## **New Country**

*Ci Iab Lor, Burnsville*

My name is Ci Iab Lor. I'm from Laos. I have been in the United States for one year and five months. First of all, I didn't know any English words and other things. And I didn't have any friends in here. All things are very different from my country, such as weather, people, languages, food etc. I didn't know anything about here because I didn't speak English. I didn't know how to drive a car. During the day I stayed home and thought and thought "What can I do?" So that made me miss my family very much. However, it was a good opportunity for me to go to school and two weeks later I went to school.

## **Immigration**

*David C. Martínez, Saint Paul*

The United States is a wonderful country where anybody can have many opportunities to grow up. That's why the eyes of many people around the world had focused on it, especially the ones who don't have the resources to be here or those ones who have that dream of Martin Luther King, the dream to be or do something good for your family or your fellows.

These people left their families, houses, jobs, and their roots to jump the border illegally to have a little piece of the American dream. Our government asks a question about why all these people, complete families, emigrate from their countries?

There is only one answer – in our countries democracy, liberty, and/or opportunities to feed our children do not exist and corruption is everywhere. The only solution is to find the good things somewhere and the only place is this beautiful country, the United States of America.

## **My Trip to Laos**

*Tom Yang, Minneapolis*

Last December 2006, I took a vacation to visit my father, mother-in-law, sister, and brother-in-law in Laos. We have missed each other for over 30 years, since the Vietnam and American War ended in 1975. It was the first time for me to go back to visit the country and people in Laos. The important thing I was concerned about were the people in Laos because there are no jobs and no government help. I was very excited on my trip because it took 24 hours to fly on the airplane and we flew over the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, and across many countries in the Middle East to get to Laos.

When I got to the airport my brother-in-law and a lot of friends came from many places to pick me up there. We were very happy to see each other. During that time too many people cried, so I cried too. After that we rode together to their home and we had a family reunion that night. So we went place to place until the Hmong New Year came and we enjoyed the celebration.

I stayed one month in Laos and I didn't want to come back to the U.S.A.

## **Memories of My Life**

*Anonymous, Waseca*

My name is Julia. I have no memories from Mexico, neither from my life in Texas. It could be I was raised with no friends or relatives. I lived in Florida for 15 years and I worked there. I lived in Michigan for 15 years and I worked there. I moved to Minnesota. It was all about work. I have taken some time to come to school to learn English as a Second Language, which I think is great. It has helped me a lot. Thanks to my teacher Sidonia and the other teacher, Marla, who have helped me.

## **An Optimistic Person**

*Teng Yang, Minneapolis*

This is about a special person of mine. Chauwat is forty years old and single. He lives in Phuket, a city of Thailand. He is a teacher and I was his student. At first, he was an English assistant teacher and I learned with him for about two years. Every day after school I attended a class with Chauwat for about one and half hours. He always told me that a man is not born in the possession of knowledge and no one is too old to learn, so everyone should be patient and pay attention because a hard beginning makes a good ending. He also told me that where there is a will, there is a way. He always gave me good advice or asked me a few questions:

“Why is staying in school important and what is education?” At that time I didn’t have sufficient experience for his question.

From his point of view, staying in school is significant because you will accomplish your career goal and education is a treasure, a light in the life of every person. Sometimes life can get complicated, but you must strive for further progress.

Later on, I realized that I may never be wise unless I love learning and without training, life will be difficult or complicated. I believe that knowledge is treasure and important for success. A good education can create a good future.

Finally, I want to thank Chauwat again for his advice. I will keep up and continue further.

## **My History**

*Pao, Minneapolis*

In Minnesota there are many holidays. All people have much time to get them away on vacation. So I have two weeks to go to my own vacation. I go with my uncle. We’re going to North Carolina. We’re going to visit his sister. Her name’s Sunny. She’s a nice person. We stay with them four days.

Sunny tells us anything about North Carolina. And she takes us to the forest two days. I saw many big and little animals—big deer, bears, ocelot, squirrels, eagle, and a nice mountain and weather. I saw many birds fly across the sky. That was exciting for me. After that I came back to Minnesota three days ago. I went to Hmong New Year; so many people came to the New Year. I saw them but I don’t know their names. I walked to buy something that I like and I want. But there isn’t anything for me. Because they’re too expensive and I know my money don’t like it too. I stay one hour and I go home to sleep and to get ready to go to school on Monday.

## **My Story**

*Sumontha Khongkaew, Minneapolis*

I am from Thailand. In Thailand I worked as an optician for eight years. I gave eye exams. I made lenses, fitted customers with glasses, and fitted customers with contact lenses. My job was interesting.

In November 2004, I met an American man. We met at a store the first time he came to Thailand. We talked together after he returned to the U.S.A. We E-mailed and talked all the time. He sent me money every month.

In September 2005, he started an application for a visa for me to come to the United States. When I got my visa, he came back to Thailand to take me to the United States. I came here on June 7, 2006. We lived in Minneapolis. We got married on July 7, 2006. Everything was new for me here. And the winter was very cold for me. I started to learn English on September 19, 2006, at Northside school. Right now, I am a housewife. In the future, I want to have a good job. That is why I keep going to school to learn English. I am thankful for my teacher.

## **My Story**

*Khadija Osman, Minneapolis*

I came to the U.S.A. and started to study English at Lincoln Adult Education Center every day by reading, writing and talking to people in English.

I want to go to college.

When I finish I will go back to my home.

## **I Remember My Travels**

*Delia Collaguazo, Golden Valley*

When I wanted to come to the United States, I couldn't have a visa because in my country, Ecuador, it is difficult to get a visa. I decided to travel to Mexico on January 10, 1994. I arrived at 3:00 o'clock in Mexico City. I stayed in the city for three days. I went to the church to pray that all the travels were good. Then I flew to Los Angeles, a beautiful city. I loved the city, but I needed to arrive in Chicago, Illinois to meet my friend, Ana. But then, she went to New York City. I was so sad because I couldn't speak English and didn't understand anything, but at the airport in Los Angeles I asked the question, "Where is the gate to get to the airplane to fly to Chicago, Illinois?" Then I arrived in Chicago, January 17, 1994. It was so cool and I didn't have a sweater. My friend, Ana, helped me understand because she knew about life in the U.S. I lived in Chicago for six years. Then I decided to move to Minnesota because my brother talked to me about Minneapolis. He said it is quiet and nice. Now I have lived in Minnesota for six years. It is a beautiful city.

## **My Goal**

*Chukwudi Greg Jideofor, Minneapolis*

Everybody has his or her goal in life. A person's goal might be to become a doctor, a senator, or even the head of this great country. I think everyone's goal is determined by many factors – for instance, the environment or family background – a child that has been raised from a drug-addicted family might grow up as a barbarian or a hard-hearted human being. School is another factor that determines one's goal in life. The quality of information that you are given as a student is what will build you towards achieving your goal and equip you towards your aim in life.

Moreover, having peer mates is another factor that determines one's goal in life. I have a parable that says: "Tell me your friend and I will tell you who you are." For example, if you have a thief as a friend, anytime he brings some stuff, he will share it with you, and one day, he will try to introduce you into the "Circle."

As a child, I was raised from a stable family of three boys. When I was 12 years old, I joined a peer group that nearly destroyed my goal, destiny, and vision in life. I spent my tuition fee with my friends in Lagos far away from my Anambra, Nigeria and wasted my time. But when I realized what I had done to myself, I cut myself off from bad friends and faced my future, dream, and goal in life: to become a medical practitioner.

With my struggling and focus towards it, I know that I will one day get to "the top of the Ladder." I will one day make my parents happy, and all the people I am representing will equally rejoice with me.

## **My Life in the United States**

*Carmen Soutter, Saint Paul*

My name is Carmen. I'm from Chile. I have lived in Minnesota since November 1996. To live in the United States has been a pretty experience. I love Minnesota, it is a beautiful state. I like spring and autumn. When it is summer my husband and I go to Wisconsin. We have a little cabin there we enjoy going to. We enjoy swimming and sunbathing but when it is winter I don't enjoy because it is very cold for me.

I have worked hard until now. My first job was in Minneapolis – downtown in a hotel. I worked tending the public area and sometimes housekeeping. I learned to work very quickly. I got another part-time job. I cleaned offices. This job was near to the hotel. At this time I am working downtown St. Paul, I have only this job. In the evening I go to Hubbs Center School to learn English. I am very grateful with my Lord Jesus Christ in everything. I have felt his protection, his help and his blessing in this country.

## **My Big Dream**

*Luta Tshihamba, Saint Louis Park*

When I came to this country, I had three small children. I stayed home with them. I didn't have a chance to study English. I learned to speak by watching the TV and speaking to people. Later on, I took three months of English class as a beginner in California. Then, I moved to the Washington D.C. area. Two years ago, I moved to Minnesota.

All that time, I was ashamed to tell my friends that I couldn't write English. If we went to meetings, I couldn't take notes. If my turn came to read, I would panic and be scared to my stomach. I was not able to participate in the discussion without speaking with my hands. If I wanted to write to my friends, I would tell my husband what to say, then I would simply sign my name. He would do the same for my family. If I saw something on the TV, I had to nag him to look on the internet to find more information for me. That is, if he had the time to do it.

Writing stories and dramas is my big dream. I feel happy when I do it. How I wanted to explain my ideas and my thoughts! I felt as if I had lost myself, "me." I was sad and miserable. I have to write stories and dramas again. Maybe one day I could write a book to tell people about my experiences. But I can't do it if I don't break this barrier which is blocking me.

When I moved to Minnesota, I decided to take a big step to change my life. No matter how old I felt or how shameful I did feel to be with University students in the same class, I was going to stand up and say, "Devil, you get out of my way! I'm not your friend any more. Good bye."

After I made that decision, I felt so good. With the help from my teachers, I can do more than I could imagine. I gained the confidence to write, sometimes with mistakes. But the main idea is that people could understand my messages. I'm amazed that I have the courage to open the computer and look for information or the news on the internet. I don't have to ask my husband to help with those basic things any more. Who knows, one day my dream may come true. My teacher is helping me to sharpen up the working tools to do the job.

## **My History, My Life**

*Bee Xiong, Minneapolis*

First time I went to U.S.A. I was very happy because I came to see my brother and sister-in-law in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I stayed two weeks. I went to school. Going to learn English to write ABC's in the Lehmann Center about three years. I took care of my children.

In 1990 I was to register for a permit to learn to drive. I went to find a job. After I got a job, I can buy my first house. I lived in my house about five years. I was buying other house. I stayed 18 years. Right now my life is to live in the United States. It is better than before when I lived in my country.

## **New Refugees Get Crazy**

*Lalee, Saint Paul*

My life is difficult in the United States. I am a refugee from Thailand to the United States. When I arrived in the United States I was very happy because the U.S. government has many programs to help poor people and new refugees.

For the first time my life was hard. After I had lived here about four months I found out there is a program call HAP to help, but HAP didn't really help very much. All new refugees were expected to work. I was very sad because all refugees didn't speak a lot of English. HAP didn't care that we didn't speak very much English. They wanted us to go to work even though we spoke only a little English. Some refugees felt crazy.

If I knew this before I decided to leave Thailand, I wouldn't have come to the United States to get crazy from HAP.

## **Firewoine's Story**

*Firewoine Abrha, Minneapolis*

Hi, my name is Firewoine Abrha. I'm from Ethiopia. I came here in September, 2005. I'm so happy to come here because I can do many things. I love America. Now I'm going to school for E.S.L class and I learned a lot. I have a plan to go to school to be a hair dresser and when I graduate I need to open my own beauty salon. But I have to say I miss my country.

## **My Life Right Now**

*Evelyn Nuah, Saint Paul*

I'm writing about my life right now. I was born in Liberia in the year 1982. I am 25 years old. I have lived in the U.S.A. for two years, and I would like to go to school and learn how to read, write, and speak better English. I take ESL classes at FIRE and also at Hubbs Center. After ESL classes, I will be able to learn nursing because it is interesting to me. I will become a good nurse when I continue my study in nursing. I would love to learn about how to take good care of sick people and pregnant women. It is very good to know about life and to help people. That's why I want to be in nursing.

I like to go to movies. I love movies about Christ. I also like action movies. I also like to read. I go to the library sometimes. I like to go shopping with friends. I have a lot of friends in Brooklyn Park, Minneapolis and in St. Paul. Sometimes I have a lot of fun with my friends.

But now, my life is frustrating because I have no job or money to transport myself to school. That's why I am about to quit the ESL classes because I have no means. I hope my life will improve when I get a job in the future, and I will continue my studies in ESL to achieve my goals.

## **Fiancé Visa**

*Sunee McKeague, Cottage Grove*

Getting a visa to come to the United States of America is not easy. There are many types of visas like visiting tourist visa, student visa or even fiancé visa etc. I went through the process of getting a fiancé visa. This is my story.

My American fiancé sent application forms to INS, now called USCIS, to petition for a fiancé visa so we could get married in the U.S. He submitted a lot of documents like photos, letters from work, and his tax returns for the last three years in order to prove that we met in person and fell in love, were willing to get married and he can support me when I'm in this country. Some people choose a lawyer to help them, but my husband did it by himself. After he sent his form to USCIS, we had to wait for 6-8 months until they approved our application. They sent a notice to let my fiancé know that they got his form. They gave him a number so he can track the process from the USCIS web page.

One day when I was in my home country, I tracked down the visa process and it said, "Your application has been approved." I called my fiancé and told him to check it out. He wouldn't believe it because he thought it would take six months, but he was wrong. It took only two months. We were very lucky.

After our application had been approved, the USCIS sent documents to the U.S. embassy in my home country and I had to prepare them to submit to the U.S. embassy for an interview. If you are lucky you will have no problem with the documents the embassy requires. You will get a fiancé visa and your passport the same day after your interview with the embassy, and then you can buy a ticket and fly to the U.S. right away. If your documents have problems, it will delay your visa. Then you have to correct everything until it satisfies them. I believe that many people know how complicated the process is to get a visa. I thank God for letting me obtain my fiancé visa, even though it was complicated. I will be happy if I can help other people through my own experiences.

## **My Life in the U.S.**

*Kao Yang, Minneapolis*

I would like to talk about my life in the U.S. It was very difficult for my family and me because we didn't speak the English language. So when my family arrived at the airport, I remember my wife asked me if I would you go to ask someone which way we should go. I told my wife, "I can't speak English. How can I talk to them?" I told my wife we should follow American people who left from their travels. Then we saw my brother and uncles. They were waiting for us. After that we went home.

I still remember the first time I applied for a job in the U.S. Everything was difficult for me to learn and work in the U.S. I went to apply for many jobs, but they didn't hire me. They wanted people to have experience or a high school diploma or GED. It was difficult for me to find a job because my language wasn't good.

I am very happy now. I go to a good school, and I have very nice teachers in my school. So right now it is not as hard as the first time because I got a little English at school and I got a job in the company. My company makes catheters in medical assembly. I want to have a better life in my future soon. Thanks a lot for reading my story.

## **I Like Living in Marshall**

*Luis Enrique Cervantes, Marshall*

I like living in Marshall for several reasons: I find good friends, I like the weather, and I think the life is nicer. I have lived in Marshall for a long time and I have had unforgettable happy times. I like Marshall because I find good friends from different countries, from Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, U.S., China, Vietnam, Kenya and Somalia too. My friends have different religions, different food, and different styles of clothes, but everyone respect each other's cultures.

I like the weather in Marshall, because it's nicer because we have hot and cold weather. Each season has different temperatures, but I like the winter because it has snow.

I have lived in different states in the U.S. with more people but I like Marshall more because in Marshall I find whatever I'm looking for. Here I know many people and I have had different jobs. Now I work at KFC frying chicken. I think the life is nice in Marshall, because I see a nice future for the people planning to live in this town.

I want to say to the people who don't know Marshall, come and take a vacation and get to know Marshall. Do you know another town like Marshall? Can you say what city you like more in the U.S.? If you come to visit Marshall I want to say, "WELCOME!!"

## **My Life in the U.S.**

*Liliya Kalman, Minneapolis*

My name is Liliya. I came to the U.S. from Ukraine. I live in the U.S. as a refugee, because in my country I was discriminated against because of my nationality. I came to Minneapolis, because my sister lived here. I live in an apartment in a big building that is located in downtown Minneapolis.

I like living in Minneapolis, but I lead a "double" life. I am caught between my native language and a new language, between the culture of my old country and my new country, and between my old friends and new friends. I live in the U.S. because I am not discriminated against. My job before I came here was an engineer. Right now I don't have a job, but I am a student at the Lincoln Adult Education Center. It's important to learn English, because English is the language of the U.S. In the class the teacher teaches students and me writing and reading English.

## **Missing**

*Anonymous, Waseca*

I miss the quality of life and family in the United States. Life is difficult. When you become family, many things are different. For example, how I grew up back home, and how my children are growing in the United States are different. When I was small, I could go many places and no one worried about the children, but in the United States parents are more worried about kids missing in big cities.

## **My Story**

*Chai Yang, Minneapolis*

When I was a small child I lived in Thailand. I was never lonely because I had many friends with me. My friends and I went to school every day together. We studied Thai language, talked Thai language and learned Thai customs too. We had about 32 teachers in our high school. It was very fun and sometimes the teacher told some stories. They were very funny, too. We were happy and then after school we played soccer, volleyball and basketball every day. But now in the United States it's different than when I lived in Thailand.

When I came to the United States I saw many things are different than my country because here we speak English. I don't understand some things. I didn't know how to speak English and I didn't know what to do. For me was it so hard. But now I go to school every day because I want to learn English and speak English. Now I understand and speak a little bit.

In my country I didn't have a job, education and freedom because I'm a refugee. But now I have it. In the United States I can do new things I never saw before. In the United States I will have a job and education. I think in the United States it is better than when I lived in Thailand.



## **Where There's a Will**

*Khoai Huynh Van, Mankato*



## *Words & Lessons*

### **Don't Forget Your Native Language**

*Cai Vue, Brooklyn Park*

I just came from Thailand. I have a friend who came to America five months after me. I met him at the Hennepin County MFIP program of Minneapolis. We talked about the MFIP program. He said, "Who translates for you?" I said, "My uncle. How about you?" He said, "I have no one." I said, "Why did you say that? I saw somebody translate for you." He said, "I will tell you later." A few weeks later I met him at the funeral home in St Paul. We talked about how he got his driver's license. In a few minutes I remember that when I met him at Hennepin County, I said, "Can you tell me about the problem when I met you at MFIP?" He said, "Oh! okay I will tell you." He told me:

That day he went to see his caseworker. His uncle's daughter translated for him. She has very good English but she isn't good at Hmong. When she talked to his caseworker in English it was very good. She couldn't translate for him, that is the problem. He couldn't tell anything he wanted to his caseworker and he couldn't understand what his caseworker told him to do, because his uncle's daughter couldn't translate in Hmong good enough for him. A few days later he made a new appointment. The Hennepin County MFIP program gave him an interpreter to translate for him. Finally he was done with his case.

This problem is a good example for everyone to know how your native language is important. Everybody has to keep their native language with their second language. It is very important for them in the future. Everybody who has children, please teach your children how to speak your native language and learn how to write it. It is not too late for you. It is very important for your children in the future and their whole lives.

## **From Tibet to Minnesota**

*Tashi Rinchin, Hopkins*

My name is Tashi Rinchin. I am from Tibet. I am twenty one years old. I grew up in Tibet on a farm. My favorite pet was a yak named Dawa.

When I came to Hopkins I didn't speak English. Now I can talk with my Uncle John. Basketball is my pastime. We play almost every day. I have three sisters, one brother, and father and mother. I also have an aunt. My aunt's husband's name is John. And I have a grandmother too. I like the American people and I like American rules. My life is Americana. I come to school all day. Right now I am going for the volunteer at the Methodist Hospital. I hope so. I want to get a job in the Methodist Hospital.

## **About Me**

*María Bustillos, Clearwater*

Hello. My name is María. My country is Mexico. When I came to the United States, I worked with my sister in a nursery planting flowers and all kinds of flowers. It is wonderful to see the growing flowers which you are planting and show them because some people buy them. I worked two months there. It was a nice time for me.

I live now in Minnesota with my husband and my two daughters. We live better in this country. I'm a student in English at Hands Across the World and also at St. Cloud ABE Education Center. I'm enjoying learning a different language.

## **Life in the New Country**

*Kham Ko, Saint Paul*

My family arrived in the United States of America on July 12, 2001 by Northwest Airline.

I can't sleep along the time I scared for my kids, sometimes plane is like fall down, some time shaking and I pray for my family and all passengers on the plane.

I didn't know who sign for my family come to Minnesota. On my paper we have to go Wisconsin. Anyway, we never worry about that in new country, new culture, new community; we understand we can live with them. We had experience on Thai-Burma border, in Thailand, also in refugee camp. In Thailand, everybody wants to come to America, for dig out dollars and want to feel taste of democracy. America is democracy country, strong economy, top technology in the world.

United States not really democracy, country mixed with capitalism. In your country, you are doctor or lawyer. When you come to America you are not doctor because you didn't have doctor certificate in America and you can't do anything. You have to go to school to take certificate for a doctor again. You need to apply for student loan. Loan means you have to pay back when you finish school.

Credit is not important in my country. Everything we buy with cash down and no problem. In United States, credit is very important. Credit card starts with \$200, you spend \$100, you have to pay \$106 and stamp is 39 cents on time. You pay late, late fee is \$26 and you spend more than you credit card you have to pay overdraft at least \$14 they charge you. If you do not pay that money they send you to debt collection center and credit bureau. Your name and social security number appears on the list and you can't buy anything like car, home and you can't borrow money from the bank.

For me when I finish high school, my father advised me. "My son, you don't need to know how to make money, you need to know how to spend money." You earn and spend the balance of money equal or not. If you know how, you never become poor or homeless. I follow my father's advice and now we have a home, car, happy family, no debt.

That is my experience in my new country. How about you, could you share for me?

## **The Life of the Brazilian Woman in the United States**

*Cristiane Holanda, Minneapolis*

When I knew I was going to come to the United States, I was excited and nervous at the same time. I didn't know how I was going to change my life. When I arrived in this country, I saw the big differences between the United States and Brazil; the most amazing thing was the culture. It was difficult to adapt myself to this New World. I was feeling so depressed and sad because I was remembering my friends, my family, and especially my nephew Carlos Arthur. I was missing the delicious Brazilian food and the happiness of Brazilian people. When summer came, I imagined taking a shower in the wonderful Brazilian beach with warm water.

I came to the United States to learn English and to try to get my Masters. English is so hard for me, but David Higley is a good teacher. I live with a friend who has two little girls. They are 3 years and 23 months old, and pretty soon she will have a new baby. My friend and her husband work all day, and I take care of the kids, cook and clean up the home. It's hard work, but I like it. When I started to go to ABE for learning English, my life was happier because I made a lot of friends from different countries. I did understand then this country has many people that miss their countries the same as me. In July I met my true love named Alejandro. He is my best friend and helps me to adapt here in the United States. He is an amazing and special person.

So now I learned that American people are different from Brazilian people. I feel better when I look for Americans and don't think about Brazilians, or I always feel sad because they are different. I just needed to understand this culture and now when I stay in Brazil, I miss my friends in the United States. And when I stay here, I pray for God, for him to help me calm down my heart because it's difficult to stay in other country, with a different culture without my family. Now I'm feeling good in this country, but I love my country Brazil and miss my family.

## **English Is Very Important**

*Theng Xiong, Minneapolis*

I am from Thailand. I came to the United States on Oct. 19, 2004. It is not a long time, only 2 years ago. I remember when I came to the United States. I was very shy when American people talked to me because I cannot know how to talk to them.

In Thailand I never studied English, I only studied Hmong, Lao and Thai. Right now I am studying English in Northside ABE. Now English is better for me than before I came. I think education is important in my life. If I cannot speak English or don't know how to fill out the forms, I cannot get a good job or good money.

My dream in the future is that I can get a GED because I can do it. I think it is far for me, but it is not too late.

## **My Proudest Accomplishments**

*Ebony Jones, Minneapolis*

One of my proudest accomplishments is when I finally moved out of Chicago. It was something I wanted to do but really didn't know where I was going to go. I wanted so much out of life but never really did anything that I needed to do. Until one day it hit me, I saw the everyday pattern that I wanted to change, the negative environment that I was in. I was in and out of schools, although I knew how important my education was to me. That's why I enrolled into the Joliet Job Corps. I was there for almost a year and received my GED and learned a trade for Building and Apartment Maintenance. At the age of 18 I became pregnant with my son. I became a proud parent in 2003. After having my son, Damani, I pursued carpenter work for different contractors. Then in the year of 2005 I had my baby girl, Destiny. Now I am a proud single parent of two. I didn't say it was easy but that's why I am so proud of this because I am still standing and making sure that they are being taken care of.

## **From Turkmenistan**

*Diana Burbeck, Minnetonka*

I moved to Minnesota on July 1, 1998 from Turkmenistan. I came here with my son. I like to cook. I don't like very cold winters. I miss my country and my family and friends. It has been hard to speak English. I work as a cook at a school. I hope that I will be able to speak English better.

## **My First Time of School**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

I came from Thailand to the U.S. on September 13, 2004. I lived with my brother only one week. Then I moved to my own house after just two weeks. Then my husband and I went to school. On the first day at school, I was surprised and scared too, because I had never seen the different people. I didn't know some friends and I didn't know how to speak English to other friends. We started the alphabet. Sometimes the teacher taught about fruits and vegetables to us. When I came back home I forgot almost all the words. The next day I asked teacher again. She taught me again until one more year my English was getting better. When I go to see my doctor she asks some easy questions to me. I know how to answer for her. But the difficult questions she makes I don't understand. I said please say slowly or excuse me please I didn't understand. I need a Hmong translator for me to understand.

## **My Name Is Yia Her**

*Anonymous, Saint Paul*

The first time I came to the United States I was very happy because in the past in Thailand my children didn't have school. When I came to the U.S. for two weeks my children got to go to school. Now I'm also going to school; but I know I won't go like my children. Now my goal is just to find a good job to work. I would help my children. I would like to find a job sewing or doing assembly.

## **The GED Story**

*Andre Hill, Minneapolis*

My name is Andre. I was born and raised in Chicago in one of the most notorious housing projects in the country, Cabrini Green. At the age of 12 I was forced to drop out of school by the gangs. At the age of 13 I became homeless so I started traveling around to different states. First, I went to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and stayed there for 20 years trying once to get my GED, but due to hard times and being homeless when I got there, I dropped out.

Five years later, having no work or money, I appealed for General Assistance, which was \$243 a month. I found a room for \$50 a month. After that time when I was traveling, I met a guy who was selling on the Greyhound Bus. He was selling shirts, hats, and body oils. I never forgot about this guy. So, a year later while I was in my room in the rooming house, the idea came to me about what this guy on the bus was doing so I thought that I would try what he was doing.

After one month I decided not to pay my rent and try what that guy on the bus was doing. I took my rent money and went to Chicago and bought some hats, T-shirts and oils for myself. When I got on the Greyhound Bus I practically sold out all of my items. Since then and there I have been selling goods and services for the past 22 years, off and on. Now that I have a way of life, I am able to not worry about my rent or food or somewhere to live because I am still running my little business. I can now focus on my GED so I can become a better businessman and help others trying to get their GED, so when they are finished getting their GED and can't find jobs they can start their own business and make a way for themselves like I have.

And that is The GED Story: General Educational Development equals General Entrepreneurship Development.

## **My First Year in the U.S.A.**

*Birhanu Jarso, Minneapolis*

In the U.S.A. for the first time, everything was very hard for me, especially to speak and understand the English language, because I was born in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia I didn't speak English because the national language of the country is Amharic. Even if I have a high school diploma back home, I didn't know how to speak and write English well.

So my first year in the U.S.A. was too hard. I couldn't even get a job because I didn't know how to speak English to apply for the job. Later on I tried to speak and understand English. Right now I can speak and understand English and I hope I will learn more English in the future. And I have plans to go to college for the coming two years.

## **Learning English**

*Thanh Van Ngo, Blaine*

I have learned English since I was in high school. English was a subject of the requirements in my school program. At that time I knew that English had become an international language and learning English was important to get a good job. Now, learning English has become more necessary to me, but it is not easy at all.

I have had many difficulties in learning English, because a foreign language is quite different from my mother tongue – Vietnamese. The first is that I am often confused with strange pronunciation, such as /θ/, /æ/, /s/... which Vietnam does not have. In spite of my great effort, I can't speak English like an American does. My vocabulary is not improving quickly. I have to read an English book while looking up new words in the dictionary because of my poor stock of vocabulary. Besides, I usually translate English word by word into Vietnamese, forgetting the literal or figurative sense of some words. The final trouble is grammar. In English, there are twelve tenses and many rules of sentence structures, such as prepositions (be tired of something, and sometimes be tired from something...). So I often make mistakes. As for verb endings, I'll write, "It is possible solve your problems", instead of "to solve." Sometimes I write sentences which are similar to Vietnamese like, "a girl pretty." These difficulties are not only mine, but also my friends'. We always say, "Let's try more and more."

## **My School**

*Diem Huynh, Minneapolis*

When I lived in Vietnam I went to school. I went to 6th grade. I walked to school every day because my school was near my house. It was about 10 minutes to walk. When I began school I was ready for everything, I had my notebook, book, pen, pencil, bookcase, and ruler. I went to buy these in the bookstore. I paid tuition for education. I paid one semester a year. My country was very poor; they didn't have money to pay for your school. The classes began at 7:45am and went to 11:45am. We had five and six periods in the day, every period was about 45 minutes and then we had break time for five minutes.

I went to school Monday through Saturday, and my day off was only Sunday. When the teacher came in the class, the students stood and said hello and good morning. Then we sat down. After that we began to study. In the class we studied history, math, reading stories, writing paragraphs and English. We changed schedules about every three months. We had three tests in a year. The first test one semester, second test next semester and we have final test for the year. If you did a good on the test, you went to the next grade in the next year. If you failed the test you needed to take the test again the next summer. We had no school for holidays, Christmas and New Year.

## **From Brazil**

*Vanada Noya, Hopkins*

I moved from Brazil to Minnesota on August 3, 2006. I came here by myself. I like my apartment, my job, shopping, restaurants, Chinese food and people. I don't like cold and my problems with English. I miss my family, Brazilian food and my friends. It has been hard to find a job and to learn how to drive a car. I work at Minnesota Language Correction. I hope that I will speak English better.

## **When I Came to the U.S.A.**

*Asia Mohamed, Minneapolis*

The first time I saw snow it looked shiny. The weather was warm and the outside was beautiful. The snow was falling and I was surprised. I loved to watch the snow fall. When I was looking at the snow, I saw children were playing on the ground. They lay down on the crystal clear snow and stretched out their arms and legs. They made a snowman. I wanted to make one but I couldn't. The next day the weather changed. It was very cold and windy. The sidewalk was slippery and it was dangerous to walk. The road was icy and the cars drove slowly and carefully. I was saying America has crazy weather; yesterday was beautiful and cool, but today is very cold. I have never seen the weather like this. Although I didn't like the winter, the snow was beautiful. The winter has fun things to do.

## **My Story**

*Yolanda Charlton, Minneapolis*

I dropped out of high school in 1990 when I had my first child. It was difficult even thinking about going back to school. I enjoyed my life as a parent, even though I struggled with many day-to-day things. I had convinced myself that I did not have what it takes to go back to school and get my GED. From time to time, though, I would half-heartedly start a GED program, then drop out when it became more of a sacrifice than I was willing to make.

Early last fall my son's teacher called and told me that my son's academic scores were lower than they had ever been. She also said that he was going to need my help at home if he was ever going to get back on track. That is when everything changed. I had worked with my son before, but I knew I did not possess the skills to really help him. I knew I had to go back to school and get my GED so that I could help my son succeed.

I went back to school and set a goal for myself. I started my classes on September 11, 2006 and told myself that I had until my birthday, January 7 to pass all of the GED tests. I figured it was going to be hard, but I knew I had to stick to it. Energetic and eager to reach my goal I dove right in. I studied hard, went to class every day, participated in class activities and did my weekly practice test. Before I knew it I was taking my last GED test on December 11, 2006. I achieved my goal ahead of time and I'm proud to say that I help all three of my kids with their work and I really enjoy helping them.

## **When I Started To Go To School**

*Arcenio Venegas Hernández, Minneapolis*

I remember in my country. When I was six years old I started to study in the school. I didn't understand what they said to me, because in my town the people speak another language, "Sapoteco." For me it was difficult to learn Spanish. Sometimes I was afraid to go to school because it is far away from my house and there were many dogs on the street. But after two weeks I made new friends and I wasn't afraid.

## **My School**

*Tom Wu, Minneapolis*

I love to study English as my second language. English is very important for me because I am living in the United States. If you don't understand English in the U.S., life will probably be very difficult for you. I am proud of myself. I can work at day and I can go to school at night. I learn a lot of English at my school.

## **My GED Class**

*Tracy Johnson, Minneapolis*

I am in class working hard to get my GED to make a better life for me and my kids. My only hope is that I can do this thing in six months. I have faith in God, I know that He will bring me through. I'll be able to get a better job, life, everything. I just want to live to my full ability. I want to do things to help other people to make sure young people stay in school and go on to be productive people. I don't want young people to have to be like me, starting over at the age of 36. One thing I know is if you don't get it when you are young you will have to get it when you're older like me. So do me a favor, listen, please listen to your mother, father, and to positive people who are trying to tell you the right things in life. Go to school, get your education and make something out of yourself, and don't forget to help people and your community. So stay in school; don't be a fool or you will end up like me, 36 years old in the GED class.

## **Breathing Again**

*Tonya B., Minneapolis*

I am a 39-year-old mother going to school for my GED. I had put it off for years. My children and work had to come first. Now I have a life. I can breathe again, and it's about me. 2007 is about achieving my goals and breathing again. Now I live in the United States. I'm happy here too.

## **About My Journey to America**

*Anonymous, Rochester*

I came to the United States when I was 17 years old. My family and I came here in April 2000 and my worst fear in America was how I could manage my family's life, because we were new. We didn't know anyone and we didn't have jobs. My sister and I started high school after a couple days, but I had to drop out after I found a job in a hotel as housekeeper. I started working there in order to support my family, and after a while my brother and dad found good jobs. Our life got better. After a couple months I was speaking and understanding English. Three months later I quit the hotel job. I found a better job up to now, I work in IBM. "Praise be to God," who gave me that luck so that leaving high school was my worst fear and I still regret it even after seven years.

Right now, I go to Hawthorne Adult School so as to keep learning and I will not stop until I reach my goal. In my future I want to have a Ph.D. because my family are educators, and every time they encourage me not to be a loser, so it is good for me to take my family's advice. I want to thank my school, my classmates, teachers, and my special teachers David and Michelle who teach me. Thanks.

## **Because of You My Life Has Changed**

*Bukurie Bilani, Minneapolis*

I want to write something but it is not easy to write in a second language every feeling, every moment, every detail in my new life in the United States. I am trying to do this because I have learned some English but it's not enough. I came from Albania, which is a real little pearl that never disappears from my mind. I am one of many birds that wanted to fly for a better life in the free sky and I am still flying. America is still a dream for everyone that lives outside this country. Indeed, it's different from a beautiful dream. It's really hard to explain. It's a lot of pressure, new people, different cultures, races and languages.

Do you know how I was feeling when I moved here? It felt like I came from another planet. How was I going to survive here? I am not alone. I have to support my family, too. The pressure is high and I can't find a job. I am homesick; my kids are homesick, too. I didn't have another choice. The only solution for me and for every one of us is to learn English, and we can do it. Be brave. It's Lehmann Center School that opened my eyes, my mouth, and my mind and gave me hopes for a good future.

I am one of thousands of students whose lives are changed here. I am very thankful to them. I will never forget them.

## **I Have Many Books**

*JuliAnn Randall, Alexandria*

A little about my life: Before I wouldn't have read to myself or my family and friends. Now I enjoy reading, especially to my nieces and my other relatives. My family enjoys listening to me read; if I need to know a word now I ask for help. Then they will learn new words too.

I have many authors. I have over 200 authors; the most interesting authors are Nancy Drew and Hardy Boy. The reason I like these authors is because they are detective murder mysteries. Almost any mystery that keeps young people thinking who did it will keep me on the edge of my seat to keep reading.

Now I have begun to read adult books. My favorite adult book authors are Laura Davis and Ellen Bass for self help books. Chicken Soup for the Soul authors are Jack Campbell and Mark Victor Hanson, from Harry Potter it is J.K. Rowling, from Left Behind it is Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. These are just a few authors.

I would like to thank my tutors, teachers and volunteers for all their help and long hours with me. To all these people that helped me and who are helping me now, Thank you.

## **Making Friends in Minnesota**

*Fadumo Shirelle, Saint Paul*

I came from Somalia. I came September 13, 2005. When I came to the United States I came to St. Paul, Minnesota. Now I live in Minnesota. I have six brothers and seven sisters. I have a big family. My family together is 15 people. Some of my family lives here: five sisters and one brother. I live with my family that lives here.

When I came I started high school. Then my first day when I go to school the students are laughing when they look at me. Then they said, "Are you new?" I said, "Yes, I am." I asked the students' names and then they tell me their names. Now they are my friends.

Before I came to the United States I couldn't speak or write English. My second day, my high school teacher gave me a small book. Then he said, "Fadumo, stand up." When I stand up, he said, "Read the book." I said, "I cannot read the book because I don't know how to read and how to write." My teacher said, "You have to try. Don't worry. I'll help you." Then I tried and he helped me.

I heard about SALT (Somali Adult Literacy Training), a school that would help me learn to write and read English. When I came to this school I see good teachers. The school is very nice because the teachers help you with homework, reading and writing. During Ramadan the school took a break. The teachers, David, Anita, Karen, Ken and Sharon, came to our apartment and helped me with my homework. Now they are my friends.

## **Why Many People Learn English**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

Millions of people around the world learn English. Businessmen, students, and many people study it because of communication and education.

First, many people learn English in order to communicate English with each other and make relationship. There is no another language so familiar in the world except English, so making business from country to another needs English, you will find people who speak English all over the world. So that is why English is very important to learn.

In addition to communication English is also important for education. Because most books are written in English and most of the internet is created in that language, to study you need to know more English. Most courses are written in it too. Especially if you live in an English-speaking country, developing yourself needs English.

In conclusion learning English is very important for many because of education and communication. Having many friends, widening experiences and many other reasons, people all around the world feel it's important to study.

## **The Story of an Immigrant**

*Emilio García, Minneapolis*

When I came to a different country I spoke a different language. In my city, people speak Spanish and here they speak English. I need to read English to get good work for my family and to get good communication with the American people. Thanks.

## **My Country**

*Daniel Cisneros, Minneapolis*

My country is Mexico. I came to America 10 years ago. I moved from Acapulco to Chicago, Illinois. My first day in America was too cold. In Acapulco the weather is warm. I passed from 100 degrees to 10 degrees. Three years later, I met my girlfriend in Chicago and her job decided to move her to Minneapolis, Minnesota. This is all my history, how I got here and met a lot of nice people and a colder city.

## **I Came to the U.S.**

*Anonymous, St Paul*

The first time I studied was in the U.S. Before in Thailand I didn't study because I wanted to work every day. So I didn't have time to study. When I came to the U.S. I was happy because I had time to study. Thank you for my teacher.

## **Wonders of Life**

*Alice Chen, Plymouth*

Today is December 31, the last day of the year 2006. White snow carpets the ground, just as the weather report had predicted. I sit by the window side and think about how quiet and peaceful the outside world is at that time. But the truth is that there is a big battle going on just outside of my window, the battle to survive. The flowers and grass, covered with the snow, try their hardest to hang on until the spring breeze signals to them that the battle for survival is over and that it is safe to grow again. Thousands of grass blades under the snow lay hidden from us, some are stronger and will live to see the next spring, while others that are not strong enough wither and die. All these events that will decide the life and death of a plant take place under our noses; yet the humans stay warm in their homes, unaware of the things taking place around them. I feel we need to learn from the flowers and grass under the snow, as they teach us to be strong; to always live our life no matter how bad the situation seems to be, or the road of life seems too long to walk. We need to find the good side of life in our everyday life and know things will always turn out good, just like the plants under the snow know, in year 2007, spring will come and a warm breeze will bring life back to them again. I feel a new respect for the flowers and grass under the snow today, as I spend the last day of 2006 warm inside my house, longing for the same thing as the plants under the snow do, that spring will come quickly to Minnesota.

## **My Story**

*Melina Mendoza, Waseca*

My name is Melina Mendoza, I'm 19 years old. I'm studying English, because I want to learn another language. I have two sisters and I'm living with my parents. My sisters are 21 and four years old. I'm from Mexico and I miss my country very much because all my friends are living there and all my family too. The person that I miss the most is my cousin. She is 16 years old, and she was the person with whom I co-existed the most.

I don't have anything. My life is a disaster, because again I will begin. And now I'm here in a new country, a new city, and a new life. I'm learning English at this moment. I'm not good, but I'm studying. English is very difficult, but I'm learning.

## **School System in Somalia**

*Ali, Saint Louis Park*

I came from Somalia. Somalia is the East Africa. I had a wonderful education when I was in Somalia. I attended middle school. I completed eight years and I took different subjects like Arabic and Somali language, but I did not take English. When I arrived in America I felt embarrassed because I missed international language.

Somali kids have to take more international languages, like English and Arabic in school. Somali language is only one subject, because if they move to foreign countries, they will enter classes without being confused and they will be proud of themselves.

In Somalia, it is very hard for parents to pay money for the kids in school, because if the government announces school fees many kids will lose an education and will become robbers and without education. In conclusion, I am very glad I attended school in my country. I wish all Somalia kids would have free education.

## **My Name Is Saul**

*Saul, New Brighton*

I am a Mexican man. I was born in 1978. I came here 10 years ago. Before I came to the U.S.A., I could not speak English well, and I didn't understand about grammar or English. My pronunciation now is not too bad. I will improve my English speaking and have confidence in myself. I enjoy attending this class because I meet a lot of people from different countries.

## **Winter**

*Pei-Yin Nieh Sun, Lauderdale*

Winter is like an old man.  
The trees wither and take off their leaves.  
Everything lively loses laughter and smiles,  
All is still and lonely.  
The groundhogs run away and hide.  
The animals hibernate to wait for spring coming.  
How freezing winter is!  
He is cold from the top to the toes although he bundles up.  
He is still shivering and almost frozen to death.  
His heart is filled with sorrow and hopelessness.  
He whispers, praying on his knees again  
God doesn't hear it.  
Now it is snowing like the old man's tears.  
Sadness overcomes him, and his heart is bleeding.  
Continuous snow buries the world.  
It blocks his vision and makes him breathless.  
He screams loudly, but nobody answers.  
He disappears helplessly  
How I wish winter were passing away.

## **Untitled**

*Rubén Abarca, Saint Paul*

I was born in Mexico City 35 years ago. I left Mexico and I traveled from Mexico to Tijuana. Some friends were waiting for me and then began my dream to cross to the U.S.A. When I arrived in Los Angeles, California, I met many friends. I went many places and to many clubs. My dream began when I went to my first concert. I didn't believe that I was in my first concert! The U.S.A. changed my life because always I was dreaming to be in concerts, know different people, different cultures, and life styles.

## **Alone**

*Michael Fleming, Bayport*

When you don't have anybody to run to  
And when you don't have anybody that wants the same thing in life as you do  
Or when you have a loved one that just can't be true  
You are alone.  
When your own family and supposed friends play you to the side  
Or when your faith and love for everyone has completely died  
And when all you got is yourself to ride  
You are alone.  
While growing up in life you had to take care of yourself  
Or while locked up you didn't have any kind of help  
And you are to the point when you say "forget everybody else"  
You are alone.  
When you give someone your heart and they just play you sideways  
Or when people tell you they will be there for you but be gone the very next day  
And when you realize no one really cares about you and all hope has gone away  
You are alone.  
When you are stressed out and don't have anybody to tell you to be strong  
And when you are tired of people and don't want life to carry on  
Or when your whole life is miserable and you don't have a happy home  
Let's just let it be known...  
I, Michael Fleming, have been through this and yet I'm still all  
Alone.



## *Reflections & Dreams*

### **A Barefooted Old Man**

*Jiwoong Lee, Saint Paul*

One day, my elder sister showed me a CD which introduced an old man looking poor. At that time I thought he was one of the humble and homeless people. The reason why I thought this was that he wore flimsy clothes, looked very cold, and wore no shoes in the middle of cold weather, which has a lot of snow and ice outside.

He walked around with that barefooted appearance everywhere to let people focus on him and shout himself hoarse about the love of Jesus Christ. But most people on the street didn't listen to a thin and small voice of the old man who was as dry as a bone. Some people willfully ignored the man who was saying something. And some other people laughed at him, treating him as mad.

The people mocking at the old man reminded me of the people blaming Jesus Christ, which made me sad. I was wondering who he was. The CD introduced his background at the end of the story. He was actually a rich pastor who had given everything to humble people when he was young. He had evangelized since he had experienced Jesus Christ, because he felt highly appreciative of His love. Accidentally, the Christian TV producer found him and decided to make his story to let people to know about this expression of love.

After the old man died, he became known and famous to many Christians. His face always looked very peaceful and merciful, which attracted me. He is not a very famous person such as Martin Luther King Jr., but he is a greater person for me than other famous people.

The name of this old man is Choi Chun Sun. I hope that all Christians who live in the world, including me, are willing to practice the truth with love some day.

## **You Can't Teach an Old Dog a New Trick**

*Sarin Phann, Rochester*

I disagree with this statement because they have been using their brains for all their lives, they have more knowledge from living, and they can learn through their friends. Older people have been using their brains for all their lives. It helps them a lot with their learning. For example, if they used to work with computers, and they want to learn about computer skills, it will be easy for them. Older people get more experience from their work. They also know many good methods to learn.

In addition, older people have more knowledge from living. For example, my grandparents used to learn through high school, and then they stopped because of the war. During that decade, they couldn't go to college because of the Khmer Rouge regime. When they retired, they wanted to continue to college. Furthermore, older people can also learn through their friends. For example, my grandparents' friends graduated from college with economic degrees. My grandparents wanted to be in the economic field, so they can ask them for help. They also have one friend who is an economic teacher. They can ask him for help, too.

Even though there are problems with their eyes and brains, they can learn as other people do. They still can learn even if they take a little longer. Nobody is too old to learn.

## **My Dream House**

*Y.M. Lee, Minnetonka*

California is the best place I'd like to live in. It has good weather, lots of fresh seafood, many Korean foods and nice beaches. My house would be located in a suburb, so there is a big shopping mall, public utilities, grocery, school, and fitness center nearby. I would live in a detached town home because of maintenance. Sometimes, we go to my country for 1-2 months. During that time, we can't take care of the lawn and exterior. The house I want to live in is a beige one and located on a cul-de-sac. It has to be quiet and look neat. I prefer wooden floors to carpets. Wooden floors are easy to clean and feel fresh to me. I'd have a bright big kitchen with natural maple wood floors. There are granite counters and a center island with maple cabinets, pull-out drawers including a complete recycling area. The kitchen is an important place for our family, especially for me. So I think this place has to be pleasant, comfortable, and easy to approach.

There are three bedrooms and two bathrooms on the upper level and double doors to the master bedroom with a vault ceiling with fan. The master bedroom has a walk-in closet and a full ceramic tile bathroom. I also need a powder-room to do make-up in. Having my own powder-room is one of the wonderful things I have dreamed. A laundry room is on the main level. There is a sink, cabinets, counters and pull-down ironing board. We would have spacious storage in the basement to keep many things. Actually, lack of storage space is an urgent problem now. Also, we'd have a three-car garage with storage cabinets that can put many things in order easily. Sometimes, I'd like to have a barbecue party with close friends on our deck with a lake view. If I can move into a house like this, only one in the world, I will invite all my friends and family in Korea to share my pleasure.

## **My Destiny**

*Jama Nasir, Minneapolis*

I walk alone in my destiny. I wait and wait but I have many obstacles. I made mistakes and try to fix them, but sometimes life seems unbearable. I try to hold my life together but I felt down and hopeless. Nothing seems to work well. I look around and everyone seems happy. I ask myself, "Why? Why does everything I touch go wrong?" Sometimes I think I am in love but other times I don't love anybody. I have many friends, but everybody is busy with their own lives. Sometime I feel my friends are full of hate. I felt my life chase me to capture. I study hard. I keep myself busy to feel better. I keep everything tight to survive this world. Finally, I figure out what I need. What I need is someone to walk with me in the empty world. I find someone to walk with me and help me in my world. I will never forget who I am and my responsibilities. My heart beats strong for one reason – not to see an empty world again. Now people love me and try to help me and I will never walk alone.

## **My Experience in Boarding School**

*Miranda S., Minneapolis*

It was my 8th grade year in Marty, South Dakota. I went to the boarding school two years before. My whole family attended school there. My mother also graduated from Marty Indian School. I played basketball. I played center. I also played in the band. I played the clarinet. I was in the dorm with two of my cousins. Nadine was also on the basketball team. We also trained together and we would run two miles a day. We played different schools. We also traveled around South Dakota.

In the middle of the school year, I got into some trouble. I had a little argument with my cousin, Linette, close to a fight. So I guess that the little argument was just the icing on the cake. The superintendent called my mother in Minneapolis. We had a little conference on the telephone. I was then asked if I wanted to stay at Marty and finish the year. I decided that I wanted to return to Minneapolis with my mother, who I missed very much. So now I have been in Minneapolis for the past 18 years.

Sometimes I wish that I had stayed in boarding school. I always think of how different my life would be, if I would have a good paying job right now. I just want to include that there are four things that I do not regret and these are my children. I am happy that I have this chance to get my life back together. I am also grateful that I am working on my education, so that maybe I can have a chance to go to college and become someone that my children will look up to.

## **My Hopes**

*Sahra Yahye, Minneapolis*

My name is Sahra. I came from Somalia. When I was in my country, I finished high school. After that I had one year when I worked for my government and one year when I taught middle school. When I finished that, I had a dream to go to the university. I didn't get that because there was a civil war in my country in 1991. After my dream broke up, in 1991 I came to Kismayo with my family. We had a second war in Kismayo, so we left there and we came to a Refugee Camp in Kenya in 1992. For five years, I was in Kenya. I left there in 2000. On December 28, 2000, I came to a city in California. My daughter and I came to Minneapolis, in 2001. We lived a couple of months with my sister Zainab. I love her very much. After two months, we found our own apartment. I looked to get a job. I found a good job, and I sponsored my husband. He came to me. I got good life and good children. Now I want to improve my language, and I am prepared for GED. If I should finish my GED, I will go to college to become a nurse. That is my dream.

## **How I Changed My Life**

*Muna Mohamed, Waseca*

I changed my life a lot because I learned more English and I can speak more English now. When I started ESL classes, my teachers helped me a lot. I appreciate them a lot because they changed my life in learning and reading. When my family saw me they were happy with me. I like to go to school every day.

## **From Mexico**

*Jorge Arias, Saint Louis Park*

I work in a factory. I hope that I will speak English very good, have a very good job and have the best life. I am from Michoacan, Mexico. I moved here on January 9, 1998 with my brothers. I like summer, parks, lakes, school, cars and my house. I don't like that I don't speak English very good. I miss my family.

## **The Story of My Life in the United States**

*Eloy Covarrubias, Minneapolis*

I am angry with myself because I wasted time not studying English as soon as I arrived here. Now, I can see that English is very important for me because I need it at work and on the street because most people here speak English, but I won't give up. I must keep studying. I think English is the first obstacle in our lives here. I want to tell that I have visited other states. I have visited Texas, where my son, my sister and brother live.

## **The Goals for My Life**

*Rosalva Botello, Saint Cloud*

When I came to the United States I didn't have legal papers. I came in 1997. I had too many problems because I didn't speak English. My language is Spanish. I started working in 1999. I had three goals for my life. First, I had to learn to drive a car. I never drove a car before so I was scared! Second, I needed a green card because I only had a permit to work. Third, I wanted to buy a house. Now I have made my goals and I am happy. My next goal is to learn to speak and read more English. This will be good for my life.

## **My Inspiration**

*Neimo Haji, Apple Valley*

My best friend is my inspiration. We grew up in the same place when we were little. We went to the same school and always did homework together. She has a dream to be a psychologist, and I have a dream to be a nurse or do something in the health field. She went to London and I came to the United States. I got married and had a wonderful baby girl, so I didn't have a chance to fulfill my dream. She started school, got a bachelor's degree in criminal psychology, and is continuing on to get her master's degree. We both have dreams to be educated women. I am not there yet. She always gives me advice and tells me different ways I can study. She said she understands my situation, but education is very important. That is why I come to this school, because I want to improve my skills in English. After that I want to reach my goal to be a nurse.

## **Good News, No More Wrong Ideas**

*José Muñoz, Minneapolis*

When you were born and grew up in a huge foreign city such as Mexico City, it is easy for you to have some wrong ideas about the people who live in the United States, who are called "gringos."

For most Mexican people it is so normal to think that American people have four characteristics that make them different as a country. You almost always think that they are white people, idiotic people, sexual predatory people and cocaine users, but when you have lived for two years here in Minneapolis, the reality hits you. It is impossible not to find that there are hundreds and hundreds of African-American people, Indian people, Asiatic people and African people living here in the U.S.A. that are Americans, too.

Then, when you go to public libraries, non-profit organizations, churches, or the Lehmann Center school and meet American people, you can find that many of them have lived several months in other countries and they know those cultures, they speak some foreign language, they support human rights, they give their free time as volunteers in non-profit organizations, public libraries, schools or churches. They work almost all year long and they are healthy people who try to make a difference in people's lives.

An American friend said to me once, "In all bad there is good and in all good there is bad." He is right. I am thankful because I don't have those wrong ideas about American people any more. Now, I know that sometimes we live with wrong ideas about others. What about you? Do you know that?

## **A Small Deer Lost in the Woods**

*Margarita Riera, Minneapolis*

One day when it was snowy, a small deer was lost in the woods. He had no idea about where his mom was. He walked and walked and didn't see anything around him. The day became foggy and gray and he started to feel scared. After an hour he was tired and decided to sleep one moment before continuing to search for his mom. When he woke up the wind was blowing very hard and the ground was slippery and freezing. It was very dangerous to continue walking but he decided to continue slowly. After he walked for a long time, he saw a small house in the woods and walked very fast to get to it. When he was near to the house, people who lived in that house saw the small deer. It was chilly and they decided to help him. So, they took the small deer into the home. When the day became beautiful they helped him search for his mom. They carried the small deer and went into the woods again. They looked at all the places and finally they saw the deer's mom. He ran very fast until he got to his mom and gave a big hug to his mom. The small deer stayed with his mom and the people returned to their home and they all became happy.

## **My Past, My Present ... And My (Gulp) Future**

*Roberto Tellez, Saint Paul*

The letters from the students in “OPEN MIND 2006” usually make reference to their past, their families, their memories, their jobs, their hopes, or their road to America. For everybody, without exception, there is a huge difference between our past in our countries and our present here. The opportunities that we have here are enormous in comparison with the expectations in our countries. When someone comes to the United States with permits it is easy to plan the future. With the support of the government, you can move forward. It’s much easier to get an I.D., a driver’s license, a good job, and health care, insurance. But 12 million people come in illegally, putting their life at risk to cross the border. They pay a lot of money for that journey (about \$2,500 for the Mexicans, \$5,000 for Central Americans, and \$7,500 for Ecuadorians).

Then the problems just start, because:

- you can’t get any civil rights, but you are working;
- you can’t get health care, but you are working;
- you can’t get an I.D., driver’s license, or welfare, or insurance but you are working;
- the government takes taxes, social security, health care fees, and you still are working;
- you can’t afford to get sick, because you have a lot of necessities, and many bills to pay, and you need to be working, even if you are sick;
- you need to drive without driver’s license and insurance, because you need to feed your family and supply the necessities by your working.

With this sad reality, it is really hard to plan for our future. If the INS decides to make a raid at your job, and unfortunately you are caught and sent home, it will be hard for your family to go forward with the family divided. Or if you are driving and somebody hits you, and you cannot demonstrate your legal status, the problems grow worse. But we are here and we are still working.

We were under the shadows. Last year we decided to make huge manifestations around the country, and tried to get the attention from the government for the approval of the migration reform. But little has changed. For now this is our present, without future, just thinking and working, working, working. And we are praying to God that we don’t get deported, for the good of us and our families.

God bless America and thank you for giving us the opportunity to be us.

## **Visiting Somalia**

*Fadumo Elmi, Minneapolis*

I would like to visit in Somalia because my aunt and uncle and all my family are in Somalia. I would like to visit Somalia when there is not war. I would like to visit Somalia in peace because Somalia is sunny. It’s a beautiful country. I would like to eat Somali bananas, mangos, potatoes, much food in Somalia. Now I live in the United States. I’m happy here too.

## **My School**

*Sirguta Yemeru, Minnetonka*

When I was four years old my dad taught me at home. He was a very busy man but he tried a lot. I started school when I was seven years old. The school was very near, 15 minutes walking distance. At that time, the problem was I had to cross the road and I didn’t like that because it was a very crowded road. Sometimes my mom helped me. In this school I finished 6th grade. I changed my school because my mom and my dad built a new house in a different area. It was a very nice school with nice uniforms. I remember when a student forgot the tie or belt, there was a punishment. I finished 10th grade and I went to Ethiopian American Institute to take a secretarial course for two years. At that time our director was a Black American. It was a very challenging course. I was able to get a job immediately after completing the course.

## **Dream**

*Vu, Saint Paul*

I have a dream to write music. When I was a teenager, I liked music, especially guitar. I started learning and playing the guitar from my friends. They taught me many ways how I could play. I like country, classic, and pop-rock music. By the way, I wanted to go to STAM Music School. But I don’t have a lot of money to pay for the class because it is too expensive. Usually I play music, but sometimes I write and compose songs. I think someday I want to become a songwriter.

## **Different Cultures**

*N.M., Saint Paul*

When I came to the United States I knew everything would be different than in Yemen. First of all, the education in Yemen is different than in the U.S.A. Such as, in the United States, there is a lot of concern about education. In my opinion 90% of U.S population is educated compared to Yemen, only 70% of the population is literate. Second, the schools in the U.S are co-education while we have separate schools for male and female. In addition, because the U.S is a developed country there are a lot of opportunities to find employment and become an independent person. But since Yemen is a developing country the job opportunities are less. There are different lifestyles. For example, people in the U.S often depend on fast food instead of preparing their own food. On the other hand, in Yemen they like homemade food. Another different lifestyle is the way Yemenis dress. Most women cover their bodies, even the face, but in the United States, you have the freedom to wear whatever you like. It is clear that Americans are more diverse than Yemenis. At last, I wish to acculturate in American traditions and culture.

## **Why Do Japanese Women Tend To Lack Self-Confidence?**

*Aya Kitamura, Minneapolis*

In January, Hakuo Yanagisawa, Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare, referred to women as “giving-birth-machines” during a speech on the future of Japan’s pension, welfare and medical systems. Although his intention might have been to encourage women to give birth in order to solve the low birthrate problem in Japan, it naturally provoked fierce criticism. This event reminded me of a woman, who, in spite of her PhD degree, told me that men were cleverer than women, and made me feel that many Japanese have this biased opinion toward women. Seeing many women doing great jobs in many areas through various media, why do Japanese people still hold this biased opinion?

I think one of the reasons is the Japanese work system. Most Japanese companies have a secretary position for women, called “Ippan-shoku,” which was originally made to protect women from working late at night or being transferred to a place far from home. Most women are hired as Ippan-shoku. However, because of their short working time, they cannot be involved in important projects that require responsibility. Being used to this system, many Japanese seem to assume unconsciously that every woman at the working place is a secretary. Based on this assumption, they even deduce that women lack the ability to do important jobs. As shown in the examples mentioned earlier, not only men but also women themselves are likely to have this biased opinion.

Notoriously, Japanese women don’t complain about being considered less competent, and seem to enjoy being dependent. It is partly because displaying their ability seems to be against their most important virtue, modesty. Some women even believe that they should not be confident, and in extreme cases, they base their self-respect only on their male partners. I think this unhealthy mindset robs women of many possibilities.

Interestingly, some Japanese men complain about the Japanese system, saying that women are unfairly protected from many difficulties that men have to encounter. Based on this, they claim that women don’t have the right to ask for further benefits. However, the point of this problem is not that one gender is benefited more than the other, but that the society in which some members find difficulty in building their self-respect should be changed. I believe the society that allows women to live up to their potential can benefit both genders.

## **My Life**

*Daniela Becerra, Minneapolis*

I like my life now in the U.S. I totally realize myself. When I was a little boy, I always dreamed about this life. I am very happy. I thank God for every thing, for living a safe life and the people to accept me for who I am. I totally realize myself. Thanks to my family for accepting my life.

## **Spiritual Beliefs**

*Xiong Lao, Saint Paul*

Having a belief is common to all humans. As for me, I have a strong belief in spirits. When I was a child I remember playful fights with my brothers that resulted in a bad ending. A spiritual ceremony needed to be performed on me to be able to heal.

I remember it was a hot sunny day back in Thailand. My parents were out in the fields, weeding. It was too hot for my oldest brothers and me to play outside so we decided to play fight inside our house. About that time, we migrated to Thailand, where we lived in refugee camp to be able to come to the U.S. On that hot sunny day, we played inside, on top of our bed. Our bed was made out of bamboo sticks. So when we were wrestling, we moved our blankets and pillow, so that it would make it easier for us to play on.

What happened was during the match, as I was going to go towards Lee who came straight at me and pushed me. When I flew back I thought that I wasn't going to fall off the bed but before I knew it, my right foot slipped off the edge of the bed and down I went. When I fell down, I didn't really feel anything until I tried to get up. When I got up I noticed that my left shoulder felt like a million needles were stuck into my skin. It really hurtled, so I started to cry, my brother was pretty scared, you can say, and Lee apologized ten times and asked me not to tell our parents.

When my parents got home, I didn't tell them until later that night when I couldn't sleep because it was too painful for me to sleep. My parents took to my uncle. My mom told my uncle what happened. My uncle looked at my shoulder. My uncle used a bowl of water and some incense. Then he did the Black Magic on me. I felt something moved inside my shoulder. One week later, I was able to move my shoulder.

This made me believe in it because in the U.S. it takes a dislocated bone one or two months to heal. It only took me a week to heal so this made me have strong beliefs in spirits.

## **My Future Plans**

*Nancy Onelia, Lynd*

My goals for the future are to obtain my GED, get my Certified Nurse's Aide Certificate, be home more often, and get involved with my kids in school. Also I want to take my kids to the YMCA every week.

I will finish my GED so my kids and family can be proud of me. After I am done with that I can get my CNA certificate. That will help me get a better job anywhere.

My kids would like for me to be home more often. I am looking forward to being home in the future. Hopefully life will be less busy and less stressful. I will continue with my goals until I have achieved them. It is very important to always finish what you have started.

## **A Dream Came True**

*Hiwot Mulugeta, Eagan*

I remember when we first bought our house. My husband said, "We need children in this house because it is quiet here." The dream came true, now we have two kids. Markose is a boy. He is three and a half and Blaine is a girl. She is one and a half. I think having children is a blessing and it is a big responsibility. I love my kids and I care for them. I enjoy being with them because I don't feel alone when I am with them. I hope I will see my kids become very productive citizens.

## **What I Know**

*Gbl, Saint Paul*

My country has many things in different form, because it depends on how one sees it. My country has many very pleasant places, and some places that I had the certainty to know, to enjoy them, and mainly to discover since there are very few people to whom that passes. I grew up in a small town. Then, the truth, I do not complain about that. On the contrary, I thank God perhaps do not take much importance but it was something many do not understand at first. Nobody is born knowing everything until later we know it.

## **My Dream**

*Kossi Ekpon, Minneapolis*

I have been dreaming about what is going on in our society and the whole world. I don't want to stop talking or sharing with all human beings who want to do something to rescue the world today. I am very concerned about the poverty, illiteracy and war which occupy a big place on our planet. All these factors represent a big deal. One question I ask is how can we solve one problem without knowing the cause or the origin? I feel very sad and humiliated today after discovering that we, as human beings, are the cause of all these problems.

Today, in our society and throughout the world, illiteracy causes poverty and poverty causes violence and the violence engenders the war. Nowadays, I call everybody, not only the government, to work very hard against illiteracy. When I say all these factors depend on illiteracy, some people called "scientists" keep doing horrible and inhuman things such as the fabrication of bombs and armies to kill our parents, mothers, sisters and destroy our lovely planet. Governments of every country in the world, young, old men and women, every race, religion must wake up and be conscious and fight against these acts to maintain a peace in the world, as God wants and desires.

## **I Have a Dream**

*Tina Chatman, Minneapolis*

This will be the year that I will become famous and well known. Every night I dream and I become more aware of the things that I love most, which are my children, my family, and friends. These are motivations in my life.

As I began to write and get more familiar with the strongholds in my life, it helps me identify who and what I am and as far as my music, it helps me more and more, because my life is my song. I begin to think and wonder who will be the one to discover me. And thoughts begin to occur. And I, Tina, begin to put the most important things in order, which are my accomplishments in life.

Goals mean success, growth, and development. As life unfolds, there are many changes, like becoming who and what you are. Now coming to the world of success I realize that it is very lonely going to the top. You won't find much encouragement. Self-encouragement is the best motivation in the whole world.

I found my true friends when I became a student at West Broadway School, where Bob was first my teacher and he gave me my first big vocabulary word. After we became friends and familiar with one another, he began to instill a plan to my life that gave me a better grip on life. He left and I was very sad and depressed. But there was a ram in the bush, and her name is Crystal. Crystal gave me hope again to stay focused and to continue my education. And I am very proud to say that this is my career start: I'm thirty-two years old and a single parent, and I love my children with all my heart. Through them I have found that life deserves a chance. My daughter that suffers from hydrocephalus is beautiful and my son is very handsome and that's more than a reason to stay motivated. With God, any and everything is possible.

## **Is It Better To Give or Receive?**

*Nery Fernández Gardona, Minneapolis*

In my opinion, I agree that it is better to give than receive. I believe that when you give something to someone, it is because you feel very thankful or when you really love someone. There are many forms to give someone something special. Sometimes you want to give everyone wonderful things. But it is sometimes difficult to have enough to give. I think what has more value is when you receive some simple help and that means a lot of success for me. The most important thing to receive from someone is friendship because the friendship from friends and family is important. Just one smile is enough from someone important in your life. How much does a smile cost? I think nothing. How much does simple help cost? Nothing. There are many simple things that mean a lot for someone.

## **Beautiful Snowy Day**

*Lan Dao, Minneapolis*

One day Maria didn't want to wake up and open her tired eyes. She looked out the window. It is ten o'clock in the morning and outside the sky was shiny but cold. The wind howled outside the window. Snow falls down on the streets, roofs, and trees. It's a snowy day. The snow makes the city crystal clear and beautiful. Maria jumped down from her lovely bed running down the steps saying, "Mom! It's snowing!" Maria loves snow very much. She asks her mom if she can go out to play. Mom hears her excited voice and then says, "OK, OK. But don't forget about lunch!"

Maria ran out the door where her friends were already playing with the snow. Winter is their favorite season so they have some fun games to play. They lay down on the crystal clear snow, stretched out their arms and legs and moved them up and down to make snow angels. Maria had long arms and long legs. Her snow angel is absolutely the most beautiful one. "Should we make a snowman?" asks Maria. She is very good at making snowmen. They make a ball in the snow until it's bigger. They made a big snowball and put it on the bottom; a medium size in the middle, and a small size on the top. Then they put two black buttons for eyes, a carrot for a nose and coal for a mouth, two sticks for hands. They put a black hat on the head and a scarf around the neck. This is a beautiful snowman. They are laughing, running and playing.

Maria's attention was on playing and she forgot what her mom said. Her mom came to their play area and said, "What time is it? Did you hear me?" Suddenly, her mom saw the beautiful snowman behind Maria and she smiled. "Do we need some food for the snowman? I think he didn't eat breakfast and lunch either!" "Oops! Sorry Mom!" Maria was embarrassed and hung her head. Today is the first time she knows her mom is a nice person and also a humorous person.

The wind still howled outside the window and the snow still falls down. Maria is sleeping on her lovely bed and closed her eyes. You can see her smiling face. Maria had a wonderful snowy day and she will never forget it.

## **Survival**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

Hi, my name is Dominic. My life is a true story from my heart. Even though things get complicated, I still stay strong for survival. The way I see it is that all you need to have your back for that is God, to stay strong and healthy and exercise your mind and body to live a long time. My mind stays focused and brainstormed at the same time. Also, I put a lot of effort into it and take my own time.

## **Life Is Hard**

*Jessica Smith, Minneapolis*

When you are born into this world, you don't have a choice of whether or not you will come from a rich family or a poor family, who your parents are, where you will grow up, or what will be your color of skin and religion. All around the world we judge these things and criticize each other. When we start off not having a choice, do we end up having a choice? Now, as adults, do we have a choice on these things or does the cycle keep going on? It's like chicken and eggs; some are white, some are black, but they all have the same things inside. We shouldn't judge because we look different, because none of us have a choice in this world.

## **Education**

*Phillips Chen, Eagan*

If a person can get more education through opportunity, this is very important and lucky in his or her lifetime. Once you accept higher education, you can get a more desirable job and upgrade your life. In the meantime, you also get more advanced knowledge which is useful for you to make judgments in deciding easily and accurately your job or career. On the other hand, it is also helpful to develop your human relationships to promote your personality. It is beneficial for your career, promotion, and success. As a result, you will have a brighter future.

## **He Used To Fight**

*Reyna Mata, Saint Cloud*

He used to fight.  
I used to dream, of  
A miracle medicine,  
A combination of science  
And faith.  
His soul is leaving this space,  
Has stopped fighting.  
Now you can see  
On his face  
Peace.  
He always is going to be  
In my heart,  
Holding my hand,  
Saying everything is right.

## **The Last Farewell to Meth**

*Gregory Lee Welsh Jr., Hermantown*

Okay meth here it goes  
Now I'm blowing you out my nose!  
We are through!  
You have done nothing but bring me  
down.  
I have a kid on the way now,  
We no longer want you around.  
I said I love everything about you  
Not no more.  
I need to worry about my family  
Not how I'm gonna score.  
You are nothing but garbage,  
Not even worth a dime,  
You were just a bad habit  
And a waste of my time!  
I'm in need of something better  
I wish it for my friends, family and me  
I am glad this is our last encounter  
Any more with you I would die!

## **My Dream**

*Vang Chang, Brooklyn Center*

When I was in Thailand, I thought I could get a good education one day. That's why I was a student for ten years. I usually went to school from Monday to Friday. Saturday and Sunday I went to my family's farm. I grew rice, corn, and many kinds of peppers, pumpkins, vegetables, tomatoes, and onions. I worked very hard on the weekends. My family had to grow, gather, and sell them. We didn't have enough money to hire other people to gather crops. I didn't think I would be a good farmer even if I had my own farm.

When I came to the U.S.A. I had only learned Thai and other subjects; I didn't have any chance to learn English. I saw many people who could speak English very well. I wanted to speak English like them. I thought I was the only one who had a very poor English educational level. When I registered as a student for the first time in the U.S.A., they asked me many easy questions such as numbers, colors, and questions with how, what, when, where; however, I didn't get them right.

I sometimes thought I was a stupid person when I encountered a new language and a new country. Everything is still new for me, but I'm much better than I was before. Sometimes English still makes me confused, however. I would like to attend high school like other people, but I'm happy to attend an adult school. I keep going to school almost every day. I attend my English class even if it's not an advanced level yet, but it's OK for me.

Sometimes I think I'm the one who has the poorest English in my class. Nevertheless, I don't like the way I put myself down, but I really don't know what I'm good at. I just think if I keep going to school every day, I will accomplish it one day. I know either GED or diploma is still far from me. Fortunately, if I reach my GED or diploma, I will get a good job. Right now I don't think much about college yet. Sometimes I still think GED or diploma is too difficult for me, as a baby who's just born opens its eyes, first to peek, and sees a new world. I think I will reach my dream if I keep going ahead.

## **Living in Minnesota**

*Phoua Khang, Coon Rapids*

My name is Phoua Khang. I am from Laos. I have been here three years and a half. I really like Minnesota in winter time because when I lived in my country, I never saw snow and just saw pictures. So when snow falls, I like to play in the snow because it is very white and clean. I really like all of the seasons because when the leaves change colors and fall down, it is very wonderful to take a walk and take some pictures to send for my family to see. When I am alone I miss my family and friends back home.

What I don't like about Minnesota is some of the winter with ice because it is very hard to go to work and people will get in accidents.

## **Mind Escape**

*Rick Penaz, Monticello*

As I sit here in this lonely place, sifting through time and faces, my mind is all jerky and confused. I wonder where things went wrong. Evil thoughts of retaliation and revenge, I'm always flipping and turning and scanning them through. All of the days are gone past, as if they were the pages of a twisted novel. I contemplate: "Is this thing called life as easy to describe as a novel?" Hard to say, isn't it? Happiness, sadness, loneliness, anger, hate, are they all maybe just chapters in which our minds suddenly decide to write? Well, if they are, then why would we choose to suffer when all we would need to do is adjust the words on the pages so that nothing but fun and excitement would come our way? Wander and wonder. Mind control is what we have as long as we figure out how to take control and keep it ourselves, for ourselves, unselfishly and without compromise. Food for thought. A great addition of excessive wonder! Letting people into our lives who are controlling makes for a recipe of doom and shame; which, in itself, is ironically uncontrollable. Think on the word, "controlling." When we give into those people who are controlling, we hop out of the driver's seat and allow someone else to "man the controls", generously giving power away. Why let another person drive your car who may not know how to drive smartly or courteously? Why let another person drive your car who will grind the gears, run into things, scratch the paint, and smash about carelessly? In the end you will have a dented, scratched, ruined vehicle equipped with a clutch that slips and a shell that's rather unattractive because of the actions of the abusive controller. From this point on, be sure to drive your own car and keep in mind that it does not have autopilot. Stay behind your own wheel. Stay on the roads you know well, and stay away from dark alleyways where you might get hurt. You have power over your own mind control. Don't give up the "driver's seat." Don't be fearful of taking control.

## **My New Home**

*Saroeung Lut, Eagan*

I moved to Minnesota on December 20, 1986, from Cambodia. I came here with my family.

I like Minnesota and think I live in a good city.

It has a lot of snow. I don't like the cold. I like snow but I don't like cold.

I miss my country.

I work at Sky Chefe. I like my job.

I hope that I will speak and read English.

## **Movies**

*Viet T. Nguyen, Brooklyn Park*

All of us like movies. There are a lot of kinds of movies. Some people like action movies. Some like novel movies. Some like history movies. Some like comedy movies. For me, three kinds of movies I like are horror, action and comedy movies. Horror films make me scared, but I like how I feel. If I'm scared, I like those moments with my eyes open and my heart pounds. My favorite films are "Resident Evil" of Paul W.S. Anderson and "Jeepers Creepers" of Victor Salva. I always see these movies at night without the light and just only me, so they make me more scared.

Action films show me how a hero acts. In fact I like Kong-Fu. Some films I like are "Gorgeous" with Jackie Chan, "Hero" and "The One" with Jet Li. When I see these movies, I sometimes imagine that I'm them. Finally, comedy films are the films I like the best. I can see them anywhere, anytime, if I have time, but I like to see them with my family, my friends or with people. I don't like to watch them alone because it is more fun when I laugh and somebody laughs. Comedy films I like are "Home Alone" and "The Mask."

In life, everybody likes to imagine, so do I. When I see these movies, they make me feel better in my life.

## **Words of Wisdom**

*K. Pierce, Thief River Falls*

Words of Wisdom,  
Word of Wise,  
The beauty is where  
Truth lies.  
My belief is pure.  
My relief is near.  
I have no fear.  
Cuz to live with no secrets  
Words of Wisdom,  
Word of Wise.  
Live 'n let live,  
For the answers in here  
Never lie!  
Live as you must, the beauty is trust.  
I believe we'll succeed.  
Wisdom is here!  
Words of Wisdom,  
Word of Wise.

## **Memories**

*David Dow, Hibbing*

Memories of walking through the park;  
The first time she called me dad,  
The first time you said you loved me,  
And the side you should have never  
seen.  
All the things we've done together,  
Like sharing our first sunset  
Or just sitting on the swing.  
The first night we spent together  
Wrapped up in each other's arms,  
I dream of all those things  
But wake up without you here,  
Wishing I could say  
I could be home soon.  
Memories I'll always have  
My love will never fade  
For my heart is still with you  
No matter what happens  
My friendship will always be there.

## **Prejudice**

*Ho-Yao Chang, Minneapolis*

What is prejudice? We can define that prejudice is to judge others or things before we know them well. Usually, prejudice comes with "stereotypes" or "discriminations." For example, some people think a fat person must be lazy; a dark-skinned person must be dirty; or a Jew must be stingy. These stereotypes all are prejudice. Unfortunately, prejudice seems to fill our daily lives, no matter what kind of culture or society we are.

I am used to taking a bus going to school. On the way to school, I have to transfer to two different bus lines. I found an interesting phenomenon: When the bus line goes to a "good area," such as a school campus or a nice residential area, the bus drivers are usually more friendly; on the other hand, if the bus line goes to a "worse area" like a slum, sometimes bus drivers might be indifferent.

I was thinking that I am nothing more than a neutral student who neither belongs to a slum nor a nice residential area. What causes the different manners between the two different bus lines? Do the bus drivers who go through different lines have prejudice? Or because passengers who are from a "good area" usually are more educated and polite so that causes the drivers' different interactions?

Sometimes people judge things according to their experience, especially when we have no opportunities to know some people or things well. If you judge correctly, we'll say that is from experience; however, if you judge wrong, that is so called "prejudice." I cannot change some people's prejudice even though I do not completely agree with it. Sometimes prejudice comes from people's different cultures, education, or simply personal bad experiences. However, what I can do is try to be an objective person and not judge things or people by prejudice. Somehow, when I encounter a prejudice, I must do my best to prove that prejudice is not always true, it is just prejudice!

## **Living in Minnesota**

*Phuong Chi Tran, Blaine*

I am from Vietnam. I have lived in Minnesota for about five months. What I like about living in Minnesota is the weather, the four seasons, and the culture. I want the chance to stay in Minnesota. However, what I don't like about living in Minnesota is the winter. In Minnesota it is very cold and there is snow, but in my country it is better. However, I like living in Minnesota because my life is very good for the future.

## **School Memories**

*H.A., Moorhead*

I am not in school.  
I am about 13 years old and I hate school  
Because when we didn't know something  
The teachers just hit us with

A long wooden yardstick.  
I remember being hit,  
Usually on the palms of my hands.  
It would hurt so bad, turning my hands red  
And leaving a burning feeling.  
Or sometimes the teacher would  
Even hit the tips of our fingernails  
If they were too long.  
To this day I keep my fingernails short.

The teacher I remember most  
Was a girl, about 30 years old.  
She was short but would wear white  
Shoes with thick heels, making her taller.  
She wore a light blue scarf around her head  
And wrapped under her chin  
And a long, light-colored, burgundy skirt.  
I do not remember her name,  
But I do remember that I did not like her.

When she assigned homework,  
She would not explain it even if it was hard.  
Sometimes homework was very hard,  
Especially when you didn't have family  
That could help you.  
My mom could not read.  
My dad was working, driving a truck,  
And he wouldn't get home 'til evening time.  
My aunt, who lived with us, would sometimes  
Try to help me, but it wasn't always enough.  
So I stayed home from school.  
My parents would tell me, "Don't quit...don't quit."

But I did anyway.

## **My Home in Minneapolis**

*Mai Vang, Minneapolis*

My home has two bedrooms. My  
family has eight children. My  
home has many people. I cook  
breakfast for my family to eat. I very  
clean room then we go to school.  
Sometimes I am busy and come late  
– sometimes OK.

## **I Live in Waseca**

*Faduma Aden, Waseca*

I Live in Waseca about four years.  
I have four children two boys and  
two girls.  
My oldest daughter went to college.  
Now my three and I live together.  
My children and I go to school.  
I love my children very much.  
I'm happy living here and my life is  
good.

## **It Is True the Life**

*Vale, Minneapolis*

It is true when I think about my  
family.  
It is true because I remember that.  
I remember my mom said  
"Wherever you go  
I am with you."  
The life with my family was amazing  
Because we lived together all the  
time.  
But one time  
I had  
To say goodbye.  
Now they are far away,  
Far away

## **My Little Brother**

*Sheila Misquadace, McGregor*

I lost my brother two years ago  
It seems like just yesterday.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
These feelings just won't go away.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
Why did he have to leave so  
suddenly?  
I lost my brother two years ago  
I know he's always with me.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
I know he's watching over me.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
He left behind a family.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
Does he still love me?  
I lost my brother two years ago  
It's so hard to see.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
We all love him dearly.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
Why can't he come back to me?  
I lost my brother two years ago  
He's still a part of me.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
I know he's in a better place.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
I know he's with family.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
I know he'll be waiting for me.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
I know we'll all be together again.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
I know he misses me, as we do him.  
I lost my brother two years ago  
In time our spirits will soon be free.

Rest in peace.

Brandon John Misquadace

1/11/83 to 1/23/05

I love you unconditionally.

## **My Life Story**

*Ray Martin, Minneapolis*

When I was about four years old my father struggled to clothe and feed us six children. He was a felon so it was hard to find a good job. Although he was gifted with his hands, he had decided to sell drugs. It put food on the table, but as young as I was I knew it wasn't good. By the time I was six we moved to a small town outside of Rapid City where he found a job as a mechanic at a used car dealership. He still sold drugs until he got caught and went back to prison.

My sisters and brothers were separated among family members. I was put in an abusive home with an uncle and aunt. Me being so young, the abuse and drug stuff rubbed off on me. I started to be the one selling drugs and going to jail. At age fourteen I went to the Juvenile Detention Center for assault and battery. I was only fourteen and I felt like I was forty-one with nothing to look forward to. So I started to go to chapel and read the Bible. All of a sudden at age sixteen I saw the light at the end of the tunnel. So I started doing good and stopped raising hell. Some of the staff thought that I was sick because of my good doings. But soon I got tired of goody two shoes and tried to hang myself and failed.

I think sometimes I'm that big of a loser I can't even accomplish death. But I think there was a good reason why I didn't die. So I'm still waiting for that good reason and it still hasn't come yet. But I haven't lost my faith and I don't want to. Deep down inside I want to change. I'm twenty-three and this shit is getting old. I need to quit before I'm in prison or dead. Sometimes I think about it, and it scares the hell out of me.

Now I'm working on my GED. I want to go to an art college, get a degree in art and try to get a job in a tattoo shop. Maybe I'll be able to open up my own tattoo shop, build up some money, and have two kids. I'd give them the things that I never had or did. You know, the good things in life that normal people have and do, whatever that is.

## **Scattered and Battered**

*Matt Styniski, Duluth*

When I was scattered and battered I was lost,  
When I was scattered and battered I had no hope; only dope.  
When I was scattered and battered I had burned all my bridges  
When I was scattered and battered I would scream for help but nobody heard.  
When I was scattered and battered I tried to ask for help  
All they did was send the feds and task force.  
When I was scattered and battered the only game was the shell game.

## **The Prodigal Son**

*Jay Russell, Minneapolis*

Early on in my life I struggled with low self-esteem, and I didn't have good coping skills. Also, instead of managing my emotions, I medicated them. I just simply gave up on life, and I had a heart attack at the age of thirty-two. I didn't realize how the choices I was making affected the people that love me the most, so I decided to turn my life around. I knew it wouldn't be easy. As I was lying in that hospital room, I asked God to change my heart and give me strength to live, but the one thing that helped me the most was forgiveness and acceptance.

Forgiveness was not to exonerate those who hurt me, but it was to empower me so that I could move forward. I also had to eliminate some people that were in my life. I realized just because someone's in your life doesn't necessarily qualify them to be there. It's not just getting off drugs, but a total change in life style.

Today my life is going well. The things I value the most are my relationship with God and the emotional connections I have with my daughters and my mother.

## **A New Way of Life**

*Brenda G., Minneapolis*

I'm a fifty-two-year-old woman. I have three grown children. Their ages are 36, 34, and 32 years of age. I had been addicted to heroin for thirty-three years of my life. That is a big part of my life already gone. I have been clean from drugs for 11 months today. I've always wanted to go back to school and finish my education. Everything I tried to accomplish I would quit. I didn't have that faith that I could do whatever I wanted in life. I have seven sisters and brothers who have supported me throughout my addictions. They are my biggest support systems now. I had to leave the state of Illinois to do this and it has been a struggle for me, but I won't give up.

I'm learning a new way of life that I've never known before today. I pay bills, I go to the grocery store, I shop for my own clothes. This is big for I've always had someone to do it for me out of love for me. I have a dream of working with disadvantaged kids. Now I can see that dream coming true with some determination, prayer, faith, courage and hard work. I've always been told that I have a loving and caring way with children. They always take to me for some reason. Today I can say everything I have in life, I have earned. No one has given it to me. That makes me feel real good about myself.

Today I belong to a fellowship called Narcotics Anonymous, a fellowship of men and women who have a desire to stay clean from drugs and have found a new way of life. I have found a God that I pray to on a daily basis. I'm honest, open mind and willing to change in my life today. Today I can honestly say I'm living, not existing.

## **Sadness – Happiness**

*Isir Egeh, Minneapolis*

Sadness  
Lonely, Angry  
Crying, Worrying  
Abuse, Hurt – Friends, Family  
Exciting, Enjoying, Laughing  
Good, Nice  
Happiness

## **Immigrant – Citizen**

*Zelalem Ladjeso, Saint Paul*

Immigrant  
Hard, Confused  
Looking, Taking, Finding  
People, Embassy – Passport, Permit  
Working, Relaxing, Enjoying  
Happy, Nice  
Citizen

*Journeys 2007*

## **We Have a Good Place in This World**

*Joshua Moore, Bayport*

I used to think that you only live once and that you need to take life for granted.  
Some people do not live long or make it to see most of their childhood.  
I have seen people get killed at a young age,  
So we need to live for the moment  
Because tomorrow is not promised to you or me.  
We have a good place in this world.

I would love to live for eternity rather than just a lifetime.  
We all know that a lifetime is not that long.  
Provided we agree that a lifetime is what is lived prior to a natural death.  
How many people do you know that live a lifetime?  
There is no one that I know who has lived this way.  
We have a good place in this world.

I would like to know if people know about life  
And how much it means to you and to all people in this world.  
I know that the world is a big place we live in,  
But along with this life,  
It needs to be examined more closely than we do.  
We may see how some people are not making it at all.  
We have a good place in this world.

## **My Name Is "Tree"**

*Yun Joung So, Saint Paul*

My name is "Tree."  
I am a sword.  
Like dancing and scattering leaves and flowers,  
Breaking through the wind,  
I dance.  
Long time ago,  
I was the training method, the passion for pride and heart beating.  
I was also the pain, the blood, and sorrow of someone.  
Now, I accept who I am and what I am silently.  
Looking up at the blue sky, cleave to my place and my land.  
Holding many creatures God made in the world,  
Oh, I breathe, taste the air what I was granted without speaking.

Sometimes, I just want to dance.

## **Feelings**

*Scott Fix, Bayport*

Well today was given more to light,  
but afraid tomorrow will bring the night  
Wonder as feelings run through my thoughts  
My mind is something that I wish not riddles in rhymes,  
Who can say? That each day is slipped away.

Time to live or just to move on  
What thoughts of love can still be strong  
I wish my life was gone away,  
Traveling light years away  
And look out to the unknown  
Only to find a thought you don't know.

So will people be gone  
Or just live on  
In our hearts or our souls  
And maybe our songs.

I'm guessing to read  
Or maybe even to be read.  
But never to understand  
Exactly what is said.

Famous in minds that no one can read  
But time will show the insides of thee.  
Trying so deeply to have a look  
To see what is said in this book.

To realize maybe you will see that life is a story  
That no one can read,  
Because to feel what is said  
Doesn't mean you can feel  
Because you weren't the one  
Who felt the last feeling.

Reflect on a life of time and pain  
Not saying it's the worst but just  
playing the same.  
To live in my world I wish you could  
see  
The way that everyone just slowly  
feeds me.

They give me what to write  
And I know what to say,  
To speak in words and to play my  
game.

No one will understand,  
So understand no one.  
So trip through life and say it's fun.  
So when are you going to start living  
And stop serving others.

To be born just to live  
And try to see your world  
Will always thrive on greed.

Because everyone wants something  
And what they don't know is  
If they opened their eyes,  
They can make that road.

People try to understand  
What can't be understood,  
Yet they all are just living  
In a dream of the good.

### **Good and Evil**

*Yhadira Flores, Minneapolis*

Good  
Kind, Nice  
Loving, Satisfying, Giving  
Faith, Hope – Wickedness, Hate  
Hurting, Suffering, Insulting  
Arrogant, Cruel  
Evil

### **What Are Friends For?**

*Zethukia Williams a.k.a Kia, Montevideo*

Friends are for a negative and positive situation  
Friends are people that put you after others when you don't  
Fit their combination.

People have friends when that's just a lie  
Friends would be the first ones who disown you  
To make you cry.

There's a saying you don't have friends, you have associates  
Why does everyone decide not to get it?

Me, I have enemies, people who hate me I'm not them  
People who dislike me, my attitude stunk  
So what are friends for?  
To put you down in a slump you don't wish for.

They try to play you, make fun of you when  
People, places, and things are around  
But I know what to do now hold my ground.

Friends like to argue, they like to make you mad  
But really what are friends for when you are feeling bad.

You will do everything to work the relationship out  
But what's the sense of trying when it's not to be listened  
I know there's an argument coming and teeth are going to be missing.

What are friends really for?  
To understand you when you're down just when  
I needed a friend no one was around.

So I figure I have people who care  
But I'm going to continue thinking  
No one's really there.

### **Maliya**

*Maliya Aliy, Minneapolis*

Maliya  
studies English  
every day  
by talking, speaking, writing, and reading  
because English is important.

## **I'll Sail The World A-Sea**

*Lewey John, Brooklyn Park*

A sail, a sail, a sail a-dee.  
I'll sail the world to see what I may see.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail away.  
I'll sail the ocean wave, feel the open water spray.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail ahoy.  
I'll sail my best, at last I'm a sailor boy.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail a year.  
I'll sail to all the world's lands far and near.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail a hum.  
I'll sail to the land where people dance to a drum.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail a-lynn.  
I'll sail to wondrous places where people are smiling.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail again.  
I'll sail with ships, large and small, into the open sea lane.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail afar.  
I'll steer in the day by the sun  
And in the night use the moon and the stars.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail a-free.  
I'll sail on ocean waves and set tide;  
With a wind speed I'll flee.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

A sail, a sail, a sail allure.  
I'll sail on in my journey, and bid you adieu.  
I'll sail the world a-sea.

## **Iraq**

*A.H., Moorhead*

Iraq was a great country  
For me and my family, and still  
today.  
I lived there when  
I was a child. I never thought  
I would leave that wonderful  
country.  
In Iraq, many wars  
Have damaged all the nicest  
buildings,  
Bridges, and towers.  
It's a wonderful country for me  
Because I have memories there.  
I think when I go back,  
I will feel like a stranger even  
With every one who is near to my  
heart.  
I would Love to go there  
And see My Family, friends, my old  
schools,  
And neighbors. When we go  
To any park here, it reminds me  
Of my friends in my country.  
I remember those days when  
We were sitting with friends in  
Our garden drinking some tea and  
talking  
About everything,  
While our children played  
Around my family's garden.  
They played any games  
That kids enjoy playing,  
Like hide-and-seek, running,  
football,  
And catching. In my garden were  
Many kinds of  
Fruit.  
Apple trees,  
Orange trees,  
Pomegranate trees.  
  
Vegetables,  
Cucumber vines,  
Tomato bushes,

Heads of lettuce  
Flowers,  
Red juree  
Magenta grunful ,  
White alfwl,

Animals  
Sheep,  
Ducks,  
Chickens.

I miss my old garden,  
I wish to go there.  
I miss everything there.  
I don't have a garden in my house  
Like my old garden in Iraq.  
I wish to have it.

### **A Message**

*Bonnie Giles, Moorhead*

Where did you go?  
Why didn't you stay?  
I see your family and  
Friends grieving for you today.  
Affected by that blow,  
For they will not see that pretty li'l  
Girl today, tomorrow, nor yesterday.

I do believe God used you,  
To help the ones who knew you.  
The message lies within;  
Help them realize  
Life is a gift to take care of,  
Not a life one wins.  
Someday they too  
Will fall in sin.

So Rise up, Rise up!!  
Make a move to improve  
The sins you cannot undo.  
Take this message to share,  
To those who couldn't be there.  
Thank you God for using me  
In writing a message for everyone to  
read.

### **Falling Leaves**

*Darryl Bialke, Brainerd*

Falling leaves, they are so much fun.  
You can crush them with your fingers, or stick them to your gum.  
Or throw them up, and let them fall again.  
Now, if you yell really loud, you can show all your friends.  
Or make a big fort, where all of you can stay.  
Then, maybe your friends will come over for the day.  
You can rake them up, and jump right in,  
Then make a pile so big, you can learn how to swim.  
So, play all day until you lose the daylight's sun,  
Or when your mother calls you in to tell you that you are done.  
When you made that fort, where in it you had played,  
And had all that fun for just a few short days,  
When you made those big piles, they brought big, big smiles.  
Remember falling leaves last only a little while.  
Now go have some fun until the snowman comes.  
But first, make sure all of your chores are done.

### **Doing Time**

*Jammie Bergstrom, Little Falls*

As I sit in this county jail  
Knowing I can't pay this Million Dollar Bail  
I sit and wait for the time to pass  
Isn't it time for me to get off my ass  
Every day that goes slowly past  
I think of my daughter growing up so fast  
She thinks I gave up and my love quit  
There's nothing I can do but sit  
Knowing I can't tell her how I really feel  
That is how my love is so real  
Even though I'm so sad and blue  
I'll never give up and that is true  
As I sit and waste all these days  
You realize dope dealing never really pays  
When everyone claims to be your friend  
Remember it's only you in the end  
Visiting days come and they go  
Time after time nobody will ever show  
Just when you're having nothing but fun  
The Judge Slams his Hammer and it's all Done.

## **Home**

*Melissa Martínez, White Bear Lake*

Home is our own front door  
with our own number on it.  
Home is hugs and “hello,”  
hugs and “goodnight.”  
Home is where our pepperoni pizza  
gets delivered on Friday night.

Home is my own bed,  
my own blanket,  
and my own Teddy Bear.  
Home is where I go  
after a terrible math day at school.  
My mom cooks spaghetti  
at home on my birthday  
and my Dad tickles me  
on the couch.

Home is where I take  
pink bubble baths  
with my little sister  
and wrestle with my brother.  
Home is right next door  
to my best friend's.  
We play Barbie dolls at home.

Home is where  
I sleep tight  
and don't let the  
bed bugs bite.  
Home is strong  
and warm.  
I am safe at  
home.

Home is where  
we leave from  
and go back to.

## **Aurora**

*Odessa Gott, Moorhead*

I am walking toward  
the huge placid lake surrounded by  
tall, dark green pine trees and wildlife.  
I decide to take a seat on  
a distant large rock, the most interesting one I can find.  
My reminiscing ends as  
a clear, cool night starts.  
The periwinkle sky turns into a  
navy blue blanket with tiny diamonds.  
My mind is free.  
I enjoy the creaking sounds of the crickets' chirps.  
Gazing at the shimmering dark water, I start  
to whistle with the chirping.  
The exotic hues of Scarlet, Amethyst and Tangerine are vibrantly streaming  
through the sky.  
They have just caught my curiosity,  
I notice they are dancing,  
Dancing hard as if they are starting the  
Grand Entry at a Pow-Wow.  
Crimson, Indigo, Marigold and Lavender are in the air.  
A fantasia of colors move  
like a flag in the wind on a breezy fall day.  
I stop whistling.  
The sky has changed back to the  
clear, dark blue blanket with tiny diamonds.  
I wonder...  
I begin whistling again.  
The dancing colors are back,  
only this time they're just above the forest trees and  
they start to dance gracefully above me.  
I begin to whistle harder.  
The blizzard of gorgeous colors begins shuffling from side to side  
while they're ribboning down from the night sky.  
Now they are here, on Earth.  
I look back at the water,  
the placid lake now looks like a  
meadow with thick mist floating just  
above the dewy green grass.  
The colors Fuchsia and Jade are now near me,  
I can almost hear them.  
They sound like paper being crumpled by  
a frustrated school child.  
I watch them move onto the placid lake,  
they're dancing hard.

I see colors dancing but nobody wearing them.  
I stop my whistling because my lips  
begin to get tired.  
They slow down as if it was the  
last beat to a drum.  
The storm of colors stops all at once.  
Looking like they're walking off  
The Ceremony Circle at a Pow-Wow  
and just fading away, vanishing mysteriously into the night.  
They're gone.

### **Past Memories**

*Nruas Xiong, Brooklyn Park*

My name is Nruas Xiong. I am going to tell you a little story poem about a family who fled from one country to another country, where the memories still carry with the family and the children.  
One day the sun rose from the West and set in the East.  
The cloud above turned dark and red.  
The guns and bombs gave us pain.  
The sounds of laughter and joy echoed through valleys and mountains,  
Carried our voices across oceans and countries,  
Buried our children beneath the land of birth and death.  
We raise our hands, praying for help,  
Settled in a new land, but the memories still carry on.

### **Being a Good Dad**

*Zac Wallace, Hibbing*

To be a good Dad is to be there for your kids,  
To show them love and support.  
To be a good Dad is to teach them right from wrong.  
To be a good Dad is to teach them tough love when they make a mistake.  
To be a good Dad is to comfort them when they're scared or hurt.  
To be a good Dad is to say no to drinking and using drugs.

### **The Day**

*Jacob McGrew, Little Falls*

I like the comfort of waking from a dream in the morning  
And the heavy syrup of sleep.  
I like walking for a long while feeling the day around me.  
I like the places the trees make a grove.  
I like friends to talk the day away.  
I like the day's closing and the return to sleep.

### **My Starlight**

*Michael Bunes, Virginia*

You are my starlight,  
You are one of a kind.  
I love you so much  
I'm glad you're all mine.  
At night when I'm lonely  
And thinking of you  
I look for a star  
And I think of you!  
My love, my life  
My starlight.

### **Me**

*Curtis Revier, Duluth*

Charming  
Uncontrollable  
Responsible  
Thrifty  
Illuminant  
Straightforward.  
Revered  
Effervescent  
Vigilant  
Instantaneous  
Exceptional  
Righteous.

### **America**

*Olga Posada, Saint Michael*

A beautiful country with nice people  
One, two, three  
Everybody's free.  
Four, five, six  
So little to fix.  
Seven, eight, nine  
You can't deny.  
Ten, eleven, twelve  
United States  
Thirteen, fourteen  
We all want to live here.  
Fifteen, sixteen  
Like a human being.

### **One Thing Before I Go**

*María Camila Mello De Biase,  
Rochester*

I will miss the snow.  
I will miss the cold.  
One thing before I go,  
I will miss it all.

I will miss my friends.  
I will miss the land.  
One thing before I go,  
I will miss it all.

I will miss my lesson.  
I will miss each person.  
One thing before I go,  
I will miss it all.

I will miss the sky.  
I will miss and cry.  
One thing before I go,  
I will miss it all.  
I will miss it all,  
So  
Goodbye.

### **Insanity**

*Nate Scheer, Plymouth*

I am.  
Insanity I have known in all its ways;  
My never ending desire to fulfill,  
Fulfill one dream, the dream to  
Succeed.  
Though I try to do it illegally,  
Insanity.  
Try and fail, try and fail,  
At the same old schemes;  
“What is wrong?” I ask.  
“Why can’t I complete this dream?”  
Insanity,  
I keep doing the same things,  
Insanity is what I plead.

### **Free At Last**

*Valerie Lynch, Saint Louis Park*

It’s been a long time since you felt the breeze  
on your face.  
Took a breath of fresh air.  
Look at and feel the sun shining down  
on your skin.  
It will be a day to remember.  
A lesson in life.  
One that shows you as well as tells you not to  
go back to your past mistakes.  
Tells you to do everything in your power not to  
go back to the old life.  
The hardships, the darkness behind the walls  
of solitude.  
To remember to stay strong against all of  
life’s temptations.  
To stay focused on doing the right thing.  
To get a second chance in life.  
We all know what needs to be done as well  
as what we want to do.  
To not be dragged down that one traveled  
path not that long ago.  
To know what path you need to travel to and  
what path to stay away from.  
To no longer be corrupted by temptations.  
To be strong for yourself as well as loved ones.  
So for yourself and no one else.  
Stay strong for choosing the right road  
you will be FREE AT LAST.

### **Living in Minnesota**

*Enmanuel Estrada, Blaine*

I’m Enmanuel Estrada. I came to Minnesota in 2001 from El Salvador. I like Minnesota because it has nice people. It has more than 10,000 lakes. It has Lake Superior (Duluth), it has the start of the Mississippi River, and also it has different seasons. Sometimes in the winter it’s fun to go out and try to do something like sliding and other sports.

I don’t like Minnesota when it snows a lot and the temperature is cold, because some people can’t work outside and also some people can have accidents on the road.

## **America**

*Kang Hee Silverio, Albertville*

America is the number one country in the world.

Most people want the American Dream.

America is a huge country, Freedom and peace.

Different nation's people are all together.

Love and Respect.

I love America and I'm proud of this country

Because I'm an American.

America, America!

## **MARIA**

*María Huerta, Minneapolis*

My name is the most usual on the earth, I am an

Alien in this town; my life is a

Raft in the river, my

Ideal is to get my citizenship.

After that I will be the happiest woman in the world.

## **Moving to Minnesota**

*Mi Young Lee, Bloomington*

I moved to Minnesota on April 21, 2004, from Korea. I came here with my family.

I like the water, air and money here in the United States.

I don't like the foods—bread and milk.

I miss Korean People, especially my brother and sister.

I work for Electric Wire Company. I like my job.

I hope that I will speak English good soon.

## **Coming Here from Mexico**

*Rivelino Hernández, Richfield*

I moved here on October 23, 1999, from Mexico. I moved here by myself.

I like my job at a restaurant.

I like Minneapolis and this country.

I don't like liquor.

I miss my brother and grandmother.

I hope I can visit my family.

## **Honesty – Dishonesty**

*Osman Ali, Roseville*

Honesty

Lovely, Happy

Enjoying, Sharing, Talking

Kindness, Truth – Lies, Liars

Disappointing, Breaking, Crying

Angry, Lonely

Dishonesty

## **Moving from Cambodia to Minnesota**

*Synath Sok, Bloomington*

My name is Synath Sok.

I moved to Minnesota on October 15, from Cambodia. I came here with my family.

I like Minnesota. I have money and a job. I don't like cold or snow.

I miss my country, my family and my friends.

I work at St. Jude Medical Center. I like my job.

I hope that I will visit my family and friends. I hope I will learn English.

## **My Home in Minneapolis**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

My home has two small bedrooms, one bathroom, a small kitchen, and a small living room. I have seven people. I like my home. A park is behind my home. In the summer, I take my children to the park to play seesaw.

## **My Story**

*Samsam Saleban, Minneapolis*

I study English at Lincoln Adult Education Center every day.

I want to talk to people in English and I want to go to college.

That is my letter.

I have a nice teacher.

## **Why I Study English**

*Asha Amir, Minneapolis*

I am from Somalia. I am studying English at Lincoln Adult Education Center every day by writing and talking, because English is very important in the United States.

## **Guatemala – Minnesota: Good Places**

*Anonymous, Minneapolis*

Guatemala

Beautiful, Colorful

Working, Praying, Laughing

Art, Magic – Freedom, Job

Walking, Fishing, Studying

Hot, Cold

Minnesota

## **About Poverty and Wealth**

*Anonymous, Fridley*

Poverty  
hungry, empty  
waiting, begging, looking,  
needing money, food, drink, life –  
visiting, spending, buying, relaxing  
wonderful, enjoyable  
Wealth

## **Cold – Heat**

*Francisco Acevedo, Minneapolis*

Cold  
Bad, Unpleasant  
Shaking, Shivering, Freezing  
Wind, Rain – Sun, Summer  
Sweating, Taking a shower, Looking  
for Shade  
Hot, Sunny  
Heat

## **Happy – Unhappy**

*Juan Panora, Minneapolis*

Happy  
Grateful, Thankful  
Loving, Trusting, Sharing  
Laughter, Joy – Distrust, Loneliness  
Crying, Upsetting, Annoying  
Frustrated, Proud  
Unhappy

## **Winter**

*Ye Rhee Lee, Shoreview*

Milky-white frost on the window,  
Over in the other world  
Snowflakes, like fleece, are falling.  
When I make a step,  
fragrance from somewhere else tickles my nose.  
Fragrance  
Of a pine tree in a white coat,  
Of a lake wearing an ice shawl,  
Of a lonely bench deserted by a stranger,  
Of a boy's yearning standing in front of his mother's grave.  
Fragrance is laid silently with snowflakes.  
I light a candle in the darkness.

## **Recovery**

*Craig Jackson Jr., Ogema*

Treatment is a place for all people to sober up  
I'm coming here  
Cuz I know I have the sobriety in my blood  
And I know I have the power to stay sober  
I'm getting sick of getting drunk and falling over  
Came to believe  
That the power greater than ourselves  
Could restore us  
We're sitting here  
Workin' on steps 1, 2, 3 'til we learn to control insanity  
That's the way its gonna be  
So you could laugh if you wanna laugh  
I'm gonna make it last if I wanna pass  
Through the last days  
I'm getting to the age when I can make a change  
That's the way it is if you wanna make it through  
Keep it cool  
And if you act a fool you're gonna lose again  
Bringin' back the pain that you made in the past  
Bringin' the shame that you had when you couldn't laugh  
Thought you had it made in the game  
And you lost  
All the drugs you bought  
Ain't never gonna bring up what your life gonna cost

## **Brain Food**

*Steven Pearson, Minneapolis*

I write because it keeps me focused,  
Now I got to give you some of this  
potion.

They say things aren't going to get  
any better  
and I'm sorry to say this in my letter.

God is loving and this world got us  
in a oven.  
Let's start being governors, not on  
what people do,  
but focus on you.

Right is right and wrong is wrong  
so don't try to mix it  
get on.

It's time for a change,  
but it's up to us to do the right thing.  
Kids do what they see,  
time to change the negative to a  
positive, you see.

No instruction leads to self-  
destruction.  
If you don't know what to do,  
What good is it to you?

We aren't here by ourselves,  
so let's give more of a helping hand  
to someone else.  
Change takes one person at a time,  
so don't get left behind.

Everything happens for a reason,  
if you don't know, pray to God,  
He'll give you the meaning.

Try not to be impatient,  
He'll show you Sooner or Later.

## **Who Am I**

*Ozone Bhaguan, Duluth*

I  
I  
Am  
I Am  
I Am the  
I am the tear you cry  
I am the Joy I sigh.  
I am the heart that sings. I am the gift you bring.  
I am the scream of rage.  
I am the tide I fight.  
I am the clock that burns.  
I am the spring wound too tight.  
I am the page I turn.  
I am the pen that yearns.  
I am the wrong that rights its way.  
I am the gentle hand that's been stayed.  
I am the gorge that can't be crossed; I am the Bridge that has been lost.  
I am the scent of the summer's breeze. I am the salt in the depths of the sea.  
I am a sword ready to pierce you soon. I am the secrets reflected in the  
moon.  
I am a truth that inflicts a wound. I am a cure that heals all wounds.  
I am the pain that surrounds.  
I am what can't be found.  
I am the fire in your veins.  
I am why you complain.  
I am the scream of your breath.  
I am there after your last.  
I am the thing many seek.  
I am what drives you to find it.  
I am what you stand behind. I am the mountain you climb.  
I am the mirror you face. I am the wind you Chase.  
I am the stone that weighs you down.  
I am the voice you hear when no one's around.  
I am a truth that many long for.  
I am a lie that even more will ignore.  
I am the Honey on the Angel's tongue.  
I am the bitter acid that demons drown in.  
I am what cannot speak.  
I am what cannot be silenced.  
Who Am I?



**Great Spirit**

*Richard No Heart, Virginia*

Let the flames burn deep within me.  
Let my wings pick up  
From a draft and take flight,  
Soar over the mountains of faith  
And through the valleys of tested times.  
They are my successes and my struggles  
That take me to those places  
Of successful life.  
When I go into these  
Shadows of the rivers that flow rapidly  
From a mighty rushing wind,  
Down to the rushing waterfalls,  
Gathering all my achievements  
To create an ocean of memories  
That someday my children will know,  
My vision of hope flowed.  
Amen

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## **You Can Help the Literacy Cause**

Did you know that as many as one in five adults in Minnesota has trouble reading and writing? Native-born citizens as well as recent immigrants need basic literacy skills to become self-sufficient, productive workers, family members and community citizens.

You can help someone achieve the goal of literacy by completing just one of these simple steps:

### **Encourage a learner**

Adult learners from across Minnesota can submit their writings for publication in the next issue of *Journeys: Stories and Poems to Open Your Mind*. To learn how, visit [www.theMLC.org](http://www.theMLC.org) or call 651-645-2277 or 800-225-READ.

### **Make a referral**

Do you know an adult who needs a little extra help with reading, writing or learning English? Or who wants to earn U.S. citizenship? Call the Adult Literacy Hotline at 800-222-1990 or log on to [www.theMLC.org/hotline](http://www.theMLC.org/hotline).

### **Become a tutor**

Experience the rewards of volunteer tutoring. And why not recruit a colleague, friend or relative to join you? English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) learners around the state are eagerly waiting for tutors. Email us at [volunteer@theMLC.org](mailto:volunteer@theMLC.org).

### **Spread the word**

Post a flier at the grocery store, drop off brochures at the coffee shop, give away some bookmarks at church, send an e-mail to some friends. Or host a speaker or fund-raising event. Call 651-645-2277 for Minnesota Literacy Council materials you can use for grassroots outreach.

### **Donate to MLC**

Your financial contribution will help MLC continue and expand literacy services in Minnesota. In-kind donations of materials and services are valuable, too. Don't forget – your employer may have a matching gift program or support community volunteerism.

### **Send your tax deductible contribution to:**

Minnesota Literacy Council, 756 Transfer Road , St. Paul, MN 55114.

To learn about other giving options, please call the Development Director at 651-645-2277 or 800-225-READ. Or visit our Web site at [www.theMLC.org](http://www.theMLC.org).

The Minnesota Literacy Council is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving literacy statewide. Our Mission is to share the power of learning through education, community building and advocacy.



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